

The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

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The Battle of Armageddon

EDITOR'S JOURNAL

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. . . . And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.—Revelation 16:14-16

William Jennings Bryan was defeated by William McKinley in the presidential elections of 1896. In 1873 the gold standard as a basis for money replaced a bi-metallic standard. This became a major campaign issue in the election of 1896 and was highlighted by the famous "cross of gold" speech at the Democratic convention.

In October of the following year Pastor Charles T. Russell built upon this popular subject in his fourth volume of "Studies in the Scriptures" which was entitled *The Day of Vengeance*. The economic problems with the new standard became one of several areas probed in a broad indictment of those nation claiming to be "Christian" and of the conditions in Christianity itself.

In another presidential election, the three-way race between Woodrow Wilson, William Howard Taft, and Theodore Roosevelt saw a popular campaign slogan coined by Roosevelt: "We stand at Armageddon and we battle for the Lord."

Capitalizing on the publicity for this election, Pastor Russell gave a series of lectures throughout the United States on the topic "The Battle of Armageddon." A new edition of *The Day of Vengeance* was issued and this lecture appeared as a special forward. The name of the new book was changed to *The Battle of Armageddon*.

The application of biblical prophecy to current events was appreciated by many of the readers of this work. These prophetic interpretations have stood the test of time and are as appropriate today as they were at the close of the nineteenth century when they were written.

Much has happened since the original publication of this monumental work. It is the purpose of this issue of THE HERALD to look at what has occurred in the 102 years since the original publication of this book..

In highly descriptive language, the apostle Peter says the heat of the conflicts of this "Day of Vengeance" are so intense that "the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Peter 3:10,12). In *Giants of Global Finance*, the author shows how the events of the past century have served to prepare these elements for the troubles which James Baldwin entitled "The Fire Next Time."

The economic scene is the subject of the next treatise, *Babylon's Confusion-- Ecclesiastical*. The author deals with such current developments as the multi-national corporation and the globalization of capital.

Developments in the political world form the subject matter for *The Crumbling Image*. Here the author seeks to trace the main political trends of the last one hundred years.

Social unrest with its clamor for equal rights—racial, gender, age, and countless others—are the subject of *The Fiftieth Year Sabbath*. The watchword of the French Revolution, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," are well illustrated by the jubilee laws of ancient Israel.

Many biblical battles took place at Megiddo. Each of these holds lessons of the great antitype, "Armageddon." The article *Megiddo and Carchemish* deals with the last of these typical conflicts, showing its connection to other biblical pictures.

While the Battle of Armageddon focuses on the fort of Megiddo, other pictures in the Bible describing the same conflict feature other locales. One of these is considered in our closing article, a verse by verse study in Zechariah 14, entitled *The Battle of Jerusalem*.

Much space in "The Battle of Armageddon" book is devoted to "The World Parliament of Religions" which was held in connection with the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. A centennial celebration of this gathering was again held in Chicago in 1993. The Chicago Bible Students published a pamphlet "One World Church" about this movement at that time. Space in this issue did not permit a planned condensation of this booklet. However, we are including as a separate item with this issue a copy of the entire booklet, entitled *One World Church*.

The editors place these articles in your hands in the hope that they will continue to stimulate an interest in prophetic study and its relationship to the world around us..

Gathering Winds of Class War--A Vignette of History

Giants in the Earth

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in Peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"—James 2:15,16

Richard Doctor

A violent class war was in the making. In 1848, Karl Marx published the *Communist Manifesto*. That same year, revolutionary worker demonstrations shook Paris, Vienna, Prague, Berlin, Venice, Milan, Parma, and Rome. These uprisings were met with cruel repression, and in response, waves of disenchanting laborers fled to the United States. Chicago and Milwaukee proved particularly attractive to the German immigrants.

By the 1870's, employment in the United States was oppressive. Employers demanded 12-hour days, six-days per week, to earn less than one dollar per day. Chicago soon became a hotbed of activity for a loosely organized international working-class movement that drew together anarchists, communists, and socialists. This largely German-speaking group distributed handbills and daily newspapers in German avidly promulgating the latest communist writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895).

Soon, the clamor for workers rights led to bloodshed. Two workers were shot dead on May 3, 1885, after strikers seeking an eight-hour workday clashed with police at the Haymarket in Chicago's wholesale commercial district near Randolph St. and Plank St. (now the Kennedy Expressway). The shouts for revenge were met the following day, May 4, 1885, as a bomb hurled from the crowd killed seven policemen. In 1886, after a highly public trial, eight of the demonstrators were convicted of anarchy. Four were hanged.

Less radical branches of the labor movement gained further strength. In 1889 the pagan "May Day" celebration was recast by the agreement of the International Socialist Congress and Samuel Gompers (1850-1924), founder of the American Federation of Labor, to serve as a celebration of working class solidarity. On May 1, 1890, in Chicago, the American Federation of Labor took up a worker's campaign for three issues: 1) an eight hour workday; 2) universal suffrage--then denied to poor workers; and 3) replacing standing armies with a citizen's militia.[1] Modern May Day celebrations began in Chicago, not in Red Square, nor in the capital cities of the repressive European monarchies.

The desire for the citizen's militia was underscored in 1894 when the Pullman rail-car factory south of Chicago cut wages by one-third, while maintaining constant rent on the company-owned housing and constant prices at company-owned stores. George

Pullman's heartless actions--which later court judgments would wisely declaim as "Un-American"--were an attempt to assure his stockholders that they would receive their regular dividends throughout the depression that began in 1893. At the Pullman factory, one hundred thousand angry protesters turned out to support a brutal strike that angered and frightened both sides in the deepening warfare of labor and capital. By the direct order of President Grover Cleveland a combined force of 14,000 armed federal troops, deputies, and police were sent in over the objections of Illinois Governor John Altgeld. Writing privately during the Pullman strike Judge William Howard Taft--later president--provided an insight into the views of the monied class: "It will be necessary for the military to kill some of the mob . . . [as yet] they have only killed six . . . this is hardly enough to make an impression." [2] Eventually, thirty laborers were killed.

At the same time, about one-third of the population, the farmers, were left destitute by the inevitable and painful consequences of unwise economic policy.[3] When the Civil War ended in 1865, the demand for money in an expanding economy that held a limited supply of gold led the United States to issue two types of currency--dollars backed with gold and dollars backed with silver. Farmers were the major holders of silver-backed dollars. Between 1872 and 1894, these dollars fell from being of nearly equal value, to the silver being worth only 49% of the value of gold.[4] At this point, silver-backed dollars were withdrawn as currency. For farmers holding silver, repayment in gold-backed dollars meant that their debts were doubled, while their savings were reduced by one-half.

"America shall not be crucified on a cross of gold!" thundered William Jennings Bryan, as he addressed the impoverishment of the farmers. Although his bid as the democratic presidential candidate in 1896 was unsuccessful, he aroused considerable public sympathy on this issue. His vice-presidential draft was Samuel Gompers of the AFL--one of the few attempts to bring about a most unlikely labor-farmer coalition.

Passionate Christian Concern

The following year, in 1897 Pastor Russell vigorously jumped into this fray with what is really a short 116-page book entitled *The Nations Assembled and the Preparation of the Elements for the Great Fire of God's Indignation*. This study, at two and one-half times the length of a typical chapter in the 4th volume of *Scripture Studies*, is its longest chapter. The 28-page *Cries of the Reapers* chapter that immediately follows is a sensitive treatment of the farmer's plight that directly and sympathetically replies to William Jennings Bryan.

We properly think of Pastor Russell as an energetic Christian leader and teacher during the Harvest. We need to remember that prior to this calling he was a highly successful young business leader. Charles T. Russell began working with his father at age 11, after his mother's death two years earlier. A skillful manager, he expanded his father's haberdashery business, amassing a small fortune. Charles T. Russell was a wealthy man while still in his 20's. How very much like the Lord to raise up just the appropriate leader for the times!

Pastor Russell was never a distant and unconcerned Christian. He cared about people and their issues. Children were literally starving, and fathers were being driven to revolution. He was not what were then called "silk stocking reformers" who criticized the world's ills from their easy chairs but were unable to deal with the practical issues of life. Pastor Russell's words show a practical and balanced consideration for both camps in the debate. He presents depthful supporting data--including the lengthy financial accounting lists of various trusts. He directly quotes many of the leading thinkers in these debates. His Christianity is relevant, direct, and sympathetic towards all.

The Rise and Fall of the Proletariat Revolution

In 1910, and until the U.S. entered World War I, Milwaukee elected Victor Beyer, the first socialist Congressman. A socialist-dominated city council also was elected. However, this was not the leading edge of a national trend. The proletariat revolution failed in the United States.

Its success in Russia in 1919 was a turning point in twentieth century history. The revolution brought into political reality human attempts to make practical the theories of Marx and Engels. Communism was a powerful and transforming vision of a world where there were no distinctions of class or privilege, but where mankind would be united in brotherhood for the common good, where want would be unknown, and where education and culture would be the common heritage of all citizens.

Economic growth following the revolution was real. Although flawed and brutal, the Soviet system showed that it could rally both its citizens and its resources to stop the Nazi war-machine. After the war, the rebuilding and growth continued. The *Communist Manifesto* was carried throughout the earth, so that at its height in the late 1970's, fully one-third of humanity answered to communist leadership.

Communism's remarkable fall in the late 1980's revealed its flaws. The absence of real market competition--so critical to success or failure in capitalism--really *did* stagnate development.

From another perspective, communism was not as successful in harnessing human drive, in some cases--the drive of selfishness. Contradictions abounded. While the Soviet Bloc was an immense reservoir for some of the leading scientific talent in the world, western technologies typically were disassembled, studied, and rebuilt with inferior Soviet Parts--a process known as "reverse-engineering." At its fall, the Soviet system--in spite of its technical triumphs in space and weaponry--could no longer even replicate the tools needed to "reverse engineer" the micro-electronics of tens years before. Painfully inefficient Soviet manufacturing actually *reduced* the value of the raw materials processed.[5] In a land of vast natural resources, shortages abounded. The vision of a worker's paradise was difficult to hold forth as an inspiration to a third generation of revolutionaries now exposed by mass communication to a more accurate picture of what living conditions in the capitalist west were really like. The extraordinary end of communism sent 1.9 billion people tumbling into the capitalist world.

Angels Holding Back the Winds

In the other hemisphere, the United States developed with different historical traditions and vision. By any account, President Theodore Roosevelt was one of the most dynamic political minds of the twentieth century. By his own account, he "arose like a rocket." Succeeding to the presidency after the assassination of William McKinley in 1901, Theodore Roosevelt was then the youngest president ever, just shy of 43. TR, as he was known, saw through a program of reform legislation to control business trusts, interstate commerce, and food quality. He was equally energetic at seeing the vigorous enforcement of this legislation. A Harvard graduate from a wealthy family, he left for the Dakota territories to live as a cowboy. A war hero, he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for negotiating the end of the Russo-Japanese War. At a time when poets celebrated lumber jacks "wielding all day their axes," and the "inexhaustible iron mines" of the United States, Roosevelt was a visionary advocate for wilderness conservation. Using his presidential mandate, he set aside 125 million acres of public land for national parks, forests, and conservation. Disdainful of Christianity that was not practical he observed, "It is much easier to be a harmless dove, than a wise serpent." His view of the business climate is revealing[6]:

"When I became President, the question as to the method by which the U.S. Government was to control the corporations was not yet important. The absolutely vital question was whether the government *had the power to control them at all* . . . the Supreme Court had, with seeming definiteness, settled that the National Government had not the power. . . . the present power of the National Government to deal effectively with the trusts is due solely to the success of the Administration in securing the reversal of the former decision by the Supreme Court."

Other reform activity was occurring. A free press gave voice to moralists such as American Civil Liberties Union founder Upton Sinclair (1878-1968). Sinclair, along with other "muckrakers" fulminated about the unhygienic conditions in the meat-packing plants of Chicago and other abuses of the working class in his book *The Jungle* (1906). That same year, TR acting with his typical energy, used the public sentiment to see the rapid enactment of law to establish the Food and Drug Administration to stop the appalling practices of meat-packers.

"We stand on the brink of Armageddon. We battle for the Lord," was Roosevelt's 1912 Presidential campaign theme for an unprecedented third term.[7] He was unsuccessful. But in Milwaukee three weeks before the election on October 14, an assassin's bullet hit him, tearing through the speech notes and glass case in his suitcoat pocket before lodging just below his ribs. Wounded and wearing a blood-stained shirt, but undeterred, he waved the bullet-pierced speech notes before the audience and proceeded to orate for an hour and a half before accepting hospital treatment. "It takes more than *that* to kill a Bull Moose," he quipped. Pastor Russell, seizing on this highly charged campaign, delivered *The Battle of Armageddon* lecture at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on November 3, 1912 (*Overland Monthly*, page 268) during the week of the elections. Even newspapers that normally did not cover his sermons covered this one. At the same time, for all future

printings of the 4th volume of Scripture Studies, he renamed *The Day of Vengeance* (R2224) to *The Battle of Armageddon* (R5137).

Public conscience was stirred with a call to civic duty. Real legislative and judicial reform followed. The unions won a measure of power and found their grievances redressed. The greediest of capitalist abuses *seemingly* were curtailed. Did these events come about by their own ordering? Did they come about because the United States is always a place where interesting things happen? Or, is this brief sketch really a concrete description of *how* the Lord's angels hold back the winds of Revelation 7:1-3?

Sowing the Winds-- The Emergence of the "Winner takes all" Society

If the Winds are indeed being held back, what is happening today?

In the "Days of Preparation" since 1799, the world has seen the United States, Japan and Canada emerge as new economic powers controlling one quarter of international trade.[8] Between 1799 and 1899 real economic growth took place in the United States. The value of stock on the New York exchange rose from \$5 to \$50 per share.[9] The U.S. gross domestic product stood at \$338,000 million and per capita income was just under \$5,248 (in 1997 dollars).[10] Though progressive by world standards, Britain with a per capita income of \$3,260 was noticeably lower than both the U.S. and Germany. Britain had seen a decline in its standard of living during the first half of the nineteenth century, and was only beginning to recover during the Victorian era. After one hundred years, it was just breaking even.[11,12] Russian per capita income lagged at \$795, while Japan was \$517.

**Table 1. Per capita income
based on Gross National Product (in 1997 dollars)**

1900 per capita 1997 per capita

United States \$5,248 \$26,580

Germany \$3,975 \$27,604

UK \$3,260 \$18,849

Russia \$795 \$2,236

Japan \$517 \$39,687

Source: U.S. Dept. Of Commerce[14];

ref. 8,10

Could the unbridled economic growth of the United States possibly continue? Pastor Russell sided with the conventional wisdom of the time:

"In this Great Republic, conditions have been favorable to a large demand, high wages, and good profits . . . And the millions of money for investment in machinery and railroads to provide the people with homes and *the necessities of life*, have for years made this the most remarkable country of the world for prosperity . . . but as Capital increases and machinery multiplies, 'overproduction' follows; that is, more is produced than can be sold at a profit." [13]

Much to the surprise of both labor and capital, the concessions grudgingly made to labor in raising wages led to an unanticipated result. It turned this class into consumers. Consumer goods drove the demand in the economy beyond all expectations. The "necessities of life" were no longer sufficient in a consumer society.

What are the statistics today, nearly one hundred years later?

The former Soviet Union's economy is in a "meltdown" considerably worse than the U.S. depression of the 1930's. Currently Russia's per capita income is near that of the United States in the 1870's. The economic marvel of the century has been Japan's emergence as an economic world power. These two examples need to be placed in the context of a larger global trend towards a "sowing of the winds" by the increasing polarization between the rich and poor nations. The magnitude of this disparity is staggering: "Comparisons based on GDP (Gross Domestic Product) show the richest 20% of the world's population producing and consuming 80% of the value of all good and services globally. The poorest 20% dispose of only 1% of the global GDP." [15]

For the United States, one of the winners in this global competition, the first quarter of 1999 finds the New York stock exchange on a drive to break the 10,000 mark on the Dow-Jones Industrial average. The 10-fold increase in the value of an average share of stock from 1799-1899 has been followed by a 180-fold increase from 1899-1999. The United States gross domestic product for 1997, the most recent reporting year, stands at \$8,079,900 million; per capita income is at \$26,580. One of the biggest problems for money managers at U.S. corporations in 1998 was where to profitably put their earnings so that they would earn even more money. Some pundits believe that this was responsible for making 1998 a record year of \$1,679,622 million in mergers and acquisitions equaling 19.7% of the United States gross domestic product. [16]

While, at least for the United States, it sounds as though things could not be better, let us scratch below the surface of these statistics: "While the real per capita gross domestic product has risen in eighteen out of the past twenty years, real weekly wages *have fallen relentlessly* in fifteen out of those same twenty years." [17] So explains Professor Lester Thurow, MIT, citing the U.S. Bureau of Census statistics. For 80% of full-time male workers, their real wages have fallen from 10-23% between 1973 and 1992. This loss of family income has been made up by working longer hours and the large-scale entrance of women into the workforce: "In the decade of the 1980's, all the gains in male earnings went to the top 20% of the workforce, and an amazing 64% accrued to the top 1 percent . . . What is emerging has aptly been described as a 'Winner takes all' society." [18]

The "High-Water Mark" for Western Civilization in 1875--Financial Giants Wrest Power from Governments

In the *Preparation of the Elements* Pastor Russell focuses on the unprecedented growth in international communications and trade, which "made necessary" international law. Ours is an era of global financial giants. For centuries, a trickling stream of long-distance trading with its high risks and higher profits has drawn a few intrepid traders from diverse cultures. Leaders in world trade from Islam, Europe, China and Indonesia all have successfully grappled with the problems of long-distance bank drafts, stock ownership, and insurance. Today, this stream has become a mighty torrent of global capitalism.

Considering the emergence of global capitalism, celebrated Oxford historian Arnold Toynbee makes no smaller claim than that the year 1875 stands as the "high-water mark" of Western civilization! For nearly four hundred years, the rising tide of national policy and business policy were one and the same. This changed in 1875. From that time forward, national policy and business policy no longer worked in each other's best interests.[19]

World War I accelerated this decline. European nations that carved up each continent over the previous four hundred years found themselves uncertain of their possessions, and ultimately shorn of them by World War II. Bible scholars have long associated the end of Roman dominion with the prophetic images of Daniel [see Volume 3, Study II *The Time of the End--or Days of Preparation, Daniel 11*]. How fascinating to find liberal Harvard Economist John Kenneth Galbraith observing a link between this power shift and the end of Roman dominion: "No one can doubt that Rome . . . had a civilizing role . . . That however, was not enough. In the second half of the twentieth century there came the greatest change--revolution is not too strong a term--in some thousands of years. The extent and depth of this change can only arouse wonder: imperialism, colonialism as anciently it had existed, came everywhere abruptly to an end." [20]

Sadly, the former colonies that reclaimed their freedom as fledgling nations showed that they frequently were ill-prepared to accept the responsibilities of managing their domestic and international affairs in a complex world. A grinding process is going on. The state is not going away, but the power of the state, particularly in economic matters is diminished by the relative power of the economic interests which can act outside of government control. Jessica Mathews, a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations directly addresses this issue: "Rapid globalization of financial markets *has left governments far behind*. Where governments once set foreign exchange rates, private currency traders, accountable only to their bottom line, now trade \$1.3 trillion per day, 100 times the volume of world trade. The amount exceeds the total foreign exchange reserves of all governments, and is more than even an alliance of strong states can buck . . . Nowadays governments *only have the appearance of free choices* when they set out to make the rules." [21]

Modern Multi-national Corporate Giants

So what is the nature and the personality of these modern giants that operate outside of the control of any government?

In his book *The Age of Uncertainty*, liberal Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith provides a fascinating overview of a century's growth, starting in the 1870's, for a mythical Chicago-based sausage maker growing into a diversified multi-national corporation.[22] The institution described is real enough, but is distinctly unlike anything that existed at the time *The Battle of Armageddon* was written. Galbraith briefly summarizes his observations: "The great capitalist entrepreneurs who both owned and commanded-- Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, Morgan, Harriman in the United States and their counterparts in other countries--are gone forever. In their place is the massive, often immobile corporate bureaucracy . . . Monopoly power . . . has surrendered to international competition . . . Replacing the one-time anxiety about corporate power is the frequent concern about the corporate stasis and incompetence." [23]

Galbraith is saying the giants are not necessarily swift nor wise.

Gathering of the Nations--Counsel for Our Day

In Zephaniah 3:8 the Lord calls our day the gathering of the nations: "Therefore wait ye upon me saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy."

Pastor Russell observes that the economic self-interests of our day have brought about a historically unparalleled assembling of nations: "Truly the nations are assembled in a manner *not expected* . . . but alas! Not in brotherly love, for selfishness marks every step." [24]

According to the brilliant review *Civilization and Capitalism* by acclaimed historian Prof. Fernand Braudel, *Maison des Sciences de l'Homme*, the practices of current capitalism go beyond selfishness: "The worst error of all is to suppose that capitalism is simply an 'economic system' whereas in fact, *it lives off the social order, standing almost on a footing with the state* . . . [and one possible reading of the situation is] that capital and economic power are entrenched everywhere, *crushing the freedom of the individual*." [25]

Using the analogy of a mechanical watch, Arnold Toynbee came to place more and more emphasis on religion as the "mainspring" that both drives civilization and is driven by civilization. The loss of religious values lets this watch run down. Writing from this perspective he pens these beautiful and inspiring words as a final thought:

"The love of Man for God flows on the Earth along the channel of Man's love for his human brother: Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time, If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:11,12).

"Christianity . . . [is then] the climax of a continuous upward movement of spiritual progress which . . . [has not only] survived successive secular catastrophes, but had drawn from them its cumulative inspiration. Spiritual and secular ideals are at variance; they are perpetually striving with one another for the mastery over human souls. It is therefore not surprising that souls should be deaf to the call of the Spirit in times of secular prosperity, and sensitive to the neglected whisper of the still small voice when the vanity of This World is brought home to them by secular catastrophes and when their hearts are softened by the sufferings and sorrows these catastrophes inflict.

"It is not then by seeking to escape suffering, but by embracing and responding to it, that the soul born into a disintegrating society can win release, and regain on a higher plane, the path of growth from which his society has strayed." [26,27]

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Babylon's Confusion—Economic

Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the Lord's wrath; and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of his jealousy, for he will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth.—Zephaniah 1:18, NAS

Leonard Griehs

The contrast of today's economic world is striking. Countries from Japan to Brazil have become economic disaster zones, and their residents face harsh and lean times. Yet in other countries such as the United States, residents are enjoying economic conditions unseen for a generation. Those enjoying such prosperity shrug off the thought of a global economic crisis. In many ways, the 1997-1999 global financial mess has actually been good for many. Many students of economics believe that "globalization" means that sooner or later everyone sinks or swims together. Today, however, some countries seem to be standing on the shoulders of those whose heads are under water. These countries are actually thriving as a result of the global malaise. How should we assess today's economic world in view of the knowledge that the Scriptures tell us that we are entering "a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation" (Daniel 12:1, NAS)?

Current Situation

There are two facets to the success of some countries such as the United States in today's world amidst the turmoil of other countries such as Japan, Russia and Brazil. First, the damage from the global financial and economic crisis hasn't been as severe as many had expected. Second, the benefits from the crisis have been more than most experts could have hoped.

The damage has not been as bad as many had thought because globalization has not yet gone nearly as far as some thought it would. For example, in the U.S. economy, trade makes up a larger share than it did ten years ago, but it is still only 11% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product. Most of that trade is with Canada, Mexico and the European Union, which have suffered far less financial turmoil than have Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Russia, Indonesia and Brazil. Harvard economist N. Gregory Mankiw says, "International trade isn't so important for the U.S. that we couldn't get by without the rest of the world." In fact, the U.S. trade deficit (what the country exports compared to what it imports annually) has increased to \$170 billion in 1998 from \$110 billion in 1997. Thus, before we experience the impact of our theme text, we would expect to see events in the economic world occur which would increase the dependence of prosperous countries such as the U.S. on foreign trade.

Unforeseen benefits of the economic crisis in many parts of the world have proven a counterweight to the predictable costs of such crises. For example, plunging raw material costs have proved a boom to many. In August 1997, a month after the collapse of the

Thai currency sparked the global financial crisis, import prices for agricultural products fell by over three percent. Asia's profound and prolonged recessions have helped builders pay less for lumber that would have skyrocketed in price had Japan been in a position to bid against the other parts of the world for that lumber. With the increased economic power created by the European Union, we should expect to see increased pressure on costs in countries that have so far been able to secure raw materials in a relatively non-competitive environment.

A Sea of Excess Savings

The world today is awash in a sea of excess savings. There are not enough good investments to go around. Foreign purchases of U.S. stocks, corporate bonds and other non-Treasury securities measured just \$57 billion in 1994, according to the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic analysis. By 1997 inflows rose to \$197 billion and they were expected to reach \$228 billion in 1998. The largest single factor holding these investment dollars today is the U.S. stock market. The biggest risk confronting the world economy is that this miraculous wealth machine will go into reverse. In one intriguing analysis, *The Global Equity Correction—How Big and How Damaging*, investment banker Goldman Sachs suggest that a 20 percent decline in the global equity market would represent a shock as large as the Asian crisis. At worst, it would start a cumulative decline in the U.S. economy.

Worst Case Scenario

Although today's world is far from falling apart, we should expect continued crisis to occur. Psalm 82:5 says, "They do not know nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken." We should expect to see the international situation worsen. No one really knows what will happen with the former countries that are now part of the European Union. It already is showing signs of slower growth. Brazil is balanced on the edge of a cliff and if it falls, so could Argentina, Mexico and other Latin American countries. A "worst-case scenario" could then have the financial problems echo back to Asia, through Hong Kong and China. The damage to healthy economies would be even more serious. Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the United States Federal Reserve Bank summed it up this way: "You cannot have the United States as an oasis of prosperity . . . if the rest of the world is in serious trouble . . . Clearly, we do live in a global world and we will be impacted in a more general way eventually."

The New Europe

A most momentous economic event occurred in 1999: the New Europe. Eleven countries joined together to promote economic prosperity. On January 1, 1999, the world saw the birth of a new currency called the euro. Despite the New Year's calm, the birth of the euro will be anything but a nonevent. Consider these widely-made predictions:

- Euroland's capital markets will grow exponentially in coming years as the removal of cross-border currency risk drives pan-European markets;
- The euro will stand alongside the U.S. dollar as the second-most important currency in the world, reflecting its coming role in global trade and finance as well as its common usage by 290 million Euroland citizens.

Goldman Sachs International chairman Peter Sutherland says that European integration, economic and monetary union is "the single most important project" in more than 40 years. Indeed, the very magnitude of the change now underway has many observers worried. In the midst of a slowdown in world economic growth and against the backdrop of potentially destabilizing imbalances among the economies of the U.S., Europe and Japan, the new Europe could produce results contrary to those hoped for.

Nobody knows how quickly governments and investors can adapt to change, perhaps disrupting to the international financial system. Internationally the consensus among government experts and bankers is that within the next five years, there will be a massive shift out of U.S. dollar-denominated securities into European countries. Few doubt that the single currency will contribute to the transformation of the European economy and especially its capital markets. The changes will impact not just the 11 direct participants in the EMU, but also the U.K. and other European Union and non-EU nations whose economies are linked to the euro zone. "The single currency is only likely to be a catalyst for changes that are driven by other forces," says Graham Bishop of Salomon Smith Barney, an adviser on European affairs.

Linked together as a single economy, the 11 Euroland nations boast a gross domestic product of \$6 trillion, compared with about \$8 trillion for the U.S. However, the equity markets are far apart, with the U.S. stock markets totaling \$11.1 trillion at the end of 1998 and the European markets totaling \$3.9 trillion. The single currency provides a new impetus to shift the balance of investment.

Globalism Creates Unstable Economic Systems

While the current situation appears stable, there is general agreement that things can change rapidly and unpredictably. The Thailand crisis that began in August, 1997, has continued to create upheaval in the world's financial markets. There are constant new threats to the industrialized world. No government or economist predicted this crisis or how it would impact the rest of the world. For example, in Indonesia, government cronyism has been permanently overthrown. In Brazil, the most reform-minded government in decades is faced with severe economic crisis almost daily. Indeed, the impact of the Thailand currency crisis can be found in Eastern Europe, South Africa, and Latin America.

Economic historians point to the reckless laissez-faire capitalism of the 19th century that led to the birth of Marxism and Communism as an example of where the current free market capitalism could lead. The indiscriminate globalism occurring through such things as the European Economic Union could generate a worldwide assault on free markets everywhere. Such globalism views the entire world as one market in which the most efficient and competitive prosper while others suffer economic ruin. The situation in the world today is an example of this.

The globalism emerging in the world today is creating a clash between the political realms of Babylon and the economic realms. While Economics declares there is one world in which capital flows freely, Politics divides the world into national units where each government determines its own fate. Certainly the clash of political leaders creates instability as economic suffering is imposed by dictates from abroad.

Our era is the first in history to experience a genuine global economic system. Markets around the world interact continuously. Investors possess the power and resources to profit from huge swings in financial markets. What used to be direct foreign investment has given way to speculative capital. The benefits of the injection of foreign investment to the host country has given way to a deeper and more vicious crisis created when financial institutions buy and sell currencies on speculation, creating mass acceleration in the outflow of funds during times of crisis. Speculators turn weakness into disaster.

The lack of confidence in one country's economy now triggers the outflow of investment in others. The ability of funds to flow rapidly in and out of countries instantly through electronic means severely reduces the relevancy of the nation states. Battles between nations are less important than trade between nations. People today are willing to compromise ideals, religion and social principle to achieve economic gain. Zephaniah 3:8 predicts this globalization in our day: "Therefore wait for me declares the Lord. For the day when I rise up to the prey. Indeed, my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them my indignation, all my burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of my zeal." Truly the nations are already gathered through the sharing of a global economy.

The Battle of Armageddon

The increase of knowledge in our day, predicted by Daniel, has produced an increase in both discontent and fear. Large nations now fear each other's prosperity. The joining together of European countries came from the fear of some individuals that nation states had become irrelevant in today's world because of the ability to move funds at the stroke of a key on a computer. Only by joining together in common union could one country hope to stave off its gradual decline and dissolution.

Note these words from the 1916 forward of *The Battle of Armageddon*: "Although all have been growing fabulously rich, all are more discontented than ever before and more fearful that something will occur to hinder their enrichment and to turn the streams of wealth to the ports of the competitor. . . The same spirit is manifest everywhere—

ingratitude for the present and the past, fearfulness for the future, and a selfishness which pays little heed to the Golden Rule."

The author gives ten "predictions" which provide an excellent summary of the events we see in the economic world around us today:

1. As blessing increases, discontent increases;
2. Wealth compounds at an unprecedented rate;
3. Improved labor conditions brings more discontent;
4. The increase of knowledge brings fear;
5. Nations vie for equal prosperity;
6. The conflict between capital and labor intensifies;
7. Debts among nations cannot be paid;
8. Nations fall into bankruptcy;
9. Worldwide revolution of the discontented leads to worldwide disruption in anarchy;
10. Civil power joins with religious power to restore order.

The More Peaceful World Fantasy

The era dominated by "super-powers" is over. It is no longer a case of good versus evil. Today, the economies of the many drive the world. Clashes in the world today take place over economic interests rather than military ones. Albania has continued to see a disruption of its social order due to the mismanagement of the economy by its leaders. Indeed, we find that economics cuts through the national frontiers of politics. Economic power is a matter of people and technology, not size.

As we approach the end of the 1900s, we see a world that is much more unpredictable. The world of a few large battleships circling each other has given way to a crowded ocean with many ships being piloted by unskilled captains. The threat of collision is much greater.

In the time of the end there will be "men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world" (Luke 21:26). The Greek word translated world means the earth, or land, as distinct from the water. It is the place where people dwell. People will be at a loss for a way out. Let us prepare ourselves to escape the plagues of Babylon (Revelation 18:4) by making every effort to make our calling and election sure.

The Crumbling Image

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 2:44

Karl Marx had a simplistic view of world politics. He saw it as a struggle between the masses and the classes. Viewed from a nineteenth century standpoint, his view was not far wrong. Pastor Charles T. Russell in his *Battle of Armageddon* exhibits a similar perspective. He sees the great battle of the ages matching the privileged aristocracy against the oppressed "have-nots" of society.

History supported these views. The inequities of serfdom had given way to equal or greater injustices under capitalism. The industrial revolution widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Downtrodden groups were growing restive--laborers, minority races, women.

In Europe, hereditary monarchies were hard-pressed to meet the challenges of a changing society. The United States, still recovering from a disastrous Civil War, was developing expansionist trade policies to fuel its fast-growing industrial economy.

Over one hundred years has passed since these ideas were promulgated. How has society changed? What role does government now play? Do the premises of the past hold true for the realities of today?

World War I

"A world has come to an end." So wrote Barbara Tuchman of the effects of the first world war in *Guns of August*. The conflict that spread from the streets of Sarajevo to the Palace of Versailles was the death knell for the hereditary ruling houses of Europe. Along with their demise went the entire concept of the divine right of kings. The French Revolution and the spread of populist fervor that reached every country of Europe in 1830 swelled to the virtual overthrow of aristocratic governments by 1918. Royalism was out, democracy was in.

What the prophet had spoken concerning a threatening confederacy in ancient Israel was being replayed: "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces" (Isaiah 8:9).

The loose associations of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente gave way to two attempts at tight girding confederacies: the League of Nations following World War I and the United Nations after World War II. But none of these was long able to hold back the tides of war.

Socialism

Edward Bellamy in *Looking Backward* and other nineteenth century writers considered Socialism as Utopia. Benevolent state ownership of all wealth with equitable distribution to all would cure the ills of both serfdom and capitalism. The theory was bright but the reality proved gloomy.

When Socialism was a major issue in early twentieth century England, Dr. John Edgar lectured throughout the country on *Socialism and the Bible*. He correctly saw the problems that Socialism would face. "[A] greater obstacle to Socialism becoming established . . . is the *opposition of vested interests*. By vested interests I mean everything which certain people believe to be their rights, whether it be rank, or property, or land, or money. The man who happens to be a king or peer, considers the rank his by right. The man who has inherited or bought property or land, claims that it belongs to him by right; and the same is true with regard to money. More and more opposition will be offered by those who possess vested interests, for very few will give up what they believe to be their rights simply that the community may benefit. *All men do not yet love their neighbors as themselves*. Before such change can be effected, there must be a moral revolution. Men's hearts will first require to be changed." (*Faith's Foundation*, pages 311, 312)

Nor did the United States escape the experiment with Socialism. The economic boom of the "Roaring 20's" was followed by the woes of the Great Depression. The plight of the poor was felt so strongly that government intervened as the employer of last resort. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, seeking to ease some of the inequalities, introduced a New Deal with its resultant welfare state. Unfortunately, attempts to put a human face on government soon resulted in a bloated bureaucracy and reports of welfare abuses abounded, resulting in deepening polarization between conservative and liberal politicians.

Communism

The philosophical socialism of Bellamy was met by the radical socialism of Marx and Lenin. The weakening of the social fabric of Europe following World War I created the conditions for the Russian Revolution in 1917.

The 70-year experiment with Communism proved disastrous. Millions perished under the purges of Stalin. Economic conditions did not keep up with the rest of the world. Human rights were ignored. The nations of eastern Europe became client states. The development of nuclear weapons often brought the Cold War to the brink of a hot war. The world's "doomsday clock" was set at 5 minutes to midnight.

Claiming to be the champion of the oppressed people of the world, Communism increased oppression. Posing as the last vanguard against colonialism, it became imperialistic. Many students of the Bible could not help but see the appropriateness of the prophecy in Amos: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and

a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him" (Amos 5:18,19).

The lion had long been the symbol of the British empire, the world's strongest colonial power. As the emerging nations, especially in Africa, began to struggle for their independence, it was the Russian bear that often embraced them. Yet in the tightness of the bear's grip, these nations felt the claws behind the paws. Fleeing into their own house of nationalism, the serpent of internal strife and repetitive coups continued to plague them. Truly the day of the Lord, promising such a bright and optimistic future, has proved at its onset to bring darkness and not light.

Pope John Paul II

Religion was discouraged under Communism. Atheism was to be the religion of the land. Poland appeared to be the only exception among the Eastern Bloc countries. There Catholicism had a working arrangement with Communism. A dramatic change came to this relationship when Karol Wojtyla was elected as the world's first Polish pope, taking on the name of Pope John Paul II.

Wojtyla was far more than a figurehead. As an active, hands-on diplomat, his influence was soon felt even beyond the Catholic community. Among his early accomplishments was presiding over the downfall of the Communist system using the civil arm of Solidarnosc and its leader Lech Walesa. The roles of Mikhail Gorbachev and the American president, Ronald Reagan, were also important in this process.

The decline of Communism was accompanied by an increase in prestige and power for the Roman Catholic Church. Dating the Communist rule from 1919-1989, many students of the Bible saw the fulfillment of the "seventy years" of Isaiah: "And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing" (Isaiah 23:17,18).

The Holocaust

Israel has always been a focal point of biblical prophecy. The first *aliyah* of their return was dated by David Ben Gurion to 1878 when, as a result of the Berlin Congress of Nations, the first émigrés established the pioneer settlement of Petach Tikvah on the sand dunes just north of today's city of Tel Aviv.

The political Zionist movement of Theodor Herzl and the influence on the British government by Chaim Weizman to issue the Balfour Declaration putting Great Britain on record as favoring the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine were seen as being prophetically indicated.

The Zionist movement was a partial fulfillment to Jeremiah 16:16, "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks." Whether the illustration is that of the angler offering alluring bait or the net fishermen taking advantage of the social habits of man to flock together, the illustration is strong (see also Isaiah 19:8).

However Jeremiah also spoke of "hunters." The rise of Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler with his practice of genocide perfectly fit this picture. The Holocaust claimed more than eight million Jewish lives, as well as large numbers of Poles and other targeted groups.

Dreadful as was the Holocaust, there was a beneficial side effect. Sufficient world sympathy was aroused for the cause of the persecuted Jew to create the political climate for the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The original boundaries of the partition plan were quickly challenged. Repetitive wars with neighboring Arab nations erupted in 1948, 1956, and 1967. As a result of the last of these clashes, Israel reestablished its capital in Jerusalem, fulfilling the biblical prediction that "Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem" (Zechariah 12:6).

Nationalism

One of the prophecies of Israel's return to her home land is given in parabolic language in Matthew: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matthew 24:32,33). The fig tree is identified with Israel as far back as Jeremiah 24:1-3.

The Luke account of this prophecy adds still another dimension: "And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, **and all the trees**; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21:29-31).

Israel was only one of scores of nations to emerge on the world scene following the second world war. Large countries like India and dozens of smaller ones, particularly on the African continent, joined the world family of nations. The strong colonial powers of England, France, Spain, and Portugal lost their overseas dominions. The claims of the victims of political oppression found their counterparts in other segments of society.

The Civil Rights movement under such strong leaders as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the United States and Nelson Mandela in South Africa raised the consciousness of black people. However such corrective policies as Affirmative Action often failed to reach their goals and brought about further disillusionment in government.

Women's rights advocates pleaded the feminist cause. While increasing the economic gains of women, these advocates began proposing other more controversial views. Strong

positions for abortion on demand were countered by an active pro-life movement declaring the sanctity of life. Extremists joined the fray by bombing abortion clinics and killing doctors who performed abortions.

The working man continued to organize. Heady with the early successes of Samuel Gompers and John L. Lewis, unions grew stronger and stronger. Soon they were as rich and powerful as the corporations they were opposing. With their wealth, corruption entered and the reputation of the labor movements became tarnished.

A Failure to Protect

The function of government is to provide an atmosphere for stable growth and those services necessary for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The ability of government to provide an environment of safety has been sorely tested by at least three developments.

1. A drug problem has erupted world-wide. All attempts to stop trafficking in narcotics have been frustrated. Untold thousands have died from overdoses. Corruption in high places has permitted the formation of multi-billion dollar drug cartels. Drug pushers have used extreme violence to protect their territory.

2. A closely related problem has been the breakdown of the family unit, particularly in the inner cities. Gang violence and drive-by shootings are a daily feature of the daily news. The predicted conditions of 2 Timothy 3:1-5 have proved all too true: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, 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."

3. The accessibility of weapons and explosives has seen an unprecedented advent of terrorism. The strongest of countries lie helpless before the committed terrorist who is willing to give his own life for his cause. Traditional methods of law enforcement have been only partially successful in stemming this tide.

Lack of Confidence

All of the above have eroded the confidence of people in their governments. In the past half century alone two presidents of the United States have either been forced from office or been tried under articles of impeachment.

While personal scandals have often been the lot of those in high office, it has been the political scandals that have most rocked the nations. The disastrous Viet Nam war called the decision-making apparatus of the United States into serious question. The Iran-Contra scandal demonstrated the willingness of high officials to ignore the law for strategic

advantage. Charges of economic corruption at the very highest levels has toppled more than one Japanese government.

The people's judgment of their rulership has been an echo of the handwriting on the wall in the last days of the Babylonian empire: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27).

Recompense

Armageddon is, above all, the just recompense for the misdeeds of those who govern. "For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands" (Jeremiah 25:14). The prophet Hosea puts it even more directly: "They have sown the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7).

The whirlwind is an apt symbol of the Battle of Armageddon. In our theme text we see the final outcome for the mighty image of which Nebuchadnezzar dreamed. A stone was taken out of the mountain and smote it on the feet and it crumbled to pieces--a process we see happening all about us today as the mighty monarchies crumble before our eyes.

After the image is crushed, it is ground into chaff (Daniel 2:35). With the mighty kingdom mountains of this earth ground to chaff, how appropriate is the commentary of Isaiah: "The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind" (Isaiah 17:13).

That storm will be great. It will totally level human society (Isaiah 40:4). But after the storm will be a calm. There will be a "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). This will be the voice of the Lord saying, "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39). Then will come the welcome words, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exodus 14:13).

As one writer has well put it, "The kings of earth have had their day, it is said, but there is a king whose day has just begun." That king will judge righteous judgment and peace shall once again come to this earth.

The Fiftieth Year Sabbath

With the mass media constantly bringing the world into the living room, it takes great restraint not to get caught up in the passions of the moment. When the world suffers an anxiety attack, when hearts fail for fear (Luke 21:26), it can be highly infectious. Fear is one of the most contagious diseases known to humanity. The only antidote is God's word. The Truth! It is the Truth that "shall make you free" (John 8:32). Hence, it is important to keep the inoculations of Truth current--fresh, and at full strength.

The Type

The Jubilee

Over 3600 years ago, on Mount Sinai, God gave the nation of Israel instructions that provide important insight into the passions that are now infecting the peoples of the Earth.

"And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and there shall be unto thee the days of seven sabbaths of years, even forty and nine years. Then shalt thou send abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; in the day of atonement shall ye send abroad the trumpet throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim **liberty** throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a **jubilee** unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you."--Leviticus 25:8-11 ASV

God through Moses instructed Israel to set aside every fiftieth year as a sabbath--a Jubilee. A proclamation was to be made throughout the land unto all the inhabitants! They were to return every man unto his possession. It was to be a universal **year of liberty!**

This Jubilee, this year of liberty, was the greatest of the sabbaths, the culmination of the system of sabbaths God gave Israel. A system beginning with every seventh day and climaxing with every fiftieth year.

The Purpose of Jubilee

The purpose of Jubilee was stated simply and emphatically by Moses. "And ye shall not ~~wrong~~ [*yanah*, #3238 = oppress] one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I am Jehovah your God."--Leviticus 25:17 ASV

Jubilee was given by God as a means to preclude oppression. Oppression is a root cause of much of the evil that afflicts the human race since Cain killed Abel. When God placed humans in the Garden he gave them dominion over all the earthly creation except for

themselves (Genesis 1:26-28). It was not God's will for human to have dominion over human.

This will of God was typically demonstrated when he established Israel in the land. "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."--Judges 21:25 ASV

In Israel, during the time of the Judges, Israelite did not rule over Israelite. Each and every inhabitant in the land was responsible to God for his or her actions. No human stood between! This was God's design and desire for Israel; however, it was not Israel's desire.

After God raised up Gideon to take care of a problem with the Midianites, the Israelites asked Gideon to rule over them. Considering his fallen condition Gideon's reply is remarkable. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: Jehovah shall rule over you."--Judges 8:23 ASV

Nevertheless, the Israelites were not to be denied and after much insistence God allowed his arrangement to be changed. Israel was given a king. Subsequent history revealed the error of such a course. For, as Solomon wisely observed, dominion is as injurious to the ruler as it to the ruled. "All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man hath power over another to his hurt."--Ecclesiastes 8:9 ASV

This principle applies to the angelic host, as well. No doubt, the desire to have dominion, to rule, was a root cause of Lucifer's fall (Isaiah 14:13).

The purpose of the fiftieth year sabbath, then, was to provide a periodic leveling in Israel which would prevent any long term establishment of ruling and serving classes, thereby forestalling oppression. Jubilee was given to promote and insure a classless society. God knew, should classes develop, oppression would naturally follow and bring great harm to the nation.

Israel's Failure

Israel did not appreciate the wisdom of God's arrangement and did all it could to circumvent his law. They failed to observe Jubilee. God's lament over Israel's shortcomings was faithfully recorded by the prophets. "In thee have they set light by father and mother; in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the sojourner; in thee have they wronged the fatherless and the widow. Thou hast despised my holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths."--Ezekiel 22:7,8 ASV

The word "sabbaths" is plural. God was referring to all his sabbath arrangements, the seventh day to the fiftieth year.

The plural was used again in verse 26. "Her priests have done violence to my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they caused men to discern between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them."--Ezekiel 22:26 ASV

And, finally, verse 29 leaves no doubt Israel's failure to observe Jubilee was very much a part of God's lament. "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery; yea, they have vexed the poor and needy, and have oppressed the sojourner wrongfully."--Ezekiel 22:29 ASV

Oppression was pervasive. Israel did not honor God's Jubilee.

The Antitype

A Year of Liberty

Does Israel's failure indicate God's work was in vain, or was there some greater purpose? Was the fiftieth year sabbath applicable only to an age long past or does it have meaning for today? Is there an antitypical significance to God's Jubilee?

The prophet Ezekiel, though he did not mention Jubilee, did have something to say about liberty. In his temple vision (a prophecy concerning the Kingdom), he declared:

"Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, it is his inheritance, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. 17 But if he give of his inheritance a gift to one of his servants, it shall be his to the **year of liberty**; then it shall return to the prince; but as for his inheritance, it shall be for his sons."--Ezekiel 46:16,17 ASV

Liberty was also a consideration of the apostle Paul.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the **liberty** of the glory of the children of God."--Romans 8:18-21 ASV

The language of verse 21 is the language of Jubilee. To describe the glory that is to be revealed, Paul invoked the spirit of the fiftieth year sabbath.

So, to the prophet and to the apostle there was an antitypical meaning to the instructions given Moses; and, they applied the spirit of those instructions to the Kingdom that was to come. There is to be a Jubilee for the fallen human race. They are to enjoy "the liberty of the glory of the children of God".

Fulfilling the Law

Another text that demonstrates there is to be an antitypical fiftieth year sabbath is found in the Lord's Sermon on the Mount. "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished."--Matthew 5:17, 18 ASV

The word "fulfil" in this text does not mean "keep". The point Jesus made was not that the Law must be kept (obeyed). Though this is true for all who are under the Law, it was not the intent of Jesus' words. The keeping of a type is not the fulfilling of it. The fulfilling is accomplished when the type is displaced by the reality, the antitype. For example, Jesus fulfilled the Passover type by dying as the paschal lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). Only the fulfilling of the Law required such a death, the keeping of the Law prohibited it (Exodus 23:7).

The writer of Hebrews used yet another figure of speech. "For the law having a shadow of the good things to come"--Hebrews 10:1 ASV

Jubilee was a part of the Law. If the Law was a shadow, so too was Jubilee. Thus, there must be a greater sabbath, a grander reality beyond the shadow.

Paul was very specific on this point in his letter to the Colossians. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath[s] day: which are a shadow of the things to come"--Colossians 2:16, 17 ASV

It is unfortunate the translators felt it necessary to add the word "day" in this text. It is not to be found in the Greek; also, the word is in the plural. Paul had more than the seventh day in mind. He was thinking of the whole system of sabbaths, from the seventh day to the fiftieth year. And, as he declared, these sabbaths are a "shadow of the things to come".

Jesus, when talking to the multitudes about John the Baptist, asserted: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."--Matthew 11:13 ASV

Jesus declared the Law prophesied! By this he indicated the Law and its provisions foretold of a greater reality just as the prophets had done.

So, as with prophecy, the Law will be fulfilled when the greater reality is realized. Only when the fallen human race experiences the prophesied "liberty," only when all that is lost is restored, will that which was pictured by God be fulfilled. There is to be an antitypical fiftieth year sabbath, an antitypical Jubilee!

The Signs of the Times

Today, the signs of the times (Matthew 16:3) are so evident, so graphic, there can be no doubt. Antitypical fiftieth year sabbath is the only reasonable explanation for that which has transpired, and is transpiring. These signs make manifest we are living in the time of fulfillment. Can the cry for liberty being heard throughout the world be the result of anything other than Jubilee? From Tiananmen Square to the Berlin Wall, from Johannesburg to Quebec, from the Baltic to Tibet, from Latin America, Africa, Middle East and Southeast Asia, the cry for liberty has gone up.

It is heard and echoed "throughout the land" and by "all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10). The economic have-nots, the political have-nots, throughout the world are demanding their rights. It is universal. No corner of the earth is exempt; and, just as in Israel in the days of old, the haves are not cooperating. They are resisting in every way possible--legal and illegal, moral and immoral, nonviolent and violent.

Jubilee is a process, not an event. In the type it lasted a full year. In the fulfillment it will take 1000 years (Revelation 20:4-6; 2 Peter 3:7,8). A process that began very quietly over a century ago. It has gradually grown, and is becoming more and more intense just as "travail upon a woman with child" (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Deliverance of humanity, the returning "every man unto his possession" will not be accomplished overnight. It will be a lengthy, difficult process, bitterly opposed by those who exercise worldly power.

Some question that all the terrible things happening today, all the evils in the world, are associated with such a glorious arrangement as Jubilee. The problem is not with God's plan. Just as in ancient Israel, the problem is the result of humankind's fallen condition and their unwillingness to live in accordance with God's law.

In this context, there is an interesting aspect to the curse in the Garden of Eden. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children."--Genesis 3:16 ASV

In a world under the curse of God pain accompanies the birth process. There is travail. So, the birth of liberty is not to be without struggle, not to be without anguish.

Just as the typical Jubilee brought strife and bitterness in Israel, so in the world the antitypical Jubilee brings a time of great trouble (Daniel 12:1); and, for the same reasons. The haves are not eager to participate in the redistribution of their wealth and its resultant privileges. The have-nots have little patience with their foot dragging. The psalmist described this day. "Why do the nations rage, And the peoples meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against Jehovah, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds asunder, And cast away their cords from us."--Psalms 2:1-3 ASV

The "kings of the earth" have set themselves against God and his sabbath. They are doing all that is in their power to hold back the tide of Jubilee. From the aristocracy at the beginning of the century (the Kings and Czars), to the rulers of today (government, business, and even religious leaders), they all have resisted God and his Anointed. They use every means available to them to preserve the present order, the present establishment, the *status quo*. And, because of this resistance there has been and will continue to be animosity and distress in the world. As Paul foretold: "When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape."-- 1 Thessalonians 5:3 ASV

As the painful process that is the birth of liberty progresses, followers of Jesus, the Church, must not allow themselves to be caught up in the ebb and flow of the great Sea (Isaiah 17:12,13). They must not take sides. Always remembering the returned Lord is in control, the bigger picture must be kept in view.

The spirit of the fiftieth year sabbath has brought forth great economic, political, and social movements--communism, socialism, civil rights, women's rights, human rights, animal rights, environmental protection. Though not all have accomplished good, all have resulted in a leveling of society. Oppression is no longer accepted as the natural right of a ruler, an employer, or a husband. Though it is not eliminated, the world's society repudiates all who practice it. Amnesty International, for example, is a product of this century. It could not have existed in earlier times.

Have-nots have learned to make their cry for liberty and equality more effective by joining together. In the U.S.A., for instance, there is AFofL and CIO (labor), NAACP (race), and more recently, NOW (women). The successes they have had, however, do not solve the problem. The most common result has been to create additional groupings of haves and have-nots; and, thereby, increase the level of anger and indignation. The communist revolution in Russia is an illustration. The rise of the oil-rich Arab world is another. A third is the ANC's demand for one man/one vote in South Africa.

So, the signs are there to be seen and appreciated. The great changes that have taken place in this century leave no doubt. The sound of the ram's horn is echoing throughout the land, to every corner of the earth. The spirit of Jubilee, the spirit of liberty, infects "all the inhabitants thereof". Truly, the fulfillment of this marvelous type is being realized.

Advice for the Church

This understanding of the antitypical significance of the fiftieth year sabbath strengthens the Church's resolve not only to watch, but also to be sober. "For ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober."-- 1 Thessalonians 5:5,6 ASV)

Followers of Jesus are not to become embroiled in the struggles that result from the spirit of Jubilee. As this spirit envelopes the world, watchful and sober followers do not allow

themselves to become aligned with one side or the other. There is usually right and wrong on both sides. The abiding solution is the full establishment of the Kingdom on earth.

David had some advice that is especially appropriate. "Commit thy way unto Jehovah; Trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass. And he will make thy righteousness to go forth as the light, And thy justice as the noonday. Rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently for him: **Fret not thyself** because of him who prospereth in his way, Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: **Fret not thyself**, it tendeth only to evil-doing. For evil-doers shall be cut off; But those that wait for Jehovah, they shall inherit the land."--Psalms 37:5-9 ASV

Fret not thyself! That is the guiding principle for the Church. All who have the hope of blessing **all** of the human race do not fret themselves. As they watch the have-nots rebel and riot against the establishment, when they see the haves do all in their power to stay the Jubilee process from returning "every man unto his possession" (Leviticus 25:10), they fret not themselves. They watch and remain sober, trusting in the Lord, for he will bring it to pass (Psalms 37:5).

Instead of fretting, every member of the Church does all he or she can to insure the words Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and Sadducees are never spoken to them. "Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot discern the signs of the times."--Matthew 16:3 ASV

Watching, and discerning the signs, they fret not and are not distracted from their goal. As Paul directed the Thessalonians: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation [for all of God's creation]."-- 1 Thessalonians 5:4,8 ASV

Megiddo and Carchemish

After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco [Neccho, KJV] king of Egypt came up to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to engage him.--2 Chronicles 35:20 (NAS)

Carl Hagensick

The battle of Carchemish changed the history of the world. It began the fulfillment of one of the longest prophecies in the Bible--the reign of the four universal empires which both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel saw in vision (Daniel 2 and 7)—and introduced the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24).

Carchemish is mentioned twice in the Bible. The first concerned the death of good King Josiah (2 Chronicles 35); the second, less than four years later, was the famous Battle of Carchemish (Jeremiah 46) where Babylon became established as a world power. These battles climaxed a prolonged campaign of a new world force east of Mesopotamia as it became the dominant power in the entire middle east.

The Setting

Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, had been dominated by the Babylonians since about the time of Abraham. Assyria had broken free as a separate vassal state of Babylon under Bel-Bani, but it was not until about two hundred years before King Josiah that they sought to extend their dominion west of the Euphrates river.

The main force in the west was Egypt. Although she had been conquered for a time by Assyria who burned their capital, Thebes, Egypt under Psammetichus successfully threw off the Assyrian yoke. His strong administration raised Egypt nearly to its former stature.

The kingdoms of Israel (Samaria) and Judah formed a buffer between these two powers. The northern kingdom of Israel looked to neighbor Syria for support, while Judah was more inclined to ally herself with Egypt for military assistance.

In the meantime Babylon and Media were joining forces in the east and making menacing moves to the west. The dynasty of Nabopolassar had broken ties with the Assyrians and was now their rival for the conquest of the west, thus maintaining control of the lucrative trade routes.

The Protagonists

BABYLON: For over a century Assyria had ruled over Babylon. Ashurbanipal, the king of Assyria, appointed his own brother as viceroy over Babylon but he fomented a rebellion for an independent Babylon. When this rebellion was crushed, a new dynasty arose on the scene and started another campaign to free itself from the Assyrians. This

was led by Nabopolassar. Seeking assistance he joined forces for a while with the king of the Medes. Babylonia's able general and future king was Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabopolassar.

ASSYRIA: Assyria had the largest army in the world at the time largely because of universal conscription. However this policy was now producing two problems: fresh conquests were needed to keep the army occupied and fresh spoils of war were required to pay the forces. Since Assyria's hold over the Medes and Babylonians was crumbling, they sought to extend their control over the west. Although their brief hold over Egypt was broken by Psammetichus, the Assyrians maintained a loose military alliance with his son, Pharaoh-necho.

EGYPT: Although suspicious of Assyria as a military partner, Egypt had a greater fear of the mustering Babylonian army. They felt, correctly as it turned out, that Babylon posed the greater threat. Necho, the Pharaoh, had been a great builder of the nation, concentrating on two fleets for his navy, one to cruise the Mediterranean and the other the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. He even sponsored a two-year expedition which successfully circumnavigated Africa, rounding the Cape of Good Hope over a thousand years before Vasco de Gama. Disease aborted the work to build a canal linking the Mediterranean and Red seas. It was not until the nineteenth century that the 103-mile long Suez Canal was actually built.

JUDAH: Under Josiah, one of the most religious kings in their history, Judah was prospering. A great religious reformation included the reestablishment of the Passover sacrifices and the repair of the temple complex. But militarily Judah was not a strong power and had entered into a defense alliance with Egypt. This may be why Necho felt safe taking his soldiers overland for the 600-mile journey to Carchemish rather than using his fleet to get to the nearer port of Arvad.

The Campaign

The campaign that enabled Babylon to cross the Euphrates and firmly establish itself as the world's first universal empire took just seven years. It began in the 14th year of Nabopolassar when he was allied with the Median king Cyaxares. He crushed the Assyrians and destroyed the city of Nineveh, forcing the fleeing Assyrians to regroup at Harran, 250 miles to the west. Here the refugees appointed a new king, Assur-ubalit II.

The Babylonian forces continued their march the next year and defeated Ruggulitu, ravaging the ancient Assyrian homeland. The next year they prepared for another onslaught. The hard-pressed Assyrians sent a message to Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt asking for military aid. Necho brought his troops and met Assur-ubalit at the former Hittite capital of Carchemish on the west bank of the Euphrates. Here he was escorted the last 90 miles to Harran where he tried to withstand the invading Babylonians. Once again Babylon was successful and the Egyptians and Assyrians retreated to Carchemish.

In the following year, the 17th of Nabopolassar, the battle was resumed. It was on this occasion that Josiah decided to forbid the Egyptian armies to cross Judea to join with the Assyrians. Rather than retreat, Necho engaged Josiah and the Jewish forces in battle on the plains of Megiddo. It was in this conflict that a random arrow hit Josiah and killed him.

After the death of Josiah, Necho continued with his large army and again joined forces with the Assyrians to try to retake Harran. Once again they were defeated. On his return, whether it was in frustration at the defeat at Harran or in anger at Josiah's opposition, Necho took Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah who was now king, captive to Egypt and placed his brother Jehoiakim on the throne as his puppet.

Over the next two years, the Babylonian armies strengthened their stronghold along the Euphrates river but did not advance further to the west than Carchemish.

Finally in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the armies of Necho went up for one last battle with the forces of Babylon, now strongly built up and fortified by Nebuchadnezzar. The battle occurred this time at the city of Carchemish itself. It was the turning point of the war. When the combined armies of Assyria and Egypt fell, victory was complete for the new rulers of the land. It was also, in a way, God's vengeance for the treatment Israel and Judah had received at the hands of Assyria and Egypt. "For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates" (Jeremiah 46:10).

That same year Nebuchadnezzar's troops advanced as far as Jerusalem and the stage was set for the Babylonian captivity. This captivity did not happen all at once. Jehoiakim was maintained on the throne for seven years before he was deposed for seeking help from Egypt; he was replaced by his son Jehoiachin who reigned but three months before Nebuchadnezzar replaced him with his uncle Zedekiah, the brother of Jehoahaz (2 Kings 24:18 compared with 2 Kings 23:31). Then, after a disastrous 11-year reign, Jerusalem fell, the temple was destroyed, and Zedekiah was taken captive and blinded. The desolation of Jerusalem was complete.

Josiah's Intervention

This brings us to the heart of this study--the intervention of Josiah to stop Pharaoh Necho from passing through Judea to assist the king of Assyria at Carchemish. Several interesting questions are raised in this experience. The account is brief enough to quote in its entirety: "After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but

disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho **from the mouth of God**, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers."—2 Chronicles 35:20-24, emphasis added.

At first it appears that Josiah, famed for his obedience to God was, in his last act, disobedient. Was the fact that Josiah was to grant permission really from the mouth of Jehovah? Did Pharaoh Necho even recognize Jehovah as a legitimate authority? Would the God of Israel send a foreign king as his messenger to his own righteous ruler? Was there no prophet in Israel? On the other hand, might not Necho be referring to **his** god, or, more likely, was he speaking sarcastically as Sennacherib did to Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:16-18)? In any case, Necho's message could hardly have been from Jehovah since, when he did reach Carchemish, he was on the losing side of the battle.

However the words of the prophetess Huldah must also be considered: "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again."—2 Chronicles 34:27,28

Dying in battle hardly seems to fulfil an unconditional promise of God that Josiah would die in peace. One explanation is that the prophecy did not say he would die peacefully, but "in peace." The phrase may describe the time of his death and not the circumstances of it. Josiah died at the young age of 39. If he had lived a normal life span of 50 or 60 years, he would have lived in a period of intense conflict as the forces of the Babylonians would be attacking and eventually destroying his beloved Jerusalem. This interpretation is supported by the clause that says he would not see the evils so shortly to come upon Jerusalem.

In a similar vein, the church of Christ will be hidden from the worst of the troubles coming upon the world. Jesus promised as much: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). Even if members of the church finish their course of life in severe persecution and at the hands of their enemies, their deliverance will hide them from the final trauma of this old social order.

There is yet another sense in which these words are true. If anyone gives his life in doing what he is sure is the will of the Lord, he is at peace in his death. Paul tells us this is even true if one misinterprets the Lord's providence as to what actions are appropriate: "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Corinthians 8:12, see also 1 John 3:20).

Finally, it would be hard to reconcile a death in disobedience to God with this summation of Josiah's career: "Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his **goodness**, according to that which was written in the law of the LORD, and his deeds, **first and last**, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah" (2 Chronicles 35:26,27, emphasis added).

Why did Josiah "disguise himself"? The only other king to disguise himself in battle was wicked King Ahab who did it out of cowardice (1 Kings 22:30). Kings usually were at the forefront of battle to lead their soldiers and give them courage. Because Josiah is never pictured as a coward, we must look for another explanation. The problem may well be one of translation. Many commentators prefer to read the Hebrew as "he equipped himself." The Septuagint says he "took courage." The Hebrew word *hitchapees* is frequently translated "searched" (as in Genesis 31:35) and once "diligent" (Psalms 64:6). It is probable that "searched" as in a mental searching of his motives before going into this battle is the correct thought and is in harmony with the character of Josiah.

It appears to have been a random arrow that struck the fatal wound. While the battle was fought at Megiddo, he lived long enough to die in his beloved Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 35:24). The account in 2 Kings appears to conflict with the Chronicles record: "In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. And King Josiah went to meet him, and when [Pharaoh Neco] saw him, he killed him at Megiddo. And his servants drove his body in a chariot from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of his father."—2 Kings 23:29,30 (NAS)

Adam Clarke has a way to harmonize the use of the word translated "killed" in these verses. He writes: "The word *meet* (Hebrew 4191) should here be considered as a participle, dying, for it is certain he was not dead: he was mortally wounded at Megiddo, was carried in a dying state to Jerusalem, and there he died and was buried (see 2 Chronicles 35:24)."

After his death the people choose his son Jehoahaz to reign. He reigned but three short months before Necho, returning from Carchemish, appointed Jehoiakim (also called Eliakin) to reign. In the fourth year of his reign, the forces of Nebuchadnezzar conquered the area and kept Jehoiakim on his throne as a puppet king.

After three years he rebelled against Babylon and a stage of warfare continued for about four years. After his death, the Israelites appointed Jehoiachin in his place. He was the last king appointed by the Jews. His reign was short-lived, only three months, before Nebuchadnezzar put down the rebellion, dethroned Jehoiachin and appointed Zedekiah in his stead.

The Mourning for Josiah

"And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations."--2 Chronicles 35:25

The mourning of Israel for this righteous king shows that even a wicked population destined to be shortly severely chastised by God, recognizes a life of goodness. Their weeping was accompanied by funereal music, or dirges. These became remembered songs of the tragic death of this good man. They were remembered throughout the Babylonian captivity for if Ezra is, as popularly thought, the author of the two books of Chronicles, then the phrase "this day" in this verse occurred after their return to Jerusalem from Babylon.

The fact that it was made an ordinance indicates that the prominence of these dirges was not accidental but a legal requirement. We find no such treatment of the mourning for any other Old Testament character.

The Mourning of Hadad-Rimmon

There is another great mourning described in scripture, not in history but in prophecy: "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; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."— Zechariah 12:10-14

Jesus' allusion to this prophecy in his Olivet sermon (Matthew 24:30) and the application of it by the apostle John in Revelation 1:7 leave no doubt as to whom it refers. It applies to the recognition of Christ at the time of his second advent.

This mournful recognition of the Messiah is likened to that at the death of Josiah. Hadadrimmon has been identified by Jerome with a village in the plain of Megiddo on the road to Jerusalem. Van de Velde, in his *Travels*, says it is the same one referred to today as Rumuni. It is probable that this is the place where either Josiah was wounded, fell into a coma on the way to Jerusalem, or actually died.

The preservation of the biblical name in the prophecy may be of some import. The name is taken from that of two false gods, Hadad and Rimmon, both sun gods. The presence of

that name in ancient Israel indicates the degree the nation had been influenced by the surrounding pagan cultures. It is from the depths of this harmful assimilation that they call out in bitter agony for their great reformer Josiah. In like manner, the descendents of those Jews are gathered back to their land in a measure of unbelief. It will remain for the extremities of Armageddon to bring about this godly sorrow of repentance and recognition of their Messiah.

This mourning of recognition, though national in scope, must be individual in depth. Everyone—wives and husbands individually—must recognize for themselves the sorrow of the death of the one whom God sent for their deliverance.

The identification of the specific house of David, Nathan, Levi, and Shimei are also suggestive. While David and Levi are easily identified as the royal and priestly lines, the matter is not so simple with Nathan and Shimei. If it is Nathan the prophet, he could represent the prophetic line. However, it is more likely that the reference is to Nathan the son of David and Bathsheba, showing the least of the kingly line. Likewise Shimei is either identified with the Benjaminite who cursed David and then repented (2 Samuel 16:5,6; 2 Samuel 19:16-23) or the grandson of Levi whose household were called the "Shimites" (Numbers 3:21), and show the least of the descendents of the priestly line.

Some Interesting Parallels

The study of the battles of Megiddo and Carchemish in the days of King Josiah reveal some correspondencies with the prophesied Battle of Armageddon.

1. As the battles of Josiah's day marked the end of dominion of historic world powers (Egypt and Assyria), so Armageddon will bring an end to current world powers.
2. As those battles of old paved the way for the introduction of the first universal empire (Babylon), so Armageddon paves the way for the introduction of the fifth universal empire (the kingdom of Christ).
3. It was in these battles that Israel's dominion over Jerusalem gave way to gentile forces; so in Armageddon Israel will gain their place as gentile governments collapse.
4. As the death of Josiah brought from the people a great mourning and recognition of his greatness, so an aftermath of Armageddon will be the universal recognition of the Messiah whom they previously rejected.

Each of the battles on the historic plains of Megiddo carries its individual lesson for that great future battle to which that place lends its name: Armageddon. May the study of this battle of Josiah encourage us to look at those details in each of the other Megiddo battles.

The Battle of Jerusalem

Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.-- Jeremiah 46:28

Verse by verse study in Zechariah 14

Zechariah was one of the prophets of Israel after their return from the Babylonian captivity. His message deals with the future of the nation, their further travails and their final exaltation to the position God had planned for them.

The prophecy can be divided into four sections. It opens with a series of eight visions which many feel can be interpreted in chronological order and which outline the future of Israel in highly symbolic language. After a short description of the crowning of the priest (Zechariah 6:9-15) the prophet spends two chapters dealing with questions concerning the observation of religious feasts after their return from Babylon.

The balance of the book contains two "burdens" or oracles from the Lord. The first (chapters 9-11) relates to the first advent of the Messiah while the second "burden" (chapters 12-14) speaks of events concerning his second advent.

It is the last chapter of this closing oracle which forms the basis for this verse by verse study.

Jerusalem Attacked--Zechariah 14:1-3

Behold, 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. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

This gathering of the nations against Jerusalem appears to be the same gathering as referenced in Joel 3:1-3 and Revelation 16:14-16. The word "spoil" is an indication that this gathering may also be connected with that of Ezekiel 38:3-7 (see particularly Ezekiel 38:12, 13).

The indication of the Zechariah text is that the enemies of Israel will at first be successful in this battle against Jerusalem. The rout will appear to be so complete that, in the over confidence of victory, they divide the spoils in the midst of the city. It is customary for invading forces to carry the spoils to a safe haven before making the division of them

among the conquerors. The danger always exists of some lingering foe who might seek to kill an invader during the division process.

While the rifling of the houses was to enhance the fortunes of the invaders, the ravishing of the women was a tactical move to humiliate the vanquished and defeat their spirits. Such atrocities as these are frequent even in our own day in the battles in the Balkan states and in the tribal warfare in Africa.

To understand the phrase "half of the city" which is taken into captivity, let us consider a passage in the book of Zephaniah: "In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid."--Zephaniah 3:11-13

Here we see two groups of people in Israel: one marked by fierce pride in their abilities and the other, afflicted and humble. The first of these two groups is taken away and is the same as described in Ezekiel 20:38, "And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD." The group of the city that is not taken--the meek and humble of Israel--appear to be the same as "the third part" that pass through the fire in the previous chapter (Zechariah 13:8, 9).

No details of how Jehovah will intervene are given. There is a clue, however, in the phrase that he will fight "as in the day of battle." During the time when Israel was governed by judges, a recurrent pattern developed. Frequent captivities were interspersed with frequent deliverances where the Lord fought for them. This pattern is recorded in Judges 2:16-19, "Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way."

To this agree the words of Isaiah 1:24-26, "Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take

away all thy tin: And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city."

These "judges" and "counselors" were their faithful leaders of the past. The suggestion is that Israel's ancient prophets and judges will return through a resurrection and become the catalyst by which Jehovah will bring victory to Israel. Noting that these are called "princes" in Psalm 45:16, this same thought appears to be indicated in the words of Micah 5:5, 6 (RSV), "And this shall be peace, when the Assyrian comes into our land and treads upon our soil, that we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes of men; they shall rule the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod with the drawn sword; and they shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our border."

The Cloven Mount--Zechariah 14:4, 5

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

The aftermath of God fighting for Israel is his standing upon the mount of Olives, showing his taking authority and beginning his reign. This appears to be the same picture as found in Daniel 12:1 where "Michael stands up." Although Michael refers to the son of God and Zechariah speaks of Jehovah himself standing on the mount, there is no real conflict. Isaiah 40:10 speaks of Jehovah's reign, stating that "his arm shall rule for him."

The mount of Olives is closely associated not only with Jesus, but with his kingdom as well. It was from the apex of this mount that he made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem as a king (Matthew 21:1). It was on this mountain that he answered his disciples' questions about returning to set up his kingdom (Matthew 24:3). And it was from this eminence that he ascended into heaven (Matthew 26:30).

Now, in figure, we see this mountain cloven into two parts--half moving toward the north and half toward the south, leaving an east-west valley between the halves. It is at the conclusion of the battle of Jerusalem that we see God establishing his kingdom in two parts. The northern part relates to the spiritual phase, the church, and the southern part to the restored judges and counselors. These are the same two parts mentioned in Micah 5:5 as the "shepherds" (the church) and the "princes" (the restored prophets).

The valley was to provide a safe passage for the refugees from Jerusalem. It was a valley of blessing, stretching from Jerusalem to Azal. This Azal is probably to be identified with the Beth-Ezel (house of Azal) of Micah 1:11, a village some 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem, about midway between Hebron and Beersheba (see also 1 Chronicles 8:37,

38). Beth-Ezel is situated in the highlands just west of the Judean mountains and thus is as far as any valley could go. Once reaching Azal, one is free from mountain terrain and has a clear passage to safety.

The ensuing flight for refuge is compared to the flight that happened in the days "of the earthquake in the days of Uzziah." Not much is known of this particular earthquake from a historic perspective. Dr. R. C. Wetzel says that this earthquake destroyed Tyre, Sidon, Ashdod, from Damascus to Gaza (*A Chronology of Biblical Christianity*, page 22). Albert Edersheim states that Josephus and other Jewish authorities connect this earthquake and the vision of God's glory (Isaiah 6) with the divine punishment for Uzziah usurping the offices of the high priest (*The History of Judah and Israel*, page 60).

In any event, the earthquake was still well known in the days of Zechariah (over 200 years later) and was used to date the prophecy of Amos (Amos 1:1).

In That Day--Zechariah 14:6-9

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

Zechariah identifies four specific features which mark "that day" of the Lord:

1. It shall be obscure, but brightest in the evening.
2. Living waters from Jerusalem shall flow to both the Mediterranean and Dead Seas.
3. The waters shall flow all year long, unlike the many dry wadies then known.
4. Jehovah would be the undisputed king of the earth.

The first of these shows how the kingdom will not be introduced precipitously upon the earth but will come in gradually. Peace will not instantly prevail upon the earth, but the clouds of trouble will slowly disperse. It will require the entire thousand years of this "day of the Lord" to fully bring about the bright prospects it promises. Thus it will not be until near the close of that day, at its eventide, that it will be light.

The picture of the promised blessing being as "living waters" is a recurrent one. It is elaborated upon in much detail in Ezekiel 47:1-12 and again in Revelation 22:1, 2, 17. The Ezekiel passage emphasizes the effect of these waters on the Dead Sea, sweetening

them and making them potable (see also Joel 3:18). It also mentions that the river is lined with trees bearing all manners of fruits and with leaves of medicinal value. The Revelation account adds the information that the leaves are for the "healing of the nations" and enumerates the number of fruit as being twelve per month, equaling 144,000 in total (12 fruits x 12 months x 1000 years).

The image of half the waters flowing into the Dead Sea and half into the Mediterranean indicates that Jerusalem sits, as it were, on a continental divide. The waters proceeding both directions forms a pictorial representation of the forthcoming blessings spreading through all the world.

The New Jerusalem--Zechariah 14:10, 11

All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

As the north to south dimensions of all Israel are frequently stated as "from Dan to Beersheba" (Judges 20:1), so one could describe the north to south boundaries of Judah as being "from Geba to Rimmon." Geba is the border town between Judah and Benjamin, six miles north of Jerusalem, while Rimmon thirty miles southwest, lies near the southern border of Judah with Simeon. In other words, all of Judah would become a plain.

There is no need to take this in a literal sense. Rather, it seems to mean a leveling of society in the same way that is expressed in Isaiah 40:4, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." The proud and haughty would be brought low, or humbled, while the meek would be exalted and praised. But we notice that it is not a lowland plain, but rather one that "shall be lifted up." Israel will again assume a leadership role in the earth.

The four place names in our text appear to be located at the four corners of old Jerusalem--Benjamin's gate at the northwest corner, the "first gate" in the southwest, the "corner gate" at the northeast corner, and from the tower of Hananeel, also in the northeast, to the king's winepresses, in the southeast, near the pool of Siloam and the king's gardens.

Although the earlier verses of the fourteenth chapter refer to the preparations for a flight from Jerusalem, the time has come now to return and reinhabit the city. There is a noteworthy contrast between these verses and the situation before the final battle of verses one to three, which is also depicted in Ezekiel 38 and 39. There we have the appearance of safety: "And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and

having neither bars nor gates" (Ezekiel 38:11). Here we have actual safety. Any safety which is not dependent upon Jehovah is only a false sense of security.

The Plague of God--Zechariah 14:12-15

And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor. And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

On two occasions at least we see the Lord using plagues in his battling for his people-- against Egypt at the time of the exodus and in preparation for the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16). Some have noticed the similarity of the effects of this plague to the radiation emanating from the atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While there may be some validity to such an interpretation, it is not the only explanation possible to these verses. Perhaps the symbols are to be taken in a metaphorical sense.

The eyes consuming in their holes is reminiscent of the punishment of the rebellious King Zedekiah by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11). The eyes are connected in the Bible with greed (1 John 2:16). Greed is an apparent motive in this final battle of the ages, as is witnessed by the many references of the invaders to "take a spoil" (Ezekiel 38:12, 13).

The consuming of the tongue implies that the boastful words of the would-be conquerors shall come to naught. One of the graphic New Testament description of the final days is "gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42). In either case, literal or symbolic, the text leaves no doubt that Jehovah will be victorious in this battle on behalf of Israel.

The plagues are not limited to the human population. All of the domesticated animals of transport are also stricken by these plagues, even as they were in the plagues on literal Egypt at the time of the exodus.

While the prophecy in Ezekiel 38 and 39 stresses the spoils that are in Israel as an incentive for this invasion, the verse before us emphasizes that the invaders will also bring their riches and that these will be used in the setting up of the new kingdom. There are several other prophecies which mention this feature of the Battle of Armageddon. (See Isaiah 23:18, Haggai 2:7 (NAS), and the fall of Jericho in Joshua 6:24.)

No Rain--Zechariah 14:16-19

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

The rule of God's kingdom will be the same as it was with ancient Israel. Obedience will bring prosperity. "And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out" (Deuteronomy 28:2-6). Likewise chastisement accompanied disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-19). In the passage under consideration the discipline is represented as lack of rain, something that is critically important in a desert climate.

The singling out of Egypt shows the universality of God's chastisements. Egypt is not dependent upon rains, its irrigation coming from the Nile which is fed by melting snows further south. In our text God is saying that if the withholding of rain is not the appropriate punishment, then he would send a plague which would be equally effective.

The specification of the feast of tabernacles is significant for at least two reasons. Originally this feast was to celebrate the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. In later times the feast took on agrarian importance, celebrating the fall harvest. Thus, not attending the feast of tabernacles was not to show appreciation for the crops of the land. All nations will need to learn that their prosperity is dependent upon obedience to Jehovah. It is also worthy of note that the feast of tabernacles fell just five days after the Day of Atonement, by which, typically, man's relationship to God is restored.

Bells and Pots--Zechariah 14:20, 21

In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

In the days of the tabernacle the title HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD was reserved for the golden crown on the head of the high priest (Exodus 28:36). There also we find bells--on the fringe of the high priest's ephod (Exodus 28:33-35). Now this title would become so prevalent that it would even be found on the bells of the horses. The bells of the horses is reminiscent of the king's royal chargers in Esther 6:9, "And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor."

The proclamation of all mankind of HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD will be the highest honor of all mankind. That is the very object of the kingdom--to produce true holiness in all people. The lesson is captured well by Dr. Marvin Vincent: "In the kingdom of Christ each individual is a priest. The priest's work is not limited to any order of the ministry. All may offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving . . . The consummation of this ideal appears in Revelation 21:22 where the heavenly Jerusalem is represented as without temple. It is all temple. It is the abolition of the distinction between holy and profane (Zechariah 14:20,21)—nearer and more remote from God—through all being henceforth holy, all being brought to the nearest whereof it is capable, to him." (*Word Studies in the New Testament*)

It is the same lesson that is stressed by saying all of the common utensils of the people--"every pot in Jerusalem and Judah"--shall echo the same refrain of holiness. This is the lesson of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

And there shall be no more the Canaanite in the land. When the nation of Israel took possession of their promised land under Joshua, there were a number of cities in which they did not drive out the inhabitants. Now, in this antitypical possession, all the forces of evil would be removed. The conquest would be total and complete. There will be no gentile there. All will be Jews. They will become so by proselytizing to the religion of the kingdom.

"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" (Isaiah 2:3).

What a day of rejoicing that will be! With the whole world willfully serving God and learning to live a life of holiness, there can be true peace on earth and true good will toward all men. How we can all look forward to the day when Zechariah's prophecy is completely fulfilled!

Ecumenism

Christianity United?

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.--John 17:21

*Excerpted from One World Church,
published by the Chicago Bible Students*

Catholic and Protestant, Modernist and Fundamentalist, Charismatic and Conservative, the Christian church is splintered into numberless subdivisions today. Christianity is a far cry from the simple united religion of Jesus and his small band of followers.

The inspiring life of the Man from Galilee, his fantastic miracles and his radical new religious concepts all combined to ignite a flame of religious fervor in the hearts of his hearers. That flame was so intense that after his death on the cross of Calvary, it erupted into a new movement—the Christian church—based upon his teachings.

Despite rigorous persecution from both Romans and fellow Jews alike, the fledgling movement continued to grow steadily and rapidly into world-wide proportions. Except for a few scattered dissidents it was a united body.

Some 300 years later, under the converted Roman emperor Constantine the Great, Christianity became the state religion. With its new political arm, the church assumed immense organizational power. For the next 1200 years there was virtually one church with few schisms of any consequence. Divisions were simply not allowed. There was one world church. Church unity was a reality, but it was an enforced unity, the unity of a totalitarian state.

Freedom of thought was repressed. Liberty of expression, if it was divergent from established orthodoxy, was curtailed. The church was in a veritable pressure cooker.

By 1517 expanding religious thought had built up a full head of steam. It burst the bounds of what Martin Luther called "the mighty monolithic church." Religious reformers appeared everywhere—Luther in Germany, John Calvin in France, Huldreich Zwingli in Switzerland, John Knox in Scotland . . . and many others.

The unified Christian church began to disintegrate into various protesting—or "Protestant"—denominations. Then these denominations, in turn, began to divide over various disagreements concerning Biblical interpretation. Then these again sub-divided, like cancerous cells gone wild, until we come to the over 800 denominations of the Christian church that are in the world today.

The ever-escalating rate of division began to concern, and then to alarm, many. By the 1840's a new trend began—to reunite splintered Christendom. After a particularly painful rupture in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, steps were initiated to prevent further divisions. The first of these steps, in 1846, was the formation of the Evangelical Alliance.

The Evangelical Alliance

This alliance represented some 50 major denominations and was designed not so much to form a giant unified church as to encourage dialog and co-operation between the various sects. Several other developments, also during the latter part of the nineteenth century, created both a desire for a more binding form of united church, while simultaneously providing further divisive pressures.

MODERNISM: The rise of the twin philosophical concepts of rationalism and humanism found their religious counterpart in modernism. This concept removed the claim of inspiration from the Bible. Substituting the theory of evolution for the doctrine of creation, denying the pre-existence and virgin birth of Jesus, modernism replaced simple faith in the Scriptures with textual criticism. By removing the authority of the Bible as the inspired Word of God a veritable Pandora's box of new religious concepts was opened up. In order to accommodate this flood of new ideas, liberalism was needed. Former doctrinal differences were made to seem petty, and thus no barrier for church union.

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL: The Industrial Revolution with its resultant urbanization of society brought immense social problems to the forefront. Such diverse injustices as child labor, rampant poverty, the exploitation of the working classes became more and more apparent. The stresses of industrialized living brought with it not only psychological problems, but a rapid increase in divorce and immorality; social diseases brought with them the side-effects of unwanted or orphaned children.

Christian leaders began to sense a certain responsibility to join the battle to correct these inequities. This task of social uplift became the dominant theme in the minds of many prominent Christian leaders. The Bible-oriented themes of Scripture study and evangelism appeared relatively inconsequential and increasingly irrelevant. The emergence of this "Social Gospel" proved to be a tremendous spur to the cause of ecumenism.

WORLD MISSIONS: World missionary results slackened noticeably in the mid-nineteenth century as a rising perception of social justice among the non-Christian peoples of the world exposed the inconsistency of the ideals of Christianity with the reality of the lives of many claiming to be Christians. They were also disillusioned by the hopelessly divided state of Christendom. This "shame of division" was yet another prod to accelerate unity activities on the part of the Christian community.

In the Western world interest in religion had rebounded from an all-time low at the onset of the nineteenth century to a fever pitch some fifty years later under the "Great

Awakening" and the revivals of Dwight L. Moody, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and others. Renewed missionary efforts sprung up around the globe under the slogan "Win the world for Christ."

INEFFICIENCY: The lack of efficiency inherent in such a Babel of cults was curtailing the activity of organized religion. Not only did world-wide evangelism and increased social services require great resources, but an ever deteriorating relationship with the governments of the earth dictated a regrouping of the Christian Church.

Further Steps Toward Unity

For all of these reasons, and more, a better vehicle was sought to unite the separated branches of Christendom.

In 1893 a World Parliament of Religions was convened. Not only were the various elements of Christianity brought together, but also Buddhists, Shintoists, Hindus, Moslems and other great world religions were invited. The aim was not so much unification, but open dialog to gain a better understanding of the spiritual forces in a world growing continually smaller.

By 1908 the International Evangelical Alliance had virtually dissolved. A new alliance, the Federal Council of Churches, was formed with some 30 denominations. Modernist denominations held a distinct majority, causing their more fundamentalist brothers to form a parallel institution—the National Association of Evangelicals.

By 1950 the Federal Council of Churches regrouped once again under the title National Council of Churches, and, world-wide, The World Council of Churches.

No longer was the aim to merely seek co-operation between disparate denominations, but to actively encourage, where possible, actual organic union by merging various sects. The goal was to eventually form one world church.

Theological discussion threatened to hinder this desired growth. Thus theology was sidelined in favor of perceived more pressing needs such as correcting the social inequities that were so rampant around the globe.

The Social Revolution

Liberalism became Christianity's creed. The vast financial resources of this religio-political conglomerate became available for the financing of the ongoing social revolution.

The social turbulence of the 1960's furnishes a vivid example. According to the October 1971 *Readers' Digest*, member churches donated \$10,000 to the Angela Davis defense fund, \$25,000 for Black Panther defense, \$40,000 to assist a quasi-guerilla movement

seeking to establish a Chicano nation in the Southwestern United States, and \$200,000 to the Black Manifesto movement.

The resultant conflict between activities in the political and religious spheres reached a crisis point on June 30, 1955, when the National Lay Committee of the Council of Churches, under the leadership of J. Howard Pew, resigned en masse. In their letter of resignation they succinctly stated their reasons: "Our Committee believes that the National Council of Churches impairs its ability to meet its prime responsibility when, sitting in judgment on current secular affairs, it becomes involved in economic or political controversy having no moral or ethical content, promoting division where unity of purpose should obtain, nor do we believe that the National Council has a mandate to engage in such activities."

While this phase of the ecumenical movement continues to progress, it is interesting to note in passing that the more conservative, Bible-oriented, fundamentalist churches, while protesting these ecumenical developments, formed a federation of their own in 1941—the National Association of Evangelicals. Some 40 denominations with one and one half million members are represented. This group has formulated a statement of faith based upon the historic creeds of Christendom to define the boundaries of its unity. Still another, more conservative, ecumenical organization—the American Council of Churches—contains only denominations which are, in their entire membership, separate from the National Council.

The Bible View

So much for the history of these movements. What does the Bible have to say on this important topic of Christian unity? The concern which Jesus felt over the proper development of his church is noted in his prayer just before entering the Garden of Gethsemane on the last day of his life: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

No greater motivation should be needed by Christians than this strong desire of their leader and Lord. But it was not just unity for which Jesus prayed. It was a particular kind of unity—"that they may be one as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one in me."

This unity was to spring from the indwelling presence of Christ in his church, even as his own unity with the Father sprang from God's indwelling presence in the Son.

How does Jesus dwell in his followers? He himself explains: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

So the basis for this oneness, the basis for true Christian unity lies in the heart acceptance of the words and teachings of Jesus. A unity of belief, a unity of Christian practice, is the glue that holds the Christian community together.

In Amos 3:3 the prophet puts it simply: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"

Two individuals from different geographical locations journey to attend the same conference. They are both motivated by their common desire in the same subject. The nearer they get to that conference the nearer they get to each other. So it is with true Christians. Their goal, their destination, is Jesus and a desire to be like him—Christ-likeness. They begin their individual journeys at the same starting point, their common interest in this important goal. The nearer they become to that goal the nearer they become to each other. This is true Christian unity—unity of purpose, unity of belief, unity of goal.

The only goal that will bring this type of unity to Christians is a common goal to be more and more like Christ. To do this requires study, the study of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. This study begins with one's acceptance of Christ as their personal Savior and goes on to learning about his life and then copying it. The only authoritative place to study his life is in the book that tells about it—the Bible, the Word of God.

Yet it can be argued that Bible study has done more to separate Christians than anything else. The main reason for the many diverse religious organizations today is disagreement over one point or another of Scripture teaching. Some have suggested, therefore, that it is better to skip over these matters of difference and get together over the work and mission of the church. Such union, however, is artificial. It is organizational and external only. The unity of which Christ spoke, on the other hand, is spiritual and internal.

The discernment of God's will for his church would come through a "renewing of the mind" as described by the apostle Paul: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

To have their minds renewed, the early followers of Jesus understood the need to study the Bible regularly. The early church at Berea was praised by Paul for such diligent study: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Ecumenism in Prophecy

Seeing what the Scriptures say about the unity of the Christian church and its present mission, let us examine what the Bible has to say about the future of the one world church.

The book of Revelation deals with matters of the end time, the period just preceding the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. This book begins with the statement that it will show what the spirit "signifies"—or tells in signs or symbols—to the apostle John.

The various objects in this book, therefore, are not to be interpreted literally, but as symbols or pictures of prophetic truths. Once again the Bible speaks, as it so often does, in code language waiting to be decoded by the holy spirit with "Scripture interpreting Scripture."

In the thirteenth chapter of Revelation we are introduced to a leopard-like beast that many scholars of the Bible identify with an apostate church system. Shortly another beast, this one with two horns, looking like a lamb but speaking like a lion, rises on the scene and oversees the making of an image to the first beast. He later gives it life and, with life, persecuting power. A mark of endorsement is then forced upon all people of the earth, those not receiving this "mark" being forbidden to buy or sell. The progression seems to be that an apostate church system would be joined by a similar system which, though innocent in appearance, would speak with the same oppressive authority. This similar, though protesting system, would construct a third, united, system modeled after—"in the image of"—the first system.

One twentieth century Bible commentator, Arthur S. Maxwell, a Seventh Day Adventist, in his book *Time Running Out* put it this way: "Does this mean that all professing Christians will return to the `mother church?' By no means. There are many who, though fully in sympathy with the reunion movement, will feel that they cannot go so far as to admit the primacy of the pope. These will find their spiritual home in a non-Roman, but pro-Catholic body, such as the World Council of Churches.

"These two bodies . . . `Roman Catholic' and `Catholic and Reformed' . . . will then move on in parallel courses, both so alike in purpose and method that sometimes it will be difficult to tell them apart. One will be the replica of the other; so much so that the recalcitrant minority of Bible-loving Christians, looking from a distance upon this much published `religious revival,' will suddenly recognize `the beast and his image' so vividly described in symbolic and picturesque language by the apostle John."

This same "unity movement" is described in Revelation 16:13 where the same beast of Revelation 13 is seen in connection with the false prophet (the image of the beast after it has been given life) and the dragon, a symbol in Revelation of political power. There, united, these three issue certain proclamations described as being unclean, "like frogs." These have the effect of bringing the nations of the earth into the Battle of Armageddon, the climactic battle of the ages, which will fully introduce the blessings of God's kingdom of peace.

The final destiny of this great united church—joined with various governments of earth—is shown a few verses later, in Revelation 16:19, when, during the final conflict, or last plague, the alliance is broken into its three constituent parts—"and the cities of the nations fell." This break-up however, only serves to pave the way for the establishment by God of that very kingdom which they sought to establish without God.

The first feature of this kingdom will be to put down all opposing forces of evil as described pictorially in Revelation 20:2 when Christ "lays hold on the dragon, that old

serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and binds him a thousand years." Then, with evil bound and sin removed, the work will begin of raising the billions of earth's dead—"all that are in their graves." That this work will not be done by Jesus alone is attested in Revelation 20:4 where we see the followers of Christ, those who have been figuratively "beheaded for the witness of Jesus" living and reigning with him for the thousand years.

This will be the time when God will establish his one world church. They will be the followers of Jesus—his "bride," his "church"—now exalted with him in heaven. They will help their Lord raise the dead of earth and instruct them in the laws and rules of that kingdom, leading them, as the prophet Isaiah says, up a highway that leads to holiness. (Isaiah 35:8-10)

Unity of the Spirit

In the meantime the lesson is clear to those truly desiring to be Christians: "say ye not a confederacy"—steer clear of organizational unity not based upon a unity of the spirit. Instead strive for that unity of the spirit that exists between all true Christians, that oneness described by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:3-6: "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

For there "is one body"—the body of Christ, composed only of those who have devoted their whole lives entirely to him in a full surrender of their own wills.

There is "one Spirit"—the holy spirit that leads the sincere believer into "all truth."

"Even as ye are all called in the one hope of your calling"—the hope of obtaining Christ-likeness and ruling with him in the heavenly realm.

"One Lord"—the Lord Jesus Christ.

"One faith"—for which all true Christians diligently search the Scriptures daily.

"One baptism"—submerging our wills completely into God's will.

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"—Jehovah, "the Lord your God is one God."

To attain this end let us continue daily feeding on the Word of God as ancient Israel fed on manna in the wilderness, proving all things and holding fast to that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Let us unite, indeed, with other like-minded Christians, comparing our thoughts on Scripture with theirs, drawing closer to them in the bonds of Christian love as we are both drawn closer to our mutual goal—Jesus Christ himself.

Let us leave the solution of the world's problems to God, knowing that he has adequately prepared for that solution, in that time for which we continue to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

THE OLD-THE NEW

'Tis at the first, 'tis at the last
The time of the transition.
We see the specter of the past,
With death's and glory's fusion.
The winds of strife, with terror's cry
Unseat the world's wide crown.
Clatter the battle stones from high,
Down, down!

'Tis at the first, 'tis at the last,
'Tis at the disappearing
Of error's chains and slavery,
With Christ's own kingdom nearing.
Soon all the elements of night
Shall be dissolved away,
And God shall send all needful light,
With glorious day.

'Tis at the first, 'tis at the last,
'Tis at the consummation,
When things foretold by prophets old
Stand at fulfillment's station
And when the trump of jubilee
With joyful note is blown,
Declaring all shall shortly see
Christ on his throne.

Walter Sargent

THE KINGS OF THE EAST

Rev. 16:12

The trumpet is sounding, the Jubilee trump.
The earth hath dispensed with despots and kings.
This trumpet demanding man's rights also brings
Distress and confusion -- this trump.

For the god of this world doth not readily yield
His usurp'd throne over fallen mankind.
But his house is "divided" and soon he will find
To the bright shining light of the East he must yield.

For "the waters shall dry up, preparing the way"
For The Christ, designated, "The Kings of The East:"
Who shall make war upon the "false prophet" and beast"
And on Satan himself and on all of his way.

So the battle doth rage "twixt the right and the wrong,
Between error and truth between darkness and light.
But the outcome is certain for truth and for right,
For God's "Kings of The East," are both mighty and strong.

Martin C. Mitchell