

Jerusalem - A Cup of Trembling!

The ancient city of Jerusalem has been associated with the Israelites, and the Jews in particular, for the last 3000 years. The Bible clearly establishes that this place has great significance for the people of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Today, however, Jerusalem is in the center of great global controversy. Attempts have been underway to divide the great city. Arab interests in Jerusalem are strong—so strong that they may actually be leading to a conspiracy with the Vatican for control of the city.

by Jim Rector

The city of Jerusalem is, quite clearly, one of the most Biblically, historically, and geographically important areas in the world. Its location is strategic; its religious significance beyond compare. This city is special, indeed even holy, not only to the Jews, the Moslems, and the Christians of this world, but also to God Himself! The Scriptures are replete with references to Jerusalem, both as a part of the history of Israel, as well as for the

future. Although the first direct mention in the Bible of this area is found in the book of Joshua, this, however, may not be the first time this part of the world is referred to in the Scriptures. Although most people associate Jerusalem with the house of David and the inhabitants of Judah, this area has had unique status and significance going back many millennia into ancient history. Just as in today's era, the city of Jerusalem has been at the

center of world events for a long, long time, and the future of this place is even more amazing than its past!

AN ANCIENT PAST

Jerusalem, either in terms of the actual city or of the area in general, has been a key part of God's plan for a long, long time. One has to wonder if it had any

pre-Flood history. It is a question that we may never be able to adequately answer. We do know, however, that Abraham met a personage known as Melchizedek, whose name means the *king of righteousness*, but whom the Scriptures also designate as the *king of Salem*. This word, of course, means *peace*, and clearly has preeminent spiritual significance, but it cannot be totally discounted that this might well be a very early reference to the area later known as Jerusalem, the *city of peace*. If this is so, then Melchizedek would have represented a royal priesthood associated with Jerusalem long predating the arrival of Israel to the Promised Land, and even longer still prior to David's time, when the city became the major center of the country.

It might also be argued that God's later instructions to Abraham to take his son Isaac and slay him on one of the *mountains of Moriah* constituted another very early reference to the area of Jerusalem, since the city is located in that mountain range. Many feel that Abraham actually erected his altar on what later became known as the Temple Mount, others feel it may have been the Mount of Olives. Both locations would qualify in terms of location and even later Biblical and spiritual significance.

Whether or not Jerusalem was in existence in the days of Abraham may be debatable, although there is evidence that it well could have been. We know

for a fact, however, that the Amorites inhabited this city at the time when Israel invaded Canaan under Joshua. In the first Scriptural reference to Jerusalem, we find the king of the city conspiring with the ruler of Hebron against Gibeon, the ally of Israel (Josh. 10).

We remember that in the days of the Tabernacle, Jerusalem did not occupy a place of great importance. The sanctuary was moved from place to place, depending upon where the Israelites happened to be in their journeys and battles in Canaan. Eventually the Tabernacle was situated in Shiloh. During the days of Eli, the Ark of the Covenant was removed from the Tabernacle. It is possibly, even likely, that the Philistines destroyed the sanctuary. Under Samuel, worship was centered in Mizpah. In David's time, the shewbread was kept at Nob, and later in his reign, fragments of the Tabernacle were located at Gibeon. David then set up a tent on Mt. Zion, to the south of the later Temple Mount in the former Jebusite stronghold of Jerusalem. Because of these events in Israel's history, we therefore tend to think of Jerusalem as coming into existence during the days of David and Solomon, especially with the replacement of the Tabernacle with the Temple. But its history is much more ancient, going back at least to the 15th century B.C., and, quite possibly, much earlier. Perhaps even the ancient Garden of Eden may have been located to the *east* of

Jerusalem, possibly on the Mount of Olives!

JERUSALEM BECOMES CENTRAL

By the time of David, Jerusalem was becoming the center of operations in Israel. Certainly after the Temple was completed in the reign of Solomon, the city was the capital of the nation. When the kingdom was divided, the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin (in whose allotted territory Jerusalem was located) became closely associated with the city.

It was from Jerusalem that all the kings of Judah ruled, and it was to this great city that God sent many of His prophets. A number of them met their death there. The Messiah once lamented:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets and stones them that are sent unto you; how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and you would not!” (Luke 13:34).

It was to Jerusalem that the Savior was sent. Judea's chief religious and political leaders lived and executed their authority there. Christ encountered them in the city many times, withstanding them to the face, thwarting every attempt they made to ensnare him, answering their every hard question, testifying against them,

and issuing the decree of God concerning the city.

The Scriptures reveal that God loves Jerusalem. In spite of its sordid history, He has set His face toward this city. Though He prophesies that much tribulation shall come upon this place, yet He also promises to eventually deliver and restore the city.

God proclaims concerning Jerusalem:

“For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, does take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff...the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient...And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honorable... For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against he Lord” (Isa. 3:1-5, 8).

Over a hundred years later, through the prophet Ezekiel, God prophesied, saying:

“He cried also in my ear with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near...And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a

writer’s inkhorn by his side...And He called to the man clothed in linen, which had the writer’s inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others He said in my hearing, Go you after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have you pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark, and begin at My sanctuary...And He said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go you forth. And they went forth and slew in the city. And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried and said, Ah Lord God! Will You destroy all the residue of Israel in your pouring out of your fury upon Jerusalem? Then said He unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great...And as for Me also, My eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head” (Ezek. 9).

Of course, this prediction had a former fulfillment in Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. There is, however, a strong likelihood that this and other such prophecies concerning Jerusalem will also have end-time applications, and, if so, then it would appear that there will indeed be a rebuilding of a

temple or place of worship in the city, because the command of God to slaughter is said to commence at His sanctuary and His house.

Some have compared the setting of a mark on the foreheads of the righteous in this particular passage with the sealing of the 144,000 in Revelation 7. Both do evidence some kind of divine protection—a sparing at a most crucial point in time. It is quite possible that these two events are related or may even be referring to the same thing.

LATTER-DAY JERUSALEM

Jerusalem has been the center of world attention for a long, long time, not only in Old Testament times, but also in the ages since. Indeed, Mohammad, the founder of Islam, is said to have ascended into heaven from the very site of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Crusades were at least ostensibly fought on the pretext of emancipating the city from the Turks, although there was clearly another more sinister agenda involved as well. The Knights Templar were established as protectors of the highways into and out of Jerusalem, although their true mission seems quite likely to have merely been masked by this apparently benevolent activity. Their interest appears to have been Jerusalem itself, the plundering of possible Temple treasure, and the establishment of a supposed divinely-appointed

dynasty, with the right to rule from this great city.

The Bible has much to say with respect to the evil and eventual downfall of Jerusalem. The leadership of Israel comes in for a great share of criticism from God. We know that God has allowed this city to fall in a great way on two former occasions, once by the hand of the Babylonians, and the other by the Romans in 70 A.D. Of course, it has been attacked, captured, and dominated by many empires and civilizations throughout history.

The former demises of Jerusalem, details of which are recorded in the Scriptures, should give us an idea of how things will unfold in the latter days. There is every reason to believe that there will be corruption and collusion on the part of certain Jewish leaders, leading them to forsake God and their own heritage in order to either gain power and money, or to save themselves. They will seek to ingratiate themselves with the proponents of globalism. A somewhat obscure prophecy in the book of Daniel contains at least an indication of what might unfold. Speaking of the enigmatic *king of the north*, Daniel writes:

“The king of the north will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set AGAINST THE HOLY COVENANT. He will take action against it and then return to his own country. At the appointed time he will invade the south again,

but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the HOLY COVENANT. He will return and SHOW FAVOR to those who FORSAKE THE HOLY COVENANT. His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the TEMPLE fortress and will abolish the DAILY SACRIFICE. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With FLATTERY he will CORRUPT those who have VIOLATED THE COVENANT, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him” (Dan. 11:28-32).

Perhaps it may not be possible or appropriate to state categorically that this passage is referring directly to such action on the part of Jewish leaders in the end-time, but there is strong indication that this could well be the implication. It is clear that this latter-day dictator is set against God. It is clear that there will be some who forsake God, entering into some sort of conspiracy. That at least a portion of these traitors are Jews seems apparent from the context, because the desecration of the Temple is spoken of, which automatically connects this prophecy with the city of Jerusalem. It is said that this unscrupulous end-time ruler will seek to corrupt some of the people of the covenant, and do so by flattery, and that he will be successful in doing so. But not all will succumb. Some will prevail and stand up in resistance,

even as did Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-nego withstand Nebuchadnezzar's command to compromise their faith and bow down to the image, an obvious forerunner to the *image of the beast* discussed in Revelation 13. It is probably impossible to overstate the importance of what Daniel and his three compatriots experienced in the court of Babylon and later under Persian domination. That entire set of circumstances is a type of the end-time situation described in many parts of the Bible, especially the book of Daniel itself, as well as Revelation.

In regard to the possible betrayal of Israel by certain Jewish political leaders, it came to light several years ago that one of the major players in the Israeli government was involved in secret negotiations with the Vatican in regard to the future status of Jerusalem. This was done in diametric opposition to the rights, interests, and welfare of the Jewish people and the city itself. It was accomplished behind the scenes at the very time the then official Israeli government position was categorically against any such outside involvement in matters concerning Jerusalem.

The details of this covert operation were revealed by an Italian newspaper, *La Stampa*, on September 10, 1993. Shortly after that time, I wrote a lengthy letter to the mailing list of *Cornerstone Publications* outlining the uncovering of this nefarious plot. The following is a quotation from that letter:

"I am writing with regard to the planned sellout of Jerusalem by the Israeli government to the Vatican...Foreign Minister SHIMON PERES is apparently the prime mover in this clandestine effort. According to the July, 1994 issue of *Inside Israel*, Peres' plans for Jerusalem's future are slowly being exposed, forcing him to engage in deception and lying to stem further erosion. The first crack in the secret plot occurred when PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, during a speech in Johannesburg, South Africa, revealed the existence of a letter sent from Peres to the Norwegian Foreign Minister in October of 1993, committing Israel to reopening PLO governing institutions in Jerusalem. Peres denied the statement before the Knesset, but the government later admitted that such a letter was indeed sent.

Peres then told the Israeli parliament, *If you are insinuating that we would ever DIVIDE JERUSALEM, then that's an ugly slander.* Insiders who know Peres intimately have quickly concluded that his response means precisely the opposite—that he is, in fact, planning on dividing the city. Once again, according to *Inside Israel*, yet another very strategic letter was sent, this time from Peres to Pope John Paul II. French intellectual Mark Halter, a close friend of Peres,' told the weekly publication *Shishi* that in May of this year, he personally delivered a letter from the

Foreign Minister to the Pope which outlined Peres' plans for Jerusalem. According to Halter, *Peres offered to hand over sovereignty of Jerusalem's Old City to the Vatican.*

Mr. Halter went on to elaborate by saying: *Jerusalem will stay the capital of Israel, but the Old City will be administered by the Vatican. The city will have an Israeli mayor and a Palestinian mayor, both under orders from the Holy See. The program was originally submitted to the Vatican by Peres two years ago, just before the Oslo talks began.*

Apparently the PLO was informed of the plans during the Oslo negotiations, and Arafat agreed to comply. The agenda also has the support of a number of very influential Palestinian intellectuals who were consulted on the matter, including Professor Edward Said.

According to *Inside Israel: The plans call for the extra-territoriality of the Old City and the airport at Atarot, which will become a worldwide meeting center. The plan was first published in the Italian newspaper, La Stampa, on September 10, 1993, three days before Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met with Yasser Arafat in Washington, D.C. At that time, Peres ordered the Foreign Ministry to deny that such a program existed. Today, Foreign Ministry workers are not issuing denials and are privately confirming the*

existence of such a plan.

The apparent details call for the Old City section of Jerusalem to become a sort of *second Vatican*, with all three major religions represented (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) within, but under the authority of the Pope. There are some in the Israeli government who see the plan as a boon for the country, resulting in increased trade, tourism, and prosperity. Furthermore, they conclude that future problems between the Arabs and Israelis could much more easily be solved with the strong presence of the Vatican in Jerusalem acting as an intermediary.

In other related developments, Peres and Arafat met in Bucharest, Romania, with the Iranian Foreign Minister. During the meeting, Arafat was given assurances that the Al Asqa Mosque will become independent of Israel, and that he will be allowed to visit it. Peres then agreed to an increase in the size of the Palestinian deployment of police in Jerusalem, as well as coming out in support of the right of all Palestinians to return freely to the disputed areas, including the capital city.

One of the overriding questions in this whole affair is the prominence of Shimon Peres. He is the one seen taking the initiative in the endeavor to make arrangements with both the Vatican and the PLO. His overt involvement even extends to his presenting his own peace plan

for Syria, in spite of the fact that Prime Minister Rabin already has his own peace program on the table. What is going on? Why is Peres apparently attempting to circumvent Rabin? Does the Foreign Minister indeed have designs on Rabin's position as head of state?

I find it most intriguing that Mr. Peres has stated that under no circumstances would he propose that Jerusalem be divided, and yet many insiders seem to sense that this is precisely what Peres intends to do. The key word here is *divide*. The Bible clearly shows that in the end-time Jerusalem will indeed be divided. It is very interesting that the word *peres* is actually found in the Scriptures. We see it in the book of Daniel, in the famous episode of the *handwriting on the wall*. Notice the following passage from Daniel 5:

Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. This is the interpretation of the thing: Mene—God has numbered your kingdom and finished it. Tekel—You are weighed in the balances and found wanting. PERES—Your kingdom is DIVIDED, and given to the Medes and Persians (Dan. 5:24-28).

How remarkable! The word *peres* is here used to denote division, in this case the city of ancient Babylon. In fact, the

actual definition reads as follows: *peres* - to split up or divide. The prime root means to break into pieces (usually without violence), to split, distribute, deal, divide, part, tear.

I cannot help but find it absolutely amazing that the Israeli Foreign Minister's very name means to *deal* and to *divide*, which is precisely what he is in the process of secretly doing, all the while denying his sinister plans. I do not believe that this can be chalked up to mere coincidence! Undoubtedly time will tell. We have the information. Now we must watch and see just how things develop."

It so happens that Shimon Peres indeed did prove to be a most intriguing character. In a shocking episode, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated, and Foreign Minister Peres assumed the reigns of government in Israel. What part, if any, he played in this event may be impossible to determine. History, however, has clearly shown that Mr. Peres was then and continues to be today a major player in both Israeli and world affairs, primarily behind the scenes, with an avowed objective of bringing the Jewish nation under the aegis of the greater global community, removing the bounds of Jewish nationalism, compromising the security and sovereignty of the Jewish people, and involving the Vatican in the interests of the city of Jerusalem.

In the intervening years, conservative Israeli efforts to

curb the trend toward yielding to United Nations and globalist demands have ultimately fallen short or failed outright. The country has weakened its once staunch stand against the encroachment of the PLO and its other sworn Arab enemies. The entire face of the Middle East situation has been so gravely altered over the past 6-7 years, that it is hardly recognizable any longer. It bears little resemblance to the resistance of former years.

Things are shaping up for the fulfillment of Bible prophecy with respect to the city of Jerusalem. It is indeed going to be a divided city; there will be intrigue and conspiracy between Jewish leaders and the Beast power that will result in compromising the safety and security of Israel. Jerusalem, true to God's Word will become a cup of trembling to the nations of the world.

CONSPIRACY CONTINUES

The previous evidence is several years old. What about today? Has there been a continuation of the original efforts of Shimon Peres, the groundwork of which was laid in the secret 1993 negotiations with the Vatican? The answer apparently is a definite **YES!**

In an article from the *Temple Mount Faithful*, the following commentary on the PLO and the Pope appeared:

“Headline: A COVENANT BETWEEN THE POPE AND PLO LEADER YASSER ARAFAT AGAINST THE GOD AND PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND JERUSALEM

On 15th February, 2000 at the Vatican, the Pope and the leader of the PLO terrorist organization, Yasser Arafat, signed a covenant against God and the people of Israel and Jerusalem. It was a covenant between two enemies of Israel who for a long time would rather have Israel disappear from the Promised Land as soon as possible.

According to this agreement, Jerusalem should be an INTERNATIONAL CITY based on international resolutions and an international guarantee (The U.N. has decided on more than one occasion that Jerusalem should be an international city). They also decided that any step or activity taken by Israel to change this position of Jerusalem is against the law. The agreement also recognizes a *Palestinian* state in the land of Israel, and agrees on cooperation between the Vatican and the PLO. The Vatican committed itself to assisting the so-called *Palestinians*. Authorities in the Vatican explained, *The agreement paves the way for establishment of full diplomatic relations with a Palestinian state when it is founded*. The PLO representative in the Vatican stated, *This is an historical covenant*.

It is no accident that this covenant was signed one month before the Pope's visit to Israel. The

agreement is part of the long-term policy of the Vatican against Israel ever since the State was founded. This is a continuation of the historical hostility of the Vatican against the Jewish people. The Jewish people in exile, mainly in Europe, and later also in South American have been persecuted by the Popes and the Roman Catholic Church, and many millions were killed in terrible ways during the Inquisition, the pogroms, and, in our time, in the Holocaust, during which the Pope did not even try to prevent this murder or even state that he was against it. He was silent.

On the other hand, the leader of the PLO terrorist organization, Yasser Arafat, continues, through this covenant, the long, bloody struggle of terror against Israel, and his hands are covered with Jewish blood. His goal was, and still is, to destroy the State of Israel, and bring another holocaust on the Jews. Yesterday's picture of the terrorist Yasser Arafat kissing the hand of the Pope after the signing of the covenant, showed an unholy and hypocritical covenant between a mass-murderer and a Pope whom the Vatican says is holy.

How could the Pope allow this hand, which is full of Jewish blood, to hold his hand, and this man, who is a murderer, to kiss his hand? More than being a covenant between two lovers, this is a covenant of hate against Israel.”

Over the last seven years, PLO chairman Yasser Arafat has

cultivated close ties with Pope John Paul II and the powerful Vatican hierarchy. His objective has been all along to get the Pope to sanction the *internationalizing* of Jerusalem, thus paving the way for recognition of an official Palestinian state, with the city as its capital.

Shortly after the signing of the agreement between the Pope and the PLO, John Paul II paid an historic visit to Israel. While he was there, however, he seemed far more intent on indicating his support for the Palestinians than for the Israelis. While the Pope tries to reconcile the Roman Catholic Church to Israel, because of there long silence during WWII, he is calling for a Palestinian homeland.

Reporting on the Pope's visit to Israel, a publication of *The Prophecy Club* issued the following statement:

“A Palestinian flag fluttered as the Pope arrived in Bethlehem. Pope John Paul II made an impassioned plea for a Palestinian homeland at the start of his visit to the West Bank town of Bethlehem—the birthplace of Jesus Christ.

No one can ignore how much the Palestinian people have had to suffer in recent decades. Your torment is before the eyes of the world, and it has gone on for too long, the Pope said in a speech at the welcoming ceremony attended by PLO leader, Yasser Arafat.

On his arrival in Bethlehem, he was presented with a bowl of

earth, which he kissed. The Pope said the Vatican had always recognized that the Palestinian people *have the natural right to a homeland, and the right to be able to live in peace and tranquility with other peoples of this area.*

In the international forum, my predecessors and I have repeatedly proclaimed that there would be no end to the sad conflict in the Holy Land without stable guarantees for the rights of all the peoples involved, on the basis of INTERNATIONAL LAW and the relevant UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS AND DECLARATIONS, the Pontiff said.

The Pope called for courage, compromise, and *compliance with the demands of justice* from all parties involved. In response, Yasser Arafat said, *The Palestinian people value highly your just positions in support of their cause, and their rightful presence on their homeland as a sovereign and independent people.*

Of course, the land desired for the Palestinian state is out of Israel's existing country, not the surrounding area that the Arab nations occupy. Why is it that they now want Israel? Is it because Israel has developed the land and make it a breadbasket for Europe? Perhaps the Arabs want to eliminate the Israeli people altogether. A good way to get a head start on the Jewish destruction would be for the PLO to be *WITHIN* the State. It would be very difficult for Israel to fight both an external and an internal attack."

There is absolutely no question whatsoever that the controlling global powers today want Jerusalem to be an international city, and insist on the creation of an official Palestinian state on Israeli soil. These goals have been on the drawing board since the creation of Israel over 50 years ago, and they are closer than ever to fulfillment.

A number of insiders are speculating that 2000 will be the year of Palestinian statehood. According to the *Sydney Herald*, the Palestinian Authority has set September 13th as a sacred date for declaring an independent Palestinian state, even without Israel's consent. The Authority is quoted as saying, *This is a final date, and it is not possible to extend or delay that deadline.*

Again, according to the newspaper, *The announcement comes a month after the Palestinian Central Council, one of the PLO's highest decision-making bodies, said a state should be declared this year. That ruling was made after Mr. Arafat bowed to international pressure last year and agreed not to declare a state until after the Israeli elections in May, to avoid influencing the voting patterns.*

Mr. Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, said there was deep dissatisfaction in the Palestinian-controlled areas as a result of the present impasse in talks...Other Palestinian officials went further, warning that the West Bank land would be seized unilaterally if no

decision was reached. A senior aide to Mr. Arafat, Tayeb-Abdel Rahim, said that if the dispute was not resolved soon, violence could erupt in the Palestinian areas...This region will not enter an era of peace unless our nation gets its rights back.

After returning home from the Camp David peace talks in late July of this year, Arafat issued a statement to the *Saudi Gazette*. Asked whether he has changed his timetable for the declaration of a Palestinian state on September 13th, he replied:

"Never, never. There is no retreat on the fixed timetable of the declaration of the state. It will be declared on the fixed time which is September 13th, God willing, regardless of those who agree or disagree. It was the first time since the failed Camp David summit that he directly answered the question of a timetable for declaring a Palestinian state."

"President Clinton, who sponsored the Camp David talks, has threatened that Washington would review its relationship with the Palestinians if Arafat presses ahead with plans to unilaterally declare an independent state in September. Clinton also said he was considering, in light of recent events, moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem."

The crucial point of division in the Middle East peace negotiations remains the status of Jerusalem, with both side claiming jurisdiction.

It is also very interesting that the Internet Edition of *The Jerusalem Post* reported in March of this year that Israel had made a deal to withdraw from the Golan Heights. Israel is almost indefensible without the high ground of the Golan.

“An Israeli television report that a peace accord between Israel and Syria will be finalized within the next few weeks has prompted strongly worded denials from both governments. TV Channel One’s correspondent, Amnon Abramovich, said in his report, *I would say that within three to five weeks we can expect [Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak to submit to the Knesset, the cabinet, and the Israeli public, an agreement with Syria, which would also include a solution to the Lebanon problem. The professional echelons have already finished their work, the details are clear, the formulas have been prepared, and the time for making the decision has arrived.*

This report prompted Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak to issue a denial that such an agreement had indeed been reached. The report came just as Foreign Minister David Levy defended his warning that anti-Israeli attacks originating in Lebanon, where Syria is the main power-broker, would be repaid in kind.

Of course, by now everyone is acutely aware that the Israeli army has recently pulled out of southern Lebanon, an area that they have controlled for a long time. Just as soon as this

occurred, the Hezbollah immediately moved in and took over the region. It was reminiscent of the American withdrawal from Vietnam. If you recall, the last of the US forces were hardly off the ground before the Communists swarmed into Saigon, producing one of the most shameful moments in American history. This present set of circumstances cannot bode well for the immediate future of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

Make no mistake about it, current Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, is a convert to the gospel of globalism. He is friends with Shimon Peres, who continues to operate against any efforts to hold the line in the Israeli negotiations with the Palestinians. After the failure of the Camp David meetings in July of this year, Shimon Peres was sponsored by Mr. Barak as a candidate for the office of President. Fortunately for Israel, at least for the moment, Peres suffered a surprising defeat, thanks to the opposition leadership of Ariel Sharon, the military hero of the Israeli defense against the Arabs.

It is also interesting to note that on August 1st, the Vatican proclaimed that Jerusalem absolutely must be made an *international city*. U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright met with her counterpart at the Vatican, Foreign Minister Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran Israel, which claims sovereignty over the whole city, accused the Vatican of meddling. On the

other hand, Vatican sources have made it clear to Israel that any unilateral decisions affecting Jerusalem would be *morally and legally unacceptable*. The protection of its own religious interests has led the Vatican to establish ties with Israel in 1994, and sign a cooperation treaty with PLO leader, Yasser Arafat in February of this year calling for the internationalizing of the city of Jerusalem.

JERUSALEM IN THE END-TIME

We read earlier in a passage from Daniel 11 that the *King of the North* will eventually come against Jerusalem, attack the Temple fortress, and cause the so-called *abomination of desolation* to be placed therein (Dan. 11:31). From Daniel 9, we understand the timing of this latter-day event to be at or about the mid-point during the last seven years prior to the end of the age, culminating in the Second Coming of the Messiah. Referring to this time, Daniel 9:27 states:

“And he (King of the North) shall confirm the (a) covenant with man for one week (prophetically, this is likely a seven-year period—a day for a year in fulfillment): and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

A more accurate and more comprehensible translation of this passage would be:

“He will confirm a covenant with man for one seven. In the middle of the seven, he will put an end to the sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the Temple, he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him” (NIV).

In His prediction of the latter day, the Savior made reference to this same prophecy by saying:

“When you therefore shall see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso reads, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains...For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be...Immediately after the tribulation of those days...then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:15-16, 21, 29-30).

In Luke’s parallel account, the wording is slightly different, adding the following information with respect to the city of Jerusalem:

“And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies,

then know that the desolation thereof is nigh...And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled...And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:20, 24, 27-28).

Clearly, Jerusalem is going to be a major center of attention at the time of the end. Of course, it already has played a critical role in world affairs for centuries, but nothing compared to its prominence and significance in the latter days.

In spite of the treachery of certain Jewish leaders, in spite of the collusion, the compromise, the deceit, and the betrayal that will lead to the endangerment of Jerusalem and the Israeli nation, all will not be lost. Great punishment is predicted upon the city and the people, but God still loves Jerusalem, and will yet see to it that it is preserved.

The book of Zechariah is one of the most intriguing in all the Bible. It apparently was written over a seven year period of prophetic ministry, and may well be a book that deals almost exclusively with the final seven years prior to the return of Christ. In the latter portion of this writing, we have powerful references to Jerusalem and the Jews at the time

of the end. God predicts:

“Thus says Yahweh; I will return unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain...There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem...and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing...Thus says the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will save My people from the east country, and from the west country...And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph...for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off.”

“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a CUP OF TREMBLING unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, says the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open My eyes upon the house of Judah...And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and

Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place...In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”

“Behold, the day of the Lord comes, and your spoil shall be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the house 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. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east...and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Him...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 JUDAH SHALL FIGHT AT JERUSALEM... And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one.”

Every believer needs to keep his eye on Jerusalem. Though it has always been one of

the most prominent places in world history, the significance and impact of its future role will dwarf its past! It is slated to play a most decisive part in the plan of God that is unfolding.

Through the prophet Joel, God exclaims:

“For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted My land...Yea, and what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you render Me a recompense?... Swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head; because you have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My goodly pleasant things: the children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have you sold unto the Grecians, that you might remove them far from their border. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither you have sold them...And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah...Proclaim you this among the Gentiles: Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all you heathen, and gather yourselves round about: thither cause the

mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision...The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall you know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no stranger pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord...Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation” (Joel 3).

We are living in the time when many things predicted in the Bible are in the process of coming to pass. Hardly a day goes by that a discerning person does not discover some new piece of evidence, some new piece of the puzzle. In spite of its danger and deception, this is still the most dynamic, exciting, and meaningful time in which to live and know the truth of God!

The near future undoubtedly holds many changes

and many challenges for those who will commit to, obey, and serve the one true God of heaven and earth. If we, as believers, have not already discovered that this life and calling are decidedly not a bed of roses, the day is rushing toward us when we will. Those who choose to go on with God in the days that lie ahead are going to face and endure powerful people, circumstances, and situations that will take them to the brink and test them to the limit. It will not be a time for the faint of heart!

Jerusalem and the land of Israel will undoubtedly become more and more the center of attention in this world. In fact, the conflict between this nation and its Arab enemies has been front-page news for many years already. This will only increase as time goes on.

Early elections in Israel over a peace treaty with the Palestinians are now inevitable. Prime Minister Ehud Barak recently suffered a double defeat in the Israeli Knesset. First, as reported earlier, Barak's chosen candidate for President, Shimon Peres, lost out; and then, just a few hours later, the hawkish opposition won a *no-confidence* vote in parliament on Barak's peace policies. The parliamentary challenges fell short of toppling the government, but made it painfully clear to Barak, elected by a landslide just two years ago, that he will be unable to pass a hotly contested peace treaty with the Palestinians in this Knesset.

According to the *Associated Press*:

"Leaders of Israel's peace camp said Barak should use the three-month Knesset recess to try and conclude a deal with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, then call elections, turning the vote into a peace referendum."

"During these three months, the Prime Minister has to make a heroic attempt to complete the negotiations with the Palestinians...and to initial early elections, said Yossi Sarid, leader of the dovish Meretz party, a partner in the coalition. The next regularly scheduled elections are in 2003."

"The Palestinians are worried by Barak's domestic difficulties, said Nabil Amr, a PLO Cabinet Minister. If he wastes more time with hesitation, he will have no agreement and no government, Amr told Al-Jazeera television."

"Monday's vote in parliament showed that the alliance between the right wing, the religious parties, and Russian immigrants, which ruled the country under former right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has re-emerged."

"The defectors have urged Barak to form a so-called government of national unity with the Likud Party. Barak's disgruntled Foreign Minister, David Levy, who is considering leaving the government, is also pressing Barak to bring in the Likud. Likud chairman Ariel Sharon said a

national consensus can be achieved only if the Prime Minister agrees that Jerusalem remain undivided under Israeli sovereignty. He does not have a majority, and I think we will have to go to elections, Sharon told reporters."

Since that news report, Foreign Minister David Levy has resigned from the Barak government. It appears as though the Prime Minister has until October to rally support and stave off a dissolution of his administration.

If the conservative Jewish religious leaders are successful in somehow re-building a Temple or place of sacrifice in Jerusalem (and concerted efforts have been ongoing for some years now), we can anticipate that strategic events will inevitably surround such an accomplishment. At the present time, Prime Minister Ehud Barak seems bent on conceding more land and authority to the Palestinians. It remains to be seen if he will be able to survive in office. Dissension is rampant among Israeli government officials, and it may be that battle lines are being drawn within the country itself.

What is gathering on the world horizon may or may not fully materialize in our day and time. No doubt, however, there will continue to be great implications with respect to events that transpire in Israel and the Middle East. It is a time for all of God's true people to keep their eyes and ears open, to draw ever

closer to Messiah, give up their hold on the things of this life, and allow God to powerfully and effectively use them in His service.

It is a time for each of us to seriously consider the calling we have been given. What is truly being accomplished in and through our lives? Is God really at work in you and me, or are we just drifting, wondering, searching, and hoping? Are we guilty of resting on our past religious and church laurels? Do we, for a moment, assume that our long tenure in the Sabbath-keeping community somehow gives us a leg up with God? This sort of erroneous thinking is both dangerous and deceptive. You and I cannot afford to assume anything! We must make our calling and election sure.

It is imperative that all of us sense how much we need to wake up, how much more we need to know God, how much more like Him we should be, how much more we must lean on Him. It is easy to have a simple faith when times are good, but the Scriptures reveal so clearly how quickly we fold when the pressure of trial comes upon us.

Will you be strong in the time of trouble? The answer to that question is found by looking in the mirror. Who are you, and what are you doing **NOW?** Do not be fooled into thinking that you can get away with coasting in your spiritual life now, but that when the chips are down, you will come through with flying

colors!! The real measure of how you will respond in the difficult times can be measured by how and what you are doing at the present moment. Change must come now, not simply be a hopeful part of the future.

Although the world is in a bad way and bound to be worse before it mends, we are assured that Almighty God is in control. He has already determined the end of these things, and victory for His purposes and His people will ultimately be accomplished. In the end, He wins, and you and I are to share in that great triumph.

According to the Scriptures, there remains a final day of reckoning for this world. It has not transpired yet, and when it does, it will be unprecedented in all of human history. Do not think in terms of how you can escape what is coming in your life. Leave that for God to decide. If the world situation continues to substantially deteriorate over the next few months and years, there is a good chance that we may witness and experience some, if not all, of what the Bible describes in its end-time prophecies. We do not know for a certainty if these things will come to pass in our lifetime, but we can be sure, in any case, that the challenges of the future will not be easy. The likelihood that many believers will be tested to the limit, indeed brought to the very brink of trial in their lives is probably greater today than ever before.

It is, however, not a time

for fear or despair on our part. Just before Paul's death, he admonished Timothy with words that seem so particularly applicable to God's people today. He said:

“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...ENDURE HARDNESS LIKE A GOOD SOLDIER of Jesus Christ. No man that goes to war entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier...Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake...It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (II Tim. 2:1-13).

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