

# ***DEVOTIONAL QUARTERLY***

## ***PROPHECIES OF CHRIST'S RETURN***

***EZEKIEL, DANIEL AND ZECHARIAH***

***SUNDAY SCHOOL  
WINTER QUARTER, 2009-2010  
DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY***



# Devotional Quarterly

*Through-the-Bible Series*

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Vol. 20, No. 1

December 1, 2009

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## Prophecies of Christ's Return

Studies in Ezekiel, Daniel  
and Zechariah

*The Daily Devotionals are a compilation of Scripture references pertaining to the second coming of Christ. They point to the fact of His coming and warn people that preparation is necessary to meet Jesus when He comes. This is done by receiving Him as personal Savior. Man's hope is in Christ. Those who are saved prepare to meet Christ by being faithful to Him. The devil hates the prophecy of the Lord's return and will do anything he can to prevent people from getting prepared for our Lord's return.*

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**Personal and Daily Devotionals  
for  
Winter Quarter, 2009-2010**

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Written by Mary McCalister, Marc Shultz  
and Beverly Barnett

# Read Through the Bible in a Year

To help you with your Bible reading, we are providing suggested Scripture readings for each day of the quarter. You will find these suggested readings at the beginning of each devotional quarterly.

The readings include the “Sunday Devotionals,” “Daily Readings” and the “Daily Devotionals.” The “Sunday Devotionals” are now included in the Devotional Quarterly. The “Daily Readings” cover other Scriptures not related to the Sunday School lessons. By reading all passages listed each day, you will have read the entire Bible at the end of one year. You may use the box beside the date to check when you have read the Scriptures for that day.

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*Vol. 20, No. 1*

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## December Scripture Readings

DATE	DAILY READINGS	DAILY DEVOTIONALS
☐ November 30	Philippians 1:1-26, 28-30; 2:17-30	Ezekiel 34:1-10
☐ December 1	Philippians 3:1-19; 4:1-3, 5-13, 20-23	Psalms 23:1-6
☐ December 2	Colossians 1:1-11, 15-19, 20-29; 2:1-5, 8-13, 15-23	Isaiah 11:11-16
☐ December 3	Colossians 3; 4	John 10:9-11
☐ December 4	1 Thessalonians 1; 2:1, 3-12, 15-20; 3:5-13	Isaiah 43:2, 3
☐ December 5	1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, 11-13; 5:1-5, 9-17, 19-28	Psalms 95:1-7
☐ December 6	2 Thessalonians 1:1, 5, 6, 11, 12; 2; 3:1, 2, 6-18	Jeremiah 23:3-8
☐ December 7	1 Timothy 1; 2:1-4, 6-8, 11-15; 3	Leviticus 18:24-28
☐ December 8	1 Timothy 4:1-12, 14-16; 5	2 Chronicles 36:14-21
☐ December 9	1 Timothy 6:1-16, 19-21	Deuteronomy 7:7, 8
☐ December 10	2 Timothy 1:1-12, 14-18; 2:1-14, 16-26	Deuteronomy 30:3-5
☐ December 11	2 Timothy 3:6-11, 13-15; 4:1, 2, 5, 9-22	Jeremiah 50:17-20
☐ December 12	Titus 1:1-5, 10-16; 2:1, 2, 6-10, 15; 3:1, 2, 9-15	Ephesians 1:13, 14
☐ December 13	Philemon	Amos 9:8-15
☐ December 14	Hebrews 1—3	Psalms 126:1-3
☐ December 15	Hebrews 4:1-11, 13; 5:1-11	Zephaniah 3:14-20
☐ December 16	Hebrews 6; 7:1-24, 27, 28; 8	Romans 11:25, 26
☐ December 17	Hebrews 9:1-11, 16-28; 10:1-21, 26-39; 11:2-40	Jeremiah 33:14-16
☐ December 18	Hebrews 12; 13:4-25	Matthew 24:29-31
☐ December 19	James 1:1, 5, 11, 13-27; 2	Jeremiah 31:31-34
☐ December 20	James 3—5	Jeremiah 32:37-42
☐ December 21	Revelation 1; 2	Matthew 25:31
☐ December 22	Revelation 3; 4	Psalms 24:7-10
☐ December 23	Revelation 5:1-8; 6	Matthew 1:18-25
☐ December 24	Revelation 7; 8	Luke 2:1-20
☐ December 25	Revelation 9; 10	Galatians 4:4-7
☐ December 26	Revelation 11; 12:1-10, 12-17	Luke 2:25-33
☐ December 27	Revelation 13; 14	Psalms 2:1-12
☐ December 28	Revelation 15; 16	Psalms 46:1-5
☐ December 29	Revelation 17; 18	Joel 3:17-21
☐ December 30	Revelation 19; 20	John 4:10-14
☐ December 31	Revelation 21; 22	Jeremiah 2:11-13

## 🌀 January Scripture Readings 🌀

DATE	DAILY READINGS	DAILY DEVOTIONALS
<input type="checkbox"/> January 1	Genesis 12:1-3, 8-20; 13; 14	Psalms 90:10-12
<input type="checkbox"/> January 2	Genesis 15—18	Ephesians 5:15-17
<input type="checkbox"/> January 3	Genesis 19—22	Isaiah 35:1-7
<input type="checkbox"/> January 4	Genesis 23—25	Numbers 34:1, 2
<input type="checkbox"/> January 5	Genesis 26—29	Exodus 6:6-8
<input type="checkbox"/> January 6	Genesis 30—32	Jeremiah 31:1-8
<input type="checkbox"/> January 7	Genesis 33—36	Isaiah 56:6, 7
<input type="checkbox"/> January 8	Genesis 37—39	Ephesians 2:19-22
<input type="checkbox"/> January 9	Genesis 40—42	Jeremiah 3:17
<input type="checkbox"/> January 10	Genesis 43—47	Genesis 12:4-7
<input type="checkbox"/> January 11	Genesis 48; 49:1-7, 11-33; 50	Daniel 1:1-8
<input type="checkbox"/> January 12	Exodus 1—4	Daniel 2:1-24
<input type="checkbox"/> January 13	Exodus 5; 6:1-5, 9-30; 7	Matthew 21:44
<input type="checkbox"/> January 14	Exodus 8—10	Micah 4:1, 2
<input type="checkbox"/> January 15	Exodus 11—13	Isaiah 11:6-10
<input type="checkbox"/> January 16	Exodus 14; 15:22-27; 16	Revelation 20:1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> January 17	Exodus 17—20	Revelation 19:11-16
<input type="checkbox"/> January 18	Exodus 21—23	Jeremiah 25:8-12
<input type="checkbox"/> January 19	Exodus 24—27	1 John 1:8-10
<input type="checkbox"/> January 20	Exodus 28—30	Hebrews 10:4-14
<input type="checkbox"/> January 21	Exodus 31—33	Isaiah 60:19-21
<input type="checkbox"/> January 22	Exodus 34—37	Nehemiah 2:1-8
<input type="checkbox"/> January 23	Exodus 38—40	Matthew 21:42, 43
<input type="checkbox"/> January 24	Leviticus 1—3	Luke 21:20-24
<input type="checkbox"/> January 25	Leviticus 4—6	Matthew 24:3-14
<input type="checkbox"/> January 26	Leviticus 7—9	Matthew 24:15-20
<input type="checkbox"/> January 27	Leviticus 10—12	Matthew 24:21-28
<input type="checkbox"/> January 28	Leviticus 13—15	Matthew 24:29-35
<input type="checkbox"/> January 29	Leviticus 16—18	Revelation 13:11-18
<input type="checkbox"/> January 30	Leviticus 19—21	Revelation 19:17-21
<input type="checkbox"/> January 31	Leviticus 22—24	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

## February Scripture Readings

DATE	DAILY READINGS	DAILY DEVOTIONALS
☐ February 1	Leviticus 25–27	John 12:12-19
☐ February 2	Numbers 1–3	Matthew 21:1-5
☐ February 3	Numbers 4–6	Luke 19:38-44
☐ February 4	Numbers 7–9	Isaiah 11:1-5
☐ February 5	Numbers 10–12	Isaiah 2:1-5
☐ February 6	Numbers 13–15	Micah 4:3-5
☐ February 7	Numbers 16–18	Isaiah 9:5-7
☐ February 8	Numbers 19–21	Revelation 16:14-16
☐ February 9	Numbers 22–25	Revelation 17:12-14
☐ February 10	Numbers 26–28	Hosea 3:4, 5
☐ February 11	Numbers 29; 30; 31:1-14, 17-54	Joel 2:28-32
☐ February 12	Numbers 32; 33; 34:3-29	Isaiah 59:19-21
☐ February 13	Numbers 35; 36	2 Corinthians 3:13-18
☐ February 14	Deuteronomy 1–3	Joel 3:14-17
☐ February 15	Deuteronomy 4–6	Micah 5:9-15
☐ February 16	Deuteronomy 7–9	John 10:9-14
☐ February 17	Deuteronomy 10; 11; 12:1-27	Isaiah 54:17
☐ February 18	Deuteronomy 13:6-18; 14; 15	Hosea 2:19-23
☐ February 19	Deuteronomy 16–18	Matthew 26:31-35
☐ February 20	Deuteronomy 19–21	Deuteronomy 12:28-32
☐ February 21	Deuteronomy 22–24	Hebrews 13:20, 21
☐ February 22	Deuteronomy 25–27	Acts 1:9-11
☐ February 23	Deuteronomy 28–30	Daniel 7:27
☐ February 24	Deuteronomy 31; 32:48-52; 33	Malachi 1:11
☐ February 25	Deuteronomy 33; 34	Psalms 22:27-31
☐ February 26	Joshua 1–3	Psalms 72:8-11
☐ February 27	Joshua 4–6	Isaiah 60:9-14
☐ February 28	Joshua 7–9	Revelation 20:4-6

## The Duty of the Shepherd

**KEY VERSE:** “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?” Ezekiel 34:2.

The urban life-style with which most of us are familiar does not give much of an understanding of what a shepherd is. This is a Bible term and we must become familiar with it if we are to understand many Scriptures. Shepherding was one of the earliest occupations. A family's wealth was measured by how many sheep, goats, cows, horses and camels a man owned. Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and David were all shepherds.

It was the shepherd's responsibility to lead his flock to green pastures during the daytime, and at night he would sleep with his body lying across the gate to the enclosure he used to keep the sheep safe. Sheep especially were dependent on the protection of their shepherd.

God used the term *shepherd* to describe those who were the leaders and teachers of His people. When these men shirked their duty, God called them false shepherds and His judgment on them was swift and harsh.

It is significant that Jesus was called the Good Shepherd because we need the Shepherd to keep us safe, to guide us along the right path and to lead us through the valley of the shadow of death.

**LIVING IT:** *Place yourself in the hands of the Good Shepherd and allow Him to lead you through life.*

Mary McCalister

## The Care of the Good Shepherd

**KEY VERSE:** “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want,”  
Psalm 23:1.

A Christian writer once told of visiting Israel and talking to an old shepherd. With Psalm 23 on his mind, the writer asked the shepherd how he used his staff to comfort and guide the sheep.

The shepherd replied that in the daylight he always carried it across his shoulders so the sheep could see it. Somehow this reassured them of his presence and protection. If darkness overtook him before he had brought the sheep to a safe resting place for the night, he would walk slowly while tapping his staff on the ground. The sheep could hear the tapping and would follow the sound knowing that their shepherd was just ahead.

In the same way Jesus, our Good Shepherd, takes care of our physical and emotional needs. He also guides us in paths of righteousness. If we submit ourselves to Him, He leads us by the hand through life and manages our affairs. It is a comfort to know that the Lord is right in front of us, removing obstacles and making the way plain for us.

Today, God’s Word serves as the staff which leads us and guides us as we move through life. It is important that we always keep it in our vision knowing it will lead us into all truth. And, even if the way seems dark or stormy, quoting passages we have put to memory will help us make our way to the light.

**LIVING IT:** *Welcome Jesus as the Good Shepherd who was willing to give His life for you.*

Mary McCalister

## God Recovers the Remnant

**KEY VERSE:** “And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth,” Isaiah 11:12.

There was no moon, but the stars were bright. A mother and her two children sat on the dock, listening as the little waves made soft, chuckling sounds on the sand.

“There’s the Big Dipper and the North Star,” the mother said as she pointed to the sky. “If you are ever lost at night and can find that star you will know which direction is north. Face it. East will be to your right, west to your left, south behind you.”

The mother said, “We can look in the almanac and find just what time the sun will rise on both your birthdays and whether the moon will be shining on that night.”

“How can anyone tell?” the boy asked.

“Men who have studied astronomy know that the sun and moon have regular schedules,” the mother replied.

“Has it always been that way?” the daughter asked.

“Yes,” the mother answered. “God is utterly dependable. In one of his sermons Paul said that God’s promise which was made unto the fathers was fulfilled unto us their children. You can count on it. God keeps His promises.”

That is the lesson of this devotional. The day will come when the remnant of Judah and Israel shall be gathered together by God, and His promises to Israel will be fulfilled.

**LIVING IT:** *Trust in God. He keeps His promises.*

Mary McCalister

## The Good Shepherd Gives His Life

**KEY VERSE:** “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep,” John 10:11.

God has always given us His voice. Before Bethlehem, He gave His messengers, His teachers, His words. But in the manger God gave us Himself.

Many people reject this truth. Islam sees God as one who sends others. He sends angels, prophets and books, but to them God is too holy to come to us Himself. In their belief, for God to touch the earth would be called a “shirk.” They believe that people who claim that God has touched the earth shirk God’s holiness; they make Him gross. They blaspheme Him.

The truth is Christianity celebrates God’s great descent. His nature does not trap Him in Heaven, but leads Him to earth. In God’s great gospel, He not only sent, but He became. He not only looked down, He lived among. He not only talked to us, He lived with us as one of us. He not only lived among us, He died to redeem us and save us.

This should be a matter of rejoicing. Long before you knew you needed grace, God took care of your need. Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Before we knew we needed a Savior, we had one. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

**BELIEVE IT:** *Christ died for you! What a great sacrifice that was!*

Mary McCalister

## He Will Be with Thee

**KEY VERSE:** “When thou passest through the waters, I *will be with thee*; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee,” Isaiah 43:2.

God was speaking to the nation of Israel—God’s peculiar people in Old Testament times—through His prophet, but as His peculiar people in the church age, we can claim the promises He gives.

What are these promises? We are His by redemption. He bought us and we belong to Him. He promised that we could count on Him. He created and redeemed us. He has called us by name and we are His.

This being true, what are we to do? God told the people of Israel, “Ye are my witnesses” (Isa. 43:10). We, too, are His witnesses. We need to live, to speak, to share, to walk our faith before a sinful world that needs to know the reality of our faith, our concern, our redemption and their need of redemption.

This passage reveals God’s mercy in the light of the people of Israel’s unfaithfulness. We are so unworthy, yet, He loves us with an everlasting love. He has delivered us in spite of our sinfulness and failures.

Everything comes from God and exists for Him. We exist to exhibit God, to display His glory. We serve as canvases for His brushstroke, papers for His pen, soil for His seeds and glimpses of His image. The Lord Himself is the Way, and all we have to do is follow.

**LIVING IT:** *Live your life knowing the presence of God.*

Mary McCalister

## The Sheep of His Hand

**KEY VERSES:** “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker . . . we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand,” Psalm 95:6, 7.

Many years ago, Thomas K. Beecher once substituted for his famous brother, Henry Ward Beecher, at the Plymouth church in Brooklyn, New York. Many curiosity seekers had come to hear the renowned Henry Beecher speak. When Thomas Beecher appeared in the pulpit instead, some people got up and started for the doors. Thomas raised his hand for silence and announced, “All those who came here this morning to worship Henry Ward Beecher may withdraw from the church; all who came to worship God may remain.”

How is your worship quotient? If you need help, meditate on this psalm, which is an invitation to praise. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury wrote, “To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, and to devote the will to the purpose of God.”

Not only does this psalm extol the blessings of worship, it is a warning against neglect of worship which leads to disobedience and the neglect of God.

The psalmist refers to Meribah and Massah, when rebellious Israel pushed the Lord to the limits of His patience. He warns the reader to obey and follow God without complaint.

**LIVING IT:** *Ask God to soften your heart and turn your murmurings into a melody of praise.*

Mary McCalister

## The Lord Will Gather the Remnant

**KEY VERSE:** “And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase,” **Jeremiah 23:3.**

It is difficult to gain a proper perspective on the position of Israel in world events. The late I. K. Cross, who was a student of prophecy regarding Israel, wrote this in his book, *O Israel*, published in 1992, page 236, “While the political pundits, as well as those of the major news media, give no credence to Israel’s appearance on the world scene as having any prophetic significance, the fact remains, . . . that this young nation exists only by divine decree. The nations of the world . . . consider Israel a liability.” Not much has changed, and it is difficult to accept what is happening in Gaza as part of Israel’s effort to protect its own people. Although Hamas launches thousands of rockets into Israel, the liberal media does not tell you this. They tell only of the suffering of a few Palestinians caused by Israel’s war effort.

No doubt Jews reading this promise find it difficult to believe, but, it is going to happen, and all the signs point to soon!

It is helpful to read and reread this promise from God for His nation, Israel, that the remnant of Israel, scattered throughout the world, will be gathered by God and brought back to its own nation. In the light of current events, this seems almost impossible, but rest assured, God is able to do what He promises.

**BELIEVE IT:** *Every promise in the book is mine!*

Mary McCalister

## Defiling the Land

**KEY VERSE: “Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you,” Leviticus 18:24.**

Going green is all the rage these days. There are countless organizations you can join who state their position will save the planet, promote safety to animals and make life easier for generations to come.

Is this the kind of defilement the Lord talked about in this passage? No, defiling the land was not what He was referring to. Instead, He referred to sacrifices and offerings which were not done properly; sexual sins of every nature, including homosexuality and sodomy; the eating of blood; consulting wizards and spiritists; all the kinds of crimes which did not honor God.

There is no true stability in what man does. The citizens of South Padre Island trusted the stability of Queen Isabella Causeway, the longest bridge in Texas. But on September 15, 2001, four barges crashed into the support system and brought the bridge down.

What Israel needed to realize, and we, too, need to realize, is that God’s view of right and wrong is the same today as it was with Adam and Eve. Your outlook might change, and Israel’s often did, but God’s truth will never waver and His ways will never alter.

God will always hate sin and love sinners. He never changes direction midstream, recalibrates the course midway home or amends the heavenly constitution. God will always be the same. As James said, there is “no variability, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

**LIVING IT:** *God’s plan and purpose will stand forever.*

Mary McCalister

## Reasons for the Diaspora

**KEY VERSE:** “Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem,” 2 Chronicles 36:14.

Did you raise your eyebrows, thinking, diaspora? What is that? It certainly is not a commonly used word but is used most often with reference to the people of Israel and their being scattered among the nations of the world. We have already looked at God’s promise to restore a remnant, which in itself reflects there must have been a diaspora, or scattering, leaving only a remnant behind.

So, why would God allow such a thing to happen to His chosen nation? The Key Verse reveals that the people of Israel “transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD.” This was not something that happened overnight. God had sent His prophets to them to lead them back to Him, but they mocked God’s messengers and misused them until they stirred up the wrath of God and there was no remedy.

If you have been participating in a known sin and shrugged it off thinking everybody is doing it, do not fool yourself. The day of reckoning will come. If we persist in sinful acts, we can be sure God’s judgment will come. It is far better to give heed to the warnings God gives us, repent of our sins and turn back to Him.

**LIVING IT:** *Be sure your sins will find you out.*

Mary McCalister

## Because of Love

**KEY VERSE:** “But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt,” Deuteronomy 7:8.

Did the people of Israel ever really stop to think about how much God loved them? Do you? His love is marvelous. He loves you simply because He has chosen to do so. He loves you when you do not feel loved. Others may abandon you, divorce you and ignore you, but God will love you always, no matter what.

Think of it. We are unalterably His. He loves us undyingly. Nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:38, 39).

In your meditation have you ever wondered why God gives so much? Think of the orange of the sunrise. The blue of the midday sky. The birds that sing. The fragrance of a flower. The taste of good food. If we give gifts to show our love, how much more would He? Think of His promise: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31:3).

Do you know what else it means? “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). You have a deep aquifer of love from which to draw. When you find it difficult to love, then, you need a drink. Drink deeply. Drink daily.

**LIVING IT:** *For God so loved the world, He gave . . .*

Mary McCalister

## He Will Gather Thee

**KEY VERSE:** “That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee,” Deuteronomy 30:3.

It is difficult for much of the religious world to comprehend the scope of the promise made in this passage. Some years ago a special service was scheduled at Saint Paul’s Cathedral. Many clerics of that day found it difficult to believe in the possibility of Jews coming to faith, while, knowingly or unknowingly, they had been in a church dedicated to the memory of a Jewish believer, attending a service in honor of the Jew’s acceptance of the Messiah, and had been listening to music composed by Mendelssohn, a Jewish believer.

When we look at the chaos rampaging the small country of Palestine today, we must feel that the restoration of Israel is indeed a mystery and difficult for us to believe. We must come to the conclusion that God’s mysteries defy human explanation and go beyond human intellect and wisdom.

So, how do we handle God’s truths that seem beyond our belief? We simply believe God and trust Him to bring about His plans and promises. We must realize that some things are in the hands of God and accept that He will bring them about in His own time.

**LIVING IT:** *God will care for Israel, and He will care for you.*

Mary McCalister

## Israel Brought to His Habitation

**KEY VERSE:** “In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and *there shall be none*; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve,” Jeremiah 50:20.

So much of Jeremiah is in a negative context, negative because of the sinfulness of Israel. So, when you read this passage, do you shake your head in wonderment? Is this truly the writing of Jeremiah? It is difficult to believe.

But, just think about it. Iniquity sought for but not found? Sins not found? What a great promise! Sounds a lot like what happens when a sinner is saved. How glad we are that as children of God there is no iniquity found in us, and our sins have been pardoned all because of what Jesus did for us.

The reliability of God to do what He has promised brings us strength and solace. In the midst of utter human loneliness and loss, in darkness and human despair Jeremiah lamented on the condition of Israel. Yet, he was able to praise God: “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him” (Lam. 3:22-25).

Paul wrote similar words to encourage the members at Thessalonica: “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (2 Thess. 3:3).

**LIVING IT:** *We can learn from these writings that God will take good care of us.*

Mary McCalister

## Sealed with the Holy Spirit

**KEY VERSE:** “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory,” Ephesians 1:14.

Not too long before the book of Ephesians was written, the most famous “sealing” of New Testament times occurred. Roman soldiers rolled a rock over the entrance to the tomb of Jesus and set a seal on the stone. Archeologists tell us this was two ribbons stretched in front of the entrance, glued together with hardened wax that bore the imprimatur of the Roman government—SPQR (Senatus Populusque Romanus)—that was possibly a warning to stay away because the contents of the tomb belonged to Rome.

Of course, their efforts were futile. Far different is the sealing of the Holy Spirit. Be comforted. When hell’s interlopers come seeking to snatch you from God, the seal turns them away. He bought you, owns you and protects you. God paid too high a price to leave you unguarded.

Think about it. Chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, enlightened, and last but not least, sealed. We are the property of the Master for all eternity, based on the finished work at Calvary. Knowing this, we should live like we believe it, fulfilling God’s will for us to be holy.

God has purchased the right of redemption for us and that time is yet to come. The token of our redemption, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, lets us know this redemption is yet to come but is sure.

**LIVING IT:** *We are not redeemed by anything we can do but by the gift of God’s love, His Son.*

Mary McCalister

## Scattered and Regathered

**KEY VERSE:** “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old,” Amos 9:11.

How many times have you read the book of Amos? How much do you know about him? I have several reference books but not one of them mentions Amos. He says of himself that he was a simple shepherd with no ties to the family of prophets. Most of his book deals with God’s judgment on various nations, but this devotional focuses on words he ended with, the restoration of Israel in its completeness.

What a great time that will be! “The plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; . . . they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. . . . they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God” (verses 13-15).

When we hear of what is going on in the land of Palestine today, we have to be careful not to think that we do not believe the prophecy of Amos. Rest assured, however, that this prophecy will come true. The people of Israel will be restored to their land, and God will pour out His blessings upon them.

**LIVING IT:** *God can accomplish what man cannot do.*

Mary McCalister

## Restoration of Israel

**KEY VERSE:** “The LORD hath done great things for us; *whereof we are glad,*” Psalm 126:3.

We need to picture the suffering of Israel through long years of burden bearing and captivity. The psalmist in this verse is referring to the time immediately after the return of the nation of Israel from its exile in Babylon. Happiness and exuberance reign supreme. It is easy to imagine that God’s people feel they have to pinch themselves to believe they are really free. Laughter comes easily. Jubilant shouting is heard often. The Israelites release their pent-up feelings in a flood of healing, restorative praise.

It is easy to imagine their Gentile neighbors looking on in amazement and thinking that the Lord has done great things for Israel! No nation had ever been restored after deportation.

Anyone who has ever experienced the loss of a loved one, financial reverses, serious illness or any kind of imprisonment can find much comfort in this psalm.

The same sensation of delight and joy should seize us every time we meditate on all the great things the Lord has done for us. Do you need to be delivered from the minor irritations and frustrations of life? Spend more time dwelling on God’s great things, and you will truly be delivered.

**LIVING IT:** *Praise God for all He has done for you.*

Mary McCalister

## A Name and a Praise

**KEY VERSE:** “At that time will I bring you *again*, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD” Zephaniah 3:20.

What a time, what a day that will be! With all the negative things that are going on with Israel today, it is difficult to imagine how this prophecy can come true. And, yet, it will come true. You can believe it because God has promised it. God asks, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee” (Isa. 49:15).

Israel should remember, and you should remember, too, that God is for you. Think of all the ways He takes care of you and ministers to you. Trials will come, but He will be with you in them and will ultimately bring you through them.

There is coming a day which will be glorious for Israel. There is coming a day which will be glorious for God’s faithful servants as well. God might be putting us through trials, but the glory day will come. For us, the glorious things about Heaven will not be the golden streets, or the gates of pearl, or even the fact that He is going to wipe away all tears. It will be that we are going to thank Him for the glorious way in which He kept us through every trial and tribulation in this life. We will rejoice in being able to lay our crowns at His feet. We will worship Him in glorious praise.

**LIVING IT:** *To him that overcometh will I give . . . a new name (Rev. 2:17).*

Mary McCalister

## Israel Will Be Saved

**KEY VERSE:** “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob,” Romans 11:26.

If you have a problem having the right attitude toward Israel, it is nothing new. In New Testament times the roles were reversed. The church called a council in Jerusalem to discuss the problem of the Gentiles being saved. I say problem because there were those among the Jewish members who thought the Gentiles had to submit to Mosaic Law to be saved. The final conclusion was that this restriction was not necessary and that faith in Christ was all that was needed.

In this promise for the salvation of Israel as a nation, God will display Himself as the One who always keeps His promises and fulfills His covenants. The ultimate salvation of Israel is one more evidence that God can be believed and trusted.

Because of Israel’s transgression in rejecting its Messiah, it was set aside for a time, and the Gentiles were brought into the fold. But the ultimate salvation of Israel is a foreordained promise sure to be fulfilled.

God’s sovereign grace and election cannot be earned. Neither can it be rejected or thwarted. Nothing can prevent Israel’s being saved and restored—not even its own rebellion and unbelief. God will remove its ungodliness and sin.

**LIVING IT:** *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it (1 Thess. 5:24).*

Mary McCalister

## When Israel Will Be Saved

**KEY VERSE:** “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah,” Jeremiah 33:14.

We have spent most of this quarter studying Jeremiah. He was called as a young man to be God’s prophet, but he demurred, “I cannot speak” (Jer. 1:6). So God told him he would put words in his mouth. For over forty years Jeremiah ministered to the Jews, chastising them for their sins and comforting them with the assurance that God still loved them. Notice how often these sentence starters appear in the book: “The word of the LORD came to me”; “Thus saith the LORD”; “The LORD said unto me” and “At that time, saith the LORD.”

Never does Jeremiah speak his own words, but only the words God gives him to speak. He was often discouraged, but he never turned away from God’s promises. God promised, and fields were bought and sold. God promised, and kings did as Jeremiah said; God promised, and sons and daughters finally returned to Palestine.

Today we read of God’s greatest promise, “The days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jer. 23:5).

Somehow, when we look at current conditions in the Middle East, we may waver in our faith that this promise will come to pass. With conditions as they are now, it will take the power of God to bring about the peace which will be needed. We must, like Jeremiah, trust in that power.

**LIVING IT:** *Have confidence in God and look hopefully toward a future peace for Israel.*

Mary McCalister

## Christ Will Establish His Kingdom

**KEY VERSE:** “And 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,” Matthew 24:30.

Read verse 27 of this chapter to find the subject of these verses: “so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” To the believer this event will be glorious, but to the unbelieving world it will be a time of great mourning. As Matthew said, this will happen “immediately after the tribulation” (verse 29).

This refers to a climactic time throughout the earth when the anti-Christ has prevailed by means of deceit and force, enslaving the major portion of the world and violating every natural and spiritual law. However, worldly people will offer what they think are rational explanations for what is transpiring and logical excuses for their not taking heed.

When God is finally ready to refine and restore the earth, everyone in Heaven, on earth and in hell will know that no human laboratory could compound the fire that will be poured out on the earth. God will not withhold His wrath forever. When He does act, men will know that human scientists and technologists could not produce the woes the earth will feel.

But, for the believer, it will be a time of great rejoicing. Paul described what will happen at the last trump in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57. He rejoiced that at last the victory will be ours.

**LIVING IT:** *Look forward to Christ's coming and rejoice in it.*

Mary McCalister

## The New Covenant

**KEY VERSE:** “But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people,” Jeremiah 31:33.

Since this passage deals with God’s final treatment of Israel, what is in it for us? It gives a picture of the loving forgetfulness of God. He says He will not remember Israel’s sin. In other words, He will forget it. Forgetting is an important part of forgiving.

God is able to forget our past. Why can we not? God throws our sins into the depths of the sea and remembers them no more.

In ancient times, the depths of the sea were completely inaccessible to man. The limits were how far a man could dive with one lungful of air. In modern times we have submarines that can go anywhere on or below the sea’s surface, so we do not fully appreciate this figure of speech. Perhaps the inaccessible aspect would be clearer if we would think about the statement as saying that God has cast all of our sins into a nuclear waste dump. That is truly inaccessible! And that is forgiveness!

Yes, God will bring the people of Israel into the position He had planned for them. He will forget their sins. God does the same for us, praise His name!

**LIVING IT:** *An unmarked tombstone has one word on it—Forgiven. That should be our testimony.*

Mary McCalister

## The Everlasting Covenant

**KEY VERSE:** “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me,” Jeremiah 32:40.

There are conflicting emotions when one hears the news of turmoil in the Middle East? Many are being killed. It is not always easy to maintain the proper perspective with slanted journalism coloring what is really happening.

Always remember that mankind can do many wrong things, but, in the final analysis, God is in control, and what He promises He brings about.

We need to hear often that God is in control. We need to hear that it is not over until He says it is over. We need to hear that life's mishaps and tragedies are not a reason to bail out. They are simply a reason to sit tight. Remember, you are not the first person to weep. You are not the first who needed help.

Jeremiah spoke the words in this passage to bring comfort to the people of Israel and Judah. Through him, God said that He would do them good and would not turn away from them.

As believers we have similar promises from God: eternal life (John 3:16), abiding peace (John 16:33), comfort (John 14:16) and leadership (John 16:13).

**LIVING IT:** *Always believe and trust God to do what He says.*

Mary McCalister

## Jesus Will Sit on His Throne

**KEY VERSE:** “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory,” Matthew 25:31.

What does the picture of Jesus sitting on His throne of glory proclaim to all? Jesus is victor! Praise God!

This generation, which glamorizes the competitive world and our selfish society, has also brought many fears to the human race. Unbelievers fear the possible destruction of the human race through the use of nuclear weapons or some similar, man-made catastrophe.

But God’s plan is different. He gives the believer the assurance and faith to know that He is in charge and He has given His angels charge over us (Psalm 91:11).

Today, there is little recognition of God’s plan for His redeemed people and the enthroning of His Son. Go into the marketplace, into our educational institutions and—yes—even into popular religious circles, and you will find a growing tendency to make mankind large and to make God small.

Believers are the true realists. They believe in the certainty of Jesus Christ’s ultimate victory and His thousand years reign on the earth.

Believers can derive great comfort, knowing that the time is coming when our Lord and Savior, coming to sit on His throne, is universally acknowledged to be King of kings and Lord of lords. All will acclaim Him victor.

**LIVING IT:** *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4). Rejoice!*

Mary McCalister

## The King of Glory

**KEY VERSE:** “Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle,” Psalm 24:8.

Processionals were very much a part of life in Israel in Old Testament times. The closest we can come today to that kind of pomp and circumstance is the inauguration of a president.

Most Americans do not have a deep respect for royalty. We always seem to enjoy it when the foibles (shortcomings) of English royalty are exposed. In fact, an internet search of the word *king* most likely lists “Burger King,” “B.B. King,” “Martin Luther King,” Stephen King,” “The Lion King,” and even “Elvis Presley,” but certainly not Jesus Christ, who is the true King of Glory.

What does it mean to call Christ the Lord and King of Glory? It means that we have not only accepted Christ as our Savior, but we also make Him the Lord of our lives. Ask yourself, is He my Lord? Is He Lord of my body, my thoughts, my tongue, my temper, my spare time, my life plans, my pocketbook, my church life, my recreation, what I listen to on the radio and look at on television?

Christ instructed His followers to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done” (Matt. 6:10). To pray this prayer is to acknowledge that Christ is not only Lord, He is the coming King of Glory. Jesus Christ, the Lord, the King of Glory is the first and last, author and finisher, beginning and end, Alpha and Omega and our all in all.

**LIVING IT:** *Be preoccupied with Jesus in every part of your life.*

Mary McCalister

## Call His Name Jesus

**KEY VERSE:** “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name **JESUS**: for he shall save his people from their sins,” **Matthew 1:21.**

We commonly read this passage every Christmas season, but do we really think about what it means? Our Savior was not called Jesus because His mother had a relative named Jesus, but He was called that because of who He is. The name *Jesus* or *Joshua* means “savior.” And that is what He is.

There are many names in the Bible that refer to Christ: Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Light of the world, the Resurrection and the Life, the Bright and Morning Star, the Lily of the Valley, Alpha and Omega.

All these are names which show how the boundaries of human language are stretched in an effort to capture the greatness and grandeur of God and His Son. They might help us to draw near to knowing the totality of God but they all fall short. Their message is so majestic we often fail to grasp it. Of course, the shortcoming is in us and the limitations of our human nature.

Not only is He Jesus, our Savior, but He is Immanuel, God with us. Not God with the rich, God with the powerful, God with the religious, but God with us, all of us. white or black, Jew or Gentile, brown or yellow, bondman or free.

Rejoice anew during this season that Jesus is indeed our Savior. Give Him homage and praise for what He has done for you.

**LIVING IT:** *Proclaim to the world that Jesus is indeed Savior, not just a babe in a manger.*

Mary McCalister

## Good Tidings of Great Joy

**KEY VERSE:** “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,” Luke 2:11.

On this Christmas Eve, it would be most fitting to gather your family together and read Luke’s account of the birth of Christ and the announcement of the angel to the shepherds. The angel’s message was “good tidings of great joy” (verse 10). The message was to be for all people. It is a message which resounds today. In a time when there are many negatives, we can rejoice as we reread this positive message—a Savior is born.

We may think times are difficult, but they were difficult then as well. The Jews were in bondage to Rome. There seemed to be little or no hope for a solution to their problems. Yet, the shepherds rejoiced and hurried to see the newborn babe in the manger.

A once well-known preacher used this passage in his message to show how the message of the angels required a response from the hearers. Hypothetically, he imagined some of the shepherds simply sitting around discussing the great event. Some forty years later one of the shepherds might have told his small grandson about that eventful night. The grandson might have asked whether what the angel said was really true. The elderly shepherd may have said that he did not know. He never went to see.

How many people are like that today? They have heard the good news, but they have never accepted it for themselves. How sad!

**LIVING IT:** *Has the angel’s message changed your life?*

Mary McCalister

## Born To Redeem

**KEY VERSES:** “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,” Galatians 4:4, 5.

There is a current religious song popular at this time of year, titled “Mary, Did You Know?” It causes us to stop for a moment and think, as Mary held her infant son, did she really know what was in store?

Paul had learned of the purpose of Christ’s birth, but did Mary know? Paul knew that Christ, virgin born of a woman, yet, the Son of God, came to redeem a lost world.

A story from an old book illustrates redemption.

There was a young boy who lived on a seaport and loved to watch the boats come in from their daily fishing trips. One day he decided to build a little sailboat all his own. He worked for weeks, making sure each detail was just right. Finally, the day came when he went down to the wharf and put his boat in the water. As he was watching his new sailboat, the wind suddenly changed, and the tiny boat was swept out of sight. The boy was heartbroken. For a month he went back every day to see whether his boat had been washed up on shore.

Surprisingly, one day he saw his boat in a store window. He ran into the store and told the owner that was his boat. The woman only responded by saying that the boat would cost him two dollars. He finally came up with the money and gave it to the owner. As he left the store, he was heard to say, “Little boat, you are twice mine. You are mine because I made you, and now you are mine because I bought you.”

**LIVING IT:** *God made us, then, redeemed us. What love!*

Mary McCalister

## Salvation in a Person

**KEY VERSES:** “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel,” Luke 2:30-32.

Watching the late night news does not lift your spirits or give you hope. Perhaps it was hearing of the two youngsters shot in a drive-by shooting or the non-reassuring announcement that twenty-six thousand highway bridges in America are near collapse or of a senator tampering with election procedures. We are told the national debt grows deeper each day. Our taxes are higher and the pollen count is up. Not much to smile about, is there?

And, yet, as we learned earlier, the angel brought glad tidings of great joy. Some eight days later, Simeon rejoiced, saying, “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:30). A prophetess Anna gave thanks for the coming of One who would bring redemption to Israel.

Earlier, Mary had visited her cousin Elisabeth, rejoicing in being chosen to bear the child who would be the Savior of the world.

It is time for us to rejoice as well, knowing a Savior has been prepared for all the people, a Light for the Gentiles and salvation for Israel. Praise God!

**LIVING IT:** *How great is the love of God that He should give us salvation!*

Mary McCalister

## The King on His Holy Hill

**KEY VERSES:** “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee,” Psalm 2:6, 7.

The caretaker of the home where Beethoven spent his final years led a group of tourists to the room that housed a stately old piano. Lifting the cover, he said, “This was Beethoven’s piano!” A young woman stepped forward, sat down on the music stool, and began playing one of Beethoven’s sonatas. Concluding, she spun around and said to the shocked caretaker, “I suppose many people who visit here like to play Beethoven’s piano.” “Well, Miss,” he replied, “last summer the world famous Paderewski was here and some of his friends wanted him to play, but he said, ‘No, I am not worthy.’”

God chose David, the chief musician, to be the greatest king in Israel’s history. But, a far greater choice was David’s great Son the King of kings. His kingdom will be established, and His reign will be forever.

If we enter God’s throne room through this psalm, the nations of the world come into focus and perspective. We find we are overwhelmed by the dignity, solemnity and majesty of this King of all the universe. We should give Him full allegiance and loyalty. We need to worship Him, adore Him, glorify Him, and enjoy Him! Yet, we can come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace for we have a High Priest who can be touched by our infirmities.

**LIVING IT:** *Thank you, Lord, for being my High Priest.*

Mary McCalister

## There Is a River!

**KEY VERSE:** “*There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High,*” Psalm 46:4.

Rivers offer many benefits. Rivers provide food. Various types of seafood can be found in the water. Rivers offer transportation. Before the advent of the automobile boats carried passengers to distant places in the shortest amount of time. Rivers provide trade and occupation. Goods for sale and trade are often carried by water to their destination. One of the most important provisions of rivers is protection. Rivers often form the borders between countries. Rivers were the first line of defense against an attacking enemy.

The Tabernacle of ancient Jerusalem offered many of the same benefits as a river. The message proclaimed in the Tabernacle was the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus according to the Scriptures. Sacrifices made within the Tabernacle pictured the sacrifice Jesus would make on behalf of all sinners. The Lord proclaimed in the Tabernacle the Bread of Life, the water leading to eternal life and refuge of the soul.

Jesus is our source of strength, comfort and provision. He brings peace to the troubled soul, comfort to the sorrowful heart and provision to the needy person. His grace is as abundant as water in a river and available to all who will receive it. His mercy is without equal. Christians can look forward to the millennial reign of Christ when the whole world will experience His righteous power.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *The grace of Jesus flows from Heaven's love.*

## Future Fountain and Blessing

**KEY VERSE:** “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, and shall water the valley of Shittim,*” Joel 3:18.

Imagine you live in the country and the only source of water for your house is from a well. You turn on the kitchen faucet to get a pitcher of water for the coffee-maker and nothing comes out of the faucet. Upon further investigation you determine the well has gone dry. There is no water for drinking, cooking, bathing or any other use. The only way to get more water is to dig a deeper well at considerable cost. Doing without water will make life difficult so you dig the new well. A flowing well is both a necessity and a blessing.

One day the Lord will reign from Jerusalem in perfect righteousness. The enemies of the people of Jerusalem will no longer be able to bring violence against them. They will become a source of blessing to the world much as water is a blessing to the arid desert. Water will flow from the house of God to the valley of Shittim. The people of Jerusalem will dwell in peace from generation to generation.

Jesus is the living water from whence comes salvation. He is a source of blessing to those who know Him as Savior.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Jesus is a fountain of blessing that will never run dry.*

## Living Water for Thirsty Souls

**KEY VERSE:** “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water,” John 4:10.

It is a hot, muggy day as you work to clean the yard. Sweat runs down your face and you are extremely thirsty. You go into the house for a few minutes of rest and a cool glass of water. The water quenches your thirst for the moment. You know as soon as you go back to the yard work you will become thirsty again. You think about how nice it would be if one glass of water would permanently quench your thirst.

Jesus met the Samaritan woman when she came to draw water. This was a daily chore for the woman because water was a staple of life. Jesus used the analogy of water to speak to her about salvation. Jesus told her about a well of water from which she would never thirst again. He did not speak of a well of physical water but of spiritual water that would bring eternal life to all who drink from it. Jesus told the woman He was that well of living water. The Samaritan woman accepted Jesus as Savior because she was thirsty for salvation. The well of living water never runs dry. Have you tasted the water from the well that produces eternal life?

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Everyone may drink from the well of living water.*

Marc Shultz

## Do Not Forsake the Fountain!

**KEY VERSE:** “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,” Jeremiah 2:13.

When I was growing up, our family lived in a house cooled by a water fan. A pump inside the fan unit would circulate water from a reservoir at the bottom of the tank. The fan unit would draw the hot outside air across the streams of water and cool the air which then was blown inside the room. The ability of the fan to cool depended upon keeping water in the reservoir. If the tank ran dry of water, the unit would only blow hot air.

Jeremiah pronounced the wrath of God against the Israelites who refused to accept His only begotten Son as Savior. The well of living water had been made available for them to drink from but they had not come to the well. They sought salvation by keeping the ceremonial law and by worshiping false gods. Jeremiah compared this to broken cisterns that hold no water. There is no other way to salvation other than by repentance and faith in Jesus as Savior.

The Lord wants no one to perish but for everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Everyone who calls upon Jesus as Savior will be saved (Rom. 10:13). Everyone may drink from the well of living water. Those who refuse to do so will not be saved.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Salvation satisfies the soul as water satisfies thirst.*

Marc Shultz

## Make Your Days Count!

**KEY VERSE:** “So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom,” Psalm 90:12.

This is the first day of a new year and a new decade. If the Lord does not return during the year and you live through the year, you have three hundred sixty-five days of opportunity to serve Him. You do not yet know what challenges you may face during the year. You will experience some successes and some failures. Do not take any of the three hundred sixty-five days for granted. Take advantage of every opportunity to serve the Lord. Do not live in the past or wish the future would come quickly. Live in the day you have been granted.

“This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24). God created the first day which began the marking of time. Time will cease when eternity begins. Time is measured duration and eternity is unmeasured duration. Each day is the Lord’s. He knows what will happen during each day and is in control of events. We do not know what will happen during the day, but God will grant us the wisdom to face whatever challenges the day may bring. No day is wasted when it is spent serving the Lord. Make the most of today because there is no guarantee that tomorrow will come. Live each day as though it could be your last. Leave no task uncompleted. Give every endeavor your best effort.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Make the most of each day by making God a priority.*

Marc Shultz

## Redeem Your Time This New Year!

**KEY VERSE:** “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil,” Ephesians 5:16.

The first day of sophomore English class the students were given a copy of the teacher’s lesson plan for the entire year. It listed the daily homework assignments, the books to be purchased from the student store and when the book reports were due. No further reminders were given concerning the assignments. It was the duty of each student to complete his assignments on time.

Each person is responsible for how he uses his time. If he uses his time wisely, he will reap blessings. If he uses his time unwisely, he will suffer the consequences. Time spent thinking foolish thoughts will likely lead to foolish actions. The person who spends his time doing God’s will finds His favor. Each person will be accountable to God for how he spends his time.

Not having enough time to serve the Lord is not a viable excuse. Time is the same for everyone. There are sixty seconds to a minute, sixty minutes to an hour and twenty-four hours a day. The only uncertainty is the length of life. The person who uses his time wisely will find more than enough time to serve the Lord. Start by giving God a tithe of your time. This would be approximately two and a half hours a day. Spend this time in prayer, Bible study and witnessing to the lost. You will be surprised how much you can accomplish during that time.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Time foolishly spent can never be regained.*

Marc Shultz

## The Desert Shall Blossom as the Rose!

**KEY VERSE:** “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose,” Isaiah 35:1.

A tornado storms through town leaving a path of destruction. Houses have been destroyed and trees have been uprooted. The area looks like a war zone. In the midst of the destruction stands a lone rose bush with a single rose still attached. It stands as a sign of hope.

The people of Judah had emerged from the Assyrian captivity. A path of destruction had been left behind. It would seem all hope was lost. Isaiah proclaimed that God would bring them from the ashes of ruin. The people would be strengthened and the land restored. God would deal with their enemies harshly. Joy and singing would once again be heard in the land. God would be glorified. There would be no reason to fear the enemy. The desert would bloom as life was restored to the land. It happened not because of the power of man but of God.

In the coming day of the Lord, He will rescue the world from destruction. As a rose that blooms in the desert, the glory of God will rise from the ashes of destruction. Jesus, the Rose of Sharon, will rule in perfect righteousness. He will restore the universe to the glory in which it was created. There will be no enemy to rise up against God or His people.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *The Christian hope is not in this present world but the greater world that is yet to come.*

Marc Shultz

## Joshua's Division of the Land

**KEY VERSE:** “Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land of Canaan; (this *is* the land that shall fall unto you for an inheritance, *even* the land of Canaan with the coasts thereof:),” Numbers 34:2.

There is enough chocolate cake for two hungry children to have one piece. The problem is one of them will complain the other received the largest piece. The solution is easy. One child is allowed to cut the pieces, and the other is allowed to choose which piece he wishes to eat. Under this system each piece should be equal in size.

The land God gave to the Israelites was large in size and abundant in resources. The land was divided among them. They were to occupy the land, work the land and worship God who had given them the land. There was no need for them to be in want because everything had been provided for them. There was no need for jealousy because there was enough land and provision for everyone to enjoy. There was no reason for them to fear because God had given them the land and would protect them. Life was good.

God has promised to meet all our needs according to His riches in glory (Phil. 4:19). There is no end to His provision because His supply will never run out. There is no reason for dissatisfaction because God supplies exactly what is needed when it is needed.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *God's job is to provide. Our job is to be thankful.*

Marc Shultz

## God's Promise to Israel

**KEY VERSE:** “And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,” Exodus 6:7.

Sally was celebrating her birthday with a sweet sixteen party. Her father was away on a business trip but had promised to be home in time for the party. He had to work overtime. At the airport he received some bad news. His flight was cancelled because of bad weather. He rented a car and drove all night in a thunderstorm to keep his promise to his daughter. He went to such an extent to keep his promise because he loved his daughter.

God promised His chosen people a great and prosperous land. The journey began four hundred years after the promise was first made to Abram. God was waiting for the proper time to fulfill the promise. The promise consisted of more than land. They would be freed from the bondage of slavery to the Egyptians. God would prove Himself faithful time and again to the Israelites.

God always keeps His promises. He will perform His perfect will in His place, in His time and through His people. We must never doubt God will do what is best. Our duty is to wait upon Him. Waiting on God requires faith. He always comes through.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Waiting on God is a sign of strength.*

Marc Shultz

## God of the Families of Israel

**KEY VERSE:** “At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people,” Jeremiah 31:1.

The family is the basis of society. God promised to make a great nation of the Israelites. What is a nation but a collection of individuals? Individuals make up families, which make up nations. God instituted the family when He created Adam and Eve and told them to be fruitful and multiply. God has ordained the order of the family and is to be the head of the family. The woman is to follow the spiritual direction of her husband and the children are to be in subjection to their parents. When God is honored in the family, the family unit will be strong.

The children of Israel occupied the Promised Land as a nation. God promised to be with the individual families in the same way He was with them collectively as a nation. As the individual families worshiped God, the nation would be faithful to serve and worship God. God promised to be the God of all families of the nation and they would be His people. This would be the strength of the nation.

Not only is the family the backbone of the nation, it is also the backbone of the local church. A church is as strong as the families within the membership of the church. The ministry of the local church must strengthen the families which in turn will strengthen the local church.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Godly families honor God.*

## Strangers Are Welcome!

**KEY VERSE:** “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant,” Isaiah 56:6.

One of the blessings I enjoyed while a student at Texas Baptist Institute was preaching at different churches as a fill-in for absent pastors. Often the occasion was the first time I had been privileged to attend services at that church and did not know any of the members. I always found a welcome handshake and quickly was made to feel at home.

To many Jews, the Gentiles were no better than dogs. When Gentiles began making professions of faith, some of the Jews did not want to believe they were truly saved. The Gentile converts were zealously worshiping and serving the Lord. The Jewish converts should have welcomed the Gentile converts as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Everyone needs to be saved. The drug dealer in the slums needs to be saved. The impoverished woman living on the streets needs to be saved. The night watchman at the hospital needs to be saved. The CEO of a Fortune 500 company needs to be saved. The richest person in the world needs to be saved. The Great Commission commands New Testament churches to preach the gospel and win souls to Christ (Matt. 28:19, 20). How shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? (Rom. 10:14).

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Jesus is the friend of sinners. Are you?*

Marc Shultz

## No Longer a Stranger

**KEY VERSE:** “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God,” Ephesians 2:19.

Recall the first time you went on a date. The first order of business was to meet the parents of your date. Despite being nervous you attempted to make a good first impression. You were well-groomed and on your best behavior. The more time you spent with the parents the more comfortable you were with them. The time came when you were no longer a stranger but a welcome friend in their home.

A person is not born into the family of God through physical birth but through the new birth. Every child of God has a relationship with other believers as brothers and sisters in Christ. They have experienced the same salvation and worship the same God. They have the same promise of a heavenly home in eternity.

You have a spiritual relationship with people you do not know by name. You have a relationship with the missionary in Mexico who is witnessing to his own people. You have a relationship with a new believer in a Third World country who has just accepted Jesus as Savior. You have a relationship with the deacon of a little country church. You have a relationship with the dear lady who has taught Sunday School for many years and has led many of her students to know Jesus as Savior.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *You may never meet these brothers and sisters in Christ on earth, but you will see them in Heaven.*

Marc Shultz

## Jerusalem—Throne of the Lord

**KEY VERSE:** “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart,” Jeremiah 3:17.

Remember the 2000 presidential election? The race hinged on the count of the vote in Florida. The candidate who won the Florida electoral vote would win the election. Both candidates declared they had more votes and challenged the results in court. The victor emerged through a ruling of the United States Supreme Court.

There is much disagreement today as to who has the right to govern Jerusalem. Many governments in the region say that Jerusalem belongs to the Palestinians rather than Israel. Wars have been fought and treaties signed to end the controversy but to no avail. There should be no debate as to who has the right to rule Jerusalem. The Bible declares Jerusalem is part of the Promised Land that God gave to the children of Israel.

In the coming day of the Lord, He will reign from His throne in Jerusalem. He will not rule from Jerusalem as the result of a war or treaty but as the rightful heir to the throne of David. Jerusalem will be the center of world affairs. No one will be able to deny the authority of the power of God. It will be a much different day. It is a day to which Christians should look forward.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *There will finally be peace when the Lord reigns from the throne in Jerusalem.*

## God Always Keeps His Promises!

**KEY VERSE:** “And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him,” Genesis 12:7.

“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18). Since God cannot lie, we can have the utmost confidence He will keep His promises. God promised Abram that He would make of him a great nation. This seemed impossible because Sarai, Abram’s wife was past her childbearing years. Despite their impatience, in God’s time Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah. Often we become impatient for God to keep His promises. God will not be hurried by our impatience. He will work through His people, in His place and in His time. Time spent waiting on God is not time wasted. We will see God’s perfect work in His time.

Abram did not see the culmination of God’s promise to him. After his death the descendents grew to a vast number. They resided in the land God promised them. Abram had no proof of this reality other than the promise of God.

Abram and Sarai attempted to cause God’s promise to come true in their own way. Abram fathered a child by Hagar the handmaid. The son born of Hagar was not the son of promise. Abram learned that it is impossible to hurry God. We must wait on Him.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *God is able to keep His promises without our interference.*

Marc Shultz

## Daniel's Resolve

**KEY VERSE:** “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself,” Daniel 1:8.

All the company employees were required to attend the annual Christmas party to get their yearly bonus. The boss and many of the employees were alcoholics and drank freely at the party. Among the employees was a Christian man who followed the biblical admonition to abstain from consuming strong drink. Several employees attempted to get him to live a little and have a drink with them. He did not compromise his principles and left the party as soon as he received his bonus.

Daniel was a man of Christian principles and high character. He had so distinguished himself that he had become an advisor to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The king was not a godly man. He prepared a provision of meat and Daniel was expected to eat from this provision. The problem was, the king’s provision featured unclean meats forbidden by God’s dietary laws of the time. Daniel could have compromised his principles and followed the king’s desires. Instead, Daniel stood by his principles and used the occasion to teach the king about the blessings of obeying God.

Christians should never compromise their principles to please the world. It will not always be convenient or easy to do what is right. There is never a right reason to do wrong.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *God is watching, so do the right thing.*

Marc Shultz

## Daniel's Request

**KEY VERSE:** “Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation,” Daniel 2:16.

The Allied forces were about to invade Normandy, France to begin the liberation of Europe during World War II. One officer was told he would not be accompanying his men during the invasion. He was one of the oldest soldiers in the war. Arthritis had made his movements extremely difficult. His superior officers were also concerned that he could be used for propaganda purposes if he were captured by the enemy. He told his superior officers he was willing to take the risk and he was allowed to accompany his men in the invasion. He died during the invasion. His name was Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. His father was once president of the United States.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him. He asked his magician and sorcerers to give him the interpretation of the dream. The problem was, the king could not remember the dream so they could not give him the interpretation. Daniel asked the king for an opportunity to interpret the dream. Daniel trusted God not only to tell him what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed but to give him the interpretation of the dream. Daniel was able to warn the king of God's wrath to come. Daniel put himself on the line for God, and God came through. Daniel gained the respect of King Nebuchadnezzar.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *God requires much from his servants.*

Marc Shultz

## The Smashing Stone

**KEY VERSE:** “And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder,” Matthew 21:44.

In biblical times, stoning was a widely used means of execution. The condemned person would be brought, bound and shackled, to the top of a stoning wall. One of the witnesses to his crime would hit him in the loins so he would fall to the ground. If the fall did not kill him, the other witnesses would begin throwing stones at him until he died. It was a cruel means of execution.

Jesus is the stone of stumbling to those who do not believe on Him as Savior (1 Peter 2:8). He is the rock of salvation to those who do believe (2 Sam. 22:47). Anyone who comes to Him with a broken and contrite heart confessing his or her sins will be forgiven. Everyone who refuses to accept Him as Savior is condemned already (John 3:18). The sinless Son of God took upon Himself the condemnation of death so believers would have eternal life. Whether a person spends eternity in Heaven or hell depends upon whether he or she has accepted the Lord's payment for his or her sins in repentance and faith.

Jesus is the Cornerstone rejected by man (Mark 12:10). He is the only way to salvation. Those who reject Him as Savior will not have eternal life in Heaven. The Lord desires salvation for everyone. He refuses salvation to no one.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *There is no reason for anyone to spend eternity in hell.*

Marc Shultz

## The Indestructible Kingdom

**KEY VERSE:** “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem,” Micah 4:2.

The United States of America is over two hundred thirty years old, relatively young in comparison to most other countries of the world. The American government is the longest continuing democracy in the history of the world. The country has faced many challenges that have brought other governments down. We have survived wars, the Great Depression and terrorist attacks. There should be no doubt that America is a resilient country, but it is not indestructible.

Today, the world is filled with fears and uncertainty. There are fears of an economic collapse. Terrorism is a daily concern. Many people live in famine and poverty. It is enough to make a person wonder how long humanity can survive.

In the midst of despair there is good news. While the world as we know it will not survive, there is a better world coming. From the midst of man's destruction rises the righteousness of God. His kingdom will succeed where human governments have failed. The world will be like it was at creation. God will end poverty, injustice and evil. The former earth will pass away to be replaced with a new Heaven and a new earth.

Christians have no reason to fear. God is in control today. Nothing happens beyond His notice and control. God is also in control of the future.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Hope for the future helps us make it through today.*

Marc Shultz

## His Rest Shall Be Glorious

**KEY VERSE:** “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious,” Isaiah 11:10.

A zoo had an unusual display. In the same cage were a lion and a lamb. Normally, the lion would have quickly devoured the lamb. When the zookeeper was asked how such a display was possible, he replied the lion was well fed and a new lamb was put in the cage when necessary. Occasionally, the lion would return to its natural instinct and devour the lamb. Such a display would not be tolerated today.

In the coming kingdom of God, the world will be much different than today. The nature of mankind will be changed to conform to the righteousness of God. There will be no reason to fear people or circumstances. The Lord will bring to the world what has eluded mankind for all history—harmony with God.

Mankind continues to look for the things that only the coming kingdom of God can provide. Wars continue despite peace treaties and arms control agreements. Poverty persists despite trillions of dollars spent to eliminate it. Crime rates continue to rise despite increased law enforcement priorities. These conditions persist because of man’s sinful nature. The world will not change for the better as long as sin reigns in man’s heart. Man’s nature will not change until God reigns in righteousness.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Why hold on to this world when a better world is coming.*

Marc Shultz

## The Millennial Peace

**KEY VERSE:** “And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season,” Revelation 20:3.

I once lived by a neighbor who had a dog which barked constantly. He barked in the middle of the night while I was trying to sleep. He barked in the day while I was trying to study. He barked while I was doing yard work. After the neighbors moved, there was peace in the neighborhood once again.

Satan walks about this world as a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour (1 Peter 5:8). As long as he is allowed to bring temptation into the world, there will be no peace. He will tempt the wicked to persecute Christians. He will tempt Christians to sin rather than obey God. Christians should not ignore Satan's attacks. A person traveling in the jungle is wary of the lion. We must be wary of Satan. One of the blessings that will come during the millennial reign of Christ is that Satan will not be around to deceive anyone. It will be a time of true peace.

Satan is formidable, but we must not give in to his devices. He can only influence those who refuse to fight against his temptations. Do not give Satan's temptations a second thought.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Decide before temptation comes that you will live for the Lord and will not listen to Satan.*

Marc Shultz

## The Coming World Ruler

**KEY VERSE:** “And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,”** Revelation 19:16.

There is a growing sentiment among people that the only way the world’s problems can be solved is to have all nations under one rule. The extreme environmentalists have actively called for the overthrow of any government that refuses to adopt its radical agenda. With the growing economic uncertainty some have called for a common currency. The anti-Christ will attempt to employ these suggestions, but they will fail to succeed.

There is a coming leader who will rule all nations. He will not rise up from the sea of humanity but will come from Heaven. He will succeed where every other leader in the history of the world has failed. He will not come to power by the sword but through unchallenged authority. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Lord will reign in perfect righteousness. No man, government or army will be able to challenge Him. He will smite the nations that do not submit to Him. His Word will be the law of the world. His power will exceed any seen throughout history. His presence will exceed the most charismatic ruler the world has ever witnessed. Unlike all other empires there will be no end to His reign. There will be the peace that eluded the world up until this time. He will be the One the world has sought.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *A person does not have to wait for the Lord’s coming kingdom to submit to His authority.*

## Seventy Years of Captivity

**KEY VERSE:** “And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, *that* I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations,” Jeremiah 25:12.

The children of Israel were a proud people. In spite of God’s abundant blessings they often rebelled against God. Through His prophets, God instructed the Israelites to turn from their idolatrous and wicked ways and turn back to the God of their salvation. God patiently waited for their repentance which never came. Once God’s patience was exhausted, He brought judgment upon the Israelites. On this occasion God allowed the Babylonians to take the Israelites captive. Their pride turned to humility. For seventy years, the Israelites were at the mercy of their enemy. Captivity was God’s way of bringing the Israelites to repentance.

Allowing the Israelites to endure captivity did not mean God was pleased with the Babylonians. The nation was just a vehicle God used to humble the Israelites. When the seventy years of captivity had ended, God turned His wrath toward the people of Babylon. There would be no end to their suffering because they refused to repent and turn to God.

God will give time to repent before He brings His wrath. He will be patiently waiting for repentance. When repentance does not come, then, judgment will be issued. His wrath is given, so His people will repent.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Since God does not hesitate to judge His own, He certainly will judge those who are not His own.*

## The Blessing of Confessing Sin

**KEY VERSE:** “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” 1 John 1:9.

Several years ago the Internal Revenue Service conducted an amnesty program. Taxpayers who had deliberately cheated on their tax returns could file an amended return without fear of being prosecuted. Some people filed amended returns as far back as thirty years. The program brought needed revenue into the federal budget but also gave the taxpayers a clear conscience.

It is impossible to hide your sins from God. He knows your every action, hears your every word and knows your every thought. God knows every sin you have ever committed. God hates sin. He desires to forgive you of every sin. He awaits your confession and repentance. When you confess your sins to God, He will forgive you of every sin.

Confessing your sins to God has advantages. You no longer have to attempt to hide your sins from God. You can put the sins in the past knowing God has forgiven you of each of those sins. You no longer have to worry about suffering divine judgment for those sins. You can go to sleep at night with a clear conscience knowing that your sins are forgiven.

Only those who seek God’s forgiveness of sin will experience it. The only thing that stands between a sinner and forgiveness is confession and repentance.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *God will not deny forgiveness to any sinner who confesses his or her sins to Him.*

Marc Shultz

## God's Permanent Covering for Sin

**KEY VERSE:** “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God,” Hebrews 10:12.

The president of the United States has the power to issue a general or partial pardon for any citizen. A general pardon grants amnesty for all past crimes. A partial pardon grants amnesty only for specified crimes. A person who has received a pardon is considered innocent for those crimes and can never be held accountable for those crimes again.

Part of the work of the Old Testament priests was offering animal sacrifices for sins. These sacrifices were to be offered at set times. The sacrifice not only was a reminder of man's sinful condition but also of the Lord's impending sacrifice for sin.

When Jesus died on the cross, there was no further need of pictorial sacrifices of animals. The blood Jesus shed on the cross covers all sins, past, present and future. His blood did what the blood of animals could not do—forgive sins. Jesus needed to die once because His sacrifice was greater than all our sins. If Jesus had not died on the cross for our sins, we would be dead in our sins and without hope of salvation.

Since Jesus needed only to die once for your sins, you need to confess Him as Savior one time. Once a person has accepted Jesus as Savior, he or she is guaranteed eternal life in Heaven. His or her sins will be remembered no more.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *God pardons sins forever.*

## Israel Will Inherit the Land Forever

**KEY VERSE:** “Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified,” Isaiah 60:21.

I once entered a drawing for a new pickup. The person who won the drawing had his picture published in the paper receiving the keys and title to the truck. Once the title was transferred to his name, the truck was his alone. No one else could claim it as his own.

God promised Abram that He would make of him a great nation. Abram would inherit a land. No one else had a rightful claim to the land. Throughout history other nations have claimed the land of Israel and Jerusalem as their own. The people of Israel have continually fought to defend the land God has given them. God gave the title deed to the Promised Land to Israel alone. Other nations may claim the land, but they have no right to it.

In the day of the Lord, Israel will occupy the Promised Land without interference from any other nation. Israel will not need any power other than the power of God to defend the land as its own. The Bible is Israel's title deed to the Promised Land. God gave the people of Israel the land. God helped them defend the land from the enemy. The glory of God will illuminate the land. The peace of God will rule throughout the land. The Lord will rule from the land in perfect righteousness.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *The Promised Land is Israel's by divine decree and not by a peace treaty.*

Marc Shultz

## Decree To Rebuild Jerusalem

**KEY VERSE:** “Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah,” Nehemiah 2:7.

A new American ambassador to a foreign country must first present his credentials to the ruling power of that country. The credentials contain letters from the President of the United States and the American Secretary of State. The credentials give the ambassador authority to act on behalf of the American government and citizens residing in that country. Without the credentials the ambassador would have no authority.

The years of captivity had taken a toll on the city of Jerusalem. The walls that once defended the city lay in ruins. The city was in shambles. When Nehemiah learned of the plight of Jerusalem, his heart was filled with sorrow. King Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah why he was so despondent. Nehemiah told the king he wanted to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city. Although the king was not a friend of Jerusalem, he gave Nehemiah permission to follow his heart's desire. Nehemiah carried letters from the king granting him authority to return to Jerusalem.

Having received permission from God and given authority from the king, Nehemiah got to work. He organized the citizens of Jerusalem into working shifts and the work continued day and night. The wall around Jerusalem was rebuilt one gate at a time. Once completed they gave the glory to God for His providence in rebuilding the wall.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Divine providence is all the permission needed to do God's will.*

Marc Shultz

## Messiah Cut Off

**KEY VERSE:** “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?” **Matthew 21:42.**

Growing up I was never athletic. When it came time to choose sides for neighborhood football or baseball games, I was usually the last one chosen. On the other hand, I kept up on current events. In world history class in high school, we often played a game similar to Jeopardy. I was always the first chosen for that game.

Jesus came unto His own, but they received Him not. They thought Jesus was a traitor and a rebel and not the Messiah. Many did not even believe He was a good man. The Lord did not allow their rejection to deter Him from His mission. He taught the Scripture and performed miracles to prove His deity. He had compassion for those who refused to believe on Him and mercy for those who did. He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). The Lord knew the time would come when every tongue would confess Him as Lord (Rom. 14:11).

There is nothing good that comes from rejecting Jesus as Savior and Lord. He alone has the power to save the lost. He leads believers to the abundant life (John 10:10). Jesus is the piece of the puzzle that makes life complete. Do not shut the Lord out of your life.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *A life without Jesus quickly falls apart.*

Marc Shultz

## The Times of the Gentiles

**KEY VERSE:** “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,” Luke 21:24.

We are currently living in the Gentile age, also known as the church age. When the Jews refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah, the Gentiles were given the authority to preach the gospel to the world through church authority (Matt. 28:18-20). The church age will not end until the Lord’s return.

Prior to the Lord’s return, the world will be thrown into turmoil. The days of divine vengeance will be worse than the world has ever seen before. Jerusalem will be under siege by its enemies. Conditions in the world will be so terrible that people will despair of life itself. This will be a great time of distress.

The Gentile age will conclude when the Lord returns for His people. There will still be a time of turmoil as the wrath of God is poured out on the ungodly world. The children of God have hope the world does not have. The return of the Lord will usher in the bliss of spending eternity with the Lord.

We are living in perilous times that precede the Lord’s return (2 Tim. 3:1). We should not despair of hope because Jesus is coming again. Our hope is not in this world but in the better world that the Lord will usher in.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Knowing a better world is coming should cause Christians to rejoice.*

## The Signs of Christ's Coming

**KEY VERSE:** “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”  
**Matthew 24:3.**

A young boy runs into his house and breathlessly tells his mother that Jesus is coming, and He is coming right now. “How do you know?” asks his mother.

“My Sunday School teacher said there would be signs in the sky before Jesus comes and there is a sign in the sky right now,” he said. His mother went outside to see what he was talking about and started laughing. What he saw was a skywriter writing an advertisement for a soft drink company in smoke.

There are signs that will tell of the Lord's return. There will be some who come claiming to be Christ and deceiving many with their false claim. The world will be in a constant state of warfare and conflict. There will be earthquakes, pestilences and famines in many different places. God's people will be ridiculed and persecuted because of their faith. Many Christians will wax cold in their faithfulness to God. These things are evident in the world today.

The only people who should fear the Lord's coming are those who are unprepared for His return. The signs of the Lord's return are warnings to prepare because He could return at any moment. The Lord could return today. Are you prepared for His coming?

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Are you anxiously anticipating the Lord's return or does it bring fear to your mind?*

Marc Shultz

## The Abomination of Desolation

**KEY VERSE:** “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:),” Matthew 24:15.

Suppose when you arrived for Sunday School, you found the church building had been vandalized. Vile words had been painted on the walls and the pews had been overturned. The songbooks and Bibles had been ripped to shreds and the pulpit demolished. Such a sight would be difficult to view. Suppose it was discovered the vandalism was done by someone who was claiming to be God. Such a crime would be considered a mockery.

The anti-Christ will enter Jerusalem as a hero. The peace treaty he makes will bring a temporary calm to the region. He will enter the Temple in Jerusalem and begin to do unthinkable acts. He will destroy the precious artifacts that pertain to the worship of God. He will proclaim himself to be God and demand to be worshiped. Eventually, the anti-Christ will begin to lose his grip of power because of his abominable acts.

Some abominable acts committed today also bring shame to the house of God. It is an abomination for false gospels to be proclaimed in the house of God. The pulpit is a place to proclaim only the truths of God. It is an abomination for anyone other than the one true God to be worshiped in the house of God.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *It is the duty of church members to make sure the house of God is only used for its intended purpose.*

Marc Shultz

## The Great Tribulation

**KEY VERSE:** “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be,” Matthew 24:21.

Think about the many crises the world has faced in the last one hundred years. There have been two world wars that have cost the lives of millions of soldiers on the battlefield. The Great Depression almost destroyed the economy of the United States. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. As tragic as these events were, society survived.

The Great Tribulation will be an event unequaled in history. For the last three and a half years of the Tribulation Period especially, the world will be in chaos and brought to the brink of destruction. The anti-Christ will rule the world with unbridled power. Those who oppose him will be martyred. There will be political and economic upheaval that will threaten the existence of every person. There will be no peace anywhere in the world. The world will be destroyed if the Lord does not step in to end the violence.

The Great Tribulation will be a time the wrath of God is poured out on the world. There will be no place to avoid the chaos. Violence will rule without end. Many will despair. It will be the worst time in all history.

The Great Tribulation will also be a time that many people will seek God. One hundred forty-four thousand Jews will accept Jesus as Savior (Rev. 14:3). Countless numbers will be saved during this time.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *God alone can bring peace from the chaos of the Great Tribulation.*

## The Coming of Christ in Glory

**KEY VERSE:** “And 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,” Matthew 24:30.

In the old, western movies the good guy always came to the rescue. When all hope seemed lost, he would come riding his trusty horse to restore law and order. He then would ride into the sunset as the hero.

When all hope seems lost and the world seems doomed, the Lord returns to restore law and order. He will not return in secret but with the fanfare due the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will bring order out of chaos and His Word will rule.

It is foolish for people to attempt to set a definite time for the Lord's return. The time is known only to the Heavenly Father. While we do not know the exact time the Lord will return, we can know His return is eminent. As the budding of trees tells of the changing seasons, certain signs suggest the Lord's return is quickly approaching. It is the duty of each person to be prepared for the Lord to return. Begin each day with the knowledge that the Lord could return before the day is over and live accordingly. Do not leave any duty undone or prayer unprayed.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *The Lord's return is the world's greatest hope.*

Marc Shultz

## The Anti-Christ at Work

**KEY VERSE:** “And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed,” Revelation 13:12.

In 1970, a twelve-year-old boy arrived in New Orleans, Louisiana, claiming to be God. While being interviewed by a local television reporter, he claimed to have performed many miracles which would prove his claim to deity. The problem was, he had done none of these miracles in the presence of independent unbiased witnesses. The lad was being exploited by his parents to make a profit by his claim of being God.

The anti-Christ will not only claim to be God but will call fire down from Heaven to back up his claim. This feat is not done by the power of God but of Satan. Many people will listen to the words and see the works of the anti-Christ and will be deceived into believing he is God. He is not God but an incarnation of Satan. He will attempt to revive the Roman empire and rule the world. In time his power will fail, and it will become known that he is not God.

The world is looking for someone who has the answers to all the problems. When the anti-Christ becomes known, it seems he is that person. While the people of the world are looking for the anti-Christ, they have rejected the real Christ. He is the only One who has all the answers.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *Jesus is the only One who can bring peace to the troubled world.*

Marc Shultz

## The Anti-Christ's Doom

**KEY VERSE:** “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone,” Revelation 19:20.

A man was arrested for impersonating a doctor. He wanted to be a doctor but did not want to go to the trouble of attending medical school. He read medical journals and kept up with all the advances in medicine. He set up a practice in a rural community that did not have a doctor. He performed medical tests and issued prescriptions for medicine. He was reported to authorities by a pharmacist who questioned why he was prescribing certain medicines. The false doctor pled guilty in court and spent time in prison.

The anti-Christ's reign of deception will eventually come to an end. The peace treaty he makes between Israel and its enemies will fall apart. The policies he structures to bring stability to the world will fail. The anti-Christ and those who follow him will be cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Jesus Christ is the only Savior. No other person can save souls or restore broken lives. The Lord uses His power for good and not evil. His kingdom will not fail.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *The time will come that every tongue will confess Him as Lord and every knee will bow in reverence to Him (Rom. 14:11). For many it will be too late.*

Marc Shultz

## The Tribulation and the Man of Sin

**KEY VERSE:** “Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,” 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

The seven years of the Tribulation Period will be a time of unequalled calamity such as the world has never seen. Governments will fall as will the economic system of the world. War and violence will be the rule of the day. The whole world will be on the verge of annihilation. There will seem to be no hope.

The anti-Christ will rise up from anonymity to rule the world. He will make a peace treaty that seems to bring peace between Israel and its enemies. The military and economic power of all nations will be placed under his control. No one will be able to buy or sell anything without the mark of the beast on his or her hand or forehead. The military force of the world will be brought against anyone who opposes the anti-Christ. The majority of the world’s population will be deceived by the anti-Christ. After the first half of the Tribulation Period, his stranglehold on power will begin to fail.

The reign of anti-Christ will be preceded by a falling away of God’s people. Their zeal for the Lord will fade because of the conditions of the day. As children of God, we should not allow the world conditions to interfere with our faithfulness to God.

**JUST A THOUGHT:** *The closer the time comes to the Lord’s return, the more faithful Christians must be to Him.*

## First Presentation of the Messiah

**KEY VERSE:** “Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt,” John 12:15.

Throughout the Old Testament the coming of the Messiah was predicted. Every time the priest read the books of Moses, the writings of Isaiah, or the other prophetic authors, they revealed that the Messiah was coming. And when that day finally came, some believed but others waited for another king.

The Jewish nation, at this time, was longing for the Messiah. Life under the Roman empire was not pleasant for most of the people. There was a restlessness, an uneasiness in the land. As in times past when things became difficult, God always came through and delivered the Jewish people from their troubles. Little did they know what a drastic change was coming and for some it was not quite the presentation they were expecting.

Can you imagine the shock and disbelief when the Messiah, King of the Jews, made His triumphant entry into the holy city of Jerusalem, riding on a colt, not even a full grown donkey? As was the custom in Israel, riding a donkey symbolized peace as riding a horse symbolized war. How fitting a ride for the Prince of Peace. Those who had been with Him in Bethany recognized the Messiah King and understood the humility in which Jesus presented Himself. Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel!

**REFLECTION:** *He came as promised. His presentation was as prophesied (Zech. 9:9) and fulfilled on that day. And even though this was the beginning of the end of Christ’s earthly ministry, it was not the end of the Messiah.*

Beverly Barnett

## The Entrance of the King

**KEY VERSES:** “And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me,”  
**Matthew 21:1, 2.**

Jesus never did anything by accident or coincidence. It was not a coincidence that He and the disciples had just come from Bethany the hometown of Mary, Martha and Lazarus or that Mary happened to anoint the feet of Jesus with costly spikenard and wiped them with her hair. Neither was the fact that Jerusalem is on the east side of the Mount of Olives a topographical accident.

As Jesus and His disciples left the home of His dear friends, the Passover Feast neared. Now was the right time for the King to enter and claim His people. However, it would not be with pomp and circumstance and the grandiosity that would present upon the arrival of an earthly monarch but with the quiet humility of a Savior willing to lay down His life for His subjects.

Jesus rode the unbroken colt of a donkey, not a neighing, prancing stallion down that rocky hillside of the olive tree covered mountain. The young colt never missed a step or stumbled under the precious load he bore.

As He came closer to His beloved people, the triumphant King was filled with love for those He would die for. He saw through the ages those who would trust Him as Savior.

Those who knew Him, loved Him. Their King and Savior entered the city with palm branches, coats and clothes strewn along the way.

**REFLECTION:** *The King will come again, riding on a white horse (Rev. 19:11).*

Beverly Barnett

## The Rejection of the King

**KEY VERSE:** “And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples,” Luke 19:39.

It is true that there are doubters and unbelievers in every crowd, including the religious leaders of the time of Jesus’ celebratory entrance into Jerusalem. We can picture these religious zealots, with their long serious faces, sneering and whispering to themselves their doubts and foolish conclusions to the miracles Jesus had performed before their eyes.

Did you ever notice how doubters and stingy people always have the same, long, serious face? It is because they base their decisions on the bank balance and their own abilities and not on the Lord’s ability to provide for His work.

Keep in mind that there were more than twelve men following Jesus that day. It was a rowdy, excited bunch, a whole multitude, not afraid to display their love and loyalty and proclaim His kingship to the observers watching the event. Most likely they were shouting as loudly as we would at a sporting event. “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest” (verse 38). We are sure its sound had the same effect as fingernails on a chalkboard in the ears of the Pharisees.

All the Pharisees could muster was a cold, molasses verbalization of “Master” (verse 39). Satan hates the sound of God’s people praising and glorifying Jesus, and Satan certainly does not like it when we are happy. Satan wants us to be silent, not talk about Jesus, and to keep our religion to ourselves. But even if we could keep quiet, as Jesus told the Pharisees, “the stones would immediately cry out” (verse 40).

**REFLECTION:** *Those who reject the King will always regret it.*

Beverly Barnett

## Christ's Purely Righteous Reign

**KEY VERSE:** “And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins,”  
Isaiah 11:5.

When the kingdom of Christ is complete and He rightfully takes the diadem of Heaven and earth, it will be nothing less than spectacular. He will rule and reign with righteous judgment—it could be nothing less.

When a person has studied law for eight years and passes the BAR examination and works a few years as an attorney, he or she may decide to take an appointment as a judge, such as on the Supreme Court. Or it may be a judgeship to adjudicate in certain areas of law in which he or she is qualified to serve. But the fact remains that they are human, and, because of that unchangeable misfortune, they do err in judgment from time to time. Some judges may even let financial gain guide their pronouncements.

Solomon was a great and wise judge. People came from long distances and far away countries to see and hear his wisdom and seek his knowledge. But in all his wisdom he was still a man and could only rule according to man's judgment.

Ah, but one day the perfect King will be on His throne, and He will rule and make adjudications based on His pure wisdom and knowledge and with the spirit of understanding because He is righteous and holy.

**REFLECTION:** *What time will it be when Christ is judging the nations? It will be a time of peace and rest when the lion and the bear will become vegetarians and the lamb and wolf will be friends. All wars will cease; the Jewish people will gather together from out of all the corners of the globe, and truth and righteousness will reign forever!*

Beverly Barnett

## The True Prince of Peace

**KEY VERSE:** “And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more,” Isaiah 2:4.

Do you remember life before the September 11, 2001? America was almost an unrestricted country then. Visas of foreigners were rarely checked and if they stayed beyond the expiration date, it was mostly without consequence. Boarding a plane was more about the comfort and convenience of passengers than confiscating more than three ounces of liquid per bottle or tube in a carry-on, not in a clear plastic, pint sized, ziplock bag. We ignored our neighbor’s activities as none of our business, even if they were taking flying lessons, paid for in cash and were more concerned with the cockpit of a commercial airliner than learning the instruments in the twin engine Cessna they were learning to fly.

Then suddenly on that bright, clear, September morning, our peaceful, untouchable shores were rocked by nineteen terrorists—terrorist, a word we only knew from foreign reporters in faraway countries. We can never go back to that pre 9/11 era again—our trust and naiveness was stolen with force.

But there is hope! True worldwide peace will one day be possible. It will not be through some ambassador’s smooth talks and armament reductions but through a complete disarmament. The ambassador will be the Prince of Peace. Then billions of dollars of weaponry will be retooled into farm implements. Instead of destruction they will be for construction, for gardens to grow food for the people not being destroyed by their use.

**REFLECTION:** *This is a time for which most of us long.*

Beverly Barnett

## A World in Harmony

**KEY VERSE:** “But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make *them* afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken *it*,” Micah 4:4.

True, since Adam fell, there has been sin and sinners but once upon a time—children played in their neighborhood parks along with friends without fear of being abducted; families slept with their windows and doors unlocked, alarm systems were only for banks; prisons were not overcrowded and drugs were not abused. Seems like a fairy tale but in times past, we can agree, there was less violence than today.

Let us imagine, if we can, a world teeming with harmony. If we could lift up the curtain of time and see the future world ruled by Christ, we would be amazed and stunned. A world without deadbolt locks and barred windows and doors, alarms systems on our houses and cars, mace, Tasers and guns; one without lawsuits and lawyers, police forces and armies; a world where violence is never heard of and husbands and wives never divorce. It will be the age of peace and harmony made possible only by the rule and reign of Christ.

What do we do in the meantime? The Scriptures teach us, if possible, to live peaceable with all people. We are to obey the laws and settle disputes out of court and that forgiveness is more valuable than vengeance (1 Tim. 2:2). That would be easy if it were not for the other people, you say. We have a difficult assignment, but we must put forth the effort and not fall into the world’s pattern of do unto them before they do to you.

**REFLECTION:** *Despite what some might say, only Christ can bring harmony to the world.*

Beverly Barnett

## The Coming King and Kingdom

**KEY VERSE:** “Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this,” Isaiah 9:7.

Throughout history many kings and kingdoms have fallen. Alexander the Great, Nero the Roman emperor, Adolf Hitler and others ultimately lost the war within themselves or with an enemy. No country or kingdom will ever be truly at peace as long as kings, presidents, prime ministers or emperors remain in power. They are at best sinners.

What the world needs is the sinless King and He is coming! He will return first in the clouds. Later, He will come from the eastern side of the Mount of Olives through the Eastern Gate into the city of Jerusalem to set up the first kingdom with as the perfect, sinless King.

His throne will be in Jerusalem but His rule will be worldwide. His energy will be boundless. He will not tire by night or be too busy for visits by day. No appointments or security clearances will be needed to see the King because He already knows the thoughts and intents of the hearts.

But, brothers and sisters, do not think we will have nothing to do under the perfect counsel of the Prince of Peace. There we will be priests in the kingdom according to Revelation 20:6. Satan will be shackled, and we will be loosened!

**REFLECTION:** *This writer has often contemplated what it would be like to have perfect thinking with judgment and knowledge beyond measure; we cannot comprehend it. Even then we will go to Christ as the supreme counselor for His advise.*

Beverly Barnett

## The Nations Gather for Armageddon

**KEY VERSE:** “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,” Revelation 16:14.

Across this globe we have heard people express the similar opinion that they do not favor war. We are in agreement that war is a terrible thing and creates many casualties due to the violence and death it brings. War should only be a last resort. Unfortunately, this world is filled with violent people only concerned with their interests and the last war of all time will be no different.

There is coming a season when Satan’s workers will go about gathering coalitions, lying and deceiving them with satanic illusions. Powerful and intelligent people, the people in power, will fall for his smoke and mirror tricks and blame Israel for all their troubles.

These nations, guided by men after power and wealth, will come together, bringing all their latest technologically advanced war equipment in tow. However, they will fight the One who created the atom.

It seems impossible for this to happen but most assuredly it will. We are all too gullible for our own good. Can you deny that you believe some of the advertisements by the corporations and the media? We believe because we want it to be true. Presidents, prime ministers, kings and emperors are the same way; to them that war will sound so winnable, so valuable, so justified but they are deceived.

Be assured, brothers and sisters, God will win; it is in the book. Though the battle may be terrible, fierce noisome and its bloodshed beyond belief, God will win!

**REFLECTION:** *Armageddon creates no fear for the believer.*

Beverly Barnett

## The Victory of the Lamb

**KEY VERSE:** “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful,” Revelation 17:14.

A great coach, Vince Lombardi said, “Winning isn’t everything, its the only thing” and our society reflects his belief. There is no Hall of Fame for losers but there are many Hall of Fame museums for various winning sports persons. Their jersey, hat and shoes all become valuable because the person who wore them was a winner. And, even when we try to console the losing team or person, with It Is Not Who Won or Lost but How You Played the Game. Secretly, we wish they had won.

Winning in sporting events is not crucial in life, unless you are employed by a professional team, but it makes being a fan or player of the winning team more fun. We like to see evenly matched teams battling it out at a sporting event because most often the better team will come out on top. It is demoralizing for the losing team when they lose by a great margin, but if the score is close, they feel they had an opportunity to win.

Winning is everything when it comes to the battle against Satan. He responds to nothing less. If you are a believer, you are on the winning team. The Key Verse above proves it.

Christians have been battling the war against the tactics of Satan since the day they were born again. Satan will never win the war; he might win a battle or two, but he will never win the war. And, even though Satan walks about as a roaring lion, he has no chance of winning against the Lamb of God.

**REFLECTION:** *V-I-C-T-O-R-Y is ours—in Jesus!*

Beverly Barnett

## Israel Will Seek the Lord

**KEY VERSE:** “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days,” Hosea 3:5.

Throughout the history of Israel, the Israelites have been on and off following God. They have been off since the true Messiah came to earth as a baby, with the heart of a servant and not as a conquering king. They rejected Jesus as their Savior and chose instead to let His blood be upon them and their children. (See Matthew 27:25.) But one day they will see the mistake their forefathers made and turn to the the Savior who gave His life for them.

It will be a wonderful time when the people of Israel once again return to worship the true and living God, and this time they will worship Him through His Son, Jesus the Messiah. It will be a time when terrible suppression will lead them to seek the Messiah.

Imagine what it will be like when all nations turn against Israel. Will they deny imports and not sell Israel food or oil and not allow its exports out of port? Will they have all their guns pointed toward Israel on the verge of annihilating it? Certainly, however it will be carried out, it will be terrible times for Israel. (See Zechariah 12:1-3.)

But at last, Israel shall turn to God and pray for His help and God is obliged from His loving promises to give help to the helpless. The people of Israel will see the error in their denial of the Messiah and will turn to God in repentance.

**REFLECTION:** *Let us not be too judgmental of Israel's unstable relationship with God lest we too fall in the hands of a fearful and wonderful living God.*

Beverly Barnett

## The Promise of the Spirit

**KEY VERSE:** “And it shall come to pass afterward, *that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions,*” Joel 2:28.

How sad that God’s chosen people, the Jews, do not possess the gift of the Spirit. This gift is reserved to a certain select group, believers in Christ.

But one day, when the Jewish people again return to God, after they have suffered through a great war, famine and pestilence, they will once again seek the face of God. They will turn to Him as the Lord of their lives, and He will lovingly receive them as the father received the prodigal son.

Then, God will pour out His spirit upon them; man or woman, rich or poor, young or old, all whom turn to God will He lavish His spirit upon. The spirit of God will be the means of communication between them and God, and in turn they will tell others what God has communicated to them.

One way we might illustrate this is the close relationship between two people. For instance, have you and your spouse ever been thinking about the same subject at the same time? One of you brings up a subject and to your amazement he or she has been thinking about it, too. In a similar way, God and His people will be doing the same thing, God will think it and they will know it because their relationship will be that close.

During this time, communication between God and His people will benefit all people. Good news as well as warnings will pass from God to the people via His spokespersons. Great evangelistic outreaches will be started by these gift possessors. They will proclaim the goodness, greatness and love of God throughout the world and many will believe (Isa. 66:18-23).

**REFLECTION:** *Mount Zion will once again be the center of worship but only for the One true God.*

Beverly Barnett

## The Redeemer Comes to Zion

**KEY VERSE:** “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD,” Isaiah 59:20.

It is nothing new for people to suffer from the consequences of their sins. It has been happening to the children of Israel since their nation was formed from the seed of Abraham. Neither will it be any different near the second coming of Christ the Redeemer. The Jewish nation will suffer greatly, then, just in time; the heavenly cavalry will come and the whole earth will take notice with fear and trembling.

The Redeemer, the Messiah, will at last come as the insurmountable force for which there is no earthly match. The enemies of Israel might fight with weapons of mass destruction but the Redeemer Creator can change the laws of nature that He set in place if He so chooses. Enriched uranium could become nothing more powerful than table salt if the Creator so desires. War planes with smart bombs, heat-seeking missiles, and stealth ability, that cost billions of dollars, can suddenly be disabled with a blink of His eyes. Then what will the warlords do?

The Redeemer will come to His people and His people will turn from their doubt and disbelief to see the awesomeness of the Messiah at work. The one and only superhero will fight the enemies of His people and win effortlessly. He will hear the cries of His children and have pity on them.

The nations that seek to destroy God's people will find the war unwinnable and task unattainable. A worldwide league of battlefield strategists might be geniuses of war but they cannot outmaneuver God.

**REFLECTION:** *What will the reality of that time look like? Our imaginations fail us but we can be assured that it will be terrible for those who battle against the Redeemer; He will ride in on that white horse to save His people from annihilation.*

Beverly Barnett

## When the Veil Is Lifted

**KEY VERSES:** “Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,” 2 Corinthians 3:16, 17.

A few years ago this writer attended a play of *The West Side Story*. It had been many years since this writer had seen a play, the excellent acting, musical abilities, and excitement and apprehension of what scene lay behind the curtain made the experience enjoyable.

Think about driving down the highway in an early morning fog. The inability to see more than a few feet ahead is reason to slow down and be alert because one sudden stop can lead to a massive vehicular pileup where even deaths could occur.

When you were a child lying in your bed with the lights off, did the shadows ever play tricks on your mind? Did the things that terrified you disappear when the lights were turned on?

Each one of these are illustrations of a covering or veil. Whether it is made of cloth, vaporous water droplets, or just illusions of the mind each one interferes with the true picture.

At this time the true central theme of the Old Testament, Jesus the Messiah, is veiled to the Jewish nation. But, one day that veil will be lifted and a whole nation will turn to Jesus. It is not an irremovable veil because even now some Jewish people have come to know Jesus as their personal Savior, but not many of them have left their synagogue roots to turn to Christianity.

But one day, the fog will lift; their false illusion will be lighted by the scared hands and feet of Jesus whom their forefathers crucified. The true Messiah will be revealed. When the Old Testament is read, they will understand fully the prophecies concerning the Messiah. Those Scriptures will be so clearly illuminated, it will be as though they were written in phosphorescent ink.

**REFLECTION:** *Now that will be truly a liberating revival!*

Beverly Barnett

## The Lord Will Defend Jerusalem

**KEY VERSE:** “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,” Joel 3:16.

Nothing is hopeless in this life if we place our hope and trust in God. Even when the news is bad and the enemy seems to have the upper hand, children of God are under His protecting hand. Who knew this better than David.

David, the next anointed king of Israel (2 Sam. 2:4), was the object of Saul’s relentless desire to kill him. And many times he came close to being captured or killed, but God always provided a way of escape. David often wrote about the protecting hand of God in the Psalms, and even today God uses those inspired words to comfort and reassure those whom Satan is attacking.

In the final hours of the battle for Jerusalem, all will seem lost during those awful days when the armies of the world will surround Jerusalem. That is, until that great and mighty roar of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah sounds.

It has been reported that when a lion roars, in its natural habitat, it is the most awesomely, frightening sound in the savannas of Africa.

The roar of God will be many times more frightening than the roar of any animal He created. His roar will literally shake the heavens and the earth. Then, who will be able to stand and fight? No one. Generals will tremble, military equipment will fail, armies will retreat in fear, defeated by the roar of God; to the enemies of Jerusalem it is a terrible sound, but to the children of God it will be a comforting hum of a father.

**REFLECTION:** *After Jerusalem is emptied of all the enemies of God, it will then be ready to be the capital city for the kingdom of God.*

Beverly Barnett

## All Idols Will Be Banished

**KEY VERSE:** “Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands,” Micah 5:13.

Each time the people of Israel conquered a nation, they infused a new god into their worship. They easily forgot the first commandment given by God to Moses. Then God would raise a man or nation to punish the people of Israel, and they would tear down their false gods and return to worship the One true and living God.

One day in a tiny little town, Bethlehem, Jesus was born—the Messiah—Savior of Israel. He came to His people. But He was rejected by the same people who were the most educated in the Law and the prophets. They had built a religious status quo and had interpreted the Scriptures in a way that would benefit them. A baby born in a stable did not fit the portrait they had painted of the king of Israel. These religious leaders disregarded the prophecies of the coming Messiah being born in a manger, and it remains so to this day.

But, in that day, when the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, have seen the error of their ways and are ready to worship the Messiah, He will for the final time throw down their false gods—false gods that they made with their own works.

The present-day gods of finance, success, education, wealth, religiosity, piousness, meditation, self-awareness and many more will disintegrate in the light of the Messiah. Then, nothing will be more important than the worship of Jesus—the One they have so long denied.

**REFLECTION:** *Is there any similarity between Israel's false gods and our nation's gods?*

Beverly Barnett

## The Good Shepherd

**KEY VERSE: “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep,” John 10:11.**

Shepherds out in the mountains and valleys in the countryside of the Middle East are rough-looking men. Their skin is windburned, darkened by the sun and scared from briars and brambles. Their clothes are faded by the sun and in need of repair. They are thin but muscular, able to pick up an injured sheep and carry it back to the fold. They are rugged but gentle men who are willing to defend their sheep.

There is nothing sweeter than a little lamb. Its curly, white wool so soft and fluffy and its pink ears and black nose make it look so lovable and innocent. But the sheepfold is not made up of just cute little lambs. There are old rams and young ewes and ages in between. They are smelly and stubborn, nervous and not intelligent. They will eat a field of grass barren if they are not rotated from field to field. Their shepherd must have patience.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd of His children. He watches over them and guides them to green pastures and gentle streams of water. He gave His life for His own and He has the eternal scars to prove it. He is patient and loving as He watches over us, His precious sheep.

One day His people whom He loves and weeps over will see His scars and know Him. What a wonderful day that will be when the Shepherd of Israel shall lead His people, and they will follow because they love Him.

**REFLECTION:** *And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice (John 10:4).*

Beverly Barnett

## The Heritage of the Lord's Servants

**KEY VERSE:** “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD,” Isaiah 54:17.

It is a warm breezy day in the village of Chux Lin Ha, Belize. Outside the windows are neat rows of gray, cinder block homes with brown, thatched roofs. Some houses have trimmed, red hibiscus hedges that give some privacy, others do not. Inside these meager dwellings live Mayan families who cook on open fires and sleep in hammocks or on hard mattresses. The more modern families have televisions and small gas stoves to cook on. When the weather is cool there is no heater and, when the weather is hot, there is no air conditioner.

The village children go to school and learn as much as possible but because of the high expense to the parents, only the brightest go to high school. At best, these children may grow up to become laborers, farmers, waitresses or some might even have a high paying job as a teacher that pays five hundred United States dollars a month. However, their future looks bright.

Although, all that these children may have to inherit from their parents is a termite eaten house and a few worn-out furnishings, there is hope for their future, but it is only in Christ. When they know Christ as their Savior, then, their heritage will be based on God's love for them. They will be adopted sons and daughters of the King and will share in the King's blessings—not based on their righteousness but on the righteousness of the Son.

**REFLECTION:** *A better day is coming for those who believe in the only begotten Son!*

Beverly Barnett

## Redeemed Israel Betrothed to the Lord

**KEY VERSE:** “And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies,” Hosea 2:19.

God intensely loves Israel in spite of its continued rejection of His way. He loves Israel so that He has chosen to court the nation and plead for its total commitment and love only to be rejected over and over again. So instead, He must love these people and bestow on them His righteousness, judgment, loving-kindness, mercy and faithfulness—such gifts are from the dowry of our faithful and loving God. He loves Israel so much that He chose for His Son’s maternal family to be Jewish descendants (Gen. 12:2; Isa. 54:5; Jer. 31:33, 34).

We also find this love exhibited in the new covenant that Christ has with all believers and especially the faithful of the Lord’s churches. His Bride (of His choosing) is espoused to Christ through the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9). His love is shown in the ultimate payment—His life for the life and love of the bride. The engagement, as far as individual church members are concerned, can only be broken by one’s unfaithfulness to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2).

But who could possibly break the Bridegroom’s heart by not being faithful after He has done so much for us? Is all faithfulness equal? Or is faithfulness judged by what is given up and the burdens carried in the service for and sacrifice of the members of the Lord’s churches?

Regardless of our questions about who makes up the Bride of Christ, the Lord has prepared a place and a feast, and is waiting for the Father to tell Him to call His people home.

**REFLECTION:** *God is faithful to Israel, Christ is faithful to the His churches, and one day there will be a wedding in Heaven like no other.*

Beverly Barnett

## Smitten Shepherd— Scattered Sheep

**KEY VERSE:** “Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad,” Matthew 26:31.

A near death experience gives one a different perspective on life. For some it gives clarity on their priorities: the existence of an afterlife, God, family and friends. Money, career and accumulation of things loses its luster when one barely escapes the grip of death.

However, in these verses, Jesus was not worried about His nearing death. He had no fear in His death; He has power over death and hell. But as the loving Shepherd, His concern was for His precious sheep.

Jesus knew that sheer terror would grip their hearts in the next few days, hours and minutes. They would be as vulnerable as a newborn lamb in the winter snow and His heart broke for them. As a father pleads with a child to be cautious in the world and stand true to his moral and ethical values and warns him that temptations will come, Jesus warned His disciples and especially Peter.

Peter’s quick ability to step forward was also his vulnerability. Satan can turn our greatest strength into our greatest weakness. So, Jesus warned, and Peter listened but was filled with overconfidence that he would never stray.

Satan hits when we are most confident we cannot fall. Then he knocks the pinnacle we have placed ourselves on right out from under us and great is the fall. Peter’s problem, like so many of us, was overconfidence in his own abilities. God is not impressed with our abilities, but it is our dependence on Him for strength that touches the heart of God.

**REFLECTION:** *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6).*

Beverly Barnett

## Destroy All Knowledge of Idols!

**KEY VERSE:** “Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise,” Deuteronomy 12:30.

So evil were some of the false religions and hedonistic rituals of the nations surrounding the people of Israel that God told them to utterly destroy them and do not even question their practices.

The best thing that we can do is run away from evil. The expression *garbage in; garbage out* is not found in the Bible but clearly the Bible teaches that what we see, hear and do has an effect on our lives. “Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of my city” (Lam. 3:51). What we see can do us good or harm.

Listening to immoral songs, or watching immoral films can plant seeds that Satan can use to build up a tolerance for evil in society and can riddle us with guilt and destroys our self-worth. Additionally, our young adults are bombarded with this when they go off to college. They are taught to be open-minded in philosophies, world religions and in cultural classes and to reject the Christian values of their parents and grandparents.

And although our country was founded on religious freedom, what some call religion is only a cult by definition and practice. We must know and stand for the truth of the Bible. Because of the lack of biblical knowledge people are easily lead astray when they go searching for what man-made religions may teach.

**REFLECTION:** *For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee (Prov. 23:7).*

Beverly Barnett

## The Great Shepherd's Work

**KEY VERSE:** “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” Hebrews 13:20.

Though men may deny His existence, they cannot undo what Jesus did. The God of peace allowed the violent death of His Son to establish a covenant between a repentant sinner and a holy God. Our Shepherd literally died as a lamb for His lowly, undeserving sheep so they might live for all eternity with Him! (See Hebrews 9:13-23.)

No other religion, other than Christianity, makes this claim to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. In fact, most world religions deny the holiness of Jesus as God's Son and count Him as only a good man or prophet. Even some Christian denominations teach that the blood of Christ is not powerful enough to keep one saved, one must work out his or her salvation, or must do good works to keep from falling out of salvation.

The Bible does teach that the blood of Christ cleanses every believer from all unrighteousness (sin). (See 1 John 1:9 and Ephesians 1:7.) The work of the Great Shepherd is complete and one does not fall in and out of the family of God (John 3:15). But, we do fall in and out of fellowship with Him (1 John 1:3-6).

Jesus Christ's work is done, finished on Calvary, recorded in Heaven, and seals the soul of every believer forever. God will not, cannot, nor does not, rescind the covenant of blood He made.

**REFLECTION:** *Believers are secure in the family of God as children of the Father.*

Beverly Barnett

## He Will Return As He Departed

**KEY VERSE:** “Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,” Acts 1:11.

The promise of Christ’s return is a great comfort to believers. As we gaze into a beautiful sunrise, we think of His return. As we live through wars, natural disasters, economic failures, job losses, illnesses, deaths and births, we are comforted by the fact that one day Jesus will return.

Now, we are not assured of when that time will be, whether it will be in our lifetime or generations to come, that is not for us to worry about.

And for certain, we can pray, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20) but the date and time is in the Father’s hands and according to His will. Furthermore, we should not make assumptions or predictions of when the time of His return will occur. But, you may sleep soundly, friend, knowing that God has mapped out a timetable based on His perfect assessment.

Skeptics will say that they have heard of Christ’s returning warning/prediction all of their lives and doubt the truth in it, but, still, it is true. Warnings are given to give people time to prepare. The National Weather Service issues weather bulletins to help people make preparations for a predicted weather change. Sometimes the weather passes by and the preparations made are not necessary. But, sooner or later we will be glad we followed the warning.

Jesus is coming again, from Heaven that He was taken up into, and those who have made preparations for His return will be glad they did.

**REFLECTION:** *As believers, we must not become sky watchers only; we must be busy doing His will, spreading the good news throughout the world until He comes.*

Beverly Barnett

## The Everlasting Kingdom

**KEY VERSE:** “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him,” Daniel 7:27.

Throughout history there have been countries and kingdoms that have conquered other lands with all power and strength only to eventually collapse or be overthrown. But, no weapon or leader will ever destroy the kingdom of God (Dan. 7:14). Governments and economies may collapse; kings and presidents may change; wars may begin and end; but the kingdom of God is stable and secure. The kingdom is perpetual, and no war will ever destroy it.

It will be a kingdom of light. No electricity or wind powered energy will be needed. It will not be dependent on foreign energy resources because the Son of God will be the Light (Rev. 22:5).

This all sounds like a C. S. Lewis or J. R. R. Tolkien story but it is not a make-believe story. It is based upon God’s truth. It is not a dream that one day we will wake from thinking this cannot be true. One day the saved will live in the new kingdom of God, not only that, but believers will rule and reign with Him on earth (Rev. 5:10; 11:15; 21:1).

This fact does not appeal to unbelievers. All they are concerned with is the here and now or maybe their future retirement. But this earth and all the kingdoms and countries contained on it are limited by time. They do have a beginning and an ending.

**REFLECTION:** *Nothing lasts forever, an old cliché, is not all together true. For example, the kingdom of God lasts forever. The souls God created—our souls—last forever. Jesus lasts forever, and God’s love lasts forever.*

Beverly Barnett

## His Name Shall Be Great

**KEY VERSE:** “For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name *shall be great* among the Gentiles; and in every place incense *shall be offered* unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name *shall be great* among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts,” Malachi 1:11.

In many countries, a person’s name is extremely personal and is respected by others. For instance, in Thailand a child’s mother’s name is never spoken by other children. When speaking of another child’s mother, they will say for example, “Ken’s mother” literally “mother of Ken” never her real name and the same for the father’s name. In Africa the mother is known by her firstborn’s name such as Mama Josiah. In some countries a person’s given name is never used except for business matters. They assign themselves a pet or nickname. Even Americans, for convenience sake, may shorten their given name, James to Jim, Robert to Bob and others.

Can you imagine how it breaks the heart of God to hear His one and only Son’s name used in such a disrespectful way as many use His name today? It is no wonder that our society is spiraling downward.

The simple truth is, there is coming a day when at the name of Jesus every knee will bow (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10). One day the Lord’s name will be properly honored and respected. His name will no longer be used in a disrespectful way as a slang or as a curse word. But, this will not come about until the world is cleansed of sin and Jesus is on His throne. However, we can start now teaching our children to respect the names of the Lord and not to use them in a derogatory way.

**REFLECTION:** *What will it sound like to speak the name of Jesus from sin-free lips?*

Beverly Barnett

## All the Ends of the Earth

**KEY VERSE:** “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee,” Psalm 22:27.

In many churches across the world, some members neglect to go to the house of the Lord for praise and worship of Jesus Christ our Savior. They are nominal Christians. Attendance is only on special occasions: weddings, funerals, Easter, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Christmas or some other special holiday. The sacrifice of Jesus for their sins is no longer precious to them and their Christian lives are suffering from lack of spiritual food.

But, a spiritual awakening is coming! There is coming a time when all of the nations of all the earth will worship the Lord. And, what a time of worship this will be when from every language, group of people, even to the smallest tribe, we will come together from each corner of the world to worship the Lord in all His glory and majesty. Imagine the sweet sounds of the songs of Africa, Belize, Romania, Thailand and all around the world as one theme is sung, “Glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:14).

We will bow to the Lord for one reason—because He is worthy to be praised. Worship will not be limited to one or two days a week. Worship will be daily. The beauty of the Lord’s scars will bring us to our knees and tears to our eyes as we praise Him for His loving sacrifice for our sins.

**REFLECTION:** *May our prayer today be, Lord, may I suffer from calluses of the knees and not calluses of the heart. Amen.*

Beverly Barnett

## Dominion from Sea to Sea

**KEY VERSE: “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth,” Psalm 72:8.**

Most of the Middle Eastern conflicts between Israel and others have been over the boundaries of Israel. Little by little, the people of Israel, for the sake of peace, have given up parts of the land promised to them by God. What the other countries do not realize is that they will never permanently own any land given to them by treaty or concession.

Stubbornly, they deny the Bible as the Word of God, and, in doing so, they disregard its teachings and promises concerning Israel and the coming Messiah. Their denial will not change the final outcome. The Messiah will have final reign over all the earth and over every kingdom.

As promised, there will be a King over all the earth, and He will rule from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River back around to the Euphrates River. This extraordinary feat could never be accomplished by any other than the Messiah Himself (Zech. 14:9).

Christ the King will set up His throne in Jerusalem, but His rule will be universal. Nothing will go on that He is not aware of, from the smallest island to the most remote mountaintop village. He will rule with righteousness and perfect judgment. And, even though He will appoint His saints to rule and reign with Him, all final authority will be His.

He will be able to discern truth even from the most deceitful people and the vast variety of languages will pose no barrier for He created languages. Distance will not be a problem because the Messiah is not bound by ordinary limits of time and travel.

**REFLECTION:** *What will be used for currency in this universal kingdom?*

Beverly Barnett

## Worldwide Worship in the Kingdom

**KEY VERSE:** “Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and *that* their kings *may be* brought,” Isaiah 60:11.

Wow, what an evangelistic explosion will occur when the perfect Savior reigns on earth!

This will be a time of an intense desire to worship the true and living Savior from the multitudes of people who will convert to Christianity. They will have witnessed firsthand the horrors of the Tribulation Period and will know that Jesus is the One and only true Savior, the Son of God.

They will come from near and far with offerings of praise and worship to the Son of God. Jesus will tenderly love and welcome them into the family of God, their sins forgiven and forgiveness freely given to each one.

New songs will be written and sung about His strength and majesty, about the victories of Christ the Messiah over the enemies of God. Poems and prose will be written assigning all accolades to Christ Jesus (Rev. 15:3).

It will be a time of peace brought on by the Prince of Peace. No need to worry about robbers or thieves breaking in and stealing from the all-knowing King. The treasury will be open so that the monetary offerings of worship can be given by the worshipers (Isa. 60:9).

**REFLECTION:** *We do not have to wait for the new kingdom to praise Him. He is worthy of all our worship, praise and glory— this moment.*

Beverly Barnett

## Christ Return and Kingdom Come

**KEY VERSE:** “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years,” Revelation 20:6

There are many variables that affect our plans for the future. Health, death and wealth are all factors that can change our future plans; as well as loss of jobs, divorce, change of location or vocation—the future for most of us is uncertain at best.

But there is a future event coming that nothing this side of Heaven will change. It is the return of Christ and the new kingdom.

The King is coming and no one can stop Him, not even Satan. He will usher in a new age of worship and government. We have previously studied that He will appoint some to be kings and some to be priests in the new kingdom. He will rule with perfect judgment and righteousness and there will be no argument regarding whom He chooses to do what.

The future will be here before we know it and for many Christians that will not be soon enough, especially those who are suffering from religious persecution. And, this persecution is going to get worse. As Satan gains more power on this earth, Christians will suffer. For them there is a special crown, a pure white robe and a position in the new kingdom of Christ Jesus.

In Christ we are blessed with a coming King, who will set the new kingdom in perfect order and will bring with Him a glorious future for those who love Him.

**REFLECTION:** *Are you setting aside rewards in Heaven for the future?*

Beverly Barnett