

Saturday/Sunday, August 26-27, 2006, Pentecost XII

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Michael Ramirez / *Copley News Service*



JESUS - THE EVER TRUE PROPHET OF TODAY'S POLITICAL EVENTS IN ISRAEL

In the mid-1960's when America was bogged down in Vietnam I declared, from this pulpit that the time will come when that confrontation will pale into insignificance, compared with a future conflict which would occur in the Middle-East between Israel, Russia, and several of its client Arab states. It's impossible to pick up a newspaper today, or turn on the TV, without hearing something going on between Israel and it's Arab neighbors.

This past week, one of our priests was quoted in the Buffalo News as declaring that the Bible is not a "roadmap" of events. And another, Jesse Jackson, once said to Muammar al-Qaddafi on a visit to that dictator in Libya, that: "the Bible is not a 'textbook' on real estate." Both statements are in error. If Jesus is the "Way, the Truth and the Life," then that "way, like any "way" to anything, is a "roadmap," and if the Bible teaches nothing else it declares that Israel was, by God's own oath, to inherit the "Promised Land. This "Promised LAND" was to be hers forever! Now, that's quite a binding real estate contract if there ever was one! And both parties (God, and Israel) are still alive, which validates this "will and testament!"

OUR BLESSED LORD CHRIST JESUS IS OUR "PROPHET," PRIEST & KING!

Our blessed Lord is a Prophet. He said so Himself (Luke 4:24), as well as being our High Priest and soon coming King. As the pre-Incarnate Christ, before His Incarnation, He led the prophets to predict the future (Rev. 19:10), the very events that we are now seeing come to pass in these "last days," which term we so describe in the Holy Eucharist Prayer "B" of our prayer book (Prayer Book, p. 368, line 7). So, are we living in the "last days?" Our prayer book says: "Yes, we are!"

There are certain definite signs of the near approach of the return of Christ to judge the world. One thing Jesus told us all, several times over, was to "**WATCH**" for events that would lead up to His soon coming. But "Watch" for...what? Watch for the signs He foretold of coming political events on the world stage that would center around the restored nation of Israel. His people. Remember the sign over the Cross on Good Friday? Jesus is the "King of the Jews."

But where can we look to find the answers to the signs about which we are to watch and anticipate? The answer? In the writings of the prophets! Jesus, that first Easter, upbraided the disciples for not knowing the prophets (Luke 24:25-27, 44). He declared that "everything written about me in the Law, and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." "Everything?" Now, how much is "everything?" Quite a bit, isn't it? Do you know the prophets? All 16 of them? What do the prophetic revelations of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi have to say about today's events? It's vital that we know. It's "basic Bible."

St. Paul, writing to the Romans (1:2) said that everything in the gospel "was promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy scriptures." About what "scriptures" is Paul referring? The New Testament? Certainly not! There was no "New Testament" when he wrote his letters. The "Scriptures" about which he spoke is what today we call the Hebrew "Old Testament." Everything about Christ: His birth, mission and ministry, his passion, death, burial, resurrection on the third day, His ascension, to the Father, His second coming and the establishment of the Millennium here upon earth are all in the Hebrew scriptures. If we cannot prove all those things from the "Old" Testament, then we do not really know God's word. It was the only "scripture" the early church had in the sub-apostolic period. The New Testament came later, and is a commentary upon the old. It has been said that the "New is in the Old contained. The Old is in the New explained!"

JESUS, WILL COME, BUT NOT AS A "THIEF IN THE NIGHT" FOR BELIEVERS!

When Jesus returns, His followers will not be surprised. They will have been **watching** and following the "signs of the times". Like the 5 wise maidens in Jesus' parable, they will have their lamps trimmed and burning with fresh oil while the sleepers (the 5 foolish maidens) will be shut out, their lamps out of oil (Matt. 25:1-11). Only those ignorant of the "signs of the times" will be caught spiritually asleep as "children of the night" (I Thess. 5:2-6, Rev. 3:3, 16:15). But not us. We are children of the day and not the night. So says holy scripture.

WE WILL NOT KNOW THE DAY OR HOUR, BUT WE WILL KNOW THE...?

Jesus said we would not know the "day" or the "hour" of His return. In fact, when He

was upon the earth, He specifically said that neither He, nor the angels in heaven knew when the Kingdom's signs would be revealed. Only the Father knew (Matt. 24:36). And then, later, Jesus ascended into heaven and the first thing our Lord revealed to the Apostle St. John, "ex-cathedra," was the "Revelation" of the coming of the Kingdom and its signs, which the **Father now revealed to the Son**, who passed these signs on to the Beloved Disciple, St. John. So, **Rev. 1:1** now supersedes **Matt. 24:36**. Rev. 1:1, reads: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God (I.e., the "Father") gave Him, to show to His servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to His servant John*" (also see Rev. 5:1-10, 8:1-2, 11:15-19, 12: 6, 15, 13:5, & 22:18-19). Now we have the "signs of the times."

So, remember, what Jesus (and even the angels) did not know while on the earth concerning the "signs of the coming kingdom," the Father later revealed and told Him when He ascended into the third heaven, into Paradise and the throne of the Father. A place where the Apostle Paul was granted a fleeting glimpse in a special vision (2Cor. 12:2). Jesus revealed it to St. John, and St. John passed it onto the Church. To us!

THE GENERATION OF THE "FIG TREE" -

Now, Jesus (Matt. 24:36) said we would never know the "day or the hour" of His return, but, in just three verses **before** He said those words (in Matt. 24:32-34), He first declared that we **would know** the **generation** of His soon coming. Not the "day," nor the "hour," but the "generation" in which He would soon return to establish His kingdom (as we pray in the Lord's Prayer); a kingdom to come "on earth as it now is in heaven" (Rev. 5:10, Rom. 5:17).

This generational "sign" to watch would be the "Fig Tree." The generation that will see the "Fig Tree" begin to grow and branch out its leaves would be the generation that would be privileged to be alive when Christ returned. OK, so who or what is the "Fig Tree?"

The answer to that question brings us to the headlines in today's newspapers and television coverage of the Middle East. When you see the side of an Israeli tank, it has emblazoned on it the six-pointed Star of David. That emblem is also on the national flag of the Jewish state. But that's not the ancient sign or emblem of Israel and its people which was... the Fig Tree (Jeremiah. 24, Hosea 9:10).

VESPASIAN, EMPEROR OF ROME, AND THE MINTING OF THE "SESTERTIUS"

When the Roman Emperor Vespasian conquered Jerusalem in 70 A.D., using his son, General Titus, he minted a coin called the "Sestertius" to commemorate the event. One side of the coin depicts a side profile of the Emperor's face. The other side depicts the figure of a conquered woman (the "Daughter of Zion,") sitting dejectedly under a fig tree with a Roman soldier triumphantly standing over her. On the script, the coin declares: "Iudaea Capta" - "The Jews are Conquered!" Well, perhaps then, but now, Rome's empire, and its capitol in the "forum Romanorum" is a mass of jumbled and broken stones. Imperial Rome's power and its empire has long since vanished, but the Jews are still here, and their capitol, Jerusalem, is a rebuilt and thriving city. The Jews are a people like an **anvil** that has broken many national "**hammers**" whose dictatorial **blacksmiths** have pounded, vainly, in an effort to destroy her (Zechariah 1:20-21)

Through the centuries many prognosticators have predicted the coming of Christ ignoring Jesus' sign of the "Fig Tree." He will not come until the "Fig Tree," the restored Jewish state of Israel, is replanted and begins to spread abroad to its former land given her by God.

So Jesus says: **"From the fig tree (the restored nation of Israel) learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you will know that He is near, at the very gates. Truly I say to you, this generation (that is, the 'generation' that sees the 'fig tree' -the Jewish state reborn) will not pass away till all these things take place."** (Matt. 24:32-34).

THE HOLY TRINITY REVEALS HIS SECRET FUTURE PLANS TO THE PROPHETS

As far as God's use of our lives in His plan of salvation is concerned, we "walk by faith" and not by sight (2Cor. 5:7). But as far as knowing the Creator's prophetic plan for the future of the world, we "walk by sight, watching the signs, and that strengthens our faith!" We are to "WATCH" with prophetic insight! We know God's plan for the future. The Holy Trinity says, in holy scripture, that He **"will do nothing without first revealing His secret plans to us through His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7)**. When the kingdom is finally established during the coming millennium, it will be in the exact manner as previously described and foretold by the prophets and declared by the Seventh Angel after the sound of the last trumpet of God's judgment on the earth and establishment of Christ's kingdom (Rev. 10:7).

Since the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the Jews wandered from land to land, and nation to nation, without their homeland. There was even a decorative plant people used in their homes called the "Wandering Jew." But Jesus said that they, the "fig tree," would return, be replanted and become a nation once more. The Jews are "wandering" no more. They have their own homeland. And Isaiah the prophet predicted how it would occur 2,800 years in advance! Israel would become **a nation state in just ONE DAY** (Isa. 66:7-8)! How about that, a 'nation born in a day!' And that is exactly what happened! The United Nations did, on May 16th, 1948, what it has never done either before or since. It declared a nation (Israel) to be reborn in a day. May 16th, and, at midnight, President Harry S. Truman recognized the State of Israel by the United States of America, as the ancestral home of all Jews. **The Fig Tree was replanted!** The generation that witnessed it will not all pass away ("die"), says Jesus, until all in the Bible is fulfilled.

And immediately after Israel's rebirth, we saw the Arab nations attack the new Jewish state, in huge numbers, and they have been defeated in war after war. Moshe Dayan, late general of the Israeli armies, was quoted as saying, after the '67 war. "We have to win every war. The Arabs have to win only one, and then we Jews will cease to exist." True, the Arab nations like Iran, have declared it is their intention to destroy and kill every last living Jew, and wipe the map clear of the State of Israel. They will almost, but not quite succeed, as the prophets have revealed before hand.

There are an estimated 500 million Arabs surrounding 5 million Jews in tiny Israel. One writer described their proportional sizes this way. "Go into a football stadium and look at the football gridiron. Now, place a postage stamp on the 50 yard line. Geographically speaking, the "postage stamp" is the size of the State of Israel, and the rest of the playing field is the area owned by Arab states. For them, it is not enough land for them. They want more. Israel's existence is an offence against "Allah." The "Zionist entity," they say: "must be exterminated!"

If you wish to know the plans of Hamas and Hezbollah, just read **psalm 83:1-8**. There, the ancient names of today's peoples are recorded, and their intention to wipe Israel off the map! 2,000 years ahead of time!

PREPARATION FOR THE COMING WAR OF 'GOG' FROM THE LAND OF MAGOG

What we are seeing today, is the gathering of Arab nations preparing to destroy the Jewish state. The "Prince of Darkness" has been trying to do this throughout history, using the ancient Egyptians, then Babylonians, followed by the Romans, then the Greeks, the Ottoman Turks, and most recently the forces of Nazi Germany, upheld and supported by the Arab states. The Grand Mufti of Arab Jerusalem, during the 2nd World War, supported the Nazi regime in killing of Jews, with a special Arab legion that fought furiously against America and our allies, in support of Nazi Germany. **Adolph Hitler** remains a hero to Arab leaders. Their only regret, that Hitler was unable to finish his genocide against the Jews. When two airliners crashed into the twin towers in America, it was the Arabs who have recently called themselves "Palestinians" that were videotaped dancing on the roof tops and streets of Gaza and South Lebanon rejoicing in the deaths of Americans in the Twin Towers and in the Pentagon.

KEEP YOUR EYES ON RUSSIA AND IRAN AND THEIR ALLIES!

Follow the events in the Middle East closely. One nation is foretold by the prophets to be active in all trouble against Israel, and in support of the Arab nations. That nation was predicted to do just what it is up to today!

Turn with me in your **pew Bibles to page 792**. Twenty-six centuries ago, Ezekiel the prophet predicted a coming attack by **Russia** against Israel. Yet, when Ezekiel made this prediction, the nation of Israel no longer existed, and this prophet was a prisoner in a concentration camp in Babylon! Yes, **Russia is the great enemy behind the scenes in today's news**. In Ezekiel 38. "**Gog**" is called the "**Chief Prince**" of **Meshech** and **Tubal**. The word "**Chief Prince**" is "**Rosh**," from which we get the word "**Russian**." The "white Russians", as foretold, are the main controlling tribe of this multi-racial nation. Their two cities are "**Meshech**" (the old form of the word "**Moscow**") and "**Tubal**," (now called "**Tobolsk**" in contemporary Russian). Notice, in Ezek. 38:15, they will attack from the **North**. If you take a ruler and place it vertically on Jerusalem, and trace the ruler Northwards, you will bisect the City of Moscow in Russia. Directly North of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel predicts that this attack will come "in the "latter years," in the "last days" (38:7, 16). And Russia's allies are also mentioned in 38:5-6. **Persia** (modern Iran, Russia's 'client state'), **Ethiopia**, "**Put**" (the ancient name of Libya), **Gomer** (Eastern European Baltic tribes) and **Beth-Togarmah** (Armenia). These are all Muslim states, with their allies from other areas. **An enormous force, and they will be defeated by a special act of God described in the following chapter, Ezekiel 39.**

Just about all of the Arab states today are industrial backwaters. It would be hard for many of them to build a factory on their own, even to build bicycles, much less advanced weaponry. Their total industrial output, all 21 nations combined, is less than that of Finland, a tiny North European nation with a total population of a bit over five million. So where are all the

sophisticated weapons of the Arab states, and Iran (which is Persian and not Arab) coming from? Where else? From Russia! With the collapse of the old Soviet Union thousands of Soviet scientists were out of work, and found employment in Iran, using their skills in Russian weaponry and nuclear physics to underpin Iran's war machine. Ever notice the automatic machine gun every Arab mullah and foot soldier carries? They are Russian made Kalashinoff's.

TRACING THE SOURCE OF ALL ARAB WEAPONRY FROM PAST WARS

All the weapons of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq used in the wars of 1967, 1973 and 1982 against Israel were supplied by Russia, even including Russia's advanced MIG jet fighters!. It is Russia that is building the nuclear reactors in Iran, and has offered the same units to, of all nations, Syria! Russian weapons and technology move first to Iran, which ships them off to Syria, which then transfers them by the thousands down the main arterial roads and bridges of Lebanon, South to Hezbollah by the Israeli border. The drones and sophisticated anti-tank missiles used so effectively by Hezbollah against Israeli tanks are all made by, and shipped from, Russia to Iran. Last December, Russia signed a half-billion dollar deal to ship more arms and weapons to Iran. It's good for business! Our American ambassador, spoke to the Russians to slow down their nuclear support of Iran. After all, Russia's problems with Chechnian Moslems in their own country could become a disaster if Iran passed such weapons to their Chechnian Moslem brothers..

THE BOOKS: "THE EZEKIEL OPTION" A BEST SELLER FOR THE NY TIMES!

So, next of the drawing board of the Holy Trinity, is the coming defeat of Russia and all her client Muslim states as described in Ezekiel 39. In fact, a recent "best seller" titled the "Ezekiel Option" was released a few years ago, predicting the same truths.

AFTER THE DEFEAT OF "GOG, THE ANTI-CHRIST WILL ARISE IN EUROPE

We mentioned earlier that the great military gathering of Gog and the Arab nations will be defeated by an act of God. Read Ezekiel chapters 38-39. **After that event**, the prophets declare that China and the nations of Europe, led by Antichrist will attack. They will almost succeed. The Bible declares that "all the nations" (that is, the United Nations forces) will come to wipe Israel off the map.

ISRAEL: -THE "APPLE" (OR "PUPIL") OF GOD'S EYE

The Holy Trinity is allowing these events to occur in order to punish those nations that have come to abolish the one nation, Israel, that God declared to be the "apple of His eye" (Zechariah 2:8). The "apple" or "pupil" is the most sensitive part of our bodies. When someone tries to touch our eye, we hold them back. "Touch anything, but not the "pupil" ("apple") of my eye." So it is with God. He warns us beforehand: "Touch Israel, and I will strike back (Genesis 12:3). Hard."

BURNING THE BEARD OF AN ELDERLY JEWISH RABBI -A CHRISTIAN WEEPS

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian and author of the book "The Cost of Discipleship." One day, in Berlin, he was out for an afternoon walk in Hitler ruled Nazi Germany in 1940. He came across three Nazi 'Brown shirts' who were happily setting the beard

of an elderly rabbi on fire on the sidewalk for their amusement. Bonhoeffer stood watching, tears running down his eyes. The Nazi thugs laughed at Bonhoeffer, and said: "Why are you crying for the rabbi? He's not a man, he's just a Jew." Bonhoeffer replied, "I'm not crying for the rabbi, but I cry for Germany. You have just struck the 'apple' of God's eye." We all know what happened to the Nazis.

THE LAST U.N. ATTACK AGAINST ISRAEL & THE RETURN OF CHRIST JESUS

Turn in your pew Bibles to p. 871. We will see what the Lord is planning to do to the nations that come against restored Israel in the "Last Days." Note **Zech. 12:1-3**. God declares that Jerusalem, in the End Times, will become a problem for all the nations. They will attack one last time to exterminate the Jewish state. Now, read, on p. 872, **Zech. 13:8-9**. Two-thirds of Israelites will be killed in the attack. Only a third will remain, and they too will be afflicted. Now look at chapter 14:2. "all the nations," (the "united nations") smelling blood, capture Jerusalem the Jewish capitol.

All hope is lost. This is one of the great signs before the Second Coming of Christ. He will come in power and glory to save Israel. **Remember in Acts 1:11-12, how Jesus ascended into heaven from...where? Why the Mount of Olives!** So, He will come again to that same Mount from which He earlier ascended, the 2nd time, to save the Jewish state from complete annihilation. After all, He is the "King of the Jews." Look at **Zech. 14:3-5**. Christ returns to the Mount of Olives. His feet touch earth, and the mountain divides North and South, leaving an escape "pass" right through the mountain going East & West towards the Mediterranean Sea.

The remnant of Jewish survivors will flee through this future geodesic fault and escape (as they did under Moses, through the Red Sea millennia earlier). When the world's armies follow into the sluice in the Mount of Olives to destroy the Jewish remnant, the Lord will cause an "aftershock" and the mountain will close inwards again, burying alive the pursuing armies.

Now, saved from destruction, the surviving Israelites will rush up the Mount of Olives to thank their Messiah. The Jewish Messiah raises up his hands to bless them, and what do they see? Turn back to page 871, to **Zech. 12:10-11**. When the Messiah raises His hands, they see the pierced hands and now know that this messiah is none other than the Crucified Jesus. Then the entire remnant nation mourns and repents. All they have to do is be baptized and their sins will be washed away. And, in **Zech. 13:1**, that's exactly what God provides to occur!. Part of the earth cracks open and a giant artesian well gushes forth and cleanses the entire nation, all "born again," in one day! What a vision! Israel, "First Born" as a nation in 1948, and "Born again" through repentance and baptism into their Messiah at His return to the Mount of Olives. What a vision!!!

We have just scratched the surface of Bible prophecy, and time allows me to speak no longer, and it's necessary to end at this point. In conclusion: Read your Bibles, and learn what the sixteen prophets have to say about the future that we are so graced to live in. Do you want "20-20 vision?" Well then, remember **2 Chron. 20:20** which declares: "*Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed*" (2Chron.20:20). It's the "20-20" vision of the End Times we all so desperately need.



Steve Breen / *San Diego Union-Tribune*

