July to September 2014
Teenz RPG Series on

"Knowing the End Times"

Do pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance before you begin your devotional time, for unless the Spirit reveals the meaning, we cannot understand scripture (1 Corinthians 2:10). Then you must read the scripture text; please don't be tempted to read the devotional alone without reading the Bible. Memorizing the scripture text will help you meditate upon it (Psalm 1:2), even long after you have finished your devotional time. After reading the devotional, always end with self-reflection: compare yourself against the standard of God's Word, and humbly yield to the Holy Spirit to direct you towards that standard (James 1:23-25). Be ye doers of the Word, not hearers only!

At the end of this series, may you be able to say as David said "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." (Psalm 63:1)

May all glory be God's alone!

Dn Milton Ang
On behalf of the Teenz RPG committee

IS THE WORLD REALLY ENDING?

The end of the world is a topic that has been subject of much speculation. In church, we have heard countless times of preaching that we are living in the last days. Yet we don't actually see much difference in our everyday lives; everything seems to go on as usual. Environmental activists fight to 'save the planet' as if it is going to be our permanent home. In fact, even amongst Christians, few think much about the last days. How do we know that the last days are indeed upon us?

In today's reading, we see Apostle Peter speaking of "the last days". Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, he had prophesied that there would be scoffers who would scorn at the very idea of the end of the world. They would say that all things will continue on as they have been doing so since the beginning, i.e. that life in this world will go on and on with no ending. But we as believers are commanded to not be ignorant of this truth that has been so clearly taught in God's Word. Without a doubt, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (vs 10). Suddenly but surely, it will come upon us. Apostle Paul, too, spoke of the "perilous times" which would come in the last days. Indeed, we see countless examples of the people and wickedness described in 2 Timothy 3:2-5 around us today.

People today are being deceived to believe that though the world has a beginning, it has no ending. This is a lie of the devil. The world has a beginning, and it will end one day. God, in the beginning, created the world and declared that it was very good. However it was Man that rebelled against God and made it bad. And so, this world is not getting better and better, but from bad to worse. It is becoming increasingly wicked. It will have an end. God will end it when He comes to judge this wicked world.

Dear teen, do you indeed believe that we are already living in the last of the last days? As we study this series on the end times, we will be learning more about the signs of the times, as well as the various events that will be taking place. But the most important which you have to ask yourself is: Are you ready?

THOUGHT: Am I ready for the end of the world?

PRAYER: Lord, save me from this wicked world.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 2

Matthew 24:3-14
Memorise Matthew 25:1-13
"what shall be the sign of thy coming?"

HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN CHRIST WILL COME?

Many have tried to predict when the end of the world will take place. Various cult groups have tried (and failed) to predict the exact date, with their so-called 'doomsday' prophecies. Even in popular culture, we see many movies and books depicting such doomsday scenarios and apocalyptic events.

As believers, though, we ought not to be deceived by these unbiblical predictions. Rather, we ought to look to the Word of God alone to instruct us. God has already revealed in His perfect Word all that we need to know concerning the last days. During Christ's time, the disciples, too, were concerned and curious to know more. Hence we see them asking Jesus, "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt 24:3b). Jesus proceeded to explain to them various signs that point towards His second coming. These are signs that would clearly be seen across the globe, and that, when viewed in their totality, would undeniably prove His imminent return.

What is God's purpose of revealing these signs to us? The answer can be seen in today's second reading, the parable of the ten virgins. The five wise virgins who had oil in their vessels represent those who are prepared for the coming of Christ. Because they knew and believed that the Bridegroom was coming as He promised, they made the necessary preparations. Conversely, the five foolish virgins were completely unprepared for the Bridegroom's arrival. From this, we learn how crucial it is to ensure that we are fully prepared for Christ's return. Otherwise, the same fate that befell the five foolish virgins would happen to us too - the door to His kingdom would be closed, and we would be shut out of His presence.

Dear teen, God in His grace and mercy has revealed to us the signs of Christ's coming. Do you know and understand them? Are you watching out for them? Or are you living a life of complacency, foolishly ignoring what is plainly written in His Word? May none of us be found unprepared and slumbering at His return, but may we be watching and waiting with eager anticipation.

THOUGHT: Jesus is coming to earth again. What if it were today?

PRAYER: Lord, I want to be ready when You come back.

Matthew 24:3-14
Memorise Revelation 8:1-13
"there shall be... pestilences, and earthquakes"

WHAT IS THE ECOLOGICAL SIGN?

Matthew 24-25 records for us the Olivet Discourse, in which Jesus responded to His disciples' questions regarding "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world" (Matthew 24:3). In the next few days, we shall be studying more about these signs, which can be divided into four main areas of human life.

First is the ecological sign. Ecology means "the study of the interaction of people with their environment". Under this heading are mentioned pestilences and earthquakes (v 7). Synonymous to pestilences are plagues, epidemics, pandemics etc. Immediately we think of the SARS outbreak in 2003 that hit our tiny island and claimed so many lives. H5N1, H1N1 and H7N9 are not just random strings of letters and numbers, but deadly strains of flu that so terrorized the world in the past decade alone. Even right now at the time of writing, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is causing no small amount of fear across the globe that another pandemic may be waiting to strike.

But a worse pestilence is the mowing down of millions of human beings by AIDS, a modern curse from God, unknown to us before 1980. In the 30+ years since AIDS was first diagnosed, it has claimed 30 million lives according to latest UN statistics. Another 34 million people are said to be infected. Sub-Sahara Africa has been by far the hardest hit by the pandemic although statistics show it is spreading quickly through Asia.

As to earthquakes, we are no stranger to its devastating effects in recent years. Flip open the newspaper on any given day, and you will likely read of an earthquake or some other natural disaster, somewhere in the world. Earthquakes became bigger and more frequent by 20 times in the 20th Century, compared to the 19th. Now we are in the 21st Century, and it can only get worse. The Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004 (9.0 on the Richter scale) that claimed close to 300,000 lives is a case in point.

Dear teen, when you hear about these signs being fulfilled, what is your response? Do you scoff and deny, or do you realize that these are actual fulfillments of God's prophecies? Will you remain willfully ignorant, or will you take earnest heed?

THOUGHT: Where are your treasures, on earth or in heaven?

PRAYER: Lord, I want to have eternity's values and treasures in view.

FRIDAY, JULY 4

Matthew 24:3-14
Memorise John 6:26-29
"All these are the beginning of sorrows"

WHAT IS THE ECONOMIC SIGN?

From the ecologic we come to the economic sign. This is where famines (Matthew 24:7) come in. The world economy has always been uncertain and bleak. Most recently, we recall the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, the ill effects of which are still being felt today. Terrorism and the war against it will also inevitably affect the world economy. We are constantly being braced for yet another spate of hard times. Even in our favoured island of Singapore earning a livelihood is a struggle for survival. Perhaps you have friends whose parents have faced retrenchment, or you have heard of people around you suffering pay cuts or having difficulties in finding employment, all whilst contending with inflation and rising costs.

Commenting on famine as a general sign of Jesus' Second Coming, Dr S H Tow in the RPG of April-June 2001 says: "Despite advances in modern agriculture and increased food production in the major agricultural countries, masses of the Third World people are starving or actually dying from under-nutrition. Ethiopia and parts of Africa bounding the Sahara desert are in the famine zone. It is said that every night a quarter of the world goes to bed hungry."

The world would respond to this global problem of famine in Third World countries in its usual way. Humanitarian organizations would appeal to those living in the First World to send aid, make donations and raise funds. What, though, should our response as Christians be? Of course, where the Lord has given us the means to, we should do our part to help those in need. But our focus should not be on solving the problem of famine, for we see that it was already been prophesied by Jesus as a sign of His coming. Instead, realize that far greater than these physical needs are the spiritual needs of mankind. Feed a poor child today, he will come back hungry tomorrow. But give him the gospel, and his soul will be eternally nourished.

Dear teen, may the signs of famine in the world around you today remind you of the nearness of Christ's coming! Will you not bring the gospel today to a hungering soul in need?

THOUGHT: Far worse than physical famine is spiritual famine.

PRAYER: Lord, fill our hungering hearts.

WHAT IS THE ECCLESIASTICAL SIGN? (I)

A third sign of Christ's Second Coming is in the ecclesiastic sphere. It occurs right in the church. As famines are a result of breakdown of the economic system, so apostasy from the faith has brought in many false Christs and false prophets.

Today Christian pastors and teachers are denying doctrines such as the Virgin Birth of Christ and His Blood Atonement and Resurrection. Bible Colleges all around the world have turned modernist and liberal. Are these not false Christs and false prophets? The Apostle Peter warned, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). These are what our Lord has termed, wolves in sheep's clothing.

We see one such example of heretical and blasphemous teachings in one of America's leading Charismatic evangelists—Benny Hinn. Benny Hinn said things such as: "God has a body, soul, and spirit, Jesus has a body, soul, and spirit. Holy Spirit has a body, soul, and spirit," "Christians are little gods," "Jesus at death became one with Satan," "You want to prosper? Money will be falling on you from left, right, and centre. God will begin to prosper you, for money always follows righteousness," confessing you are a sinner saved by grace only insults God with such garbage ... Jesus could not have remained sinless without the Holy Ghost ... I'm gonna read one Scripture, and then I'm gonna preach, and the devil is gonna drop dead". Despite all these erroneous teachings and malicious accusations against Christ, Benny Hinn continues to have a worldwide following.

Benny Hinn is a great deceiver, a false prophet, and a blasphemer. Do you know that tens of millions of people still attend his crusades every year? It was reported that he had 7.3 million people (in three services) who once attended one of his healing rallies in India. See how many people are still being deceived today. The warning is simple; we need to beware of subtle false teachings and false teachers even today.

THOUGHT: Beware the pretenders and the deceivers—the wolves in sheep's clothing.

PRAYER: Lord protect me from false pastors and false teachers.

WHAT IS THE ECCLESIASTICAL SIGN? (II)

Another very famous false evangelist is Rodney Howard Browne ("Laughing Revival"). Rodney Howard Browne once demanded of God, "Either You come down here and touch me, or I will come up there and touch You" (the prayer Howard Browne prayed before he got the so-called "anointing"). Rodney Howard Browne went on, "Stop praying now and let the joy bubble out your belly. Joy, Joy, Joy. Don't pray! Laugh!...You can't have revival without stirring up the flesh. When revival comes you will see manifestations of these three things in meetings: (1) the Holy Spirit, (2) the flesh, and (3) the devil. But, I'd rather be in a church where the devil and the flesh are manifesting than in a church where nothing is happening because people are too afraid to manifest anything. Don't worry about it. And if a devil manifests, don't worry about that either. Rejoice, because at least something is happening!"

"One night I was preaching on hell," Rodney Howard Browne says, "and laughter just hit the whole place. The more I told people what hell was like, the more they laughed. I'm just the Holy Ghost bartender. I just serve the new wine and tell them to come drink". O what a mockery he makes of hell and the filling of the Holy Spirit!

Prominent "Televangelists" like Benny Hinn and Rodney Howard Browne are deceiving thousands and millions of people today. Living in the midst of such great deception and danger, what should we do? The Bible tells us to "try the spirits." To "try" means to "test" with the idea of discerning between truth and error. We cannot be gullible and ignorant in the things of God.

Dear teen, true Christians must be well grounded in God's Word. In order to know that a counterfeit dollar note is counterfeit, we must first know what a genuine dollar note looks like. We must know how it feels like; we must pay attention to the watermark, to the printing and to every detail that tells you that the dollar note is genuine. In order to identify erroneous teachings, we must know the truth of God's Word very well.

In these days of great deception and falsehood, what we need is not shallow Christianity, but discerning Christians.

THOUGHT: Are you able to tell the genuine from the counterfeit?

PRAYER: O Lord, grant me discernment.

WHAT IS THE ECCLESIASTICAL SIGN? (III)

Another false prophet is Oral Roberts. He wrote a book entitled, How I Learned Jesus Was Not Poor. On January 4, 1987, Roberts told his followers that if he did not raise a total of 8 million dollars by March, God was going to take his life. Comparing himself to the apostle Paul, Roberts begged not to let Satan defeat him. Sometime later, Robert's son, Richard, took pen in hand to warn of his father's impending doom. Without "the additional $4,500,000" explains Richard, "God will not extend Dad's life." He then pleaded, "If you neglect to pay attention ... then Satan will take advantage and hit you with bad things and you will wish that 1985 had never come." Roberts closed his letter with a hard sell. Sending a seed-faith gift will not only enable you to "Stop Satan in His hate to bring you down," it will also "help you get your hundredfold return." Roberts raised the money and did not die. Oral Roberts and his son have made God an extortioner. This is abominable. *"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not"* (2 Peter 2:3).

One of the signs of the times is not just false teaching, but the greed and the lusts of these false teachers. Because of their greed they will manipulate truth to satisfy their lust. The Bible has warned us "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

Who are the ones being deceived? They are the ones who were *"laden with sins, led away with divers lusts"* (2 Timothy 3:6). One of the reasons why these false teachers are so successful is because they use the lust of the world to appeal to Christians who still want to enjoy the world. While we must guard against false teachers and false teachings, we must also guard against worldliness and lust. Have you ever wondered what makes these false teachers so appealing? Is it not because of the lust that these people have for these material things as well?

That which can destroy the church and lead Christians astray is not only falsehood from external influences, but also worldliness from inside the hearts of Christians themselves. Holy living is very needful today. Dear teen, have you been striving toward holiness? Have you been living in the power of God's Word, or are you still lusting after the world?

THOUGHT: To be a watchman, I need to live a watchman's life. How should a watchman live?

PRAYER: Lord, I want to be a watchman to warn others of false teachers.

WHAT IS THE EVANGELISTIC SIGN?

The fourth general sign of Christ's return is in the breakdown of diplomatic relations between countries. Thus wars flare up. *"Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars."* Over a hundred wars have been fought with millions upon millions killed since World War II. But the crushing of two million Cambodians by Pol Pot is so soon forgotten! The slaughter of a million Rwandans just 10 years ago seems a thing of the distant past! Even right now, there continues to be much political instability around the world. We think of the recent conflict surrounding the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing territorial disputes in the South China Sea. As always, the Middle East remains an extremely volatile region. World leaders make attempts at diplomacy and peace talks, but it is as if the world is sitting on a powder keg, ready and waiting to explode at the slightest spark.

While all these things are at work, God's children will counter with a great burst of missionary energy, *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"* (Matthew 24:14). This is the evangelistic sign. This is markedly seen after World War II when the bulk of Singapore Churches which were under the various missions from the West had become self-supporting and independent. Instead of being receiving churches they now have become sending churches. Most outstanding among Asian churches are the Koreans. Truly they are the foremost missionary orientated church in Asia if not in the world. It is said that wherever you go in the world, you will find a Chinese restaurant, and now, wherever you go into the world, you will also find a Korean church.

Accelerated Missions is our war-cry while we labour waiting for the glad day of His Second Coming. The increasing number of graduates from Far Eastern Bible College, now totaling over 500 in the last five decades, is another fulfilment of accelerated missions unto the coming of the day of Jesus Christ. Dear teen, are you playing a part in this global evangelistic effort? You may not be called to be a missionary in the traditional sense, but this does not mean that you shirk the Great Commission, which has been given to all believers.

THOUGHT: "The Great Commission is the First Commandment of the Church" (Timothy Tow).

PRAYER: Lord, "Here am I, send me."

Daniel 2:31-45
Memorise Daniel 7:1-8
"He revealeth the deep and secret things..."

WHAT DOES NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM TEACH US?

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of a Great Statue (Daniel 2)	Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts (Daniel 7)	Interpretation
Head of Gold	Two-Winged Lion	Babylonia (606-538)
Silver Breast and Arms	Three Ribs-in-Mouth Bear	Medo-Persia (538-333)
Brass Belly and Thighs	Four-Headed Four-Winged Leopard	Greece (333-63)
Iron Legs and Clay Feet	Ten-Horned Beast	Rome (63-?)

Prophecy is one area of Bible study that many teens find daunting. Take today's readings for example. What is this huge statue about? What does it represent? How does it even apply to my life?

The grand statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represents the various world superpowers which are significant in world history (see table above). These also correspond to Daniel's vision of the four beasts recorded in Daniel 7. Nebuchadnezzar was named the head of gold, the No. 1, and after him came lesser kingdoms – hence the decreasing value of the metals. Babylonia's resplendent empire built by Nebuchadnezzar would be succeeded by three other empires but each deteriorating in glory while increasing in might.

Take a look at any history textbook today, and you will see that this prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter. How could Nebuchadnezzar have dreamed such a prophetically-accurate dream, and how could Daniel have known its interpretation? The answer is found in Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving rendered unto the Lord (Daniel 2:20-23). Truly it is the God of heaven who revealed these secret things to Daniel.

Dear teen, this same God continues to work in our world and in our lives today. There are as yet many prophecies in the Bible which remain unfulfilled, which are concerned with the Second Coming of Christ. Some may sound cryptic, some may seem confusing, but know this thing for sure: God knows what they mean, and He will bring it to pass. Doesn't it excite and delight you, to know that our God is in control and sovereign over all the affairs of mankind? Don't you want therefore to grow in your understanding of Scripture, that you may also be able to warn others around you of what is to come?

THOUGHT: The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture itself.

PRAYER: Lord, teach me Thy Word, and help me to understand prophecy.

DO END-TIME PROPHECIES CAUSE YOU TO DESPAIR?

While the dream of Daniel 2:31-45 and the vision of Daniel 7:1-8 represent the same prophecy, one marked difference is the mention of the "little horn" (Daniel 7:8) that has no equivalent in Nebuchadnezzar's image.

Though the fourth beast with its ten horns (signifying the Roman empire) seems all-powerful, it has an inherent weakness. Its equivalent was described in the great image of Nebuchadnezzar. There we see that it is made up of part iron and part clay (a newly constituted and revived Rome). As such "the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken" (Daniel 2:42-43). This describes the secret of its Achilles' heel and its ultimate destruction.

As Daniel beheld the Ten-horned Beast, focusing on the horns, he was amazed indeed to see a new drama. This little horn, according to Daniel's further explanation, "had eyes and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows". This little horn rose up and uprooted three of the ten horns. Daniel continues, "I beheld, the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (7:21-22).

This little horn describes a great and powerful ruler who will rise up to international prominence, crushing three of the ten kingdoms before him (7:24). The "eyes of man" (7:8) suggest that he will be a man of great brilliance and intelligence. This ruler will rebel against God and blaspheme against God with his mouth (7:25). This brilliant yet blasphemous ruler will wage war against the saints and have victory for a while; until the sovereign God, described as the Ancient of Days, returns with judgment.

Dear teen, do you feel despair when you read of such scenes of the end times? Yet, it should also remind us of God and His sovereign control over all things. As much as there is great cause for fear and uncertainty even in our time today, we can take comfort in the knowledge that God is the "Ancient of Days" and He reigns supreme over all things even today. Even as these frightening things unfolding before your eyes today, look to the "Ancient of Days"!

THOUGHT: God is in total control of history and world events.

PRAYER: O Lord God, Thou art Sovereign, and Thou rulest over all!

WHAT IS THE "LITTLE HORN"?

Revelation 13:1-8 throws further light on this mystery of the little horn that became a great, boastful one. First of all we see many more details of the ten-horned beast. Here are seven heads (not one as in Daniel) and one of its heads is as it were wounded to death. When the deadly wound to this head was healed, it drew great admiration from the whole world. Worship is now given to the beast, whose head-wound is healed. The forty and two months given to the beast in Revelation 13 is the period of three and a half years given the little horn to blaspheme God and them that dwelt in heaven. This little horn is none other than the "capital-A Antichrist", who will persecute God's children on earth and overcome them.

"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). The Antichrist will not only blaspheme against God but he will do so in a way that will draw others to worship him. People will be drawn to him and he will conquer the world.

How does he do it? He has the ability to speak great things (Revelation 13:5) and will be very eloquent. He will use his abilities to first establish a false 3 ½ years of peace before bringing about war and complete destruction (Daniel 9:27). The Bible gives us one clue as to who this little horn will be: As the little horn comes out of the fourth beast which is the Revived Roman Empire, it must be concluded that the end-time World Ruler will be a European, or of European descent.

The Bible warns that, even now, there are already many antichrists (with a small letter "a"). These are those who have gone out to deceive others with their eloquence and cunning speeches. They can even be found in churches, in seminaries, in our pulpits. Dear teen, are you easily enamoured by the words of man? Be warned, "...Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (1 Corinthians 11:14). It is only through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the illumination of the Word that we can guard against such deception.

THOUGHT: The Antichrist is a Fake Christ.

PRAYER: Lord, help us beware of the many fake Christs today.

WHAT IS THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS?

Who is the Mother of Harlots in Revelation 17:5? This Mother of Harlots, called Mystery Babylon the Great, also called the great whore, is a woman arrayed in purple and scarlet decked with gold, precious stones and pearls. She rides upon a scarlet seven-headed, ten-horned beast full of names of blasphemy. This woman has committed fornication with the kings of the earth and made the people of the world drunk with the wine of her fornication. She held a gold cup in her hand filled with the abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

What made the Seer wonder was the sight of her becoming drunk with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus. The angel said to John, "Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carried her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns" (v 7). In the interpretation that follows, the angel explains the significance of the beast, the heads, horns, and waters. What is pictured is a religious body that has committed spiritual fornication with the political powers of the world, and had persecuted the saints and martyrs of Christ.

Now who can the woman be but the unfaithful, apostate Church? In Scripture language, God's people are likened to the wife of Jehovah in the Old Testament (Isaiah 54:5). In the New Testament the Church is a chaste virgin, the Bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). In Revelation, she is called the wife of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7). Following this metaphor, the false apostate church is thus likened to this great whore who had prostituted herself to the godless powers of the world. This will be the end time ecumenical one-world church that the Antichrist and False prophet will use to control the whole world.

Before this one-world church can be formed, there must first be a period of great religious compromise, to pave the way for the great apostasy to happen. All around us today, we see signs of this happening. Churches today are forsaking the Bible and many important fundamental doctrines, and are uniting together under the banner of peace and love. They have no qualms about uniting with other religions, and proclaim that all paths lead to heaven. These are signs, that the Lord's return is very near!

THOUGHT: Not all churches are true churches of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER: Lord, help us be discerning in the churches that we worship in.

Revelation 17:1-18
Memorise Revelation 18:1-10
"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen"

WHAT IS THE END OF THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS?

By the time we come to the last days before Jesus returns we see before us a thoroughly corrupt Church. All commentators from the Reformers agree that the Mother of Harlots is the Roman Catholic Church inasmuch as it is located on the City of Seven Hills (Revelation 17:9). The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, a picture of politics entering the Church and the Church making use of politics. The description of the woman being arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls can fit no other Church on earth than the Roman Church. What chills the spine of the true Church of Jesus Christ is the vision of this Church being drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Has not the Roman Church, in all her domain during the time of the 16th Century Reformation put to death countless thousands of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? The Spanish Inquisition (1215) is another chapter of her nefarious deeds. Many were burned at the stake for possessing or distributing the Bible. The short reign of Bloody Mary of England (1555-58) saw 288 burned at the stake because they were Protestants.

A more contemporary manifestation of the Mother of Harlots is the Ecumenical Movement organised since 1948 as the World Council of Churches (WCC). The word Christian is not there because her ultimate aim is to unite all religions inasmuch as the word "Ecumenical" means all of the inhabited earth. Is the Ecumenical Movement and its organisation the WCC a chaste virgin to Christ or a harlot? The Mother of Harlots is surnamed Mystery Babylon the Great, and Babylon is Rome, as Chambers Dictionary defines: "Babylonian: Romish, popish (from the identification with Rome of the scarlet woman of Revelation 17)".

When Jerusalem became as Sodom (Revelation 11:8) and Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:9) did God spare her? She was completely overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar under God's righteous judgment. When the Harlot Church goes far beyond apostate Jerusalem in her wickedness, she is righteously judged through the attack upon her by the Scarlet beast she rode (Revelation 17:16). At the end of the tribulation, she will receive a just reward for all the many great sins that she has committed. For now, we must be careful that we never find ourselves part of this adulterous relationship!

THOUGHT: Should we worship in churches that is a part of the Ecumenical Movement?

PRAYER: Lord, I want to live a separated life, holy and pure for Thee.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
Memorise Matthew 24:10-13
"the mystery of iniquity doth already work"

WHAT IS THE "FALLING AWAY"?

The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back real soon. The "mystery of iniquity" is already at work (2 Thessalonians 2:7). "The day of Christ is at hand" (2 Thessalonians 2:2). What must happen before Christ returns?

From 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 we discover that the 2nd Coming of Christ will be preceded by the coming of the Antichrist. The word "coming" (Greek parousia) occurs twice in these 12 verses: the first time in verse 1: "the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ," and the 2nd in verse 9 which talks about the parousia of the Wicked one (cf v8).

Before Christ returns, there will be a great rebellion, "a falling away first" (v 3). The words "falling away" come from the Greek word apostasia (literally, "to stand away from"). It speaks of a rebellion against the Standard, the Truth, or the Law of God. It is a God-rejecting apostasy.

Now, who are the rebels, and against whom or what are they rebelling? Jesus reveals who they are in Matthew 24:10-13, "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold. But he shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved". In other words, those who fall away are those who call themselves "Christian", but in actual fact are not. By and large, the visible church in the last days will forsake the Faith. These people who profess to be Christians were never regenerated in the first place. They did not have true faith.

Who are they? Well they would be those who say: "I believe that Jesus Christ can bring me to heaven, but I also believe that I can get to heaven if I believe in other gods". "I believe in Jesus Christ, but he is only a man, not God." "I am a Christian, but I am also homosexual." Paul describes them in verse 8: "they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved;" and verse 10: "they believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness".

THOUGHT: Do you have true faith?

PRAYER: Lord, help me always to walk in the strait and narrow way that leads to life.

HOW DANGEROUS IS APOSTASY?

Apostasy begets judgment. God's wrath will be poured out. And since unbelievers stubbornly and repeatedly choose to reject God's Truth, God gives them up (1) to uncleanness, (2) to vile affections, and (3) to a reprobate mind (Rom 1:24-28). This is judicial hardening or blinding, a God-sent delusion (v. 11-12). Now understand that it is not God that sends the lie. God is not a liar, and does not deceive. We understand this under the permissive will of God—Since they desire to believe in Satan's lie, and be deceived, God allows them thus to be. The end result will be condemnation (v 12). There will be a dividing of the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares. Those who have not truly believed in the Lord will apostasise and be condemned. True believers will never be lost—God will keep them to the very end.

On the other hand, the passage has a stern warning against those who would turn away from the truth and live in lawlessness. The word "lawless" occurs three times here: in verse 3, we read of the man of sin or lawlessness; in verse 7, the mystery of iniquity or lawlessness; and in verse 8 the Wicked or Lawless one.

First, let us deal with the person of lawlessness. He is called in verse 3 the man of sin, and in verse 8 the Wicked one. In verse 3 he is also called the son of perdition. This same term was used in John 17:12 of Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord. From this we see that the man of sin is an individual or a person, not an institution, a nation, a force or an influence. He is like Judas—someone who professes Christ but in all his deeds he undermines the Lord and works against Him; i.e. he is an Apostate (with a capital A). And in verse 4, he is described as one who "opposeth" Christ. He is the Antichrist (i.e. Counter-Christ): he wants to take the place of Christ, to usurp Him as Lord and King. He possesses the Satanic ambition to be God Himself (cf Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28).

For us, let us check ourselves: Are we truly saved? Have we sincerely and truthfully believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are we like the lawless one, and will we be deceived by those who reject the truth?

THOUGHT: Do a spiritual check-up. Am I truly saved?

PRAYER: Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief!

ARE YOU ON GUARD AGAINST DECEPTION?

In 2 Thessalonians 2:8 we are told that this particular Satanically-inspired person will be revealed. This Antichrist will imitate the coming of Christ. He will probably identify himself as the Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour, and deceive many. "You are looking for your coming Saviour, I am he," he will say. That is why Jesus warned us, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5).

How will the Antichrist capture the allegiance and adoration of the whole world? In verse 9 we are told that his coming is "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders". He will be empowered by Satan to perform deceptive miracles. Today's Charismatic miracle workers like Benny Hinn with all their signs and wonders are preparing the false church to receive this false Christ. Be careful Christian, don't be deceived. Know the truth and love the truth that you might be saved (v 10).

Know that Jesus Christ will not return until the Antichrist is revealed. But some may say, "I do not see the Antichrist to be here yet. So I can still enjoy myself, do what I like, since Christ's coming is nowhere near". Paul warns against presumptuousness for the Antichrist can appear at any time (v 5-6). For although the person of lawlessness has not yet come, the principle of lawlessness is already at work (v 7). In other words, this work of opposing Christ and His Church is already going on. For instance, the Thessalonian Church was already undergoing persecutions and tribulations (1 Thessalonians 1:4). 1 John 2:18 tells us, *"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time".* There are many antichrists running around in the world today. Satan will spare no effort to destroy or corrupt the Word of God, to hinder the Church from preaching the gospel, to attack God's servants and His saints. So we must be ever diligent in preaching the Gospel, and ever vigilant in defending the Faith.

THOUGHT: It is not enough to be a Bible believer, true disciples of Christ must also be Bible defenders.

PRAYER: Lord, I want to be a defender of Thy Perfect Word—the Holy Scriptures.

WHICH COMING ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO?

What prevents the Antichrist from appearing right now is the work of the Restrainer. 2 Thessalonians 2:6 says, "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time," and verse 7b says, *"only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way".*

Who or what is this Restrainer? It is difficult to identify who or what the Restrainer is. There are several views: the Law of God, the Archangel Michael, the Holy Spirit. The popular view is that it is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is presently doing this work of convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment (John 16:8). He is not only active in the Church, but also in the World in restraining evil, from letting evil run amok. Come to think of it, it is not just the Spirit, but also the Word of God, and the Lord's angels etc. that are doing the restraining work. So it could be a combination of these. So once the Lord withdraws His restraining hand, this sin-cursed world will take its natural course, and wickedness will reach its height with the Wicked one leading the way.

Know that there will be two comings: (1) the coming of Christ, and (2) the coming of the Antichrist. Antichrist will first come before Christ returns. And when Christ returns He will destroy all His enemies by *"the spirit of his mouth"*, and *"brightness of his coming"* (v 8).

For which coming are you waiting? Whose side are you on? Christ or Antichrist? May you be found on the Lord's side, for it is the winning side. Those who attack our Perfect God and His Perfect Word today are on the losing side. *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (vv 11-12).

If you are still not a Christian, I plead with you dear reader to believe in Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.

THOUGHT: Do not delay, believe on Jesus today.

PRAYER: Ask God for forgiveness, confess your sins, and believe on Jesus Christ who died for your sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures.

WHY IS ISRAEL SIGNIFICANT?

Israel is at the centre of three continents as the Lord has said, *"This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her"* (Ezekiel 5:5).

Since the end of World War II, many young and vigorous nations have been born one after the other, which were once colonies of the Great Powers. From the ASEAN Bloc have "emerged" the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Many nations have arisen in Africa with new names that old-timers have a hard time to follow. Among all these new nations, there came into being one on May 14, 1948 - the State of Israel. The majority of Israel is made up of returnee Jews, after 2,000 years of exile.

In terms of land area Israel is one of the tiniest in the region. Population-wise Israel has close to 8 million, not that much more than the population of our tiny island state of Singapore. Indeed, Israel is but a speck on the globe, a little dot on the world map. If you stand at a vantage point in the Holy Land on a fine day, say, on the hill of Samaria, you could see almost the four corners of the country. How does a tiny country like Israel become such a great nation as she is today? Israel is featured on the front page world news more often than any other of the new-born nations. Israel is in the news side by side with the super powers, most frequent with the United States. How has little Israel gained such global prominence?

In an issue of the Straits Times 1981, the story was told of former Israel Prime Minister Menachem Begin meeting with former US President Ronald Reagan. This is what Begin said of a joke he cracked with the American President. Begin said President Reagan told him he had three phones on his desk. One was white to call British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. One was blue to call France's Francois Mitterrand. The third which was a red one was for God. But added Reagan, "I don't use it too much, as long distance is so expensive". Mr Begin told his host he too had three phones. One was for Mrs Thatcher, one for Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and also one for God. "But," added Begin, "I use it all the time as, in Jerusalem, it is considered a local call".

THOUGHT: Israel is great only because of God.

PRAYER: Lord, we pray that Israel will confess Jesus as Messiah.

WHY IS ISRAEL A GREAT NATION? (I)

Israel is a great nation because it is so closely linked to God. Israel is a great nation not by her own prowess. It is not because the Jews are a smarter people, or a superior race. Israel is a great nation because that is what God had graciously promised Abraham concerning his descendants (Genesis 12:2). The same promise that Israel would be a great nation he confirmed with Jacob (Genesis 46:3), and with the Israelites under Moses (Deuteronomy 26:5). Israel's greatness is solely from God. Now, may we ask, "How does Israel become great?" Israel has become great by being God's receptacle, God's chosen vessel, to receive His Special Revelation.

Sin had polluted the whole world and blinded the eyes of the nations to the light of the truth. Instead of seeking the Creator God that had made them, they groped in the darkness of idolatry. This is particularly condemned by Paul in the first chapter of Romans. In the midst of such darkness, God came first to Abraham, and after several generations to Moses. God took Israel out of the land of their slavery and gave them the Law. This Law is summarised in the Ten Commandments God delivered to Moses on two tables of stone. By the light of these two tables Israel was delivered from the pollutions of the world, from sins against God and sins against her fellow man. It is through Israel that the moral Law, as given in the Ten Commandments, has become the pattern of all modern legal codes of the nations of the world. Thus declared Moses to Israel on the eve of their entry to the Promised Land to remind her of her holy obligations to greatness, *"Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons"* (Deuteronomy 4:5-9).

We too can become great in the sight of the Lord, if we keep His law.

THOUGHT: *"The Law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul."*

PRAYER: *"Thy word is very pure, therefore Thy servant loveth it."*

LORD'S DAY, JULY 20

Psalm 19:7-14
Memorise Psalm 119:1-8
"The law of the LORD is perfect"

DOES YOUR COUNTRY KEEP THE LAW?

We who live under the justice of a good Government in Singapore must remember the British who gave us our law. But, how did the British possess such good laws? Where did they get it? From the Bible and from the Law of Moses.

In contrast with little Israel, there is that gigantic country China, the land of our ancestors. For hundreds of years until the Manchu Dynasty she had sunken into the depths of poverty and misery, of backwardness in science and technology. And all this because our ancestors had departed from the Creator God, being devoid of His Law. Our ancestors were steeped in idolatry, not knowing the Living and True God. Hence flourished all the social evils that outgrew from their sin without restraint. As recent as the last two generations, the Chinese people did not enjoy such a divine right of man as the weekly Sabbath. The weekly Sabbath had been enjoyed in the West with the advent of Christianity from time immemorial. The keeping of Sunday as a Holy Day was particularly strong in the days of the Puritans in Great Britain. How both man and beast rested from their servile work in the Light of God's Law! This is but one blessing to mention that comes to the whole world from Israel, yea, even from the Law of Moses. How is it we have no need to go to office or factory when Sunday, our Christian Sabbath, comes around? We in Singapore today are enjoying the blessings of a Law which God first gave to Israel! This law that distinguished Israel from the Gentiles that made Israel great!

However in recent years, what we see is a sad departure from God's holy law. Instead of honouring the Sabbath, Sunday has now become a day to have tuition and enrichment classes, go shopping, or recover from hangovers. The state is also beginning to take a more liberal view on matters such as gambling, prostitution and homosexuality. More and more so, as we imbibe the carnal attitudes of the west, we are moving further and further away from God and the His perfect law. As Christians in this carnal age, we can do little to change the law of the land, but we must do all we can to ensure that our churches and our families continue to abide by God's perfect law. To us it must always be the statutes that rejoice the heart, enlightens the eyes, and are more to be desired than gold.

THOUGHT: Any nation that truly keeps the Ten Commandments shall be great.

PRAYER: Pray for your nation to keep the Ten Commandments.

Romans 11:1-27
Memorise 2 Samuel 7:12-13
"all Israel shall be saved"

WHY IS ISRAEL A GREAT NATION? (II)

Israel is a great nation not only because she has God's Law given through her, but also God's Son. Jesus our Lord and Saviour was born a Jew, through the house of David from the stock of Abraham. The greatness of Israel, as we have observed, is not in her mental powers, but rather in her spiritual heritage. Through her is the Promised Seed given whereby all the families of the earth are blessed (Genesis 12:3). We Christians must remember that we owe the Jews this great debt. Israel was not only, as St Augustine had said, the Librarian to the Christian Church (she has given us by her prophets the Bible). Through her has come to us the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, the only way to God. A young Jewess, the Virgin Mary, was the chosen vessel through whom Jesus Christ was born.

But alas! The Jews who were the very recipients of the Salvation of God rejected Christ and had Him crucified. Their Church leaders were not afraid of the guilt of their crime. They even challenged God to take the Blood of the Spotless Son of God upon themselves and their children (Matthew 27:25). Of the Jews that believed in Jesus and were gathered together as a Christian community there were not more than 120. Apart from those 3,000 and 5,000 (Acts 2:41; 4:4) who believed in the Lord at Pentecost, and a sprinkling of converts throughout Paul's ministry, most of the Jews rejected the Gospel. Therefore the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles. The Jews who rejected Christ were rejected of God. Hence they experienced the Diaspora or dispersion, their scattering, to the ends of the earth. Israel the great nation became a small nation, a stateless nation. By the mysterious decrees of God, Israel, like the olive branch, was cut off when they rejected the Saviour. The Gentiles who believed, like a wild olive branch, was grafted in her place.

Today salvation is still given to the Gentiles, so this Gospel continues to be preached freely and without restraint to us who live in a free country like Singapore. But soon our time will be up when *"the fullness of the Gentiles be come in,"* i.e. when the predestined number of Gentiles to be saved will be counted. Then Israel, the outcast Olive branch, will be reinstated when *"all Israel shall be saved"* (Romans 11:26).

THOUGHT: God cannot fail to keep His promises.

PRAYER: Lord, I praise Thee for Thou art a covenant-keeping God.

Isaiah 9:6-7
Memorise Isaiah 11:11-15
"The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this"

WILL ISRAEL BE RESTORED?

One reason why Israel must be reinstated is God's unchangeable promise to Abraham. The promise given to him and his descendants is forever vested in them. Another reason why Israel must be restored to her former glory is that the promise God gave to David of a throne that will remain forever must be fulfilled. And that throne to be set up again is by none other than Christ, the Messiah, David's Greater Son, "and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called ... The Prince of Peace. 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 forever" (Isaiah 9:6-7). In the light of these promises, no wonder we see Israel gathered back together to her land as a nation.

Israel has become a great nation again. Satan does not like to see Israel restored to her previous greatness as in the days of David and Solomon. Satan has therefore instigated the Arabs to fight Israel. Five wars were fought: In 1948 the Arabs tried to prevent Israel from becoming a nation but they failed. In 1956 there broke out the Second War. Again the Arabs were defeated. In 1967 Egypt, Syria and Jordan were gravely wounded in the Six Day War. The fourth one, fought in 1973 known as the Yom Kippur War or War of the Day of Atonement, again saw Israel victorious. All these victories against her neighbours are foretold by in Isaiah 11:11-15 which describes in startling detail Israel's re-gathering and the victory that she shall have over the surrounding nations.

All these are just a foretaste of the future glories that God will work through His people and His nation. God's plan for Israel is far from complete, and He will certainly fulfill every of His promises down to the very jot and tittle.

THOUGHT: Israel now back in the Promised Land will never be uprooted again.

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy plans for Israel be fulfilled to the glory of Thy Name.

HAS GOD FORSAKEN ISRAEL?

The fifth war was waged over Lebanon 1982-85. Israel's invasion of Lebanon is foretold by the prophet Zechariah. *"Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled; a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them"* (Zechariah 11:1-6).

How is it that the Arabs, like a platoon of soldiers charging on a lone teenage boy, were thrown back one after the other like in a Kung Fu drama? The secret of Israel's greatness as a nation is God. And as God is behind the descendants of Abraham His "friend", so has He helped Israel in the epic Entebbe raid, saving over 100 hostages hijacked by Palestine Arabs. Moreover God has enabled His chosen race to carry out the destruction of the atomic plant in Iraq. Iraq may have retaliated in 1990's Gulf War with Scud missiles, but to no avail, for Israel continues to thrive amidst such heavy persecution and opposition.

Israel continues to be helped by the United States, the greatest power in the world in a new age of peace-making, according to Daniel's prophecy. That Rabin (then Israel's Prime Minister) had shaken hands with Arafat (Palestinian leader) under Clinton's (then US president) patronage surprised the whole world except students of prophecy. All this is in order that Israel might play her role in the coming of Jesus Christ. At His first coming, Jesus was born as a Jew of the nation of Israel, yet He was crucified by the very people he had come to save. At His Second Coming, Jesus will come back not as a suffering servant, but as a judge and King, and will rule the world from his capital Jerusalem.

THOUGHT: Israel versus the Arab nations is a repeat of David versus Goliath.

PRAYER: Pray that the Arab nations might turn to the living and true God—Jesus Christ.

HOW WILL ISRAEL BE SAVED?

Israel is bound to be a great nation again, because God has set this seal upon her in Abraham: *"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee"* (Genesis 12:3). Thus those who have persecuted Abraham's descendants the Jews have lost out. Yea, they have been thoroughly extinguished. The sad ending of the Jew-hating and arch anti-Semitic Hitler is notorious. Then there arose Egyptian President Nasser, who wanted to throw every Jew into the sea before the Six-Day War. He soon died in the War's aftermath. From then to now, numerous other leaders of the Arab states have spoken out strongly in opposition to Israel's existence as an independent state.

Yet all these conflicts are but the appetizers to the grand final war of the tribulation that will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon. In this final Battle the Messiah must come to save Israel. According to the prophecy of Zechariah on the climax of that last Battle: *"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south"* (Zechariah 14:1-14:4). Yes Jerusalem will be taken by the might of her enemies, but then the Lord shall appear to fight for His people, returning upon the Mount of Olives. When all that happens, Israel will finally acknowledge their sin, and recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah, for the Lord says *"and I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn"* (Zechariah 12:10). In sincere and true repentance they shall mourn for the one whom they crucified, and all Israel shall be saved!

THOUGHT: Jesus will descend onto the very same mountain from which He had ascended—the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:11-12).

PRAYER: Lord, may Thou return soon.

WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE TO ISRAEL?

If you have that anti-Jewish feeling like the rest of the world, change over to be a lover of Israel. *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee"* (Psalm 122:6). Make peace with Israel! Such a heathen chieftain had the wise insight into the goodness of making friends with Israel: *"Thus Abimelech, Chieftain of the Philistines, came to Abraham: "God is with thee in all that thou doest."* And thus did Abimelech say to Isaac, *"We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and we said, let there be now an oath betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the Lord"* (Genesis 21:22; 26:28,29). This wise choice is what King Solomon had observed: "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7). Make peace with Israel because she is destined to be great. She will be the greatest when our Lord comes back to earth, to sit on His father David's throne in Jerusalem. Jesus will rule this reformed earth with peace for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

The capital of the world will be shifted to Jerusalem, as seen by the Prophet Isaiah. *"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"* (Isaiah 2:3). The world would acknowledge Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, and would all want to seek Him at Jerusalem *"And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you"* (Zechariah 8:21-23).

Israel, indeed, is destined to be a great nation when she turns to her Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, whom her people have blindly rejected all these centuries. Let Israel now say: Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

THOUGHT: Is Christ now sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem?

PRAYER: Lord, we look forward to the day of thy millennial reign on earth.

SATURDAY, JULY 26 *Jeremiah 25:8-11, 29:10*
Memorise Ezekiel 33:7-11

"I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel"

WHO WAS THE PROPHET DANIEL?

The vision of the Seventy Weeks came to Daniel at the fall of Babylon and the beginning of the reign of Darius, the king who reluctantly sent Daniel to the lions. The year was 537 BC, 69 years after he was carried captive to Babylon (606 BC), and one year before Cyrus, King of Persia and conqueror of Babylon, decreed freedom to the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

This princely prophet who subdued kings and lions was of greater personage than the highest royalty. He was God's ambassador to the kings that he served; he was Israel's spiritual leader during their years of exile. Throughout the dark night of her captivity Daniel not only kept in touch with Jehovah the Lord God Almighty by prayer and supplication, but also by study of the sacred Scriptures. That portion of Holy Writ that particularly struck him was Jeremiah's prophecy on Israel's Babylonian captivity to last 70 years (Jeremiah 25:9-11; 29:10). As this was the 69th year, the prophet was gripped with a spirit of expectancy — what hopes and fears in the face of a new Day that was fast dawning!

He is like the watchman in Ezekiel's vision, yea, like Ezekiel himself, to whom the Lord said, "O thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me" (Ezekiel 33:7). Daniel had stood, faithful to his commission, all these seven decades as God's watchman.

Dr Chia Yu Ming, China's first theologian, was like Daniel. In August 1948 when he left China to attend the First Congress of the International Council of Christian Churches in Amsterdam, Holland, the Communists were hard on the heels of the Nationalist Army fighting a rearguard action. The Chiang Kaishek regime was about to collapse. Yet he submitted to God's will to return to Nanking, the then Chinese capital. He said he had a duty, as a spiritual leader of China, to return to the Fatherland to watch over the flock of the Chinese Church even though like Daniel, he was in his early 80s. Likewise today, there is need of a witness to kings and governors. Daniel started this ministry when he was still just a teen. Can you do the same?

THOUGHT: A true pastor of God's church serves out of love and loyalty, never for gain and fame.

PRAYER: Lord, grant us true pastors who are loyal to Thee and who love Thy people.

WHAT WAS DANIEL PRAYING FOR?

How did Daniel approach the Lord in that hour of transition, waiting for the coming of a new Day? He sets us the example by earnest prayer and supplication, *"with fasting and sackcloth and ashes"* (v 3). He confessed first his sins and then the sins of his people, accepting the lot of their captivity as righteous judgment from God's Hand because they had broken the Law which Moses gave to their fathers. Their exile and wanderings to many foreign countries with the desolation of Jerusalem were a "curse poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses" (v 11). This curse is given in Deuteronomy 28 which climaxes as follows: *"And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you"* (Deuteronomy 28:64-68). It was clear that Israel was undergoing her trials because of her departure from God's laws.

Today Israel is returned to her homeland. She has won numerous wars against her Arab neighbours, but has been plagued by the Palestinians whose territories Israel had seized in the Six Day War (1967). Numerous efforts are made in trying to broker peace with them. Will a new day of peace and prosperity dawn on Israel? According to prophecy, not until the Messiah comes. The need of Israel to humble herself in prayer and supplication to God of their Fathers is far greater than what they are trying to achieve by diplomacy. This formula is always right, *"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you"* (James 4:8).

THOUGHT: Man will have no peace until he first makes peace with God (Romans 5:1).

PRAYER: O Lord God, I want to make peace with Thee. I believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ who died for me and rose from the dead. Forgive me of my sins.

Daniel 9:24-27
Memorise 1 Peter 1:19-21
"We have also a more sure word of prophecy"

WHAT ARE THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL? (I)

Indeed, as Daniel sought the Lord's forgiveness both for himself and his people in captivity and for Jerusalem's restoration, suddenly Gabriel flew swiftly to him about the time of the evening oblation (3 pm). This Gabriel is the same who centuries after appeared to the Virgin Mary to announce the Birth of the Saviour through her (Luke 1:16-35).

This is the message delivered by Gabriel to Daniel: *"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate"* (Daniel 9:24-27).

While Daniel was thinking that the consummation of 70 years exile according to Jeremiah's prophecy would usher in the Messianic Kingdom, God rather revealed what would happen to Israel in 70 x 7 prophetic years hereafter. A new Day indeed was coming when Messiah shall judge this sinful earth and bring in righteousness, but not until 70 x 7 prophetic years had passed. Now, some confusion has resulted in the minds of Bible students due to the translation "weeks" in verse 24: "seventy weeks are determined." The Hebrew word so translated does not mean a week of days but rather a seven, like the English word "dozen", meaning 12 of anything. What Daniel actually said in Hebrew was "seventy sevens are determined". This is to say God was telling him it would not take 70 years but seven times seventy to consummate His saving-work with Israel. This was a cryptic way of saying, 490 years.

THOUGHT: The Bible is not only a historic but also a futuristic book.

PRAYER: Lord, help me understand Biblical prophecies.

WHAT ARE THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL? (II)

This period of 490 prophetic years are required (1) to finish the transgression, i.e. to remove the transgression from God's sight; (2) to make an end of sins, i.e. to put a stop to the course of sin (Revelation 21:3-4); (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, i.e. to atone for sins of the people (Zechariah 12:10, Jeremiah 50:4-5 34); (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, i.e. to give true righteousness and enduring peace (Jeremiah 31:33-34); (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, i.e. to fulfil all the prophecies of the Scriptures (Matthew 5:17-18, Hebrews 1:1-3); and (6) to anoint the most Holy, i.e. to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4).

Daniel's prophetic programme consists of (7 x 7 = 49 years) + (62 x 7 = 434 years) + (1 x 7 = 7 years) = 490 years. When will it begin and when will it end? From the command to rebuild Jerusalem down to Messiah the Prince are 483 years (69 x 7 years). The prophetic years here are to be understood as 360-day years according to the Jewish calendar, rather than the 365-day years of the Gregorian calendar. This understanding of the prophetic year as comprising 360 days is supported by the time period as described in Revelation 11:2-3 which speaks of the middle of Daniel's 70th week as lasting 1,260 days or 42 months. The final seven years of this present world's history before the return of Christ is divided into two halves of 3½ years each, or 1,260 days if they are multiplied by 360.

The 69 weeks or 483 years will begin with the issuing of the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 BC (Neh 2), and ends with the crucifixion of the Messiah in AD 30. The 69 weeks is divided into 2 parts: (1) the 49 years which saw Jerusalem rebuilt (Nehemiah 6), and (2) the 434 years which ended with the crucifixion of Christ. Forty years after Christ was crucified, Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus the Roman general. According to Josephus the Jewish historian, as many as a million Jews were massacred. The surviving Jews were cast out of their land, and scattered to all four corners of the earth. Between the 69 weeks and the final 70th week, there is an interval—a period of God's patience—for He *"is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). But when the time is up, the 70th week will commence with the Antichrist making peace of Israel (Daniel 9:27), and finally conclude with the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16).

THOUGHT: Are you prepared to meet the Lord when He comes?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be always ready for Thy return.

Daniel 9:27
Memorise Matthew 24:15
"whoso readeth, let him understand"

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN DANIEL'S 70th WEEK?

With the cutting off of the Messiah the "prophetic clock" seemed to have stopped ticking. In Daniel's "prophescope" what is in the distant future is brought into focus, viz the last or 70th week. With reference to that prince mentioned in Daniel 9:26 (different from Messiah the Prince in verse 25 who is Christ), he would be the Antichrist, the last World Dictator: "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week". Commentators generally say this covenant is with the Jews, but we view that it is with Gentile powers too, as many as come within his orbit. In this covenant he brings Jews and Arabs together. This event would thus signal the beginning of the 7 year period of the Great Tribulation, which as we have seen earlier, is divided into two 3½ year periods. This first 3½ year period would be a time of relative peace, as the world comes unto the global rule of the Antichrist, and a diplomatic solution is sought in the Middle East.

But after 3½ years, in the middle of the week, he shall cause "the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate." Bible students generally conclude that since there would be the Old Testament sacrifices revived, the Temple by this time would be rebuilt. There are others who do not necessarily see it as a prediction of an actual Temple that is rebuilt, but that a compromise will somehow be sought and that offerings will be allowed to be made in accordance to the Jewish law. Whatever the case may be, what we do know is that this breaking of the covenant and the abomination that the Antichrist will commit will certainly shatter the fragile peace that would be established in the Middle East.

What would then follow would be a redoubling of Satan's efforts against the Jews, which results in an intensifying of the persecution against them. This second half of the tribulation will thus really be a time where Israel is troubled, as was prophesised by Jeremiah whereby he called it the time of "Jacob's Trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). Yet it will end with victory for Christ, for at the end of this seven years (the consummation), a determined judgment will be poured down upon the Antichrist (the desolate) – referring to the final battle of the Armageddon that we shall read about later.

THOUGHT: Follow Christ not Antichrist.

PRAYER: Lord, Thou art my Shepherd, and as a faithful sheep I want to follow Thee always.

WILL THEY REALLY WORSHIP THE ANTICHRIST?

In light of the abominations that this Antichrist will commit, is it really possible that he would be universally acclaimed as God in this modern unbelieving world? Well, 2 Thessalonians 2:4 describes what the antichrist will do: *"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God".* This shows that not only will the antichrist be called God, but he will be worshipped above the living God!

First of all, biblical history is replete with examples where Israel worshipped false gods above the living God. Possibly the worst form of such worship was the sacrifice of infants to Molech in the valley of Gehenna. One can only imagine the depth of worship of Molech that drove parents to willingly sacrifice their children. Not for nothing God calls idols idols: it is almost a natural instinct for man to idolize something, be it a statue or an actual human being. Little wonder Romans 1:25 talks of those *"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever".*

Secondly, see what 2 Thessalonians 2:9 tells us about the antichrist: *"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders".* Think about the millions in the world today who are already fooled by the false miracles of Charismatism, and the signs and wonders movement. Moreover, the antichrist will deceive the world into believing he is God by curing even the mortally wounded! (Revelation 13:12).

Thirdly, considering that those who do not worship the antichrist will be killed (Revelation 13:15), mortal men who fear death most of all will choose to worship the antichrist instead. Perhaps this will be the most compelling factor of all.

For all these reasons, dear teen, the antichrist will be acclaimed as God himself. While we praise God that we who are born again would not be around to witness this tragic deception, may we all never fall prey to Satan's deceptions which are already working in the world right now.

THOUGHT: Deception is a very powerful tool of Satan.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be discerning and never fall prey to the wiles of the Devil.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1

1 Corinthians 15:1-58
Memorise Romans 5:12-21
"we shall all be changed"

WHAT IS THE RESURRECTION?

All Christians one day will either be resurrected or be raptured. This has to do with the believer's life hereafter—life after death, and life after life. This blessed hope of the believer was taught by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis for the resurrection and rapture of the saints. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, Paul wrote, *"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming".* Christ is the Prototype of the resurrection. His resurrection ensures the resurrection of all who belong to His kingdom. Adam was mankind's representative head in the very beginning. In the garden, Adam fell into sin, and all of mankind fell with him and came under the judgement of death on account of his sin (Genesis 2:16-17, 3:1-7). But God was gracious, and promised a Saviour in Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:15). Christ, the greater Adam, was man's Representative Substitute, and all believers, on account of His death on the cross shall receive the gift of eternal and live forevermore (Romans 5:12-21). *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

All believers, like Christ their Saviour, shall be resurrected one day. *"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 15:53-57). This is the blessed hope that we as believers can all look forward to. Dear Teen, is this your hope as well?

THOUGHT: We live because He lives!

PRAYER: I thank Thee O Lord for Thy resurrection power.

WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

Before the wrath of God befalls this wicked world, not only will there be a resurrection of believers who have already died in Christ, but also a rapture of believers who are still alive on earth when Jesus returns in the clouds. The word "rapture" is the Latin translation of the Greek word harpazo, "caught up", in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (cf Acts 8:39, 2 Corinthians 12:2, 4).

The taking up of the saints to heaven while they are still alive is not something new. In the Old Testament, we have the examples of Enoch and Elijah who were taken up while they were still alive. In Genesis 5:24, we read, *"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him".* And in 2 Kings 2:11, it says, *"behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven".* Both Enoch and Elijah did not experience death, and in the last days when Jesus returns, there will be believers who will not taste death, but will be caught up suddenly to meet the Lord in the air. This is the blessed hope of New Testament believers.

In 1 Corinthians 15:51, Paul calls this doctrine of the rapture a "mystery." Now, the word "mystery" (Greek musterion) is used 28 times in the New Testament to refer to truths that were not explicitly known in the Old Testament but now clearly revealed in the New Testament. It is now clearly revealed that when the last trumpet is blown the saints will all be changed in a micro-second (1 Corinthians 15:52). When the last trumpet is blown, *"we shall all be changed. ... For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality"* (1 Corinthians 15:52). In other words, the mighty hand of the Lord will resurrect the bodies of the departed saints, and the living believers will be raptured, and all will receive their glorified bodies that will last forever.

As saints living in this present age, we know that we are in the last of the last days. The Lord's return is very soon. We could very well be the generation that will be alive and remain until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that the rapture could happen any time now, possibly within our lifetime! Dear Teen, is this something that excites you?

THOUGHT: Are you ready for the rapture?

PRAYER: Father in heaven, I want to be always ready for the eminent the return of Christ.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 3 *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*
Memorise 1 Corinthians 15:51-58
"O death where is thy sting?"

WHEN WILL THE RAPTURE TAKE PLACE?

Concerning the time of the rapture, there are 5 views: (1) Pretribulational rapture view which teaches that the rapture will happen before the 7-year Great Tribulation period begins; (2) Mid-tribulational rapture view which states that the rapture will happen in the middle (i.e. when it reaches 3½ years) of the Great Tribulation period; (3) Pre-Wrath rapture view which believes that the rapture will happen at the ¾-point of the Great Tribulation period; (4) Post-tribulational rapture view which says that the church will go through the Great Tribulation, and the rapture will happen only at the end of it; and (5) Partial rapture view that says that very spiritual believers will be raptured in the beginning, not so spiritual ones will be raptured in the middle, and the carnal ones will only be raptured at the end of the Great Tribulation period.

The Partial rapture view which advocates multiple raptures is untenable for a couple of reasons: (1) the rapture is stated as a single event that takes place at the last trump, and (2) the Great Tribulation period would be a sort of Protestant purgatory if believers have to go through the Great Tribulation. The Post-tribulation rapture view is also untenable because it would mean believers have to suffer the wrath to come. This contradicts 1 Thessalonians 5:9 which says that believers are not appointed unto wrath. Moreover, if all believers were raptured and all unbelievers destroyed at the end of the Great Tribulation, who would then inhabit the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth (Revelation 5:10)?

The only tenable views are the Pretribulational, Mid-tribulational, and Pre-Wrath rapture views. We should be charitable and not be dogmatic over which of the three is the correct view. Whether it is Pretrib, Mid-trib or Pre-wrath, the most important thing is to be sure that when Christ finally comes in the clouds, we will be caught up to meet Him in the air. We need to be sure of our salvation. But if you have no assurance of salvation, it is like a traveller studying three or four airline flight schedules from Singapore to New York, but he has not bought his ticket. Whichever plane is leaving now, this very hour, how can you join the flight? O to be stranded when others in your family are gone above!

THOUGHT: Make sure of your salvation today!

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, hear my humble cry: do not pass me by.

WHAT WILL THE RESURRECTION BODY BE LIKE?

What will the resurrection body be like? The Bible gives us some details about it, but not all. As 1 John 3:2 tells us: *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is".* Thus for more answers we look to the resurrected body of our Lord Jesus Christ who is *"the firstborn among many brethren"* (Romans 8:29). When the Lord Jesus rose from the grave, his resurrected body was a physical one. He was not a ghost, phantom, or spirit. He had flesh and bones (Luke 24:36-43). He could be touched (John 20:20). He had the ability to consume food (John 21:12-15).

Although the resurrection body of Christ had all the above physical or natural characteristics, yet at the same time it had certain metaphysical or supernatural abilities, such as being able to enter into a room which was completely locked and bolted (John 20:19, 26), and being able to appear and disappear all of the a sudden and be transported to another place in a moment (Luke 24:31).

Such a resurrected body is described in several ways in the classic chapter on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. The resurrected body is described as (1) incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:42), (2) glorified (1 Corinthians 15:43), (3) powerful (1 Corinthians 15:43), (4) spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:44), and (5) heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:47). This body cannot be plagued by disease, will never get sick, does not age or decay, feels no pain, never gets hungry or thirsty, or become tired or weary. More significantly is the fact that sin will be completely and finally removed from this body once and for all. When we have this glorified body, we will no longer sin nor be tempted with sin. It is truly a super and a sinless body!

What a glorious day it will be when we finally enter into glory with our glorified bodies. The frustrations, disappointments and agony of this physical mortal body will be no more, but we shall be like our Lord Jesus Christ, and be with Him for eternity!

THOUGHT: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

PRAYER: Lord, we cannot wait to receive our glorified bodies.

WHAT IS THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

Jesus warned that there will come a time "when there 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). The Great Tribulation will be a terrible period of time and is referred to in the Scriptures with these 11 other terms: (1) The day of the Lord (Isaiah 13:6-9), (2) The indignation (Isaiah 26:20, 34:2), (3) The day of God's vengeance (Isaiah 34:8, 63:1-6), (4) The time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), (5) The overspreading of abominations (Dan 9:27), (6) The time of trouble such as never was (Daniel 12:1), (7) The seventieth week (Daniel 9:24-27), (8) The time of the end (Daniel 12:9), (9) The great day of His wrath (Revelation 6:17), (10) The hour of His judgement (Revelation 14:7), and (11) The end of this world (Matthew 13:40, 49).

The term "tribulation" speaks of a time of affliction and calamity. It is a time of divine punishment and destruction. The prophet Isaiah described it most vividly, *"Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity"* (Isaiah 13:6-11).

The prophet Joel gave another terrifying picture, *"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations"* (Joel 2:1-2).

It is indeed a fearsome time, and an event that no one would ever want to experience. The only way we can escape this, would be if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!

THOUGHT: The judgement of God is rooted in His holiness.

PRAYER: Lord, save me from the judgement to come.

WHAT WILL THE GREAT TRIBULATION BE LIKE?

The Great Tribulation will last for seven years. The seven years are divided into two equal halves of 3½ years each. The first half is a time of peace howbeit a temporary and man-made one. It will begin when the Antichrist makes a peace treaty with Israel which will end the wars that plague Palestine till this day. This covenant between the Antichrist and Israel is predicted in Daniel 9:27a, *"And he* (i.e. the Antichrist) *shall confirm the covenant with many for one week* (i.e. 7 years)". Israel will be allowed to sacrifice and worship in peace for 3½ years. After 3½ years, the Antichrist will break the peace treaty and persecute Israel: *"and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate"* (Daniel 9:27b).

The Antichrist will stop all worship of Jehovah and order the whole world to worship only him. He will set himself up as God. The whole world will be mesmerised by this because he received a fatal wound and yet became alive again, *"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast"* (Revelation 13:3). The Antichrist deceives the world by imitating the resurrection of Christ. The world will be so amazed by the power of the Antichrist that they will worship him as God, "*And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"* (Revelation 13:5). The Antichrist filled with Satanic pride will blaspheme against the living and true God, and this he will do for the next 3½ years, until the seven years are up (Revelation 13:5-6).

There is another man—the False Prophet—who will assist the Antichrist to commit evil. He is described as one like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon (Revelation 13:11). In other words, he looks religious and pious outwardly, but inwardly he is full of lies, evil and wickedness—a wolf in sheep's clothing. The false prophet will make the world worship the Antichrist, and will deceive the world with his miracles, even making fire to come down from heaven [an imitation Elijah]" (Revelation 13:12-14).

THOUGHT: Beware the prophet today who says he can perform miracles.

PRAYER: Lord, let me not be deceived by false miracle-workers.

WHO ARE THE 144,000 JEWS?

In Revelation 7:2, it is written, *"And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea"*. What specific reason is given for this enforcement of peace by restraining the four angels holding the wind? That which is revealed to us is the sealing of the 12 tribes of the children of Israel. Twelve thousand from each tribe makes a total of 144,000. In prophetic numerics, 12 is the number of representation, so it may stand for a bigger number. Another observation is that the tribe of Dan is left out and Levi, the priestly tribe is counted in. The tribe of Ephraim is subsumed under the name of Joseph. (To understand this selection of the tribes one must first learn the names of the 12 tribes and that Joseph is represented by two sons, viz, Ephraim and Manasseh which increases them to 13.) To make the number 12, one tribe must be left out and that tribe, as stated above, is Dan. Why Dan? Perhaps it is because she forsook her assigned land and worshipped idols (Judges 18). However, the Scriptures are silent on this point and we must therefore remain silent. This is one of Calvin's hermeneutical principles.

What then is the meaning of the sealing the forehead (Revelation 7:3)? According to Ezekiel 9:1-6, it means sealing upon the persons God's protection in the midst of terrible destruction. Thus these 144,000 Jews, who are called "the servants of our God" are specially chosen to accomplish God's purpose during the Great Tribulation to come. Some say they are Jewish evangelists. These are Christian Jews who acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, therefore they come under God's "particular providence". These are they described in Matthew 10:16-20 as those who will be given divine utterance as they are brought before Government authorities, and who will confound their accusers.

In this, God is showing his grace and mercy upon his chosen people, and fulfilling His promise that He will never forsake them. This time of Jacob's Trouble will also be a time to drive Jacob to finally acknowledge the Saviour whom they crucified. As witnesses, they will preach the gospel to their fellow Jews, such that by the end of the Great Tribulation, all Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26)!

THOUGHT: There is no denying that Israel is God's chosen, and that God will fulfill His covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

PRAYER: Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father.

CAN PEOPLE BE SAVED DURING THE TRIBULATION?

Paul tells us in Romans 11 in a parable that after the Jews rejected Christ, salvation was given to the Gentiles. The rebellious branch of the olive tree was cut off and cast away and in its place was grafted in the Gentiles, represented by the wild olive branch. But when *"the fullness of the Gentiles be come in"*, that is, when the last Gentile predestined to be saved is counted and the Gentile Church is full, then will Israel the olive branch be grafted back. *"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). The question is, when will the fullness of Gentiles be, and when shall Israel be saved?

Rev 7:9 describes a scene whereby "a great multitude which no man can number of all nations, and kindreds and people, and tongues" (Revelation 7:9) that stands before the throne in heaven. These myriads of people are clothed with white robes and stand before God to worship Him. They are now safe in heaven, and comforted by the Lamb.

Who is this great multitude that suddenly appears before the throne of God? One of the elders gave the answer—that they had come out of Great Tribulation. They come out of hunger and thirst, and from the heat of the shining sun, with tears in their eyes. They have come to heaven having gone through a great tribulation on earth. From here we can infer that even during the Tribulation, there will be those who are saved, and will be resurrected if they die during the Tribulation. Thus the time of the Gentiles will continue throughout the period of the Tribulation. God in His great mercy will continue to guide His elect to know of Him, perhaps through Bibles, tracts, sermon recordings that are left behind. Although they missed the rapture and suffer through the Tribulation, they can still be saved, if they repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Following that, we then realize that the salvation of the Jews would then happen at the end of the Tribulation, when the fullness of Gentiles is complete.

Yet this must not be an excuse for us to be complacent, thinking that we can wait for Tribulation before we repent. As we learn more of the Tribulation, I am certain none of us would want to go through it. It is far better to be assured of our salvation now, than to assume that we will have the opportunity to repent later. We must believe now before it is too late!

THOUGHT: Christ will save both Israel and His Church in the last days.

PRAYER: I thank Thee Lord for thy salvation so rich and so free.

Revelation 11:1-2
Memorise Psalm 91
"...for the tree is known by his fruit"

HOW WILL GOD PROTECT HIS PEOPLE? (I)

As we think of the intense persecution that the Jews will have to undergo, we may wonder, how will they ever survive? What will life be like for the Jews under the wicked and cruel regime of the future kingdom of the Antichrist? The Word of God assures us that as God's chosen people, He has a plan and a purpose for them. They will not be cast aside. Instead, God will protect them and care for them, even amidst the sufferings that they will have to endure.

In Revelation 11:1-2, John was instructed to measure the temple of God, and the altar, but not the outer court. In the Old Testament, these were the sections of the temple that only Jews were allowed to enter into. A distinction is then made, that the outer court is given to the Gentiles, and that portion need not be measured. This measuring out seems to be a setting of boundaries by God, whereby he demarcates the area in which he will give special focus and attention to. This likely signifies God's assured protection of the Jews from persecution of the Gentile powers during the second 3½ years of Daniel's 70th week. Although Jerusalem will be treaded under foot by these foreign nations for those 42 months (3½ years), yet God will measure out His chosen people, the Jews, and will protect them.

An analogy may be drawn from Ezekiel's vision of Jerusalem in the last days of Babylonian destruction. In Ezekiel 9 is recorded how six men carrying a slaughter weapon were commanded to slay all the living in the city, both old and young. But before this extermination was to be carried out, another man clothed with linen equipped with a writer's inkhorn was ordered *"to set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof"* (Ezekiel 9:2-4). Those who are devoted to the Lord are *"the apple of His eye, and hidden under the shadow of His wings"* (Psalm 17:8). *"Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge even the Most High thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling"* (Psalm 91:9, 10).

In the midst of persecution, the Lord knows how to protect His own from harm and danger. Without the Lord's permission, Satan cannot touch the Lord's people.

THOUGHT: Remember Job.

PRAYER: I thank Thee Father that I am safe in the everlasting arms of Jesus Christ my Saviour.

WHO ARE THE TWO WITNESSES?

Now, while Jerusalem in the last days (of 3½ years) will be under Gentile domination, the Antichrist World Dictator holding sway, God will send His two witnesses to testify to the power of the living and true God. Some identify them to be Elijah and Enoch, but others Elijah and Moses. One reason for Moses is the plagues he brought down on Egypt are mentioned as in his power to enact again. Besides, it was Moses and Elijah who appeared together at the Mount of Transfiguration, not Enoch.

As preachers, they will bring to the world both good news and bad news. The bad news is that God is going to judge the world by His wrath. The good news is there is still salvation in Christ Jesus for those who would believe on Him and repent of their sins. Just like John the baptiser, they will call for repentance for the day of the Lord is at hand: "Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:7-8).

Now, it is God's purpose to let them flourish only for a short season, and then be killed by the Antichrist. Their bodies will lie in the city plaza of Jerusalem and all over the world men will be able to see their dead bodies displayed for 3½ days. Whilst this may have seemed impossible in the past, now with live TV broadcasts and the advances of the Internet, certainly "they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies" (Revelation 11:9). During this display all who dwell upon the earth will make merry and send gifts one to another because these two prophets had tormented them by their miracles of punishment. But suddenly they shall stand up alive and great fear falls on all who sees them. Then a loud voice calls from heaven, "Come up hither," whereupon they rise up and will be carried into the air by a cloud. The City will then be shaken by a terrible earthquake that tears down a tenth part of its construction. Seven thousand people will be crushed to death by this big Quake. All the rest of the people will glorify God as they tremble with fear.

In all this, God shows himself to be gracious and merciful in preaching salvation even to those in the tribulation period. At the same time He is the righteous and perfect judge who knows how to punish the wicked.

THOUGHT: *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Hebrews 10:31).

PRAYER: Lord, I want Thee to be my Saviour and not my Judge.

Revelation 12:1-17
Memorise Isaiah 54:1-6
"Where she hath a place prepared of God"

HOW WILL GOD PROTECT HIS PEOPLE? (II)

The second half of the Great Tribulation will see Israel come under persecution as never before. The Jews who suffered under Hitler in WWII would understand what we mean. A permanent record of their sufferings preserved in Yad Vashem—the Holocaust Museum—in Jerusalem is an eye opener to the Bible student of Revelation 12.

Who is the woman "clothed with the Sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of 12 stars" (Revelation 12:1)? In prophetic language, woman or wife in the Old Testament signifies Israel, with God as her husband (Isa 54). We believe the woman of Revelation 12 is Israel inasmuch as Joseph's dream in Genesis 37 also described the family of Israel as represented by "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars" (Genesis 37:9), with Joseph himself being the 12th star. Now who is the Child? Inasmuch as Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, who is of Israel, this Child must be our Saviour, for He is One "to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Revelation 12:5).

How about the red dragon? The dragon is also called "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" (Revelation 20:1). Red signifies bloodshed, and is Satan not called a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). The great red dragon, having seven heads and 10 horns and seven crowns upon his heads shows how powerful and successfully clever the Devil is in working out his schemes through the nations. That he tried to devour the Child harks back to his attempt to kill the baby Jesus through King Herod. That the Child was caught up unto God and to His throne is a picture of His preservation during the 33 years of ministry on earth till the day of His death, resurrection and ascension.

This vision from Revelation 12:1-5 therefore gives us a brief history of the world, from the formation of the nation of Israel, till the birth and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 6 then leaps forward to the period of the Great Tribulation, where 1260 days speaks of its second half. Again what we see here is a promise that God will protect and preserve Israel during the period of intense suffering and persecution. They would be fed in this special place prepared by God, whilst Satan will rage upon the earth.

THOUGHT: The Lamb of God Lion from Judah is infinitely more powerful than the red dragon and that old serpent.

PRAYER: I praise Thee Lord Jesus for Thy omnipotence.

WHAT WILL BE TAKING PLACE IN HEAVEN?

Now, leaping across the centuries to the last years of this age, when Israel will come in full view and will be in conflict with all the hostile nations surrounding her, we are given to understand that spiritual forces are also simultaneously clashing in conflict. There is war in the heavenly regions between Michael the Archangel and his angels against the dragon and his angels, demons unnumbered!

That battle will not be long, and the result is a forgone conclusion. Satan will certainly lose, and he and his demons will be cast down to earth in defeat. Seeing that he has but only 3½ years left before his final defeat, like the Japanese invasion of the Pacific had reached high tide and ebbing was setting in, Satan will go all out, like the Kamikazes, to persecute Israel. But to the woman were given two wings that she might fly to the wilderness. The Wilderness, indeed, is a cryptic name of the Promised Land as used by Moses in his demand to Pharoah, *"Let us go, we pray thee, three days journey into the desert* [wilderness]*, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God"* (Exodus 5:3 cf 5:1).

When the Jews were gathered back in their Homeland, the Serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood, but the earth helped the woman and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

The prophet Isaiah has this to say of God's protection over His people, "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). We believe, in times of utmost testings, God will break through from heaven to save His people. As He caused the Red Sea to divide and allow Israel to go over dry land, so will He cause the earth to swallow the flood that Satan will send to drown His people.

THOUGHT: "My God is so great, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do."

PRAYER: O Lord, save us by Thy almighty hand.

WHY MUST ISRAEL SUFFER?

What is Satan's flood, but one of death and destruction? We know Israel is a land of rock caves in the Negev (the southern desert) which stretches all the way into the Land of Edom, all the way beyond the Dead Sea region. Daniel 11:41 confirms this, "these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon" (Edom, Moab and Ammon form the Land of Jordon today). Perhaps these would be the places that Israel would be hiding – the place that God had prepared for them to be "nourished for a time" (Revelation 12:14).

In the final battles of Armageddon leading up to Jerusalem and into the Judean hills, Zechariah calls, *"And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light"* (Zechariah 14:5-7). *"And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God"* (Zechariah 13:8-9). Through these times of tribulation, the Jews, in their suffering and desperation, will finally call upon the name of the Lord!

Satan, knowing that his time of judgement is now come, pursues all the more "to make war" with the remnant of the woman's seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. It would be a difficult time for the Jews, but yet it is necessary in the perfect plan of God. This period would serve as both a punishment for their rejection of the Messiah, but also as a time where they will be driven to their knees and finally acknowledge Christ as their Saviour! Likewise we must be thankful for even the trials and afflictions in our lives, for it shows that God is actively involved in our lives, and wants us to draw near to Him.

THOUGHT: Have no fear, God is near.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I trust only Thee for thou alone art my Saviour and Redeemer.

WHAT IS ARMAGEDDON?

The sin-cursed world is desperately looking for peace, but there can be no peace but war! We are living in a war-torn earth. Are we dreaming of peace and prosperity on earth in this lifetime? Banish the thought! Remember we are but pilgrims. We are not citizens of this world, but of the world to come. "This world is not my home, I am just a passing through". Peace will come, but only when the Prince of peace returns to judge this world and rule the world for a thousand years.

Who can forget September 11 (9/11)? An earth-shaking tragedy with worldwide repercussions that struck the most powerful nation in the world. Since then, America and the world have declared war against terrorism! Surely, terrorism ought to be condemned, but has this long drawn war in the years that followed made the world a safer and better place to live in? The Scriptures paint a bleak scenario of the future, *"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom"* (Matthew 24:7). There will be a whole lot of hatred and not love in the world, *"And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another ... And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold"* (Matthew 24:10, 12).

What is going to happen? The Bible tells us! The Bible speaks of War! A War that will end all wars— the Battle of Armageddon.

"Armageddon" - the sound of it echoes ominous! The meaning of the Hebrew is "Hill of Slaughter". It is a broad plain you can see as you stand on Mt Carmel, Haifa, looking across eastwards, the plain of Esdraelon. It is the site of numerous battles of warring nations from time immemorial. Pharoah Nechoh rode through this plain to fight the Assyrian king (2 Kings 23:29). So will the Oriental forces coming down against Israel meet at Armageddon. In this case, Armageddon is the last stop before the assault on Jerusalem, the target of end-time nations.

Dear Teen, when Armageddon happens, which side of the battle will you be on?

THOUGHT: The world is not heading towards Utopia but Armageddon.

PRAYER: Lord, help me sound out the warning that the end is near.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15

Daniel 2:31-34
Memorise 1 John 2:18-29
"even now are there many antichrists"

IS THE SCENE BEING SET FOR ARMAGEDDON?

God will judge this wicked world on that final day. How will it come about? For answers let us visit three prophets in the Bible: the prophets Daniel, Ezekiel, and John.

In Daniel 2:31-34, we see Nebuchadnezzar's image speaking of 6 kingdoms in world history—4 have passed, the 5th is now here, the 6th and final one will come soon. The dream is interpreted from verse 36 onwards. Let us review the dream: we have (1) the head of gold which is the Babylonian empire (Daniel 2:37-38), (2) breast/arms of silver which is the Medo-Persian empire (2:39), (3) the belly/thighs of brass which is the Grecian empire (2:39), (4) the legs of iron which is the Roman empire (2:40), the (5) feet/toes of clay and iron which is the Revived Roman empire (2:41-43), and ultimately (6) the Stone from heaven which is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who will set up His kingdom on earth (2:44).

Today, we see the emergence of a revived Roman empire: European Union and USA—partly strong and partly broken (2:42). Partly strong because they are the political/economic/military superpowers of the world and yet vulnerable; partly broken because they are no longer united under one emperor—Caesar, but under many kings. They are united and yet divided.

From this revived Roman Empire will come the Antichrist. John tells us in 1 John 2:18, *"Little children it is the last time: and as ye have heard that the Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time".* This Antichrist will succeed in bringing about world peace—but it is a self-serving and temporary peace. The turmoil in the world today is due to the trouble we see in the Middle East, between Israel and the Palestinians and Arabs. Whether one likes it or not, it all boils down to Israel. Israel is the centre and cause of it all. Israel is the key to understanding prophetic Scripture. When we read the news and hear of all the conflicts going on in the Middle East, realize that we are reading of the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy!

THOUGHT: The Antichrist is a man of blasphemy (666) who makes himself God.

PRAYER: Lord, save me from the many antichrists that are in the world today.

Ezekiel 38:1-8
Memorise 1 John 2:18-29
"and not be ashamed before him at his coming"

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE MIDST OF THE TRIBULATION?

Israel is looking for peace. Will peace come? Yes, but it will be a false peace. Read Daniel 9:27—69 weeks have passed. When the Tribulation begins, we will enter the 70th week of Daniel which will last for 7 years comprising 2 halves: 3½ years of peace, 3½ years of war, engineered by the Antichrist. In the middle of the 7 years, Antichrist will break the peace treaty and persecute Israel. World War III begins. World War III is a 3½-year war that begins in the middle of the Tribulation week. What is the scenario like? Let us look at Ezekiel 38:1-8.

The prophet Ezekiel speaks of a Mid-tribulational War involving (1) the Northern nations, viz, Gog/Magog (38:2 cf v. 14-16) which are countries north of Israel (Russia, Armenia, Turkey), (2) the Eastern nations (v 5a) which are Persia (Iran), her neighbours (Iraq and Afghanistan), and all Arab nations east of Israel, (3) the Southern nations (v 5b) which are Ethiopia and Libya representing the African nations. This war against the Antichrist will be fought in the land of Israel. They will attack the Antichrist, like a desert storm that covers the land. The revived Roman empire led by the Antichrist will defeat them (Daniel 11:36-45).

However, after fighting off the Northern, Southern and Eastern nations, the Antichrist himself will turn against Israel. He will set himself as God—the abomination of desolation, and persecute the Jews (Daniel 9:27, Revelation 12:6, 13-14). This will last for 3½ years. World War III will reach its grand finale at the end of the Great Tribulation.

The vision of reaping the grapes of God's wrath and having them trampled in the winepress outside the city of Jerusalem so that blood flowed from the winepress, reaching to the horse bridles for a stretch of 1,600 furlongs (Revelation 14:16-20) or 200 miles is a picture of total bloody carnage along the whole length of the land of Israel. From the battlefield of Armageddon in the north near Haifa to the southern desert, even to Eilat on the Red Sea, this 200-mile river of blood rises as high as touches the mouth of a horse (about 5 feet above the ground). This preview of Armageddon teaches a lesson on the theology of war: that it is God who uses the wrath of men to execute His divine purposes according to His counsel, to His own glory.

THOUGHT: The Antichrist is a man of blasphemy (666) who as a man makes himself to be God.

PRAYER: Lord, save me from the many antichrists that are in the world today.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE END OF THE TRIBULATION?

What will happen at the end of the 7 years? Let us now consult the Apostle John in Revelation 16:12-16.

The Antichrist is now world ruler, but there are nations that are against him, viz, the kings of the east (v 12). These will fight the Antichrist in a final showdown at Har Megiddo—the hill of slaughter. What is the battle scenario like? Well, in the 6th vial, we see war breaking out in Iraq, the Euphrates dried up and the way open to invasion by "kings of the east". It appears to have taken three years for such a climax to be reached. Some commentators cite China the Far Eastern Power as the main assailant. Now the word "East" is applied to all lands eastwards of Israel, even Syria is comprehended in this term (2 Kings 13:17). All the Arab and Muslim countries east of Israel, viz, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, extending all the way to China in full alliance can be a menacing force against little Israel now under the aegis of the end-time World Dictator. Even Russia and the northern nations, if they swoop down to join the Orientals, coming through the Euphrates would be counted as "kings of the east." We see here a final showdown of nations outside of the Antichrist's orbit in what is so dreaded—the battle of Armageddon. "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." When this happens, Christ will return with His saints to destroy the Antichrist and the armies of the world (Revelation 19:11-21).

The Lord Jesus Christ—He that is Faithful and True—will ride on a white horse down to earth. In His triumphal entry to Jerusalem the first time, Jesus rode on an ass. This signified His humility as a slave (the ass or donkey is a slave animal), and his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil 2:8). In His second coming, Jesus will no more come as a Lamb but as a Lion from the tribe of Judah. No more need He suffer as when He first came to earth, but as the conquering King of kings and Lord of lords. Riding on a white horse, He comes in a second triumphal entry by His own might and power, in a victory march over His enemies. *"In righteousness He doth judge and make war ... and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations"* (Revelation 19:11-16). Read also Zechariah 13:8-9, 14:1-4.

THOUGHT: The same Word of God that created this world, will one day destroy this world.

PRAYER: Lord, Thy Word is powerful indeed.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE END OF ARMAGEDDON?

What is Armageddon's aftermath? The Scriptures tell us that the Lord "treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:15, cf 14:14-20). At the same time, the Lord will personally save His own as prophesied in Zechariah 13:8-9, 14:1-4.

The enemies of Christ will come to a terrible end (Revelation 19:17-19). The Antichrist's last-ditch stand against Christ and His saints is of no avail. By a word from His mouth all their weapons of war shall be totally paralysed. Here is a glimpse of this terrifying scene of destruction, *"And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour"* (Zechariah 14:12-13). It will certainly be D-day—a day of Doom, Death, and Destruction—for the Antichrist and all who stand against Christ.

Is this bad news to you? Well this is bad news only if you do not have the good news. You can escape from the coming judgement by accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. As Christians, how should we live today? In the light of Christ's soon return, let us reorder our lives. Let us not love this world. This wicked world gives only false hopes. Let us love instead our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our only hope. Many a time, we are so caught up with the things of this world— leisure, entertainments, money, career, cars, houses, properties, investments, sports etc. How would we be ready when Christ comes back? Read 1 John 2:15-17. Live not for this sin-cursed world of Satan, but for the glorious kingdom of Christ that is to come. There will be no peace in this world, until the Prince of peace returns.

THOUGHT: I wonder have I done my best for Jesus?

PRAYER: Lord, I want to do my best for Thee.

Revelation 20:1-7
Memorise Revelation 5:10
"and shall reign with him a thousand years"

WILL THERE BE A MILLENNIUM?

At the end of the final battle of the Armageddon, the beast and the false prophet would be "cast alive" into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (Revelation 19:20). This time, the Angel comes down from heaven with the key of the bottomless pit, i.e. Christ, or Michael the Archangel, and with a great chain in His hand, lays hold on the dragon, the old serpent and binds him a thousand years, and casts him into the bottomless pit. He shuts him up and sets a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed for a little season.

The term "millennium" literally means "1,000 years." It is a word that all Bible students, and all Christians should be familiar with. Although the term itself—"millennium"—is not found in the Bible, the concept of a 1,000-year reign of Christ certainly is. It is found in the text we have just read, in Revelation 20:1-7. Six times in this passage, the phrase "a thousand years" appears. This is an important event, and we need to pay attention to it.

What is the millennium all about? This period very clearly has to do with the worldwide reign of Christ, together with His people. In verse 6 we read, *"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".* In Revelation 5:10, we are told that the Lord "hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth". The saints are not yet ruling on the earth. They are presently waiting for the Lord's return, and it is only when the Lord returns that the millennial reign will begin and last a thousand years.

Will you be part of this 'ruling class' on earth to reign together with Christ for a thousand years?

THOUGHT: The saints are now not ruling but being ruled.

PRAYER: Lord, let me humbly submit to those who rule over me now, and patiently wait for Thy promotion one day when I shall reign with Thee.

Luke 18:1-8
Memorise Matthew 7:13-14
"shall he find faith on the earth"

WHY DO WE REJECT POSTMILLENNIALISM? (I)

There is some measure of confusion over what the millennium is all about. There are three main views on the millennium—postmillennialism, amillennialism, and premillennialism. Which view is correct? Let us examine all the three millennial views in the light of Scripture, and see which view is the correct view.

Postmillennialism is the view which says that Christ will come after the millennium. Postmillennialists have an optimistic view of the world. They say that the world will become better and better, until it reaches perfection. Through human effort, the world will eventually be peaceful, harmonious, and prosperous. After the world has experienced these wonderful conditions of peace, harmony and prosperity, Jesus would return.

This view is held mainly by the modernists who deny the doctrine of sin, who believe that man is inherently good. Man is capable, intelligent, and good enough to create a heaven on earth, they say. Another group of postmillennialists are the reconstructionists or theonomists. They say that Christians should be active in politics in order to influence or reconstruct the laws of a country by making them more Christian or Biblical. They believe that wicked society needs to be reconstructed by Christians. Through the preaching of the Gospel, more and more people will become Christians. So when Christians dominate the world, the world will become a better place. Christ will return after the world is set right by Christians.

Is the postmillennial view correct? What does the Bible tell us about ourselves and the world we live in? Does the Bible paint for us an optimistic or a pessimistic picture of the world and of the end times? Will the world at the end times be inhabited by mostly Christians?

The answer is found in Jesus' rhetorical question, *"Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"* (Luke 18:8). The Christian population in the world just before the Lord returns will be relatively small.

THOUGHT: Are the newspapers filled with good news or bad news?

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ in this world that is filled with bad news.

Matthew 24:6-8
Memorise 2 Timothy 3:1-4
"in the last days perilous times shall come"

WHY DO WE REJECT POSTMILLENNIALISM? (II)

The Bible tells us that man is not morally good and inherently incapable of transforming the world into a better place. There are many attempts by man to live in peace with one another. But each attempt has ended in failure. The world has a history of about 6,000 years. Out of these 6,000 years, the world has known only 300 years of peace. In the past century alone, we already have two world wars. When we read the newspapers, do we see the world becoming kinder, gentler, and more peaceful? No, we find a whole lot of fightings, riotings, killings, cheatings, thefts, rapes, murders all the time. This is because the world is inhabited by sinful men, born in sin, and bent on sinning. Man has no ability whatsoever to make this world a good place to live in. He certainly has the ability to make the world a sophisticated place (we have cars, computers, aeroplanes etc), but not necessarily a peaceful and happy place for living.

The world is not getting better and better, but from bad to worse. Jesus Himself painted a pessimistic instead of an optimistic view of the world in the last days. In Matthew 24:6-8, Jesus predicted, *"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: ... for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows".* The Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-4 warned, *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God".* Jesus said that the last days will be like *"the days of Noah"* when *"the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Luke 17:26 cf Genesis 6:5).

Will the world be filled with Christians just before Christ returns? Jesus said, *"Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"* (Matthew 7:14). True believing Christians will not be in the majority but in the minority before Christ returns.

Postmillennialists have a wrong view of the world. We reject the postmillennial view of the end times.

THOUGHT: Are we living in "the days of Noah?"

PRAYER: I thank Thee O Lord that I am safe in the Ark of Christ.

Revelation 20:1-7
Memorise 1 Peter 5:8-9
"the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about"

WHY DO WE REJECT AMILLENNIALISM?

Amillennialism literally means "no millennium." Amillennialists teach that there is no future 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. They say the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 is not literal but symbolical. It is not referring to a physical but a spiritual reign of Christ, and is not an earthly but heavenly one. Some of them say that the millennium is right here and now. Christ is presently ruling over the whole world from heaven through the Church.

Is this correct? Are we right now living in the millennium? If so, then Satan and his demons should not be in this world. Revelation 20:2-3 tells us that Satan will be chained up during the millennium: *"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 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".* Do we see this to be the case? Is Satan at this time bound? If so, then why is there so much Satanic activity today? And if Satan is now chained up, then the Apostle Peter would be wrong to warn us in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour". Satan is still on the prowl, we are clearly not in the millennium yet.

The amillennialists say that there is no future rule of Christ on earth. Is this true? Revelation 20:6 says that God's people will reign with Christ: *"they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."* Please note the future tense—*"will reign"* and *"shall reign."* The Apostle John was talking about a future, and not a present reign.

Will this reign be in heaven or on earth? Scripture interprets Scripture. In Revelation 5:10, we are told very clearly that Christ and His saints will reign on earth: *"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth".* Is this the case right now? Do we see Christ physically on earth ruling over the whole world right now?

Clearly this has not yet happened. We are still waiting for this great event to come. And it will happen when Christ returns to judge this world, put all His enemies under His feet, and rule over this whole planet for a millennium.

THOUGHT: Jesus reigns spiritually in the hearts of all believers today, but one day He will reign literally and personally over the whole world.

PRAYER: O Lord Jesus, Thou art sovereign, and in control over all things.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23

Isaiah 11:1-9
Memorise Revelation 20:6
"the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD"

WHY DO WE SUBSCRIBE TO PREMILLENNIALISM?

Premillennialism is the view which teaches that Christ will return before the millennium. This is the view taken by the Bible-Presbyterian Church and the Far Eastern Bible College. Christ must return to judge His enemies, restore Israel, and rule over the whole world from Jerusalem for a thousand years.

The Bible tells us that the world will become increasingly wicked culminating with the evil rule of the Antichrist who will set himself up as God, and demand worship from all. During the seven-year Tribulation period, he will persecute Israel. This seven-year Tribulation period is called "the time of Jacob's Trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), where Israel will suffer during this period. Jacob is Israel, not the Church. The Church will not be present during this time, but will be raptured, snatched up in a micro-second to be with Christ in heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

During this Tribulation period, God will pour out His wrath upon the unbelieving inhabitants of the earth. It will end with Christ returning to earth with His saints to fight the Antichrist and his armies, destroying all of them at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16, 19:11-21).

Jesus will then begin His millennial reign on earth. Survivors of the Tribulation will enter the millennium. Christ will sit on the throne of David and govern the whole world from Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be the political and religious capital of the world. The earth will be rejuvenated. The land will be peaceful and productive, and the life-span of man will increase (Isaiah 65:20 tells us that if a man dies at a hundred years old during this period, he dies young).

The people of this world are looking for peace on earth. But they are looking for it in all the wrong places. Only God can give peace. We will have true peace on earth only when the Lord Jesus Christ—the Prince of peace—returns.

There are three views on the millennium—postmillennial, amillennial, and premillennial. The premillennial view is the biblically correct view. What is also important is that we see a clear distinction between Israel and the Church.

THOUGHT: What a day it will be when Christ returns as King of kings!

PRAYER: O Lord Jesus, come back soon.

WHAT WILL THE MILLENNIUM BE LIKE? (I)

Who are the ones who will reign with Christ for a thousand years? First in the list are they who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus Christ and His Word, who had not worshipped the beast nor his image nor received his mark on their foreheads, nor in their hands. This should include martyrs of every age, which are seen in the opening of the fifth seal (Revelation 6:9-11). These reigned with Christ on the earth (Revelation 5:10) for a thousand years. In view of Christ coming before His thousand year reign takes place, this second coming is called premillennial. These who reign with Christ have suffered for Christ, even as our Lord has promised the Apostles, *"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint to you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed me; that ye might eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Luke 22:28-30).

That this thousand years will not be in heaven but on earth is so numerously predicted by the Old Testament prophets that we can quote but a few passages:

1. With the deceiver of nations under chains so that he cannot instigate them to fight, there shall be no war. *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"* (Isaiah 2:2-4). This passage on Christ's peaceful reign on earth is also recorded in Micah 4:1-3. Moreover, Micah adds, *"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).

THOUGHT: If we are in the millennium today as some say, why then are there still weapons of war in the world?

PRAYER: O Lord deliver us from World War III to come.

WHAT WILL THE MILLENNIUM BE LIKE? (II)

2. In the millennium, men will live to ripe old age with no exception since the curse on this earth will be virtually removed. *"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands"* (Isaiah 65:20-22).

3. The curse placed on the physical world will also be removed. *"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"* (Romans 8:20-22). But Isaiah foresees the coming deliverance during the millennial reign, *"The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD"* (Isaiah 65:25).

4. With the earth all at peace, "when nation shall not life up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4), the chief occupation of the nations shall be worship of the Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, the capital of the millennial kingdom. *"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD"* (Zechariah 8:20-22, see also Zechariah 14:16-20).

THOUGHT: In the millennium, creation shall groan and travail no more.

PRAYER: Lord deliver us from the many pains and pangs of this sin-cursed world.

WHAT WILL THE MILLENNIUM BE LIKE? (III)

5. As the United Nations Headquarters in New York City shall be no more, and Jerusalem will take its place by virtue of Christ's seat of government being established there, many Old Testament prophecies on His millennial rule must needs focus on the restoration of Jerusalem. Apart from Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4 quoted in previous readings, here is an extended description of Restored Jerusalem according to Zechariah 8:3-8: *"Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness"*. Also, *"Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you"* (Zechariah 8:22-23).

That people from the whole world will be led by Jews to come to the Lord in Jerusalem is beginning to be fulfilled in our day is reflected in an increasing number of pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Many of the tourists that travel to Israel today are there as pilgrims. Jerusalem today is a flourishing city. Are these not signs that Christ will soon come to take over His inheritance?

THOUGHT: Jerusalem is God's city of peace to the world only when Christ the Prince of peace returns to sit on David's throne.

PRAYER: O Lord Jesus, come back soon.

WHAT WILL THE DEVIL'S END BE?

After the thousand years has passed, at the instigation of Satan who is now let loose, Gog and Magog become the leading assailants against the beloved city of Jerusalem. Magog is the second son of Japheth born after the Flood (Genesis 10:2). Magog was the progenitor of the ancient Scythians or Tartars, whose descendants populate modern Russia (Ezekiel 38:2, 39:1). From Ezekiel 38 and 39, you will notice that Gog and Magog are the mortal enemies of Israel. Ezekiel 38:15-16 describes for us the might and magnitude of the army that will descend upon Israel to attack her. But these opponents of God the Almighty will be consumed by fire sent down from heaven (Revelation 20:9).

With Gog and Magog's defeat, the Devil, which deceived them, is at last "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone", where the beast and false prophet have already been condemned to. Revelation 20:10 tells us that they "shall be tormented day and night forever and ever". The Greek words behind forever and ever" mean "to the ages of the ages," that is, "never ending cycles of time".

God brings this severe punishment upon the Devil for his rebellion against God. After all, this place of torment was originally designed for Satan and his demons (Matthew 25:41). The torment of the Devil will be an eternal one – it will last "forever and ever"! There is no hope for the "adversary", the "father of lies", the "murderer from the beginning". There will be no respite at all to this suffering, for the Devil deserves no mercy at all.

Do you realize that it has been prophesied right from the beginning that this is the ultimate end of the Devil? Some may view it as an ongoing battle between Good and Evil, but we as Christians know better. In Christ, the victory has already been won. No matter how much the Devil might tempt and entice, no matter how many foolish people he may lure into his snares, he will never be able succeed in his attempt to be like the Most High, nor to ascend into heaven.

Dear teen, would you therefore serve a God in whom we know victory is secure, or would you rather a master whose end is eternal torment?

THOUGHT: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve".

PRAYER: Lord, help me to stand on the side of truth and right.

Revelation 20:12-15
Memorise Mark 9:43-48
"I saw a great white throne"

WHO ELSE WILL BE CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE?

At the end of the millennium, not only will the Devil be cast into the lake of fire to be punished forever, it is revealed to John in the vision of the Great White Throne that all the finally impenitent will likewise be punished.

In contrast with the first resurrection which was for salvation and reward of Christians according to their works, this is the second resurrection where no one is stated to be found in the Book of Life but rather in the books of death. These who now stand before Him "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away" have no white robes to cover them. Naked in their sins they, like the devil their father, are judged according to their works, and whosoever not found in the Book of Life is cast into the lake of fire. Death and hell are then cast in together to an everlasting second death which is the sealing of their sad fate forever and ever. There is no annihilation but everlasting torment. If there is any doubt in this matter, let the warning from yesterday's reading remind us once more: "And shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

The magnitude and intensity of the punishment of the Lake of fire is clearly described in Scripture. Our Lord declares that this is a place where the worm dieth not and where the fire shall never be quenched (Mark 9:43-48). It is a place of burning, of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of everlasting pain and torment.

Dear teen, realize that God is the God of justice and all the wicked works of the Devil and of man will be judged. No sinner will go unpunished. The lake of fire is a sobering reminder of God's justice, purity and infinite holiness. Yet, while wickedness and sin must be punished with the punishment they deserve, God in His infinite mercy has provided a way of escape. While there is yet time, may you be absolutely certain that you will not find yourself standing before the Great White Throne on that day, condemned to eternal suffering in the Lake of Fire.

THOUGHT: How can I find pardon for my sins?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I thank Thee for saving me from fiery torments of hell.

WILL GOD KEEP HIS WORD TO ISRAEL? (I)

The anti-Israel millennialists like the amillennialists, postmillennialists, and so-called historic premillennialists err in their view of the nation of Israel. They say that God has cast away Israel. Israel, for her sin of rejecting her Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ—is now forsaken by God and is replaced by a new Israel—the Church. All the promises God made to Israel is now transferred to the Church.

Is this true? Did God cast away and forsake Israel? Did He withdraw all the promises He had originally made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? The answer is No. God has not forsaken Israel. God's hand is still upon Israel to protect and preserve her. God must keep His Word. Although Israel has sinned against God by rejecting Christ, yet God will not and cannot break His Word. God will punish Israel for her sins, but God is true to His Word, and is faithful to the Covenant He had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God says in Psalm 89:3,34-36: *"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, ... My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me"* (see also Jeremiah 31:35-37). Paul himself questioned those who said that God has cast Israel away. In Romans 11:1, Paul asked, "Hath God cast away his people?"

Answer: "God forbid!" In Romans 11:25-27, Paul predicted that one day "all Israel shall be saved." The anti-Israel millennialists say that this Israel is the Church. This is a manipulation of God's Word. God means what He says and says what He means. If Paul was talking about the Church instead of Israel, he could and would have used the term "Church". He did not. He was not referring to the Church but to Israel—God's chosen nation when he said "all Israel shall be saved".

THOUGHT: Man may break his promises, but not God.

PRAYER: Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father.

WILL GOD KEEP HIS WORD TO ISRAEL? (II)

The word "Israel" is used 70 times in the New Testament, and on every occasion it is used, it refers to the Jewish nation of Israel, not the Church. Israel is Israel, Church is Church. We must not confuse the two. The nation of Israel will one day be converted and will acknowledge Jesus as her Messiah. This will happen when Christ returns. Israel will be truly glorious in that day when the Lord sits on the throne of David in Jerusalem ruling over the whole world in fulfilment of all the Old Testament prophecies concerning her.

We are seeing God's promises being kept and prophecies being fulfilled today. Look at Israel today! She is back in her land in fulfilment of Isaiah 11:11-12. Israel must be back in her land before the Lord can return. This is one indication that the Lord is coming back very soon. The Lord will return soon to complete the restoration of Israel.

The anti-Israel view is problematic and questionable. If God has truly cast away Israel for her sins, then what makes the Church so sure that she will not be cast away also? Are we not as sinful as Israel? Have we not been as disobedient? Have we not broken the Ten Commandments, and do we not continue to break the Commandments? Should not God cast us away? God forbid! God is true to His Word, and will save us to the very end. When we sin, He will chastise us. *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"* (Hebrews 12:6). Believers are God's children. The Lord, true to His promise, will not and cannot cast His children away. Likewise, when Israel sins, God will punish her. But Israel remains God's special and chosen nation. God will not cast her away.

THOUGHT: If God would break his promise to Israel, how can we be certain he will not break other promises as well?

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for thy great and precious promises.

CAN WE SPIRITUALISE GOD'S PROMISES AWAY? (I)

The root problem with the anti-Israel millennialists is in their method of interpreting Scripture. How do the anti-Israel millennialists interpret the prophecies in the Bible that have to do with Israel? Well, they explain these prophecies away by saying that these prophecies are not to be taken literally but spiritually. They spiritualise away all the prophecies which deal with the nation of Israel and the second coming of Christ.

How do they do it? For an example, let us turn to Zechariah 8:21-23. Zechariah 8:21-23 is a prophecy that will be fulfilled in the millennium, but the anti-Israel millennialists say, No, it is fulfilled by Christians and by the Church. Zechariah 8:21-23 reads, *"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem* (read "Church"), *and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew* (read "Christian"), *saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you".* The anti-Israel millennialists say "Jerusalem" means "Church," and "Jew" means "Christian." Is this how we should understand this passage? If this is how we should spiritualise the Scriptures, then how about Zechariah 9:9 which says, *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."* This prophecy—was it not fulfilled literally by the Lord Jesus Christ in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (cf Luke 19:38)? The fallacy of the anti-Israel interpretation of prophecy is obvious. If Zechariah 9 is literal, why should Zechariah 8 be spiritual?

How many verses will we misunderstand if we adopt this anti-Israel millennial method of interpreting prophecy? Not one or two, but 4,200!

THOUGHT: *"When the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense."*

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee that Thy Word is plain and clear.

CAN WE SPIRITUALISE GOD'S PROMISES AWAY? (II)

There are 4,200 verses in Scripture concerning the second coming of Christ. That amounts to the whole New Testament minus the four Gospels. That is a whole lot of Scripture! We thus cannot allow for this spiritualising away of Scripture to make it mean what it does not mean. God requires us to understand the Old Testament prophecies literally.

We have many prophecies in the Old Testament on the first and the second coming of Christ. The prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ were fulfilled literally. Isaiah prophesied, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Was this not literally fulfilled? Jesus was indeed born of a virgin. Micah in chapter 5:2 prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Was not Jesus born in Bethlehem? Virgin means virgin, Bethlehem means Bethlehem. If the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ's first coming were fulfilled literally, why do we then say that the prophecies concerning His second coming are fulfilled spiritually? It does not make sense. If the first coming prophecies are literal, then the second coming prophecies must be literal as well. God means what He says, and says what He means. Israel means Israel; Zion means Zion; Jerusalem means Jerusalem.

So, we reject the anti-Israel millennial view of Israel, and its erroneous method of interpreting biblical prophecy. We can have utmost confidence in the Words of God, for we are certain that He will always fulfil them to the very jot and tittle. Besides the prophecies concerning the first and second coming of Christ, there are also many wonderful promises that assure the believer of God's presence, protection and preservation. These are real literal promises that God will certainly fulfil. We cannot spiritualise these promises away!

THOUGHT: God says what He means and means what He says.

PRAYER: Lord, help me understand Thy Truth with a simplicity that comes by faith in Thy forever infallible and inerrant Word.

Revelation 20:11-15
Memorise Hebrews 9:27
"it is appointed unto men once to die"

WHAT IS THE GREAT WHITE THRONE?

We often hear this saying, "Crime does not pay". And this is very true. Thieves and robbers, kidnappers and murderers, and all criminals shall not escape the long arm of the law. In Singapore, drug traffickers receive the death penalty. Other offenders are jailed and caned. If we as human beings know how to punish those who break the law, how much more God who is holy and just?

The Bible tells us that there is a final reckoning at the end of the Millennium. This will be a judgment of sinners, of the unbelievers who never repented and believed in Christ. In Revelation 20, it is called the judgment of the Great White Throne. Hebrews 9:27 says, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment". There is no reincarnation. There is no purgatory. There is no second chance. Every man will have to face his Creator after he dies and be judged for what he has done on earth.

Man's Creator who is also Judge is described in Daniel 7:9-10 in vivid terms, *"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened".* This Judge is none other than the Son of God—the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son ... And hath given him authority to execute judgment also" (John 5:22, 27).

What will man be judged for? He will be judged for all the sins he has committed against God and against man. No one can escape this judgment. John said in Revelation 20:2 that he saw "the dead, small and great, stand before God". Whether tycoon or beggar, prince or pauper, everyone will have to give an account of himself to God.

THOUGHT: "The wicked are incapable of profiting by the judgments of God" (Calvin).

PRAYER: O God, I want to be saved from the judgment to come.

HOW WILL SINNERS BE JUDGED AT THE GREAT WHITE THRONE? (I)

How will sinners be judged? The Judge will judge by the book. There are several books that will be opened. One such book is the book of words. Matthew 12:36-37 says, *"But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"*. So, be careful little mouth what you say. Speak no vulgarities, do not slander, do not lie. Do we speak against Jesus Christ and His words? John 12:48 says, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"*. So, be warned those who say Jesus is not God or that the Bible is not perfect.

Sinners will also be judged according to the book of works. Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, "For God shall bring every work in to judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil". And when our works are judged, we will find that the works which we thought were good were actually evil because we have fallen short of God's holy standards. *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). Our good works in the sight of God are as *"filthy rags"* (Isaiah 64:6), for *"there is none righteous, no not one ... there is none that doeth good, no, not one"* (Romans 3:10, 12). Jesus said, *"If you look at a woman to lust after her, you have committed adultery". "If you hate your brother you have committed murder."* O be careful little hands what you do. O be careful little feet where you go. O be careful little eyes what you see.

Based on our words and our works, do you think we can escape judgment and ever gain entrance into heaven?

THOUGHT: Man may not know the evil we have done, but God knows!

PRAYER: Confess all your sins to God and beg Him for forgiveness.

HOW WILL SINNERS BE JUDGED AT THE GREAT WHITE THRONE? (II)

Not only are there the judgment of words and the judgment of works that sinners are put through for all they have said and done, there is also the judgment of the will. This has to do with the conscience, the motives, the secret intentions of the heart. The sin of the heart is the most serious of all. God has revealed Himself so clearly to man in His creation (Psalm 19:1), so fully in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-3), and so perfectly in His Word (Psalm 19:7). And yet man chooses to reject and rebel against Him. Man willfully suppresses the truth and even corrupts the truth by spelling the name of GOD backwards, making Him DOG.

And so we read of God's judgment against such reprobates in Romans 1:18-23, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things"*. Those who change GOD into DOG shall face the wrath of God. When God comes back to judge this world, He will not spare His enemies.

The judgment of God against all the finally impenitent is eternal destruction in a place of torment called the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). It is a terrible and terrifying place where the fire is not quenched and the worm dieth not. It is a place where Satan and his demons will be, including the Antichrist and the False Prophet. All of them and those who are like them shall be cast alive into the fiery lake to be tormented day and night forever. The torment shall never end.

THOUGHT: "The ungodly are moved by no threats; nay, they laugh to scorn all God's judgments" (Calvin).

PRAYER: O Lord, I want heaven not hell. Please save me from my sins.

CAN WE ESCAPE THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT?

The only way sinners may escape this judgment to come is to be found in the book of life. How may a sinner have his name written in the book of life? The sinner cannot write it himself. The sinful, wicked and corrupt are not qualified to write on this holy book. Only one person can write on it, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. If a sinner wants his name to be written in the book of life, he must bow himself to Jesus and say, "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me a sinner, save me from the wrath to come. I believe in thy death and resurrection for me, and receive thee as my Lord and Saviour". When such a humble prayer is made, the Lord Jesus will hear and will not turn away. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18). "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

FORGIVEN

Sins Forgiven, Heaven to See
Sins Forgiven, Not Hell 'twill Be
Sins Forgiven, Forever to Live
Sins Forgiven, Only Jesus can Give

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The Bible is very clear and states in no uncertain terms that there are only two outcomes available – heaven or hell. It is either eternal glory with God, or eternal torment in hell. God in His love has made the way to heaven open for us through the gift of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only way whereby we can escape the judgment of the Great White Throne judgment – if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: "The gospel cannot be faithfully preached without summoning the whole world, as guilty, to the judgment-seat of God" (Calvin).

PRAYER: Pray for the salvation of the Lord.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6 *2 Cor 5:5-10*
Memorise 1 Cor 3:11-15

"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"

WHAT IS THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST?

The judgment of believers is quite different from that of unbelievers. Unbelievers who die without Christ are judged for their sins, but saints who die in Christ will be judged for their service. Saints will be judged at the Bema or the Judgment Seat of Christ. In New Testament times, the Bema is a judgment where rewards are given. Athletes who have won a race are crowned with a wreath at the Bema. Likewise, every Christian will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive "the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad". Those who have served the Lord with pure motives to glorify His name, who build with gold, silver, and precious stones, will receive prizes for their good and faithful work. Those who have served the Lord but with impure motives to promote themselves, who serve out of envy and strife desiring fame and power, who build with wood, hay, and stubble will receive no reward, for all their works shall be burnt up in the day of testing. Thus in heaven, there will be those who have and those who have not. Those who are not rewarded due to poor service will still have their salvation for that cannot be lost—it is God's work won for them by Christ.

Although at the judgment seat of Christ some will be rewarded and others suffer loss, yet the atmosphere will be a joyful one. It may be likened to a graduation ceremony. Those who have studied hard will graduate summa cum laude (with highest praise), or magna cum laude (with high praise), or cum laude (with praise), and there are those who simply graduate without laude, without praise. Those who graduate without praise will regret that they did not serve the Lord as well as they should, but nonetheless there will be no mourning or sorrowing for they are grateful to the Lord for saving them from their sins.

Do you wish to participate in this heavenly graduation when Christ returns? The only way is to be enrolled in the University of Life whose principal is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. There are no academic prerequisites for this University. To be a student of this University, the only qualification you need is your confession. Only applicants who will humble themselves and confess their sins before the Principal—Jesus Christ Himself—and accept Him as Lord and Saviour may be received as students and eventually graduates of this University.

THOUGHT: No one dies in the University of Life whose Principal is Christ.

PRAYER: Lord, I want to be Thy student forever.

Mark 9:43-48
Memorise Luke 16:19-31
"for their worm dieth not"

IS HELL REAL?

There are many so-called Christian leaders today who question God's judgment of sinners in a place called hell. Clark Pinnock of McMaster Divinity College in Canada says, "Let me say at the outset that I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in body and mind an outrageous doctrine... How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely, a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God". Another example is Billy Graham who takes the fire out of hell. "The only thing I could say for sure is that hell means separation from God. ... That is going to be hell. When it comes to a literal fire, I don't preach it because I'm not sure about it." He says that he has "a hard time believing God is going to allow people to burn in literal fire forever".

Such are the words of fallible man. But what does the infallible Word of God say? Make no mistake about it; the Bible tells us that hell is a place of punishment *"where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched".* This phrase is repeated not once, not twice, but three times in Mark 9! (vss 44, 46 & 48). Likewise in Luke 16, we see the agony that the rich man in hell was undergoing – "I am tormented in this flame" (v 24). The word "torment" is repeated thrice more (vs 23, 25 & 28), emphasizing the extreme suffering that is to be experienced in this place of eternal torment.

Hell is surely not simply a separation from God, nor is it a metaphor meant to be understood figuratively. Dear teen, hell is a literal place of torment and suffering. To end up in hell is a fate that you would not want to wish on even your worst enemies. Now, what have you been doing to ensure your loved ones are delivered from hell?

THOUGHT: Hell is literally and clearly a real place.

PRAYER: "O, burn on our hearts the hopeless wail of souls damned eternally."

Romans 3:10-23
Memorise 1 John 1:8-10
"For all have sinned..."

DO WE REALLY DESERVE HELL?

Those who deny the existence of hell, or eternal punishment in hell do so because they assume that (1) people are generally good, and deserve better, and (2) God is all love, and only love. Let us examine these assumptions one by one in the light of the Bible. The Bible is God's Perfect Word—our sole and supreme authority of faith and practice. It is not what man says, but what the Bible says that counts.

Is it true that people generally good, and so ought not to be punished forever in hell? The Apostle John says in 1 John 1:8, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us".* If we think that we are generally quite decent and upright people, we are merely deceiving ourselves! By our very low standards, we may perceive ourselves to be good and decent people, but how does God see us? The Apostle Paul, quoting from various portions of the Old Testament, passes a very damning verdict upon all mankind – *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one, There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:10-12, 23).

Perhaps you may say, "I am not so bad. I am a good citizen. I am not a criminal. I am not a thief or a murderer or an adulterer. Surely I do not deserve hell". What is God's reply? Jesus in Matthew 5:22 says, *"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca* (i.e. Idiot), shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool (lit, Moron), *shall be in danger of hell fire".* In verses 27-28, Jesus continues, *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart".* How many of the Ten Commandments have we broken already? The apostle James tells us that when we break one, we break all (Jaems 2:10). Truly, *"there is none righteous, no, not one".*

THOUGHT: "God would not be God, except he were to punish sins" (Calvin).

PRAYER: Lord, I want to be in heaven, not hell.

WHY CAN'T GOOD WORKS SAVE US?

Many unbelievers have the vague notion that doing good deeds is somehow linked to going to heaven. They think that, as long as they live generally moral lives and do not commit any heinous crimes or major trespasses, they should somehow be able to make it into heaven.

Yet we know that this is as far from the truth as it gets. Because of the problem of sin, no amount of good works can ever erase the sin that is in us. From the very moment we enter into this world, we have the sin nature in us. In fact, even before our birth, we were already "shapen in iniquity" (Psalm 51:5). There is no running away from the sin nature that is in every single human being.

But some may argue, "I have done a lot of good works to help people. Don't they count for anything?" In fact, the word "good" here is a misnomer – we may perceive our works to be good by the world's standards, but in God's eyes there is nothing good in the works of a totally depraved sinner. We read in Isaiah 64:6, *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags".* Before we are saved, all our seemingly good deeds are "as filthy rags" to God. Our "good" works are rubbish to God because we are in the first place not right with Him. God sees our hearts, and He knows the selfish motives behind our display of righteousness or goodness. Man cannot see it, but God sees right through us. Therefore no amount of good works we do can ever save us from our sins.

Of course, this does not mean that good works have no place in our lives. If you are a believer, you are able to do good because of the righteousness that Christ has wrought in you, and the new man that you have put on. These good works will now be accepted of God if they are truly done with the right motives and in the right spirit, and they will be stored up as treasures in heaven. Dear teen, may you thus seek to do good, not as a means of salvation, but as evidence of your salvation.

THOUGHT: Good works do not save; only Jesus saves.

PRAYER: Lord, thank you for saving me through Your Son.

WHY DOES A LOVING GOD SEND PEOPLE TO HELL?

To answer this seemingly controversial question, we must first ask: What is the penalty of sin? *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 3:23a). It is eternal punishment in the Lake of fire. It is known in the world that "crime does not pay". The most serious crimes like murder bring capital punishment, i.e. the death sentence. If we as human beings send criminals to jail or to death depending on the severity of the crimes they have committed, and yet do not see ourselves as being unloving or unkind for doing so, why do we accuse the thrice holy God of being unloving or unkind for punishing those who break His laws in hell? To accuse God of cruelty for sending sinners and law-breakers to hell is not only fallacious, but malicious. If we can punish criminals, why can't God?

God is love, and it is precisely because He loves us that He sent His only begotten Son—the Lord Jesus Christ—to die a most painful and cruel death on the cross to save us from our sins. Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us". Jesus paid the penalty of our sins on the cross to redeem us. He shed His precious blood on the cross so that our sins might be washed away. He died and was buried, but on the third day rose from the dead so that we might have life through His name.

God is love but He is also a God who is holy. The Lord is Saviour, but He is also Judge. Sin must be punished. And the greatest sin that anyone can commit is to reject Christ. The greatest sin demands the greatest punishment—eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

Yet, we know that God does not delight in the sufferings of people. The Scriptures tell us in Ezekiel 33:11, *"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live".* God desires you to live, to enjoy Him, to be in heaven! Hell indeed is a horrible and terrible place. It is a place of intense darkness inhabited by the devil and his demons. It is a place where tormenting worms do not die, and the fire cannot be put out. It is a place of great pain and suffering where people will be weeping and gnashing their teeth. Dear teen, God has provided a way of escape – will you take it?

THOUGHT: The only way out of hell and into heaven is the way of Christ.

PRAYER: Lord, save me now!

WHAT IS CREMATION?

Burial and not cremation is the biblical way of putting to rest the body of those who have been called home to be with the Lord. What are the reasons for burial and not cremation? The reasons are based on Scripture and Doctrine. We shall first examine the practice of cremation in the light of Scripture, and then present the doctrinal reasons why we ought to bury and not cremate.

First, let us deal with the question of cremation. Cremation is the method of disposing the dead by burning. This method is not new. It has ancient origins, and was practised by the Canaanites in the time of the Old Testament. In the light of the Old Testament, we learn that cremation is not only a heathen practice but also a sign of divine judgment.

Dr John J Davis in his book, What About Cremation? said that cremation "was both early in origin and widespread in geographic scope. For the most part, it was associated with pagan ideas about the essence of life or mythical beliefs regarding the afterlife". Cremation is tied to the heathen practice of offering human sacrifices. God commanded the Israelites not to follow this cruel and hateful practice in Deuteronomy 12:31, *"Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods".* For the heathens, cremation was the way to send off both the living and the dead to the netherworld. Is it no wonder that non-Judeo-Christian religions like Hinduism and Buddhism also practise cremation?

The Jews regarded the act of cremation as a form of idolatry. Israel in keeping herself distinct from the heathen nations, and in obedience to the command of separation, practised burial instead of cremation. To prove that the divinely sanctioned method is burial and not cremation, the Jews cited Deuteronomy 21:23, *"His body shall not remain all night upon a tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day"* (see also Genesis 23:19, 35:8; Deuteronomy 34:6; 1 Kings 11:15, 22:37, Ezekiel 39:15).

THOUGHT: "Burying has been held as a sacred custom in all ages; for it was a symbol of the last resurrection" (Calvin).

PRAYER: Lord, I want to be a good testimony of Thy resurrection even at death.

Leviticus 10:1-2
Memorise Amos 2:1-2
"there went out fire from the LORD"

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CREMATION?

Cremation is also a sign of judgment. In the Old Testament, cremation was done to dishonour or punish those who had sinned against God. Achan for his sin of idolatry was punished by fire. God said, *"And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath, because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel. ... And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones"* (Joshua 7:15, 25).

Fire is a symbol of God's judgment. When the wicked priests—Nadab and Abihu—offered strange fire before God which He commanded them not, "there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Leviticus 10:1-2). God destroyed the homosexual cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with brimstone and fire (Genesis 19:24). The nation of Moab too faced God's fiery judgment, *"For three transgressions of Moab and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime: But I will send a fire upon Moab"* (Amos 2:1-2).

In the New Testament, we find the same teaching that fire and burning point to God's judgment and disapproval. In Acts 19:18-19, the newly converted believers renounced their heathen past by burning all their books on witchcraft and sorcery. The Apostle Peter prophesied that God would destroy the whole universe one day by fire, *"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto the fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men"* (2 Peter 3:7). At the judgment of the great white throne, all the fallen angels and all the finally impenitent will be cast into the lake of fire for eternal punishment (Revelation 20:14-15).

As believers, we do not have to face the eternal judgment of fire, so why would we send off our physical bodies with the burning of cremation?

THOUGHT: Cremation is always cast in a negative light in Scripture.

PRAYER: Lord, I want to follow the way of Scripture.

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS BURY THE DEAD? (I)

In both Testaments, believers have always been buried. The Old Testament patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—were all buried (Genesis 25:8-10, 35:29, 49:33, 50:1-13). The same is true in the New Testament: John the baptiser was buried (Matthew 14:10-12), Lazarus was buried (John 11:17), Stephen was buried (Acts 8:2), our Lord Himself was buried (John 19:40-42). The Bible is clear that burial is the acceptable practice for both Jews and Christians.

There are two doctrinal reasons why as Christians we should bury and not cremate. We bury because of (1) the doctrine of the resurrection and (2) the doctrine of the body.

As Christians, we believe in the bodily resurrection. Burial is meaningful to the Christian because it points to the future resurrection. This was certainly what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he said, *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection"* (Romans 6:4-5). When we bury the human body, it is like sowing a seed into the ground; at the appointed time, it will sprout out of the ground as a plant. God will one day raise up our body just as He raised Christ's (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

Cremation, on the other hand, with all that fire and burning, would only evoke thoughts of punishment and judgment. Would not the message on the Christian's blessed hope of a future resurrection be contradicted by rolling a casket into the furnace? The fire gives a picture of hell, not heaven. Clearly, cremation illustrates the eternal destiny of unbelievers, and not of believers. The hideous sight of a body stoking up the furnace will only bring more sorrow and grief to the bereaved, not hope and comfort. The message of the resurrection is lost when we cremate our dead.

THOUGHT: "The rites of burial arouse us to the hope of resurrection and everlasting life" (Calvin).

PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for the resurrection hope.

John 11:1-26
Memorise 1 Cor 15:51-57
"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth"

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS BURY THE DEAD? (II)

The Bible teaches that a human being consists of two parts: (1) the body and (2) the spirit. These two parts are not only distinguishable but also separable (Genesis 3:19, Luke 23:43, 46, Ecclessiastes 12:7). Both the spirit and the body are important. The spirit is that part of man that relates to God (John 4:24, Romans 8:16) while the body is that part which allows man to subsist on earth. For Christians, the body is also the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Although at death, the spirit will be separated from the body, both will be rejoined at the time of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:44). When a believer dies, he is said to be sleeping (1 Corinthians 15:51). When a person sleeps, he expects to wake up. This awakening will happen when Christ returns. So the body is an important part of man and must be treated carefully even at death.

The Jews understood the doctrine of the resurrection and of the body (cf John 11:24). That was why they treated the body of their departed loved ones with great care. Consider the following Jewish burial procedure:

1. Eyes of deceased closed by eldest son or next-of-kin (Genesis 46:4).
2. Body washed (Acts 9:37).
3. Body anointed with aromatic spices (John 12:7, 19:39, Mark 16:1, Luke 24:1).
4. Body wrapped in cloth (Matt 27:59, John 11:44, 19:40).
5. Body not to be mutilated (Leviticus 19:27-28, 21:5, Deuteronomy 14:1).
6. Body carried to a tomb on a wooden bier (2 Samuel 3:31).
7. Body is finally placed in a simple grave, cave, or rock-cut tomb (Luke 23:53).

The Church kept to the Jewish and biblical practice of burial. Dr Davis noted that *"the early church practiced inhumation and rigorously opposed cremation. Prompt burials followed death and a special memorial service was conducted the third day following the believer's death. The choice of the third day was a means of reaffirming belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the ultimate resurrection of all believers. ... The overwhelming consensus of early church writers and leaders was that cremation was associated with rites that were incompatible with many basic tenets of their faith."*

THOUGHT: Burning is a symbol of God's judgment and curse.

PRAYER: Lord, I want my funeral to be a picture of heaven and not hell.

Revelation 21:1
Memorise 2 Peter 3:10-13

"the first heaven and the first earth were passed away"

WILL THERE BE A NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH?

The heaven and the earth that God created in Genesis will one day be obliterated. This truth is mentioned in Revelation 21:1—"for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea". This is a repetition of Revelation 20:11, "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away: and there was found no place for them". The passing and fleeing away of the first heaven and the first earth undoubtedly refers to the destruction of this physical world we live in, which consists of the earth, the atmospheric heaven and the sea. This sphere of man's livelihood which was good and very good (Genesis 1:31) in the beginning before sin contaminated it cannot be inhabited anymore by a new society of sinless perfection after the Great White Throne Judgment. In view of the space (stratosphere and ionosphere) immediately above the earth being also contaminated by the clutter of space junk now orbiting and by man's audacious landing on the moon, the solar system will be destroyed inasmuch as other planets are also invaded and polluted by puny man's uncanny machines.

This is generally predicted by the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:10-13. He declares that in the final day, "heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up". The whole world as we know it shall be destroyed.

In giving us this teaching, Peter is merely echoing Isaiah, *"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind"* (Isaiah 65:17). That heaven and earth shall pass away is repeatedly declared by our Lord in his sermons (Matthew 24:35, Mark 12:31, Luke 16:17, 21:33) further confirms Peter's statement and throws light on Revelation 20:11 and 21:1.

Thus in light of that, we would do well to take heed to Peter's advice, whereby he exhorts us to live circumspectly while we are yet on the earth. Knowing that everything physical around us will be gone one day, our purpose and goal in life ought to be seeking after the things of God and not of this world.

THOUGHT: Heaven and earth are temporal, but the words of the Lord are eternal (Matthew 24:35).

PRAYER: I praise Thee O Lord that Thy Words are forever true.

Revelation 21:1-8
Memorise 1 Cor 3:15
"there was no more sea"

WHAT WILL THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH BE LIKE?

That the burning up of the earth is total is seen in the statement, "and there was no more sea". Now the earth is made up of 75% water as part of its ecology. Human life on earth cannot go on without this aquatic provision and sustenance on the land he tills. Not only agriculture, but also in industry and manufacture. Yet in the New Heaven and New Earth, there will be no more sea!

In the new ecology of perfected saints with glorified bodies like our Risen Saviour, the former pattern of livelihood is past. Hence there is no need of the sea or ocean any more. The new man who now can enjoy God forever is given a new environment where God and man live together. This will be a world of perfect happiness, oblivious to death, sorrow, pain, and weeping. The only water that is needed, figuratively speaking, is the water of life freely provided. That is to say, our happiness in the new earth is constant fellowship with the Lord. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be His God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7). This is indeed a wonderful promise that we can look forward to. When we finally get to heaven one day, we will find ourselves in constant fellowship with God. We shall be as his sons and daughters and be able to freely commune with him. The barrier of sin will no longer be there, and the fear of God's judgement and wrath will be past.

Yet to the unbelievers, there is a final warning given: *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death"* (v 8).

Dear Teen, seeing all the wonderful precious promises that God has in store for us, would we not want to look forward to the day where Jesus returns, and this whole End Time program will begin?

THOUGHT: The first resurrection is life; the second resurrection is death.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, save me from the second death by giving me the water of life.

WHAT WILL THE NEW JERUSALEM BE LIKE? (I)

Now, inasmuch as the Church building is where a Christian congregation meets to worship God, so our new abode with Christ as His wife is that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God (v 10). "Here comes the bride, so glorious and white!" This "great city" is a cube, 12,000 stadia (furlongs), that is, 1,500 miles on every side. The wall is 144 cubits thick, whereby one cubit, the measure of a man's forearm, is 18 inches. This holy city is like the precious stone of jasper, clear as crystal. What a contrast to a dark Taoist and Buddhist temple or a Roman Catholic Church festooned with images, crucifixes and relics amidst flickering oil lamps in murky darkness!

This City has a high wall with 12 gates guarded by 12 angels. The names of the 12 tribes of Israel appear on these gates. The wall of the City stands on 12 foundations "and in them the names of the 12 apostles" (Judas Iscariot's name cannot be seen there, and in his stead, it would most certainly be the Apostle Paul!).

The foundations of the City wall are garnished with all kinds of precious stones. The first foundation is jasper, a dark opaque red. The second sapphire, which like the diamond is sparkling blue. The third is chalcedony, named after Chalcedon in modern-day Turkey, and is an agate stone. This stone having stripes of various colours is basically sky-blue. The fourth foundation is emerald – a clear green gem. The fifth is sardonyx, combining red and white. The sixth stone is sardius, of a reddish tint. The seventh, chrysolite, which according to Pliny is gold in colour and transparent. The eighth foundation, the beryl, is deep sea green. The ninth foundation, topaz, is a transparent yellow-green stone. The tenth foundation, a chrysoprasus, is another kind of green. The eleventh, a jacinth, is reddish orange and the twelfth, which is amethyst is purple. All these colours add up to the beauty of the rainbow so as to enhance the beauty and glory of God. The 12 gates are 12 big pearls while the street is paved with translucent pure gold.

Indeed what a beautiful place, adorned with all manner of precious jewels. Would you not want to live in such a place?

THOUGHT: The New Jerusalem will be the most beautiful city ever built.

PRAYER: Lord, I long for my home above.

1 Cor 3:11-17
Memorise Isaiah 54:11-14
"For other foundation can no man lay"

WHAT WILL THE NEW JERUSALEM BE LIKE?

Now, the foundation of foundations is none other than Jesus Christ as Paul reminds us. To the Corinthian Church, the apostle says, *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are"* (1 Corinthians 3:11-17). By heeding Paul's injunction above, we see that the New Jerusalem, which is built in such jewel-sparkling splendour, abounds with a deep spiritual meaning. And inasmuch as dwellers in the City are perfected saints, do not these precious stones reflect all the Christian virtues and graces that we must exhibit through our Lord Jesus Christ?

Thus Isaiah comforts a restored Israel: *"O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee"* (Isaiah 54:11-14).

Whilst physically beautiful, what is more important is the spiritual significance and beauty that these gems represent. In describing a place such as the New Jerusalem, God is fulfilling His promise to an afflicted Israel, to show them that He certainly does have such a place prepared for her. It is God's own city, and will certainly be the most perfect city ever built!

THOUGHT: "How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word."

PRAYER: Father in heaven, help me to build upon the foundation that has been laid by Christ, gold, silver and precious stones.

WHAT WILL LIFE IN HEAVEN BE LIKE?

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early" (Psalm 46:4-5). This aspiration of the psalmist becomes a reality as the apostle John is shown a pure river of life, clear as crystal, flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Revelation 22:1).

On either side of the River, along the street, is the Tree of Life which bears 12 kinds of fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations. This is to remind the perfected saints of Christ being the true Tree of Life, who also had healed them of their diseases (Psalm 103:3, Isaiah 53:5).

What shall we do in the new earth and new heaven? Just play harps of gold as some Christian songs or choruses tell us? No, there would certainly be much more for us to do, as the words of an English poet tell us: "If all the year were a holiday, to play would be as tedious as to work". There is plenty of worshipful activity in heaven, but we shall have many other things to do also, as we are declared His servants and we shall serve Him (Revelation 22:3). How about heavenly choirs? Will there be rehearsals and practices? If there be a plucking of the fruits from the Tree of Life, will there be a picnicking by the River and eating those fruits, not because we are hungry, but because we enjoy them together in fellowship. Just as our Lord ate "a broiled fish and an honeycomb" after His resurrection, not because He was hungry, but rather to prove a point (Luke 24:42, 43). Dr Buswell humorously said he would have plenty of work to do in heaven—he would be reading Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion.

O yes, how we would need an eternity of time just to get acquainted with all the patriarchs and saints both of the Old and New Testaments, and with the heroes of Church history. But our main work is to serve the Lord and to behold His face. As we wait for His beck and call, we are not idle. John Milton says, "They also serve who only stand and wait". O the wonderfulness of that new life in and under God, that only becomes newer and happier each day.

THOUGHT: "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before."

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I love Thee more and more as the days go by.

WILL THERE BE MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN?

Remember, the Church is the bride of Christ. Marital love is the highest joy of human life, yea, that first love between a man and a woman. Sad to say, in a world of sin, such love is often short-circuited. Sin spoils it, and hence the tears and separations and divorces.

In heaven, there will be no marriages (Luke 20:35). One central theme of life is to be "married" to the Lord. This word cannot be used in the sense of the individual but of the corporate. To love Him with an ever increasing first love—what greater happiness than this?

Many have experienced the joys of love at first sight, the joys of a happy home though not without tears. But the greatest joy ever to be imbibed is the joy of salvation newly received from the Lord, of being saved from hell and everlasting punishment. Nevertheless, the greatest in the salvation experience is to worship Him and sing praises to His Name even as Augustine has declared, "Worship is the mother of all virtues". The thrilling ecstasies of worship were experienced by those in the Singapore Pentecost of 1935, in the John Sung Revival. That was a foretaste of heaven, of the new life in the new heaven and the new earth.

Hallelujahs fill the heavens
For the saints have all come home
To Jerusalem! To Jerusalem!
Joyfully they shout hosannas
Come and crown Him King of kings
In the New Jerusalem.

As we are shown all these glories to come, as we are taught the true meaning of life on earth that must be promoted to the heavenlies, so will we hear the Saviour calling out of the Celestial City, *"Behold I come quickly, blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book"* (Revelation 22:7). And as the angel spoke to John, *"Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand"* (Revelation 22:10), let us go out to evangelise the lost around and beyond and bring them in before it is too late. *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"* (Matthew 24:14).

THOUGHT: Accelerate missions, hasten His return.

PRAYER: Lord, I want to give my life to serve Thee full-time.

Revelation 4:1-11
Memorise John 4:21-24
"worship him in spirit and in truth"

WHAT IS TRUE WORSHIP?

St Augustine said, "Worship is the mother of all virtues". Why is worship the mother of all virtues? It is because worship involves a personal relationship with a thrice holy God.

Worship changes lives. But please know that it is not any kind of worship that will bring about a changed life. It must be true worship of the only living and true God that will bring about a holy life. Jesus in John 4:24 said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth". So if we want to worship God truly and properly, we must first be born again (born of the Spirit), and we must worship Him according to His ways as taught in the Scriptures (in truth), and not in our own ways.

Are we worshipping God truly and truthfully? We engage in false worship when (1) we worship idols, or ourselves, and (2) when we are still in the depth and guilt of sin, not yet washed by the precious blood of Christ. So before we talk about worship, we need to ask ourselves this question: Am I still an unbeliever, still outside of God's kingdom and not part of God's family? We must be reconciled to God, make peace with Him, believe in Christ and we can be saved. It is only when we are God's children that our worship of God would be acceptable.

We are now worshipping God on earth. But do you know that there is also worship in heaven? Worship is something that will not end. Even when we pass away and enter into the next life, worship continues. In the book of Revelation, we get a glimpse of what worship in heaven is like.

THOUGHT: "God wishes first of all for inward worship, and afterwards for outward profession" (Calvin).

PRAYER: Lord, I worship and adore Thee from the bottom of my heart.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Revelation 7:9-12
Memorise Rev 4:1-11
"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty"

WHAT IS FALSE WORSHIP?

But before we look at what heavenly worship is all about, let us examine what worship is like today. It is troubling that the worship service that is conducted in many churches today is of the casual, frivolous, flippant type. It is not heavenly but earthy worship. According to popular Christianity today, a good worship service is one that is filled with energy, excitement and entertainment. The Church is supposed to be in the world but not of the world, but today we find the Church both in the world and of the world.

Worldly rock and roll music characterises much of modern-day worship. Musicians and singers emulate their worldly counterparts by jumping, dancing, hopping from one corner to the other, twisting their bodies here and there on stage. The lyrics and melodies are either loud and jarring, or soft and sentimental. The songs have this romantic feel to them. They sing as if God was their boyfriend or their girlfriend. They have a false idea of love that comes from Hollywood. Worship in these charismatic and contemporary churches is worship MTV style—loud and wild, carnal and sensual.

Dear friends, we must not worship God according to Hollywood but according to the Holy Word, Our worship must not be earthy but heavenly. Worship is a very serious and solemn exercise. In the book of Revelation we do not find worshippers jumping up and down, but all falling prostrate, faces to the ground in humble submission to God (Revelation 4:10; 5:8, 14). You find the people displaying reverential fear. If we are required to conduct ourselves most decently and properly before dignitaries—kings, queens, emperors, presidents, Prime Ministers, etc—how much more ought we before our God who is the King of kings and Lord of lords!

THOUGHT: "What contempt will be incurred if we do not preserve dignity in the Church, by conducting ourselves honourably and becomingly?" (Calvin).

PRAYER: Lord, may we worship Thee with great reverence and fear.

Luke 18:9-14
Memorise Rev 4:1-11
"Thou art worthy O Lord"

HOW ARE WE TO WORSHIP GOD? (I)

Do we know the God we worship? There are people who think of God as a glorified Santa Claus. He smiles all the time, and gives anything you ask or want. Who is God? What is God? The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth". If we know who God truly is, and the kind of person He is, and what He is characterised by, we will be very careful to worship Him correctly. You will not want to offend Him. You will not want what you want in worship, but what He wants and requires.

When we worship God, we are really 'worthshipping' Him (Revelation 4:11). We worship Him for Who He is—His nature and His attributes and His marvellous deeds to the children of men. We find the people in heaven worshipping His Holiness (Revelation 4:8a). He is three times holy—God the Father is holy, God the Son is holy, and God the Spirit is holy. The holiness of God should cause us to realise our sinfulness, our need to confess and repent of our sins. To worship Him correctly involves coming before Him with clean hands and pure hearts. We come before Him to beg for His mercy and grace. We come before Him not proudly but humbly. We do not want to be like the self-righteous Pharisee who prayed, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess". We ought to be like the penitent publican who prayed with his head bowed, not daring to lift his eyes towards heaven, "God be merciful to me a sinner".

THOUGHT: "There is no worship of God without sincerity of heart" (Calvin).

PRAYER: God, be merciful to me a sinner.

HOW ARE WE TO WORSHIP GOD? (II)

We also find the saints in heaven worshipping His Almightiness (Revelation 4:8b). God is all-powerful, all glorious, all-majestic. He is sovereign and controls all things. When we worship, we must submit to His will. When we pray, we pray not according to our will, but according to His will. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Do not pray the prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:9-10) in the way expounded by Bruce Wilkinson in his little book. In it he teaches that there is a secret code or formula in prayer—chant certain words repeatedly in a certain way and God must give what you asked for. Such arrogant and presumptuous prayers God will not hear, nor will He answer. James 4:2-3 says, *"Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts".* Our almighty God says in Psalm 46:10, *"Be still and know that I am God".* Ecclesiastes 5:2 says, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth: therefore let thy words be few". If God is almighty, then let us always pray, "Lord, no matter what, let thy will be done".

The Lord is also worshipped for His Preexistence (Revelation 4:8c)—*"which was, and is, and is to come".* He is the I AM THAT I AM. He is the God of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Kingdom to come—the Millennium. We ought to worship the Lord in light of His return, with a spiritual and heavenly mind and heart, and with eternity's values in view. May we never worship Him falsely with a carnal, worldly, and earthy mind and heart concerned only for things of this world, for prosperity, health, and success in business. We should rather pray for God's grace to be spiritually prepared when Christ returns.

THOUGHT: "God cannot be rightly worshipped unless when He has His peculiar attributes acknowledged" (Calvin).

PRAYER: O Lord God, thou "art a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth".

HOW WILL WORSHIP IN HEAVEN BE LIKE?

In heaven, worship is characterised mainly by adoration. These are the features of our worship in heaven:

1. Praise. We praise the Lord for Who He is and for what He has done. Angels and saints will praise Him (Revelation 5:11-14).
2. Thanksgiving (Revelation 11:17-18). We will thank God non-stop because we will be so filled with eternal gratitude.
3. Singing. Heaven will be filled with music and song (Revelation 5:9). We will sing a new song. The word "new" here is "new" in terms of quality. Worship in the Old Testament was good, worship in the New Testament is better, but worship in heaven will be best. "New" here does not mean singing in "tongues" (charismatic gibberish). The words are distinct, and full of meaning (Revelation 5:9-10).

Note that there is no confession of sin, no petition, no supplication, no intercession for one another. All these are what we do while we are still on earth, when our sinful nature is still with us. In heaven all sins will be removed, there will be no more diseases, tears, pain etc. We will have our perfect and glorified bodies. No need for confessions, petitions, supplications, intercessions.

So, let us worship God with a heavenly mind and we shall live a heavenly life on earth in preparation for eternal life in heaven when Jesus finally returns or when He calls us home.

"Heaven is a wonderful place, filled with glory and praise." Will you be there? Make sure! Make peace with the Lamb! Worship Him now, and you will worship Him forever more. Amen.

THOUGHT: "No one rightly worships God, but he who is taught by His Word" (Calvin).

PRAYER: Lord, may we worship Thee according to Thy Word, and not according to the world.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

2 Peter 3:1-14
Memorise 1 Thess 5:3
"There shall come in the last days scoffers"

DO YOU BELIEVE THE LORD IS COMING SOON?

Are there scoffers out there who laugh at the concept of a doomsday? 2 Peter 3:3-4 has already described for us what people at large will be thinking before the world comes to an end, *"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation"*. Nothing has changed. The world did not end. Christ did not come. Let's eat, drink, and be merry. Don't worry, be happy.

The Asian Tsunami on Boxing Day that claimed 280,000 lives occurred on a clear blue, business-as-usual day. Nobody expected such a catastrophe. Peace one moment, death the next. Mr Eio Eng Hua of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church testified: "I cheated death by half an hour! It was Sunday morning on 26th December 2004 in Sri Lanka. I was driving to Colombo on my way to attend a church service from my resort located near Kalutara (37 km away). The sky was blue and the road was clear. It was a relaxing drive. I had to pass an area known as Moratuwa where on both sides of the road you can see hundreds of wooden houses with zinc roofs usually occupied by the lower income people here. That stretch of road is about 5 km. It was about 9 am when I drove past that place. There was nothing abnormal or unusual at that point of time. When I return from Colombo about one and a half hour later, to my horror, I saw tree trunks, branches, debris and household items spread over the 5-km stretch of road. What was more shocking was that 80% of the houses on both sides of the road were flattened! People were running wild and screaming. I didn't know what was happening. It was later on that I learned that at 9.30 am the killer waves—tsunamis—had wiped out the homes of the poor residents in that area. If was as if some weapon of mass destruction had exploded there. Many people were either killed or missing, and others badly injured. If not for God's grace, the killer waves could also have 'swallowed' me also. It was a matter of half an hour difference".

They never saw it coming, until it was too late. Likewise for these scoffers, they will continue in the unrepentant sinful lives, and *"when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"* (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

THOUGHT: Am I a scoffer?

PRAYER: Lord, help me live my life for Thee and for Thy glory.

2 Peter 3:1-14
Memorise Luke 24:25-27
"Where is the promise of his coming?"

HOW CAN WE BE SURE OF JESUS' SOON RETURN? (I)

How can we be sure that Jesus will return? We know for certain that Christ will return and that the world will end one day because of these three divine assurances.

First, we have the assurance of prophecy (2 Peter 3:1-2). One quarter of the Bible is prophecy. The Bible contains many prophecies concerning Christ's 1st coming, as well as His 2nd coming. Consider the prophecies of Christ's 1st coming: In Genesis 3:15, God promised that a Saviour will appear one day from the seed of a woman, and will crush the serpent's head. In Genesis 17, God revealed that this Saviour will come from the seed of Abraham. In 2 Samuel 7:14, we are told that He will be a King from the line of David who will sit on his father's throne. In Isaiah 7:14, it is clearly revealed that this Son will be virgin born, and is God Himself—Immanuel. In Micah 5:2, we are told specifically the city in which He would be born—Bethlehem. In Isaiah 53, it is prophesied that He will suffer and die for the sins of His people. I can go on and on for a 127 times. There are 127 prophecies in the Bible concerning Christ's first coming, and all have been fulfilled to the jot and tittle. History attests to the fact that Jesus did come, and Scripture affirms that He was born of a virgin, lived a perfect, sinless life, and as a Lamb without spot and blemish, died a sacrificial death on the cross, shed His precious blood to redeem you and me from sin. He was buried, but on the third day, rose again from the grave, appeared to His disciples over a period of 40 days, and then ascended to heaven and is now sitting at the right hand of God, waiting for His Father's timing to send Him back to earth, this time to judge it.

If all these prophecies of the 1st coming of Christ were fulfilled so exactly, can we not with full certainty and confidence expect the same of the Lord's 2nd coming?

THOUGHT: God is all-knowing.

PRAYER: O Father in heaven, I eagerly await the fulfilment of Thy prophecies concerning Christ's return.

HOW CAN WE BE SURE OF JESUS' SOON RETURN? (II)

The Bible also contains many prophecies with regard to the 2nd coming of Christ. If all the prophecies of Jesus' 1st coming have all come to pass, we can be very sure that all prophecies concerning His 2nd coming will also come to pass. At Christmas time we do not just remember His 1st coming, we want to remind ourselves too of His 2nd coming. Never doubt God or the Bible. Never laugh at God when He says that the world will end one day, or that Christ will return. God will most certainly have the last laugh. While you have time, you want to make peace with God, and be reconciled to Him. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Believe on Christ today!

We know that the world will be destroyed one day because the world had already gone through a worldwide cataclysm in the Genesis Flood. In 2 Peter 3:5-7, we have the assurance of a biblical and historical precedent.

The certainty of a future worldwide judgment and destruction is confirmed by a historical and global cataclysm in the Genesis Flood. The scoffers of today are like those in the days of Noah. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He warned the wicked people in his day to repent; God was going to send a great flood to destroy them if they did not. The rains will come and everything will be under water. As he preached, he built the ark. Now, in those days there was no rain (Genesis 2:5). That the whole earth could be flooded was inconceivable. The people all laughed and scoffed at Noah and his family. For a hundred years, Noah preached, and the ark steadily took shape. No one would repent. They all scoffed at the preaching of Noah until the day God shut the door of the ark. That day, water from above, and water from below drowned the whole earth. All scoffers were destroyed. The scoffers today will suffer the same fate if they do not repent. God had destroyed the world by water the first time. He will destroy the world one more time, and this time it will be by fire. Those who laughed at Noah laughed no more when the Flood came. Do not laugh at God when He says that the world will be destroyed by Fire one day. We can be sure that He will have the last laugh. If we want to be saved, we must repent today!

THOUGHT: The Scout's motto, "Be prepared," is a good one to adopt.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be prepared always for Thy coming.

HOW CAN WE BE SURE OF JESUS' SOON RETURN? (III)

Some of us Christians may be asking: "The Lord said He will return to take us home. Did He forget His promise?" God will not and cannot forget His promises. One of the most assuring words of Scripture is the word "Remember". It is used many times in the Old Testament with reference to God. It is a covenantal word. God has made many promises to His covenant people: to Israel and to the Church, and He kept reminding His people that He will keep His promises (2 Peter 3:9, 13). We can be sure of Jesus' return simply because He has promised to return. God will keep His covenant promises. John Calvin has rightly said that God is more interested in keeping His promises than in making them.

It has already been 2,000 years since Jesus made His promise to return. We have already entered the new millennium. Why has Jesus not returned yet? The answer is in 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, no willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance". Christ has not returned yet, not because he is tardy, or has forgotten about us. He is giving men a change to repent and turn to the Lord! He is waiting patiently for all His elect to come to the saving knowledge of Him, before he comes to judge this world a final time.

The promise to return to redeem His own and to destroy the finally impenitent was not made once or twice but many times in the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus Christ meant every word that He had said, and would carry out what He had predicted and promised.

Are you ready for the Lord's return? If you have yet to believe on Christ for your salvation, I pray you might believe on Him right now.

THOUGHT: Christ will return soon to destroy this world. Will you be there when that happens?

PRAYER: Lord, save me from the destruction to come.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 *Matthew 22:1-14*
Memorise Revelation 19:7-9

"the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready"

WILL YOU BE AT THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB?

You know, there is a great wedding dinner coming! It is great because it is going to be the wedding dinner of the King—a royal banquet. This banquet is not only going to be great, it will be the greatest because it is the banquet of no ordinary king, but the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and the Prince of princes. And do you know what? You are invited!

Where will this wedding dinner be? Which restaurant? Well, it will be in heaven. Name of the restaurant? I call it the Heavenly Restaurant of the New Jerusalem. When will it take place? It will take place when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to receive His bride.

In Revelation 19:7-9, we have a glimpse of the marriage supper of the lamb: *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God".*

Our Saviour-King is coming back real soon. The wedding dinner is about to begin. All must be punctual because the bridegroom will come on time. Latecomers will not be entertained. You must book your seats. Your name must be in the book of life. You must get your wedding garment—the bride cannot appear without her robe of righteousness.

Do you have this robe of the righteousness of Christ? If you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as your Lord and Saviour, He will give you this precious robe lovingly and freely.

THOUGHT: Read the Lord's invitation in Revelation 3:20.

PRAYER: Lord, clothe me with Thy robe of righteousness, clean and white, so that I might be ready for that great wedding day in heaven.

THE LORD RETURNS TO EARTH KING OF KINGS, LORD OF LORDS			HE REIGNS 1000 YEARS	FINAL JUDG-MENT	"BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW" REV 21:5
The Lord shall descend from heaven, the dead in Christ shall rise first, we shall be changed. *1 Cor 15:52* *1 Thess 4:16-17*	Believers caught up to meet the Lord in the air; appear at a) Judgment Seat of Christ - 2 Cor. 5:10 b) Wedding Supper of the Lamb - Rev 19:9 All on the earth hide from the WRATH OF THE LAMB *- Rev 6:15,16* **ANTICHRIST RULES** *Rev 13*	Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints *- Jude 14* All Israel shall be saved *- Zech 12:10* *Rom 11:26* OLIVET	a) OT Prophecies fulfilled. "Paradise regained" b) Lord's Prayer answered. c) We shall reign with the Lord for 1000 years. *- Rev 5:10; 20:6* d) Israel restored, as the head of the nations. **GOD'S KINGDOM COME**	Satan loosed, deceives nations. God's fire consumes them. *Rev 20:7-9* EARTH BURNT UP *2 Pet 3:10*	NEW HEAVEN NEW JERUSALEM NEW EARTH PREPARED FOR THOSE WHOSE NAMES ARE WRITTEN IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE *- Rev 21:27*
FIRST RESURRECTION	GREAT TRIBULATION (7 Years)	ARMAGEDDON	The CREATION delivered from bondage of corruption - Rom 8:21	SECOND RESURRECTION - Rev 20:5,13	GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT "every man according to their works" - Rev 20:13
Full Redemption of Saints and Creation Romans 8:22-23			**Satan bound, cast into bottomless pit Rev 20:1-3**		**LAKE OF FIRE PREPARED FOR SATAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS Rev 20:10-15**

An Eschatological Timetable

To: *The RPG Ministry*

Calvary Pandan B-P Church
201 Pandan Gardens, Singapore 609 337
Tel: (65)-6560 1111 Fax: (65)-6561 1861 Email: rpg@calvarypandan.sg

Read Pray Grow (RPG) is a Daily Devotional Guide published and distributed quarterly free-of-charge by The RPG Ministry. If you have been blessed by this Devotional Guide, you may wish to subscribe to it for yourself or for your loved ones and friends by filling in the form below.

1. Please send me: *(Maximum 2 years)*

   ____ years of ____ copies per issue of RPG

   ____ years of ____ copies per issue of Teenz RPG

   ____ years of ____ copies per issue of Junior RPG

   ____ years of ____ copies per issue of Chinese RPG

   starting from month: JAN / APR / JUL / OCT _____ (year)

2. Name: (Dr/Rev/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Mdm/Ms) _____

   Address: _____

   _____

   Country: _____ Postal Code: _____

   Tel no.: _____ (H/O) _____ (Mobile)

   Email *(Important for receipt & renewal)*: _____

Postage & handling cost for 4 issues per year					
No. of copies per issue	*Singapore*	*Malaysia/Brunei*	*Asia*	*Other Countries*	
	Local Mail	*Airmail*	*Airmail*	*Surface Mail*	*Airmail*
1 copy	*S$6.00*	*S$8.00*	*S$15.00*	*S$8.00*	*S$20.00*
2 copies	*S$7.00*	*S$12.00*	*S$23.00*	*S$12.00*	*S$31.00*
5 copies	*S$10.00*	*S$23.00*	*S$50.00*	*S$24.00*	*S$67.00*
10 copies	*S$15.00*	*S$40.00*	*S$93.00*	*S$40.00*	*S$130.00*

Love Gift: The RPG Ministry welcomes love gifts from readers to help meet the cost of publishing and distribution. The ministry also sends these devotional guides to readers in poor countries. Hence, your generous support is much needed and greatly appreciated. "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:8)

Enclosed is my love gift of ☐

Please make all love gifts payable to: **Calvary B-P Church (Tabernacle Books)**
International donors please send love gifts by Bank Draft in Singapore Dollars drawn on a Singapore Bank.

_____
Name / Signature

To: *The RPG Ministry*
Calvary Pandan B-P Church
201 Pandan Gardens, Singapore 609 337
电话:(65)-6560 1111 传真:(65)-6561 1861 电邮: rpg@calvarypandan.sg

《读经、祷告、长进》(读祷长）乃读祷长事工定期出版并免费赠阅的每日灵修辅助本。你若因这灵辅助读本蒙福，且愿意为自己或朋友订阅此刊物，请将以下表格填妥:

1. 请寄:*(最多两年数量)*
   _____ 份 ____ 年数量之英文版读祷长
   _____ 份 ____ 年数量之英文少年版读祷长
   _____ 份 ____ 年数量之英文小学生版读祷长
   _____ 份 ____ 年数量之中文版读祷长

   从_____年 一月/四月/七月/十月 起分发

2. 姓名: (Dr/Rev/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Mdm/Ms) _____
   地址: _____
   _____
   国家: _____ 邮区 : _____
   电话: _____ (H/O) _____(手提电话)
   电邮*(为发收据与更新使用)*: _____

一年四期的邮费及运送费					
每期的数量	*新加坡*	*马来西亚/汶来*	*亚洲*	*其他国家*	
	本地邮费	*空运*	*空运*	*平邮*	*空运*
1 份	*S$6.00*	*S$8.00*	*S$15.00*	*S$8.00*	*S$20.00*
2 份	*S$7.00*	*S$12.00*	*S$23.00*	*S$12.00*	*S$31.00*
5 份	*S$10.00*	*S$23.00*	*S$50.00*	*S$24.00*	*S$67.00*
10 份	*S$15.00*	*S$40.00*	*S$93.00*	*S$40.00*	*S$130.00*

爱心奉献: 读祷长事工欢迎读者的爱心奉献以资助印制与运输费。我们也将此灵修辅助本分送到一些贫穷国家。因此，我们需要您的慷慨奉献与帮助，并谨此献上感谢。"你们白白地得来，也要白白地舍去。"(马太福音10:8)

谨此附上爱心奉献 ☐

支票请注明收款人: **Calvary B-P Church (Tabernacle Books)**
海外捐献者，请使用（可向新加坡银行，以新币兑现之）银行汇票。

_____
姓名 / 签名