

THE DARK SIDE OF RELIGION

"Let there be no compulsion in religion." The Koran, Sura 2:256

"Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him" The Hadith, Volume 9, Book 84, Number 57

Thus read the *holy* texts of Islam. It is no wonder then that it is an easy thing to find constant stories about the violent actions by the practitioners of Islam as they attack and persecute those of other faiths, - especially Christians. It has long been this writers contention that violent attacks on those rejecting Allah, - and terrorism in general, - are not an aberration perpetrated by extremists that have hijacked 'The Religion of Peace', - but rather the natural way to interpret that faith when it is practiced literally. Sura 9:5 of the Koran is of course the famous text that tells Islamists to "*Slay the unbelievers wherever you find them*". That's a pretty powerful statement of religious intolerance that stands alone. And many are the fatwahs and theological justifications of terror and murder and the like that have been issued by imams from around the world. These religious pronouncements declare their of approval of terrorist acts, so long as they advance the cause of Islam. While not contaminating the majority as of yet, this theology of death and intolerance has had its effect on a significant portion of the Muslim world. Palestinians and others in the Middle East are taught to hate Jews and Christians from the time they are very young. They live in a culture that encourages religious suicide in the form of suicide bombings of the innocent in the name of their god of peace. And they leave little room for the true seeker, searching for a relationship with the God of the Universe.

Take this horrifying story of the Somali Mansur Mohammed who converted from Islam to Christianity back in 2005. He was working as an aid worker for the World Food Program when he was captured by the al Shabab group of Muslim extremists back in September. Five masked men armed with guns and swords brought him to the square where they had gathered the villagers, telling them there would be a feast. Instead they proclaimed him an apostate, and a spy and recited from the Koran. Then with cries of "Allah Akbar" growing in volume they twisted his neck and sliced off his head, - showing it to the villagers once they had done so. A cell phone video documented the execution. Elsewhere in Somalia, reports were surfacing that anyone found with a Bible was being killed.¹ **"I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."** (Revelation 20:4)

In Mogadishu, Somalia a 13 year old girl named Aisha was raped. She was then charged with adultery and taken to a stadium and stoned to death by a mob of 50 in front of an audience of about 1,000 men.² In Afghanistan a Christian aid worker was murdered by the Taliban in Kabul.³ Seven Christians were murdered in Mosul, Iraq in just the first two weeks of October.⁴ So the beat goes on, with Islamic rage targeting the Christian faith. However persecution is not only an unofficial activity but often has the imprimatur of the government.

In Afghanistan a journalism student was convicted of "insulting Islam", and sentenced to death. He purportedly questioned the tenets of Islam by downloading and distributing information that questioned the Islamic view of women's rights. The student told an appeals court that he confessed only under torture. The appeals court reduced his sentence to 20 years. The lenience of this decision caused grumbling among observers, one of which said that the judge "should be hanged", for his mercy.⁵

It's Not Just Islam

We must see this violence as but a symptom of what it is; - The expression of mankind's rebellion against God that started with Adam and Eve in the Garden and found its legs under the banner of Nimrod who tried to build the Tower of Babel in defiance of The Almighty. But it is not just Islam alone that is persecuting Christians around the globe, and in many cases it's not just Christians that are being targeted. There is a virulent strain of radical Hinduism that has perpetrated horrible slaughters in the name of religion. In 1984 for instance, at the death of India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, 3,000 Sikhs were killed on the streets of Delhi. Muslims too, have been a target of the Hindus in the past.⁶ Now, in the province of Orissa, India 70,000 Christians have been forced from their homes and are living in refugee camps. Many had to take refuge in the forests where they hid from the roving bands seeking to murder them.⁷ And after the Olympics, persecution has intensified across China in the form of beatings and arrests. Some church leaders were sent to labor camps, joining others that have been there since 2007.⁸ Often the real story in these news items is not so much the persecution as the willingness of believers to stand up for Christ. These are Christians that are not backing down from their beliefs. It brings to mind the witness of the Tribulation saints written of in Revelation 12:11. **“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”**

AWAITING THE MESSIAH

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved”. (Romans 11:25)

Earlier this month, David Solomon, respected Bible scholar and historian said that he believes its time for Israel to set aside its democratic system and set up a theocratic monarchy by appointing a king. To Solomon this would be the natural response to a time when leadership is wanting in both the political and religious spheres, - just as in the days of Samuel when Israel demanded and got a king.⁹

That story would be but an interesting and isolated sidelight if not for the radio interview that followed not long afterward on Israeli National Radio with renowned speaker Rebbitzin Esther Jungreis. Alluding to the scriptures as well as the historical writings of esteemed Jewish scholars over the centuries, Jungreis said that the world is now living in the “chevlei Mashiach”, - the labor pains that are part of the redemption process that precedes the coming of Messiah. Jesus Himself described the turbulent times that would precede His return as **“the beginning of birth pangs”**. (Matthew 24:8) Citing the ancient sages the Rebbitzim said that this age was to be characterized by audacity, the idol worship of money by a generation that would claim “My strength did this all” and giving “no credit to HaShem”, or God. Jungreis pointed to the work of 9th century Rabbi Eliezer who wrote that Ishmael, Abraham's illegitimate son through a slave girl and the father of the Arab nation would – rule the world. An ancient Jewish commentary on the Scriptures holds that “The King of Persia is going to have a weapon that is going to terrorize the entire world”. And the brilliant 18th century rabbi known as Vilna Gaon, wrote that in the final Gog / Magog confrontation, there would be such fearful and powerful weapons that the war would last only 12 minutes.¹⁰

Thus serious devout Jews are awaiting the arrival of Messiah. Scripture is clear. One day they will recognize that He who returns is He who came before. In Zechariah 12:10 God tells us **and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son”**. **“And so all Israel will be saved”**. (Romans 11:25)

YADAS

TERROR ALERTS – A report by the UK's Ministry of Defence revealed that domestic-based al-Qaeda cells in Britain are preparing to launch "mass-casualty attacks". The cells in question consist of foreign-trained operatives between 18 and 30 years of age centered mostly in the cities of London, Birmingham and Luton. It is believed that there are about 200 active cells in the country involved in at least 30 plots at present.¹¹ At the same time the London based *Al Quds Al Arabi* cited "very close" sources in reporting that Osama bin Laden himself is involved in organizing an attack against the US mainland that will "outdo by far" the 9/11 attacks and "change the face of world politics and economics".¹²

OBAMA'S SECRET PEACE PLAN – Last week we learned that the President elect had reportedly let the Palestinians know that he supported a peace plan that would divide Jerusalem. Now, new reports are coming out that he has made overtures to Damascus, to end that country's isolation. Obama's aids reportedly told the Syrian Ambassador to the US that the new chief executive would be willing to push Israel to withdraw from the strategic and disputed Golan Heights, from which Syrian artillery threatened Israel before losing that territory during the Six-Day War in 1967.¹³ In addition, the Arabic language paper *Al-Hayat* reports that Obama's team has conducted a running dialogue with the terror group Hamas. Hamas chief Haniyeh reportedly congratulated Mr Obama on his recent election victory.¹⁴ Outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Olmert indicated agreement with the momentum for peace on Arab terms, stating: "we need to give up parts of the homeland we have dreamed about for generations...and return to a 1967 Israel, with certain amendments. The decision must be made now".¹⁵ But that is not God's ultimate plan for that land. Here's God's promise to His people given in Deuteronomy 11:24: **"Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be."** And one day, so it shall be!

ARE WE THERE YET?...

Pastor Randy Smith

...a question most kids ask their parents on a trip. I asked this of three people, and they replied unanimously, "are we there yet?" This article is not meant to be prophetic in nature, as the publisher of this newsletter is more capable for that. This is meant to be more of an encouragement for the trip. As a child I was always restless on our trips and didn't like sitting in the backseat and looking out the window. It was boring, or so I thought. Dear reader, right now (spiritually speaking) we are on the trip of a lifetime, and many of you may not care for the place or position you are in, both spiritually and physically. I'm not here to tell you to make changes so you'll be happy, but I will suggest you seek God for direction. On our life trip we don't like being in the back seat either. You don't have control there, but what you do have is the opportunity to look and listen.

Ps.37:7 says..."Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." Hmm, an interesting scripture. Let's look at two words in it. 'Rest' is something you can't do while driving. The word "rest" means to be dumb, to stop, to be silent, to wait or tarry. We know the scripture from **Is.40:31 ..."They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."** We don't like waiting because it requires patience. Forget about the promise of renewed strength, we want what we want when we want it. **Heb.10:36** tells us that **"we have need of patience so we can receive Gods' promises after we have done His will."** It takes strength and humility to handle His promises both of which are learned in the back seat. 'Patiently' is the other word to look at in the scripture. Patience is both grown and learned. It is a fruit of the Spirit. How many of you have prayed for patience? Give me patience and give it to me now! I did that years ago and ended up in traction in the hospital. Learn it and let it grow while in the back seat, I can guarantee you'll need it for the journey you're on.

There is something else that you learn in the backseat; trusting the driver. I think most of us have seen the bumper sticker that says "God is my co-pilot". I believe it should read "God is my pilot". If He is your co-pilot then you are driving. **Prov.3:5-6 says..."Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths."** The word "ways" has an interesting meaning: a road traveled, a journey, or course of life. As we travel this road called life, it has its potholes and detours and sometimes we get lost or break down. This is why we need an experienced driver, one who knows the way. In fact Jesus said in **Jn.14:6...I am the way, the truth and the life.No one comes to the Father except through Me.** It is again interesting that the word "way" has the very same meaning in Greek as it does in Hebrew. It denotes a road, highway, journey, or route. Jesus again said in **Mat.7:13-14..."Enter in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."** Look at the words: narrow, wide, few, and many. Those words should make you aware of how important it is to have a driver who knows the road. I drove a school bus for twenty years and have been in some pretty precarious situations, but knowing my route and knowing my students kept me accident free for all those years. Friends, Jesus knows you and He knows the way, for He said He is the Way. The Bible tells us that we were fearfully and wonderfully made in His image. He knows our hurts, hopes and hang-ups and loves us in spite of them. He is committed to bringing us safely home at the end of the day. There is no curve, detour, or roadblock that takes Him by surprise. That is the kind of driver I want in control of my life, how about you?

Let's see what we've learned so far. Rest, patience, and trust. I guess that's stuff we can use huh? We can also learn to enjoy the ride. In spite of the economy and the world situation we can enjoy the presence of the Lord. **Ps.16:11 says..."Thou will show me the path of life,** (incidentally the word for path is the same word for ways in Prov.3:5-6) **in thy presence is fullness of joy."** It looks to me like we got a God thing going on here. **Gal.5:22** tells me that we have some fruit growing here. Rest, peace, patience, faith and trust, all growing while we are in the back seat. I remember the T.V. commercial, Go Greyhound and leave the driving to us. There is something to be said for that. Jesus said in **Jn.16:13..."Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide into all truth."** One day in the not too distant future you'll hear Him say..."We're there!"

ARE WE LIVING IN THE END TIMES ?

COME & FIND OUT IN PERSON ! Primary Newsletter author, Rob Palaszewski will be appearing at the **Babcock Community Center** on **Tuesday, December 9th at 6:30PM**, - giving a presentation entitled **"ARE WE LIVING IN THE END TIMES"**. The talk will discuss the evidence that we are living on the edge of Christ's return and outline the plan for the New World Order. The center is located at 1168 Seneca St, Buffalo – phone # (716) 822-5914. Admission of course is free. If you're a regular reader – and from the Buffalo / WNY area – you might want to consider bringing along an interested friend.

WE NEED HELP!

This ministry is embarking on several projects that we hope to unveil in the immediate future. We are in need of seed money to get a book project completed and sent to the printer. An old lap top and projector would be greatly appreciated. A website is being designed and needs money to complete and launch. That's where you can come in. We need people to partner with us in getting the word out. If you can help us please make checks payable to My Father's House and indicate it's for Zew's News Review & send to: **Zew's News Review, My Father's House // 140 Pound Rd // Elma, NY 14052**
Thank you for your contributions and thank you especially for your prayers. May God bless you.

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- ¹ Somalia: Christian Aid Worker Beheaded For Converting From Islam, Compass Direct News, October 27, 2008
 - ² Somalia Militants Stone Raped Girl To Death For “Adultery”, BOS News Life, November 3, 2008
 - ³ Afghanistan – Taliban Kills Christian Aid Worker, Persecution.com, VOM, November, 2008
 - ⁴ Seven Christians Killed in Mosul, Iraq, Persecution.com, VOM, October 13, 2008
 - ⁵ Afghan journalism student sentenced to 20 years for insulting Islam, London Times, November 3, 2008
 - ⁶ Disturbing Stories Expose Dark Realities of Christian Persecution, Christian Post, October 30, 2008
 - ⁷ India – More than 70,000 Christians displaced in Orissa, Persecution.com, VOM, November, 2008
 - ⁸ Christian Persecution Intensifies Across China, Persecution.com, VOM, November, 2008
 - ⁹ Time for Israel to appoint a king, scholar says, Free Republic, November 2, 2008
 - ¹⁰ Malkah Fleisher, *Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis*: Prepare for the Coming of Messiah, Israel National News, October 27, 2008
 - ¹¹ Mass-casualty attacks alert, Strait Times, Reuters, November 10, 2008
 - ¹² Paola Totaro, Bin Laden ‘plans new attack on US’, Sydney Morning Herald, November 10, 2008
 - ¹³ Aaron Klein, Source: Obama secretly pledged cooperation with Syria, World Net Daily, November 9, 2008
 - ¹⁴ Hana Levi Julian, Hamas Claims Secret Relationship with Obama Aides, Arutz Sheva, November 11, 2008
 - ¹⁵ Olmert: We must cede parts of Jerusalem, Jerusalem Post, November 11, 2008