

Orlando Bible Students Newsletter

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Has Man Gone Mad?

Everywhere we see man's madness toward one another particularly in the form of oppression and violence. A civil war in Syria and Middle Eastern countries have led to the highest number of refugees ever—over 60 million. The trade in illegal drugs and the resulting crime and violence plagues many nations and millions of human beings. Violence against women, immigrants and others have led to incidents like the forty-nine individuals recently slaughtered in Orlando, Florida by a single gunman. Nations continue to purchase and stockpile more and more weapons to protect their leadership, their borders, and their place in the world. Nations such as Iran and North Korea are pursuing nuclear weapons to increase their power and threaten their neighbors.

Jesus described our day in these terms: "Then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." (Matt. 24:21, *NASB*) The Prophet Joel describes our day and associates it with the gathering of the nations against Israel. "Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men! Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up! Beat your plowshares into swords And your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, 'I am a mighty man.'" (Joel 3:9,10 *NASB*) Terrorists and hackers have become mighty men and have at times had huge influence over their fellow men.

God, because he knows the end from the beginning, knew that man's disobedience in Eden would lead to this result. (Isa. 46:10)

However, he also knew it was the best way to teach man the heartache, misery, and destruction that would result from sin. Therefore, God allowed man to experience the result of disobeying his principles of truth and righteousness.

While the situation looks unfixable to us, God has everything under control. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." (Ps. 76:10) God will allow the situation to continue until Armageddon, when through Christ and the church he directly intervenes, saves Israel, and brings this present, evil order of things to an end. Jesus mentioned this in Matt. 24:22 (*NASB*): "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short."

The Apostle Paul writes, "Now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN. This expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe." (Heb. 12:26-28, *NASB*) Christ's unshakeable kingdom will bring man's madness to an end, and offer mankind the chance for peace, health, and everlasting life.

To learn more, see our ad for the booklet *The Kingdom of God* on the back page. ■

Jacob's Twelve Sons

Jacob, later renamed Israel, fled from Esau to the land of his mother Rebecca where he providentially was guided to the household of Laban, his mother's brother. After one month, Laban asked Jacob to name the wages he should receive for his service in tending the flocks. Now Jacob was in love with Rachel and made a covenant with Laban that he would serve seven years as the bride-price for his youngest daughter. When the seven years' commitment had passed, Jacob asked for his wife Rachel. However, Laban deceived Jacob and gave Leah, his older daughter, to Jacob. This greatly upset Jacob, and after confronting Laban, he was given Rachel with the stipulation that he serve Laban another seven years. Laban also gave handmaids to his daughters, namely Zilpah to Leah, and Bilhah to Rachel.

It is obvious from the account in Genesis 29 and 30 that there were feelings of rivalry between the sisters in attaining and maintaining the love of Jacob. Leah felt unloved and competed with Rachel in bearing sons. Overall, she bore six sons and Rachel two. Their two handmaidens also bore two sons each. In those days, a child borne of a handmaid was thought of as the wife's son. Rachel first, and then Leah, did what they could to outdo one another. Each in turn requested Jacob sleep with her handmaid. All told, Jacob had twelve sons.—Gen. 35:23-26

Eleven of his sons were born in the service of Laban. Having served fourteen years for his two wives and six years in building his own wealth, Jacob fled with his wives, children, and possessions. His last son, Benjamin, was born of Rachel on the way to Bethlehem. Sadly, Rachel died in childbirth.

Joseph, the 11th son, and first actual son of his favored wife, Rachel, was resented by his brothers (Benjamin being the exception) because of the greater attention from Jacob. They sold him into Egypt, where he rose in power and authority, becoming next to Pharaoh. Later, Jacob, his sons and their families settled in Egypt because of the famine and Joseph's position. Thus, God's providence sustained the incipient nation of Israel. ■

Jacob's Promises to His Sons

Genesis 49:1-28 reveals to us the promises Jacob made to his twelve sons just before he died. "He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him." (Gen. 49:28, *NASB*) Through these promises we gain critical insight into Israel's coming savior, the Messiah. Because of their misdeeds, Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, and then Simeon and Levi, Jacob's next two sons, lost the blessing of the firstborn.—vss. 4-7

The blessing and the authority to rule passed down to Judah, as Jacob explains in Gen. 49:10: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." The Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. He would be "Shiloh"—the "Prince of Prince" prophesied by Isaiah. (Isa. 9:6) To him would not only Israel, but all mankind, become obedient. "He ties his foal to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes." (Gen. 49:11 *NASB*) Tying his foal to the vine [Israel]
(Continued on next page)

God's Promise to Jacob

While fleeing Esau and heading to Paddan Aram, Jacob had a dream we often refer to as “Jacob’s ladder.” During that dream, God affirms part of the Abrahamic covenant with Jacob, and God makes a series of promises to Jacob.—Gen 28:13-15, *NIV*

First, “I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.” God gave the Israelites the land originally promised to Abraham. (Gen 15:18-21) God’s guarantee for them to retain this land continues today with the current Jewish nation.

Second, “Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth.” This restates the earthly promise originally made in the Abrahamic covenant. (Gen 13:16; 22:17) This promise is the hope for all mankind, that all who are not part of the heavenly church will be guaranteed a resurrection in Christ’s earthly kingdom.—John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15

Third, “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.” This is a reference to the blessing that the entire world will receive through Jesus’ sacrifice—“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.” (John 3:16) Paul points out in Galatians that this “offspring” refers to Jesus and is the same offspring or seed mentioned in the Abrahamic promise.—Gal 3:16; Gen. 22:18

Fourth, “I will bring you back to the land.” This declaration by God had multiple fulfillments. It was first fulfilled in Jacob’s personal life when he returned from Paddan Aram to Canaan. The gathering of the Jewish people from their dispersion to Babylon, and more recently from all corners of the world to form the modern nation of Israel, also fulfill this promise.

Fifth, “I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” God was with Jacob all of his life and continues to be with Jacob’s descendants, the nation of Israel. God has not left Israel, and furthermore, he has promised, through his prophets, that Israel will be the source through which the earth will be blessed in Christ’s soon-to-be-established earthly kingdom.—Zech. 8:23; Isa. 2:3; 11:9 ■

Jacob’s Promises to His Sons *(continued from previous page)*

indicates he would become Israel’s king. (Isa. 5:1-7; Zech. 9:9) Washing his garments in wine and blood pictures that Jesus alone would tread the path to Calvary’s cross to secure man’s salvation and later, he will tread the winepress of God’s wrath bringing this present evil world to an end.—Isa. 63:2,3; Rev. 14:20; 19:15

Then, Jacob calls Joseph, “a fruitful bough by a spring.” (Gen. 49:22, *NASB*) Jesus would become the vine by the spring of truth that would bring life and produce the fruit of righteousness to all who become joined to him. (John 15:1-8) While the archers (leaders of Israel) attacked him, Jesus’ bow remained firm, his arms remained agile by God’s mighty power and Jesus becomes the great shepherd and the stone or rock of Israel. (Gen. 49:23,24; John 10:11,14-16; Ezek. 34:23; 1 Cor. 10:4) God would bless Jesus with “blessings of heaven above. ... May they be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.” (Gen. 49:25,26, *NASB*) Like Joseph, Jesus would become the one distinguished among his brothers—the King of Israel.—John 1:49, 12:13 ■

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Calendar of Events

Bible Students General Convention July 16-21, 2016

University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown
450 Schoolhouse Rd
Johnstown, PA 15904

[Free admission, no collection]
For further information contact:

**Bible Students General Convention
Phone: (407) 670-4189**

Or contact us at our website:
[www. biblestudentsweb.com/general16](http://www.biblestudentsweb.com/general16)

The Orlando Bible Students is a non-denominational group that meets for Bible studies and devotions on Sunday mornings at the South Seminole Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL and in area homes during the week.
For further information call: (407) 695-6815

Special Offer

We would like to send you a complimentary copy of the booklet,

The Kingdom of God

This booklet describes how Christ's earthly kingdom will provide man with an opportunity for peace, happiness, and life.

For your **FREE** booklet, call (407) 695-6815 and request a copy, or fill in your address below and mail this coupon to:

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