

And Safety

Introduction

The devastating loss of life from the Great War (*World War One*) brought to the fore the infant cry of the peace movement. Though numerous individuals and groups had campaigned throughout the last few centuries for peace, abstinence of aggression and so forth, the peace movement as a true social voice was for all intents and purpose unheard until the 1930's.

After *World War Two* the futility of war was given centre stage, and the superpowers hoped the amassing of stockpiles of weapons capable of destroying the planet several times over would be sufficient deterrent from all-out-war. Nevertheless, north and south, east and west, still went to war. The major conflict of the fifties was the Korean War and of the sixties and seventies the Vietnam War. With each successive war the voice of the peace movement grew louder, to the extent that anarchy was the action of the peace activist.

Throughout the last fifty years though, there remains one ongoing "problem" in the middle-east; the problem of the modern nation of Israel (which was established in 1948). Divided opinion in America, Britain, Europe and Australia meant that the scales were balanced between: those in favour of Israel's annihilation (or to phrase it in a politically correct way, replacement by a "Palestinian" state), and those who support Israel (the only free and democratic country in the Middle-East). Nevertheless, Israel and the middle-east remain a sticking point for "peace".

Peace is Not Enough

Despite its affluence, technology and maturity as a social demographic, Western society has not been a bed of roses, nor without problems. In the space of a few decades people began to not just lock their doors and windows at night, but bar and deadbolt them. Gone are the days that - so long as the kids turned up for dinner at night, no one gave a second thought to what they were doing. All these things mean that the aging peace activists, and the generations they spawned, are now making a new cry, "Peace", but not just peace, but "Safety" as well.

This is an important point to consider. No longer is the issue 'peace', so much as it is for safety. Though September 11 can be seen as a major turning point in the vocalisation of the new cry, the "safety" cry was well beyond infancy when the twin towers fell. As more and more terror type activities are broadcast, such as the Spanish Train Bombing¹, the Bali Bombings² and the London Bombings³ (let alone events such as the war in Afghanistan and Iraq), the greater Safety's voice gets. People want to feel safe, they want to be able to sleep at night and not worry about the burglars, the rapists, the murderers, they want to be able to travel without worrying about car bombs, train bombs, bus bombs, and plane bombs and the most unsuspecting of them all (except if you live in Israel) the suicide bomber.⁴ So where is the current cry leading us? Surely someone will have an answer; surely someone will have a solution? But what solution will it be?

¹ The Spanish Train Bombings, also known as the 2004 Madrid Train Bombings, occurred on March 11, 2004; it is also known by the abbreviation "3/11". 191 people died and 2050 people were injured.

² Two separate bombings have occurred in Bali, one in 2002 and one in 2005. The 2002 Bali Bombings occurred on October 12, 2002 in the Kuta tourist district of Bali and resulted in 202 deaths and 209 injuries. The 2005 Bali Bombings occurred on October 1, 2005 in the tourist districts of Jimbaran and Kuta, resulting in 20 deaths and 129 injuries. Other bombings in Indonesia, against churches, embassies and tourists include: the Christmas Eve 2000 Bombing, the 2003 Marriott Hotel Bombing and the September 9, 2004 Australian Embassy bombing in Jakarta.

³ The 7 July 2005 London Bombings included the detonation of four bombs during morning rush hour. Three of the bombs exploded in trains (the first between Liverpool Street and Aldgate stations, the second at Edgware Road station, and the third between Kings Cross St Pancras and Russell Square stations) and one on a bus (in Tavistock Square)

⁴ Though not the main topic or point of this article, this list of "safety" concerns includes many day to day events and activities, and is probably better listed (for the purpose of highlighting how pervasive this is list) as: People want to feel safe, they want to be able to sleep at night and not worry about the burglars; they want to be able to ride, walk, jog and run on bike paths without the prospect of being mugged, raped or killed; they don't want to worry about the elderly being bashed after cashing their pension cheques; parents don't want to worry about who their children might run into on the way to school or the shops; they don't want to, and (one would think) expect to, worry about perverts hiding in the public toilets of major shopping centres; they don't want to have to worry about their kids being attacked at bus stop and railway stations at night;

"And he will make a covenant with them for seven years...?"

Safety's Destruction

In Daniel chapter 9, a collective period of 70 weeks had been "decreed" for Israel. This period, 70 weeks, is literally seventy sevens, or seventy units of seven, and is regarded as 70 seven-year periods, or 490 years. The designation of a week comes about only because of the usual reference of seven (or a unit of seven) meaning seven days, the context of the verse to Daniel though, is logically regarded and interpreted as referring to seven-year periods, and not seven-day periods.

As is not uncommon with Biblical prophetic and apocalyptic writings, more than one fulfilment of the verses may be expected. For Daniel and the Israelites in Exile they are given hope that Jerusalem will be restored and rebuilt, but then warned of a future destruction.

*"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild **Jerusalem** until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; **even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering;** and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."*

Daniel 9:24-27 (NAU⁵)

In like manner, the writers of the New Testament take up Daniel's prophetic words and write from a New Testament perspective.

*Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. "Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and **they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months**"⁶.*

Revelation 11:1-2

*And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and **authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.** And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue*

they don't want to think that some people are so callous that they would walk up to an unsuspecting stranger and king-hit them; they don't want to have to worry that the "friend" their 8 year old is talking to in an online chat room is not of the same age, but is really 30, 40 or fifty years old.

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, all Scriptures are from the New American Standard, Updated 1995 (NAU).

⁶ 42 months: 3 ½ years.

and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

Revelation 13:1-9

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, he encourages the church to not despair over those who have died,

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

But furthermore, he responds to the apparent question over the timing of Christ's return.

Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-10

The fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy in the first century foreshadows the final fulfilment at the end times. But notice the saying Paul forewarns us about, "While they are saying 'Peace and safety'...". How long indeed will it be before a covenant, an agreement, is made which appears to guarantee peace and safety? How long before the cry is, "Peace and Safety"? Perhaps only in hindsight will we know? Throughout modern-day Israel's history there have been many meetings, conferences, summits, etc., whose purpose has been to create peace. Some have worked, to greater and lesser extents, but most have not: Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty (1979)⁷, The Madrid Conference (1991), the Oslo Accords (1993), the Hebron Agreement (1997), the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum (1999), Camp David 2000 Summit (Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David), Taba summit (2001), and others. The desired outcome is a guaranteed signed agreement (covenant) made to create peace and safety. But now the stakes are not just concerning Israel, but global peace and safety.

So it is the signs-of-the-times, those events taking place, and the discernment God gives us to recognise these events, which will help us. To the world another peace agreement in the middle-east will be a wait and see issue. And only when it appears to be working, when they relax and say, "Peace and Safety" that "then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape." The church can not become complacent, the church

⁷ The Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty came about due to the Camp David Accords (aka Camp David 1). "The Camp David Accords were signed by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on September 17, 1978, following twelve days of secret negotiations at Camp David. The two agreements were signed at the White House, and were witnessed by United States President Jimmy Carter." (*Camp David Accords*. WWW Page. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_David_Accords>, cited 22 March 2007.)

should not sleep, the church should remain diligent throughout the night to recognise the times and seasons.

True Peace and Safety

Let us remember, and let us note the cry of the world. It is no longer the cry for *Peace*, but the cry for *Peace and Safety*. Soon enough they will think they have found it, soon enough, they will find out its deceptive tone. True Peace and Safety is found in one only, and that One is GOD!

For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

*Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress;
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.*

*O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach? How long will you love what
is worthless and aim at deception? Selah.*

*But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I
call to Him.*

Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And trust in the LORD.

*Many are saying, "Who will show us any good?" Lift up the light of Your countenance
upon us, O LORD!*

You have put gladness in my heart, More than when their grain and new wine abound.

*In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in
safety.*

Psalm 4:1-8

And let us remember, that in spite of the world's yearning for peace and safety, Jesus warned and encouraged us with these words, "When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; *those things* must take place; but *that is* not yet the end. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will *also* be famines. These things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs" (Mark 13:7-8). Much has happened, and it seems that much is to happen before the end. Nevertheless, let us keep our eyes on the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and earnestly and diligently await His return.