

# Satan's World

*(Scriptures from the English Standard Version throughout unless otherwise noted)*

When people discuss the Middle East, a term that very quickly comes to the fore is the term, "Monotheism." As writers and news reports tell us frequently, the Middle East is seen as the home of "the three great monotheistic religions" of the world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. They state literally what they consider to be a literal and eternal truth. "This is unassailable."

Yet the term "monotheism" was only coined in the English language in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Henry More, in 1660, is reputed to be the first person to use the term in writing in the English language. So it is a relatively recent term to describe a feature that many ASSUME to be a foundational part of the Biblical record dating back to Mount Sinai.

Humanity has a penchant for labelling ideas. So the idea that people perceive from the Bible was labelled "monotheism." Of course, those who study monotheism have developed their ideas so that today if someone is really discussing the subject of monotheism, they have additional labels, because monotheism is not identifiable enough. Is it "exclusive monotheism" or is it "inclusive"? Is it "hard" or "soft" monotheism? They have a variety of labels that you have to work out.

I went to a conference about this. As I was sitting there and they started talking about "exclusive" and "inclusive" monotheism, I was scratching my head! What were they talking about?

If you want an example, Islam is an "exclusive" monotheistic religion: "No god but Allah!" That's it. "You can have things you call god, but they are not gods. There is only one god: Allah." Islam is a very exclusive monotheistic religion.

Writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the then British Prime Minister, social reformer and cleric, William Gladstone, recognised that Islam or "Mahomet" as it was described then, was in fact the only TRUE monotheistic religion.

Over the past few decades, people have come to question the ideas of monotheism. Questions have risen in a variety of ways. Characteristic of this is a question posed by one New Testament scholar in the early part of the 1990s. She said it was:

"... something of a puzzle to explain how a group of Jews, known best of all in antiquity for their absolute insistence on the oneness of God and their refusal to grant worship to any other, should come in the middle of the first century to worship the man Jesus of Nazareth, whom they call the Messiah. The question becomes even more puzzling when you consider that those Jews who believed in Jesus gave him titles apparently ascribing to him qualities and actions previously reserved for God alone" (Paula Fredricksen, Bible Review, December 1992, 14-15).

So this person, reading through the New Testament and looking at the way in which the New Testament has been written, said, "Hey! There is something WRONG with our understanding here! How could these people start ascribing to Jesus Christ qualities and attributes which were reserved for God alone? There is something we don't understand about this." So people start to dig.

Further study has led some scholars to recognise that monotheism by any of the various varieties by which it is known today has no place in Scripture! So new writers will have to change their ideas: "true Christianity is not monotheistic."

As I have mentioned in the past, Judaism was not originally monotheistic in the way in which people

think about monotheism today. So what have people done? It is widespread enough now even to occur in the *Britannica*. Some scholars have created a NEW term to label the worship that the Eternal required of Israel. Now you have to learn a new word: "monolatry." If you take "idolatry," remove the "ID" and add "MON" to the front, you have "monolatry" - the worship of only one God.

As a starting point they take the First Commandment in Exodus 20:

***Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these words, saying,***

***2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.***

***3 "You shall have no other gods before me.***

The very first commandment has within it the phrase, "You shall have no other gods before Me." In stating "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," the Eternal recognised that there WERE other gods, other things called gods, but Israel was only to serve Him.

The other gods are normally perceived as idols, the work of the hand of a man. The Scriptures rail against people who worship such creations. It describes the way in which people cut down a tree, shape it and gild it and then fall down and worship the thing that they have made themselves. The Scriptures point out the stupidity of that.

Most people, when reading Exodus 20:3, think very clearly in terms of idols.

A few chapters earlier, in Exodus 12:12, the Eternal told Moses and all Israel that He was going to bring judgment against "all the gods of Egypt" and show that they were nothing compared with He.

So Israel entered into a covenant relationship with the Eternal at Mount Sinai in a world in which other gods existed. Israel, of course, disobeyed the first commandment and FORGOT the Eternal their God. The rest, you might say, is history. They worshipped Baal, Ishtar, Molech, Chemosh and all the other gods of the heathen nations round about them.

But the translators play a little bit of a trick on us. They condition our minds because as we are reading in the English translation we know that the "other gods" aren't real gods at all because they are written in lower case and the true GOD is in upper case. So as we go along, we realise this "other god" is a fiction.

The problem is that in Hebrew or Greek, there is no such thing as upper and lower case! It is all upper case. If you go back to the Dead Sea Scrolls, or to some of the early copies of the New Testament, they are all in upper case - nothing is lower case. It is all one form of printing. Only upper case was used in Scripture. Most people didn't READ God's Word, they listened to it.

If you LISTEN to Scripture, how do you know when I am using upper case as opposed to lower case? You don't! You have to make a judgment yourself. But in those days, people couldn't make judgments like that because they didn't know the difference between upper and lower case. Certainly they knew the difference between the True God and false gods.

So the translators sought to immediately identify where the TRUE GOD is addressed as opposed to false gods, or idols. They have done a good job of identifying which is which for us so that our reading is made that much easier.

But in so doing they help us miss a major point relating to the first command. Is there another being we could worship rather than the Eternal, bearing in mind that what we WORSHIP is in fact a "God"? We create gods by worshipping them.

The Apostle Paul was educated as a very devout Pharisee. Like others of his day, he believed that there was an alternative "god" who could be worshipped: a being that was so successful at his deception, that he had blinded the minds of the people so that they couldn't recognise the true God who should be worshipped. What does Paul say to the Corinthians?

**2 Corinthians 4:1 (New King James) Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart.**

**2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.**

The next verses are really critical verses:

**3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,**

**4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.**

When Paul wrote that verse, he used the same word for the god of this age, who has blinded people's minds, and the God that Jesus Christ is in the image of. There is no difference between those words in terms of his writing. We see it today as one being in lower case (god) and the other being in upper case (God).

In Ephesians 2, Paul refers to this same individual as being the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). There is another being out there who seeks our attention, and the worship of that being ends in destruction.

The idea of Satan worship is not appealing to most, but Satan has an unlimited pantheon of gods to distract and keep us from the worship of the true God! Why should we be aware of this? Why should we be concerned about it?

Shortly we will be keeping the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement prior to observing the Feast of Tabernacles. Why are we keeping those days? It is because central to these days is an understanding that there is a ruler of this world who is to be replaced at the return of Jesus Christ! That is fundamental. If we take that out of those days, what are we left with? Absolutely nothing except a nice meal. There is no hope, no future.

So central to those days is the concept that there is a ruler of this world who is to be replaced at the return of Jesus Christ who will return as King of kings and Lord of lords, and that being is to be bound for a thousand years and restrained in a great abyss. The thousand years of peace and prosperity will ensue for all humanity.

Although we gladly observe those days, how clearly are we aware that the world in which we live is ruled by this other god? How much does that fill our minds? How much are we cognisant of that as we go about our lives? How much does that shape and motivate our lives?

As a case in point, let's return to the Middle East where a war is still being waged between Hezbollah and the Israelis. Who is right in this conflict: the "army of God" or the Israelis? In case you are not aware, Hezbollah simply means, "The army of Allah."

Which really is the army of God?

The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, gave a speech in Los Angeles a little over week ago in which he outlined and defined the "arc of terror." He made it abundantly clear that we, in the west are the "good" guys and that we have got to DEFEAT the arc of terror, that we have to prevail. Tony Blair set out various criteria by which the west (i.e. the "good guys") could win the battle against the "bad guys."

So I ask the question again: which really IS the army of God? Either or neither?

Yes, Jesus Christ will intervene on the part of the Jews at the very end, but as the book of Zechariah makes abundantly clear, only AFTER they come to "look on Him whom they pierced." That requires a change in mentality and outlook. Only when they come to look on Him whom they pierced - and accept Him as the Messiah that He truly is. Until then, both sides are waging a war between two elements of the Babylonian system! So why should we take sides? Where should we be?

Students of prophecy love to look at the developments in the Middle East and portray the growing Islamic fundamentalism as being a representation of the "King of the South." Often what is overlooked is that the King of South presented in Daniel chapters 10-11, is part of the Babylonian system just as much as the King of the North is part of the Babylonish system!

We have warring factions within the Babylonian system which will be destroyed by Jesus Christ at His return. There are no "good guys." They are all bad, in terms of God's perspective. I'm not saying that the Islamic world is not or could not be the King of the South.

Something I learned to my surprise at the conference is that in reality, Islam is the ultimate expression of the Greek philosophic tradition! In fact, the works of Aristotle were given pride of place with the Koran in Islamic teachings! Those elements shaped Islam as profoundly as certain ideas of Plato shaped what is called "Christianity" today. Both of these religions are shaped by elements of the Greek philosophic tradition. They have all come out of the same mould, the same pot. They may appear different, but in the final analysis, they are all from the same source.

So Islam is clearly rooted in the Babylonish system of this world. There is no "good guy" in the struggle between the powers of this world: not even our own country. At best our own area could be described as the "least worst" in a very bad godless world.

Let's look at some of the values that exist in this world today that are considered "acceptable" and appreciate just how Satanic they really are: things that our society holds so dear, things that Islam holds so dear to it, so intrinsic to it.

The prophets were used by the true God as emissaries and mouth pieces to convey to us the values of the true God. They presented what was pleasing to or unacceptable to God - literally allowing us to see how God sees the human situation. They lived over 2,000 years ago. But as we read through "the Prophets," one thing we find is that they are highly relevant to today. Human conditions, the human situation, has not changed one iota. They have a lot to say about this world. These men didn't speak out of their own over-taxed creative memories, as some people would like to see them doing.

***2 Peter 1:19 (New King James) And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;***

***20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,***

***21 for prophecy never came by the will of man ...***

It wasn't that Isaiah got up one morning and said, "What can I write today? How do I feel? Down, so this is going to be a prophecy of doom today."

Or, "I feel I had a good night's rest. This will be an uplifting prophecy." It wasn't like that.

***21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.***

These men found themselves writing things that they would prefer not to have heard, recording events that were to take place of horrendous magnitude, that they didn't want to be part of.

They were also able to describe situations of incredibly joy and elation. It wasn't for them to choose what to write. That was conferred upon them by the Holy Spirit.

So where do we start in terms of the prophets? We have a war going on at the present time. Wars are about power. Power is perhaps a very good place to start: with how God looks at power.

The world is in a struggle at this time between two rival power blocks. In reality, Hezbollah and the Israelis are, at best, proxies for those two systems. Any other way of looking at it is less than really acceptable.

How does the world establish power? Who is in charge? The most successful way we have found of doing this is by WAR! "Knock the other guy down, put your foot on his throat, then read the conditions to him." That's it.

Society honours conflict. Do you realise that? Count the Presidents of the United States of America who have been military heroes! Is it any different today? People would have liked to draft Colin Powell as a Presidential candidate at one point in time. He was a military hero. That is not unique to the United States. Every nation in the Western world has followed that same path.

Arnold Toynbee, was a prominent English historian of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote a book in 1950 entitled *War and Civilization*. In it, he stated:

"Perpetual peace is a dream - and not a beautiful dream - and war is an integral part of God's ordering of the Universe. In war, Man's noblest virtues come into play: courage and renunciation, fidelity to duty and a readiness for sacrifice that does not stop short of offering up Life itself. Without war the world would become swamped in materialism."

So, "viva the conflict! It keeps materialism in its place." We may not express it quite the same way today. We would be a little more "politically correct" about it. We would be a little more "nurturing" about our views rather than the very masculine view that Toynbee was espousing.

But what we do has not really changed. Have you had a look at any video games recently? Most of us don't look at video games. What are they about? Destruction. Battle. Conflict. These are the things that we get our children to occupy their minds with so that we have time for ourselves.

What about movies? Aren't we awaiting a movie called "Terminator 4!" The irony is unabashed. We live in a state that prides itself on its social conscience and we have a Governor whose fame was developed in the portrayal of violence! I don't see that the world has changed very much from Toynbee's time. We may do a little window dressing, but we are still motivated by violence.

How many see the solution to the problems of inner city gangs in the reintroduction of some form of military discipline - national service, the draft, or whatever it may be called in various parts of the world?

The prophets were inspired to write in a world which had a clear view of power. In the Gentile world, the king was "divine" - he was not able to be questioned. He had absolute power. God inspired the prophets to repudiate the power of man as an object of adoration.

Isaiah writes about Assyria and the way in which Assyria was going to be used, and the ruthless execution of power that Assyria had. Assyria literally became the byword in the ancient world for "ruthless execution of power." There were no equals to the Assyrians. Notice what Isaiah says:

***Isaiah 10:12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks."***

Here's a person who thinks they have all the power, that they, in fact, are a deity, and they can do whatever they like.

The Eternal says, "I am going to remove the smirk from your face" - of whoever the king might have been.

Jeremiah talks about the land of Judah, and the conditions which prevailed within the land of Judah. This is not talking about Assyria or Babylon at this point in time. The people were supposed to be God's own people. If anyone had the "right" to call themselves "God's own people" (or the Hebrew equivalent of those words), these people had the right to. They were still part of the Covenant People. What does Jeremiah say?

***Jeremiah 23:10 For the land is full of adulterers;  
For because of a curse the land mourns.  
The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up.  
Their course of life is evil,  
And their might is not right.***

They don't have the right sense of power and of might. In many places, the prophets questioned humanity's infatuation with might or power, the way in which that was used in two areas: in terms of the way in which they treated one another, and the way in which they treated the possessions that God had given to them - their own land, the physical resources that they were given.

On the other hand, God's view of a world is diametrically opposite.

***Isaiah 2:2 (New King James) Now it shall come to pass in the latter days  
That the mountain of the LORD'S house  
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,  
And shall be exalted above the hills;  
And all nations shall flow to it.***

They are going to seek to learn God's ways:

***3 Many people shall come and say,  
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
To the house of the God of Jacob;  
He will teach us His ways,  
And we shall walk in His paths."  
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.***

As a result of that, what is the Eternal going to do?

***4 He shall judge between the nations,  
And rebuke many people ...***

There's going to be judgment. There's going to be correction. In other words, people are going to be set on a right path. They are going to be told what is expected of them. The net effect of that is:

***4 ... They shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
Neither shall they learn war anymore.***

That is God's standard in terms of human relationships, whether it be the person level, the family level, the tribal level, the national level or the international level. People are supposed to learn to live with one another in peace. They are supposed to learn to operate in a way which engenders that peace, rather than a way that engenders war.

We don't live in God's world at this point in time. We may have a wonderful, comfortable life, but it is not God's world. It is a world in which WAR is being conducted - where we are not, fortunately for us, so we are spared the anguish of it.

It's not surprising that at the Passover Jesus told the disciples that they were not to be like the Gentiles and seek to RULE over one another. When Luke records that, he said that they WEREN'T to exercise dominion over one another as the Gentiles exercise dominion. There was a certain ruthlessness to that exercise of dominion:

***Luke 22:25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them,***

*and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'*

**26 "But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.**

"He who is to be the greatest among you is to be the servant." That is a radical REORDERING of power! The one who has the power is not the one who is adored. The one who has the power now serves those who have needs, takes care of them and provides for them.

The Godly standard is one of serving one another. We are called to exercise power in our lives, modified by the Holy Spirit, so that it serves the needs of others rather than the self. If there are wars, as James said, where do they come from? They come "out of our own lusts, unbridled, untempered by God's Holy Spirit." We check the Holy Spirit at the door. When we go to see someone, we leave the Holy Spirit behind and we get into a fight or an argument with them - because our mind is not being tempered by God's Holy Spirit to seek the well-being of the other person, to seek the rightness of God.

We are called to exercise power in our lives, modified by the Holy Spirit so that it serves the needs of others rather than ourselves.

What is wrong with power in this world? In God's view, power leads to violence and lust. In the Middle East at the present time is an organisation known as *Hamas*. *Hamas* is an acronym for an Arabic collection of words which, translated into English mean "Islamic Resistance Movement." But when you make an acronym, what are you seeking to do? You are seeking to do a little more than just find a suitable collection of letters. It has got to convey a meaning, a message. In Arabic, the term *hamisa* is used to convey "being persistent in battle and in religion." In Hebrew, of which Arabic is a cognate language, the word *hamaša* means "violence."

***Micah 6:9 (New King James) The LORD'S voice cries to the city -***

***Wisdom shall see Your name:***

***"Hear the Rod!***

***Who has appointed it?***

If you have any wisdom, you will realise that chastisement of God is beneficial.

***10 Are there yet the treasures of wickedness***

***In the house of the wicked,***

***And the short measure that is an abomination?***

***11 Shall I count pure those with the wicked scales,***

***And with the bag of deceitful weights?***

***12 For her rich men are full of violence ...***

... full of *hamas*. They are full of violence.

***12 ... Her inhabitants have spoken lies,***

***And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.***

Their rich men get mixed up in violence.

Amos speaks to the Philistines:

***Amos 3:9 Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt, and say, "Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see the great tumults within her, and the oppressed in her midst."***

He is calling the Philistines and the Egyptians to Samaria to see what is happening within Israel. What are they to see? It is the oppression!

***10 "They do not know how to do right ..."***

The way of truth, the way of peace is not in them.

***10 ... declares the LORD, "those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds (their palaces)."***

Does the Eternal like violence? Not in any way, whatsoever. As far as God is concerned, violence is a problem.

Even King David's service of the Eternal was limited because of his involvement in war and the blood he had on his hands. Even though the Eternal was with Him in those wars and David is presented as doing God's service, yet He was not able to pursue his greatest ambition, the building of the Temple. Why?

It was as though God was making a point about His work, that ultimately speaking, it is to be a work of peace not violence, not war. God will use war to establish the conditions of peace. But war is not an end in itself. Violence and war for humanity, become an end in themselves. People want more, and they will stoop to greater violence to achieve more.

God intervenes in the power struggles of this world to bring His purposes to pass. He has a remarkable power that no human being has ever had the ability to do, of and by themselves. He maintains the ability to resurrect to life those who lives are taken! No human being, no king, no King of Assyria, no one with power within this world has the ability to change things that way. The Eternal is able to resurrect them.

In contrast to the violence of society, consider the Godly standard. Let's look at a Psalm of the sons of Korah, obviously a Psalm that was sung within the Temple to the honour and glory of God. Psalm 85 extols the greatness of God and His ways. It talks about God being our salvation. It talks about the way in which He brought back the captivity of the people.

***Psalm 85:9 Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.***

God's salvation provides glory! What is the consequence of that salvation?

***10 Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.***

***11 Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.***

***12 Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.***

***13 Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way (our pathway).***

Jesus Christ built on these. Who is going to inherit the earth? It is the meek. What is going to happen to the righteous? They are going to be filled. Righteousness is going to bring about prosperity for people, rather than the way in which prosperity is attained today.

Isaiah says:

***Isaiah 32:15 until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high ...***

He is looking forward to a time when God's Spirit is going to be poured out upon the nation. And as a result of that ...

***15 ... and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.***

***16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.***

***17 And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.***

***18 My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.***

***19 And it will hail when the forest falls down, and the city will be utterly laid low.***

***20 Happy are you who sow beside all waters, who let the feet of the ox and the donkey range free.***



We can discuss that another time, but Isaiah is clearly portraying a time when God's Spirit exists in the land - a future event when justice and righteousness are going to be there, and the end result is peace and well-being for people. People are not going to be concerned about their sons being killed in a war, or their wives and offspring being homeless or fatherless. They are not going to go through all of these emotions that people suffer at this point in time.

In God's mind, the problem with power within human hands is that it breeds arrogance and conceit. It becomes self centred, no matter how altruistic its initial aims may have been. We need to realise that the real power is that of God's Holy Spirit, to change our minds, to serve one another, to seek for the well being of the other.

Zechariah recorded the way in which matters are really accomplished:

***Zechariah 4:6 Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel ...***

"This is not my word, or anyone else's word. This is the word of the Eternal to Zerubbabel."

***6 ... Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.***

Part of that reordering of power is that God is asking us to reject what seems so natural to human beings in terms of power and might, and realise that the real might and power comes from one source, and one source alone: from His Holy Spirit so that we can be changed and we can become like the prophets. We can start to see this world from a Godly perspective.

The end result of that is that we worship the true God more diligently and more carefully.

Let's have a look at another area in which humanity gets very caught up: education. Education is currently seen as being the route out of poverty, the path to a better life. It is seen, in many ways, as being the panacea of the ills of humanity. And there is a certain validity to that. But it is education based on what?

The Apostle Paul spoke of the educated peoples of his day and showed that they rejected the knowledge of God. In Romans 1, is a classic example of the apostle Paul talking about the world in which he lived, a statement which is very much a truism of today. He said:

***Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.***

***19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.***

***20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.***

***21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.***

***22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools,***

***23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.***

I believe it is a truism to state that today, education throughout the western world operates without any concern for God.

Science is the study of the observable: what is accessible to the rational mind. It is the pursuit of physical knowledge on the one hand, but without any sense of who created or formed the material or the mind of the scientist. There is no concept of the consequences of its studies and endeavours.

A great case in point in the United Kingdom at the present time is that they are trying to determine what to do with all their nuclear waste. They are trying to work out, "Where is a safe place to build a chamber thousands of feet below the surface where this nuclear waste can be stored safely for thousands of years?"

At the same time, they are trying to determine, "How can we afford to build this facility?" Because that is part of the problem. How do you build something 3,000 feet under ground of the size and the magnitude that is required to take care of the last 50 years of Britain's nuclear wastes?

And at the same time as they are trying to work out, "How do we afford it?" they are talking about building NEW nuclear power stations - as a means of avoiding their problems with energy.

It's not just Britain's problem. It's everybody's problem who gets involved in the nuclear age. What do you DO with this stuff? How do you get rid of it so that it doesn't destroy you - or destroy the next generation?

It's not just science that is bereft of the knowledge of God. The humanities are also. In fact, we had a Professor of Theology tell us on one occasion that the way to "ruin a good minister" was to send him to a seminary! This was a Methodist Minister from a Methodist seminary. "If you want to ruin a man as a minister, send him to a seminary." It's very sad.

Take history: history is not just the study of events, but rather the understanding of man's experience of those events. History is very much human centred. Hence politics, economics, foreign affairs and warfare become very much the focus of history.

But to God all of that is irrelevant. History, to God, is totally different. If we were to involve ourselves in a little exercise and write a history of Israel under Jeroboam II (as people do today), we would note that it is a time of unprecedented prosperity for Israel. It was an expanding economy. Stability existed in terms of its foreign relations and peace. Israel was able to expand its borders. Israel, as a nation, was at a peak.

In terms of this world, Jeroboam II would be considered a successful monarch. He would join the "Bill Welch's" of this world, and we would probably have a book, "How I Did It: How To Be a King - My Way!" You can imagine all the titles that might come up - "according to Jeroboam II's way of doing it."

What was God's view of Jeroboam's reign? It was an unmitigated disaster. Why? It was godless. There was no justice. There was no seeking after God. The Eternal provides a summary of the reign of Jeroboam II:

***2 Kings 14:23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, began to reign in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years.***

It was a very long, successful reign - but not from God's perspective.

***24 And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin.***

Obviously he idolised Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, hence taking the name of Jeroboam to himself.

***25 He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher.***

***26 For the LORD saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter, for there was none left, bond or free, and there was none to help Israel.***

***27 But the LORD had not said that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.***

This guy was successful - but it wasn't because of himself! He was successful because God willed that Israel be saved at that period of time. It wasn't the political acumen or the economic nous or the military strategies of Jeroboam II that made Israel great at that period of time. It was the fact that the Eternal willed it to be that way then.

So God's view of the history of Israel at that period of time is radically different than that of the

historians. So Jeroboam II died. If you want to learn a little more about him, just read the book of Amos. What do we find? We find cruelty, human suffering, greed, lack of justice, no seeking after God - human oppression on a grand scale.

Amos chapter two comes at the end of a very well developed rhetorical device in which the Eternal starts pointing out the problems in the other nations round about Israel - and slowly, but surely He gets home. Having visited all the surrounding nations, and having got the Israelites on side, saying, "Yes - that's right God! Give it to them! They deserve it! Kick them! Go at them," the Eternal eventually gets down to Israel itself.

In the same way as He had spoken of the other nations, He said:

***Amos 2:6 (New King James) Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment ...***

Why?

***6 ... Because they sell the righteous for silver ...***

Their oppression is of such a nature that someone who wants to do things right, in a Godly way, is literally sold for silver ...

***6 ... And the poor for a pair of sandals.***

***7 They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble ...***

He goes on to describe the way they conducted themselves.

***Amos 5:10 (New King James) They hate the one who rebukes in the gate, And they abhor the one who speaks uprightly.***

***11 Therefore, because you tread down the poor And take grain taxes from him, Though you have built houses of hewn stone, Yet you shall not dwell in them; You have planted pleasant vineyards, But you shall not drink wine from them.***

These people were making a wealthy life for themselves on the backs of the poor people, taking from the poor to build for themselves. The Eternal said, "You are not going to enjoy those things."

If we back up a little, the Eternal describes another condition that Israel didn't have, that historians forget:

***Amos 5:4 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel:***

***"Seek Me and live;***

***5 But do not seek Bethel,***

***Nor enter Gilgal,***

***Nor pass over to Beersheba;***

***For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity,***

***And Bethel shall come to nothing.***

***6 Seek the LORD and live ...***

People, when they wanted to seek for something, wanted to seek for a physical place. Sometimes the play on the words that are used here are lost because the translators' grasp of the English isn't broad enough to accomplish it. Different words are being used for "seek" here. The "seek" that the Eternal wants is not the "seek" that they do! They seek for physical things. The Eternal tells them to seek for spiritual things. They don't do it.

**6 Seek the LORD and live,  
Lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph,  
And devour it,  
With no one to quench it in Bethel -  
7 You who turn justice to wormwood,  
And lay righteousness to rest in the earth!"**

These condemnations of the nation of Israel are laid out very clearly.

**14 Seek good and not evil ...**

Seek the right things!

**14 ... That you may live;  
So the LORD God of hosts will be with you,  
As you have spoken.  
15 Hate evil, love good;  
Establish justice in the gate.  
It may be that the LORD God of hosts  
Will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.**

What is Amos telling us? There was a vast gulf between the standards the Eternal required of the society of that day and what was practised within it. People thought it was good: "the halcyon days," or "the good old days."

And God said, "No - they are anything BUT that."

The Bible is a record of history, not from the eyes and observations of human beings but from the eyes of the Creator Himself. It's a different perspective. How does He evaluate the plights of human beings? How does He evaluate the rule of man within this day and age. He doesn't evaluate them in terms of economics or military prowess. Economics doesn't enter into it. Industrial output isn't a factor. Consumer confidence is a non starter.

How does He evaluate it? It is in terms of Godly character. "How are you using the knowledge that I have given to you? Is it changing you? Are you seeing one another the way I see you? Do you see Me for whom I really am?"

"Or do you allow your vision to be constantly clouded by the array of gods that the god of this world loves to clutter your vision with?"

That's a question that each and every one of us has to evaluate for ourselves. How do the leaders measure up to the Godly standard? Not very well! They either do what is right in the eyes of the Eternal or they follow the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. Or they follow one of the other wicked kings that was in Judah. That is God's evaluation of them.

Nothing is hidden from God, no matter how secretly it may be recorded. Notice Isaiah's comment:

**Isaiah 26:20 Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by.  
21 For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.**

People think they can perform atrocities and cover it up. The news media seems to think it is responsible for uncovering those things. But how many have they NEVER uncovered? How many atrocities have they never been able to resolve?

The Eternal knows all of them. The Eternal says, "I have the ability to uncover all of these things, to show what is really and truly in the mind and the heart of the individuals at that period of time." They may appear to be wonderful, magnanimous individuals - altruistic, outgoing. He said, "I can see the heart. I can uncover the blood that they shed to be in the position they were in."

The Eternal is coming to disclose the blood shed.

What I have given you is a little snapshot between history as human beings perceive history, and history as God perceives history: two radically different disciplines. History exists in terms of education, without God.

We could take every profession and every element of human endeavour and show similar shortcomings in terms of human perception. Human beings teach those subjects from a very human level as opposed to seeing things from a divine level.

This is not to say that people should not be educated. We should be educated, but we also need to be educated about the education, so that we are not taken in by it. We need to be very aware of the shortcomings of every form of education. It only ever sees the subject from the human perspective!

And it is so easy for people to be blinded by their education so that they see themselves as a repository of all knowledge or the saviours of humanity! We used to talk about this in terms of college "sophomores." "They know it all." That's why we call them "sophomores" ("wise fools," "wise morons")!

They say that when you get a "B.A." you THINK you know it all, then when you get a "Masters" degree you know what you DON'T know, and when you get a "PhD" you know that nobody knows anything! "It's all a matter of opinion." But it's amazing how arrogant people can become as a result of their education. It's amazing how arrogant people can be. They think their education gives them power over others.

I subscribe to a number of groups on the Internet (Biblical studies and so forth). I am amazed, at times, to see the attitudes of people towards others. "Who are you to give this advice? You don't have a PhD! Who are you to go telling a PhD how something should be? Get back in your box! You know nothing."

People talk like this to one another! It is arrogance! It is the same sort of arrogance that the disciples confronted in terms of the Sanhedrin. They considered that they didn't have the equivalent in those days of PhDs. They weren't "rabbis," "masters," or "doctors of the law," as the case may be.

We have to be aware that even education can breed its own arrogance - which is totally against God, rather than serving one another!

So education needs to be tempered with an appreciation of a Godly perspective, whether it be a profession or a trade. How does my profession treat other people? How does it deal with other people? Does it oppress them? Mine had better not!

But what about yours? Does it oppress other people? Is there a way in which you can avoid oppressing other people? How does it deal with those people who, one of these days, will have the opportunity to be part of the God Family?

I have heard enough of the sales world and the business world to know that it can be very rapacious.

We don't have time to talk about many of those things today, but what about technology? What about the blessings that God has given to us? We use technology in a remarkable manner today - for which we can be very grateful.

Do we ever spend enough time thinking how that will be handled in the Kingdom of God? What will be the nature of technology we use in the Kingdom? The present levels of destruction caused by technology and the rapine plundering of the natural resources of the earth cannot be sustained indefinitely. There is a limit.

There is no way in which this world has enough resources for the more than six billion people to live at the LOWEST standard of the members of the Church in Pasadena. Do you realise that? There just aren't enough resources to do that. This world doesn't have that level of resources. So how are we going to handle resources in the world tomorrow?

A cursory consideration of all aspects of our society show a system that is totally out of keeping with God's intentions for humanity.

As we approach the Holy Day season and prepare for the Feasts, let's never lose sight of the REASON for those Holy Days: that this is not God's world. This world is ruled by somebody else - and the fruits of this world are not Godly fruits. They are fruits that are borne by the god of this world, and by people being in bondage to him.

We keep these Holy Days because this is presently Satan's world. We keep them because we look forward to the time when he will be bound and removed from humanity. And humanity will be able to live in a way which God has outlined through the prophets.

Humanity will be able to enjoy the relationships that they should have with one another. Power will be used to benefit rather than to serve the self.

The apostle Paul said:

***Romans 16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet ...***

Is that something that we look forward to with great anticipation? Do we seek that?

Until that happens, we need to be preparing for the Kingdom by ensuring that our thinking is Godly thinking, thinking that is informed by and shaped through the interaction of God's Spirit and His Word.

We need to be certain that we DO worship and serve the true God, that we can stand before Jesus Christ - knowing that we have kept that very first commandment!

... *David Hulme*  
22 Jan 05

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