

"PEACE IN OUR TIME"

Gabriel L. Mancino



"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 10, 11. The angel's message to the shepherds)

Our Jewish GP years ago said to me, "If Jesus came to bring **peace**, He failed miserably!" I replied that his conclusion was based on only half of the evidence! The Old Testament, that told that the Messiah-Saviour would be born in Bethlehem, also told that this "*Servant of the Lord*" would suffer. It vividly foretold of the horrific agony of the Cross. Thank God, it also told of the victory Christ's death provides for every person on earth. It is a *provisional* victory— provided by God through "His Servant," the Lord Jesus Christ. I say "provisional" and "provided," for though God *provided* this great victory, He never forces anyone to have it...to accept it.

So, I told our former GP that Christ's first coming provided genuine **peace** for all mankind *on an individual basis*. When Christ returns at "the *second coming*," **peace** will come *to the entire world*. Please note that the "**peace**" I refer to is not a quietness, or feeling of calm or tranquillity resulting from any means other than total and unconditional surrender to God on *His* terms. He has made those terms easily known

and available, and each of us *may* and *must* learn what they are.

2 Cor. 5: 19-21 paints the above picture in the following way: "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not charging their sins to their account; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal to you through us: we plead with you, on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin [a "sin offering"] for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

Commenting on the Bible verses above, English preacher, **John Wesley** (1703-91), wrote the following:

"What unparalleled condescension and divinely tender mercies are displayed in this verse! Did the judge ever beseech a condemned criminal to accept of pardon? Does the creditor ever beseech a ruined debtor to receive an acquittance in full? Yet our almighty Lord, and our eternal Judge, not only vouchsafes to offer these blessings, but invites us, entreats us, and with the most tender importunity solicits us not to reject them."

The Metro's "**A date with history**" on 30 Sept. had the photo of former Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, promising "**Peace in our time**," while holding up **Hitler's written promise of 1938 not to invade Britain**. Britain was at war within a year! Satan and the world promises **peace**, but it is a false peace, full of lies and deception. No wonder **Jesus made the distinction**: "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (Jn. 14: 27). There CAN be "**Peace In Our Time**," through Jesus Christ, "*the Prince of Peace!*" (Isa. 9: 6).

THE LITTLE DRUMMER BOY is one of many worldly Christmas songs not based on the Bible. The boy, unlike the Wise Men, had no gift to give baby Jesus. He played his drum and Jesus smiled at him. It **IS** true that God accepts our genuine best, even if it seems of little value, yet never as a substitute for being "born again." Jesus came to save from all sin, & to set us to beating our drum for Him...whatever it is & wherever we go!

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A NEW HOUSE FOR CHRISTMAS

A GIFT: FROM GOD'S HAND — FOR GOD'S GLORY!

Gabriel L. Mancino

Unwrapping such a large present as a **new house for Christmas** will take some doing. Stay with me. This *old*, yet *new* house has up-to-date fittings that apply today!

That "*old*, yet *new* house" caused a **crushing heartache** for older Jews in Jerusalem of about 520 BC. The city, along with the Temple, had been utterly destroyed by the Babylonians (ancient Iraq) in 587 BC. The first of the returning Jews made a keen start to rebuild the Temple in 538 BC, but apathy, weariness and laziness set in, plus opposition from enemies. They lost interest in the rebuilding of *God's* House, and concentrated on their own! The work ceased for about 18 years. Then God sent the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to stir them from sleep.

By 516 BC the work was complete. Yet some of the old people were grieved by this new, "lower-grade" temple, compared to the splendour of the former one. Imagine **St. Paul's** or **Westminster Abbey** being replaced with something like our own local **Hendon Town Hall**.

The prophet, Haggai, asked them: "*Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?*" (Hag. 2:3). **What those people didn't realise** was that it was to *THIS* rebuilt, "inferior" temple that Jesus, their long-promised Messiah, would come, as we see in the Bible. And *this* Messiah is the Saviour of the world! (Jn. 3:16).

(continued inside)

"COME & SEE!" Andrew met Jesus & asked, "*Master, where do you live?*" Jesus replied "*Come & see.*" He *did*, then went & told his brother, Peter! The next day, Jesus called Philip to follow Him. Philip also quickly told someone—Nathaniel. Like Andrew, Philip declared he had found the Promised Messiah. Nathaniel asked, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" The town where Jesus grew up had a poor reputation. Fearless Follower, Philip, like Jesus, answered, "*Come & see!*" (Jn. 1: 35-46). Angels at Christ's birth told the shepherds: "Go & see!" The shepherds did more! They told!! "*Come & see...go & tell!*" commanded the angels at Christ's tomb, announcing His resurrection. **THIS** is God's Pattern!

THE NEW HOUSE...

(continued from front page)

Haggai and Zechariah were **sent to encourage them to rebuild**. They also helped them to **adjust their priorities**, which were way off-centre. I heard of a building that housed a powerful engine years ago. A central part went off-centre, **shaking the entire building!** Britain, like the rest of the world is way out of centre. This is why society (*"the global community!"*) is shaking to pieces.

God was withholding His blessing, for Israel had abandoned Him—**THE CENTRE**. As a result, times became tough, life was hard, provisions became more scarce and prices soared. Sounds familiar. Yes, God can be forgotten during times of national prosperity, as well. Rapid and radical change in **priorities** is critical, then followed by intense, unswerving focus on true-hearted, whole-hearted worship of the God of the Bible.

Consider this example of wrong **priorities**: There is a saying, "A dog is man's best friend." Also, "A dog is not just for Christmas." I could say that these sayings have it all backwards! Spell "Dog" backwards, and insert it into those sayings above. This is not an attempt to be cute, nor is it restricted to animal lovers. The principle applies to all aspects of life, right down to eating, for as Jesus quoted, *"Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of GOD!"* **The priorities-principle, above**, applies to the economy, to education, to employment, to entertainment and so on.

Now, whether it was a flashy, gold-lined Temple such as Solomon built, or a comparatively feeble-looking one as built in Haggai's time—*this* is not the main issue! Building either of those buildings didn't make the builders holy and acceptable to God. God repeated to them through Haggai: *"Consider your ways!"* So must we!

There is **emphasis** in Haggai on the spirit of specific, God-chosen men for the rebuilding work, and emphasis also on God's Spirit. God wants us to take serious and thorough **inventory** of our spirit. He also wants us to **recognise and cooperate** with **HIS** Spirit. No human can come to God without cooperating with the Holy Spirit of God *from the very beginning*, nor can anyone *advance* in God's ways without Him! **This is true regardless of a person's background or how much or how little they know.**

As the off-centre engine part **shook** the engine house, so man's sins, *though often sporting a flashy, deceptive exterior*, **shake** nations into wreckage...ruin...rubble. However, in Haggai, after God mentions His Spirit, He says *"I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of All Nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory!"* (Hag. 2: 6,7).

Some Bibles have *"the Desire of All Nations shall come."* Others say *"and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations."* Jesus said *"I have come that they might have life more abundantly...I have come to seek and to save that which was lost"* But then He also says: *"Come to Me, ALL!"* In Christ, God moved in man's direction. He *demand*s that we, too, must move. He *invite*s us to do so. He *welcome*s... even *long*s for it (e.g. Ezek. 18: 23; 2 Pet. 3:9). God **ALWAYS** takes "the first step," *and more*, in initiating **"The Peace Process"** between the world population and Himself, Whom we ignore, neglect, mock or rebel against.

Each human being is intended to be **God's House**. He desires to live and control within, so that each of us has a soul-saving influence on all around us and upon all whom we can, *in whatever ways possible*, influence for God, holiness and heaven.

Did you notice in Hag. 2: 6,7 above, God said *"I will shake...I will shake... I will fill!"* Off-centred Man shakes

nations into disaster. God shakes in order to fill with His glory! What a difference! And nations will see the greatest prosperity when they allow God to shake their foundations in order to fill with His glory. Do you think that such a shaking is irrelevant to the world? I **GUARANTEE** you that nothing stops crime and corruption of all sorts, so quickly and so completely as real salvation from sin! Nothing!

God's *shaking* process is a *cleansing* process, for God *cleanses* before He *fills*. Jesus could not properly enter "His Father's House" unless He turned over the tables of the money changers, and thereby cleansed the temple. Every person on earth must allow Christ to turn their tables over. HE must shake and turn over in order to cleanse and fill. **What a new house for Christmas!!**

Let's quickly review! It was seen that during the times *and with the encouragement* of the prophet, Haggai, the Temple was being rebuilt. It was to *that rebuilt Temple* that Christ came during His earthly ministry nearly 550 years later. For that reason, we call the rebuilt temple **"A New House For Christmas,"** for pushing aside the commercializing and secularizing of Christmas, it remains the only time in the year when thoughts, *world-wide*, turn (*even if it is to the slightest degree*) to the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.

With the above paragraph in mind, I reach for a copy of the **Christmas classic, Handel's Messiah**, which we listen to each Christmas season. On one side of one of the three LPs is the piece that uses words from the prophet, Malachi, 3: 1-3 regarding this very point and theme. **Note the words in bold print!** I will also add words in brackets for better understanding of the meaning. They are as follows:

"Behold, I send My messenger [i.e. John the Baptist], and he will prepare [clear] the way before Me [Christ]. And the Lord, whom you seek, will

suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant [Christ], in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's [metal tester's] fire and like launderer's soap. And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge [refine] them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."

The ancient Jews had a general desire that the Messiah would come, but, in a sense, Malachi asks, *"Do you think you are really ready?!"* *Don't be too hasty, because God requires His people to be holy, and has a Way to make them holy."* Are you ready?

Christmas is just weeks away. The Christ Who came to earth, born in Bethlehem, is the same as He Who will come a *second* time; perhaps very soon. But *even now*, He will come where He is made Lord of *All*, not merely in *theory*, but in *fact*, in every aspect of our life. **Those ancient Jews didn't realise what they were building. We must!** Each of us will choose whether or not to allow a total house-cleaning and table-turning so that He may shake, then fill us with His glory, that we might be *HIS* lights in this very dark world.

WHAT A GIFT! WHAT A HOUSE!

Our body is to be the temple of the Holy Spirit... Whom we receive from God, and we are not our own. We were bought at a Price; therefore we are to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's.

(See 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19)



We meet at Christ Church on the corner of Brent Street and Heriot Road in Hendon (NW4) at 5:45 pm Sundays. Nearest Tube: Hendon Central.