

LEVITT LETTER

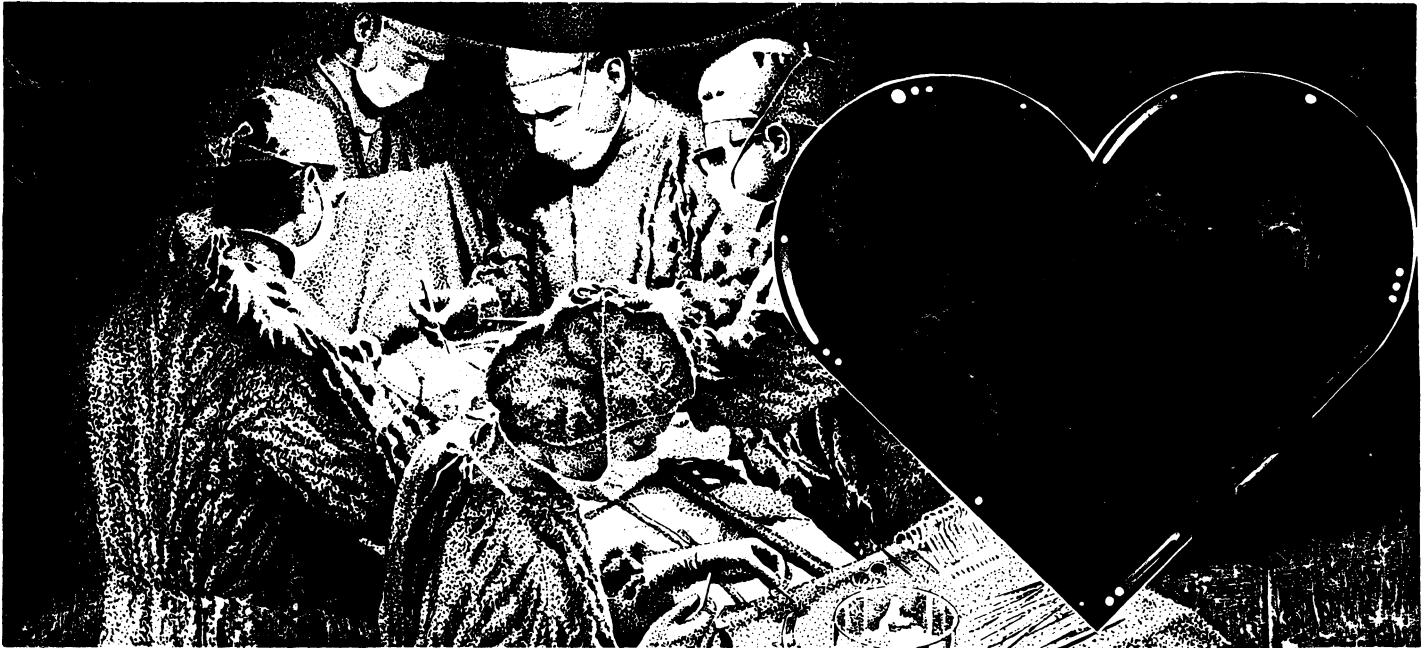
* "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." (Romans 10:1)

ZOLA LEVITT MINISTRIES Vol. 5, No. 1

P.O. Box 12268

DALLAS, TEXAS 75225

AND THE BEAT GOES ON



I don't want to bore you with more "heart-to-heart" talk from my recent by-pass operation but it seems there really are a few things left to say.

First, thank you so very much for all of the get-well cards and prayer messages and general good wishes and good cheer. It gets a bit glum sitting around after an operation, waiting for things to knit back together, and your messages were sincerely encouraging and comforting.

Naturally this open heart surgery has been a topic of constant conversation around me and it inevitably came up on my local radio talkshow. In that format, talking with thousands of folks throughout the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex, I thought I just might sound the alarm for how very important chest pain is. I didn't want anyone sitting around with it, like the late Jack Webb sat around with it recently. When you have chest pain you need your doctor and that's all there is to that. It's not something you wait with for one hour.

In any case, I did turn up a telephone respondent who had a mixed experience at a local hospital. She went down with plenty of chest pain alright, unable to stand or sit comfortably, but wasn't treated at the emergency room because she didn't have medical insurance nor enough money for their deposit. She was offended and came back

home to see if her pain might go away. That might well have been her last earthly act. **DO NOT WAIT AROUND WITH CHEST PAIN. GO TO YOUR DOCTOR.** I don't know how to stress this enough, but when I went to the hospital on Tuesday before Thanksgiving for a diagnosis of chest pain, I was operated on the following Friday. I really never got back out of bed. It was routine and I only had minor discomfort (and the operation would have been Thursday except that the surgeons were all busy carving their turkeys before they could get on to carving their customers). According to what I myself saw on the angiogram--the radioactive picture of the circulation of the blood in my coronary arteries--I might have been dead by Christmas. And what a useless and pointless way of dying; not in battle or some grand crusade but because of a minor plumbing problem.

In any case I think the point is made. I imagine that out of the huge family of viewers of ZOLA LEVITT LIVE there probably are right now any number of people with odd pains in their chest. Not every one is serious and not every one is heart related. But **every one** needs an immediate diagnosis. Please understand this to be a very godly act. The Lord gave you a body serviceable to your needs and put it in your care, and by and by He'll give you an even better one. But the

maintenance and repair of the one you now have is a holy and scriptural duty. Please attend to it without delay.

And by the way, I'm feeling very fit, coming along quite naturally, and should be at a full work load this month. I'm looking forward to Passover Season, when I have a great many speaking engagements, with full enthusiasm this year, and to the June Israel land-and-sea trip with special anticipation. The last three tours I hosted were under circumstances of lacking energy, and I was taking medications with side-effects. On the upcoming pilgrimage I should be myself again and I really look forward to that. I hope you can join me in June.

Thanks again from the bottom of my newly repaired heart for all those prayers and good wishes.

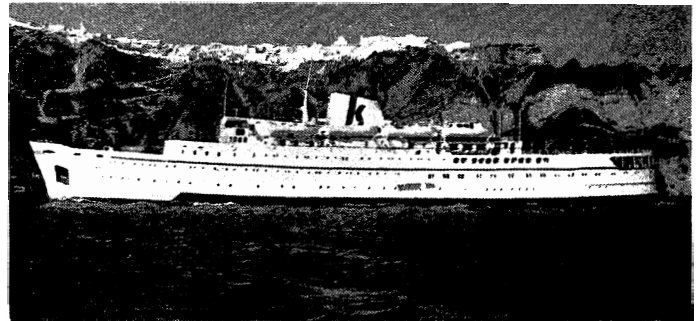


Our Zola Levitt Ministries Notebook is an answer to many requests. Our viewers evidently keep our Levitt Letter and the personal letters we send and we are very gratified by that. We have designed the multi-purpose binder shown above for your use in this respect. It has marked tabs indicating separate sections for keeping our materials and our program schedules in an organized fashion so you will always have them handy. It also contains all seven studies that go with our new series of programs, "The Bible--the Whole Story." All of the scriptural references in those important studies are included so that you may go over them carefully at your leisure. We need a minimum donation of \$20 to defray the cost of this item. We will automatically supply you with a new television and radio programming schedule each quarter to put into your notebook.

ARE YOU GOING?

For those of you holding tour applications for our June 4-18 trip to Egypt, Israel and the Greek Islands, I need to urge you to come to a decision as soon as possible. If you're thinking about going with us but don't have an application yet, then please send for one by return mail.

The fact is, we are getting much more response than we anticipated and it seems as though it will be difficult to get everyone on the trip. We are deeply gratified by all your interest but we can't add cabins to ships or seats to airplanes, and at some point we're going to have to cut off registrations. We have contacted our land agents overseas and asked for the maximum space they can give us and at this point it's simply a first-come, first-serve basis. Other travelers are trying to reserve the same spaces and we just have to get our reservations made before they do.



Ordinarily we're able to add people to our trips almost up to the departure date, but this year we are embarrassed by our own popularity. It almost seems as though we are the only folks who ever thought of going to Israel to look at the response we have! Indeed as more people become conscious of the prophecy fulfillments all around us, they become eager to see the holy places where it all happened. We're all for it, but we need to know well in advance just how many are coming along.

THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S

I've been saving a news article which represents one of those familiar echoes of a major prophecy fulfillment. A few weeks ago in Jerusalem there was an incident that can teach us a great deal about how close we are to the end times. The article below was reprinted from the Washington Post, datelined Jerusalem.

JERUSALEM — Jerusalem police, alerted in advance, Thursday night broke up what they described as a well-organized attempt by orthodox and militantly nationalistic Jews to take over and establish a settlement on the Temple Mount, a site holy to both Jews and Moslems.

Police arrested 45 people in a roundup in the Old City, later releasing four after determining they were not involved. The others remained in custody and will be brought before a judge tonight for an extension of their jail terms until being brought to trial.

Local officials, including Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, condemned the takeover attempt and worked frantically Friday morning to prevent a feared violent Arab reaction as the news of the incident spread.

They appeared to have been successful as there were no reports of serious disturbances in Arab East Jerusalem Friday, although security forces fired into the air to break up a small crowd of stone-throwing Arabs Friday night. Israeli Radio said three Arabs were detained.

The incident, however, was thought likely to increase tension in Jerusalem and the West Bank, where there have been numerous clashes recently between Palestinians and Jewish settlers.

Police officials said some of those arrested were followers of Rabbi Meir Kahane, a U.S.-born Jew and founder of the extremist Jewish Defense League, who advocates the forcible expulsion of the Arabs from the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel. They also included Israeli soldiers who were not in uniform and residents of Qiryat Arba, a militantly nationalistic Jewish settlement near the West Bank Arab city of Hebron.

Some of those arrested, including the soldiers, were armed with automatic weapons.

The Temple Mount, located in the eastern section of the Old City, is the site of the ancient Jewish temple of King David as well as two mosques—the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa.

The Dome of the Rock shelters an outcropping of rock from which the prophet Mohammed, according to Islamic belief, ascended to heaven, and upon which, according to the Old Testament, Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac. The site is Islam's third holiest, after Mecca and Medina.

Police did not say how they learned of the plot.

About 10 Jewish youths were arrested initially, reportedly near the entrance to a blocked passageway through which they apparently hope to tunnel to reach the Temple Mount. Most of the others were rounded up at the Old City home of Rabbi Israel Ariel, a Kahane ally who was the rabbi of Yamit, the last bitter holdout Jewish settlement in the Sinai, which was returned to Egypt last year under the terms of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

Kahane, who is in New York, was quoted by Israeli Radio as saying he had no advance knowledge of the Temple Mount plot.

First let's see what happened from a Biblical perspective because we have four thousand years of experience with the importance of Mt. Moriah to the Jewish people. The Temple Mount, as the article attests, is traditionally the site where Abraham offered his only son, and of course, it was the site of the two past Temples of God. Since 691 A.D. however, the Arab shrines have stood on the Mount and the Jewish people have been powerless to reclaim their most hallowed ground.

That situation is changing.

Eleven years ago when I wrote *Satan in the Sanctuary*, there were similar attempts of the Orthodox Jews to retake the holy site and we reported them in that book. Back then someone actually applied for a building permit to construct the Temple of God! (The permit was denied by the appropriate authorities since the site was occupied).

One of the principal features of the Tribulation Period to come is that the proper Jewish House of God will again stand on the Temple Mount. We know it from several important verses (Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15, II Thessalonians 2:3-4, Revelation 11:1-3). The Temple will have to be there for the Antichrist to enter and proclaim himself God. It will have to be there so that the Old Covenant system of sacrificial worship can be re-instituted and some Israelis are preparing for that. The Dome of the Rock has been standing in the place of the Temple of God for nearly thirteen centuries but it will have to go. When we made our program at the Dome last year, I appealed to the viewers to take a good look at it because it wouldn't be there forever. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't want to own "a piece of the rock" right now.

We shouldn't be too impressed by all the dramatics in the above article because that is what the American press does to Israeli affairs no matter how localized or benign they may be. The Washington Post seems to have thought more of the incident than the Arabs themselves, and of course, Israeli "disasters" sell very well in our media.

But we must never underestimate the importance of the prophecy fulfillment aspect of such events. Rabbi Kahane's people don't realize the total implication of what they are moved to do but they are following God's plan nevertheless. The Temple will be re-established by the Jews, not once but twice; the Millennial Kingdom will be centered in the ruling House of God on Mt. Moriah for a thousand years.

We should also note in passing that the Israeli and Arab mentalities toward such happenings are not so very antagonistic after all. If the Orthodox Jews don't protest the presence of the Arab shrines, they feel they're being faithless. If the police don't get involved then they're not being very good police. And if the Mayor doesn't come out, he'll really get it from his opposition. I met Mayor Teddy Kollek on a ZOLA LEVITT LIVE program and, as you could plainly see, he's a very busy and very kind-hearted man. Such incidents are all in a day's work in Jerusalem, and they've been going on since King David and the Jebusites. Mayor Kollek, in my estimation, is the best mayor of Jerusalem since Nehemiah.

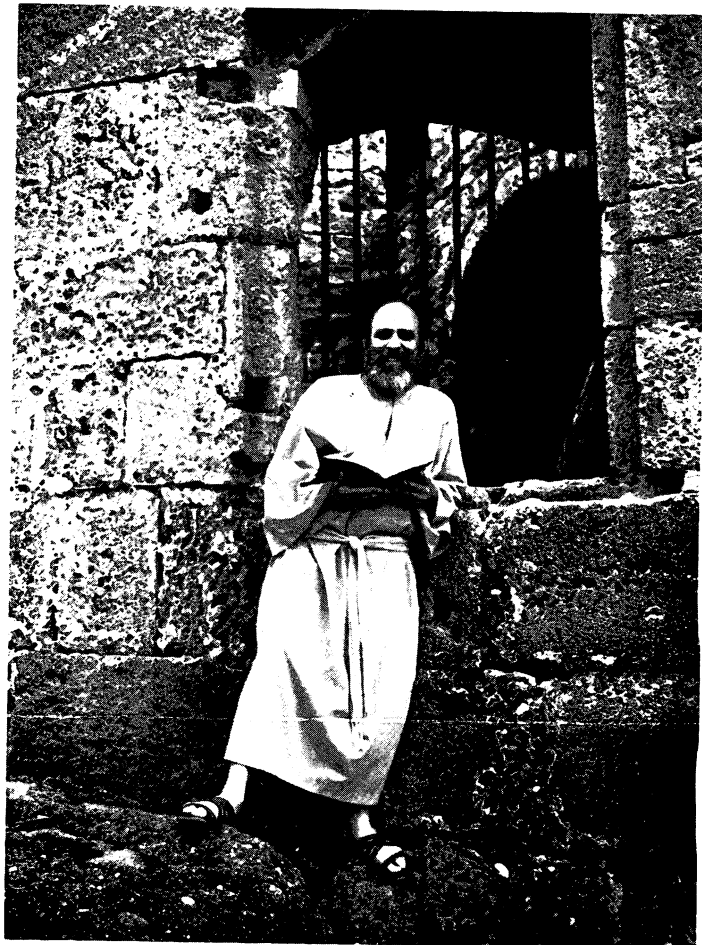
Another interesting feature of the incident is the factor of Jewish police arresting Jewish protestors to protect an Arab site. It is against Jewish law--and now I'm talking about serious Biblical Covenant Law--for anyone to disturb anyone else's holy ground. It may have been a long night in the cooler for the invaders, but I like the general attitude of the Municipality of Jerusalem.

"DOING WHAT WE DO BEST!"



Above please see the location crew of ZOLA LEVITT LIVE doing what they do best. Truly the Holy Land, the Greek Islands, and the breathtaking Acropolis of Athens just seemed to open up to our cameras and we believe we have the best location footage ever in all of our efforts over the years. The upcoming fall programs will reach a new standard of excellence on ZLL and we thank you most profoundly for making it all happen. Be sure to tune in to the new series, which will begin for most of you in September, continuing through our national system for several months.

Please write in and tell us how we're doing, and please encourage your friends and neighbors to join you for this especially fine series.





LAMB Producer - Rick "Levi" Coghill
LAMB Lead Vocalist - Joel Chernoff

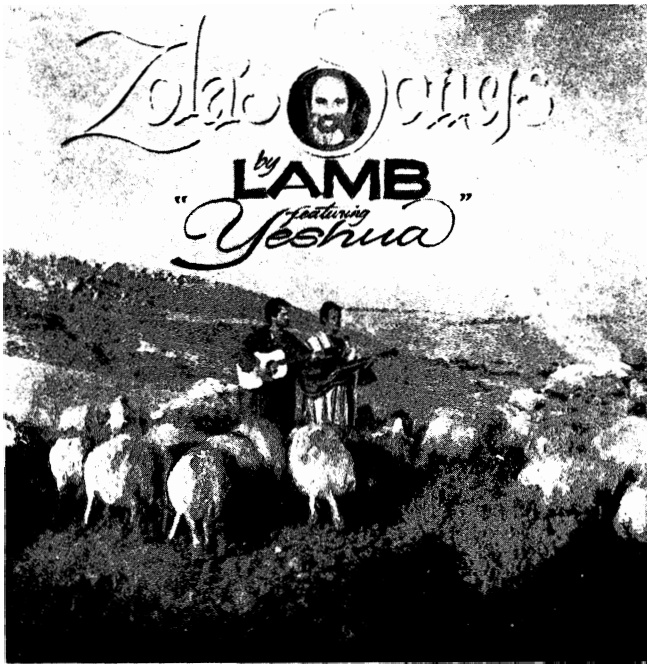


ON LOCATION

LAMB accompanied the crew of ZOLA LEVITT LIVE to Israel in June to provide "location music" for the new fall series called "Yeshua". Many of you have complimented LAMB's beautiful songs on past programs and in the new series you'll see the musicians performing at the Biblical sites.

LAMB consists of Joel Chernoff and Rick "Levi" Coghill and on record albums they are supported by a variety of instruments. The new album, "Zola's Songs by LAMB" will be offered exclusively through our ministries.

Zola's Songs by LAMB



I've been waiting to write this article for some twelve years.

When I came to the Lord in 1971 I assumed that He would put me to work in areas where I was already competent. I was just finishing my doctorate in music and I well understood the inspirational power of fine music. I had written songs for years and so I eagerly prepared to write some love songs about my new Love. God I supposed, would delight in my experienced creativity.

But God's ways are not our ways. Though I had only a little bit of writing experience, mostly as a music critic, I found myself writing books. The books were widely read but privately I continued to write my songs and I hoped there was a way that God would use them.

The books led to radio. I became a talkshow host on a Christian station in Dallas and I met some very interesting people. I talked with Pat Boone, Hal Lindsey, Charles Colson, Rod McKuen, and Madelyn Murray O'Hair on that program, along with hosts of other believers and unbelievers. And I secretly kept working on my songs.

Radio led to television even though I wasn't exactly one of the beautiful people. I remember thinking how downright good-looking the Christian TV personalities were and how out of place I'd be. But God multiplied the work anyway and I kept tirelessly polishing my songs.

And now, this summer, the door finally opened. The singing group LAMB heard the songs and they liked them. In fact, they loved them. Even

though they had never before recorded any outside composer's songs they wanted to make an album of mine. And it so happened that they were between contracts and they could do so.

So at last God has called for the songs and, in fact, has arranged for the right musicians at the right time to make the album. I won't bother you with the myriad other miracles that typically accompany such projects, but I assure you that LAMB has done a magnificent work. The album is simply wonderful if I say so myself. I composed three of the songs in Jerusalem in June and I'm amazed that the Lord has provided for their distribution this soon.

The album will be ready to mail shortly after you receive this newsletter. The title of the album is simply "Zola's Songs by LAMB". It will be offered on all of the new fall programs and the music will be played on the programs as much as possible. We will be asking a \$20 minimum gift for this item (or for the cassette tape version).

We realize that the readers of this newsletter are our regular supporters and we wanted to do something a little special for you. Frankly, we do need the \$20 to cover our rather high costs, but I will autograph each album ordered before September 30. This will be the only autographed offer we will make so you are getting in on a "first edition". And you will be helping us tremendously as we undertake this new kind of outreach.

THE DAY AFTER "THE DAY AFTER"

100 million Americans tuned in to the television movie "The Day After" and were horrified to see one of the possible futures of this generation. It was certainly a stunner of a presentation and the discussion afterwards pretty much supplied the fact that nothing can be done. It was remarkable to see so eminent a group of fine minds come to no happy conclusion about the prospects for warding off total nuclear catastrophe. The philosopher, Elie Wiessel, said it all when he commented, "If there were only a way to improve human nature." There is a way, of course. As Jesus Christ said, "I am the way," (John 14:6). It sounds simplistic of course, to say that the human nature of saved individuals will improve but I'm not ashamed to say that it usually does. In any case, human beings will be profoundly improved at the coming of the King when "We shall all be changed" (I Cor. 15:51-52).

I personally have no answer to the impending problem of the end of the world by means of nuclear weapons. Ted Koppell, the moderator of the commentary program, called the upcoming war "Armageddon" but that was the only credit given to the scriptures in the discussion. The liberal denominations all over the land gathered in their churches to watch the film in a pristine example of "learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth." Outside of John 3:16 I don't know what to suggest. If you missed that Sunday night program because you were in a Bible teaching church you did the right thing.

An interesting exercise after the event was the ABC Nightline News program's "War Game". Again the program assembled a group of experienced government and military officials and purported to show what might happen in the actual situation of a nuclear war. I frankly didn't watch all of it since it went on night after night (and since I don't intend to be on earth for that war). The introductory program persuaded me that the commentators were on the wrong track. The "War Game" guessed that the trouble which would finally escalate to world war would begin in Iran. Interestingly enough, the original movie "The Day After" guessed that the initial trouble would be in Germany.

Prophecy tells us, however, that the beginning of the end will be in Israel, or more accurately, in an attempted invasion of Israel. To look at the Tribulation Period prophecy as it relates to the final battle of Armageddon, we can see that at least a 7-year time span is involved (See Ezekiel 39:9). Prophecy analysts disagree on the timing of the invasion called "The invasion of Gog and Magog" (Ezekiel 38-39). In my book with Dr. Tom McCall, "The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel," we place it very close to the beginning of the Tribulation Period, probably just before it. And so the world, in effect, mobilizes for Armageddon throughout the 7-year tribulation but especially in the latter 3½ years. When the Antichrist first assumes power there will be a sort of enforced peace on earth, but when he is shown vulnerable at the mid-point of the 7 years (II Thess. 2:3, 4) the preparations for the final war will begin. We should appreciate that, unlike in the TV portrayal, it will take some amount of time for the world's armies to actually clash, and the war seems to be more like a conventional war than a push-button nuclear holocaust. Quite possibly, the Israelis will have shown the world such a fearsome weapon in repulsing the Russian

invasion that nuclear weapons will be considered futile. Or perhaps world leaders will still keep their final deterrent weapons under wraps. The common fear of total global annihilation accompanying the use of nuclear devices will impress even the world of the Tribulation.

All that is better explained in the book, or in "Satan in the Sanctuary," which details the history of the Temple and the career of the upcoming Antichrist.

I understood that certain religious leaders were against Christian people watching "The Day After" but I didn't favor that point of view. We are soldiers in a much greater spiritual battle and we need to keep informed about the battlefield. We have no fear of possible world-ending catastrophes if we are biblically prepared. And we simply should be up with the time in order to witness intelligently in a very nervous climate.

Be prepared to answer the unbeliever when he asks you what it's all about (I Peter 3:15).

Every soul saved will see the day after "The Day After".

"He who lives by the sword..."

At the time of this writing I don't know the ultimate fate of Yasser Arafat, but we would do well to remember what a fuss an unknowledgeable world made over this unfortunate terrorist. He was received as a statesman at the United Nations. He had a private audience with the Pope and photographs produced for all the world to see. The Kremlin laid out the carpet for him as an important military leader. The Reverend Jesse Jackson embraced him as a dear friend and members of our UN delegation dealt with him despite our government's announced policy to the contrary.

Now he is cornered and about to be annihilated by his own brothers for reasons as incomprehensible as all the rest of the Lebanese events. If you save your Levitt Letters you will find that our past commentary and our predictions about Arafat were very much in line with the current events. What we really are watching is much more important than the assassination of an assassin; we are watching the take-over of Lebanon by Syria, which is in effect the mobilization of Russia on the northern border of Israel. Prophecy marches on.

What we might learn from the Arafat case is first, not to embrace every self-styled spokesman for an entire people, and second, deals made with Russia, Syria, or the PLO have a way of back-firing. By the time you receive this letter, the Arafat issue should be resolved one way or another.

The spectre of Palestinians killing fellow Palestinians should indicate the results of a Palestinian "homeland" established in the land of Israel.

DOOMSDAY!

Occasionally I'm called on for particularly interesting and relevant assignments as a writer. Some of these assignments include speech writing for certain Christian personalities. Recently I completed a speech on a subject that certainly concerns us all -- Doomsday. What the Scriptures refer to as the "end times" or the "latter days", laymen have begun to call "Doomsday".

This is certainly not the first exposition of this critically important current event but since my speaker was a minister of great integrity, I was able to work in a very Biblical viewpoint. After his address, his audience could not have claimed to have never heard the Gospel.

The subject matter is crucial to us all and when the speech was written I felt led to share it with you. And so beginning in this issue of the Levitt Letter and continuing in upcoming issues we will present the scriptural view of the end of the world.

The speech began as follows:

My dear friends,

As I address you today we are the least privileged generation of all time.

We are the first and perhaps the last generation of human beings to confront the possibility of global destruction. We are the first people to truly have to come to grips with the possibility of the utter destruction of our world and everything on it. No human beings before us have ever had to seriously think about this and if there is to be a generation of people coming after us, it's hard to imagine that they will live under still more tension than we do. I believe and I think you agree with me that our time surpasses any before it in the area of sheer insecurity -- the day by day simple lack of confidence in the future.

Now we are not gathered here to talk about the failure of this world as a world but rather the greatness of our nation as a nation. Without doubt we remain great and people with experience with other nations of the world will testify to that. America is still the most successful national experiment in freedom in all history and that's all there is to that. But America too, is deeply affected by the climate of the times.

I believe that it is particularly appropriate for men of God to address the political situation at the present time. The political situation happens to be shot through with Biblical overtones today. I believe that the Biblical prophets, and particularly our Lord Himself, spoke meaningfully to the kinds of problems we now live with day by day and hour by hour.

The theme of the Bible is hope. Can you imagine what life would be like without the slightest conception of God -- without the vaguest hope of any kind of a hereafter? Do you realize that the least religious among us invariably says, "Dear God" or "God help me" when the chips are really down. When we are sick or when we are hurt or when we are totally discouraged we tend, every one of us, to call upon the God that we obviously all know. It doesn't matter if we haven't been to church for years and it doesn't matter if we are even cynical about our Creator; we still call on Almighty God when we need His help. We all have within us that inevitable hope that there is a providential God and that He hears our petitions. We all believe that somehow we can go to a better place.

I don't think I presume when I say that we all believe in God, at least when we desperately need to.

And today, my friends, all of us in this great nation and all of the people of all of the nations desperately need to believe in God. We need to at least comprehend the Biblical message about the times we live in. We need at least the solace of knowing that the Biblical prophets have foreseen our troubles and have spoken to a solution for them.

The very fact that our situation has been foreseen gives us a tangible hope. We simply cannot live without hope. We really can't live sensibly with the threat of global genocide and the constant predictions of the end of the world. People used to almost make a joke of preachers who warned of the end of the world, but if they make that joke now, they don't get many laughs. The expression "too true to be funny" has no greater meaning than in this case.

We are simply surrounded by people predicting our own demise. Intellectuals of every sort from the Biblically faithful to the total opposite are for once talking about the same things. Scientists, environmentalists, philosophers, political leaders, military experts and all the rest have finally joined the Bible reading community in warning this generation that our days may

be numbered. Some predict global destruction by nuclear weapons. Others predict the same thing by environmental pollution. Still others see the end coming through a variety of natural catastrophies. And then there are the advocates of famine, of disease, of overwhelming financial turmoil and on and on. Some see the human race ending entirely and others at least suppose that we'll survive through another dark age. But frankly there are very few who are optimistic. One can find the occasional predictor of good times, but let's face it, that point of view is getting difficult to believe. And at the same time those old-fashioned and profoundly undervalued books of the Bible take on more and more significance.

The Old Testament prophets foresaw an end to this world as we know it. They prophesied a time which they called "the latter days" or "the end times" in which society would simply collapse under a tremendous outpouring of the wrath of God. Men somehow would no longer be able to live together in their view and under the influence of terrible delusions would destroy their own world. This view of things has never been popular, understandably, but it's high time we took it seriously.

The New Testament continues the same theme, especially in the words of our Lord to His disciples about the end of the age. Jesus was very candid when he was asked these important questions about the future. He said:

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

(Luke 21:25-28)

Any Bible student is aware that our times match fatally well with those powerful words. Those conversant with the speeches and the lessons of Jesus Christ are very aware that there is an end somewhere to all of this and that our Lord was speaking of that end in that passage. It is only an intelligent view of our times that suggests that the Lord was referring to our generation or one very soon after it, like that of our children.

The disciples themselves were concerned about the end of the world and they asked Jesus some very important questions:

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came upon him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

(Matthew 24:3)

On this occasion our Lord did not answer in parables but rather stated most clearly what we now refer to as "The signs of the end." The distress of the nations, the perplexity, the hearts failing us for fear, and the powers of heaven shaken are all too familiar to the generation living today. During these end times we have the very real fear of annihilation and we simply have never faced that fear before.

Never in the history of this world since the time of Noah and the flood has the possibility even existed that the human race would be finished off to the last man, woman and child. Never in all of the wars of all the bloody history of all of the nations of the world has it ever been even remotely possible that men and men alone could destroy the world.

But now it is. With our technology we can destroy this entire earth within a matter of hours, perhaps even minutes. We all realize that fact and the mere realization of it must deeply affect the way we live.

As we assemble today, in a very real way we are terrified. There's no point in acting terrified for one another, but the fact remains we each are terrified within ourselves. We are as terrified as any people anywhere at any time who ever faced death.

Jesus' signs in the heaven may well involve the awful militarization of outer space involving killer satellites, laser weapons, horrible bombs and missiles and poisonous gases by which we can assure the cessation of life on this planet. The sky, so glorious by day and by night, has become an object of fear in our times.

Jesus went on to speak of disease, famine, hunger and suffering:

And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences: and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven (Luke 21:11).

Some might argue that men have always been plagued by these adversities. But it is a matter of common sense that these things are more intense now than ever before. Obviously famine and disease run rampant in a world badly over-populated. New forms of disease have visited our generation that the world never before contemplated, like the terrible epidemic of the diseases of incontinence -- AIDS and Herpes -- and the awful sicknesses and cancers of our environmental pollution. As if creation itself did not contain enough disease following the sins of the Garden of Eden, we have managed to invent new ones. People may have died of cancer before in history but they never died of exposure to Dioxin before in history. People may have been killed, even by the dozen, along lonely roads back in history. But only now are they blasted out of the skies by the hundreds. Men have always carried spears and swords and have faced their assailants before in history but now we have computer keyboards and display screens and while our killing power has grown exponentially we no longer even have to face the victims.

And morally, my friends, we have not seemed to grow at all. In fact, there's good argument to say that we have *deteriorated* through the ages. Paul wrote to Timothy:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

(II Timothy 3:1-7).

Are these the last days? If Timothy could come here and see our circumstances today he might indeed think that Paul was referring to these times.

Not all signs of the end are negative ones. Jesus indicated that the Gospel of His kingdom would be preached throughout the world:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

(Matthew 24:14)

We can see that this process is well under way. The nations of the world are receiving the Gospel as never before due to the improved television, radio and print journalism which fully blankets the globe with information of all sorts. The job is certainly not yet done but it is well under way and that marks the time that we should be watchful.

As a principle, we don't have to wait for all these things to reach completion to know that the end of the age is near. Jesus said that when we saw these things *beginning* to take place then there was hope of His return. Those of us who have our hopes in Him know that we will escape the worst of these consequences and are going to be raised to be with Him in heaven.

We need to always be watching and looking. Jesus compared the approach of these signs to birth pangs:

All these are the beginning of sorrows (Matthew 24:8).

Sorrow, or travail in Biblical language, is simply what we call labor, and no one ever ignored labor. When the pains come, even if there is an episode of false labor, sooner or later there will be a delivery. Something will happen. That is our Lord's image for the signs of the end. Ultimately, regardless of how we interpret these oncoming pains, something is certainly going to happen. We cannot ignore these signs. He did not say that all of the signs have to reach their worst stages nor be completed but rather "when these things begin to come to pass..."

Those of us in Christ have no need to simply shake our heads at what is happening in our world. Jesus is preparing a place for us now. He said:

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

He will come back for us from heaven:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

He gave us full warning:

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh (Matthew 24:42,44).

Friends, the only reasonable solution to all that we're confronting in these times is deliverance by Jesus Christ. If that sounds like an old, old story, then I'm proud to repeat it. I'm confident of it, I believe it myself, preach it on and on and I always have. This world needs an awareness of the reality of the return of Jesus Christ. This is not some pie-in-the-sky philosophy of some wizard of the supernatural or some cultic Johnny-come-lately's. This is the Bible pure and simple. Without the return of Christ, Christianity is almost pointless. What we see is not all we get. True Christians wait for Him every hour. We quoted Him a moment ago as saying, "If it were not so I would have told you." There are those who say it is not so—that Jesus Christ will not really return. They don't think a man can come back from history. They don't even think He's alive, evidently. Or if they think He's alive they don't think He's concerned for us—not concerned enough to come and do something. Well I believe that is why He said,

"If it were not so I would have told you." He would not have asked us to bear this heavy cross if there were not some way out—some plan of God, some redemption.

Our salvation is paid in full:

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (Ephesians 1:7).

Jesus Christ shed His blood on that cross for our salvation and that is how we have our redemption. We need only to believe in that cross and to be willing to believe He's really coming. If we believe He is coming then He will come for us. And when we are with Him, all of this travail will be finished. All of our wars, all of our famine, all of our pestilence, all of our betrayal, all of our lack of love, all of our poisoning of the air and the water and the land God gave us—all of it will be finished. We'll be at home with Him. We must simply repent of our sins, and receive Christ by faith. Then, in a life of Christian devotion and service, we are to await our eternal inheritance.

There is a facade of religion, especially in the Western world, my friends, but the difficulty is with true belief. We simply need to make the relationship with Jesus Christ an affair of the heart and not merely head knowledge or inconsequential respect. God keeps what He calls the Book of Life and only those whose names have been written in it will be saved. There are church people who are not saved just as there are communists who are not saved. No one is more nor less a participant in salvation; we either believe or we don't believe. If we haven't totally committed our lives to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord we may attend all the churches in the country but still miss out on salvation. Nicodemus, a ruler among the Jews and evidently a brilliant scholar of Bible truth, still was not saved. Jesus told him, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:3).

Friends, I don't believe I have to detail for people like you what true belief in Jesus Christ means. You have heard it before. Know that your heart, your mind and your will must simply turn to Him and He must be Lord of your life. You must serve and follow Him as you're directed by Him. You must do this openly and boldly.

In these troubled times evangelism is not what it used to be. Preachers used to plead with people to come to salvation. Now it's more a question of appealing to their simple common sense. How much more does the Lord have to fulfill before you realize that you need to get off of a sinking ship? How much more terrifying does life have to become and how much more menacing the inhumanity of man to persuade you that there must be a better way? In these troubled times I just say with open arms, come and be with us Christians. We're leaving and going to a better place.

In this land that we love there are many Christians indeed. Maybe the United States of America is the most Christian country in history. We can't be sure. But this is indeed a land of churches and a land of Bibles. This is a land of the most intricate and various Bible translations and devotional books and prayer guides and doctrinal lessons and all the rest. Indeed I suspect that the Kingdom will contain a great many Americans. It just can't be otherwise from what we can see. But again, being an American doesn't save you; believing in Jesus Christ does.

Now I don't have to tell you that I'm glad to be an American. The very purpose of our time together today is to reflect on the very real greatness of this nation. But friends, as a Bible student I would be remiss to speak of this nation without speaking of the end of time. To be an American is to be in the very thick of a gathering storm. We cannot help being the world's greatest power and therefore one of the protagonists in its very ending. But being a good American gives you the best chances to survive the upcoming series of troubles. Being a Christian provides for you to avoid them altogether. And so my message is essentially the same as it has been each year: If you're a good American I commend you, and if you're a good Christian I look forward to being with you forever.

Friends, will you bow your heads and pray with me about our nation and about the end of the age.

On the Shores of Tripoli

At this writing heavy fighting goes on in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli. For a week straight, local factions of Moslems, divided over Syria's future role in Lebanon, have been gunning each other down.

The significance here involves the fact that it doesn't seem to take an Israeli occupation, nor even an established battlefield, to cause the Lebanese to settle their arguments with bullets. At the same moment as the world watches Israel castigate her officers about a massacre they had no part in, another massacre grinds on day-in and day-out. And this second one in Tripoli isn't even between rival groups but divides a single group down a hair-thin line. It has nothing to do with Israel, of course, and merely seems to presage the power struggles that will issue forth in Lebanon when that country governs itself again.

In any case, Tripoli is far north of the Beirut action, had nothing to do with the Israeli occupation, had very little to do with the PLO or its staging grounds or outposts, and really doesn't figure into a new Lebanon in a very important way in the future. We should simply realize that there are some people--in Lebanon and in America too--who simply prefer to fight, even to the death, and that is what they will do under any circumstances.

It might also be said that this particular news item was buried in the back of the newspapers, despite the tragic casualty figures. This one was downplayed as if it really never happened, and I think it's because Israel is not involved and therefore much of the flavor goes out of the story. No villain, no entertainment.

But for my part, I think it is sadder to die in Tripoli at the hands of a brother than in a battle zone at the hands of an enemy. The confused Lebanese people need so much prayer and so much support at a time like this. Basically non-combatants (and they never really have participated in the modern wars against Israel) they have been targeted by the PLO, the Syrians, the Christian Phalangists, the militant Moslems, the Israeli occupiers and the occasional abandoned explosive in a field or a car. It is chaos just like this that will bring the world to seeking peace at any cost and will propel us directly into the end times. That this scenario should appear on Israel's northern border at just such a time as this should make prophecy students sit up and take notice.

I frankly feel there is an evil thought gathering in the mind of Gog even now, and the Kremlin is studying the territory very carefully even as we try to bring peace to where there can be no peace.

TWENTY-SEVEN DAYS AND COUNTING

We are led to think these days that war in the Middle East is almost constant and that Israel herself never stops fighting. In one sense there's some truth to it; the Israeli people haven't really been able to relax since 1948 when they were restored to the Promised Land. God promised to restore them but in His prophecies are many warnings about conflicts. Peace will not come to the Middle East until the Prince of Peace Himself establishes it.

But if we compare war with war the world around, a surprising truth emerges. I recently heard an Israeli native point out that the total time the Israelis have actually spent in combat amounted to 27 days! Since the independence of Israel 35 years ago that's all there has been. Probably no 27 days in all history have received so much media coverage nor scared so many people so much. Our own nation, by way of contrast, was at war for some 8 years in Viet Nam and 3 years in Korea during the same period. The Russians spent similar stretches of years extending their empire and they're still at it.

Now admittedly, when the Israelis go to war, they are efficient. They bring everything they have and they use it 24 hours a day. Virtually everybody in the country is in the army and it's a wonder that things haven't been much harder for them. But if we take the Biblical reports as given, the Lord goes to the battle with His people and He looks after them. And when He says that they will remain in the land (Amos 9:14) He means what He says. Israel will fight another few days before all is said and done but their enemies will never be successful when they try to cross God's boundaries.

At least two more wars are scheduled in prophecy for Israel and the Holy Land will survive them as usual. The Russian Invasion, at the beginning of the Tribulation Period, will be another of those "instant wars" and the Battle of Armageddon will be stopped by the King when He comes.

Until the fighting gets spiritually serious then, there's little to worry about and we know that our Kingdom is secure. In the meanwhile we might remember to look upwards into heaven because peace is on the way.