

Living Sacrifices | Living Stones

Gary Bergel

Happy New Year! Compiling reports for this first 2009 prayer letter and seeing militant pro-abortion advocates among President-elect Obama's appointees triggered flashbacks to 1973, the year IFA was called forth.

State laws against abortion were wiped out in January, 1973 by an activist Supreme Court in Roe vs Wade. Assaults on gender, marriage, and family were quickly intensified by legal and political activists who were waiting in the wings. Some of these same personalities or their protégés are again entering the political stage, even as I write. Déjà vu.

Biblical issues are "red hot." Taking moral stands, like California's Proposition 8 vote to ban same-sex marriage, can spark angry activism in the streets.

Many evangelical Christians appear war weary. Some seem confused and poised for compromise in areas where the Bible is morally certain. As ABC news anchor Ted Koppel declared in his 1987 Duke University commencement address: "What Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions, they are Commandments. They are, not were." God, not man, has drawn today's battle lines.

How will we endure and soldier on? Only by living out a deep and abiding daily commitment to Christ. "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ..." (1 Pet 2:4-5)

ABUNDANT LIFE: A THREE-FOLD CORD Gary P. Bergel

Recorded in Israel! This message was delivered at the L'Chaim International Pro-Life Conference in Jerusalem, Israel. In this 55-minute message, the "abundant life" promised by Jesus of Nazareth (John 10:10) is explicated to show that, through our Messiah, we can enjoy abundant life in the natural (biological), spiritual, and even eternal realm—now, not just in heaven! Order IFA Item #CD034, \$4.95 + \$3.50 shipping. **Credit card orders toll-free 1-800-872-7729 or via www.ifabooks.com.**



Illustration by Meinrad Craighead, Liturgical Art, Sheed & Ward 1988

He performed the mercy promised that we might serve Him without fear all the days of our life.

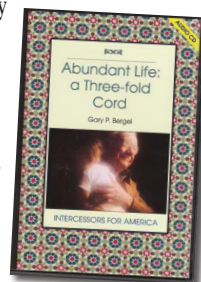
Luke 1:68-79

A key to open Kingdom understanding presented here is, "Coming to Him...!" All God-appointed direction in our lives, both for prayer and service, flows out of our relationship and fellowship with Christ.

Mark Earley, President of Prison Fellowship Ministries, stressed this in an "extraordinary" message, "Called by God / Called to God," which he shared at a banquet marking IFA's 35th year of ministry, held in conjunction with our annual in-person Board meeting at the end of October. We are presenting a short introductory excerpt to hopefully jump-start your devotional life with Jesus in 2009. Mark's full message, and all other 35th Anniversary Banquet remarks, is available as an audio CD. (See Page 2)

Scripture and the severity of the hour dictate that we surrender and consecrate ourselves as "living sacrifices." It is only as "living sacrifices" that we can know ourselves positioned and effective as "living stones" in the body of Christ. "Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments [weapons] of righteousness to God." (Rom 6:13)

The call to each of us in this New Year is to be a yielded instrument, a "weapon" of righteousness to God. As we "come to Him" and yield our lives we satisfy our Lord's heart, advance His Kingdom, and fulfill this glorious Messianic prophecy: "Your people will be volunteers in the day of Your power." (Ps 110:3)



FIRST FRIDAY January 2 PRAYER FOCUS

TERRORISM | FOREIGN POLICY

Intercede for the thwarting of any planned terrorist attacks in the weeks before, during, and following the January 20, 2009 Inauguration. Intercede that the Lord grant revelation and hold President Bush and President-elect Obama in a biblical posture toward Israel and Jerusalem. Offer thanksgiving for the approval of the Security and Troop Removal pact with the U.S. by the Cabinet and Parliament of Iraq; pray for ratification by national referendum this summer. Intercede for the protection of U.S., Coalition, and Iraqi troops and the continued establishment of good government, law and order, religious freedom, and resolution of the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION 11TH CONGRESS

Intercede by name for the Obama Administration Cabinet and other key advisory and staff appointments that are being made. (Use listing on Page 4) Pray for your U.S. Senators and Representative, their families, and for the hiring of God-fearing, qualified staff members, both in Washington and their state offices. Intercede as the new 11th Congress completes the hiring of staff and selection of leadership for all committees and subcommittees.

LEADERSHIP AT IFA

Intercede in agreement with the Board and Staff of IFA as CEO candidates are being interviewed and considered this month, that the Lord will be gracious to reveal and unanimously confirm the one He has been preparing for this strategic position. Recognizing that all in the ranks of IFA who pray and fast regularly for America comprise the ministry of IFA, intercede that grace, anointing, courage, and strength be granted to all state, regional, city, and local church men and women that the Lord is calling to mobilize prayer and to observe the first Friday in their churches and communities.

LIVING SACRIFICES

"As you come to him...like living stones [you] are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 2:4-5) Offer thanksgiving that through the finished work of Christ we have been made "to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God." (Rev. 5:10) Offer yourself anew and pray for grace to be yielded and obedient in prayer and service throughout 2009. (Rom. 12:1-2, 6:11-14)

www.ifapray.org



Watching Unto Prayer . . .

"What I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" —Mk 13:37

"But the end (final limits) of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers." —1 Pet 4:7

Jimmy & Carol Owens

PRAYING THE NEWS...

Great spiritual principalities and powers of evil are not routed by loners but by armies of prayer warriors praying strong prayers. The marvelous last-days technology that God has given us—the ability to communicate images and sound instantly to the whole world from anywhere on the earth via radio, telephones, the Web and E-mail, and specifically television—may be part of God's plan to summon those vast armies immediately to battle. Carol and I always look forward to the TV network news. It has become one of our most intense intercession times.

There must be multitudes of Christians across the nation whose hearts are touched by the daily parade of catastrophe crossing our TV screens. If only we were aware of each other, we could pray as a united army. If one shall put a thousand to flight, and two, ten thousand (Deut 32:30), how many spiritual foes can be routed by the simultaneous prayers of thousands of intercessors across the nation? We could pray with new faith and boldness, knowing that we are not alone but are many. One of the great values of television is its immediacy. Consider for example:

TV: "We take you live by satellite to the airport where terrorists have seized hostages." Images flash on the screen. Within moments, prayer warriors are called to battle worldwide.

We pray: "In the overruling name of Jesus we resist the spirits of anarchy and violence that drive these terrorists, and, as an army, we bind them up. Lord, send Your angels to confound the powers of darkness. Protect the innocent. Give wisdom to the authorities." Then we stay with it, following the news flashes and responding in prayer until the episode ends.

TV: "An attorney for a civil rights advocacy group has asserted today that the First Amendment protects all freedom of speech, even child pornography."

We pray: "O God! Destroy these works of ungodliness in Jesus' name. Defeat the plans of those who corrupt our children! We resist the spirits of perversion and depravity that enslave the innocent and bring Your wrath on our country. Forgive us for our apathy that has allowed this evil to spread across our nation. Show us what You want us to do now."

Other typical calls to prayer:

Refugees from a natural disaster or war. Bureaucracy holds up relief efforts. Speak against those obstacles in prayer. Ask for mercy for the suffering and bereaved, and blessing on the rescue efforts.

Continuing violence between Israeli troops and Palestinians. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." (Psalm 122:6)

Drugs, crime, abortion, corruption in government and in the church, AIDS, poverty, injustice. These things and others are daily brought into our homes as instant calls to prayer. All across the time zones of our nation and the world, an intercessory army is mobilized to resist the devil and cry out to God.

When Christian leaders are being interviewed live, ask God to put words of godly wisdom in their mouths. Pray for the news media, too, that God will save those who decide its content or remove those who mock righteousness and promote evil causes.

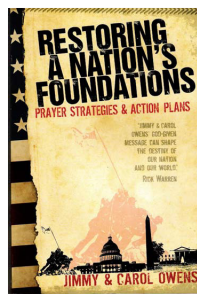
Think what wonders might be accomplished through the daily agreement of thousands of Christians "watching and praying." However, take a word of advice from a pair of inveterate news prayers: Watch the news, discern and understand the times, and pray, but don't immerse yourself in bad news, and don't live in fear.

Read more on "Current Prayer Guides" page at www.ifapray.org.

RESTORING A NATION'S FOUNDATIONS

Jimmy & Carol Owens

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CALLED by GOD CALLED to GOD

Mark Earley

The following is a brief excerpt from remarks Prison Fellowship President, Mark Earley, presented at IFA's 35th Anniversary Banquet. His inspiring message and the evening's remarks encapsulating IFA's history are available as a one-hour audio CD; see offer below.

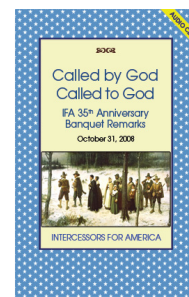
We are delighted to have a longstanding relationship with Intercessors for America. One of the things I really appreciate about IFA is that you are a ministry that was born for collaboration. You link ministries together; you link churches together in a movement; praying for this nation and for the world. Collaborating with IFA is an inspiration.

I want to share a thought with you that I share with every new employee at Prison Fellowship. It is also the thing that I think is at the heart of what IFA is all about, both today and in its founding. You would think I would say "prayer" and, in essence, it is. But let me come at this from a little different perspective. This thing we call Christianity, this relationship that makes us a Christian, is exactly that, relationship. We have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and at the heart of that truth is that we have been called to fellowship with Him.

I tell all of our new employees that their calling is not to Prison Fellowship or to prison ministry. Their calling is to Jesus Christ, and to fellowship with Him. If they are faithful to that, to that which they have been called, then they can be effective in the places where God sends them.

I believe from the scriptures that God gives us one calling, and that is to Himself and to Himself alone. (1 Cor 1:9) I travel and meet Christians in a lot of settings. I am convinced that for most who name the name of Jesus, very few are truly engaging in their fellowship with Christ. I think this is why the Church today is so anemic. I honestly do not know very many Christians who really are ruthless every day about carving out time to spend time alone with God.

There is nothing more amazing to me than being called to fellowship with Jesus. There is nothing more amazing, nothing more necessary, nothing we should be more passionate about.



CALLED BY GOD CALLED TO GOD

IFA 35th Anniversary
Banquet Remarks

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The best starting point for a study of the Christian discipline of fasting is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 6:1-18, Christ gave instructions to His disciples on three related duties: almsgiving, praying, and fasting. In each case, He placed His main emphasis upon the motive and warned against religious ostentation for the sake of impressing men. With this qualification, He assumed that all His disciples would practice all three of these duties. This is indicated by the language that He used concerning each.

In the second verse, He said, "When you do a charitable deed." In verse 6, He said, "When you [singular] pray" (individually); and in verse 7, "When you [plural] pray" (collectively). In verse 16, He said, "When you [plural] fast" (collectively); and in verse 17, "When you [singular] fast" (individually). In no case did Christ say *if*, but always *when*. The inference is clear. Christ expected that all His disciples would regularly practice all three of these duties. In particular, the parallel between prayer and fasting is exact. If Christ expected His disciples to pray regularly, then by the same token He expected them also to fast regularly.

Fasting was an accepted part of religious duty among the Jewish people in Christ's day. They had practiced it continuously from the time of Moses onward. Both the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist fasted regularly. The people were surprised that they did not see the disciples of Jesus doing the same, and they asked Him the reason.

Their question, and Christ's answer, are recorded in Mark: "The disciples of John and of the

Jesus assumed that all of His disciples would practice almsgiving, praying and fasting.

Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.'" (Mark 2:18-20)

Shaping History

Derek Prince

The Place of Fasting

This answer of Jesus is given in the form of a parable. It is important to interpret the parable correctly. The "bridegroom," as always in the New Testament, is Christ Himself. The "friends of the bridegroom" are the disciples of Christ (about whom the question had been asked). The period "while the bridegroom is with them" corresponded to the days of Christ's ministry on earth, while

Fasting is a mark of true Christian discipleship, ordained by Jesus Himself. Christ did not say *if*, but always *when*.

He was physically present with His disciples. The period "when the bridegroom will be taken away from them" commenced when Christ ascended back to heaven, and will continue until He returns for His Church. In the meanwhile, the Church, as a bride, is awaiting the return of the Bridegroom. This is the period in which we are now living, and concerning which Jesus says very definitely, "And then they [the disciples] will fast in those days." In the days in which we now live, therefore, fasting is a mark of true Christian discipleship, ordained by Jesus Himself.

Fasting is endorsed not merely by the teaching of Jesus, but also demonstrated by His own personal example. Immediately after being baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit to spend forty days fasting in the wilderness. This is recorded in Luke: "Then Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilder-

ness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry." (Luke 4:1-2)

The record says that Jesus did not eat at all during these forty days, but it does not say that He did not drink. Also, it says, "afterward, He was hungry," but it does not say that He was thirsty. The probable inference is, therefore, that He abstained from food, but not from water. During this period of forty days, Jesus came into direct spiritual conflict with Satan.

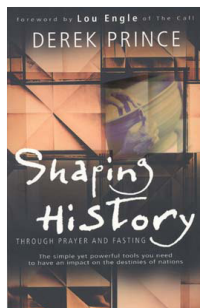
There is a significant difference in the expressions used by Luke to describe Jesus before and after His fast. At the beginning, in Luke 4:1, we read: "And Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan." At the end, in Luke 4:14, we read: "Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee."

When Jesus went into the wilderness, He was already "full of the Holy Spirit." But when He came out again after fasting, He "returned in the power of the Spirit." It would appear that the potential of the Holy Spirit's power, which Jesus received at the time of His baptism in the Jordan, only came forth into full manifestation after He had completed His fast. Fasting was the final phase of preparation through which He had to pass, before entering into His public ministry.

The same spiritual laws that applied in Christ's own ministry apply also in the ministry of His

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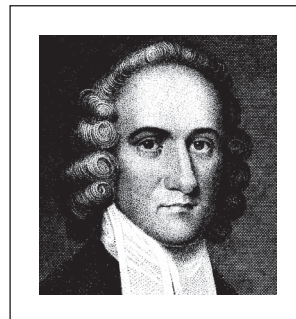
disciples. In John 14:12, Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also." By these words, Jesus opened the way for His disciples to follow in the pattern of His own ministry. However, in John 13:16, Jesus also said, "The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." This applies to the preparation for ministry. If fasting was a necessary part of Christ's own preparation, it must also play a part in our preparation as His disciples, and in the preparation and release of an empowered Church.



SHAPING HISTORY THROUGH PRAYER AND FASTING
Derek Prince

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Israel, the founding of America and other world events. Softcover, 219 pages. Order IFA #B142 \$4.95 + \$3.50 shipping.



Jonathan Edwards (1703 - 1758)

"I have often said it would be a thing very desirable, and very likely to be followed with a great blessing, if there could be some contrivance, that there should be an agreement of all God's people in America . . . to keep a Day of Fasting and Prayer to God; wherein, we should all unite on the same day. . . . It seems to me, it would mightily encourage and animate God's saints, in humbly and earnestly seeking God, for such blessings which concerns them all; and that it would be much for the rejoicing of all, to think, that at the same time such multitudes of God's dear children, far and near, were sending up their cries to the same common Father for the same motives."

—Jonathan Edwards, 1742

21 DAYS OF AWAKENING JAN 1-21

For a Christ Awakening | www.AwakeningAmerica.us

MOMS' DAY OF PRAYER JAN. 17

Worldwide day of prayer: www.momsdayofprayer.com

SANCTITY OF LIFE SUNDAY JAN. 18

★ STERLING, VA – Care Net (www.care-net.org), Focus on the Family (www.family.org), Lutherans for Life (www.lutheransforlife.org) and other groups are calling on churches to observe Jan. 18 as Sanctity of Life Sunday.

36th DC MARCH FOR LIFE JAN. 21-22

★ WASHINGTON, DC – The 36th annual March for Life will rally at noon on Thurs., Jan. 22, at the Mall in Washington, DC. A pro-life convention will also be held on Wed., Jan. 21, at the Hyatt-Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. More than 50 million preborn humans have been killed through abortion since 1973. For more information about the rally and seminars, go to www.marchforlife.org.

PRO-LIFE YOUTH TRAINING JAN. 21-23

★ STAFFORD, VA – “Personhood Now” is the theme for Rock for Life’s Ninth Youth Training and Activism Week. All events will take place in or near The Liaison Hotel on Capitol Hill, 415 New Jersey Ave. Prayer vigils will be convened at Planned Parenthood, the White House and Supreme Court. For more information visit www.rockforlife.org.

COLLEGE STUDENTS FOR LIFE JAN. 24

★ ARLINGTON, VA – The Students for Life of America (SFLA) Annual Conference will convene all-day Saturday, January 24. SFLA director, Kristan Hawkins, reports that last year, 800 students from 100+ universities participated in this day of education, training, and networking with fellow college students who often feel “alone” yet care to make a difference on their college and university campuses by proclaiming the pro-life message. For more information visit www.studentsforlife.org.

SEEK GOD FOR THE CITY FEB. 25 – APR. 5

★ AUSTIN, TX – The annual “Seek God for the City” Lenten vigil begins February 25. This year’s call to “pray great things in desperate times” is on biblical hope, seeking the face of God, and seeking His Kingdom. A 64-page daily prayer guide is available for \$3.00 each from WayMakers, PO Box 203131, Austin, TX 78720; call 512-419-7729 or 800-264-5214; visit www.waymakers.org.

TV LINK TO TEEN PREGNANCY FOUND

★ CHICAGO, IL – A new RAND research study of more than 2,000 teens aged 12-17 found that children who watched programs with “high levels of sexual content” were almost twice as likely to become pregnant as teens with limited exposure to such shows. The study, published in Pediatrics, is said to be the first to establish a verifiable link between teen pregnancy and lewd programming. (R FRC 11/3/08)

In America Today...



JANUARY IS SANCTITY OF LIFE MONTH

★ WASHINGTON, DC – Pro-life leaders asked for prayer as they elevate the reality of the personhood of the unborn. Christians draw inspiration from Luke 1:39-43. Mary, two weeks pregnant with Jesus, an *embryo*, visited her cousin Elizabeth, six months pregnant with John, a *fetus*. John left in Elizabeth’s womb as he and she both recognized the personhood of the incarnate Christ.

INITIAL OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

★ WASHINGTON, DC – President **Barack Obama**; Vice President **Joseph Biden**; Chief of Staff **Rahm Emanuel**; Press Secretary **Robert Gibbs**; WH Counsel **Gregory Craig**; Staff Secretary **Lisa Brown**; Chief Speechwriter **Jon Favreau**; Intergovernmental Affairs Dir. **Cecilia Munoz**; Communications Dir. **Ellen Moran**; Communications Deputy Dir. **Daniel Pfeiffer**; Cabinet Secretary **Chris Lu**; Political Director **Patrick Gaspard**; Deputy Chiefs of Staff **Jim Messina** and **Mona Sutphen**; Senior Advisors: **David Axelrod**, **Valerie Jarrett**, **Pete Rouse**; Attorney General **Eric Holder, Jr.**; National Security Advisor Ret. Gen. **James Jones**; UN Ambassador **Susan Rice**; Dir. of Management & Budget **Peter Orszag**; Dir. of National Economic Council **Lawrence Summers**; Chairwoman of Council of Economic Advisors **Christina Romer**; Chairman of Economic Recovery Advisory Board **Paul Volcker**; Staff Dir., Economic Recovery Advisory Board **Austan Goolsbee**; Dir. of Domestic Policy Council **Melody Barnes**; Secretary of Homeland Security Gov. **Janet Napolitano**; Secretary of State Sen. **Hillary Clinton**; Secretary of Defense **Robert Gates**; Secretary of Treasury **Timothy Geithner**; Secretary of Commerce Gov. **Bill Richardson**; Secretary of Health & Human Services **Tom Daschle**; V.P. Chief of Staff **Ronald Klain**; V.P. Key Staff: **Michael Donilon**, **Terrell McSweeney**, **Evan Ryan**, **Cynthia Hogan**, **Moises Vela, Jr.**; First Lady Chief of Staff **Jackie Norris**.

PRESIDENT BUSH HONORED WITH INTERNATIONAL P.E.A.C.E. MEDAL

★ WASHINGTON, DC – Dr. Rick Warren convened his annual Saddleback Civil Forum in DC in the recently constructed Newseum and honored President and Mrs. Bush with the first “International Medal of P.E.A.C.E.” from his Global Coalition. Pastor Warren said, “No U.S. President or political leader has done more for global health than this Administration” which has “worked tirelessly to bring awareness and solutions to pandemics such as HIV/AIDS. The P.E.A.C.E. Coalition is mobilizing one billion Christians to Promote reconciliation, Equip servant leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick and Educate the next generation. (RW 11/30/08)

MILITARY AND F.E.M.A. PARTNER

WASHINGTON, DC – Authorities agreed in October to begin a \$1.8 million pilot project funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through which civilian authorities in five states could tap military planners to develop disaster response plans. Hawaii, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Washington, and West Virginia will each focus on a particular threat—pandemic flu, a terrorist attack, hurricane, earthquake, and catastrophic chemical release, respectively. (HC 11/30/08)

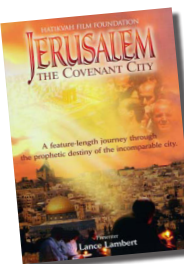
PENTAGON: DEPLOY 20,000 TROOPS IN U.S.

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. military expects to have 20,000 uniformed troops inside the United States by 2011 trained to help state and local officials respond to a nuclear terrorist attack or other domestic catastrophe, according to Pentagon officials. The Pentagon’s plan calls for three rapid-reaction forces to be ready for emergency response by September 2011. The long-planned shift in the Defense Department’s role in homeland security was recently backed with funding and troop commitments after years of prodding by Congress and outside experts. Critics of the change—in the military and among civil liberties groups and libertarians—express concern that the new homeland emphasis will strain the military and possibly undermine the Posse Comitatus Act, a 130-year-old federal law restricting the military’s role in domestic law enforcement. Planners say that a growing domestic threat of terrorists exploiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction now requires this militarization of homeland security. (AP HC 11/30/08)

BIBLE IN ALL LANGUAGES BY 2025

★ ORLANDO, FL – Wycliffe Bible Translators, founded in 1972, announced the launching of a “Last Languages Campaign,” to produce a Bible in the languages of a remaining estimated 200 million people by the year 2025. Wycliffe also announced receiving an anonymous \$50 million donation and said it would be used to initiate the accelerated project. (WND WT 11/21/08)

★ = An answer or development to an IFA First Friday, Church Pray!, Israel | Middle East or On Watch in Washington Alert. Publication index: AP=Associated Press; FRC=Family Research Council; HC=Houston Chronicle; R= Reuters News; RW=RickWarrenNews.com; WND=WorldNetDaily.com; WT=Wycliffe Bible Translators



JERUSALEM: THE COVENANT CITY by Lance Lambert / Hugh Kitson – Why do world leaders wage war for the Temple Mount and rage over “the final status” of Jerusalem? Part 1 of “Jerusalem: The Covenant City” traces the prophetic history of the Holy City. Part 2 explores what the Bible has to say about Jerusalem’s present and future destiny. We discover that as we move into the third millennium of the Christian era, the destiny of the whole world hinges upon the destiny of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. This 108-minute documentary will bring you a memorable message of challenge and hope. Order IFA Item #DV046, \$15.95 + \$3.50 shipping. **Credit card orders toll-free 1-800-872-7729 or via IFA’s secure eBookstore www.ifabooks.com.**

THE MISSION OF INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA – SINCE 1973: Uniting Believers in Effective Prayer and Fasting for America.

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“Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [demonstrate] what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” —Rom 12:1-2