

## The Disintegration of Columbia Joseph Herrin (1-3-2003)

Disintegrate: To break up into component parts by mechanical or atmospheric agency: v.i. separate.

[Webster's Dictionary, 1933]

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003 the space shuttle Columbia was lost upon re-entry to the earth's atmosphere. Onboard were seven astronauts, including the first Israeli astronaut. The disintegration of the space shuttle was observed as it was flying over Texas, the home state of President George W. Bush, and wreckage from Columbia was scattered over Texas. The first reports from observers on the ground came from the town of Palestine, Texas. The Internet, television, and printed media were filled with graphics detailing this event, such as the following.



The entire world has been presented with a witness of this event. Though myriads of people will only see it as one more tragedy in the American space program, there are many people who see it as a prophetic sign from God, and already numerous

writings have gone out to speak of what this sign might mean. I believe that this event truly is given as a sign from Yahweh of impending judgment, and I will share why.

It is not unusual for Yahweh to give a sign to the people and rulers of a nation regarding impending judgment. As I thought on this most recent sign I was reminded of a sign given to an ungodly ruler many years ago.

### Daniel 5:1-12

Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together. The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom." Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.

Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed. The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale. "There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners. "This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."

There is great precedence throughout Scripture of God using signs, dreams, enigmas and riddles to declare His mind to the nations, their rulers, and their people. Yet it

has often taken the anointed messengers of Yahweh to explain the meaning of these symbols to those unto whom they pertain. Daniel was used in this capacity in numerous instances, as was Joseph when he was summoned to give an interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. At times God has used something as simple as a ripped robe to indicate that a nation was going to be divided and given to another.

### I Samuel 15:27-28

As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, "Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you."

### I Kings 11:30-31

Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and tore it into twelve pieces. He said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, "Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes..."

If God has used things as mundane as a ripped robe to indicate such portentous events, how much more should we take heed when a sign is given that the entire world is made witness to? Symbolism is everywhere present in this event. Who can fail to notice the prominence of the name "Palestine" on the maps and graphics being displayed? Is the importance of this event occurring over the President of the United States home, a state that has such strong connections to the oil industry, not obvious? Yet there is much more.

The space shuttle bore the name 'Columbia'. On an official government website, the following information concerning this name is found:

Columbia, the oldest orbiter in the Shuttle fleet, is named after the Boston, Massachusetts based sloop captained by American Robert Gray. On May **II**, 1792, Gray and his crew maneuvered the Columbia past the dangerous sandbar at the mouth of a river extending more than 1,000 miles through what is today south-eastern British Columbia, Canada, and the Washington-Oregon border. The river was later named after the ship. Gray also led Columbia and its crew on the first American circumnavigation of the globe, carrying a cargo of otter skins to Canton, China, and then returning to Boston.

Other sailing ships have further enhanced the luster of the name Columbia. The first U.S. Navy ship to circle the globe bore that title, as did the command module for Apollo **II**, the first lunar landing mission.

On a more directly patriotic note, "Columbia" is considered to be the feminine personification of the United States. The name is derived from that of another famous explorer, Christopher Columbus.

[The above quote can be found at:

<http://science.ksc.nasa.gov/shuttle/resources/orbiters/columbia.html>]

The statement, "Columbia is considered to be the feminine personification of the United States", is significant. Nations are referred to with various feminine personifications. Even Israel in Scriptures is referred to as a bride, a woman, a virgin, and at times as a harlot. The founding father's of America chose "Columbia" as a personification of the nation, and the Capitol of the country is referred to as the "District of Columbia". What then is portrayed when the space shuttle Columbia disintegrates as it returns to earth, broken beyond remedy? What is God speaking to the world, and to the United States in particular?

One characteristic of the government of America that has become the talk of the world is that it has become proud and is acting arrogantly toward other nations. Many haughty words are being spoken by her leaders. America boasts that she is the last superpower in the world since the Soviet Union broke apart in the 1980's. She has declared that she will carry out her agenda with or without the approval and support of the rest of the nations of the world. America uses her economic might and her technologically advanced military to intimidate and cow other nations into agreement.

In her pride, the rulers of America have sought to overrule the judgment of Yahweh. They have reached out their hand to touch the land that God promised as an everlasting inheritance to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants, and they have sought to give this inheritance to Israel's enemies. Yet God speaks many warnings against those who would do so.

### **I Chronicles 16:15-22**

**Remember His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. He also confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan, as the portion of your inheritance." When they were only a few in number, very few, and strangers in it, and they wandered about from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people, He permitted no man to oppress them, and He reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, "Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm."**

### **Joel 3:1-2**

**"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; *and they***

*have divided up My land."*

It is not likely a coincidence that the day before Columbia was destroyed America's Secretary of State Colin Powell made this announcement:

Powell: Bush to be more involved in  
Israeli-Palestinian conflict

By The Associated Press 2/1/03

WASHINGTON - U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said Friday that *President George Bush will become more deeply involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than he was in his first two years in the White House.*

Powell said that the conflict was the most pressing problem in the Middle East.

Powell also told the Palestinians that "they cannot get a state by using violence" and warned that they must install a new leadership.

Appearing before a national conference of Americans interested in U.S. foreign policy, *Powell said the administration would resume its pursuit of a settlement* now that Israel had concluded its elections.

He said he had talked by telephone to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who won a new term this week, and that the Bush administration would use the roadmap devised in partnership with the European Union, Russia and the United Nations.

*It aims to create a Palestinian state by the year 2005 carved out of land that Israel has held for more than 35 years...*

[end excerpt, highlighting added]

America does not want to drink from the cup that is reserved for those who will set their hands to touch the nation of Israel. Yahweh's hand is against those who are against Israel. Since 1948 when Israel fought a war of independence against her Arab neighbors, she has faced constant struggle. Yet she has miraculously survived in the face of overwhelming opposition. During the Six Days War of 1967, and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, tiny little Israel overcame the massed fury of her enemies and she greatly enlarged her territory. Her Arab opponents were humiliated by the swiftness and thoroughness of their defeat. Only the supporting hand of God could explain these Israeli victories.

During these wars, the Soviet Union was the main supplier of equipment to Israel's

enemies. The U.S.S.R. sent soldiers and trainers to ready the Arabs for battle using the tanks and planes and guns that she supplied. The defeat of these armies was also a great shame and failure for the U.S.S.R.. Was it merely coincidental that this mighty nation that dominated such a great landmass across Europe and Asia began to fall apart in the 1980's? The world was shocked at the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet empire. The Soviet military that once seemed invincible was bloodied and beaten in Afghanistan and forced to withdraw. Her economy lay broken and her people begged for food and stood in line for hours to enter stores whose shelves were empty.

These things should give America and the rest of the world a reason to stop and ponder the fate of those who touch God's anointed. Will America seek to force Israel to capitulate to her enemies through economic and political means, when others have failed militarily? The judgment will be the same. America will also suffer judgment and be broken.

Many will read these words and think, "Surely America will not go the same way as the Soviet Union. America is too strong economically and militarily." Yet I ask you, "Who could have anticipated the demise of the Soviet Union? Who would have imagined that she would be beaten back in Afghanistan, a third world country that lay on her borders? Who could have anticipated how thoroughly her Arab allies would be trounced by little Israel, destroying or capturing billions of dollars of equipment?" None are too mighty for Yahweh to bring them down.

Americans view their nation as an impregnable fortress. They believe that prosperity will continue on unabated. Yet God has been sending warnings that she can be touched. On 9-11 America saw her vulnerability. Destruction was brought to her soil. The Pentagon was damaged and the World Trade Centers were destroyed. America's vaunted stock markets had to be shut down for more than a week and great effort was made to ensure that when they reopened that there would not be a crash. Yet despite all the efforts, the market has dropped by thousands of points and it has yet to recover. A market that was over 11,000 is struggling to stay above 8,000.

Is there not a reason? How much clearer could God's message have been on that terrible day?

Yet God in His mercy has sent a further warning. There are significant parallels between these two events. One parallel is the predominance of the number eleven. This number has been written about much in reference to 9-11, and it is seen again in the Columbia disaster. We already read the history of Columbia and saw its relationship to the number eleven (the Columbia River was entered on May 11<sup>th</sup>, and Apollo 11's command module was called Columbia). Yet there is more. The exact time of the shuttle's disintegration has been reported with these words:

Communication with the crew and loss of data occurred shortly after, while Columbia was at a Mission Elapsed Time (MET) of 15 days 22 hours 20 minutes and 22 seconds.

[These words can be read at:

<http://science.ksc.nasa.gov/shuttle/missions/sts-107/mission-sts-107.html>]

Twenty-two is two times eleven, and this number is very significant in Scripture. E. W. Bullinger speaks about the significance of the number eleven in his book "Number in Scripture". Following is a quotation:

## ITS SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

### ELEVEN

If *ten* is the number which marks the perfection of Divine *order*, then *eleven* is an *addition* to it, subversive of and undoing that order. If *twelve* is the number which marks the perfection of Divine *government*, then eleven falls short of it. So that whether we regard it as being 10 + 1, or 12 - 1, it is the number which marks, *disorder, disorganization, imperfection, and disintegration*.

[Note - I did not add the emphasis in this description. It is present in the text which can be viewed online by accessing the book from this link: <http://philologos.org>]

I was startled when I read this description. Eleven is the number of disintegration, and the Columbia disintegrated at a precise time that is marked by this number. The events of 9-11 were also marked by this number. E. W. Bullinger goes on to cite Scriptural examples of the typology of this number.

### JEHOIAKIM REIGNED ELEVEN YEARS

when Nebuchadnezzar came up and began his disintegrating work on Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:36, 34:1; 2 Chron 36:5,6).

### ZEDEKIAH REIGNED ELEVEN YEARS

when Nebuchadnezzar completed the work by putting an end to Israel's rule in Jerusalem (2 Chron 36:11; Jer 52:1), for "in the eleventh year the city was broken up" (Jer 39:2).

### THE ELEVENTH YEAR

in which Ezekiel prophesied against Tyre (Eze 26:1) and against Egypt (30:20 and 31:1) was the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in which Jerusalem was broken up. And the threefold repetition of it is to impress us with the fact that Tyre and Egypt should be broken up, as Jerusalem had been.

### THE ELEVEN APOSTLES

witness of disintegration even amongst the Twelve (Acts 2:14, etc.); while

### THE ELEVENTH HOUR

(Matt 20:6,9) is proverbial as being contrary alike both to what is right in order and arrangement.

## THE LIFE OF OUR LORD ON EARTH

was about 33 years (3 x 11), and then He was "cut off," and "we see not yet all things put under Him" (Dan 9:26; Heb 2:8).

[end excerpt]

This number eleven is consistently related to the break up and disintegration of people's, cities and nations. Columbia, on the sixteenth day of her mission is seen breaking up at the 22<sup>nd</sup> hour and 22<sup>nd</sup> second. This significance might be shrugged off had America not received a similar warning on the date that is now referred to as 9-11.

On 9-11, four planes were hijacked by terrorists and these planes also disintegrated. Virtually nothing was left of them. These planes were from two airlines, United and American. Consider the significance when you put these two airline names together - United American, and then consider that these planes, like Columbia, also disintegrated.

A further event occurred not long after 9-11 that was quickly downplayed by the media and then it disappeared from sight. A single American Airlines flight took off from New York headed for the Dominican Republic, the place that Columbus landed over 500 years earlier, and the plane fell apart, or blew apart, and pieces of it rained down on Queens. Once more this same symbolism was seen. The Scripture came to mind after this event:

### Revelation 18:7-8

"To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as a *queen* and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.' For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong."

I do not believe it is coincidental that we have been given these very graphic images of destruction that are marked by destruction of manmade creations at a great height. America has magnified herself due to her prowess in trade. She has allowed her affluence to lead her to ease and sensuality and to fill her borders with all manner of defilement. Yahweh has demonstrated before that He is quite willing to bring judgment on nations and peoples who have followed the same course.

### Ezekiel 16:49-50

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.

How much more will God hold a people responsible when they reach out their hand to touch that which is the apple of His eye, to divide their land, and to force them to give into the demands of their enemies? By the judgment that is rendered, America will be judged. As America seeks to force Israel to divide her land with her enemies, Yahweh will bring division and disintegration to America.

### **Zechariah 2:8-9**

**For this is what Yahweh Almighty says: "After he has honored me and has sent me against the nations that have plundered you (for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye) I will surely raise my hand against them so that those who serve them will plunder them. Then you will know that Yahweh Almighty has sent me."**

Is it possible that even as Columbia, the personification of America, disintegrated over Palestine, Texas that America could also be judged over this issue of creating a Palestinian state from the land promised to the descendants of Abraham? The sins of America have already reached into heaven. Only a few weeks ago America marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roe v. Wade court decision that made the murder of unborn children legal. A recent Focus on the Family newsletter pointed out that in the past thirty years, 28 percent of all pregnancies ended in abortion. Over one quarter of the children who would have made up this current generation have been killed by American doctors whose bloody occupation is protected by the government of America. Oddly, the Columbia was on its 28<sup>th</sup> mission when it was destroyed.

I believe that very dark days are ahead for America. God has been giving the nation signs that what is about to occur is a judgment from His hand. Even as Belshazzar saw the hand writing on the wall, so God is giving America a clear message. Repent of your sins and touch not My anointed!

These signs are also for the saints who have ears to hear and eyes to see. In the midst of dark days Yahweh will have a people prepared who will shine forth. These have already been being prepared to walk by faith, not by sight. These will be a people whose focus will be intently upon God when all others are focused on the destruction and calamity that will abound. God's people will be kept at peace when the hearts of men and women around them are failing due to fear. God wants His people to be awake and ready so that this calamity should not come upon them as a great surprise.

### **I Thessalonians 5:3-6**

**While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.**

The mindset of millions of Americans that they are protected behind high walls, and that they will not know devastation, and their nation will never be broken up, has been shared by many nations before them.

Isaiah 2:12-17

For Yahweh of hosts will have a day of reckoning  
Against everyone who is proud and lofty  
And against everyone who is lifted up,  
That he may be abased.  
And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up,  
Against all the oaks of Bashan,  
Against all the lofty mountains,  
Against all the hills that are lifted up,  
Against every high tower,  
Against every fortified wall,  
Against all the ships of Tarshish  
And against all the beautiful craft.  
The pride of man will be humbled  
And the loftiness of men will be abased;  
And Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day.

The nations in their pride are compared to trees, and the words 'lofty' and 'lifted up' are mentioned in this passage. Likewise high towers are mentioned and beautiful craft. These things represent the pride of man, and we are told "the pride of man will be humbled."

On board Columbia was the first Israeli astronaut. His name was Ilan Ramon. The name Ilan bears great significance.

ILAN masculine *Jewish*

Means "tree" in Hebrew.

[source: <http://www.behindthename.com> ]

The leaders and people of Israel have looked to America to find protection and shelter. Israel's leaders have agreed to give up the land that Yahweh gave to Abraham and his descendants. Rather than turning to Yahweh for protection, Israel has sought shelter under Columbia's wings. Yet Columbia will be judged. Her strength will be shattered. Then Israel will have no place to turn other than God. When her enemies gather around her and America is no longer present to shield and protect, then they will turn in desperation to the God they have spurned.

As a lofty tree, Israel thought that she would prosper and ascend to the heavens by binding herself to America. Yet America is not Israel's source and provider. Yahweh

alone desires to be exalted in her sight. If He must bring down every lofty thing that stands before Him, then He will do so. He has given the world numerous signs regarding this. The towers have been brought down, but America has said that she will build even taller towers. The United and American planes have been brought down. Now even Columbia has been brought down.

I believe the time for signs is over. The judgment will surely follow.

These words are not shared to excite anyone's emotions. They are offered that those with understanding might ready themselves. It is a time to be vigilant and sober. It is a time to press into God and hear what His Spirit is saying. A time is coming when pride will be broken and then many will seek something that cannot be shaken. Amidst the darkness many will begin to desperately seek for a true light.

May you know peace and be granted understanding in these days.