

Isaiah 54:8-17 – The City of God

Translation and Sermon by Nate Wilson for Christ the Redeemer Church, Manhattan, KS 20 Jan 2008

Translation

8. With flood of wrath I caused my face to be hidden from you for a moment,
but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you, says Jehovah your Redeemer.
9. This is like the days of Noah to me,
when I swore off the waters of Noah from again going over upon the earth,
thus I have sworn off from the wrath upon you and from the rebuke with you.
10. For the mountains may recede and the hills may slip away,
but my lovingkindness will not recede from you
and the covenant of my peace will not slip away, says Jehovah, your Compassionate One.
11. Poor, stormy one, she has not been comforted;
Look I am laying down antimony for your stones,
and I am laying your foundation with sapphires!
12. And I will place ruby for your windows,
and as for your doors, garnet for stones,
and for all your siding, precious stones!
13. And all your children will be disciples of Jehovah,
and great will be the peace of your children!
14. In righteousness will you be established,
you must get far away from oppression, for you will not be frightened,
and from the terror, for it will not come near to you.
15. Look, an end will surely come together from me,
whoever comes together against you, they will fall over you!
16. Look, I myself created the smith –
one who blows into a coal fire and causes an instrument to come out for his doings.
And I myself created the destroyer to spoil.
17. Every instrument formed against you will not make progress,
and every tongue [that] shall rise up against you before the judgment, you will make out to be wicked.
This is the inheritance of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness from me, declares Jehovah.

Introduction:

Last week, we saw in the first half of chapter 54 that the self-sacrifice of the Messiah would lead to a future of restoration for God's people, and we saw that compared to a fruitful marriage.

Now where we pick up today in v.8, we see the restoration following God's punishment compared to what God did during the time of Noah to destroy sin on the earth by a flood.

Comparison to the Days of Noah (vs. 8-10)

- The Masoretic Hebrew Text and the King James English translations based on that text read "This is the waters of Noah to me." However, the much older Hebrew text from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, and all the modern English translations read, "Like the days of Noah is this to me." When I was making my translation, I decided to go with "days" instead of "waters" because the phrase "days of Noah" appears in several other places in the Bible as well (Genesis 9:29; Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26; and 1 Peter 3:20).
- The "days of Noah" are characterized in Genesis 6:5 a time when "Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," so God brought unexpected judgment upon the earth – a worldwide flood that wiped out the rebellious population.
This kind of thing would happen again in 586 BC when Jerusalem was at its height of rebellion against God and Nebuchadnezzar unexpectedly conquered the city and took the people into exile.

- Isaiah 54, however, looks at the other side of that judgment – the time of restoration. This restoration was begun, as we’ve seen before in Nehemiah and Ezra’s re-laying the foundations of a community of faith in Jerusalem after the exile and reached a climax in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, laying the foundation for spiritual restoration, and the worldwide growth of Christianity.
- There are a number of additional parallels to the ending of the exile and the setting up of the church: “This is like the days of Noah”
 1. Judgment was for a limited time:
 - a. 40 days / nights with Noah,
 - b. 70 years with Judah
 2. A remnant was preserved:
 - a. Noah and his family “8 in all” (I Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 2:5),
 - b. and the approximately 50,000 that came out from Babylon with Ezra (Ez. 2)
 3. God made a covenant in which He swore that He would never again do what He did:
 - a. There has never been a worldwide flood since the days of Noah.
 - b. So God contrasts the “flood/overflow/surge/outburst” (I think the KJV and LXX are off-base to translate the word as “little”) of His wrath against Judah in v.8 with a time of “everlasting lovingkindness” and “compassion” in which He will “swear off” exercising “wrath” and “rebuke” (v.9)
 - c. But wait, has God kept that promise?
 - i. Didn’t Jerusalem fall to Titus in AD 70 and get utterly destroyed?
 - ii. Didn’t the nation of Israel disappear in the first century, only to resurface 1,900 years later as the Israel we know of today?
 - iii. Ah, you’re thinking down the wrong lines. You’re thinking like Jews, not like Christians.
 - iv. Remember that the context of Isaiah 54 is Isaiah 53 where it describes how Jesus, while dying on the cross, put Himself in our place and received God’s just wrath against us for our violations of His laws, so that God could not be angry against us anymore.
 - v. Isaiah 54:9 says “I will not be angry with you.”
 - vi. It is the church – the true people of God – that this passage is talking about, not the ethnic or political nation of Israel (although there are many Jews who are believers in Jesus and thus part of the church, the people of God).
- If it is the case that the people of God are no longer going to experience God’s anger, why does God proceed in v.10 to say, “*For the mountains will recede and the hills will slip away, but my lovingkindness will not recede from you and the covenant of my peace will not slip away, says Jehovah, your Compassionate One.*”
 - a. Why would they need any reassurance that God’s lovingkindness toward them would not go away? After all, being a Christian is all about experiencing God’s grace (lovingkindness) and peace, right? (Rom. 1:7; 16:20; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Philip. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philem. 1:3; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 1:3; Rev. 1:4) When you become a Christian, your life is suddenly filled with prosperity and happiness and nothing bad ever happens again, right?
 - b. Well, not exactly. And the experiences we have all had since becoming believers certainly bears that out!
 - c. ILLUSTRATION: I remember the time when I had been on staff for a couple of years with a large Christian organization and was invited to a national training event in another state. At the end of the training, our entire staff team was called together and told that our department was being terminated in two weeks, at which time we would get our last salary check which would only cover one month’s wages. I suddenly got that panicky feeling – I’m free-falling vocationally – I didn’t have any savings and I knew it would take more than a month to make a ministry change. How am I going to feed my family next month?

- d. In fact, we've all been through situations where changes were going on around us and we began to think there was something wrong with God's promises of lovingkindness and peace! "Mountains" and "hills," as it were, start "shaking" and "moving" and "disappearing" and we wondered about that "covenant of everlasting peace." (God provided, by the way, for that job transition and we never had to skip a meal!)
- e. God's word is, "Don't panic at the changes. My promise to forever keep a peaceful relationship with you, will be in force no matter what happens, and the more you can trust that, the more peaceful your life is going to be!"
- f. Isaiah said something similar a few chapters back, promising both everlasting salvation and a disconcerting experience of loss: Isa 51:6 "Lift up your eyes to the heavens and look to the earth beneath, for the heavens will be dissolved like the smoke, and the earth like wear out like the garment, and her inhabitants will die likewise, but my salvation will exist forever, and my righteousness will not come undone."
- g. We are not yet in the age when peace is fully established upon the earth. It is still a promise. Romans 16:20 "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." Satan isn't crushed yet. There is still spiritual work to do as Jesus works to extend His kingdom through the agency of His body, the church, and as we crush Satan under our feet. Yet in the midst of the battle, God is still the God of peace, and His grace is with us during this time, even though we haven't seen the final stage of its fulfillment yet.
- h. This promise also does not preclude God's discipline when we sin against Him: **Psalm 89:31** "If they break my statutes, And keep not my commandments; 32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes. 33 But my lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. 34 My covenant I will not break, Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."
- i. But there will always be a happy end to God's discipline, as we already saw in Isaiah 51:21 "Therefore, please hear this, poor/afflicted one, and intoxicated one (but not from wine). 22. Thus says your Lord Jehovah and your God, who will contend for His people, 'Look, I take from your hand the cup of trembling. The goblet cup of my wrath you will not be caused to drink any more of it again...'"
- j. So if you are feeling shaken up, weighed down by distress, and deprived of consolation - if it seems that God has forsaken you, listen to this: There it hope!
- k. No matter what happens around you and to you, you can be confident in God when He promises, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Heb. 13:5, cf. Gen. 28:15, Deut. 31:6-8, Josh. 1:5, 1 Chr. 28:20)

By the way, notice how many names of God are heaped up in the first ten verses of chapter 54:

1. Jehovah (v.1) — the personal name for God, (all caps LORD in most English Bibles and in Greek, but a different word in Hebrew indicating His self-existence)
2. Maker (v.5) – He created you and it is His nature to create things new.
3. Husband (v.5) – He is in a covenant relationship with you. You are the Bride of Christ.
4. Lord of Hosts (v.5) – He controls the world's largest army, the unseen hosts of angels.
5. God of all the earth (v.5) – There is no part of this world where He is not God, thus He sends us into "all the world" to make disciples.
6. your God (v.6) – He has personally chosen you to be your God, not just the God of your parents or of somebody else in history.
7. your Redeemer (v.8) – It is His nature to redeem. To enter into brokenness and waywardness and draw you back to Himself and bring healing and restore His rightful ownership.
8. your Compassionate One (v.10) – The flood of wrath is over, you can expect redemption, relationship, and compassion from God from here on out! The one who was not comforted will be comforted.

Oh what a wonderful God we have!!!

Last week, I said there were three comparisons in this chapter to the relationship that God was promising to His people through Isaiah, and I focused last week on the

1. first comparison, which was a husband-wife relationship, and up to this point today, I've been focusing on the
2. second comparison which was to the flood of Noah and the covenant of promise. Now we reach the
3. third comparison, that of a city.

Comparison to a City (v.11-17)

Blessings are promised in contrast to the affliction of Zion's former state.

The description of the city made of precious stones is much like the heavenly Jerusalem which John saw in the book of Revelation, chapter 21, which Chip read earlier.

The Stones of the City

In vs. 11-12, we have a city described from the bottom up, from wall to wall. It is a city built by God, as He lays precious stones piece-by-piece into the antimony backdrop.

Antimony (Latin Stibium) is a dull grey element that provides a background to the gemstones He is laying in. It makes the gemstones look all the brighter. If you look at the handout on these gemstones, you'll see that the photographers chose a dull grey background for almost every one of these stones! In 2 Ki. 9:30, Jezebel put this same grey stuff around her eyes to make her eyes look brighter, too.

I don't want to press the analogy too far, but it is possible that there is significance to the fact that the first thing God lays in is a dull-looking background. God may first have you in a position of enduring a tedious experience that you would never want to have to endure for the rest of your life in order to provide a backdrop that shows His later works in your life to be all the more beautiful as blessings. For instance, my first notes of the book of Isaiah started in the summer of 1989, and those were definitely "antimony" days, single-handedly running a gymnasium daycare at a church all day long for anybody who wanted to drop their kids off for any length of time with no structured program and no way to discipline the kids. I would come home at night exhausted and frustrated and bored from being cooped up in that gym all day long, and I would read Isaiah and write notes on it until I fell asleep, and then I'd do it all over again the next day. I still have those notes, and they form the foundation of the study I'm doing now on Isaiah. I don't know if everyone would consider this current sermon series as valuable as gemstones, but for me I see God building something valuable today upon a background that seemed very grey in my life.

My favorite commentator on Isaiah, Franz Delitzsch made several good points about these precious stones:

1. First, the blue sapphire or lapis lazuli foundation reminds us of heaven, revelation, and of the covenant upon which our relationship with God is founded.
2. The red-colored stones (carbuncle/garnet, ruby/agate) of which the windows and doors are made, remind us of the blood of Christ which made the new Jerusalem possible, of life eternal, and of victory. (The word which medieval Jewish scholars and the KJV render "windows" is literally the Hebrew word for "sun," so there is a variety of other translations given for this word having to do with either the height of the sun or the rays of light from the sun, including the NKJ & ESV "pinnacles" and the NAS, NIV "battlements." There are also some differences of translation in the precious stone for the gates – the NAS and NKJ follow the Septuagint in naming a clear sparkling gem – crystal rather than the red carbuncle gemstone.)
3. Even the borders – the outer walls are inlaid with precious stones that bring delight to the eye. "Whence, then, do the precious stones derive their charm? The ultimate ground of this charm is the fact, that in universal nature everything presses to the light, and that in the mineral world the jewels represent the highest stage of this ascending process. It is the self-unfolding process of the divine glory itself, which is reflected typologically in the several gradations of the manifold play

of colours and the transparency of the precious stones. For this reason, the high priest wore a breastplate with twelve precious stones, upon which were the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; and for this same reason, [Revelation 21] carries out into detail the picture of the new Jerusalem, which is here sketched by [Isaiah] (without distinguishing time from eternity), adding crystals and pearls to the precious stones which he there mentions one by one. How can all this be explained, except on the ground that even the mineral world reflects the glory of those eternal lights from which God is called the 'Father of lights,' or except on the assumption that the saints in light will one day be able to translate these stony types into the words of God, out of which they have their being? The outward glory of the city is only the manifestation, which strikes the senses, of the spiritual glory of the church dwelling therein." (Delitzsch v.2 p.350)

In fact, Peter described the church in a similar fashion as a building made of "living stones" with Jesus as the "corner-stone." (I Pet. 2:5) You are a precious stone which brings delight to God's eyes, which He is laying upon the foundation of His "covenant of peace," or to use a New Testament parallel, you are laid upon the "cornerstone" of Jesus Christ and His atonement!

The Life of the City

Isaiah moves from the architecture to the life of the city in v. 13.

1. It is a place where God Himself is a teacher of the children in the city. The children are His disciples.
 - **Jeremiah 31:33-34** "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: 34 and they will no longer teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know Jehovah,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them [the children] unto the greatest of them, says Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."
 - The fulfillment of these prophetic passages is in the church, not of the reconstruction of Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah:
 - In **John 6:44-45**, Jesus quotes this passage in Isaiah saying that the fulfillment is in Him: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Every one that has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes unto me."
 - Paul underscored this in **1 Thessalonians 4:9** "But concerning love of the brethren you have no need for anyone to write to you: for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another..."
 - And so does the apostle John (**I John 2:27**) "And the anointing which you yourselves received from Him remains in you, and you have no need for someone to be teaching you. But as His anointing is teaching you concerning everything—and it is true; it is not a lie—just as it taught you, you remain in Him. 28 And now, dear children, stay in Him, so that whenever He is revealed, we may have an open conversation and not be embarrassed by Him in His presence.
2. Isaiah 54:13 says that this "teaching" leads to profound "peace."
 - Has the Gospel of Jesus Christ brought peace to your heart?
 - Phil. 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but rather in everything by prayer and by petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known before God. 7 And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 - The peace we have from trusting God is an outworking of the "covenant of peace" mentioned in v.9
3. Verse 14 describes the moral foundation of the city. "In righteousness will you be established." Notice that the people don't establish themselves in righteousness; "they will be established" – God does it for them. God did it for you through the righteousness of Jesus Christ who is the foundation of:
 - your redemption and drawing near to God,
 - your eternal life, and
 - your subsequent morality that keeps you "far from oppression/tyranny... and fear"

4. Finally, the city's interaction with enemies is described in verses 15-17.

a. Notice the implication in v.17 that there will be weapons fashioned against us, not the least of which will be accusing words from the tongues of enemies.

- Review the top 10 persecution items from 2007 in *Compass Direct*.
- But God's word tells us here that neither violence (v.15) nor malicious speech (v.16) will be effective against us.
- The church has survived amazingly through centuries of persecution from the enemies of God. In fact, persecution seems to make the church grow faster!

b. God is sovereignly in control of our enemies

- Verse 15 has an unusual verb in the first two phrases. Everywhere else in Isaiah, I translated that verb as "to lodge," however, here, there seems to be a different angle, that of "gathering together with intent to harm" God's people, thus the KJV "gather/assemble" the ESV "stir up," NAS "assail," and the NIV "attack."
- It appears to me that the word translated "not" in all the major English Bibles (as in "not from me") is actually a noun meaning "end/cessation" and that that noun is the subject of the verb "come together." "An end will surely come together from me; whoever comes together against you, they will fall."
- So I take verse 15 to have a similar meaning to Romans 8:28, that God causes all things to work together for a good end.
- This introduces the statements in the following 2 verses where God claims to sovereignly make:
 - the ironsmith who makes the weapons fashioned against God's own people, and
 - the destroyer (Assyria-14:20, 36:10, 37:12, 51:13) who came to spoil God's own people.
- God does not distance Himself from claiming to be the cause of calamity; He only distances Himself from moral evil. God is sovereign and He made the enemy, but God is not the author of sin, and He will punish sinners. And in the process He will protect His people.

c. (The end result) At any rate,

- whether it is enemies who assemble without God's command and without God's presence to fight against God's people,
- or whether it is God's sovereign working out of the ends of things,
- the end will be that all who fight against God's people are:
 - headed for a fall (v.15b),
 - they will not make progress toward their ends (v.17a),
 - and they will be demonstrated to be wicked in God's court (17b).
- This principle had already been demonstrated once in Isaiah's day when the Assyrian army came up against Jerusalem to destroy it and Hezekiah cried out to God for deliverance, and the Assyrian army fled from God's wrath. (**Isa 17:13** *The communities roar like the roaring of many waters, but He will rebuke it, and it will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the face of a storm-wind. 14 At evening time, behold, terror! Before morning, it is no more! This is the share of our looters, and the lot of our plunderers!*)
- And it will happen again in the future. **Revelation 19:19-21** "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army [that's Jesus and the church]. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone: 21 and the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of His mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh."
- All who fight against the church, the city of God, will stand before the Judge of heaven and receive justice. **Revelation 20:7-12** "And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the

four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city: but fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. 10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. 11 And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

5. But v.17 tells us that those who believe in Jesus have an inheritance, they get righteousness from God!
- **Hebrews 12:22-24** “... You have come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant...”
 - Praise the Lord for bringing us to that city, the city of God, built of beautiful precious stones, disciplined by God Himself, a city established in the Righteousness of Jesus Christ and profoundly at peace because it knows that God is sovereign over all its enemies and will bring them all to justice!

Conclusion:

1. Don't be afraid (v.4); you have a just God who has vowed not to punish you for your sins, who has promised to vindicate you, and who will make our spiritual enemies fall.
2. Rejoice! (v.1) You have eternal life that can never go away, you have a place in the church where you can shine like a precious stone, and an inheritance laid up for you in heaven (Col. 1:5)!
3. So “remove yourself/Be far from/abstain from oppression/injustice/tyranny/anxiety” (v.14)
2 Peter 1:1-8 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Nate Wilson's website – Isaiah Sermon Expositions](#)

[Christ the Redeemer Church website - Sermons](#)

COMPASS DIRECT NEWS' TOP 10 STORIES OF 2007

1 – Unprecedented Violence in Modern Turkey

The 99% Muslim country of Turkey claimed its first Protestant martyrs in modern times when 5 Islamic men bound 3 workers at a Christian publishing house, tortured them with stab wounds, and slit their throats in the SE city of Malatya.

2 – Heightened Attacks on Iraqi Christians

Islamic extremists took greater aim at Christians in 2007, with Father Ragheed Ganni and 3 deacons shot to death on June 3 in the northern city of Mosul... In Baghdad, Islamic extremists killed Fouad Salim for refusing to convert to Islam... In Baghdad's Dora neighborhood, Iraqi Christians fled their homes in April after armed Sunni extremists threatened to kill them if they did not convert to Islam within 24 hours... Chaldean priest Nawzat Hanna, 38, was abducted May 19... in Baghdad's Baladiyat neighborhood and released 2 days later after kidnappers demanded a 6-digit ransom... On October 13, kidnappers demanded \$1 million after abducting Syrian Catholic priests Pius Affas & Mazen Ishaq from Mosul...

3 – More Deaths by Torture in Eritrea

Eritrean authorities tortured a woman to death on September 5 for refusing to recant her Christian faith, the fourth such killing in less than a year... More than 2,000 Eritrean Christians are imprisoned in Eritrea. All have been denied legal counsel or trial, with no written charges filed against them. Eritrean authorities have also ordered that all Catholic schools, clinics, orphanages and women's vocational training centers be turned over to the government's Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor.

4 – Muslim Rampage in Nigeria Kills 10

A Muslim rampage in Tudun Wada Dankadai in the northern state of Kano resulted in the killing of 10 Christians and the destruction of 9 churches, according to eyewitnesses. Another 61 people were injured and more than 500 displaced in the September 28 disturbance... The attack came on the heels of a call in July by the Sultan of Sokoto, Abubakar III, to Muslims in northern Nigeria to rise against Christianity... All area homes, shops and businesses owned by Christians were looted and burned, eyewitnesses said...

5 – First-Ever Legal Challenge in Egypt

Jailed & tortured in 2002 when police discovered his conversion, Mohammed Hegazy said, "Martyrdom would be much better than being jailed under such a radical and fundamentalist authority." Hegazy, whose wife Zeinab is pregnant... said he wants his child to be born with Christian papers... A Christian ID card would allow their child to take Christian religion classes and openly attend worship services. Egypt's security police... threatened to kill the lawyer whom Hegazy retained to legally change his ID card. He pulled out of the case shortly after opening it.

6 – Christian Leader Killed in Gaza Strip

Police found Christian bookstore manager Rami Ayyad murdered on October 7 in the Palestinian territory of Gaza... The bookshop is operated by the Palestinian Bible Society, which Muslim extremists have repeatedly threatened. The Bible Society shop was bombed in April after previous threats, destroying most of the first floor... Ayyad is survived by two children and his pregnant wife, Pauline. Since his death, seven Palestinian Christian families have been evacuated out of Gaza and remain in temporary exile in the face of ongoing death threats from Islamic militants.

7 – Indiscriminate Killing of Christians in Laos

Soldiers, police and others killed at least 13 Christians in Laos in July in a swarming crackdown on Hmong villagers... In the sweep, encouraged by communist village leaders and others who falsely accused the Christians of being separatist rebels, authorities arrested and imprisoned about 200 members of the 1,900-strong Laos Evangelical Church in Ban Sai Jarern village, Bokeo province, in northwestern Laos. The hunted Christians were largely Hmong refugees who had fled persecution in Vietnam...

8 – Korean Aid Workers Killed in Afghanistan

Taliban terrorists killed two members of a team of 23 Christian aid workers from S. Korea after abducting them on July 19. Shim Sung Min, 29, was shot to death on July 30. The group's leader, pastor Bae Hyung Kyu, was shot on July 25, his birthday. After the freeing of two hostages, South Korea agreed to withdraw troops and missionaries from Afghanistan in exchange for the release of the remaining 19 aid workers... According to *Agence France-Presse*... "They... were beaten at first for refusing to take part in Islamic prayers or for rejecting a demand to convert." Seoul-based *Christian Today* newspaper on Sep. 5 quoted pastor Park Eun Jo as saying that Bae Hyung Kyu had been killed for refusing to convert...

9 – Pre-Olympics Crackdown in China

The Chinese Communist Party waged a secret campaign against unregistered house churches for nearly six months, from mid-June until the end of Nov... On November 18, authorities detained 40 church leaders from China Gospel Fellowship (CGF). Public Security Bureau officers from Xiancheng County, Henan raided their house church leadership meeting in Peichang...

10 – Christmas Attacks in India

In India, a series of Hindu extremist attacks beginning Christmas Eve in Orissa state's Kandhamal district made 2007 the most violent on record for Christians, with more than 800 incidents reported throughout the year. Over a period of 10 days in Orissa state... at least nine people were killed, close to 90 churches burned and about 600 houses were torched or vandalized, leaving 5,000 people facing hunger and fear.

THE STONES OF THE CITY

Carbuncle/Garnet



<http://www.emporia.edu/earthsci/amber/go340/images/cabgarnt.gif>



<http://www.gemstone.org/gem-by-gem/stones/Garnet-011.jpg>

Ruby



<http://www.gemstone.org/gem-by-gem/stones/Ruby-055.jpg>

Sapphire



<http://www.gemstone.org/gem-by-gem/stones/Sapphire-017.jpg>

Lapis Lazuli



<http://www.gemstone.org/gem-by-gem/stones/lapilazuli-003.jpg>

Antimony (*Stibium*)



www.webelements.com/webelements/elements/media/element-pics/Sb.jpg

Notice the backgrounds of these photographs. What color are they?