

## THE TIME OF OUR VISITATION

A Devotional Meditation from Psalm 121:1-8; Esther 8:13-14; Zechariah 12:3; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 19:41-44; Romans 11:25-27; 2 Corinthians 1:18-22

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The world was rocked – literally – on June 1, 1967. On that day, The Beatles released their iconic eighth album: *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. The long-anticipated collection of their latest songs soared immediately to the top of the charts in Great Britain and the United States, and there it remained for months. The ground-breaking artistic and production techniques built into the album, as well as *The Beatles'* message conveyed in song, coincided with a number of trends in Western culture that made Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band the soundtrack of "The Summer of Love."



Revelers at the "Fantasy Fair" in Mill Valley, California during the 1967 Summer of Love (Photo by Elaine Mayes, California Historical Society "On the Road to the Summer of Love Exhibition," [via History.com](https://www.history.com)).

At the distance of more than half a century, we must ask, "What was the 'Summer of Love'?" One source explains it this way:

In the summer of 1967, a hundred thousand young people descended upon the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. These utopian-seeking artists, musicians, drifters, and hippies were there to take part in the cultural phenomenon known as the "Summer of Love." New forms of rock 'n' roll pulsed through the airwaves, psychedelic drugs were plentiful, and free love was embraced. These counterculture dreamers were challenging society's expectations while wearing flowers in their hair.<sup>1</sup>

Young people, not only in America and Britain, but throughout the world, had taken a look at the civilization their parents had built – or, more accurately, rebuilt from the ashes of World War II – and declared it unacceptable. They watched, and participated in, the ruptures of the day, such as the dramatic struggles of the Civil Rights Era, the ominous nuclear-tipped Cold War between the Communist powers and the Free World, and the escalation of a baffling war in Vietnam. Age-old institutions, including government, church, and education, seemed incapable of providing satisfactory answers to longstanding problems. Therefore, the youth of the day embraced the exhortation of counterculture prophet Timothy Leary to, "Turn on, tune in, and drop out."

To be fair, Leary meant something a bit different from the popular interpretation of his words. He intended to call people to a higher level of spiritual enlightenment and social

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<sup>1</sup> Madison Horne, "A Photographic Trip Through the Summer of Love, 50 Years Later," *History.com*, August 21, 2017 (<https://www.history.com/photos-of-the-summer-of-love>).

responsibility, but the popular interpretation seemed to be, “Get stoned and abandon all constructive activity.”<sup>2</sup>

In retrospect, it could be said that the idealistic genesis of the 1960s counterculture quickly degenerated into an era of self-indulgence and rebellion. It might also be said that that era has not ended – nor that it began in 1967. A biblical perspective might propose that the era of self-indulgence and rebellion actually began in the Garden of Eden, and that what really changed in 1967 was the removal of all pretense imposed by civilization. And, of course, the tragic consequences continue to plague humanity to this day.

Perhaps the most tragic consequence of all is that the world, and the church in particular, missed the most important development in God’s redemptive plan during that summer of 1967. While the youth of the world embraced the reckless abandon of sex, drugs, and rock & roll, and while their elders shook their heads in disgust, the covenant nation of Israel was fighting for its life. Ironically, it was doing so at the very time The Beatles’ iconic album hit the charts.



*Israeli paratroopers sits along the Western Wall in Jerusalem’s Old City on June 7, 1967 (Israeli Defense Ministry IDF Archive, [via Jewish Virtual Library.](#))*

Today we know what happened during the Six-Day War, when God ensured Israel would not only survive the third threat within a generation to annihilate the Jewish people, but would regain control of Jerusalem, the Holy City where He had placed His Name. At the time, the only ones paying attention seem to have been the people of Israel, and their enemies in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and the rest of the Arab world stretching from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf. If anyone cared to listen, Arab leaders clearly articulated their intentions, such as the statement by President Aref of Iraq on May 31:

"The existence of Israel is an error which must be rectified. This is our opportunity to wipe out the ignominy which has been with us since 1948. Our goal is clear – to wipe Israel off the map. We shall, God willing, meet in Tel Aviv and Haifa."

President Abdel Rahman Aref of Iraq, May 31, 1967<sup>3</sup>

The Iraqi president and his allies made the same mistake another enemy of the Jews made long, long ago. Haman, counselor to King Xerxes of Persia, also sought to destroy God’s covenant people, but failed to heed warnings such as this:

Haman recounted to his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, “Since Mordecai, before whom you have begun your downfall, is of Jewish descent, you won’t be

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy Leary, *Flashbacks: A Personal and Cultural History of an Era*, pg. 253, as quoted in “Turn on, tune in, drop out,” *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turn\\_on,\\_tune\\_in,\\_drop\\_out](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turn_on,_tune_in,_drop_out)).

<sup>3</sup> President Abdel Rahman Aref, quoted in “The Six-Day War,” *Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA)*, 2007 (<http://www.sixdaywar.org/content/threats.asp>).

able to stand against him. In fact, you will certainly fall before him!" (Esther 6:13-14 TLV)

This is what we might expect of the enemies of the Jews, but what do we expect of those who should know better? Christians have had the testimony of scripture for two millennia, as well as the testimony of history. Time after time, that testimony bears out the promise of the Creator:

Behold, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.  
The LORD is your protector; the LORD is your shade on your right hand.  
The sun will not beat down on you by day, nor the moon by night.  
The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul.  
The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in from this time and forever.  
Psalm 121:5-8 NASB

Paul the apostle, himself a Jewish scholar, knew this. He understood that God provided only one means of redemption for the world, and that was through the covenant nation of Israel that would produce the Messiah – the Savior, Redeemer, and future King of the world. He knew that this "Jewish Messiah" would open the way for anyone, regardless of origin, to become part of the redemptive covenant nation. Thus, he proclaims with certainty that all Israel will be saved, knowing that the promises of God in Messiah are "Yes" and "Amen."

This is what the people of God should know, but do we? And if we do, why are we silent when Israel continues to experience existential peril? Jerusalem, the city of God's peace, is indeed a burdensome stone for the nations. Where is the church in this? Are we working to help God's chosen people survive in the land He gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Or, like so many of our forefathers, are we turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the plight of those who have born the national cost of God's work of redemption?

The world has seen this before. Instead of recognizing the miracle of the Jewish people, we have too often condemned them without cause, dismissing them as cut off from God's grace and redemption. This is how our forefathers tolerated and even promoted the expulsions of Jews from one country after another, the dehumanizing of Jews through humiliating social customs and laws, the mass murder of Jews in pogroms and death camps, and even the threatened extermination of the world's only Jewish state from the moment of its birth in 1948.

If we learn anything from the Messiah's parable of the Sheep and Goats, it is that He rewards those who care for His brethren, and condemns those who, by inaction, allow His brethren to perish. Who are His brethren? Israel, of course. And who is Israel? Let us be honest: the heart of Israel is the Jewish people. Thus, we might consider that the greatest test our Messiah places before us is what we do with, for, or to His Jewish family.

Luke's gospel says that Jesus wept over Jerusalem's imminent destruction, explaining that it was coming because His people did not recognize the time of their visitation (Luke 19:44). Could it be, as we approach the end of this age, that our Messiah weeps over His church because, in our indifference to Jerusalem and the Jewish people, we are missing the time of our visitation? If so, then instead of seeking our own satisfaction, perhaps we should pray and work for the peace of Jerusalem.