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Recent Mega Earthquakes—Just a Coincidence?

Recent months have seen major earthquakes rock Haiti and Chile. What does the Bible tell us about natural catastrophes, and what does this mean in today's world?

by Mario Seiglie

Suddenly, the ground started heaving and shaking. I felt the car jerking as if all four tires had suddenly gone flat. I couldn't help swerving back and forth on the road and barely kept the car from crashing.

Then I saw telephone poles swinging wildly back and forth and plumes of dust rising to the sky. Around me, buildings were collapsing and people were screaming. It seemed so surreal.

Back home, my wife, barely able to keep her balance, watched horrified as my little daughter, still asleep after a day of swimming, was being tossed around on her bed as if she were a rag doll.

Thankfully, all of us survived the ordeal that took place when we lived in Santiago, Chile. On that day in 1985, the earthquake registered 7.8 on the Richter scale and 178 people perished, while many thousands were left homeless.

Now, 25 years later, almost to the day, it has happened again—but this time the earthquake was much worse. It rocked Santiago and all the cities and towns 500 miles to the south, killing close to a thousand people and leaving over a million homes severely damaged. A tsunami also engulfed several coastal villages. At 8.8 on the Richter scale, it was 500 times stron-



Reuters/Mariana Bazo

A man recovers his belongings after a major earthquake struck the coast of Chile on Feb. 27, 2010. It was 500 times stronger than the quake that devastated Haiti six weeks before.

ger than the quake that had devastated Haiti six weeks before.

Is this normal?

What is happening? If we look at the 12 strongest earthquakes registered in the world since measure-
(See "EARTHQUAKES," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Can We Control Natural Disasters?

Will it ever be possible for humans to master the forces of nature? The eruption of Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano grounded transatlantic flights between Europe and many countries and generally disrupted travel for hundreds of thousands of people. The cost to airlines is in the multiple millions.

This particular volcano had not erupted since 1821, and modern aviation has not had to deal with such a major problem before. Experts say the volcano could erupt for months. If that happens, it could be a long summer full of inconvenience for not just the travel business but for a large segment of the global commerce.

Clearly natural disasters of this magnitude severely impact a modern technologically based world. The sophisticated machines and computers at the heart of our world are vulnerable to forces beyond the control of man. This points to the fact that events, natural and man-made, can create changes beyond anyone's imagination.

In this issue of *World News and Prophecy* we have an article about recent earthquakes. The two this year in Haiti and Chile highlight the fragility of life and society. Both poor and rich are subject to these forces. There are key lessons to learn from these events, as God's Word tells us.

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:13-14).

Major disruptions like an earthquake or a volcano remind us of the fragility of life and how little control we have at times. What it should do is point us to God, the Creator of life, and add a measure of humility to our thinking.

We humans begin to think we can master the forces of nature in all their forms. It can't be done. We have limited control over our own lives. We can, and should, choose wisely in the matters we can control. But as we all learn, there are many aspects of everyday life we can't control. We cope and adapt to these challenges. But these larger challenges, like a natural occurrence of an earthquake, hurricane or volcano, can teach us to look to God and His will above our own. It is meant to humble us.

James goes on to say, "Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil" (James 4:15-16).

Modern science is committed to figuring out where natural disasters come from, with the goal of eventually mastering them. I wonder how you master a massive volcano with all its forces unleashed from far beneath earth's surface? How do you turn the course of a hurricane bearing down on a major city? Could such ideas border on arrogance? I wonder.

This same book of James reminds us we cannot even master our little tongues, which have occasional explosive tendencies that can alter the human landscape around us by clouding up issues and potentially destroying each others' emotional and spiritual well-being. That, for most of us, is a lifetime work. The larger lesson for us is to master our own nature with the help of God. We cannot control natural disasters, but we have a chance to control some of our own human "disasters." God help us do that.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“EARTHQUAKES” (Continued from page 1)
ments of them began some 300 years ago, four—or a third of the list—have occurred within the last six years.

This recent one in Chile is rated eighth in intensity, and the earthquake off Sumatra, Indonesia, five years ago is ranked third. It caused a tsunami that killed 226,000 persons. Then, just six weeks before the earthquake in Chile, a great quake hit Haiti and killed about the same number of people as the one in Indonesia.

Until recently, geophysicists have said these great earthquakes are normal occurrences and there hasn't been a noticeable increase in them—but that is no longer the case.

According to Asian News International, “The 8.8-magnitude earthquake that shook Chile on Saturday was not outside the realm of normal, but the Earth has been more active over the past 15 years or so relative to a time period in the past, according to a scientist.

“Relative to the 20-year period from the mid 1970's to the mid 1990's, the Earth has been more active over the past 15 or so years,” Fox News quoted Stephen S. Gao, a geophysicist at Missouri University of Science and Technology, as saying.

“We still do not know the reason for this yet. [It] could simply be the natural temporal variation of the stress field in the earth's lithosphere,” he added” (“Chile Earthquake Shows Earth More Active in the Last 15 Years: Scientist,” Feb. 28, 2010, emphasis added throughout).

In fact, according to the data available, over the last 15 years there have been more large earthquakes that have rocked the planet *than in the previous 300 years*.

In the scientific community, there is some disagreement over the historical magnitude and frequency of earthquakes; however, the impact earthquakes have had on human lives is unquestionable.

“There have been more deaths over the past decade from earthquakes, said University of Colorado geologist Roger Bilham, who just returned from Haiti... ‘We found four times as many deaths in the last 10 years than



Reuters/ Victor Ruiz Caballero

Chile's 8.8-magnitude earthquake knocked down homes and hospitals, triggered a tsunami and is responsible for at least 122 deaths. Over the last 15 years there have been more large earthquakes that have rocked the planet than in the previous 300 years.

in the previous 10 years,’ Bilham told the Associated Press Monday. ‘That’s definitely up and scary.’ Other experts said they too have noticed a general increase in earthquake deaths. The World Health Organization tallied [about] 453,000 deaths from earthquakes from 2000 to 2009, up markedly from the previous two decades” (“Not More Quakes, Just More People in Quake Zones,” Seth Borenstein, Associated Press, March 9, 2010).

This brings to mind one of Jesus Christ's predictions as the end-time scenario nears. He said, “There will be great earthquakes [Greek *megas seismos*] in various places” (Luke 21:11).

After describing numerous other signs, He ended by saying, “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (verse 27). Since there have always been earthquakes on the earth, Jesus was speaking of these momentous events increasing in intensity and frequency.

Earthquakes in the Bible

The Greek term in the Bible for an earthquake is *seismos*, from which

we get the English words *seismic*, *seismograph* and *seismologist*. The word conveys a meaning of anything that produces an intense shaking of the ground.

For example, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* describes *seismos* as “a shaking, trembling, as of a sieve. A trembling of the earth, caused sometimes by volcanic activity, but more frequently, by a displacement, often very slight, of the earth's crust (tectonic earthquake)” (1989, Vol. 2, p. 4).

Clearly, the earth seems to be suffering from more violent shaking than normal. Going back to the list of the world's 12 strongest recorded earthquakes, three happened in the 1700s, one in the 1800s and now, eight in the last hundred years. The four mega earthquakes that have struck the planet in the last six years have killed *almost half a million people*—an unprecedented figure.

Just a “natural” phenomena?

Is God trying to get our attention? Certainly in the Bible, earthquakes

can be seen as a means to wake people up out of their complacency. Here are some scriptures to keep in mind:

Psalm 18:7: "Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, because He was angry."

Isaiah 13:11-13: "I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible... Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger."

Isaiah 29:6, 13: "You will be punished by the LORD of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire [here God includes tornados, hurricanes and scorching fires]... Therefore the Lord said: 'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.'"

Revelation 6:12, 15-16: "I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood... And the kings

of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'"

Naturally, there are parts of the earth more prone to earthquakes, but almost everywhere in the world there have been major earthquakes, or there is a potential for them, so no place is truly exempt. The earthquake in Haiti, for instance, took almost everyone by surprise since there had not been an earthquake of this magnitude in 200 years.

In fact, the entire crust of the earth is heavily cracked, with major and minor faults running virtually throughout the globe. Unfortunately, when a large earthquake strikes a place that is not prepared for it, and the building codes are lax, then the damage is much greater, as witnessed in Haiti.

Thankfully, Chile has among the strictest building codes in the world, which are strongly enforced, so these rigorous regulations probably saved hundreds of thousands of lives.

Why?

What about the idea that somehow people suffer these consequences because they are more unjust than others? Christ Himself answered this question in Luke 13:1-5, "There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

"And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.'"

In other words, as the Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). No one is exempt from suffering the consequences of some natural catastrophe.

God does intervene at times to punish sin, but usually He allows natural disasters to occur in this fallen world as a reflection of man's rule under Satan's influence.

As Solomon wrote: "I returned and saw under the sun that—The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to

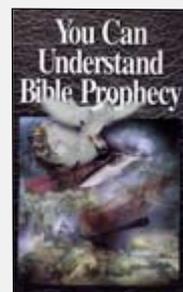
(See "EARTHQUAKES," page 13)



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Germany's Growing European Role: Where Will It Lead?

Chancellor Angela Merkel's noteworthy reluctance to part with large amounts of bailout cash has recently riveted European leaders' attention. Germany is increasingly beginning to negotiate from a strengthened position, fortified by the long-term effects of 20 years of reunification. But what is Germany's ultimate destiny?

by John Ross Schroeder

Two world wars with Germany in the first half of the last century (1914-1918; 1939-1945) have often dominated the anxious, postwar thoughts of other European nations. "A failure to move toward monetary union [meaning the euro] would lead only to 'a preponderant influence of Germany,' Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the former president of France, said in a 1997 interview" (Celestine Bohlen, "Euro Unity? It's Germany That Matters," *New York Times*, March 9, 2010).

The basic idea has been to see Germany well encased inside the European Union (EU) in order to prevent its notorious nationalistic tendencies from spilling over into the sovereignty and territory of other nations. But has this strategy really worked out? Will the German nation eventually wind up virtually directing the activities of the EU?

In her "Letter From Europe," Celestine Bohlen wrote: "Ten years after the euro, it's still all about Germany, which isn't the way it was supposed to be... President Nicolas Sarkozy of France can come out and pledge all the support to Greece he wants, but in the end, it's Germany that matters" (ibid., emphasis added throughout). At the end of the day, Germany did agree to become part of a bailout, but only with stringent conditions duly attached.

A successful and influential German chancellor

Last autumn *The Economist* published a cover story dubbed "Set Angela Free" (Sept. 17, 2009). The last German general election went a long way down that road, giving Angela Merkel a conservative coalition more supportive of her plans.

Today Chancellor Merkel ranks number one in *Forbes'* listing of the most powerful women in the world. Wrote political journalist Martin Lohmann, based in Bonn: "There is no doubt whatsoever that Angela Merkel's understanding of power goes very deep. She likes it, she knows how to wield it, and she knows how to hold on to it... She is pragmatic, aware of her power, clever, determined, cool and self-confident" ("Sphinx in the Reichstag," *The Tablet*, Aug. 29, 2009).

Angela Merkel grew up in East Germany and is Germany's first female chancellor. At a 2007 EU conference celebrating and commemorating the original Treaty of Rome, I saw firsthand her diplomacy, deference and graciousness in dealing with the leading men in the European Union. Yet there was no doubt in anyone's mind that she was firmly in charge.

Josef Joffe, editor of *Die Zeit* (a German national newspaper), titled his *Time* article "German Rules." He agreed with her tough line with Europe's spendthrifts, calling her "assertive Angie" (April 1, 2010). The *Financial Times* acknowledged the fact that "on matters economic, at least, Germany now dominates" in Europe. The article itself was aptly titled "Tough Lady of Berlin Stakes Out Strong Role" (Quentin Peel, Ben Hall and Stanley Pignal, March 27, 2010).

Why Britain fears German nationalism

The headlines of two leading national daily newspapers in Britain sounded similar warnings. The titles were "Germans and French Plan an EU Economic Government"

"The new Germany has a narrower view of its interests. It is unburdened by the guilt that shaped a postwar generation. Berlin no longer wants to pay for the grandiose ambitions of others."—Philip Stephens



German Chancellor Angela Merkel attends a party congress of the Christian Union Party in Muenster, Germany, March 20, 2010. The last German general election gave Merkel a conservative coalition more supportive of her plans.

(*The Daily Telegraph*) and “EU in Push for Power” (*Daily Mail*).

The text of the *Daily Mail* article began: “Britain could be forced to have its Budget signed off by European leaders under plans to impose an ‘economic government of the EU,’ it emerged yesterday. German Chancellor Angela Merkel is pressing for ‘oversight’ of national economies to be included in controversial arrangements that were agreed by EU leaders yesterday” (Jason Groves, March 26, 2010).

The editorial in *The Daily Telegraph* stated: “France and Germany demanded sweeping new powers to control the economies of EU states, by giving Herman Van Rompuy, the new European Council President, responsibility for the ‘economic government of Europe.’ The ostensible reason for doing so was the economic chaos in the eurozone. But you do not have to be a paid-up Euro-sceptic to suspect that this is an excuse for a federalist power-grab” (March 27, 2010).

Remember that the basic tensions between the United Kingdom and Germany are rooted in their somewhat differing security concerns and perceptions. The British have always been favored by their geography, being surrounded by the waters of the English Channel, the North Sea and the Irish Sea—really in a larger sense the Atlantic Ocean.

On the other hand, Germany sits in the middle of the North European Plain, bordered by other nations on all sides, especially east and west. “The Germans are the peoples of the north European plain, [generally speaking] the people without a defined natural frontier” (A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History*, p. 2).

Evaluating Europe’s German question

Noted *Financial Times* columnist Philip Stephens has recorded some insightful observations about more recent adjustments in Berlin’s overall economic strategy. He wrote: “Europe is haunted again by a

German question. Somewhere along the way the old neurosis has been up-ended. The issue that so long vexed Europeans has returned in another guise.

“Berlin’s neighbours used to worry about an over-mighty, expansionist state straddling the heart of the continent. Now they must grapple with an indifferent, introverted Germany... The new Germany has a narrower... view of its interests. It is unburdened by the guilt that shaped a postwar generation. Berlin no longer wants to pay for the grandiose ambitions of others” (“Merkel’s Myopia Reopens Europe’s German Question,” March 26, 2010).

Mr. Stephens concluded his column with this observation: “There has been much hand-wringing about what sort of Europe will emerge eventually from the present era of tumultuous geopolitical change. The prior question is: *what sort of Germany?*”

Germany in history and prophecy

A.J.P. Taylor was one of Britain’s preeminent 20th-century historians in both the written and spoken word. He studied and explored the subject of German unity both in detail and broad perspective.

Germany is associated historically with Charlemagne (747-814) and the Holy Roman Empire. “Charlemagne’s Empire claimed to be universal, and the Reich maintained the claim sometimes more and sometimes less resolutely for six hundred years thereafter. But from the first it was unmistakably a German institution, and became progressively more so. By the fifteenth century it had acquired the almost official title of the ‘Holy Roman Empire of the German nation’” (*The Course of German History*, p. 5). Although the Holy Roman Empire title did *not* fully reflect reality at the time, it fits well with the general prophetic framework.

In viewing the European continent as a whole, Professor Taylor stated that “throughout modern times Europe has been composed of independent states, some of them

considerable powers. One power has tended to predominate or at least to be stronger than the others” (*Europe: Grandeur and Decline*, p. 7). Germany was this one power for much of the 20th century.

Professor Taylor viewed Germany from the standpoint of a British citizen, whose nation had gone to war with Berlin twice within a half century (1914 to 1918 and 1939 to 1945). That’s 10 years of conflict with much economic deprivation and many lives lost on both sides.

So he concluded: “What is wrong with Germany is that there is too much of it. There are too many Germans, and Germany is too strong, too well organised, too well equipped with industrial resources. This greater Germany is a very recent appearance, created overnight by Bismarck and completed only by Hitler” (ibid., p. 121).

Again, from the point of view of a British citizen and historian by profession who had lived through two world wars with Britain and Germany on opposing sides, he minced no words in saying that “the harsh truth of German history is that the solution to the German question cannot be found within Germany. Partition cannot be maintained as a permanent policy [it wasn’t], yet a united Germany will keep Europe in apprehension” (pp. 165-166).

A little earlier Professor Taylor had made this stark controversial prediction: “A Germany free from foreign control will seek to restore the United Greater Germany which Hitler achieved in 1938; nor will democracy provide an automatic safeguard against a new German aggression” (p. 165).

At least on the surface, the bare facts today do not bear out Professor Taylor’s stark warnings. Clearly Germany today is a fully functioning democracy and currently represents no apparent visible danger to any nation. Its outlook since World War II has been far more pacifist than aggressive, and some measures have been taken by the German government to compensate for what happened during that war and before.



Flickr.com/Werner Kunz

Tourists photograph the Brandenburg Gate, one of the best known landmarks in Berlin. It is the site where, on Dec. 22, 1989, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and East German Prime Minister Hans Modrow greeted one another in a public acknowledgement of the reunification of Germany.

Germany’s politicians today apparently have no intention of posing any threat whatsoever to the world. That is the present reality. However, things do not always go on indefinitely as planned. In the political arena, events all too often get out of hand as economic circumstances alter for the worse.

Democratic governments have been known to relinquish control under such conditions. As a result of political and economic upheavals, they can be suddenly thrust out of power. Remember what happened to Germany’s infamous Weimar Republic in the early 1930s.

Will the EU solution work?

Many Western politicians (both in Germany and other nations) have long felt that membership in the European Union or its predecessors like the European Economic Community would restrain Germany from shedding its democratic rule and eventually pursuing aggressive intentions. Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, perhaps the chief

architect of reunification, believed this almost as an article of faith.

Of course, the ultimate truth of the matter would depend on just how dominant in Europe Germany might eventually become in the long run. The most economically sound nation is bound to acquire a predominant position over other nations in a given area. In spite of some obvious geographical disadvantages, geography has, in fact, also placed Germany at the fulcrum of Europe. The question is: Has this occurred by divine design? (See Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26; Isaiah 10:5-7.)

Biblical prophecies in both the Old Testament book of Daniel and the New Testament book of Revelation indicate that the key nations of central Europe will fulfill many national prophecies during the period that will mark the end of man’s age.

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The Decline and Fall of Nations: A Prophetic Perspective

*Ancient Babylon fell in one night after having been “weighed in the balance and found wanting.”
Can modern empires fall just as quickly? History and the Bible provide an answer.*

by Darris McNeely

When other nations lose confidence in the sustainability of an economic model, events can be set in motion to quickly change the balance of power.

Harvard historian Niall Ferguson, writing in the March/April 2010 issue of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, presents an analysis of how empires can quickly collapse into chaos. Rather than a slow decline over centuries, Ferguson shows that many large nations of the past were gone in a few short years. They were seemingly strong and viable and faded virtually overnight.

Conventional wisdom presents the economic challenges to America’s global dominance as long-term threats. Demographics alone will increase the debt to unmanageable proportions.

Citing long-term predictions of China overtaking America in economic size and output by 2027 or 2040, Ferguson asks, “What if history is not cyclical and slow moving but arrhythmic—at times almost stationary, but also capable of accelerating suddenly, like a sports car? What if collapse does not arrive over a number of centuries but comes suddenly, like a thief in the night?” (“Complexity and Collapse,” p. 22).

A thief in the night? Sounds biblical! “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3).

What the Bible says about the end-time events culminating in the Day of the Lord applies to the sudden collapse of powerful nations and empires throughout history. Ferguson looks at the collapse of the Soviet Union over a short period of five years, from the time Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Soviet

Communist Party. Although the CIA overestimated the size of the Soviet economy, they did have nuclear superiority over the United States. It looked as if the Soviet Union would be around to challenge America for many years to come.

“Yet less than five years after Gorbachev took power, the Soviet imperialism in central and Eastern Europe had fallen apart, followed by the Soviet Union itself in 1991. If ever an empire fell off a cliff—rather than gently declining—it was the one founded by Lenin” (ibid., p. 30).

Ferguson’s thesis is that empires are large, complex systems that can be turned upside down in short order by the insertion of even one event that is more than the system can handle. Lack of confidence in a nation’s future, even while it is strong, can be such an event. When other nations lose confidence in the sustainability of an economic model, events can be set in motion to quickly change the balance of power.

Other smaller, seemingly insignificant events can trigger a chain reaction leading to world upheaval. The assassination of Austrian Archduke Ferdinand in June 1914 was the fuse that lit the powder keg of World War I. No one saw it at the time, but events quickly got out of control and conflict started.

Recent economic crisis

We have the recent example of how the complex world economy went from boom to bust when a lot of Americans began defaulting on something called “subprime loans.” Because thousands of large financial institutions were set up to depend on the performance of those loans, they suddenly found themselves insolvent or quite near the brink. The reverberation brought

down large Wall Street financial houses and had repercussions across Europe and Asia.

The world financial system came near meltdown one week in September 2008. The global economy is still recovering. It is an object lesson in how quickly events, even small events, can happen and turn the world upside down.

Ferguson concludes by observing that “empires behave like all complex adaptive systems. They function in apparent equilibrium for some unknowable period. And then, quite abruptly, they collapse... It is sudden” (ibid., p. 32).

What Ferguson and other historians miss in their studies is what can be called the missing dimension in world affairs. That missing dimension is the hand of God in the rise and fall of great nations and empires.

The Bible is a chronicle of ancient nations that rose and fell according to His plan and purpose. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome—all are mentioned in the narrative. All played key roles in working with the nation of Israel and the Church founded by Jesus Christ. Even today, the lessons of empires embedded in the Bible apply as we watch the modern world move toward what Christ said would be the end of the age.

Babylon

The prophetic book of Daniel lists Babylon as the first in a line of empires that would impact the world from the time of the fall of Jerusalem to the end of the age. Daniel found himself at the seat of the empire dealing with a succession of rulers beginning with Nebuchadnezzar. While explaining the king’s dream, the prophet says that God “removes kings and raises up kings” (Daniel 2:21).

Here is the first principle to understand about world affairs. God determines the course of nations. He can set up or remove a leader when He wills. That doesn’t mean He is involved in every small nation’s affairs when it does not impact the



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Jesus Christ said people would be going about a normal life and caught unaware of momentous changes occurring in the world system around them... The fall can take a few decades or only a few years. But when God’s time is ready, nothing can turn it back.

course of His plan. The nations may “rage” and the rulers “take counsel together” (Psalm 2:1-2), but unless their actions are in accord with the counsel of God, in the end they will pass from the world scene.

Babylon found itself in this position on the night when a subsequent ruler, Belshazzar, “made a great feast” (Daniel 5:1). This event occurred as the Persian armies massed outside the city gates. During the banquet the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote on the wall of the king’s palace (verse 5). King Belshazzar was troubled at the sight and asked for anyone to interpret what the writing said. Word came that Daniel was the only one who could possibly interpret the handwriting, so he was brought into the banquet room.

Daniel gave a brief history of Nebuchadnezzar’s experience with

God, including a reminder that “the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whom-ever He chooses” (Daniel 5:21).

Daniel’s interpretation of the handwriting highlights another fundamental dimension in world affairs. The message on the wall was, “God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it;...you have been...found wanting;...your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians” (Daniel 5:26-27). It is God who judges the time an empire lives and when its time is over. A key is when the nation and its people are “found wanting.” In other terms, this is speaking of sin, breaking God’s laws and not acknowledging the God of creation.

Babylon worshipped gods who neither saw, heard nor knew. They did not acknowledge the “God who holds your breath in His hand and

owns all your ways” (verse 23). Their problem was the same as virtually all other great nations that rose and fell through time: They did not worship the true God. They practiced what the Bible calls idolatry, worshipping as God that which is not God. The problem is still with us today.

That night Belshazzar was killed and the Persians entered Babylon. As a power, Babylon ended—absorbed into the Persian kingdom. It was over, like a thief in the night.

Modern Babylon to fall

But Babylon has a long story within the Bible. When we go to the book of Revelation, we see a modern version of this ancient system dominating the world scene. Revelation 17 shows a woman sitting on a scarlet beast with a name on her forehead saying, “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (verse 5).

This system, a combination of religion and politics, controls the world for a brief but significant time prior to the coming of Jesus Christ. The world will be lulled into a sense of peace and security by this system that will come together in the guise of safety and security.

While this system will impact the entire world, there are signs it will be weak in its foundation. Again, size will make it a complex system. Many nations, ethnicities, cultures and languages will be in play. Technology, by itself a complicated and tenuous structure, will tether together the diversity of the world. It will be an unstable mixture that will quickly unravel.

Revelation 17:16 shows the “beast” turning on the woman and eating her flesh. Revelation 18:8 says, “Therefore her plagues will come *in one day*—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her... For *in one hour* your judgment has come” (Revelation 18:8, 10, emphasis added).

Once again, judgment comes quickly—unexpectedly. Whether it

is days or months is unclear, but it will likely not be much longer given the time frame of prophecy in this period. Like ancient Babylon falling in one night, we see that sudden change can come upon a nation even as life appears to be normal.

Christ’s warning

Jesus Christ said people would be going about a normal life and caught unaware of the momentous changes occurring. “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:34-35).

Once again, we see the warning that events can occur “like a thief in the night.” What Niall Ferguson noted in his article about the decline and fall of nations finds support in Scripture. But there is a difference. Ferguson and most modern historians focus on demographics and economic factors. They miss the spiritual dimension of God as we have noted in the Bible.

To ignore and deny the hand of God in history is to miss the real meaning of history and current world events. It is to deny God, and that is what is at the heart of any decline and fall.

The problem of idolatry

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn this lesson the hard way. He looked at the kingdom he established and thought it was all done by his wisdom and cunning. Like any despot in history, he was pretty high on himself; and when he surveyed the splendor of Babylon in a pride-filled boast, he came face to face with reality. God figuratively grabbed him by the pants and made him face reality.

He went mad for seven years. His mental state made him a prisoner in his body with no ability to act or think rationally. And then, just as suddenly, he returned to normal and resumed his position in the kingdom. He learned a lesson—that God’s control of leaders and nations

is the critical factor in world affairs. The last few verses of Daniel 4, where this part of the story is told, form a final word on the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

The words of the prophets, including Jesus Christ, teach us the critical lesson needed to understand why nations can suddenly collapse when all the signs say otherwise. Whether it was God’s chosen people, Israel, or another empire, when a people fail to acknowledge God and lapse into idolatry, putting themselves first, they set out on a road to collapse. It may take several generations, but it is inevitable. The fall can take a few decades or only a few years. But when God’s time is ready, nothing can turn it back.

This is why the present state of affairs in America and its role in the world is so critical. Since the end of World War II, America has been the defender of what has been called the “free world.” Its nuclear shield protected Europe during the Cold War, allowing its economies to rebuild. The U.S. Navy has kept the sea lanes of the world open to commerce. Its armies have combated terrorism, responded to genocide and been a deterrent to rogue nations like North Korea and Iran.

America’s rising debt will one day cause it to retreat from this historic role as a global protector. When that day happens, it will signal a change, perhaps a collapse, in its role as a superpower. What follows will likely be quick and sudden, “like a thief in the night.”

When the day comes that America and the English-speaking peoples relinquish their historic and biblically based role in the modern world, the world will be a different place. Only then, as one historian notes, will the world mourn the passing of a decent and noble people.

You need to read the full story of why this is important to today’s world and your future. Our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* will supply the full missing dimension in modern world affairs. Go online at www.GNmagazine.org/booklets/US to read the full story. ❖

Turkey at the Crossroads

Following rebuffs from both the United States and Germany, could NATO's second biggest military power turn toward the east?

by Melvin Rhodes

The vote was close and had taken almost a century, but when the House Foreign Affairs Committee in Washington D.C. declared by a single-vote majority (23 votes to 22) that Turkey's mass killing of Armenians in 1915 was "an act of genocide," Turkey was quick to recall its ambassador in protest.

It's difficult to understand Turkey's sensitivity on the subject. The killings were in the middle of World War I and were actually perpetrated by the predecessor of the Turkish Republic, the Ottoman Empire. It would be similar to blaming the United States for an act committed during colonial times before the country even existed.

Nobody denies the killings took place. The question is whether it was a natural consequence of the war or a deliberate attempt to wipe out an ethnic group. The official position of the Turkish government is that the historians should decide, not the politicians.

While most Americans remain unaware of the vote, the Turkish people were deeply offended by it. I know that because I was in Turkey just two weeks later.

During my visit over the last two weeks of March, the German chancellor also rebuffed Turkey. The Turkish press proclaimed that Turks felt insulted by the German leader's visit and her announced rejection of Turkish attempts to join the European Union (EU).

Turkey has the second biggest military in NATO, and the country has even closer ties with EU nations, especially Germany. (Many EU members are also in NATO.)

Travelling around Turkey, it is clear that every business will accept euros, but few will take U.S. dollars. Many prices are in both Turkish lira and euros, with the euro worth two lira (the dollar is worth approximately 1.5 Turkish lira). Even pay toilet facilities will take euros as well as lira.

Our tour guide told us that Germans comprise the biggest single group of tourists, with the Russians coming in second. The British are third. Americans didn't even make the short list. It's surprising, since Turkey is full of biblical sites that should be of great interest to American Christian groups. In biblical times, the area known as Asia Minor was the center of missionary work by the early apostles.

Although the name *Turkey* does not appear in the Bible, the geographical area that Turkey inhabits is featured prominently in both the Old and New Testaments. It was a part of the Persian Empire until Alexander the Great's conquests in the fourth century B.C. Then Turkey was a part of the biblical "king of the North" that Daniel prophesied about in the sixth century B.C.

You can read about the king of the North and the king of the South in Daniel 11. Of particular note is the fact that the "king of the North" features in biblical prophecy "at the time of the end" (Daniel 11:40).

Relations with the EU

At the famous UNESCO World Heritage site of Hierapolis, the ruins of an ancient Roman city and spa, German was being spoken all around us.

A century ago there were close ties between Germany and Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the two powers were allies. When Germany was defeated and its empire crumbled, the Ottomans soon followed.

Today's Middle East is the result, a radical carving up of the Ottoman Empire that has led to a number of wars throughout the region, including all the conflicts between the Jews and Palestinians and the two recent wars against Iraq. World peace is constantly threatened by the precarious balance of power in the Middle East.

Once again, Germany and Turkey are close. There are over 3 million Turks in Germany. Whereas Germany wants them

Faced with what's been interpreted as a massive rejection from Europe, Turkey is looking to build closer ties with its Middle Eastern neighbors.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan attend a press conference March 29, 2010. A clash of cultures is pitting Germany's desire for assimilation against Turkey's desire for cultural preservation.

to assimilate, the politicians in Turkey are calling for separate schools to preserve their Turkish culture and their Islamic religious identity. It's a classic clash of cultures.

The Turkish *Daily News and Economic Review* of March 29 quoted Chancellor Merkel as saying: "These Turks have been living in Germany for three or four generations. We want them to integrate." The Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan made the following comment on the same issue: "I think it is an improper approach for a German chancellor. She doesn't accept the opening of Turkish high schools."

The newspaper commented further: "The European leader has rejected the idea of opening Turkish high schools in Germany and recently reiterated her intention to pursue a 'privileged partnership' with Turkey as an alternative to its full membership in the EU."

EU concern about Turkish membership is due primarily to a simple fact—that 50 percent of Turks are under the age of 30. The country also has an official unemployment rate of 14 percent. EU membership would enable millions of Turks, both unemployed and those seeking higher salaries and better benefits under European social umbrellas, to spread

out across Europe. Europeans, already concerned about the Islamization of their nations, are naturally concerned.

Turkey reaches out to neighbors

Faced with what's been interpreted as a massive rejection, Turkey is looking to build closer ties with its Middle Eastern neighbors. In the same day's newspaper a headline declared: "PM Backs Arab League's Iran Offer."

The subhead read: "Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey strongly supports Arab League Secretary General's proposal on establishment of a regional dialogue mechanism that includes Iran and Turkey—both non-Arab nations. The proposal could undermine US-Israeli efforts to isolate Tehran amid concerns that its nuclear program aims to develop atomic weapons."

A month earlier, before the House committee's vote against Turkey, the country might have acted differently.

Moves toward closer ties with the 22-member Arab League and radical Islamist Iran are a direct consequence of the U.S. and EU's rejection of Turkey.

"Along with Germany, France is also a vocal opponent of Turkey's

EU aspirations. The two EU heavyweights believe that a vast, relatively poor country with a mainly Muslim population of 71 million has no place in Europe" ("A Summit Defined by Growing Tension," *Daily News and Economic Review*, March 29, p. 5).

The Turkish prime minister declared France's position as "illogical." He also described Merkel's rejection of separate schools for Turks as "hatred," language that will only inflame the situation between Turkey and the two most powerful EU member nations.

Although Turkey became a secular country with the declaration of a republic in 1923, the nation is currently governed by a radical Islamist party that frequently clashes with the military. Although it's been three decades since the military directly intervened in Turkish politics, some Western nations still express concern about the fragility of Turkish democracy.

First-time visitors like myself are amazed at how free the country is and its similarities with the West. Turkey is very much "Islam lite," a country where it's easy to see local people drinking alcohol in bars and restaurants and dressing in a more liberal way than would be possible in many Mideast countries.

Our guide told us that about 50 percent of Turks are religious, defined as going to the mosque on a regular basis. Officially 99 percent of the country is Muslim. A small number of Orthodox Christians still live there, descendants of those who once ruled the area when it was the Byzantine Empire. There is also a small Jewish community.

Until this year Turkey was a good friend of Israel, but recently there have been strains in the relationship. The future remains uncertain, as is the future relationship between Turkey and its Western allies.

It is important for the West to remember that Turkey matters. A look at a map will show you how strategically located the country is. The realization that it has the second biggest military force in NATO emphasizes its importance to the Atlantic alliance. If growing alienation from the West leads to growing Islamization of the country, it will be a serious blow to the Western democracies.

At the crossroads

Turkey has always been at the crossroads of Asia and Europe. Only 3 percent of the country is in Europe, while the remaining 97 percent is in Asia. Right now, it's at a crossroads where it must decide its own future.

The country is also in a very sensitive region of the world that is the primary focus of Bible prophecy—the Middle East. Jesus Christ showed that Jerusalem would be the main focal point when He said: “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:20). Interestingly, Jerusalem was ruled by Turkey a century ago. It had been a part of the Ottoman Empire for four centuries.

Turkey today shares borders with Lebanon and Syria, two of Israel's neighbors. Each of these countries is quite small, smaller than the state of South Dakota.

Over two millennia ago, the kings of the North and South fought repeatedly over the territory of what was then Judah, the ancient nation of the Jews. The two dynasties were the successor states to Alexander's Greek Empire. Daniel 11 contains a detailed prophecy from the sixth century B.C. that was largely fulfilled in the second century before Christ. However, it was not fulfilled in its entirety.

Verses 40-41 of the chapter shows that the final part of the prophecy is still future:

“At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious [Holy] Land, and many countries shall be overthrown.”

The country now known as Turkey will be involved in these end-time events.

For a greater understanding of the region and its future, be sure to read or request our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* at www.WNPonline.org/litreq. ❖

“EARTHQUAKES” (Continued from page 4)

men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them” (Ecclesiastes 9:11-12).

Does this mean God doesn't protect a righteous person in the moment of danger? Of course He does, and there are many instances of God's timely intervention when He has His powerful and holy angels protect the just (see Psalm 91). But in an increasingly degenerate society, more catastrophes are bound to happen. Consequently, we should always pray for God's protection and also apply biblical principles by carefully securing our dwellings so we will not be found negligent (Deuteronomy 22:8; Proverbs 22:3; Ecclesiastes 10:18).

Remember, God is very patient and does not want anyone to perish but to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Unless it is part of a prophetic event, God in His mercy “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). Moreover, He “is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful just as your Father is also merciful” (Luke 6:35-36).

Be spiritually prepared

We can't be completely certain why this increase of major earthquakes is occurring and whether it is a temporary phenomenon or a permanent trend. But it behooves us to be alert and to watch whether this pattern continues into the future and what it can portend for all of us.

This intensity and frequency of earthquakes might be a wake-up call for the world—and for us. One thing is for sure—we should spiritually prepare for the coming of Christ, whenever that happens. We cannot afford to get caught unprepared.

Jesus warned, “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:34-36).

This is no time to take it easy spiritually. Thankfully, we know one day, earthquakes will be a thing of the past. When Christ comes to reign on the earth, He will remove the curse upon the land and heal this ailing planet (see Isaiah 32:16-18; 60:18-21).

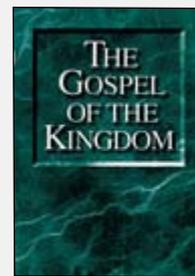
As a final admonition, Peter tells us, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

“Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:10-13).

As we have seen in the past six years, there is much suffering and death because of major earthquakes. May that day soon come when Christ comes back and heals this fractured earth! ❖

Recommended Reading

Jesus Christ brought good news—the gospel—but few understand why His promise of a coming Kingdom is the best news this world could ever hear. Request or download our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom* for the biblical answers.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 15, or request or download it from our Web site at www.WNPonline.org

“BEGINNING” (Continued from page 16)

painful rupture as soon as it occurred (Isaiah 59:2). Adam and Eve went into hiding from their Maker and even hid themselves from one another due to new shameful feelings they had about themselves.

Everyone started to blame everyone else. The man blamed the woman. The woman pointed to the snake. No one pointed to himself or herself. Some things never change! When all was said and done, they were all really pointing at God.

In the curse (Genesis 3:14-19) that God rendered on them, He specifically pointed at each of them in order of sinful sequence. He sentenced humanity to a frustrating life apart from the delight of the garden experience.

But it wasn't really the garden alone that was the experience, was it? No! It was being with God. That incredibly fascinating bond was broken not by God's design, but man's short-sighted choice. Genesis 3:24 describes how God “drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Yes, the curse of constant frustration began and has been alive and well ever since. For 6,000 years, humanity at large has tumultuously existed in turmoil, because the very purpose of life has been forgotten, rejected or not revealed. The divine call to worship God has not been realized. Spiritual amnesia about why we are and to whom we belong is ever present.

Reluctantly God lets go

Let's fully grasp that none of this stems from God's lack of loving desire toward His creation. When God let go of Adam and his descendants, it was not in the sense of jettisoning them in wrathful rage. Rather, it was in the sense of having done all one can for loved ones by pointing the clear path to success but reluctantly allowing them to go their own way based upon their own choices, to face themselves and the consequences of their decisions.

This abandonment of God's ways has led not only man, but also nature itself, to a state of frenzy or longing



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The Bible is the revelation of God set between two revealed portraits of gardens designed for one purpose—maintaining a beautiful, close relationship of walking and talking with God and worshipping Him.

for something rejected long ago. The Bible speaks to this bewildered longing of that initial garden setting when it says, “Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse. All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up the present time” (Romans 8:20-21, New Living Translation).

The magnificent choice in the first prophecy

But thankfully, God has made a magnificent choice that transcends our mortal foibles. God mentioned His magnificent choice when He proclaimed the first prophecy recorded in all Scripture. It is found in Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between you [the serpent, representing Satan] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

So often we think of prophecy in books like Daniel, Jeremiah or Revelation. But it all starts right here! The rest of the Bible is the fulfillment of this verse. The rest of Scripture dis-

plays how the serpent would be at war with the seed of Eve, Christ Himself. This verse speaks of the wiles of Satan always nipping at the heels of God's chosen Savior and chosen covenant people, but how God would ultimately triumph through His only begotten Son and crush the head of the snake (Romans 16:20). All the prophecies you are reading about in your Bible and in this publication flow from this pivotal point inside Eden.

Yes, the magnificent choice declared in the first prophecy would offer hope to the hopeless and a compass to the lost. Yes, even as humanity was being forcibly removed from the Garden of Eden, God was already initiating a plan of return through the shed blood of the very One who made them in the first place—the living Word of God, the LORD of the Old Testament, now revealed as Jesus Christ.

Revelation 13:8 shows how long ago God made this choice: “All who dwell on the earth will worship him [the beast], whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (emphasis added throughout). The magnificent choice of the Godhead was set—forever!

Again, what was the purpose of Christ's sacrifice? To reconcile us to God so that we may worship Him. Yes, to go back to that time in the garden when God experienced a close bond with His special creation. The "Seed" would have a precious life, a humbling death and a glorious resurrection in preparation for reigning on behalf of His Heavenly Father on this earth for 1,000 years—a stepping-stone toward eternity.

For the joy that was set before Him

The prophetic moment came in the truest sense when the serpent "bruised His heel" at Golgotha (Matthew 27:33). It is noteworthy what the author of Hebrews conveys about our Savior, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Is it possible in that moment of utter human frustration that Jesus Christ's divinity was able to see past that mere moment of anguish and fixate on joy? On the joy He had initially planned for His creation in the Garden of Eden? The verse is not underlined with sorrow, but joy!

Joy that would move beyond His personal anguish to set an example for us to move beyond our own momentary physical, emotional and spiritual struggles to focus on what is "set before" us. Joy that moves beyond the seven seals of religious deception, warfare, famine, pestilence, intense tribulation, the earthshaking heavenly signs or the divine judgment of God. Joy that moves beyond the martyrdom of His two witnesses (Revelation 11:3-7) and those saints who "did not love their lives to the death" (Revelation 12:11).

Yes, joy that focuses on another garden portrayed in chapter 22 of the prophetic book of Revelation. This, the last chapter of the Bible, speaks of a pure river (verse 1) and trees (verse 2) just like in Eden. It speaks of leaves and fruit that are beneficial for the "healing of the nations" (verse 2). Absent is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Absent is Satan,

the enemy of you and me and God. Absent is the curse (verse 3)!

What about the parallel of Adam? Here we find the faithful One forever bonded with God. He is the second Adam, described by Paul's statement: "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). But once again, in the midst of this prophetic display of a fully redeemed creation, is the Godhead: both the Father and His chosen Lamb (Revelation 22:3).

When you think about it, the Bible is the revelation of God set between two revealed portraits of gardens designed for one purpose. You might say these two scenarios of Eden, one past and one prophetic, are bookends to hold Scripture intact. In the truest sense, when all prophecy is fulfilled, we are simply "ending with the beginning." We are finishing where God wanted us to start and remain all along, in a beautiful, close relationship of walking and talking with God and worshipping Him.

"I go to prepare a place"

Jesus said to His disciples then and now, "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). Did He have this prophetic Eden in mind? What an encouragement for those who are true to God to be openly invited into such a paradise rather than be given the boot like our first human parents!

Such a reversal is only made possible by the fulfillment of the very first prophecy in Genesis 3:15. How does one even hope to enter that desirable garden? Perhaps the key to unlocking the door is found in another time and place in another garden set between the two Edens. That garden was called Gethsemane.

There Jesus Christ, the second and faithful Adam, offered us the ultimate

depiction of "this is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21) when He answered the call of the magnificent choice by saying, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). ❖



Robin Webber

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by Robin Webber

Ending With the Beginning

In the beginning” is a renowned phrase that draws us toward a unique realm of fascination and wonderment. The early chapters of Genesis that follow that phrase illustrate the dynamic events that separated humanity from God.

But have you ever asked yourself what it must have been like to experience a world dramatically different from our own? God emphatically said it was “good,” even “very good,” but how *good* is good?

The Bible says, “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden” (Genesis 2:15). The very word *Eden* means “delight” or “pleasure.” Imagine a world in which all was in perfect harmony with the Creator.

Let’s take it a step further. Imagine a world in which there was seamless unity between God, man and nature. Discord, disobedience, immorality, amorality, ungratefulness, disunity, hatred, impatience, brutality and pride had not yet been given birth in the heart of man. Rather, it was a world that lacked frustration of any sort.

Humanity designed for worship

Let’s go back in time and understand what that world resembled. Let’s remember that everything God creates is for His express purpose and ultimately His pleasure (Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11). It is here that we notice God gently taking the clay of the earth and carefully, delicately sculpting what would be the pinnacle of His physical creation—man. It was on the sixth day that God moved from saying “good” to “very good” as He lovingly breathed the breath of life into the living being that the Scriptures declare to be a “son of God” (Luke 3:38).

Imagine as Adam’s eyes first opened and his ears first received the sound of God’s voice. Perhaps God told him, “Just look around! This is all to be yours. Most importantly you are to be Mine and I am to be yours. You were created to reflect Me in all ways and to respond to Me like no other part of the creation.”

The immediacy and connectedness of the relationship between the first human family and its Maker was designed for God’s purpose and delight. Humanity is designed to worship God and all He is.

As man looked around, he would see a river, plants, trees and, after a divinely inspired nap, something really special—a woman! But it was God in the midst of all His creation that made everything perfect. We can only imagine how very rich it must have been to enjoy the give-and-take of talking and walking with God with absolutely no barrier. Oh, how utterly sublime! God’s very purpose for creating man and woman was to have them fully experience Him, up close and personal, and to worship Him.

Choosing spiritual amnesia

God left the garden, just for a while, and the serpent entered and pointed to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It seemed so wonderful. The fruit looked beautiful. Initial indications seemed to promise ingredients of unknown wisdom. And frankly, they were told it tasted good! How could life go on without a bite?

The end result of Eve’s action and the additional crunch of her husband’s bite broke the bond of full and uninhibited worship of God. I would suggest God felt the

(See “**BEGINNING,**” page 14)