



In This Issue:

May/June 2011 | Vol. 14, No. 3

What's Happening to Our World?

by John Ross Schroeder 1

Restoration: Where Begins Restoration?

by Darris McNeely 2

Japan Copes with Overwhelming Devastation

by Rod Hall 5

Kitchen Table Economics

by Darris McNeely 8



Photos.com

China: Cooperation of Conflict?

by Rod Hall 11

This Is the Way . . . "They Were Not Afraid to Die"

by Robin Webber 16

What's Happening to Our World?

Recently Newsweek magazine wrote of "a pileup of disasters, crises and wars." The world appears to be entering a meltdown mode. Astute observers are now asking questions like "What on earth is happening to us?" Does the Bible tell us how to cope with this uncertain world?

by John Ross Schroeder

Is the American age drawing to a close? Although he doesn't share this belief himself, George Friedman, founder of the global intelligence company Stratfor (Strategic Forecasting), acknowledged: "There is a deep-seated belief in America that the United States is approaching the eve of its destruction. Read letters to the editor, peruse the Web, and listen to public discourse. Disastrous wars, uncontrolled deficits, high gasoline prices, shootings at universities, corruption in business and government, and an endless litany of other shortcomings—all of them quite real—create a sense that the American dream has been shattered and that America is past its prime" (*The Next 100 Years*, 2009, p. 15).

In recent years, I have written a number of times on the failure of the United States as a whole to meet God's moral standards as laid out in the Bible. Indeed our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* shows the importance of the United States in God's plan and purpose for mankind.

Yet it's not all about America. God has a serious quarrel with the behavior and conduct of all the nations of the earth.

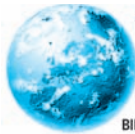


Reuters/Lee Jae Won

Devastation in Japan after the tremendous earthquake it suffered on March 11.

Japan only a beginning

Even at this writing Japan remains in dire straits in the wake of its momentous earthquake and the devastating tsunami that immediately followed. Nancy Gibbs of *Time* magazine described their effects: "The 9.0 quake that hit Japan on March 11 was powerful (See "WORLD," page 3)



“Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things . . .” ACTS 3:21

Where Begins Restoration?

This column is called “Restoration.” As you can see from the masthead, it is taken from the book of Acts, where Peter spoke of Jesus, saying, “. . . whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (3:21).

I once had a Bible instructor who referred to this verse as the benchmark verse of the entire Bible. That is quite a weight to lay on one lone verse. What, you might wonder, will be restored to the earth?

How about peace, even if only among men of good will? Peace would be a good thing to see break out among the nations of the earth. The current Arab Spring of uprisings across the Middle East illustrates how turbulent and unrelenting age-old problems can be. Despotism within these countries has not created fertile conditions for peace. Youth take to the streets seeking a better life. Other forces always seem to be at work to prevent the noble aspirations of many for equity and justice from taking root.

The hopes of democracy or better government in the Middle East are always dashed when religious or ethnic traditions come to the fore. One thing that’s certain about the latest crisis is that the age of the present tyrants is passing. Sadly, others will take their place. History in this part of the world is hard to escape.

How about restoring justice to the earth? We are considering a *Beyond Today* program on the increasing crisis in government. While discussing the idea with one of our writers, the unique position of the United States Constitution came up. This semi-miraculous document has stood the test of modern times and is a little-understood engine of America’s success in the world. While not perfect, it’s still a beacon of temporal hope for people who live under inferior forms of government.

Yet America’s wondrous constitution has not produced a perfectly just nation at peace with itself or the world. Winston Churchill’s wry comment about democracy being the worst form of government except for all the others offers some keen insight. The simple plain truth is that no form of government without Christ as its head will truly succeed among the human race.

Which brings us back to the point of this regular column and the verse that is its inspiration. Since starting it, I have worked each time to write a few words here to point us to the amazing prophetic hope of restoration. It’s time to evaluate the mission and ensure compliance.

God’s work of restoration begins with the individual. Before restoring “all things” to this earth, He has purposed to begin in the smallest of ways with the human mind. He begins to work with a flawed human mind and convert it to a spirit-led mind continually renewed by the same power that was at work when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20). This mighty power can work in you if you believe.

I will continue to illustrate this verse and its relevance in future issues. It is a benchmark scripture—perhaps as much to measure our own progress toward the Kingdom of God as any we can use in this way. And in the voice of the prophets, we will find the key to progress and ultimate restoration.



Darris McNeely

World News and Prophecy (ISSN 1942-1001) is published bimonthly, in January, March, May, July, September and November, by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Drive, Milford, OH 45150. © 2011 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices.

The mission of *World News and Prophecy* (WNP) is to provide United Church of God members and other interested persons with commentary and analysis of selected world news topics in the light of Bible prophecy. Its purpose is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of the answers Christ gave to His disciples’ questions: “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3).

Editor: Darris McNeely

Managing editor: Tom Robinson

Senior editors: Melvin Rhodes, Robin Webber

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder

Senior writer: Paul Kieffer

Copy editor/Proofreader: Milan Bizić

Layout/design: Mitchell Moss

Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

The United Church of God provides *World News and Prophecy* as an educational service for interested persons. The purpose of *WNP* is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of current events in the light of Bible prophecy. Although the staff strives for truth and accuracy in its reporting, analysis and Bible commentary, *WNP* is not a doctrinal publication. Articles do undergo both an editorial and a review process.

Unsolicited materials: Due to staffing limitations, unsolicited materials sent to *World News and Prophecy* will not be critiqued or returned. By their submission authors agree that submitted materials become the property of the United Church of God, an International Association, to use as it sees fit. This agreement is controlled by California law.

Subscriptions: *World News and Prophecy* is sent free to members of the United Church of God and all who request it. There is no subscription price. To request a subscription, write to *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, phone (513) 576-9796 or download from www.ueg.org. For international addresses, see page 15.

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

World News and Prophecy online: Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed. The next issue is scheduled to be available by June 29, 2011, on the Internet at:

www.WNPonline.org

“WORLD” (Continued from page 1)

enough to shift the earth on its axis and make it spin a little faster ... It shoved the island nation one parking space to the east ... The sturdy buildings that survived the quake were ravaged by the wave that followed. The three-story wall of water dissolved coastal towns, dry-docked boats on the roofs of buildings and shuffled houses like playing cards” (March 28, 2011).

Does the Bible allude to such occurrences—even beyond Jesus Christ’s statement in His prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives about “earthquakes in various places”? He specifically includes this natural disaster with some other disturbing signs of the times (Matthew 24:7).

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah clearly stated: “The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; *its transgression shall be heavy upon it*” (Isaiah 24:19-20, emphasis added throughout). Only metaphorically is the earth the guilty party. Many other biblical passages show that its wicked inhabitants transgress God’s law as the guilty ones.

“For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity [lawlessness, or sin]” (Isaiah 26:21). Also: “I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity” (Isaiah 13:11). Yet it must be stressed that this does not mean a particular nation that experiences calamitous natural disaster, such as Japan recently, is the focus of God’s anger. In principle Christ makes this point crystal clear—and He issues a warning to *all* who are unrepentant (see Luke 13:1-5).

In due time, God is going to deal severely with this whole world. Some nations may suffer much more initially, but others will surely follow. The Bible clearly indicates that our Creator will even use some countries to bring



Reuters/Amr Dajsh

A rebel fighter takes up position with his rifle as a fellow fighter mans a heavy machine gun at the front line along the western entrance of Ajdabiyah, Libya.

punishment on others, but they themselves will not escape God’s corrective attention (see Isaiah 10:6-7, 12).

The Middle East in chaos

Geography, historical events, world and regional politics, key energy resources, and centuries of ethnic and religious strife have all conspired to turn the Middle East into the cauldron of conflicts we see today. A London *Times* article observed that “it is one of the world’s most unstable regions, where conflicts over land, ideology and religion have raged for centuries” (Richard Beeston, Nov. 4, 2006).

An editorial in *The Economist* said of the current conflict in Libya: “The spectacle of American, British and French missiles pulverising an

Arab and Muslim country at the dead of night arouses a sense of foreboding. Such ventures have too often begun with good intentions and naive overconfidence, as oil-rich despots see their armour crumple and burn beneath superior Western technology. Within weeks, though, vainglory turns into a costly and bloody quagmire” (“The Challenge of Libya: Where Will It End?” March 26, 2011).

In principle what the Bible observes specifically about Jerusalem can be applied in a general sense to the Middle East as a whole. “And it shall happen in that day,” God says, “that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces” (Zechariah 12:3). Clearly the Middle East continues to be a dangerous region

of the earth in which to become involved in wars, whether international or civil.

The *Economist* editorial continued: “Moreover, what happens in Libya, for good or ill, will affect its more hopeful neighbours, Egypt and Tunisia. Farther afield, even Syria is beginning to stir and its government may be tempted to be as ruthless as Libya’s. If violence prevails in Libya, the momentum for peaceful change across the Middle East may drain away, as both autocrats and protesters elsewhere in the Arab world conclude that violence is after all an essential tool for getting their way.”

Noted author Niall Ferguson recently warned in *Newsweek* magazine: “A peaceful transition to Western-style democracy in the Arab world is, of all the scenarios, the least probable. The more likely outcomes are (a) 1848-style restorations of the old regimes; (b) a descent into protracted civil wars; (c) Islamist takeovers; (d) a regionwide Sunni-Shiite conflict. By the way, (b), (c), and (d) are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They may be a sequence of events” (“The Big Dither,” March 20, 2011).

Overall, the world finds itself

in a sea of troubles—natural and manmade. An insightful article in a recent newspaper forcefully reminded me of the current plight of this planet. Former leader of the British Liberal Party, Paddy Ashdown, summed it all up yet again. As *The Times* reported: “He says that there is a ‘perfect storm’ of climate change, population rise, economic crisis, food shortages, increased seismic activity and political upheaval that is making the world more dangerous than ever. ‘The number of natural disasters is going up . . . We are living in extremely turbulent times. We are also seeing massive shifts in power. Events are gathering pace’” (“Britain Needs a New Response to a Disastrous World,” March 26, 2011).

Is divine punishment possible?

God says that He continues to be the unseen Witness to world troubles. It is He who has a controversy with the nations. Our Creator plainly tells us: “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, *declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done*, saying, ‘My counsel

shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure’ . . . *Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it*” (Isaiah 46:9-11; compare Isaiah 48:5).

As always God remains on His throne and fully in control of world events. Unless the earth’s peoples really repent and alter their conduct, our overall future looks very bleak indeed. Read what the prophet Isaiah spoke: “The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish. The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, *because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant*. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left” (Isaiah 24:4-6).

Do we imagine that God is unable to correct us? Do we think that our Creator will allow us to trample upon His holy laws forever? That He has no power to deal with those “who drink iniquity like water”? Isaiah also stated: “This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:26-27).

The positive side of the story

Yet all of the foregoing amounts to only one side to the whole story. The other side strongly encompasses God’s merciful thoughts and feelings toward those who do heed His warning messages, believe He truly exists and fervently wish to follow His righteous ways.

God wants an intimate, meaningful personal relationship with each person He calls to salvation during this age of human misrule. He wants to help people cope with and successfully endure the trials

(See “WORLD,” page 10)



Want more
World News and Prophecy?

Find us on  

Watch *WNP* seminars and stay informed.
Visit our website at www.WNPonline.org

Japan Copes With Overwhelming Devastation

Millions of beleaguered and traumatized inhabitants of Japan are still struggling to come to terms with a staggering disaster—the world’s costliest thus far. What is the fallout? And what can the Bible tell us about such calamities?

by Rod Hall

Japan’s 127 million inhabitants remain traumatized from the triple torrent that devastated the country. Its worst earthquake on record spawned an enormous tsunami that swamped coastal areas, killing thousands and critically damaging a nuclear power plant, threatening a complete nuclear meltdown.

This is the worst disaster to hit Japan since World War II, and the vast economic toll has made it the world’s costliest natural disaster. And the repercussions are ongoing. Here we survey what’s happened and then turn to the Bible for some perspective—to help us navigate through tumultuous and uncertain times.

Sudden shock and a 15-minute warning

On March 11, 2011, the fourth strongest quake in recorded history, measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale, rocked Japan with a jolt equivalent to that of 30,000 Hiroshima-sized atomic blasts. According to Japanese seismologists, a major quake close to this magnitude is a once-in-a-thousand-years occurrence in the region. In the capital of Tokyo, some 150 miles south, thousands cowered in fear beneath their desks in tall, swaying, shock-absorbing skyscrapers.

Within nine minutes, tsunami sirens loudly blared throughout the northeastern portion of Japan’s 1,300-mile eastern coastline. While the country is one of the best prepared to deal with the threat of a tsunami, residents in the hardest hit areas probably had only 15 minutes to rush to higher ground before the first column of waves slammed ashore.

Tens of thousands of people living in ports, coastal towns and tiny cove communities simply could not escape the

30-foot-high wall of water that breached with ease some of Japan’s best coastal defenses. It swept across rice fields, engulfing entire cities and totally leveling some towns. In some areas the surge of icy water shoved debris miles inland, killing most of those who were unable to scramble to higher ground. In several coastal communities, more than half the population was left dead or missing.

The powerful surging waves pulverized wooden houses, scattering rubble like matchsticks in every direction. Cars, trucks and even train cars were thrown about like toys. Ships, tankers and boats collided, and some were washed far inland or left stranded in mounds of mud and debris 5 to 30 feet deep. Some multistory buildings became gutted shells as water rose as high as the fourth floor.

As the scale of the horror began to sink in, rescuers and search dogs combed mud and debris looking for survivors, corpses and personal mementos. For more than two weeks, some of the world’s best trained disaster relief personnel remained hindered by cold weather, shattered roads, snapped rail lines and downed telephone networks. The numerous aftershocks and threats of additional tsunamis also hampered their efforts.

Hundreds of survivors were pulled from mounds of debris. Government officials reported that there were more than 360,000 homeless who fled to one of the 2,000 ill-equipped makeshift emergency shelters on high ground above the vast plains of mud-covered debris. Most were forced to stay there for weeks because they had no homes or jobs to return to.

The double shock of the earthquake and tsunami left nearly 28,000 confirmed dead or missing. More than 2,000 bodies

The Bible can offer perspective about the worst disaster to hit Japan since World War II.



The daughter of an earthquake and tsunami victim cries over her mother's coffin during a mass funeral procession at a field outside Kesenuma town, Miyagi prefecture.

were recovered after having been dragged out to sea, and many more may never be found. One man was rescued after floating on a piece of metal roof from his home some nine miles out to sea.

For over two weeks 221,000 households fortunate enough to still have homes went without power, and more than 2.4 million went without running water. Many became “food refugees” at evacuation centers. Stores remained closed because food and supplies could not be delivered due to a shortage of fuel. And drivers waited in single lines nearly all day to receive their 20-liter ration of gas (5.3 U.S. gallons).

Averting nuclear meltdown

As if this double whammy was not enough, the world's worst nuclear crisis since Chernobyl radiated additional fear across Japan and around the world. The speeding

tsunami waves, as tall as a house, washed right over the six reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant on Japan's northeast shoreline. This knocked out power and crippled the backup generators needed to circulate vital coolant.

Suddenly four of the six atomic reactors were in dire trouble all at the same time. Three were threatening meltdown from overheating. A series of destructive explosions and fires rocked the complex. Two of the buildings housing the reactors were left a twisted mangle of steel and concrete, and concern grew that at least one containment vessel for fuel rods may have been breached. Emergency crews inside the overheating structure raced to restore power. Others began drenching the building with more than 900,000 gallons of seawater to avoid a complete meltdown.

As they battled to regain control of the reactors, workers faced many

setbacks. Many were exposed to high levels of radiation, including three who were hospitalized. And hazardous levels of radiation leaked into the atmosphere and soil. (Read of the courage of the Fukushima 50 in “They Were Not Afraid to Die,” beginning on the back page of this issue.)

Many near the plant were told to stop drinking tap water after high levels of radioactive iodine were detected. Levels surpassed 4,800 times the legal limit in the seawater south of the plant. Government officials said there was no immediate danger to nearby residents and that the ocean would quickly dilute the worst contamination. (In fact, the power plant had to then dump more than 10,000 tons of radioactive water into the sea to make room for containment of higher-level radioactive water.)

Japanese authorities say efforts to control Fukushima's overheated reactors will take months, during which time radiation will likely continue to leak into the environment, extending a nuclear emergency that already ranks as the most serious in a quarter-century.

In mid-April, the severity rating of the incident on the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale was raised to the highest level of 7, the same as that of the Chernobyl disaster.

National and global anxiety

Not since atomic bombs rocked Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the close of World War II have local residents felt the palpable fear of a nuclear disaster. As the only country to have suffered mass radiation from atomic attack, many Japanese understand full well the deadly effects and long-term health risks of radiation poisoning.

The safety of water and food became a particular concern. Japan exports three billion dollars' worth of food a year—mainly fruit, vegetables, dairy products and seafood, with its biggest markets being Hong Kong, China and the United States.

Low doses of radioactive con-

tamination in milk and some leafy vegetables were detected in these countries, which then banned their import. Many other countries, including Canada and Australia, followed suit in an effort to prevent the contamination's spread throughout the global food chain. Some also banned seafood.

Global anxiety also grew regarding the prospect that a large explosion or complete meltdown would propel dangerous clouds of radiation internationally. Plumes of tiny radiation particles did traverse the globe with small, non-dangerous traces being found in at least 13 American states, in British Columbia, Canada, and as far away as Iceland.

The crisis has intensified fears about nuclear safety worldwide. But a number of key countries—notably France, Russia, China and India—will likely remain committed to nuclear power.

Economic distress

This costliest natural disaster ever will likely exceed \$300 billion, government officials say. That surpasses the \$81 billion for Hurricane Katrina, which hit the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005, and the \$100 billion for the 1995 quake in Kobe, Japan.

Some have speculated that Japan's strong institutions, advanced economy and ample human capital will enable it to rebound relatively quickly. Japan has always shown phenomenal resilience in the face of immense odds.

However, the country was already hurting economically before the current crisis. *The Wall Street Journal* reported on April 1 that "some in the government are considering calling on the Bank of Japan to directly underwrite Japanese government bonds, or JGBs—essentially printing money—to fund reconstruction. Even before last month's disasters, Japan's public debt was already about twice the size of the nation's \$5 trillion economy, and the central bank has been very careful to avoid giving any appearance that

it's directly printing money to fund that debt" ("Japan Debates TEPCO Control, Debt Monetization").

However, it seems likely that this is what will happen, which will lead to inflation at home and, with the actions of other central banks, abroad—ultimately hurting consumers everywhere.

In any case, even if the economy were to recover, the psychological toll on Japanese survivors of the triple disaster may linger for years as many cope with the trauma of fleeing for their lives, the death of loved ones and the ripping apart of homes and whole communities.

Why natural disasters?

When natural disasters like this strike, our hearts and prayers go out to those caught up in the crises. We may also search for meaning behind events. God's Word reveals the underlying causes of natural disasters and shows us what we should learn in times of great tragedy.

God created the perfect safe environment for Adam and Eve—the Garden of Eden. But from the time they bit into the forbidden fruit, they chose to reject God's way and determine for themselves how they should live. So God denied them access to this protected environment (Genesis 3:23-24).

Notice God's judgment: "*Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life*" (verse 17, emphasis added throughout). Man's environment would now present grievous difficulties. And natural disasters have plagued mankind ever since. Again, the underlying cause is mankind's choice to reject God's way. The reality is we now exist in a world that is largely cut off from God and the protective, lush and perfect setting He designed for us in the Garden of Eden.

Yet those who die in accidents or natural disasters are not necessarily greater sinners than those who survive. Time and chance happen to all people, and anyone can be suddenly snared in disasters (Ecclesiastes 9:11-12). Jesus Christ explained

the randomness of some events by citing examples of how harsh leaders and devastating natural disaster can randomly strike (Luke 13:1-4). His bottom-line point is clear: "But *unless you repent you will all likewise perish*" (verse 5).

Signs of the end time

Christ clearly said many natural disasters would be a sad reality throughout history and would build in impact toward the end of the age. He foretold: "There will be *earthquakes* in various places; there will be *famines* and *calamities*; this is but a beginning of the *intolerable anguish* and *sufferings*" (Mark 13:8, Amplified New Testament).

While God may not directly cause many natural disasters, He sometimes directs them as His judgment on a rebellious humanity (Genesis 6:6-7, 11-13, 17; 18:20; 19:24-25). He will directly intervene in more and more events as the time for His Son's return draws near.

Natural disasters or accidents should humble us and help us deeply appreciate our dependence on God to sustain life and deliver us from harm (Revelation 16:8-11). God is a God of comfort and compassion. He will comfort us in times of trouble so we can comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

But God also places creating a better spiritual relationship with Him ahead of physical comfort (James 1:2-4). Sadly, many have to learn things the hard way (Romans 8:7; Proverbs 14:12). Natural disasters have and will be used to shake people out of their complacency and lead them to seek God (Luke 21:25-26; Revelation 6:12; 11:13; 16:18). (For more on this, see "Natural Disasters: A Biblical Perspective" in *The Good News*, May-June 2011, p. 17).

The good news is that after Jesus Christ returns to establish His righteous government, He will restore a magnificent safe and secure environment much like the Garden of Eden (Isaiah 41:17-18; Micah 4:3-4; Amos 9:13). God speed that day! ❖

Kitchen Table Economics

There are times when households reach the end of their financial resources and have to declare bankruptcy. Their income cannot meet their debts. Has America come to such a defining moment?

by Darris McNeely

Massive, uncontrollable debt is not good. As we watch large nations struggle with crippling debt loads, we are offered the chance to change our own immediate behavior regarding money.

One of my uncles was a farmer who hit on hard times and had to declare bankruptcy. I well remember the night he and his wife came to my parents' home, sat down at our kitchen table and spread out their financial papers. They had some paperwork to accomplish and file with the court before they left town. Their eldest son had found factory work out of state, and they were traveling north to join him, in hopes that they too would find hourly work to enable them to get a fresh start in life.

My uncle was a small farmer, and too many bad years finally caught up with him. I remember the hushed talk that night in our home as he and my parents went over their plight and what that would mean for the family. Sound financial management is vital to the family unit—and to society at large. It makes the difference between stability and chaos—for both households and entire nations.

The United States is bankrupt

The United States of America is facing a defining moment in its history. On April 18, 2011, as CNNMoney reports, "S&P [Standard & Poor's], one of the three main agencies that rate the ability of companies and sovereign nations to repay their debts, lowered its outlook for America's long-term credit rating to 'negative' from 'stable.' The change means that there is a one-in-three chance that S&P could downgrade the nation's 'AAA' credit rating within two years. That would make it harder for the U.S. government to borrow money to fund its activities" (April 19, 2011).

The sad reality is that the country is fiscally bankrupt, and unless it makes some fundamental changes it will decline as a great power. Other countries will not only take America's place

in the world but will also dictate much of its future.

Anyone who honestly looks at the amount of debt we owe and the obligations coming due in the future can see that we don't have the money in hand and currently owe more than we can pay. President Barack Obama's proposed budget for the next fiscal year nearly doubles the current debt position.

No one with an ounce of fiscal sanity can stand by and watch this train wreck about to happen without asking serious questions about the future of the country. Entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are unsustainable. Promises made to a generation of Americans cannot be met without the United States government going deeper in debt to other nations who are willing to finance our profligate spending patterns.

China, Japan and Saudi Arabia have been willing to buy our bonds and treasury bills, in effect loaning us money to finance what we cannot afford. They hold our future in their hands. Like any bank or lending institution, they can call that debt by demanding payment. If you cannot pay you have to return the goods or declare insolvency. For an individual this is bankruptcy. For a nation it could mean economic servitude.

Grasping the scope of the problem

When we speak of trillions of dollars of national debt it's hard to really picture what that means. *The Wall Street Journal* recently carried a story with an illustration that brings this subject home to the kitchen table. Freshman Republican Congressman Mick Mulvaney of South Carolina explained to a group of his constituents just how seri-



President Obama meets with the co-chairs of the fiscal commission to discuss reducing the rising U.S. deficit. The president's proposed 2012 budget nearly doubles the current debt position.

ous America's debt problems are. "It's much, much worse than I had expected," he stated.

"Picture, he suggested, a family of four with an income of \$46,000, annual costs of \$78,000, and a credit-card debt of \$281,000. That drew a gasp from the audience of mostly older voters. The figures are roughly proportionate to federal government revenue, annual outlays and the accumulated national debt, he said" (April 1, 2011).

I think we all know what that would mean if you were sitting around your kitchen table. The answer would be to file for bankruptcy, sell your assets to pay what you could to creditors and hope for a new start.

When we hear figures of billions and trillions of dollars of national debt we instantly glaze over. No

one really understands how much money a trillion dollars is. Mention that America's debt could reach \$14 trillion and we tune out. But bring it down to what that means for a family of four and we begin to get the picture.

The United States has been able to avoid the consequences of massive debt for a number of reasons. Macroeconomics works a bit differently than microeconomics, the level where the average person functions. Because of its size, power and scale of population, a large nation can go a long time without paying back outstanding debt to the rest of the world. America has been running budget deficits for decades, and because other nations have reason to accept and enable this behavior the situation continues.

Enabling factors

One reason is that America is the world's largest consumer nation. China's rise in recent decades has been tied to America's demand for cheap labor to produce things it wanted. Japan's earlier rise was based on this to some degree as well. It has been to these nations' advantage to see America remain in this position. If financing U.S. debt is perceived as good for business, then that's what is done.

Arab nations like Saudi Arabia produce oil that fuels America's, and much of the world's, economy. Petro dollars are good for the region and its ruling governments.

Factor in the military might of America. It protected Europe from the Soviets during the Cold War, sheltered Japan from encroachment by other Asian powers and kept the sea lanes of global commerce free and open for the world economy. The desire to maintain America in its protective role is part of why key nations have been willing partners in its descent into debtor status.

Could this come to change?

It could through any number of ways. Imagine one scenario: To finance America's debt the U.S. Federal Reserve prints more and more dollars. Since many of the basic commodities like food and fuel are denominated in dollars, this flooding of markets creates a rise in costs, called inflation. More dollars chasing fewer goods, or goods in greater demand, create a problem. (See "A Note About Inflation" on page 10.)

When a person in Damascus or Cairo can't afford the rise in food costs and has to go without, it causes unrest. This leads to food riots and the potential for other instability. A commentator recently wrote, "When the Fed sneezes money, the weak economies of the world, and the poor masses who are highly vulnerable to price rises in the necessities of life, catch pneumonia."

The Middle East is already seeing massive instability. Unrest is leading to change in governments, some

of which may not be as friendly to American interests in the region. They will not be able to withstand domestic upheaval. If such unrest is linked to American fiscal policy, you have another reason for some to turn from old alliances to pursue their own self-interest.

Back to the kitchen table

Prices are rising in America as well. Food prices are going up, and gasoline is approaching \$4 per gallon. While this is catching up with the rest of the world, it can't help but have an impact on the American consumer. When jobs and incomes do not keep up with inflation, cuts in lifestyle will be dictated. Those prepared can manage. Those who aren't will face constricting challenges.

Lawmakers in the U.S. Congress have been making proposals to begin to deal with the budget deficits. Proposals introduced in early April target the nation's health care and social entitlement programs. Changes to the tax structure are also on the table. If such changes are enacted, and if other world factors remain stable, there is some hope that America could pull out of the decline and return to fiscal stability.

Which brings me back to the kitchen table.

My uncle's bankruptcy taught him a big lesson. He moved out of a farming career to which he was not suited. The day of the small farmer was passing, and he need-

ed to move on to other work. He found it in a factory and went on to make a living wage and another life. He later retired and moved back to our home area and died at a good age. He never again filed for bankruptcy.

You and I live in a highly challenging period, with the opportunity to learn deep and enduring lessons. Massive, uncontrollable debt is not good. As we watch large nations struggle with crippling debt loads, we are offered the chance to change our own immediate behavior regarding money. It's as if God is giving you and me the chance to prioritize our values and bring our spending habits in line with our income—to live a realistic life with the income we have.

Perhaps this is the one opportunity you will have to break old habits and begin to get control of your personal finances. If you choose to do so, we can help. We have a free booklet, *Managing Your Personal Finances*, that presents a biblical foundation for financial management. It offers practical advice along with budgeting tools to help you turn around this part of your life. You can read or download it at our website or request a copy from the address on the inside cover of this magazine.

Sit down at your kitchen table. Take a completely honest look at your income and expenses. Do something today's lawmakers find difficult to do, and get control of your financial life. ❖

A Note About Inflation

It should be realized that inflating the money supply is actually massive fraud and theft. By printing more dollars for the government's and central bankers' own purposes, the value of every dollar held by others is made less. In essence, the value of the dollars in your wallet is stolen by the government and Federal Reserve to use as they see fit. Of course, this means that dollars and other debt instruments held by foreign countries are also worth less—and if inflation is unabated, these nations will eventually tire of having so much stolen from them and will transfer their wealth somewhere more secure. (Of course, these other nations do the same with their own currencies.)

—Tom Robinson

“WORLD” (Continued from page 4)

and tragedies prophesied in His Word to afflict this earth.

Chris Patten, who managed the transition of Hong Kong from Britain to China, observed in his latest book, “There is no simple formula for survival, no global plan waiting to be set in place, no institution that will provide compass and captain for the world” (*What's Next?*, 2009, p. 7). Humanly speaking, in a sense he's right.

But there exists a “strong hand from somewhere,” of whom Winston Churchill once spoke, who has a ready-made plan and purpose for humankind. He patiently waits for the right time to actively intervene in this world's affairs and bring it to its senses. That's where God's earthly followers come into their own. Jesus Christ has given them the important mission of both warning the world and making disciples for His coming Kingdom (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20).

They herald a new age to come, accomplishing their godly mission in a hostile world, with some areas filled with and motivated by false religious concepts and others consumed by ungodly secularism. But God manifests His deep concern for their well-being, knowing full well that the path to eternal glory can be very difficult at times (see Matthew 7:13-14).

We often advertise our free booklets about prophecy in this particular publication. But we also have booklets that focus on helping Christians to cope with this world of uncertainty, assisting them in the process of transforming their lives for their future role in the Kingdom of God. You may wish to request or download our booklets *You Can Have Living Faith, Making Life Work* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

The Church Jesus built constitutes the last train for sanity in this world. Getting on board will help you attain God's purpose for you of an ever-interesting and abundant life. ❖

China: Cooperation or Conflict?

Concern is growing over China's increasing assertiveness and conflicts with other nations. What is behind the Asian Dragon's growing aggressiveness, and where does Bible prophecy say this will lead?

by Rod Hall

The amazing economic, political and military transformation of the People's Republic of China is rapidly pushing it into the realm of superpower status. Over the past 30 years it has been the world's fastest-growing economy with an average annual increase of 10 percent.

China recently passed Japan in becoming the second greatest economic power behind America, and it overtook Germany as the number one exporting country. It's still far behind the United States in terms of GDP—\$5.9 trillion vs. \$14.7 trillion. Nevertheless, it's now ousting America as the world's biggest manufacturer—a position the United States has held for 110 years. Chinese manpower is vast. Consider that while China is about the geographic size of America, it has more than four times the population—1.3 billion people or nearly a fifth of humanity.

Moreover, “according to the latest IMF [International Monetary Fund] official forecasts, China's economy will surpass that of America in real terms in 2016—just five years from now” (“IMF Bombshell: Age of America Nears End,” MarketWatch, April 25, 2011).

Will this burgeoning global colossus cooperate with America and the West, or will its growing influence lead to greater conflict or even war?

The drophead of an article in *The Economist* says, “China and America are bound to be rivals, but they do not have to be antagonists” (“The Dangers of a Rising China,” Dec. 2, 2010). “But the two mistrust each other,” the article states, “China sees America as a waning power that will eventually seek to block its own rise. And America worries about how Chinese nationalism, fueled by rediscovered economic and

military might, will express itself.” Just where is all of this heading?

Will the new China fit in or become a threat

The impact of the revolutionary changes underway inside China are felt worldwide and are creating a new self-identity—a potent mix of past greatness, recent humiliation, present achievement and future supremacy.

As China transitions into a world power, another article in *The Economist* asks: “Will it broadly fit in with the Western world, as a place where people want nothing more than a chance to succeed? Or... will China become a threat—an angry country set on avenging past wrongs and forcing others to bend to its will?”

“China's choice of role, says Jim Steinberg, America's deputy secretary of state, is ‘the great question of our time.’ The peace and prosperity of the world depends on which path it takes” (“Brushwood and Gall,” Dec. 2, 2010, emphasis added throughout).

Of course it's wise to remember that China is no stranger to conflict. Since 1949 China has had military skirmishes with Russia and has fought against United Nations actions in Korea, India and Vietnam.

According to *Foreign Affairs*, available data shows “China as the only major power that has been more violent than Muslim states; in crises, it has used force at a rate more than four times as high as that of the United States” (Richard Betts, “Conflict or Cooperation? Three Visions Revisited,” Nov.-Dec. 2010).

Conflicts in the South China Sea

As relations grow worse, so does the potential for conflicts. China's rising hard and soft global power is felt most

The amazing economic, political and military transformation of the People's Republic of China is rapidly pushing it into the realm of superpower status. Will this burgeoning global colossus cooperate with America and the West, or will its growing influence lead to greater conflict or even war?



China has the world's largest standing army—more than 2.25 million troops.

directly in Southeast Asia, where it's trying to create a more dominant sphere of influence than America's. But many of China's 14 neighboring countries remain uneasy about the prediction of a "Chinese century" and hotly dispute its claim to much of the South China Sea.

China sees the shadowy hand of America exerting its influence in an effort to contain and limit its rise, which is something it says it will not permit. The wealth of these Asian countries depends on China while their security currently depends on America, so which way will they turn?

China has joined more than 50 intergovernmental and 1,000 international nongovernmental organizations, including ASEAN Plus Three. ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) recently became China's third-largest trading partner.

"But reasonable China sometimes gives way to aggressive China," says *The Economist* ("The Dangers of a Rising China," Dec. 2, 2010).

"In March [2010], when the North

[i.e., North Korea] sank a South Korean warship, killing 46 sailors, China failed to issue any condemnation. A few months later it fell out with Japan over some Chinese fishermen, arrested for ramming Japanese coastguard vessels around some disputed islands—and then it locked up some Japanese businessmen and withheld exports of rare earths vital for Japanese industry. And it has forcefully reasserted its claim to the Spratly and Paracel Islands and to sovereignty over virtually the entire South China Sea" (ibid.).

China did act quickly to help Japan with disaster relief following the recent earthquake and tsunami, but conflicts remain.

"The danger is that spats and rows will sour relations between China and America, just as the friendship between Germany and Britain crumbled in the decades before the first world war" (ibid.).

Other potential flashpoints

North Korea, Taiwan and various trade disputes are other areas of possible conflict.

China is North Korea's only real ally and primary benefactor. The United States continues to call on China to do more to halt North Korea's provocative behavior and meet international obligations. The Americans recently accused China of "enabling" North Korea to start a uranium-enrichment program and to launch attacks on South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island—the first strike on civilians since the Korean War (1950-53). The North even threatened to use nuclear weapons.

If war breaks out between the two Koreas, it would likely involve the 28,500 U.S. troops stationed in the South, and China may back the aggressor as it did during the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Then there's China's claim to the island nation of Taiwan (which continued as the Republic of China after the communist revolution established the People's Republic of China over the mainland). "If the two Koreas share the world's scariest land border, the Taiwan Strait is its scariest sea passage. [Communist] China's insistence on reunification is absolute," says *The Economist* ("Friends, or Else," Dec. 2, 2010). While increased air travel and a new free-trade agreement are signs of improving relations, in a military conflict America would likely feel compelled to come to Taiwan's aid.

As for concerns over trade conflicts, "Chinese companies are scouring the globe for the raw materials they need. Already China is Saudi Arabia's biggest customer. It imports about half of the oil it burns, a share that will rise to two-thirds by 2015 and four-fifths by 2030. China cares what happens in the countries that supply it . . . One reason why China is now building an ocean-going navy is to protect its raw materials and goods from embargoes. This reflects a lack of faith in the global trading system, part of an underlying fear that the West is fundamentally hostile to China's prosperity" ("Less Biding and Hiding," *The Economist*, Dec. 2, 2010).

Growing military might

As the potential for conflicts grows, so does China's military might. The Chinese have the world's second largest navy and the largest standing army—more than 2.25 million troops (plus some 1.17 million paramilitary and reserves).

Over the past decade military expenditures have grown about 10 percent annually, reaching almost \$100 billion a year, second only to America. The country has also been modernizing its missiles, submarines, radar, cyber-warfare and anti-satellite weapons.

The Economist reports a few areas that stand out. One is “what the Pentagon calls ‘the most active land-based ballistic- and cruise-missile programme in the world’ . . . They are also improving their medium-range ballistic missiles able to carry either conventional or nuclear warheads and deploy several hundred air and land-launched long-range cruise missiles” (“The Fourth Modernisation,” Dec. 2, 2010).

Furthermore, “China has transformed and enlarged its submarine fleet. China has about 66 submarines against America's 71, though the American boats are superior” (ibid.). Some estimate they will have 85 to 100 by 2030. “What does this amount to? Military experts in America, Australia and Japan think China's new arsenals are a greater threat than its higher-profile plans to launch aircraft-carriers in the next decade or so . . . Ultimately, China seems to want to stop the American fleet from being able to secure its interests in the western Pacific” (ibid.).

Key prophetic relationships: Russia and India

In addition to building its military capacity, China is also developing closer relations with key countries in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Its relationships with Russia and India will also likely continue to grow.

Bible prophecy indicates that nations north and east of Jerusalem will engage in a major end-time con-

flict with a group of 10 European powers led by what the prophet Daniel calls the “king of the North” (Daniel 11:40-44). The book of Revelation calls this leader, as well as the union he rules over, “the beast” (Revelation 17:12-14).

Russia is the major power north of Jerusalem, while India, China and other Asian countries lie east. According to Ezekiel 38 and 39, these and other Asian nations will fight together against Jesus Christ shortly after He establishes His rule on the earth and restores the people of Israel to their homeland. So it fits well that these northern and eastern forces would be in alliance shortly before His coming as well. Indications are that they will respond with overwhelming military force to the overt military actions of the king of the North as his forces move into the Middle East.

Russia today continues to be China's leading provider of arms, and joint military exercises have been conducted between these nations for the past five years. Even the legislative bodies of the two countries, the Russian Duma and National People's Congress, announced they will begin building a “stronger China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination” (Xinhua News Agency, Dec. 2, 2010).

Ties with India are also growing. Historically, China and India have enjoyed thousands of years of relative peace between them, and now joint trade has been growing at about 46 percent annually over the past five years—reaching \$60 billion. For the last four years they have conducted joint military exercises. India has the world's second largest military (1.3 million, plus nearly twice as many paramilitary and reserves) and second largest population (1.2 billion). It also has 60 to 80 nuclear weapons.

Devastating end-time events

In the short run, says *The Economist* about China's rise, “the most likely outcome is a more assertive China that wants to get more

done abroad without fundamentally upsetting the world order. On sensitive territorial issues where the [ruling communist] party's credentials are at stake, China may be uncompromising and increasingly unreasonable . . . How easily will the world accommodate this more assertive China? . . . Asian security will be determined not just by how China uses its new strength but by how other countries react to it” (“Less Biding and Hiding”).

Bible prophecy gives no specific indication of a major conflict between China and America. But it does reveal that America's power will fade (Leviticus 26:16-19) while European and Asian powers are destined to rise, building toward critical end-time events.

With the blowing of the sixth of the “seven trumpets” in the book of Revelation (8:6), a huge 200-million-man army will arise from lands to the east of the Euphrates River (Revelation 9:13-19). That's about double the nearly 100 million troops mobilized on all sides during World War II.

The resulting engagement will kill a third of mankind and may involve weapons of mass destruction (verses 18-19).

These events are followed by what appears to be a second phase of the overall operation as Revelation 16:12 reveals: “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of *the kings from the east* might be prepared.” Notice that the forces of multiple eastern rulers are involved.

The ultimate outcome of these major events is Jesus Christ intervening in divine power to save humanity from complete self-annihilation as the armies of the earth gather at Armageddon (verse 16; Matthew 24:22). Then Jesus will establish His rule on the earth at long last, ushering in a thousand years of peace (see Revelation 20:6; Isaiah 2:2-4). The Chinese, as all people, will at that time be led to follow God and pursue peace and cooperation with the rest of humankind. ❖

“NOT AFRAID” (Continued from page 16)

They realized that even working in one-hour shifts near the reactors would expose them to dangerously high radiation levels. As one mother proudly but sadly lamented, “They accepted they will all probably die from radiation sickness in the short term or cancer in the long term” (“Quotes of the Day,” *Time*, March 31, 2011). You might say there were no good choices and no way out from personal harm. As one daughter would share with her mix of bewilderment and pride, “I fought back tears when I heard that my father, who is to retire in six months, had volunteered” (quoted in “Fukushima Workers Labour Round the Clock in Effort to Avoid Catastrophe,” *The Guardian*, March 17, 2011).

The bottom line is that many felt it was a suicide mission. Even so, they stood up. They stepped forward. They stepped in. It’s been said, “It takes courage to stand up and be counted, but it takes more courage to keep standing up after you have been counted.”

Yet their courage was not lost on others. It challenged others to join them. Today, the Fukushima 50 are no longer alone. Having stood their ground, more than 400 other TEPCO employees have swelled their ranks. But again, it does not come easily. One worker, Emiko Ueno, wrote an email quoted in *The New York Times*. “My town is gone,” he said. “My parents are still missing. I still cannot get in the area because of the evacuation order. I still have to work in such a mental state. This is my limit” (“Workers Give Glimpse of Japan’s Nuclear Crisis,” March 30, 2011).

Nevertheless, even as I write, these same people continue to expose themselves to a living death. When it is all said and done, they simply are not afraid to die. Does that mean they weren’t frightened as one by one they made a choice to reenter the toxic labyrinths and vaults of the facility? I don’t think so. I’m sure their knees were shaking, but it was firmness of heart that bid them enter. After all, courage has been described as “fear holding on a minute longer”



Reuters/Kim Kyung Hoon

A man is tested for possible nuclear radiation at an evacuation center in Fukushima, northern Japan.

and “fear that has said its prayers.”

“There shall be a time of trouble”

The Bible speaks of other people in other times and places that have and will yet have to face incredible decisions to stand up and be counted when everyone else is “headed for the aisles.” Yes, people that have a sense of direction in the darkest moments that will eventually touch every corner of the earth. Scripture clearly offers a warning alarm of a tsunami-like catastrophe that is not simply going to affect one island nation, but is going to literally sweep the entire globe. Daniel 12:1 warns, “There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.”

But this tidal wave of global trouble has a source of devastating energy just as much as a tsunami is created by the jolt of the ground. Revelation 12:12 warns one and all: “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.” Satan makes his insidious splash, and the ripple effect is felt around the world. The extent of the impact

and casualty list at first glance is incredible. Revelation 12:9 supplies the tally of his penetrating havoc even today by stating, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.”

In the midst of this rising tide of malevolence depicted in chapter 12 stands one of the most electrifying passages of the Bible, verse 11, which depicts the courage of the saints in the face of Satan’s attacks and the source of their energy: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” The New Living Translation words it this way: “They were not afraid to die.”

“Whoever desires to save his life will lose it”

Here are people who not only can recite the words of the 23rd Psalm, but live and, yes, are willing to die, as they stand firm in its meaning. They fully understand and believe, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (verse 1). And in fact, they follow His own example of supreme self-sacrifice. He is the very same shepherd who “did not come to be

served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). The same shepherd who said, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). The same shepherd who said to those who would follow in his footsteps: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24-25). Indeed, the same shepherd who ultimately did not ask someone else to give his or her blood, but voluntarily walked into the seething hotbed of Jerusalem knowing full well the consequences of his determination—giving His own blood as the Lamb of God. No, He certainly was not afraid to die.

The folks granted the roll call of honor in Revelation 12:11 “get it” and understand the 23rd Psalm’s deep meaning when it says: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

Whether it be the heroic Fukushima 50 of Japan, the saints of God down through the ages or Jesus Christ Himself, there is a commonality that bonds each of them as to why they move in one direction while others stand paralyzed or flee from the “oncoming fire” of life. It is simply this: You do not find your values in a trial but take them into the trial with you.

The unshakable Kingdom

Christians recognize in their inner treasure chest of things valued, locked deep in their heart, that God’s goodness and mercy will indeed follow them. They recognize that this life is not an end in itself but that, as pilgrims, we are simply passing

through. Oh yes, life can be challenging and “max us out,” with no human reserves left to go on. But, as people with the Spirit of God, we put those same “butterflies of worry” that go up and down our spine into formation and wholeheartedly hand them over to God—recognizing a purpose is being worked out here below. The same God declares through the author of Hebrews: “He has promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.’ Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:26-28).

The “shakes” of life will come. You don’t have to stand in line and place your order. They will find you. This is not a variable, but a reality. We cannot choose the timing, but we can choose how we will respond to them. They came to first-century followers of Jesus Christ, they come to us now, and they will come to those who will yet wondrously witness of Him during the prophesied Tribulation. The question only you can answer is not how big the future shake will be in your life, but how big a Christ-like heart do you have to respond to the call.

It is my hope and prayer in life that you and I will have the courage of the Fukushima 50 and will stand firm in the same conviction of the saints in the book of Revelation of whom it will be said, “They were not afraid to die.” A scripture that further amplifies the clarion call of Isaiah 30:21—“This is the way, walk in it”—is discovered in the writings of the same prophet in chapter 6, verse 8: “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’” ❖



Robin Webber

How to Contact Us

AFRICA & ASIA (except as listed below): United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia. Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122

BENELUX countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands.

BRITISH ISLES: United Church of God—British Isles, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 614-1234, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 614-1749 E-mail: info@ucg.ca

CARIBBEAN: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

EAST AFRICA (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda): United Church of God—East Africa, P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200 Kenya. E-mail: kenya@ucg.org

FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France.

GERMANY: Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637 E-mail: info@gutenachrichten.org

ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy. Phone/Fax: (+39) 035 4523573. E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org

MALAWI: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi. Phone: 085 22717. E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1140, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

NIGERIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 2265, Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria. Phone: 803-323-3193. E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

PHILIPPINES: United Church of God, P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines. Phone: (+63) 82 224-4444 Cell/Text: (+63) 918-904-4444

SCANDINAVIA: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 3535. 111 74, Stockholm, Sweden. E-mail: sverige@ucg.org

SINGAPORE: United Church of God, P.O. Box 535, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001, Australia.

SOUTH AFRICA (and Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland only): United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 36290, Menlo Park, 0102, Pretoria, South Africa. Phone: +27 12 751 4204 Fax: +27 (0)86 572 7437.

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796

TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 518, Nuku’alofa, Tonga.

ALL OTHER SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONS NOT LISTED: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Queensland, 4001, Australia

ZAMBIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. Phone: (02) 226076. E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

ZIMBABWE: United Church of God, Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe. Phone: 011716273. E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

Internet access on your computer:

Along with www.WNOnline.org, the United Church of God’s home page www.ucg.org gives you access to *The Good News*, booklets and links to our international Web sites : www.ucg.ca (Canada), www.ucg.org.au (Australia), www.labuonanotizia.org (Italy), www.goodnews.org.uk (British Isles), www.ucg.org.ph (Philippines), www.ucgeastafrica.org (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) and www.ucg-rsa.org (Southern Africa).



“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,
This is the Way,
walk in it . . .” **ISAIAH 30:21**

by Robin Webber

“They Were Not Afraid To Die”

The earth shook. The sea came. Nothing would be the same again. It’s been said that life is what happens when you’re making other plans. This calendar date that changed numerous lives forever was March 11, 2011. It was then that the greatest earthquake in Japanese history struck its northeastern shores. The catastrophe set off a chain reaction of events that are still reverberating as I write.

Being from Southern California, I am no stranger to earthquakes. You know the feeling when one comes. You feel the sway and perhaps hear the rumble (sometimes quiet and sometimes deep and loud). And then comes either the rolling wave action or the quick jolt, and you hold your breath and say in your mind, “What’s next? Is it over, or is the big one just a second away?” But a 9.0 on the Richter scale like the Japan event? Unimaginable! Monstrous! This quake set off a tsunami wave action that reached several continents. The fast-moving and powerful waters swept over Japanese cities and swallowed up farmlands. Sadly in some spots, where life was spared from collapsing buildings, the turbulent sea claimed its quarry and swept them away. The death toll is now 11,600, with 16,000 missing. The final toll is expected to be 20,000 (figures from *The New York Times*, “Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Crisis,” April 4, 2011).

Beyond the earthquake and the accompanying tsunami, the third catastrophe in this chain reaction of tragedy would ultimately emerge. The three reactors of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (150 miles north of Tokyo) were compromised by the surge of the tsunami. The compound’s cooling systems fal-

tered within 90 hours of the original quake. Explosions and fires, spent fuel rods that overheated, and radioactive material filtering into the atmosphere from the power plant created the greatest nuclear power crisis since the Chernobyl incident. Due to the possibilities of nuclear waste exposure, much of Japan, and the world as a whole, has been “holding its breath.”

But what has emerged from this multidimensional tragedy and caught the world’s attention is not the size or scale of the quake or tsunami, or nuclear waste leaks, but the size of the hearts of “everyday workers” at the plant who have stepped up in time of trouble. They have become known as the Fukushima 50. And their story should serve as an inspiration to us all.

Raw courage in the face of certain danger

As their story of raw courage emerged, the Fukushima 50 were deemed civilian warriors, likened to the legendary samurai in the minds and hearts of their people. When the news began to filter out about the potential meltdowns within the nuclear facility, a 12-mile zone of evacuation was created. The facility’s operator, the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) would evacuate 700 employees. But 50 would remain behind and walk back into certain danger.

Just imagine: as everyone was moving in one direction away from probable disaster, they were walking into the abyss of the unknown. These brave men and women would stay on duty to connect electric cables, repair machinery and check equipment to avert a total meltdown.

(See “NOT AFRAID,” page 14)