



# *The* Good News

March-April 2008

A M A G A Z I N E O F U N D E R S T A N D I N G

## **Redefining Morality**

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## The War on Morality



**H**aving served as a “medic” of sorts on the battlefield of war for more than 30 years, I have a lot of stories to tell. Mine are not about flesh wounds or people dying from gunshots. Rather, as a pastor I have been involved in trying to help many emotional and spiritual casualties of a nasty civil war. This war isn’t over. It is still raging, leaving no one untouched. Yet its subtlety blinds many to its devastating impact!

This incessant conflict is *the war on morality*.

In the 1960s, after seeds of change had been sown and taken root decades before, a moral revolution burst on the scene. I remember first hearing of “the new morality” as a teenager during that time, but I doubt that anyone then comprehended how that social upheaval would forever change the world. Looking back 40 years in the rear-view mirror, we can see the changes and their disturbing effects. But can we clearly see the future—where these changes will *yet* take us?

### This war isn’t over. It is still raging, leaving no one untouched. Yet its subtlety blinds many to its devastating impact!

This issue’s lead article on how we have redefined morality is a must-read. John Ross Schroeder would not consider himself a war historian, but his analysis is, in effect, a historical account of a war.

This civil war has pitted moral revolutionists against traditionalists in a philosophical clash over ethics, principles and standards. It has not been confined to mere intellectual debate, however. Predictably, revolutionary philosophies morph into revolutionary *practices*, and when social rebellion exploded in the ’60s, the battle heated up.

Early on, traditionalists—typically those who upheld time-honored, biblically based values—were surprised to find themselves fighting what has seemed to be a losing battle. Probably very few of them accurately anticipated how ideologies such as “moral freedom,” “situational ethics,” “value neutrality” and “nonjudgmental tolerance” would become so ingrained in culture and thought 40 years later!

No mystery remains now, as it did in 1965, as to “what’s this ‘new morality’?” In reality, there was no new morality back then. It was just another phase in the cycle of human philosophies that habitually resurface in various times and societies. Yesterday’s revolutionary thought eventually becomes today’s tradition, only to be overthrown tomorrow in favor of another supposedly new theory.

The greater mystery is this: Why can’t we settle on a workable philosophy, finding the moral compass that leads to true happiness, contentment and peace?

Our latest grand search and morality experiment has only led to a high casualty rate. Just as conventional warfare destroys, moral warfare also exacts its toll, leaving the “moral medics” to deal with the devastating effects—marriage breakups, family conflicts, fractured relationships, the weight of guilt and other untold suffering.

Not coincidentally, God’s Word has been a parallel war casualty. But although dismissed by far too many, it’s not dead! The good news is God foretold that, beyond our current morality crisis, another wave of redefining morality is coming! Jesus Christ is returning “with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2)—the healing that comes through learning and living by God’s standards.

In the meantime, some of the past casualties of the “new morality” have already embraced His way of life, and they know it works! You, too, can be armed with His values, ethics and standards. Continue searching God’s Word with us, and avoid being a casualty in this war!

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

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Today the major English-speaking nations watch as a storm of problems draws ever nearer, a storm created by hostile forces that blurred and weakened their sense of morality. Does the Bible indicate where we will go from here?

# Redefining Morality:

## Why a Torrent of Trouble Threatens to Engulf Us

by John Ross Schroeder

A recent article in *USA Today* captures the essence of present discontent in the United States. It laments: “In poll after poll, two-thirds or more of Americans say the country is on the wrong track. Oil prices are near an all-time high. The president’s popularity hovers near record lows over a deeply unpopular war. Millions of homeowners are in danger of losing their houses to foreclosure. And many more Americans fear the loss of their jobs” (Thomas Hine, “How to Tackle America’s Familiar Funk,” Jan. 17, 2008).

The article goes on to compare the country’s plight today with its tumultuous national picture in the 1970s: “Americans were shocked by the ’70s. We seemed to be running out of everything: oil, beef, even toilet paper. Prices were rising, and so was unemployment. Both the president and vice president resigned from office. The long struggle in Vietnam ended in a desperate retreat from Saigon by helicopter.”

Comparisons with recent history can be very instructive, but we should not ignore ancient times. The biblical “song of Moses”

also invites historical perspective. It reaches down through the generations and suggests meaningful comparisons with the past: “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you” (Deuteronomy 32:7, emphasis added throughout).

If young and middle-aged Americans were to ask the country’s “greatest generation” of World War II what they thought of our current cultural behavior, what would the answer be?

Would they be full of praise for our national conduct? Are they pleased with what passes for entertainment on television during the evening of their lives? Would they not think that what’s really wrong with the nation is its steep moral decline over the last half century?

### A half century of American television

Growing up in a small town in southern Texas, I well remember the sitcoms of the 1950s: *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Father Knows Best*, *I Married Joan*, *My Little Margie*. Although these programs didn’t always perfectly exemplify biblical standards, they

weren’t immoral or suggestive. They were usually just relatively harmless entertainment about family life, and they always had a good ending.

Fast forward to the late ’70s and the ’80s. Soap operas had normally been consigned to afternoon TV viewing. But programs like *Dallas* and *Dynasty* (really just soap operas) hit prime time and proved to be highly profitable, long-running shows with vast audience numbers.

These programs normally depicted the upside-down lives of greedy, power-hungry top business executives who broke every rule of proper family life and reaped “their just rewards” with dysfunctional, mal-adjusted offspring who regularly had to be bailed out of crisis situations.

But even these programs and their spin-offs eventually proved too tame for jaded audiences who demanded even more salaciousness. In the decades that followed, producers gave them what they wanted: *Sex in the City*, *Desperate Housewives*, *The Jerry Springer Show*, to name a few.

The saucy, sexed-up dramas offered today have hit new lows. As one writer put it before the start of the latest TV season:

“Traditional appeals to family values find no resonance beyond the religious and conservative base. This has so emboldened America’s TV executives, desperate to staunch the hemorrhaging of audiences to the internet, that the autumn schedules [of 2007] offer such an orgy of sexually explicit programming, even [Janet] Jackson will be blushing” (*The Sunday Times Magazine*, Aug. 12, 2007).

Since the contents of the four main U.S. television networks are subject to the supervision of the Federal Communications Commission, much of the most salacious material is found on cable TV. Up to two thirds of American households have access to cable.

Television wasn’t alone in its downhill plunge during the last 50 years. At the same time, much of American publishing experienced a similar decline in moral

under 17 should not be allowed to view them without a parent.

### How and why the moral decline?

Do such trends have consequences?



in the relaxing interval between one moral code and the next, an unmoored generation surrenders itself to luxury, corruption, and restless disorder of family and morals, in all but a remnant clinging desperately to old restraints and ways . . . *A failure of leadership may allow a state to weaken itself with internal strife*” (*The Lessons of History*, 1968, p. 93).

### Moral choices a necessity

America is now fighting a crucial civil war over moral values within its own borders. Put another way, a culture virtually devoid of adherence to biblical standards, and often openly hostile to them, is rapidly growing right inside its own geographical borders. This is the most basic manifestation of the country’s current internal strife. In that sense the nation is presently deciding its own destiny.

In his book *When Nations Die*, cultural commentator Jim Nelson Black documents 10 key factors that led to the decline

**“The spiritual and intellectual qualities of American life are seriously degraded, and the soul of the nation is in jeopardy.”**



*Financial Times* feature writer Philip Stevens recently stated, “*The overarching geopolitical fact of coming decades is likely to be the decline of US power*” (“A Physicist’s Theory of the Transatlantic Relationship,” Dec. 14, 2007). Morality is not really what he had in mind, but in the long run it may prove to be the most crucial factor in the overall American decline.

With some notable exceptions, national leadership in all three branches of U.S. government have generally reflected the sliding moral standards of the people. Consider, for example, Supreme Court decisions. *Roe v. Wade* (1973) set aside the states’ constitutional right to protect innocent, not-yet-born human life, striking down their laws. Abortion became just another method of birth control, and since then 50 million lives have been snuffed out.

Other court decisions virtually ordered God, the Bible and the Ten Commandments out of our public schools and court systems. State laws forbidding homosexual behavior were struck down. Long-held traditional values were summarily cast aside by a generation that thought very differently from its progenitors.

This follows a common historical pattern. Historians Will and Ariel Durant reflected on such generational dilemmas: “Caught

and collapse of earlier great powers such as ancient Greece and Rome. He sees the United States standing at a historic crossroads, afflicted with those same symptoms.

Describing some of them, Dr. Black wrote: “The United States is at or near the top of all nations in the industrialized world in the rates of abortion, divorce, and births to unwed mothers . . . But in elementary and secondary education, we are at or near the bottom in achievement scores . . . The spiritual and intellectual qualities of American life are seriously degraded, and the soul of the nation is in jeopardy” (1994, p. 7).

Our Creator demands that we make moral choices as to the direction we will take, declaring, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; *therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live*” (Deuteronomy 30:19). These solemn words of long ago echo down through the ages and tell us what we must do to ensure the survival of our nations.

The current race to the November U.S. presidential election reflects our present morality dilemmas. Very few of the candidates have demonstrated high moral standards by relatively clean family lives, supported by verbally professed religious commitments. Others have a more negative

standards. As a high school student in the early ’50s I read men’s magazines like *True* and *Argosy*, fairly wholesome and enjoyable reading. The emergence of *Playboy* and other similar titles with their explicit content eventually caused these adventure magazines to disappear from the shelves.

It should go without saying that movies followed the same sad path. The year 1967 saw the first mainstream film showing female nudity. After that it was all downhill. The U.S. movie rating system was introduced the following year, and since then well over half of American movies produced have been rated R, meaning that even the rating board felt their content is so sexual, violent or profane that children

personal history, and some have expressed support for abortion and gay rights, among other societal evils.

### British values also under threat

Across the Atlantic, one British party leader revealed, in answer to a journalist's question, that he did not believe in God. The gradual breakdown and decline of American values has its common parallels in the United Kingdom.

As it is in the United States, the breakdown of values in Britain is largely generational. Author David Starkey points this out in his book *Monarchy*: "The Diana story—which reached its climax . . . with her death in a car crashed by a drunken driver in 1997—is also a testament to the revolution in British values that had taken place during the Windsor years . . . [Princess Diana] was photogenic, a celebrity, a clothes-horse and profoundly self-indulgent . . . Duty was fuddy-duddy, happiness a right—at whatever the cost.

"In the face of this tide of sentiment, Elizabeth [and many in her generation], with her determination to stick to the monarchy of her father and grand-father, *with its values of duty and service*, looked more and more out of touch" (2007, p. 337). In fairness, we should note that the queen's popularity has largely recovered in recent years.

But to confirm Starkey's declaration of a "revolution in British values," one recent poll found that nine out of ten UK residents believe that Britain's social fabric is under threat due to *family breakdown and rising crime*.

A feature article in *The Observer* Sunday supplement was titled "Is Anyone Faithful Any More?" The author, Polly Vernon, interviewed American writer Pamela Druckerman, who spent three years studying marital infidelity in several prominent Western nations, including Britain. In a companion article Lisa Hilton wrote, "I cheated because I believe pleasurable sex between consenting adults is no big deal . . . Sometimes we cheat because we're just greedy, because we want more" (July 8, 2007).

Druckerman found that adultery was a major problem in every country she visited. (We urge readers to request or download our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*, which presents many biblical principles regarding marriage and shows how we can all cultivate and improve our marital and family life.)

### Lack of basic integrity

Recent statistics show a 5 percent

increase in violent crime in Britain. But there are many different types of crime, some not as obvious.

A survey by Keele University in northern Staffordshire revealed an appalling lack of basic honesty among far too many British citizens. Cutting corners in basic morality is more prevalent in the West than previously thought possible.

More than a third use cash to avoid paying tax. Nearly a third keep silent when mistakenly given too much change by a clerk or cashier. Nearly 20 percent pilfer small items from the office where they work. The list goes on and on.

Incredibly, "the worst perpetrators are said to be highly paid people facing temporary financial difficulties" (Richard Ford and Dominic Kennedy, "Why Middle England Is the New Criminal Class," *The Times* [London], June 25, 2007). Professor Suzanne Karstedt, a criminologist at Keele University, stated: "*Contempt for the law* is as widespread in the centre of society as it is assumed to be rampant at the margins and among specific marginal groups" (ibid.).

### Materialism and moral decay in all English-speaking countries

Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, charged British society with being "fantastically materialistic." He stated: "We seem to be tolerant of all sorts of behaviour, yet are deeply unforgiving. People demand legal redress for human errors and oversights . . . We shouldn't be misled by an easy-going atmosphere in manners and morals; under the surface there is a harshness that ought to worry us" (*The Sunday Telegraph*, March 25, 2007).

One of the archbishop's major concerns is "*the erosion of Christian belief systems*." Here he is getting near the crux of the problem that plagues Britain, America, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa—all the major English-speaking nations.

Like England, Australia is also a victim of the overemphasis on materialism. According to an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, "The core value in contemporary Australia . . . is materialism . . . [We] have been thoroughly seduced by the idea that wealth is the measure of our worth. Consumerism is rampant" (Hugh Mackay, "Into the Embrace of the Unholy Trinity," Sept. 15, 2006).

Traditional religious life in Australia has been experiencing considerable decline as well. "In modern secular societies such as Australia, where the grip of convention has relaxed hugely since the 1960s, *there's a fair amount of disagreement over what's*

*right and what's wrong* as people question, interrogate and criticise traditional moral authorities" ("The Moral Dimension," *The Bulletin*, Feb. 27, 2002).

Canada is no exception to what has been generally happening to our English-speaking world. Its moral decline has been summed up in "The Moral Destruction of Canada: A Survey" in *The Interim*: "For about 40 years Canada has been the laboratory for an awful social experiment. Begin-



ning with contraception (1967) and divorce (1968), Canadian society has become a culture coarsened by narcissism and nihilism; these, in turn, have led us to abortion (1969) and euthanasia (2005?). Canada has become a culture corrupted by death . . .

"The state permitted easy divorce and placed itself and its courts in an ever-greater number of family disputes. The state approved and then funded abortions, thus involving itself in the doctor-patient relationship and, more ominously, the womb . . . The state attacked religion, thus entering into churches to tell them what they could and could not do . . . Religion has been banished from the public square" (Paul Tuns, August 2005).

Dr. Blackwell sums up the situation facing the major English-speaking countries: "The lesson of history is that nations die from a lethal combination of internal and external pressures. Moral decay, combined with rising violence, lawlessness, and intellectual apathy, leads invariably to the disintegration of the structures that make civilization possible . . . From ancient times to the present, the pathology of decadence is unmistakable, and in times of trouble it is imperative that we heed these warnings" (*When Nations Die*, pp. 4-5).

### The message of Moses applies today

At the end of the day what really counts will be our relationship with God—both nationally and personally. That relationship

is being challenged by secularism at just about every level. Only the Bible reveals the way to bring us back to our senses.

The “song of Moses” is one of the most profoundly prophetic portions of the Pentateuch. It contains Moses’ penultimate message to the historic nation of Israel.

But its wisdom and understanding is intended for a much broader audience than that of the ancient Hebrew nation. The song begins: “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth” (Deuteronomy 32:1).

Moses’ words look down through the ages to our time and our own English-speaking peoples. The song is fitly designed for the modern descendants of the house of Israel—principally the house of Joseph, presently located in Britain and those nations descended from it, including the United States. This

world looks at America now, they no longer see a ‘shining city on a hill.’ Instead, they see a society in decline, with exploding rates of crime and social pathologies” (quoted by Black, p. 5).

In large measure our nations are treading the downward path of ancient Rome. Rome’s



## “They have corrupted themselves. They are not [God’s] children, because of their blemish: a perverse and crooked generation.”



prophetic anthem declares without qualification: “*They have corrupted themselves. They are not His [God’s] children [spiritually], because of their blemish: a perverse and crooked generation*” (verse 5).

Paradoxically, America is one of the most prosperous countries in the world and at the same time one of the most immoral.

As former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett stated: “While the world still regards the United States as the leading economic and military power on earth, this same world no longer holds us in moral respect as it once did. When the rest of the

beginnings were characterized by a stable family life. However, this changed dramatically over time. E.B. Castle wrote about the Roman Empire in his book *Ancient Education and Today*: “Added . . . was the consequent easy attitude to the marriage tie, the increasing frequency of divorce and growing freedom and laxity in women’s morals, all of which ended in a loosening of the old family unit

in which the best of Roman character had its roots” (1961, p. 119).

The apostle James stated that when you break just one of the Ten Commandments, in principle you transgress them all (James 2:10-11). Immoral family life in Rome was accompanied by covetousness and greed. “Personal aggrandizement was too eagerly sought and too readily achieved by the ruthless . . . and the old traditions of selfless service to the state were weakening” (pp. 119-120).

The same decline and fall that happened to the Roman Empire could happen to us.

It is not impossible! Even the decay of traditional Roman religion played its part. In time “it had wholly lost its power over the human hearts” (Jerome Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, 1960, p. 122).

Today the major English-speaking peoples no longer recognize and appreciate the true God who generously gave them many of the choice places on this planet. “He made [them] ride in the heights of the earth,” the “song of Moses” proclaims (verse 13). Yet their thanks is to let these very blessings turn them away from God: “But Jeshurun [a poetic name for Israel] grew fat and kicked; you grew thick, you are obese [literally true today]! Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation” (verse 15).

As foreseen, our nations are rapidly forgetting about God and His laws: “Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful and have forgotten the God who fathered you” (verse 18).

### A tragic fate without God’s help

The consequences of dismissing God are dire: “And when the LORD saw it, He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. And He said: ‘*I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be*, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith’” (verses 19-20). There is no real future without the help and favor of our Creator.

God will not be mocked! If they do not repent, He will punish His own peoples, His own nations, for their many sins: “I will heap disasters on them; I will spend My arrows on them” (verse 23). The following verses speak of coming famine, disease epidemics and monumental reverses in war (verses 24-25).

Do we believe such things cannot happen to us? Do we think that God lacks the power to bring these things to pass? The truth is that unless we turn around and go in an altogether different direction spiritually, our tragic fate is inevitable. We are drawing very close to that unstoppable wave of consequences mentioned at the beginning of this article.

### Lack of godly wisdom and understanding

In many ways secularism has vanquished our Christian belief systems. In this world’s educational system, divine creation is—at best—taught on rare occasions as a peripheral theory for the origin of man and the universe, but usually as one supposedly without any scientific proof.

## Turning Your Own Life Around: Where to Start

In the face of spiraling national problems, what can you personally do to protect yourself from the present morally adverse atmosphere?

**1. Make reading and studying the Bible an important priority.** The publishers of *The Good News* offer a free booklet, *How to Understand the Bible*, that shows you the fundamental keys to grasping the message of the Bible and getting the most out of your personal study. We also offer a free 12-lesson *Bible Study Course* that will guide you through the pages of Scripture and reveal how basic biblical doctrines can enrich and improve your life. We also offer booklets on many biblical subjects on our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets).

**2. If you're not already doing so, set aside time to regularly communicate with God in daily prayer.** "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you," we're told (James 4:8). Ask God to help you better understand His Word and see how you can apply it in all aspects of your life.

The Bible can help us all to exercise our God-given senses to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:14). Our free booklet *Making Life Work* shows us how to make Scripture more user-friendly—revealing how it applies to everyday, practical situations.

**3. Get your spiritual house in order.** Read our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* to begin to understand God's great, awe-inspiring purpose for you. Read the free booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process*

of *Conversion* to learn how to attain that great purpose.

**4. Evaluate your priorities and how you use your time.** Ephesians 5:16 tells us we should be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Make the points listed above a high priority in your life.

Following that, your Internet, music, TV, movie and reading entertainment should be governed and guided by practical, down-to-earth advice from our Creator as found in the Bible. Its pages can help us recognize and avoid many subtle pitfalls that we may not realize are even there. The book of Proverbs is particularly helpful in this regard.

Carefully evaluate the worth of your own entertainment—making sure that it is uplifting, positive and encouraging. Consider, for example, the Internet. While many Web sites contain much useful and helpful information, there are also many others that waste your time with worthless trivia and trash.

Noted British commentator Bryan Appleyard recently offered some useful tips in the Jan. 20, 2008, issue of London's *Sunday Times* about using the Internet more wisely: "Tired of pop, porn and celebrity prattle online? . . . We risk drowning in this info-ocean . . . Judgement, therefore, rather than brute fact-finding, is the key. The trick is to narrow your focus . . . and to refine your sense of what is serious and what is not . . . You can lose hours [indeed, many valuable hours] taking nonsense seriously."

Evolution, an unprovable theory itself and one requiring even more faith than divine creation when you really understand it, is most often trumpeted as the only possible explanation for human life as we know it today. In concert with secular humanism, the theory of evolution denies absolute values and inevitably reduces humankind by ever-decreasing moral standards.

It starts with the denial of the Creator by those who know better (Romans 1:18-20). That denial of God's existence inevitably leads to all sorts of perverted thinking and behavior (as the rest of Romans 1 shows). We shouldn't be surprised that the Bible is assaulted in academic and intellectual circles by those who seek to discredit its teachings.

These many corrupting beliefs quickly filter down to our children, with devastating results. Taught by evolutionary theory that only the fittest survive and that this life is all there is, we shouldn't be surprised when our children make decisions accordingly.

Among other things, many become involved in sexual relationships before marriage, often with appalling consequences. The message of music, television shows and movies teaches young people to resolve conflicts by the use of violence. Many are not taught by their parents how to peaceably resolve disagreements, disputes and arguments. They are also deceived into believing that alcohol and drugs lead to happiness rather than to sickness and despair.

Former Boston College President John Silber explains that we need not be ignorant

of the results of such moral breakdown since "one can foretell the poverty, misery, and despair awaiting a pregnant, unmarried, drug-dependent teenager and the wretched life awaiting her unborn child" (*Straight Shooting: What's Wrong With America and How to Fix It*, 1989, p. xv).

As Dr. Black explains: "The consequences of the self-serving decisions of the young and restless today have brought about the disasters of AIDS, venereal disease, unwanted pregnancy, illegitimacy, multiple abortions, abuse, death, violent crime, and much of the deep emotional turmoil that is the natural result of profligate living.

"The entire record of human history confirms that despair and disaster are the natural consequences of irresponsible self-indulgence. Immorality and hedonism contribute to the death of nations; yet a number of Americans want to ignore that dark reality" (p. 216).

Modern society has pushed God to the periphery, if not out of the picture altogether. He is no longer the center of our lives. We no longer rely on Him. Moses' warning in Deuteronomy 32 continues: "For they are a nation void of counsel, nor is there any understanding in them. Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (verses 28-29). National repentance is possible if we would only deeply consider where our current national practices are taking us.

Yet God is so merciful that even if we should continue on this road to national

oblivion and these calamities become inevitable, He pledges to come to our rescue: "For the LORD will judge His people and have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their power is gone" (verse 36).

Does the worst scenario have to happen? Do our peoples have to persist in their ungodly ways and learn godly wisdom and understanding by tragic experience? Or will we have the moral courage to reassess our lives, see where this path is leading and turn to God and His way of life?

Whatever road our nations choose to take, you personally can swim against the stream and begin to change your life for the better right now. You can repent of past transgressions of God's law, receive God's forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice and begin a new and spiritually abundant life. We hope you'll choose wisely! **GN**

### Recommended Reading

You don't need to remain in the dark about what's going on in the major English-speaking nations and why. Nor must you remain unaware of where trends and events are taking us. The answers were spelled out in Bible prophecy long ago—and have been unfolding just as foretold. You need to read our eye-opening booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Download or request your free copy today!



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[www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)

# 10 Practical Ways to Teach Your Children Right Values

*Most parents recognize the need for their children to have right values. But how do you teach them? Here are practical pointers parents can use to instill those standards, starting today!*

by Becky Sweat

**R**espect, kindness, honesty, courage, perseverance, self-discipline, compassion, generosity, dependability. Most parents want to instill these kinds of values in their children.

Doing so will protect them from potentially negative societal influences and lay the foundation for them to become good citizens.

We're not fulfilling our responsibilities as parents if we don't try to instill solid morals in our children.

Of course, this is often easier said than done. Teaching values takes *time*—a scarce commodity for many parents today. "Our increasingly competitive economy is creating an environment where Mom and Dad are spending longer hours at work and fewer hours with their children," observes Gary Hill, Ph.D., director of Clinical Services at The Family Institute at Northwestern University.

As a result, outside influences like peer pressure and the entertainment industry—through the Internet, television, movies, video games and music—are having a greater affect on children, shaping their perspectives more than ever before.

What's a parent to do? "You need to make time to be with your kids and make the time you have with them really count," Dr. Hill urges. "Talk with them about what's right and wrong, and what constitutes good behavior and what doesn't."

Have these kinds of conversations with your kids on a regular basis so that the topic of values becomes a completely "normal" one in your household. That way, in the future, if your children do face moral conundrums, they're going to be more comfortable broaching the subject with you than with their peers. If you don't address these issues with your kids, society will fill in the void, says Dr. Hill.

That may sound like a tall order, especially if most of your dialogue with your children revolves around "What's for dinner?" or "Where's the remote control?" Still, there are many ways to weave lessons about values into your everyday interactions with your children. Let's look at 10 practical suggestions that will help.



## 1. Model good values

One of the most important things you can do is set a good example for your children. They learn from seeing how you treat them, overhearing your interactions with others and observing what you do in different situations throughout the day.

If you want your children to exhibit values like honesty, self-respect and compassion, then you need to show these qualities yourself. All the teaching in the world can be undone if your children watch you behave in ways that contradict what you've said.

Your kids won't think it's important to persevere if you're routinely giving up on diets or exercise programs, or quitting college classes when they get tough. They won't think it's important to follow through on commitments if you back out on organizing the church fundraiser or fail to take them to the zoo as you promised.

They won't think there's anything wrong with lying if they hear you tell your boss you're sick when you just don't want to go to work, or if the phone rings and you tell your child to tell the person that you're not home.

"If there's a discrepancy between what you say and what you do, your kids are just going to ignore what you told them. But if your actions are consistent with your words, then your message is going to be reinforced," stresses Dr. Hill. Your children will know that

what you tell them to do is vital if they see that you always "practice what you preach."

Of course, everyone falls short now and then. Maybe you had to cancel the trip to the zoo because you hadn't really thought through all the other things you had to do that week. Acknowledge to your children that dependability—or whatever character quality trait you failed to live up to—is still important to you. Otherwise, they may get the idea that the reason you didn't say or do certain things is because these things really don't matter that much to you.

## 2. Apologize to your children when you make mistakes

When you fall short with your children, not only do you need to acknowledge your mistake, you also need to tell them you're sorry. This shows them that you value and respect their thoughts, perspectives and feelings. You're also modeling an important way to show respect to others, and how to accept responsibility for your mistakes.

It's a lesson Janet of Oakland, California, had to learn one day. "I had just found out that the car repair I thought was going to cost \$200 was going to be \$2,000 and I was really upset," Janet related. "Then my daughter came home from school and told me she got a failing grade on her math quiz. That was it. I started screaming at her and sent her up to her room."

A few minutes later, Janet felt horrible. She knew she had overreacted and taken her frustrations out on her daughter. She also knew she needed to apologize. "I'm sorry," Janet told her daughter. "I shouldn't have yelled at you like I did." Her daughter's look of relief told Janet she'd done the right thing.

Several days later, Janet's daughter was playing a board game with her brother. When she started losing, she threw the game board into the air and stormed out of the room. Several minutes later she reappeared to tell her brother she was sorry. "I don't know if she would have been so quick to apologize if I hadn't apologized to her a few days earlier," says Janet.

When you apologize to your children, you instill a desire in them to do the same when they make mistakes.

### 3. Use everyday experiences as a springboard for conversation

Almost every day something happens that can provide you with an opportunity to teach your children about values. Use these incidents as conversation starters. It could be an incident you hear about in the news, something you or your children do or something you and they observe someone else do. These can make great on-the-spot lessons.

If you read an article in the newspaper about someone's heroic deed, you might ask your children, "What would you have done if you had been in the same situation?"

If you're waiting in a long line at the post office with your kids and you observe a customer and the clerk arguing with each other, afterwards you could say to your children, "What did you think about the way that customer talked to the postal clerk?" Try to ask open-ended questions that will get them thinking about values.

You will find a lot to comment on within your family. For example, let's say you overhear your daughter teasing your son about his new haircut. This can be a natural transition into having a discussion with your daughter about the values of kindness and respect.

If your children are with you at the grocery store and the cashier hands you a \$10 bill for change when it should have been a \$1 bill and you let him or her know, that's the ideal time to discuss the value of honesty.

Even if you're not always the best example, you can use that to tell your children, "Well, I shouldn't have gotten so upset when that other driver took my parking space." True, it might sound a little awkward at first to have these kinds of conversations. However, the more you do it, the more natural it becomes.

### 4. Read the Bible with your children

Plan some Bible studies with your children, each exploring a different moral virtue. You might do a study one week on honesty or gratitude, and then the next week read what Scripture has to say on compassion, gentleness or generosity. Help your children see that what you're teaching them about right and wrong is not simply your own ideas, but comes from God's Word.

You may also want to do some Bible studies with your children, each devoted to a different Bible figure. Focus on how he or she exhibited particular character strengths when facing different circumstances and tests.

There are certainly many Bible heroes you could discuss, but for starters, you could turn to the story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) for

some valuable lessons. Be willing to share some of those stories with your children, especially those that illustrate how you made choices that were consistent with good values.

You might tell of a time when you stood up for your convictions rather than going along with the crowd, befriended a classmate at school whom everyone else was teasing, turned in a lost wallet rather than keeping the money for yourself, or worked really hard to achieve a particular goal. When you tell each story, describe why it was such a moral dilemma, how you came to make the decision you did, and how everything turned out.

You may also want to share some stories where you made bad choices and had to learn some lessons the hard way. This is especially

## The bottom line is that you need to communicate with your children.



some wonderful lessons on honesty, courage, kindness and unselfishness.

Isaac and Rebekah's story (Genesis 24) is ideal for teaching the virtues of kindness, hospitality and helpfulness.

Go to the book of Ruth to read about Ruth's loyalty and dependability towards Naomi, and the generosity and kindness of Boaz towards Ruth.

The story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) is a sobering springboard for a discussion about honesty, and the story of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:16-34) can teach some valuable lessons on self-control, dependability and justice.

When you're finished reading a Bible passage, talk with your children about specific values being taught by the story. But don't do all the talking. Ask your children what lesson they think can be gleaned from the story. See if they think there are principles that can be applied to our lives today.

### 5. Share your personal experiences

Most of us can look back at our past and think of a lot of experiences that taught us

effective with older children, who may very well be facing similar moral struggles right now. Try to help them learn from your mistakes so that they don't have to suffer the same consequences you did.

### 6. Hold your children accountable for their mistakes

Your children may get themselves into trouble now and then. They might break the neighbor's window playing baseball, perform poorly on the job and get fired or disobey school rules and receive a detention.

You may be tempted to rush in and immediately try to "make things better" for them by going to the principal and asking him to take away the detention, or by paying for the broken window yourself, *but don't*. If you rescue your children every time they make a mistake, they won't take responsibility for their actions. They need to know that bad choices result in unpleasant consequences.

Melodie of Richardson, Texas, shares the story of when her 12-year-old son, Chas, accidentally broke his friend's computer

monitor when he tossed a metal ruler at it. “Chas was sitting in his friend’s bedroom, and playing around with the ruler like it was a paper airplane,” she recounted. She and her husband insisted on buying the family a new computer monitor, and they were going to make Chas pay for it.

The cost of a new monitor was \$140, and Chas didn’t have that much money. His parents’ solution was to come up with \$140 worth of extra chores for Chas to do around the house to pay them back for the monitor.

“We know Chas broke the monitor accidentally, but he still needs to learn that in life, you can make some costly mistakes when you’re being careless,” Melodie says. She didn’t want to just “fix the problem” for Chas, as he wouldn’t have learned from his mistake. She figures that the next time Chas is with his friends, he’ll exert more self-discipline and not get into trouble. But most kids won’t learn to do that if they never have to “own up” to their mistakes.

## 7. Don’t let your children take the easy way out of challenges

Along the same line, you should require your children to finish projects they start, even if their endeavors get tough, tiring or mundane.

Suppose your son begs to sign up for football and then wants to quit after two weeks of practices. Perhaps your daughter signed up for French class but a week later she wants to drop it when she discovers how much the teacher expects students to work and achieve. For the most part, you should not let your children get out of these kinds of commitments (there are exceptions, of course).

If your kids committed to doing something, they need to follow through on that. You don’t want them to become quitters. Encourage them to finish the projects they start. In the process, they’ll develop perseverance and responsibility.

## 8. Involve your children in encouraging and helping others

Encourage your children to help others whenever they can. It’s amazing how helpful they can be to others just through simple acts of kindness, such as making get-well cards for people who are sick, befriending shy or new kids at school, opening the grocery store door for a mom pushing a stroller or making some small talk with the elderly lady sitting by herself at the park.

Try to motivate your children to do these kinds of things. Be on the lookout for people who might need help and lead your kids to reach out to them.

You might also want to get your children involved in a more formal type of service project. That might include visiting nursing homes, helping the local food bank with collecting donations of canned goods or getting involved in a community service organization.

This is not only a great way to serve others, but your children have the opportunity to develop and practice virtues such as generosity, kindness, compassion and respect. “They’re getting to experience first-hand what it’s like to help others,” Dr. Hill says, “and that’s very satisfying.”

## 9. Monitor television viewing and Internet use

When it comes to teaching your children values, there will be a lot less “unlearning” that needs to be done if you minimize their exposure to wrong ideas in the first place. Granted, you can’t shelter them from everything, but you can and should limit their exposure to television and the Internet.

Consider putting computers only in areas of your home where the whole family congregates together. “You don’t want your kids surfing the Web on a computer in their bedroom where you can’t see what they’re looking at,” Dr. Hill warns. If your children do have computers in their bedrooms, install parental controls so that they’re not going to sites you don’t want them to see.

Televisions, too, should be placed only in areas in your home where the family is together—not in kids’ bedrooms.

Barb of Lake Villa, Illinois, has just one television for her family of five, and that’s in her den. “When we watch TV, we all watch it together, and we make sure it’s a show that’s not promoting bad values,” she says. “If my husband or I see something on TV we don’t like, we bring it up with our kids right then and there, while we’re watching the show.”

“Co-viewing,” as this is often referred to, can be a very effective way to filter what kind of ideas are coming into your home and to be aware of what values your kids are being exposed to. If something questionable comes up on a program, don’t be shy about offering your comments during the show or even turning the show off if necessary.

After you’ve watched a television show, talk to your children about what you just saw. Were there any moral lessons to be gleaned? What kind of character qualities or weaknesses did these people have? Did the characters’ actions reflect good values?

## 10. Applaud good behavior

When you observe your children doing something good, let them know you are pleased with their actions.

Thank your children when they clean their rooms without being asked or they do their homework without grumbling. Acknowledge what a good job they did when they finished a seemingly grueling school assignment. If you walk into the living room and notice your children playing nicely together, tell them how wonderful it makes you feel to see them getting along so well.

“Sincere praise goes a long way in reinforcing behaviors you’d like to see more of,” Dr. Hill says. Point out specific actions your children did that were good, so they know exactly what behaviors they should keep doing. “It was nice to see you smiling and talking so politely with Mrs. McDonald at church,” communicates more to your son about what he did right than simply saying, “You were a good boy at church today.”

### Communication is the key

The bottom line is that you need to communicate with your children. Talk about what they did right, what they did wrong, how to make better moral decisions, what character traits God wants to see in us, and why you’ve made certain choices in your own life. Granted, it takes time to have these kinds of conversations, but you’ll find the results worth the investment.

“Don’t let yourself get so busy that you stop having ‘real’ conversations with your kids,” urges Dr. Hill. It sounds cliché, but children do grow up very fast. Depending on their age, you may have them living in your home for just five or 10 more years. “You need to use the time you have with your kids very wisely,” concludes Dr. Hill. “Make sure you build time into your schedule for consistent, quality, face time with your kids—while they’re still kids.” **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Few people realize it, but they already own one of the world’s best books on successful parenting—the Bible! It’s packed with practical, helpful advice on child rearing. And we can be sure that it’s good advice because its ultimate Author is the One who *made* parents, children and family—our almighty and all-knowing Creator! Discover for yourself much of the Bible’s best guidance in our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*.



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## Europe's first president: Prophetic significance?

In January 2009 the United States will inaugurate its 44th president. The selection process has been underway for many months. But few realize that, across the Atlantic, it's quite possible that the European Union (EU) may see its first president also assume office in January of next year, beginning a 2½-year term.

Currently the two primary candidates are former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Jean-Claude Juncker, current prime minister of Luxembourg. The EU process of selection runs roughly parallel with this year's U.S. presidential race, although the methods are vastly different. The much less democratic EU selection will be by a "council of chiefs of state and government created by the Lisbon Treaty" (*International Herald Tribune*, Jan. 22, 2008).

Europeans who oppose Tony Blair's candidacy point to Britain's ambivalence about its EU role in general. The U.K.'s choice to reject the euro as a national currency doesn't help his cause either. Britain's participation in the Iraq War is yet another important factor. However, in January Mr. Blair delivered a strong pro-Brussels speech in the French language at a Parisian conference in the presence of the new president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy.

Prime Minister Juncker's reputation is "that of a European federalist or super-state advocate" (*ibid.*). Many in Britain oppose his candidacy. Perhaps a compromise choice will eventually emerge.

The term of office and the powers of this new EU presidential office are definitely limited in scope



*The European Parliament building in Strasbourg, France, emerges out of the morning mist.*

for the present time. Still, many European observers consider it a groundbreaking move forward for Europe. This is just one more step in the steady EU progression towards greater political union with a European military force firmly in the EU vision. In retrospect, the progress made in the last 50 years has been nothing short of astonishing.

For greater insight and understanding of these important events, request or download our free booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* Much end-time Bible prophecy focuses on events in Europe and the Middle East. These two major regions will increasingly intertwine as time moves on, as noted in another of our booklets, *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Sunday Times* [London], *International Herald Tribune*.)

## French public gets no say on Europe

Less than three years ago the French populace decisively rejected the new EU constitution. But when the same document recently reemerged with only cosmetic changes, masquerading as a mere treaty, France's parliamentarians voted for it. Without a referendum, the choice was taken away from the French citizenry.

The new president of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, was blunt in giving the reasons for not allowing a referendum. Another French "no," he warned, would be "catastrophic for Europe" and could risk France's "exclusion from European integration" (*Financial Times*, Feb. 4, 2008). This amounts to tacit admission that the process of integration is far from complete.

U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown has also refused to allow the British people a referendum on the treaty, which will cede important personal and national rights to the growing European superstate. Is the day of democracy gradually vanishing from the European scene? (Source: *Financial Times*.)

## Trade war coming between Europe and the United States?

Threats of a trade war between America and the European Union have emerged from time to time over the last 50 years. But so far all potential outbreaks have receded.

The latest incident revolves around EU reaction to presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's stated intentions to review America's main economic treaties, even including NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) with Canada and Mexico. She has reportedly called for "measures to 'shelter' US companies from foreign investors" (*The Daily Telegraph*, Jan. 25, 2008).

Mrs. Clinton said: "We just can't keep doing what we did in the twentieth century. We have to drive a tougher bargain" (*ibid.*). EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson reacted sharply by retorting: "The things she's been saying reverberate around the world. . . People in the current

## Entertainment media anticipates the great turmoil of the last days

Authors like Nostradamus during the Middle Ages have predicted perilous times for the last days of this age of man. Later Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*, wrote a book describing *The Last Man* on earth. It's long been a staple of science fiction, and modern movies like *Cloverfield* and television series and books such as *The World Without Us* also address this surprisingly popular theme.

Alan Weisman, author of the book *The World Without Us*, stated: "I show how beautiful things could get—and how quickly—if we [the human race] weren't around. How things revert to wilderness, almost like the Garden of Eden" (*Time*, Jan. 17, 2008).

These so-called apocalyptic visions are far from accurate in terms of God's plan and purpose for humanity. True, many tragic events will take place between now and the second coming of Jesus Christ. But the God who cannot lie has promised in His Holy Word to save humanity from itself and cut short the coming "days of vengeance" (Luke 21:22) to ensure human survival (Matthew 24:21-22). To learn more, request or download our free booklets *Are We Living in the Last Days?* and *What Is Your Destiny?* (Source: *Time* magazine.)



administration tell me the US is turning into a protectionist country. It is a serious concern" (*ibid.*).

These trade tensions continue on several fronts. For instance, *The Wall Street Journal* (Jan. 15, 2008) stated that "the U.S. said it will retaliate with trade sanctions unless European countries reverse illegal bans on planting genetically modified crops, threatening escalation in the long-running trans-Atlantic dispute over engineered foods."

Bible prophecy indicates that these recurrent trans-Atlantic tensions could eventually develop into a full-scale trade war as events move us toward the end of this age. (Sources: *The Daily Telegraph* [London], *The Wall Street Journal*.)

## Attacks on marriage continue unabated

**T**he *Daily Telegraph* of London bluntly noted: “Government support for gay couples and single parents, the rise in cohabitation and an official failure to support traditional marriage are said to have resulted in previously unconventional lifestyles becoming widely accepted” (Jan. 23, 2008).

Britain’s National Centre for Social Research recently conducted its regular survey of British social attitudes. The results show that “marriage—once the bedrock institution of British society—is seen by two thirds of people as virtually indistinguishable from cohabitation” (ibid.). Yet the average cost of a traditional wedding in the United Kingdom amounts to well over £17,000 (\$34,000). This is a curious anomaly.

The lead editorial in that same *Daily Telegraph* said that “champions of ‘alternative’ lifestyles will be cheered by the results” of the survey. But in reality the whole nation should be in mourning. These anti-biblical trends attacking the marriage institution are part of a Satanic conspiracy to bring Britain and other Western countries to their knees.

In God’s eyes it does not matter how the majority of the population views human relationships. Our Creator clearly states in Malachi 2:16 that He hates divorce. He is also infuriated with middle-aged men who abandon their wives to marry younger women (verse 14).

The institution of marriage was established at creation and is sacred to God and Jesus Christ (see Mark 10:1-12). Any sexual relationship outside that basic biblical standard is a sin—a “transgression of [God’s] law” (1 John 3:4, KJV).

To understand how you can improve your own marriage and family relationships by following the guidance outlined in the Bible, request or download your free copy of *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. (Source: *The Daily Telegraph* [London].)

## Criminal activity runs in some families

**C**rime in America tends to run in families. Nearly half of inmates in state prisons have family members who either are or have been incarcerated.

Three brothers in Louisiana are all convicted murderers serving life sentences in the state prison system. Among the many prisoners

## Al-Qaeda spreading beyond Iraq

**A**l-Qaeda keeps on keeping on. It sells its brand of terrorism to the younger generation, which sees its involvement as leading to glory in the next world. The U.S. military surge in Iraq has greatly reduced the group’s effectiveness, so it’s apparently headed elsewhere to spread terrorism.

An Associated Press report, citing U.S. Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell, noted that “Al-Qaida, increasingly tamped down in Iraq, is establishing cells in other countries as Osama bin Laden’s organization uses Pakistan’s tribal region to train for attacks in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Africa and the United States” (Feb. 5, 2008).

More than six years after the 9/11 attacks on New York and the Pentagon, “Al-Qaida remains the pre-eminent threat against the United States,” said Admiral McConnell (ibid.).



Bible prophecy foretells that “at the time of the end,” a “king of the South” (Daniel 11:40), apparently a leader from the Muslim world, will initiate a great conflict with the “king of the North,” leader of a European-based superpower. Constant agitation and increasing terror threats from Islamic extremists could be the catalyst that sets such a chain of events in motion. In fact, some Islamic leaders speak openly of just such a scenario. Keep your eyes on the Middle East. (Source: Associated Press.)

## Why bad news in *The Good News*?

**S**peaking of global conditions before His return, Jesus Christ said our planet will experience “a time of great distress, such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again” (Matthew 24:21, Revised English Bible).

The United Church of God, whose members and supporters provide the financial backing for *The Good News* and other publications, proclaims the good news of Jesus’ imminent return. Yet we often report on the negative consequences of human behavior leading to the very conditions He said would precede His coming.

Following Jesus’ example, part of our purpose

is to highlight the lessons mankind is writing in its self-centered way of living and to warn of where this way is leading. But more than that, our intention is to illustrate the need for an alternative way of life—the godly way of life Jesus taught and exemplified. Beyond the bad news, we present this way of living that would eliminate man’s problems. We also explain from Scripture that under the coming rule of Christ, God’s way will become universal—and humanity will at last know true and lasting peace.

The world of today is indeed filled with bad news. Yet the future holds incredible promise—Christ’s return to establish the Kingdom of God (Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 11:15), ushering in a wonderful world of peace, prosperity and plenty during which all people will at last learn to live God’s way of life. This truly is good news!

awaiting capital punishment in California are six sets of brothers. Texas has already executed six sets of siblings, and two sets of cousins are on death row.

In addition to female partner Bonnie Parker, the 1930s notorious robber and murderer Clyde Barrow also had a brother who occasionally joined him in robbing banks. Brothers Jesse and Frank James made a career of crime in the late 1800s.

Clearly family members influence one another for better or for worse. According to *USA Today*, “The

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says an estimated 2 million children with one or both parents incarcerated face the greatest risk of perpetuating the cycle of crime across generations” (Jan. 29, 2008).

Breaking the cycle of family crime is a supremely difficult, but necessary, national challenge, and one that must start in the home. You can learn many foundational principles in our free booklets *Making Life Work* and *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. (Source: *USA Today*.)

## How Can You Make Sense of the News?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today’s dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You’re probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That’s why we’ve created the *World News & Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening site offers you a perspective you won’t find anywhere else—the perspective of God’s Word, the Bible. Visit us at [www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org) today!





# 'Watch Therefore, and Pray Always'

*These words of Jesus Christ underscore the importance of a right understanding of Bible prophecy and show the need for action on our part—beginning with personal repentance.*

I feel as if I live in two different worlds. One world is the United States, where my wife and I live in Michigan, her home state. Then there's the rest of the world. I travel frequently to Ghana in Africa and England, my home country. Occasionally I also visit other countries. Oddly enough, there's a certain sameness to all of these, at least in the area about which I'm writing. Let me explain.

In January I was in Ghana. Almost every day I was able to watch CNN International on the television in my hotel room. Where this was not possible, I could listen to the BBC World Service on my portable radio.

CNN International is a channel that comes out of London. It's owned by CNN in Atlanta but is quite different from the U.S. version. Its focus is far more international, as is the BBC World Service, which is available 24/7 on radio in Ghana's capital city of Accra and can be heard across much of the globe.

The BBC, like CNN, also has an international television news channel called BBC World. Satellite subscribers in most countries can receive this channel along with CNN International.

But not viewers in the United States. In America, neither CNN International nor BBC World is available.

For whatever reasons, although many of us in the United States have access to half a dozen or so 24-hour news channels, not one of the international news channels is available here. The result is that Americans' view of the world is somewhat narrow—we miss the broader coverage found elsewhere.

This is what I mean by saying that I live in two different worlds.

When I'm overseas I watch international news programs whose primary focus truly is international. As soon as I return to America, the U.S. presidential election is about all there is. No wonder most Americans see themselves and their country as the central focus of everything.

While it remains true that the president of the United States is the world's most important political figure, a great deal is happening around the world that should also grab the attention of Americans. More importantly,

there's a great deal happening that should grab the attention of *Christians*.

## A sense of urgency

In Matthew 24:42, speaking of the time of His return, Jesus Christ said, "*Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming*" (emphasis added throughout).

*Correctly understanding the prophetic time line is crucial and should create in us a greater sense of urgency.*

These words convey a *sense of urgency*.

Elsewhere we read that "after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. *Repent, and believe the gospel*'" (Mark 1:14-15).

Here we see, encapsulated in just two verses of the Gospels, the most important focus of Bible prophecy—the *coming Kingdom of God*, coupled in turn with a *call to repentance*.

Again, a great sense of urgency, of immediacy, is conveyed here in Christ's words. Prophecy and repentance go hand in hand. An awareness of world conditions leading to the coming Kingdom of God will help us to stay focused spiritually. "*Seek first the kingdom of God*," Christ said in Matthew 6:33.

Cynics will dismiss this by pointing out that Jesus spoke these words 2,000 years ago and yet here we are, still waiting.

But wait a minute.

Jesus walked the earth two millennia ago during the Roman occupation of Judea. Many of the people around Him must have been aware of Bible prophecies that had foretold the coming of the Roman Empire.

In Matthew 24, where Christ's disciples asked Him what signs would herald His second coming, He referred to the prophet Daniel: "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation' spoken of by Daniel the prophet . . ." (Matthew 24:15). His disciples were clearly familiar with Daniel's prophecies.

This was also the case with the secular

first-century Jewish historian Josephus, who relates an interesting prophetic anecdote. Writing about an earlier conqueror of the region, Alexander the Great, Josephus recounts the enthusiasm shown by the Jews at Alexander's arrival in Jerusalem:

"And when he [Alexander] went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high priest's direction, and

magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests. And when the book of Daniel was [shown to] him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 11, chap. 8, sec. 5).

A footnote adds that "the place showed Alexander might be Daniel 7:6; 8:3-8, 20-23; 11:3." These are all prophecies about the coming of Alexander, written more than two centuries earlier by the prophet Daniel, during the time of the Babylonian Empire.

Chapters 2 and 7 of Daniel, recorded during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, both kings of Babylon, foretold a series of gentile empires that would succeed one another over a span of centuries. The Babylonian Empire, the first, was to be conquered by Persia, which in turn would fall to Greece under Alexander the Great.

The prophecies even go so far as to show that Alexander would die young and that his empire would be divided into four smaller kingdoms, which is exactly what happened. In time, the Hellenistic kingdoms that succeeded Alexander would eventually be conquered by Rome.

The Jews of Christ's time knew all this. They knew that the empire that had conquered them had been prophesied centuries earlier by Daniel. Bible prophecy was *very real* to them. They also knew that the Roman Empire would, in turn, fall with the coming of the Kingdom of God (Daniel 2:44). So when Jesus Christ came preach-



ing the gospel of the Kingdom of God and calling on people to repent (Mark 1:14-15), there was a definite sense of urgency.

What they likely did not understand, however, was that the original Roman Empire was to be succeeded by successive revivals (Daniel 7:7-8) over the course of the next 2,000 years. The final resurrection, a union of “ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but . . . receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast” (Revelation 17:12), still lies ahead.

### The crucial prophetic time line

Correctly understanding the prophetic time line is crucial and should create in us a greater sense of urgency. It should help us see that God is in charge, and His prophetic plan will come to pass as assuredly as the rising and setting of the sun. As Daniel 2:21 tells us, “He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.”

In another sense, “the Kingdom of God is at hand.” King David wrote that “the days of our lives are seventy years” (Psalm 90:10). Hebrews 9:27 reminds us that “it is appointed for men to die once.” We will all die, and not many of us around the world will surpass the 70-year figure given here. In the next moment of our consciousness we will be resurrected at a time that coincides with the coming of the Kingdom of God. So in that sense the Kingdom is “at hand” for each and every one of us.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the apostles continued the work of preaching the gospel. On the Feast of Pentecost shortly after Christ’s death and resurrection, more than 3,000 people were added to the Church following Peter’s powerful sermon showing Jesus was indeed the Messiah through His fulfillment of many prophecies:

“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:37-38).

Clearly, prophecy and repentance go together.

It’s the same today, almost 2,000 years later. Again, an awareness of Bible prophecy and an understanding of where we are in the prophetic time line should fill us with a greater sense of spiritual urgency—of putting our spiritual house in order. While we should always plan physically as if we are going to die at an old age, we should plan spiritually as if we could die tomorrow—for indeed *we could*.

Prophecy has taken on a renewed urgency in the last six decades since the establishment of a Jewish nation in the Middle East. The state of Israel (actually part of the house of Judah historically and in prophecy) had to arise in modern times for many end-time prophecies to be fulfilled.

It’s not surprising that Jesus Christ’s focus,

when answering the question “When will these things be?” (Luke 21:7), was on Jerusalem (verse 20). In verse 36 He adds: “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 21:36).

Jesus promised His true followers a way of escape from the terrifying events that are prophesied to take place immediately before His return. World conditions will be so dangerous that Jesus Christ said He would return to save the human race from destroying itself (Matthew 24:22).

Clearly, it helps us spiritually to be aware of the times in which we live. Our primary focus should be on the Middle East, but those 10 kings are soon to unite in Europe, so that should be another area of focus for us.

If you live in the United States, you are not likely to learn much about these areas of prophetic emphasis, especially in a presidential election year.

Thankfully, in our area public radio carries the BBC World Service for a few hours daily. It’s also available 24/7 via the Internet. However, although it has more international correspondents than any other news service, it also has its shortcomings. Modern Britain is a very secular country, and this is reflected in the BBC’s coverage—especially that of the Middle East, a crucial area to watch.

It’s important not only to watch the news to be alert to what’s going on in the world, but also to vary your sources. Don’t rely on just one channel or one newsmagazine, as each has strengths and weaknesses. For a complete picture, read and “watch” widely. And continue to read *The Good News* to gain the crucial prophetic and biblical understanding you won’t find anywhere else. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

How can you better understand Bible prophecy? What are its major themes? What is its time line? Where can you turn to fit it all together? You need to know! Download or request your free copy of *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* to discover the answers. While you’re at it, also be sure to request our monthly *World News and Prophecy* newsletter. Both are yours free for the asking!



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[www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)

# Would Jesus Christ Celebrate Easter?

*For millions of people Easter Sunday is the most important religious holiday of the year. But if Jesus walked the dusty roads of Galilee today, would He observe Easter?*

by Jerold Aust

**E**ach spring the excitement of Easter fills the air. Many churches prepare special Easter programs about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At home mothers color eggs, and parents hide the brightly colored symbols of Easter around the house and lawn so that, come Easter morning, their children can excitedly hunt for them.

Stuffed Easter bunnies and chocolate rabbits are seen everywhere in the weeks leading up to this major religious observance. Then there are the Easter sunrise services, where churchgoers gather to hear about Jesus' resurrection and honor that miraculous event by watching the sun come up in the east.

But what do colored eggs and the Easter Bunny have to do with Jesus Christ's resurrection? How did these seemingly irreligious symbols come to be associated with that event?

Can we find any historical or biblical record of Jesus or His disciples observing Easter or teaching parents and children to dye eggs and display bunnies on this holiday? Did Jesus or His apostles instruct any of His followers to meet to honor His resurrection at sunrise on Easter Sunday—or at any other time, for that matter?

If Easter was not sanctioned by Jesus or instituted by His apostles, then where did Easter come from? In other words, if Jesus were living among us as a flesh-and-blood human being, would He celebrate Easter or encourage others to do so?

Answers to these questions are readily available. Some may take a little research, but they become clear when we look into history and the Bible.

## The apostles' record on Easter

As surprising as this may sound, nowhere in the New Testament can you find any reference to Easter. In the King James Version of the Bible (in Acts 12:4) you do find the word *Easter*, but it is a blatantly erroneous

mistranslation that has been corrected in virtually every other Bible translation.

The original Greek word there is *pascha*, correctly translated as "Passover" in virtually every modern version of the Bible everywhere it appears in the Scriptures. It refers to the biblical Passover originally instituted

given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:23-27).

Paul was concerned that the Church members in Corinth observe the Passover in the right way, with reverence and proper comprehension of its meaning.

The writings of Paul and of Luke, his traveling companion and author of the book of Acts, regularly mention keeping the weekly Sabbath day and the biblical festivals listed in Leviticus 23. But Easter is conspicuously absent (1 Corinthians 5:6-8; 16:8; Acts 2:1-4; 13:42, 44; 17:1-3; 18:4; 20:6, 16).

Since Easter wasn't introduced by Jesus or the apostles, where did it come from, and how did it come to be such an accepted part of traditional Christianity?

## The origin of Easter

It's not that difficult to trace the surprising origins of Easter and what it really represents. Many scholarly works show that Easter is a pre-Christian religious holiday, one that was created and developed long before Jesus' time and carried forward to the modern era through such empires as Babylon, Persia, Greece and finally Rome.

*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* notes: "The term 'Easter' is not of Christian origin. It is another form of *Astarte*, one of the titles of the Chaldean [Babylonian] goddess, the queen of heaven. The festival of Pasch [Passover] held by Christians in post-apostolic



when God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-14).

The original apostles, from the inception of the New Testament Church to near the end of the first century, when the apostle John died, left absolutely no record of observing Easter or teaching others to do so. From Jesus to John, not one of the apostles gave even the slightest hint of celebrating or advocating the observance of what we know today as Easter Sunday.

However, that doesn't mean the early Church did not hold to specific religious observances. The apostle Paul, some 25 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, plainly told members of the church at Corinth that they should continue to observe the *Passover* as Christ commanded.

Paul wrote: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had

times was a continuation of the Jewish feast . . . From this Pasch the pagan festival of 'Easter' was quite distinct and was introduced into the apostate Western religion, as part of the attempt to adapt pagan festivals to Christianity" (W.E. Vine, 1985, "Easter").

Alexander Hislop, in his book *The Two Babylons* (1959), explores the origins of Easter. He discovered that a form of Easter was kept in many nations, not necessarily only those that professed Christianity: "What means the term Easter itself? . . . It bears its Chaldean origin on its very forehead. Easter is nothing else than Astarte, one of the titles of Beltis, the queen of heaven, whose name, as pronounced by the people of Nineveh, was . . . Ishtar" (p. 103).

Easter and the practices associated with it can be traced back to various pagan rituals. Hislop explains that "the forty days' abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshippers of the Babylonian goddess" (p. 104). In Egypt a similar 40-day period of abstinence "was held expressly in commemoration of Adonis or Osiris, the great mediatorial god" (p. 105).

### A pre-Christian spring festival

How, then, did 40 days' abstinence come to be associated with a resurrection? Hislop continues: "Among the pagans this Lent seems to have been an indispensable preliminary to the great annual festival in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Tammuz, which was celebrated by alternate weeping and rejoicing" (p. 105).

Tammuz was a chief Babylonian deity and husband of the goddess Ishtar. Worship of Tammuz was so widespread in ancient times that it even spread into Jerusalem. In Ezekiel 8:12-18 God describes that worship and calls it an abomination—something repugnant and disgusting to Him.

The Babylonians held a great festival every spring to celebrate Tammuz's death and supposed resurrection many centuries before Christ walked the earth (see "The Resurrection Connection" on page 18). Hislop comprehensively documents evidence showing that Easter's origins precede the modern Christian holiday by more than 2,000 years!

Hislop cites the fifth-century writings of Cassianus, a Catholic monk of Marseilles, France, on the subject of Easter's being a pagan custom rather than a New Testament observance. "It ought to be known," the monk stated, "that the observance of the forty days [i.e., the observance of Lent] had no existence, so long as the perfection of that primitive Church remained inviolate" (p. 104).

Sir James Frazer describes Easter ceremonies entering into the established church: "When we reflect how often the Church has skillfully contrived to plant the seeds of the new faith on the old stock of paganism, we may surmise that the Easter celebration of the dead and risen Christ was grafted upon a similar celebration of the dead and risen Adonis [the Greek name for Tammuz], which . . . was celebrated in Syria at the same season" (*The Golden Bough*, 1993, p. 345).

### Why eggs and rabbits?

What about other customs associated with Easter? One Catholic writer explains how eggs and rabbits came to be connected with Easter. You will quickly notice an absence of any link or reference to the Holy Bible when it comes to these rituals:

"The egg has become a popular Easter symbol. Creation myths of many ancient peoples center in a cosmogenic egg from which the universe is born. In ancient Egypt and Persia friends exchanged decorated eggs at the spring equinox, the beginning of their New Year.

"These eggs were a symbol of fertility for them because the coming forth of a live creature from an egg was so surprising to people of ancient times. Christians of the Near East adopted this tradition, and the Easter egg became a religious symbol. It represented the tomb from which Jesus came forth to new life" (Greg Dues, *Catholic Customs and Traditions*, 1992, p. 101; emphasis added throughout).

Like eggs, rabbits came to be linked with Easter because they were potent symbols associated with ancient fertility rites. "Little children are usually told that the Easter eggs are brought by the Easter Bunny. Rabbits are part of pre-Christian fertility symbolism because of their reputation to reproduce rapidly. The Easter Bunny has never had a religious meaning" (p. 102).

Honest Bible scholars freely admit that Jesus never sanctioned this pre-Christian holiday, nor did His apostles. In the centuries to follow among those who called themselves Christian, Easter eventually supplanted the Passover, the biblical ceremony Jesus and the apostle Paul told Christians to observe.

This came to a head with the Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicaea—almost three centuries after Jesus was killed and rose again.

Says *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*: "A final settlement of the dispute [over whether and when to observe Easter or Passover] was one among the other reasons which

led Constantine to summon the council of Nicaea in 325 . . . The decision of the council was unanimous that Easter was to be kept on Sunday, and on the same Sunday throughout the world, and 'that none should hereafter follow the blindness of the Jews'" (11th edition, pp. 828-829, "Easter").

Constantine's decision was a fateful turning point for Christianity. Those who remained faithful to the instruction of Jesus and the apostles would be outcasts, a small and persecuted minority (John 15:18-20). A vastly different set of beliefs and practices—recycled from ancient pre-Christian religions but dressed in a Christian cloak—would take hold among the majority.

### What would Jesus do?

Since Easter (with all the pagan symbols that have come with it) was adopted by the Catholic Church centuries after Christ's ascension, should Christians observe this holiday and encourage others to do so?

To answer that question, let's go back to the title of this article, "Would Jesus Christ Celebrate Easter?"

He certainly *could* have told us to. So could the apostles, whose teaching and doctrine are preserved for us in the book of Acts and the epistles written by Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John. But nowhere do we find a hint of support for Easter or anything remotely resembling it. What we do find, as pointed out earlier, is clear instruction from Jesus and Paul to keep the Passover and other biblical—and truly Christian—observances.

Holy Scripture does not support this pre-Christian holiday and, in fact, condemns such celebrations. Because Scripture condemns pagan practices and the worship of false gods (Deuteronomy 12:29-32), we know that God the Father and Jesus His Son have no interest in Easter and do not approve of it.

Jesus, in fact, is diametrically opposed to religious rituals that supposedly honor Him but in reality are rooted in the worship of false gods. He makes clear the difference between pleasing God and pleasing men: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men . . . All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition'" (Mark 7:6-9).

Easter is a tradition of men, not a commandment of God. But it's more than that. It is a pagan tradition of men that, like other traditions involved in the worship of false

gods, is abhorrent to the true God. Jesus and His apostles would never sanction its observance because it mingles paganism with supposedly Christian symbolism and ritual. It is rooted in ancient pre-Christian fertility rites that have nothing to do with Jesus.

In reality, most of the trappings associated with Easter reveal that the holiday is actually a fraud pawned off on unsuspecting and well-intentioned people. God wants us to worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24), not to recycle ancient customs used to worship other gods.

Even the timing of the events used to justify celebrating Jesus' resurrection on a Sunday morning—that He was crucified on the afternoon of Good Friday and resurrected before dawn on Sunday morning—are demonstrably false, as an examination of the Scriptures shows.

For those who want concrete proof that He was indeed the Messiah and Savior of mankind, Jesus made a promise: "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the

great fish, so will the Son of Man be *three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" (Matthew 12:39-40).

Try as some might, there is no way to calculate three days and three nights from late Friday afternoon to Sunday morning before daylight. At most, this amounts to barely more than a day and a half. Either Jesus was mistaken, or those who say He was crucified on a Friday and resurrected on a Sunday are mistaken. You can't have it both ways.

### Jesus' instructions remain consistent

If Jesus walked the dusty roads of Galilee today, would He celebrate Easter? Certainly not. But He would be consistent because He does not change (Hebrews 13:8). For instance, He would keep the annual Passover in the same manner as He instructed His followers to keep it (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:15-17). And Jesus would observe the Days of Unleavened Bread in the way He inspired Paul to instruct early Christians (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

Anyone who wants to be right with God, who wants to be a true disciple of Christ, the Master Teacher, will carefully examine

his beliefs and practices to see whether they agree with the Bible. Such a person will not try to honor God with ancient idolatrous practices, violating His explicit commands (Deuteronomy 12:29-32; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 7:1). Easter, as we have seen, is filled with idolatrous trappings.

Simply claiming that something is Christian or is done to honor God doesn't make it acceptable to God. Easter doesn't represent a resurrected Jesus Christ. Rather—difficult as it may be to admit—it merely continues the practices pagans followed thousands of years ago to honor their nonexistent gods. If we are to escape the calamities prophesied to come on those who place the ways of this world ahead of God, then we must repent of following traditions that dishonor Him (Revelation 18:1-5).

God wants us to honor and obey Him according to His instructions in His Word. Then He can use us to represent His holy Son, our Savior and the Messiah, who will return to the earth. No greater calling can be extended to human beings. May you have the heart to seek understanding and God's perfect will! **GN**

## The Resurrection Connection

**H**ow did worship of an ancient god and goddess come to be associated with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Although the details are lost in time, a closer look at the ancient mythology surrounding their worship will help us understand how pagan practices have survived in popular Easter customs.

Two of the earliest recorded deities were the Babylonian fertility god Tammuz and the goddess Ishtar. Every year Tammuz "was believed to die, passing away from the cheerful earth to the gloomy subterranean world . . ." (Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 1993, p. 326).

The seasonal cycle came to be connected with Tammuz's supposed annual death and resurrection. "Under the names of Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, and Attis, the peoples of Egypt and Western Asia represented the yearly decay and revival of life . . . which they personified as a god who annually died and rose again from the dead. In name and detail the rites varied from place to place: in substance they were the same" (p. 325).

Many of these rites revolved around inducing the return of Tammuz from the dead. One of these ceremonies is recorded in Ezekiel 8:14, where Ezekiel saw in vision an abominable sight—women "weeping for Tammuz" at the very temple of God.

*The Expositor's Bible Commentary* says regarding this verse: "Tammuz, later linked to Adonis and Aphrodite by name, was a god of fertility and rain . . . In the seasonal mythological cycle, he died early in the fall when vegetation withered. His revival, by the wailing of Ishtar, was marked by the buds of spring and the fertility of the land. Such renewal was encouraged and celebrated by licentious fertility festivals . . . The women would have been lamenting Tammuz's death. They perhaps were also following the ritual of Ishtar, wailing for the revival of Tammuz" (Ralph Alexander, Vol. 6, 1986, pp. 783-784).

As worship of Tammuz and Ishtar spread to the Mediterranean region, including the territory of biblical Israel, the pair came to be worshipped under

other names—Baal and Astarte (Ashtoreth), Attis and Cybele, and Adonis and Aphrodite. God heatedly condemned the sensual, perverted worship of Baal and Astarte (Judges 2:11-15; 3:7-8; 10:6-7; 1 Kings 11:4-6, 31, 33; 16:30-33; 22:51-53).

In ancient worship we find the mythology that would ultimately link these ancient customs to Christ's death and resurrection. Says Alan Watts: "It would be tedious to describe in detail all that has been handed down to us about the various rites of Tammuz, Adonis, . . . and many others . . . But their universal theme—the drama of death and resurrection—makes them the forerunners of the Christian Easter, and thus the first 'Easter services.' As we go on to describe the Christian observance of Easter we shall see how many of its customs and ceremonies resemble these former rites" (*Easter: Its Story and Meaning*, 1950, p. 58).

In its various forms, worship of Tammuz-Adonis-Attis spread around the Roman Empire, including to Rome itself. As Christianity spread through the empire, religious leaders apparently merged customs and practices associated with this earlier "resurrected" god and applied them to the resurrected Son of God.

In this respect Easter followed the pattern of Christmas in being officially sanctioned and welcomed into the church. "Motives of the same sort may have led the ecclesiastical authorities to assimilate the Easter festival of the death and resurrection of their Lord to the festival of the death and resurrection of another Asiatic god which fell at the same season. Now the Easter rites still observed in Greece, Sicily and southern Italy bear in some respects a striking resemblance to the rites of Adonis . . . The Church may have consciously adapted the new festival to its heathen predecessor for the sake of winning souls to Christ" (Frazer, p. 359).

(Excerpted from *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?* To download or request your free copy, go to [www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets).)



# God, Science and the Bible

News from the world of science about God and the Bible

by Mario Seiglie, Tom Robinson and Scott Ashley

## Tomb of biblical King Cyrus may be lost forever

The sixth-century-B.C. Persian emperor Cyrus II, known to history as Cyrus the Great, is one of the most intriguing figures mentioned in the Bible. Recognized as a remarkably enlightened ruler for his era, he also played a key role in the fulfillment of a major Bible prophecy.

His story begins about a century before his birth when God inspired the prophet Isaiah to write: "Thus says the LORD . . . , *who says of Cyrus*, 'He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," and to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."'

"Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut . . . I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, *who call you by your name*, am the God of Israel" (Isaiah 44:24, 28; 45:1-3, emphasis added).

The kingdom of Judah fell to Babylonian invaders about a century later, in 586 B.C. Jerusalem was razed to the ground; its walls and its magnificent temple, constructed by King Solomon, were utterly demolished. Most of the citizens of Jerusalem and Judah were taken captive to Babylon. Yet God did not forget His promise to eventually bring His people back to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29:10-14).

Ironically, just about the time Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, Cyrus was born to parents who were members of the royal families of the Medes and Persians. In 558 B.C. he became a Persian king, and by 548 he ruled all of Persia and Media.

In 539 B.C. Cyrus conquered Babylon. In doing so, he fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy that God would "open



**The tomb of Cyrus the Great, a prominent biblical figure, may soon be submerged, along with the remains of two major Persian cities, behind a dam in Iran.**

before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut." This was a remarkably accurate reference to the way Cyrus was able to overthrow the seemingly impregnable city of Babylon.

The Euphrates River flowed into Babylon through massive gates. Cyrus had his troops divert the river by removing ancient dikes that kept it in its course (referred to in Isaiah 44:27). He also managed to get a spy into the city, who had the inner gates along the river unlocked. Then, under cover of darkness, the king's forces waded into the city under the gates though the now-drained riverbed. Before sunrise,

the great city of Babylon was conquered—and all according to prophecy.

Cyrus incorporated Babylon into his growing empire. In a time when conquerors were routinely merciless with their captives, Cyrus, in contrast, was known as a benevolent ruler who offered considerable freedom to the peoples previously conquered by the Babylonians.

Ezra 1 records the decree issued by Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. This set the stage for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple foretold by Isaiah about a century and a half earlier, long before they had even been attacked and destroyed. The entire story is described in the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Sadly, the foresight and tolerance shown by Cyrus hasn't extended to the successors of his kingdom, the rulers of modern-day Iran. Reports out of Iran have accused the ruling religious authorities of embarking on a campaign to sever the Iranian people from their pre-Islamic past, similar to the campaign waged by the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan.

The sites of Persepolis, ancient capital of the Persian Empire, and Pasargad, location of the tomb of Cyrus, are soon to be submerged behind a new dam. Whether or not this is a deliberate attempt to eradicate evidence of the past, it will certainly serve that end—and the ruling religious authorities seem all too content to stand by as these priceless sites disappear forever.

Although little is left of the city of Pasargad, Cyrus' tomb is largely intact and has been partially restored in previous years. A group of Iranian scholars has founded the Pasargad Heritage Foundation to draw attention to the issue and seek United Nations protection for the site.

## Nehemiah's wall discovered?

So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God," wrote Nehemiah, a fifth-century-B.C. governor of Judea, as recorded in Nehemiah 6:15-16.

Until now, few remains from Nehemiah's time in Jerusalem (444-432 B.C.) have been uncovered. But now, Eilat Mazar, a Hebrew University archaeologist digging in the city, believes she has identified remnants of that famous wall that protected Jerusalem after the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity.

While the wall had been uncovered earlier, archaeologists had assumed it dated to the Hasmonean Period (141-37 B.C.), well after Nehemiah's time. But in stabilizing a tower that was part of the wall to prevent its collapse, excavators found immediately under it pottery and arrowheads dating to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and pottery and a seal impression dating to the Persian Period (6th to 5th centuries B.C.).

No later remains were found, which indicates that the tower and wall

dated to the time of Nehemiah's building of defensive walls around the city as described in the biblical book that bears his name. Judah at that time was a province of the Persian Empire, which is why archaeological remains from this time are referred to as being from the Persian Period.

"This find opens a new chapter in the history of Jerusalem," Dr. Mazar said. "Until now, we have never had such an archaeological wealth of finds from Nehemiah's period" ("Nehemiah's Wall Uncovered," *The Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 28, 2007).

The Bible records that Nehemiah, cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes, received permission from the king to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians a century and a half earlier. He also repopulated Jerusalem and restored it as the capital of Judea. It was a bustling city by the time Jesus Christ arrived some four centuries later.

The tower in question lies at the back of the walls of a large stone structure that Dr. Mazar unearthed in 2005 and tentatively identified as the palace of King David (see "Remains of King David's Palace found in Jerusalem?" *The Good News*, September-October 2005). This indicates that the structure must have been built first and supports her claim that the site was King David's palace. While conclusions are still preliminary, these finds appear to further strengthen the historical accuracy of the biblical accounts.



# God's Spirit: The Power to Transform Your Life

*Jesus Christ is cultivating supernatural "fruit" in the lives of His disciples. To understand that miraculous effect, we must first understand the awesome cause and ultimate source—the Spirit of God.*

by Don Hooser

**P**eople want power! Car power and computer power. Political, economic and military power. Physical and mental powers. And *spiritual* power.

Tragically, however, most people search for help in the wrong places. Some believe they have an inner psychic power they can uncover and unleash. Others are convinced there is a mysterious "universal energy" they can align with or tap into. Some even turn to outright spiritism.

Many people put their hopes in one of the countless false religions, either non-Christian or counterfeit Christian. They may choose an ancient "ism" or some New Age philosophy. A cafeteria approach is also common, where a person picks ideas from several religions to create a combination he likes.

## The awesome power of God's Holy Spirit

What mankind most needs is *spiritual* power from our Creator God—the force He offers that can govern our lives, solve our problems and lead us to real peace. It is the fuel of spiritual transformation. And most importantly, for those who receive that Spirit, "If he plants in the field of the Spirit, from the Spirit he will gather the harvest of eternal life" (Galatians 6:8, Today's English Version).

It's exciting to understand the reality of the Holy Spirit and how God uses it! But *what exactly* is it?

First of all, it is *not* something we are born with. It can only be received as a divine *gift* from God after one believes the truth of the Bible, repents of his sins and is baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38-44).

Secondly, contrary to popular tradition, the Bible reveals that the Holy Spirit is not a third person in a Trinity. (In fact, the word "trinity" is never mentioned in the Bible. It is hardly mentioned in historical records until about *three centuries* after the writing of the Bible was finished!)



In the Bible, God's Spirit is compared with water, rivers, oil, a cloud and fire. These comparisons would not make sense if the Holy Spirit were a person.

In reality, the Bible shows that the Holy Spirit is the *nature* and *essence* of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. In fact, "God *is* Spirit" and the source of the Holy Spirit (John 4:24, emphasis added throughout). "The Spirit," "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of Christ" are used synonymously in Romans 8:9.

In the Bible, God's Spirit is compared with water (that one is "baptized with"), rivers (that "flow"), oil (that is "poured out"), a cloud (that "filled" the temple) and fire (that one can "quench" or "stir up" to rekindle). These comparisons would not make sense were the Holy Spirit a person.

God's Spirit emanates from Him and radiates everywhere, which explains the *omnipresence* of God—how God can, in effect, be present *everywhere* at all times. As David wrote: "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?" (Psalm 139:7).

God's "broadcasting" by His Spirit has been easier to understand since the

invention of radio and television. We can enjoy sights and sounds in our own homes as much as if we were in the faraway TV studio. We can get perfect "reception" from God no matter where we are.

God uses His Spirit as His "remote control." When "God created the heavens and the earth," He used the power of "the Spirit of God" (Genesis 1:1-2). After praising God's creation, the psalmist wrote, "You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:30).

Ever since creation, God has used His Spirit to sustain and maintain the universe—everything from the largest galaxies to the smallest subatomic particles. All creation functions perfectly according to the laws of nature—which God put in force and keeps in force.

God not only disseminates knowledge by His Spirit, but His Spirit brings Him awareness of all things. "You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off . . . For there is not a word

on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether” (Psalm 139:2-4). Thus, by His Spirit God is *omniscient*, which means He has total knowledge!

And God is *omnipotent*—having universal and unlimited power! He is *El Shaddai*—God Almighty. Therefore, “with God, all things are possible” (Mark 10:27), whether it is parting the Red Sea, changing water to wine, healing the sick or resurrecting the dead. With every miracle, God is using the infinite power of His Spirit.

Perhaps the most far-reaching miracle was the incarnation of God when the Father sent His Spirit to impregnate a young virgin named Mary (Matthew 1:18, 20). That was Jesus Christ’s first coming. The next great highlight in His story will be His second coming!

### The greatest ongoing miracle

That brings us to the world’s greatest challenge—the transformation of human nature! This spiritual conversion is taking place in the people God has called and who are submitting and committing their lives to Him.

Compared to instantaneous miracles, it is a slow process because God has given human beings free will—freedom of choice. Like a master potter with his clay, God patiently forms His nature in us as we yield to Him.

The big challenge is the rebellious nature of man! Jesus Christ cited the evils that come “out of the heart of men” (Mark 7:20-23). Paul related the corruption in people’s character when they turn their backs on God (Romans 1:24-32). Later he explained how humanity’s evils “will grow worse and worse” in the end time (2 Timothy 3:1-7, 13).

Paul also called the ugly traits of human nature “the works of the flesh.” He concluded his list by saying “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Like noxious weeds in a vineyard, sins must be eradicated. “*Put to death*, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5, New International Version). God’s Spirit is the power that liberates us from being “slaves of sin” (Romans 6:16-18).

God pinpointed the problem of all mankind when He said, “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would

fear Me and always keep all My commandments” (Deuteronomy 5:29). Everyone has spiritual heart trouble, and everyone needs a spiritual heart transplant!

Through His prophet Ezekiel, God said: “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and *get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit*” (Ezekiel 18:30-31).

A later prophecy for all mankind states, “I will give you *a new heart and put a new spirit within you*; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh”—a heart that is soft, pliable and receptive (Ezekiel 36:26).

The indwelling of God’s Spirit is the very thing that *defines* a true Christian, a son of God. You are “in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Romans 8:9). And “as many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (8:14).

It is by following the lead of God’s Spirit and relying on its power that one’s life can be spiritually transformed!

And it is the Holy Spirit that empowers the Church to carry out Christ’s work here on earth in preparing the way for His return (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8).

### The promised “fruit of the Spirit”

If you missed it, we recommend you read the previous article in this series—“Jesus Christ’s Command to Us: Bear Good Fruit and Much Fruit.” It explains and amplifies what Christ said in John 15:1-16.

Just as a fruit grower demands more than pretty leaves, God will not be pleased if we are merely religious and nice. He wants *productive* servants who are growing spiritually and at the same time serving God and their fellow man with every opportunity.

Keep in mind that we human beings “can do nothing” that is spiritually good on our own (John 15:5). That’s why we need God’s Spirit to guide and enable us!

Each of us was created to be “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16). That is why Paul could say, “Christ lives in me” and “we have the mind of Christ” (Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 2:16). And when Christ lives in you, He *changes* you. His work is a complete remodeling job, to make your character a replica of His own.

*Continued on page 23*

# God’s Greatest Gifts

In the beginning, God created mankind “in His own image” with wonderful bodies and minds; He also created everything else on earth for man’s benefit (Genesis 1:26-30).

Then He gave the most precious thing He had: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

And Christ was willing to sacrifice His life. “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us” (1 John 3:16).

Because of Christ’s sacrifice, we can receive God’s amazing grace, which includes the forgiveness of all our sins. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

And what gift does God give then? It is His “gift of the Holy Spirit,” which one receives immediately after baptism when his or her sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38).

Just think: God is offering to implant His very own nature and power within you! What an astonishing offer! And then that gift results in the wonderful “fruit of the Spirit” and “gifts” of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:4).

And finally, it is God’s Spirit dwelling in you that makes possible the ultimate gift—“the gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23), sharing God’s nature and divine glory in His Kingdom forever (2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 2:10; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 1:4; 5:10).

Our response to God’s grace and generosity should be overflowing gratitude and heartfelt submission to His will!

God’s master plan for mankind and how you can become a part of it are explained in our free booklets *What Is Your Destiny?* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

Please reflect on the story of the Ethiopian official in Acts 8:26-39 and his eager desire for baptism and the gift of God’s Spirit. He earnestly asked, “What hinders me from being baptized?” (verse 36).

What hinders you?

# Jesus Christ, the Supreme Servant

*Prophecies in the book of Isaiah foretold that Jesus Christ would first come to serve humanity by dying for our sins, and come a second time to rule over the earth. What does His suffering and death mean for mankind?*

by Vince Szymkowiak

**M**any Christians will be observing the Christian Passover on the evening of April 18 this year. The central focus of that observance is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Yet many others claiming to be Christians do not seem to realize that the apostle Paul commanded Christians to observe Christ's Passover sacrifice (1 Corinthians 11:23-28). He tells us that by partaking of the symbols of that ceremony, we "proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (verse 26). Jesus Himself promised that He would observe the Passover with His disciples in the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 26:29).

The New Testament elaborates on many details of His Passover sacrifice. And throughout the Old Testament, many prophecies speak of this greatest of events.

In the book of Isaiah we find many passages about the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Let's focus on four passages from the book of Isaiah that have been called the "servant songs" of the Messiah.

These scriptures reveal the tremendous love Jesus has for the people of the earth. They reveal in detail the willingness He would exhibit in paying the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the world. They prophesy of the Savior who was to come with compassion and courage. These prophecies also look forward to the time when Jesus Christ will return to rule the entire earth in God's coming Kingdom.

## Prophecy of "My Servant"

The first of these four passages is Isaiah 42:1-4. We know that this passage is talking about Christ since it is also quoted in Matthew 12:18-21 as being specifically about Him.

Jesus is here identified as God's Servant, God's elect or chosen One. Verse 1 tells us, "He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles." Thus we see that Jesus did not come to save Israel only; His plan is to reach out to all

people of all nationalities and racial origin. All will be saved through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as long as they repent of their sins, accept Him in faith, and live as He commands.

Continuing in Isaiah 42:2, we read, "He



will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets." Jesus did not come as a rabble rouser or political activist. As He was being questioned by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). After questioning Christ, Pilate could say only, "I find no fault in Him at all" (verse 38).

Next, in Isaiah 42:3, we read, "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench." Jesus is compassionate to the meek and humble. He will comfort and rescue those who are bruised and battered or who are burnt out under the strains of this life.

Jesus, as God's servant, "will not fail nor be discouraged" (verse 4). Indeed, at His second coming He will ultimately establish justice and truth all over the earth. At His return, He will establish God's law to the far reaches of the earth.

Contrary to what many believe, Jesus never came to do away with the law of God. Rather, He came to make it more binding,

that is, so God's law can be written in our hearts as part of the very fiber of our being (Hebrews 8:10; 10:16). True Christians, upon repentance and acceptance of Christ as Savior and King, will obey God's commandments from the heart (Romans 6:17).

In Isaiah 42:21 we read that part of Christ's purpose in coming is to "exalt the law and make it honorable." This is so different from the false concept many hold that the Ten Commandments are archaic and have been done away.

## "The Redeemer of Israel"

The second servant passage about Christ is found in Isaiah 49:7. Here He is referred to as "the Redeemer of Israel." This prophecy foretells that although many would despise Him at His first coming, when the Kingdom of God is established after His return even royal families—kings and princes—will come to worship Him.

## Total submission to God's will

In Isaiah 50:4-10, we read the third prophecy, which speaks of the courage of Jesus Christ. It gives insight into how He faced the tremendous trial of torture and crucifixion. He was neither rebellious to His Father's will, nor did He run and hide.

After fervent prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed that the Father's will would be done (Matthew 26:42). He went forward to meet His captors (verse 46). He insisted that His apostles be let free (John 18:8).

He could have called for 12 legions (72,000) of angels (Matthew 26:53), but instead He willingly gave His back to those who scourged Him (Matthew 27:26; Isaiah 50:6). Because of His great love for humankind, He even allowed evil men to spit in His face (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 27:30).

Isaiah 50:7-8 says that Jesus Christ would not be disgraced nor ashamed. Even though He was to suffer a cruel death, ultimately

He would be crowned with glory and honor (Hebrews 2:9). In the coming Kingdom of God, all people will worship the One who saved them from their sins.

### Detailed prophecies of Christ's suffering

In the longest servant passage of Isaiah (Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12), we read prophecies of His suffering—all for the purpose of washing away our sins.

In Isaiah 52:14 we read that His physical appearance “was marred more than any man.” In verse 15 we read that many nations and kings will be shocked, dismayed and brought to repentance when they, too, realize that it was their sins—along with yours and mine—that made it necessary for Jesus Christ to be nailed to the cross.

In Isaiah 53:2, we read that Jesus had no special form or appearance, “no beauty or majesty to attract us to him” (New International Version). Even though the common perception of Jesus is a man in white, flowing robes with a piercing stare, Scripture shows that He looked like an ordinary Jewish man of His day.

Verse 4 foretold that Jesus would bear our griefs and sorrows—the pains, heartbreaks, discouragement and sicknesses we all face

in life. Ultimately, our Savior came to heal us of every malady—spiritual, physical and emotional wounds!

Verses 5-6 state that He was willing to be beaten and disfigured by the Roman scourging because it was the will of God to lay on His shoulders “the iniquity of us all.”

Verses 7-9 reveal that the Lamb of God was led to the slaughter (by means of an unfair and hastily assembled court) to pay for the transgression of God's people. Finally, Isaiah 53 promises that God's righteous Servant would justify (deliver from sin) those who will turn to Him (verse 11).

### Our coming King of Kings

When Jesus came to earth the first time, He came as a willing servant to pay for the sins of humanity. We must also keep in mind that He is coming again soon, this time as the world-ruling “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16). In His coming Kingdom, every knee will bow before Him (Philippians 2:9-11).

At the present time God is calling many to become a part of His spiritual household, though only few will respond (Matthew 22:14). He may very well be calling *you* to repentance, faith, baptism and an ongoing spiritual relationship—as well as to have an

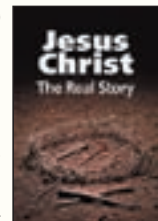
important part in the coming Kingdom.

If you believe you are being called, we urge you to heed this precious call and respond now to the mercies of the One who suffered and died for you. Do not postpone what will be the most important decision of your life!

If you would like a minister to assist you in learning more about this life-changing experience, contact the regional office of the United Church of God nearest you (see listing on page 2). Or you may contact us online at [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org). May Almighty God bless you as you seek Him in this most vital of all endeavors. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

Why did Jesus Christ have to suffer? Why did He have to die? Our understanding of Christ's suffering and sacrifice becomes much deeper when we understand from the pages of Scripture exactly who and what He was and why He came to earth. To discover the truth from the pages of your Bible, download or request your free copy of *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at

[www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)

## Holy Spirit

Continued from page 21

Another analogy is that God's Spirit carries the code of God's “DNA,” as it were. When you receive an infusion of His Spirit, it brings with it the righteous spiritual attributes that enable and empower you to develop the fruit of God's character.

God's Spirit is necessary to comprehend the spiritual truths of the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:7-16). Knowledge of God's Word is essential to spiritual growth. The Bible and the Holy Spirit are synergistic—each is much more effectual because of the other. In a sense, the Bible guides us from *without* while the Holy Spirit guides from *within*.

God literally *in-spires* our understanding when He puts His Spirit in us. Without God's Spirit, people can understand only *pieces* of spiritual truth, like seeing pieces of a jigsaw puzzle but not being able to visualize the overall picture.

In addition, God's Spirit imparts desire, motivation, willpower, zeal and strength to put that spiritual understanding into practice. God promised, “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts” (Hebrews 8:10). When that new nature is

internalized, they, like the author of Psalm 119, begin to *love God's laws* (verse 97).

Indeed, God's Spirit profoundly changes people! Paul wrote that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering [patience], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). In this series of articles, we will thoroughly examine each of these aspects to understand them and learn how to practice them in our daily lives.

Note here that although “fruit” is singular, God has *many* characteristics that all harmonize to form His holy character. John summarized God's character with one word: “God is *love*” (1 John 4:8). But just as we can distinguish the individual colors of the rainbow when white light passes through a prism, it is profitable for us to examine each attribute of God's character.

### Fruit production requires patient perseverance

After a believer has been baptized, he receives the gift of God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). New disciples of Jesus Christ begin as spiritual children, but God expects them to rapidly grow up to become mature Christians (Ephesians 4:11-16). To do that, we all

need to keep spiritually fed with the daily nourishment of prayer, reading the Bible and meditating on it, and striving to live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4).

After someone has received the gift of God's Spirit, why does he not produce abundant fruit immediately? Think of a healthy fruit tree in early spring. The tree is receiving plenty of sunshine and water, and the sap is flowing. And there may already be the tiny emergence of fruit. But the fruit is not desirable until it has grown to full size and ripened to sweet maturity.

Likewise, a new disciple of Jesus Christ has immense potential, but he starts out with fruit that is small and “green” or immature. If we are ever to bear ripe luscious fruit, we must assist the Owner of the orchard with our own horticulture—our own fruit cultivation—day after day for the rest of our lives.

James put it very well in James 5:7-8: “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” **GN**

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## UNITED STATES

**Alabama**  
Athens ch. 2, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Tue 7 p.m.  
Decatur ch. 2, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Tue 7 p.m.  
Scottsboro ch. 2, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Tue 7 p.m.

**Arizona**  
Prescott ch. 13, Sun 5 p.m.; Sat 3:30 p.m.  
Prescott Valley ch. 13, Sun 9 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.  
Tucson ch. 73, 98, 120, Sun 10 a.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

**Arkansas**  
Fayetteville ch. 18, Sun 10 a.m.; Wed 6 p.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

**California**  
Alamo ch. 26, Thu 7:30 p.m.  
ch. 6, 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.  
ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.

Anaheim (west) ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.  
Berkeley ch. 6, 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Clayton ch. 6, 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Concord ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Costa Mesa ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Cypress ch. 6, 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Danville ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.  
Dublin ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.  
El Cerrito ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.  
El Sobrante ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.  
Emeryville ch. 12, Fri 8 p.m.  
Eureka ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Fountain Valley ch. 29, Tue 6:30 p.m.  
Fremont ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Garden Grove ch. 28, Tue 10 p.m.  
Hayward ch. 3, Fri 2:30 p.m.  
Hemet ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.  
Hercules ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Huntington Beach ch. 6, 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Lafayette ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.  
Livermore ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Los Alamitos ch. 26, Tue 10:30 p.m.  
Marin County ch. 6, 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Martinez ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Midway City ch. 26, Thu 8:30 p.m.; Fri 6 p.m.  
Modesto ch. 16, 98, Tue, Thu and Sat 4:30 p.m.  
Monrovia ch. 26, Thu 7:30 p.m.  
Moraga ch. 6, 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Novato ch. 71, Tue 9:30 p.m.  
Oakland ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.  
Orange ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Orinda ch. 26, Thu 7:30 p.m.

Palo Cedro ch. 56, Sun 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.  
Pasadena ch. 26, Sun 9 p.m.  
Petaluma ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.  
Piedmont ch. 26, Thu 12 midnight  
Pittsburg ch. 6, 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Pleasant Hill ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.  
Pleasanton ch. 11, Sun 11:30 a.m.  
Redding ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.  
Richmond ch. 26, Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Rossmoor ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.

Sacramento ch. 18, Thu 6 p.m.  
San Diego (North) ch. 19, Sun 2:30 p.m.  
San Diego (South) ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.  
San Francisco ch. 29, Sun 9:30 a.m.  
San Jose ch. 15A, Wed 4:30 p.m.  
San Rafael ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.  
Santa Clara ch. 15A, Wed 4:30 p.m.  
Santa Rosa ch. 72, Sun 7:30 p.m.; Sat 10:30 a.m.  
S. Pasadena ch. 6, Thu 4:30 p.m.  
Stanton ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Verdugo Hills ch. 20, Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Walnut Creek ch. 6, 26, 1st Tue & 4th Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Westminster ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.

**Colorado**  
Boulder ch. 43, Fri 1 p.m.

**Georgia**  
Cornelia ch. 4, Sun 6:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.

**Hawaii**  
Hilo ch. 53, Sun 10 a.m.; Thu 7:30 p.m.  
Lanai ch. 13, Fri 7 p.m.; Sat 7 a.m.  
Maui ch. 52, Fri 7 p.m.; Sat 7 a.m.  
Molokai ch. 13, Fri 7 p.m.; Sat 7 a.m.

**Idaho**  
Boise ch. 11, Wed 7:30 p.m.

**Illinois**  
Arlington Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Bartlett ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Brookport ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.  
Buffalo Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Chicago ch. 36, times vary  
Des Plaines ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
East St. Louis ch. 18, Sat 5:30 p.m.

Elk Grove Village ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Glenview ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Golf ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Hanover Park ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Hoffman Estates ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Lincolnwood ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Metropolis ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.  
Morton Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Mt. Prospect ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Naperville ch. 17, Sun 10 a.m.  
Niles ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Normal ch. 20, Sun 6 p.m.  
Northbrook ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Palatine ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Park Ridge ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Prospect Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Rolling Meadows ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Romeoville ch. 6, Sun 9 a.m.  
Schaumburg ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Skokie ch. 4, Wed 12 a.m., 8 a.m. & 9 p.m.  
Springfield ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Streamwood ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Wheeling ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.  
Wilmette ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.

**Indiana**  
Bloomington ch. 3, Sun 9:30 p.m.  
Evansville ch. 7, Mon 5:30 p.m.; Tue 6:30 p.m.  
Ft. Wayne ch. 57, Sun 9 a.m.  
Valparaiso ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.

**Iowa**  
Des Moines ch. 15, Sun 11:30 a.m.

**Kentucky**  
Berea ch. 5, Fri 9 & 9:30 p.m.  
Hopkinsville ch. 23, Wed & Fri 11 a.m.  
Owensboro ch. 52, Sun 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.  
Paducah ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.  
Richmond ch. 5, Fri 9 & 9:30 p.m.

**Massachusetts**  
Amherst ch. 12, Tue 9 p.m.  
Boston ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.;  
Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.  
Cambridge ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.;  
Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.  
East Longmeadow ch. 5, Sun 11:30 a.m.  
Greenfield ch. 17, Tue 4 p.m.; Wed 10:30 a.m.  
Palmer ch. 15, Sun 12, 2:30 & 8 p.m.  
Shrewsbury ch. 33, Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 7 a.m.  
Worcester ch. 13, Thu 10 a.m.

**Michigan**  
Ann Arbor ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.  
Grand Haven ch. 22, Mon 4 p.m.  
Grand Rapids ch. 25, Tue or Wed 11 a.m.  
Kalamazoo ch. 19, Sun 8:30 a.m.  
Midland ch. 3, Fri 5:30 p.m.  
Mt. Pleasant ch. 3, times vary  
Traverse City ch. 2, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Fri 5 p.m.  
Ypsilanti ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.

**Minnesota**  
Albert Lea ch. 6, Sun 9:55 a.m.  
Austin ch. 6, Sun 7 p.m.  
Blaine ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
Brooklyn Center ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.;  
Sat 10 p.m.  
Brooklyn Park ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.;  
Sat 10 p.m.  
Burnsville ch. 14, Mon, Wed & Fri 4:30 p.m.;  
Sun, Tue, Thu & Sat 4:30 a.m.  
Centerville ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
Circle Pines ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
Eagan ch. 15, Sun 6:30 a.m.; Mon 12:30 a.m.;  
Tue 9:30 p.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.;  
Thu 3:30 p.m.; Fri 12:30 p.m.;  
Sat 9:30 a.m.  
Eden Prairie ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.  
Edina ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.  
Golden Valley ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.;  
Sat 10 p.m.  
Ham Lake ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
Hopkins ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.  
Inver Grove Hts. ch. 15, Sun 6:30 a.m.; Mon 12:30 a.m.;  
Tue 9:30 p.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.;  
Thu 3:30 p.m.; Fri 12:30 p.m.;  
Sat 9:30 a.m.  
Lexington ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
Lino Lakes ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
Litchfield ch. 10, Sun 2 a.m., 8:30 a.m.,  
1 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wed 1 a.m., 3 a.m.,  
8:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.  
Maple Grove ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.;  
Sat 10 p.m.  
Minneapolis ch. 75, Mon 6:30 p.m.  
Minnetonka ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.  
New Hope ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.;  
Sat 10 p.m.  
New Ulm ch. 72, Sun 5 p.m.; Thu 10 a.m.; Fri 7 p.m.  
Osseo ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.;  
Sat 10 p.m.  
Plymouth ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.;  
Sat 10 p.m.  
Richfield ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.  
Robbinsdale ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.;  
Sat 10 p.m.

Rochester ch. 10, Sun 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.;  
Sat 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.  
St. Charles ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.  
Spring Lake Park ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
Wabasha ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.  
Willmar ch. 8, Thu 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
Winona ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.

**Missouri**  
Cape Girardeau ch. 5, Sun 7:30 a.m.; Tue 6 p.m.;  
Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 7:30 p.m.  
Jackson ch. 5, Sun 7:30 a.m.; Tue 6 p.m.;  
Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 7:30 p.m.  
Jefferson City ch. 3, Wed 6 p.m.  
Poplar Bluff ch. 54, Tue 4 p.m.  
St. Louis ch. 18, Sat 5:30 p.m.

**Montana**  
Billings ch. 7, Sun 6 p.m.; Sat 11 a.m.  
Helena ch. 11, Sun 3 p.m.  
Missoula ch. 7, Sun 11 a.m.

**Nevada**  
Carson City ch. 10, Wed 7:30 p.m.  
Reno/Sparks ch. 16, Wed 7 p.m.

**New Hampshire**  
LaConia ch. 25, 26, Sun 7:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m.

**New Jersey**  
Newark ch. 19, Sun 7 a.m.

**New Mexico**  
Albuquerque ch. 27, Sun 10:30 p.m.  
Santa Fe ch. 16, Sun 10 a.m.; Mon 6:30 p.m.

**New York**  
Binghamton ch. 4, Thu 5:30 p.m.  
Brooklyn ch. 56, 69, Sun 10 a.m.  
Bronx ch. 70, Mon 3 p.m.  
Canandaigua ch. 12, Sun 2 p.m.  
Manhattan ch. 57, Sun 7 a.m.  
Olean ch. 6, Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Oneonta ch. 23, Mon 6 p.m.; Wed 9 p.m.  
Queens ch. 35, Tue 8 p.m.; Thu 3 p.m.  
Rochester ch. 15, Tue & Thu 8 a.m.  
Woodbury ch. 20, Sat 9:30 a.m.

**North Carolina**  
Asheville ch. 20, Sun 1 p.m.  
Burlington ch. 5, 10, Sun 10 a.m.  
Charlotte ch. 21, Sat 2 p.m.  
Durham ch. 8, Wed 7:30 a.m.  
Greensboro ch. 8, Sun 10:30 & 12:30 a.m.  
Hickory ch. 3, Sun 7 p.m.  
Mebane ch. 5, 10, Sun 10 a.m.  
Raleigh ch. 22, Tue 6:30 p.m.

**North Dakota**  
Bismarck ch. 12, Sun 2:30 p.m.  
Fargo ch. 12, Tue 10:30 a.m.

**Ohio**  
Akron ch. 15, Sun 9:30 a.m.; Mon 11 p.m.  
Athens ch. 23, Sun 7 p.m.; Wed 7 p.m.  
Brunswick ch. 21, Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 12:30, 4:30 &  
8:30 a.m.; 2:30, 6:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Bryan ch. 4, Sun 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.; Mon 8 p.m.  
Cincinnati ch. 18, Sun 10:30 a.m.; Tue 10 p.m.;  
Thu 11 p.m.; Sat 6:30 a.m.  
Cincinnati (Union Twp.) ch. 8, Sun 2:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 a.m.;  
Wed 11 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.  
Cleveland W. suburbs ch. 21, Sun 11:30 a.m.  
Dayton ch. 12, Mon 3:30 p.m.; Sat 11:30 p.m.  
Defiance ch. 5, Sun 12 noon; Thu 6 p.m.  
Fairborn ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.  
Greenview ch. 3, Thu 8 p.m.  
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 12, Sun & Sat 9 a.m.  
Springfield ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.  
Trotwood ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.  
Urbana ch. 1, daily 6 a.m., 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.  
Vandalia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.  
Wash. Court House ch. 3, Wed 2 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.  
Xenia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.

**Oregon**  
Eugene ch. 29, Tue 2 p.m.  
McMinnville ch. 11, Sun 5:30 p.m.; Wed 8 p.m.  
Medford ch. 15, 95, Sun 5 p.m.  
Oregon City ch. 21, Mon 8 p.m.  
Portland ch. 22, Sun 7:30 p.m.;  
Tue 12:30 p.m.; Fri 2 p.m.; Sat 11:30 a.m.  
Salem ch. 11, Sun 9 a.m.

**Woodburn** ch. 11, Sun 9 a.m.

**Pennsylvania**  
Pittsburgh/Moon Twp. ch. 14, 21, Sun 12 & 2 p.m.  
York ch. 16, Sun 8:30 p.m.;  
Mon 4:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.

**Rhode Island**  
Entire state ch. 14, Fri 10:30 a.m.

**Texas**  
Austin ch. 11, Mon 8:30 p.m.  
Dallas ch. 148, 74, Sun 12:30 p.m.;  
Thu 9:30 p.m.  
Del Rio ch. 19, Sun 9 a.m.; Wed 5 p.m.  
El Paso ch. 15, Mon, Fri, Sat 1 p.m.  
Fort Worth ch. 28, Tue 5:30 p.m.; Thu 1 p.m.  
Houston ch. 17, 98, Sun 1:30 p.m.

Longview ch. 26, Tue 2 p.m.; Wed 10 p.m.;  
Fri 12:30 p.m.; Sat 9 p.m.

**Virginia**  
Hampton Roads ch. 71, 74, Sun 10 a.m.

**Washington**  
Everett ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.  
Kennewick ch. 13, Sun & Tue 8:30 p.m.  
Olympia ch. 22, 29, Sun 9 a.m.; Thu 10:30 p.m.  
Seattle ch. 29, 77, Sun 9 a.m.  
Vancouver ch. 11, Sun 1 p.m.; Tue 3:30 p.m.;  
Thu 12 noon; Fri 8 p.m.

**West Virginia**  
Morgantown ch. 3, Mon, Wed & Fri 3 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.

**Wisconsin**  
Beloit ch. 12, Thu 6:30 p.m.  
Eau Claire ch. 11, Sun 2 p.m.  
Kenosha ch. 14, Sun & Mon 7:30 p.m.  
Madison ch. 4, Sun 12:30 p.m.  
Milwaukee ch. 96, Mon 2 p.m.; Tue 7 p.m.;  
Wed 2 p.m.  
Stevens Point ch. 3, Mon 5 & 9:30 p.m.;  
Tue 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.  
Wausau ch. 10, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Sat 9 a.m.  
West Allis ch. 14, times vary

## CANADA

**Nationwide**  
Vision TV, Sun 11 p.m. (PST)  
Star Choice Digital ch. 399, Sun 10:30 a.m. (EST)

**Alberta**  
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sun 8:30 a.m.

**British Columbia**  
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sun 7:30 a.m.

**Manitoba**  
The Christian Channel MTS ch. 21, Sun 9:30 a.m.

**New Brunswick**  
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 11:30 a.m.

**Newfoundland and Labrador**  
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 12 noon

**Northwest Territory**  
The Christian Channel Northwestel ch. 226, Sun 8:30 a.m.

**Ontario**  
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 10:30 a.m.  
The Christian Channel Cogeco ch. 186, Sun 10:30 a.m.

**Saskatchewan**  
The Christian Channel SaskTel ch. 282, Sun 8:30 a.m.

## Radio Log

For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or listen to programs online, visit [www.beyondtoday.tv/radiol/](http://www.beyondtoday.tv/radiol/).

**Nationwide**  
Internet Radio live365.com, Sun 8:30 a.m. (PST)

**Alabama**  
Birmingham 1070 AM, Sun 7:30 a.m.

**Arizona**  
Douglas 930 AM, Sat 10:30 a.m.  
Globe 1240 AM, Sat 10:30 a.m.  
Sierra Vista 1470 AM, Sat 10:30 a.m.  
Tucson 940 AM, Sat 10:30 a.m.

**California**  
San Diego 760 AM, Sun 6 a.m.

**Florida**  
Jacksonville 690 AM/106.5 FM, Sun 7 a.m.

**Indiana**  
Ft. Wayne 1190 AM, Sun 10 a.m.

**Louisiana**  
New Orleans 870 AM/105.3 FM, Sat 9:30 p.m.

**Montana**  
Helena 101.9 FM, Mon 8 p.m.;  
Fri 8 p.m.; Sat 8 a.m.

**Nebraska**  
Omaha 1110 AM, Sun 7:30 a.m.

**New York**  
Buffalo 930 AM, Sun 6:30 a.m.

**Ohio**  
Cincinnati 550 AM, Sun 6 a.m.

**Oklahoma**  
Tulsa 740 AM, Sun 8 a.m.

**Texas**  
San Antonio 550 AM, Sun 6:30 a.m.

**Washington**  
Seattle 770 AM, Sun 7:30 a.m.

**West Virginia**  
Wheeling 1170 AM, Mon 11 p.m.;  
Fri 8:15 p.m.; Sat 9 p.m.



# Europe Moves Closer to Fulfilling Its Grand Design

*Europe continues its march toward its destiny, moving rapidly toward a time of transition that will surprise and shake the entire world. How prepared are you for the changes that are coming?*

by **Beyond Today** host Darris McNeely

**M**ore than two years after voters in France and the Netherlands vetoed the proposed European constitution, leaders have signed a version of the same constitution with a different name and a few adjustments. It must still be ratified by each member nation, but it is unlikely to be put to a popular vote in most nations except Ireland, where it is legally required (and possibly Britain if the call for it there gains more traction).

The *Financial Times* describes the situation: “EU leaders reacted by dropping the concept of a ‘constitution’ from their treaty but keeping as much of the document’s detail as possible. Most of the key changes to the European Union’s institutions—the European Council, representing national governments, the European Commission and the European Parliament—remain in place in the new Lisbon treaty.

“Like its forerunner, the treaty extends the use of qualified majority voting, notably in matters affecting justice and interior affairs. It keeps the new voting rules designed to smooth the EU decision-making process now that there are 27 member-states, up from 15 as in 2004.

“The Lisbon treaty is an immensely complicated document with (in its English version) 175 pages of treaty text, 86 pages of protocols, a 25-page annex and a 26-page final act containing 65 separate declarations” (Dec. 13, 2007).

Many critics see this treaty as a “stealth” step toward greater centralized control in Brussels, the headquarters of the EU, thus creating a loss of national sovereignty for member nations.

The treaty establishes a new European Union in the form of a supranational federal



*German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy greet each other warmly at a European Union summit in October 2007. The new European treaty signed in December will give their two countries even greater power in leading the EU.*

state, which is separate and superior to the member states. Just as the United States is to Indiana, or Germany is to Bavaria, so the EU is to its member nations. The EU would have authority to make agreements with other countries by which all member nations would be bound.

This would make the EU a full legal and corporate entity. The EU would exercise all the powers of a sovereign state (the primary exception, for now, being the ability to make member states go to war against their will). People living in the EU would technically become citizens of the EU, thus holding dual citizenship but owing ultimate allegiance to the EU.

How exactly this will develop in practical fact is yet to be seen. It is hard to imagine a Frenchman thinking of himself as anything other than French. The same for any other EU “citizen.” This is no small matter

in Europe and will be a significant reason why the Bible describes the end-time Beast power as a mixture of iron and clay (Daniel 2:41).

## **Germany and France gain more clout**

The new treaty gives the larger states more voting power. Germany and France are two immediate winners. If these two nations get only two other nations to vote with them, they would have the power to control passage of any EU law. The new double-majority voting system makes population the key criterion of influence.

If Turkey were to gain admission to the EU, it would be the largest state by population. In light of this, the admission of Turkey will continue to see intense opposition.

The EU will also have additional power to make laws binding on all member nations. Areas such as criminal and civil law, justice, immigration and energy policy would fall under the authority of the EU. This is a major increase of EU powers and a decrease of power to the separate national parliaments and legislatures.

It means the lives of each citizen of the EU will be managed by the EU power structure. Gradually all the functional aspects of everyday life, the infrastructure that makes a town, a city or a state work, will be controlled by EU policy and those who make policy.

Under this treaty the EU, and its EU Court of Justice, will have the final power

to decide issues of human and civil rights in all areas of EU law. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights would become binding on all member states. All in all, 68 new areas of lawmaking would then come under EU authority.

Still evolving are critical areas of foreign and economic policy, which are not fully developed under this treaty. And of course, the question of who speaks for the EU—who or what holds the ultimate leadership role—has yet to be determined.

Until these areas are fleshed out, along with a common military posture, what we see is a bureaucratic behemoth with nowhere to go and no one to lead it. That will come later, as Revelation 13 shows, in the form of political and religious leaders who give voice and authority to a system destined to influence the entire world.

### Competing for leadership

Germany and France are currently

## ***We are in a transitional period of history. The role of the English-speaking nations, led by Great Britain and America, is being challenged by the rising power centers of Europe and Asia.***

sparring over their respective leadership roles within the EU. Since reunification, Germany has gained a level of self-confidence and is asserting what it feels is its natural leadership role on the continent. In Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany has found an unexpectedly feisty leader. Meanwhile, President Nicolas Sarkozy seeks to guard France's position as a leading power in Europe.

A recent Stratfor analysis put it this way: "With Germany again thinking for itself and France again looking out for French national interests in Europe rather than French superpower interests globally, there is a bit of a tug-of-war going on.

"Germany sees itself as Europe's natural leader by dint of population, location and economic heft. But for its part, France is no more likely to concede the 'natural' leadership of Germany under traditional power politics than it was to concede American leadership of the free world under Gaullism" (Stratfor Intelligence Brief, Dec. 7, 2007).

As this report went on to say, the conflict between the two countries is about "the future of Europe which ultimately boils down to who will call the shots." The report ended with this prediction: "The Europe of 2010 will likely have a lot more in common with the Europe of 1913

than with the Europe of 2000."

### A historic time of transition

That last statement should make everyone sit up and take notice. Europe in 1913 was the center of a global economy rivaled only by what has been created in the past decade and more. Borders between states were open. Trade in goods, services and currencies flowed easily between Berlin, Paris and London.

All this changed with the outbreak of World War I. Empires collapsed and the whole world order was turned upside down. In the aftermath, Europe smoldered for two decades until it again erupted into another global war. The Cold War of the post-World War II era ended with the collapse of the Berlin Wall (1989) and Soviet communism (1991).

Now we are in an even larger period of globalization, and Europe is again a major player. Where this recent treaty

takes Europe remains to be seen.

Longtime readers of *The Good News* understand that we view this world from the perspective of Bible prophecy. The book of Revelation tells us to expect a dominating new superpower to arise from the region of Europe—an end-time revival of ancient Babylon and Rome. This "beast" power (Revelation 13 and 17; compare Daniel 7) will command a global system of political, economic and religious power.

We are in a transitional period of history. Global structures are shifting. The role of the English-speaking nations, led by Great Britain and America, is being challenged by the rising power centers of Europe and Asia. China and Russia are asserting themselves through their economic base and energy supplies.

Massive amounts of money from the Middle East are finding their way into global markets, helping to provide stability during the recent economic crisis. A recent article in the *Financial Times* detailed why we might be at an "important turning point for financial markets and the world economy" ("Why the Credit Squeeze Is a Turning Point for the World," Dec. 11, 2007).

As the years go by, the world economy will go up and down and up again. But however things play out, ultimately the revived Babylonian system in Europe will

emerge as the world's leading marketplace with great affluence (Revelation 18). Accompanied by a time of relative and apparent peace, the world will be lulled into a sense of security.

The Bible describes it as spiritual drunkenness, a wealth- and power-induced sense of calm that will be exposed as built on a crumbling foundation when God begins to intervene in world affairs. The Day of the Lord will wipe away this satanic system and introduce the righteous Kingdom of God (Revelation 11:15).

### What kind of person are you?

This prophesied time of trouble is but a stepping-stone to the time of Jesus Christ's rule on earth and the establishment of His Kingdom of peace. That is what you need to keep in perspective. While we encourage you to keep one eye on world events, we also want you to focus intently on the greater prophecies of the world to come.

All of our words about Europe and a coming collapse of fortunes for the English-speaking nations are meant to awaken you to the dramatic times in which we live.

While the world is going to transition into the end-time system described in the Bible as Babylon, the biggest transition lies beyond that. It is the transition to the Kingdom of God on earth with Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

That is the focus of our vision and the source of our true hope. It is meant to stir us to repentance and good works now in advance of the glorious appearing of the Lord. Hear the stirring words of Peter, words that put prophecy in its proper context:

"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).

What manner of person should *you* be? The choice is yours. Keep your eyes on today's changing world, be sobered, and let it motivate you to make the changes needed to prepare for the coming Kingdom of God. This is what Christ expects from you. **GN**

# “Borderless” Europe Now Encompasses 400 Million People

At the stroke of midnight on Dec. 21, 2007, nine Eastern European countries joined the European Union’s Schengen Treaty, which allows Europeans to travel from one Schengen country to another without border formalities. The EU “Schengen zone” now extends from the border of Russia and the Ukraine all the way to the Atlantic Ocean.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel described the opening of Germany’s borders with Poland and the Czech Republic as a historic occasion. She and the Polish and Czech prime ministers attended a special ceremony as the border was opened at the “three-country corner,” where the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland intersect.

Thousands of Europeans were up early to enjoy their new freedom to visit a neighboring EU country without lengthy delays at the border because of passport formalities.

## Eastward march

The Schengen zone now encompasses 24 of the EU’s 27 members, representing 400 million people. The extension of the Schengen zone eastward is another milestone in the slow but sure march to European unity and a further confirmation of the unification of Europe following the end of the Cold War.

Each Schengen country has the responsibility to provide border controls for its non-Schengen external borders. In exchange for fulfilling this obligation, there are no border or immigration controls on the movement of people within the Schengen zone when they travel from one Schengen country directly to another.

Some Germans have expressed concern that opening Germany’s eastern border to its EU neighbors will lead to an increase in crime. German interior minister Wolfgang Schäuble disagrees. The Schengen Treaty allows each country’s border police to undertake on-the-spot passport examinations in an 18-mile zone along the border. According to Schäuble, the allowance will more than compensate for formalities at the border crossings themselves.

In addition, the new Schengen members in Eastern Europe are eager to demonstrate to older Schengen members in Western Europe that their police and border patrols are capable of guarding Schengen’s exterior borders. Electronic cooperation among the police jurisdictions within Europe has also constantly improved over recent years, enabling closer monitoring of criminal activities.

Schäuble and other leaders believe that the extension of the Schengen zone will provide an economic benefit to border areas previously hindered in their development by border formalities. The Schengen Treaty facilitates the movement of people and goods within the Schengen zone, which is why the treaty’s extension eastward is being called another milestone in freedom for EU citizens.

Russians, however, believe the Schengen border could be a problem. According to the Russian newspaper *Pravda*: “The visa issue restricts the life

of millions of people. Lithuania and Poland joining the Schengen treaty serve as examples, since it is now considerably more difficult to travel by car from Kaliningrad into the Russian heartland. The EU and its individual members will use the visa situation to put pressure on Russia.” Russia is currently negotiating in Brussels on easing visa requirements for Russians desiring to visit the EU.

## Capitalizing on trade

On the other hand, the eastward expansion of the Schengen zone brings “borderless” Europe closer to Asian markets, a key trading area for the European Union.

Slovakia’s second largest city, Kosice, is already gearing up for expanded railway traffic with the east.



**A typical Schengen internal European border crossing, like this one between Germany and Austria, no longer has a border control post—only a sign welcoming the visitor. This sign announces entry to the Federal Republic of Germany.**

Located not far from Slovakia’s border with the Ukraine, Kosice is a western termination point for the wide-gauge Russian railway system. With funding from Brussels, Kosice wants to develop a logistics center for rail freight between the EU and the east. Using Kosice as an entry port for freight, Asian goods would have immediate access to any point within the Schengen zone.

In the other direction freight containers shipped from Germany via Kosice to China, Korea or Japan would arrive an average of 20 days earlier than by sea routes. In fact, major east-west rail lines from Western Europe to Moscow, Kiev and destinations further to the east run through Kosice.

Zuzana Bobrikova, Kosice’s director of economic development, explains the city’s unique position within the Schengen zone: “We are connected to the railway system for all of Asia.”

The development of a high-speed Russian railway system makes Kosice’s ambitious plan to capitalize on the extension of the Schengen zone look realistic.

At the 2005 Hanover trade fair—the largest in the world—Germany and Russia signed a historic con-

tract for German company Siemens to manufacture 60 Inter City Express (ICE) high-speed trains for Russia. Russia’s attempts for some 30 years to build its own high-speed railway system have met repeated setbacks and failures.

Siemens’ third generation ICE travels within Germany at speeds of up to 170 miles per hour and will be a major step forward for Russia with its long routes. The first ICE to run in Russia will be used on the 450-mile route between St. Petersburg and Moscow.

The enlarged Schengen zone will further strengthen the European Union’s position as the world’s largest trading bloc. The EU’s trade with non-EU countries already makes up 20 percent of world trade (trade within the EU not included). The EU’s world share of trade in service industries stands at 26 percent.

EU trade with developing countries is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the picture. According to United Nations definitions, the EU accounts for 50 percent of all trade with developing countries and 60 percent of trade with the world’s “less developed countries.”

## Babylon the great

As we have noted repeatedly, the Bible foretells a final resurrection of the Roman Empire, which like previous revivals will be centered in Europe. The Bible calls that end-time political-religious system “Babylon the great.” It will also be a great trading system, reflecting the competitive orientation of its real power behind the scenes, Satan the devil (Ezekiel 28:18).

Revelation 18 describes in detail the extent of end-time Babylon’s world trade and the reaction of merchants when that system falls: “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore” (Revelation 18:11).

In view of the scope of its worldwide trade, the demise of the European Union would certainly evoke that kind of response from merchants all over the world. The extension of the Schengen zone will further entrench Europe as the king of world trade and growing superpower.

—Paul Kieffer

## Recommended Reading

Would you like to better understand where world events and trends are taking us? Would you like to better grasp how it all fits with Bible prophecy? You can! Request or download our free booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. Also be sure to request your free subscription to our *World News and Prophecy* newsletter, in which we regularly discuss world events in the light of Bible prophecy.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at

[www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)

## "Seven Prophecies That Must Be Fulfilled Before Jesus Christ's Return"

The issue about the seven prophecies that must be fulfilled and bearing good fruit is the best magazine I've read in the last four years. You discussed two issues that were vague to me and dealt with them in clarity. I look forward to Jesus' coming again, but in the meantime I am wondering how I can help other Christians who are struggling.

T.W., Australia

*For about 2,000 years Christians have been longing for the return of Jesus Christ, seeing that many in the world suffer from poverty, disease and injustice. After being anointed with a costly oil, Jesus Himself said, "The poor you have with you always" (Matthew 26:11). Of course, we should be compassionate to those in need as we are able and have opportunity.*

*But helping can take many forms. Others appreciate it when caring people spend time with them. Good advice and true education are other ways in which people are aided and supported. The Good News magazine and related publications help provide readers with a sound basis for beginning a relationship with God, aiding them to handle life's pressures and challenges. Helping with getting the gospel to this world is another important way to assist others (see 1 Corinthians 15:58).*

Thank you very much for this fountain of biblical knowledge you have made available to all people, and especially to me. I am so happy for the light you have projected in *The Good News* article "Seven Prophecies That Must Be Fulfilled Before Jesus Christ's Return." For a long time I have tried to retrace the fate of the lost 10 tribes of Israel, but in vain. I would be glad to receive a more complete documentation on that subject.

M.H.F., Lauderhill, Florida

*Our free booklet The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy has been mailed to you.*

I have received copies of *The Good News* and find it excellent in all respects. I do find the statements regarding Ephraim and Manasseh, intimately associated with Great Britain and the United States respectively, a novel concept. However, with your help I intend to further explore the basis of your statements. Otherwise the magazine is well-written, timely and has encouraged me a great deal. I will be sending a donation to your ministry.

D.R.M., Internet

*Thank you for your open-minded approach. The free booklet The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy will be of great help.*

## "The Coming European Superpower"

Some time ago I wrote to you because I was angry with the way you wrote about what's going on in Europe and the future of Europe. Now I see it all coming together as you said the Bible prophesied. So I was wrong and you were right.

T.R., Internet

## The Middle East in Bible Prophecy

I am reading through the booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* and I wanted to say thank you for putting it all in order. As a history major in college, it's overwhelming to try to study the whole world's history, but this booklet has really helped me to understand and put in order the history of the ancient-modern Middle East (and beyond).

S.W., Internet

I have just finished reading *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. I am so excited by the things this booklet has explained. Now I want more booklets, the *Bible Study Course* and anything else you can send me. I want you to know that I have not enjoyed reading anything, except the Bible, so much in such a long time.

D.J., Ozark, Alabama

## Questions answered by free literature

I wish to thank you for all the free literature you have been sending over the

past months. When I had a question in mind, especially when my prayers seem unanswered, I asked myself, Does God exist? And then I received your booklet *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* Your literature has been answering all of my deepest questions.

T.P., Guyana, South America

## Readers from South Africa

My friend at work practically shows me every booklet that you send her. What fantastic booklets you have. I have two children and a husband who gives life orientation at a high school. Every time I have to make copies of things that are interesting in your booklets. Could you possibly sign me up for your literature as well? I really thought I understood everything about Christianity until I started reading your booklets.

C.J., Wellington, South Africa

Your magazine is the only publication that I have ever looked forward to with so much anticipation, and the only one that I have ever so avidly devoured each issue from cover to cover. I am somewhat restricted by a debilitating spinal cord condition. Your magazine keeps me up to date and very much aware of what is happening in the world. Your publications and Web site, as well as your *Bible Study Course*, have for the past year consistently addressed my thoughts and questions on the state of the world.

They have provided me with the material needed to fulfil my duty in bringing awareness and understanding, as well as hope, to people who are confused, afraid and depressed by the turmoil which seems to have taken over much of the world. Your articles are firmly grounded in the Bible. My understanding of the book of Revelation and the teachings about the Kingdom of God have grown tremendously through all the materials published by your Church. I have downloaded all of your booklets from your Web site and intend to read them all.

S.H., South Africa

## Bible Study Course

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your *Bible Study Course* by which I have learned much. I know that I have much to learn yet. By the grace of God I pray I will. I have studied my mistakes and learned a lot from them. May the Lord continue to bless your work in teaching and spreading the good news.

R.W., Northern Ireland

## Attending church in America

I am so impressed with the latest *Good News* magazine and with the booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. I had no idea that I would get so much out of this booklet. As usual with your publications, you fooled me. I saw my own upbringing for what it was—highly dysfunctional. Please keep the literature coming and please accept my contribution. Also please let me know the nearest congregation. I can certainly see the value of assembling together. I don't do too well trying to go it alone.

S.K., Prescott, Arizona

We receive *The Good News* magazine and enjoy it. I am writing to ask if there is a local church near me. My family and I have been in the wilderness for two years. God has revealed so much to us in this time. We yearn to be with fellow believers who want to live as close as possible to God's instructions about His Holy Days. Is there any place near us? We live in a small town.

P.W., Hermitage, Missouri

*In the United States we normally send those who want to attend a United congregation the telephone number of the nearest pastor, who will be glad to inform them of the nearest congregations. It may also be helpful to request our free booklets The Church Jesus Built and This Is the United Church of God.*

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to *The Good News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254-1027, U.S.A., or e-mail [ginfo@ucg.org](mailto:ginfo@ucg.org) (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).



## Q: When and how often should Christians partake of the Lord's Supper as directed by Jesus to remember His death for the sins of the world?

*W.S., Northern Ireland*

A: The expression "the Lord's Supper" is found only once in the New Testament. It appears in 1 Corinthians 11:20, where Paul was discussing the observance of the New Testament Passover. Jesus Christ Himself specifically referred to this observance as the Passover (Luke 22:8, 11, 15). He observed it, with the new symbols of bread and wine, on the date specified in Leviticus 23. This annual observance should be kept on the 14th day of the first month on the Hebrew calendar.

The Passover is observed as a memorial to Christ's death (1 Corinthians 5:7; 11:20-27). It takes place just once a year. This is certainly the custom of memorial observances described in the Bible, and it is the typical pattern of secular memorial observances.

As a youth, Jesus observed the Passover annually with His family at the specified time (Luke 2:41). He continued this yearly practice with His disciples (Luke 22:7-15). After His death and resurrection, the early Church continued to observe the annual festivals listed in Leviticus 23. For example, Luke records that Jesus' followers met to observe the Feast of Pentecost: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1).

Scripture gives no hint of the early Church adding to or changing the dates God appointed for observing His festivals. The phrase in 1 Corinthians 11:26—"for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup"—does not mean at any time members might arbitrarily choose to partake of these symbols. It means whenever they actually *did* partake of them as part of the Passover ceremony—which was once a year. Paul was simply pointing out that by observing the New Testament Passover each year on the appropriate day, members were "proclaim[ing] the Lord's death till He comes."

The Bible specifies that the Passover ceremony should be observed annually. As a memorial of Jesus' death, it should be observed once a year at the specified time rather than whenever one chooses.

Following the original disciples' example, we should observe the Passover at the beginning of the evening of the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar. (The corresponding contemporary calendar dates are given on pages 32-33 of our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.)

## Q: How can someone plagued by debt trust the Bible and rely on God's promises, and why does God allow other people to disrupt the lives of those who are seeking Him? How can one develop faith under those circumstances and defeat the doubts?

*Reader from Southeast England*

A: We are concerned to learn of your problem with debt and that these difficulties are hindering your faith. It is a misconception that those trying to live by every word of God will experience lives free from trials. The truth is that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12) and "many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him [or her] out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

In Romans 8:16-17 the apostle Paul explains suffering for righteousness and the Kingdom of God's sake: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we

may be also glorified together" (King James Version, emphasis added). Trials are part of the process of inheriting everlasting life. (To understand more, download or request our free booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*)

Our Creator can and will use the inevitable trials that afflict us all to develop in us godly qualities like patience and faith. True faith in God can take time to fully develop and deepen into an unshakable confidence in Him. Faith is an important subject in its own right. The publishers of *The Good News* also offer the free booklet *You Can Have Living Faith* to help readers understand this crucial subject.

Anyone combating a personal trial or sin may at times find it difficult to concentrate on God's promises. That is why we need His help in facing up to the difficulties of everyday life and battling our own natural inclinations (see Romans 7:14-25).

The true followers of Jesus Christ should understand that their approach to life is in many respects much different from others. Christians are told to acquire the mind of Christ in the way they live (Philippians 2:5). By contrast, the majority of humanity has no real interest in serving God.

This is often the root cause of our troubles from others. We're surrounded by a world largely oblivious to biblical values, and those who wish to obey God often find themselves swimming upstream against popular thinking.

But these obstacles should never deter us from our quest for everlasting life. God the Father sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for us, so that on genuine repentance our sins could be forgiven. And God will help us live as He directs through the power of the Holy Spirit.

On the subject of money and debt, the Bible gives helpful principles:

- It warns against covetousness, which can lead to spending beyond one's means (Luke 12:15). The Tenth Commandment forbids coveting.
- It states that "he who is greedy for gain troubles his own house" (Proverbs 15:27).

- It cautions against borrowing (Proverbs 22:7).

Money worries can cause all kinds of stress-related illnesses and can lead to family breakdown. Being deep in debt has been known to drive people to drink, steal, take drugs or do even worse things.

Yet it is not always easy in modern society to avoid borrowing money. For instance, many university graduates have to gain their degree through enormous debt from student loans. Sometimes it can be difficult to avoid debt even with reasonably well-paid employment.

Still, within reason, God expects us to surmount and overcome these obstacles. He promises to help those who rely on Him. Of course, our Creator wants us to do our part by taking carefully reasoned, positive actions to help us toward a debt-free life. Consider a few suggestions below:

- Talk to reputable organizations that advise people in debt. Some may even be able to help negotiate payment plans with creditors.

- Be careful about taking out the much-advertised consolidation loans to pay off outstanding debts. It may be possible to repackage the debt into one single loan, but get competent advice on this—and not just from the finance company offering the loan.

- Work out a reasonable budget and stick to it. A simple budget would first list income from all sources and then identify how the household is going to spend that money. It should prioritize items so that outstanding debts can be repaid, while ensuring that reasonable needs are met.

- If you have family, involve them in the budget planning.

- Avoid using credit and store cards, which charge high rates of interest.

The publishers of *The Good News* offer two helpful booklets on the subject, *Managing Your Finances* and *Making Life Work*.

With our Creator's help and a willingness to overcome obstacles, we can walk with Him—and build the faith that all things will indeed work out for good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

*Life's greatest challenges are in everyday decisions! Learning to choose wisely and learning from your experiences can prepare you for a rewarding future!*

by Larry Greider

# Are You Up for the Challenge?

**H**ave you ever thought about what a dull experience life would be if it were not for its amazing variety? God gives us this incredible variety in His creation—daytime and nighttime, seasons and cycles—making life full of contrasts, changes and increasing challenges. Life is full of enough variety and touches of adventure to constantly move us outside our comfort zones.

Our articles are written to encourage you to make the most of your life and to develop a deeper spiritual quotient so that you will be confident that you can develop your full potential.

Youth is a time to stretch yourself and to take on new challenges. Whether it is to develop your skills in a sport, learn a new language or learn how to play a musical instrument, the more you try different pursuits, the more likely you are to discover your innate talents.

## Choices you make

Our lives are composed of the choices we make, the values we embrace, the crises we experience and the mentors we choose.

Free choice is one of the greatest gifts God has given to man. We are not like animals that react primarily by instinct. Human beings, made in God's image, have the ability to accept or reject opportunities. When you make wise choices and set your heart to accomplish something wholesome and healthy, the result can be satisfaction and greater understanding of life and of God.

In contrast, making poor choices in life can be costly and sometimes deadly. In the beginning, God presented the first human beings, Adam and Eve, with two trees in the Garden of Eden representing two different ways of life (see Genesis 2-3). God's instruction was to not take of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You probably remember the story and the repercussions for humanity that ensued.

We all have the opportunity to choose. When admonishing Israel about which lifestyle to choose, God told them to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19), showing them what the result would be for each option. Many people today make wrong choices and don't even realize the consequences until some disaster or pain has come upon them.

## Values you embrace

Our choices usually center on what is important to us. We all have to decide how to live our lives and must accept the reality that not all values are the same. The values that

God offers us show us how to have a better relationship with Him, our elders and our peers.

These values stem from His law, which He reveals as truth. Jesus prayed to God the Father: “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). When we base our lives on God’s inspired law, God says it will go well with us: “Observe and obey all these words which I command you, *that it may go well with you* and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 12:28, emphasis added).

We all have 24 hours in a day, but some use time much more effectively than others. If we value time, we can use it to accomplish something lasting or important. An athlete must practice, a worker must perform, a student must study, etc.

It has been said that if you don’t know where you are going, you’ll probably end up somewhere else—and that usually means having to face the question of where your time went. Time can be one of God’s greatest gifts, or it can be a great curse when misused. Spending precious moments to learn godly values is one of the most beneficial uses of the time we have.

### Crises you experience

No matter how good we might think our choices have been, eventually we will face challenges or crises that will try our character. Bad things can happen to good people, and being in the wrong place at just the right time can bring a life-changing moment.

I remember a sobering story of a young boy who was riding in the backseat of the family convertible. They were enjoying the warm weather on a family outing when a stray golf ball from a driving range next to the highway smashed into his forehead. The freak accident caused a lifetime of headaches and some permanent brain damage. Coping with this tragic accident became the challenge of his life.

Some people are born with severe birth defects, while others may find themselves in the middle of a war or a natural disaster. Besides these random acts of man and nature, we can make poor decisions that have repercussions

that are just as serious—more than we could possibly have realized at the time.

Driving too fast, not wearing a seat belt or choosing to hang out with the wrong crowd are all real choices that young people face in today’s world. You can either learn or lose from your experiences, and how you recover from your mistakes is often indicative of your character.

God wants us to learn from our mistakes and determine to change by making wise choices. Sometimes it takes suffering the consequences of a poor choice to motivate us to make better ones.

### Mentors you choose

Having someone to guide you could be one of the most important ingredients in making the most of your life, at any stage in life. Hopefully your parents, a pastor or older siblings are part of your mentoring network. Hanging around with the wise provides an opportunity to become wiser yourself. “A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel” (Proverbs 1:5).

Many people let their lives become dictated by routine and expediency rather than making creative choices to bring something better. Accepting the challenge of developing your mind, body and spirit can be a springboard toward a fulfilling and exciting life.

As a young man growing up, I was privileged to be a part of the Scouting movement and was encouraged to work toward the highest level, the Eagle Scout award. Being encouraged to set goals and push myself at an early age helped me more than I realized at the time. It has been instrumental in achieving all that I have accomplished and in going all the places I have been.

We live in a time when there are so many opportunities, if you have the eyes to see them and the desire to grow. Take responsibility for your own life. Accept the challenges that come your way to become the best you can be. Set worthwhile goals for yourself, and remember that your life is a composite of the choices you make, the values you embrace, the crises you experience and the mentors you choose.

The challenge is up to you. Make the most of your life! **GN**



# LEARN MORE!

If you like reading our articles for teens and young adults in *The Good News*, be sure to take a look at our companion magazine, *Vertical Thought*, at [www.VerticalThought.org](http://www.VerticalThought.org).

This magazine is specially written for our younger *Good News* audience. Each issue is packed with helpful insight and eye-opening articles guiding today’s young people in getting the most out of life—both now and in the future.

You’ll uncover fascinating facts, meet interesting people, discover what’s really going on behind the scenes in our world, get answers to your questions and find practical, down-to-earth guidance on all kinds of subjects.

**Visit [VerticalThought.org](http://VerticalThought.org) today!**



# How Much Do You Know About the *Real* Easter Story?

**H**ow much do you know about the origin of Easter and its popular customs? Take the following short quiz to assess your knowledge!

## POP QUIZ

- 1 True or False?** Easter didn't originate with Jesus Christ's resurrection, but had been celebrated for many centuries by that time.
- 2 True or False?** Rabbits and eggs have nothing to do with Christ's resurrection, but are holdovers from ancient spring fertility celebrations.
- 3 True or False?** *Easter* gets its name from an ancient fertility goddess.
- 4 True or False?** Pagans celebrated the supposed resurrection of their false gods in the spring many centuries before Jesus Christ.
- 5 True or False?** The word *Easter* appears only once in the Bible—and that one time is a mistranslation of the Greek word for *Passover*.
- 6 True or False?** Neither the apostles nor other members of the early Church celebrated Easter.
- 7 True or False?** Celebrations such as Easter are condemned in the Bible.



The correct answer to all of the above questions is *true*—and you can verify most of these answers with a quick look through several good encyclopedias. Or, for an in-depth look at the real Easter story as revealed by history and the Bible, request your free copy of our booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?*



Too many people go through life thinking they are honoring Jesus Christ through popular celebrations such as Easter. But, before you celebrate Easter again, why not consider what Jesus Himself thinks about this holiday? As a serious Christian, don't you think it's time you considered His point of view?

Request or download your free copy at  
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