

# The Good News

March-April 2010

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

## EUROPE

A New Superpower  
On the Rise

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Imagine—a half-inch thin, lightweight device, described as something between a laptop computer and a multimedia digital mobile phone that can run nearly 140,000 different applications, all at the touch of your finger! The media fanfare surrounding Apple's recent unveiling of its new iPad, a machine that does just that, certainly stoked such imaginations of millions and set the tech world abuzz.

This cutting-edge technology faces one certainty however: For all its amazing bells and whistles, the iPad will soon be rendered passé, as the next new gizmo on the scene makes it obsolete.

Remember cassette tape recorders? They were once cutting-edge too. I remember how cool it was to get one with "LED display"! Some of you recall marveling at revolutionary breakthroughs like domed stadiums, hi-fi stereo systems and "Technicolor." But technology presses onward, churning out the faster, the cheaper, the more efficient.

## What about an "app" that would give you relevant answers to life's toughest questions?

What was once new and vibrant becomes a relic, and one day the iPad will find its place in obsolescence—among the typewriters and washboards of ages past—as the latest and greatest takes its place. We won't long mourn its passing, though, because now we're technohungry, eager to see what the next innovation will allow us to do.

But amid this frenetic pace of life do you sometimes pause and ask, wouldn't it be great if we had something that didn't need to be upgraded or thrown out every couple of years? Something dependable that would help us stay up to date, not so much with *things* like music, movies and high-speed information, but with *life* and its changes and challenges? Something that would keep us on the cutting edge of knowing where world events are heading and what lies on the horizon for you and your loved ones? Or giving insight into the complexities of human thinking, or discovering practical tools for managing life's problems, or analyzing societal trends?

What about an "app" that would give you relevant answers to tough questions like: What actually happens after death? Does your life really mean anything? Why so much suffering?

There *is* such a tool! Despite its naysayers, it has a remarkable track record of high performance for people who understand and use it correctly. It has never become outmoded, and users marvel at its modern relevance in teaching the art of living a productive life. Besides that, it's futuristic, accurately predicting events yet to come. Let me restate that: This tool *tells the future*. You won't find an app for that for the iPad!

If you're longing for something of lasting and timeless value, you don't have to wait for the newest fad or other revolutionary scientific advancements. Just look in the pages of God's tool for life and living—*your Bible*. In every issue of *The Good News* we take you there. We provide answers with a unique Bible-based perspective you won't find in other publications. Our articles are like "demo" drives, taking you on a tour to show how the Bible fits your life now, how to use its practical applications for solving challenges.

For example, did you know that today's rise of a new European superpower was prophesied in the Bible? More important, what does that mean for you? And where did Easter really come from? And why is a best-selling book titled "Shocked By the Bible"? That's all in just this issue alone.

Imagine! We've had it all along: a user-friendly, always-up-to-date, relevant guide to life—the Bible!

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

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# EUROPE

## A New Superpower On the Rise

by Melvin Rhodes

Now that the Lisbon Treaty has gained final approval by all 27 EU member nations, 2010 promises to be a significant year for the European Union. Ever since the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, Europeans have dreamed of uniting their continent. Is this long dream about to be fulfilled? Are we seeing the birth of a new superpower foretold in Bible prophecy?

I first heard about the Common Market in the early 1960s. The British conservative government of Harold Macmillan, encouraged by U.S. President John Kennedy, applied to join in 1962. French President Charles de Gaulle replied with a resounding “*Non!*”

Britain at the time was going through fundamental changes. It was dismantling its empire after four centuries of looking beyond Europe to the wider world. In the words of the former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson in the same year, “Britain has lost an empire and not yet found a role.”

In the middle of the tumultuous decade of the 1960s, “pirate” radio ships started broadcasting a steady diet of pop music into Great Britain. They were situated outside of what was then a three-mile limit, thus

outside of U.K. government control.

British radio was seriously limited. Only three radio stations existed, none of them commercial, and the content was fairly strictly controlled. The “pirate” stations offered non-stop contemporary music, which automatically gave them a wider audience. They were financed by commercials. This was their big weakness, as the British government found a way to ban them by prosecuting advertisers. On Aug. 15, 1967, they all closed down.

But not before a strong spiritual message had gone out across the country. A radio program called *The World Tomorrow* taught the Bible like I’d never heard it explained before. Whereas I had always found the book of Revelation hard to understand, my own church not being able to adequately explain it, this program explained it very

well. The programs on biblical prophecy made the Scriptures particularly relevant and very real to our own time.

Not all the programs were about prophecy, but those that were seemed to concentrate on three areas: the decline of the English-speaking countries, the rise of a unified Europe and the Bible’s emphasis on the Middle East.

More than 40 years later, these are still the three main areas of prophetic focus, now dominating international news and world affairs as never before.

### Europe’s rise under the radar

The 1960s saw great turmoil and change in both the United States and Great Britain.

In the United States, Americans saw race riots, student demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, racism and poverty. In the United Kingdom a radical Labour (socialist) government came to power in 1964 and started dramatically changing laws that had been in effect for centuries. Suddenly, abortion, homosexuality and easy divorce were allowed, while the death penalty was abolished. Serious economic problems continued to plague the country.



German troops invade France, 1914



German troops invade France, 1940



Berlin, Germany, in 1945



Berlin, Germany, in 2005

In the Middle East, Arabs and Israelis went to war for the third time in less than 20 years, and the British pulled out of the region after losing against an insurrection in Aden.

Meanwhile, Europe was starting to come together.

After World War II, the continent lay in ruins. Germany had twice tried to conquer Europe in a period of 30 years. France had been attacked by Germany three times in the lifetimes of some still living—in 1871, 1914 and again in 1940.

But by the 1960s, these two longtime rivals, whose shared histories went back to one of Europe's greatest monarchs, Charlemagne, were determined that never again would they go to war. Former British war-time leader Winston Churchill spoke of a United States of Europe as the best way for Europe to move forward.

Churchill himself had said at the end of the war that Germany would never rise again. Yet one of the presenters of the *World*

progressive, on establishing uniform systems of justice and welfare, on giving an example of international cooperation. This Europe, the Western Europe of the European Community, claims to be more than a continent" (1987, p. 5).

In 1951 France, West Germany, Italy and the three Benelux nations (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) formed the European Coal and Steel Community. Six years later in 1957, these states increased integration by signing the Treaty of Rome, which formed the European Economic Community (EEC), also known as the European Community or Common Market, pledging themselves to form "an ever closer union."

At the time, the British decided to stay out. Their empire and commonwealth was still a major force, though it had begun to decline in the aftermath of the war. Trade agreements between Britain and its dominions were still in place, enabling the British to enjoy inexpensive food imports and

## Clearly a regular theme has run through European history—the desire for a united Europe in the tradition of the Romans.

*Tomorrow* radio program I listened to predicted *exactly the opposite*—based on a deep understanding of Bible prophecy.

Who was right? Germany has indeed risen again and now boasts one of the world's strongest economies. For some time it has been the world's number-one exporting nation, surpassing even China, which has a population 16 times greater.

### An ever closer union

One reason for Germany's postwar success has been the growing unity of Europe.

In *An Idea of Europe*, Richard Hoggart and Douglas Johnson write: "It has been said that in 1945, when the mists of battle cleared, a corpse was found lying, naked and despoiled, in a corner of the field. It was the corpse of Europe. Or better, it was the corpse of a particular Europe: the Europe which regarded itself as civilization personified, the Europe of humanism and the Europe of world domination in religion, science, commerce and manpower.

"Then in the late 1950s and 1960s another Europe appeared. This was a Europe which put emphasis on unity, on creating a great center of production, on being modern and

providing them with secure markets for their exports.

But Britain was in industrial decline. It needed new markets for its exports. Watching the growing success of the EEC, many in Britain felt they had missed out when they failed to join in 1957. Britain applied for membership five years later and was rejected. Applying again in 1971, the new French president, Georges Pompidou, concerned about containing Germany and seeing Britain as a powerful counterweight, said "Oui!" to British membership.

On Jan. 1, 1973, Britain, Ireland and Denmark all joined the EEC, expanding it to nine countries. More new members joined later—eventually expanding it to 12.

These nations became more tightly knit in 1992, when they signed the Treaty of Maastricht, thereby becoming the European Union (EU), reflecting the fact that the renewed entity was more than simply a shared, or common, market. It was increasingly becoming a political union. More members were admitted, including many from Eastern Europe, formerly under Soviet domination, with the number rising to 27 states in 2007.

The end of 2009 saw the ratification of the

Lisbon Treaty by all 27 member countries, essentially a new constitution for Europe, giving the EU its own long-term president (over the European Council of heads of state), as well as its own foreign ministry and diplomatic service.

The desire for “an ever closer union” may have taken more than five decades, but Europe is now well on the way to super-power status rivaling the United States! It is already the greatest single market in the world and is by far the world’s biggest trading power. Its economy is almost as big as the United States and China combined!

While the United States is in serious—and some would say *terminal*—decline, Europe is striding ahead at the moment, with increasing numbers of countries wanting to join the EU and others wanting to sign on to trade agreements.

### A dream that goes back centuries

“It was in the court of Charles the Great [or Charlemagne] that the ancient term of ‘Europe’ was revived.” So wrote British historian Norman Davies in his 1996 *History of Europe* (p. 302). “The Carolingians [the noble family of the Franks (after whom France is named) who ruled in Western Europe following the fall of the Western Roman Empire] needed a label to describe that section of the world which they dominated, as distinct from the pagan lands, from Byzantium [the Eastern Roman Empire, which still continued as a Christian state], or from Christendom as a whole. This ‘first Europe’, therefore, was an ephemeral Western concept which lasted no longer than Charles himself” (ibid.).

Charlemagne, crowned by the pope on Christmas Day, A.D. 800, still inspires the dream of European unification more than 1,200 years later.

Every year the inhabitants of his ancient capital city of Aachen award the Charlemagne Prize to the person who has made the most significant contribution to European unity in the previous 12 months. At the end of its weekly European news section, the British newsmagazine *The Economist* features the “Charlemagne” page, a featured article highlighting some aspect of further European integration taking place on the continent.

Charlemagne’s kingdom united the French and the Germans, two nations that, in the seven decades prior to 1945, were in conflict on three separate occasions. Their continuing conflict helped inspire the very idea of European unity—a desire that the continent should never see another continental war.

Using that criteria alone, the European Union has been very successful. Europe did not see conflict between nations from 1945 until the 1990s when the Balkans erupted into violence following the breakup of Yugoslavia, a country that was not a member of the European Union. Member states of the EU contributed to efforts to end the conflict in the region. Parts of the former Yugoslavia are already members of the EU; others want to join.

### Further attempts to unify Europe

Charlemagne was not the last ruler to seek unity in Europe. Since the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, there had been a need for unity. Chaos and confusion, often referred to as “the Dark Ages,” followed the demise of the empire, with barbaric warring tribes moving into previously civilized areas.

In the sixth century, the Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian, who ruled from Constantinople (modern Istanbul, Turkey), tried to revive the Roman Empire in the West. He was partially successful, but his dream did not survive him.

In the eighth century, Muslim Arabs invaded Spain and rapidly moved north, arriving not far from Paris only 21 years later. Here, at the famous Battle of Tours in 732 (also known as the Battle of Poitiers, the place near Tours where it was actually fought), the Muslims were defeated by Charlemagne’s grandfather, Charles Martel. The western Christendom of the Roman church was threatened. It’s no wonder that Charlemagne was crowned by the pope, who saw the need for a western emperor just as there was an emperor in the east.

Historian John Bowle notes that “the event was crucial in European history, for the revived Western Empire would continue, in medieval times ‘Holy’ as well as Roman, and in theory dominate European politics until the days of [Emperor] Charles V in the sixteenth century; then . . . continue until . . . 1806, when Napoleon abolished it” (*A History of Europe*, 1979, p. 170).

Clearly a regular theme has run through European history—that of a desire for a united Europe in the tradition of the Romans. In fact, it goes even further than that. The desire has been for a united Europe in tandem with the Church of Rome, just as in the late Roman Empire.

It was the pope who crowned Charlemagne. It was also a pope who later crowned Otto I (the Great) in 962, thereby formally establishing the Holy Roman

Empire, which lasted until 1806.

“The reign of Otto the Great (936-973) marks a stage in the development of Germany which can best be expressed in the statement that he founded the Holy Roman Empire, which modern Germans like to speak of as ‘the First Reich’. In its original conception the Holy Roman Empire was no more than a revival of the Empire of Charlemagne” (J.S. Davies, *From Charlemagne to Hitler*, 1994, p. 16).

In that sense, Charlemagne is the one who founded the Holy Roman Empire, which lasted a thousand years until Napoleon abolished it. This thousand years was the inspiration for Adolf Hitler’s self-proclaimed “thousand-year Reich,” his Third Reich intended to recreate the glory of the First.

John Bowle points out on the same page



Charlemagne, Holy Roman Emperor

as his quote above that “the revival of the Western Empire, in abeyance since 476 [when the last Western Roman emperor was deposed], reaffirmed the common civilizations of Latin Christendom.” He also explained that the crowning of Otto the Great “created not a deputy [for the Roman church] but a rival, even a master . . . That action was the greatest mistake the medieval popes ever made.”

All of this fit with the details of biblical prophecy.

### Seven mountains on which the woman sits

In the biblical book of Revelation we read of two themes running through European



The EU Constitution was signed in this hall in the Musei Capitolini in Rome in 2004.

## Fornication is used by God in a figurative sense to describe the illicit relationship between the church and secular powers.



The woman and Beast of Revelation

history, along the lines of what historian John Bowle points out in his book.

Bowle mentions Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V and Napoleon in the same paragraph, all revivals of the Western Roman Empire, which had fallen in the fifth century. He also showed the constantly charged relationship between the church and the state, a relationship described in the Bible as one of “fornication” (Revelation 17:2).

Fornication, or sexual immorality, is used here in a figurative sense for the illicit relationship, from God’s perspective, between the church and secular powers. The same metaphor is used today when people representing different interests are

said to be “in bed with” one another. Likewise, the 19th century gave us the adage, “Politics makes strange bedfellows.” The imagery is one of close and sometimes secretive collusion.

In Revelation 17:1-2 the apostle John saw a vision of how this relationship between church and state would play out in Europe’s history: “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’”

Note that the sexual immorality here is specified as harlotry—prostitution. This is a figurative way of describing selling oneself or one’s favors for material gain or advantage. The Roman church endorsed state rulers, promoting popular allegiance, in return for the state ensuring the church’s protection, advancement and enrichment. Such mutual advantage is the nature of sexual immorality, which is motivated primarily by selfish interest rather than the love and concern of a committed marriage.

The New Testament likens the true Church of God to a bride, waiting to marry her husband, the returning Jesus Christ

(Ephesians 5:23; Revelation 19:7-8). In Revelation 12:17, we read of a woman symbolizing the true Church whose members “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

In contrast to this chaste, faithful Church, in Revelation 17 we see a church described as a “harlot.” This is a false church—again, one that sells itself for political power and financial gain.

The church described here has been a powerful force in European history, involved in the various resurrections of the Roman Empire—Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles V, Napoleon and others.

Verse 10 of Revelation 17 shows that there would be seven “kings”—rulers who, with church sanction, would lead major attempts to restore the Roman Empire down through history. The last, one who “has not yet come,” will lead a final revival immediately before the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Justinian, Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles V and Napoleon were the first five of these revivals we can identify. In more recent times, we have seen further continuity of the historical themes when the Second Reich of the kaisers and Hitler’s Third Reich followed on from the First.

The decades-long struggle between the Germanic peoples and other Western nations for world domination was the sixth revival of the Roman Empire. Benito Mussolini, Hitler’s ally in Italy, even explicitly proclaimed the revival of the Roman Empire in 1922. Both these men signed agreements with the Roman papacy, lending legitimacy to their regimes. (To learn more, see “Europe’s Amazing Rise: Foretold in Bible Prophecy,” beginning on page 10.)

### A final revival of the Roman Empire still ahead

The groundwork for the final resurrection of the Roman Empire began with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which, as mentioned earlier, established the European Economic Community or Common Market.

The European Union, as constituted at the moment, cannot be the final formation of the seventh and last Roman revival—though it almost certainly will lead into it.

The Bible is clear that the final revival involves 10 “kings”—which today could include presidents, premiers or prime ministers—“who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [indicating a very short time] as kings with the beast” (Revelation 17:12).

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# Why Is Europe So Important?

by John Ross Schroeder

From its inception *The Good News* has continually covered the European scene. Today this coverage is more important than ever because crucial developments in Europe are central to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.



In West Berlin, Germans eagerly wait for the Berlin Wall to come down in late 1989.

More than three decades ago our family of five moved from the United States to Britain. During most of the time since, I have researched and written many articles about the emergence of a group of European states gradually inching toward becoming one powerful political, economic and military union. Now called the European Union (EU), it was formerly named the European Economic Community (EEC).

Why is the issue of European integration important? Bible prophecy indicates that the EU will catch up with the United States as a world powerhouse—and eventually *move ahead* of America. While clearly already an economic superpower, at the moment the European Union remains a relative dwarf militarily.

But it will not remain so indefinitely. And considering that two world wars started on the European continent and killed many millions, the world should rightly fear when military power begins to inevitably flow from Europe's growing economic muscle.

## Europeans' loss of national sovereignty

Americans are largely unaware of where trends are taking Europe. Much of this is due to the U.S. media, which devotes little coverage to international areas and developments and tends to focus more on trivialities. As a result, Americans fail to understand the signif-

icance of how greatly the world is changing.

As a longtime member of the Foreign Press Association in London, I have attended many EU conferences throughout Western Europe as a correspondent. Step by step, year by year, I have watched as national sovereignty has been stripped away from individual European nations to satisfy the ambitions and aspirations of the ever-expanding European Union. Much damage has already been done, and Europe's course appears irreversible.

In the Jan. 13, 2010, issue of the online publication *American Thinker*, John Griffing sums up the ill effects of these changes: "Europe—the Europe of free and independent nations—is *no more*. Sovereignty is all but dead there, and a collective behemoth, tellingly referred to as the 'European Soviet' by Mikhail Gorbachev, now straddles the continent, *ushering in a new tyranny for the 21st century*."

"With the unanimous (and highly undemocratic) ratification of the infamous Lisbon Treaty on November 3, 2009, the European Union has achieved a transfer of authority that even the most aggressive military conquests could not. Even the German Anschluss [the union of Greater Germany and Austria during World War II] can't compare to this unified surrender of freedom by stargazing Europeans" ("The Breaking of Nations," emphasis added throughout).

During late 1991 I attended an EEC confer-

ence in Maastricht, Holland, which produced the Treaty on European Union (signed in 1992). At the time, noted historian Paul Johnson summed up the ongoing British loss of national sovereignty with his nostalgic title "Farewell to the England I Loved." His opening words were: "For me the squalid haggling of Maastricht *marked the end of England . . .*" His concluding paragraph included the words, "*England is dying and we are stuck in a robotic mega state*," referring to European unification (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Dec. 15, 1991).

That was nearly 20 years ago. In the two decades since, more and more national sovereign rights have been swallowed up.

## Late 1989—the crucial turning point

Between 1982 and November 1989, several visits to communist Eastern Europe gave me cause for apprehension at border crossings. One Czech train conductor sought to confiscate all my travel expense receipts (without success). On another occasion it required six Polish border guards, one right after the other, to match my face with my passport photo.

It's difficult to believe that just over 20 years ago the borders between Western and Eastern Europe were virtual frontiers of fear separating the free world from one gripped by communist totalitarianism.

But the iron curtain collapsed with a thud. Our London editorial office had dispatched me to Berlin in early November 1989 to cover the fall of the Berlin Wall, which had formerly prevented East Germans from escaping into free West Berlin. It was exciting to see the East Berliners passing through the infamous Checkpoint Charlie unhindered by armed East German border guards.

At that time West Berlin, brimming with financial and material prosperity, contrasted sharply with the stark, gray, rundown buildings of East Berlin. Yet returning for the anniversary celebrations 20 years later, I noticed little difference between the eastern and western sectors of the now united capital of Germany. The entire city seemed energized, modernized and ready for its role in the future.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was indeed a historic watershed event. At the time, Paul Johnson wrote with seemingly prophetic insight, "The breakup of the Eastern bloc *opens the way for the world dominance of a greater Europe*" (*The Spectator*, Nov. 11, 1989).

Johnson knew the German nation: “Germany was always too big and powerful, the Germans too industrious and numerous to play a limited role in Central Europe” (ibid).

### German reunification: The far-reaching consequences

The Jan. 11, 2010, issue of *Time* magazine described German Chancellor Angela Merkel as “a trailblazer and the unchallenged leader of Europe’s largest economy.” The cover of the European edition of this issue featured her portrait with the telling caption: “Frau Europa: Angela Merkel has more power than any leader on the continent. What will she do with it?”

It took less than a year from the collapse of the Berlin Wall for East and West Germany to achieve formal reunification on Oct. 11, 1990. That paved the way for steps to unify all of Europe.

Robert Zoellick, president of the World Bank, wrote in the *International Herald Tribune* late last year: “Over the last 20 years, Germans have accomplished important things. They have helped integrate the countries of Central and Eastern Europe into the European Union and into the trans-Atlantic security of NATO. They have helped build an historic European Union in peace” (Nov. 7-8, 2009).

With America’s recent financial meltdown, the European Union is now the world’s greatest economic power, with a GDP almost as large as the United States and China combined. As *The Wall Street Journal* recently noted, “Contrary to the view of the [European] continent as sclerotic, no other region has changed more radically in the last 20 years” (Gareth Harding, “Europe Reborn,” Nov. 3, 2009).

In the last 20 years, the EU has grown from 12 countries to 27. The euro has replaced many national currencies in Europe. Many members of the European Union have benefited economically. But at what enormous cost to their liberties?

### Another view of Europe

Many observers applaud the European Union as the solution to the continent’s age-old problems of conflict, economic inequality and war. They view this transnational body as the most positive geopolitical development ever to occur in Europe.

Yet in the words of John Griffing’s *American Thinker* article, “Europe is now lost to history.” He stated that the Lisbon Treaty of late 2009, which restructures the European Union as a federal superstate (essentially a “United States of Europe”), “is one of the most destructive documents in European

history,” explaining that “the unelected European Commission can revise, edit or even remake the laws passed by the people’s duly elected representatives.”

Important parts of Britain’s Magna Carta have been overturned. National and personal liberties are in serious jeopardy. Centuries of Anglo-Saxon law have been subverted by the



Europe’s Central Bank in Frankfurt

Napoleonic Code’s approach of “guilty until proven innocent.”

Griffing addresses how it all happened: “How did independent nations with separate identities and divergent cultures allow themselves to be bullied into submission by a gaggle of European bureaucrats in Brussels? The answer is that the attack on European nationhood was implemented brick by brick, piece by piece, bite by bite.”

His words are strongly reminiscent of Winston Churchill, who stated that Adolf Hitler conquered the European continent *step by step*. Indeed a book was published collecting some of his previously printed writings under that very title, *Step by Step*.

And just as Hitler had a grand design for Europe, the Bible reveals that a grand design is at work behind current efforts to unify Europe and transform it into the world’s next great superpower.

### The divine insight sorely needed

Though rarely given serious consideration, what *God* sees within Europe is what really counts. His political and geographic vision is far, far sharper than our own. He understands and sees trends and happenings as no human being or nation does. And our Creator has revealed His thoughts in the Bible, of which a fourth to a third is devoted to prophecy.

Hundreds of years before Christ, the

Hebrew prophet Daniel foretold future occurrences in the Middle East and the world at large, including in Central Europe. His prophecies were later complemented and fleshed out in the book of Revelation, revealed to the apostle John near the end of the first century.

Both prophets show that a European-centered superpower will rise to dominate the world in the end time, just before Jesus Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. As revealed to John, this superpower will be a union of 10 rulers of nations or groups of nations (Revelation 17:12-14). By all appearances, this final superpower may not be that long in coming. The foundation is being built before our eyes.

At the very end time, all nations on earth will be severely chastened by tragic events yet to occur. Terrifying events, including earthshaking natural disasters and clashes of nations and civilizations that will claim literally billions of lives, will take place before human beings finally realize that God is the ultimate Ruler over the kingdoms of men.

A number of times the prophet Ezekiel quoted God as saying, “They shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 7:27; 25:17; 29:21). This life-bringing understanding will finally reach its zenith during Christ’s reign following His return to the earth: “The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever’” (Revelation 11:15, New International Version).

Jesus Christ Himself will at that time establish His reign on earth, assisted by those who have faithfully served and followed Him in this life (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6).

This is what Bible prophecy reveals in the near future for you, me and the entire world. The foundation is being laid even now. Are you paying attention? Will you be ready? **GN**

### To Learn More...

Many people dismiss Bible prophecy as fantasy, irrelevant or impossible to understand. Yet Bible prophecy reveals a great deal about our Creator and what lies ahead for you, your loved ones and the entire world. And you can know what it says! Be sure to request or download your free copy of *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* today. You need to understand what the future holds and why!



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# Europe's Amazing Rise: Foretold in Bible Prophecy

by Scott Ashley and Gerhard Marx

Where is the ever-closer, ever-more-powerful union of Europe heading? Do history and Bible prophecy help us understand where these trends are leading?

**B**ible prophecy clearly shows that Jesus Christ will return to establish the Kingdom of God, a literal world-ruling kingdom, on earth. This hope is so fundamental that Jesus instructed Christians to regularly pray, “Your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). Prophecies throughout the Bible give many details about Christ’s return and conditions in the world leading up to that event.

However, one little-understood fact prophetically highlighted in the Bible is that *a new superpower* will emerge on the world scene shortly before His return. It will, in fact, *fight* Jesus Christ at His return, only to be destroyed—but not before this superpower reshapes today’s geopolitical landscape in ways that will shock and surprise the entire world.

## Understanding of future empires revealed

The rise of this final world superpower is foretold primarily in the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation. We’ll begin with what God revealed to the prophet Daniel in Old Testament times.

Daniel 2 records that the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a gigantic image of a man, with different parts of the image composed of different metals—gold, silver, bronze, iron, and iron mixed with clay. None of the king’s astrologers, advisors or wise men could interpret the meaning of the dream until Daniel, to whom God had revealed its meaning, stepped forward.

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that “there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets” and that He had made known to the king what would happen in the future (verses 28-29). Daniel then went on to explain that a series of empires would arise to dominate the Holy Land and much of the known world of their day.

The image’s head of gold, Daniel explained, represented Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian Empire: “You are this head of gold” (verse

38). After Babylon, “another kingdom inferior to yours,” Daniel told the king, would arise, followed by a “third kingdom of bronze,” and finally a fourth kingdom “as strong as iron,” which would “break in pieces and crush all the others” (verses 39-40).

From history we know that these next three kingdoms after Babylon were the Persian Empire, the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great and his successors, and the Roman Empire.

All were the superpowers of their day. Rome indeed broke in pieces and crushed all its competitors in building the greatest empire the world had ever seen up until that time. (Although we won’t go into it for lack of space, Daniel 7 contains a similar prophecy of these four empires, symbolized by beasts described as being like a lion, a bear, a leopard and a fourth beast unlike the others.)

## Fast-forward to the end time

The feet and toes of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw were composed “partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron,” meaning “the kingdom shall be divided . . . partly strong and partly fragile.” This means it would be made up of people who “will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay” (Daniel 2:41-43).

The timeline represented by this image began with the head in Nebuchadnezzar’s day. Continuing that timeline from head to toes, the image represented, after Babylon, the Persian, Greek and Roman Empires that would follow, each in its own era. But regarding the last of these great empires drawing to a close, we see another dramatic symbol introduced into the vision.

Describing the time represented by the feet of iron mixed with clay, Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: “While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them . . . The rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled

*the whole earth*” (verses 34-35, New International Version, emphasis added throughout unless otherwise noted).

## What does this mean?

Daniel went on to explain this symbolism: “In the time of those kings [the leaders of the mixture of people represented by the iron and clay], *the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed*, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but *it will itself endure forever*. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands” (verses 44-45, NIV).

This “kingdom that will never be destroyed,” we know from many other prophecies, is the Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ will establish on earth at His return. This is confirmed by the triumphant announcement that accompanies His return as recorded in Revelation 11:15: “The kingdom of the world *has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever*” (NIV).

We see here that, odd as it may sound, Daniel’s prophecy reveals that the fourth empire—the *Roman Empire*—will exist in some form and be destroyed at Christ’s return to earth! As we will see, a comparison of several Bible prophecies with secular history will show how astoundingly accurate those prophecies have proved to be!

## More details in the book of Revelation

Revelation, the final prophetic book of the Bible, reveals more details about this fourth and final empire. In Revelation 13, John records a vision he saw of “a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns” (verse 1). This beast, representing a final empire or geopolitical superpower, has characteristics of a leopard, bear and lion (verse 2)—showing continuity with the ancient gentile empires of Babylon, Persia and Greece, symbolized by these same animals in Daniel’s vision found in Daniel 7.

As Rome had swallowed up and incorporated characteristics of these earlier empires,



Justinian I, crowned in A.D. 527



Charlemagne, crowned in A.D. 800



Otto the Great, crowned in A.D. 962

so does this final great empire, represented by a beast in John's vision, incorporate characteristics of the creatures that represented these earlier empires as seen by Daniel.

Why is this final empire represented as a beast? It's because ultimately its actions are more like a powerful and vicious animal than a human being. Whereas a person can be open to the guidance of God and exercise qualities such as compassion, care and concern for others, an animal is driven primarily by the motivations of self-preservation, power and control.

And indeed we see that these have been the motivations of most human governments throughout history. Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and countless other kingdoms, empires and governments have wielded their power to attack, oppress and enslave others so they could preserve their power and control. So a "beast" is indeed a fitting symbol for a world empire—particularly one such as this.

"The dragon"—Satan the devil (see Revelation 12:9)—is the unseen supernatural influence at work behind the scenes in this final world superpower (Revelation 13:2). And it will wield enormous influence over the world in the end time. All the world will marvel and follow it (verse 3). People will say: "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (verse 4). It will appear invincible and unstoppable.

With Satan behind it, this power will "make war against the saints"—killing and persecuting the faithful servants of God. So great will be the dominance of this beast that it will have "authority over every tribe, people, language and nation" and "all inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast" (verses 7-8, NIV).

Centuries of history bear record of man's unjust rule without the guidance of God. Like its ancient predecessor, this end-time system will set itself against God, ruthlessly suppressing His truth and attacking those who faithfully serve Him.

### All signs point to Rome

Do other signs lead us to identify this final world superpower as a modern-day incarnation of the Roman Empire? In addition to what we have seen above, many other Bible indicators point in that direction.

One is found in verses 3 and 12, where it is stated that this beast has a "deadly wound" that is healed. Prophetically, what does this mean?

After years of decline, the Roman Empire indeed received a "deadly wound" in A.D. 476 when Rome's Emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed by Germanic tribes led

by Odoacer. But that was not the end of the Roman Empire. As we will see, that "wound" was indeed healed and the empire would rise again—and again and again through history.

In Revelation 17 this beast appears again, in another form, here linked with a powerful and influential church called a "great harlot" (verse 1). (To learn more, see "Europe: A New Superpower on the Rise," beginning on page 4.) This fallen woman, representing a great false church, sits on "seven hills" (verse 9, NIV). Rome, of course, is famously known as "the City of Seven Hills."

Bible prophecy sometimes has dual meanings. Hills or mountains are also prophetically symbolic of governments or kingdoms, as is the case here.

We see that verse 10 speaks of seven kings—leaders of governments or kingdoms—of which "five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come," who will "continue a short time." Allied with this final seventh king will be 10 other leaders or rulers who will "receive authority for one hour [symbolic of a short time] as kings with the beast" and "give their power and authority to the beast" (verses 12-13).

Crucial to understanding the time frame of these final events is verse 14: "These [the 10 allied rulers or leaders] will make war with the Lamb [Jesus Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them . . ." As with Daniel's prophecy discussed earlier, we see that this final empire, characterized as a beast, *exists at the time of Jesus Christ's return and is destroyed by Him.*

A study of history shows the fulfillment of these remarkable prophecies. After Rome's "deadly wound" of A.D. 476, that wound was indeed healed. Following that would come seven "kings" or leaders of *revivals of the Roman Empire in cooperation with the Roman church.* Let's see how this was fulfilled in recorded history and what lies ahead yet to be fulfilled.

### Justinian's Imperial Restoration

After Emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed, less than a century passed before Justinian, the Eastern Roman or Byzantine emperor, ruling from Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul), committed himself to restoring the empire in the West, launching what would be known to history as the "Imperial Restoration."

William Langer's *An Encyclopedia of World History* states, "Justinian's whole policy was directed toward the establishment of the absolute power of the emperor and *toward the revival of a universal, Christian Roman Empire*" (1960, p. 172). This

same work refers to Justinian's "*grandiose reconstruction of the Roman empire.*"

The Roman church hierarchy played a key role in this revival. As historian Will Durant points out, "In 554 Justinian promulgated a decree requiring that 'fit and proper persons, able to administer local government, be chosen as governors of the provinces *by the bishops and chief persons of each province*'" (*The Story of Civilization*, Vol. 4: *The Age of Faith*, 1950, pp. 519-520, emphasis in original).

The Roman Empire was alive again, having experienced its first of several revivals in league with the church. However, in the process of time, this imperial revival waned and gradually fell apart. Six more revivals were to follow Justinian's restoration.

### Charlemagne, Holy Roman emperor

The second of these prophesied revivals or resurrections of the Roman Empire occurred at the time of Charlemagne—Charles the Great—who was crowned by Pope Leo III in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in A.D. 800. This act was indicative of the power and influence the Roman church would hold over the empire in future years, when emperors would receive the title *Holy Roman emperor*.

Langer's *Encyclopedia of World History* refers to this time as the "*Revival of the Roman Empire in the West*" (p. 155), adding that "Charlemagne's rule was a *theocracy.*"

If there is any doubt that the Roman Empire was very much alive through Charlemagne's revival, he adopted as his official title, "Charles, the most serene Augustus, crowned by God, great and pacific emperor, governing the Roman Empire."

### Otto I, "the Great Emperor"

After Charlemagne's death, his empire was divided among his grandsons, and although the imperial title continued, the empire disintegrated and remained weak and divided until the time of Otto the Great.

The new emperor of the German nation united the imperial realm mostly by conquest. He received the title of Roman emperor in A.D. 962 when he was crowned by Pope John XII. This marked the third of seven prophesied revivals or resurrections of the original Roman Empire.

According to Langer's *Encyclopedia of World History*, Otto's "coronation by the pope as Roman Emperor marked the revival of the Roman Empire" (p. 216). His Latin-inscribed seal read *Otto Imperator Augustus*—"Otto the Great Emperor."

The German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel*, in a 2007 special edition on history, made

the following observation about the German emperor: "Otto called himself . . . ruler of the Roman Empire, even though it came to an end a few centuries earlier. Charlemagne had already carried such a title.

"A belief spread about by Christians was that *the Roman Empire would last until the end of the world*. The prophet Daniel from the Old Testament prophesied of four world empires; then the anti-Christ would come. According to the configuration of the time, the Roman Empire would be the fourth empire. According to this interpretation, Otto saved the people and as such highlighted the claim to be over all other rulers in Europe" (p. 28).

Although the medieval concept of prophetic events as noted here was somewhat muddled, it does show that *the idea of the Roman Empire as a contemporary power, and one that would exist at the time of the end of*

*this age*, was a well-established concept.

### Charles V, on whose empire the sun never set

Although Otto passed from the scene, his empire lasted for almost three centuries before being divided by rival factions.

This was followed, after nearly two decades without an emperor, by Rudolph I of the Habsburg family becoming "King of the Romans" in 1273—this distinction being used for those assuming the imperial throne without official coronation in Rome by the pope (as circumstances often prevented this from happening right away or at all). This title gave way in 1508 to Elected Emperor of the Romans, and emperors ceased making the journey to Rome. Only one was crowned by the pope—Charles V of the house of Habsburg in 1530 (all the elected emperors between 1438 and 1740 being of this royal family).

From his father, Charles inherited the vast Habsburg possessions of Central Europe, Germany and Italy. From his mother, daughter of the famed Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, he inherited Spain and its American possessions. Ruling over an empire on which the sun never set—an empire even larger than ancient Rome's—he was the most powerful man in the world.

Determined to realize the age-old dream of a unified Europe, Charles V's reign was the

pinnacle of the fourth prophesied revival of the Roman Empire. "One of the greatest of the kings of Spain and Holy Roman emperor, [Charles V] was perhaps the last emperor to attempt to realize the medieval idea of a *unified empire embracing the entire Christian world*" (*The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, Micropaedia, Vol. 2, "Charles V").

However, major challenges thwarted his vision. In the course of his reign he fought against France, the Ottoman Empire of Suleiman the Magnificent, Protestants, and even forces of the pope. He eventually abdicated in 1556, leaving his Spanish possessions to his son Philip II and his Central European holdings to his brother Ferdinand.

### Napoleon, rival of Charlemagne and Alexander

One of history's most famous figures, Napoleon Bonaparte, was to lead the fifth

## The idea of a Roman Empire that would exist at the time of the end was a well-established concept in medieval times.

prophesied attempt to resurrect the Roman Empire with the endorsement of the Roman church. As Will Durant observed, Napoleon "*dreamt of rivaling Charlemagne and uniting Western Europe . . . then of following Constantine . . . to the capture of Constantinople . . . and proposed to rival Alexander by conquering India*" (*The Story of Civilization*, Vol. 11: *The Age of Napoleon*, 1975, pp. 242-243). At the height of his power he ruled 70 million subjects across the European continent.

Born on the Mediterranean island of Corsica, Napoleon began to make a name for himself in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Having received a military education in France, he quickly proved himself a military genius in campaign after campaign.

But military power wasn't enough to satisfy his ambitions. In 1799 Napoleon maneuvered himself into France's top political position. In 1804 he crowned himself emperor of France, and later that year was crowned Emperor Napoleon I by Pope Pius II at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Before long his military conquests led him to rule Europe from the Elbe River to the Atlantic Ocean, as well as over Spanish and French territories in the New World—the greater part of the Americas.

Looking to Rome and Charlemagne for inspiration, Napoleon determined to unify Europe under his reign. However, his great



Charles V, crowned in 1530



Napoleon I, crowned in 1804



Adolf Hitler, appointed chancellor in 1933

ambitions proved his undoing. Plans to invade Britain fell apart after his navy was defeated by Admiral Lord Nelson at Trafalgar in 1805. In 1812 his invasion of Russia proved disastrous, with the loss of more than half a million men. Forced to abdicate his throne, he was sent into exile in 1814.

With this, the fifth revival of the Roman Empire drew to a close. But this was not the end of imperialist attempts to unify Europe.

### German and Italian dreams

Germany as we know it is a relatively modern creation. Before Napoleon, there were literally hundreds of small German states, each ruled by its own prince, duke or king. Austria and Prussia were the most dominant. In the 19th century Otto von Bismarck managed to unite most German territories under the Prussian Hohenzollern dynasty, with others allied with Austria.

In 1870 both groups of German states fought together against France, and in 1871 Prussia's King William (or Wilhelm) was proclaimed emperor of Germany in the French palace of Versailles. His title, *kaiser*, harkened back to the Roman title *caesar* (as did the Russian title *czar*). Centuries earlier Otto the Great had established the first great German empire—the First Reich. Now Germany had its *Second Reich*.

German dreams of a greater empire inevitably led to more war. In 1914 the First World War broke out, a conflagration that took the lives of millions and transformed the face of Europe. But when it ended four years later, major problems remained. In the coming years two new strongmen would arise with new dreams to unite Europe and expand beyond—Benito Mussolini in Italy and Adolf Hitler in Germany. Both these men signed agreements with the Roman church that gave legitimacy to their fascist regimes.

Declaring the reappearance of the Roman Empire, Mussolini formed an alliance with Hitler, bringing about the Rome-Berlin Axis. Adolf Hitler proudly proclaimed Germany's *Third Reich*, envisioning a new German empire that would rival the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation established by Otto the Great. The sixth of the seven imperial revivals foretold in Revelation 17 was under way.

From 1939 until 1945 the Allied and Axis powers fought the Second World War, battling and bloodying each other across Europe, Africa, Asia and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Germany's dream of a Europe united under a new empire almost succeeded, and at a horrendous cost. As in World War I, millions

perished and Europe was again left in ruins.

### Back to the future

In the devastated aftermath of World War II, it seemed unimaginable that Europe could rise again. Its cities had been bombed and battered to rubble, its infrastructure had been shattered, its economy was in shambles and millions of its citizens were dead or maimed.

Yet Europe *has* risen. The 27-member European Union has grown to become the world's largest economy and its biggest trading power. The EU has its own president and foreign minister. It is quickly developing global political power to match its economic clout. Military power will surely follow its expanding economic and political might.

But it is not yet *as it will be*.

Returning to Revelation 17, we see that John "marveled with great amazement" at the vision he had seen of the woman and the beast (verse 6). An angel then explained to John that "the beast that you saw *was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit . . .*" When they see it, people "will marvel . . . when they see the beast *that was, and is not, and yet is*" (verse 8).

### What does such unusual wording mean?

Having gone through this historical background, we can now understand how an empire *could once exist, then disappear, then reappear* in a somewhat different form. The fact that this beast, symbolic of an empire, "*was, and is not, and yet is*" tells us that the Roman Empire, which does not exist at this time as such, *will be restored yet again* in the near future.

It "*was,*" meaning it existed in the past, it currently "*is not,*" meaning it doesn't exist at this moment, and "*yet is,*" for it remains an undercurrent in European politics, and "*will ascend out of the bottomless pit*"—meaning it is destined to rise yet again.

Revelation 17:10 prophesies that there would be *seven kings* or rulers who would lead resurrections of the Roman Empire in cooperation with the Roman church. History shows that this development has occurred *six times* in the past. A final revival, linked in prophecy to God's intervention in human affairs with Christ's return, lies ahead.

In 1957 six Western European nations—West Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium—came together to create the European Economic Community through the Treaty of Rome. These groundbreaking steps toward European unification were taken in the ancient capital city of the Roman Empire and home to one of the

*Continued on page 30*

## The murky depths of the U.S.-U.K. debt crisis

Notice these sobering words from *The Wall Street Journal*: “Never in the World Economic Forum’s 40-year history have business and political leaders gathered in Davos [Switzerland] with so many pressing issues to discuss” (“A World of Troubles,” Feb. 3, 2010, emphasis added throughout). Several of those pressing issues center on the global debt problem, and specifically that of the United States and the United Kingdom.

A number of disturbing newspaper and magazine headlines should grab our attention: “U.S. in Fiscal Peril With \$12.1 Trillion Debt” (*USA Today*, Jan. 4, 2010); “Ocean of Debt Threatens Obama as He Forecasts Record £975 [billion, or \$1.5 trillion] Deficit” (*The Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 2, 2010); “Tell Us the Truth About the Depth of Our [Britain’s] Debt Crisis” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Sept. 20, 2009); “We Can Afford to Pile Up Debt, Says [British Prime Minister Gordon] Brown” (*The Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 3, 2010); “How Great Powers Fall: Steep Debt, Slow Growth and High Spending Kill Empires—and America Could Be Next” (*Newsweek*, Dec. 7, 2009).

The *USA Today* article simply states: “After \$787 billion in stimulus spending and \$707 billion in bank bailouts, 2010 is fast shaping up to be the year of the federal budget diet. Bipartisan support is growing in Congress for action to stabilize the nation’s bulging debt, which is now \$12.1 trillion.” Influential fiscal experts and concerned politicians want decisive action, but there is no agreement on what needs to be done.

According to *The Sunday Telegraph*’s lead editorial about Britain’s debt crisis: “The numbers are horrendous: today the national debt stands at £804.4 billion [or \$1.3 trillion], equivalent to more than £25,000 [or nearly \$40,000] for every family in Britain. Interest payments are expected to increase

by more than 11 per cent every year; by 2013-14, they will amount to £63.7 billion [\$100 billion], or more than we now spend on defence and transport together.”

The Feb. 3 *Daily Telegraph* article said that “Gordon Brown has insisted he was ‘right’ to run up a huge Government deficit and said that pushing the public finances deep into the red was essential to cope with the recent recession . . . The Government will spend £178 billion [around \$280 billion] more than it raises in tax during the current financial year, a deficit equal to 12.6 per cent of the entire economy and larger than almost any other advanced economy.”

In the *Newsweek* cover piece, author Niall Ferguson focused on how “economic weakness is endangering [America’s] global power.” He further stated: “But if the United States succumbs to a fiscal crisis, as an increasing number of economic experts fear it may, then the entire balance of global economic power could shift.” Ferguson, a Harvard professor, indicated that a debt explosion usually ends up in a radical reduction in national defense spending.

This has already begun to happen in Britain. A Feb. 2 *Daily Telegraph* report stated: “Britain’s Armed Forces face inevitable cuts that will leave the country ‘dependent’ on allies [like France] to fight future conflicts . . . The country can no longer afford to fund current operations in Afghanistan” (“Budget Cuts ‘Will Leave Britain Reliant on War Allies’”).

Failure to balance the books inevitably leads to financial disaster, whether on a national, corporate or individual level, bringing on all the other thorny difficulties that flow from a lack of adequate funds. (Sources: *The Daily Telegraph* [London], *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*.)

## Serious U.S.-China diplomatic conflicts

Not long after being appointed U.S. secretary of State, Hillary Clinton flew to China for her first important diplomatic encounter abroad. She emphasized mutual national interests, like trade and climate policy, just as President Barack Obama later did on his first presidential trip to China.

But a number of months down the road, the diplomatic relationship between these two nations lies pretty much in tatters. According to *The Daily Telegraph*, “China has accused the United States yesterday of ‘rude and unreasonable’ Cold War thinking” (“China attacks US ‘Cold War’ Mentality Over Taiwan Arms Sales,” Feb. 2, 2010). What has happened?

A *Time* magazine article initially stated that “nobody, not even China, can afford to let the row over Google intensify into a broader dispute.” Yet the same article later added, “The Google issue has crystallized a whole range of discontent with China,

economic and otherwise” (“The China vs. Google Dispute: Hold Fire,” Feb. 8, 2010).

For instance, recently President Obama has stated his intention to meet with the Dalai Lama. The Chinese reacted swiftly (“China Warns US of Further Damage to Relations if Obama Meets Dalai Lama,” *Financial Times*, Feb. 3, 2010).

In recent months the perennial Taiwan issue, in which mainland China lays claim to the island, had at least appeared to be cooling somewhat. But Washington recently announced its intention to sell Patriot antimissile batteries, Blackhawk helicopters and two minesweeper ships to Taiwan. China instantly voiced a very strong objection.

Other intractable issues remain on the diplomatic docket. Beijing’s stubborn blocking of stronger UN sanctions, intended to curb Iran’s march toward acquiring nuclear weaponry, continues as another sore spot from the American standpoint.

Nearly a year and half ago, China had its first spacewalk, serving as a reminder of its growing might and influence. Then in mid-January of this year China

## Global declines in freedom

The world became less free in 2009, according to Freedom House, an independent watchdog organization that monitors the status of human freedom around the world.

“For the fourth consecutive year, global declines in freedom outweighed gains in 2009, as measured by Freedom House’s annual survey of political rights and civil liberties. This represents the longest continuous period of decline for global freedom in the nearly 40-year history of the report” (*Freedom in the World 2010: Global Erosion of Freedom*, Jan. 12, 2010, www.freedomhouse.org).

They found declines in freedom in 40 countries, including authoritarian states that became more repressive and setbacks in countries that had been trending more positively in recent years. The Middle East remains the most repressive region overall, and Africa showed the greatest declines in freedom.

The worst of the worst, ranked “not free,” include nine countries and one territory: Burma (Myanmar), Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Tibet (ruled by China), Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Freedom is a precious commodity. Currently, only 46 percent of the world’s population lives in countries ranked as “free.” The Bible prizes true freedom. Jesus said to His disciples, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). When Jesus Christ returns to the earth, all human beings at last will know and bask in true freedom (compare Hebrews 8:10-12; Isaiah 11:9). But for now, in a world devoid of true freedom, watch your back!

announced success in testing advanced missile-interception equipment, continuing the persistent upgrade of its military capabilities. Recall also that “China holds most of America’s \$12.4 trillion debt” (“Analysis: The Worsening Relationship Between America and China,” *The Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 2, 2010).

Focus attention back to the autumn of 2009. At that time the *Daily Mail* articulated a disturbing view of this East Asian powerhouse: “An army of 2.25 million. Chilling imperial ambitions. Today, as China celebrates 60 years of communism with an awesome display of military might, the West should be very, very worried” (“Marching to World Domination,” Oct. 1, 2009).

To read about where Bible prophecy says these stunning events in East Asia will ultimately take us, download the article “The Enormous Expansion of Chinese Influence: What Does It Portend?” from the archives of our *World News and Prophecy* newsletter at WNPonline.org (August 2009 issue). (Sources: *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Financial Times* [all London], *Time*, *Newsweek*.)

## The Turkish-Israel dilemma

Turkey and Israel have generally enjoyed mutually beneficial diplomatic relations ever since Israel became a new nation in 1948. Last year that relationship hit some rapids. Stated *The New York Times*: “A multinational air force exercise that was supposed to take place in Turkey has been postponed indefinitely after the Turks asked Israel not to participate, officials said Sunday, in a sign of the strained relations between the two allies” (Oct. 12, 2009, emphasis added throughout).

Then came the unwelcome news of “a war of words ignited by a new Turkish TV series depicting Israeli military atrocities” (“TV Show Deepens Split Between Israel and Turkey,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 19, 2009). The plotline of this popular action drama is fictional but cast Israel in this light as supposedly reflective of reality.

This unfortunate incident shook “what is probably Israel’s strongest partnership in the Middle East . . . The two countries have long had strong diplomatic and trade relations, and Turkey has been a substantial

buyer of Israeli military hardware. For years Israeli pilots trained in Turkish airspace” (ibid.).

*Financial Times* columnist Philip Stephens pointed out that “ignoring anxieties in Western capitals [not to mention Israel], Turkey has engaged with the Palestinian Hamas and with the Iranian-sponsored Hizbollah in Lebanon” (Oct. 23, 2009). Also Turkey has opened its border to Syria, a nation typically hostile to the West, offering Syrians visa-free travel.

Since becoming prime minister in 2003, Recep Erdogan has slowly but steadily shifted Turkey’s orientation from the West (the country being a member of the NATO alliance and a candidate to join the European Union) toward its Muslim neighbors to the east—including such unsavory players as Iran and Syria.

Considering recent trends in Turkey and the Islamic world, Israel’s hope for restoring close relations with Turkey may be past the point of no return. The rest of the West can only hope that Turkey, with its vast resources and 77 million population, retains its secular character and doesn’t adopt the hardline fundamentalist Islam of its neighbors. (Sources: *The New York Times*, *Financial Times* [London], *The Wall Street Journal*.)

## Pope helps reverse proposed British legislation

Pope Benedict XVI recently spoke out against proposed legislation in Britain that could have forced religious organizations to hire homosexuals and restricted their freedom to speak out against behavior they consider sinful. He urged Catholic bishops to fight such government policies with “missionary zeal.”

He told the British: “Your country is well known for its firm commitment to equality of opportunity for all members of society. Yet . . . the effect of some of the legislation designed to achieve this goal has been to impose unjust limitations on the freedom of religious communities to act in accordance with their beliefs” (“Pope Benedict XVI Criticises ‘Unjust’ Effects of Harriet Harman’s Equality Bill,” *The Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 3, 2010).

*The Times* of London also reported that “the Vatican condemned Britain’s proposed equality law yesterday, complaining that legislation to give homosexuals equal rights ‘violates natural law’” (“Britain’s Human Rights Policies Violate Natural Law, Pope Says,” Feb. 2, 2010).

A later edition of *The Times*, on Feb. 3, contained an article headlined “Churches Win Fight Over

Discrimination.” The first sentence says, “Harriet Harman [deputy leader of Britain’s liberal Labour Party] has backed away from a confrontation with religious leaders over whom they can employ, making clear that she will not force contentious amendments to the Equality Bill through Parliament.”

This development highlights growing Roman Catholic influence in Britain. Wrote Martin Beckford in another *Daily Telegraph* piece: “The Roman Catholic Church has provided a vocal and effective opposition to Labour [i.e., the Labour Party] in recent years” (“Catholic Opposition a Thorn in Labour’s Side,” Feb. 2, 2010).

The fairly substantial Catholic vote could prove crucial in Britain’s soon-coming national election, perhaps even determining who Britain’s next prime minister will be. The Catholic bishops in both England and Wales will soon publish their own manifesto, possibly influencing Roman Catholic voting patterns. John Paul II, the late pope from Poland, expanded the Vatican’s influence throughout the world, and it’s clear that Benedict XVI has picked up the baton.

When advised against conflict with the Catholic Church, Soviet leader Josef Stalin dismissively responded, “How many divisions does the pope have?” He had no military divisions as such, but he nevertheless had a huge army, and Europe may be

## The Haitian disaster, earthquakes, and Christ’s return

Could the Haitian earthquake disaster signal worse natural disasters to come? Some assume things will always remain the same, continuing as they always have (2 Peter 3:4). Natural disasters are expected, even though they are uncomfortable to think about. In relatively recent times we’ve had devastating earthquakes in China (2008), Chile (2007), Pakistan (2005), Iran (2003) and, most recently, in Haiti. The 2004 tsunami that hit the Thailand coast, as well as the coast of East Africa, was caused by an earthquake on the ocean floor off Indonesia.

Earthquakes occur when one area of the earth’s crust slips against another at a fracture in the crust called a fault, causing tremendous friction and massive vibration. The amount of friction and how near to the earth’s surface it occurs determines the impact of the earthquake at ground level. And of course the degree of damage is also dependent on human habitation in the affected area. Furthermore, earthquakes can trigger tsunamis and volcanoes.

Many areas of the globe are susceptible to earthquakes, as seismologists and other earth scientists have mapped out interconnected zones the world over—and new fault lines are being discovered regularly.

The Bible tells us that earthquakes will occur in different places before the return of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:7). And just before His return, there will be a major earthquake that will shake the world as never before (Revelation 16:18, 20). As terrible as the Haitian earthquake was, it will not compare to the greatest earthquake yet to come. For more on what the Bible foretells concerning the last days, be sure to send for or download our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

on the verge of finding that out. To understand the vital significance of events in the religious world, request or download our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*. (Sources: *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* [both London].)

## 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 and Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening site offers you a perspective so badly needed in our chaotic and confused world—the perspective of God’s Word, the Bible. Visit us at [www.WNPonline.org](http://www.WNPonline.org) today!



# Shocked by the Bible

A Good News interview with author Joe Kovacs by Jerold Aust

Journalist Joe Kovacs has written for broadcast, print and online media for more than 25 years, receiving awards for excellence in news coverage from both the Associated Press and United Press International news services. Mr. Kovacs has been executive news editor for WorldNetDaily, a leading Internet news site, since 1999. His strong interest in the Bible led him to write the recent best seller *Shocked by the Bible: The Most Astonishing Facts You've Never Been Told* ([www.shockedbythebible.com](http://www.shockedbythebible.com)). The book documents many surprising facts regarding common beliefs that are and are not supported by Scripture.

**The Good News:** Your unique book *Shocked by the Bible* has drawn a lot of attention. Were you surprised by this?

**Joe Kovacs:** I was originally surprised because some people thought I was speaking against the Bible when the exact opposite was true. I was trying to shock people with the actual words of the Bible. Some people couldn't understand that. They thought I was talking against Christianity or the Bible.

I need to make it clear from the outset that I am a Bible-believing Christian. I believe that every word of the Bible is true.

**GN:** What got you interested in the Bible in the first place?

**JK:** While growing up, I had no interest in the Bible. I never read the Bible until I was about 14 years old. But then I started reading it based on a challenge from my sister. She made some comments about Christmas—that much of the Christmas traditions were not found in the Bible. I couldn't believe that, so I started reading the Bible to find out what it said about Christmas. This sparked my interest in the Bible because no matter how deeply I looked, I could not find Christmas traditions in the Bible. So I wondered what else people are missing.

**GN:** Was that the very first topic that shocked you personally?

**JK:** Absolutely. It started with Christmas. Whether people celebrate Christmas is their own decision, but people should know *why* they do what they do and that virtually everything to do with Christmas is not in the Bible.

The birth of Jesus is found in the Bible, but you won't find three wise men showing up at the manger when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. You won't find Christmas trees mentioned in the Bible, but you will find that God condemns the decoration of trees with

silver and gold. That's in the book of Jeremiah [chapter 10] and people don't seem to know about this.

**GN:** Do you feel that the Bible is the inspired word of God for all mankind? Is the Bible for everybody?

**JK:** The Bible is definitely for everybody. God created mankind in His image and He does have an eternal purpose for them, so the Bible is for all humanity. Still people are free to choose to follow God. God has given us that freedom, and unfortunately most people on this planet choose not to follow the instructions God has given.

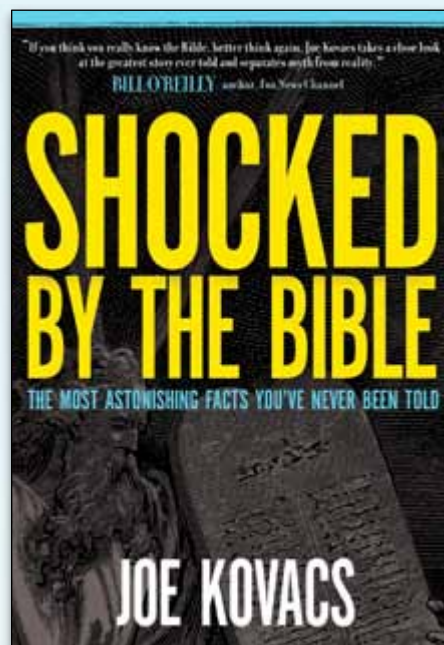
**GN:** What do you hope to impart to your readers through your book?

**JK:** People should realize why they do what they do. Most have no idea why they follow certain customs, why they believe certain things. They go to church for 30 or 40 years and still don't know why they do certain things. I want to educate people on what's in the Bible and what's not. Again, people should have an understanding about why they do the things they do.

**GN:** Let's get into today's popular religious holidays. First, why do you think that even though Easter is not in the Bible, a billion people continue to celebrate it?

**JK:** The word *Easter* is not found in most Bibles. It's found once in the King James Version [Acts 12:4] and that one instance is a mistranslation of the Greek word *Pascha*, which means Passover.

You will find people celebrating Passover throughout the Bible, including Jesus. But you won't find people celebrating Easter. The word *Easter* comes from an ancient fertility goddess. It's spelled in different ways but usually pronounced "Easter" or something like it. For instance, the Babylonians called



her Ishtar. The Phoenicians worshipped their goddess Astarte. The Germans had Ostara. The Hebrews called her Ashtoreth. This is all the same goddess, and God condemned the Israelites for having anything to do with this pagan goddess of fertility and the dawn.

People wonder why they color eggs and go on Easter egg hunts when none of that is in the Bible or endorsed by God. You don't see the apostles going on Easter egg hunts or hiding eggs. There was no Easter egg in the tomb when they looked for Jesus at His resurrection. The eggs and rabbits associated with Easter are simply ancient fertility symbols. Traditional Christianity today is a mixture of a little bit of the Bible and a whole lot of pagan, heathen traditions which have infiltrated church teachings and practices.

**GN:** How do you think God views Easter, and why?

**JK:** There's no question that Easter is an abomination to God. People can say they are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, but they are using the method of pagan worship.

God has nothing to do with paganism. In fact, the first commandment is "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" [Exodus 20:3]. Yet people bring the name of a pagan goddess and put the name of Easter in front of God's face, even as they are allegedly trying to worship Him. People think they are doing the right thing.

I'm not against people for wanting to honor the resurrection of Jesus and God raising Jesus

from the dead, which shows us how we can be saved and how we can be resurrected into the actual family of God. But to do so with a pagan method is the wrong way to do it.

**GN:** Let's turn to Christmas. Why do you think that so many people celebrate Christmas when you can't find it in the Bible?

**JK:** The biggest reason is that it's fun, plain and simple. It's a fun holiday. There's the family, the kids, an enjoyable time when you exchange gifts, get together and enjoy excellent food.

It also survives because of merchandising. The fourth quarter of the year in which Christmas happens to fall is when merchants do most of their business. It survives because of money and fun.

**GN:** So how do you think God views people observing Christmas?

**JK:** The Bible is silent on Christmas. You don't find people celebrating Christmas in the Bible. If you look throughout biblical history, the Israelites would worship the true God with pagan methods and even get into child sacrifice, but they thought they were worshipping the true God. If you extrapolate that to Christmas, God and Jesus Christ might not appreciate that you are using pagan methods to supposedly honor Him.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say we should celebrate the birth of Jesus. The Bible does have a number of holidays which are mentioned that people are to celebrate forever, like the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. But it doesn't say to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

**GN:** There's a great pull for people to get together with family for Christmas and to honor Christ through this observance as they see fit. What are your thoughts on this?

**JK:** I know many people in this world who celebrate Christmas. If they want to know about Christmas they can Google terms like "Christmas origin" and add "pagan" and they'll learn where these customs come from. They are not in the Bible. They originate with the worship of the sun and the worship of trees. It has nothing to do with the worship of Jesus Christ. Just because someone throws the name of Jesus Christ on something does not make it Christian.

**GN:** Let's discuss the Sabbath. How did you discover that Sunday was not the biblical Sabbath?

**JK:** The Bible talks about the Sabbath as the seventh day of the week. It's always referred to as the seventh day of the week and not once do you see Sunday, the first day of the week, referred to as the Sabbath day

## "People go to church for 30 or 40 years and still don't know why they do certain things. I want to educate people on what's in the Bible and what's not."

of rest. The Bible did not ever declare that Sunday should be the Sabbath day.

The Sabbath day is mentioned in the Fourth Commandment [Exodus 20:8-11] and in the account of creation after God created the world and mankind [Genesis 2:1-3]. He set the seventh day apart to rest on that day. It's consistent in both the Old and New Testaments that the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, what we call Saturday.

**GN:** The Catholic Encyclopedia states that Jesus and His disciples always observed the seventh-day Sabbath, but the Catholic Church had the right to change the Sabbath day from Saturday to Sunday. What are your thoughts on this?



Joe Kovacs

**JK:** Religion doesn't always go along with the Bible. The fact is that nowhere in the Bible do you see the Sabbath changed. If it were changed, there would have been a huge discussion on it, especially in the New Testament.

It's interesting that in different languages around the world, the word for the seventh day of the week, Saturday, is *Sabbath*. In Greek the word is *Savvato*; in Italian, *Sabato*; in Spanish, *Sabado*; in Hebrew, *Shabbat*; and in Polish, *Sobota*. Go to many other nations, and you will find that the seventh day is defined by the word *Sabbath*.

**GN:** That's a good indicator of the

**Sabbath. Let's talk about the unseen god of this world. You address Satan as "public enemy number one" and say that he wants to be worshipped. Why would Satan want to be worshipped?**

**JK:** If you understand who Satan is and the origins of Satan, you would know what he's doing. Satan, "the god of this world" [2 Corinthians 4:4, King James Version], is not the ultimate God who created everything. He is the ruler of this present society. Satan was originally an archangel of God. He was booted out of heaven because he tried to lead a rebellion of angels against God.

The Bible refers to this rebellion, saying he ascended above the clouds to be like the Most High. He has a "god complex" and thinks he can do a better job than God. Who knows what his motivation is, but apparently he was a brilliant individual. The Bible calls him an angel of light. He is able to appear as very good so he can lead people away from God.

He wants to be God and to be worshipped. I can say unequivocally that most people on earth, no matter what religion they are, think they are worshipping the true God. However, they are actually worshipping a corrupted form of satanic confusion that was begun back in the Garden of Eden.

**GN:** Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:4 that there was "another Jesus" with "a different spirit" and "a different gospel." Do you think this scripture reveals what Satan is doing?

**JK:** I think that Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light [2 Corinthians 11:14], and many, but not all, people think that they are worshipping the true God, the true Creator God of the universe. Yet they are actually following, unknowingly in many cases, Satan the devil. He has brought a brilliant deception upon people of this world and especially the Christian world.

Many people call themselves Christian, and yet they do things that are antithetical to what the Bible teaches. You can go through the Bible and find out what God's teachings are. You can look at what the religions of the world teach and see that they are, in fact, very different from what the Bible teaches. **GN**

# Shocked by the Bible, Changed by the Truth

by Jerold Aust

The Bible holds many shocking truths that few people have ever known or recognized. Fewer still are those who go beyond the shock of the Bible and allow themselves to be changed by the truth. Will you be one of them?

Jack had a good thing going while stationed in Hawaii in the U.S. Navy. Everything was under control. He sang on a live television entertainment show, played football on a local navy team, performed at dances with a musical ensemble and drove to the beach in his baby-blue convertible.

As the flight scheduler for all the Navy and Marine fliers on the island, his office commanded a spectacular view of the ocean. Hollywood could not have produced a more satisfying environment.

Life was good until the day his barracks supervisor, a gnarly and salty boatswain's mate, added to his cubicle room a sailor named Chuck. For the past year, Jack had treasured the peace and freedom of solitude, but that would soon end.

Chuck regularly listened to a particular radio preacher every evening. The preacher authoritatively painted frightening scenarios about biblical prophecy and the end of this age of man.

Jack asked Chuck to turn down the sound. A week later Jack asked Chuck to turn *up* the sound. His curiosity trumped his agitation.

Jack was shocked by what the preacher reported the Bible said, and he set himself to prove wrong both the preacher and Chuck. But digging into the Bible itself, much to his surprise he proved them right.

Up until that time, Jack (not his real name) had been in control of his life, or so he

thought. But no longer. His days of peaceful serenity were over. Initially shocked by the Bible, he noticed his life beginning to change by the truth he was discovering.

## Are we following truth or tradition?

The Bible shocks most people when they compare their long-held religious traditions to the truths of God revealed in Scripture. It never occurred to them that their beliefs didn't match up!

Caught in this quandary, most just don't know where to turn. Some try to resolve their problems by "giving their hearts to the Lord." But when things don't miraculously and immediately change for them, they often take their hearts back.

To most religious-minded people, the unvarnished facts of the Bible can indeed be shocking. One person who was shocked was Joe Kovacs, executive news editor of WorldNetDaily. An interview with him appears on page 16 of this issue. Kovacs has written a book titled *Shocked by the Bible*, in which he offers his readers some interesting Bible facts. For example, one cannot find in the Bible that Sunday is the biblical Sabbath, and one cannot find Christmas or Easter at all.

His book, one of the religious best sellers in recent years, directly—and sometimes humorously—contrasts popular religious beliefs with Bible facts. And yes, many of the things he documents are quite shocking!

## Blessings and benefits from the truth

Are there any benefits to biblical shocks and surprises? Yes, because anytime you learn biblical truth and live by it, it will benefit you.

We see a positive case of biblical shock in the example of the people of the ancient city of Berea in northern Greece, whose attitude is held up as an example in Scripture.

The Gospel writer Luke wrote of how the apostle Paul and his companion Silas went into the synagogue in Berea and preached the gospel of Christ Jesus. Both Jews and Greeks there believed what Paul taught from Scripture. But they were also proactive and *proved* to themselves whether what they had heard was true.

Acts 17:11 tells us of the Bereans, "These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for *they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so*" (New Revised Standard Version, emphasis added throughout).

Though they had never heard of these facts from the Bible (for them a set of scrolls), and though they were likely surprised by them, still they approached Paul's teaching and the scriptural facts he presented with a positive attitude. As a result, they received great benefits for proving true the facts of the Bible: They learned that Jesus Christ was indeed the prophesied Messiah, the Son of God, and that He taught God's truths leading to eternal life.

Paul, formerly known as Saul, experienced an even *greater* shock from Scripture. Though he knew well the Old Testament from his studies as a rabbinical student, he aggressively persecuted the early Church, traveling great distances to bring Christians back to Jerusalem, where they would be jailed or worse (Acts 8:3; 9:1-2). He was even complicit in the execution of Stephen, a faithful deacon who was stoned to death (Acts 7:58; 8:1).

God shocked Paul by blinding him for three days. God then directed a Church member, Ananias, to lay his hands on Paul so he could receive his sight (Acts 9:3-17). "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God" (verse 20).

From persecutor of the Church, Paul

As Winston Churchill famously said of our natural human tendencies, "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened."



## Well-meaning Bible readers are so blinded by man-made religious traditions that they cannot see Christ's true gospel.

became a proclaimer of Jesus Christ. God shocked Paul and changed his life completely. More shocks followed: God selected Paul to be “a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (verse 15), which led to persecution and death.

Still, Paul enjoyed many great spiritual blessings and benefits, especially the sure conviction that ultimately He would live forever. As his life neared its end, he wrote: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

There are many tangible benefits to being shocked by the Bible, *if* one takes them to heart. Sadly, most do nothing even after they're shocked by Bible truths. As Winston Churchill famously said of our natural human tendencies, “Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened.”

Jesus tells us: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

Very few find Christ's narrow gate to eternal life because of spiritual blindness.

### Blinded by a great deceiver

One shocking fact of the Bible is that most people are blinded to God's truth,

including professing Christians (Matthew 13:10-15; John 12:37-40; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 11:13-15).

Well-meaning people have been led to believe that God accepts their brand of Christianity as long as they are sincere about it. Sincerity is good, but salvation is built on God's Spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).

If sincerity alone identifies a true Christian, then God has failed miserably. The Bible says “the truth [singular] shall set you free” (John 8:32)—not *truths*, plural. All of the different religious denominations, and there are hundreds if not thousands, think they have the truth—and yet their doctrines vary wildly and often diametrically contradict each other.

But Christ is not divided (1 Corinthians 1:13). He has one body, one Spirit, one hope, one faith and one baptism, all given by one Lord, one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). Jesus said He would build His Church—one singular body of believers, not many different and contradicting churches (Matthew 16:18).

*Why* are there so many differing churches that claim to represent Jesus Christ? Because, as the apostle Paul warned, there is a “god of this age” who has subtly blinded well-meaning people from the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4).

This lying being, Satan the devil, has deceived people into believing in “another Jesus” with a “different gospel” (2 Corinthians 11:4). And he slyly palms himself off as “an angel of light,” with misguided ministers following him who may seem to be ministers of righteousness but are purveyors of falsehood (verses 13-15). If Christians refuse a counterfeit \$100 dollar bill, why

would they trust their eternal salvation to counterfeit religious traditions?

The Bible exposes this interloper who wants to be worshipped as the god of humankind. After Jesus' 40-day fast, Satan audaciously offered Him authority over *all the kingdoms of the earth*—but there was, of course, a catch: “And he [Satan] said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You *if You will fall down and worship me*’” (Matthew 4:9). Thankfully, Jesus refused to worship Satan. Sadly, however, a blinded, deceived humanity has made a different choice (1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9).

### All make a choice

Most people, including professing Christians, are blinded to these shocking Bible facts. They don't know that much of what masquerades as Christianity is not of Christ, but is part of Satan's great deception of mankind.

Many major “Christian” beliefs and practices—such as Christmas, Easter and weekly Sunday worship—are not found in the Bible. They are parts of a different gospel, a counterfeit of Jesus' true gospel and the accompanying authentic biblical observances of Passover, Pentecost and God's other commanded festivals, as well as the weekly seventh-day Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 23).

Well-meaning Bible readers are so blinded by man-made religious traditions that they cannot see Christ's true gospel.

Why are 2 billion professing Christians blinded by human religious traditions? The sad fact is that they are, at least in part, *complicit in their own blindness*. Jesus said: “For the heart of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes *they* have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them” (Matthew 13:15).

Did you catch what Jesus said? He said they have *willingly closed their own eyes to the truth!*

Jesus holds each of us responsible to act on the facts of Scripture once we hear them (Acts 17:30; James 4:17). He also said that the world loves its own but hates those who love God and His truth (John 15:19).

Where do you stand on this matter? Though the plain truths of the Bible can shock well-meaning people for a short time, usually the shock wears off, either because—to use Jesus' figurative language—the seed of truth fell by the wayside, or on stony

places with no fertile soil to support spiritual roots, or among the thorns, meaning worldly distractions and entrenched bad habits or works of the flesh that choke out growth (Matthew 13:4-7; Galatians 5:19-21).

Encouragingly, Jesus reveals that a few in this age would respond favorably to God's good spiritual seeds, yielding good fruits or works. Some are able to produce a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold (Matthew 13:8). God's good spiritual seeds are spread before you in this magazine in the hope that they will take root.

Most people find a religion they feel comfortable with. But to live the truth as Jesus did requires the conviction and courage to leave our comfort zones (Luke 14:26-27). It requires counting the cost of following God wherever that might lead (verses 28-32). It means, if necessary, giving up *everything* to devote one's life to following Christ (verse 33).

To follow Christ is to represent Him and God the Father as an ambassador of Their heavenly Kingdom, which is soon coming to this earth (2 Corinthians 5:20; Luke 11:2).

Yes, religious traditions blind many well-meaning people. The Bible can indeed shock you and impact your life, but whether or not you will allow the truth to further change you is ultimately your decision.

### Changed by the truth

Jack, whom we met at the beginning of this article, was shocked by the Bible—what it did and did not say. He spent hours every night striving to disprove what he was hearing so his friend Chuck could be set free from the bonds of what Chuck confidently called *the truth*.

It took several months for Jack to discover what Chuck already knew. Unlike the Bereans, he tried earnestly to disprove what Chuck called the truth. Instead, Jack found himself being changed by the Bible teachings he thought were bogus.

Although Jack was shocked at what Chuck showed him from the Bible, it took Jack's unconditional surrender to God, imperfect though it was, for him to be really changed by the truth.

What does it take to be changed by the truth, to understand the spiritual applications of God's laws? You can know Bible facts, but *to allow those facts to change you* requires something more. It requires spiritual discernment and understanding.

Such spiritual discernment and understanding come only through the gift of God's Holy Spirit. That is what makes one a true Christian (Romans 8:9). But how does one

receive the gift of God's Spirit? There are progressive steps a person must go through to become and remain a true Christian.

First, God the Father must call us. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). The Father's calling sets the stage for our salvation.

We must respond to God as we learn His truth, which means we change from our old ways that conflict with His new ways. The Bible calls this repentance (Acts 2:37-38).

We then exercise faith or belief in God beyond simply saying we are Christians or that we believe in Jesus. Believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior we must. But that means believing in Jesus' teachings, including His commands and rewards, and acting on them. As Christ Himself said, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). It also means accepting His sacrifice for sins and receiving Him and the Father into your life completely.

We then ask for baptism from a minister of Christ who believes, teaches and practices the truths of the Bible. True Christian baptism is total immersion in water symbolizing the death and burial of the old sinful self and resurrection to a new life in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-11). God washes our sins away through Christ when we go through this symbolic act (Acts 22:16).

After the minister baptizes us, he then places his hands on our head, asking God to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17), which God does if repentance is sincere.

Through receiving the Holy Spirit, we are begotten as the Father's own children (2 Corinthians 6:18). Having been raised from the symbolic watery grave of baptism to new life, we are now expected to live our life after the manner that Jesus lived His, as a new creation in Him (Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

We are now able to examine and evaluate our own life on a daily basis (1 Peter 4:17; 1 Corinthians 11:31-32), viewing ourselves in the mirror of God's law of liberty and Jesus' sinless and perfect life (James 1:21-25).

Finally we strive daily to become more and more spiritually mature or perfect (Matthew 5:48), living by and applying God's law, which is spiritual and holy (Romans 7:12). The apostle Paul said that we die daily (1 Corinthians 15:31), continuing to repent of our old habits and sins that crop back up at times, and are renewed daily,

striving to follow Jesus' sinless example (2 Corinthians 4:16).

### Perfected by the truth

God the Father wants us to become perfect or complete in Him (Matthew 5:43-48). He is perfecting us through Christ, His Holy Spirit and our willingness to actively strive to change our life with His help (Philippians 1:6; Ephesians 2:21-22; Galatians 2:20).

God is merciful toward us, patient with us and loves us so much that He gave His only Son that we might have life (John 3:16-17). "What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? . . . In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Romans 8:31-32, 37, NRSV).

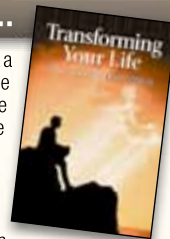
To be changed by the truth, one must give up the world's way of living and actively live God's way of life. This is what Jack learned after he was challenged by the facts of Scripture that shocked him. He gave up his former way of life and allowed Christ to change him through the gift of the Holy Spirit. He went from being shocked by the Bible to being transformed by its truths.

Again, Jesus Christ clearly shows that we come to understand God and are changed by God's truth *through the power of God's Spirit*: "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father *in spirit and truth*; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship *in spirit and truth*" (John 4:23-24).

We hope that you will be one of those who are shocked by the Bible and then ultimately changed by God's truth! **GN**

### To Learn More...

What is conversion all about? Is it a one-time "giving your heart to the Lord"? Does the Bible teach once saved, always saved? Many are confused or fail to understand what the Bible really teaches. You need to know the truth! Download or request your free copy of *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* today! And while you're at it, to learn the truth about other subjects mentioned in this article, also request or download our free booklets *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest and Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Really Matter Which Days We Observe?*



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# Jesus Christ: Victim of Stolen Identity!

Most people understand that Jesus died for our sins, and the details of His illegal crucifixion are well known. But few know that after Jesus' death His identity was stolen! Many well-intentioned believers have fallen for the deception. Could you also be duped?

On that fateful day when Jesus' physical life hung in the balance, the people of Jerusalem had an opportunity to ask for the release of either Jesus or Barabbas, a convicted felon. On the surface, there was an appearance of fairness. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, was going to let the people of Jerusalem decide who should receive a pardon.

Tragically, both Jesus and the citizens of that ancient city were the victims of an effective and deadly campaign. The religious leaders had skillfully devised their plan to eliminate the one who was exposing their hypocrisy and undermining their privileged position in the minds of the populace. They were angry, and from their perspective they were justified in taking action.

Earlier, one of them had suggested that it might be necessary for one man to die for the good of the nation (John 11:50-51). It sounded so noble and patriotic.

But most of the people had no idea what was really going on and what was coming.

Then, after Jesus' arrest and illegal trial, which they held at night so the populace wouldn't see or hear what transpired, the efforts of the chief priests and elders took on increased intensity. They "persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus" (Matthew 27:20).

At the end of the day, the religious leaders had won. The crowd had been manipulated, and Jesus had been put to death by crucifixion. But eventually, the truth came out.

Today, people know that Jesus of Naza-

areth was put to death over jealousy and false charges. But what most don't know is that Jesus' human life wasn't the only thing lost. Over time, *Jesus was also robbed of His identity*. The result is that many now unknowingly worship a *counterfeit Jesus* and believe an *altered gospel*.

The same campaign to distort Jesus and His message continues today, and it is quite possible that you—like the citizens of first-century Jerusalem—are also misled by this deception. You need to know the rest of the story!

## A total makeover of His identity

Modern identity theft has become a worldwide problem affecting an estimated 3 percent of citizens in the United States every year, plus similarly large numbers of



**The Bible tells us that Jesus was a builder involved in major construction and hung out with commercial fishermen. He spent a lot of time in the outdoors and was a man's man.**

people in other countries. Thieves know no national boundaries.

Today when a thief steals a person's private information, it is quite common for him to use this data to get a driver's license and/or additional documentation with his own picture and address. This gives the thief the appearance of legitimacy for all kinds of additional theft, which can even include taking out loans in the victim's name.

Those who stole Jesus' identity followed a similar process. Over time, Jesus received a total makeover that altered His look, changed His birthday and blurred His cultural background.

Consider Jesus' appearance. When people think of Jesus today, many picture a long-haired, effeminate-looking man walking around with a halo over His head. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. The real Jesus had no halo—these are simply artists' inventions—and He looked like the other Jewish men of the first century.

History tells us that the men at that time had short, cropped hair. The Jews of the first century considered it a shameful practice for a man to have long hair. Reflecting this perspective, Paul reasoned with members of the church in Corinth saying, "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?" (1 Corinthians 11:14).

Of course, short hair on men was also quite common in the other leading cultures of the first century. Statues and coins from that time show Greek and Roman men with similar haircuts. The fact that Jesus had short hair like the other Jewish men is what made it possible for Him on two different occasions to disappear into the crowd (Luke 4:28-30; John 8:59).

Even though people were trying to kill Him, Jesus got away because He looked like everyone else. Long hair, a halo around His head or a soft, feminine appearance would have been a dead giveaway.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was known to be a "carpenter" (Mark 6:3), the Greek word *tehton* here actually meaning a builder or artisan involved in major construction (such as stone masonry), and that He hung out with commercial fishermen. As such, He undoubtedly spent a lot of time in the outdoors and was a man's man. He simply didn't appear as so many artists

have mistakenly presented Him.

### A new birthday that conflicts with the Bible record

In addition to a new look, Jesus was also given a new birthday. Dec. 25 was selected to match up with the day pagans celebrated as the birthday of the sun god. Religious leaders thought this date would help people leave paganism for Christianity. After the transition, it was assumed that the celebration would be dropped.

Of course, this never occurred. Christmas is now one of the biggest celebrations of the year. To many, celebrating Christmas is now a critically important part of worshipping God. They simply can't imagine a Christian not honoring Jesus' birth.

But the facts show that Jesus couldn't have been born on Dec. 25 because of two key events recorded in Luke 2. First, a Roman census was taking place (verses 1-6), and this would never have been conducted in the winter when it was difficult to travel. Second, the shepherds were in the fields watching their flocks by night at the time of Jesus' birth (verses 7-8). Since December is cold and rainy in Judea, the shepherds wouldn't have wanted to stay with their flocks in the open fields but would likely have kept them in shelters at this time of year.

Scholars who carefully consider all the evidence of Luke's account realize that it is most likely that Jesus was born in the autumn. A careful study of the birth of John the Baptist and the account showing that John was born six months before Christ (Luke 1:26, 36) indicates that Jesus was likely born in September or early October. The popular idea that Jesus was born on Dec. 25 is simply a compromise with paganism, says William Walsh in his book *The Story of Santa Klaus*.

### Jewish lifestyle obscured

The new, revised Jesus known by most today has largely been stripped of His Jewish background and culture. Even though the Bible clearly states, "It is evident that our Lord arose from Judah" (Hebrews 7:14), most claiming to worship Him today are uncomfortable with—if not outright hostile toward—His Jewish background.

Many simply don't realize that Jesus lived a life that included regularly going to the synagogue on Saturday, the weekly Sabbath (Luke 4:16), observing the biblical Holy Days (Leviticus 23; Luke 2:41; Matthew 26:17; John 7:2, 10) and not eating pork or



**The apostle John wrote, "He who says he abides in Him [Christ] ought himself to walk just as He walked." How ironic it is that anyone actually following Jesus' lifestyle today is thought to be *unchristian*.**

shellfish (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14).

Those who know of Jesus' lifestyle commonly think that He deemed it too harsh and demanding and that He lived by it in place of us so no one would ever have to follow its requirements again. But Jesus never indicated that He was now rejecting the culture in which He had lived or that He wanted His followers to reject the biblical instruction regarding these practices.

After Jesus' death, His disciples continued to follow His lifestyle, and they taught new believers to do the same. Paul said, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). When Paul traveled, he continued to worship God on Saturdays (Acts 13:5, 14; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4), just as Jesus had done.

When the gentiles (non-Israelites) of the city of Antioch wanted to hear Paul's words, they assembled with the Jews the next Sabbath (Acts 13:42-44). Instead of accepting the clear biblical record, many have embraced the false argument that Paul taught the gentiles to meet on Sunday instead of Saturday. It's commonly assumed that the day of worship was changed to honor the day of Jesus' resurrection (another falsehood since Jesus was resurrected on Saturday evening around sunset).

The hostility toward God's seventh-day Sabbath was clearly evident in the Roman Catholic Church's decision several centuries later to establish Sunday as the weekly day of worship. In explanation of the change, church leaders plainly said they wanted to separate the church from anything Jewish. They declared as anathema (separated or cut off from the church) anyone who "Judaized" by observing the seventh-day Sabbath.

In addition to observing the Sabbath, Jesus also observed the biblical Holy Days. He undoubtedly accompanied His parents "every year" to Jerusalem to observe "the Feast of the Passover" (Luke 2:41), and He continued to observe the biblical days of worship throughout His ministry (Matthew 26:17-19; Luke 22:14-15). Jesus' followers observed these same "feasts of the LORD" (Leviticus 23:4) and taught believers to do the same.

Toward the end of the first century, Jesus' disciple John wrote, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6). So he, too, taught believers to live their lives as Jesus had done. How ironic it is that anyone actually following Jesus' lifestyle today is thought to be *unchristian*. Such thinking simply reflects the profound success of those who designed today's counterfeit Jesus.

The misguided teaching of today that advises people to reject Jesus' example is most often justified by a faulty assumption that Paul changed the gospel—the message of Jesus—because of direct teaching from Jesus mentioned in the book of Galatians. But while it is certainly true that Paul received direct training from our Lord, that training did not change the gospel message.

As Paul outlined what he taught to the Corinthians, he clearly said that his teaching was the same as that of the other apostles. His exact words, "Therefore, whether it was I or they [the other apostles], so we preach and so you believed" (1 Corinthians 15:11), show that he was

## Who Is Responsible for the Deception?

While it's clear that the scribes and Pharisees of the first century were Jesus' enemies and that false teachers soon began altering His message, the real author of the campaign to destroy Jesus is a spirit being the Bible calls *Satan*. Also known as Lucifer, the great dragon, that serpent of old and the devil, this powerful fallen angel "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

He was present in the Garden of Eden to counter God's instruction, offering his alternative way of life in deceiving Eve (Genesis 3). As a result, God told Satan, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (verses 14-15). This passage is often recognized as the first in the Bible to indicate the battle

that would take place between Satan and Jesus Christ—the "Seed" of the woman.

Identified by Christ as a "liar" and "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44), Satan was the brains behind the operation to get rid of Jesus and distort His message. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 he is described as "the god of this age" who blinded the minds of the first-century religious leaders and put a veil over the true gospel message. Satan and the demons (fallen spirits who follow him) continue their efforts today as they pose as "ministers of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

The point here is to understand that human beings of and by themselves did not deliberately set out to steal Jesus' identity and distort His message. These blinded and misguided people have themselves been victims of Satan's deception. For a better understanding of Satan and how he works to deceive you, download or request our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*

not a maverick with a different gospel.

### A perverted message about grace

While changing Jesus' appearance and cultural background has led to much confusion, the mistaken teaching regarding His expectations of those who follow Him has been the most damaging result of His stolen identity.

Instead of living in accordance with God's laws about such things as the Sabbath, Holy Days and food laws, people are mistakenly told that anyone who follows Jesus' example today is rejecting God's grace and practicing legalism—that is, trying to earn his salvation by works.

While the Bible clearly teaches that salvation is by grace through faith rather than works (Ephesians 2:8-9), it is also clear that "we are . . . created in Christ Jesus for good works" (verse 10). Indeed, it will be "those who do His commandments" who will be granted access to the tree of life representing eternal life (Revelation 22:14).

Christ's own words also show that there is no conflict between grace and obedience. Jesus emphatically stated: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Jesus still expects us to obey His commandments. Simply put, a genuine relationship with Christ will always result in a changed life.

On another occasion Jesus said, "If you

love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). But rather than follow Jesus' teaching, false ministers in the first century began telling others that it was no longer necessary to obey God's laws. Their teaching was a perversion of God's grace. They falsely said that God's grace covered everything and that He expected nothing in return.

This misguided teaching offered all benefits and no expectations. Jude described these false teachers as ones "who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness [license to sin] and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 4, New American Standard Bible). Sadly, this mistaken message still poses as Christianity today.

When we fully comprehend Jude's observation, we note that God's wonderful gift of grace had been cheapened and besmirched by misguided teaching saying that it was okay to sin. The result of this sordid process was that God and the real Lord Jesus Christ were denied. The same result continues today when people blindly accept a counterfeit Jesus and fraudulent grace.

### Recovering from the damage

If you've been a victim of this bogus, inaccurate, counterfeit message of Christ, you can recover. To any who will repent—truly feel sorrow for his or her disobedience and change to a life of obedience—God is quick to show mercy and "abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

Jesus truly wants to have a relationship with you (2 Peter 3:9), but it must be on *His* terms. If it isn't, you're just kidding yourself and wallowing in deception. It isn't comfortable to change when we find we are in error, yet we have no choice but to change if we want to receive eternal life. As Jude noted, we must "contend earnestly for

the faith which was once for all delivered" (Jude 3).

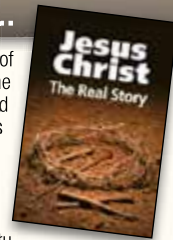
In one of His final prayers to the Father prior to His crucifixion, Jesus noted that "this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). In order to truly live forever, we have to know the *real* Jesus and do what He says.

The fact that you have read this far indicates that you're serious about your relationship with God and could benefit from a better understanding of the real Jesus and His authentic teaching. Now that you know that much of what you've been told about Jesus is false, we recommend that you request our free booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.

Don't miss out on this authentic information that offers priceless, life-changing benefits! Don't follow a cleverly designed myth—a fictional character without a biblical basis. Be one who understands Jesus' true identity and responds to His calling. If you do, your life now and in the future will never be the same! **GN**

### To Learn More...

Most people view the Jesus of the Bible through the lens of the myths they've been taught and heard over the years. Sadly, this has created a warped and distorted view of the Savior and Son of God. To help combat all the misinformation that's been spread around for centuries, we'd like to offer you a free booklet titled *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. Download or request your free copy today!



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# Easter or Passover: Which Is Christian?

by Jerold Aust

Many believe that God's endorsement of Passover ended with Christ's death—and that He has since replaced it with the observance of Easter as a celebration of Christ's resurrection. But is that so?



On April 4 of this year, a billion or more people who identify themselves as Christian will celebrate Easter. The week before, a far smaller number will observe Passover.

How do these two scenarios compare? On the one hand, we have a fun-filled Easter egg hunt, Easter bunnies galore and an Easter Sunday sunrise service. On the other, a solemn Passover service that typically includes participants washing one another's feet and partaking of unleavened bread and wine.

Easter seems more fun, more joyous; Passover seems old-fashioned and more serious. These are some differences that are obvious on the surface. Many other differences aren't so obvious.

## My own Easter story

My earliest recollections of Easter included searching for colored eggs that I helped paint and my mother hid. Since I loved hard-boiled eggs, finding and eating those colorfully decorated eggs was fun and quite a treat!

I never questioned the Easter season with its Easter eggs and Easter bunnies. This was supposed to be the most holy holiday of the year, but to me it was more about fun—just as merchants hoped it would be.

It wasn't until my early 20s that I learned about the so-called "Jewish" Passover. The ministers I'd known earlier had given me

no hint that Passover was something for Christians.

I now found this curious, since my Bible clearly showed that Jesus, a Jew, observed the Passover with His closest followers and instructed them, and *us*, to continue to keep it until His return (Matthew 26:26-29). I was also surprised to read that the apostle Paul explicitly told Church members in the Greek port city of Corinth—most of whom were not and never had been Jewish—to observe the Passover as a reminder and memorial of Jesus Christ's death (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

And try as I might, I couldn't find anything in the Bible mentioning the apostles or early Church celebrating Easter. No eggs or rabbits anywhere. I even found that the one place where the word *Easter* is found in the Bible—Acts 12:4 in the King James Version—the original word there is actually *Pascha*, the Greek word for *Passover*!

I was at a loss to explain this. How was it that millions upon millions of people celebrated a holiday that clearly *isn't* found in the Bible, while dutifully ignoring a holy observance that *is* in the Scriptures?

## A valid replacement?

Have you ever compared the meanings and symbols of Passover and Easter? Have you ever asked what God thinks of the two?

If you celebrate Easter with sincerity (and many millions do), you likely regard Easter

as a religious holiday that superseded the archaic Old Testament Passover. After all, that's what most churches teach—that Easter has replaced the Passover. But is there more to the story than that?

Even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* acknowledges that Jesus and His apostles never celebrated Easter, observing instead the seventh-day Sabbath and the annual festivals of God, including the Passover, all listed in Leviticus 23 and mentioned in many other places in Scripture (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5, 1967, p. 867, "Early Christian Feasts").

You might have heard that Easter came from pagan origins but may have simply dismissed this as irrelevant. After all, God surely wouldn't mind if you celebrated this holiday to honor Him, would He? Yet He *does* mind. The Bible clearly states that God wants to be worshipped *according to the way He instructs in the Scriptures* (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32).

Has Easter, in fact, replaced Passover as a Christian obligation, sacred because so many people keep it and because it was sanctioned by the universal church? Additionally, does Passover keep the Jews (and those Christians who insist on observing it) in darkness, unable to receive the grace and life of Jesus Christ?

If those assumptions are true, then—end of story. But if they are not, then we'd better ask some serious questions. In fact, we'd better seriously question those assumptions either way.

## Shining the light on Easter

Can Easter and Passover be compared and weighed in the balance? If so, could and would it have any effect on your life, your future?

Most Christians think that as long as a person celebrates Easter as honoring Christ's resurrection, God won't mind and we shouldn't care. But God *does* mind and we *should* care that He does.

Many sources are available that describe the origins, history and purpose of the Easter celebration. If you read them without checking what *the Bible* says about which religious festivals are acceptable to God, you could easily conclude that the writers and researchers know what they are writing about. Their analyses may seem well-grounded, even beyond questioning.

But *question you must*. If you follow human dogma that doesn't match Jesus' teachings, you're on religious quicksand without the lifeline of God's saving truth.

You can check in nearly any Bible help or encyclopedia to verify several fundamental facts:

- Easter cannot be found in Scripture.
- Easter was never instituted by God.
- Easter was never sanctioned by Jesus Christ.
- Easter was never taught by Christ's apostles.
- Easter was never observed by the early

before the sun had risen—she saw that the stone had already been rolled away from the tomb's entrance, revealing it to be empty. She immediately ran to Peter and John, excitedly complaining that someone had surreptitiously removed Jesus' body from the tomb.

Both Peter and John ran to Jesus' tomb; John arrived first (verses 3-4). He looked into the tomb but didn't enter until after Peter did. Both saw Jesus' burial linens and head covering lying there. Neither one of them had understood that Jesus would rise from the dead (verses 5-9).

Mary returned and shed tears that Jesus'

confirms that He was already risen from the dead well before the time of sunrise, the moment celebrated by modern Christians in Easter sunrise services. Both John and Matthew give minor details not covered in the other's account.

Matthew states: "Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb" where Jesus was laid. At that time there was a great earthquake, and an angel descended and rolled back the stone from the door (Matthew 28:1-2).

The guards, stationed there to prevent the stealing of Jesus' body, shook with fear and looked like dead men. The angel addressed the women: "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for *He is risen*, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that *He is risen from the dead*, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold I have told you" (verses 4-7).

Matthew confirms at least two things about Jesus' resurrection: First, it was *beginning* to dawn when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to His tomb, yet still dark outside. Second, the angel told them that Christ had already risen, which meant that He rose sometime before this period, certainly not at sunrise on Sunday morning.

This makes good sense since Jesus told the religious leaders of His day that He would spend *three days and three nights* in the tomb. He called this the sign of the prophet Jonah, since Jonah had spent three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish that swallowed him (Matthew 12:39-40).

This statement from Jesus alone disproves another myth about Easter, that Jesus was crucified on Good Friday and resurrected on Easter Sunday. Try as you might, there is no way to fit three days and three nights between a hurried late Friday burial and a Sunday morning resurrection.

At most, this scenario only allows for a tiny part of two days (a few minutes each on Friday at sunset and Sunday at sunrise) and another full day (Saturday), plus Friday night and Saturday night—leaving us more than a day and a night short of what Jesus Himself foretold!

Jesus could not have been resurrected on Sunday morning at daybreak since the only sign He gave to His disciples that He truly was the Messiah was the sign of Jonah.



## Easter seems more fun, more joyous; Pass-over seems old-fashioned and more serious.

New Testament Church.

### Easter sunrise vs. the book of John

You can also check your Bible and see for yourself that a fundamental part of the Easter celebration—that Jesus rose at sunrise on Sunday morning—is *a fallacy disproved by the Bible*. Easter cannot commemorate Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday morning because Jesus was already resurrected and gone from the tomb well before sunrise! Read it yourself!

John 20:1-2 tells us: "Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him'" (emphasis added throughout).

Notice that when Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb while it was still dark—

body was no longer there. Reluctantly she took one last look into the tomb, and to her surprise, saw two angels in white sitting at the head and foot of where Jesus' body had been. The angels asked her why she was crying. She told them that someone had taken Jesus' body away. She then turned and saw a man whom she assumed to be the gardener. She asked him to tell her where Jesus' body was (verses 11-15).

In His unique way, Jesus addressed her by name. Immediately she recognized His voice and only then did she know who it was.

Remember, it was not daylight yet. There was no group of people waiting for the sun to rise in order to honor Jesus' resurrection from the dead. John's account—and remember, he and Peter were the first two apostles to come to the tomb—plainly shows that Jesus was *not* resurrected at sunrise on Sunday morning.

### Easter sunrise vs. the book of Matthew

Matthew's account of Jesus' resurrection

Again, as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so Jesus spent that same amount of time in the tomb or grave. You can see the detailed proof for yourself in our free booklets *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* and *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?*

### Is it only harmless tradition?

Easter is not simply a harmless man-made religious tradition that supposedly replaces the Passover because a church or some group of clerics said it does. The fact remains that any religious tradition that does not agree with what Scripture reveals about Jesus' death or resurrection *cannot* represent Him.

But that's not the worst part. Easter's origins—and you can verify this yourself with a little research—actually long predate Christianity. Its strange symbols (what do eggs and rabbits have to do with Christ's death and resurrection?), its timing (in the spring of the year), its most notable custom (worshipping at sunrise) and even its name all go back to the worship of pagan fertility gods and goddesses.

God's Word is very clear as to how He views adapting pagan customs and practices to worshipping Him. He explicitly commands His people not to copy religious practices used to worship other gods (Deuteronomy 12:29-32). He calls such practices *abominations* and emphatically states, "You shall *not* worship the LORD your God in that way!"

When we weigh Easter in the balance, it is clearly found wanting. It isn't found in Scripture, the way it is celebrated conflicts with basic biblical facts, and it is directly traceable to ancient pre-Christian pagan practices.

In contrast, what can we learn about Passover?

### Passover: A memorial of Jesus' death on our behalf

Every professing Christian believes that Jesus Christ died as the Savior of humankind, for our sins. But how many know *why* He died?

Much of modern Christianity tells people they have nothing more to do than give their hearts to Jesus and accept His blood for their sins. They reason that since human beings are imperfect sinners and Jesus' blood covers their sins, there's nothing more to do but simply accept these facts. Many professing Christians also assume that if a Christian believes he or she is required to strive to

obey God in any way, then he or she is denying Jesus as Savior.

But does the Bible support this outlook?

The apostle Paul addresses this subject in Romans 6:1-2: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" He goes on to say: "For he who has died has been freed from sin . . . Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts" (verses 7, 12).

Paul also explained that Jesus is our Passover who shed His sinless blood to cover the sins of humankind (1 Corinthians 5:7). He wrote that Jesus Himself explained the meaning of the Passover symbols of unleavened bread and wine—that they represent His body bruised and broken for us and His blood shed to pay the penalty for our sins.

"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 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" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Paul's clear teaching is that Jesus' death is symbolized by the Passover, and we who accept His shed blood should no longer live in sin, giving in to the lusts of our selfish nature. We are most certainly saved by grace through faith, but we are also required to honor God by our works, based on God's Ten Commandments (Ephesians 2:8-10; Matthew 19:17). Faith must be accompanied by works, for faith without works is dead (James 2:14, 17, 24, 26).

The Passover has great meaning for Christians, being as current and relevant today as it was when Jesus instituted its symbols and told His followers, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:17).

### Summing up the comparisons

Finally, let's review how Easter and Passover compare and differ.

Jesus observed the Passover, not Easter, with His apostles, instructing them to continue to observe it and teach it to the Church and declaring that when He returns, He will observe it again with His

true followers (Matthew 26:26-29).

Easter, even the very name, finds its origins in the worship of an ancient fertility goddess, Ishtar (or Ashtoreth as she was called in Israel during Bible times—1 Kings 11:5, 33; 2 Kings 23:13). She was worshipped in many ancient nations, which helps explain the origins of the Easter egg, a fertility symbol associated with this goddess (Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, 1959, pp. 103, 109).

There was another church that emerged after the early New Testament Church, one that began as an alternative to the original Jewish-Christian church of Jerusalem. Over time it appeased, negotiated, reconciled and pacified the pagans into accepting a nominal form of Christianity; and by replacing the Bible's religious observances with popular idolatrous celebrations, it merged paganism and Christianity into a new religion (p. 105). You can learn more of the story in our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*.

Regardless of how many well-meaning people celebrate Easter, they cannot legitimize a religious holiday that doesn't represent or belong to Christ. If a billion people do something wrong, it's still wrong.

Easter, the very name of which comes from an ancient goddess of fertility, denies the Savior it claims to honor. Jesus would never have sanctioned or observed it since doing so would have broken some of the very commands He inspired to be recorded in Scripture. And had Jesus sinned in this way, we would not have a Savior.

The command to observe Passover is one of the inexorable laws of God, given to human beings to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ, in spirit and truth (Matthew 26:17-29; John 4:23-24).

Passover entails God "passing over" human beings in meting out the justice of death for people's sins (Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Peter 1:18-19). God passed over Israel when He sent the death angel to kill all the firstborn of the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:27), which is a type of what He does for Christians today. Passing over Israel spared the lives of their firstborn; passing over Christians spares the "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23), ultimately freeing them from death.

Jesus then *is* our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). Christians keep Christ's Passover festival because it reminds them that if it weren't for the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we would surely die—*forever*. Jesus shed His blood for humanity, and those who accept His shed blood, while following

God's holy and righteous law (Romans 7:12), are promised an abundant life now and everlasting life later.

With God, timing and meaning are important. God is always on time, and He does nothing without life-giving meaning. Easter does neither.

Easter is a widely known man-made tradition. It stands against the true Jesus Christ and His teachings. Such departure from what He taught came early in Church history.

The apostle Paul wrote to certain Christians, lamenting, "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a *different spirit* which you have not received, or a *different gospel* which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!" (2 Corinthians 11:4). Many still do!

Remember that sin is the breaking of God's laws. The observance of Easter is *contrary* to God's laws (Deuteronomy 12:29-32); Passover observance is *part* of God's law (Leviticus 23:1-5).

Elijah demanded of the Israelites, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Though God is patient, He commands all men everywhere to repent of their sins (Acts 17:30).

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Neither He nor God the Father replaced the Passover with Easter. When you honestly compare and contrast Easter with Passover, there should be no question as to which one God desires you to observe.

Either we obey God or we don't. He sanctioned the true Christian Passover and not the pre-Christian and man-made tradition called Easter. Are you willing to follow what He says? **GN**

## To Learn More...

Are you surprised at what you've learned in this article? Don't feel alone. Most people are shocked to learn the true origins of some of our most popular holidays! If you'd like to learn more—and there's much more to learn!—request or download your free copy of *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?*

If you'd like to learn more about the biblical Passover observance and the Bible's other holy celebrations, be sure to read *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Both are yours free for the asking.

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# A New Superpower

Continued from page 7

"Beast" is the title Scripture gives to the leader of this end-time alliance, which is likewise called "the beast," given its savage nature in the tradition of its tyrannical predecessors. Together the rulers forming this alliance "will make war with the Lamb"—the returning Jesus Christ (verse 14).

The Scriptures do not give clear indications of what will bring about the transition to the "ten kings" at some point in the future. Verse 13 says that the 10 leaders in this final union will be "of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast."

This could be a decision on the part of some member nations to go ahead with "an ever closer union," leaving others behind. Outside circumstances could dictate some sort of change. It could also be a step beyond Europe itself. Just as the first Roman Empire 2,000 years ago included territory beyond Europe's borders, this final revival could extend beyond Europe, with other regions involved.

## The year ahead

This year is going to be a test year for the post-Lisbon Treaty European Union. What lies ahead? The British newsmagazine *The Economist* ran an article in its special year-end publication *The World in 2010* that states: "The fear of irrelevancy will haunt European leaders in 2010. They devised a new rule book, the Lisbon treaty, to come into force in 2010 and give their union the political heft to match its might as a trading and regulatory power. Its first year will reveal whether the design really does the job" (David Rennie, "More Than a Museum?").

In the last issue of *The Good News*, I quoted from the 2008 book *Picking Up the Reins* by Norman Moss. The book gave a thorough account of how power passed from Great Britain to the United States after World War II. It happened because Britain was broke after fighting two world wars and could no longer afford to police the world as it had done for two centuries.

America's economic problems today echo those of Great Britain six decades ago. At some point, the United States will lose its preeminent position in the world. Bible prophecy shows that a revived Roman Empire will replace it as the global superpower.

The Dec. 24, 2009, issue of the Canadian

newspaper *Ottawa Citizen* included an article titled "The Decline of America" by Karl Moore and David Lewis. It concluded with the following remarkable assessment of the near future:

"In spite of all the arguments of the Euro-skeptics, *the European Union has transformed itself into a unique global super-state*. Europe now has a president, a foreign minister, a common currency, a passport, a defence industry, a supersonic fighter, and an international role in peacekeeping.

"If and when the United States begins to retrench, no certain thing but a real possibility, *the European Union may well begin to fill the vacuum in the Western world* . . .

"Is the past key to the future? If one goes back five centuries China and India ruled the global economy. Turkey dominated the world of Islam. Europe suddenly came together under the leadership of the young dynamic Habsburg Charles V, who ruled from Belgium. Charles sought to halt the expansion of Islam, defend European civilization, unite the continent and forge a Latin American empire. Europe enjoyed a global reach under his reign, not only by military might but by 'soft power' and diplomacy.

"If America declines, will Europe fill the vacuum, partly in response to the Chinese challenge? To some this seems unlikely but think back to the world of only a scant 10 years ago when the Anglo-American model of stakeholder capitalism stood triumphantly (and perhaps a tad arrogantly) and practically alone on the top of the heap, and how much has changed since then."

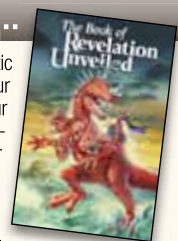
Indeed much has changed since then. And Bible prophecy reveals that far more astounding changes will take place in the coming weeks, months and years. Be sure to continue reading *The Good News* to better understand the forces that are transforming our world and why! **GN**

## To Learn More...

To more fully grasp the dramatic events that will shape your world, be sure to request your free copy of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. You'll discover much more about the astounding events the Bible says will affect the entire world. You need this crucial understanding—download or request your free copy today!

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# Television Log

All channels and times listed are for cable TV unless stated otherwise. For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or view programs online, visit [www.BeyondToday.tv](http://www.BeyondToday.tv).

## UNITED STATES

**Alaska**  
Anchorage ch. 18, Fri 4 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. 72, 120, Sun 9:30 a.m.  
ch. 73, 98, Sat 9:30 a.m.

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

**California**  
Anaheim (west) ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Clayton ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.  
Concord ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.  
Costa Mesa ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Cypress ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Danville ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.  
Eureka ch. 12, Fri 8 p.m.  
Fountain Valley ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Garden Grove ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Hayward ch. 28, Tue 10 p.m. (monthly)  
Hemet ch. 3, Fri 2:30 p.m.  
Huntington Beach ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Lafayette ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.  
Livermore ch. 26, Fri 5 p.m.  
Los Alamitos ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Marin County ch. 26, Wed 7 p.m.; Thu 1 p.m.  
Martinez ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.  
Midway City ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Modesto ch. 26, Fri 6 p.m.  
Monrovia ch. 16, 98, Tue, Thu and Sat 4:30 p.m.  
Novato ch. 71, Tue 9:30 p.m.  
Orange ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Orinda ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.  
Pasadena ch. 56, Sun 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.  
Petaluma ch. 26, Sun 9:30 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Wed 6 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.  
Pleasant Hill ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.  
Rossmoor ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.  
Sacramento ch. 18, Mon 6:30 p.m.  
San Diego ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.  
San Francisco ch. 29, Sun 9:30 a.m.  
San Jose ch. 15a, Sun 10:30 a.m.  
Santa Clara ch. 15a, Wed 4:30 p.m.  
Santa Rosa ch. 30, Sun 11 a.m.; Mon 4:30 a.m.; Wed 9 p.m.; Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 6 a.m.; Sat 7:30 p.m.  
Stanton ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Walnut Creek ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.  
Westminster ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 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.

**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.  
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.

**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 9:30 a.m.  
Valparaiso ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.

**Iowa**  
Des Moines ch. 17, Sun 11:30 a.m.

**Kentucky**  
Owensboro ch. 72, Sun 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.  
Paducah ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.

**Massachusetts**  
Boston ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.; ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.  
Cambridge ch. 5, Sun 11:30 a.m.  
East Longmeadow ch. 17, Tue 6:30 a.m.; Sun 6 p.m.  
Greenfield ch. 12, Tue 11 p.m.  
Palmer ch. 13, Thu 10 a.m.  
Worcester ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.  
Ann Arbor ch. 97, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.  
Cadillac ch. 97, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.  
Charlevoix ch. 97, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.  
Cheboygan ch. 97, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.  
Grand Haven ch. 22, Mon 4 p.m.  
Grand Rapids ch. 25, Tue or Wed 11 a.m.  
Kalamazoo ch. 95, Sun 9:30 a.m.  
Mackinaw City ch. 97, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.  
Manistee ch. 97, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.  
Michigan City ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.; Thu 7 p.m.  
Midland ch. 99, Tue 5:30 p.m.  
Mt. Pleasant ch. 3, times vary  
Petoskey ch. 97, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.  
Redford ch. 97, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.  
Traverse City ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.

**Minnesota**  
Albert Lea ch. 13, Sun 10:30 a.m.  
Austin ch. 13, Sun 10 a.m.  
Blaine ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
Bloomington ch. 16, Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.  
Brooklyn Center ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.  
Brooklyn Park ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.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.  
Crystal ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.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 6 a.m. & 2 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.  
Lexington ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.

**Lino Lakes**  
Litchfield ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.  
ch. 10, Sun 2 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 12:15 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wed 3 a.m., 8:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.  
Maple Grove ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.  
Minnetonka ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.  
New Hope ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.  
New Ulm ch. 72, Sun 5 p.m.; Thu 10 a.m.; Fri 7 p.m.  
Osseo ch. 14, Thu 9 a.m.  
ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.  
Plymouth ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.  
Richfield ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.  
Robbinsdale ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 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.  
Winona ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.

**Missouri**  
Cape Girardeau ch. 5, daily 5 & 9 p.m.  
Jackson ch. 5, daily 5 & 9 p.m.  
Jefferson City ch. 3, Wed 6 p.m.  
Poplar Bluff ch. 54, Tue 4 p.m.  
Springfield ch. 26, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Wed 7 p.m.

**Montana**  
Helena ch. 11, Sun 3 p.m.  
Missoula ch. 7, Sun 11 a.m.

**Nevada**  
Carson City ch. 210, Sun 2:30 p.m.; Sat 9:30 a.m.  
Reno/Sparks ch. 216/16, Wed 6:30 p.m.

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

**New York**  
Binghamton ch. 4, Thu 5:30 p.m.  
Bronx ch. 70, Mon 3 p.m.  
Brooklyn ch. 56, 69, Sun 10 a.m.  
Canandaigua ch. 12, Sun 2 p.m.  
Long Island ch. 20, Mon 10 p.m.  
New York ch. 57, Sun 7 a.m.  
Oneonta ch. 23, Mon 6 p.m.; Wed 9 p.m.  
Queens ch. 35, Tue 8 p.m.; Thu 3 p.m.  
ch. 56, Thu 3 p.m.; Sat 12:30 p.m.  
ch. 115, Sat 2:30 p.m.

**North Carolina**  
Charlotte ch. 21, Sat 1 p.m.  
Durham ch. 18, Wed 7:30 a.m.  
Hickory ch. 10, Sun 11 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**  
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.  
Cincinnati (Union Twp.) ch. 4, Sun 11:30 a.m. & 8:30 p.m.; Mon 8:30 p.m.  
Dayton ch. 8, Sun 2:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 a.m.; Wed 11 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.  
Defiance ch. 12, Tue 11 a.m.; Sat 3 p.m.  
Fairborn ch. 5, Sun 12 noon; Thu 6 p.m.  
Greenville ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.  
Huber Heights ch. 3, Thu 8 p.m.  
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.  
Springfield ch. 12, Sun & Sat 9 a.m.  
Trotwood ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.  
Urbana ch. 1, daily 6 a.m., 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.  
Vandalia ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.  
Wash. Court House ch. 3, Wed 2 p.m.; Sat 10 a.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.  
Monmouth ch. 17, Sun 11 a.m.  
Portland ch. 22, Fri 4:30 p.m.  
ch. 22a, 33, Sun 7:30 p.m.  
ch. 23, Mon 6:30 p.m.  
ch. 23, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Fri 2 p.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

**Pennsylvania**  
Pittsburgh ch. 21, Wed 2 p.m.

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

**Texas**  
Austin ch. 11, Mon 8:30 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.  
Longview ch. 26, Tue 2 p.m.; Sat 9 p.m.  
San Antonio ch. 20, Mon 10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

**Virginia**  
Charlottesville/Albemarle County ch. 13, 14, Mon 5:30 p.m.; Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 4:30 p.m.  
ch. 71, 74, Sun 10 a.m.

**Washington**  
Bainbridge Island ch. 12, Sun 9:30 a.m., 6:30 p.m., 11 p.m.; Sun-Sat 1 a.m.; Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat 5 a.m.; Tue & Thu 5:30 a.m.  
ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.  
ch. 13, Sun & Tue 8:30 p.m.  
ch. 22, 29, Sun 9 a.m.; Thu 10:30 p.m.  
ch. 14, Sat 5:30 p.m.  
ch. 11, Sun 11 p.m.; Mon 5 p.m.; Sat 11 a.m.

**West Virginia**  
Morgantown ch. 3, Mon, Wed & Fri 6:30 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.

**Wisconsin**  
Beloit ch. 12, Thu 6:30 p.m.  
Eau Claire ch. 96, 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.  
Omro ch. 19, Sun & Sat 1 p.m.  
Stevens Point ch. 96, 984, 984-1, Mon 5 & 9:30 p.m.; Tue 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.  
ch. 14, times vary

## CANADA

**Nationwide**  
Vision TV, Sun 7 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.



# Does Haiti Have a Future?

by **Beyond Today** host Darris McNeely

A massive amount of aid has poured into the Caribbean nation of Haiti in the aftermath of a devastating 7.0 earthquake. History has neglected this poor nation. Beyond this present tragedy, what is the best way forward for Haiti?



The Jan. 12 earthquake is the latest in a string of terrible tragedies for this poor island nation. The death toll as of Feb. 9 is 230,000, and the devastation is so great that the true number of dead will likely never be known.

Haiti's buildings and infrastructure were not built to withstand a quake of this magnitude. That is why everything, from the presidential palace to the poorest shanties, lies in ruins. Decades of political corruption have robbed the country of any chance to provide a high quality of life and health for its citizens. Investment capital has fled the nation, along with many of its brightest citizens—gone to safer havens, like America and Europe, to build better lives.

Haiti has suffered almost from its beginning when it was a slave colony of France. After a 13-year uprising, the slaves threw off the French yoke and gained independence in 1804—just as America was

expanding westward after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

Yet no major power recognized this fledgling nation immediately, largely because other nations feared losing their own slave colonies in the Caribbean. Finally France was the first country to recognize Haiti in 1825, followed by Great Britain in 1833. However, the United States did not recognize this Caribbean country until 1862 after the secession of the Southern states following the start of the American Civil War in 1861. Brazil did not recognize Haiti until 1888.

This isolation kept needed trade relations from developing that would have led to a stronger economy that could have provided for better education and better health. Lacking the technological development of the modern world, Haiti has largely been left in the hands of corrupt leaders.

With limited natural resources, Haiti

falls prey to other forms of corruption. It is strategically situated between Latin America and the United States, making it a natural pipeline for international smuggling and drug trafficking.

On top of this, the country lies along two geologic fault lines, one of which caused this quake. Hurricanes storming through the Caribbean often make their way over the island, leaving destruction and misery in their wake. Deforestation has left the country with even fewer natural resources.

In the wake of this disaster a great deal of international aid flowed into the country. But it will take years to recover. Beyond this tragedy await others, if only because of Haiti's geographic location. No doubt thousands of Haitians will immigrate to other nations seeking escape and a chance at a better life.

## What disaster reveals

A disaster of this magnitude among the world's poorest reveals much about the social fabric of a nation. Experts had warned officials that buildings needed to be reinforced to withstand earthquakes. But there was no money to accomplish the task. Even if it had been made available, government corruption likely would have siphoned off much of the money into the pockets of the powerful.

Since hospitals were also destroyed, in the aftermath there was no place to adequately care for the injured. This means doctors had no proper instruments with which to operate, no medication to ease the patients' pain or to treat wounds. Sanitation procedures were bypassed in the urgency of the moment.

It is likely that many Haitian health personnel were themselves victims of the quakes. Health workers flown in from other nations set up makeshift hospitals as near to the victims as they could.

The piles of bodies in the streets being lifted by earthmoving equipment into waiting dump trucks testified most poignantly to the collapse of norms. The dead could not be identified and given a proper burial.

Wikimedia Commons



Threat of disease mandated quick removal and mass burial. They were not mourned; there was no time. And for many there was likely no one left to mourn their passing.

Whatever level of community existed before the quake vanished in some areas in the aftermath. This is not uncommon with disasters. However, it is particularly acute in Haiti, given its history of political and business corruption.

Rebuilding must be accompanied by changing the basic nature of the system and its people. New leadership must be demanded if there is to be any future for this country and its people. Haiti needs leaders with a heart to serve *the people*—not themselves.

#### What will help Haiti?

A great deal of foreign aid will be needed to meet immediate needs. Much more will be needed to completely rebuild the nation. But is money the key to a solution?

Haiti has been the recipient of hundreds of millions of dollars of foreign aid. A 2006 report from the National Academy of Public Administration, titled “Why Foreign Aid to Haiti Failed,” showed that the outcome of financial assistance was unsatisfactory and the long-term institutional benefits were negligible (Bret Stephens, “To Help Haiti, End Foreign Aid,” *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 19, 2010).

The report faulted a high level of financial dysfunction and mismanagement in the government. The more foreign funds flowed in, the more it fueled corruption.

The *Wall Street Journal* article showed a key to building a lasting future for the people of Haiti: “A better approach recognizes the real humanity of Haitians by treating them—once the immediate and essential tasks of rescue are over—as people capable of making responsible choices. Haiti has some of the weakest property protections in the world, as well as some of the most

burdensome business regulation. In 2007, it received 10 times as much in aid (\$701 million) as it did in foreign investment.”

Many Haitians who immigrate to developed nations create productive lives when given education and proper support. Given a decent, working government, one that serves the best and highest interests of every individual, Haiti could develop a much higher standard of living than it now has. The nation needs proper government with leaders of integrity working to serve the people and transform the country into a just and productive society.

There is a well-known saying: “Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime.” Haiti has been a neglected and forgotten nation. As the milk of human kindness continues to pour into this devastated nation, let’s continue to pray that wisdom will prevail and that Haiti will become a society in which everybody fishes and everybody eats!

We pray for the people of Haiti in their present suffering. We hope a better day will rise from the rubble of their distress. If you have opportunity to help these impoverished and devastated people in any way, by all means do so. God, of course, expects all of us to help our fellow human beings made in His image as we are able.

May God speed the day of Jesus Christ’s return to establish the Kingdom of God throughout the earth—when perfect leadership, instruction and help will deliver not just Haiti, but all the world from anguish and poverty, leading all to an abundant and happy life. **GN**

## Europe’s Rise

*Continued from page 13*  
world’s oldest and major religions.

Paul Henri Spaak, former secretary-general of NATO, later remarked on that signing in a BBC documentary: “We felt like Romans on that day . . . we were consciously recreating the Roman Empire once more.”

Europe’s long dream of unity retains its hold on European leaders. Although slow to come together, and certainly not yet in its final form, that union will emerge as a global superpower that will stun and shock the world.

Again, Revelation 17:12-13 tells us of an alliance of 10 “kings”—which today could refer to presidents, premiers or prime ministers—who “will give their power and authority to the beast” in a final union of nations. Little do they know how mon-

strously evil their creation will become, ultimately plunging the world into catastrophe.

The next verse clearly states the time setting for this prophecy: “These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them.” The Lamb, of course, is Jesus Christ. He will not return until these 10 rulers are in place and forming an end-time superpower, as prophesied. Yet all indications are that His return must be soon—and the appearance of this empire will, of course, be even sooner.

As history shows, the Roman Empire has fallen, risen and fallen several times in the past. Be assured that it will rise once more, yet soon afterward will be destroyed for good and replaced by the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, which will *never* be destroyed!

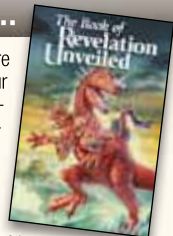
This is what Bible prophecy reveals regarding the end time as it focuses on events in Europe. The foundation is laid, the structure is

being built, and the time for the final revival of the Roman Empire draws ever closer.

Will you be ready to face these events that are destined to transform the world? **GN**

### To Learn More...

What’s behind the forces that are reshaping the world before our eyes? Where are these developments all around the world leading? Where can we look to find the answers? Only one source can tell us. God’s Word alone can and does reveal the future in advance. Be sure to request or download *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* to better understand where our world is headed and why!



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

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

## “God’s Time Machine”

I am so thankful that the wisdom of God still exists in our world despite Satan’s best efforts. I have gained a lot of knowledge from many of your informative articles and am especially appreciative of the solid biblical context. In your last issue was an article titled “God’s Time Machine,” in which you quoted Isaiah 66:2: “But on this one will I look; on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

I love that text as it gave me so much perspective when I read it, and because it goes so dramatically against the grain of our culture. I was also wondering if you had any booklets on major Old Testament events and current evidence of them, such as the Exodus.

*D.B., Alberta, Canada*

*We recommend several resources. One is our free booklet [Is the Bible True?](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets), available at [www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets). At the same site you can also download pdfs of an earlier 24-part Good News series titled [The Bible and Archaeology](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets). You may also wish to access our free Bible Reading Program at [www.ucg.org/brp](http://www.ucg.org/brp), checking the archives for the relevant biblical chapters.*

## Fruit of the Spirit series

The articles on the fruit of the Spirit in *The Good News* are exceptional and inspiring. Remember these are the fruits we need to produce to achieve our spiritual goals. They are very important. Please make these articles into a booklet. Enclosed is an offering.

*Mrs. E.A.K., Moon Township, Pennsylvania*

## Holidays or Holy Days?

I request your free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* I have done a lot of research and have come to many conclusions about this subject. I have also come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ rose on the Sabbath and not Sunday.

I feel the same about Easter and Halloween and do not celebrate either of these days. But it’s hard to talk with others on the subject. I can’t find anyone in this town where I live who believes any of this. I know the church will think the same. I don’t listen to man, but I read my Bible. And I have come to the conclusion that your church is like the one described in the Bible.

*J.W., Cabot, Arizona*

*If you wish to discuss the subject further, we have e-mailed you the contact number of our elder in the area. You also may wish to request our free booklet [The Church Jesus Built](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets).*

## More about the Sabbath

How can I know more about the Sabbath day?

*A.P., London, England*

*We have mailed our free booklet [Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets). It covers the subject and all relevant biblical scriptures in considerable detail. If you have any further questions, we would be happy to help you.*

## Readers from Canada

I am just writing to let you know that reading *The Good News* and the [*World News and Prophecy*] newsletter surely opens one’s eyes. Please keep sending the magazine and the newsletter. I enjoy reading them.

*M.A., Ontario, Canada*

Thank you for having accepted me as a new subscriber to *The Good News* magazine. I enjoy the magazine very much. It is what I call “solid biblical food.” I find it very generous of you to make your literature available for free. Please accept my check towards the costs of proclaiming the gospel.

*S.B., British Columbia, Canada*

For almost a year now, I have read your magazine and booklets diligently, and I’m very impressed. They are leading me to a better understanding of

the Bible. However, I am not sure which Bible I should be reading. Please let me know which version I should be using.

*R.J., British Columbia, Canada*

*We generally recommend the New King James Version, which we use as a basic translation in all of our publications. At times we also use some of the more reliable modern versions to help make the meaning clearer. To understand more, request or download our free reprint article “Which Bible Translation Should I Use?” at [www.GNmagazine.org/reprints](http://www.GNmagazine.org/reprints) and our free booklet [How to Understand the Bible](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets) at [www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets).*

## Readers from around the world

Both my husband and I have grown spiritually because of your in-depth articles in *The Good News*. You have no idea how much I look forward to receiving each issue in the mail, month after month. We are both self-employed, but would like to make a contribution to your ministry one day soon. It will never match the richness your magazine has brought into our lives. May the Lord enlarge your territory and may the editorial team be filled with joy everlasting, knowing you have been good and faithful servants to our Lord Jesus Christ.

*E.O., Singapore*

Thank you so much for sending me a copy of your magazine *The Good News*. I was so happy when I received it, but I don’t have any idea who gave you my name and address. I am very fortunate to be one of the receivers of this magazine.

*V.I.S., Israel*

Thank you for placing my name on your *Good News* mailing list. You are doing an excellent job keeping readers aware of the imminent appearance of Jesus Christ. I am not a Christian. I am a Muslim, but along with other Muslims I am waiting for Christ to come and bring Muslims and Christians together.

*A.S., Harlow, England*

Thank you very much for your excellent magazine *The Good News*. I enjoyed it with all of my family. I also finished the booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. I don’t have words to thank you for the complete information. Honestly, one day I would appreciate having the complete collection of your booklets.

*O.M., Bogota, Colombia*

You have raised an issue that everyone wants to know more about: Why are the allies finding it so difficult to win the war in Afghanistan? Military power alone will not restore global peace and security.

*S.J., Ethiopia*

*Our free booklet [The Gospel of the Kingdom](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets) will explain why the return of Jesus Christ remains the only real solution to our intractable global problems, including warfare.*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for helping me understand God’s great message. Life is a journey that needs people like you who wish to share the truth with us Africans. I am a young man of 34 years, still single and am prepared to serve God where necessary. Distances should not matter. People have lived many, many miles away from each other while doing the great work of God.

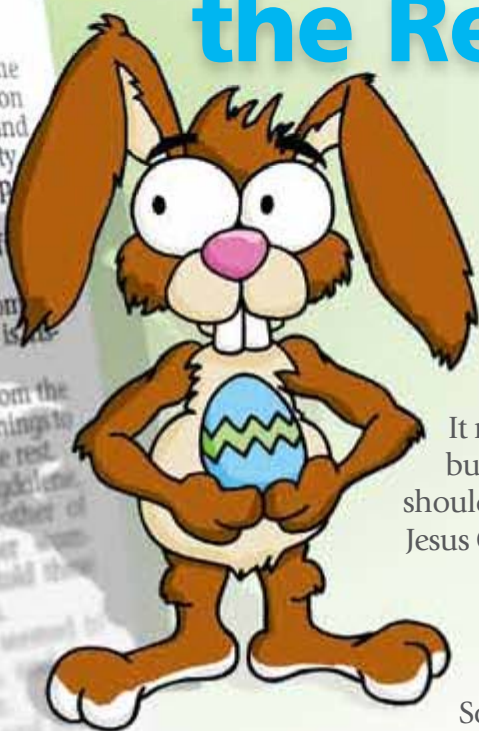
Professionally I am a medical laboratory technician working with the Ministry of Health Department. People are dying of tuberculosis, malaria, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. The number of cases is on the increase. Unless we involve God in the care of these patients, humanly we cannot do much in Uganda. He should be the One guiding us in what to do.

*R.B., Uganda*

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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).

# How Did *That* Get Into the Resurrection Story?



**W**hat do rabbits, painted eggs and colorful Easter baskets have to do with the death and resurrection of the Savior of mankind?

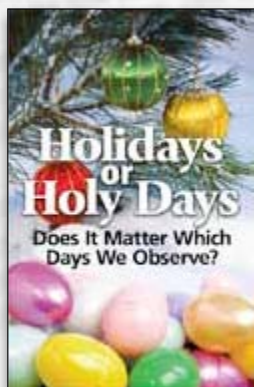
It may sound like an odd question to ask—but then it's truly odd that these symbols should have ever come to be associated with Jesus Christ's resurrection in the first place!

So what *do* these things have to do with Christ's resurrection? The plain answer is *NOTHING*.

So how did this strange association come to be? The same way that holly, kissing under mistletoe, decorated evergreen trees and a jolly plump man in a red suit (riding in a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer!) came to be associated with Jesus' birth.

Curiously, all these odd customs and symbols do have one thing in common. All were important symbols in pagan religions that had nothing to do with Christianity—most *long before Christianity even started*. So why are they part of the world's most important holidays today?

You need to discover the facts. And most important, since most people think they are worshipping God through these customs, you need to understand what *He* thinks about them! Our eye-opening free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* will help you discover the surprising answers. For your free copy, visit our Web site or contact any of our offices listed on page 2. A free copy is waiting for you!



Request or download your free copy at [www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)