

# *the* Good News

## Deadly Diseases

*Again a Threat to Humanity?*



Common Bacteria Make a Comeback • The New Breed of Weapons  
The Global Economy • What You Can Say to Make Someone's Day

## Could It Happen Again?

**I**t was the deadliest epidemic in human history. It circled the globe in a few months, killing more than 20 million people. Some cities and towns saw thousands perish in a few short weeks. In some remote villages, more than half the population died. The epidemic emerged out of nowhere, sickened and killed millions, then disappeared as quickly as it had come. The most deadly plague in human history remains largely a mystery.

Shocking as it may seem, humanity's deadliest epidemic occurred not in the Middle Ages, not in the time of the waves of bubonic plague that devastated Europe centuries ago, but in *this century*.

The influenza epidemic that traversed the globe from September 1918 through March 1919 left more than 20 million dead—in sheer numbers, far more than any previous plague. In New York City alone more than 33,000 died.

*Time* magazine estimated that, if a similar killer-flu virus emerged today, modern travel would allow it to spread worldwide in four days rather than the four months it took in 1918. The magazine estimated that some 60 million could die—triple the 20 million of 80 years ago.

Scientists are only now beginning to unravel the secrets of that extraordinary epidemic. How could an influenza virus—known primarily for its ability to produce aches, fevers and coughs—turn so deadly?

In recent years we have begun to see that the world of microorganisms is far more diverse—and unstable—than we had thought. As new technologies have enabled scientists to unveil and study the genetic makeup of living things, some of their discoveries are increasingly disconcerting.

The incredible variety and diversity of life we see around us is mirrored in the microscopic world—also all around us, but largely unseen and unnoticed. Just as humans and animals reproduce and pass on their diverse genetic traits to their offspring, so do the other tiny creatures all around us.

And occasionally something goes wrong.

Scientists think this is what happened in 1918. Several have concluded that a strain of flu mutated and crossed from swine to humans. The strain then spread around the world in the mass movement of soldiers and civilians in World War I.

Somewhere along the way, the virus apparently mutated further. Its particular genetic makeup differed so greatly from other flu strains that many people had no natural immunity and thus were defenseless. The mutated virus claimed millions of victims before it ran its course and apparently disappeared.

This crossover from animals to humans is not without precedent. Some scientists think that such news makers as the Ebola virus and HIV crossed from animals to humans, and our lack of any natural resistance helps explain why they are so lethal to humans.

Some researchers think the flu virus of 1918 first migrated from birds to pigs before it spread to humans—and thus the desperate slaughter of every chicken, duck and goose in Hong Kong when a different flu strain jumped from these domesticated birds to humans and started a miniepidemic there earlier this year.

As *Time* described the chain of events in Hong Kong, “while the rest of the world was wringing its hands over the remote threat from such exotics as Ebola and hantavirus, the health officials were busy staring down a far more likely global disaster . . .”

Could an epidemic like the 1918 flu outbreak happen again? Some researchers think we came perilously close just a few months ago and that it is just a matter of time before something similar—or worse—comes to pass.

Read the articles in this issue to discover what the Bible has to say about the possibility of future epidemics. But keep in mind that beyond the trauma prophesied to come lies the long-promised world of tomorrow. To discover more about this magnificent age to come, please request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

—Scott Ashley

# Good News

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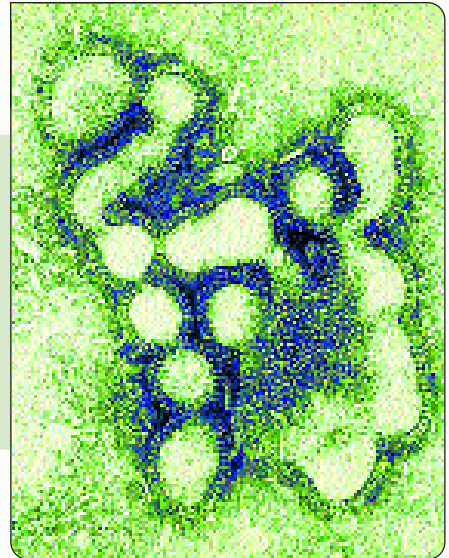
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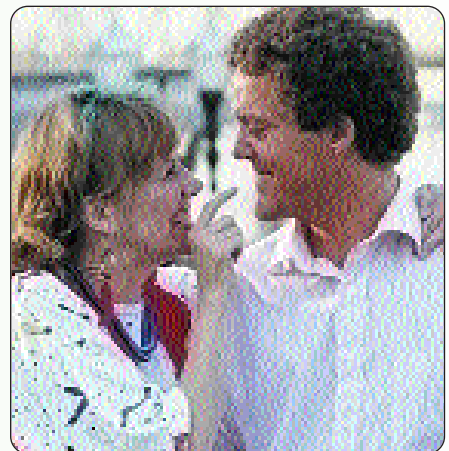
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**S**aturday, Feb. 8, 1975, dawned cold and clear. Eleven-year-old Danny Gallant and his friend Dale trudged the foothills of the Sandia Mountains east of Albuquerque, New Mexico. A chilly wind pressed against the young boys' faces, but the warmth of the sun soon took the bite out of it. The boys had no particular goal; they just wanted to explore. They were, however, armed with sheath knives against the unexpected. The unexpected insidiously appeared that crisp winter morning. Dale saw it first. Half hidden in a pile of rocks was a coyote, rigid in death. The two boys, excited about

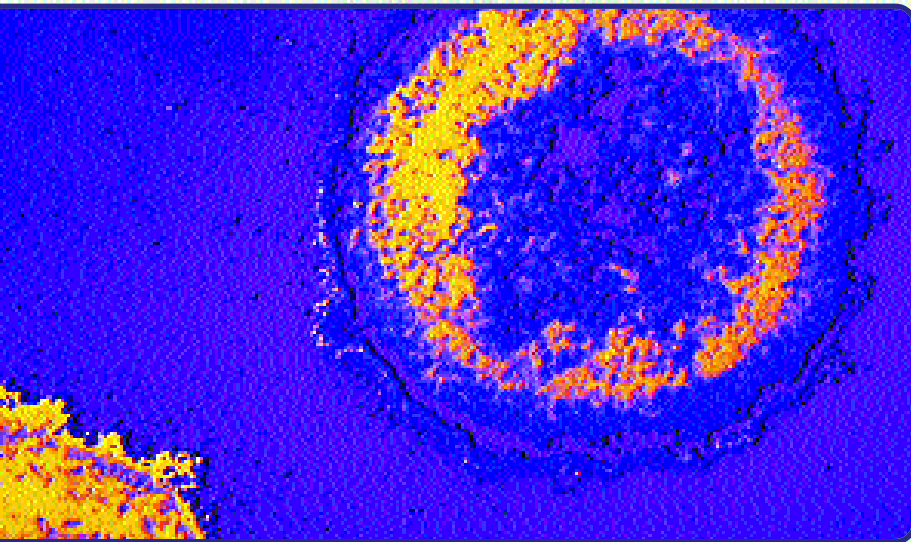
their find, quickly decided to skin it for its hide. Afterward they trudged home, triumphant. Their families admired the skin they so proudly displayed. Perhaps because Danny's mother wasn't home, the hide found a place inside his house.

By Tuesday the excitement of the wilderness trek wore off, and for Danny an unpleasant sequel was just beginning. He complained of a bad headache and that he felt weak. On Wednesday he stayed home from school, shaking from chills and pain in his right shoulder. At 5 o'clock Thursday morning, Danny woke his mother to show her the egg-sized,

# Deadly Diseases:

by Jerold Aust

## Again a Threat to Humanity?



*The human immunodeficiency virus, above, is responsible for one of the deadliest modern-day plagues—acquired immune deficiency syndrome, more commonly known as AIDS. Since it was first identified in 1983, the virus has claimed an estimated 12 million lives and infected 30 million more.*

*The Ebola virus, right, is named for the Ebola River in Zaire, where it was first discovered in 1976. From the first onset of symptoms, some 90 percent of those infected die in about a week. There is no effective treatment or vaccine for Ebola.*

*The influenza virus, far right, infects hundreds of millions every year. Although its effects are normally limited to fever, aches and chills, it has been known to mutate into deadly strains. One strain that emerged in 1918 led to the deadliest epidemic in recorded history, killing 20 million people before the plague ran its course.*

excruciatingly painful swelling in his right armpit. His parents took him to a medical center. It took several days to verify the illness: Danny Gallant had bubonic plague!

Danny's case was the first of the 1975 plague season. Matters got worse. It turned out to be the worst plague in half a century. Many wild animals perished from the disease, and each animal was a potential threat to domestic animals and humans.

### Plague: still nearby, still deadly

Although the thought of bubonic plague *seems* extremely remote, it isn't. A decade after Danny's deadly encounter, plague-infected animals could be found in at least 40 percent of the continental United States, from the Pacific eastward into Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.



The term *plague* comes from the Latin *plaga*, meaning “to blow,” or a blow at the hands of a god. The word is at once frightening, disheartening and—in today’s technological societies—so distant from modern thought that it almost defies the prospect of reality.

A long interval without epidemics brings complacency about the disease. Yet, depending on where you live, plague could be as close to you as the fleas on a rat’s back.

Humans contract the plague as they become involved in the rat-flea cycle, either by hunting and trapping animals that have become infected by plague-bearing fleas or by the spread of such fleas to rodent populations that live close to humans. The common black house rat, *Rattus rattus*, is highly susceptible to plague infection, but other small rodents and animals, such as field mice, gerbils, squirrels, marmots, guinea pigs, hamsters and prairie dogs, can also be affected.

Humans can be bitten by an infected flea, which disgorges the deadly plague bacilli into the skin as it feasts on the

against infectious diseases.

We face threats, not just from earlier killers like bubonic plague, but new and yet-unknown potential microbial catastrophes. In modern societies where food is plentiful and wars are nonexistent, stories about epidemics rarely interrupt social apathy. However, some epidemiologists think we have set the stage for the next epidemic. Even in the midst of modern medical advancements, how will we deal with future microbial juggernauts?

### Plague in history

History records three great pandemics, (worldwide epidemics) in the past 2,500 years. Each ravished nearly the whole of the inhabited world. The first lasted for 200 years, the second for 400 and the third more than 100 years.

The first began in the 15th year of the reign of Roman emperor Justinian I (ca. A.D. 542). It apparently first broke out in the Egyptian port of Pelusium, then spread to Byzantium (now Istanbul), probably aboard grain ships from Egypt.

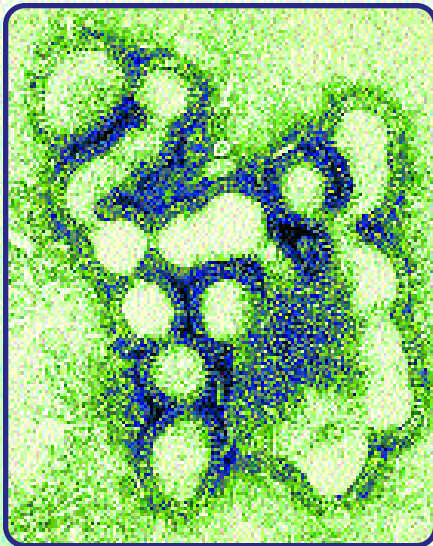
The Byzantine historian Procopius

time describes how the uncontrollable outbreak “depopulated towns, turned the country into a desert and made the habitations of men to become the haunts of wild beasts” (ibid.).

It took another century for the plague to disappear. It did not reappear for 600 years. This is plague’s typical pattern. It “erupts with pandemic intensity, scourges humanity for years or centuries, and then disappears as mysteriously as it comes” (ibid.). It passes through a populace, largely annihilating it. Then, as conditions change for the better and it runs out of hosts to infect, it disappears as quickly as it had spread.

### Europe’s devastation

The plague reappeared in the East and West in the 14th century. This pandemic is the one best known in history. It apparently originated in the East, in China, and marched relentlessly westward. The plague reached Europe in 1348, beginning in the ports of Sicily and mainland Italy. From there it moved inland to other cities. By June it had entered Paris. Its



host’s blood. The most effective transmitter of the bacillus is the oriental rat flea, which is thought to be the main link in plague outbreaks among humans down through history.

What are the prospects of a future plague, bubonic or otherwise? Some scientists think we are dangerously close to unknown plagues, against which HIV and AIDS could be viewed as minor forerunners of future epidemics. Occasional news reports detail how and why science is starting to lose ground in skirmishes

records the deadly march of the disease: “From [Egypt] it spread over the whole world, always moving forward and travelling at times favourable to it. For it seemed to move by fixed arrangement, and to tarry for a specified time in each country, casting its blight slightly upon none, but spreading in either direction right out to the ends of the world, as if fearing lest some corner of the earth might escape it. For it left neither island nor cave nor mountain ridge which had human inhabitants . . .” (“Procopius,” translated by H.B. Dewing, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Vol. 1, Book II, XXII-XXIII).

Historian Edward Gibbon wrote in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88): “I only find that, during three months, five and at length ten thousand persons died each day at Constantinople (Istanbul)” (Henry T. Coates & Co., Philadelphia, 1845, Vol. 3, p. 641).

For more than 50 years the plague infected much of Western Europe.

A chronicle written during Justinian’s

citizens lived in terror for months.

Philip VI ordered his best physicians to discover the source of the pestilence. Their conclusion? The plague had occurred because of the conjunction of Saturn, Mars and Jupiter. They then prescribed ways to avoid the disease: Eat poultry, fatty meats and olive oil. No one should sleep past dawn, baths were dangerous and sexual intercourse fatal (Charles T. Gregg, *Plague: An Ancient Disease in the Twentieth Century*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1985, p. 12).

Regardless, Parisians continued to die. As the decades passed, the black death—another name that usually refers to bubonic plague—spread its deadly fingers up the Rhine and Moselle valleys and finally arrived in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and England, where centuries later it finally played itself out.

In England the lovely summer of 1665 brought the plague. Instantly the wealthy retreated to the country. Even the president of the College of Physicians fled, and by late June the school was without

We face threats not just from earlier killers like bubonic plague, but new and yet-unknown potential microbial catastrophes.

a faculty. The Royal Society suspended its meetings, and the inns were empty.

But not all professionals left the city. Physician Nathaniel Hodges bravely remained in London to do his duty. He recorded the frustrating battle: “Many patients were lost when they were thought in a safe recovery; and when we thought the conquest quite obtained, death ran away with the victory; whereas others got over it, who were quite given up for lost, much to the disreputation of our art” (Gregg, p. 14)

Some 100,000 Londoners died. To this day, the old London graveyards are a mute testimony to these tragic years.

Outbreaks of plague continued for more than a century in Malta, Marseilles, Moscow and Vienna. The plague gradually withdrew from whence it came: to the East.

Some 400 years had passed. Nearly one third of Europe’s population had died of the disease. During these four centuries the plague sporadically reappeared every 17 to 25 years, usually in urban centers where rats were numerous. It concluded its devastation of Europe in Marseilles in 1720. But history shows us that the plague only went underground.

### The third pandemic

A myopic complacency again set in. A report from a select committee of the British House of Commons in June 1819 reads: “The Plague is a disease communicable by contact only . . . It appears from some of the evidence that the extension and virulence of the disease is considerably modified by atmospheric influences; and a doubt has prevailed *whether, under any circumstances*, the disease could be received and propagated in the climate of Britain” (Gregg, p. 16, emphasis added).

The committee admitted that some evidence existed that the disease had been “received and propagated” in years past, but doubted it could do so again.

Curiously, the third pandemic, beginning in the 1850s and ending in 1959, remains virtually unknown to most people. It began in the two ancient flashpoints of plague, Africa and Asia. However, this pandemic created a third region that permanently harbors the plague: the Western United States.

This third outbreak brought epidemics in San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Pensacola, several Texas

ports and other coastal cities around the world. In recent years cases of chronic infections have been reported in Texas, California, Massachusetts, Nebraska and North Carolina. In all but one of these cases, the infection began in New Mexico (Gregg, p. 16).

The third pandemic spanned more than 100 years. While the Great Plague of London (in the second pandemic) took 100,000 lives in six months, the third pandemic killed that many in a few weeks and continued monthly, and yearly, until more than 13 million were dead (Gregg, p. 17). In India alone more

than 11 million perished. During the Vietnam War of the 1960s and 1970s, more than 10,000 died of the plague. Transoceanic shipping was the principal transporter of the disease.

Eventually plague again played itself out, but not before demonstrating the world’s vulnerability to this and other microscopic killers.

### Will history repeat itself?

Could such devastating outbreaks of the disease rear their ugly heads again? It is a frightening possibility, even in our modern world. Plague can be as near as

## Plague’s Deadly Messengers

**P**lague is usually a disease of wild animals. It progresses through a cycle in which the bacterium infects fleas, the fleas then infect animal hosts and, finally, both fleas and animals die of plague. But before they die fleas often transmit the plague to other hosts—usually animals but sometimes humans.

When humans become infected, an epidemic may ravage a whole community. Sometimes entire families perish before medical science can detect the bacillus and prescribe a successful antidote. More often than not the carnage takes place unnoticed among wild rodents.

On rare occasions conditions grow ripe for plague to breach the boundaries of the big cities. When this happens the disease explodes within the midst of a tightly packed population. The common rat is the major factor in transporting prairie plague into the cities.

Ironically, the seemingly inexhaustible reservoirs of wild-animal plague seldom include the rat. When it comes to the plague and its effect on human beings, the common domestic rat is the king of culprits. It is the deadly messenger that carries the plague from infected wild animals to the human environment. History bears out that the rat can pass the deadly disease over thousands of miles: from central Asia or Africa into India, Southeast Asia, Europe and, in the early part of this century, into the Americas.

The black rat and the Norway rat play dominant roles in plague transmission. Their abilities to live off the human habitat are legendary. Rats gnaw incessantly; their incisor teeth grow at least five inches a year. They can penetrate materials that almost defy imagination: lead pipes, cinder block, concrete that has not completely hardened, plastic, fiberboard, asbestos and aluminum siding.

They can squeeze through a hole as small as the size of a human forefinger. Climbing trees and pipes is a simple feat, and they can scamper full speed along telephone wires using their long tails to maintain balance. Rats are incredibly prolific and destructive.

Rats are forced to migrate when overcrowding, predation, starvation or disease threatens their survival. Circumstances determine their migration. In South America the migration of black rats relates directly to the ripening and decay of a dominant species of bamboo. When unusually large quantities of bamboo seeds ripen, the rats multiply rapidly. When they don’t, the hungry rats descend on cultivated areas, destroying and consuming crops.

The World Health Organization estimates the world’s rat population to be at least four billion. But let’s not forget the common mouse. Its population is estimated to be as large or larger than that of the rat. As one professor of environmental studies put it: “Frankly, I’m more concerned about mice than rats. The rat may be in your basement but the mouse will be in your cereal box.”

The rat population in the United States is estimated at between 100 million and 200 million. New York is estimated to house six to eight million rats.

Some rats within the contiguous United States have been found to be plague-infected. Plague exists, and its most dangerous messengers are rats. “We depend, for the prevention of catastrophe, upon approximately equal measures of eternal vigilance and continued good fortune” (Charles T. Gregg, *Plague: An Ancient Disease in the Twentieth Century*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1985, p. 72).

—Jerold Aust

the next-door neighbor or, with the miracle of modern travel, only hours or a day's journey from virtually anywhere.

Gregg focuses our attention on the continuing presence of the roots of the plague: "Plague is a willing handmaiden to famine and war; these threaten us still, perhaps more than ever. The plague bacillus and its hosts [rodents] show increasing resistance to antibiotics and pesticides. This raises the specter of our most potent weapons [modern medical scientific discoveries] splintering in our hands at that moment when they are most needed" (Gregg, p. 17).

Laurie Garrett, who won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for reporting on the Ebola virus, wrote a bestseller on new diseases. In her recent book about the emergence of diseases such as Legionnaires' disease, AIDS, the Muerto Canyon microbe, the Rwandan cholera outbreak and others, she refers to such opportunistic infections as ecological paybacks for our modern behavior, flawed technology and the destruction of the rain forests. Her conclusions cry out for our attention.

Garrett's bestseller is titled *The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World Out of Balance* (Penguin Books, New York, 1995). Dr. David Baltimore, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine, says of her conclusions: "... Nature continually throws [challenges] at human civilization in the form of infectious diseases. Like earthquakes and hurricanes, the devastating diseases that periodically emerge . . . remind us how thin is the veneer that separates our high-tech society from personal and communal disaster."

Most people assume that medical sci-

**Plague can be as near as your next-door neighbor or, with the miracle of modern travel, only a day's journey from virtually anywhere.**

ence will shield us from disasters such as those in previous centuries. Garrett's book is a call to awaken from such complacency, to realize that we are much more vulnerable than we suppose. The horrendous precipitators to pandemics are reported every day in the news: the deadly, inexorable march from war to famine to pestilence. And, if war is not a first cause, then earthquakes and drought



*Desperate to be spared from plague, medieval Europeans seek deliverance through dancing and prayer. Unaware of the causes of plague, the world was largely defenseless against its onslaught. One of every three Europeans died of bubonic plague in the 14th century. Note the graves in the foreground and background.*

can do the job quite effectively. Man himself, just through interference with and alteration of nature, can also provide the first cause.

#### **Man-made catastrophe**

Laurie Garrett, in describing the deadly Machupo virus, shows how easily our best intentions can bring disaster on our own heads. This story began in Bolivia in 1962.

Two U.S. officials, Karl Johnson and Ron MacKenzie, were asked to help investigate an epidemic sweeping the eastern part of Bolivia. The men flew to the remote region, where they encountered the epidemic firsthand. The first

determined that the mysterious disease was caused by a virus. The virus caused a devastating hemorrhaging throughout the body. Johnson and MacKenzie were elated to make this discovery and celebrated with champagne. Their joy didn't last long.

Shortly after, both men began to feel ill. To their shock, they had contracted the malady. They both made it to a hospital in Panama, where a U.S. Army doctor was flown in from Washington to try to save their lives. Although he hadn't treated this specific ailment, he was proficient in treating another viral hemorrhagic disease called Seoul hantaan, which American soldiers had contracted in the Korean War. Military doctors had discovered that the patients' chances for recovery improved when they were carefully administered electrolytes and fluids.

Physicians understood that hemorrhagic diseases depleted the body of fluids and proteins, which could damage vital organs beyond repair and prohibit the immune system from mounting an effective attack against the deadly virus. Without help from the immune system, the patient would either convulse or go into shock. Under the Army doctor's careful administration of electrolytes and fluids, both men recovered.

Johnson and MacKenzie survived and returned to their dangerous fieldwork in

dozen patients they saw were writhing in pain and vomiting blood.

With the assistance of researchers in the United States, they established a field laboratory in the village of San Joaquin. Their first order of business was to determine whether the deadly microbe was a bacterium, virus or parasite.

After conducting an autopsy on a youthful victim of the epidemic, they

Bolivia, not knowing whether their devastating encounter had made them immune to the deadly microbe.

It wasn't long until they isolated the mysterious virus, which they found in the blood, spleens or brains of five mice. They called it Machupo, after the

The virus was then ingested by humans as they ate the grain. It could also be inhaled or enter through cuts in the skin. From those points of entry, the Machupo virus was lethal to its human hosts.

How did the mouse population grow so large in the villages? MacKenzie

ment of resistant microorganisms. Unexplainable appearances of new or mutated strains can burst unexpectedly on an unsuspecting population. Man can even, unfortunately, create an epidemic where none existed before" (Geoffrey Marks and William K. Beatty, *Epidemics*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1976, pp. xi-xii).



*Japanese schoolgirls wear masks to protect themselves from flu in Tokyo during the worldwide influenza outbreak of 1918-19. Although flu is rarely deadly, that epidemic claimed the lives of 20 million people around the world.*

local river. But how could they find the mode of transmission? With painstaking patience and experimentations, the scientists discovered the Machupo virus was transmitted through the urine of mice. The transmission sequence from mice to humans was at once incredible and simple.

Johnson traced back the most likely explanation for how the Machupo virus had spread. The epidemic's roots lay in Bolivia's revolution of 1952, when the people of San Joaquin suddenly found themselves without an employer and a steady source of food supplies. Realizing they needed to grow grains for their survival, they hastily chopped down jungle areas along the Machupo River to grow corn. Unknowingly, they had disrupted the natural habitat of the *Calomys* field mouse, now providing the mice a new and plentiful food source: corn. The mouse population grew rapidly and soon invaded San Joaquin.

During the plague of hemorrhagic fever, mice could be found throughout the town's grain storehouses. While feeding on the grain, the mice also urinated on the food supplies, spreading the virus.

noticed the remarkable lack of cats. He learned that, a few years earlier, in a well-meaning health measure, Bolivia had initiated a massive DDT-spraying campaign to eliminate malaria. However, the spraying also poisoned thousands of cats. As

the cats died off, the mouse population rose. A well-intentioned government program inadvertently contributed to a deadly plague. Sometimes well-meaning mankind can be its own worst enemy.

Garrett's analyses of other recent outbreaks of deadly diseases—Marburg virus, yellow fever, lassa fever, Ebola, swine flu, Legionnaires' disease and others—show that some have been actually precipitated by human actions.

"Even in modern times there is still much that we do not know about the causes, spread, and decline of many epidemic diseases. Powerful new methods of treatment have sometimes complicated the picture by stimulating the develop-

#### Words of scientific wisdom

In 1989 an impressive group of American scientists, at a three-day conference, discussed how disease-causing microbes were not at all defeated, but were posing ever-greater threats to mankind.

At that meeting University of Chicago historian William McNeill outlined why humanity has been vulnerable to plague over the millennia. His studied belief was that such catastrophic epidemics were a result of humanity's steps forward. "As humans improve their lots, McNeill warned, they actually *increase* their vulnerability to disease . . . It is worth keeping in mind that the more we win, the more we drive infections to the margins of human experience, the more we clear a path for possible catastrophic infections. We'll never escape the limits of the ecosystem. We are caught in the food chain, whether we like it or not, eating and being eaten" (Garrett, p. 6).

How great a threat do such microscopic killers pose for humankind? "The current vogue is that they're not as much

### "What happens if a deadly virus for which we have no treatment or cure explodes into the middle of a major city?"

of a large-scale, Andromeda Strain-type threat as some people have suggested. And they could be right. Maybe nothing's going to happen. But there is something terrifying about the fact that nothing can stop the implacable evolution of these viruses as they test, through mindless mutation, ever more strategies to facilitate their survival, a survival that just may represent disease and death for us humans. Maybe no deadly pandemic will occur. But I wouldn't want to bet my life on it" (C.J. Peters, M.D., and Mark Olshaker, *Virus Hunter: Thirty Years of Battling Hot Viruses Around the World*, Anchor Books, Doubleday, New York, 1997, p. 323).

Peters and Olshaker also pose the

sobering question: “What happens if a deadly virus for which we have no treatment or cure explodes into the middle of a major city?” (ibid., p. 1).

Of course, the further we are from the last great plague the closer we are to the next one.

We would do well to heed these authors’ and scientists’ words of wisdom. And, more important, there is a much higher source who speaks authoritatively of the certainty of future epidemics. Scripture tells us to “hear Him!” (Matthew 17:5).

### Why Christ must intervene

Contrary to the evolutionary theory, God says He made man (Genesis 1:26-27). Since He states this without equivocation, we would do well to listen to Him—especially in relation to human catastrophes. It is also wise to heed



*A priest consoles a victim of bubonic plague in Milan during one of the waves of plague that devastated Europe centuries ago. Like everyone else, even religious authorities were unable to halt the plague's deadly march.*

human beings who know the ingredients of plague and how it affects us.

Bluntly put, God reveals through Scripture that humanity, through the greed and selfishness that drive most human behavior, is hell-bent on a course, if left unchecked, that will eventually destroy human life.

However, God is determined to save, deliver and restore mankind and to build a different human society. But before He does that we must suffer some severe trials.

Sadly, this is the record of history. We never seems to learn from our tragic mistakes.

Since man has chosen to learn lessons of life the hard way—and not allow God to guide him—God will allow humans to bring themselves to the very brink of annihilation before He intervenes. In our state of selfishness and lust for power, we will collectively come to the point of destroying ourselves.

Jesus Christ Himself made this clear and tells us why He must intervene and return to earth: *to prevent human extinction*. He speaks of that time: “It will be a time of great distress, such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again. If that time of troubles were *not cut short, no living thing could survive*; but for the sake of God’s chosen it will be cut short” (Matthew 24:21-22, Revised English Bible, emphasis added throughout). Left to his own devices, mankind would certainly destroy himself from the face of the earth.

Jesus Christ speaks of our end-time period as one of unprecedented tyranny, terror, war, famine and epidemics: “The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should *destroy those who destroy the earth*” (Revelation 11:18). Christ will return to earth to judge those who would foolishly and selfishly destroy the earth and its inhabitants.

If Jesus Christ were to wait to save man from himself, to allow man to try to find his own answers to his own insurmountable problems, He would be too late. Mankind would be extinguished from earth. Christ must return to *save* man from *himself*.

### Dire prophetic warnings

Although the book of Revelation was recorded by the apostle John, its true author is none other than Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1-2). Christ makes predictions about human nature and its inevitable consequences.

Man’s history can be read as a chronicle of wars. From time immemorial he has wanted—and still wants—to control human beings by force. What usually follows on the heels of war? The disruption

*Continued on page 16*

## Are New Plagues Emerging?

**A**quatic botanist JoAnn Burkholder prepares 70 fish per day to be sacrificed to the strange beast in her lab aquariums. To the naked eye, the tanks appear empty, but 10 minutes after Burkholder places the fish in the water they are all dead. Some fish are covered with hideous sores that caused scientists to label their microbial murderers as “the cell from hell.”

Burkholder knows too well that the beast’s venomous “bite” can harm humans as well as fish, so she watches the slaughter from behind a mask and protective suit. The “creature” is a bizarre one-celled predator that can transform itself from animal to plant to animal again.

This killer dinoflagellate—*Pfiesteria piscicida*—came on the scene six years ago in North Carolina’s coastal estuaries. It is the suspected killer of more than one billion fish.

Six years ago the tiny creature seemed exotic and weird. But, after many investigative studies over the past six years, it is no longer viewed as a curiosity; it is now a warning. Now scientists place the *Pfiesteria* among the ranks of other harmful microorganisms, including the toxic “brown tides” that have devastated fisheries in New England and Texas by polluted sewage-filled waters.

According to scientists, “*Pfiesteria* may be another sign that humans are changing coastal environments in ways that could have serious consequences for wildlife and people . . .” (Joby Warrick, *The Washington Post*, June 10, 1997). There is little doubt that this cell from hell has the same effects as that known as plague. It can neurologically impair human beings, causing symptoms that can include open sores, nausea, memory loss, fatigue, disorientation and a near-total incapacitation (Michael Satchell, *U.S. News & World Report*, July 28, 1997, p. 27). It is a plague and, according to Satchell, it is spreading.

We can add *Pfiesteria* to the list of other newly discovered killers that have made headlines in recent years—AIDS, Ebola, Lassa fever and hantavirus, among others.

—Jerold Aust



# Common Bacteria *Make a Deadly Comeback*

*Can medical science reliably protect us  
from bad bugs? Some observers aren't so sure.*

by Jerold Aust

**F**ood contamination isn't just a simple stomach ache anymore. Sixteen-month-old Anna Grace Gimmestad of Evans, Colorado, loved fruit juices. When she went grocery shopping with her mother, she would excitedly point to the colorful, fruity juices on the shelf.

In late 1996 little Anna fell ill after drinking some tainted apple juice. Within two weeks her kidneys failed, her heart faltered, and she died. The juice she drank was contaminated with one of America's increasingly troublesome pathogens: a strain of bacteria known as *E. coli* 0157.H7.

This deadly strain has been found in fresh-

1980, and sporadic outbreaks have become increasingly more frequent.

Although the nation's food supply remains one of the safest in the world, it apparently is not good enough always to catch such virulent strains. Inattention to health safeguards can make the difference between life and death. Apparently the batch of apples that wound up in the juice little Anna Gimmestad drank had fallen to the ground and come in contact with deer feces. Safeguards that should have prevented this tragedy failed.

Is this an isolated incident, or are there other dangerous bugs that can intrude into our lives, breaking down the perceived wall of protection we assume that science and medicine have built?

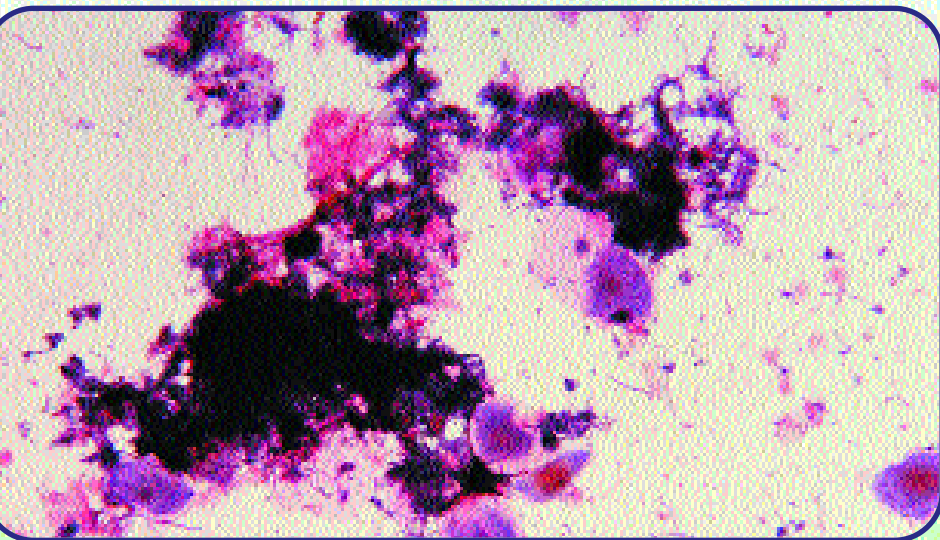
Over the last year a series of troubling reports has described how microorganisms are fighting back, mutating into strains resistant to the most powerful antibiotics in the medical arsenal. Among them are such killers as tuberculosis, bubonic plague and staphylococcus (staph) bacteria.

## The battle against the bugs

Just 15 years ago most staph infections responded to a wide range of antibiotics. But in the early 1980s a specific strain surfaced that medical practitioners found resistant to methicillin, then the drug of choice to combat the ubiquitous staph bacteria.

However, some strains of staph found ways to mutate around its killing properties, and today methicillin is useless against half of all staph infections. The omnipresent bug has developed resistance to other drugs as well. Because bacteria and viruses can mutate rapidly, researchers must constantly develop new antibiotics to stay one step ahead in effective treatments.

In recent years, however, such advancements have begun to stall. Vancomycin, the last antibiotic with a clear knockout punch against bacteria, is showing signs of faltering as new strains emerge. The notion that science has given us permanent victory over infectious diseases may prove to be illusory.



*Bacteria are all around us and often serve a useful purpose. This is a magnification of bacteria breaking down waste in water. Of some 1,600 known species of bacteria, about 200 are known to cause disease in humans.*

fruit juices and vegetables—ironically the very foods Americans desire most in their pursuit of good health. (Of course, this incident and some other relatively isolated instances by no means constitute sufficient grounds to cease buying these food products.)

*E. coli* infects as many as 20,000 Americans every year, mostly through meat, and about 500 die. *E. coli* 0157.H7 was first identified in food in

"We don't have any new drugs, really new ones, of the vancomycin type coming through in the next few years, and it concerns me that we're going to lose the one we can count on," said Stuart Levy, director of the Center for Adaptation Genetics and Drug Resistance at Tufts University Medical School in Boston.

### An alarming development

A notable case illustrating the challenge medicine faces involved a patient from Michigan. His case might well prove a harbinger of more significant health problems ahead, according to public-health officials who noted that similar instances of drug resistance in previously susceptible bacteria have become more and more common around the world.

The Michigan patient became infected with a strain of *Staphylococcus aureus*, a common bacterium that manifests itself in ailments ranging from pimples and boils to fatal septic infections in surgical patients. Because of kidney failure, this patient relied on a home dialysis system to cleanse his blood in place of his failed kidneys. The procedure required a tube to remain in the patient's abdomen. Since this process makes patients prone to frequent infections, treatments with vancomycin were used to control and eradicate occasional staph infections.

However, in this case the miracle drug proved less effective than usual. Tests done and confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed that this newly discovered strain of bacteria had developed the ability to survive moderate levels of vancomycin given intravenously. Although a previous single case was recorded in Japan, this was the first time vancomycin-resistant staph had been discovered in the United States.

### The problem of overprescribing

William Jarvis, epidemiologist and acting director of the CDC's hospital infection program, thinks that this drug-resistant strain of staph has developed largely because of doctors overprescribing vancomycin when

## Malaria Poses a New Threat

**M**alaria, a disease that comes to humans through tropical mosquitoes, is posing a new threat. During the past five to 10 years, the disease has reappeared in regions where health authorities once thought it was under control, and it is emerging for the first time in countries that previously had no problem with the disease.

Malaria is a disease transmitted through the blood to humans by an infected female anopheles mosquito. The primary symptoms are severe chills and fever. If malaria is left untreated, it is often fatal. The infection is most severe in very young children and in pregnant women.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that between 1.5 and 2.7 million deaths occur worldwide each year from malaria, and between 300 million and 500 million malaria illnesses occur annually. Out of all the cases worldwide, nine out of 10 infections and deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa, where some regions have seen a sevenfold increase in the disease during the past several years.

"If you live in a village in Africa, you pretty much have to deal with malaria on a daily basis, so there's some level of acceptance to the fact that you and your children are going to get a malaria infection several times a year and get sick from it," says Dr. Trenton Ruebush, chief of the Malaria Epidemiology Section at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. "Malaria is a huge problem in this region, and it's going to take a lot of work to make major inroads on it."

Along with Sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) has always had a problem with malaria. "For many years through effective malaria control programs, the region had the disease under fairly good control," Dr. Ruebush explains. "But then, partly because of reduced funding, perhaps partly because of complacency on the part of the Ministry of Health, partly because of the increases in drug resistance and so forth over the last 10 years or so, the disease has increased greatly in these countries."

### Malaria extends its reach

Malaria is also occurring at an increasing rate in industrialized nations, including Europe and the United States, areas that haven't had to face the problem before.

In the United States between 1,000 and 2,000 cases of malaria are reported annually, although the CDC has estimated that those figures represent only half of the actual incidence of the disease. The CDC estimates that around 97 percent of these cases are "imported," meaning they are acquired either by an American who's traveling abroad or by a foreign visitor or immigrant to the United States. Often travelers can carry an infection from one country to another before they know they are ill.

According to the CDC, an increase in the number of "locally acquired" cases of malaria in the United States has occurred during the past decade. Locally acquired cases are those in which transmission of the disease occurs in the United States. This could be through blood transfusion or organ transplantation or through drug addicts sharing needles and syringes (in which case some contaminated blood is left in the needle or syringe and transmitted from one person to another).

Dr. Ruebush says a small number of malaria infections have occurred each year because of mosquitoes that live in the southern two thirds of the United States, but cautions that the risk for a large outbreak of malaria in the United States is still low.

"A large number of factors would have to come together for an outbreak to occur in the United States," he explains. "A mosquito would have to bite and infect a person, the weather needs to be just right so the mosquito can live long enough for the parasites to undergo the development in the mosquito, and then they manage to find someone else to bite and transmit the infection. Then other mosquitoes would have to bite those one or two, get infected, and then each of them bite more people and continue that on for several generations."

### The battle goes on

WHO and CDC scientists have several malaria vaccines under development and hope to have at least one vaccine ready within the next five to 10 years. Work continues on improving anti-malarial drugs and developing new ones. Another malaria-control measure is the use of mosquito netting hanging over people's beds, particularly if it is treated with insecticide.

"We have many of the tools; the problem is, in the regions in the world where malaria is a really big problem, the health infrastructure is very poor, many of these areas are difficult to gain access to, the health budgets in these countries are very limited to buy the drugs," Dr. Ruebush says. "So, technically, malaria is less of a problem than administratively and in terms of logistics."

—Becky Sweet

less-potent drugs would have sufficed. The more a strain of bacteria comes into contact with a given antibiotic, he explained, the more opportunities it has to develop a way to resist that drug's effects.

"It's become common practice in some dialysis centers that if a patient develops a fever or pain at the catheter site or some other nonspecific symptom, they'll give them a bolus of vancomycin," he said. "That practice has clearly got to stop. We have recommended that . . . if it is susceptible to other antibiotics, then we must use those instead."

Dr. Jarvis is concerned not just with the overprescribing of vancomycin and other antibiotics, but with the lack of funding necessary for state and local laboratories to track the emergence of resistant bacteria.

Anthony S. Fauci, chief of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, defends the use of vancomycin in cases in which seriously ill patients need

to be treated immediately. In such serious cases "you don't want to take a chance and you have to go with your big guns," he said. Dr. Fauci indicated that, if subsequent testing shows a lesser drug will work, then in many cases the patient can be safely switched to a less-potent drug. This reserves vancomycin for emergencies.

For the first time in the history of the United States, scientists have found a strain of staphylococcus bacteria that can resist treatment with vancomycin. Up until recently this superpowerful antibiotic proved 100 percent effective against this threatening microbe.

Many doctors are now placing their hope in Synercid, a new antibiotic developed in France. But even this drug is no silver bullet against infections; in some studies it has not proved as effective as existing antibiotics.

The regular mutation of bacteria and viruses is what makes development of

effective treatments and vaccines against HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, so maddeningly difficult. The virus has so far been able to mutate at a rate faster than researchers can develop weapons with which to fight it. By the time treatments are devised, tested and put into use, new strains have emerged that are resistant to those treatments.

### Stemming antibiotic resistance

There are some encouraging signs in the battle against drug-resistant microbes. If doctors and patients change their behavior, they may be able to slow the spread of drug-resistant bugs. Finland has noted a favorable change in human behavior and a corresponding reduction in antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Similarly, New York has noted a dramatic drop in the frequency of drug-resistant tuberculosis after adopting a newly revitalized tuberculosis-control program.

## The World's Most Deadly Disease

It is an epidemic of unprecedented proportions. It kills more adults worldwide than all other infectious diseases combined, and nearly half of the world's refugees may be infected with it. It is the leading killer of people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and orphans more children than any other infectious disease. It's not AIDS, nor hepatitis, nor malaria, but an ancient disease that was nearly eradicated a generation ago: tuberculosis.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), almost *two billion people*—one third of the world's population—are infected with tuberculosis (TB) bacteria.

Each year eight million new cases of TB appear, along with three million TB-related deaths. At current rates the WHO estimates that as many as 500 million people will become ill from TB during the next 50 years.

TB is not a disease limited to the developing world. In the United States alone it is estimated that 10 million to 15 million people are infected with the TB bacterium, and 22,000 new cases of TB occur each year.

Yet, only 15 to 20 years ago, health authorities were about ready to declare that TB, like smallpox and polio, had been wiped off the face of the earth. In the United States during the early 1900s, TB was the No. 1 killer. Then, in the 1940s, the introduction of antibiotic drugs that could kill TB bacteria meant that the disease could be cured. For three decades, from the 1950s to the mid-1980s, TB cases steadily declined.

But in the 1980s the battle against tuberculosis took a turn for the worse. The disease reemerged and spread in industrialized countries and underdeveloped nations. Between 1985 and 1992 the number of TB cases increased by nearly 20 percent in the United States. Worldwide, the modern TB epidemic led the WHO in 1993 to declare its first "global emergency." At the time, TB was killing more adults each year than AIDS, malaria and tropical diseases combined.

TB is caused by a bacillus, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. A person can become infected with the tuberculosis bacterium when microscopic airborne particles of infected sputum are inhaled. The bacteria

get into the air when someone who has tuberculosis infection of the lung coughs, sneezes, shouts or even laughs. People who are nearby can breathe the bacteria into their lungs.

For most people who inhale TB bacteria and become infected, the body is able to fight the bacteria to stop them from spreading. The bacteria become inactive, but they remain alive in the body and can become active later. This is called TB infection. People with TB infection do not feel ill, have no symptoms and do not spread TB to others. The infection can remain dormant in a person's body for decades, then flare into active disease when the body's immune system is weakened for any reason. About 10 percent of infected people develop TB at some point.

TB can attack any part of the body but usually targets the lungs. When a person breathes in TB bacteria, they can settle in the lungs and begin to grow, then move through the blood to other parts of the body, such as the kidney, spine and brain. Although TB in the lungs or throat can be contagious, TB in other parts of the body is usually not contagious. Usual symptoms of the disease are a general fatigue or weakness, extreme weight loss, fever and night sweats. If the infection in the lung worsens, then further symptoms can develop, including persistent coughing, chest pain, coughing up of blood and shortness of breath.

Because TB is spread through airborne bacteria, anyone can become infected. Groups with the highest risk are the poor and homeless, as well as those with undeveloped or suppressed immune systems: young children, the elderly, HIV-positive people and patients with certain types of cancer.

### New and deadly strains

Health-care officials are increasingly concerned about emerging new forms of drug-resistant TB. According to the WHO, outbreaks of drug-resistant tuberculosis are showing up all over the world and threaten to touch off a worldwide epidemic of virtually incurable tuberculosis.

Drug-resistant strains have appeared in New York City prisons, a

But we might be surprised how much people have come to depend on antibiotics to cure their illnesses. In the United States one fourth of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* bacteria (which cause ear infections, pneumonia and meningitis) are resistant to penicillin. Longer hospital stays and higher mortality rates are associated with resistant organisms, especially in hospitals.

Experts warn that, if vancomycin resistance develops in the common staph bacteria, it will precipitate a monstrous medical problem. "I think it's important to be aware of this before we do reach the end of the rope," said Morton N. Schwartz, professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School.

Doctors and patients aren't the only ones who must consider the overuse of antibiotics. Fully 40 percent of the antibiotics produced in the United States in the early 1980s was given to livestock. Fruit growers also use such potent drugs. Of

the 15,700 tons of antibiotics produced in that period, 300,000 pounds were sprayed on pears, apples and other fruit, ostensibly to prevent a blight that causes scaling on fruit skin.

"We are just covering the world with

## Drugs kill sensitive strains and provide a survival advantage for germs whose genetic traits permit them to withstand antibiotics.

this thin layer of antibiotics, which is selecting out [bacterial] resistance," said David L. Heymann, director of the World Health Organization (WHO) division on emerging diseases.

Drugs change the environment of bacteria, killing sensitive strains and providing a survival advantage for germs whose genetic traits permit them to withstand and overcome potent antibiotics. Eventually each individual and society are at greater risk. Thus we can understand why some

observers feel that antibiotics should be used more sparingly.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that more than 50 million of the 150 million antibiotic prescriptions written annually for patients

outside of hospitals are not needed. Eliminating unnecessary prescriptions could greatly reduce the ability of bacteria and viruses to develop resistance to drugs.

Experts urge this change of human behavior in an effort to stem the rising tide of antibiotic resistance. Otherwise we might be creating a specter that can come to haunt us, the likes of which mankind hasn't experienced since the plagues that wiped out much of the world in the Dark Ages. *GN*

hospital in Milan, Italy, and many places in between. "Everyone who breathes air, from Wall Street to the Great Wall of China, needs to worry about this risk," says Dr. Arata Kochi, director of the WHO Global TB program.

An October 1997 survey by the WHO, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease estimates that 50 million people are infected with a strain of TB that is drug-resistant. Many of those are said to carry multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis—incurable by two or more of the standard drugs. In underdeveloped countries, where the vast majority of multi-drug-resistant TB cases have occurred, it is usually fatal.

"The world is becoming smaller and the TB bugs are becoming stronger," Dr. Kochi says. "While international travel has increased dramatically, the world has been slow to realize the implications for public health. Only recently have wealthy governments begun to recognize that the poor TB treatment practices of other countries are a threat to their own citizens."

The WHO study identifies hot zones of untreatable tuberculosis that threaten a worldwide crisis. These zones are home to nearly 75 percent of the world's TB cases and include Russia, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand and Zaire.

Many of the hot zones are regional centers for travel, immigration and international economic activity. WHO officials admit that little can be done to prevent people infected with drug-resistant TB from traveling and spreading the bacilli to other countries.

According to the WHO, one third of the world's nations have a strain of TB resistant to multiple drugs. Untreatable cases account for 2 to 14 percent of the world's total. That number is low, but the WHO said lethal tuberculosis could spread rapidly because only one in 10 patients gets medical care that could overcome drug resistance.

Drug-resistant strains of TB develop when patients do not complete the course of treatment, fail to take their medicine or don't use medication properly. Tuberculosis often can be cured with a combination of four drugs taken for six to nine months. But some patients may begin to feel better after just two to four weeks of treatment, so they stop their medication. But not enough of the medication has

been taken to kill all the TB bacteria in the patient. The remaining bacteria survive and mutate, becoming a tenacious, more deadly form of the disease.

TB can be diagnosed in several ways. Chest X rays can reveal evidence of active tuberculosis pneumonia, or they may show scarring, suggesting contained inactive TB. Examination of sputum under the microscope can show the presence of tuberculosis bacteria. A sample of the sputum can also be grown in special incubators, and tuberculosis bacteria can subsequently be identified.

Several types of skin tests are used to screen for TB. Tuberculin skin tests include the Mantoux test, the Tine test and the PPD. In each of these tests, a small amount of dead tuberculosis bacteria is injected under the skin. If a person is not infected with TB, no reaction at the site of the injection will become apparent. However, if a person has become infected with tuberculosis, an area around the site of the injection will redden and swell. This reaction occurs 48 to 72 hours after the injection.

### Treatments can work

Health-care authorities believe one of the best ways to treat TB is something known as "DOTS" (directly observed treatment, short course). Health workers make sure that TB patients take their medicine by watching them swallow every dose they take. Patients take all their medicine, their TB is cured, and the development of drug-resistant tuberculosis is prevented.

According to the WHO, only 10 percent of the world's TB patients are being treated using DOTS. If DOTS were used, WHO officials maintain that nearly three fourths of TB cases could be cured.

"DOTS cures sick patients and prevents drug resistance," says Dr. Kochi. "Alarming, only about one in 10 TB patients today has access to DOTS. We have to quickly put more DOTS programs in place to stop multi-drug-resistant TB from increasing."

"The TB epidemic must be fought globally to protect people locally," Dr. Kochi warns. "It is in the interest of the wealthy countries to help less-developed countries fight tuberculosis, before their own countries become the battleground."

—Becky Sweat



# An Overview of Conditions

## One in three British men are criminals by age 40



Buried in the British Crime Survey published recently by the British Home Office was this startling conclusion: "By the time they reach the age of 40, fully 40 percent of men in Britain have a criminal record for a non-motoring offence—a fact little known among the general public."

Officials note that this figure may actually understate the number of criminals, since some obviously commit crimes but are not caught and convicted.

The study tracked a group of men born in 1953 over four decades. By age 15, 8 percent had at least one conviction. By age 20, 20 percent had been convicted. By age 30, 31 percent, and 34 percent by age 40. After age 40, first offenses are rare.

The crimes are not petty or insignificant, say authorities. Theft, burglary and violent crimes are proportionately more common in England and Wales than in the United States. In 1996, 6 percent of the English population had their homes burglarized.

In the last two decades the number of recorded crimes in England and Wales has doubled—a greater increase than in any other Western country. Only in murder rates does the United States live up to its reputation of being more violent than England.

Commenting on the pervasiveness of crime in England, Dick Hobbs, a criminologist at Durham University, said: "We have been encouraged to think over the last 15 years that

*"By the time they reach the age of 40, fully 40 percent of men in Britain have a criminal record—a fact little known among the general public."*

crime is exceptional, but it's now normal for people to commit crime. For many young people, it's a routine activity. In some areas you find up to 90 percent of the youths involved in crime." (Source: *The Sunday Times* [London].)

## U.S. home-foreclosure rate approaches Great Depression's

Although the American economy appears strong, some troubling statistics indicate that it is not as stable as it may appear. In 1997 a record 1.3 million Americans declared bankruptcy—an increase of more than 20 percent for the second year in a row. In 1998 more families will likely lose their homes to foreclosure than in any year since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Analysts noted that in recent months 1.09 percent of mortgage loans were in the process of foreclosure—a rate almost double that of the recession years of the 1980s. These percentages mean that more than half a million homes will likely be lost by home owners this year. (Source: *The Denver Post*.)

## Britain leads Europe in auto thefts

The United Kingdom leads Europe in the incidence of auto thefts, with car owners there more than twice as likely to lose their vehicles to theft as are other European drivers.

Of every 1,000 cars in Britain, 22 are stolen each year, according to insurance-industry reports. The rate is highest in England and Wales, with 23 of every 1,000 cars stolen annually. Scotland and Northern Ireland follow at 15.5 and 14.6 thefts, respectively.

The overall average for Europe is 9.5 of every 1,000 autos stolen each year. France, with the next-highest rate of thefts at 11.4 cars stolen per 1,000, is still only about half as bad as Britain. Austria had the lowest theft rate, and its 1.4 thefts per 1,000 cars was one sixteenth that of Britain's. (Source: *The Daily Mail* [London].)

## Turning the corner on cancer?

New cancer cases in the United States are declining for the first time in decades, according to a joint report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society. Officials reported that deaths from cancer are also decreasing.

The decline in new cases is largely attributable to behavioral changes, particularly reductions in cigarette smoking. Authorities attribute the drop in deaths to more-effective therapies and better screening, which enable physicians to detect the disease earlier.

The incidence of cancer had risen steadily since the 1930s and climbed an average of 1.2 percent annually from 1973 to 1990. From 1990 to 1995, the latest year for which complete statistics are available, the rate of new cancers averaged a 0.7 percent decrease each year. New cases of cancer appear to have peaked in 1992, when 426 of every 100,000 Americans were diagnosed with cancer. By 1995 the number had decreased to 392.

The various types of cancer continue to be a major health threat, taking the lives of 1,500 Americans every day. But, says CDC official Dr. James Marks, "cancer is conquerable, and progress is being made." (Source: *The New York Times*.)

## "Safe sex" fading in Britain

New research and statistics indicate that Britain's young people are increasingly ignoring warnings about the dangers of AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases and are reverting to promiscuous sexual behavior—with predictable results.

A survey of sexual behavior of 500 young men and women 16 to 24 showed that three in four of those not married were having regular sex (defined as at least five times a





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month) compared with only one in four in 1991. Of these, far fewer were actively concerned about the risk of contracting AIDS or other diseases. In addition, more than four in 10 reported having four or more sexual partners by age 24.

Predictably, the rate of gonorrhea infection among British teenagers has grown by almost 30 percent just since 1995.

A similar survey showed that 12 percent of British young

*Britain's young people are increasingly ignoring warnings about the dangers of sexually transmissible diseases and are reverting to promiscuous sexual behavior.*

people mistakenly believe that a cure for AIDS is available—thus this misinformation might be contributing to the lack of awareness of the dangers of promiscuity.

Dr. Nick Ford, University of Exeter researcher who carried out the first study, observed that many young people “are having a series of sexual partners.” Changing attitudes and lifestyles “have implications not only for the transmission of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases but also marriage, family formation and childbearing.”

He attributed much of the change in behavior to a major shift in the thinking of young women. “The ‘romantic’ attitude of women towards relationships has been eroded. They are now much more at ease with casual relationships.”

These findings bring to mind the apostle Paul’s prediction: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men [and women] will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, . . . without self-control, . . . headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (Sources: *The Sunday Times* [London], 2 Timothy 3:1-4.)

## Information war: The next threat?

As the United States recently prepared for a showdown with Iraq, Pentagon planners increasingly worried about American vulnerability to a new kind of warfare—sabotage of U.S. computer systems.

Government officials consider America so susceptible to such attacks that in July 1996 the White House asked 6,000 experts for their input in forming a commission to evaluate the threat and recommend strategies for defense. Included in their year-long research were senior officials from all U.S. national security agencies, the U.S. Treasury and the departments of Transportation, Energy and Commerce.

What are the dangers? Many aspects of modern life are increasingly controlled by computers, including banking systems, electrical power, telephones, hospitals, air-traffic-control systems, railroads, traffic lights, water supplies and the like. Without computers, life as we know it in Western countries would largely grind to a halt, creating massive economic problems and social upheaval.

In this kind of warfare the only weapons needed are a computer, modem and telephone line—and technological

know-how. Inside knowledge, gained through bribery, threats or extortion, would make it immeasurably easier for an enemy nation—or terrorist—to infiltrate and disrupt computer systems.

Retired Air Force general Robert Marsh, head of the commission, stated: “Common to all threats is the insider. We could spend millions on technology to protect our infrastructure, but a well-placed insider or disgruntled employee could render nearly all protection useless.”

Summing up the threat, Gen. Marsh stated: “The opportunity to do harm is expansive and growing. The threat is a function of capability and intent . . . These tools recognize neither borders nor jurisdictions. They can be used anywhere, anytime, by anyone with the capability, technology and intent to do harm. And they offer the advantage of anonymity.”

In such warfare the identity and location of an assailant would remain a mystery, making defense and countermeasures difficult. (Source: *The Independent on Sunday* [London].)

## New states of anarchy

When authority collapses, chaos ensues, says world-affairs analyst and author Georgie Anne Geyer, and the trend is increasing around the world. Pointing to events in Algeria, where some 60,000 to 75,000 people have been killed in a six-year civil war, the analyst says the troubled nation is the latest in a series of countries in which breakdown of government has left a vacuum filled by savagery and brutality.

Algeria’s road to disaster began when 1991 elections, which Islamics apparently won, were annulled by the secular Algerian government. To overturn the decision, Islamic militants initially chose to fight the government through traditional military means. When that strategy failed, they turned to terrorism, usually choosing to invade villages at night, systematically stabbing, slashing, burning and beheading the innocent inhabitants.

Analysts think the terrorists’ goals are twofold: first, to provoke so much chaos that the government will eventually collapse; second, to drive the populace out of various regions

*Man is capable of incredible savagery toward his fellowman when there is no greater power to keep such brutality in check.*

so they can move in and take over, creating their own mini-states answerable to no one but themselves.

This pattern is paralleled, says writer Geyer, by events in recent years in Europe (Bosnia), Africa (Rwanda) and South America (Colombia). In the case of Colombia, drug overlords have joined forces with communist guerrillas in effect to create their own fiefdoms in remote areas of the country. Events in Bosnia and Rwanda showed that, whether armed with machine guns or machetes, man is capable of incredible savagery toward his fellowman when there is no greater power to keep such brutality in check. (Source: Universal Press Syndicate.)

—John Ross Schroeder and Scott Ashley



# Plague

Continued from page 9

created by warfare leads to famines, which are followed in turn by disease epidemics. We see this sequence revealed in Christ's prophecies.

In vision John saw four horses and riders that represented future events. The rider of the second horse, which was "fiery red," had power "to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword" (Revelation 6:4). This vision represents war.

This horseman is followed prophetically by a black horse and rider, carrying scales, that depicts famine (verses 5-6).

They are followed by a pale horse. "And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, *to kill with sword, with hunger, with death*, and by the beasts of the earth" (verse 8). We learn from this prophecy that a fourth of mankind—well over a billion humans, based on earth's current population—will die from warfare, starvation and disease. Other prophecies in the same book indicate the toll will be much higher.

Jesus Christ described this same sequence of disasters when He talked to His disciples of the conditions leading up to His return: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars . . . For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, *pestilences*, and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:6-7).

## The results of disobedience

But why will these things happen? It all boils down to the inevitable results of man defying his Creator. God warned His people Israel: "But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, *wasting diseases and fever* that will destroy your sight and drain away your life . . . And I will bring the sword upon you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a *plague* among you . . ." (Leviticus 26:14-

16, 25, New International Version).

God repeats His warnings in Deuteronomy 28: "The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish" (verse 22). "The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed" (verse 27).

What mankind cannot seem to understand is that God made man for a great purpose. Man is His greatest creation. As such, God has the sole right to tell us how to live. God, in His Word, gives us a blueprint for how we should live on His earth. Sadly, few have ever listened.

Could man really be his own worst problem? God says he is, telling us that "there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

He also informs us: "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Romans 8:7, NIV).

How, then, can human beings get right with God and avoid such catastrophes?

## The key to divine safety

Overall, the Bible is a book that proclaims wonderful and exciting news. In fact, that's why *The Good News* is the title of this magazine. There is a need to put this horrible news—these tragic diseases, past, present and future—into some type of proper perspective.

First, how can Christians withstand such terrible crises?

Avoiding such tragedies begins with humility. The person who humbles himself or herself before God can enjoy supernatural protection. The ultimate antidote to plague isn't found in some new strain of antibiotic but in turning to God and honoring Him. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2).

God also says of those "who feared the LORD" that He will "spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him" (Malachi 3:16-17).

According to the Word of God, the world is destined to face epidemics that will lay waste many nations. However, you can escape that time of great tribula-

## Drug-Resistant Bubonic Plague

A case of bubonic plague was recently discovered in Madagascar, an island in the Indian Ocean off the southeast coast of Africa. This is not the first case of bubonic plague discovered in recent years. Rather, it is the first case identified that is resistant to multiple antibiotics, including the ones commonly given to treat the plague.

Two years ago a 16-year-old boy on Madagascar was diagnosed with a drug-resistant plague bacterium. Three antibiotics were necessary to save his life. The isolated organism (*Y. Pestis* bacterium) was found to carry five antibiotic-resistant genes. The antibacterial drugs that this particular bacterium was resistant to were streptomycin, gentamicin, chloramphenicol, tetracycline and various sulfonamide compounds. It was found susceptible to trimethoprim.

Although similar multiple drug-resistant gene transfers have been found in other disease-causing bacteria, never before have they been found in bubonic plague, a disease synonymous with debilitating epidemics and pandemics. Researchers don't know whether the Madagascar bacterium is rare or common, but they do know that it symbolizes the growing problem of antibiotic resistance in human pathogens.

Stuart Levy of Tufts University Medical School cautions, "We now know this agent exists, and have to be alert for it in other countries, where we know antibiotic resistance has emerged in so many other bacteria."

Drs. David Dennis and James Hughes of the CDC state that such incidents "provide another grim reminder that emerging infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance in one location can pose serious problems for the entire world."

—Jerold Aust

tion, a terrible time unparalleled in human history (Matthew 24:21). Almighty God and His Son, Jesus Christ, are the ultimate solution and antidote to war, drought, famine and plague. They show the way to life through Their holy words, the Bible. Hear them!

To better understand what the future holds, be sure to request your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Contact us at the office in your country (or the country nearest you) on page 2 of this issue. **GN**

by Scott Ashley

**A**s 1997 drew to a close, an ominous news item went largely unnoticed by most of the world: The U.S. Defense Department announced that it would vaccinate its entire 2.4 million-man force of troops and drilling reservists against anthrax, a devastatingly deadly bacterium being developed as a biological weapon in various nations.

Meanwhile, a heated war of words continued over the standoff in Iraq, with the United States, Britain and other countries ready to attack suspected Iraqi biological- and chemical-weapon production and storage sites.

Why are these weapons a matter of such deep concern?

Such grotesque munitions are not new to late-20th-century military engagements. The first serious, widespread use of chemical warfare dates back to World War I. That war was considered so terrible that it was thought that it would—by its sheer destructiveness and millions of casualties—expunge any future prospects of war. Tragically, this was not to be.

#### World War I and chemical weapons

Roger Harris and Jeremy Paxman describe the introduction of chemical warfare in World War I. “The 22nd of April, 1915, had been a warm and sunny day, but towards the end of the afternoon a breeze sprang up. To



# Instant Epidemics:

## *The New Breed of Weapons*

them [French reservists and Algerians] the fresh wind must have seemed a good omen, for a few seconds later, as if on cue, the German guns—which had been bombarding them all day—suddenly stopped firing.

“An abrupt silence descended over the front. The wind had changed. At five o’clock, three red rockets streaked into the sky, signaling the start of a deafening artillery barrage. At the same time, two greenish-yellow clouds rose from the enemy’s lines, caught the wind, and billowed forward, gradually merging to form a single bank of blue-white mist: out of sight, German pioneers were opening the valves of 6,000 cylinders spread out along a four mile front. The cylinders contained liquid chlorine—the instant the pressure was released and it came into contact with the air it vaporized and hissed out to form a dense cloud.

“At thirty parts per million of air, chlorine gas produces a rasping cough. At concentrations of one part per thousand it is fatal. The breeze stirred again, and one hundred and sixty tons of it, five feet high and hugging

*Chemical and biological weapons have been called the poor man’s atomic bomb because they are relatively easy to produce—and horrifyingly deadly. Does the Bible predict and comment on these horrendous modern-day developments?*

the ground, began to roll towards the Allied trenches. Chemical warfare had begun” (*A Higher Form of Killing: The Secret Story of Chemical and Biological Warfare*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1982, p. 1).

Never before had any army encountered an invisible

and such a seemingly harmless enemy. "The wave broke over the first line within a minute, enveloping tens of thousands of troops in an acrid green cloud so thick they could no longer see their neighbors in the trench. Seconds later they were clutching at the air and at their throats, fighting for breath" (ibid., pp. 1-2).

Chlorine doesn't suffocate its victims. It poisons them, stripping the lining of the bronchial tubes and lungs. The inflammation that quickly follows produces an incredible amount of fluid. The fluid blocks the windpipe and fills the lungs.

"In an attempt to escape the effects, some men tried to bury their mouths and nostrils in the earth; others panicked and ran. But any exertion or effort to outdistance the cloud only resulted in deeper breaths and more acute poisoning. As the tide of gas washed over the struggling men, their faces turned blue from the strain of trying to breathe; some coughed so violently they ruptured their lungs. Each man, as the British casualty report was later to put it, was being drowned in his own [bodily fluids]" (ibid., p. 2).

On that fateful day, according to German records, this hideous experiment cost the Allies 5,000 men dead and 10,000 wounded. By the time "the war to end all wars" ended several years later, 25 varieties of poison gas had killed some 92,000

soldiers and civilians and produced another 1.3 million casualties.

The horrific sight of recovering gassed soldiers during and after the war led many nations to sign the 1925 Geneva Protocol outlawing use of poison gas and biological weapons. However, research and development of chemical and biological warfare agents continued.

Several nations experimented with such weapons in World War II, although they were not used on a massive scale as in the First World War. However, scientists researching chemical warfare stumbled onto an entirely new class of weapons—nerve gas.

### Headline-making weapons

Exactly what are these weapons, and how widespread are they?

*Biological weapons* are derived from disease-causing bacteria and viruses or their byproducts. They are designed for one purpose: to create immediate and highly lethal epidemics, disabling and killing armies or populations on a massive scale.

Some of the most deadly biological weapons are anthrax, capable of killing those infected in as little as a week, and botulinum toxin, which can kill in a few days. When inhaled, anthrax spores kill some 90 percent of those infected. As one U.S. military commander put it, "if you inhale

spores, you're going to die."

Pound for pound, biological weapons are the most lethal munitions man has ever created. It takes less than a millionth of an ounce to kill a person. Under the right weather conditions, as little as 40 gallons of anthrax or botulinum toxin launched against a city could kill up to a million people. And most people would not know they had even been attacked until symptoms appeared—by which time it is too late for effective treatment.

*Chemical weapons* are created from artificial or natural chemicals. Many chemicals harmful or fatal to humans can be used as weapons. The most-well-known chemical weapons are the chlorine, phosgene and mustard gases that proved so devastatingly effective in World War I.

Chemical weapons attack the

nose, throat, lungs, eyes, skin or other parts of the body. Some are designed to incapacitate an enemy; many are lethal within minutes. They are, in essence, highly toxic insecticides—



## Futuristic Weapons and the Bible

"Zap 'em! Fry 'em! Stun 'em! But whatever you do . . . DON'T KILL THEM!" These words in the July 7, 1997, *U.S. News & World Report* depicted in cartoon the serious text that followed. The article, "Wonder Weapons," and the subtitle, "The Pentagon's Quest for Nonlethal Arms Is Amazing. But Is It Smart?," takes a somber look at the prototypical, futuristic and nonlethal weapons being developed by the United States military.

"For a good 40 years, the U.S. military has quietly been pursuing weapons of this sort," said the article. A cartoonlike illustration showed 21st-century soldiers looking like sci-fi GI Joes. Dressed in camouflage fatigues and helmets with large, light-reflecting, protective, beach-style sunglasses covering the soldiers' eyes and upper faces, each soldier brandished Star Wars-like weapons, emitting nonlethal waves that would stun, but not kill, the enemy.

Inadvertently, this major news magazine presented a scenario remarkably similar to the apocalyptic symbolism of the book of Revelation. This book, at the end of your Bible, predicts end-time warfare somewhat akin to the reports of modern journalists. The language is different, certainly, more symbolic, but the results sound quite similar:

"Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottom-

less pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

"They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were *not given authority to kill them, but to torment them* for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them" (Revelation 9:1-6, emphasis added).

The prophecies of Revelation are far more foreboding than *U.S. News & World Report's* somewhat satirical rendering. When it comes to modern weaponry, as well as chemical and biological warfare, could the Bible be closer to the truth than many people have previously thought?

According to God's warnings to humanity, the specter of weapons unlike anything we've ever imagined—possibly including chemical and biological weapons—will one day be reality. Only God can ultimately save mankind from these prophesied catastrophes.

—Jerald Aust

with humans as the insects.

*Nerve gas* is an especially insidious type of chemical weapon. Some of the most lethal gases are sarin and tabun, which can disable and kill in a few minutes. Even deadlier is VX, which disrupts the nervous system, bringing convulsions, paralysis and death within seconds of being absorbed through any unprotected patch of skin.

These deadly substances can be spread through missiles, bombs, artillery shells and land mines and can be sprayed from aircraft, land vehicles or hand-carried canisters. In the hands of terrorists or undercover agents, such materials can be (and have been) spread through water and food supplies and through means as simple as puncturing plastic bags on a subway train, as happened in Tokyo in 1995.

### Quick, easy and deadly

One factor that makes the spread of such weapons almost impossible to control is the relative ease with which they can be produced. Writes Leonard Cole, citing information from U.S. senator John Glenn: "To make these weapons, a small kitchen would do . . . An ounce of biological agent in a half-gallon of growth medium . . . could produce enough material" to kill or sicken up to 95 percent of the population of a city as large as Washington, D.C. (*The Eleventh Plague: The Politics of Biological and Chemical Warfare*, W.H. Freeman and Co., New York, 1997, pp. 157-158).

Cole cites several examples of terrorist groups that have been caught trying to acquire or develop or were actually using biological weapons (pp. 160-161).

For governments, chemical and biological weapons are attractive because of their relatively low cost. They are "the poor man's atomic bomb," write Joseph Douglass Jr. and Neil Livingstone. "A sophisticated program designed to produce a [nuclear weapon] would probably cost hundreds of millions of dollars, whereas type A botulinus toxin, which is more deadly than nerve gas, could be produced for about \$400 per kilogram.

"A group of [chemical and biological weapons] experts, appearing before a UN panel . . . , estimated 'for a large-scale operation against a civilian population, casualties might cost about \$2,000 per square kilometer with conventional weapons, \$800 with nuclear weapons,

\$600 with nerve-gas weapons, and \$1 with biological weapons'" (*America the Vulnerable: The Threat of Chemical/Biological Warfare*, Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass., 1987, p. 16).

U.S. intelligence sources report that they believe chemical and/or biological weapons are possessed or being manufactured not only by the world's major military powers, but by Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Myanmar (Burma), North Korea, Pakistan, South Korea, Syria, Taiwan and Vietnam.

### Apocalyptic realities?

Mankind's tragic history shows that, no matter how destructive they are, it is only a matter of time before the horrifying weapons we create are used against our fellowman. Before World War I chemical weapons were thought to be so horrible that they would never be used—but they were. Before World War II, use of biological weapons was similarly thought to be unconscionable. But they, too, were used.

*The book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, describes a series of earth-shattering events to occur before Jesus Christ's return. These visions are the stuff of nightmares.*

Even nuclear weapons were used—against civilian populations.

Why should we think the future will be any different?

The book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, describes a series of earth-shattering events to occur before Jesus Christ's return. These visions are the stuff of nightmares.

Revelation 9 describes a massive army 200 million strong (verse 16). In this time of unprecedented turmoil and upheaval "a third of mankind [is] killed" (verse 18). But, in spite of these horrors, "the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent . . ." (verse 20). In this great frenzy of destruction, it appears that man will do anything except that which would deliver him from these overwhelming problems—repent and turn to God.

But this is not all. Chapter 16 describes further plagues to come on humanity. "So the first [angel] went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image" (verse 2).

This is followed by another plague: "Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds" (verses 10-11).

### A world forever changed

What kind of horrifying weapons or conditions will bring such suffering? We don't know for sure. The apostle John, when he wrote the book of Revelation, in the first century, recorded what he saw in terms he understood. He knew nothing of tanks, jet aircraft, howitzers, napalm and machine guns, much less nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

But he clearly describes a terrifying world in which literally billions of people will die because they stubbornly refuse to acknowledge or obey their Creator and turn from their self-destructive ways. Conditions will be so perilous that, "if that time

of troubles were not cut short, *no living thing could survive*" (Matthew 24:22, Revised English Bible).

However, the world will not suffer that ultimate fate. Why? Jesus Christ promises that "for the sake of God's chosen [that time] will be cut short" (verse 22, REB). Christ will return. Just when all of humanity is at the precipice, He will intervene *to save us from ourselves*—for the sake of those few who have remained faithful to Him.

Under His righteous rule, mankind will experience a peace we haven't known since Eden. The appalling weapons of man's evil imagination will be a thing of the past. **GN**

### RECOMMENDED READING

What lies ahead for all of mankind? Where is the world headed—and why? Does the Bible tell us what the future holds? You can discover the answers in *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. This free booklet reveals the exciting and wonderful truth revealed in the Bible. Request your free booklet today by contacting the office of your country (or the country nearest you) on page 2 of this issue.

# Israel at 50

## A Saga of War and Peace

*Much of Israel's 50-year history is a chronicle of wars and other conflicts with her Arab neighbors. What does the future hold for this nation?*

by John Meakin

**F**ifty years ago, on May 14, 1948, Jewish leaders in what was then called Palestine gathered in Tel Aviv to declare the rebirth of Israel.

This event captured newspaper headlines around the world. The Jewish people, scattered and persecuted for centuries, could finally look to a homeland again.

Israel did not form against a background of peace. During the latter 19th century, the hopes of many Jews were shattered by waves of anti-Semitism. In Eastern Europe especially, Jews repeatedly suffered in murderous pogroms often initiated by the authorities themselves.

These traumatic experiences helped to spawn the Zionist movement. Zionism rested on the conviction that

of the population of Palestine. At first there was cordiality, but over time much of the Arab population, alarmed by increasing Jewish immigration, land purchases and claims to the area, became adamantly opposed to Zionism. This tension set the scene for the conflicts, violence and wars that continue to this day.

### The British mandate

Near the end of World War I, the British had captured Palestine from the Ottoman Turks. Jewish and Arab forces had supported the British. The Arabs had been promised the independence of their lands after the war. But the British had made other conflicting promises. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 promised the Jews a national home in Palestine.

Such contradictory promises were impossible to reconcile. After the war, with the British government granted mandatory powers over Palestine, British policy seesawed back and forth in reaction to conflicting Arab-Jewish pressures. The Zionists wanted large-scale immigration and their own Jewish state. The Palestinian Arabs were alarmed that the Jews had been promised sovereignty over an area that the Arabs had looked upon as theirs. They feared being totally dispossessed. The climate that evolved grew ripe for confrontation and violence.

Fear of Jewish domination proved to be the catalyst for the Arab revolt, which broke out in 1936 and continued intermittently until 1939. The Jews established a clandestine nationwide defensive militia, the Haganah (meaning "defense"), to safeguard their physical security.

Mounting persecution of European Jewry increased pressure on the British at a time when they were attempting to placate Arab concerns by restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. Six million Jews—a third of the world's Jewish population—died in World War II, resulting in a wave of sympathy towards European Jews. Many holocaust survivors found their way to Palestine.

The British mandate had become unworkable. In April 1947 the problem went to the newly formed United Nations. The UN recommended partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states with an internationalized Jerusalem. The Jews accepted the partition plan, although the Arabs denounced it and vowed to oppose, by force, its



*Sacred to three religions, Jerusalem typifies Israel's turbulent history. Here Jewish worshipers pray at the Western Wall (foreground), while one of Islam's holiest shrines, the Dome of the Rock, dominates the background.*

Jewish problems could be solved only by the establishment of an independent Jewish nation.

In the late 19th century Palestine seemed eminently suitable for the purpose. It was a sparsely inhabited, marginal province of the fragile Ottoman Empire. To many Jews it seemed a motherland waiting for redemption from centuries of neglect.

Jews already living in Palestine experienced their own national renaissance and revival of the Hebrew language. Simultaneously, groups of Jewish settlers returned to Palestine as pioneers to establish modern Jewish villages. At the time Arabs constituted the overwhelming majority

implementation. By now the Jews, who numbered around 600,000, and some 1,300,000 Arabs were preparing for a showdown.

### The war of independence

Under the leadership of defense minister (and later prime minister) David Ben-Gurion, the Jews prepared for the inevitable explosion of violence that began when the state of Israel was declared on May 14, 1948—the day the British mandate ended.

The next day, May 15, five Arab armies invaded Israel, coming to the aid of the Arabs in Palestine. Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Transjordan and Syria all sent troops. Their combined forces gave them overwhelming superiority in armored vehicles, artillery and aircraft. They made many initial gains.

However, the Haganah, now renamed the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), eventually predominated. After 15 months, and with various truces declared along the way, peace finally prevailed. It was the bloodiest of all modern Israel's wars, with more than 6,000 Jews losing their lives. In the end Israel not only repulsed the invaders, but gained a third more territory than that prescribed by the UN. Egypt eventually controlled Gaza, and Jordan controlled East Jerusalem and the area usually referred to as the West Bank of the Jordan River.

After the war Palestinian Arabs tried to salvage their goal of an independent Palestinian state. They proposed to the Arab League Council that a new Palestinian state be proclaimed on the West Bank and Gaza. However, these plans were thwarted when King Abdullah of Jordan annexed the West Bank, adding it to his kingdom. The other Arab nations, still smarting from their defeat and in no mood for further conflict, dropped the issue. Thus the Palestinian Arabs lost an early opportunity to have their own state.

In contemporary terminology, the Arab inhabitants of the former British mandate of Palestine are called Palestinians. Most of those who live within the pre-1967 borders of Israel are Israeli citizens.

### The Suez-Sinai War of 1956

In 1956 Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal and blocked Israel's Red Sea access, precipitating an international crisis and another war.

At the end of October, in a sweeping operation lasting only a few days, Israeli forces under Moshe Dayan seized the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. As Israeli

forces reached the Suez, the British and French entered the conflict. Shortly thereafter the UN brought a halt to hostilities, submitting to intense pressure from the United States and Soviet Union. The UN forced Israel to return the Sinai and Gaza, but only after receiving security assurances.

### The Six Day War

By spring 1967 events were spiraling out of control. The Soviet Union, hoping to benefit from an alliance with the Arabs, played a significant role in precipitating hostilities. War fever began to grip the Arab countries. Nasser mobilized his Egyptian forces and sent 100,000 troops to the Sinai. He

*The Zionists wanted their own Jewish state. The Palestinian Arabs were alarmed that the Jews had been promised sovereignty over an area that the Arabs had looked upon as theirs.*

demanding the removal of the UN peacekeeping forces and blockaded the Straits of Tiran. Jordan's King Hussein placed his forces at the disposal of the Egyptian command—a move that soon cost him half his kingdom.

On June 5 the Israeli air force launched a crippling first strike against Egyptian and Syrian airfields. The preemptive blow largely destroyed Nasser's air force on the ground. Jordan launched an attack on Israel. The IDF advanced into the Sinai, defeating the Egyptian troops, who had lost their air cover.

In just six days, Israeli troops took East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, and stood on the banks of the Suez Canal. A 2,000-year dream was realized: Jews once again controlled the whole of Jerusalem.

In September an Arab summit declared there would be no peace, no recognition and no negotiations with Israel. The UN passed Resolution 242 in November, calling for peace and recognition of the "right of every nation to live free from threat within secure and recognized boundaries," and in return called for Israel's withdrawal from captured territories. Arab inhabitants of those territories have been seeking to establish another independent Arab state, Palestine.

A proliferation of guerrilla organizations and intensified terrorist attacks followed the war. Palestinian terrorists transferred their activities abroad, hijacking and blowing up planes. One of their most infamous operations was the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games.

Meanwhile, in September 1970 Nasser died and was replaced by Anwar Sadat. In secret coordination with Syria, Egypt prepared for another round of conflict.

### The October War

On October 6, 1973, Syrian and Egyptian forces attacked Israel. The date chosen for the attack was the holiest day of the Jewish year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. After significant initial gains, Arab fortunes rapidly paled. Within a few days Israeli forces were within striking distance of both Cairo and Damascus.

The United States and U.S.S.R., fearing escalation involving nuclear weapons, franti-

cally forced a cease-fire agreement after three weeks of hostilities. The war, though in some respects a success for Israeli forces, was a qualified failure. It became known as "the earthquake." Israelis questioned the military's unpreparedness. The cost was heavy: More than 2,500 soldiers fell, and many aircraft and tanks were lost to Soviet-made missiles. The conflict shook Israeli self-confidence.

Over the following years Israel negotiated various separation-of-forces agreements with Egypt and Syria. Terrorist attacks continued. The spectacular and daring Entebbe Raid of 1976 rescued Jewish passengers from an airliner hijacked by German terrorists and flown to Uganda. Israeli forces countered terrorist operations by attacking their strongholds in Lebanon.

In November 1977 President Sadat of Egypt, in a dramatic turnaround, visited Jerusalem on a quest for peace. This led to the Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979. Egypt granted recognition of Israel in return for the demilitarization and withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai Peninsula.

For their efforts, President Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978. Sadat was assassinated in October 1981.

### Operation Peace for Galilee

In spite of the facade of peace, another crisis soon erupted. In June 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon to eradicate Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) strongholds used for attacks against northern Israel. Six thousand

PLO fighters found themselves trapped in West Beirut. For a short period the Syrians were involved in the war; they had a large expeditionary force in northern Lebanon.

By mid-August, after fierce fighting in and around Beirut, 15,000 PLO and Syrian forces evacuated the area. Israel dug in to prevent their return.

Israeli troops remained in southern Lebanon until 1985. But hitherto monolithic national support of the war effort began to break apart. Some Israelis viewed the conflict as a war of choice, unlike previous hostilities that were viewed as matters of survival.

Eventually both Israel and Syria withdrew their troops. However, attacks by members of Hezbollah (Party of God) continued.

Peace with Egypt was relatively secure. Jordan seemed eager to remain quiet. Syria was the most hostile and continued arming to achieve parity with Israel.

At the conclusion of the eight-year Iraq-Iran war, Saddam Hussein of Iraq declared his intentions to aid the Palestinian cause. During the Gulf War of 1991 he launched numerous missile attacks against Israel, but Israel did not counterattack.

### Further moves toward peace

The aftermath of the Gulf War led to renewed attempts to forge a comprehensive peace with the Palestinians and neighboring Arab states. After secret negotiations Israeli's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat flew to Washington to sign a historic peace agreement. Israel accepted Palestinian self-rule, first in the Gaza Strip and then in other areas of the West Bank.

In July 1994 Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein signed a peace agreement that ended 46 years of hostile relations. A full peace treaty followed several months later.

On September 28, 1995, Rabin and Arafat signed an agreement to hand over West Bank towns to the Palestine National Authority (PNA). However, opposition from extremist factions on both sides never ceased. Barely a month later an Israeli extremist assassinated Rabin. The killing served only to highlight growing divisions among Israelis over the peace process.

In January 1996 an overwhelming majority elected Arafat as the leader of the PNA. Meanwhile, Israeli voters selected as prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Likud leader allied with the religious parties, by a narrow majority. Immediately the peace process began to be called into ques-

tion as Netanyahu rejected negotiations on the future of Jerusalem or the possibility of the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Controversy and riots erupted with the building of additional Israeli settlements. Grave doubts remain as to the future of the peace process.

### What next?

An overview of Israel's brief history shows major outbreaks of violence with her Arab neighbors every 10 years or so, with ongoing violence and terrorism punctuating the intervals of peace. The price has been great in terms of war dead.

Slowly but surely the Arab world has grudgingly recognized Israel's right to exist. Yet not all Arab and Muslim countries extend this recognition. Syria and Iran continue their military buildups. Iraq continues to defy the UN, and questions and concerns abound about her chemical and biological potential to make war and threaten Israel, as well as the world. The PLO actively pursues its goal of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Meanwhile, Israel anticipates and prepares for the next round of hostilities. Her armed forces remain highly trained and among the world's best equipped. Israel's nuclear arsenal is estimated to include some 100 warheads, as well as the means to deliver them. If pushed to the limit, few observers doubt they will be used.

Will the UN yet be forced to intervene in Jerusalem to preserve peace as the original partition plan envisioned? With the peace process largely stalled and Arab tensions on the rise, we may be approaching a new pitched conflict. Some intelligence sources openly predict as much, possibly in late 1998. Others fear Israel's jubilee year of celebrations is too tempting a target for some Arab and Islamic extremists.

### What does the future hold?

Bible prophecy has much to say about the future of this ancient land. Israel and Jerusalem will continue to be a focal point of world attention. Regrettably, more hostilities and wars are coming, culminating in a great final conflict that will pale into insignificance what has gone before. Israel will not emerge unscathed.

The perspective of the Bible, and therefore *The Good News*, is that we are approaching the end of the age of man. Our problems are so great that they defy human solution. Nowhere is this so true as in the Middle East,

where events will again explode, precipitating a crisis unlike any other.

In Matthew 24:21-22 Jesus Christ predicted a time of unprecedented turmoil focused on Jerusalem. We cannot precisely pinpoint what catalyst will lead to such troubles. So many points of controversy exist that it is impossible to say what might light the final fuse.

Jerusalem, though controlled by the Israelis, remains the center of three world religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Any overt religious act particularly offensive to the Arabs could easily pull the Middle East into the maelstrom. The desire of some Jews to rebuild a temple and resume sacrifices is an obvious potential flash point (see Daniel 8:13-14, 23-27). Any interference with religious sites could lead to disaster.

Whatever the circumstances that ignite the final fuse, Bible prophecy shows that Jerusalem will be attacked (see Zechariah 14:1-2). As the major powers of the world are drawn into the developing inferno, Jesus Christ must intervene to prevent utter catastrophe (verses 3-5). "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:25-28).

We need to be alert as never before as world events unfold around us. Jesus Christ warns us to "take heed" lest events catch us spiritually unprepared (verse 34). The world at large will be surprised by these earth-shaking events (verse 35), but we need not be. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (verse 36).

### How will real peace come?

God is not through with Israel or Jerusalem—or their Arab neighbors, for that matter. He will leap to defend Jerusalem and allow Israel (Judah) to yet live there in safety (verses 4-9). Jerusalem will become the religious capital of the world at a time when all will finally dwell at peace (see Jeremiah 3:17; Zechariah 14:11, 16-17). Jerusalem, whose name means "city of peace," will finally live up to her name. The long-standing Jewish-Arab dispute will be settled, and both peoples will dwell at peace.

The Bible proclaims that a genuine peace is coming. May we all pray with the words of King David: "*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*" (Psalm 122:6). **GN**

# The Global Economy's *Uncertain Future*

*What lessons should we learn from Asia's economic difficulties?*

by Howard Davis

**J**apan, so long an economic superstar on the world stage, appears to be entering its first recession in a quarter-century. Some analysts are predicting a worst-case scenario of a 1930s-style Japanese deflationary depression. International experts believe the economic turmoil that began with financial collapse in Southeast Asia last summer may be beginning to affect economies all over the world.

Since the crisis started, business leaders have begun to change their tune. Through borderless flows of money and trade aided by favorable government policies, business leaders for the last decade had assumed an ever-expanding prosperity would bless those who participated in the rising tide of worldwide business activity. Unfortunately, something else is happening.

## **Bubbles do burst!**

Once proclaimed the engine of growth for the 21st century, East Asian economic might is falling apart. Deflation seems to be rearing its head in some areas.

While Japan is experiencing even sharper price declines for manufactured goods, global commodity prices for wheat, corn, metals and gold have had dramatic drops, and gasoline prices in the United States have recently been at their lowest in years (adjusted for inflation). In February, computer prices dropped 6.6 percent—the greatest monthly plunge in history.

Premier technology companies that have driven much of American economic growth in the 1990s are feeling the pinch of a flood of cheap Asian imports while the export market to Asia is evaporating. The Asian crisis has meant at least \$6.5 billion less revenue to the semiconductor industry alone this year, according to industry experts.

In a confusion of cross currents, stock prices for high-technology giants like Intel, Motorola, Microsoft and Hewlett Packard



have taken heavy hits while other stock prices continue to reach stratospheric levels on the New York Stock Exchange.

But some experts are clearly sounding caution. The most powerful voice in the world economy, the American Federal Reserve board's chairman, Alan Greenspan, cautioned American investors in early March. "Vicious cycles are evidently emerging more often," he said, and predicted that many investors may be sorry in 12 to 18 months.

As Hong Kong's financial secretary, Donald Tsang, recently told *Business Week*: "The Asia crisis is not a regional crisis but a global issue. We are all in the same boat."

Most of us give little thought to the possibility of a worldwide economic calamity. But recent economic problems in Asia, and stock-market gyrations around the world, should alert us to the real possibil-

ity of global economic reverberations.

## **A system of faith**

As the stock markets of the world began to topple like dominoes last fall, Wall Street analysts convinced themselves that their faith in the U.S. economy was so strong that even the "Asian meltdown" could be contained.

Soothing words were offered by President Bill Clinton and Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin. They insisted the American economy was fundamentally sound; in fact, better than ever.

American and global investors left their trillions in American equities. Even the dramatically expanding numbers of small American investors kept their faith in the future of the market, even though stocks are at their highest prices and lowest dividend rates since before the 1929 crash.

Even as Asian markets declined, the prices of American financial assets continued to hold strong. Money poured into American stock exchanges from foreign investors, pension funds, speculative profits, retirement investment proceeds, savings from high salaries and corporate profits.

By March 1998 the record prices of stocks in the U.S. markets seemed to become disassociated from underlying dividends. Stock prices escalated as dividend predictions went down.

Surveys show that Americans continued to place faith in the long-term future of their stock holdings, perhaps unconsciously acknowledging that faith is the basis of the global economic system: faith in the dollar, faith that their financial assets would make them ever wealthier and faith in the heart and core of global capitalism's materialistic system. This belief in and preoccupation with material well-being and progress can blind us to basic spiritual truths.

Some, like controversial economic journalist William Greider, see this faith as misguided. In his book *One World, Ready or*

## The Roots of Asia's Economic Problems

As Washington Post Writers Group columnist Jim Hoagland put it in describing the Asian economic crisis, “the chickens of globalization are coming home to roost in Asia.”

The roots of the Asian problem can be traced back to misguided economic management. Protectionist policies, coupled with strong government support and subsidies for particular industries and companies, often rewarded the politically well-connected at the expense of ordinary citizens. Billions of dollars went into misdirected investments.

Since 1990 hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of investment and loans was extended to the Asian economies. To turn a quick investment profit, Western financial and industrial interests shifted production and labor from high-cost Western countries to cheap labor found in abundance throughout Asia.

But, instead of sharing the wealth and helping develop middle classes in these poorer Southeast Asian countries, elites in the target countries manipulated their wealth and diverted loans and investment into pet projects. Real-estate speculation grew rampant. Columnist Hoagland observes that a “get-filthy-rich-quick” mentality was evident within many of the national elite.

Throughout Southeast Asia and in China, vast factories greatly expanded production capacity, and gleaming skyscrapers were built. But the countries lacked consumers with

enough money to buy the glut of newly manufactured goods, and the skyscrapers lacked clients to occupy them. The region's potential for its own consumer spending to absorb goods evaporated—or was never developed.

Now, however, this great speculative bubble has burst. Asian banks and financial institutions are saddled with billions of dollars of bad loans and properties that have plunged in value. Reflecting these losses, overseas stock markets and currencies have also plummeted. Unemployment is mounting as businesses falter and fail.

*Business Week* warned that the prescription to cure the Asian economic problems may make them spread. “The danger is that IMF [International Monetary Fund] prescriptions will intensify the deflationary pressures that are beginning to squeeze the global economy . . . Prices are declining in China, Japan, and much of the rest of the world . . . Currency devaluations not only lower consumer buying power but also unleash new waves of exports on international markets, further depressing prices.”

Once financial instability begins to migrate globally, severe scenarios are possible, even for the richest multinational companies. In 1994 John F. Welch, chief executive officer of General Electric, predicted: “The shakeouts will be more brutal, the pace of change more rapid.” He likened the world's economic future to “a hurricane.”

—Howard Davis

*Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*, Greider predicts the end of stability in a world financial system awash in bad debt and misdirected financial capital. He feels these forces are “propelling the world toward some new version of breakdown, the prospect of an economic or political cataclysm of unknowable dimensions.”

These economic forces have continually been at work after World War II. And although nothing truly catastrophic and long lasting has yet happened, the long-foreseen economic collapse will come. The good times are going to come to an end.

### Falling dominoes

As 1997 drew to a close, the world saw that faith in the international financial infrastructure may have been overstated. The financial stability of South Korea (with the world's 11th-largest economy) collapsed. Other alarms sounded as Japan's \$4.5 trillion economy grew shakily uncertain.

The Asian financial morass forced leaders of Pacific Rim economies to adopt a financial rescue centering on intervention by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). What started as a \$20 billion bailout grew to almost \$60 billion a few weeks later for South Korea alone. Total IMF and bilateral financial arrangements targeted more than

\$100 billion to stabilize the region.

In mid-December a commentary in *U.S. News & World Report* observed that “the Pacific Rim looks more like the Pathetic Rim.” *The Economist* proclaimed “the Asian bubble has burst.”

*Business Week*, along with others in the financial press, expressed concerns about the Chinese banking industry. Unless something happens soon, it warned, “the economy is sure to take a massive hit” from a “staggering official figure of \$200 billion in bad bank loans—[and] the true amount likely is much higher.”

The problem? The Chinese banking system is technically bankrupt, with uncollectible debt five times greater than bank capital. *Business Week* concluded that, if China doesn't fix itself soon, “the whole world will be affected.”

A few weeks later, the Japanese government roughly tripled its estimate of the amount of bad loans held by Japanese financial institutions—to a staggering \$581 billion. Japan's prime minister warned that, if Japan's economic-recovery plan fails, the country's economic ills could trigger worldwide financial problems.

### Destination America

With domestic demand declining

throughout much of Asia, analysts think the only workable strategy to fix the economic mess is for Asians to export their way out of their problems. Although potentially helpful to Asia, this could dramatically impact world trade balances.

“This will unleash a flood of cheaper imports into the flourishing American market, while shrinking Asian economies will not be able to import more American goods,” said Washington Post Writers Group columnist Jim Hoagland. “With factories dumping excess inventories onto international markets, exports so far this year have soared by 25 percent, accounting for roughly half of China's economic growth and causing the trade surplus to balloon.”

Analysts predict that goods at deflationary prices will emanate not only from prodigious China and the other Southeast Asian countries, but from Japan. With its currency plummeting in value against the dollar—20 percent in 1997—Japan will likely choose this route as the easiest way out of its problems.

But to whom will Japan—along with China, South Korea and the Southeast Asians—direct their huge wave of consumer and industrial products in a world of collapsing markets and declining real incomes?

In the minds of the architects of Asian bailout plans, all roads lead to the American consumer. With much of Europe hampered by high unemployment and slow economic growth and Asian economies on the verge of collapse, there is simply no other viable market for such goods.

No doubt about it, American consumers have a seemingly endless appetite for merchandise. From hair dryers and makeup to microwaves and mansions, the American public's impulse to consume drives more than \$4.5 trillion in annual U.S. economic activity.

Although the U.S. economy certainly appears robust, analysts predict coming problems. The IMF predicted that the American current trade-account deficit would surge to \$230 billion in 1998. Others place the future U.S. trade deficit \$100 billion higher. Some U.S. firms will face heated competition from inexpensive Asian imports, leading to lower profits and increasing layoffs as companies slash expenses. At the same time, falling prices will be a boon to consumers and businesses using imported goods and components. Time will tell when and how it all gets sorted out.

### **Collapse of consumerism?**

Inevitably "the borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7).

Whether about toothpaste or a new car, the not-too-subtle message of the media is that the way to happiness and fulfillment is the next purchase. All too often the path is perilous and leads to a precipice.

The path is debt.

Consumer debt in the United States is at its highest historical level, at \$1.2 trillion, not including mortgages. In 1997 a record 1.34 million people filed for personal bankruptcy—a 20 percent increase over the previous year. The federal government debt is more than \$5 trillion—\$68,000 per family. Notwithstanding the fact that some inroads have been made towards lowering the national debt and some optimistic Americans even contemplate balancing the budget, sooner or later the bills will come due.

America's buying binge began after World War II with the premise that the good life can be endlessly and painlessly charged on credit. But, says Greider, "sooner or later, like any other kind of debtor, the United States will be tapped out."

How long can this continue? Only God

knows. But clues may lie in recent economic trends.

### **The spiritual bottom line**

Most people are blissfully unaware that God condemns the practices that are leading the global economy—including America—to the brink of disaster.

Like it or not, we are not immune to the consequences of ignoring God's instructions. How often have we heard that we reap what we sow, not realizing that this principle originated in the Bible? "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

God gave us laws that—if obeyed—would prohibit the exploitation of those less fortunate. "If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you" (Leviticus 25:35-36).

The Tenth Commandment (Exodus 20:17) also cautions us against greed—coveting things that do not belong to us or we have not rightfully earned. Jesus Christ added, "Take heed and beware of covetous-

pursuit of personal gain and material affluence has a hidden pitfall because it obstructs spiritual well-being.

Jesus said "the deceitfulness of riches" can "choke" the Word of God (Matthew 13:22), blinding individuals and nations to God's divine purpose and plan. The world has largely been seduced into believing materialism is the ultimate goal of this life and the bulwark against bad times.

### **An inevitable day of reckoning**

Christ said that one cannot serve God and "mammon"—the pursuit of material possessions (Matthew 6:24). Jesus also said a person will love the one and hate the other. Many people behave as if mammon is the god that delivers the goods that make life worth living.

For the foreseeable future, some may enjoy a tremendous variety of quality imported goods at heavily discounted prices. But this could well create significant pressure to depress corporate profits, the stock market, consumer spending, employment, real-estate prices and financial infrastructures.

As this century comes to an end, American dominance also may be ending soon. "This reality may surface as a dramatic

## **Recent economic problems in Asia, and stock market gyrations around the world, should alert us to the real possibility of global economic reverberations.**

ness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

For those caught up in its worship, materialism is a god that inevitably fails. In a whirlwind pursuit of gain, many people have placed their faith in the shortest paths to wealth, thereby artificially distorting markets and the economies of poor countries.

Some 3,000 years ago an astute observer of human behavior said, "A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him" (Proverbs 28:22). A millennium later Jesus Christ explained that the great and small points of the divine law of God would never pass away (Matthew 5:17-19). We can keep them and prosper. Or we can break them and be broken—personally, nationally and globally.

"He who trusts in his riches will fall," warned King Solomon (Proverbs 11:28). The vision of economic utopia based on the

thunderclap or simply emerge from the slow bleeding process that is already in progress," said Greider in *One World, Ready or Not*.

The lack of understanding and applying godly principles inevitably leads to harm, whether to an individual or to a nation. The excesses and manipulations that created the Asian economic crisis violate God's instruction, and the world is beginning to see its inevitable fruit.

As God said of ancient Israel's rejection of His instruction, "they sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7).

How strongly, and how far, those winds blow are the central questions of the world's economic future. And remember, we are warned by Jesus Christ Himself to "keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36, New American Standard Bible). *GN*

# The Global Economy and Jesus Christ's Return

*What possible connection could Christ's return have with the global marketplace?*

by Roger Foster

**R**

Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is the only New Testament book specifically devoted to prophecy. It is literally “the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1).

The 18th chapter describes a dominant system of international trade supported by corrupt political and religious hegemonies whose “sins have reached to heaven” (verse 5). But the Bible shows that the return of Jesus Christ will signal this system’s collapse and destruction.

This system will exercise, for a short time, such control over the lives of the earth’s inhabitants that “no one may buy or sell” without its permission (Revelation 13:17). This economic system will stringently regulate commerce.

In our society, which greatly values individual freedom, it seems almost absurd to predict such a drastic global change in economic outlook and practice. What could possibly induce the citizens of civilized nations to accept such intrusive controls over their right to buy and sell as they please?

## **Earlier time of economic turmoil**

On a regional level this scenario has already been played out once in our century. The collapse of the world’s free economies, trade wars and economic turmoil of the Great Depression of the 1930s helped catapult Adolf Hitler to power. Hitler’s solutions restored Germany to power and made him a hero among most of his own people until his military defeat in 1945.

People who were adults during the Great Depression are rapidly passing from the scene. Their accounts of plummeting wages, loss of homes and jobs and pervasive hunger seem long ago and far away. Today few people in the industrialized world have any concept of what happens when deflation—a drop in prices and wages—sets in.

The destructive effects of prolonged deflation are almost unimaginable to most. Consider the consequences. As wages drop, debt retirement becomes more and more difficult. Mortgage defaults skyrocket. Business earnings drop, and corporations go bankrupt. Employment dries up. People become

aimless and idle, with hunger and fear their constant companions. It is a downward spiral into economic oblivion. Little wonder our parents and grandparents referred to the human disaster they experienced as the Great Depression.

During times of such economic deprivation, people sometimes respond favorably to exceptionally strong and decisive leaders who show promise of quickly bringing order out of chaos. Drastic problems can lead to drastic solutions.

People want immediate action, not principles and platitudes. The leaders most likely to spur their followers to action are those who have no objection to trampling on the rights of others to accomplish their own agendas. They get things done, but at an appalling cost to freedom and dignity.

In the end they reward only those who provide the support they need to keep themselves in power. They call themselves benefactors and statesmen. History sees them as despots and tyrants.

This is what happened in Central Europe between 1929 and 1945 as rulers gained dictatorial powers and plunged the planet into a conflagration.

## **Will history be repeated?**

Bible prophecy indicates that a similar scenario will unfold just before Christ returns. It reveals that 10 heads of state will throw their power, authority and support behind a superleader whom the Bible compares to a clever and powerful animal, a “beast” (Revelation 17:12-13). The political entity this leader will create is likewise characterized as a beast—a cunning animal that preys on the very ones it purports to protect.

The Bible indicates that managing the global economy—successfully controlling what can be bought or sold—may be a major reason that this system will be adopted. For this to happen, the international community may have to enter an economic crisis so enormous and threatening that the nations will be desperate for a solution.

If history repeats itself, a bold and daring new plan may be presented and adopted. And, as before, the loss of individual rights and freedoms built into this new

sociopolitical system may well be presented as only temporary. But the Bible shows that what follows will become so appalling that only the return of Christ can stop it.

Let's look back nearly two millennia to see how the Bible describes that time.

### Ancient origins

In committing to writing the revelation that Jesus Christ gave to him concerning this political, religious and commercial system, the apostle John first connects us with this evil system's spiritual roots. According to the Bible, an unseen spirit being, a fallen angel called Satan the devil, rules the earth. This malevolent spirit is increasingly angry as he sees the approaching end of his influence.

John speaks of that "great dragon, . . . that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). That "enraged" adversary has committed himself to "make war" against those who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (verse 17). He is the driving force behind the scenes.

Next John refers to the physical and cultural origins of this beastly system that is yet to arise from deep in the reservoir of ancient human tradition. "I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion . . ." (Revelation 13:1-2, emphasis added throughout).

These are the exact characteristics the prophet Daniel ascribed to the ancient kingdoms of Greece, Persia and Babylon. John is telling us that there is a direct link between some of the dominant characteristics of those kingdoms and the sociopolitical system that Christ will destroy. Ancient Babylon, in particular, destroyed the temple of God in Jerusalem, conquered the kingdom of Judah and took its people into captivity. As such, it has symbolically become the ultimate adversary of God's people.

Notice who will manipulate the world's final superdictator from behind the scenes: "The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority" (verse 2). Satan is never far from the action. It is his agenda that will really shape the policies of what will emerge.

### The religious connection

But this system embodies much more

than its sociopolitical aspects. It also has strong religious support. John introduces "another beast" that, in some ways, *resembles* a lamb but *speaks* "like a dragon" (verse 11). This beast performs miracles and "deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast . . ." (verses 13-14).

These verses describe that great religious deceiver who is referred to as "the false prophet" in Revelation 19:20. His influence will be enormous. "He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that *no one may buy or sell* except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:16-17). Also, he "causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast . . ." (verse 12).

By throwing the full force of his deceptive religious power behind the sociopolitical schemes of the first beast, this false prophet will be the one primarily responsible for persuading humanity to accept and support this major development in the world's economic and political structure. Those who acquiesce will be enslaving themselves to the state.

### The masters of commerce

In the end the merchants will make this system, symbolically named Babylon the Great (Revelation 17:5), function. Their trade will include "merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, . . . every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; . . . fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and *bodies and souls of men*" (Revelation 18:12-13).

Today, as some of the economies of Asia totter on the brink of collapse, it is appropriate that we reflect on how greed will dramatically affect the future of mankind. We have no way of knowing the precise time when it will happen, but the Bible reveals that at some point a general breakdown of the world's economy will trigger a massive rethinking of social, political and economic assumptions.

Out of the chaos of that time a clever and powerful political "beast" will emerge with vast military and economic powers. For a short time his economic policies will lead some to revel in their wealth and power.

But this system will succeed only because opposition will be smashed. Those who will not submit to this economic sys-

tem will be excluded or killed (Revelation 13:15-18).

### Dawn of a new era

The book of Revelation shows that God will send Jesus Christ back to earth to bring man's systems to an end. "After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her'" (Revelation 19:1-2).

At the return of Christ the political and economic culture that was perfected by ancient Babylon, embodying enslavement of its people, will be permanently destroyed.

At that time "the merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing'" (Revelation 18:15-17).

Also, "the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come'" (verses 9-10).

One of the first things Jesus Christ will do when He returns will be to permanently terminate this world's last great experiment with this Babylonian type of political, religious and economic culture. Then the sufferings of "this present evil world" will come to an end and Christ's joyous millennial rule will begin. *GN*

### RECOMMENDED READING

What lies ahead? Where are our economic, social and political problems ultimately heading? The answers have been available to us, though few have understood them. *The Gospel of the Kingdom* explains where this world is going—and why. Request your free copy by contacting the office in your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2.

# Ten Things You Can Say *to Make Someone's Day*

by Becky Sweat

**By offering  
some words of  
encouragement,  
we can help  
others face their  
present and  
future with  
courage!**

**F**lowers in hand, I rang the doorbell of my friend's apartment. After three weeks on a new job, her boss had called her into his office this morning and informed her that things weren't working out and he was going to have to let her go. I knew my friend was taking it hard; it had taken her several months to find this job, and now she was going to have to start searching again.

My heart raced as I approached the door. What was I going to say? Should I try to make her laugh and get her mind off her situation? If I ask her how she is doing, will she think I am prying? If I don't bring up what happened today, will she think I'm being insensitive to what she's going through?

When the door opened, I handed my friend the flowers and nervously blurted out that I cared about her and that I wanted to help in any way she needed. I could tell she had been through a lot that day, so I stayed only a few minutes and then hugged her good-bye and went home. A few days later she sent a card, thanking me for the flowers, but especially for the encouraging words.

For most people life has its share of disappointments. Fatigue from a demanding schedule, financial difficulties, a failed endeavor at work or school, health problems, difficulty getting along with a family member or friend—these are times when a person can feel frustrated and discouraged.

Our words can be a valuable tool to cheer up and encourage a person who is down. Proverbs 25:11 tells us, "Like apples of gold in settings of silver, is a word spoken in right circumstances" (New American Standard Bible). By offering some words of encouragement, we can help discouraged people face their present and future with courage and a positive outlook.

Yet often that's easier said than done. Sometimes we want to help, but we've never been in a situation similar to what the discouraged person is facing and are at a total loss for words. Maybe we don't know the person's circumstances well enough to comment

on specifics, but we still want to show our concern. When you want to give someone a word of encouragement and don't know what to say, here are 10 phrases that help bring new perspective to a discouraged person's life.

❶ **"Let me know if you ever need to talk."** One way to help is by letting the other person know you're available to listen if he or she ever wants to talk about the problem. You may not be able to give advice from your own experiences or background, but just listening and trying to understand the other person's perspective can be a big comfort. Often being able to talk about the particular problem is just what a discouraged person needs to sort through his or her concerns and gain the insight needed to deal with the situation.

❷ **"You've made progress."** People who are discouraged rarely see their own achievements—in their personal lives, in their careers or educational goals, or in their lives as Christians. You can cheer on those who are down by helping them see their personal growth and accomplishments. Acknowledge any new habits or achievements. You might say: "A few months ago you rarely exercised. I'm really impressed that you've stuck with your aerobics program," or "You used to tell me you would never get used to using a computer. Now you're an old pro!"

Point out trends you've seen in your friend over the months and years, such as improvements in how he relates to others. If you know it's a struggle for your friend to keep his cool under deadlines at work, you could tell him, "I've noticed how patient you are with your employees lately." Help the discouraged person focus on his or her progress rather than failures.

❸ **"You're not alone."** You can remind a person who is discouraged that he or she is not alone—you are choosing to face his problems with him and certainly others are also rallying behind him. Reassure your friend that you want the best for him and that you are praying about the situation. Help your friend see that he is not the only person to face that particular problem. If you know of other people who've been in such

a situation, suggest that your friend talk to that person. Your friend will feel less isolated and will gain constructive information to help work through the problem.

④ ***“I really admire you for . . .”*** A person who is depressed often has lost sight of his good qualities. You can encourage that person by pointing out his genuine strengths. What are your friend’s natural talents and abilities? What personal traits do you appreciate in him? What about the other person do you see as attractive to others? Go beyond appearance or personality. Point out your friend’s personal strengths such as dependability, friendliness, trustworthiness, patience, sincerity and other character traits you value in him. Talk about the positive differences your friend has made in other people’s lives. Statements such as, “Your smile really cheers me up,” or “The way you treat your kids has been a wonderful example for me to follow,” can be encouraging.

⑤ ***“The present is not the future.”*** Those who are discouraged tend to see their present problems as overwhelming and can’t envision their future as being any better. You can help them see that one day they will be able to function better than they can at present. Ask such questions as, “What would you like to be doing next month that you can’t do now?” or “How do you hope to be living this time next year?” Encourage your friend to write down a few goals for future reference. While your friend is talking, listen for statements such as, “I always wanted to . . .” or “I wish I had . . .” and then urge your friend to make those undertakings his or her goals. Get the discouraged person excited about something positive. Focusing on a brighter future helps a person get past a gloomy present.

⑥ ***“You’re not a failure.”*** Another way to get a handle on discouragement is to remind others that they’re not a failure just because they’re at a low point and experiencing negative feelings. If you’ve been frustrated over a similar situation in the past, be willing to talk about how you were feeling at the time. Knowing you were able to stick it out may give them the motivation to go on. Remind your friend that it is normal to feel frustration, discouragement and disappointment now and then; however, as Christians we should not let depression destroy us.

⑦ ***“I want to help in any way I can.”*** Offer to help your friend and provide assistance in any way you can. Doing so will take some burdens off your friend so that he or she can

focus on solving the problem at hand. Realize the other person may feel uncomfortable asking for help, so your offering to help in specific ways may take a big load off the other person. Offer to take your friend’s children to the park or to baby-sit. Ask if she would like you to go grocery shopping for her or if she needs clothes taken to the laundry or dry cleaners. Offer to cook and deliver a complete meal, to water her garden or to pick her up from the airport. Put yourself in the other person’s shoes and try to anticipate what might be genuine needs.

⑧ ***“There are solutions.”*** Discouraged people often feel they are in a hopeless situation and cannot see what resources are available to solve their problems. Help your friend see that there’s at least one way to improve the situation, and maybe more. Together with your friend, brainstorm as many solutions to the situation as possible—even silly, far-fetched ideas are okay, if they make your friend laugh and get his mind off the problem. Talk about each option and help your friend figure out which plan is best.

⑨ ***“You did really well.”*** A discouraged person is often preoccupied with a specific failure or mistake. One way to help is by finding something about the person that you can sincerely applaud: “You did a good job!” “I really appreciated all your hard work.” “I was impressed by your insight.” “I thought you had some great ideas!” Don’t overlook the little, everyday things. Let an employee know you appreciate her meeting a deadline or her informative presentation. Tell family members how much you appreciate their hard work doing chores or preparing a special meal. Sincerely compliment your friend’s initiative, ideas, efforts, achievements or choices.

⑩ ***“You are a special person.”*** No other person has your friend’s unique opportunities in life or thinks the same way your friend does. Nobody else can

duplicate his or her personality, childhood, family life and other experiences. No other person has that particular combination of talents, insights and personality traits. Point out the ways your friend is truly one of a kind. Tell your friend, “There has never been and never will be another person exactly like you, and I’m grateful for knowing you.” Let your friend know how much you care for him or her and enjoy spending time together.

Keep in mind that encouragement is truthful. It is not blind reassurance, for example, to say, “Things are okay,” or “Things will get better soon,” when the facts may be saying just the opposite. If we tell other people that things are all right when they’re not, this tends to confuse them and makes them feel guilty when they in fact see the situation differently. If we try to predict the future and tell another person things will turn out okay and, in fact, they turn out badly, this tends to disillusion or disappoint the discouraged person.

Focus on what you know to be true: that you care about the person and are pulling for him. To know there are others who are concerned about them and who are by their sides even during their low points can give those who are discouraged the strength they need to face setbacks and challenges with a positive mindset. *GN*



For most teens one of the most eagerly anticipated times of the year is summer break: an extended recess from school!

Millions of young people will burst out of school, celebrating a reprieve from classes, books and homework assignments and an opportunity to rest, recharge batteries and enjoy a change of pace. They will eagerly look forward to precious time off.

But time off to do what?

Those of you who will get out of school for summer break, do you have anything planned, or will you just let the time happen?

To have a profitable summer, you need to plan your time creatively. *Use* this time off from school. Make it an experience worth remembering. Don't take a long break and then wake up at the end of it wondering where all that time went!

So how do you plan your summer? What can you do to get the most out of it? Here are some steps you can take to make your coming break both productive and profitable.

#### Make the most of your time

- Take advantage of opportunities. This coming

break is a good time to catch up on all the things you've been wanting to do but haven't managed to get to yet. Visit a museum or art gallery. Take short trips to visit parks and attractions in your town or within a few hours' drive.

If you've always wanted to go to a particular summer camp (provided it is affordable), make this the time that you finally go. Perhaps visit some colleges you're considering attending.

Try some new experiences. Visit a national park near where you live. Go canoeing or white-water rafting. Learn to swim (preferably before you go white-water rafting!). Organize a family trip, picnic or some other activity.

- Set a goal for the next year. What do you want to be good at a year from now? Do you want to be the best shooter on your basketball team? If so, you'd better start practicing. Maybe you want to be the best dribbler. Again, start practicing.

A teenage girl who is a friend of ours wanted to learn to sew, so she came to my wife for help in getting started. She and my wife spent several afternoons together, and in a few weeks she was wearing a dress she had made. She wanted to learn a skill, so she set to work on it.

# Make the Most of Summer Break

by Scott Ashley



So set a goal for yourself—something you'd like to be good at—and get to work on it.

### No break for your brain

- Don't give your brain the summer off. Keep your mind active. Use this time to grow and develop.

How many of you have heard (or said) the words, "There's nothing to do here"? Young people have been saying that for years. I know my parents heard it a few times from my brothers and me, and I've heard that complaint from young people everywhere I've ever lived. I heard it when I lived in a small town in Texas. Even when I lived in the Los Angeles basin, the entertainment capital of the world, young people were complaining, "But there's nothing to do!"

There's always something you can do. You don't have to be bored. Here's a list of several things you can do to keep your brain active and develop your talents effectively:

- *Get a head start on school next year.* If you know you'll be taking a history course next school year, read one or two history books this summer. If you know you'll be taking a course in English literature, read some Shakespeare or Dickens. If you know you'll

interest and learn more about it. It could be just about anything: painting, drawing, photography, writing, computers, woodworking, gardening, making models, collecting or reading on a particular topic. You'll find it's a great way to pass the time, keep your mind in gear and develop your own talents and abilities.

### Start earning money

- *Get a job.* Part of maturing and preparing for adulthood is learning responsibility. There's no such thing as summer vacation once you get out of high school. It will then be a thing of the past. Adulthood is going to be here before you know it.

Why should you get a job? There are many reasons. I know one teen who took a summer job working at a fast-food establishment so she could make money to go to a summer camp in a faraway state where she would meet lots of new friends, learn new skills and try new experiences.

Young people need to learn to prepare financially for the future. Start earning and setting aside some money. Many opportunities are available if you look: mowing lawns, baby-sitting, movie theaters, restaurants and fast-food establishments and all kinds

education would. Which would you prefer?

Obviously many of you reading this will be too young to get a summer job to earn money, so what can you do? If you're too young to get a job, make it your job to help your parents or perhaps a neighbor in need. Ask what you can do to help. Maybe it will be taking care of the lawn chores. Maybe you could clean out the basement and garage and keep them clean and tidy. Perhaps you could help out in the garden. Maybe there are some special projects that your parents have been wanting to do but haven't had the time to get to.

So help them out this summer. Make it your job to help build your family, to do things together with your parents, brothers and sisters.

### Practical advice

My wife is always telling me that I'm not as young as I once was and that I'm getting a nice, gray "extinguished look." There's a scripture that makes this same point: We're all going to grow older, and we should make the most of our time while we are young.

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 advises young people: "Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment. So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigour are meaningless" (New International Version). Or, as another version puts it, "childhood and the prime of life are fleeting" (New American Standard Bible).

The point King Solomon is making is that youth is a time to be enjoyed. It is a time to be happy, to try new things and new experiences and to take advantage of the opportunities that come your way. But we are to try *the right kind of experiences*—those that will create lasting positive memories. He reminds us that we will all be judged for what we do, and, if we waste our time in senseless or immature acts or behavior that violates God's laws and principles, we will suffer the consequences.

Youth is a time to be enjoyed, but it is also a time that will inevitably pass all too soon. You're going to take all your experiences, whether good or bad, with you as you grow up and mature. Take advantage of those opportunities so you have lots of fun with plenty of good memories and experiences to take with you. You are young only once, so make the most of your youth.

Put some of these things into practice. Don't let this time just happen. Plan your time. Use your time. And make this summer one of the best, most productive times of your life. **GN**

## What will you do during your time off from school? Will you look back on it later and wonder where all the time went? Here's how to make sure that doesn't happen.

be taking a class in geography, get an atlas and start looking up all the places that are mentioned on the news each evening or read several travel books. Don't vegetate in front of the television. After all, there's usually nothing on but reruns anyway.

- *Get into the library habit.* This is one of the best things you can do to educate yourself. With books you can travel around the world right from your house. You can travel through time—back into history or even into the future—from your own room. You can meet all kinds of interesting people, experience all kinds of things this summer, through books.

Reading is a great habit that will serve you well throughout your life. Read widely; try a variety of books and magazines. This summer why not make it a goal to read some of the other articles in *The Good News* or some of the booklets we offer free. You'll find out lots of interesting things about one of the most fascinating books ever written—the Bible!

- *Develop a hobby or other special interest.* This is a great way to keep your brain from taking the summer off. If there's something you're interested in, follow through on that

of stores that need help.

One teen I know got a summer job picking up trash along the highways for the state highway department. He learned something important from that experience: that he wanted to go to college so he wouldn't be doing something like picking up trash along a highway for the rest of his life!

That leads to an important point: Begin preparing for your college education. A college education is expensive; it can cost between \$20,000 and \$100,000 for a four-year degree.

That's a lot of money. But consider that the alternative is a lot more expensive!

Studies show that a college graduate will, on average, earn about double the amount someone without a college education would earn over the course of a lifetime. With a high-school education you may earn \$20,000 a year for the rest of your life, but your friends with college degrees will earn about \$40,000 a year.

Even after taking four or five years to earn a college degree, someone with a college education will still earn about double over the course of a lifetime what someone without a college

# What's the Best News This World Can Hear?

**T**oday's headlines are filled with bad news—war, famine, natural disasters, new and baffling diseases, environmental catastrophes and governmental scandals and corruption. The litany of tragedies and bad news is relentless. In this century, more than 150 million people have been killed in war alone. Well over 100 million more have died from diseases, epidemics and natural disasters. With all this bad news, what kind of future can we look forward to?

Almost 2,000 years ago, a prophet came bringing a message of hope for this world. That prophet was Jesus Christ, and His message was “the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14).

The word *gospel* means *good news*. But what was the good news Jesus Christ brought? And what is the kingdom of which He spoke? Is it the church? Is it something to be set up in the hearts of men? Is it the collective good of all humanity?

Churches do not agree on either what the gospel is or what the Kingdom of God is. Yet the Bible is clear on this most important of subjects. And the message Jesus Christ brought truly is *good news*. It is the best news the world can hear!

In *The Gospel of the Kingdom* you can discover the surprising message Jesus Christ brought. This booklet shows you, from the pages of your Bible, exactly what that message is—and what it means for you. For your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom*,

write or call us at our office in your country or the country nearest

you (see the inside front cover for a list of addresses worldwide). Discover this wonderful good news for yourself!

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