

^{The} Good News

The Year

**2000
Peril or
Paradise?**

The Lesson of Y2K: The "Millennium Bug" • Reflections on Europe
Isaiah: Prophet of the New Mind • What's Wrong With Our Governments?

Can You Know What Lies Ahead?

We greet the dawn of a new year with excitement and enthusiasm. A new year brings new opportunities, an occasion for a fresh start. We imagine all sorts of new possibilities.

This year, 1999, brings a special tinge of anticipation as we count down to midnight on Dec. 31, 2000, which will mark the end not only of century but a millennium. Only a tiny fraction of humanity has ever heard the clock strike that magical moment that separates any one 1,000-year period from the next.

The start of a new year is a time for reflection, for considering where we have come from, where we are and where we are going. So what lies ahead for us?

Much of *The Good News* is devoted to news—especially significant news events and articles about world conditions. But there's more to the magazine than just that. We like to think of *The Good News* as a news magazine with a difference.

Many magazines and newspapers report the news. Many do an admirable job of keeping us informed of events in far-off corners of the world. But few if any of them explain *why* these events occur. They have no basis for explaining *why* certain things come to pass or *why* some conditions never seem to change in spite of our best efforts to find solutions.

In spite of our ingenuity, we human beings are frustratingly incapable of solving some of our most basic problems: our inability to get along with one another; the seeming impossibility of erasing poverty and hunger; our governments and leaders focused on preserving and expanding their own power rather than empowering their citizens to better their lives; the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Writers, editors and publishers have their sources to help them make sense of events in the news. So have we at *The Good News*. We have a primary source. Although our source has never been proven wrong, most people remain suspicious of or flatly reject the source of most of our knowledge. Most writers, editors and publishers pay no attention at all to our source. As a result, although they can tell you the who, what, when, where and how of the news, they cannot tell you *why*.

Our source explains the *why* of world events. We relay that information on to you.

The main source for *The Good News* is the Bible. The articles in *The Good News*, including our regular news features "Behind the Headlines" and "World News and Trends," are written from the perspective of God's Word. That scriptural understanding of God's purpose and plan for mankind, and His working out of that plan on earth, gives us the edge in explaining *why* our world faces the many problems that threaten our peace and safety.

What will the next century—and the next millennium—bring? Will it be a time of peril, or will it be a time of man-made paradise? There are at present several ways in which human and animal life could be extinguished.

Without the knowledge provided by study and understanding of God's Word, we could never know in advance whether our planet is destined to be a smoking, lifeless cinder hurtling through space or a long-awaited utopia, a shining, light-filled time beyond our imagination.

We can understand where this world is headed—and why. We can understand the factors that influence events around us. But it takes something that we do not have on our own. Psalm 9:10 explains what we need: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments."

Continue reading *The Good News* to gain this understanding we so desperately need.

—Scott Ashley

Good News

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The Year Peril or P

"... The twentieth century has been less a century to celebrate than one to survive. And as it draws to a close with threats to our continued existence multiplying both in scale and number—so that to add to the evils of overpopulation, possible nuclear warfare and famine, we face a new catalogue of environmental hazards and a legion of new microbial foes."

—Marina Benjamin, *Living at the End of the World*



by John Ross Schroeder

Two distinct views are extant on the millennial year 2000. The differing perspectives naturally prompt two crucial questions: Is the world at a point of deep crisis as we approach 2000? And will that critical year serve as a stepping-stone to a glorious future?

It all depends.

Essentially, most views are divided among doomsday forecasters and millennial optimists. The pessimistic believe that the arrival of 2000 is merely the harbinger of a troubled 21st century that will threaten our survival even more than the previous one.

On the other hand, optimists predict that century 21 will usher in a utopian epoch of technology that will finally liberate us from the age-old ills of the human race.

Would-be visionaries regularly espouse both views. But which of the two perceptions will become reality?

One idealist went so far as to say that "paradise is here now, if only we will accept it." Another titled his article: "Getting Better All the Time." A third lightheartedly advised: "Go away, ye merchants of

gloom, your wares are not wanted here. Let the good times roll."

Other well-informed observers are not so sure. Realistic statistical indicators are far from encouraging. Consider, for example, worldwide employment. A *Financial Times* article predicted a "bleak future for the world's workers," saying that "it is estimated that by 1999 a third of the world's labour force will be either jobless or underemployed" (Oct. 2). On the wellness front, the World Health Organization predicted that cancer will double in the next 20 years (*The Express*, Oct. 19).

A more-realistic assessment

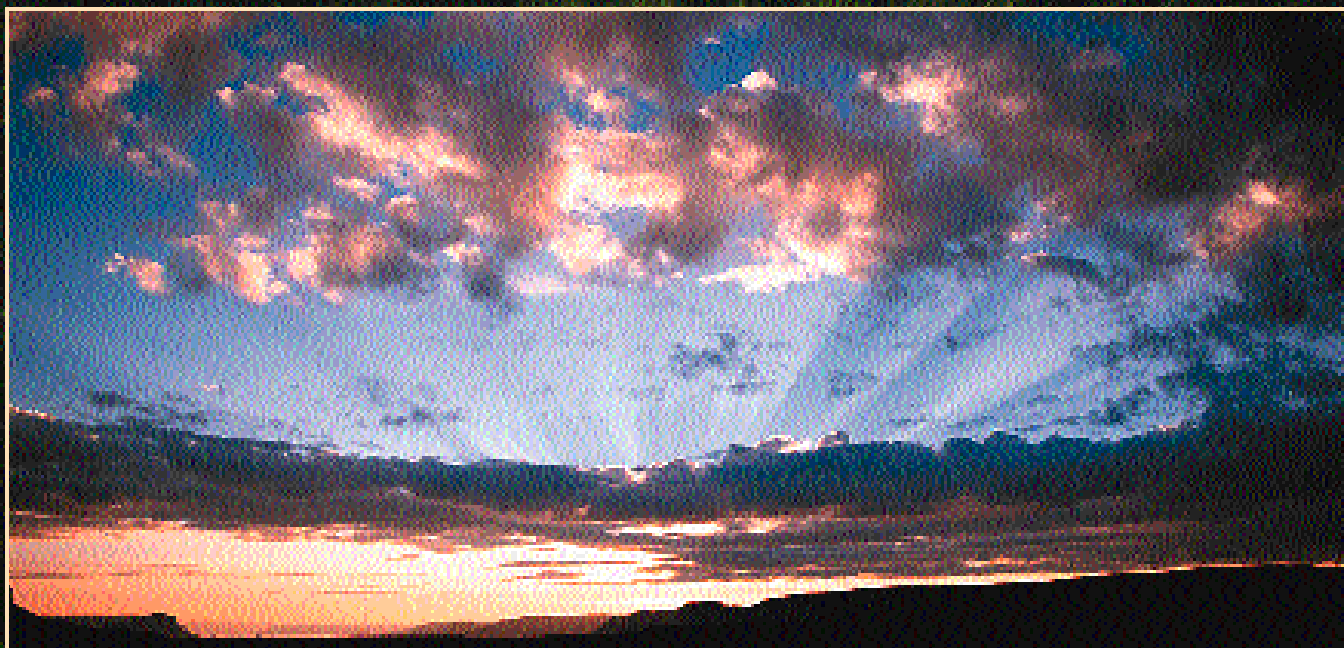
Norman Cousins (1915-1990) regularly looked to the future in a positive vein. Yet even he recognized the enormity of the human predicament in looking beyond 2000. In an interview for his book *An Agenda for the 21st Century*, he mentioned four pressing problems that dog humanity.

- Weapons that can "pulverize the human species."

Year 2000: Paradise?

"The world has been preparing for the third millennium of the Christian era in a spirit of optimism . . . World disaster today? I don't think so. The omens simply aren't there . . . I am betting on a smooth transition to the third millennium."

—John Keegan, Defense Editor, *The Daily Telegraph* (London)



- Environmental deterioration so severe as to threaten natural balances that are necessary to sustain life.

- Worldwide hunger that takes millions of lives every year.
- Worldwide squalor and crushing poverty that sentence some people and nations to an existence of misery and suffering.

These problems, Mr. Cousins hastened to add, are not new. "But they exist, nowadays in a form so heightened that people don't want to think about them."

Although *The Good News* magazine publishes just that—good news—we recognize our obligation to bring serious problems to the attention of our readers. What makes this magazine different is our commitment to presenting the solid solutions the Bible offers. Does the Bible have anything to say about the problems that threaten us? Let's consider 2000 from a broader biblical and historical perspective.

What 2000 means to mankind

Man is always fascinated by time—even more so as every day

brings us nearer the turn of the millennium. We look to that date with a mixture of anticipation and apprehension. The clock ticks. We count the days as we near the end of one century and the second millennium since the birth of Christ and look forward to the beginning of another 100 years and the onset of a new 1,000-year period.

Damian Thompson commented on people's preoccupation with the otherworldly around benchmark dates on the calendar: "The measurement of time is inextricably bound up with belief in the supernatural. We need look no further for proof of this than the currents of revival and anxiety which are flowing through the world's religious communities as the year 2000 approaches" (*The End of Time*, 1996, p. 3).

But what is it about 2000 that tends to steer so many people in the direction of apocalyptic musings? Why should Christians—who, if they have looked into the matter, realize that Jesus Christ was not born in A.D. 1 (but 4 B.C.)—attach such great importance to a mere date change?



The Apocalyptic Prophetic View: A Coming Time of Great Distress

A Vision of Isaiah, the Hebrew prophet:

"I will give children to be their princes, and babes will rule over them. The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base towards the honorable" (Isaiah 3:4-5).

A prophecy of Jeremiah:

"They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14).

One of Ezekiel's visions:

"They have blown the trumpet and made everyone ready, but no one goes to battle; for My wrath is on all their multitude. The sword is outside, and the pestilence and famine within" (Ezekiel 7:14-15).

God's word to Zephaniah:

"The great day of the LORD is near . . . That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, . . . a day of trumpet and alarm . . ." (Zephaniah 1:14-16).

The word of God to Joel:

"Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Joel 2:1-2).

From the mouth of Moses:

". . . If you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God . . . all these curses will come upon you . . . Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land . . ." (Deuteronomy 28:15-18).

God's Word through Hosea:

". . . The LORD brings a charge against the inhabitants of the land: 'There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed' " (Hosea 4:1-2).

An end-time prophecy of Daniel:

"And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time" (Daniel 12:1).

Marina Benjamin put it this way: "We ache to place the present moment in its proper perspective so that we may know where we stand in relation to the entire sweep of time" (*Living at the End of the World*, 1998, p. 5). In other words, we would like to know what will happen and how we fit into the picture. People try to divine the shape of the future.

Numbers convey a sense of order, destination and limit. They bring our mortality into sharper focus. We will live only so long in the flesh, so we are curious about tomorrow, the day after and next year. Solomon wrote that "man is greatly troubled by ignorance of the future" (Ecclesiastes 8:6, Revised English Bible).

Numbers point to helpful patterns. They allow us to wrest order and meaning from a confusing mixture of chaotic events. God Himself imposes order upon His creation. The seven-day week is a case in point. Each day is specifically recounted in Genesis 1, and God did something different during every one of those original 24-hour periods.

Men and women, made in God's own image (Genesis 1:27), share some of His characteristics (although not His perfect character). So we look for historic patterns that explain events and impose order, especially in our chaotic age marked by a torrent of new knowledge and information.

Calendrical patterns can help. Wrote Damian Thompson of mankind's quest for meaning: "The existence of a divine plan for humanity which can be glimpsed by arranging man's experience into epochs has been taken for granted in every society which has recorded history" (*The End of Time*, p. 3). The Bible shows there really is a divine plan.

The Bible and millennial numbers

Scripture itself lays great stress on the importance of the number 1,000. Psalm 90 (a prayer of Moses) mentions the millennial number in the context of man's mortality and the natural limits of his life on earth. "For a thousand years in Your [God's] sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night . . . The days of our lives are seventy years . . ." (verses 4, 10).

Many centuries after Moses, the apostle Peter uses this same theme to help explain to members of the early Church why the second coming of Christ might not occur in their lifetimes. "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8).

Modern man is nearly always in a hurry.

By contrast, God is patient and guides events and conditions when necessary to allow His plan to unfold properly, firmly hoping that in the meantime we will turn to Him in repentance (verse 9).

At the end of the apostolic era, near the close of the first century, the apostle John foretold a 1,000-year period of utopian peace and prosperity when Jesus Christ will rule the earth (Revelation 20:4-6). Revelation 20 mentions this 1,000-year span no fewer than six times.

Considering the original pattern of a six-day creation immediately followed by God's seventh-day rest, some have predicted a 6,000-year age of man that would precede a millennial rest period (Hebrews 4:1-9). If true, God's plan for man would be carried out over a 7,000-year period.

In a scholarly volume about world chronology, *The Timetables of History* (1991), most of the entries regarding man's civilized activity begin around 4,000 B.C.

Biblical chronology also indicates that we could be close to the end of 6,000 years from the creation of the first man, Adam. Biblical researchers have estimated from Old and New Testament chronologies (Genesis 5, Luke 3, etc.) that the general time frame from the creation of Adam to the birth of Christ was somewhere in the neighborhood of 4,000 years. It has been slightly more than 2,000 years since the time of Christ's birth (4 B.C.).

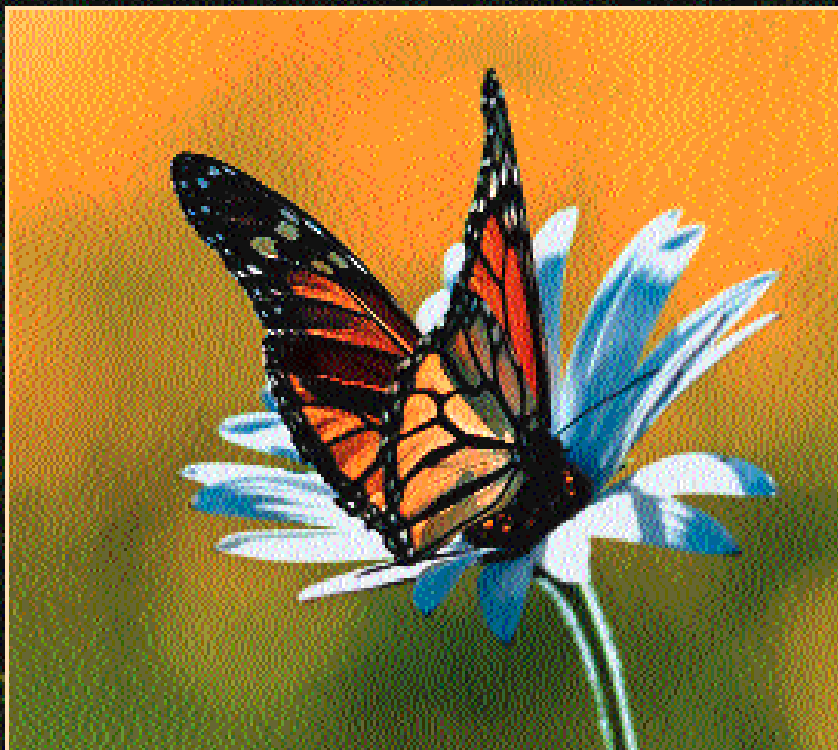
This is a much more complex computation than most people realize. Archbishop James Ussher (Anglican primate of Ireland) published his famous study of biblical chronology in the mid-17th century. Although specifics of his work are judged as much too precise, his estimated figure of 4,000 years for the biblical chronology from Adam to Christ is generally accepted.

Certainly this computation involved much more than sitting around on a rainy afternoon counting up the numbers in the Bible. It was a painstaking labor of biblical scholarship, even requiring comparison with certain national histories in which gaps occurred in the records, such as the time between the two testaments.

A broader perspective

Man is not the only being imbued with the ability to hold multiple viewpoints. God's Word also gives us different views of the future. The big difference is that, while human observers mostly divide between the optimistic and pessimistic outlooks, the

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Beyond 2000: Utopian Prophecies of the World to Come

A vision of Isaiah:

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain . . ." (Isaiah 11:6-9).

A prophecy of Jeremiah:

"At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem . . . In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel" (Jeremiah 3:17-18).

The Word of God to Ezekiel:

"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them . . . and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

The message of Micah:

" . . . They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid . . ." (Micah 4:3-4).

A vision of Zephaniah:

"The LORD your God is in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you in His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

Daniel's millennial vision:

"Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High . . ." (Daniel 7:27).

God's word to Amos:

" 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it . . . They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them' " (Amos 9:13-14).

Reflections on Europe

To better see where Europe is headed, consider its past.

by Melvin Rhodes

"Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane, but the church of Jesus constant will remain." Remember the words of "Onward Christian Soldiers"? They come home to you when you travel in Central Europe. I had an opportunity to do just that in early September, accompanying my parents on tours of three cities—Prague, Budapest and Vienna—with other stops en route.

We joined 32 other people on our bus, all from the north of England, where I grew up and where my parents live. I found it fascinating to hear their comments on the emerging European Union.

Understanding continental history

People from the Anglo-Saxon countries (including Americans) find it difficult to grasp history and Bible prophecy. The reason is quite simply that our nations have been around so long.

The United States, for example, although only about 220 years old, has enjoyed more than 130 years of peace and stability, with a continuous political system within the same stable borders since the end of the Civil War. England has done even better, with almost 300 years of stability under the present royal house, a substantiality that

nations like Australia and Canada have shared in through their ties to the throne.

This means that anybody living in any of these countries is not as old as the country itself. Our memories are of stability, so we find it difficult to understand the turmoil of other nations during our lifetimes. It is no exaggeration to say that many European nations are younger than most of you reading this magazine.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia, for example, two of the countries I recently visited, are barely five years old (even when united, their history began only in 1918). The former Czechoslovakia was created out of the northern end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the First World War. Today's Hungary itself is less than 10 years old.

The Austrian Republic, as it is now configured, did not come into existence until 1955. The Federal Republic of Germany did not exist until 1949—and, with its present borders, it is only seven years old. Even France's Fifth Republic is celebrating only its 40th anniversary.

Of course, nations, cultures and kingdoms existed on the same pieces of land for centuries before the present political boundaries were drawn.

It is no exaggeration to say that many European nations are younger than most of you reading this magazine.





Today's Europe is a fascinating mixture of the ancient and modern. State-of-the-art transportation and other conveniences

contrast with centuries-old cathedrals and castles that constantly remind Europeans of their long and often-unstable past.

Ancestors of the citizens of many of today's nations lived on those lands for centuries and helped shape the Continent. But the past, as they say, was another country, no less so than Colonial America was distinct from what the United States of America is today.

These changes have had their effect on the peoples of these lands. Whereas Americans and Britons have been lulled into a sense of security, the peoples of nations that have endured decades of war, foreign domination, political uncertainty, revolutions, divisions and financial upheaval suffer from what the Germans refer to as *Zukunftsangst*, a constant worry about the future.

I have often observed that, whereas most American males read the sports page first, most European men don't. When traveling on the London underground it's instructive to see what people are reading. Most are perusing a newspaper—there are plenty to choose from—but most people do not read the sports page first. The front page often impacts their daily lives in a way that Americans would find difficult to understand. Accordingly, the average European citizen is usually better informed about the issues of the day than the average American.

Perspectives on the euro

It came as no surprise, then, that the people on our tour all had an opinion on the euro, the new currency that is supposed to tie 11 European nations together beginning this year. The United Kingdom is not one of the 11. The ruling Labour government is in favor of the euro but will not consider adopting it until after the next election, due in 2002. The opposition Conservative Party is somewhat divided over the issue, with most of its members decidedly against the euro, including party leader William Hague.

It is difficult for many in the United States to understand the issues here. Think of it this way: What if America were forming an economic union with the other nations of the Americas, and a common currency was to be set up and run by an independent bank based in South America? In this scenario, a three-year transition to the new money would start in January, with the U.S. dollar and the new pan-American currency to be accepted in all businesses, but by the year 2002 the dollar would be phased out and only the new currency would remain. The Super Federal Reserve would be based in South America.

In the above scenario, it's doubtful that many Americans would support the change. Yet opinion polls show that just under 50 percent of the British electorate supports the euro. One third are opposed, while the others remain undecided or uninterested.

Britain leery of German dominance

The dominant nation of the euro will be the economically most successful country, undoubtedly Germany, with which Britain has fought two major conflicts this century. The British people are, in effect, being asked to hand over control of their finances to peoples of other nations, principally their former enemy.

Britons leery of the euro include the political editor of *The Daily Mail*, who wrote on Nov. 20: "Germany's ambition to dictate British tax rates was made starkly clear yesterday. Oskar Lafontaine, the country's new left-wing finance minister, insisted that EU members who sign up to the euro must also accept a co-ordinated tax policy. 'A unified currency area needs a fair and equal tax framework,' he said. The prospect horrified UK business leaders. Harmonisation would inevitably mean rises in both company and income tax, as British rates are currently

among the lowest in Europe."

London remains the world's biggest center for international finance, a role that began in colonial times. The British pound is still a major currency, though not as vital to the world trading system as it once was.

Britain has lost a great deal of its independence since joining the European Community in 1973, but losing its own currency and adopting one controlled mostly by others would be its biggest single step away from independence. Whatever Britain decides, its role as an international financial center will be affected.

For hundreds of years the British people struggled against continental domination to preserve their freedom and the freedom of others and the unity of the multitude of nations that formed the British Empire until fairly recent times. Successive British governments based their foreign policies on not getting involved in European affairs any more than they had to, but always being ready to intervene to stop any single European power from growing too powerful.

Now the British have completely reversed the safe policy of centuries to become a part of the latest European superpower, which some observers see as the German-led European Union.

Nations in waiting

Other nations, too, are growing increasingly enamored of the EU. Formerly communist nations in Eastern Europe are turning their eyes from the East to the West: to Western Europe, that is. All seem to want to be a part of the EU.

The Czech Republic and Hungary are two of the most successful formerly communist nations. Hungary's economy has taken off since the end of the communist era, showing signs of successful

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What's Wrong With Our Governments?

Why do so many problems seem to defy solution? Why isn't government effective at preventing and solving our longstanding problems?

by Gary Petty

How will historians look back on the events of the last few decades? How will they interpret the collapse of the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, the moral decay of the United States and other Western nations or the reasons for the AIDS epidemic?

Libraries bulge with books explaining the social, moral, economic, military, religious, agricultural, environmental and political reasons that every government from the ancient Sumerians to Nazi Germany has ultimately ended in ruin. The cycle repeats itself again and again.

Rudyard Kipling captured the essence of the cycle of man's inability to govern himself in his novel *The Man Who Would Be King*. The tale describes two British soldiers in 19th-century India who decided to travel into remote mountains to find an "uncivilized" people and set themselves up as kings.

In the course of the story, the two soldiers take over a small mountain tribe, teach its members how to use firearms and proceed to conquer the neighboring tribes. They institute a benevolent dictatorship. At first the self-styled English kings seem to bring progress to the tribes. Eventually the mountain people begin to look on the pair as gods.

The Englishmen's favored condition persists until one of the men makes amorous advances toward a local girl. This leads the villagers to decide that their rulers aren't really gods. The pair are dethroned; one is killed, the other tortured. The second man lives just long enough to escape and tell his story.

It seems that man needs government, laws and leadership for his own good, but people tend to corrupt themselves by the very power inherent in government.

The Roman Empire and the United States

Why do great nations and even empires decline and fall? No great power's collapse has spawned more discussion than that of the Roman Empire. Although many differences between ancient Rome and the United States are apparent, many unsettling similarities demand serious consideration.

Taylor Caldwell wrote a historical-fiction account

of the life of the apostle Paul in the ancient Roman world. In the introduction to *Great Lion of God*, she refers to conclusions she drew from her research:

"... The Roman world was declining in the days of Saul [Paul] of Tarsish as the American Republic is declining today—and for the same reasons: Permissiveness in society, immorality, the Welfare State, endless wars, confiscatory taxation, the brutal destruction of the middle-class, cynical disregard of the established human virtues and principles and ethics, the pursuit of materialistic wealth, the abandonment of religion, venal politicians who cater to the masses for votes, inflation, deterioration of the monetary system, bribes, criminality, . . . the loss of masculine sturdiness and the feminization of the people, scandals in public office, plundering of the treasury, debt, the attitude that 'anything goes,' the toleration of injustice and exploitation, bureaucracies and bureaucrats issuing evil 'regulations' almost every week, the centralization of government, the public contempt for good and honorable men, and, above all, the philosophy that 'God is dead,' and that man is supreme" (1970, pp. xi-xii).

Is America headed down the same path as ancient Rome? Politicians claim their platforms and agendas can solve our problems, yet much of the Western world continues to face a spiral of crime, illegal-drug use, broken marriages and economic uncertainty. The paradox is that governments tend to perpetuate the problems they are supposed to solve.

Historian Barbara Tuchman writes in her classic exposition of human government, *The March of Folly*: "A phenomenon noticeable throughout history regardless of place or period is the pursuit by governments of policies contrary to their own interests. Mankind, it seems, makes a poorer performance of government than of almost any other human activity. In this sphere, wisdom, which may be defined as the exercise of judgment acting on experience, common sense and available information, is less operative and more frustrated than it should be" (1984, p. 4).

In the beginning

How did such bad government originate?

"A phenomenon noticeable throughout history . . . is the pursuit by governments of policies contrary to their own interests. Mankind, it seems, makes a poorer performance of government than of almost any other human activity."

Barbara Tuchman,
historian and author

When God created humankind, He gave Adam and Eve basic instructions on how to govern this planet: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Genesis 1:27-28).

But our first parents chose to disregard God’s rule over their lives, instead partaking of “good and evil” (Genesis 3) and establishing their own style of government. The pattern was set.

Since then, human history has been one agonizing experiment by tribes, city-states, nations and empires to create systems of government—all of which eventually failed. Although some forms appear to be better than others, all contain the seeds of their own destruction. It was Winston Churchill who observed that democracy was the worst form of government, “except for all the others.”

This cycle of failure has led many leaders of nations to conclude that real peace, justice and prosperity for all mankind can only be brought about by one world government. Woodrow Wilson, president during World War I, died a broken man because of his lost dream of the League of Nations. Many are similarly disillusioned today over the failure of the United Nations to create real peace and unity for humanity.

But why should governments fail? Why can we find no lasting solutions? The reason is simple: The problem with human government is man himself.

A government that works

The words of the prophet Isaiah portend a

time when the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, will bring a successful government to the world. “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7, emphasis added throughout).

When Jesus walked the earth, His fellow Jews were waiting for the Messiah to appear and establish this kingdom. To a few, Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah of these prophecies, although His message about the Kingdom wasn’t exactly what they expected.

Even His disciples believed Jesus would immediately overthrow their Roman overlords and establish a powerful Jewish nation in Judea. However, Jesus told them He would be rejected by men, leave and then return to establish the Kingdom. In the meantime, His servants would have to live as members of His Kingdom while surrounded by the hostility of Satan’s rule (Luke 19:11-27).

After Jesus’ death and resurrection, His followers eventually realized that the Messianic world rulership would not take place in their lifetimes. Yet they were already spiritual citizens of His Kingdom. In a real way Christians find themselves both “heirs” of a future Kingdom (James 2:5; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Timothy 4:1) and “ambassadors” of that Kingdom to a dying world (2 Corinthians 5:20).

We can experience a change from despair to hope by submitting to God’s rule now. This requires that we dedicate our lives to

the King of that Kingdom, Jesus Christ. Our submission to Him will demand changes in our family lives, our example as employees and employers, the way we treat our neighbors, how we act at school, our willingness to serve others, how we relate to God and faith that the real answers to life come from obedience to God’s Word.

The hope for the future

Future generations will look back at this point in history and recognize it as just another chapter in mankind’s failure to govern itself. Humanity must realize that on its own it cannot solve the problems of government, agriculture, industry, education, family, health and personal relationships. The Bible reveals that, with mankind on the brink of self-destruction, Jesus Christ will return to solve these problems and show man how to live by establishing God’s Kingdom on earth.

You have the opportunity to taste that Kingdom now, even in the midst of a world filled with hopelessness, poverty, war, violence and bigotry. The answer is accepting God’s rule in your life. Future issues of *The Good News* will show you more solutions to human problems from the Bible—solutions that can transform your life. **GN**

RECOMMENDED READING

Discover for yourself what the Bible says about solutions to mankind’s problems. Be sure to request *What Is Your Destiny?* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom* to better understand how God’s Kingdom will affect your life now and in the future. They are free for the asking when you contact our office in your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2.

Prophecies of a Different Government

The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies about God’s Kingdom, which Jesus Christ will establish when He returns to earth. And what a kingdom it will be! Notice a few of the major prophetic themes from the Bible regarding the Kingdom:

- Jesus Christ will return to earth and rule from Jerusalem (Psalm 2; Jeremiah 3:12-19; Zechariah 14; Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 11:15-19).
- He will rule the world with mercy and righteousness (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10).
- God’s faithful servants through the centuries will be resurrected and rule with Jesus Christ (Daniel 7:13-18; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 3:21; 5:9-10; 20:4-6).
- When Jesus Christ begins His rule on earth, Satan will be

bound and unable to influence mankind (Revelation 20:1-3).

- God’s Spirit will be available to all mankind (Joel 2:28-32).
- The physical creation will be transformed (Isaiah 58:12; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Zechariah 14:4-11).
- Christ will establish a happy, poverty- and crime-free society (Zechariah 8).
- Christ will abolish war and institute a time of worldwide peace (Micah 4:1-7; Isaiah 2:1-4; 25:1-12).
- Christ’s rule will be a time of prosperity and agricultural abundance (Isaiah 35; Ezekiel 34:20-31; Hosea 2:18-23; Amos 9:11-15).
- The nature of hostile animals will be changed (Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:9; Hosea 2:18).

—Gary Petty



An Overview of Conditions

A troubled Russia struggles with an uncertain transition



The close of the Cold War period nearly 10 years ago was more than only a victory for the Western powers. It brought the end of a political and economic way of life that had dominated Russia and the Soviet Union since 1917. Subsequently the far-from-smooth transition from communism to capitalism has been fraught with many pitfalls, and its eventual success is by no means sure.

Coming to terms with its loss of superpower status, coupled with the loss of satellite states and the Eastern European empire, has been no easy task. In fact, many things trouble the Russians: a beleaguered national government; NATO expansion; an economy in tatters; a culture suffering from severe social strains; the worst potato and grain harvest in years; and the threat of imminent starvation in the coming months.

This last prospect most concerns Western nations. After all, Russia still has the world's second-largest nuclear arsenal. As Michael Binyon and Charles Bremmer reported for *The Times* (of London), "Russia is on the brink of severe food shortages that could pose a security threat to the West, intelligence sources have concluded. The fears confirm Moscow's predictions that supplies could run out in weeks."

However, the security threat is not the only thing to be worried about. *The Times* continued: "The worry in Western capitals is that food shortages could lead to demonstrations and rioting that might topple the government. This could lead to unpredictable political consequences [including a potential return to communism] as well as the possible flight of thousands of refugees to the West."

To help meet this threat, the European Union has proposed

Many things trouble the Russians: an economy in tatters, the worst potato and grain harvest in years and the threat of imminent starvation in the coming months.

an emergency food package of some 285 million British pounds to stave off potential starvation. But even this solution troubles Western observers. "EU officials have said that if aid found its way into the wrong hands, it could end up back on world markets, helping no one," continued *The Times*. "Russia must promise not to re-export the food."

Some 70 years of communist rule is not going to be over-

come easily. The needed transitions have caused, and will continue to exact, much suffering. Former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev wrote this year: "Russia's horizons stretch far beyond the desperate plans of those who see the year 2000 as a life-and-death political watershed." For everyone's sake, let us hope he is right. (Sources: *The Times* [London], *International Herald Tribune* [London], *The Financial Times* [London], *The Houston Chronicle*.)

Vatican seeks assured access to holy sites

As Israel and the Palestinians negotiate on the future of Jerusalem, the Vatican has requested "internationally guaranteed" access for traditional holy sites.

After a two-day conference on Jerusalem, Vatican foreign minister Monsignor Jean Louis Tauran told reporters, "... We ask that the uniqueness and the sacredness of the most holy places of Jerusalem be internationally guaranteed."

Israelis and Palestinians are deeply divided on the future status of the city. Palestinians want the Arab-populated east Jerusalem, location of most of the holy sites, as capital of a possible future Palestinian state. Israel, which captured all of Jerusalem in the 1967 war, has made Jerusalem its own capital and repeatedly stated that it will not allow the city to be divided again. (Source: Associated Press.)

The drive toward a European superstate

Ever since the first postwar steps toward the formation of what we now call the European Union (EU), occasional setbacks have stood in the way of unity. However, from the founding Treaty of Rome, in 1957, onwards, the trend has undeniably moved in the direction of an integrated Europe and, according to Bible prophecy, toward a European superpower that will astonish the world.

Germany's new chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, has said to his parliament that Bonn will use its 1999 presidency of the EU "to drive forward" European integration. William Hague, British Conservative Party leader, immediately reacted by warning that "the single currency posed 'risks' to Britain's independence after Gerhard Schroeder . . . spoke of his ambition of creating a federal Europe *on German lines*" (emphasis added).

Mr. Hague further responded that the German chancellor "has been honest enough to admit 'what many fear': that the single currency is an important step on the road to political union."

Make no mistake. Events in Europe are moving steadily towards what the Bible refers to as the formation of a "beast" power. Conception occurred many years ago, and the embryo is fast growing in the European womb. History, however, shows that the eventual birth will not be easy because serious economic and social strains have almost always been the precursors of major European dictatorships.

A few leaders in Europe are already talking of a common army (excluding the United States) that would entail many states in one uniform, perhaps under one flag, and sending





ions Around the World

soldiers out to fight under one command. This would require the subordination of certain sovereignties to a dominant central authority reminiscent of this biblical passage: "And the ten horns . . . are ten kings who have received no king-

A few leaders in Europe are already talking of a common army (excluding the United States) that would entail many states in one uniform, perhaps under one flag, and sending soldiers out to fight under one command.

dom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [a short time] as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast [a supra-national political leader]." (Sources: *The Daily Telegraph* [London]; Revelation 17:12-13).

Pope helps build telescope

"The Pope has asked a team of top astronomers to try to find 'the fingerprints of God' amid the chaos of the cosmos," writes Jonathan Leake. The Vatican is helping construct one of the earth's most powerful observatories, on Mount Graham in Arizona. The purpose is to find star systems and planets capable of supporting life as we know it.

Although intricate and lawful patterns common to the material universe should direct our minds to God (Psalm 19:1-7; Romans 1:19-20), the fingerprints of our Creator are also to be found nearer at hand—in His Word, the Holy Bible. (Source: *The Sunday Times* [London].)

Growth of British stepfamilies

Numerically speaking, nuclear families—those with children reared by parents in a lifelong marriage—are apparently on the way out in Britain. "A Family Policy Studies Institute report claims that by 2010, marriage, divorce and remarriage will be the normal pattern of domestic life and, assuming that at least one of the remarrying partners has children, stepfamilies will outnumber nuclear ones."

The numbers of stepfamilies are mushrooming. Of children who are victims of divorce before age 16, more than half will live in a stepfamily. With the 40 percent divorce rate in Britain, 18 million children and adults are part of stepfamilies. Sixty percent of second marriages fail, further complicating the problem.

Lesley White observed: "As lifelong partnership [marriage] fades from absolute convention to romantic ideal, remarriage is . . . the choice of those—especially women—with economic options and a personal fulfillment to pursue. Even the House of Windsor [the British royal family], constitutionally obliged to keep the lines of dynasty pure, has become an extended network of modern parenting arrangements."

This is not good news for Britain. Although we can and should sympathize in individual cases, the phenomenon as a whole is exacting a fearsome toll on the nation. The National Stepfamily Association says that "it takes two to 10 years for the stepfamily to become a cohesive unit." Research by the Family Policies Studies Centre shows that stepchildren are more likely to leave school with fewer qualifications, experience worse career prospects, start sexual relationships earlier and run twice the risk of teenage illegitimacy.

The Bible record shows ancient nations murdering children by making them "pass through the fire"—by burning them as a sacrifice to pagan gods. Many modern families are sacrificing their children to a much more arduous life than necessary. Such difficulties result from wholesale societal rejection of God's laws of marriage as given in the Bible.

The apostle Peter spoke of "the restoration of all things" during Christ's coming millennial reign on earth. Few things are more in need of restoration today than that basic building block of society, the family unit. (Sources: *The Sunday Times Magazine* [London]; Deuteronomy 18:10; Acts 3:19-21.)

Teen ethics: a challenge for parents

Almost half of American teens have stolen, and most admit to cheating and lying, according to a survey of middle- and high-school students. At the same time most also say that "good character" is important.

The survey, conducted by the Josephson Institute for Ethics, found that 47 percent of high-school teens admitted to stealing from a store within the last year. Seventy percent confessed to cheating on a school test, and 92 percent admitted they had lied to parents. The survey also found that older teens were significantly more likely to have stolen, cheated and lied than younger teens.

"There's no evidence that they're moral mutants or that they're inherently different than any other generation, but they are cheating and lying more," said Michael Josephson, president of the nonprofit Josephson Institute for Ethics.

"There's no evidence that [American teens are] moral mutants or that they're inherently different than any other generation, but they are cheating and lying more."

(Michael Josephson was featured in an interview in the November-December 1996 *Good News*.)

J. Angelo Corlett, founding editor in chief of the *Journal of Ethics*, warns: "It should sound an alarm that people don't take ethics seriously in our society, and that's been the case for some time." Mr. Corlett added that the survey reflects parents' ability to instill ethics in their children and noted that parents who teach strong moral values face powerful outside influences to the contrary. (Source: *USA Today*.)

—John Ross Schroeder and Scott Ashley



Y2K the 'Millennium Bug'

"It has never happened before, and it will probably never happen again. No technical hitch has ever been so pervasive, so expensive, or so potentially damaging as the failure of many of the world's computer systems to understand the difference between dates in this century and the next."

—The Economist

by John Ross Schroeder

Y2K is an abbreviation for the "millennium bug." It literally means "Year 2000."

In brief, the Y2K computer problem is simply that, in the '60s and '70s, and even into the '90s, when computer memory was costly, most programmers used only two digits to designate a year when writing software, so they wrote *1968*, for example, as simply "68." But soon some computer systems will read 00 as 1900 instead of 2000; others will simply treat 00 as a mistake—an invalid date—and produce erratic results or just shut down.

How Y2K will affect us

Since the day-to-day business, economy and military infrastructure of much of the world is conducted through computer technology, the potential for massive technological breakdowns is enormous.

Perhaps the biggest intrinsic difficulty is that the problem appears so trivial that it has been hard for politicians and businessmen to take the millennium bug seriously. The process of attitude conversion has been slow.

Yet, on a more practical level, "many time-sensitive businesses have already begun to hit millennium problems; more will do so after the start of 1999, and of the financial year spanning 1999, and 2000. Systems will crash, components will fail. Generally this will cause irritation, not catastrophe" (*The Economist*, Sept. 19).

Of course, many Western governments and businesses around the world are earmarking enormous amounts of money with the hope of fixing the problem before Jan. 1, 2000. But the necessary alterations are so minutely detailed and the repair

processes so arduous that many observers are skeptical that technicians can meet the deadline—especially since some governments and many companies are only now beginning to address the problem.

Interdependence is a major factor. As *Newsweek* (Atlantic edition, May 18) put it: "While some businesses are responding aggressively to the problem, our computers work in an incredibly complex web of interdependence, and even if a given bank or auto manufacturer manages to stamp out all its bugs, failures by partners and suppliers can still grind things to a halt."

Some fundamentals

What is it about people that landed us in this problem in the first place? Clearly the blame must be laid on the fallibility of human beings. What important lesson should we learn from the folly of Y2K?

The book *New World New Mind* summarizes our enigma in this way: "Human inventiveness has created problems because human judgment and humanity's ability to deal with the consequences of its creations lag behind its ability to create" (1989, p. 9). In other words, our awesome technology is fast outrunning our wisdom and ability to control technology. We are simply unable to deal with its consequences.

Shortsightedness is a major factor in human problems. We live for the moment. The images on our television screens vie for our too-short attention spans. We undervalue the lessons of history. We take little thought of tomorrow and fail to understand long-term cause and effect. As the late Carl Sagan expressed it: "We are very devoted to the short-term and hardly ever think about the long-term"



(*Billions & Billions*, 1997, p. 67).

Even when we grasp, in a limited way, long-term effects of our actions and decisions, we don't appropriately follow through. Lung cancer may terrify us, but many continue to smoke.

Our record of human folly shows that we lack both perspective and foresight. Those who made the original decisions to conserve memory space by using only two digits for system dating did so for reasons that were rational and sensible at the time.

Explained *The Economist*: "Even those who foresaw the year 2000 problem in the computer's early days chose to ignore it, for two good reasons. First abbreviating dates made overwhelming economic sense *at the time*. This is hard to imagine now that [computer] memory seems almost limitless . . . The second reason for not worrying about abbreviated dates was that nobody expected software to last so long" (emphasis added).

The perils of taking shortcuts

The wisest of the ancients, King Solomon of Israel, understood man's shortsightedness: "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). If bad decisions and unwise actions don't yield immediate consequences, we discount their long-term effects. In developing and implementing modern technology, we fail to face the long-term consequences of taking easy shortcuts.

Environmental problems are another textbook example. Our shortsighted ecological actions have filled the earth with various types of pollution. Yet the easy way of the moment can seem so attractive to human beings. Solomon concluded: "Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him" (verse 12).

Jesus Christ expressed the consequences of the principle of cause and effect in this way: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it" (Matthew 7:13). Sooner or later, following the easy way—the path of least resistance—catches up with us.

The 2000 Bug: A Time Bomb for Chaos?

Speculating on the events of the morning of Jan. 1, 2000, is everyone's business. It's that serious. The passing of just one day on the calendar has the potential to wreak chaos on the world.

Will communications and transportation fall into near-total disarray with nations' economies hitting the floorboard, or will the first day of the year 2000 be only a temporary blip on the activities of mankind—annoying and uncomfortable but manageable?

Edward Yardeni, chief economist for the international investment firm of Deutsche Morgan Grenfel, predicts a 70 percent chance of a serious global recession. Said Mr. Yardeni: "If we have everything fixed in the United States [highly unlikely], but major disruptions in Europe and total calamity in Asia and Latin America, we're going to be affected in a very, very adverse fashion" (*Washington Times*).

One big problem is public education. People simply do not grasp the magnitude of our dependence on computers for nearly every aspect of our lives. We even forget that our offensive and defensive nuclear-weapons systems are controlled by complex computer software. One major concern is that Russians are not anywhere near close to solving the millennium-bug problem resident in their military technology.

The Gartner Group in the United States is one of the leading Y2K research firms in the world. It recently surveyed 15,000 companies in 81 countries and found, according to a recent communiqué:

- Segments of companies and governments throughout the world will not be prepared to deal with the Y2K problem by 2000.
- In the United States, industry segments such as health care, education, agriculture, construction, food processing, governments and companies of fewer than 500 employees are lagging

behind in compliance efforts. Many will simply not adequately safeguard their critical systems by 2000.

- Countries already plagued with financial woes, sharp increases in inflation, limited monetary reserves and high unemployment are some of the same countries farthest behind with year-2000 compliance.

- The biggest risk to the United States and American citizens is the impact from companies and governments outside the United States.

America is the wealthiest country and theoretically has the resources and know-how to best deal with 2000. Yet the Gartner Group points out several serious risks to American well-being:

- Too many people may lose confidence in the banking sector.
- Interruptions could occur in the food or medical-supply chain.
- Local, city and town governments may not be able to provide critical services.

The above risks are serious. Clearly, without banking, society may come to a virtual halt, and the interruption of food supplies would have horrific consequences.

What will really happen in 2000—and how seriously will we be affected? No one knows for sure. We should, however, stay aware of the problem and current developments, seek the best professional opinion and act accordingly. But one thing is for certain. Y2K clearly fits into the sobering prophetic framework that *The Good News* has reported since its inception.

Biblical prophecies—many of them truly frightening—are not a matter of *if*, but *when*. But the time factor is variable. God will work out national and global events in a way to best fulfill His plan and purpose.

—John Ross Schroeder

A Source Book with foresight

Computer hardware and software come with handbooks to help us understand and operate them. They are vital aids to comprehending the workings of our modern machines and offer insight into dealing with problems.

But, of much more importance, the Bible is a handbook that helps us to understand *ourselves*. Crucial parts of Scripture focus on human weaknesses and show us how to overcome them.

The Bible focuses on long-term consequences. Its pages peer far into the future and look back to man's earliest beginnings. God's Word enlarges our vision of life and helps us to grasp cause and effect.

Two key chapters in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) highlight the cause-and-effect principle. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 spell out the kinds of behavior that bring rewards of peace and prosperity and the opposite actions that result in a multitude of curses. Both chapters are worthy of careful study.

The 200-plus-year history of the 10-tribed House of Israel shows us the long-term consequences of stubbornly persisting in a wrong way of life. King after king, ruler after ruler, failed to obey the living God. Each made the same mistakes as his predecessor. None learned from the blunders of Jeroboam, the northern kingdom's first ruler.

The people as a nation courted catastrophe by rejecting the laws of God. Finally the Israelites' way of life ended in their enslavement to a foreign power. In concern for their welfare, God sent several prophets who advised the nation to change course before disaster struck.

Elijah was one such prophet. Even though he was one of the most righteous and powerful of God's servants, the House of Israel virtually ignored his warnings and stayed on the foolish path to destruction.

Most people rarely face the predictable negative consequences of their choices. It is far easier to live for today and let

tomorrow take care of itself.

What action is required?

Individually, we are unlikely to prompt a national course correction among our own people. But we can take steps to put our personal lives in order and take reasonable precautions (See "The 2000 Bug: A Time Bomb for Chaos?").

We can face the future. We can get in harmony with God's way of life and begin reaping the righteous fruits that emerge from living according to His laws. Gradually our lives will begin to reflect the remarkable benefits of our new perspective and foresight.

If you would like to know more, please request our free booklets *What Is Your Destiny?*, *The Road to Eternal Life*, *How to Understand the Bible* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Or, if you would like to talk to someone about these important spiritual matters, the telephone numbers of many of our offices around the world are listed on page 2. **GN**

Isaiah

Prophet of the New Mind

"Behold I will do a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19).

by John Ross Schroeder

What makes a literary work a classic? The words of a masterpiece transcend the vagaries of time. They are forever new. They apply to all generations. Their precepts range across millennia.

Such a legendary work outlives its time and circumstances. One such work is the book of Isaiah. Transcending its historical context, Isaiah is a classic whose pages are not bound by any particular time. Isaiah was inspired by One who, its author says, "inhabits eternity" (Isaiah 57:15).

If Isaiah were a single book and not just one of 66 in an anthology, it would still be a classic. As it is, ancient Jewish authorities singled it out for the beginning of a major section of the Bible.

Isaiah properly epitomizes the books of the Hebrew prophets. It is introductory. Its themes range across the age of man and—when you understand it—beyond the age of humanity into eternity.

The supremely important introduction

The introduction to a significant written work is critical to comprehending its contents. There the author defines his purpose and to whom his message is directed.

This one begins: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Isaiah 1:1).

Based on the dates of the reigns of these rulers of the Kingdom of Judah, Isaiah wrote around 740-685 B.C. His message is historical. That is, his vision occurred in a specific place during a specified period. So why should we, 27 centuries later, concern ourselves with the contents of this ancient Hebrew writing?

First we should understand to whom the prophet's vision is addressed, along with who, if anyone, is exempt from the authority of his words. In verse 2 Isaiah tells us to whom his message applies: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!"

Isaiah's message is universal, for all peoples of all ages everywhere, and as such it demands our closest attention.

Behind-the-scenes author

But what should concern us most is the ultimate source of Isaiah's inspired words. From whom did Isaiah get his message? Who instructed the prophet to take these words to all peoples?

Isaiah writes: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken . . ." (verse 2). According to the Bible, its source is divine. The prophet's vision stems directly from the Creator. If we accept the Bible's claim that it is the Word of God, Isaiah's message merits our closest attention. We have no option but to read his book for understanding and try to properly apply its counsel.

God called Isaiah around 740 B.C., "in the year that King Uzziah died." In that transitional time the prophet saw, in vision, the throne of God (Isaiah 6:1-3). Here, in the things Isaiah witnessed, are his credentials. Here is the source of his message. Here is ultimate authority.

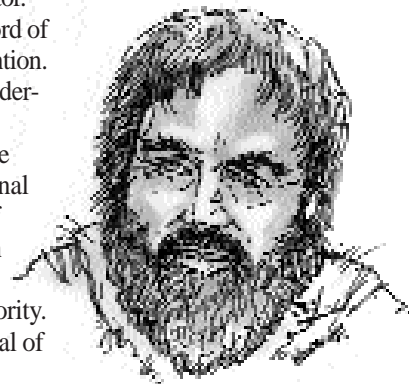
Isaiah's initial response, however, is typical of Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles who viewed a scene almost beyond human imagination. In the language of 2,700 years ago, Isaiah blurted out his reaction to the vision of the Creator of heaven and earth: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips; . . . for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (verse 5).

Only God can call a prophet and fit him to utter a divine message; our minds cannot understand how this can be. God symbolically cleansed Isaiah, with a burning coal, before He let him impart the message. God said to Isaiah: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged" (verse 7).

These passages, early in Isaiah's book, establish three important points: to whom the book is addressed, the source of Isaiah's message and the author's credentials. But what about the message itself?

Good news and bad news

Isaiah's writing mirrors the New Testament gospel—the announcement of the good news of the Kingdom of God—more than any other



Isaiah

What should concern us most is the ultimate source of Isaiah's inspired words. Who instructed the prophet to take these words to all peoples? Isaiah writes: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken . . ."



Once that kingdom becomes reality—when all is said and done and when all things have been fulfilled—then these futuristic words of Isaiah will find their ultimate fulfillment: “For

single book in the Old Testament. It is the book most quoted by Jesus Christ and the apostles. It has rightly been called a miniature Bible.

The essence of Isaiah is the good news of God’s Kingdom and Christ’s central role as its King. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isaiah 52:7).

But we don’t hear a lot of good news today. Turn on your television; read your newspaper. Bad news mounts up.

Yet Isaiah’s priority was to address his contemporaries on their terms. He graphically summarized the state of his own nation: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment” (Isaiah 1:5-6).

Sadly, this description fits our world even better than it applied to Isaiah’s. This is especially true of the West. Few aspects of our lives—financial, legal, moral, familial—are not threatened by disruption and disaster. No category appears safe.

But Isaiah’s message remained one of

hope. While lamenting the sad condition of the people, he boldly called for reform by imploring his hearers to “cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow” (verse 16-17).

Are these the words of an antiquated, out-of-date political reformer? Or do they accurately describe the gaping lacks in our own state of affairs?

It was not that long ago that many elderly people lost their life’s savings in a defunct savings-and-loan bank in a small Texas city near the Mexican border. One saver had even been assured that his money was as secure as if it had been locked up in Fort Knox.

These people began their lives before the Great Depression of the 1930s and served their country during World War II. They hadn’t invested in junk bonds or speculative stocks. A supposedly reputable financial institution had failed them.

Yet it is characteristic of Isaiah to offer solace to all people, no matter how badly they have failed themselves and others. “Come now, and let us reason together,” said the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow . . .” (verse 18).

Good confused with evil

Isaiah draws a distinct line between

right and wrong, good and evil. Perhaps one reason Isaiah and other Bible writers are not taken seriously is our penchant for trapping ourselves in a maze of blurred and fuzzy moral standards.

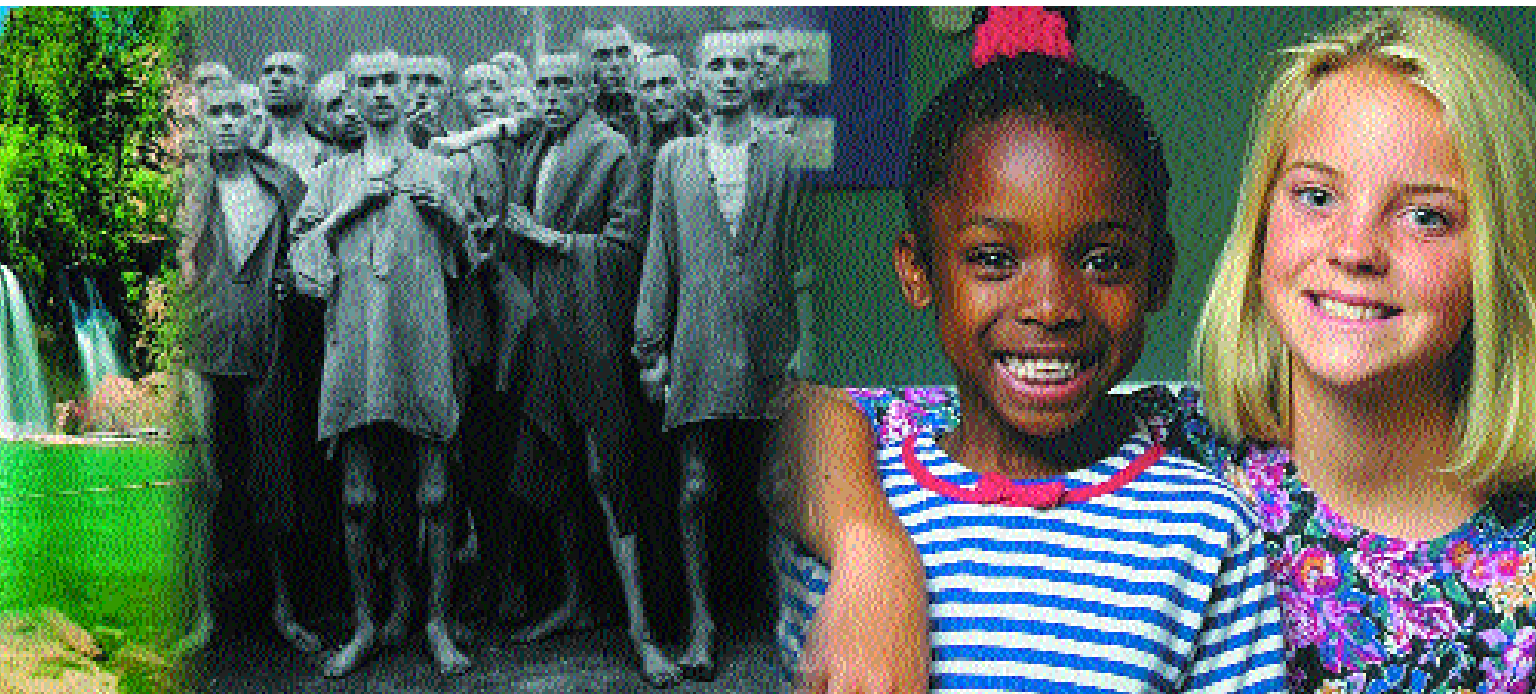
At the heart of the West’s slide into abject lawlessness is confusion about what’s right and what’s wrong. Isaiah describes and soundly condemns such moral misalignment: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” (Isaiah 5:20).

Haranguing people about wrongs and injustices, however, won’t change them. Yelling at people doesn’t alter their hearts and minds. Isaiah recognized this and called for *a new way of thinking*—indeed, *a new mind*.

“Do not remember the former things, nor consider things of old” (Isaiah 43:18); forget the sinful things of the past.

To blot any sense of sin or shame from their minds, people shut themselves away from reality. They live in the past, dreaming obsessively of yesterday’s supposed golden age. They escape while morbidly yearning for the good old days.

A nostalgic obsession with days gone by clouds the present and obscures the future. We desperately need a new mind, free of inhibiting prejudices and old



past troubles are forgotten; they have vanished from my sight. See I am creating new heavens and a new earth! The past will no more be remembered, nor will it ever come to mind."

biases, yet with a sound perspective and residual regard for genuine history, the kind of history to be found in the Bible.

The need for a new mind

Our world cannot come to grips with its monstrous problems. Our technologies are outrunning our capacity to control them. We suffer from information overload. We live in, as Peter Ustinov wrote, "a world in which the genius of discovery is not matched by intelligence in its application" (*The European*, Jan. 23-29, 1997).

Authors Robert Ornstein and Paul Erlich concluded that "the human predicament requires a different kind of education and training . . . We need to replace our old minds with new ones" (*New World New Mind*, p. 12). But how do we even begin to do this?

First hear the futuristic vision of the Isaiah: "Behold I will do a *new thing*, now it shall spring forth . . . I will even make a road in the wilderness" (Isaiah 43:19). Isaiah stands as a prophet in tune with the future. He seeks a way out for mankind. He wants us to start to understand God's way of thinking, to elevate our minds. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts," says God (Isaiah 55:9).

In His revelation to another major prophet, God promises to let us in on this higher level of thinking: "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Fixing your eyes on God

The mind's eye of which Isaiah spoke is sharply focused. It knows where the answers are and to whom to go. This mind understands the priority of trusting in Providence. It places little trust in fallible human beings and brittle, man-made creations.

Isaiah prescribes the perfect antidote. He writes of God: "You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). This beautiful passage is the starting point in our quest for a new mind.

We live, work and play in a world and system that does not exalt God nor put Him first in anything. Our priorities are upside down. The Eternal God justly asks: "Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die . . .? And you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundation of the earth . . ." (Isaiah 51:12-13).

Jesus Christ stated the same principle in a more-positive vein. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

The Kingdom of God is the key. Once that kingdom becomes reality—when all is said and done and when all things have been fulfilled—these futuristic words of Isaiah will find their ultimate fulfillment: "For past troubles are forgotten; they have vanished from my sight. See I am creating new heavens and a new earth! The past will no more be remembered, nor will it ever come to mind" (Isaiah 65:16-17, Revised English Bible). Here is that wonderful time of God making "all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

Isaiah, with its millennial theme, brims with timeless values. The prophet's writing, translated from the Hebrew, waits for you in your Bible. Your task is to take the time to read and understand its pages. **GN**

RECOMMENDED READING

Can you believe the Bible? Is it what it claims to be: the inspired Word of God? How can you know for sure? Be sure to request your free copy of *Is the Bible True?* Also ask for *How to Understand the Bible*, also free for the asking. Call or write our office in your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2.

Defining Marriage

What is marriage? When and how did it originate? Does it really matter?

by David Treybig

My wife and I recently celebrated our silver wedding anniversary. We've been blessed with two wonderful children, now grown, and 25 years of marital happiness in what is popularly known as a "nuclear family."

Looking at the world around us, we find ourselves in the minority. Traditional families like ours have diminished over recent decades as single-parent households have steadily increased.

During the social upheavals of the 1960s, some observers predicted that marriage itself would soon become obsolete. Recent evidence, however, indicates that the number of married couples compared to singles has stabilized.

But a new debate has arisen: What constitutes a marriage? Courts and legislatures wrestle with the issue. Some believe marriages between two consenting adults should be allowed regardless of their sex. Traditionalists view marriage as being, by definition, strictly limited to the union of a man and woman.

The importance of the Bible

What is marriage, and is there a tangible benefit to keeping it intact as an institution? Does marriage really matter?

Our earliest instructions on the fundamentals of the marriage relationship are found in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In the New Testament, in rehearsing the intent and purpose of marriage, Jesus Christ referred to an early chapter in Genesis (Mark 10:6-12; Genesis 1).

Though the earliest passages of this instruction book for mankind were recorded several thousand years ago, the Bible has repeatedly proven its relevance and validity on important issues facing us. (Be sure to request our free booklet *Is the Bible True?*) Accompanied by proof, backed up by real evidence, we can have confidence that God's instructions to mankind regarding marriage and other basic tenets of a godly life remain our wisest course of action and the best way to pattern our lives. This is the supreme value of the Bible.

As regular readers of *The Good News* know, this magazine is dedicated to demonstrating the wisdom and veracity of the Bible's instruction on many topics

ranging from creation to geology to everyday living.

In this article we turn to the most intimate of human relationships—the marital union—and see that sociologists continue to discover evidence that applying biblical principles and instructions still leads to marital success—thousands of years after those instructions were first written down for us.

To understand what a marriage is, we need to set aside people's opinions and carefully examine the biblical foundation of the institution that remains the building block of any stable society.

After our Creator made the first man, Adam, He observed, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:18). God's creation of woman was a blessing not only for the first man. The divine institution of marriage—of husband and wife loving and helping each other—has benefited society down through the ages.

The woman God created for Adam was Eve (Genesis 1:27). After establishing the exclusive male-female relationship called marriage, God instructed that the pattern was to continue: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). An intimate sexual relationship was to be part of marriage. But throughout Scripture God condemns any sexual activity outside of marriage and warns us to "flee" from it (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

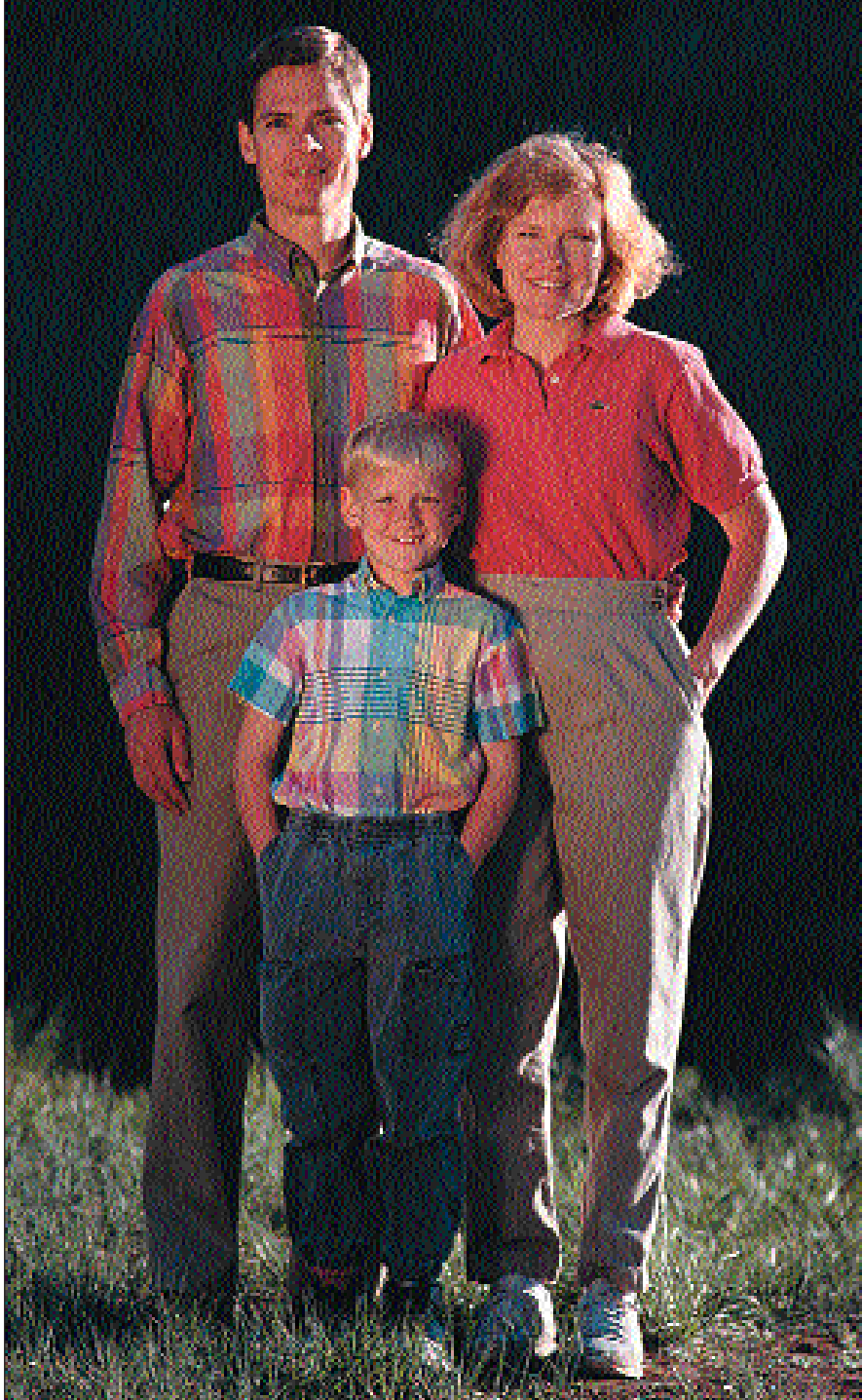
God has never condoned same-sex relationships (Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10) or described them as marriages. Supposedly enlightened efforts to legitimize such relationships by equating them with marriage are contrary to Scripture.

God knows best

Although some may think same-sex relationships are as legitimate and workable as opposite-sex ones, sociologists confirm that God knew long ago what was best for mankind. Three researchers from Carnegie-Mellon University recently put some common assumptions to the test about sex differences in communication.

In comparing the effects of male-male, female-female and male-female discussions, they found

We need to set aside people's opinions and carefully examine the biblical foundation of the institution that remains the building block of any stable society.



God's purpose was for a man and a woman to conceive children and raise a family, teach children His ways and grow in love for each other and their Creator throughout their lives.

that people listened better to others of their own sex but noted that "more emotional support was provided during opposite-sex interactions than during same-sex interactions" (Mickelson, Helgeson and Weiner, p. 220). In establishing marriage as a male-female relationship, God gave humanity the best foundation for emotional support.

From the beginning God intended that couples should not divorce (Malachi 2:16)

but remain together in a respectful, loving relationship for the rest of their lives. God's purpose was for the two to conceive children and raise a family (Malachi 2:15; 1 Timothy 5:14), teach children His ways (Deuteronomy 6:6-7) and grow in love for each other (Ephesians 5:25; John 13:34) and their Creator (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37) throughout their lives.

Many people either don't know or don't understand God's instructions about how

to live this kind of life. God laments that people invariably suffer when they either remain ignorant of or reject His instruction. As Hosea 4:6 tells us, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge . . ."

The Good News remains committed to disseminating this priceless information and instruction, the knowledge revealed by God that is so obviously missing in the thinking extant in our world.

Impact on children

Many people readily appreciate the benefits of happy, traditional marriages, and *The Good News* frequently offers information on building successful marital relationships. However, an often-overlooked aspect of marriage is its impact on children, whether good or bad. Although many single parents do commendable jobs raising their children, they can never completely replicate the benefits a child receives while living with two loving parents in the same household.

Children whose parents have successfully married are blessed with the ideal environment to grow up in as productive and emotionally stable leaders of the next generation. From firsthand experience they can learn how good relationships and happy marriages operate.

In addition to these benefits, a health dividend seems to be an additional blessing. Marianne Herring says that "children from single-parent homes are 20 percent to 40 percent more likely to suffer health problems" ("Believe Well, Live Well," *Focus on the Family*, September 1994, pp. 2-4). Successful, enduring marriages greatly benefit not only the married partners but also the children they raise.

The Bible aptly advises: "Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain [temporary] life which He has given you under the sun . . . for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 9:9).

Remember, marriage is a divine institution designed by God as a lifelong relationship between a man and a woman.

As I toasted my wife on our wedding anniversary, I was grateful for the understanding that she and I have received from God's Word that has allowed us to have a happy marriage. Our experience has proven that God's instructions work and that His teaching on marriage does not need redefining. Let's be thankful to our great Creator for this wonderful gift. **GN**

The Downfall of Judah: Exile to Babylon

by Mario Seiglie

In this series *The Good News* examines archaeological finds that confirm and clarify the historical record of the Bible. Several earlier articles discussed the time of the divided kingdom of the Israelites after they split into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah after the death of King Solomon. Two articles described the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, and the last issue portrayed the early years of the southern kingdom of Judah. We continue with an examination of the last years of Judah as a kingdom.

Around 710 B.C. Judah found itself in a dangerous position. A decade before, Judah's fellow Israelites in the kingdom of Israel had been conquered by Assyria. The Assyrians repopulated the land with others brought in from distant parts of the Assyrian Empire.

Judah's territory had been largely devastated by Assyrian armies. Only a great miracle had saved the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the same fate that had overtaken their northern cousins.

Meanwhile, more winds of change were beginning to stir in the region. A new power, Babylon, was rising in the east. Could the tiny, weakened kingdom of Judah survive its precarious position between powerful and warring Assyria, Babylon and Egypt?

The amazing story of Judah's survival is one of the themes of the Old Testament.

Hezekiah's fateful mistake

Soon after Jerusalem's miraculous deliverance from the Assyrians, Judah's King Hezekiah fell ill. After God healed Hezekiah, a Babylonian prince sent representatives with a message and gift of congratulations for the monarch.

"At that time Berodach-Baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick" (2 Kings 20:12).

Hezekiah's response to what he naively interpreted as a neighborly act of kindness and reconciliation would prove costly in the end.

"And Hezekiah was attentive to them [the Babylonian ambassadors], and showed them all the house of his treasures—the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all his armory—all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, 'What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?' So Hezekiah said, 'They came from a far country, from Babylon' . . . Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the LORD: "Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left"' (verses 13-17).

Although Hezekiah proved righteous and faithful as king, he foolishly tried to impress his visitors by showing them the kingdom's wealth and weaponry. The Bible reveals that at this time God withdrew from Hezekiah "in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chronicles 32:31). God allowed Hezekiah to make this thoughtless decision. Thus the setting was established for the future Babylonian invasion of Judah and its rich capital, Jerusalem.

Manasseh: vassal of the Assyrians

After Hezekiah's death his son Manasseh inherited the throne. It wasn't long before the young king departed from his father's righteous example and exposed himself as a wicked ruler. "Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the LORD . . ." (2 Chronicles 33:1-2).

"So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed . . . And the LORD spoke to



The mighty Assyrian king Esarhaddon is depicted as towering over captured rulers of Egypt and Tyre. Ropes pass through the lips of both prisoners as they plead for mercy. A similar fate befell Judah's King Manasseh, who was taken away "with hooks" into captivity.



Prisoners from Judah play their lyres while guarded by a soldier. This scene from an Assyrian palace is reminiscent of the words of Psalm 137:1-3 describing Judah's captivity in Babylon: "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors . . . said, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'" (New International Version).

Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen. Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon" (verses 9-11).

Two Assyrian records corroborate Manasseh's submission to the Assyrians. "The name, 'Manasseh, king of Judah' appears on the Prism of Esarhaddon . . . and on the Prism of Ashurbanipal" as among 22 rulers who paid tribute to Assyria (*The New Bible Dictionary*, 1996, p. 724).

The biblical narrative describing King Manasseh as being carried off "with hooks" (verse 11) refers to nose rings used to lead prisoners by ropes. It was a painful, humiliating and degrading punishment for those who would defy the mighty Assyrian kings.

Mighty capital of a mighty empire

The Assyrian Empire, with Nineveh as its capital, appeared invincible at the time. James Muir graphically describes this empire at the time of the prophet Nahum (668 B.C.):

"Assyria's expansion across western Asia could be likened to an octopus whose tentacles stretched from the Persian Gulf to the

Nile, and whose head was Nineveh. At that time, Nineveh was considered one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Recently, three of its kings had adorned the city with the wealth of their conquests and had built fabulous palaces. These were made of brick, and on the walls of the palaces were exquisitely crafted bas-reliefs which depicted their great victories. The great walls which surrounded the city measured twelve miles in circumference" (*Archaeology and the Scriptures*, 1965, pp. 182-183).

In spite of Nineveh's greatness, Nahum foretold not only the city's destruction but predicted that it would never be rebuilt. "Behold, I am against you," says the LORD of hosts; "I will lift your skirts over your face, I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame. I will cast abominable filth upon you, make you vile, and make you a spectacle. It shall come to pass that all who look upon you will flee from you, and say, 'Nineveh is laid waste! . . .'" (Nahum 3:5-7).

After its destruction, in 612 B.C, this mighty metropolis of the ancient world vanished from view. "Nineveh disappeared so quickly from sight," according to one author, "that when the Greek general Xenophon and

his ten thousand soldiers passed over the site in his famous reconnaissance of the Persian Empire, he didn't realize the ruins of Nineveh were under his feet. What had happened? When Nineveh was put to the torch, everything was burnt, and gradually what was left became an artificial mound covered with grass" (Arnold Brackman, *The Luck of Nineveh*, 1978, p. 21).

Although few would have believed it at the time, Nahum's remarkable prediction came to pass just as he had foretold. Nineveh was rediscovered only in 1845 by British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard. As a result, many treasures from its ruins adorn the galleries of great museums in several countries.

A scribe who made an impression

After Assyria fell, Babylon ascended to rule the region. With the rise of King Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C), the days of the kingdom of Judah were numbered. Nevertheless, God sent faithful messengers to warn the nation's leaders to return to worship of the one true God before it was too late. Nehemiah said later, "Yet for many years You had patience with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands" (Nehemiah 9:30).

One of those prophets was Jeremiah, who lived while the Babylonians were threatening Jerusalem. His faithful scribe, Baruch, wrote down some of Jeremiah's prophecies.

"Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote on a scroll of a book, at the instruction of Jeremiah, all the words of the LORD which He had spoken



This impression from the seal of Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, is dramatic proof of the existence of this biblical character. A fingerprint, possibly that of Baruch himself, appears on the left side.

to him” (Jeremiah 36:4).

Archaeologists recently found a clay impression from Jeremiah’s time bearing not only Baruch’s name, but apparently even his fingerprint!

Tsvi Schneider, who in 1991 served as assistant librarian at Hebrew University’s Institute of Archaeology, writes about a seal with Baruch’s name on it: “The first and best-known biblical name to be identified on a bulla [a lump of clay bearing a seal impression] is Baruch son of Neriah. Baruch was the scribe, loyal friend and political ally of the prophet Jeremiah. The inscription is in three lines and reads: ‘Belonging to Berekhyahu/son of Neriyahu/the scribe.’ The bulla refers to Baruch by his full given name . . . Baruch son of Neriah, the seal impression tells us, was a scribe. Four episodes in the Book of Jeremiah mention Baruch, son of Neriah the scribe” (*Biblical Archaeological Review*, July-August 1991, p. 27).

The librarian explains that the names of three other people from Jeremiah’s day, including Baruch’s brother, appear in other clay impressions and seals. “It is interesting that chapter 36 of the Book of Jeremiah also contains the names of two other people whose seals have been impressed in surviving bullae: ‘Yerahme’el son of the king’ and ‘Gemariah son of Shaphan.’”

The seal of Seriah, Baruch’s brother, has been found as well. Seriah’s name appears several times in Jeremiah 51 (verses 59-64). “The seal reads, in two lines, ‘Belonging to Seriahu/Neriyahu’ . . . Seriah was the brother of Baruch, Jeremiah’s scribe; both Seriah and Baruch were the sons of Neriah and grandsons of Mahseiah (Jeremiah 32:12, 51:59)” (*Biblical Archaeological Review*, p. 30).

These remarkable finds confirm even some of the tiniest details of the Bible—that four people mentioned in the book of Jeremiah were real people who lived in Jerusalem at the time.

The fall of Jerusalem

The Bible’s account of the conquest of Jerusalem is also confirmed by Babylonian records. First, let’s notice the biblical record: “And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising

up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans [Babylonians] . . .” (2 Chronicles 36:15-17).

“Then they burned the house of God [the temple], broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah . . .” (2 Chronicles 36:19-21).

Jerusalem was actually conquered twice. The city was first captured but not destroyed. Later it fell a second time, in 587 B.C., when it was destroyed as the Bible describes. The city was put to the torch, its palaces and temple burned and its walls demolished. The Bible faithfully describes both defeats but does not specify when the city was conquered the first time.

In 1887 several Babylonian tablets, which archaeologists call *The Babylon Chronicles*, were deciphered. They provided dates of the reigns of many Babylonian kings. More tablets, deciphered in 1956, give the dates of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign and activities. Regrettably, one tablet is missing that could account for the years 594-557 B.C. Other than this gap, the tablets document his reign.

The Archaeological Commentary on the Bible explains the significance of the 1956 find: “Until 1956, the date of the first conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians was not known. But in that year, several cuneiform tablets were deciphered which gave an exact date for the first conquest—in 597 B.C.” (1979, pp. 143-144).

Exile to Babylon

Like the Assyrians, the Babylonians deported vanquished peoples to maintain tighter control over conquered territories. As their cousins in the northern kingdom of Israel fell into captivity by Assyria more than a century earlier, Judah’s inhabitants now

were taken to Babylon.

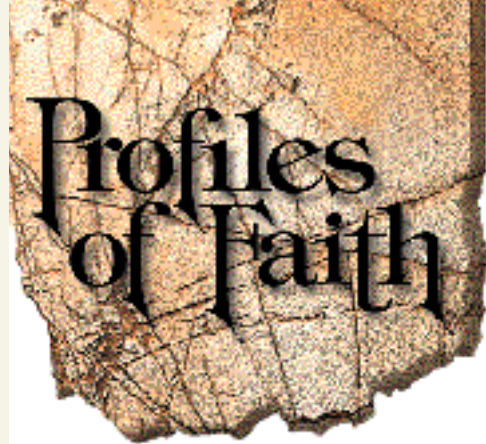
The situation seemed hopeless. Judah was devastated, and the Babylonians forcibly removed most of its citizens. Yet, in spite of their situation, God through His prophets encouraged the people not to give up hope that they would one day return to their homeland. He not only sent prophets to Judah but to Babylon as well. Men such as Daniel and Ezekiel, who both lived in Babylon, spoke of a coming restoration of Judah.

Speaking through Jeremiah, God held out hope for His people: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters . . . that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace . . . After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place” (Jeremiah 29:4-10).

After these encouraging words, the exiles flourished as a community in Babylon. They were so successful that after the 70 prophesied years of their exile the majority decided to stay. These circumstances nurtured the growth of two large Jewish enclaves in that part of the world, one in Babylon and the other in Jerusalem.

Archaeological evidence demonstrates the kind of favorable conditions that God promised Judah’s inhabitants in Babylon. “In 1933, E.F. Weidner, the Assyriologist, took in hand to look through the tablets and sherds in the basement rooms of the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum . . . Among this dull administrative rubbish Weidner suddenly found some priceless relics of red tape in the ancient world. On four different receipts for stores issued, among them best quality sesame oil, he came upon a familiar biblical name: ‘Ja’-u-kinu’—Jehoiachin! There was no possibility of his name being mistaken, because Jehoiachin was given his full title: ‘King of the [land of] Judah’ . . . Jehoiachin,

Continued on page 28



Josiah

A Kingdom Returns to God

by Jerold Aust

The prophet Jeremiah made a remarkable prediction about the kingdom of Judah in the days of King Josiah. Less than a century had passed since the northern kingdom, Israel, with its 10 of the 12 original Israelite tribes, had fallen into captivity. God had used mighty Assyria as an instrument of correction to punish Israel.

Now God turned His focus on the southern kingdom of Judah, where the two remaining Israelite tribes had barely escaped the same fate. God's analysis of the character of Judah was ominous: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, 'Return to Me.' But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it" (Jeremiah 3:6-7).

"Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away [through captivity at the hands of the Assyrian Empire] and [had] given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense . . . Backsliding Israel

has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah" (verses 8-11).

Josiah's early reign

It was in this time of idolatry and spiritual adultery with other gods that a new ruler came to power in Judah.

Josiah was only 8 years old when he ascended the throne of Judah. According to the Scriptures, his father, Amon, was a sinful king, an idolater. His own servants conspired to assassinate him. Josiah reigned 31 years in Jerusalem, "and he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and

Josiah faithfully followed God's laws. He influenced his closest servants, counselors and representatives to follow his example and obey God with all their hearts and minds.

walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (2 Chronicles 34:2).

It didn't take Josiah long to reverse the pattern of Judah's collective wickedness. "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young [only 16], he began to seek the God of his father [ancestor] David; and in the twelfth year [at age 20] he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images. They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and the

wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them" (2 Chronicles 34:3-4).

"He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And so he did in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali and all around, with axes. When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land

of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem" (verses 5-7).

Josiah zealously pursued obedience to God. Recognizing the calamity that had come on Israel because of the nation's idolatry and other acts of disobedience, Josiah purged not only Judah and Jerusalem of their idols, but much of the territory of the former kingdom of Israel.

He then concentrated on restoring the worship of the true God. The Levites collected money to repair the temple of God in Jerusalem. They hired work-





...and repair the floors. The efforts were an inspiring sight for those who understood what was taking place. During the rebuilding and repairing process, Hilkiah the priest found a scroll of the law of God, a discovery that proved to be a turning point in Judah's return to God.

Finding the Book of the Law

Hilkiah must have been astounded

Josiah was a great ruler in the annals of Judah's kings. Only Josiah and his great-grandfather, King Hezekiah, turned Judah back to God in such a wholehearted way.

when he came across the Book of the Law (verse 14). It is a sad commentary on the spiritual state of the kingdom that this scroll containing God's inspired Word could have been lost. Earlier priests had apparently either misplaced it or hidden it for safekeeping as the nation's kings and people had turned from God to idolatry.

Hilkiah instantly knew the importance of the find and quickly delivered the scroll to Shaphan the scribe. Shaphan wasted no time carrying it to King Josiah. First the scribe reported how all the king's servants had dealt faithfully with the money collected to repair the temple of God. Only then did Shaphan direct the king's attention to the Book of the Law and began reading from it (verses 16-18).

When Josiah heard the scribe reading the words of God, he tore his clothes in a common expression of grief and anguish (verse 19).

What prompted Josiah's reaction? Perhaps Hilkiah had found the original copy of the Pentateuch that Moses had commanded should be placed beside the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:25-26). The account of the discovery in 2 Chronicles refers to "the Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses" (2 Chronicles 34:14).

Some scholars have concluded, based on details in this account, that the "Book of the Law" was a scroll of the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 28 describes

the curses that would come on

The shock of hearing the fate of his kingdom described in such graphic detail may well have been the cause of the anguished reaction of the king.

Josiah's subsequent declaration may confirm that this was indeed the content of the scroll. He gathered Hilkiah, Shaphan and other trusted servants and advisers and told them: "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD,

to do according to all that is written in this book" (verse 21).

The king commanded "those who are left in Israel and Judah" to seek God's will regarding wayward Judah. They went directly to Huldah the prophetess, who confirmed the curses that would surely come on a nation that rejected God: "Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place, and not be quenched.'" (verses 24-25).

Meanwhile, Huldah spoke comforting words for Josiah: "'Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,' says the LORD. 'Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants'" (verses 27-28).

The king's servants brought back the prophetess's words to Josiah, who gathered the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and read to them the words of the newly found scroll. The king made a covenant to follow God wholeheartedly, keeping His commandments. He also made those present

"take a stand" to obey God (verses 31-32).

"Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers" (verse 33).

Restoring God's festivals

Part of God's instruction that had been ignored was the command to observe God's festivals. Josiah determined to restore this aspect of the true worship of God, beginning with the coming Passover (2 Chronicles 35:1). He restored the priests to their proper duties and instructed the Levites to return the ark of God to the temple Solomon had built. The king instructed the priests to serve God and His people.

The king then gave to the people 30,000 lambs and young goats and 3,000 head of cattle, all from his own herds, for Passover offerings. Other officials contributed another 2,600 lambs and goats and 300 head of cattle.

This was a memorable time for King Josiah, as well as Judah in the south and all the remnant of Israel in the north who kept the feast in Jerusalem. "There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests, and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept" (verses 18-19). Josiah probably restored the other festivals of God as well (verse 17; Deuteronomy 16:16; Leviticus 23:1-44).

The Passover season was a fitting time to begin the process of national repentance. The Passover sacrifice involved a sacrificial shedding of blood as an atonement for sins and to bring reconciliation to God.

The Passover lamb was a type of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul tells us that the sacrifice of "Christ, our Passover," is not to be taken lightly (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). He confirms that, when one receives Christ's atoning sacrifice, he must repent of sins (Romans 6:11-23).

It was at this appropriate time, during the Passover season, that King Josiah initiated a return to true worship, restoring Judah's citizenry to a right relationship with God.



A fatal mistake

Although Josiah was a man of many admirable qualities, even righteous people can make foolish mistakes. Josiah's greatest mistake—at an early age—cost him his life.

Josiah had faithfully followed God's laws. He had repaired the temple and restored the priests and Levites to their proper service. He influenced his closest servants, counselors and representatives to follow his example and obey God with all their hearts and minds. What would motivate an otherwise successful king to presume to intervene in the conflicts of other nations?

King Josiah had his reasons. Before we consider them, it is important to note that God can and sometimes does use gentle leaders and peoples to carry out His will. For example, God had already used the Assyrians to punish the rebellious northern 10 tribes in the kingdom of Israel (Isaiah 10:5-7).

In Josiah's time Pharaoh Necho of Egypt was leading his army north, up the coast of Palestine, to join forces with the weakened Assyrian kingdom against the rising power of Babylon.

Josiah did not realize that God was dramatically shifting the regional balance of power. Pharaoh Necho was hurrying to a battle in which the Babylonians would slaughter the Egyptians at Carchemish and gain control of the Assyrian Empire. Was Josiah unwittingly working at cross purposes with God?

Josiah exhibited a common weakness. His reliance on his own reasoning apart from God's revelation clouded his judgment. We find no record that Josiah asked for counsel from his faithful advisers, nor that he sought God's will in this matter as he had consulted with Huldah during his early reign. God may have put it into the mind of Pharaoh Necho to join forces with the Assyrian forces. In fact, Necho said as much to Josiah before they met on the battlefield near Megiddo, cautioning Josiah to refrain from trying to defeat the will of God (2 Chronicles 35:21).

Josiah didn't heed the Egyptian ruler's advice. He tried to block the Egyptians' northward advance. In the ensuing battle Josiah disguised himself as an ordinary soldier but was mortally wounded in a hail of arrows. A chariot evacuated him to Jerusalem, but to no avail. "So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers.



Recognizing the calamity that had come on Israel because of the nation's idolatry and other acts of disobedience, Josiah purged not only Judah and Jerusalem of their idols, but much of the territory of the former kingdom of Israel.

And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah" (verse 24).

With Josiah out of the way, Necho continued his advance to Carchemish and his own disastrous destiny. Josiah's death spared him from witnessing the destruction of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. With this righteous king gone, Judah's downfall would follow in a few short years.

Josiah was a great ruler in the annals of Judah's kings. Only Josiah and his great-grandfather, King Hezekiah, turned Judah back to God in such a wholehearted way.

A matter of life and death

What lessons can we glean from Josiah's example? First, we can be glad that God does not look at age when He chooses a willing servant. Josiah was only 16 when he began to root idolatry out of Judah. Moreover, a mere youth can dedicate himself to God as Josiah did. Throughout this king's life (he was only 39 when he died), he faithfully followed God's commands just as he had pledged to do.

Only in the case of his rash venture

against Pharaoh Necho does the Bible record a failure by the young monarch. Josiah should have consulted God on this venture rather than relying on his own judgment and placing confidence in his achievements. Too much success, and the weakness of the flesh, can spoil a person, prompting him to grow too self-dependent.

God intervenes in the affairs of mankind. Sometimes, as with Josiah, He provides a faithful, obedient ruler for His people. Judah listened to God for a time during Josiah's reign. But the Judahites quickly returned to their idols and spiritual adultery under the leadership of succeeding kings. It wasn't long before the prophesied disaster struck.

We live in precarious times. Of the days yet ahead, God says that His righteous servants should warn people to turn from their unrighteous and hypocritical ways (Isaiah 58:1-4). Will our people listen and learn?

If we are willing to mend our own ways, learning from and following the example of righteous King Josiah, Jesus Christ says we can be spiritually prepared for the dangerous times prophesied to come at the end of this age (Luke 21:34-36). **GN**

Europe

Continued from page 9

incorporation into the capitalist West, with many Western companies already operating in Hungary. Also evident are traffic jams and the visibly obvious social evils that freedom and prosperity bring.

Slovakia isn't doing as well. Economically it is progressive, having embraced free enterprise. But it has been held back by a too-dictatorial government. On entering and leaving Slovakia, I noticed that its border was the only one with long delays, a sure sign of some form of continued dictatorship. (After a recent election, many Slovaks hope that a more democratically inclined administration will be willing to cooperate more with neighboring nations.)

Borders are almost meaningless in Western Europe. We emerged from the Channel Tunnel in France. Before we knew it, we had traveled through Belgium and were in Germany, and no one had asked us for our passports or other identification. Nations in this part of Europe, together with some others, have removed border controls, allowing freedom of movement.

The Czech Republic is not yet a member of the EU, but its border had little substance. We crossed quickly. For the first time I had to travel on an American passport because my British passport had expired. I was singled out at border crossings for special handling, much to the amusement of my English traveling companions, who, with their new European passports, can cross any border with minimum inconvenience. One can see some advantages to the new Europe.

This new Europe is part of the appeal of the euro. In an age of incessant international travel, the desire for one currency for all the nations of Europe is appealing. Loss of independence seems to be of secondary importance to many.

Although the British government has not decided to adopt the euro, a third of British companies are gearing up for it. It will be possible for visitors to spend euros in the biggest British stores, adding pressure to fully embrace the new currency.

Why Europeans want unity

But it is on the Continent that enthusiasm for the European Union is greatest. The 20th century has been disastrous for Europeans. In this period two world wars have

been fought on European soil. Millions were killed; many more millions were dispossessed and forced to relocate as refugees in strange surroundings. By some estimates, 90 percent of Europe's historical treasures were destroyed in World War II.

It is easy to see why Europeans want to unite. The Continent has seen much civil conflict and political division throughout this century, with ethnic tensions often surfacing, especially in Central Europe. The 40-year division of the Cold War has ended, but subsequent fears of Russian instability dominate headlines on the Continent.

The desire among most of the people of the Continent is for security and unity. Few have thought it through to the extent of exactly what kind of alliance they want, but most would agree with the stated intent of the EU to work toward an ever-closer union.

A prophesied superpower

Key Bible prophecies in Daniel and Revelation describe a major political, economic and military power that will rise shortly before God's dramatic visible intervention in world affairs (Daniel 7; Revelation 13, 17). Revelation 17:12-14 reveals a union of "ten kings" (leaders of 10 nations or groups of nations). These leaders and their combined military forces will turn against Jesus Christ at His return, bringing destruction on themselves.

This prophetic union could pose a major threat to the predominantly Anglo-Saxon nations that have dominated the world for the last few centuries. Ironically, both the United States and Great Britain have played major roles in encouraging the European Union.

Even many of the British people are considerably ignorant of the implications of unity. Nobody on our bus knew of the entity as the European Union; they all still referred to it as the EEC (European Economic Community), its former name when the intention was to create only a single economy. The designation changed a few years ago to show that the present goal is a closer economic, political and military combination. Europe has moved forward considerably during this decade.

Continue reading *The Good News* to understand how world conditions are increasingly setting the stage for the fulfillment of many Bible prophecies. **GN**

Archaeology

Continued from page 24

the deposed king of Judah, lived with his family and his retinue in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. We may conclude from Weidner's discovery that the biblical account in the Second Book of Kings may be thus supplemented: 'And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion, until the day of his death, all the days of his life' (Jeremiah 52:34)" (Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, 1980, pp. 303-304).

The Bank of Murashu & Sons

The enterprising inhabitants of Judah, who had come to Babylon as a defeated and captive people, were given considerable leeway by the equally industrious Babylonians. Historian Petra Eisele explains: "Although not much is known of the lives of the Jewish exiles in Babylon, enough is known to confirm their plight was not as harsh as their slavery had been in Egypt during Moses' time. In Babylon they did not live as prisoners or slaves, instead as a 'semi-free' people . . . After the Persians conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. and granted the Jews the right to return to their native land, only a minority of these supposedly 'poor prisoners' took advantage of this generous offer. Many did not want to sacrifice the comforts and riches they had acquired in this 'foreign' land and face the uncertainties of going back to their 'homeland.'

"As the clay tablets of commercial documents in the fifth century B.C show, even after the end of the exile, the Babylonian banks were firmly in the hands of the Jews. There was one Jewish banker whose firm, Bank of Murashu & Sons, had greatly expanded into the real estate business. It had its headquarters in nearby Nippur, and had approximately 200 branches throughout the country!" (*Babylon*, quoted in *Editorial EDAF*, 1980, p. 70).

With thriving centers in Babylon and Jerusalem, the Jewish people were better equipped to survive the conquests of the Persians, Greeks and Romans. Several centuries later, in the New Testament period, they remained firmly established in Israel. Against all apparent odds, God's promise that Judah's inhabitants would not remain in their Babylonian captivity was fulfilled.

As we will also see in future articles, archaeology has discovered much from this period to confirm the biblical record. **GN**

Year 2000

Continued from page 7

doomsday and the utopian, God sees a broader perspective in which both negative and positive scenarios will come to pass. They are a matter of timing.

In God's master plan, the good will follow the bad. The biblical writer Luke sums up both the bad and good to come. He first quotes the words of Christ in his Gospel account, then follows in the book of Acts with highlights from one of the apostle Peter's earliest sermons.

How did Jesus describe conditions at the end of this human epoch? "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing mothers in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people" (Luke 21:22-23).

But the conditions Christ described are the prelude to a transformed world. Said the apostle Peter: "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

The key phrase in Luke's Gospel account, "all things which are written may be fulfilled," refers to the many prophecies in the

Hebrew Scriptures that describe the horrendous events leading up to the second coming of Jesus Christ (Luke 21:7). These are the troubling signs of the times indicating the end of man's chaotic age and the beginning of God's benign rule on earth. (See "The Apocalyptic Prophetic View: A Coming Time of Great Distress," p. 6.)

Peter's words in the book of Acts summarize the many joyful millennial prophecies found in those same Hebrew Scriptures. (See "Beyond 2000: Utopian Prophecies of the World to Come," p. 7.)

The Old Testament prophets had a similar long-term perspective in which they saw a future containing extremes of both bad and good. Some of the very same books that herald that utopian period of peace, prosperity and plenty also warn us of the frightful, earth-shaking occurrences that will take place just before Christ's second coming.

A time of transition

In a sense, Christians are constantly reminded of both of these views of the future. As "ambassadors for Christ," their real citizenship is not of this world—"this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4). But Christians must live in the age of man, though always looking eagerly and expectantly towards the world to come—the time of the Prince of Peace and the absence of war. Only the Bible gives us this God's-eye view of the world tomorrow.

The year 2000 should hold no unreasonable fear for committed Christians. Whether that year or one yet in the future turns out to

be the beginning of the very end time—with the unpleasant fallout of prophesied horrific events—the Captain of our salvation, Jesus Christ, tells us "when these things begin to happen, lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28).

The troubling times prophesied to come are not a time for Christians to fear, but a time to be encouraged. "... When you see these things happening," said Jesus, "know that the kingdom of God is near" (verse 31).

But those who reject the eternal God and His laws have plenty to worry about. Recently "Britain's churches published a millennium prayer to be said at celebrations and churches as the clock strikes midnight next year." Although that sounds well and good, the prayer "was immediately criticised for making no mention of God or Jesus" (*The Times*, Oct. 9).

Men forget God at their peril (Hosea 4:1-10). For those who ignore their Creator, the future truly will hold "days of vengeance." **GN**

RECOMMENDED READING

Can you know what the future holds? The Bible describes a world of bad and good news—of unprecedented terror followed by peace and plenty such as the world has never seen. Be sure to request your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom* from our office in your country (or the country nearest you).

Approaching 2000: A Window on Today's World

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the fall of the communist bloc in Eastern Europe, some politicians went so far as to proclaim "a new world order" in celebration of the end of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West. After all, Russia itself had renounced communism and joined the world of democracy and entrepreneurship.

According to Francis Fukuyama, this was "the end of history" in the sense that the modern era was about to enter a time of multiple positive possibilities. The situation was supposed to be "win-win." Old commercial and political disputing would soon fade into oblivion.

But this is not what happened.

Crises swiftly returned. Events in the Persian Gulf soon prompted America and her allies to go to war. The breakup of the former Yugoslavia brought a descent into ethnic anarchy, with the death of many innocent civilians: the terrible fruits of guerrilla warfare among the Balkan nations. Trouble spots plagued Africa and the Middle East.

Current events are far from encouraging. The American presidency is in crisis amid the worst scandal ever to hit the federal government. The Russian economic and political climate continues to

worsen. Stock markets are marked by insecurity and instability, fluctuating wildly in the wake of political and economic earthquakes as we approach 2000.

Political boundaries are redrawn as nations balkanize. Yet a new global economy and a burgeoning Internet align people across oceans and continents, integrating financial systems and effectively dismantling territorial frontiers.

On the down side of the new developments, and in the wake of rapid communications, it should not be surprising that big problems can spread around the world with incredible speed. *Time* magazine observed that "Russian flu can spread," meaning that the country's deep troubles could rapidly engulf other nations. Russia's ailments did spread to a degree, sending other stock markets plunging within hours. The economic crisis in Japan is causing serious unemployment in faraway Britain. And so it goes.

World leaders consistently ignore the basic biblical principle of cause and effect in the interest of temporary gains—much to the peril of mankind. (See "The Lesson of Y2K: the 'Millennium Bug,'" p. 14.)

—John Ross Schroeder

You've probably heard of Murphy's Law. It's the observation that whatever can go wrong will go wrong. Murphy's law and its variations are the subject of books and calendars. We've heard Murphy's corollaries, such as: If buttered toast falls to the floor, the probability that it will fall butter-side down is in direct proportion to the cost of the rug.

Where did Murphy's Law originate? According to one book on the subject, this truism was invented by U.S. Air Force captain Ed Murphy back in 1949. Capt. Murphy, who tested airplanes, noticed that a technician kept making the same mistake when designing one of the parts. Capt. Murphy reportedly said, "If there is any way to make things go wrong, he will." As the story goes, this stated principle came to be called Murphy's Law, and variations of his words have spread around the world.

Although this supposed law is usually not taken too seriously, some professionals soberly espouse

- Experimental results should be repeatable; they should all go wrong in the same manner.
- A shortcut is the longest distance between two points.
- Sooner or later the worse possible set of circumstances will occur.
- Things get worse under stress.
- When a cable or rope is cut according to a measuring mark, it will always be too short.
- A mistake will not appear in a unit until it has passed the final inspection.
- After a unit is assembled, pieces will be left over.
- Whichever magazine contains the story you want to read is the one you can't find.
- It doesn't matter how much time and effort it takes to buy something, after you buy it you will see it advertised less expensively in another store.
- When your plane lands late, the connecting flight will have taken off on time.

- The other lane or line is the fastest.

- Expenses rise until they equal income.

- If everything else fails, read the instructions.

- There is never enough time to do something well but always enough time to repair it.

Does Murphy's Law affect us? It often seems so.

But is Murphy's law always bad? Not necessarily. If looked at properly, Murphy's Law can even be of considerable help.

Stated positively, Murphy's Law

has a simple and important lesson for us: Carelessness is costly.

Double-checking what appears to have been done properly often reveals mistakes that could have proved disastrous. This can apply to almost any human endeavor—from a child turning in his homework, to a father repairing a light socket, to a mother cooking a meal, to a scientist sending a spaceship into outer space.

Murphy's Law in the Bible?

Surprising as it may seem, the principle of Murphy's Law is even found in Scripture. The book of Proverbs is filled with advice against being careless and overlooking mistakes. It points out that the person who is negligent and careless will usually have a hard time in life and bring problems on himself.

Consider, for example, these particular proverbs:

- "He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich" (Proverbs 10:4).

- "The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor" (Proverbs 12:24).

Perhaps you have noticed that overconfidence can generate costly mistakes. It's always easier to take

How to Make *Murphy's Law* Work for You

by Mario Seiglie

the principle. Engineers, for example, have to assume that things will go wrong. Mistakes in planes, bridges, buildings and the like can be terribly costly both in money and lives lost, so engineers have to constantly suppose that, if anything is left to chance, it will go wrong. In one tragic example, after thorough investigations, officials found that the billion-dollar space shuttle *Challenger* exploded on takeoff because of one relatively inexpensive part that did not function properly.

Murphy' at work

Does Murphy's Law affect us in everyday life? Here are some variations on Murphy that may sound familiar to you:

- If several things can go wrong, the one that does will do the most damage.

- If things are left to chance, they will tend to go from bad to worse.

- When things go well, something wrong is bound to happen.

- When tallying results, the figure that seems most obviously right and does not need checking is the one that is wrong.

things for granted or assume they are right, but failing or refusing to double-check what we've done gives Murphy's Law a chance to exact its toll.

The book of Proverbs also brings out this lesson in life:

- "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

- "The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps. A wise man fears and departs from evil, but a fool rages and is self-confident" (Proverbs 14:15-16).

Of course, sometimes we just don't pay enough attention to what we do. We lack concentration. "Keep your mind on what you're doing while you're doing it," as one successful man put it. Also, we don't

Perhaps the best story to illustrate this principle is the legend of the death of King Richard III of England. In an epic battle to decide who was going to rule England, Richard faced the forces of Henry, duke of Richmond. He wanted to prepare his horse for battle, but the blacksmith didn't have enough nails for the last horseshoe.

Impatiently, Richard's guard asked the blacksmith, "Will the shoe hold?"

The blacksmith replied, "I'm not sure; it lacks the final nail!"

"Very well," said the guard, "it will have to do."

He left and handed the king the horse.

Soon, as the two forces clashed on the battlefield, King Richard was in the thick of things, fighting and encouraging his men. Then he noticed some of his men

Perhaps all was lost for the lack of a simple horseshoe nail. If this legend is indeed true, Murphy's Law was alive and well here, as throughout human history.

Does Murphy's Law have to impact your life? Maybe so, but maybe not. You can watch for it and be on guard against it. How? By simply applying some of the biblical proverbs discussed earlier. Reread those lessons so you don't have to learn them the hard way. By guarding against Murphy's Law, it will then not work its damage in your life.

If we remember that carelessness will eventually exact a costly price, perhaps we will not take things for granted and double-check what we do. If we diligently follow these principles, then maybe we can steer clear of Murphy's Law. **GN**



always exercise sufficient common sense and foresight. Such lack of discernment of potential problems in life can lead to serious errors and problems.

- "Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment, but a man of understanding walks uprightly" (Proverbs 15:21).

We can live a much better life by avoiding carelessness in our studies, work and family life. Sometimes paying attention to details makes the difference between success and failure.

were retreating. The king galloped forth to steady them when the missing nail did its mischief.

The horseshoe came off, the horse tripped, and the king fell. Before he could recover, the horse fled in fright. His men saw him fall and lost courage. As Henry's men closed in around him, Richard cried out: "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!"

But it was too late. His army fled, and he was killed.

RECOMMENDED READING

God does not want us to live our lives accidentally. We are the product of a great mind. We have been carefully designed (Psalm 139:13-18) for a grand and wonderful purpose. To more fully understand, please write for the free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* from the address nearest you listed on page 2.

What Lies Ahead for Planet Earth?



Today's headlines are filled with bad news—war, famine, natural disasters, new and baffling diseases, environmental catastrophes and governmental scandals. The litany of suffering, 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 vital message 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? What is the kingdom of which He spoke? And does it have anything to do with the problems that threaten us today?

Most churches do not agree on what this gospel is. Nor do they understand and teach the truth about the Kingdom of God. Yet the Bible is clear on this vital subject. It is the central theme of the Bible—and truly the best news the world can hear!

In *The Gospel of the Kingdom* you can discover the truth of 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, write or call us at our office in your country (or the country nearest you) at the address listed on page 2.



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