

WORLD NEWS *and* PROPHECY

Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

February 2000

Vol. 3, No. 2

Will Russia Win in Chechnya?

Last time they failed to crush the Chechens. Will Russia succeed this time?

by Melvin Rhodes

It's a scenario reminiscent of Vietnam 30 years ago—television news footage of the covered corpses of young men sent to fight a faraway war against a people with a different culture. This time it's not Southeast Asia and Americans are not involved. Now the war is in the Caucasus, in the southern part of the Russian Federation. The dead soldiers being sent home are Russians—officially over 500 dead at the time of this writing, but many sources put it much higher. The war they are fighting is taking longer than expected, and the victory is as elusive as it was for America in the 1960s.

Once again, a major power is fighting a conflict against what is seemingly

a minor force. Six years ago it tried to crush the Chechens and failed, but then Russia itself was in chaos. Now it's better organized and has sent the full force of its military might against the Chechens.

Will they win this time? Recent history is not very encouraging for Russia.

From the time of Peter the Great 300 years ago right through much of the



Source: Alexander Nemenov/AFP

A scene from the war in Chechnya

1800s Russia was an expanding empire, a powerful monolithic state that conquered all before it and ruthlessly suppressed revolt.

A checkered history

In the early years of the 20th century, in 1904-5, Russia fought a war with Japan. The whole of Europe expected mighty Russia to win this little war, with little difficulty. But Russia lost heavily to Japan, a major

embarrassment at a time of European
(See "RUSSIA" page 3)

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Will Russia Win in Chechnya? — Siege Mentality — Update on the Search for Noah's Ark — Reengineering Babel — Who Is My Neighbor?

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Its purpose is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of the answers Christ gave to His disciples' questions: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

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Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed. The next issue is scheduled to be available on March 10, 2000, on the Internet at <http://www.ucg.org/html/literat.shtml#4>.

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

“RUSSIA,” (Continued from page 1)

domination of Asia and the rest of the world. It was the first of many heavy defeats in the century to follow. A review of the main conflicts Russia fought during the century is helpful as we consider the outcome of the current war.

A few years after its loss to Japan, confident after years of industrial expansion, Russia went to war against Germany and Austria alongside its allies Britain and France. But Russia was to be the first of the warring parties to sue for peace. Following a total collapse of the social order that had given the country stability for over three centuries, Lenin seized power, creating the world’s first communist state. One of his first moves was to seek peace with Germany. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed in 1918 and ceded much territory to the Germans, also freeing the Axis allies up on the eastern front to concentrate their military might against the Western allies. Russia had lost almost two million men in the First World War. It was to lose hundreds of thousands more in the Civil War that followed as the Red (communist) Army fought against the Whites (Czarist forces).

Concentrating on internal security, the Russians managed to stay out of major wars in the early years of Stalin’s rule, but “volunteers” went to Spain to fight in that country’s civil war in the late 1930s. The Soviet supported leftist forces lost to Franco’s right-wing fascists. At the same time this conflict was being fought far away on the other side of the European continent, Stalin was busily disposing of most of his top military so that they would pose no threat to him. By the time the next major conflict came along, the country had been considerably weakened and was to suffer greatly.

Stalin’s 1939 peace treaty with Hitler, (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, named after the foreign ministers of the two nations) kept the Soviet Union out of World War II for parts of two years, during which the Russians attacked Finland and fought the particularly vicious Winter War against the Finns. They won by sheer force of numbers, but the Finns inflicted heavy damage. Russia lost 50,000 men while Finland’s losses were

less than half that number, 24,600.

Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Russia fought what became known as the Great Patriotic War (1941–45), a struggle for the survival of the Russian homeland. The Soviet Union lost an estimated 20 million of its citizens during this conflict, including 7.5 million men under arms. (The losses would not have been so great if Stalin had not killed off so many potential opponents in the years immediately preceding the war.)

Soviet domination maintained at high cost

After victory in 1945, Russia ensured its security by keeping troops in eastern European countries that shared its borders. Communism was imposed against the will of the people, backed up

by Soviet forces. The economic cost was extremely high, arresting the development of all the participating nations. Official statistics at the time cannot be relied upon, but the Soviet Union was spending a far higher percentage of its gross national product on the military than that spent by any of the member nations of NATO, the Western alliance.

Every single rebellion during this period was crushed throughout the region, increasing anti-Russian feeling and tying down more and more Soviet troops at an ever-rising cost. About 1,500 men were lost in the Hungarian Uprising of 1956.

During the period known as the Cold War, the Soviets and Americans fought many proxy wars (minor conflicts through client states) around the globe. These wars were fought in Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East. It

Battle Deaths for Russian Wars

The following are battle deaths for Russian wars since 1900. Note that the first list is of interstate wars (wars with other nations) and reflect only troop deaths. The second list is of civil wars and includes civilian deaths. The Afghan War was an intervention in another nation’s civil war.

War	Dates	Deaths
<i>Wars With Other Nations</i>		
Boxer	1900	302
Sino-Russian	1900	242
Russo-Japanese	1904–05	71,453
World War I	1914–18	1,700,000
Russo-Polish	1919–20	60,000
Sino-Soviet	1929	200
Changkufeng	1938	1,200
Nomonhan	1939	5,000
World War II	1939–45	7,500,000
Russo-Finnish	1939–40	50,000
Russo-Hungarian	1956	1,500
<i>Civil Wars</i>		
1905 Revolution	1905	1,000
Kirghiz/Kazakh revolt	1916	103,000
Russian Civil War	1918–21	800,000
Green Rebellion	1920–21	6,700
Soviet-Turkestan	1931–34	20,000
Afghanistan	1979–89	14,454
First Chechen	1994–96	90,000

Figures courtesy of “Correlates of War Project,” University of Michigan.
Compiled by Philip Schafer.

began to seem as if the Cold War would go on forever. It also became gradually apparent that an increasing number of countries were turning to communism, exactly as Marx and Lenin had predicted they would.

In 1979, confident of a quick victory, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, traditionally a buffer state between the old Russian Empire and British India, left alone by Russia and England. Afghanistan had been in turmoil since the overthrow of its king in 1973, and Moscow saw an opportunity to back leftist forces and impose communism on yet another backward Third World state. It was not to be that simple.

For over a decade Russia fought mounting resistance by Afghan Muslims determined to resist subjugation by the Russians. Eventually the Russians gave in and pulled out, leaving Afghans to fight on among themselves and the U.S.S.R. to collapse under the economic strains of its own internal contradictions. The loss of Russian life in Afghanistan was unacceptable to the people at home. The war was a major contributing factor in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Now, 10 years later, before the nation has had an opportunity to recover from past conflict and internal upheaval, it is fighting another war against internal separatist forces, people wanting independence for ethnic and religious reasons. Like the Afghans, they are Muslims. Although Russians ruled them since the 19th century, they have never liked Russia. Russian is not their native language and they are of a different culture. Russia tried to suppress them in 1994, but withdrew two years later after heavy losses. The Chechens were not given independence but they were left alone—until recently.

Trends reflect decline

One little-known factor here is that ethnic Russians have had a very low birthrate since World War II, whereas the Muslim regions within the country have experienced a very high one. Abortion has been freely available to Russian women since the Soviet Union was founded after World War I. Most couples

had just one or two children. That means that most households would have only one son, increasing the likelihood that wars would be unpopular at home. Meanwhile, resistance would be greater in the regions where the birth rate has been much higher.

There are other noteworthy trends.

Russia has gradually been losing territory occupied mostly by non-ethnic Russians. Following World War I, it lost Finland, Poland, the Baltic States and some other areas of Eastern Europe. More recently, it has lost vast territories occupied by Muslims, who have now formed themselves into new countries, further complicating the politics of the region.

It is not only Russia that has been losing territory. All the great European

Vladimir Putin has proposed a 57 percent increase in defense spending. Americans, enjoying a booming economy, would not tolerate that. Will the Russians?

empires that dominated the globe at the beginning of the 20th century have now gone as the indigenous peoples took over their own nations.

The rise of Islam is another trend against which Russia is fighting. This is not only Islamic fundamentalism, but also simple nationalism, the desire to be rid of foreign rulers and foreign influence. It wasn't so much the Afghans who defeated Soviet forces, as the arms provided by Muslim Pakistan's General Zia, who supported fellow Muslims against the atheistic communist Soviet state. As Jesus Christ prophesied in Matthew 24, at the time of the end "nation shall rise against nation." The Greek word for nation is *ethnos*, meaning ethnic group. Most of the wars fought in the last 50 years have not been between great

nations, but have been conflicts fought along ethnic lines as different tribal groups have wanted to rule themselves. This is one of those wars.

Will Russia win this time?

Russia is often described as a bear—big and clumsy. Its heavy weight alone will win it some wars and it may win this one. Chechnya does not have Pakistan next door to continue to supply its forces with arms. Russia waited until after Kosovo before acting against the Chechens, assured after the NATO conflict in the Balkans that no Western country would risk losing manpower to fight a war thousands of miles from home. So it has a virtual free rein in the region. While the Russians like to compare this conflict to the one fought by NATO against Serbia, there are two noteworthy differences. This is a much longer conflict and the Russians are suffering casualties—a stark contrast to NATO forces a few months ago.

Instead of courting a nation that could have been a neutral docile neighbor, the Russians will have to keep tens of thousands of troops stationed in the area for decades to come, at a time when the Russian government needs to sort out its major financial problems. President Vladimir Putin has proposed a 57 percent increase in defense spending for Russians. Americans, enjoying a booming economy, would not tolerate that. Will the Russians?

It remains to be seen. The war right now is still popular at home as Russians believe that the Chechens were responsible for the terrorist acts committed in Moscow last year. There was, however, no proof that Chechens were behind these acts. If they weren't, then the whole war was rather pointless. Meanwhile, with the number of body bags increasing, what is a popular war as the new year begins may turn out to be yet another failed military enterprise. Like so many other wars Russia has fought in the last century, the same public that was so enthusiastic at the beginning may turn against their leaders as things go wrong. Then the question will be: Will Russia's democracy survive Chechnya? ❖

Siege Mentality

In spite of the long period of U.S. economic growth, violence and uncertainty have led to the mental strain and even paranoia of a people under siege.

by Gary Petty

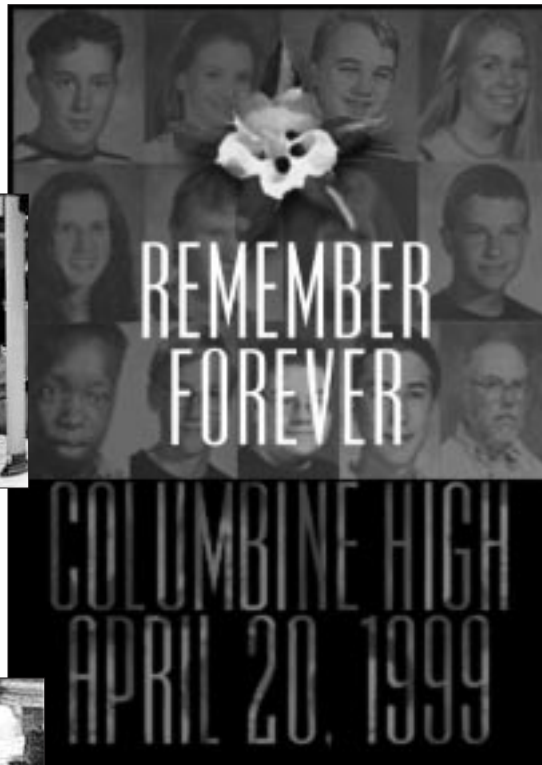
A few months after the tragedy at Columbine High School in April 1999, I sat with a group of children ages 6 through 12 discussing changes in their schools since the shooting. It was astonishing to hear first and second graders describe passing through metal detectors, undergoing backpack searches and in more than one case, having classes shut down due to bomb scares. The confusion and fear were obvious.

How many photographs have we seen over the decades from Northern Ireland, the Middle East or Africa of the haunting look in a person's eyes as he or she peers from battle blackened buildings surrounded by barbed wire? The fearful eyes of people under siege. A similar strain is beginning to show in the United States as people suffer under violent siege from the nation's own citizens.

The United States is currently experiencing one of the longest sustained periods of economic growth in its history, yet the stress of a hedonistic, violent and increasingly morally valueless culture has created a kind of siege mentality.

The strain leads to paranoia. The recent Y2K panic was a symptom of siege mentality as some people stockpiled guns and ammunition anticipating anarchy. We've all heard of people who locked themselves in their apartments, shotguns on laps, waiting for looters to barge through the doors to steal their carefully hoarded food.

An example of siege mentality is given by Charles R. Swindoll in his book *The*



Source: www.redhare.com/columbine

The stress of a hedonistic, violent and increasingly morally valueless culture has created a kind of siege mentality.

The Columbine tragedy led to precautions like metal detectors in schools. U.S. violence and fear is echoing that seen in Northern Ireland

Quest for Character. A California artist named J.H. Zorthian became anxious about his children being killed in a car accident. He put his career on hold to spend time and money devising a plan to protect his children from harm.

Zorthian purchased isolated property on a mountain with a long, twisting road as a driveway and built his hideaway house. He designed and built a safe fenced play area. The garage was made so that only his car could enter and he was about to finish a driveway turn-around that would mean further safety. Rain delayed construction. On



The Columbine shooting wasn't the end of the madness. Christians must be lights to this crazy world

the day the turn-around should have been completed Zorthian's 18-month-old son dashed behind his car as he was backing up and was killed.

Hiding from potential tragedy has never stopped it from happening.

Bunker vision

Some people believed that a Y2K computer disaster would bring about the biblical "tribulation" or be the signal for the "rapture" of believers to be with Christ. It's common for survivalist groups to use Bible prophecies as support for combat training to prepare for the coming world catastrophe.

The Bible does contain terrible images of events leading to the return of Jesus Christ—images of massive starvation, disease epidemics, earthquakes, political and economic upheaval, and devastating wars. It may seem tempting for Christians to dig a bunker and hunker down in a siege mentality to await Christ's return.

Jesus taught His followers, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14–16). It's hard to be a light to anyone while hiding out in a bunker.

Charles Swindoll writes, "There are no absolute guarantees. No fail-safe plans. No perfectly reliable designs. No completely risk-free arrangements. Life refuses to be that neat and clean. Not even the neurotics, who go to extreme measures to make positively sure, are protected from their obsessive fears. Those 'best-laid plans of mice and men' continue to backfire, reminding us that living and risking go hand in hand. Running scared invariably blows up in one's face. All who fly risk crashing. All who ride risk colliding. All who run risk falling. All who walk risk stumbling. All who live risk *something*" (*The Quest for Character*, 1987, pp. 82–83).

Christians are called by God to

Christians are called by God to risk everything. Jesus didn't say be a light to the world only in good times.

risk *everything*. Jesus didn't say be a light to the world only in good times. He didn't tell His disciples that they could pack up their lights and dig a hole in the ground when faced with economic or political trouble.

I'm not talking about preparedness for unexpected emergencies, which is a wise course of action (Proverbs 6:6–11). I'm talking about *total withdrawal* for the sake of self-preservation.

In another place, Jesus deals with this approach in a parable about a man who travels to a far country and leaves various amounts of money with his servants. When he returns, he calls the servants together to give an account of what they accomplished. Those who managed their master's property wisely were rewarded. But one servant hid his

resources. When he came before the master this servant explained, "...I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground." The master was angry with this unprofitable servant and he was punished (see Matthew 25:14–30).

Purposes for biblical prophecy

God has definite expectations for those anticipating the return of Jesus Christ. God didn't inspire biblical prophecy concerning future events so that people can hide in fear. It is recorded to inspire courage, faith and hope.

God spoke through the prophet Isaiah saying, "Remember this, and show yourselves men; recall to mind, O you transgressors. Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:8–10).

The God of the Bible is the Lord of history and of the future. Humanity has free will to make decisions, but it is God who determines the outcome.

Jesus prophesied that before His return the world would suffer "great tribulation, such as has not been seen since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved" (Matthew 24:21–22).

The exciting news is that humanity will be saved! Jesus Christ is returning to establish God's Kingdom on this earth. He is coming to save humanity from total destruction.

It's true that many horrible things must happen before He intervenes. This shouldn't fill Christians with trepidation, but with hope. Hope that a better world is coming. In the meantime, the light of that hope is to boldly shine in a dark and dying world. ❖

Update on the Search for Noah's Ark

Conditions may make this a good year for searchers. But nothing in Bible prophecy demands that the ark must have been preserved or that it would be discovered.

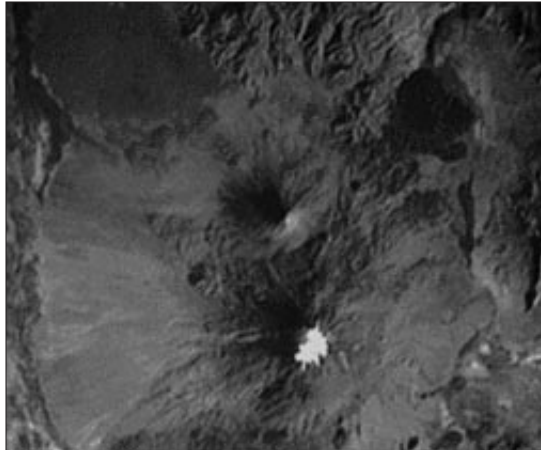
by Mario Seiglie

At times, those searching for Noah's ark must think they are seeking a phantom ship. Despite the many expeditions in recent years, no solid evidence has been presented to confirm the discovery of the elusive ark. Lately, some explorers have claimed to have discovered it, but the proof so far has been inconclusive. Either the supposed photographs of the ark turn out to be blurred or the wood brought back is of questionable antiquity. It is also quite common for the discoverers to lack corroborating witnesses.

For those who keep up with these recent explorations, it is hard to fathom why, with all the technology available, these searchers still have not been able to find a huge ship on a mountain—if it has survived the ravages of time.

Perhaps discovering Noah's ark would be such a monumental find that it could be seen as a "trump card" from the Creator to this mostly unbelieving world right before He decisively intervenes in world events. It would turn current geological notions on their head and provide convincing evidence that God does exist and the biblical record of the Great Flood is true. If a huge boat were found on Mt. Ararat or its environs, there is no feasible explanation of how it got there unless a worldwide flood took place. Additionally, the persons building it would have had to know in advance what was coming or they wouldn't have built it, and only God could have warned them ahead of time. Finding the ark could be a concrete proof that God's prophecy was fulfilled just as it was recorded in Genesis 6 through 8.

This is a good reason for us to keep an eye on the news about these searches, for if they succeed, they would provide an important proof to buttress the Bible and prophecy. On the other hand, we should carefully scrutinize any evi-



Space shuttle image of Mt. Ararat in Turkey

dence, so charlatans or publicity buffs claiming to have found the ark will not deceive us.

The search for the ark

The failure to find Noah's ark has certainly not been due to lack of effort. Over 50 expeditions have taken place in the last decade, but all returned empty handed. There have been many claims to the contrary, but in the end, no solid proof has survived scrutiny. After so many expeditions, why hasn't it been found? Can the ark still be there? For what it's worth, there still is a determined group of professional explorers who think it is and are willing to spend thousands of dollars to continue the search. At least they believe they have narrowed down the area on Mt. Ararat where the ark could be—if it actually is on that mountain.

A few years ago, the ark was supposedly found on an alternative site, Mt. Judi, some 200 miles south of Mt. Ararat. Since then, after extensive geological tests, this "ark" turned out to be a

It is hard to fathom why, with all the technology available, these searchers still have not been able to find a huge ship on a mountain—if it has survived the ravages of time.

natural rock formation. The main explorer there, David Fasold, went broke after spending \$250,000 on this futile search and finally admitted, "I believe this may be the oldest running hoax in history" (*The Incredible Discovery of Noah's Ark*, Charles Sellier, 1995, p. 292).

The focus has now returned to Mt. Ararat, where the Bible said the ark landed. For the last two thousand years, there has been a steady stream of claims to have seen or touched the ark on this mountain. Historians such as the Babylonian Berosus and the Jewish Josephus said that in their day, the ark could be seen and the tar taken out of its sides to make amulets. For instance, Josephus wrote, "The Armenians call this place 'the Place of Descent'; for the ark being saved in that place, its remains are shown there by the inhabitants to this day" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, chap. 3, section 5). Numerous pilgrims and adventurers through the Middle Ages also claimed to have seen and touched the ark.

In this century, the stories of finding the ark have continued. George Hagopian, an Armenian who lived next to Mt. Ararat, claimed to have visited the ark with his uncle in 1902 and 1904, when there was a great melt-back in the mountain ice pack. He said he even climbed up on its roof. He is a strong witness, and even submitted to and passed a lie-detector test.

Then in 1916, a Russian pilot reported seeing a large ship on Mt. Ararat. The following year, a group of 150 Russian soldiers, engineers and scientists were dispatched. At that time, Mt. Ararat was situated between the Russian and Turkish border. They claimed to have entered and taken pictures of the ark. Reportedly, all the information was sent to the Czar, but in that year, 1917, the Communists took over and the reports disappeared.

Another key witness in this century was George J. Green, an American oil and pipeline engineer working in Turkey in the 1950s who said he saw the ark

while flying in a helicopter over Mt. Ararat. He took close-up pictures of the ark, went back to the United States and tried to mount an expedition in 1953. No one took the offer and Green died a few years later. The photos mysteriously disappeared. This is typical of much of the evidence claimed for the ark.

A difficult and dangerous mountain

Mt. Ararat is actually a huge, inactive volcano and the largest mountain in the eastern Turkish region. It has two great peaks, Big Ararat, at 17,020 feet and Small Ararat at 12,800 feet. The area between the two peaks spans 17 to 22 square miles and the snow and ice can build up to 200 feet thick. Even expert climbers can get lost, and this mountain has swallowed many a person in its crevices. To make matters worse, fighting erupted in the last decade between the Turkish authorities and the Kurdish people on Mt. Ararat itself. Many climbers have been held hostage or simply killed. Climbing permits are almost impossible to acquire, especially since the arrest of the area's main Kurd leader.

B.J. Corbin, an explorer who has climbed Mt. Ararat many times, mentions, "I have been a Noah's Ark researcher for over 12 years and a veteran of four separate expeditions to Mount Ararat in Turkey (1988, 1989, 1990, 1998). Since 1990, very few ark researchers have been permitted on Mount Ararat. In 1994, Mount Ararat was declared a military zone and permits to climb or

research the mountain have been almost non-existent. Since evidence for the remains of Noah's Ark has not been proven beyond a reasonable doubt, there are individuals or groups still attempting to search. I returned in October 1998 from eastern Turkey and the Mount Ararat region as a consultant and member of the Ark Research Team. Though there was a good melt-back of the ice

cap, no permissions to climb Mount Ararat were granted and military security was high."

Another example of the dangers and claims made by explorers was reported by Reuters News Service on December 24, 1998: "Nestled on the snowy cap of Mount Ararat, lodged in ice, lies the shadowy form of a boat the size of a battleship. 'Halleluja,' cried a triumphant Antonio Palego as he set eyes on the legendary vessel after trekking up the mountain for days on foot and donkey. 'It's Noah's Ark!'"

"Explorer and Bible scholar Palego says he has found the real thing perched on Mount Ararat in Turkey. Using intricate calculations based on the story in the Bible's book of Genesis, the Italian explorer says the ark has been preserved in ice for over 4,000 years. Laying out a series of grainy photos on his kitchen table back home in northern Italy, the 63-year-old former chemist points out the form of the huge boat estimated to be 512 feet long, 82 feet wide and 50 feet high with enough space to fit 800 train [cars]. A small piece of wood found in the same area by a French explorer friend and authenticated as dating from the time of the flood is physical evidence of his find, he says....

"Many explorers, especially American, say they have found the ark, but their sightings do not correspond with the Bible's coordinates,' Palego said. 'The CIA decided not to publish their photos after we highlighted that their vessel was not the right size.'...

"Palego says he just needs to get to his site to collect more evidence. So far, he has only seen it from a distance during his 13 expeditions to the mountain. The explorer has yet to get authorization from Turkey to take a helicopter, which an Italian television station has agreed to pay for, into the highly sensitive area where he was once taken hostage by Kurds. 'We've asked the Turkish government to let us go in and I won't give up until I get there,' said Palego. 'This is my mission.'"

The claim sounds impressive at first, but then a certain skepticism sets in. Why didn't the French explorer who found the wood, report the sighting? After planning



the trip and trekking for days, why didn't he take a camera with a zoom lens for good, close-up pictures?

Mountain has fooled experts

From a distance, looks can be deceiving, as helicopter pilot Chuck Aaron, who has been on eight expeditions to Mt. Ararat, can attest. He writes, "I have flown a helicopter around that mountain many times. I have landed a helicopter on the 15,200-foot western plateau, and have even camped and walked around there for three days" (*Explorers: Searching for Noah's Ark*, B.J. Corbin, 1996, p. 10).

Aaron explains what happened in September of 1989: "On this expedition there were just Bob Garbe and myself. You have possibly heard of this trip. It was on this trip that the claim was made that we had 'found' Noah's Ark. That statement hit the papers and TV all around the world. We were sure. Anyone with us would have been sure too! The object that we saw fit most all the clues that some 'eyewitnesses' had stated about the ark over the years. It was on the side of a steep wall, encased in ice, protruding out at an angle, etc. What we saw at 14,500 feet on the west side of Ararat, fit that description exactly, and we had never seen it before, even though we had been all over that mountain many times in the past. The only reason we saw it this time was because of the tremendous amount of melt-back that had occurred that summer.

"Many of the past sightings had been by pilots flying past Mt. Ararat. Astronaut Jim Irwin made the comment, right after he saw our videos of it, saying, 'It looks like it could be Noah's Ark.' But was it, really?... A third expedition was made in October 1989.... We got a helicopter in Istanbul, flew it out to Ararat, and on this trip were able to fly within 100 feet of the object that appeared to be the ark. After close inspection, we all agreed that it was not the ark after all. We also agreed that from a distance of five hundred feet or more, most people would swear that it was" (ibid., p. 11).

Has Chuck Aaron given up after this disappointment? No, he still thinks it is

up there. He says, "I believe the ark to be on Mt. Ararat in the ice cap somewhere between 13,500 and 17,020 feet. That is the altitude range of the perennial ice cap. As for the question, Where on Mt. Ararat? I can tell you for certain, as can many of my close friends who have been with me on these eight different expeditions, that it cannot be seen with the naked eye. We have been all over that mountain by helicopter many times at very slow speeds and right up next to the mountain too. We have seen every square inch of it, photographing it as we went. But don't lose hope, we haven't finished yet" (ibid., p. 9). He mentions there are a number of places where the ark could still be, since the thick ice covers many other areas.

Charles Berlitz records a conversation with Ahmet Arslan, a Turkish doctor who has climbed Mt. Ararat 16 times. Dr. Arslan says, "I believe enough people have seen it [the ark] within the last fifty or sixty years to establish the truth of the legend. It will probably be found right where it is supposed to be—between 14,000 and 15,000 feet up, following the right-hand side of Ahora Gorge right up to the front of Parrot Glacier. There is a huge flat plateau there, as big as a football field, a hundred yards deep in ice. This is where, during melting periods, the ark has been seen and pieces of it have been taken away, and this is where the remains of the ark will be found" (*The Lost Ship of Noah*, 1987, p. 58)

In 1999, the snow on top of Mt. Ararat dramatically receded, a phenomenon called "melt-back." According to some of the local people who live around the mountain, it was the best melt-back in 70 years. In the late summer of 1999, the Turkish government finally granted a few permits to climb Mt. Ararat at a cost of \$2,000 per climber. There was considerable Kurdish unrest in the area. Due to the late announcement about permits, no extensive expedition took place. Several

groups did take photographs, but no significant structure was found.

Explorers expect this melt-back to last on through the summer of 2000, and if climbing permits are granted early in the summer, it could be one of the best years in decades to explore the mountain. Perhaps one of the expeditions will eventually find the elusive ark—if in fact it is the right place and its remains are still preserved.

But our faith should not be based on whether or not the ark is found.

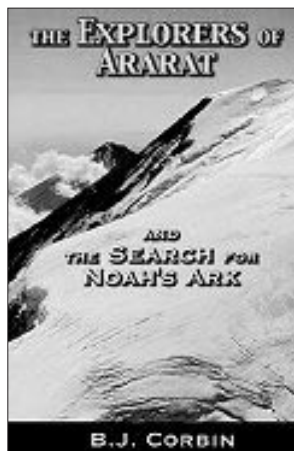
What our faith is based on

Nothing in Bible prophecy demands that the ark must have been preserved or that it would be discovered. Consequently, our faith should not be based on whether the ark has survived up to this time. Our faith should be solely based on God's sure Word. If the ark is found it would be wonderful and an additional proof about the Flood. But if the ark isn't found, it doesn't affect the veracity of God's Word, prophecy or Christ's coming back to this earth to establish the Kingdom of God. These are the things we can be completely certain are true.

One has to be cautious not to make too much out of finding or failing to find the ark. Since the mountain is huge and there are many large rock outcrops, some explorers regularly mistake them for the fragments of the ark. There are also many publicity hounds trying to "make a buck" and a name by claiming to have found the ark.

With more expeditions planned and better technology available, we should simply wait and see whether they will ever find the ark. But remember, God's Word and His prophecies are separate from these results and remain forever faithful.

(If anyone is interesting in keeping track of the expeditions or wants more background material about the search for Noah's ark, two Web sites are recommended: <http://www.arksearch.com> and <http://www.noahsarksearch.com>.) ❖



Reengineering Babel

Language is tricky business. Global corporations and the European Union have turned to translation technology to bring breakthroughs in the language barriers laid down at Babel.

by Mike Bennett

America has gotten used to throwing its weight around in the world. By its bountiful resources and by the sheer size of its internal market, the United States carries enormous economic clout. The ugly American—the traveler or businessman who expects everyone else to speak his language and do things his way—has had a major impact on the world.

Add that to the influence of Britain and its former Commonwealth of English-speaking nations. Businesses and individuals around the world have seen the advantages of learning at least a little English, and various multinational corporations have adopted English as their lingua franca.

Some have predicted that this trend will continue till English completely dominates the world. But the business reality is different.

American companies are finding what European companies have long known: to grow internationally, you have to make your product make sense in the local language and market.

Even though English is being spoken more widely around the globe, we are a long way from an English-only world. No, today the Tower of Babel is being reengineered in different ways.

It's not that global businesses wouldn't like a single language. But when Microsoft and most of the major U.S. software companies make half of their money outside the United States, they quickly learn what the Japanese, French, Italian, German and Spanish speakers will buy. Adapting a piece of software for the Japanese market may cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, but losing those sales can make an even bigger impact on the bottom line.

Turning to technology

Every industry has its lingo, and the lan-



You can try out automatic translation for free on the Web, for example on AltaVista

guage industry is no exception. As editor of *MultiLingual Computing & Technology* magazine, I became immersed in this specialized field where software makers find they have to *internationalize* and *localize* their software, interfaces, documentation and marketing materials for specific language markets. At about \$2 billion a year, this localization industry is just a tiny segment of the entire economy. Still, companies providing these services have been experiencing growth rates of 30, 50 or even 100 percent, year after year.

As the art of translation meets the science of productivity, terms like *machine translation* (MT), *translation memory* (TM) and other types of *computer assisted translation* (CAT) have spread in this important niche in the global economy.

Machine, or automatic, translation has been in development for more than 50 years, but has not yet approached the Universal Translator or Babelfish popularized in science fiction. You can find automatic translation on the Web, for example on AltaVista (<http://babelfish.altavista.com>), but it comes

The introduction of different languages slowed the production and spread of knowledge. But in our frenzied information age those obstacles seem to have largely been overcome.



Source: <http://logos.uoregon.edu/polyphonia/babel.html>

Pieter Brueghel the Elder's "Building the Tower of Babel" (1553)

with disclaimers. The nuances of language are not easily reduced to the kinds of bytes that computers can crunch.

But research continues in this area, with companies like Caterpillar spending millions developing technology that, combined with a simplified version of English, promises savings on translation of Caterpillar's thousands of pages of documentation.

Even larger is the European Union's 20-year investment in the Systran system—a commercial version of Systran powers AltaVista's translation. Currently EU officials can request an automatic rough translation of 18 language pairs by e-mail. Often, to make it understandable, a human translator will be asked to give the output a quick edit.

According to the European Union Web site, "The use of machine translation has grown continuously over the last 10 years, and more than 400,000 pages were processed by EC Systran in 1998." In comparison, the EU's Translation Service, which employs more translators than any other organization in the world, produced about 1,200,000 pages in the 11 official languages of the EU.

Because of the quality of the trans-

lation, it's unlikely that machine translation will replace professional transla-

The immoral economic and religious power described in Revelation is able to rule for a time over many nations and languages (Revelation 17:15).

tors in the foreseeable future. Most of the productivity gains so far have been achieved with a variety of other tools that don't replace translators, but assist them.

Translation memory tools, for example, really help when a software company upgrades its product, perhaps changing 20 percent of the on-line help and documentation. The tools compare the old translation database with the new, and any sentences already translated don't need to be translated again.

New developments are constantly

being made to increase speed and consistency. But with the volume of international trade and communication growing daily, some predict that the industry will never be able to keep up.

The beginning and the end

The Bible tells the beginning of the story of man's languages at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). God could see that man's plan and approach would soon repeat the mindset before the flood, when "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). God saw that "indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" (Genesis 11:6). God's response was to confuse their language. God threw in this confusion factor to keep mankind from communicating too well too soon in ways that would bring about its destruction.

The introduction of different languages served to divide humanity. It slowed the production and spread of knowledge. But in our frenzied information age those obstacles seem to have largely been overcome. As Daniel recorded about the time of the end: "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4).

Now, as the world plunges on in a dizzying spiral of greed and violence, the complications of language can still serve to divide. But we're told that the immoral economic and religious power described in Revelation is able to rule for a time over many nations and languages (Revelation 17:15).

This great trading power, whose spirit goes back to Babylon and Babel, is known for its international commerce and wealth. "The merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury" (Revelation 18:3). Perhaps this is partly made easier by the development of translation technologies. One thing's for sure: Without these behind-the-scenes developments, today's globalization boom would have been much harder to achieve. ❖

In Brief...

World News Review

Austria and Switzerland Move Right

Today, left-of-center governments dominate much of Western and Central Europe. However, there are certain signs of a movement towards the far right in at least two European states.

Most alarming is the emergence of Jörg Haider's Freedom Party as the second largest political force in the Austrian legislature. He is known for his alleged pro-Nazi pronouncements and qualified praise of Hitler. Haider has traveled to London to silence alarm bells set off in the West by his controversial statements about the Third Reich.

This rightward direction has potentially sinister implications for the whole of Europe. *History Today* assistant editor Nigel Jones wrote in the respected British weekly magazine, *The Spectator*:

"To dismiss this election...as a mere blip on Europe's smooth progress towards a social democratic paradise, would be unwise.... The forces that have brought Haider within reach of power in Vienna are also astir in Austria's giant neighbor, Germany. The German political establishment is scarcely more popular with its voters than in Austria.

"But the German far-right lacks a charismatic leader. Already Haider has begun to make trips to Bavaria to address meetings of like-minded Germans, who have given him an ecstatic reception. *Haider would not be the calculating politician he is if the thought 'Today Vienna, tomorrow Berlin' had not entered his handsome head. An Anschluss in reverse? Stranger things have happened*" (emphasis added).

Three weeks after Austrian voters had boosted the ultra right, neighboring Switzerland followed suit. Christopher Blocher's extreme Swiss People's Party made huge gains in the federal elections, which places him in a strong position to play a significant role in a future coalition government. He is known for his highly controversial views about the Holocaust.

This change in the Swiss political landscape will enable Mr. Blocher, a 59-year-old businessman, to more effectively push his ideas on the wider socioeconomic scene. And as *The Economist* observed, "Like any disgruntled Swiss [citizen], he can set out to veto, change or even launch major legislation through the machinery of direct democracy."

Even without a major rightist movement affecting the whole of Europe, the European Continent is predicted to

expand its economic power and political role in this decade. Reporting from Paris for *The Los Angeles Times*, John-Thor Dahlburg observed that "the coming decade should be one of momentous, if plodding and confusing, change in Europe, and of growing power and assertiveness that the United States will be forced to heed. Already the world's largest trading bloc at 15 members, the European Union by 2010 may count 20 to 30 members and ultimately as many as 35."

What makes the growing power of Europe so potentially hazardous is the possibility of extreme political forces taking hold.

Sources: *The Spectator*; *The Economist*; *The Guardian*; *Sunday Times*; *Sunday Telegraph*; *Independent on Sunday*; *Daily Mail* (all London); *The Los Angeles Times*

Grabbing for the Ring

ABC's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* (imported from Britain) has become a golden-egg-laying-goose for the network, consistently pulling top Nielsen ratings and beating the other networks. It even topped the 57th Annual Golden Globes during the hour that it played opposite the awards show on January 23.

Diving to cash in on the public's love for money giveaway shows, Fox has begun to air *Greed*. (How's that for a subtle name?) NBC has resurrected *Twenty-One*, the infamous game show that once fraudulently furnished Charles Van Doren with answers to quiz questions in advance out of—well, *greed* to build and keep the show's audience. CBS joined the dash for cash-lovers late with *Winning Lines*.

In true, "I'll see that and raise you one" mentality, Fox promises a new show this February, titled *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?* The list of possibilities for thinly disguised clones is nauseatingly endless.

The U.S.-Canadian and British markets aren't the only ones that have an appetite for big-money game shows. A similar show, *Chance of a Lifetime*, recently pulled a Norwegian audience of 1.25 million people—in a market of just 4 million!

"Why are these shows making a comeback?" is an easy question to answer from the networks' point of view. They are relatively cheap to make. The sets are inexpensive, and advertisers front the money that is given away to winners. Not that there are that many winners. ABC's version of *Who*

Wants to Be a Millionaire? had a million-dollar winner recently—only the second person ever to win the big prize on any of the show’s various versions.

Maybe the question “Why are these shows so popular with the viewing public?” is a little more difficult to answer. *This Week*, ABC’s Sunday morning news show, discussed the phenomenal success of their money game, speculating on the reasons for its astounding popularity. The round table of newsmen all thought people simply wanted to see other people win. Only one, a conservative columnist, disagreed, saying he believed that most watched in the hope that they would see the contestant lose! He was roundly booed for his uncharitable attitude!

There is a more basic answer, one that would surely raise a chorus of boos from those who are mesmerized by this “cavalcade of cash cows” for network television. That is, they pander to a desire that lies within the makeup of everyone’s primary nature, the desire to strike it rich. The audience is able to project itself into the winner’s circle, to vicariously win the big money. It plays to the tinsel veneer of cheap values that overlay Western culture like a shabby forgery of the genuine article.

What harm does it do? Some might say that quiz shows are “educational” and therefore good for people to watch. Hmm.... I wonder if anyone thinks of reading a book anymore, or going for a walk to look at what God has made. Does anyone really think that it is “good” that millions upon millions of man-hours are being spent weekly in front of the television watching a few people trying to grab for the brass ring?

Is it truly good that people bathe their minds in—as one show is plainly titled—greed? Look again at the timeless wisdom of God on the subject: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things” (1 Timothy 6:9–10).

Sources: ABC’s *This Week*; *Variety*; *Associated Press*; *Northeastern News*, Northeastern University; *Drudge Report*

Chinese Interests in Bahamas

In 1962 the United States and Russia came dangerously close to nuclear war over the issue of nuclear weapons based in Cuba, just a few miles off the coast of Florida. Today there are concerns expressed over the presence of a Chinese company, Hutchison Whampoa Limited, in Panama, where it has contracted to manage the entrances to the former U.S. possession. The same Chinese company is currently completing construction of the largest container port in the world in Freeport, Bahamas—just 60 miles from Florida.

While this is a far cry from placing nuclear weapons close to United States soil, it has raised concerns that a company

with Communist Chinese connections is operating in two strategic geographic points very close to American interests.

Several U.S. military experts say that these activities in both Panama and the Bahamas by Hutchison Whampoa Limited, a Hong Kong-based conglomerate, pose a significant risk to U.S. national security.

Officials for Hutchison Whampoa have heatedly denied any links with the Red Chinese government, but several established connections suggest that the Chinese government has a keen interest in the company’s activities.

One port facility that has captured the interest of the Chinese government is Hutchison Whampoa’s sprawling port facility in the tourist destination of Freeport on Grand Bahama Island.

According to the company’s Web site, the port is located at one of the most strategic spots in the world because “Freeport is the closest offshore port to the east coast of the United States, at the cross-roads of routes between Europe and the Americas and through the Panama Canal.”

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (Republican-Mississippi) and former U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger have expressed concerns about Hutchison’s influence over the Panama Canal.

Lott has described the Hong Kong firm as “an arm of the People’s Liberation Army.”

Hutchison Whampoa’s chairman, Li Ka-Shing, is also a board member of CITIC—the China International Trust and Investment Corporation. U.S. intelligence sources have described the firm as a front for China’s governmental State Council.

Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (Republican-California) has stated that CITIC has been used as a front company by China’s military to acquire technology for weapons development. A recently declassified report by the United States Southern Command’s Joint Intelligence Center, prepared in October 1999, said that “Hutchison Whampoa’s owner, Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-Shing, has extensive business ties in Beijing and has compelling financial reasons to maintain a good relationship with China’s leadership.”

The military intelligence report also warns that “Hutchison containerized shipping facilities in the Panama Canal, as well as the Bahamas, could provide a conduit for illegal shipments of technology or prohibited items from the West to the PRC, or facilitate the movement of arms and other prohibited items into the Americas.”

Retired Admiral Thomas Moorer, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and former commander in chief of the Pacific and Atlantic Fleet said this of the Chinese efforts: “Of course the Chinese military sees the benefit of having a base, a future base, so close to the United States. What China is trying to do is get a kind of maritime position worldwide, and they need a home base, so to speak, in every ocean.”

Source: Newsmax.com

Contributors: *Peter Eddington, Cecil Maranville and John Ross Schroeder*

“NEIGHBOR,” (Continued from page 16)

young man responded to Christ’s question regarding how to inherit eternal life by stating, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

Christ encouraged the man, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.” But the young man, being a lawyer and perhaps looking for the “loophole” in the law asked, “And who is my neighbor?” Without missing a beat, Christ moved into the story that has come to be known as the “Parable of the Good Samaritan.” In speaking to conservative religious folk of His day, He purposefully inserts the example of a Samaritan. The Jewish community at this time viewed Samaritans as a mixed breed of people, and had nothing to do with them!

In this environment, Christ breaks the mold and daringly inserts the reference to “another,” and gives him life, heart and purpose. At the end of the famous story, He asks a simple question: “Which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” (It is interesting that the term “good” is never used in the story, but rather has been attached to the parable by its readers.) Christ puts none above another in the way that He tells the parable, challenging the human tendency towards prejudice. He powerfully illustrates that it’s not who you are, or what you know, but *what you do* that is essential.

But this was not simply a token gesture. At another time and place, while visiting a Samaritan village, we again find Christ boldly taking the initiative in dealing with “others.” In John 4, we find Him tired, resting and sitting by a well. A Samaritan woman approaches. He does what would have been unthinkable in light of the common custom of the day. He simply states, “Give Me a drink” (verse 7). He does not wait to be asked, but rather He initiates the contact. The woman is startled and responds, “How is it that You being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (verse 9). He goes on to explain many things to her.

When the disciples returned, they reflected common prejudices—“they marveled that He talked with a woman.” As human beings, all of us have our own lines that we like to draw and boxes that we like to fill, boxes filled with “us” and lines that keep us comfortable. But that is not the story of the gospel. And we don’t always get it all at once or in one sitting. The original disciples certainly didn’t.

Have you ever noticed whom it was that James and

John wanted supernatural fire to consume? Notice in Luke 9:52, “And as they went they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him.” The zealous sons of Zebedee were set for action! They asked Christ, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” (verse 54).

Many communities throughout Judea and Galilee rebuffed Jesus, but the disciples didn’t ask that they be burned like this. Why Samaria, and not Judea? Simply put, dealing with “others” is not always how we deal with ourselves. It rolled off the lips much more quickly to miraculously “nuke” the Samaritans rather than their fellow citizens. You see, even religious folk may have tough times with the powerful question, “Who is my neighbor?”

Christ didn’t. He answered, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them” (verse 56). Yes, even Samaritans.



Harmony can be a hallmark of God’s people, like this group in Dominica

God shows no partiality

God is very patient and He brings the lesson back to us until we get it and do it like He does. Interestingly John was given another opportunity to “get it right.” Have you ever noticed who were the first two apostles to follow Philip into Samaria and assist in baptizing the Samaritans? One was John—the same John who had

wanted to “nuke ’em.” Every step into Samaria must have weighed heavily on his mind. But when the big moment came, “they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17). Such an act for a Jew was one of ritual uncleanness! John had now embraced the “others” in a daring act of spiritual courage.

Not only John, but also the entire Church would be taken back to another point of initial failure in understanding the powerful lesson of “who is my neighbor?” The port of Joppa had long ago been the point of departure for Jonah’s ill-fated cruise to escape his responsibility of dealing with his “others,” the Assyrians. Have you ever noticed in Acts 10:5 where Peter was staying when he received the vision to go to the gentile Cornelius? That’s right, it was Joppa.

Peter had to make a decision. Ultimately, the risk was even greater for him and the Church, for the call was not only to preach repentance, but also to embrace the gentiles. What would people think? Who gave him permission to “draw new lines,” to step “out of the box” and to conclude: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34)?

Luke, the author of Acts, must have been smiling when he wrote these words, for he himself had been, in the eyes of the Jews, an “other.” Luke is the one who shares the story of the Good Samaritan as well as the story of the healing of the lepers in Luke 17. He specifically points out in verse 16 that the grateful one was a Samaritan. Luke is the one who shares the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. He is the only one of the synoptic authors who quotes the fullness of John the Baptist’s statement from Isaiah 40:5, “all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6).

Luke recognized the difference that God’s Holy Spirit made in people before and after conversion. He recognized that his own Greek people had their whole list of “others.” They had a concept referred to as “autochthonous” which literally means, “springing up from the soil of Attica.” To not be of Attica was to be a “barbarian.” That is the Greek term they used for everyone other than themselves. Perhaps that is why Luke wrote a detailed record of Paul’s powerful address to the intellectual leaders of Athens, people who would have been steeped in this notion. Paul challenged their perspective with the words: “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26).

“Hath not a Jew...?”

Common blood, a common father and common hopes and aspirations is a theme that William Shakespeare gave voice to through Shylock the Jew in *Merchant of Venice*. At this time, the Jews were the “others” in Italy. In Act III, Shylock bellows:

“He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, hated mine enemies; and what’s his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that.”

We can read the examples of Christ, take encouragement from fellow Christians as John, Peter and Paul—even marvel at the wisdom and eloquence of Shakespeare and draw strength. And we need to, because it’s a tough

world out there on the job, in the schools or in the neighborhoods. We need to recognize that even “good people” can be pushed back into small boxes and reverse their growth steps. You may think that you would never say disparaging remarks toward someone else of another racial or ethnic group or disassociate yourself with certain friends when the pressure is on. Be careful. Notice a powerful drama played out in Antioch.

“But when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face...for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy” (Galatians 2:11–13).

When the Bible states “even Barnabas,” it is making a powerful point! Barnabas was “the son of encouragement,” Paul’s mentor, the one man who always stood up for people—but he also had human failings. It is the humanity of this wonderful man put out before us here to remind us that we don’t find our values in a trial, we take them into the trial with us.

Birds of a feather

I have been raising chickens for over 20 years. Many nights I have gone out to see if my birds are all right and shined my flashlight into the coop. No surprises here! All “the birds of a feather flock together” to stay warm and cozy, even in the darkest night. People can be like chickens in many ways. We’ve all heard of the “pecking order of life,” and I know some people that have never gotten past “the feathers” of other people. But Christ never looked at feathers;

He focused on hearts.

As we continue to read the headlines and articles in our newspapers or the subjects we cover in *World News and Prophecy*, let’s realize many of these articles will deal with people different from us. They will deal with racial tension, conflict and, unfortunately, even death, because humanity as a whole hasn’t gotten beyond “the feathers.” Racism, culture wars and ethnic tensions will continue to intensify. Right now, a Christian’s responsibility is not to change the world. Only the literal rule of Jesus Christ on earth is going to accomplish that. But we are to change ourselves and be responsible for our actions within our spheres of influence, whether our family, our school or our jobs.

It is Jesus Christ, Himself, who tells us “this is the way walk you in it” with His simple command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ❖

Christ puts none above another in the way that He tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, challenging the human tendency towards prejudice. He powerfully illustrates that it’s not who you are, or what you know, but what you do that is essential.

This Is the Way... Who Is My Neighbor?

by Robin Webber

All of us are challenged by this ever-changing world. For many of us, society is much different from what we knew as children or even as young adults. One of the great dynamics of our age is the number of new and different faces that are entering our lives whether through the media, in our schools or right next door in our neighborhoods.

In one sense, the growing reality of globalization is pushing us together with people we have never dealt with before. The global neighborhood is simply getting crowded. Dynamic advances in technology, transportation and communication have brought new faces, accents and traditions into our everyday lives. Our comfortable world of “sameness” is being stretched, if not actually shaken.

This is no longer simply a New York, London or Los Angeles phenomenon, but it’s happening everywhere—just look out the door, or pick up your local newspaper, or look up the names in your phone book. How we deal with “others” is going to be one of the great personal challenges of the 21st century.

Society today is split on dealing with this issue of “others.” In one sense, society has become more tolerant of people from different backgrounds. Today we

see much interaction between different groups and an appreciation of others. At the same time, other parts of society are fragmenting into isolation and tribalism.

We find this in all the various racial and ethnic groups. “Balkanization” of nations, states, counties and cities is an ever-present dilemma facing responsible people. The hyphenated person or group is a big part of modern society and how we view ourselves. These two terms, “globalization” and “Balkanization” are two very real dynamics that will affect your world, your church and yourself in the 21st century. How you view “others” is very telling as to how you view yourself, and ultimately how you view God.

Let’s look through the lens of Scripture and see how Jesus Christ and His followers dealt with their own multicultural world. We’ll come to see that each in his own way and in his own time made real headway in dealing with “others.”

How big is your box?

Jesus was once engaged in a conversation with a young lawyer. We find the story in Luke 10:25–29. The

(See “NEIGHBOR,” page 14)