

WORLD NEWS *and* PROPHECY

Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

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What Lies Ahead for U.S. Leadership?

The next four years could bring some dramatic challenges for America's leadership role in the world. The next president will face the consequences of missed opportunities during the 1990s.

by Darris McNeely

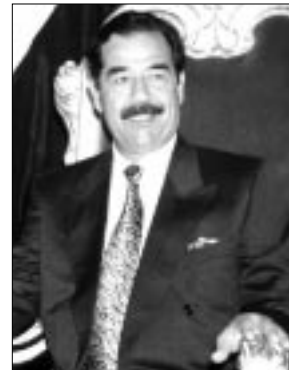
Every farmer understands the importance of seed corn. It is the best of the seed, which is cultivated for future crop production. Without good seed corn, prepared in advance, succeeding harvests will diminish in yield.

In international relations, this concept is helpful in understanding where America stands in today's world. As we move into a new century, the reins of American power will transfer in a few weeks. Now is a time to assess the previous decade and understand what events the next few years may bring. Has a measure of America's "seed corn" been squandered in recent years?

Ten years ago, the United States led a coalition of allied forces in an air and

land attack to liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's aggression. While they were successful in this goal, the forces stopped short of ousting the Iraqi leader from his position. Today, Hussein still sits in power in Baghdad with a firm grip that still threatens the stability of the region.

Ten years ago the Berlin Wall had already crumbled and the Soviet Union was in its last months. The Cold War ended with America the victor and the opportunity to shape a new order in the world. Yet today there is still no peace in the Middle East and questions remain about Russia's experiment with economic reform and democratic government.



Ten years after the Gulf War, will we again face the same foe?

During the '90s, America rode the wave of its biggest economic expansion in history. With domestic prosperity, there was time to focus on foreign policy issues that needed wise leadership.

There should have been time to at least lay the groundwork for future progress.

One of the most important strengths
(See "LEADERSHIP," page 3)

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World Watches U.S. Post-Election Predicament — The Perfect Prophetic Storm

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Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed. The next issue is scheduled to be available on January 5, 2001, on the Internet at <http://www.ucg.org/articles/wnp/index.html>.

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.

“LEADERSHIP,” (Continued from page 1)
of the American president is the inherent power to shape and conduct foreign policy. It is critical that each administration understands this duty and uses it to benefit American interests and world stability. A president may lack skills in domestic policy. Such weaknesses can often be covered by Congress. But the world looks to the leader of the country as the embodiment of American policy and values. Therefore, it is critical that any administration pursue clear and coherent goals in its relations with the major powers of the world.

Instead, the past eight years of the Clinton administration seemed unclear, unfocused and uncertain. Only in recent months was a concerted effort made to achieve a peace settlement between Israel and Palestine. Even then, it was done in the shadow of “leaving a legacy” for the outgoing president. In July, Camp David talks between Israeli leader Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat broke down after coming close to a resolution.

China

China poses a major challenge in the coming years. Its desire to “reunite” with [read “absorb”] Taiwan is a relentless threat to peace in the region. China intends to play a more influential role in Asia and will again run into conflict with its historic rival Russia. This will play a significant role in the balance of power. Add to this China’s possession of ballistic missiles capable of hitting the U.S. mainland and its proclivity to export nuclear missile technology to developing nations, and you have an unstable mix.

Instead of achieving significant positions of strength with China during the past eight years, two things are likely to cloud any legacy. One is China’s effort to influence the 1996 presidential campaign by making cash contributions to the Democratic Party. The second is the disappearance of sensitive nuclear secrets from the Los Alamos labs. This information was thought to have wound up in Chinese hands. Satisfactory answers to both of these issues have yet to be discovered.

China is not the only nation capable of launching a nuclear attack upon the United States. Russia still has that capability, and other hostile nations, such as North Korea, Iran and Iraq, are known to be developing ballistic capability. America’s ability to defend itself against nuclear attack is still debated. Some advocate a space-based, “star wars” type of system, while others prefer a cruiser-based approach that would allow more mobility in deployment. Russia continues to oppose American efforts to upgrade its missile defense capability. Again, years of opportunity have been wasted in this area.

Military defense

While the United States still projects the world’s most powerful military force, the past 10 years have seen a

Economists believe that the United States...is long overdue for an economic correction. Many think the country is overdue for both a stock market correction and a recession.

marked decline in capability. Given the state of preparedness, some seriously question whether America could mount another Desert Storm type operation.

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of army divisions has been reduced from 18 to nine. The navy has shrunk from 600 ships to 300. The number of air wings has declined from 36 to 18. America’s military defensive forces have been effectively cut in half. When a nation relies on its armed forces for defense, the military must be kept in top shape and at sufficient numbers. America has also projected its power to other nations and thereby acted as a guarantor of peace or policeman. Without that capability, and the threat it carries, the

world would be a much different place. Historically, America’s military role has meant more to the stability of the world than any other nation in recent history.

What lies ahead?

What challenging events could the next U.S. president face? Economists believe that the United States, 18 years into the biggest period of economic stability the world has seen, is long overdue for an economic correction. Many think the country is overdue for both a stock market correction and a recession. Today’s budget surplus overshadows the overspending of the past eight years, but that flawed management would become obvious during an economic downturn.

The next president could see the first nuclear war since 1945. Expert analysts suspect the most likely spot for such a confrontation would be on the India-Pakistan border. Both nations have demonstrated to the world their nuclear capability and this region continues to be a hot spot of military activity.

In October, the USS *Cole* was attacked by suicide terrorist bombers while docked in Oman. Two years ago, terrorists bombed American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Many feel that it is only a matter of time before America will experience a major attack within its borders that would be larger than any previous effort.

Former Clinton National Security Advisor Anthony Lake has written a book, *6 Nightmares: Real Threats in a Dangerous World and How America Can Meet Them*. In one scenario, terrorists release anthrax into a stadium full of sports fans. Days later, after suffering fever, chest pain and vomiting, more than 17,000 spectators die. With anthrax, there is no smell, taste or sight to warn you of an attack. The first signs show up days later, when it is too late. Authorities have actually run a drill of such a scenario in preparation for a possible real-life attack. Between 1993 and 1995 several arrests were made of people trying to sell, buy or cross international borders with deadly biological or chemical weapons.

Lake is of the opinion that the United States has been living in pros-

perous times with the mistaken impression that the Cold War is over and that it faces no real threats. “We’re not using these good times to prepare for the threats that are very clearly coming or are already upon us in this new century,” said Luke. “I wrote the book as a

executive branch at a time when clear and decisive leadership is needed in foreign policy. America needs a capable team of leaders who can formulate a credible foreign policy and inspire the confidence of the world’s nations. Time may be running out.



Anthony Lake’s book warns of anthrax being released in a crowded stadium

warning that I hope could in some small way stimulate action in our society and our government” (*Book Magazine*, November/ December 2000).

The foresight of Joseph

God showed the biblical patriarch Joseph that Pharaoh’s dream meant there would be seven years of plenty in advance of seven lean years. Through his efforts, and with the cooperation of the Egyptian leader, Joseph steered the economy on a course that enabled it to prepare for the years of famine. Egypt was able to maintain its position of regional power and to aid in the preservation of a key family, Jacob and his descendants, with whom God was working.

Where is such a wise leader within the modern descendants of Joseph’s son Manasseh? Where is the leader who is able to see the dangers ahead and take the necessary steps to protect the nation’s interests and the safety of its people? Sadly, the results of the recent presidential elections show a divided electorate and a potentially crippled

The unseen factor

Leaders can plan, but unforeseen events can cause chain reactions that change the course of history. Witness the assassination of Austrian Archduke Ferdinand by an unknown Serbian anarchist in July 1914. Within weeks events spun out of the control of leaders and diplomats and plunged the world into war.

Former British Prime Minister Harold McMillan was

What unexpected event could occur that would set in motion a string of events radically changing the current world balance of power?

once asked what key factors shaped his administration. “Events, my dear boy, events,” was his reply.

What unexpected event could occur that would set in motion a string of events radically changing the current world balance of power? No one can know for sure, but the Bible advises us that the best plans of human leaders don’t always work out.

Psalm 2 shows that nations devise and scheme to empty ends when their will does not fit the purpose of the Lord. Treaties and alliances that serve only national interests will come to nothing. “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the

rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.’ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision” (Psalm 2:1–4).

From the book of Daniel we learn that God rules over the nations and His will is ultimately accomplished. “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him” (Daniel 2:20–22).

Daniel interpreted dreams and received visions that tell of the rise and fall of great world powers through history. In Daniel 10:13–20, we are given a glimpse into what appear to be titanic struggles for power and control over the destiny of nations. Michael, a princely angel, comes to reveal understanding to Daniel and says he was hindered in his mission for 21 days by “the prince of the kingdom of Persia....” As he leaves Daniel in verse 20, he says he returns to the fight and expects another “prince of Greece” to come.

We are shown a glimpse of the great spiritual powers that support nations and empires. Satan has historically marshaled physical forces to fight against the plan and purposes of God. Paul clearly understood this when he defined where the real enemy lies in Ephesians 6:12, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Powerful spiritual forces are at work in today’s world. Events that can shape the whole future of the world can happen suddenly. Specific end-time events can take place without warning. We are told to watch and to love the truth. If we do, we’ll have the context to understand events of the coming years. ✦

U.S. Election Crisis— End of Political Stability?

Political stability is rare. It's essential that those countries that have found the way to enduring stability hold fast. Has the historical stability of the U.S. form of government begun to wane?

by Melvin Rhodes

We awoke to the sound of gunfire. It was a Monday morning. I turned on the radio. Handel's *Water Music* was playing, unusual music in the West African nation of Ghana. A friend rushed into the house. "A coup. A coup. A coup!" was his excited cry.

Many countries in Africa, South America and Asia and island nations around the world have experienced similar violent changes of government. These sudden, often unforeseen, violent upheavals certainly make for more interesting politics than what we have in the Western democracies. But they take an enormous toll, not only in lives lost, but also in terms of economic progress and stability.

Without political stability, it is impossible to have economic progress. Until a nation has a stable political system in place, it is impossible for people to plan their lives, to conduct business successfully, to go about their daily routine with any hope for the future.

What is truly remarkable is how few nations of this world have had political stability during the last one hundred years. If longevity, together with the continuous and repeated peaceful transfer of power without civil war or other internal upheaval, are indicators of political stability, then there are few success stories in the world of today.

Interestingly, the nations that stand out in this regard are the English-speaking nations whose people are descended from the biblical tribe of Joseph.

Political stability essential, but uncommon

Great Britain itself has enjoyed political stability since the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. Following the death of Queen Anne in 1714, the same dynasty has been on the throne for almost

300 years with peaceful transfers of elected governments taking place periodically in that time.

Through ties with the British crown, other nations have also enjoyed this same stability, notably Canada, Australia and New Zealand. A unique system of checks and balances has ensured that no one person has too much power, thereby safely guaranteeing a peaceful, stable government. When nations have severed the tie with the crown, political instability has often been the result.

The American system of government is built on similar checks and balances. The United States has enjoyed 135 years of political stability since the end of the Civil War.

No other modern nations can boast of such longevity. Whereas Germany, France, Italy, Russia and China have cultures that go back thousands of years, the political systems they now have are relatively new and follow periods of great upheaval. The German Federal Republic is less than 50 years old. France's Fifth Republic dates back to 1958 and is the latest of many constitutional arrangements that have been tried since the revolution of 1789. Italy's republic is also post-World War II and has seen more changes of government than any other Western nation, while Russia and China have suffered through a century of revolutions, civil wars and other political problems.

Political instability has been the norm for most of the new nations of the world, given birth since World War II as the European powers dismantled their colonial empires. Most of these countries are republics with their own presidents, but few have been able to manage successfully the peaceful transition from one leader to another. Even when there are democratic structures in place, endemic corruption denies any government a real claim of legitimacy.

Ironically, many former colonies that benefited from political stability in colonial times, have

The election of 2000 has left the world bewildered, with people wondering if America is going to start to have the succession problems that other nations frequently experience.

known only chaos since independence. British colonies were able to share the benefits of the stable British political system while under colonial rule, sometimes for centuries.

Promised blessings

When considering the physical blessings promised to Abraham and his descendants in Genesis, chapter 12, one of those blessings must surely be the stable political systems evolved over centuries that enabled economic development to take place on an unprecedented scale. “In blessing I will bless you” (Genesis 22:17). Joseph’s descendants could not have been “a fruitful bough” (Genesis 49:22) in the “last days” (verse 1) without political stability.

The United States and the older members of the British Commonwealth have been politically stable for so long that few of their citizens today appreciate what they have. Demands for constitutional changes that could seriously rupture that stability are increasingly heard.

“God Save the King” (or Queen) is an old cry, dating back to Old Testament times (1 Samuel 10:24; Daniel 2:4; 5:10). There are good reasons that people wanted the king to live a long time. The reigning monarch was a known entity. His style of rulership was usually predictable. That meant stability. In order for that stability to continue, he must have a male heir.

Even today, church bells ring out across the land in some European countries to announce the birth of a royal heir, assuring the people of another generation of political stability. Russian czars once held their naked newborn sons up in the air on the palace balcony so that the people could see that a male heir was born, alive and well. They could now go home safe and secure in the knowledge that there would be stability at least for the remainder of their lives.

Constitutional government

The British system of constitutional monarchy evolved over centuries. Angry and frustrated at the excesses of some of the medieval kings, nobles gradually increased the powers of the Parliament

until the English Civil War in the 1640s involved both king and Parliament in a struggle for dominance. Parliament won. The king lost his head, and England was for a few years a republic. But the republic ended up a dictatorship under Oliver Cromwell. Determined that no other politician should ever have dictatorial powers, the country restored the monarchy. Additionally, the monarch’s powers were limited, with ultimate power residing in the Parliament.

Over a century later, when the United States was formed, America’s founding fathers had a real challenge—to establish a lasting democratic republic that would not become a dictatorship. Historically, republics have not lasted very long.

America today is the oldest democratic republic in the world. This is an incredible accomplishment. What is truly amazing is that no other country has been able to copy the American system of government successfully. It is as if the American system of government is uniquely suited to the United States of America.

It has worked well—until now. The presidential election of November 2000 has left the world bewildered, with people wondering if America is going to start to have the succession problems that other nations frequently experience.

If so, then political stability will be a casualty and America’s economic progress will suffer, affecting other nations badly at the same time. If America is perceived as unstable, other nations will lose confidence in her. If the president lacks legitimacy, it will be much more difficult for world leaders to look to the president of the United States as the leader of the free world.

What the future holds

What has gone wrong? Could it happen again?

We need to understand that no political system is perfect. The British and American systems have worked better for longer than any other political systems in today’s world, but they are still man-made. Neither country is the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ made it clear in John 18:36 that His “kingdom is not of this world.” His kingdom, to be established at

His return, will be a perfect kingdom. Interestingly, “of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end...to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever” (Isaiah 9:7). Political stability is promised “forever.”

Meanwhile, all nations have to do the best they can to work out their own systems. Humanly speaking, the British and American systems have worked better than others, for longer periods. Interestingly, the two institutions upon which this stability has been built, the British monarchy and the American presidency, have taken quite a battering during the last decade, mostly due to scandals that could easily have been avoided. At the same time, greater openness has removed the awe.

Further weakening of these institutions can only be a negative development for the American and British peoples. *It is of supreme importance that those who reside in the White House and Buckingham Palace recognize the serious responsibility they have in contributing to the stability and well being of the nations over which they preside.*

When politicians squabble over who holds the supreme office, it is understandable that fears of America becoming a “banana republic” are heard, both at home and overseas. Political uncertainty over the presidency is to be expected in some of the poorer, less politically stable nations of the Third World. People do not expect to see the same in the richest nation in the world, a nation that has been politically stable longer than anybody can remember.

A nation divided

The recent election brought out how deeply divided America has become. In an article titled “Election Reflects a Nation Divided,” ABC-TV news correspondent Cokie Roberts and her husband, Steven, wrote the following: “As the election returns show, the voters are as divided as the politicians. Even though Gore and Bush both ran as centrists, exit polls demonstrate they were appealing to two very different constituencies. Start with geography. The Democratic states are
(See “STABILITY,” page 9)

World Watches U.S. Post-Election Predicament

The world has been watching and evaluating the spectacle. Has the United States' image, and more importantly, its power and prestige, been compromised?

by Cecil E. Maranville

The U.S. election surprised even those who predicted a close race. One authority on probability equated it with the likelihood that a tossed coin would land on its edge—and remain upright! Suspicion has given way to angry accusations, motivated by bitterness and resentment. Internally, officials claim and citizens expect all wounds to heal and business to go on as usual. However, the world has been watching and evaluating the spectacle! Has the United States' image, and more importantly, its power and prestige, been compromised?

As noted in the November issue of *World News and Prophecy*, U.S. citizens have focused their attention inward over the past year, due to a protracted, competitive and divisive presidential campaign. Instead of the fracas dissolving into post-election harmony, it blossomed into a never-before-experienced (in the United States) contentiousness. Will the tight election results permanently harm the U.S. internally? A convincing majority of its citizens said, "No" in a November 26-27 poll conducted jointly by CNN, *USA Today* and Gallup. Since a democratic government's effectiveness is directly proportional to the confidence of its electorate, that's a strong indicator that the country will weather the crisis. (Of course, how much people come together and how well the major political parties are able to cooperate remains to be seen.)

There's a more important question to address: What effect has the election had on the United States' standing in the world community? "Phrases like 'shambles,' 'Mickey Mouse' and 'banana republic' have popped up in newspaper headlines around the world," reports T.R. Reid of the *Washington Post* foreign service in "The Whole World's Watching America's Presidential Follies."

Some have suggested that the highly competitive electoral procedure damaged the country's international authority. Has the image of the United States been diminished before the world's nations to the point that the country has lost its effectiveness as the leader of the free world? Using a parody on the famous E.F. Hutton commercial, "When the new U.S. administration speaks, will anyone listen?"

Early indications are that many are ready, willing and eager to jump on the bandwagon of criticism of the United States. Nations less wealthy than the United States (much of the world) and less powerful (all the remaining nations) reflect their resentment over U.S. dominance in political, economic and environmental world issues.

World press titters at the tallying

Some have been openly sarcastic over the impasse generated by the Florida vote count, recounts and related court challenges. Fidel Castro offered to send "election monitors" to Florida, as did former Russian President Boris Yeltsin. A Russian television commentator, reporting on the Florida quagmire, said with a smirk, "Just like Russia!" London's *Daily Mirror* ran a front-page photo of Vice President Gore and Governor Bush over the headline "Forrest Chumps." India (where thousands have died during election campaigns!) has had much fun at U.S. expense. Even Italy, with its revolving door democracy, has joined the gallery of critics.

Excerpts from the world press lay bare the taunts—and something more.

The Belfast News Letter (U.K.) warns, "As democracy flourishes in places where it has been suppressed for too long, it is vital that

"Phrases like 'shambles,' 'Mickey Mouse' and 'banana republic' have popped up in newspaper headlines around the world...."

the leader of the U.S. carries into the international arena the confidence and credibility associated with an *indisputable* mandate” [emphasis added throughout]. It’s clear to all that no clear mandate exists.

Iranian criticism comes as no surprise. Former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani declared, “The recent scandal in the U.S. election shows how hollow their democratic claims are, and that democracy is invalid there.”

South Africa’s *Financial Mail* categorically asserts that the U.S. presidency, and the country’s influence, have suffered. “No doubt, it reassures Americans to take the view that the Presidential election fiasco reflects the closeness of the race rather than any intrinsic weakness in their electoral system. In fact, *they are wrong*.... In the long run, U.S. society won’t suffer from this unedifying struggle. But the image of the presidency, and the whole body politic, will be tarnished. It’s already suggested that [the new president] will find it hard to *assert any moral superiority*, especially abroad. But you *can be sure he’ll try*.”

Notice the thinly veiled resentment towards the United States, coupled with insinuations of a perceived haughtiness and self-righteousness on the part of the United States in its international dealings. The point isn’t to judge whether the United States has been so or not, but rather to observe the mood of the international community towards “Uncle Sam.” The election has invited all to show their true sentiments.

Jibes reveal hard feelings

Beyond the comedy, one can hear serious voices labeling the United States as a hypocrite guilty of the weaknesses it has projected onto others. Egyptian editor Samir Ragab posed, “Now can the U.S., the self-styled standard-bearer of democracy and freedom in the world, question the integrity of the Egyptian elections? *Absolutely not*” (ibid., Reid).

Reid notes that many Mexican commentators reflect the sting that

country has felt from U.S. scolding. In their delight over a “Latin-American” type of muddle, they point out that the presidential election may have hurt the international image of the United States. Political scientist Rafael Segovia put forward this thoughtful comment. “The United States is like the most rich and powerful man in the world, but in the end, still just a man.”

Wounds opened between political parties and their supporters within the United States may well close over with little scarring. That’s not likely to be the case with international denigration, for the election has changed the status quo. “[The presidential campaign] has left the playing field wide open for those whose vision is to oppose America to seek its destruction. The America-haters have all the energy now in Europe and the Middle East.... The notion that the very reason

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America has the prosperity it does is because of its values, institutions and deeply imbedded ideals goes unarticulated these days” (“Democracy in America Is Looking Pale” by Ching Cheong, November 10, 2000, Singapore Press Holdings).

United Arab Emirates’ *Gulf News* was blunt in its analysis: “Both Republicans and Democrats are now preparing for a way of attrition which has already weakened the credibility of their electoral process and made Americans the laughing stock of the whole world. Countries which have in the past been lectured on anything and everything by the Americans—and this means a majority of the world’s

nations—are now gleefully poking fun at the Americans and their electoral process.... Americans should therefore brace for more uncertainty, mudslinging and a lot of jeering from an amused international community.”

The Belfast Telegraph’s lead editorial of November 10th summarized the perspective of a lot of nations: “The nation which likes to style itself as the greatest democracy in the world is having to come to terms with the fact that its electoral system is in shambles. America is squirming, and if we are to be honest, the rest of the world is loving every minute of it” (quoted by Michael Moran, MSNBC in “Over There: Snickering and Dismay,” November 17, 2000).

U.S. has friends and admirers

Other countries, some of which are used to armed uprisings and bloodshed over disputed elections in their homeland, have marveled at and praised the orderly manner of resolving the disputed U.S. presidential vote.

The Nation (Kenya) editorialized, “We cannot help compare our chaotic and pathetically unfair electoral practices with those of the U.S., which, however convoluted and incomprehensible they may seem to us, are at least conducted in a systematic, gentlemanly fashion.”

The Irish Times voiced a similar acknowledgement, “Due and fair process, legally defined, is a central part of [the U.S.] political culture, with an exemplary appeal far beyond its shores.”

Israel’s *Jerusalem Post* offered high praise: “The cliffhanger U.S. election may produce bemusement in the world, as the orderly transfer of power seems to be delayed and confused. But this glimmer of instability in the United States only highlights the fundamental strengths of the American system.”

Self-interest motivates national comments

Nations are looking at the United States from the viewpoint of their own

interests. *Ethnos* (Greece) editors were transparent in their point of view—a sardonic appraisal that the election won't benefit them. "Experience teaches us that U.S. presidents come and go but the orientation of American foreign policy remains the same.... Whether a Republican or a Democrat becomes president, nothing will change for Greece. We know that by now."

Aside from their barbs about electoral procedure, Arab countries have also expressed a concern that any new U.S. administration would continue to favor Israel in its foreign policy.

Russian response, other than a few jibes, has also been to assess how likely policy shifts in a new U.S. administration will affect them. "In Russia, commentary has not reflected worry about an earth-shattering crisis; there have been more quips than criticism" (ibid., Reid).

Judging on the basis of what has been said thus far, the U.S. image has been smudged, but it is far from destroyed. While some nations have attempted to make political points by jabbing at the image of the United States, there is little evidence that its position of power and influence has been seriously diminished by the recent presidential election—bizarre though it was.

God's hand sustains U.S. supremacy

Why does the United States continue to dominate the world? A partisan response would say that it's due to the leadership of the current or previous administrations. We do not gain-say the fact that the people in key positions are important to any country. However, we recognize something that many past U.S. presidents have humbly acknowledged—that God's will is the critical determining factor in the country's prominence.

Daniel, an outstanding biblical book of history and prophecy, is a fascinating study in international politics and God's involvement in the rise and fall of nations. One of the early world

powers, the first such power from some perspectives, was the Babylonian Empire under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar. An egotistical genius, Nebuchadnezzar found himself stymied by a frighteningly realistic dream. His usual advisers were unable to help, and he turned to a young Daniel who had humbly claimed, "there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets" (Daniel 2:28).

It's been observed that successful people often have a deep-seated ego that enables them to reach further than the average person would attain. Self-image would compel such an individual to claim that the nation's great power was due to his personal leadership.

Daniel acknowledged that, "You O king, are a king of kings"—his leadership ability far exceeded that of any rival. Nonetheless, Daniel continued, Babylon's importance was due to God's hand. "For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory" (Daniel 2:37).

The implication was that, great as Nebuchadnezzar was, he was still just a man. How like Segovia's clear-headed summary of what he has learned from the U.S. presidential contest: "The United States is like the most rich and powerful man in the world, but in the end, still *just a man.*"

Without doubt, the hand of God has lifted the United States to its current prominence, and His grace has allowed its standing to continue *far beyond* any greatness that could be attributable to outstanding leadership, national morality or intrinsic values in its citizenry.

The presidential election spectacle has afforded the nations of the world an opportunity to snicker and mock, but the United States will continue to dominate the world in the immediate future because of God's will. When God withdraws His sustaining hand—and He surely will—the jealousy and anger of the nations hinted at in the above commentaries will be unleashed with a passion.

Additional source: *Time Europe* ❖

"STABILITY," (Continued from page 6)

grouped mainly in three clusters: the Northeast, the upper Middle West and the Pacific coast. The rest is GOP (Republican) country, with almost no regional overlap.

"Then there is race. Whites and non-whites are living on different planets. Six in ten Latinos voted Democratic nationwide and so did nine of ten blacks. Whites favored Bush by 12 points. Gender differences were almost as striking. Men voted Republican by 11 points, women favored the Democrats by the same margin. That figures out to a 22-point gender gap, the largest since exit polling started and five points larger than the difference four years ago" (*Denver Rocky Mountain News*, November 9, 2000).

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ warned that "a house divided against itself cannot stand" (Matthew 12:25).

Other factors also cause concern. For a democratic system to work, everybody must be willing to play by the rules, to accept the result and then unite behind whoever wins. This election will long be remembered as the first (of many?) when the rules themselves were openly criticized and the results constantly questioned. It is doubtful whether the supporters of the losing candidate will unite behind the new president no matter which one takes the oath of office in January.

Many have expressed concern at the important role played by both the media and the legal profession in this election. The media announced the result, based on their own predictions, before the polls closed, thereby affecting voter turnout in some areas. Accusations of media bias are common. After the election, the close election result led to lawyers and the courts playing a major role in determining the outcome, thereby setting precedents that will long influence future elections.

Whatever the outcome of the present impasse and the future consequences, it is clear that the world has been jolted into a realization that America's political stability cannot be taken for granted. This is something new for America and for her friends. Also for her enemies who may take advantage of this new situation.

One thing is certain—American elections will never be the same again. ❖

The Perfect Prophetic Storm

Bible prophecy foretells a time when two great world events will converge to overwhelm all of man's efforts to resolve them.

by Mario Seiglie

The *Perfect Storm* is the title of a recent popular movie, based on a true story about a hapless crew on a fishing vessel that sailed into the combined force of two hurricanes. Not surprisingly, the ship capsized and all the crew perished. Perhaps if they had faced only one hurricane, they could have survived, but the power of two deadly hurricanes was simply too much for the crew to handle.

The movie stressed the unusual combination of factors that led to this tragedy. The fishing crew had plenty of experience and the ship had weathered many storms in the past. They felt their well-equipped craft could ride out just about anything nature threw their way. But, when they faced the combined fury of two hurricanes, all their efforts proved futile.

This is an apt analogy for what the Bible has prophesied will one day occur when a combination of forces is unleashed on the entire world. Just as the seasoned fishing crew assumed it could handle whatever came its way, many people assume that society can handle any crisis the future brings, through scientific achievement, economic growth, military prowess and political cunning.

Many political and religious leaders want their followers to believe they are amply equipped to solve any grave danger ahead. They reason: "We have been through two World Wars, disease epidemics, a great economic depression, numerous social upheavals, and have survived them all. Now that we have even more technological tools at our disposal, we can prevail over any crisis that comes our way."

Thus, society can be lulled into a false sense of security, thinking the world will never face "a perfect storm" of world events.



Claudette Barius, © 2000 Warner Bros.

The Perfect Storm, a recent movie, provides an apt analogy of prophesied events

Biblical prophecy enters the scene

Yet, biblical prophecy clearly foretells "the perfect prophetic storm." It will be a time when two great world events will converge to overwhelm all of man's efforts to resolve them.

Jesus Christ prophesied a combination of these forces would eventually lead to what He called "great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). Paul also described this same period: "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3).

These two main events will combine to bring about "the perfect prophetic storm." What are they? Is there a way to avoid suffering the brunt of their consequences?

Thankfully, God's Word not only describes these coming world systems in order to warn us

Just as the seasoned fishing crew assumed it could handle whatever came its way, many people assume that society can handle any crisis the future brings.

of the dangers, but also shows us how to spiritually prepare for them.

As Paul explains: “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.... For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:4–9).

What are the two “prophetic storms” that are destined to unite and unleash the end-time events from which mankind, as a whole, will not escape?

The first prophetic storm

In Revelation 13:1–3, Christ revealed to John the first “prophetic storm system.”

“Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a *beast* rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast” (emphasis added throughout).

The symbolism is explained in other parts of Revelation. A similar prophetic beast appears in Revelation 17, but now is ridden by a fallen woman. “And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (verse 3).

What does this beast represent? “Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads [of the beast] are *seven mountains* on which the woman sits, and they are *seven kings*; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.... And the ten horns which you saw are *ten kings*, who have not yet received a *kingdom*, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.... *These will wage war against the Lamb*, and the Lamb will overcome

them” (Revelation 17:9–14, New American Standard Bible).

Here it explains each of the seven heads is a symbol of a king and his kingdom (Revelation 17:9–10). In other parts of the Bible, a mountain is also used as a symbol of a kingdom and its king (Isaiah 2:1–3; Daniel 2:35, 45). The last head, or the seventh kingdom, is destined to be of short duration.

As the final clash between the seventh head of the beast power nears, the Bible says, “Five [kings] have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come” (Revelation 17:10). Since the last head of this beast, along with 10 rulers, “will make war with the Lamb [Jesus Christ],” the previous six kings must have ruled in former ages (verse 14). As the end time approaches, the seventh head of the beast that has 10 horns is symbolic of the kingdom that will be headed by a mighty ruler with 10 kings that will “receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast” (verse 14).

This first “prophetic storm system” is prophesied to astound the whole world by its enormous power, which comes not so much from human might or cunning, as from “the dragon,” another name for Satan (Revelation 12:9). As Revelation 13:2 explains, “The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.” As the Bible describes, God will allow this final rebellion of mankind to take place prior to sending His Son to reign on this earth: “For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled” (Revelation 17:17).

The second prophetic storm system

The second “prophetic storm system” is a second beast system, described in Revelation 13, after speaking of the first beast.

“Then I saw *another beast* coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a *dragon*. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound

was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was *granted* to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived” (Revelation 13:11–14).

Just as with the first system, the devil is behind the power of this second beast, and gives its leader miraculous powers to deceive the world. Impressive miracles by the second beast will help persuade people to support and obey the first beast.

This second beast has horns like a lamb—that is, it seems to be meek like a lamb, but speaks “like a dragon” (Revelation 13:11), thus revealing the satanic origin of its power.

The two beasts are called “the beast” and “the false prophet,” respectively. They are allies at the end time, with the first one governing and warring while the other manipulates the public through religion.

“And I saw *the beast*, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then *the beast* was captured, and with him *the false prophet* who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast” (Revelation 19:19–20).

What type of a system does this false prophet head? Biblically, a false prophet refers to a *religious* figure deceitfully claiming to represent God (see Deuteronomy 13:1–5 for the difference between a true and a false prophet).

Moreover, the woman who rides the beast is the symbol of a false religious system located in a great city that governs much of the earth. “And the woman whom you saw is that great city which *reigns* over the kings of the earth” (17:18). So, this false religious system has carefully orchestrated an alliance to rule with the kings of the earth.

In order to have this power and influence, it must be of enormous size and wealth, since this world’s rulers per-

(See “**STORM**,” page 15)

In Brief...

World News Review

U.S. Population Statistics Show Looming Issues

“United States in Throes of Rapid Change” headlined an Agence France Presse article published November 1, 2000. Statistics recently released by the U.S. Census Bureau are indicators of issues that will confront the U.S. government and citizenry in the next few decades.

The report showed that 26.4 million of the 275 million people in the U.S. population, nearly 1 in every 10, was born outside of the United States. Famous for its “melting pot” attitude, the U.S. has championed its historic ability to assimilate people from diverse cultural and political backgrounds into the fabric of its representative republic. That’s not necessarily the case any longer.

Consider the language issue. Increasingly controversial measures to legislate or to deny bilingual education resound in states with large Hispanic populations. Some 6.5 million people speak little English, while 17.3 million *speak Spanish exclusively*. The recent U.S. presidential election campaign demonstrably illustrated the need to reach out to and include the sizable block of Hispanic voters.

Immigration during the years of nation building for the U.S. was chiefly from white nations of Europe and other Anglo-Saxon peoples. However, a fundamental shift is underway that portends political and cultural changes in years to come. Within the next 50 years, African-Americans, Hispanics and Asian-Americans will outnumber whites. Presently, 71 percent of the population are white.

In the world’s wealthiest nation, poverty is still an issue. Over 2 million have been lifted out of “statistical poverty,” defined as an income of \$17,000 or less for a family of four, between 1998 and 1999. Nonetheless,

people living in poverty still account for 11.8 percent of the population, or 32.3 million people. The debate rages on over how to address the attendant needs, including providing health care to the 10 million children not currently covered.

Some believe that the strong economy will eventually eliminate poverty and that the country needs only to continue on its current path. A more realistic view holds that the economic growth is tenuous and likely to cycle downward. Should the basic needs of the poor be met by government welfare programs or by programs that help the poor to obtain the education and job skills that will enable them to earn their way out of poverty? Or, is a combination of these methods required? The debate will undoubtedly continue.

Finally, a burgeoning senior citizen population promises persisting disputes over Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and programs to ensure reasonably priced prescription drugs. Those aged 65 and older currently make up 12.7 percent of the population, or 34.4 million people. The Census Bureau forecasts that the figure *will double in the next 30 years!*



The number of people aged 65 and older will double in the next 30 years

“And There Will Be... Pestilences...in Various Places”

Concurrent with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, intravenous drug usage has exploded, and with it, the spread of AIDS in those regions. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported November 24 that there are approximately 250,000 new cases of AIDS in the area this year, which brings the total in the region to 700,000.

WHO estimates that 3 million people worldwide will die from AIDS during the year 2000. The agency estimates that this will bring the total number of adults and children who have died because of the disease to 21.8 million.

United Church of God publications have reported the tragedy of millions of AIDS orphans in Africa. In a bizarre related development, Mole Songololo, a child welfare organization in Cape Town, South Africa, reports that thousands of orphans, ranging from age 4 to 17, are being kidnapped and sold into slavery for prosti-

tution. Primary targets are orphans who roam the rural regions in sub-Saharan countries, for these children are easily abducted and trucked to South Africa for sale.

Among those trafficking in children, according to Bernadette van Vuuren, an official of Mole Songololo, “were brothel owners, government officials, crime syndicates, former military and police personnel and border officials inside South Africa” (“AIDS Orphans Sold into Sex Trade” by Adriana Stuijt, NewsMax.com, September 7, 2000). If anything could add to the revulsion of this gross evil, it is the fact that *family members* are sometimes involved in selling the children.

Ignorance fuels the multifaceted disaster. Van Vuuren explains that, “Adults scared of contracting the HIV/AIDS virus view children as safe sex options. And many in Africa with AIDS believe that sex with children could cure them” (ibid.).

AIDS has also been a factor in the return of tuberculosis (TB). “Tuberculosis Roars Back” reported Catherine Arnst for the McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. in early October. Because tuberculosis bacteria become active after the patient’s immune system weakens for some other reason, TB is the leading cause of death for AIDS victims.

Scientists did not refer to the surge in incidences of TB as an *epidemic*, but rather described it as *endemic*, that is, permanently lodged in the world’s populations. WHO reports that TB has now affected two billion people worldwide. Statistically, about 10 percent of carriers develop the disease and therefore become infectious. Everyone who does become infectious will spread the disease to between 10 and 15 others, which translates into *another* 2 to 3 billion people—and so, the potential horror escalates.

TB is now the fifth-largest cause of death in the world and the number one killer of women. Industrialized nations are not spared. About 15 million U.S. citizens have already been infected. Treatment costs will severely impact health-care programs. According to the Institute of Medicine, TB treatment costs more than \$16,000 per patient in the United States.

Ms. Arnst reports, “Any commercial drug is still at least seven years away from approval.” She’s speaking of a drug under development that would block the bacteria which causes TB from becoming active. The bacteria can remain dormant in an infected person for *60 years!* Even further away is a vaccination that would prevent infections altogether.



BSE Disease Now in Western Europe

What peaked as a minor British epidemic in 1992 and 1993 has more recently spread first to France, and now to Germany. BSE is popularly known as mad cow disease. CJD is the acronym for the human form of BSE, often fatal especially to young people. It is a rapidly debilitating disease of the brain.

As the *Times* (London) explained, “Over the past month [October] it has belatedly dawned on France that people have long been eating meat from cattle infected with BSE.” Now in late November, BSE has been confirmed in two German cows with one possible case of CJD, the first human victim in the Federal Republic.

This disturbing disease has been a political football in Western Europe as, until fairly recently, British beef was basically banned on the European Continent. Now public pressure is being brought in Britain to ban French beef.

Sources: *The Daily Mail*, November 25, 2000; *Times* (London), November 10 and 21, 2000.

Dutch Approve Euthanasia

The Netherlands has become the world’s first nation to approve mercy killing. For years the country tacitly approved the practice, but now allows it as a policy of the state.

The bill’s supporters, including many doctors, say it champions patients’ rights and brings a long-standing practice into the open, but many religious and medical groups were swift to condemn it, claiming killing would replace caring.

“Again, we are faced with a law of the state which opposes the natural law of human conscience,” Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls told Reuters.

Dutch Calvinist opposition parties fear the proposed law will be abused. Some drew parallels with Nazi Germany.

“The same line of reasoning is being used as in Germany in 1935.... In the Netherlands, your life is no longer safe,” said Bert Dorenbos of the Scream for Life group. “If doctors are not hesitating to kill people then they will not hesitate to withdraw medical treatment from people they do not like,” he added.

Some feel what is now termed one’s “right to die” could someday translate into one’s “duty to die.” At issue is the sanctity of human life. A significant, and potentially terrifying, threshold has been crossed when the state presumes the right to sanction the termination of life in this manner.

Contributors: *Darris McNeely, Cecil E. Maranville and John Ross Schroeder*

“TIME,” (Continued from page 16)

at 79, but most of his family lives well into their 90s. There they were, Mom and Dad, a man and his wife of 55 years. Many questions raced through my mind. Was this it? Was he going to die? What happened? Was it a heart attack, stroke or fainting spell? As a minister all of my adult life, I have been involved in numerous emergencies, but now this was “our emergency” and our moment in time.

Although absorbed in what I could do to help, I was also aware of what others were doing all around me. Moment by moment, people that we didn’t know and may never meet again became involved in our family’s personal plight. I have no names to share with you—only what the people did.

Over the years, we have all read of stories where people were in a state of emergency and no one came to their aid. We have all heard and read of the rape victim whose screams for help went unheeded, or the person being mugged on the road whose plight was ignored by countless drivers whizzing by. Such real stories, and they are real, condition us to despair and make on-the-spot judgments of those who failed to heed the call. The bigger question is, What would you have done if you had been there? Would you have broken from the crowd and been different?

Well, this story is not about a mugging or a rape, but it is a simple thank you in writing to a crowd who took the time and recognized “the moment” to get involved. There truly are people out there who make a difference!

They each had a part

As several of us stood by my folks, one person took it upon himself to dial 911 and call for the paramedics. One lady, who appeared to be a professional office person, slowly worked her way through the crowd, and said, “Let me be of assistance. I’m a former paramedic.” She quickly asked various members of the crowd to “back off” and requested someone to get a cold cloth for my dad.

People began to form a shield around him to shade him from the heat of the day. I looked around and each person caringly stepped in or out, forward or backward, to provide the wall of shade. They each had a part; they each cared. For one moment in time, this caring team of humanity had bonded towards a common goal.

Then another lady emerged from the small crowd and began to calmly, pleasantly, but ever-so-confidently move men and women into further action to assist my father. You

might say, she just took over until the paramedics got there. Boy, did she take over, and I’m glad she did!

That’s the last time I saw her and most of the crowd, because I ran out to wait for the ambulance and fire engine to direct them through a crowded office parking lot. The paramedics’ professional demeanor and care was outstanding. They were not only concerned about the welfare of my dad, but the state of my mother who was certainly going through a traumatic moment. As soon as they got my dad’s name, they started asking him questions like, “Jack, where are you? What day is it?” etc.



They were talking to him person-to-person like an old friend. It calmed the entire situation. Soon they had him in an ambulance with my mother riding in the front seat on the way to the hospital. My wife and I followed behind in our car. In a couple of hours, my dad was up walking. He had suffered a mild stroke, and he is doing fine now as I write this column six weeks later. But we didn’t know that then, as we were going through this “moment in time” together with strangers who intersected with us at a critical news juncture in our family’s own little world which is, after all, an important world to us.

Interestingly, the people at the church mentioned they had never seen the second lady who helped us that day. When asked, someone replied, “We don’t know where she came from; we’ve never seen her before.” When I heard that comment, I couldn’t help but think of Hebrews 13:2 and the mention of “angels unawares.” You see, I really do believe in angels. I also believe that God is not only the Creator of time, but also the author of timing. Why that day for my dad to have his stroke? Is it possible that it happened to strengthen our family?

While I do not believe that everyone there was an angel, there were many good folk there. I bring this up because we realize that prophecy firmly points to a time when, as it says in Matthew 24:12, “the love of many will grow cold.” Why? In 2 Timothy 3:1 we see a part of the answer. “For men will be lovers of themselves.” We all tend to become absorbed with our own life schedule of comings and goings, people to meet, planes to catch, children to pick up, traffic jams to avoid and work deadlines to meet. There is a fast-approaching time in which people will be totally disconnected from human feelings of tenderness and care.

Yes, we increasingly see and sense a growing “disconnect” in our society for the cares, even the emergencies, of others. These disconnected ones fall in line behind the priest and the Levite in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). But the Samaritan was different. Christ didn’t call

him good, and neither did the Samaritan identify his actions as good or bad. He simply did what had to be done.

At the end of the parable, Jesus simply asks a question, “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among thieves?” (The term “good” goes unmentioned, in spite of the fact that most Bible readers for 2,000 years have assumed that Christ called the Samaritan “good.”)

It is encouraging to realize there are still some individuals out there who don’t dodge responsibility.

“I have done what I could”

The help given my father left a mark on me. It taught me a lesson. To be ready, to be on the alert, to be involved and to do what I can do, whatever my part, when the need arises. It again allowed me to realize that it is not the size of the job, but the “size” (or character) of the person that counts.

Leroy Brownlow in his book *Today Is Mine* shares a poignant story in his entry of February 3. This story can be ours in a stormy world of increasing darkness and unease. “In a roaring and flashing thunderstorm, a family gathered into what they thought was the safest room. They huddled in fear. One of them was a little girl who folded her hands, closed her eyes and prayed. Then she confidently said, ‘Oh Mamma, I have done what I could.’” Brownlow adds “Oh! How it would add to life if we could say, ‘I have done what I could.’ The satisfaction would be most gratifying. Many a person, after living up to some strenuous duty, has been heard to say, ‘Thank God I have done my part.’”

How often have we seen the pictures on TV of neighbors, friends and strangers bearing a stretcher or sandbagging a flooding stream? Or seen the fireman who went above and beyond to rescue the seemingly lost? The opportunities to serve are out there, and they will come to you someday in some way. Will you be ready to make an emergency call, give shade to others or run for a cold cloth?

Never, ever, underestimate your ability to serve, no matter the size of the need, because it all adds up to a big story in someone’s life. No, your name will probably not appear in the newspaper the next day. No ribbon or certificate of good citizenship will await you. No “15 minutes of fame” is guaranteed. But you will have tapped into the reality of a new and different age to come—a world that is identified in Isaiah 30:20–21: “Your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk you in it.’”

Six weeks ago, in a little Spanish-style courtyard outside of a church service, I think I saw some “teachers” and I got the point—“this is the way.” ❖

“STORM,” (Continued from page 11)

mit her to rule with them. This is precisely what the Bible reveals: “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Revelation 17:15). It is truly an international religious, political and economic system spanning many nations and languages.

Protection for some, persecution for others

When these two leaders appear on the world scene, they will astonish the entire world, and time will be short. Soon after their appearance, the persecution against the Church of God will increase. The Bible reveals with its symbols that some of the faithful will be miraculously protected, while others will not.

Christ warned His disciples that some would be martyred (Matthew 24:9). So, although there is a promise of protection, some brethren are also destined to die as faithful witnesses of Christ.

There is clearly a promise of protection for some in the Church of God (Revelation 12:13–14). On the other hand, verse 17 shows us that Satan wars against “the woman, and...her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”—a clear reference to believers having to endure Satan’s wrath.

Christ knows it will be very difficult to remain faithful during the end time, and so He encourages the Church to hold steady. “Behold, I am coming quickly! *Hold fast* what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Revelation 3:11).

Paul also indicates maintaining “the love of the truth” is very important in the last days and warns some will be lost in the coming prophetic storm, “because they did not receive *the love of the truth, that they might be saved*” (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

Another prophecy advises us that when the prophetic storm finally arrives, it will be too late to prepare for it. “And he said to me, ‘Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. *He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.... Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city*’” (Revelation 22:10–14).

According to this scripture, the world will eventually be divided into two main groups—those who are obedient to God and keep His Commandments to the end, and those who will remain disobedient. Christ wanted His people to be spiritually prepared, watching world events, so the perfect prophetic storm will not take God’s faithful people by surprise.

Jesus said, “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you *unexpectedly*. For it will come *as a snare* on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted *worthy to escape* all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:34–36).

Let’s heed God’s counsel and be prepared to weather the coming “perfect prophetic storm.” ❖

This Is the Way... One Moment in Time

by Robin Webber

Headlines about national and international issues are a daily fare, but every day, somewhere, events are occurring that affect some family for a lifetime. These events, whether for good or bad, take up the “headline space” in their family’s personal front page of life’s happenings. For the moment, such personal activity pushes aside bigger news like elections or wars in far-off nations.

Personal headlines like births, deaths, illnesses, accidents, marriages or divorces tend to overshadow other news. Allow me to share a recent “headline story” in my family. You won’t read about it in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post* or the *Times* of London, but it left an indelible impression on us.

Recently, my wife and I had the opportunity to attend church with my parents. It was the first time in many years that my responsibilities as a church pastor had afforded the chance for us to get together like this. All of us really looked forward to the day, being able to sit and worship side by side with “the folks” and seeing old and dear friends. When we picked up my folks for church, my mother had mentioned that my dad seemed to be “under the weather” that morning. But he wasn’t going to miss the special occasion.

As we entered to the warm welcome of the assembled

brethren, little did we realize what was to unfold in the precious minutes ahead. About halfway through the services, my dad became noticeably silent and still. Then he whispered, “I’m going to go out for a while.” Five minutes must have passed, and he walked back in during services and told my mom, “You had better come out.” I was chalking this all up in my mind and began to wonder what was happening.

Next thing I knew one of the congregation’s officials came up to me and said, “Robin, you had better come out. There’s something wrong with your dad.” As I was guided to the exterior courtyard, little was I prepared for what I would see or what I would come to learn. A “moment in time” had begun. The “video camera of my mind” began to engage as a story began to unfold.

The unexpected struck

There before me in an attractive little Spanish-style garden courtyard was my dad sprawled out on a bench with his head in my mother’s lap. He looked “out of it,” completely disoriented, a still shadow of the man I knew who was always on the go. My dad is no “spring chicken”

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