



In This Issue:

July 2003 | Vol. 6, No. 6

The Battle of the Giants—Who Will Win?

by Melvin Rhodes 1

Restoration: Planting the Seed of the Kingdom

by Darris McNeely 2

World Heading Into “the Perfect Storm”

by Clyde Kilough 5

Visions of Judgment: The Ride of the Fifth Horseman

by Darris McNeely 7

Lessons From the Life of Jeremiah



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by John Ross Schroeder 9

Problems, Politics and Prophecy About Water

by Cecil Maranville 12

This Is the Way... Don't Worry, You Won't Miss the Parade

by Robin Webber 16

The Battle of the Giants—Who Will Win?

Seemingly unnoticed, a titanic battle is underway between the world's most powerful economies. U.S. overspending and a calculated gamble to take advantage of a devalued dollar is forcing other nations—the EU included—to pay the tab.

by Melvin Rhodes

It was a major crisis. Our business was closed down for a day by government decree. All employees had to work late to handle the constantly changing situation.

At the time I was working for a major British bank. It was November 1967 and the government then in power had announced on a Saturday night that the British currency, the pound sterling, was to be devalued by approximately 14 percent. Prior to that date, the pound had been valued against the U.S. dollar at \$2.80 to the pound; now it would be \$2.40. Regular television programs were interrupted in peak time to give this news.

The American dollar as of May 27, 2003, had fallen over 14 percent against the euro this year. Include last year and it has fallen about 45 percent (from 82 U.S. cents to the euro to over \$1.18 at the end of May). But in sharp contrast to my experience in 1967, banks are not being closed and you don't hear about people being asked to do endless hours of overtime. Additionally, little attention has been given to this “news” in the American media.

In stark contrast to Britain in 1967, where only the most reclusive or clueless citizen would not have been aware of the currency's fall, few in America seem aware at all of the international



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The dollar has fallen about 45 percent compared to the euro. What will the consequences be?

crisis of confidence in the American currency.

Why the difference?

During the 1960s and into the 1970s Britain staggered from one economic crisis to another. Strikes were rampant, the trade deficit ballooned and the British currency continued to fall. All the former British colonies, except Canada, plus Jordan (one quarter of the world's nations) used the British currency for their international

(See “GIANTS,” page 3)



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The mission of *World News and Prophecy* (WNP) is to provide our membership and interested persons with commentary and analysis of selected world news topics in the light of Bible prophecy. 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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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things..." ACTS 3:21

Planting the Seed of the Kingdom

Do you view prophecy as something that is frightening or exciting? A few years ago at a weekend seminar, I gave a presentation about learning to discern the times according to Bible prophecy. A man in the audience later wrote me a letter of appreciation for the approach I took with the prophetic scriptures. This man had been taught from his preteen years about various prophecies. The approach taken by some of his teachers had left him with a frightened and uncertain view of this subject.

He made two points that are important for readers of *World News and Prophecy* to understand. The first is that prophecy should not be seen as a means or an excuse to escape today's world with its problems and challenges. While Christ's return is the only hope for the physical and spiritual salvation of mankind, a Christian cannot ignore the plight of his neighbor. The apostle Paul said, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:9-10).

The second point he made was that we should not shortchange ourselves by failing to plan for the long term for matters such as marriage and family, education and career, even retirement, because "the world will soon come to an end." Through the centuries, far too many people have fallen into this trap, setting too firm a date for the return of Christ and thinking they could circumvent the plain teaching that only the Father knows the "day and the hour."

Through experience, this gentleman came to a balanced view of prophecy. He learned to truly watch and discern the times, maintaining an urgency about life, while at the same time providing and preparing for his family and himself, should Christ not return in their lifetime. This is a mark of wisdom.

Bible prophecy is an exciting subject. While the future time of Satan's wrath and God's judgment on the nations will indeed be a frightening experience, the overarching message of prophecy is one of hope for a better time and an encouragement to live righteously in today's evil world. Prophecy is a tool of motivation from a loving God to change one's behavior, to turn from sin, repent and live a godly life based on tried and tested laws that make life work at its highest and best. Prophecy should never be used as an excuse to avoid personal responsibility and accountability.

Each issue of *World News and Prophecy* chronicles the sad story of a world adrift from God and careening recklessly toward a climax. In this issue, you will read a startling analysis of world conditions by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, reported on by Clyde Kilough, who adds the all-important biblical perspective with its bottom line of good news. Our goal is not only to show you the problems of today's world, but also to give you the vision of hope for a better world to come. We know the only lasting hope for peace lies in the coming Kingdom of God.

If you knew with certainty that Jesus Christ would return tomorrow, what would you do today? Someone once said he would plant a tree. I like that thought. Planting a tree is a statement of responsibility. It takes a long-term affirmative view. As we wait and look for the times when Christ will step into history and restore "all things," let's also attend to today and plan for tomorrow. By doing so, we plant the seed of the Kingdom into our present lives. These are exciting times, which offer us the opportunity to prepare for eternity in the world to come.

—Darris McNeely

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“GIANTS,” (Continued from page 1)

trade. This trading bloc was known as “the sterling area.” Its existence took considerable pressure off the dollar. The two currencies had been the world’s reserve (trading) currencies since the 1946 Bretton Woods agreement that set up the postwar economic order. It was absolutely essential that these two currencies be stable for international trade to bloom.

Some astute economists have noted that Britain’s continual industrial crisis led to a huge trading deficit. The United Kingdom was buying more from other countries than it was selling. Rather than deal directly with the root causes of this, the British government took the option of devaluing the currency against other currencies. This was in order to give Britain a trading advantage, making British goods cheaper and so therefore more attractive to foreign buyers. It would make foreign goods more expensive and result in Britons buying fewer products made overseas.

But the economic problems were caused in part by poor industrial relations and practices that limited productivity, so this strategy didn’t succeed. Eventually, the pound went so low it was barely above the dollar. Today, the exchange rate is approximately \$1.65 to the pound. This is an example of how human governments try to find a palatable solution to an economic problem, but the end result worsens the situation considerably.

Why the dollar is falling

The dollar is falling primarily because of the burgeoning U.S. trade deficit, the highest for any nation in human history. At over \$40 billion per month, the U.S. currency was suffering from a rising crisis of confidence. Americans have been buying more than 40 billion dollars’ worth of goods each month than they have been selling. That’s a situation that cannot go on.

Imagine if your household was overspending at a rate of \$1,000 per month. How long could you continue to do that without any consequences? You might be able to get away with it for a while by adding to your credit card debt load or refinancing, but eventually you would have to face reality. If you failed to, the

banks and the credit card companies would help you face up to your obligations.

The United States is in a similar position internationally. Realizing the full extent of the U.S. trade deficit, nations and peoples around the world have been divesting themselves of dol-

The problem there is a seismic shift in attitudes to money that has taken place in the last four decades, not just in America, but throughout what former French President Charles de Gaulle used to so disparagingly refer to as “the Anglo-Saxon debtor nations,” the United States, United Kingdom,



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If (perhaps “when” would be a more accurate term here) oil producers opt to fix the price of oil in euros, the U.S. economy would be in deep trouble.

lars, fearing a fall in the value of the currency due to a lack of confidence. The more people rid themselves of greenbacks, the more others felt obliged to do the same. Hence, the run on the dollar that seems set to drop its value by over 50 percent against the euro. A leader in the June 26, 2003, issue of *The Economist* stated: “Several forecasters now suggest that the euro could hit \$1.40 by the end of next year.”

However, sometime during this steep decline, the U.S. administration decided it *wanted* the dollar to fall, as Treasury Secretary John Snow gave verbal support to the free fall of the currency. The reason? Classic economic theory is that a devalued currency boosts exports (which are now cheaper) and reduces imports (which are more expensive), thereby reducing the trade deficit. Problem solved?

Well, not really.

Exports may increase and imports decrease, but that will not solve the problem of Americans and the U.S. government living beyond their means.

Canada, Australia and New Zealand, all of which practiced deficit spending for most of the postwar years.

This has not always been the case. At one time, these were the world’s biggest creditor nations, fulfilling a biblical prophecy in Deuteronomy 28:12: “You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow”—one of God’s blessings for obedience. The British currency was tied to the gold standard (its value was fixed in terms of gold, meaning pounds could be exchanged for gold at that value by anybody) until the time of the Great Depression. America continued to tie its currency to gold right up until 1971 when the Vietnam War and Great Society debts combined to sever the tie. Since then, the United States has effectively been overspending with a currency that isn’t worth what it claims to be worth. There is nothing to back it up—except confidence.

A fall in the value of the currency reflects a lack of confidence, internationally, as large holders of dollars

divest themselves of their dollar bills. Interestingly, the decade of the Vietnam War, the Great Society and the social reforms that led Americans to turn their backs on the God-ordained family system, was the decade when America's debts led to an international crisis of confidence in the United States. Again, this fulfilled God's prophecy about the consequences of disobedience: "He [the foreigner] shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail" (Deuteronomy 28:44), meaning that other nations will eventually be able to have control.

By allowing the value of the dollar to drop by roughly 50 percent, the United States has effectively reduced the assets of foreign investors in the United States

Americans have chosen short-term gain over long-term interests. Rather than tighten belts now, the country has chosen to feed its credit binge with yet more spending . . .

and U.S. Treasury bonds by 50 percent. It could be said that America is borrowing (some might say stealing) from other countries in order to continue its profligate ways.

This happened before, in the 1980s. The dollar then was falling against other currencies. The Japanese at that time lost out, big time. They had bought into the U.S. property boom and suddenly found, with the fall in the value of the dollar against the yen, that their American assets were worth far less than they had paid for them. Japan still hasn't recovered from that incident, which was a contributory factor in Japan's current problems with deflation (an economy going backwards). This time, the Europeans may suffer the same negative consequences.

Problems in "Euroland"

As the dollar falls, so the euro rises. This will make it harder for European companies to export their goods to the United States, as the price of all such goods in dollars will increase dramatically. With already high unemployment rates throughout the euro zone economies, this will only make matters worse. If the fall in the dollar had altered the exchange rate by 5 percent, the Europeans might have been able to cope—but 50 percent? There

will inevitably be some serious consequences.

In fact, it has been speculated that this is a deliberate attempt by Washington to destroy the euro, the dollar's only viable rival currency on the world stage. The fledgling European currency may not be able to survive the pressure that will result from the greenback's free fall. Although a rising euro emphasizes the success of the currency, if it rises too high, it could result in the collapse of the economies of member nations. Some have even speculated that this is calculated revenge for Paris and Berlin not supporting the United States over Iraq.

If this is the case, it's a dangerous game.

There is a very real possibility of competitive devaluations taking place as

other countries follow America's example and let the value of their national currencies fall.

In effect, this would repeat the early 1930s. Following the stock market crash of October 1929, the United States passed the Smoot-Hawley Act, which imposed high tariffs on imported goods. Other nations followed suit and a worldwide slump, the Great Depression, was the result. Competitive devaluations in the value of currencies would have the same result but would get around World Trade Organization rules on tariffs and trade.

An early indicator of developments moving in this direction was the decision of the European Central Bank to lower its key interest rate June 5, thereby reducing the appeal of the euro. The measure did slow the rise in the value of the European currency, but it has not stopped the trend of money moving away from the dollar into the euro.

The U.S. Federal Reserve followed suit 20 days later and reduced its interest rate, thereby making the dollar even less attractive. Having regained a little of the ground lost to the euro during the intervening three weeks, many speculate that the greenback still has further to go down against the European currency.

Not only are Europeans losing out as a result of the dollar's fall, so are others. The American assets held by foreign companies have lost about half of their value in the last 18 months, a loss that will reflect badly in this year's balance sheets. All nations that do significant trade with the United States are likely to see a dramatic fall in sales this year. Additionally, nations that export oil, minerals and raw materials, most of which are priced internationally in dollars, will find that they are going to be earning less, but will in turn have to pay higher prices for goods bought from the countries of the EU.

It has already been suggested by some Arab oil ministers that oil be priced in euros. The pressure for this must increase as oil-producing nations see the value of their oil dropping with the dollar. If (perhaps "when" would be a more accurate term here) oil producers opt to fix the price of oil in euros, the U.S. economy would be in deep trouble. The trade deficit would have to be reduced to zero overnight and America would have to increase its sales to the EU just to keep up its oil consuming habits.

Which brings us back to the root cause of the problem: overspending in the United States. Overspending is occurring at every level, among consumers, corporations and government—both federal and state governments.

Even the recent tax cuts will only worsen this situation. Without an equal cut in spending, the result will be a bigger federal deficit and a bigger trade deficit as consumers use some of the extra cash to buy foreign goods.

Added to this is the simple fact that all this borrowed money has to be paid for eventually. When will that happen? The sad reality is that the children of today's generation will have to pay off the bills. Unlike previous generations, this generation will leave its children massive debts, instead of an inheritance.

Americans have chosen short-term gain over long-term interests. Rather than tighten belts now, the country has chosen to feed its credit binge with yet more spending with the inevitable result that our children and their children will be much worse off than we have been. ❖

World Heading Into “the Perfect Storm”

World conditions are developing like “the perfect storm,” warned former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in a recent speech. Placing her comments alongside biblical revelation provides us with unique insight into what is about to happen in the world—and what to do about it.

by Clyde Kilough

Madeleine Albright’s résumé bulges with experiences and qualifications, the foremost being former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and former Secretary of State. When she speaks, people listen, so when I had the chance to hear her lecture recently, I listened intently. In that audience of over 10,000 conventiongoers, I think that only those who had a grasp of Bible prophecy could connect the dots between her analysis of current events and what the future holds.

“I am in my seventh decade now, and have seen few periods with more dangers or turbulence than this one,” said Secretary Albright, who has seen her share of terrifying times, beginning with flight from Nazi-controlled Czechoslovakia with her parents during World War II. “I learned early in life that there is great evil in the world.” And now, she explained, world conditions are developing like “the perfect storm,” where several factors hold potential to come together with powerful, and perilous, results.

The threat of terrorism is an obvious factor, as is the ongoing struggle in the Middle East, the menace in North Korea and numerous other hot spots like the Congo and Liberia. Add to the mix a fragile worldwide economy “generating more anxiety than jobs,” plus, perhaps less obvious but equally important, potential divisions between longtime alliances, and world leaders are being hard-pressed to prevent “the perfect storm” from forming. Secretary Albright detailed these dangers, and also lamented the terrible lack of understanding that most Westerners have about the nature of world conditions.

“The challenge is long-term, unpredictable and deadly,” she said of the war on terror, adding confidently that the free world will not be intimidated or shut down. However, she warned that this war must be fought on many fronts—militarily, politically and economically—with much better education, better dialogue, and somehow bringing diverse religious faiths together in “a unifying force instead of a divisive force.” In

fact, she proposed that world military battles today are really the lesser of our problems. The bigger conflicts in the world are the “battles of ideas” which eventually ignite physical clashes.

The logic of peace

One of the more interesting observations Secretary Albright put forward was that the Middle East turmoil has not only “highlighted the need for peace, but has also underlined the logic of peace.” The “logic of peace”—what an intriguing concept! It is plainly logical, she explained, that only peace can deliver to people the common desires for which all humanity seeks. What escapes human logic, however, is how we can actually find our way to peace. For example, early optimism for President Bush’s recently proposed road map to peace for the Middle East has quickly faded in light of the continuing killings. “The obscene has become routine, as bombings are reported every week,” is how Secretary Albright described it.

Isaiah described it similarly, only with an added spiritual dimension: “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. *The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made for themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace.* Therefore justice is far from us, nor does righteousness overtake us; we look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness!” (Isaiah 59:7-9).

Justice and righteousness are only two of several spiritual dimensions that are the critical missing elements in world peace efforts today. Secretary Albright’s analysis, insightful as it was, still missed the greatest arena of battle—the spiritual. This is where the logic of peace really resides.

Jesus told His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” (John 14:27). Only God

Bible prophecy allows us to connect the dots between Madeleine Albright’s analysis of current events and what the future holds.



Former Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Henry Kissinger shown here before Senate Foreign Relations Committee Sept. 26, 2002

holds the roadmap to peace, and real peace among people can come only through us first making peace with Him.

Until humans humbly submit to Him, we will keep on generating conditions that will swirl and foment until they do combine to spawn the “perfect storm.” At that time the world will be forced to look to Him, because Jesus Christ will dramatically arrive on the scene (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7). The storm will be quickly stilled, and only then will a real, lasting peace process begin.

Gospel message includes road map to peace

The “logic of peace” has always been a part of the gospel message. The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:15, “As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’” However, the logic of spiritual peace escapes most people, as Paul revealed in the next verse: “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’”

In lieu of the gospel report, people choose to believe in something else and obey their baser urges. Secretary Albright astutely observed, “To seize the sword

instead of the olive branch is a choice; to teach children to hate is a choice; to dehumanize and disrespect is a choice. When people have the ability to choose they have the opportunity to change.”

She tried to cast an optimistic glow upon the potential for the world to change, if we just somehow keep working at it. I appreciated her leadership skills and efforts to encourage the crowd, but I just couldn’t muster much enthusiasm for relying on the potential of human nature. On the other hand, we who hold forth the gospel of the Kingdom of God are by no means pessimists. We are among the most optimistic, and realistic, people in the world! Why? Because our optimism rests not on human efforts but on the guaranteed return of Jesus Christ and the spiritual reconciliation with God that will truly change the world.

One more important thought came to mind while listening to her speech. Even if relatively few people believe God’s report, the Church of God must continue to proclaim it as boldly as possible, because Christians, just as much as Secretary Albright, are ambassadors!

Paul certainly tried to lift the vision of the Corinthians to see this high calling when he wrote: “Now all things are of

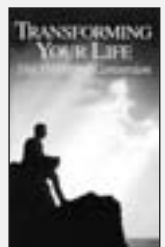
God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

Those words are for us as well—“*we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us!*” Through this publication and our other media and broadcast means, we plead with mankind to make the difficult choices the gospel encourages and requires. The world needs to know it is heading into the worst time of human suffering in its history. But there is a way out for those who genuinely repent and truly change their lifestyle.

Do you know the way? Just as Westerners are woefully misinformed or under informed about world conditions, they are generally unaware of this world’s spiritual condition. Sadly, “they” includes a majority who think of themselves as Christian. Our booklet, *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* lays out God’s road map to peace in plain language, presenting the scriptures that describe it. For your sake, for the world’s sake, we invite you to request a free copy, so you may start on that narrow road. ✦

Recommended Reading

Today, the way of peace is elusive. It seems it is not in man’s nature to live peaceably. But the Bible talks about a miraculous, life-transforming process that makes it possible. Request *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* to explore the Bible teaching on this vital subject. It is provided free of charge.



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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.

Visions of Judgment: The Ride of the Fifth Horseman

Most Bible students focus only upon the first four horsemen of Revelation 6. The phrase, "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" is synonymous with frightening prophecies. But there is another horseman—a fifth, whose ride signifies a much different future. This horseman brings the hope and promise of a better age to come.

by Darris McNeely

In early June U.S. President George W. Bush put the prestige of his office into the quest for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Meeting in Aqaba with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Jordan's King Abdullah and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, a new effort, dubbed "the road map for peace," was initiated. The Israeli and Palestinian leaders shook hands, expressed regret for the suffering of the peoples, stated their desire for peaceful relations and committed to travel the road to peace.

But within days of this highly heralded meeting, another wave of violence broke upon the streets of Israel. Sniper attacks and homicide bombings took Israeli lives. Seventeen were killed in one grisly bus attack. Israeli counterattacks took the lives of Palestinian leaders as well as innocent children. No sooner were the hopes for peace raised than they were dashed to the ground, leaving many to wonder if there is any peaceful solution to this problem.

Diplomats shuttle between nations, while new solutions to age-old enmities are tried and found wanting. One U.S. senator went so far as suggesting that the United States may need to commit troops to Israel as a peacekeeping force. The last thing Israel wants is the death of American soldiers in defense of its territory. The imposition of a foreign army into Israel sounds ominous notes, which students of prophecy easily hear.

Where do we find the way to genuine peace? Beyond the Middle East, other areas of conflict continue to flare up. In the Congo, a little-noticed war has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Africans. While attention is focused on Iraq, Iran and Korea, this war has been all but ignored by the world powers. It is a sad and discordant commentary on those who claim to work for peace in the world.

In this series of articles, we have focused on the ride of the four horsemen of Revelation 6. These horsemen, who make up the first four of the seven seals opened by Christ, show the coming destruction caused by false religion, war, famine and pestilence. Christ said these seals would herald an unparalleled time of sorrow and great tribulation "such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:7-8, 21).

The prophecies show dark days ahead for this world and its inhabitants. Revelation 8 shows the effect of further plagues, which affect the earth's vegetation (verse 7) and cause the waters of the rivers and seas to become bitter and bloody (verses 8 and 10). Men will seek the escape of death in that day, but it will not be found (Revelation 9:6). Why will all this come upon the earth and where will it lead?

God's righteous judgment

There is a basic principle of God's judgment upon man. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He would rather see man live righteously and enjoy the blessings that come from obeying His way. But when the way of man becomes too wicked, there follows a time of righteous judgment, the end of which is ultimate restoration. Notice Ezekiel 18. In verse 23, God rhetorically asks, "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? . . . and not that he should turn from his ways and live?" Again in verse 30 He says, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways . . . Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin."

The book of Revelation shows that God will bring a time of righteous judgment upon the world that in the end will result in peace. It is the only way this warring fractious world will be brought to a state of harmony. Notice

The book of Revelation shows that God will bring a time of righteous judgment upon the world that in the end will result in peace.

what is sung at the throne of God in anticipation of the seven last plagues. A song of Moses and the Lamb carries these words: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For you alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested” (Revelation 15:3-4).

Another angel, holding a bowl of judgment says, “You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due” (Revelation 16:5-6).

To the human mind, unaccustomed to thinking about divine judgment, these words strike a discordant and harsh note. How can a loving and merciful God do this to His creation? Yet our judgment must be guided and shaped by the words of another spirit being from God’s altar, who says, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments” (Revelation 16:7).

However, the fifth horseman of Revelation, Jesus Christ, rides not with famine, pestilence or a false gospel. His ride is not the fifth seal of Revelation 6. Instead He is the returning King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Christ rides onto the world stage at the moment of earth’s greatest crisis and “makes war.” But it will be *the* war to end all war. And it will be a war waged in righteous judgment. Notice the description in Revelation 19, “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war” (verse 11).

Like the first horseman of Revelation 6, Christ sits astride a white horse. But here the similarity ends. Unlike the deception of the first rider, Christ comes with truth. His name is “The Word of God” (verse 13) and He wields a sharp sword, which in other places is used to symbolize the Word of God. Indeed, there will be a literal battle, after which the true way of God will replace the governments of this world and nations will be subject to the

Kingdom of God. Unlike the previous four horsemen, which foreshadowed increasing world turmoil and tribulation, Christ’s ride will lead to a time of peace upon the earth.

Christ will rule the nations according to all the prophecies that foretold His righteous government. Revelation 19:15 carries forward the thought recorded in Isaiah 11:4, “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

Christ’s second coming, with power and great glory, will be a time of great conflict and a final battle of the nations gathered in Jerusalem. These armies gather for what will seem to them to be an earthly, temporal matter. But God will have another purpose. An angel, emblazoned against the sun, appeared to John with this ominous command to the fowl of the skies: “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God” (Revelation 19:17). Plainly, after Christ destroys those who hurt the earth—the kings and captains and mighty men—there will be nothing left but food for the scavengers.

Read in your own Bible the words describing this dramatic scene at the end of this present age. While not pretty, it is the only solution to the continual warring of mankind. When giant oil wells are burning out of control, the only way the firefighters can extinguish the flame is by igniting an explosion in the well head. The explosion sucks out the oxygen, thus taking away a key element needed for the fire. Similarly, the righteous war Christ will wage is like a massive explosion of force that brings the raging flames of war to a halt. Only then will the conditions be set for the peace of the Kingdom of God.

The Desire of All Nations

Through the prophet Haggai, God sent a message of comfort that echoes through the ages. It speaks to the world at the time of great calamity mentioned in Revelation. “‘My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!’ For thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and

earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts . . . ‘The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘*And in this place I will give peace,*’ says the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:5-9).

Clearly, the Messiah is the “Desire of All Nations.” What do all nations long for? Is it not peace? Is it not the chance to live and love and grow old through the generations without fear of war, wasting diseases and want? Mankind throughout the ages has looked for one who would bring universal peace to the world. The first century world looked for a golden age that would bring justice and peace to mankind. They sensed the time was right for restoring a time of prosperity and wisdom when the physical and spiritual world worked together in harmony.

The poet Virgil spoke of the return of justice from “a new breed of men sent down from heaven.” “Only do thou at the boy’s birth in whom The Iron shall cease, the Golden Age arise . . . He shall receive the life of gods, and see Heroes with gods commingling, and himself . . . reign over a world of peace” (*Eclogue* 4.5-13, 15-18). Of course, the Roman Empire did not bring a “Golden Age”—it was more like iron than gold. The peace of Rome was achieved at the end of the legionnaire’s short sword—war, but not a righteous one. No leader or nation since then has brought lasting peace to any age of man. Where can you turn for a reliable promise of peace and justice?

A lasting peace

The search will continue for a lasting peace within today’s world. Conferences will be held and treaties and accords produced and signed. There will be short periods of calm giving the illusion of peace, but in the end, the only real peace must be brought by the hand of God through the ride of the fifth horseman of Revelation. Today the world awaits the voices that will declare, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15.) ❖

Lessons From the Life of Jeremiah

In the course of 40 years in a major prophetic office, Jeremiah learned certain hard-won lessons that 21st century men and women desperately need to grasp and understand. What are they?

by John Ross Schroeder

The 20th century was always the age of anxiety. Yet after two world wars and two draining conflicts in East Asia, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 seemed to herald a new era and a fresh opportunity for world peace. Western leaders talked freely of a “New World Order.”

Yet just 14 years later with Afghanistan and Iraq as recent hot spots—and now outbreaks in the Congo and Liberia—we seem further from real peace than ever. Following the road map to peace in Palestine is proving to be a rutty and difficult path indeed. The future seems very uncertain as the world experiences one crisis after another.

Yet one of the purposes of preaching and publishing the true gospel is to spread the certain truth that the message of the Bible offers real hope for the future in spite of our present chaotic, unstable world.

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4, NIV).

Jeremiah to the rescue

In the 6th and 7th centuries B.C., the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah lived in a moral and political climate not so different from our own. His own nation was under constant threat from two ancient powers of the time, Babylon and Egypt. By that time the Assyrian Empire (which had previously conquered and taken the 10-tribe northern house of Israel into captivity) had begun to disintegrate as an imperial power.

Jeremiah’s basic commission from God included “presiding over” the demise and captivity of the nation of Judah by a foreign power, King Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon.

In the course of 40 years in a major prophetic office (626 to 587 B.C.) encompassing the reigns of five kings of Judah, Jeremiah learned certain hard-won lessons that 21st-century man desperately needs to grasp and understand.

Lesson 1: the limitations of humankind

Prominent among the lessons Jeremiah

learned was his visceral understanding of the limitations of mankind—that we cannot live proper and fulfilling lives without the continual guidance of Almighty God.

One newspaper writer recently observed that “nation states are failing to settle the world’s differences, but a new kind of imperialism can do it.” In other words, some sort of world government seems to promise an end to our many afflictions. Human hope springs eternal, but when based solely on mankind’s limited resources, we are surely destined for bitter disappointment.

“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). This basic biblical principle from the mouth of Jeremiah applies across the board—globally, regionally, locally and, perhaps most of all, personally. It impacts our governments on every level. Purely human intelligence, wisdom and understanding are not sufficient to guide our destiny. In fact, we will fail to reach it *unless we learn to rely* on a great unseen power apart from ourselves.

Another passage in Jeremiah elucidates the same basic principle: “Thus says the LORD: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD’” (Jeremiah 17:5).

Lesson 2: The importance of knowing God

Jeremiah had a long-enduring, very close relationship with his Creator. Over time he learned to trust God with the positive outcome of his many sore trials.

This is what he once said to God: “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You” (Jeremiah 32:17). No matter what happens, God is in charge. He is sovereign. He is our Creator.

Jeremiah recorded the following words, reflecting the fact that God saw him through all of his hardships in a time of terrible national crisis. (We may just be entering one very shortly

The true gospel found in the Bible offers real hope for the future in spite of our present chaotic, unstable world.

ourselves.) “Blessed is the man [or woman] who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought” (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

We have to learn to subject our limited human outlook on life and submit it to God’s divine perspective—His way of viewing things. “Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Lesson 3: The need for national reformation

Jeremiah’s day is reminiscent of our own modern age. We too live in a period of unusual tension and international anxiety. These conditions came about as a result of sin, the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4). The

time finally came when the Creator chose to judge the nation of Judah for its many sins.

Not everyone escaped with their lives during that nation’s severe national crisis. Only 4,600 were recorded as taken captive to start a new life in the land of Babylon (Jeremiah 52:29-30). Many of those who failed to follow God’s specific instructions through the prophet Jeremiah perished, whether they remained in Jerusalem or fled to Egypt.

Obedience to God is the master key to human survival. National calamity came upon Judah because of her many sins. People ignored the Ten Commandments. Adultery, stealing, lying, idolatry and Sabbath breaking typified their conduct. “For the land is full of adulterers” (Jeremiah 23:10). “Because they have done disgraceful things in Israel, have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives” (Jeremiah 29:23).

Is anyone willing to venture the thought that these two passages of Scripture do not aptly describe our Western world today? In truth we know that sexual immorality threatens to engulf and shatter the very fabric of our Western society.

A case in point is the breaking news in Britain that a prominent politician and member of Parliament “leads a double life as Britain’s leading organiser of upmarket sex parties” (*The Sunday Times*, June 22, 2003). He runs a London-based organization “that hosts five-star orgies for swingers.” This politician also has a leading role as a coordinator for policy change in a major political party in Britain.

Yet this politician insists that “the two things don’t overlap and therefore do not pose a problem. Fortunately we’re living in the 21st century and even naturally censorious people tend to feel slightly self-conscious about wagging their fingers at what consenting adults do behind closed doors.” Frankly, adults consenting to sin in private cuts no ice with God whatsoever. We are all made in His image and He will hold us responsible for our conduct, whether private or public.

The sin of Sabbath breaking was also a major problem in God’s eyes (see Jeremiah 17:19-27). Today it may be a largely unrealized transgression of God’s law, but our Creator is just as concerned about it now as He was anciently in the time of Judah’s national troubles. (If you do not yet understand

Jeremiah’s Commission From God

Jeremiah was accorded a very rare honor even among the biblical prophets. The Creator declared to him: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you [set you apart]; I ordained you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). This prophet was commissioned from his mother’s womb for his sacred task.

Please note that his prophetic commission is plural in nature. His brief is “to the nations”—not just to the one nation of Judah alone. Verse 10 mentions nations and kingdoms (both plural). Jeremiah’s overall mission was “to build and to plant” as well as “to destroy and to throw down.”

His prophetic commission began with Judah and Jerusalem (Jeremiah 2:1-2), but was extended to “all the families of the house of Israel” (verse 4). (To understand the full extent of Jeremiah’s sacred task among the 12 tribes of Israel and its modern implications, please request our free brochure *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Two scriptures written by Luke (author of the Gospel account and the book of Acts) in the New Testament reveal the broad extent of Jeremiah’s divine commission. In the Olivet Prophecy, Jesus Christ specifically stated: “For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written [the Old Testament prophecies]

may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22). Horrendous events are predicted to occur during the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. World conditions would get so bad that only Christ’s direct intervention will assure human survival (see Matthew 24:21-22).

However, other biblical prophecies show that an undreamed world of peace and prosperity will follow Christ’s second coming to this earth. In the early Church the apostle Peter exhorted his audience to “repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until *the times of restoration* [restitution, KJV] *of all things*, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21).

So Bible prophecy is twofold in nature. It certainly promises punishment for transgressions of divine law. But it also encourages mankind by promising a golden age of peace, prosperity and plenty following in the wake of global repentance occasioned by Christ’s second coming. Jeremiah (the longest book in the Bible) contains many prophecies of punishment for national sins, but also crucial prophetic promises of a new covenant and a utopian age that will come upon and overtake humankind.

the importance of observing the weekly Sabbath day, please request our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset—God’s Sabbath Rest.*)

But perhaps Judah’s worst sin was their national idolatry, which expressed itself in two primary ways. “For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13).

One of the worst expressions of modern idolatry today is our virtual worship of celebrities: movie stars, pop icons, sports personalities, even politicians—many of whom lead seriously flawed personal lives, unworthy of our respect and attention. Greed—our modern way of life, worshiping money and the things it can buy—is also called idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

Lesson 4: Gaining God’s favor

God didn’t enjoy punishing Judah for its national and personal sins. He sent His prophets to warn them first, but the nation didn’t heed. “In vain I have chastened your children; they received no correction” (Jeremiah 2:30). So, national captivity became a necessity. Is there a lesson for our Western world today?

Before Judah’s calamity Jeremiah preached national repentance to his contemporaries. “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place’” (Jeremiah 7:3). God called the nation of Judah to national and personal repentance (verses 4-7), but it didn’t happen.

The Creator is consistent; He doesn’t change (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). He hopes that our nations will wake up; but do not mistake His merciful longsuffering and patience (2 Peter 3:9) for indulgence and consent to bad behavior. “These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; but I will reprove you . . . To him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God” (Psalm 50:21, 23).

Today God calls us to national and personal repentance (Acts 17:30). But even if our nations as a whole do not



In spite of the fact that he was severely persecuted by his own people, Jeremiah knew that Almighty God was in complete control of events.

heed the divine warnings and really repent, you can develop a personal relationship with your Creator and turn your own life around.

You will benefit enormously from His continuous guidance no matter how bad national conditions are allowed to become. “O LORD, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing” (Jeremiah 10:24). You can pray that same prayer today!

Relying on God

In spite of the fact that he was severely persecuted by his own people, Jeremiah knew that Almighty God was in complete control of events. Many of his countrymen did not and some of them continually contrived to undermine his messages, which were directly from the Creator.

But God had said: “I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled” (Jeremiah 1:12, NIV).

Our Creator has a definite plan and purpose for the salvation of mankind. Few things in this world really make sense unless we grasp that fact.

To the remnant of Judah who obeyed Him in Jeremiah’s day, God promised to bless them during their Babylonian captivity.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you” (Jeremiah 29:11-12).

God is no different today; He has not changed. He will respond to genuine repentance and a willingness to be corrected with His abundant blessings. Indeed He will guide His true people into more and more truth. “Call to Me, and I will answer you,

and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3). ❖

Recommended Reading

Where do such nations as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia appear in Bible prophecy? Does the Bible neglect to mention them? This thoroughly researched, eye-opening brochure, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, will help answer these questions. It’s provided free of charge.



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

Problems, Politics and Prophecy About Water

“Water, water everywhere . . .”? Not so! The worldwide crisis of water shortages continues to mount. Some have ideas that may alleviate the problem, if enough nations and individuals cooperate. What about God? Is He causing today’s problems? Will He change the climate in the future?

by Cecil Maranville

Most of us have never heard of Nassarawa, Hauwa-Gana, Tundun Wada or Bolari Kagarawal. But they and many more cities and towns in the state of Gombe, Nigeria, face an acute shortage of water.

So does Chitungwiza, a city of one million outside of Harare, Zimbabwe. Borneo, Mozambique and the Maldives do, too.

Unseasonably hot weather in Saudi Arabia led to acute water shortages in Riyadh. The Yellow River in China is at its lowest level in 50 years, and more than half of the watersheds of China’s seven main rivers are contaminated by industrial, farm and household waste, translating into summer water shortages for literally millions of people.

The Amarillo-Globe News reported in May of this year about a developing American water shortage problem in Texas: “By 2050, Texas is projected to have a 43 percent shortage of water in 900 cities,” said Ron Kaiser, Texas A&M professor and organizer of a series of seminars on conservation of groundwater (“Water Shortage Expected by 2050,” May 29, 2003). The Texas problem is potentially solvable with money—a lot of money, \$17 billion.

I was fascinated to learn of the modern technology employed in U.S. conservation efforts. *The Oregonian* (June 10, 2003, online edition) tells of farmers using tractors guided by lasers and satellite receivers to level fields so perfectly that every plant receives the same amount of irrigation water. Further, what little runoff occurs is captured and recycled. Even so, local farmers struggle with a different kind of water problem—the politics of environmentalists who dispute the use of limited water supplies.

Millions of acres of pine forest in the southwestern United States have died or are dying in the current drought, due to a pine beetle infestation. The beetle burrows into trees, feeds on the inner bark and destroys or clogs passageways that move water from root to branch. As of this writing, the

official estimate of acres destroyed by the pine beetle in Arizona alone stands at 800,000. That’s up from 50,000 acres in 2001 and on its way to over a million acres—an area the size of the state of Rhode Island.

New Mexico, Colorado and Southern California are also suffering huge losses of timber. The infestation will continue to spread, until the beetles have no more trees to destroy or until rain gives the trees enough strength to resist them. If last year’s fire season was catastrophic, this year’s could be apocalyptic with millions of standing dead and dry pine trees.

Nonetheless, Western countries overall remain unaffected by projected world water shortages, when contrasted with developing countries. James Reynolds, writing for *The Scotsman*, captures the disparity perfectly by pointing out that “people in the Western world think little of paying over 500 times more for water in a plastic bottle compared to that which is perfectly safe and drinkable and supplied direct to their homes” (“World’s Liquid Asset Is Draining Away,” March 6, 2003).

Contrast that with the fact that many in the nation of India manage today with only between 10 and 11 quarts per day—that’s *per household*, not per person! And 40 percent of urban India—65,000 villages—do not have their own water supply. Approximately 6 million wells dug over the past half century have dried up. Water tables fall a meter or more every two to three years (“Indian Population Faces Looming Problem of Serious Water Shortage,” www.channelnews-asia.com, May 28, 2003).

Water is major part of the Israeli-Palestinian picture

By international law, Israel must supply drinking water to the Palestinians. Yet Israel deals with drought in some areas virtually every year. Its principal supply comes from the Jordan River system, the Sea of Galilee and two ground sources.

Highlighting the reality of the region’s con-

Did you realize that 10 times as many people die from waterborne diseases annually than those who die in war? This is just one of the many factors in a worldwide water crisis.

cerns, Jacob Kaidar points out that there have been 21 armed disputes over water in recent history and that *18 of them involved Israel*. Kaidar directs multilateral peace talks and water issues in the Israeli foreign ministry.

The Intifada interferes with water shipments. Fearing sabotage by terrorists, Israeli soldiers scrutinize water tanker trucks that pass through their checkpoints, occasionally even draining the water to ensure nothing is amiss. Also, water storage tanks in Palestinian towns are common targets for Israeli bullets.

Palestinians respond by stealing water from Israeli pipelines and drilling illegal wells by the thousands.

Water has to be a part of negotiations for peace, but that's not happening. The BBC reports: "With the publication of the road map to peace, there had been hopes the political leaders would begin to look more closely at the water crisis in region. But with the road map apparently in crisis, it seems the Palestinians may be thirsty for a good while longer" ("Water War Leaves Palestinians Thirsty," BBC, June 15, 2003).

Water-related deaths outnumber war dead 10-1

We recoil in horror at the death toll of wars, but did you realize that *10 times* as many people die from waterborne diseases annually than those who die in war? UN figures for the year 2000 estimate that 2,213,000 died from poor water sanitation and associated diseases (1 million of this total was due to malaria alone); an astonishing 2 billion were infected with water-related illnesses—more than 300 million of them seriously so.

But, as with so many other problems, Asian and African countries suffer the most. Approximately 65 percent of Asians and 27 percent of Africans lack an adequate supply of water; 80 percent of Asians and 13 percent of Africans do not have necessary sanitation—resulting in the disease and mortality statistics quoted above.

The present global picture is bleak: 1.1 billion people lack access to clean water and 2.4 billion lack access to proper sanitation, largely in these nations (UN figures).

Future looms disturbingly dry

The future looks worse. "If nothing

happens, we have a doomsday scenario with billions of people in countries where water has simply run out by 2025," said Steven Turner, deputy director of Water Aid, a British charity (op. cit., Reynolds).

"Of all the social and natural crises we humans face, the water crisis is the one that lies at the heart of our survival and then of our planet earth," said Koichiro Matsuura, director general of UNESCO (ibid.).

The UN estimates that two of every three of the world's citizens will face water shortages by 2025. By the middle of this century, the worst case scenario projects 7 billion people in 60 countries who will lack water altogether or face severe shortages. The best case scenario projects 2 billion people facing a water crisis in 48 countries.

There are three causes for water shortages: climate changes, pollution and population growth.

Let's take a closer look at the factor of population growth in the 22 Arab nations that are already seriously affected by sanitation problems and water shortages. Their population (now 281 million) will increase approximately 80 million by 2010 and then *an additional 100 million* by 2020 (Jumana Al Tamimi, "Many Arab Countries Face Serious Water Shortage," *Gulfnews*, Feb. 16, 2003).

Adding to the fragility of the situation, an average of 60 percent of the water comes from outside of the region. For example, Iraq receives 66 percent of its water from outside its borders; Syria, 34 percent; Jordan, 36 percent; Sudan and Mauritania, 77 percent each. The source areas are principally the Ethiopian Plateau and the nation of Turkey (ibid.).

Nearly 65 percent of Arab farmers depend on rainfall in order to produce their crops. However, this area, like so many areas of the world, is currently undergoing a serious drought.

United Nations teams look to education about pollution and to desalination projects to lessen the potential crisis facing the world. Controlling population growth is unlikely, as individual religious convictions come into play. The 22 Arab nations we've been looking at are principally Muslim.

It's quite probable that people will fight wars for the water they need. In Kofi Annan's words, "Fierce national competition over water resources has

prompted fears that water issues contain the seeds of violent conflict" ("UN Warns of Looming Water Crisis," BBC, March 22, 2002).

Let's consider in more depth the factor of changing climates. Some argue that slash-and-burn clearing of rain forests, overusing land in ways that steadily increase the world's deserts and paving millions of miles with concrete and asphalt to make cities have combined to change the world's climates. That may well be true.

What about God? Is there a supernatural factor in changes in the world's weather? And, if so, what can be done to change the negative trend?

What about God?

Jesus said that God does not normally intervene in the weather cycles He created. "He . . . sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Paul and Barnabas commented that normal and ample rain is indicative of God's provision for mankind: "Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17).

Yet God has and will again withhold rain as a tool to motivate people to spiritual change. Because He is a loving provider, withholding nurturing rain is an unusual and extreme tool for unusual and extreme times.

Look back in history to the time when the Israelites returned from Egyptian slavery to inhabit the land of Canaan (Palestine). The wording of Deuteronomy 11:12-15 indicates a different climate existed than the present one.

Rain enabled abundant agriculture, rather than irrigation used today in the same region. Note also the linkage between a submissive, loving relationship with God and abundant rainfall:

"A land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year. And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its sea-

(See "WATER," page 15)

“PARADE,” (Continued from page 16)

But why am I writing this now? You will be reading this after the Fourth of July.

Never had so few dared so much

The “Fourth” is much more than a date on a calendar. The quest for freedom is ageless and boundless. It’s an ideal that was given life and breath over 200 years ago with the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Its birthplace was in the most unlikely spot. It was drafted and ratified by Englishmen living in 13 colonies in the “New World,” an entire ocean apart from the great political and philosophical capitals of the time—London, Paris and Berlin.

These “colonials” dared to dream of a society in which men would be judged, not based upon the right of birth, but rather on how they successfully lived their own lives, based upon the newly established universal tenets of the rights of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” It was simply unimaginable at the time—a society of free people without a hereditary ruler reigning over them. The historical mode of human relationships had been completely altered. Humanity had experienced a geopolitical earthquake. Human society would never be the same. Never had so few dared so much.

A defining date of destiny

It would be the defining date of history in which the sovereign God of all nations would allow two peoples to depart from one another and establish their own prophetic destiny as rendered in Genesis 48:19. The passage speaks of Jacob’s blessing upon his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, proclaiming, “He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”

This family of Joseph was guaranteed further prophetic blessings in Genesis 49:22-24, which describes it as a “fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob . . .” With these verses read, contemplate how a “great nation,” the United States, and a “multitude of

nations,” Great Britain and its Commonwealth (formerly empire), dominated world history for the last 200 years in this critical time that we believe to be what the Bible calls, “the end of the age.”

Imagine world history without either America or Britain and their “special relationship.” Think of the outcome of the pivotal war years of 1815, 1918 or 1945; then think again. Think of the “archers” who shot at these two brother nations and even tried to undermine their special relationship, at times trying to break it apart.

Think of Winston Churchill’s words during the dark days of World War II, when he spoke of the United States as the “arsenal of democracy” coming to the defense of freedom. Think what the world today would be like without the United States as the world’s sole superpower with its trusted ally, Great Britain. Then think again of a world left solely to the imminent threat of terrorists and their well-meaning, but pontifical apologist allies who simply think time will solve everything.

Then think again to July 4th when a nation was granted birth by a watchful God keen to fulfill His prophecies. It was He who bequeathed to America a land of fruit and honey bound by two oceanic walls to protect them from adversaries. A land that did not advertise for royalty, intelligentsia or warlords, but put up the advertisement: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free.” Why? It was intrinsically believed that an atmosphere of freedom would be the great equalizer and defining element as to whether a person succeeded. America has always been about where a person is going, not where he has come from.

A day of reckoning

But America will not always be here to be a beacon of liberty! America itself has a day of reckoning. The Bible speaks in Jeremiah 30:7 of a time of “Jacob’s trouble.” A time in which the same nation that touts itself a “one nation under God” will not be divinely protected from the “archer’s bow,” because of its steady course into godless humanism and secular anarchy.

How far have we come from the words of James Madison, the father of the American Constitution, when he said in 1778: “We have staked the whole future of the American Civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have

staked the future of all of our political institutions . . . upon the capacity of each and all of us . . . to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.”

If the near future does not look bright for my beloved country, what does that mean for the rest of the world? The incredible reality is that the great future hope of all humanity is not “one nation under God,” but rather *all nations* under Him in *His Kingdom*, established and ruled on this earth by Jesus Christ.

So, no more parade?

God never removes one blessing without replacing it with something even more special. God promises His followers a parade of color, action and interactivity, and a cast of multiple thousands. When the big moment comes, no one is going to miss it. It doesn’t matter whether I’m at a youth camp in the High Sierras, our house in Mayflower Village, the densest jungle in the Amazon Basin or the remotest oasis in the Sahara. Wherever we might be, when the ultimate Independence Day comes, you will see everything happen right before you.

Jesus Christ plainly described His future entrance into human affairs in Matthew 24:27: “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” Have you ever watched fireworks light up the sky with their bright illuminations? Especially, the moment of the grand finale? That’s exactly what His entrance will be like. Everyone will see it everywhere. There’ll be no missing it.

Some in the congregation at Thessalonica thought they had “missed the parade.” They were concerned that the Day of the Lord had come and gone—and perhaps they were “goners” for missing it. But Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 thoroughly describes the ultimate parade of activity of the ultimate Independence Day when man is freed from the self-imposed tyranny of death. He gives the parade program in order. “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be

caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

The apostle John adds a few more details of this epic event in Revelation 19:11-14 so we will know this heavenly parade of strength, majesty and immortality is under way. “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True . . . His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns . . . And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.”

When you put all the dynamics of this future celestial parade in full motion, what we look forward to here in Mayflower Village every July 4th pales into insignificance. Talk about the ultimate interactive parade event with everyone watching and, yes, everyone involved! Just think of it—the Son of God coming through the clouds, the crowns, the beautiful white outfits of linen, armies marching by, the dead rising, the living being transformed into immortality before our very eyes. I don’t think I’ll miss Neil Diamond’s “Comin’ to America” when the trumpet sounds. I don’t think I’ll miss the eagle mounted on my neighbor’s truck when I stare at the wings on an archangel.

God’s children in this present world are described by Christ in Luke 12:32 as a “little flock.” As Christians, never have so few dared so much by claiming a new citizenship in heaven.

Their hope and the words from Isaiah 30:21 of “this is the way, walk in it” can best be captured in the echo of my granddaughter’s voice when she excitedly yelled out, “Here it comes; here comes the parade!” Her excitement and watchful heart for a temporary, earthly parade must be matched by our excitement for a parade that is right around the corner of human history and coming our way. ❖

Correction

A reader has pointed out that the Medal of Honor medal pictured on page 14 of the June issue did not match the story being told. The medal shown was that issued during the American Civil War. The design has changed through the years and we should have shown a medal of the modern period to be consistent.

“WATER,” (Continued from page 13)

son, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.”

The thought continues: “Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD’s anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you” (verses 16-17).

Historically, God applied the consequences He warned about sporadically at first. He wanted to turn their hearts, not destroy them. Going without rain would, He hoped, bring them to their senses. Eventually, as you know, He shut the skies entirely to the peoples of Israel.

We anticipate that God will do the same in the end time, first to the modern-day Israelites and then to the rest of the nations. His goal remains the same—a desire to have a loving relationship with mankind. But that relationship cannot be cluttered with the kind of syncretized religion into which Israel fell. By way of analogy, Israel attempted to have a marriage relationship with God at the same time as it “entertained” other “gods.”

Every major religion on the face of the earth today is a variation of the syncretized religion of the darkest days of Israel’s history. It is only a matter of time before the Creator God intervenes—in part, through rain deprivation—to turn people back to Him.

The prophet Amos illustrates how God first shuts down the normal rain here and there. “‘I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,’ says the LORD” (Amos 4:7-8). His message rehearses the past, as it projects the future.

Isaiah speaks similarly: “Your ears

shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left. You will also defile the covering of your images of silver, and the ornament of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away as an unclean thing; you will say to them, ‘Get away!’ Then He will give the rain for your seed with which you sow the ground, and bread of the increase of the earth; it will be fat and plentiful. In that day your cattle will feed in large pastures” (Isaiah 30:21-23).

He will do it again

God systematically used rain deprivation to help people come to their senses and repudiate their mixed religion, and He will do so again. Prophecy indicates that the majority of mankind will not easily or quickly come around. The prophecy of two witnesses in Revelation 11:6 specifically foretells a major confrontation—not between nations, but rather between the nations and God. The two witnesses have God’s permission and power to “shut off the tap” of fresh water. Revelation 8:11 and 16:4 tell of two additional times of supernatural intervention in the earth’s water supplies at the climactic conclusion of the age.

All the statistics and observations above indicate that the world is headed for a wretched crisis. Its politics and its religions virtually guarantee that the crisis will not be averted. Some measure of international cooperation may mitigate the already terrible circumstances. However, the time is coming when God will change the world’s climate patterns.

Has God begun this dramatic intervention? If one has to ask the question, the answer is, no. When God sets His hand to get man’s attention, He will not do so secretly or with subtlety. Further, His actions will be bold and in conjunction with His true Church declaring the purpose of what’s happening. For, after all, it’s not punishment for punishment’s sake, but rather the tough love of a caring Father.

Water, the world’s most abundant natural resource will be a key factor in future world events. ❖



by Robin Webber

Don't Worry, You Won't Miss the Parade

This year, I'm going to miss our neighborhood's Fourth of July parade. I'll be out of town serving at our church's youth summer camp. I'm happy to spend time with the young people of our church, but I will surely miss the time spent with my neighbors on this commemorative day in America. In the neighborhood where I live, the Fourth of July is not simply one more holiday—it's an event. We don't go down to the big boulevard in town to watch strangers put on a parade. We *are* the parade and it happens "smack-dab" in front of our front porches.

Starting early in the morning, many begin washing their vehicles that will be in the upcoming parade. The more creative begin to lace their vehicles with the national colors of red, white and blue. The more inventive types use their trucks as a base for homemade floats with statues of Uncle Sam or the American eagle. Soon you begin to hear the sound of "boom boxes" all over the neighborhood. But there's no rap, heavy metal or Beatles music on this day. "God Bless America," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "The Star Spangled Banner" pleasantly compete for attention. Finally, one of the "'80s crowd" amps up Neil Diamond's "Comin' to America" and you know there is going to be a celebration.

A community comes to life

Soon people start lining their neighborhood lawns with their chairs and make sure their flag is out. Many plant it, along with themselves, right at the curb. People start sharing coffee and donuts. A community comes to life! Neighbors ask the inevitable question, "Are you going to march this year?" A man replies, "No, I don't think so. I did last year, but not this year."

Little children can hardly contain themselves for what they know is coming. Then, all of a sudden, a roar of voic-

es can be heard from a block away. You know the parade has started and the action is coming your way. But which street will they go down first? What will you do when it reaches your street?

The music gets louder and there, rounding the corner onto our street, is a sea of motion, color, music, chatter and the happy voices of our neighbors. Our granddaughter, Meghan, shouts, "Here it comes. Here comes the parade!" People stand up as the flag goes by. People laugh at the poodle going by all dressed up in its "Yankee Doodle best." Parents carry their little ones on their shoulders as "living floats" to celebrate freedom. The flashy red fire engine from the local station comes rolling around the corner sounding its horn. Video cameras are rolling to capture all that's best about America.

Freedom is on their minds

Remember the man who wasn't going to march this year? All of a sudden he grabs the flag from his porch and says to his wife, "Grab the baby and get the wagon. We're going to march this year—yeah, again!" It's an amazing sight to see 400 to 500 of your neighbors winding up and down through the streets that you call home. It's even more amazing when you are in the middle of it and have for the moment become a living float of freedom.

Mayflower Village is not a world apart from the Los Angeles Basin, but mirrors the rich diversity of peoples that inhabit the metropolis. The street is filled with every mix of race, ethnic group and language—but on this day there is no doubt what everyone is feeling. They are all Americans and freedom is on their minds.

(See "PARADE," page 14)