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Could Ahmadinejad Be Daniel's "King of the South"?

Some have drawn a parallel between American President Bush and Iranian President Ahmadinejad. That there could be any comparison at all initially seems improbable to say the least! But making the comparison yields both parallels and paradoxes, and it may predict a colossal confrontation in the making.

by Cecil E. Maranville

President George W. Bush heads the most powerful nuclear power on earth. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad heads a nation struggling to have its way to continue its nuclear program, which is apparently close to being weaponized. His and Iran's ambitions are troubling the world—with good reason.

President Bush heads a great democracy that champions personal freedom. President Ahmadinejad heads an Islamic republic that controls many aspects of the lives of its citizens.

Bush was elected in a free popular vote. Ahmadinejad was chosen by Iran's "Supreme Leader" (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) and conservative mullahs; Ahmadinejad reportedly spent nothing on his election campaign, which the mullahs funded.

Bush is the U.S. commander-in-chief. Ahmadinejad is subject to the Ayatollah Khamenei, as well as to the Guardian Council, a 12-member body of clerics. And Khamenei added an additional oversight body recently, the Expediency Council, which is led by none other than Hasemi Rafsanjani, the man Ahmadinejad just defeated for the presidency! Imagine, for the sake of comparison, a religious king-maker in American politics who selected



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (right) meets with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani (center) and his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Tehran Nov. 22.

George W. Bush to be president instead of his principal opponent, John F. Kerry, only to subsequently appoint Mr. Kerry to oversee Mr. Bush's presidency a few months after the election!

Shimon Peres, who was then the Israeli deputy prime minister, offered this frank assessment of Ahmadinejad's election: "Neither the primaries nor the recent round of elections were free, and were contests between extremists. The candidates were pre-determined, as were the results . . . The conclusion is that the dangerous combination of extremists, non-conventional weapons and isolation from the West will continue, and will generate a great deal of

(See "AHMADINEJAD," page 3)

Reuters

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Person of the Year

This is the season when selections are made for "Person of the Year." Lists will be drawn up like the "Ten Most Intriguing People." Interviewers will fawn over such personalities and talk will be shallow and banal. I saw such a list just this week and thought, "These people did nothing of note to be singled out as special. Why would I want to listen to their vain blathering?"

It says something about life today when we look at the popular cult of celebrity. There is little to admire in many of those who are prominent in today's culture. Celebrities with marginal talent opine about politics, and athletes play games while we lazily lounge and watch on our big screen televisions.

Admit it, we all have more than a measure of triviality in our lives. It is tempting to live vicariously through some famous person when our days are filled with ordinary matters like work, raising kids and making ends meet. When we tune into the world around us, we hear a lot of bad news about war, natural disasters and the latest political debate.

Where is the exceptional life? Where is the life well-lived? Where is the life we yearn to live that is whole, complete and filled with meaning? Where is the life we can hold up to our children and grandchildren as worthy of imitation?

What if we created annually a list of the "Ten Best-Lived Lives?" Could we find 10 common people, who have no celebrity status, who have lived exceptional lives, being fully human? I suspect we could if we looked around our neighborhoods and among the people we interact with each day. Perhaps the reason we don't is that the celebrity and status of those who entertain us mesmerize us. We miss those who lead common lives with honor and dignity, serving rather than being served. And our lives are the less for this.

I spend a lot of my days visiting and counseling with people who live their lives, as best they can, by the Word of God. Recently I have spent time with some who are elderly and are dealing with illness and suffering. It is my job as a minister to encourage them and help them understand why they suffer and give them hope.

Often I visit these people and walk away myself being encouraged and given hope. Those who face their mortality see with a clarity that cuts through the nonessentials of life. I find they help me to focus on what is really important, rather than the trivial and distracting.

I could put together a list of people who live full lives rooted in biblical values, tuned into their eternal spiritual purpose. They are part of the group who will be given the Kingdom of God at the time of Christ's return. Daniel 2:44 says, "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

This verse has always given me comfort and hope that God is preparing a group who will be ready to step into leadership roles in His coming Kingdom. I deal with this group every day. They do not live trivial lives, blunted by the modern idolatry of money, power, celebrity or status. They live fully charged lives aligned with the values of the Kingdom of God. They walk the path leading to the time when Christ's Kingdom will restore true values to a world in dire need of a new religion.

Keep this in mind this season when you are momentarily entertained by endless lists of people and ideas that celebrate some of the worst of our times. Why not start looking around you for those who live authentic lives? Why not start living one yourself?

—Darris McNeely

“AHMADINEJAD,” (Continued from page 1)
problems for the free world” (“Iran Poll
Result: World Reaction,” BBC, June 25,
2005).

Peres’ words could prove true, as we
watch for the alignment of nations spoken
of by Daniel the prophet: “And at the end-
time, the king of the south shall butt at . . . the
king of the north [who] shall come against
him like a tempest, with chariots and with
horsemen and with many ships” (Daniel
11:40, Modern King James Version).

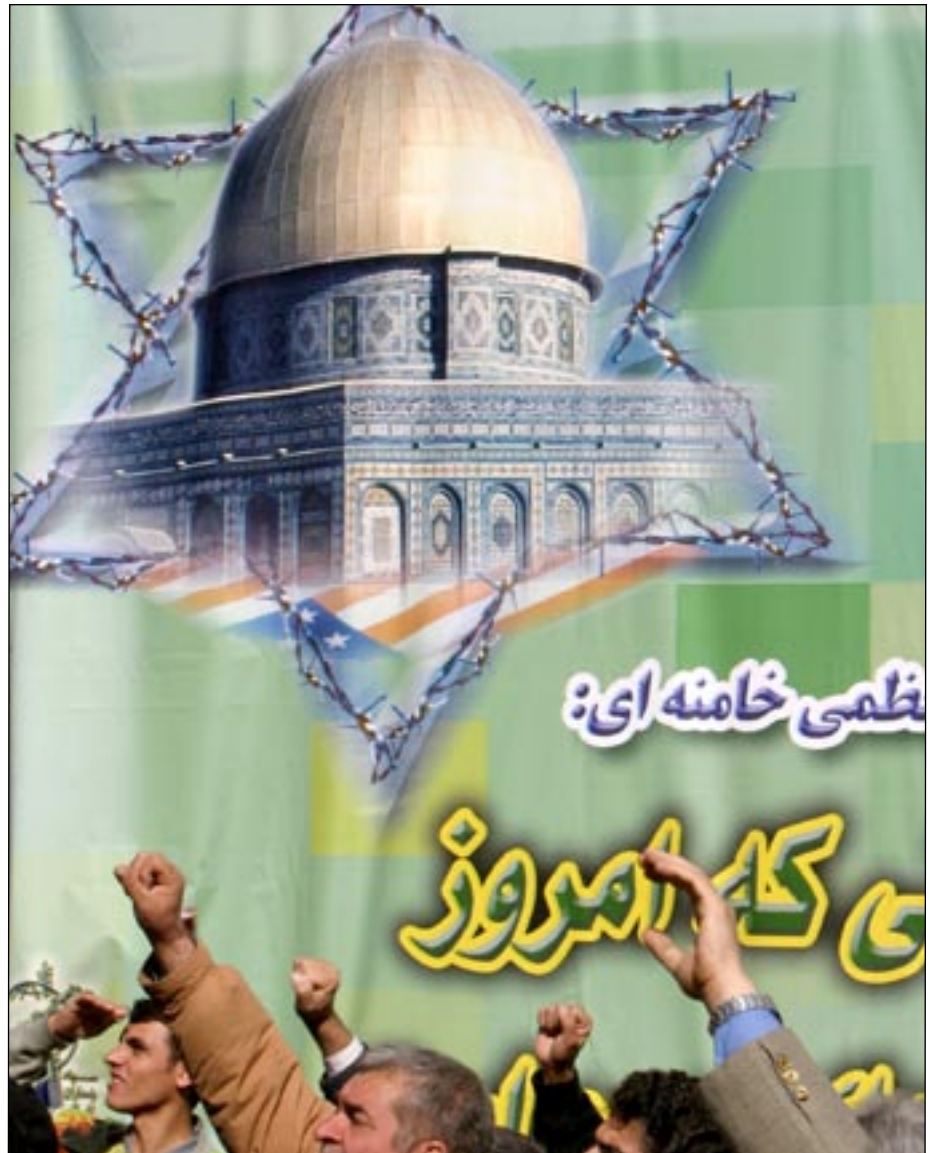
Untypical politicians

Surprisingly, there are many parallels
between Mr. Bush and Mr. Ahmadinejad.
Neither is a career politician. Bush gradu-
ated from Yale and went on to complete
an MBA at Harvard. Ahmadinejad holds
a Ph.D. in traffic and transportation from
the University of Science and Technology
in Tehran. Neither avenue is a typical
pathway to high office in their respective
countries.

President Bush won election twice
by narrow margins (in the state-by-state
electoral count) and he deals with a highly
polarized country, nearly evenly divided
for and against him. Ahmadinejad “won”
by a wide margin in the second round of
voting, but a national poll shows that nearly
40 percent of all Iranians regret not going
to the polls to vote against him (Farshid
Motahari, “Ahmadinejad Seeks ‘New
Islamic Wave’ in Iran,” Deutsche Presse-
Agentur, Nov. 13, 2005). Since four out of
six of those who *did* go to the polls voted
against him (there were seven candidates
in the first round), crunching the numbers
shows that Iranians are similarly divided
over their president.

When he was a presidential candidate,
Bush was asked who was his favorite phi-
losopher. “Jesus Christ,” was his quick and
bold reply. The strong support of conserva-
tive Christians was a key factor in his presi-
dential election victories. His religious zeal
and his conservative religious constituency
invite frequent criticism. It also causes U.S.
foreign policy to be viewed as “Christian
policy” in the Islamic world.

Mr. Ahmadinejad is a devout (Shia)
Muslim. His speeches are filled with refer-
ences to his religious philosophy. He, too,
would not be president today if it were not
for his conservative backers in Iran’s reli-
gious community. And, surprisingly for
Iran, this has provoked some open criti-



Reuters/Rafieb Homavandi

Iranian protesters shout slogans against the United States and Israel during a Jerusalem Day demonstration outside Tehran University, before Friday prayers, in Tehran Oct. 28. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stood by his call for Israel to be “wiped off the map,” as thousands of Iranians marched through Tehran chanting “death to Israel” and “death to America.”

cism. Rafsanjani blasted the mullahs for their interference in the election.

Terror his tool of choice

It is disturbing to learn that the Iranian president is so much at ease with terrorism that he was surprised at the world’s reaction to his “eliminate Israel” speech last October, explaining that he was only repeating a statement made over a quarter century ago by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (who preceded the

current supreme leader, Khamenei).

In his audience were representatives of the Palestinian terrorist groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who also addressed the assembly of 4,000 students from the Iranian Students’ Society at the annual “World Without Zionism” conference. The speeches blatantly supported and recruited Palestinian terrorists.

Less reported from Ahmadinejad’s speech were his comments about a historic clash between the West and Islam.

He referred to the West as “the World of Arrogance” and “the hegemonic and arrogant system.” He declared that Israel is a “bridge” that “the World of Arrogance” is using to dominate the Islamic world, urging his listeners to realize that the goal of “a world without America and *without* Zionism . . . surely can be achieved.”

He blasted Pakistan for recognizing Israel, warning that “the ones who do . . . are standing in front of Islamic nations and that *this is an unforgivable crime*” and that “whoever does will burn *in the fires of our Islamic rage*” (Ijaz Hussain, “Thus Spake Ahmadinejad,” *The [Pakistan] Daily Times*, Nov. 9, 2005). He refers to a “historic war” between Islam and the non-Islamic world, dating back hundreds of years. He envisions an Islamic Iran leading the Muslim world to victory in this war of civilizations.

Even under the comparative “moderate” Iranian administrations that preceded Ahmadinejad’s, Iran’s “primary instrument of advancing its foreign policy objectives has been terrorism or the threat of it” (“Ahmadinejad’s Terror Policy Must Be

Fought,” *The American Thinker*, Nov. 16, 2005).

Ahmadinejad plainly sees terrorism as advancing his objectives for Iran. Four days after his “destroy Israel” speech, “the Associated Press reported that about 300 men and women, motivated by Ahmadinejad’s remarks, turned up . . . at a state-sponsored event to volunteer for suicide bomb attacks” (*ibid.*).

Ahmadinejad cannot be ignored

Clearly, Ahmadinejad is a man to be reckoned with, and his firebrand messages appeal to the revolutionary-minded. Indeed, he repeatedly calls for “a worldwide Islamic revolution,” which he believes Iran and, presumably, he would lead. Supreme Leader Khamenei seems to have some misgivings about his protégé, and he is quietly shifting negotiations over the nuclear issue to the rival Rafsanjani. Parliament is far from rubber-stamping the new president’s decisions, having rejected three nominees in succession for the post of oil minister.

A former deputy in the previous gov-

ernment, Rajabali Mazrouei, rebuked Ahmadinejad for his “eliminate Israel” speech, calling it “irresponsible” and “illogical,” adding, “Ahmadinejad is not even familiar with the world of politics” (“Ahmadinejad’s Israel Remarks Split Iran,” *Leading the Charge*, leadingthecharge.com, Oct. 31, 2005).

But Ahmadinejad will not be easily controlled. When Iran’s ambassadors sought to soothe the international community after his Oct. 26 speech, he promptly dismissed 40 of them—nearly half their total number!

Supreme Leader Khamenei promotes an *evolutionary* pace of change, in contrast to the *revolution* for which Ahmadinejad has been calling. Rising in power within Iran with the new president are a number of radical clerics and organizations, including Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Yazdi, a rival to Khamenei. Yazdi in turn is working to place his radical protégés in the Assembly of Experts, which is the only power that can remove and replace Khamenei. The obvious possibility for the new supreme leader is Yazdi.

What responsive chords will Ahmadinejad strike in other Islamic nations or in the broader Muslim community? Will he succeed in igniting a worldwide Islamic revolution, driven by terrorism?

President Bush leads a crusade (a word he dropped from his speeches, due to its provocative nature) *against* terror. He is careful to say it is not against Islam, but men like Ahmadinejad are trying to make the two synonymous. That could prove true if Islam uses terrorism as its policy muscle.

Because Iran is, to this point, intractable in its demand to develop nuclear power, and because it produces the second highest amount of oil in OPEC, neither it nor its new president can be ignored.

Back to Daniel’s enigmatic prediction. He spoke of two geopolitical configurations, kings of the south and north. It’s too soon to tell whether Ahmadinejad will become the first “king,” but it is possible that the group backing that king of the south could well be some form of the Islamic *ummah* (community). However, the nation(s) backing the king of the north will not be America. How do we know this? To see and study the scriptures that speak of these intriguing matters, request our booklets *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. ❖

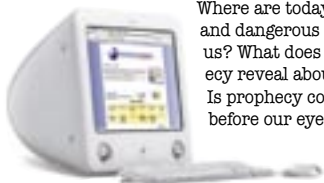
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One Mile Away From Terror

It is one thing to read about a terrorist bombing thousands of miles away from our comfortable homes. It is altogether different to be in the same city when a bomb blast goes off, killing dozens. It changes your perspective.

by Darris McNeely

I was sound asleep in my hotel room in Amman, Jordan, the night of Nov. 9 when suddenly the door flew open and a hotel employee screamed, "Emergency, sir, please evacuate, now!"

I hurriedly threw on my clothes and started out the door when I thought, "I don't know if I'll get back into this room." I turned back and grabbed my U.S. passport and my airline ticket; we were scheduled for a 10:30 a.m. departure the next day from Amman to Chicago. After nearly four weeks on the road I wanted to be sure I could leave the country.

The entire Le Meridien Hotel was evacuated into the street where we were given blankets to ward off the chill of the night air. Names of guests were read off to account for everyone while we huddled in small groups. Around us we could hear the sound of sirens and see ambulances rushing by. Military personnel and police cordoned off our street and began a search of the hotel. There was a report of an abandoned car that contained some luggage being removed from the hotel entrance.

For the longest time we did not know what had happened. There was no smoke or fire in our building; we suspected a bomb threat, given the "neighborhood" we were in. Finally, the hotel manager told us that bombs had gone off earlier at three American-owned hotels, killing dozens and wounding hundreds. Our hotel was being swept for explosives.

Close call

I realized then how close we had come to being victims of one of the many terrorist attacks that rock that part of the world. But for the grace of God, our hotel could have been picked as a target. On my way to dinner that same night, I had passed a large banquet going on in the hotel ballroom. Was it a wedding, like that targeted at the Radisson SAS Hotel just a short distance away?

Just a few days earlier I had been at the

Le Meridien with over 200 people, mostly Americans, observing the biblical Feast of Tabernacles, something unusual in an Arabic country. Did the small band of Islamic terrorists scout our hotel during that week as a potential site for their insane act? How close had we come to being their target?

Sixty-four people lost their lives that night, and more than 100 were wounded in the bombings of three American hotels. Most of the victims were Jordanian Arabs. The greatest carnage was at a wedding where the blast killed the fathers of both bride and groom. Jordanians were shocked at these first-ever suicide bombings on their soil. The attack was a blow to Jordanian security services, which had been very effective in breaking up past plots by other extremist groups.

Jordan's King Abdullah II condemned the attacks, describing them as "criminal acts conducted by stray, misleading groups." He vowed that such acts would not deter Jordan from assuming its important role in striving to combat both terrorism and those who advocate violence.

Ironically, a Jordanian, a former small-town thug, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, organized the attack. Until three years ago Zarqawi was nothing more than "a small man, with a small group, in a small jail," said Jordanian journalist Abdallah Aburomman, who spent three months in prison with Zarqawi in 1996. But that has changed since Iraq has become the center of terrorist activity in the Middle East.

Before this attack Zarqawi had popular support within Jordan, according to unofficial polls that indicate up to 70 percent approved of his terrorist activity in neighboring Iraq. Jordan has a high percentage of Palestinians among its population and there is more than a little anti-Israeli sentiment.

But Zarqawi's popularity has not survived last month's bombings. Within hours of the attack, thousands of Jordanians took

I realized then how close we had come to being victims of one of the many terrorist attacks that rock that part of the world. But for the grace of God, our hotel could have been picked as a target.

to the street shouting slogans of support for King Abdullah and denouncing Zarqawi.

“The Amman Message”

The act was obviously meant to destabilize the pro-Western monarchy in this progressive Arab state. On Nov. 18 Zarqawi released a statement, saying attacks in Jordan would continue, and threatening to cut off the king’s head. He said he was targeting Jordan because it serves as a “protector” for Israel, helps the U.S. military in Iraq and has become a “swamp of obscenity,” with alcohol and prostitution in its tourist sites.

King Abdullah has worked hard at projecting a peaceful face of Islam to the world. In November of 2004, he released “The Amman Message,” a short essay portraying the more peaceful sayings of the Koran and expressing his desire to prevent further marginalization and isolation of Islam.

“The Amman Message” is addressed to “the public, our brethren in Muslim lands and in this whole world.” It reads, “We are aware of the danger and challenges the Islamic Nation is facing today in this difficult juncture of its course. Evils threaten its identity, incite disunity, tarnish its religion and assail its tenets; they attack fiercely the very message of Islam. Some who attack Islam imagine it is their enemy. But it is not their enemy. Others, who claim to belong to Islam, have done gruesome and criminal acts in its name.

“The message that is under attack is the message of tolerance, revealed by the Almighty to His prophet Muhammad, God’s prayers and salutations be upon him, and carried after him by his orthodox successors and household members: a message of brotherhood and humanity; forming a righteous religion that embraces the entire sphere of human life, upholding what is good and forbidding what is wrong, accepting of others, and honoring all human beings.”

The document makes an explicit statement against terrorism. “On religious grounds, on moral grounds, we denounce the contemporary concept of terrorism which is associated with wrongful practices wherever they come

from—including assaults on peaceful civilians, killing prisoners and the wounded, unethical practices such as the destruction of buildings and ransacking cities. These despotic attacks on human life transgress the law of God, and we denounce them . . .

“No human whose heart is filled with light could be an extremist. We decry the campaign that portrays Islam as a religion that encourages violence and institutionalizes terrorism.”

Several passages from the Koran are cited to support their claims of a peaceful religion that shuns violence and cruelty, but the document does not cite portions of the Koran that encourage attacks on the infidel unbeliever. It is those statements that have helped breed today’s generation of extremists who are set on reestablishing an Islamic caliphate in all lands once controlled by Islam.

The tie to Abraham

“The Amman Message” contains one thought in particular that people of the region should consider: “Islam’s principles also provide common ground among different faiths and peoples. The origin of divine religions is one, and Muslims believe in all messengers of God; denying the message of any of them is a deviation from Islam. This furnishes a wide platform upon which peoples of different faiths can meet together, with respect for others’ ideas and faiths, and act in common in the service of human society.”

I was introduced to this theme by Akel Biltaji, an advisor to King Abdullah, who addressed our group of convention goers. Citing common points between Islam and Christianity and Judaism, such as the common ancestor, Abraham, Biltaji used the cities of the region where Christ, Elijah, Moses and Muhammad visited and traveled, to show that they form a “biblical road map to peace,” if only the differing parties could focus on them.

Imagine if all the warring factions in the Middle East would look to the common ancestor they all recognize, Abraham, and begin to travel the road he blazed in his time in the region. Then we might begin to see progress toward a lasting peace. Jew, Christian

and Muslim recognize Abraham as a “father,” indeed the father of the faithful.

Abraham followed the command of God into a new land and a new faith when he left his home country and his father’s house to go to a land that God showed him. He received God’s blessing for walking before Him in a new way of life (Genesis 12:1-3).

Sadly, these three great faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), which claim Abraham as their ancestor, have strayed from his example and practice. Generations of tradition, error and deception have created religions that Abraham would not recognize or identify with today. It is no wonder we fail to see any representatives of these faiths forging peace along the pathways of the Middle East today. Their historic legacies have created the cultural, religious and political divide that presently exists.

What is needed is a new religion, one unlike those we see on today’s scene. A new religion that models the one lived by father Abraham and his descendant, Jesus Christ. It would be a faith that writes the way of God on the heart, a more permanent way of life. “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them” (Hebrews 10:16). Abraham looked for a city whose foundations are built by God (Hebrews 11:10). It is a city to come one day when Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Prophet, returns in all His glory.

Not until we see Arabs look upon Israelis as brothers, and Israelis look upon Palestinians as brothers, will we see a breakthrough in the peace process. Until the day we see all parties walking along this “biblical road map,” we are not likely to see a permanent peace settlement. We will see more suicide terror attacks like those in Amman. More suffering and anguish will affect Israelis, Arabs and Christians.

I was only about a mile away from the November bombings of Amman. It is as close as I ever want to be to such an attack. God speed the day when terrorism ends and no one feels its horror any longer. ❖

French Riots Highlight Growing Clash of Civilizations

For three weeks, young Muslims across France rioted every night, burning cars and destroying property. What's behind the riots and where are they leading?

by Melvin Rhodes

Not since A.D. 732, almost 1,300 years ago, has there been such a violent clash involving Muslims on French soil.

Then, it was an Islamic army that had already conquered Spain and was well on its way to spreading the new religion of Islam into France. The North African military forces were defeated by the armies of Charles Martel not far from Paris. Europe was saved from a serious Islamic threat.

What will save it now?

For over two weeks, Muslim youths rioted in cities across France, destroying property and burning cars. The latter was not new. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, "An average of 80 cars were burned every day in France even before the riots began—a practice that has long been an expression of anger and civil disobedience by the nation's underprivileged. 'We don't have a choice; we are ready to sacrifice everything because we have nothing,' said a young man in one neighborhood hit by rioting" ("After the Flames," Nov. 21, 2005).

A great deal of the blame for the riots has been placed at the feet of "racism and poverty." It is certainly true that these second- and third-generation children of Islamic immigrants are generally poorer than their French fellow-citizens. The generous French social welfare system has also contributed to an entitlement mentality that encourages the poor and underprivileged to blame the government for not taking care of them.

Additionally, employers complain that laws making it virtually impossible to fire workers also discourage the hiring of new employees, a contributory factor to France's high rate of unemployment. That rate is currently 10 percent, but it's at least double that level in the poorer, Islamic areas.

However, poverty is not the sole cause of second- and third-generation Islamic resentment against the establishment. Across the English Channel, the perpetrators of the ter-

rorist attacks on London in July came from fairly affluent backgrounds. They, too, were second generation, the children of Muslim immigrants from the Third World.

A major cause of these problems would appear to be an identity crisis among the children of immigrants, desperately trying to reconcile the Islamic values they have been taught with the secular values (or lack of values) that permeate the society around them. Is there any wonder they do not feel they belong?

"The juvenile rioters—some are barely twelve or thirteen—are French-born; they want to make something of themselves but feel trapped on the wrong side of an invisible window as they watch their compatriots succeed, work, and travel . . . As disenfranchised as these young people are, they are first and foremost children of television and supermarkets—they understand perfectly the mechanisms of the media. So they seek to recreate the disorder and vandalism of Baghdad or Gaza (so familiar to them from television) in their own streets, to rival other neighborhoods in destruction. They find validation in the images of their exploits broadcast on television and shared on their cell phones" (Pascal Bruckner, "How French," English translation in *The New Republic*, Nov. 21, 2005).

While many in the media have played down the Islamic aspect of the riots, one North African immigrant father quoted on the BBC World Service on Nov. 15 said he felt that he was "watching a clash of civilizations in my own living room."

Clash of civilizations

The phrase "clash of civilizations" is particularly disturbing when used in the context of the French riots. Noted American historian Samuel Huntington wrote a book called *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* in 1996, long before the French riots or the terrorist attacks on U.S. soil on 9/11. Mr. Huntington predicted a coming glob-

One North African immigrant father quoted on the BBC World Service on Nov. 15 said he felt that he was "watching a clash of civilizations in my own living room."



Firemen douse burning cars during rioting in the Reynerie neighborhood in the southwestern French city of Toulouse Nov. 9. This followed two weeks of violence that flared in a rundown Paris suburb on Oct. 27 (Reuters/Jean-Philippe Arles).

al clash between Islam and Christianity, based partly on history but also on demographic trends—Islamic peoples tend to reproduce at a much greater level than those who are adherents to the myriad forms of Christianity.

In this decade, the numbers of people following the Muslim religion will surpass the numbers calling themselves Christians, a seismic shift in the global balance of power. Over the last 50 years, surplus numbers of peoples from the Islamic world have been pouring into the formerly Christian nations of the West, who are failing to reproduce sufficiently for their economic needs.

Although dismissed by some as “a myth of history,” there have been notable clashes in the past between the two civilizations of Islam and Christianity.

Just a few years after the death of the prophet Muhammad, his followers clashed with the Christian empire of Byzantium, the eastern half of what had been the Roman Empire.

After spreading rapidly in all directions, Islamic forces followed their conquest of North Africa with the con-

quest of Spain, which led to the Battle of Poitiers in 732.

In 1095, three and one half centuries later, following further Islamic expansion, Pope Urban II called on the Christian nations of Europe to launch a “crusade” against Islam. Christian armies were to spend the next two centuries in the Holy Land fighting Muslims.

History shows the Christian armies conducted themselves in a very unchristian manner, treating Jews, Muslims and even fellow Christians badly. Students of the Bible know that one of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 is “You shall not murder.”

Jesus Christ expounded on this when He instructed His disciples to “love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44). Christians who murder are going against the teachings of their founder, Jesus Christ.

This is not the case with the Islamic religion. The last words of the prophet Muhammad were: “Muslims should fight all men until they say, ‘There is no god but (Allah)’” (Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 1991, p. 19). It was a clear instruction to his

followers, setting up a conflict until everybody on the planet submits to Islam (a word that means “surrender” or “submission”).

These two religions have a violent history. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Islamic armies of the Ottoman Empire twice tried to conquer Vienna, at the very heart of Catholic Europe. The Turks ruled the Balkans right up until the early 20th century. The cultural and religious mix that is the legacy of their presence was the root cause of the Balkan conflicts a decade ago.

Now Western Europe, too, is affected by a significant Islamic presence brought about by massive Third World immigration since World War II. In a naive attempt to create a multicultural society, the thinking was that all peoples could become French, British or Dutch. The reality is quite different. Slowly, Europeans are realizing that cultures that are significantly different from each other don’t mix well and are likely to clash.

This is made worse in Europe because of a lack of space. The different ethnic groups have to live literally on top of each other in high-rise apartment blocks, creating an unhealthy environment that exacerbates tensions. There will likely be more riots in France and other Western nations in the years ahead, no matter how much money is spent on social programs aimed at alleviating poverty and giving young people more opportunities.

Blaming the riots on “racism and poverty” denies the growing clash between the followers of Islam and Western secularism, a friction that progressively widens, involving more and more nations. Second-generation Muslim immigrants in Western countries are particularly vulnerable, not having a sense of belonging fully to either culture, a growing resentment that exploded in the streets of many French cities and towns in past weeks.

Bible prophecy predicts a clash of civilizations at the time of the end (Daniel 11:40) when the “king of the South” pushes at the “king of the North.” This coming clash between the two civilizations of Islam and Europe is explained more fully in our booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. ❖

Leadership Under Siege Around the World

Top Western leaders are under severe attack by the world's media. It is but another baleful sign of the times. This article assesses the prophetic meaning for our future.

by John Ross Schroeder

This is not an easy time to lead a prominent nation. The verbal brickbats come fast and often. Perhaps President George W. Bush suffers more than most as the leader of the world's only superpower.

A few of the more recent headlines in Britain illustrate the point: "Bush's Problems Keep Mounting," "Casualty of War," "Downhill for Bush Since Katrina," "End the War Chorus That Bush Can't Control" and "A Year of Setbacks Costs Bush His Political Capital."

President Bush's approval rating is even lower than Richard Nixon's at the comparable time in their careers. The president's "saving grace" is that the approval rating for his Democratic opposition in Congress is even lower.

Likewise, the media pressure directed at British Prime Minister Tony Blair has been relentless. Some of the recent headlines read: "The Final Whistle for Blair," "Blair a Security Threat for the Nation," "Maestro of Self-Delusion," "The Beginning of the End," "Blair's EU Flop," "Blair Now Unhinged," "Blair Revolt Deepens" and "Blair Losing His Grip."

France, Germany and California

Jacques Chirac of France is not faring any better. The 72-year-old president is portrayed as losing his grip down in the bunker. Many days of ethnic riots turned portions of Paris and other parts of France into a battlefield between police and rioters.

Angela Merkel of Germany has just been inducted into the chancellor's office, but the closeness of the election and her socialist coalition partners have forced her to virtually abandon key economic reforms profusely promised during her candidacy.

On a more regional level of leadership, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California has found it hard going in a highly public backlash against his proposed reforms to revive the economic fortunes of the Golden State. Four of his proposals designed to revitalize public finances and break the state's political gridlock went down

in a resounding defeat. This occurred only two years after Californians voted him into office on the promise of a new beginning in state leadership.

Assessing the United Nations

Institutional governing bodies around the world are gradually losing their authority and influence. Consider the United Nations as an example. It is often accused of corruption, nepotism and gross incompetence. Journalists who travel extensively report that these criticisms are justified. As an article in *The Sunday Times* put it, "Nobody who visits poor parts of the world and sees the UN in action can doubt its maladministration."

The words of those who say that the United Nations is the sole possessor of moral authority in a politically immoral world have a hollow ring of vain jangling. Most simply do not believe it.

According to Ann Leslie in the *Daily Mail*, reports emerged out of Romania and Moldova of young prostitutes being forced to consort with UN peacekeeping troops, and in the Congo of UN employees abusing young girls they were charged with protecting.

These two accounts are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg of alleged sexual and financial scandals. But to give dedicated workers their due, Ann Leslie did pay tribute to "many UN employees in various parts of the world who have impressed me with their idealism, their realism and their self-sacrificing hard work in often appalling conditions."

Blaming the men at the top?

Simon Jenkins is a longtime veteran feature writer for the leading national newspapers in Britain. He made the observation that "*the world is losing touch with the art of government . . . [Leaders] have lost any ability to keep these huge cosmic bureaucracies fluid and accountable. Government is an art—never a science—and one that seems to be going the way of great painting and architecture. Nobody does it well anymore*"

"The world is losing touch with the art of government . . . [Leaders] have lost any ability to keep these huge cosmic bureaucracies fluid and accountable. Government is an art—never a science—and one that seems to be going the way of great painting and architecture. Nobody does it well anymore"
—Simon Jenkins.

(*The Sunday Times*, emphasis added throughout).

But Mr. Jenkins is not unsympathetic with the arduous and awesome task facing prominent national leaders in the political world today. He reminds his readers of huge public expectations and the incredible demands on government—and their own responsibility.

He states: “We have become lazy participants in democracy. *We look only to some ‘man at the top’ and saddle him with duties beyond his capacity to deliver.*”

“You ain’t seen nothin’ yet”

Al Jolson, one of the premier singing entertainers of the 20th century, often promised his live audience after a warm-up song or two, “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet.”

Bible prophecy predicts a future time “when a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying, ‘You have clothing; *you be our ruler, and let these ruins be under your power.*’ In that day he will protest, saying, ‘I cannot cure your ills, for in my house is neither food nor clothing. Do not make me a ruler of the people.’ *For Jerusalem is stumbled, and Judah is fallen*” (Isaiah 3:6-8).

Here the Hebrew prophet Isaiah talks of a time of national calamity. These two brothers (themselves types of Judah and Jerusalem) are also in principle a type of what will happen to whole nations in the Western world—mainly to the descendants of the 10 tribes of Israel and to the present state of Israel in the Middle East. (For further understanding of this impor-



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“The real danger in demanding ever higher and stronger leadership is that one day we might get it . . . Just now the Western world is having a Weimar moment. We should know where that led.”

tant point, please request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy.*)

Notice what is said in the beginning of the chapter. “For behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah . . . the mighty man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, and the diviner and the elder; the captain of fifty and the honorable man, the counselor and the skillful artisan . . .” (verses 1-3).

In other words, certain Western nations will become bereft of competent leadership in all fields of endeavor, including the art of government. The cupboard will be swept clean. A residue of incompetents and no-hopers will man the ruling establishment. Complain though you may of today’s leaders, “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet.”

Notice Isaiah’s prediction: “I will give children to be their princes [rulers], and babes shall rule over them” (verse 4). This passage is not speaking of literal children and infants, but future leaders who will lack maturity, wisdom and common sense. King Solomon tells us that “foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child” (Proverbs 22:15), and the rulers of the future will behave as children sometimes do—very foolishly.

A more sinister brand of leadership

Simon Jenkins concluded his feature article with this telling comment: “The real danger in demanding ever higher and stronger leadership *is that one day we might get it.* A truly strong leader might emerge and start calling all the tunes. He is unlikely to be liberal or democratic. Just now the Western world is having a Weimar moment. *We should know where that led.*”

How perceptive!

This is, of course, referring to the Weimar Republic of the 1920s and early ’30s, a weak German government that paved the way for the rise of the cruel, dictatorial Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler.

The biblical books of Daniel and Revelation describe a political and religious dictatorship coming in Central Europe that will shock and astonish the whole world. You need to read more about it. Please request our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled.* ❖

World News and Prophecy Seminars

People are often heard to say, “What in the world is going on?” The editorial staff of this publication is dedicated to making sense of today’s news within the framework of biblical understanding and prophecies that God’s Word indicates are yet to occur. If you appreciate what you are reading in this publication, then you may desire to attend a weekend *World News and Prophecy* seminar.

The writers of this publication attempt to meet their reading audience as often as possible to engage the readers regarding the great geopolitical and cultural concerns of our time.

News, the Bible, God, the future and you—put it all together and ask yourself, What is in store?

If you would like to experience the pages of this publication live and in person, please contact Darris McNeely at Darris_McNeely@ucg.org.

Upcoming Seminars

- Akron, Ohio, March 18, 2006
- Beloit, Wisconsin, Nov. 4, 2006



A Page on the World

Reviews of books that count, endure and light the path ahead

The Next Superpower?

By Ambassador Rockwell A. Schnabel, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005, ISBN 0742545474.

Reviewed by Darris McNeely



Last May the French voted “no” to the European Constitution. Ever since, many have speculated that the European project is stalled or halted. Nothing could be further from the truth. The European Community is still a potent force in world affairs and growing larger. Anyone who thinks Europe will not be a player, if not *the* player, on the future geopolitical scene does not understand our current world.

The Next Superpower? shows how the structure of the European colossus is building, one layer at a time.

Rockwell Schnabel wrote this book after serving as U.S. ambassador to the European Union from 2001 to 2005. He is a businessman from California, born in the Netherlands but raised in America.

Most Americans do not appreciate the significance of what has developed in Europe during the past 50 years. Many see the union as nothing more than a trading bloc, if it even shows up on their radar screens. Even the experts, such as former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, as recently as 1999 dismissed the euro (the EU common currency) as a “failure.” Yet Europe has become an economic power in today’s world and is well on the path to becoming a global power of the first magnitude.

Not everyone has so lightly dismissed the European Union. Some recognize the threat the EU poses to American economic and geopolitical dominance.

In September 2003 an article appeared in the American magazine *The Weekly Standard* titled, “Against United Europe.” The article was written by a British journalist and advocated an anti-EU strategy by developing ties with Eastern member states and advising Britain not to adopt the euro. It concluded: “It is not too late for the United States to help stop the European superstate from becoming a reality.”

Mr. Schnabel argues that the European Union is a reality—that there is no turning back despite the problems of the constitution and the current talks over the admission of Turkey.

He does, however, look at the EU as a guarantee of stability among its members and a force for democracy and Western values in neighboring countries. America, in his view, needs to learn how to work with this rising power to insure a continued voice in world affairs. Bible prophecy shows America will be eclipsed on the world stage by a power centered in Europe.

The core of the book is chapters 2 and 3, “The European Union as an Economic Superpower” and “The European Union as a Geopolitical Superpower.” Chapter 2 begins with a definition of “superpower” from the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “[a state] which has the power to act decisively in pursuit of interests which embrace the whole world.”

Through a complex bureaucracy that includes myriad rules, laws, statutes and standards, the EU has managed to thwart such powerful

businesses as Microsoft and General Electric from business deals in Europe. Farmers in Indiana plant only acceptable crops so as not to lose access to the lucrative European market. Even McDonalds was forced to alter chemicals used in toys in Happy Meals because they did not meet EU standards.

Simply put, the EU has in place a regulatory regime that it seeks to impose on the rest of the world. This could have large consequences for the innovation and growth of U.S. businesses, since the EU promotes its way of regulation to the rest of the world.

This obsession with regulation has led one EU trade negotiator to say the world suffers from “a deficit of global rules.” This logic leads to the conclusion that pollution, poverty and disease do not respect national borders in a global economy. So, the solution is “global governance.”

“The main role of the European Union in international affairs, both political and economical, must be to give teeth and to give bite to the multilateralism,” says Pascal Lamy, director-general of the World Trade Organization. Mr. Lamy quotes EU father Jean Monnet that the EU is “nothing but a step towards the organization of tomorrow’s world.”

Such statements bring to mind the description in Revelation 18 of a world economic system that dominates the end-time events.

The book describes the difference between “hard” and “soft” power. Hard power is military and economic might, both of which America possesses in abundance. The EU does not have the same degree of military status as America today. Soft power is a co-optive power, the ability to manipulate another nation through the attractiveness of one’s culture or values. It is this soft power, the ability to coerce favorable actions from other nations without intervention, where the EU is gaining ground.

Chapter 3 describes how the EU is developing the geopolitical power to enforce its economic status. A 2004 CIA think tank report stated: “The EU, rather than NATO, will increasingly become the primary institution for Europe, and the role which Europeans shape for themselves on the world stage is most likely to be projected through it.”

Europe knows the major problems of today’s world (weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) will demand their direct action. Their goal is to guarantee their own security entirely without U.S. assistance. That day has not yet arrived, but they have plans to develop their own military defense.

Economic, demographic and political forces are rising that will force the EU to act on its own behalf apart from the confines of the old Atlantic alliance. Large events propel large responses. And history shows the result is not always what the architects planned. Europe is rising from among the nations as a superpower, and in time it will be part of the largest world power bloc ever known.

Bible prophecy shows us the outline of what is to come. This book shows some of the details and helps us see how it is developing. ❖

Gross Domestic Product—Is It the Measuring Stick of Success?

If you look only at GDP, things might seem pretty good for the U.S. economy. But there are other factors to consider.

by Darrell Keisel

When we look at the economic health of the United States, the main thing many people look at is Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is the total of all transactions of the goods and services of the United States. It is the broadest available picture of the country's economic growth.

As of Oct. 1, 2005, GDP has been positive for 16 consecutive quarters. That is four years in a row. While the GDP of other nations has struggled at times to remain positive, America's GDP keeps going forward.

The most recent figures show the GDP for July through September 2005 rose 3.8 percent—a good healthy rise. GDP has now expanded at a rate between 3 percent and 4.5 percent for eight consecutive quarters, the longest streak of such consistent growth since World War II.

But before Americans get out the noisemakers and confetti in celebration, we should look at how the United States attained this feat.

GDP growth in spite of economic sluggishness?

Over the last several years of steady GDP growth, the manufacturing sector has been declining. The service sector has grown, but only sluggishly. And unemployment was up during some of these same quarters the GDP surged ahead.

So, how does the United States get the GDP to keep moving forward so well in spite of all this? As a friend of mine, a local bank president, says, "We are a great nation because we spend a lot of money." That's pretty much it in a nutshell.

Referring to growth after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, *The Wall Street Journal* said of the GDP expansion of July-September 2005, "Increased consumer and federal government spending contributed heavily to the increase" ("Economy Marks Solid Growth Despite Storms," Oct. 29, 2005).

First we need to realize that a product, let's

say a microwave oven, could be made in China, shipped from California to Maine by a Mexican trucking company and sold in a Dutch-owned store, with each step in this process adding to America's GDP.

What has added most to GDP growth is the volume of foreign goods sold in America. As late as 1975 the country had a trade surplus of \$9 billion. By 1980 that turned into a trade deficit of \$24 billion. In 1995, the deficit soared to \$150 billion; in 2000, to \$436 billion; in 2003, to \$532 billion; and in 2004, to \$600 billion. This year, the deficit will be around \$750 to 800 billion. Many economists believe that these trade deficit increases cannot continue without an eventual economic collapse.

The unique part is how America could make GDP grow so much without a corresponding increase in national productivity. In other words, how can the United States spend so much more money without Americans making more money? Good question.

In 2004 when the trade deficit was \$600 billion, the U.S. government also overspent its budget by \$400 billion. You could say the nation "lost" \$1 trillion last year. And yet it seems to be going forward.

Spending other nations' money

What the United States is doing now is unique—financing its deficit by borrowing huge sums of other nations' money and spending it.

Remember when the United States used to have gold bullion sitting in Fort Knox backing its currency? Those days are long gone. In fact, no major country has precious metals backing its currency today. Instead most countries today have either American treasury bills or European Union treasury bills backing their currency.

It's like you going down to the bank and buying a certificate of deposit. You buy a certificate of deposit with a maturity date and a specific amount of interest you will receive at the time

In 2004 when the trade deficit was \$600 billion, the U.S. government also overspent its budget by \$400 billion. You could say the nation "lost" \$1 trillion last year. And yet it seems to be going forward. How?

of maturity. The issuer of the certificate of deposit meanwhile uses your money as it wishes until the due date. The U.S. government does the same thing, only on a much bigger scale.

The money invested in U.S. treasury bills, in large part, comes from the trade surpluses that other countries have with America. For instance, as of September 2005, China had \$770 billion; Hong Kong, \$120 billion; Taiwan, \$250 billion, South Korea, \$250 billion and on it goes. In the back pages of *The Economist* magazine you can find the breakdown per country of GDP growth, trade deficit or surplus, as well as foreign reserves.

It should be noted here that during the Reagan administration, America's Social Security money was moved from a "locked box" to U.S. treasury bonds so the money could draw interest. This money is in the same pool as the treasury bills purchased by other nations as well as U.S. investors.

You may have noticed that after Hurricane Katrina, President Bush pledged up to \$200 billion for disaster relief and rebuilding. Seven billion dollars has been pledged to fight the bird flu and the list goes on. The United States keeps spending more and borrowing more. Actually, as the government spends more money, regardless of where it gets it, that spending in turn makes GDP rise because it puts more money into the economy.

Conservative-minded Americans shake their heads, saying, "But it isn't our money!" This protest is generally ignored. It's the 21st century, with its "live for today" mentality!

Relentless savers vs. reckless spenders

The second big gusher of money comes from the private sector. The world's pension funds, mutual funds and insurance money have \$46 trillion at their disposal globally. In order to tap into this huge pool of money, the Federal Reserve dropped its lending rates from 6 percent to 1 percent in a single year. This caused an avalanche of new home buyers and builders, as well as corporate building.

"That there should be such a glut [of money] when U.S. consumers save

none of their current income and their federal government borrows heavily, might seem paradoxical. But plenty of others do save and accumulate cash to invest, including U.S. corporations. Abroad [outside the United States] many families' saving habits are the mirror image of American's free-spending ways. European and Japanese workers save far bigger shares of their incomes and Chinese households save a stunning 25% of their income. In all, China is expected to have about \$116 billion to invest abroad this year, much of which goes into U.S. bonds" ("Huge Flood of Capital to Invest Spurs World-Wide Risk Taking," *The Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 3, 2005).

U.S. household savings rates have been declining steadily for many years,



but not until the April-June 2005 quarter have the savings rates gone negative. Savings for the third quarter dropped to a negative 1 percent of personal income. Many Americans have become dependent on "home equity loans," borrowing money on their biggest asset, their homes.

"The money is out there looking for people to use it. People talk about a wall of money everywhere," says Peter Fisher, a former Federal Reserve and Treasury Department official. "Bankers talk about too much money chasing deals. Private-equity funds talk of money chasing them. And buyers of corporate and asset-backed debt seem to come at the bond market from all directions" (ibid.).

In general, America has become the "Great Consumer" while many other nations have become the "Great

Lenders." It is an illusion that spending borrowed money is good for the economy, because, of course, it has to be paid back at some point. America is recklessly spending money it is borrowing from foreigners.

Unsustainable trend

The question is not whether this is a sustainable trend. Economists, government leaders and bankers know this has to be turned around. The question is how do you do it without a domino effect?

In a global economy, even seemingly small adjustments can lead to the "housing bubble" bursting or some other economic downturn that could make foreign investors fear the loss of their investments. Or if other nations find their money could make a better return somewhere else, that could be fatal to the U.S. economy.

American consumer greed for more material possessions continues. Accepting less is not a part of the American psyche. How do you change that?

What God says

In the end, it is God who blesses or curses us. If U.S. citizens, as a nation, put God first in their lives, He promises to bless them. But if people greedily try to get all they can, never acknowledging God or thanking Him for His blessings, disobeying His laws, then they will receive curses from Him. Deuteronomy 28 lists blessings and curses. God says if the United States turns its back on Him, this is what will happen:

"The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which he commanded you" (Deuteronomy 28:43-35).

Does this sound like America? It's time to turn back to God before it's too late. ❖

In Brief . . .

The World Stood by as Hundreds of Thousands Died in Darfur

In spite of some pressure from the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and the African Union, the murdering in Darfur and of refugees from there has continued unabated. The death and displacement toll has now reached the point that this tragedy ranks among the greatest in modern times.

The press covered the crisis sporadically, but for the most part, the media catered to the world's appetite for the latest political intrigue, the overworked debate about going to war in Iraq and, of course, the weather.

While hundreds died in hurricanes and on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, hundreds of thousands died in the once gentle land of western Sudan.

The Sudanese government claimed it did not sanction or support the "Janjaweed" Arabs, who with their private militias pillaged, raped and murdered their way through the province of Darfur with impunity. Yet the numerous eyewitness accounts of government aircraft bombing and strafing in conjunction with militia attacks from horseback make it piercingly evident that the government is responsible for the deaths of its citizens.

The UN's World Food Program reports that 3.5 million people are hungry, 2.5 million have been forced from their homes and 400,000 have died.

The crisis was too big for any one or group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or private charities to resolve. It truly requires the international community to support the African Union in forcing Sudan's government to stop the carnage. Yet Sudan's neighbors and the world community of nations have failed miserably to come to the rescue of Darfur.

This is largely an intra-Muslim dispute, as Arab Muslims kill and savage black Muslims. Since Sudan's government is a radical Islamic government, perhaps this has caused the world to use kid gloves in dealing with it.

The pressure from the outside world, such as it was, was too little. The government was plainly willing to do whatever was necessary to maintain power, and it unleashed the Arabs to "clean out" rebel elements. Washington, London, Brussels, Moscow, Beijing and other world capitals should have spoken loudly and often about the evil taking place.

The Muslim world's leaders kept their lips closed, saying little to condemn the slaughter, to condemn the inhumanity or to pressure Sudan to cease.

Truly, the world stood by—and stands by, still, to its monumental shame.

—Cecil E. Maramville

"LIGHT," (Continued from page 16)

dants of Israel, and for that matter humanity as a whole, have not yet been lifted by God's Anointed. Until that age of light comes to pass, our walk of faith is guided by the great light that our Heavenly Father ordained the Messiah to bring to our darkened age.

I sincerely believe that the degree to which we embrace, internalize and exude this message is the degree to which we will be able to stand throughout the upheaval of kingdoms portrayed in Daniel, the sobering events foretold in Jesus' Olivet Prophecy, and the tumultuousness conveyed in Revelation.

A throne of straw

A great light shines in that phrase "for unto us a Child is born." Just imagine—this was pronounced nearly 700 years before the birth of Jesus. Since God foreknew this special birth, He was equally knowledgeable and purposeful about the location of the birth. The Christ child did not land by happenstance in the straw of a manger in a stable converted into a guestroom for an overcrowded inn, but was placed there by divine providence.

God was on target, not out of luck, when there was "no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). His path to ultimately reign over all mankind was inaugurated in the form of a helpless newborn babe on a "throne" of straw. Our faith will be tested and magnified as we reflect on what the One who became Christ brought about as He emptied Himself of His divine position and took on our form (Philippians 2:5-8). It does truly take one to know one, and Christ became one of us so that there might be "a room" for us in His Kingdom.

A great light shines in contemplating the utterance, "unto us a Son is given." God not only proclaimed through Isaiah that the line of man would produce the Messiah, but that the seed of God would be incorporated into

the master plan to bring humanity back into alignment with our Creator. Just imagine the mind and love of God who willingly allowed a member of the eternal Godhead, the one known as the Word (John 1:1-3), to become the atoning sacrifice for all humanity's sins.

God sees things as if they already are

A great light is displayed by understanding the depth and breadth of these words: "The government will be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

For 6,000 years of recorded human history, God has watched and cried as He witnessed the corruption of humanly devised systems, even in those governments that tout that they are the best humanity has produced.

God, who sees things that will be as if they already are, shares that future with us in Isaiah's prophetic writings: "The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth" (Isaiah 11:2-4).

These marvelous qualities were not only on display at Christ's first coming, but Daniel 2:44 plainly measures the jurisdiction of such needed governance. This passage states, "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

Notice two profound conclusions: 1) Human government will no longer govern the world, as



The great question is not whether a great light has shined, but whether we have embraced, internalized and, in turn, displayed that light of hope for others. Can we come to appreciate that prophecy is more than facts? Its purpose is to enhance our faith in a good God.

the kingdom shall “not be left to other people” and 2) This new divine government will be ageless, as “it shall stand forever.”

At given times in history, rulers or founders of countries have been awarded the title of “father of the nation.” In America, George Washington comes to mind. Likewise, Christ is going to be the “Father” or founder of an everlasting spiritual Kingdom. Yes, as *Adam Clarke’s Commentary* renders it, Christ is “the Father of an Everlasting Age.”

Taking a moment to imagine

This great light is further defined as the “Prince of Peace.” One estimate says that humanity has only experienced 300 years of peace in 6,000 years of known history. Now, imagine a world at peace. No roadside bombings in Iraq. No ambushes in Afghanistan. No tribal warfare in Central Africa. No drive-by shootings in our urban areas. No abductions in Chechnya. No car burnings in France.

No longer will young soldiers eye one another across a “no-man’s-land” surrounding some cold, forsaken and forgotten line of demarcation penned by politicians in a back room. No longer a world of “tit for tat,” or “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” that leaves all blind and toothless.

You are left with a question

The great question is not whether

a great light has shined, but whether we have embraced, internalized and, in turn, displayed that light of hope for others. Can we come to appreciate that prophecy is more than facts? Its purpose is to enhance our faith in a good God.

Such faith is made known by our actions—everyday actions that prove to others and ourselves that we truly do believe that God exists, that He came to this earth in the form of a baby and died for us. Everyday actions in our homes, work places and schools that are defined by wisdom, justice and peace. Everyday actions that are not bound by the moment or what we’ll get in return, but bound by our endless desire to be like the one prophesied in Isaiah 9. Everyday actions that are molded by a personal resolve concerning our God, that He has not and never will abandon us.

Like He did for the ancients of Isaiah’s time, God always lays out a path of return, if only we will receive it and share it.

The admonishing millennial refrain of Isaiah 30:21 that encourages us, “This is the way, walk in it” is given further breadth by the defining and empowering words of Jesus in John 8:12 as He declares, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

Yes, a great light has been and is shining! It’s time to accept and follow. ❖

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by Robin Webber

A Great Light Has Shined

Times are troubling. Things just don't seem to be like they used to be. Whatever happened to life just "playing out" like it did for previous generations? Talk of God isn't heard in the public place like it used to be. National leaders seem to be cut from a different cloth than the founding fathers. A new world order seems to be emerging with powers rising in the Orient. These emerging forces challenge and threaten what has been the status quo.

The economy is getting worse, not better, and money doesn't seem to go as far as it used to go. What is a person supposed to do? And to top it off, some are saying it's going to get worse before it gets better! Yeah, call them for what they are—"doom and gloomers." Does this sound like your world? Yes, it probably does.

But it's also the world of the prophet Isaiah around 700 B.C., as God was allowing the "curtain to come down" on the covenant peoples of Israel and Judah, who had increasingly pushed the Ten Commandments out of the marketplace of ideas and values. They wanted to be like everyone else. God granted them their wish. Like every other kingdom, they would be swallowed up by a new world order arising from the city-states of the Mesopotamian plains.

Isaiah seemingly "nails the coffin shut" when he pens in Isaiah 8:22, "Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness." Ouch! Certainly no pardon for severity of punishment or clemency for good behavior is given here. Pretty bleak! You might say, "Where's the love?"

Well, that "love" starts to unfold in chapter 9, which

in the scroll of Isaiah's time, would have made for one complete line of thought.

Verse 1 illuminates a future hope in which "the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed." That hope is magnified in verse 2, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined."

We need to ask, "What is happening and to whom?" Is it only for the people of Israel and Judah or will we, too, recognize that great light? The people of Galilee would be the first to see this light. But the expansive nature of this prophecy includes you and me in the here and now.

The brilliance of God's sustaining entrance onto the earth is given definition in the following verses of Isaiah 9:6-7. It is one of the great messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. The titles and attributes of this light do not merely describe the events that Jesus Christ would fulfill during His first coming, but also at His prophesied second coming.

Stepping-stones of faith

The message is even more powerful than the lyrical beauty of Handel's *Messiah*, for it includes stepping-stones of faith for all peoples of all times in periods of darkness. Its illuminating message of hope was offered by a loving God to fortify our personal faith as this world around us grows increasingly hostile to His ways.

The words speak of a time that was not completely fulfilled at Jesus' birth, because "the yoke of his burden" and "the rod of the oppressor" (verse 4) upon the descen-

(See "LIGHT," page 14)