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The Element of Surprise

Included in the many end-time prophecies is an often-overlooked element that stands as a powerful warning in addition to the events to take place. Why is it people will be absolutely stunned by the suddenness of prophecies being fulfilled, and what can we learn from this lesson?

by Clyde Kilough

The Communist leader of East Germany, Erich Honecker, boldly proclaimed in 1989 that the Berlin Wall would stand for another 100 years! Ten months later the wall was gone, but his infamous quote lives on in a newspaper headline glued to little pieces of the wall and sold to tourists. I bought one recently on a trip to Europe.

The Berlin Wall fell suddenly—Nov. 9-12, 1989—and Honecker wasn't the only one surprised. Its dismantling, and the failure of the entire European communist system that it symbolized, came with a speed that surprised the entire world.

Almost instantly a building boom began, and the East Berlin drabness was soon replaced by modern, beautiful skyscrapers, business towers and entertainment centers. That transformation, too, came so fast it was almost stunning.

Surprising Muslim protests and European backlash

It was also while I was in Europe that the Muslim world violently reacted to the Danish cartoons depicting Islam's prophet Muhammad. This



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Erich Honecker, the leader of East Germany, proclaimed that the Berlin Wall would stand for another 100 years. Within a year it was gone.

reaction, too, erupted suddenly, its intensity catching many governments and pundits off guard. Just as quickly, a backlash flared up as many Europeans began venting their long-simmering anti-Muslim sentiment.

I thought at the time, it's not hard to see how, in such a divided and sensitized world, the prophesied conflict described in Daniel 11:40 could reach a boil virtually overnight. Daniel describes a "king of the South" push-

(See "SURPRISE," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Return to Jerusalem

I recently made a return trip to Jerusalem. When I was 19 years of age, 35 years ago, I spent a magical summer in Jerusalem working at the Temple Mount excavations conducted by Hebrew University. Returning to any city after that long reveals a number of changes. Jerusalem, however, is different. In Jerusalem there is a mixture of many old things that never change along with some new features that create major change.

Jerusalem has grown in the past three and a half decades. There is more traffic and new streets to accommodate the increase. New and larger hotels have sprung up to handle the increasing numbers of pilgrims coming to the city. I easily found the old hotel, which had been our home for the summer. It is closed and boarded up now. But what memories it held as I stood in the abandoned courtyard.

The Temple Mount, or Haram al-Sharif to Muslims, hasn't changed in hundreds of years. The al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock stand on the mount in all their beauty. Jews gather in prayer at the Western Wall, although when I first touched it years ago it was called the Wailing Wall. Further excavations finished the work I was part of back in 1971. Now the southern wall of the Temple Mount is cleared all the way down to the period of the first century, the time of Christ and the apostles. *The Economist* recently called this 35-acre site the "most explosive piece of real estate in the world." The platform and holy places are under the supervision of an Islamic authority. No one is happy with this arrangement. Constant irritants arise over Jewish access to the area and ongoing Muslim "improvements" that disturb valuable archaeological information.

The biggest change one sees in Jerusalem today is the winding wall being erected as a barrier between Palestinian and Israeli areas. The suicide bombings of recent years prompted this action by the Sharon administration. It was seen as the only way to stop this form of violence and has been effective in reducing the incidents. The wall cuts through Jewish and Palestinian neighborhoods. One wonders, who is being shut out by the wall? Are the Israelis boxing themselves in or shutting the Palestinians out? It is like the question asked in Robert Frost's poem, "Before I build a wall I'd ask to know what I was walling in or walling out..."

I passed through that wall on the way into Bethlehem, just south of Jerusalem. On the Israeli side the wall was without any slogans or graffiti. But the Palestinian side was different. Spray-painted slogans and epithets showed the anger and hostility of the Palestinian view. It reminded me of another infamous wall, the Berlin Wall. The West German side of that wall had some of the most imaginative graffiti ever written.

This wall will provide a temporary benefit, but in doing so it will create other problems requiring attention. And so the struggle and turmoil that is Jerusalem goes on. As the prophet Zechariah said, Jerusalem has become "...a very heavy stone for all peoples" (Zechariah 12:3).

The late King Hussein of Jordan once said that Jerusalem was so holy to so many, therefore no human power could hold it together. It should be subject only to the sovereignty of God. It is doubtful any earthly power could define this in practical terms. *The Economist* suggested recently that "the mount be denationalized with international guarantees ensuring freedom of worship for all."

Bible prophecy shows that armies and nations will converge again on Jerusalem before the coming of Jesus Christ. Could the trigger for this event stem from an effort by some entity to create such a status for Jerusalem or the holy mount? We will wait to see, knowing that the end of any such time will see the return of Jesus to Jerusalem. Like you, I'm sure, we'll want front row seats at that event.



—Darris McNeely

Darris McNeely

“SURPRISE,” (Continued from page 1)

ing at the “king of the North” (see our booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* for more details). Today tensions sufficient to set the world on fire can spark suddenly, and in a variety of ways, easily catching people totally off guard.

It has happened before—and will happen again.

How quickly life can change

We should know how quickly our world can change. Since 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, Americans are acutely aware of how events, whether man-made or natural, can swiftly alter a nation’s future course. Similar wake-up calls have hit other countries, too, such as the Madrid, Bali and London bombings, or the “Christmas tsunami.”

Our vulnerability to sudden change should make us heed an often-overlooked, but critically important, element of prophecy. Consider a common thread in the following prophecies.

Isaiah 5:7-20 describes a time in Israel’s history eerily similar to today, when spiritually confused people called evil good and good evil. Because of their sins, verse 26 foretells a time when their punishment would come “with *speed, swiftly.*”

Judah and Israel experienced the suddenness of prophetic fulfillment on several occasions. Jeremiah prophesied, “Destruction upon destruction is cried, for the whole land is plundered. *Suddenly* my tents are plundered, and my curtains in a moment” (Jeremiah 4:20). After describing the covetousness, dishonesty and rebellion of God’s people, he warned of punishment that “will *suddenly* come upon us” (Jeremiah 6:26; see 13-19 and 22-26).

We would be fools to dismiss these accounts as mere ancient history and miss the lessons for our day.

Zephaniah also took up the theme of sudden destruction, but plainly with an eye on events not yet fulfilled. “The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and *hastens quickly*... For He will make *speedy* riddance of all those who dwell in the land” (Zephaniah 1:14, 18).

In the verses immediately following, God urgently pleads for us to



Reuters/David Brauchli

A demonstrator pounds away the Berlin Wall as East Berlin border guards look on from above the Brandenburg Gate Nov. 11, 1989.

see the storm clouds on the horizon. “Gather yourselves together...before the day of the LORD’s anger comes upon you! Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD’s anger” (2:1-3).

Malachi, too, emphasizes this: “And the Lord, whom you seek, will *suddenly* come to His temple” (3:1).

Jesus Himself stressed the concept of suddenness and surprise with regard to His return: “Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—...lest coming *suddenly*, he find you sleeping” (Mark 13:35-36).

One scripture carries a particularly powerful metaphor in light of the sudden fall of the Berlin Wall. Isaiah 30 tells of a time when people won’t listen to God, or even read the obvious “handwriting on the wall.” God declares, therefore, “This iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose *breaking comes suddenly, in an instant*” (verse 13).

So was the Berlin Wall—political

pressure built up for years until events could be held back no longer. One observer wrote, “The fall of the wall began the day it was built, only it took 30 years for it to be torn down.” The sins of a nation are likewise! Unrepented of, they build up for a while, seemingly without effect. But when God calls for an accounting, the destruction can come with shocking suddenness.

We see in all of these scriptures two things: When God determines it is time to move, He is not delayed by anything—He moves, and He can move swiftly. At the same time, people blind to the signs of the times are staggered by the apparent suddenness of unfolding events.

These events won’t be sudden to God, though! He’s laid out these predictions for thousands of years. Yet He has embedded the element of sudden surprise throughout His prophetic warnings. It’s as if He is alerting us not only about coming events, but also to another danger. We are easily prone to falling asleep, only to be stunned by the suddenness with which those events take place.

In one of the most penetrating parables in the Bible, Christ warns of the frantic reaction many will have upon realizing they are waking up too late.

Carefully read through the parable of the virgins in Matthew 25:6-13, and put yourself in the shoes of the foolish. Can you hear the angst and desperation in their voices crying “Lord, Lord, open to us!”? Can you sense the depth of feeling Christ had and His sense of urgency as He pleads His point: “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming”?

Understand very clearly what Christ is telling us: When these things begin to happen, we will either have a *sense of urgency before*, or a *sense of panic after!* And those who do not have a sense of urgency will be stunned by the suddenness of the events unfolding.

This article isn’t really about prophecy—it’s about our *response* to prophecy. Where we are concerned individually, being given an understanding of prophecy is only as good as our reaction to it! Both history and fulfilled prophecy stand as a witness that human nature is easily lulled to sleep. Ignorance, deception, skepticism and apathy work powerfully to depress the spiritual senses. If we are not stirred to spiritual action by understanding prophecy, then what good is it for us to know all of these things?

Back to Europe

While in Europe I talked with a minister in Italy, Carmelo Anastasi, about the general mood of Europeans today. He said, “When is the last time in history Europe had 60 years of peace? We are in a golden era of unprecedented peace and prosperity. This is coming on the heels of the two worst wars in history that devastated us. But look how quickly we have rebuilt. The mood in Europe today is, ‘We don’t need God!’”

It’s true. Europe’s rise from the rubble has been swift and spectacular. But its humanistic, materialistic system will lead the entire world to places it does not envision. In end-time prophecy, Europe is described in terms of not only the king of the North, but as the final culmination of an institution sym-

bolized by the great empire of Babylon (see our booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* for more on this). This system eventually brings the world to the brink of annihilation before God decisively steps in to save us.

Revelation 18:4-5 warns God’s people to come out of this sin-laden “Babylon” before He destroys it. In four verses (8, 10, 17 and 19) we again note the element of surprise at work for those in its grip. These scriptures point out that not only will the world lament its downfall, but people will marvel at how remarkably fast the system crumbles. “In one day” and “in one hour” are phrases denoting the shock and awe at how speedily God brings its ruin.

No doubt, that is why Jesus said, “Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of

the whole earth” (Luke 21:34-35).

Snares work precisely because they snap their victims suddenly, unexpectedly. Jesus continued, “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (verse 36).

Watch!

Watch for the future, keeping your eyes on the coming Kingdom of God.

Watch in the present, keeping your eyes on what is happening in the world, understanding the prophecies being fulfilled.

Watch by learning lessons of the past, keeping your eyes on the rearview mirror of history, learning the lessons of how suddenly events can unfold when God decides to intervene.

Above all, remember: Those who have a sense of urgency now will not have a sense of panic later, when these things surely come to pass. The choice is ours. ❖

How Can You Make Sense of the News?

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World News & Prophecy

Russian Resurgence in a Unipolar World

Russia is a superpower no longer, so what is behind President Putin's bold actions toward Hamas, Iran, Eastern Europe and China? Russia will play a critical role in geopolitics and globalization in the 21st century. No longer a superpower, it is still a superplayer.

by Cecil E. Maranville

A self-confident Vladimir Putin took a reporter's tough question head-on last February. The question had to do with whether Moscow was using its control of natural gas supplies as a political tool. The reporter was referring to the Russian company Gazprom, which forced Ukraine to accept a huge price increase in January. Because the Kremlin owns a controlling interest in the giant oil and gas company, Gazprom's policies are Russia's policies.

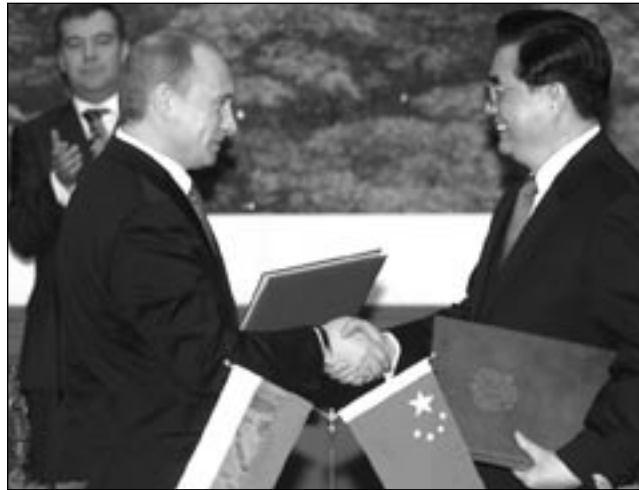
Russia wants membership in the World Trade Organization, which would not look favorably on what amounts to Russian imperialism, meddling in the Ukraine to hobble its pro-Western government.

But rather than step back from that impression, Putin shot back to the reporter's question: "We still have plenty of nuclear rockets, too!" (Owen Matthews, "Russian Nukes Redux," *Newsweek International*, Feb. 13, 2006). Such bravado would hardly comfort the WTO. He added that new Russian missiles were capable of outmaneuvering any missile-defense system. The last comment was for Washington, as the United States is the only nation with such a system.

Putin's speech played well to the Russians, with whom he remains popular (he won his second term with 70 percent of the vote; his closest rival received only 14 percent), but it's all for show. In reality, the new missiles are only in the development stage, and the rockets and submarines needed to launch the missiles are themselves nearly past their period of usefulness.

A decade from now, according to Russian security expert Dr. Aleksei Arbatov, "Russia is likely to have just 500 warheads...to America's 2,000 state-of-the-art nukes" (ibid.).

So, nuclear arms aren't what makes Russia a player on the world scene. Energy is the key.



Reuters/Sergei Karpuhin

Russian President Vladimir Putin and China's President Hu Jintao agreed to double trade by 2010, especially deepening energy cooperation.

Nuclear arms aren't what makes Russia a player on the world scene. Energy is the key.

Not nukes, but energy

President Putin makes no secret of the fact that he would dearly like to steer Russia back into the ranks of the world's leading nations. Russia was a superpower in terms of nuclear capability, never economically. The nation remains poor, but that is in the process of changing—slowly.

Energy resources are a large part of that story. Gazprom is Russia's largest company and the largest gas-producing company in the world. As Russia's constitution requires that Putin step down at the end of his second term (only two years from now), some speculate that he would like to take the helm of Gazprom.

The company is destined to become even larger. Gazprom has or is in the process of signing deals with China, India, Japan, Korea, Italy, Germany, France, Iran, Britain, Austria, Belgium, Turkey, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, Belarus and the United States. It hopes to be a major supplier to the United States, providing up to 20 percent

of America's liquefied natural gas needs within a decade or so. In our energy-starved world, Gazprom's oil and gas are in high demand. (That's right—oil. Few realize that Russia is the world's second largest producer of black gold.)

The 2004 tragic terrorist attack on a Belsan school that left hundreds of students dead was a watershed event in Russia. Afterwards, Putin tightened the reins of federal power. Russian citizens liked the move, for it seems that they prefer a strong central government.

Shortly after Belsan, Putin announced Moscow would appoint provincial governors, rather than have provincial elections choose them. Shortly thereafter, Putin supporters in the Duma (the Russian parliament) introduced a law to that effect. The Russian president proposes the governors, and their respective legislatures approve or disapprove. Although widely criticized outside Russia as an autocratic move, Putin shook off the complaints.

When President George Bush publicly criticized what he called the rolling back of freedoms in Russia, Putin angrily lashed back, accusing the United States of attempting to enforce its personal vision of democracy on the rest of the world—a not-so-subtle slam on the American role in democratizing Afghanistan and Iraq.

Former Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov said recently that he sees his country becoming more and more like a dictatorship, reflecting upon state control of business and manipulation of the judiciary and the media.

Oppose the United States any way it can

Russia annoyed much of the Western world by inviting the newly elected Hamas leaders of the Palestinian government to Moscow for "talks." It was a symbolic move that could only help raise the stature of Hamas. So why would Russia do such a thing? It is but another illustration of the desire of Putin's Russia to be a major player in the world's geopolitics again.

The recent translation of two Iraqi documents dated on the eve of the 2003 war revealed that the Russian ambassador relayed detailed intelligence on the American-led coalition's battle plans and force strength to Saddam Hussein's government. Russia seems to be willing to oppose the United States anywhere that it

can, just as it did in the Cold War. Moscow is clearly smarting under the dominance of the world's only superpower.

Another poke in America's eye was Russia's out-of-the-blue offer to Tehran to provide the Iranians with the enriched uranium they would require to fuel their Russian-built reactors. The offer temporarily sidetracked Washington's tough stance against Iran's ambitions.

Furthermore, Russia has been working for several years to improve its relationships with the Islamic world. Even though the Iranians turned down Russia's offer of enriched uranium, Russian stock in the eyes of Muslims went up. And it helped its image even more by making it clear to the other members of the United Nations Security Council that it would veto a move to sanction Iran.

If the Iranian crisis leads to war, Russia would still benefit, because the price of oil would go up. And, unlike Saudi Arabia, Russia does not need the use of the Strait of Hormuz to export its product (it uses pipelines and railroad tank cars).

SCO

Lastly, we need to look at the SCO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Formed by Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 2001, this intergovernmental organization is little known in the West. Yet we are likely to hear more and more of it in the future.

Kazakhstan holds huge oil reserves that the United States would like to tap. It's also strategically located for oil pipelines.

Uzbekistan was a critical link in the U.S. military's stoppling of Taliban-led Afghanistan, allowing the Americans to establish a base there, only 90 miles north of the Afghanistan border. But last year, Uzbekistan—under pressure from fellow SCO members—told the Americans to leave.

SCO is not a military alliance, but it does deal with security issues, enabling intergovernmental cooperation on pursuing, apprehending and prosecuting drug dealers, terrorists and other criminals. It is also a common market of sorts, facilitating business between central Asian countries.

No one paid much attention to the SCO when it began, but now that it is well established, Washington and NATO are taking notice. Washington recently asked for observer status at SCO's annual meeting, but the group rebuffed the request.

SCO just announced it would extend invitations to four more countries to become members: Mongolia, India, Pakistan—and Iran. Iran's deputy foreign minister said this move "...could make the world more fair." And he spoke of building an Iran-Russian 'gas-and-oil-arc' by coordinating their activities as energy producing countries" (M.K. Bhadrakumar, "China, Russia Welcome Iran Into the Fold," *Asia Times*, April 18, 2006).

An Iran-Russia energy alliance would be a formidable economic force. But there is a more immediate potential consequence to SCO's invitation to Iran to become a member.

With the International Atomic Energy Agency report to the UN Security Council about Iran's nuclear program due at the end of the April, Iran's membership in this regional *security organization* affords it some credibility in debunking the U.S. assertion that it is a member of an "axis of evil." Iran can say to the world, "Here's proof that we are a responsible regional power."

As we go to press, the SCO announced that their members would hold joint military exercises in 2007.

Where these developments fit into the prophetic grid

Russia's "spoiler mentality" toward the United States does not itself threaten the latter as a superpower. But Moscow can certainly thwart American plans for Central Asian energy sources, which at the least will make energy more expensive for American consumers. At the worst, it could give Russia control over a sizable percentage of U.S. energy supplies.

And in the long term, Russia's inclinations will help to strengthen China's economic muscle, which many analysts are forecasting will present ever-increasing competition to the United States. Russian energy is critical to the continuing evolution of the European Union, which is the other primary competitor to the United States. Finally, Russia's efforts to improve its relationships with Muslim countries will coincidentally promote the slow, but steady rise of Islamic influence at the end of the age.

For related information, please see our booklets, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. ❖

European Demographics and Bible Prophecy

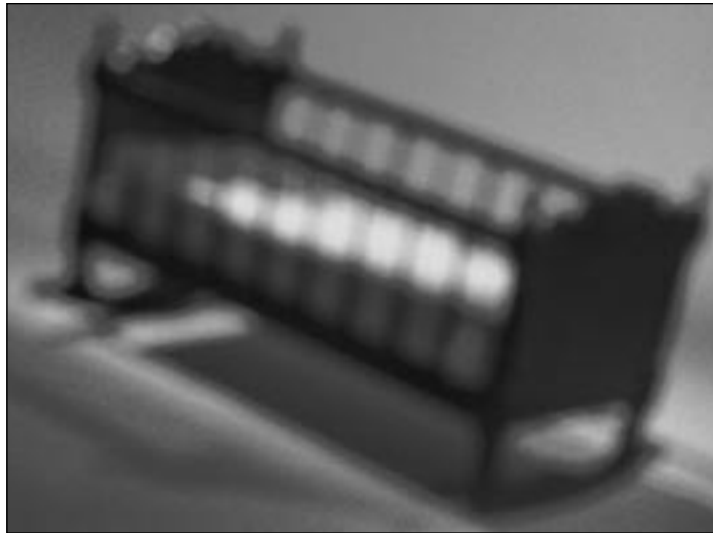
The demographic situation in Europe—particularly Western Europe—should cause us to consider how close we could be to the fulfillment of key end-time prophecies.

by Paul Kieffer and Ewin Barnett

The history of ancient Israel is a reminder of how important demographics can be. After living several generations in the land of Goshen in Egypt, the Israelites had multiplied to the point where they were viewed as a potential internal threat to Egypt's security. We read of Pharaoh's concerns in Exodus 1:9-10: "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and...in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land."

As the verses that follow show, this was the main reason for the enslavement of the Israelites. In ignorance of the dynamics of demographics, some have wondered how a group of some 70 Israelites could have become a nation numbering possibly 2 to 3 million people within a span of just over 200 years. However, a look at European history shows just how quickly population growth takes place when conditions are favorable.

Consider that 300 years ago there were an estimated 120 million people living in Europe. The next 200 years witnessed a veritable population explosion in the region. The industrial revolution with mechanization of farming, food production, improved hygiene and medical practice contributed to a remarkable reduction in infant and child mortality. By 1914 Europe's population had increased to 450 million (even though about 60 million had moved to other nations during that period). From 1780 to 1910 Germany's population



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After 200 years of European population explosion, birthrates slowed in the last century and are now well below the rate needed to sustain the population.

increased by 205 percent, from 21 million to approximately 64 million. Population growth in England and Wales was even faster. The 8 million people living in this region in 1780 had become 40 million by 1910, an increase of 400 percent (source: *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*).

However, before the turn of the 20th century, birthrates in Europe had already started to decline, primarily in the upper middle class.

From slow growth to no growth in Europe

The trend continued in the 20th century, especially following World War II. Improved educational and career opportunities, the resulting delay in marriage or childbearing, the introduction of welfare and pension systems and changing life-

Europe's non-Islamic population is slowly but surely dying out, and Europe's Islamic community is experiencing a population explosion.



Muslims old and young take part in a demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy in London.

styles with an emphasis on leisure were among the factors contributing to the decline.

Birthrates in Europe have now fallen to an average of 1.45 children per woman of childbearing age, well below the 2.1 average needed to sustain the population. At this level, the population of the EU will decline by about 5 percent in the next 40 years, even with an estimated one million legal immigrants per year.

The situation is especially critical in Germany. As of early 2006, the birthrate was 1.36 live births. Given current trends, births will drop 50 percent by the year 2050. "Germany's negative demographic development has increased," was the assessment of Hans Fleisch, chairman of the private Institute for Population and

Development in Berlin. Fleisch says the decline is evident in just the last two years. The already low birthrate of the last three decades dropped even further.

This is most acute in the former East Germany, where the average birthrate since 1990 is 0.77 live births. Reiner Klingholz, the director of the institute, summarized the situation with some humor: "With Vatican City as the exception, that's the lowest birthrate anywhere in the world." Germany's eastern region will begin to see a marked population decline after 2015.

Apart from the declining birthrate, it is also interesting to note that the number of Europeans professing Christianity declined noticeably in the last 100 years, dropping from 95

to 75 percent at the beginning of the 21st century, most of the decline just in the last 25 years. Today's Europe is also the only continent witnessing a decline in the number of Catholics. The annual number of infant baptisms in the Philippines is now more than the combined annual total for France, Italy, Poland and Spain.

A fast-growing Islamic minority

In the boom years following World War II, Western European nations hired "guest workers" (*Gastarbeiter* in German) to meet the requirements of an expanding economy. These laborers came from Turkey, Algeria, Morocco, the former Yugoslavia, etc., which either are Islamic nations or have a large Islamic population. For the most part, the guest workers were Muslim.

The term "guest worker" says it all: A guest is supposed to go home when his stay is finished. However, immigration laws and residency requirements applied equally to all, regardless of the country of origin. That resulted in millions of Muslims receiving permanent residency status in their host countries. Spouses and children joined most of the workers, having used Europe's liberal immigration family reunification rules for immediate family members.

Much of this Islamic minority is now in its third generation in Europe and its numbers are growing quickly, tripling in 30 years. Most of the growth is attributable to the high birthrates among Islamic families, currently about *three times higher* than that of traditional native Europeans.

In other words, without its Islamic contingent, Europe's population would be declining even more rapidly. Muslims currently account for about 5 percent of Europe's population and their numbers are expected to double within 15 years, while the non-Muslim population will decline by an estimated 3.5 percent.

Europe's non-Islamic population is slowly but surely *dying out*, and Europe's Islamic community is experiencing a *population explosion*. If this continues, the Islamic commu-

nity will become a sizable minority, possibly even a majority in the EU. In 2005, for example, there were more children of Islamic parentage born in France than of a traditional French background.

Europe's future in Bible prophecy

The key to understanding Europe's future is found in Daniel 2, in Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar's dream about a huge human statue. The statue was divided into four parts—head, chest and arms, mid-section and thighs and, lastly, its legs and feet. The image represented a chronological succession of world-ruling empires.

Daniel identified the Babylonian Empire and Nebuchadnezzar as the head of the image (Daniel 2:38). The succeeding empires were, in chronological order, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great and, lastly, the Roman Empire. In a parallel vision in chapter 7, "four great beasts" symbolize these empires (verse 3).

Nebuchadnezzar's dream appears to leave some questions open, since the fourth empire—the Roman—was described as existing at the time of Christ's return. Jesus is the stone that strikes the image on its toes (Daniel 2:44-45), causing it to crumble. So the image (and the governments it symbolizes) continues to stand until then. After breaking up the statue, the stone then fills the entire earth, symbolizing the Kingdom of God with Jesus as its ruler.

Daniel identifies the toes of the image as "kings" (Daniel 2:44). Since Nebuchadnezzar's image progresses in chronological sequence from top to bottom and the stone representing Jesus strikes the image on its feet, the 10 toes logically represent the final days of the fourth empire, the Roman Empire. However, history students know that the Roman Empire ceased to exist in A.D. 476, and Jesus did not return at that time.

However, the Roman Empire has been *resurrected* several times since its demise. The Roman pontiff asked Justinian of Constantinople to re-

establish the "Holy Roman Empire" in A.D. 554.

Interestingly, the book of Revelation contains a prophecy about 10 kings who collectively form a "beast" that Jesus Christ will conquer and destroy upon His return to the earth. We read about them in Revelation 17:12-14: "The *ten horns* which you saw are *ten kings* who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast... These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them." (For a detailed look at this prophecy, see our booklet, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.)

Implications for Europe's future

The center of the final resurrection of the Roman Empire will likewise be in Europe. The European Union is its embryonic form. All EU nations will not necessarily be part of the final configuration, but 10 nations or 10 groups of nations will form a short-lived, powerful union influenced by a traditional religious system based in Rome, the modern heir of ancient Babylon.

Islam has never been the religion of the "Holy Roman Empire." Since Revelation 17 pictures the "great harlot" as the continuing dominant influence on the Beast system, we deduce that Islam will not supplant the traditional Roman church.

With the fast-growing Islamic minority in Europe, what are the implications for Europe's future vis-à-vis the Islamic community and Islamic immigration? There would appear to be several possibilities, including the following:

- Restrictions on those immigrating from Islamic countries.
- Revocation of residency for some—perhaps a majority—of non-EU Muslims.

The final configuration of the last resurrection of the "Holy Roman Empire" will occur relatively soon, while Europeans of a traditional heritage are still the obvious majority in Europe.

In the current liberal atmosphere here in Europe, restricting immigra-

tion for people of the Islamic faith—or even deporting some of those who are already here—seems unlikely today. However, the violent reaction toward Muslims in the Netherlands after a Moroccan Islamic militant brutally murdered movie producer Theo van Gogh in November 2004 shows what can happen under provocative conditions. Restricting immigration of Islamic nationals would certainly strain relations between the European Union and the Islamic world.

One area that remains a big question mark is whether Islamic Turkey will become a full member of the EU. Negotiations began last fall, but may last 10 to 20 years. Turkish EU membership would definitely weaken past criticism of the EU for appearing to be a "Christian club" of sorts. Turkey would become the EU's largest country, surpassing Germany's 82 million inhabitants by the year 2020. It may have as many as 100 million people by the year 2050.

Prior to becoming Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger described negotiations with Turkey on EU membership as a "huge mistake." The Catholic Church currently has no official position on the subject, and Pope Benedict has said nothing further, either. However, his silence may indicate that his personal viewpoint remains unchanged.

On the other hand, Pope John Paul II made an obvious attempt to improve relations with the Islamic world. As strange as it might sound, is an agreement possible between Christian Europe and at least part of the Muslim Middle East that would guarantee tolerance of the Muslim minority in Europe while providing Europe access to Middle Eastern oil and natural gas?

Whatever international relationships may develop, Bible prophecy indicates that the dominant religious influence on the final resurrection of the Roman Empire will not be Islam, despite the current demographic trends in Europe. As in previous revivals of the "Holy Roman Empire," it will be "Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (Revelation 17:5). ❖

Two Elizabeths— A Study in Contrasts

How times have changed! Queen Elizabeth I reigned over one of Britain's greatest periods of growth and increasing power. The reign of Queen Elizabeth II has seen the disintegration of the British Empire and the considerable decline of Britain as a military power. Why?

by Melvin Rhodes

"Elizabeth the Great" was the banner headline sprawled across the London *Daily Mail* newspaper on the morning of April 21, celebrating the 80th birthday of Queen Elizabeth II.

Elizabeth the Great is also the title of a book I have in my home library. It was written in 1958 by Elizabeth Jenkins and is a biography of Elizabeth I, who reigned from 1558 to 1603.

At the time of the coronation of the present Queen Elizabeth, many people talked of a second Elizabethan Age. The Elizabethan Age was one of the greatest periods in English history, during which freedom from Rome was secured and the foundations of the future British Empire were laid.

This period was so important to the development of the Western world as we know it, that the American writer Michael H. Hart listed Elizabeth I as one of the two most influential female figures in history (*The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, 1978).

Mr. Hart wrote: "Queen Elizabeth I is widely considered to have been the most outstanding monarch in English history. Her forty-five-year reign was marked by economic prosperity, a great literary flowering, and the rise of England to first rank among the world's naval powers. Living in an era when English monarchs were not mere figureheads, she is justly entitled to a significant share of the credit for the achievements of England's Golden Age" (pp. 468-9). "She left England with the world's strongest navy, and laid the foundation for the enormous British Empire which followed" (p. 473).

In stark contrast, the reign of Queen Elizabeth II has seen the disintegration of the British Empire and the considerable decline



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One writer listed Queen Elizabeth I, who reigned from 1558 to 1603, as one of the two most influential female figures in history.

of Britain as a military power. The United Kingdom's military is now less than 25 percent of what it was at the time of the queen's ascendancy to the throne in 1952.

There is, of course, a major difference between the two queens. As noted earlier by Michael Hart, Elizabeth I lived in an era "when English monarchs were not mere figureheads." By contrast, Elizabeth II is a figurehead, a constitutional monarch, who is not personally responsible for decisions made by her governments. Nonetheless, like her earlier predecessor, she is a symbol of an age—and the age has not been a good one for the English-speaking peoples!

Britain's decline from greatness coincided with its rejection of the Word of God in education, popular culture and even in organized religion. Today, America is also traveling down that same path!

The importance of faith

Elizabeth I's father was King Henry VIII (1509 to 1547). It was Henry who led England away from the Roman Church. In 1537 he legalized the publication and distribution of the Bible, which had been banned by ecclesiastical authority for hundreds of years.

Only a few months earlier, the English religious reformer William Tyndale had been burned at the stake by an ecclesiastical court across the English Channel for smuggling Bibles into England. His last recorded words, while the flames and smoke rose around his body, were a prayer: "O Lord, open the eyes of the king of England."

Nine months later, that same king lifted the ban on the Scriptures, giving the people of England the opportunity to read and study the Word of God for the first time.

"By royal injunction, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in English were to be taught sentence by sentence on Sundays and holy days throughout the year; at least one sermon on the Gospel was to be preached every quarter...and every parish church in England was to 'set up in some convenient place' a copy of the English Bible accessible to all as 'the very lively Word of God.' Throughout the kingdom, copies for public use and edification were soon chained to lecterns in the vestibules of churches—six of them in St. Paul's church alone" (Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters*, 2001, p. 151).

An early biography of Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury at the time of this momentous event, who was later burned at the stake under the Catholic Queen Mary, observed:

"It was wonderful to see with what joy the book of God was received, not only among the learned sort...but generally all England over among all the vulgar and common people; with what greediness God's word was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was. Everybody that could bought the book and busily read it, or got others to read it to them, if they could not themselves; and divers among the elderly learned to read on purpose. And even little boys flocked among the rest



Now monarchs are treated as mere figureheads to appear at public ceremonies and on the money. Queen Elizabeth II is beloved by many, but few seem to care about things that are important to her, such as religion and the Commonwealth.

to hear portions of the Holy Scriptures read" (ibid., pp. 151-152).

When did all this change? French Canadian historian Jacques Barzun wrote: "It did not cease for 350 years: 1900 was the first year in which religious works (at least in England) did not outnumber all other publications" (*From Dawn to Decadence*, 2000, p. 10).

The title of Mr. Barzun's book is itself revelatory. The dawn of our present Anglo-American civilization was the Protestant Reformation. The decadence referred to in the title is the present era, decadence being defined as the rejection of all the values upon which our civilization was built. The rejection of those values has been the hallmark of the second Elizabethan era.

While the queen herself is reputedly a very religious woman, most of her subjects today are not. During the reign of the first Elizabeth, there was an incredible enthusiasm for the Bible as the "very Word of God." The reign of the present Queen Elizabeth sees instead almost universal ignorance and rejection of the Bible, resulting in

a people living in spiritual darkness!

Britain's rise to greatness coincided with the country's enthusiasm for the Word of God. "Only in England was the Bible in any sense a national possession... Englishmen carried their Bible with them—as the rock and foundation of their lives—overseas... Beyond the shores of Albion it fortified the spirit of the pioneers of New England, helped to shape the American psyche, and through its impact on thought and culture eventually spread the world over" (*Wide as the Waters*, p. 12).

It can also be said that Britain's decline from greatness coincided with its rejection of the Word of God in education, popular culture and even in organized religion. Today, America is also traveling down that same path!

The Old Testament book of Deuteronomy helps us understand this. In chapter 28 God promised blessings to the descendants of Israel for obedience to His laws. Later in the chapter, He says that disobedience would result in penalties.

Verse 1 introduces the blessings, “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.”

The Bible and history show that the British people fulfilled the promise made to Joseph’s sons of becoming “a multitude of nations” (Genesis 48:19). (For more on this, see our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Part of God’s blessing was the wide distribution of the Bible. The enthusiasm for the Word of God lasted right up until the end of the Victorian Era—although its authority began to be challenged because of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, published in 1859 in his book, *The Origin of Species*. After Queen Victoria’s reign, many of the British peoples turned further away from God.

“But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you” (Deuteronomy 28:15).

The blessing promised to Ephraim was the multitude of nations, the Empire and Commonwealth of which the British monarch was the symbolic head. It was this group of nations that fought together through two world wars and countless other smaller conflicts, resisting tyranny and bonding together as “an association of free peoples.”

Sir Winston Churchill, the queen’s favorite prime minister, understood its importance, but the British politicians and people after World War II chose to turn their backs on it.

Decadence and decline

My wife and I were in Cape Town, South Africa, watching the celebrations of the queen’s 80th birthday on the three main news channels delivered by satellite around the world: BBC World, Sky News and CNN International, none of which is available in the United States. It was in Johannesburg, South Africa, 59 years earlier, on her 21st birthday, that then Princess Elizabeth broadcast to the peoples of the Commonwealth and pledged her life “to the service of the great imperial family to which we all belong.”

At her coronation six years later, she was crowned queen of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Pakistan, Ceylon (all fully independent nations), “and her other realms and territories” (the various colonies and protectorates that were ruled from London).

It is doubtful that anybody on that day could have foreseen the dismantling of that same “imperial family,” but in the lifetime of one monarch, it’s all gone. The Commonwealth remains, but is now a loose affiliation of fully independent nations with no military and few economic ties.

The British government today concentrates on Europe, having diverted its attention from the Commonwealth, which is a reminder of the “politically incorrect” colonial days. Because the queen herself

is still on the throne, few people realize the significance of the change that has taken place during her reign.

Only the queen herself continues to care about the organization, visiting its 54 member nations in her role as head of the Commonwealth. After she is gone, we cannot tell how much longer the Commonwealth will last.

Not once on the occasion of her birthday was the Commonwealth even mentioned. Her son and heir Prince Charles spoke only to the British people on television toward the end of the day, while not one of the television stations covering the event mentioned the Commonwealth or reflected on Britain’s greatly diminished role at this point in her reign.

It was as if the “multitude of nations” never existed!

The Empire and Commonwealth of the first Elizabeth’s reign was the glory of Britain, the prophesied strength promised to Joseph’s son, Ephraim. The multitude of nations that God gave to Great Britain stood at her side in countless conflicts, as she stood with them.

For four centuries, Britain concentrated on her relationships with her overseas possessions, of which she was the undisputed leader. Now, under the present Elizabeth’s reign, the emphasis is on Europe and the nation’s commitment is to an uncertain future within a European superstate where Britain is just another member. ❖

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A Page on the World

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

Menace in Europe

Claire Berlinski's book, subtitled "Why the Continent's Crisis Is America's, Too," provides an engaging analysis of modern Europe—and a warning (ISBN 1400097681).

Reviewed by Darris McNeely

Today's conventional wisdom among those who write about global politics is that Europe is in decline and nothing more than a museum of the past. The future, they say, will be driven by Asia, particularly China and India. A recent article ended by saying, "Europe is yesterday's news; Asia is tomorrow's."

It is the position of this publication that Europe will be tomorrow's news and is not an irrelevant relic of the past. Bible prophecy shows clearly that Europe will be at the center of a religious-economic system that will rise and astound the world. Claire Berlinski has written a book that reminds us how quickly events can change.

Berlinski is a secular Jew whose grandparents fled the Holocaust. She has lived, worked and studied in Europe and thus has a good perspective of events shaping the current European mood. She writes about the terrorist threat to the continent, the anti-Semitism in France and the cultural climate of Germany. Her chapter on the German fascination with the music group Rammstein is a must read for anyone wanting to understand the potential locked within the Teutonic soul.

She writes, "Europe is peaceful, prosperous, free, and democratic, relatively speaking. . . Europe's achievements since the Second World War have been real and significant. . . The great powers of Europe are no longer cannibalizing one another. The Furor Teutonicus has for the moment subsided. No doubt, much of the darkness has been repressed. *But the repressed is known for returning*" (p. 5, emphasis added).

Her stories are based on travel and observation and are tied together by two themes. Here is how she states them. "The first is that Europeans are behaving now as Europeans have always behaved. Many seemingly novel developments in European politics and culture are in fact nothing new at all—they have *ancient* roots in Europe's past.

"And what is that past? From the sack of Rome to the Yalta conference, that past has been one of nearly uninterrupted war and savagery. Ethnic wars, class wars, revolutionary wars, religious wars, wars of ideology, and genocide are not aberrations in Europe's history; they are its history.

"An [interlude] from these ancient conflicts endured from 1945 to the end of the Cold War when Europe's destiny was in the hands of the two superpowers. With the collapse of the Soviet empire, however, history has reasserted itself. Those disturbing sounds you hear from Europe are its old, familiar ghosts. They are rattling their chains.

"The second theme is that this history has culminated in a peculiar palpable European mood. Europeans, especially young Europeans, sense in their lives a cultural, spiritual, and ideological void, one that



is evident in the art, language, the literature of contemporary Europe; in the way they talk about their existence in cafes, in discotheques, and on the Internet; in their music, in their heroes, in their family lives; and above all in the way they face threats to their own civilization—and ours" (pp. 6-7).

Berlinski is blunt and perceptive about the various problems afflicting Europe today, but she also points out that America cannot overlook the implications that a changing demography or Muslim immigration has made on the nations.

They must be understood within the historical and cultural mix that is unique to Europe. I would also add the need for a biblical perspective to fully understand what this means for the future. Europe will have a significant impact on America's future. The perceptive subtitle to the book is, "Why the Continent's Crisis Is America's, Too."

To the questions, "Why should Europe concern us now? Can't we just leave them to their own devices and forget about them at last?", she answers, "No, we can't." She continues, "A United Europe. . . is a major power—one bigger than the United States in territory and population. A morally unmoored Europe. . . poses a threat to American interests and objectives everywhere on the planet" (p. 11).

Berlinski is fair in saying that some of the problems of Europe are also found in America. Among the intellectual elite you can find rabid anti-Americanism. Immigration is a threat to American security. But she makes a perceptive statement that should be a warning for anyone looking to Europe as a social model. "Europe is a test case, a laboratory, that shows us *exactly* where some of these ideas lead."

Each chapter of her book offers an engaging and well-written analysis of modern Europe. It is her conclusion that ties all this together into a warning for any student of history and Bible prophecy.

"As someone who has spent time thinking about Europe and its history, I do not prophesy the imminent demise of European democratic institutions, nor do I predict imminent catastrophe on European soil. But I don't rule out these possibilities either. Europe's entitlement economy *will* collapse. Its demography *will* change. The European Union may unravel. Islamic terrorists may succeed in taking out a European city. We have no idea what these events would herald, but it is possible and reasonable to imagine a very ugly outcome.

"And once again, the only people to whom this will come as a surprise are those who have not been paying attention" (pp. 245-246).

Her concluding statement is another way of saying, "Watch," which is exactly what Christ told us to do in Matthew 24:42. Read this book to understand Europe today and how it will impact the future. ❖

“CAMERON,” (Continued from page 16)

the Mount should think twice about inheriting this world.

But this is only looking at things as they are based on our human premises, rather than the divine promises of a God who not only made us, but also truly cares about our future.

God is not simply a “first cause” in our lives or the life of little Cameron, who simply wanders off and becomes an absentee Heavenly Father who doesn’t care about children made in His image.

Living with a dime

Sometimes through all the haze of today’s news, it’s humanly challenging to believe that God really has a different world in store for Cameron. I’ve had to think about it for a few days. But He does, and He is preparing one for your Billy, Megan, José, Brittany and Jacob, too!

I’m often reminded of the story of Sally and Autumn who were making big plans about how to spend all their money. Sally told Autumn, “Look, I have a dime.” Autumn came back, as she opened her hand to show her treasure, with, “Well, see I have 10 cents, too!”

Sally replied as she saw a nickel in Autumn’s hand, “You don’t have a dime like me, but only a nickel.” Autumn immediately replied, “My daddy told me before he went to work today that when He came back tonight, he would give me another nickel, so I do, too, have 10 cents!”

The moral of the story is simply this—Autumn believed her dad’s promise and lived as if all 10 cents were already in her hand. It’s not that she was telling a falsehood. That’s how she saw her life, not in the moment, but with the promises of her father making all the difference in her world. Her world appeared to be worth only a nickel, but Autumn lived the life that came with a dime in her heart.

As parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, we, too, need to get to know Autumn a little bit



Just think for a moment about the world that Cameron and all the other newborns of the world are destined to inherit: a world of terrorism, a world of Iraqs and Irans, a world in which “family” is defined by people who have never even experienced what a family truly ought to be. Is this the only world in Cameron’s future?

more. She’s good company! She can be good for us when we get stuck in those “nickel moments” and get fixated on the headlines of today rather than the ever-present promises of God regarding a new and different world.

Long before Autumn drew breath, the apostle Paul lifted up the eyes of those around him by lovingly, but firmly saying, “Therefore we do not lose heart... while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

The things that are not seen, yet...

Oh yes, there it is, a better world for Cameron! A world that is founded on the reality that man is created in the image of God. God describes this “full 10 cents” as a world in which “He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).

He further describes it as a world of abundance as He grabs our atten-

tion in Amos 9:13-15 by stating, “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, ‘when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine. And all the hills shall flow with it... And no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them.’”

God goes on to describe a safe world for children as He provides colorful detail in Zechariah 8:3-5: “Thus says the LORD: ‘I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain.’ Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand, because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.’”

God plainly depicts the world



Autumn kindly, but firmly, declares to Sally as she shows the nickel in her hand: “My daddy told me before he went to work today that when he came back tonight, he would give me another nickel, so I do, too, have 10 cents!”

He is preparing for Cameron as a world in which “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, no more sorrow, nor crying. There shall be

no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write for these words are true and faithful’” (Revelation 21:4-5).



The fullness of that new age of the Kingdom of God under Jesus Christ has not yet emerged. Wishing this society away isn’t going to make it happen. Praying “Your Kingdom come” is a step in the right direction.

A love note

But this is more than another column with a pending deadline. It’s a love note to our granddaughter, Cameron, and I’d better throw in the other three girls, Meghan, Kailyn and Annabelle too.

It’s a love note to God to say “thank you” for all those wonderful promises of future realities for all of our children and for our children’s children. And thank you for planting my eyes and heart in Your Word rather than in a newspaper. God is preparing a world for Cameron, and that makes me smile.

As we hold our child tonight in our arms or rock a little one to sleep in the still of the night, let’s also be sure we are holding on to one more thing as we do.

You know—the nickel that’s really a dime. It’s the way to be in a world that has lost its way. It’s Autumn’s way and Paul’s way. It’s a way that captures the essence of Isaiah 30:21 that describes a voice telling us, “This is the way, walk in it.”

It’s the way of Autumn who kindly, but firmly, declares to Sally as she shows the nickel in her hand: “My daddy told me before he went to work today that when he came back tonight, he would give me another nickel, so I do, too, have 10 cents!” ❖



Robin Webber

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by Robin Webber

A World for Cameron

My wife and I were introduced this past week to someone very special. Her name is Cameron Olivia Long. You’ve probably never met or heard of her, because, well, she is only four days old at the time of this writing. So, no, you haven’t flunked any current events quiz.

The latest addition

But she did make some headlines in our household. She’s the latest addition to our expanding family, joining three other special granddaughters. It was an event long to be treasured. I’m sure many of you have had such moments.

The birth of a baby is always a precious moment. It’s a miracle like none other! It can even make the atheist blush and reconsider. Here, locked into this tiny bundle of precious flesh, is the proof that mankind is truly not alone. Something is happening down here! Anyone who has ever held a little baby’s hand and pondered its complexity right down to the fine detail of his or her petite fingernails recognizes that we are not witnessing the ongoing trek of evolution, but rather, the grand design and personal touch of a masterful Creator.

But where are we all headed?

Many of us who are professing Christians have little doubt about how the world started. We faithfully look upon God as being the “first cause” of all that we see around us. We actively acknowledge that “children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit

of the womb is a reward” (Psalm 127:3). We do not believe they are simply the end result of a freak accident of long ago when light, heat and a chemical soup began the cycle of all things living.

But the big question that gnaws at our hearts is not where we came from, but where are we all headed? As parents and grandparents, we wonder with great concern what kind of a world our children and grandchildren will inherit. What kind of a life will they experience?

I place my finger into the air and feel the touch of the currents of this age. Something is blowing in the wind, and it isn’t good.

Just think for a moment about the world that Cameron and all the other newborns of the world are destined to inherit: a world of terrorism, a world of Iraqs and Irans, a world in which “family” is defined by people who have never even experienced what a family truly ought to be.

It’s a world that has completely abandoned any thought of the Judeo-Christian ethic regarding modesty and propriety in how people present themselves in public, a world in which sex seems to be the only word in the dictionary, because that’s all people think about and talk about anymore. A world that increasingly paves its soil over with concrete, which stills the waving of the winter wheat and deadens the song of the bird.

Is this the only world in Cameron’s future? If so, the “meek” of Jesus’ words in the Sermon on

(See “CAMERON,” page 14)