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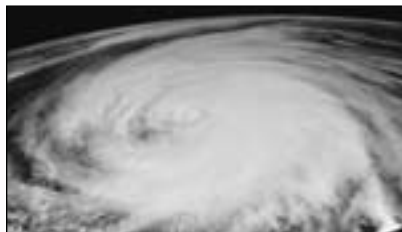
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The Next Holocaust

The ugly specter of anti-Semitism was on display again last month in Iran. It should send a shudder up and down your spine, and serve as a warning that this disease has not been eradicated and threatens world peace.

by Darris McNeely

In December, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad hosted an eclectic gathering of scholars, Orthodox rabbis and Holocaust deniers in an international conference whose purpose was to debate whether the Holocaust of World War II that killed more than 6 million Jews really occurred.

That one of history's most documented stories could even be questioned in such a setting shows the bizarre mind-set of the Iranian leader and his government. Ahmadinejad has repeatedly questioned the Holocaust as part of his continuing rant against the state of Israel and its main supporter, the United States. He told conference attendees, "Just as the Soviet Union was wiped out and today does not exist, so will the Zionist regime soon be wiped out."

This conference highlighted Iran's position as a source of instability across the Middle East today. Iran is behind the Shiite unrest in Iraq and is well known to be the real power behind the terrorist group Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. The recommendations of the recent Iraq Study Group include approaching Iran as a partner in reaching a peace settlement in Iraq and the Palestinian territories.

That Iran could be a serious partner in reaching an equitable solution for Jews and Arabs in the region strains



Reuters

American David Duke (left), a former Ku Klux Klan leader, attends the international conference of "Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision" in Tehran, Iran, Dec. 12, 2006.

the imagination. This leader speaks clearly, consistently and dogmatically about a world under his view of Islamic law. One must conclude that he represents a dominant view among Iran's ruling religious clerics. And his world is one without Jews and Americans or anyone else who fails to submit to the teachings of Allah and his one prophet, Muhammad.

Anti-Semitism in Europe

Anti-Semitism is still very much alive
(See "HOLOCAUST," page 3)



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The mission of *World News and Prophecy* (WNP) is to provide United Church of God members and other interested persons with commentary and analysis of selected world news topics in the light of Bible prophecy. Its purpose is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of the answers Christ gave to His disciples' questions: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things... ACTS 3:21

World Won't End in "Fire and Ice"

I recently read a book that surveys the history of what it calls "the most controversial book in the Bible." The book's catchy title, *A History of the End of the World*, caught my eye at my local bookstore. The biblical book it describes is Revelation.

Now this is just another of the many hundreds of books that have been written in recent years about Revelation. And as usual, the author, Jonathan Kirsch, does not truly understand the book and draws many faulty conclusions about its message. Notice what is said in the book's last paragraph. "On one point... we all seem to agree: somehow and someday, sooner or later, whether by the hand of God or the hand of humankind or the mindless workings of the cosmos, the earth itself and all living things upon it will pass away. Ultimately, we are compelled to decide for ourselves how to make sense of our lives as we continue to wait—as men and women have always waited—for the world to end on time" (p. 256).

How depressing! Why do people misread the book and mistakenly conclude it describes the "end of the world"? Revelation does not describe the end of the world. Rather it describes the conclusion of the age of man on this planet in terms that offer the only message of hope found anywhere. Most people believe that life on this planet will one day be altered beyond anything we recognize today. People's misunderstanding leads to the catastrophic conclusion that the world just ends. Nothing. Oblivion. It all returns to darkness.

No wonder people look at Bible prophecy as only a message of gloom and doom and want no part in that kind of message. I wouldn't want to read it either. What people need today more than anything else is a message of hope. Life is tough and there is a lot of bad news in the world and our personal lives. Why spend time with a message that is hopeless?

Now I admit that prophecy does deal with much that is not pleasant. But a careful, unbiased study will show that much of what prophecy discusses is what man brings upon himself. And when God acts to intervene in human affairs, it is only after much warning that something must change. When God punishes, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. He always holds out hope. This is true of even the most terrifying prophecies of the Bible.

Bible prophecy is anchored in the fact that God is in control of His creation. This world, and human life with it, is not going to vaporize into the cosmos. Man will not blow himself up in a nuclear war and create a "nuclear winter" unsuitable for any life-form. Your Bible shows from Genesis to Revelation that God will give every opportunity for man to achieve the utopia of the Kingdom of God. And this wonderful world of the future, long prophesied by every major prophet of God, will come to pass. And you will have your chance to enter that Kingdom as a child of God. This is God's sure prophetic promise to you!

Such books, along with many misguided Bible teachers, distort the sure promise of the Bible. Revelation is the capstone of all God's prophecies of the world to come. It goes into much detail about what that world will be like. Human tradition has cast these details aside as spiritual allegory that doesn't really mean what it says. But God's Word does mean what it says—your future, mine and the future of all of humanity depends on those promises.

This publication deals with prophecy and a lot of the bad news of today's world. But the larger view is the overarching prophetic promise summed up in Peter's statement in Acts 3:20-21: "Jesus Christ... whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things." This column takes its title from that promise.

There are times of restoration ahead. It is when we frame our prophetic worldview in the promises and hope of that passage that we can make sense of our world and have a positive view for the future. No, the world will not end in "fire and ice," as a poet once wrote. It will not "end" at all. It will be restored to the form and shape that God intended when "the angels shouted for joy."



—Darris McNeely

Darris McNeely

“HOLOCAUST” (Continued from page 1)

in Europe, the scene of the Holocaust. Synagogues have been attacked, Jewish cemeteries desecrated and angry Muslim immigrants have murdered some Jews. The situation is so bad in France that many French Jews have purchased second homes in Israel should the situation ever become intolerable.

Government leaders are eager to deny the problem or denounce the random acts of violence. Germany has specific laws making it illegal to deny the Holocaust. German Chancellor Angela Merkel was quick to issue a repudiation of the conference in Tehran.

Germany is very sensitive to its world image on this matter and has taken tangible measures to atone for its “departure from civilization,” as it calls the Holocaust. On a trip to Berlin last September, I visited a Holocaust memorial near the site of Hitler’s Chancellery in the heart of the city. It is a stark reminder of what can happen when evil drives out reason and logic from a people.

Not all Muslims are anti-Semitic

The violent hatred of Jews by Muslims is a relatively recent development. The Koran teaches believers to respect Jews and Christians as “people of the Book,” since they share a common ancestor, Abraham. Iranian history does not reveal any deep resentment of Jews. The Persian epic, *Shahnameh* or *Book of Kings*, carries no hint of anti-Semitism.

A study of Middle Eastern history will show that the disease of anti-Semitism was more prevalent among Christians than Muslims. The Crusades are a horror story of atrocities perpetrated against Jews. In one terrible episode, when Crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099, they herded the city’s Jews into a synagogue and set it afire.

It is not till after World War II that we see the eruption of anti-Semitism in the Muslim world and its subsequent impact on politics and culture.

In *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright states, “Jews had lived safely—although submissively—under Muslim rule for 1,200 years, enjoying full religious freedom; but in the 1930s, Nazi propaganda on Arabic-language shortwave radio, coupled with slanders by Christian missionaries in the region, infected the

area with this ancient Western prejudice. After the war Cairo became a sanctuary for Nazis, who advised the military and the government. The rise of the Islamist movement coincided with the decline of fascism, but they overlapped in Egypt, and the germ passed into a new carrier” (2006, pp. 38-39).

Somali immigrant Ayaan Hirsi Ali compares the way she was taught about

“If we ever wanted to know peace and stability, and if we didn’t want to be wiped out, we would have to destroy the Jews. For those of us who were not in a position to take up arms against them, it was enough for us to cup our hands, raise our eyes heavenward and pray to Allah to destroy them” (*Los Angeles Times*, “Why They Deny the Holocaust,” Dec. 16, 2006).



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Remains of Nazi concentration camp serve as a stark reminder of the Holocaust that killed 6 million Jews and hundreds of thousands of others during World War II.

Jews as a child with the manner in which the Nazi Party of Germany slandered Jews in the pre-World War II period.

“As a child growing up in Saudi Arabia, I remember my teachers, my mom and our neighbors telling us practically on a daily basis that Jews are evil, the sworn enemies of Muslims, and that their only goal was to destroy Islam. We were never informed about the Holocaust.

“Later, as a teenager in Kenya, when Saudi and other Persian Gulf philanthropy reached us, I remember that the building of mosques and donations to hospitals and the poor went hand in hand with the cursing of Jews. Jews were said to be responsible for the deaths of babies and for epidemics such as AIDS, and they were believed to be the cause of wars. They were greedy and would do absolutely anything to kill us Muslims.

The 1.2 billion Muslims are simply not fully informed about the Holocaust. In America and other Western nations, we take this information for granted. Museums, documentaries, books and firsthand accounts of Holocaust survivors have chronicled the atrocity for more than 60 years. I have visited the Yad Vashem Memorial in Jerusalem and have seen the evidence of the killing of 6 million Jews. I have been to Berlin and seen the public confession by the German government of what happened. And I have heard firsthand from survivors of the concentration camps what was done to eliminate the Jewish people. It is a fact of history no one can honestly deny.

Could it happen again?

The true Church of God has many beliefs similar to those of the Jewish



King Herod was deeply disturbed by the wise men who came seeking a new king of the Jews. When they didn't return, he had all the baby boys in Bethlehem killed.

people. Does the return of anti-Semitism portend an eruption of violence against this group as well? It is interesting to see what Bible prophecy says about this. In Revelation 12 is the story of a woman who gives birth to a Child and is subsequently persecuted by a dragon. The woman represents the people of God from the time of ancient Israel to the spiritual Church of God founded by Jesus Christ. The dragon is a symbol of Satan the devil who has always opposed the work and plan of God through the ages.

Verse 4 describes the dragon as it "stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born." Christ was born to descendants of the tribe of Judah. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke record the details of King Herod's attempt to destroy this prophesied child. Every Jewish boy in the districts around Bethlehem, aged 2 and under, was ordered killed. But God had already made plans by which Joseph and Mary had spirited their son off to the safety of Egypt (Matthew 2:13-14). Here was a first-century holocaust against the Jews!

Revelation 12 gives a broad sweep of history involving the people of God. Christ is "caught up to God and His throne," and the Church endures through

many centuries of world history (verses 5-6).

In an event yet to occur we see Satan cast out of heaven, and knowing he has only a short time to work, he foments a time of tribulation on the nations and persecutes the Church, which is supernaturally protected (verses 13-16). It will be the unprecedented time of trouble spoken of by Daniel (12:1).

The last verse of Revelation 12 shows us what to watch for in the future. "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus

Christ" (verse 17).

Here is a prophecy of violent persecution on a group who keeps God's law and faithfully follows the deepest teachings of Christ. This persecution goes beyond one ethnic group to attack a spiritual group bound together by the Holy Spirit as the Church of God. A time is coming when the world will witness a different type of Holocaust than that seen last century in Europe.

At the heart of such persecution is man's animosity toward God. Anti-Semitism is merely an expression of mankind's hatred of God and anything that reminds man of what God requires of His creation.

The law given at Sinai embodies what God expects of humanity. And the age-long hatred of the Jews reflects humanity's deep-seated feeling against the commandments of God. The Jews, being descended from Judah, one of Jacob's 12 sons, are the only remnant of ancient Israel retaining any of the elements that identify them as a tribe of the ancient people of Israel. The seventh-day Sabbath is a critical key to that identity.

The Holocaust of World War II was only a forerunner of a broader form of satanic attack upon God's people.

Revelation 12:17 defines this group as those who obey God by keeping the Ten Commandments to their fullest intent. They are not willing to compromise with convenience or the prevailing standards of this present world. They go so far as to keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the Fourth Commandment, one of the signs God gave as a badge of identity for His people (Exodus 31:13).

This same Sabbath sign was neglected by the nation of Israel and was specifically mentioned by God as a reason they were removed from their homes and marched off to captivity (Ezekiel 20:12, 16, 20, 24). This is one of the main reasons that most of the modern descendants of Israel do not know who they are. They are nonetheless responsible for rejecting God's commands. They will also suffer Satan's wrath in this future holocaust.

Don't be too sure that your present form of religion will protect you from this time of world upheaval. God has a great deal to say against false shepherds who control peoples' minds with false religion. You can read more of the story in our booklets *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *The Church Jesus Built*.

Sadly, the Muslim world stands largely silent when one of its larger nations hosts a conference questioning the truth of one of history's greatest tragedies. This should be a warning that many will turn a blind eye when a large end-time power will be the tool Satan uses to persecute sincere God-fearing people. Today's headlines foretell another holocaust. ❖

Recommended Reading

The United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and other English-speaking peoples have played a major role in modern world history. What does the Bible say about the role they will play in the future?

Request a free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Contact any of our offices listed on page 15, or request or download it from our

Web site at

www.wnponline.org



Disasters to Hit the United States

The United States has faced its greatest national health emergencies in the past five years. What do they show about America's ability to handle national disasters? What is yet to come?

by Cecil E. Maranville

The blessings the United States enjoys are many, but one of the greatest has been its relative freedom from major disasters. Only twice has the United States declared a federal public health emergency—the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and Hurricane Katrina.

That remarkable record is likely to change. We'll consider how below, but first, let's look at how prepared the country is to deal with major disasters.

The nonprofit organization Trust for America's Health (TFAH) recently released its fourth annual "Ready or Not? Protecting the Public's Health from Disease, Disasters, and Bioterrorism" (<http://healthyamericans.org/reports/bioterror06/BioTerrorReport2006.pdf>). TFAH assesses health emergency preparedness of the 50 states using 10 specific indicators. Some of them are:

- Meeting the highest rating of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for preparedness to distribute emergency vaccines, antidotes and medical supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), which the CDC maintains.

- Sufficient laboratory capabilities to test for biological threats.

- Sufficient number of laboratory experts trained to test for a suspected outbreak of anthrax or the plague.

- Enough hospital bed capacity to accommodate the estimated number of people needing hospitalization within the first two weeks of "a moderate pandemic flu outbreak."

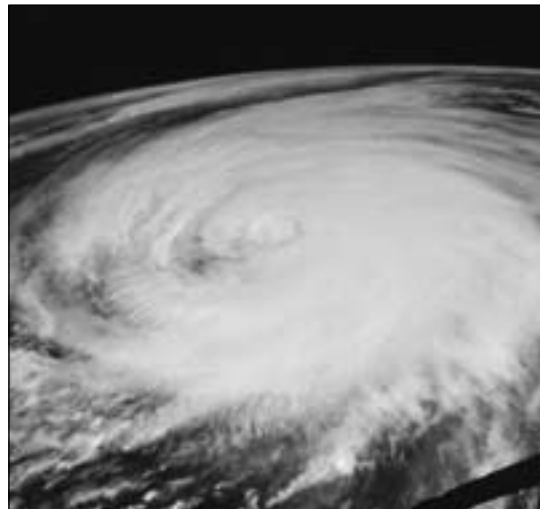
- Having a sufficient number of registered nurses.

Highlights from the report

Only one state scored a perfect 10—Oklahoma; Kansas was the only state to score nine; the rest (and Washington D.C.) scored between eight and four.

The CDC rated only 15 states at the highest preparedness level to receive and provide emergency vaccines, antidotes and medical supplies from the SNS.

A state's ability to deal with biothreats encom-



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Hurricanes and other natural disasters can lead to public health emergencies as well.

passes the existence of facilities, technology and equipment. Eleven states and Washington D.C. came up short in this area. An additional problem exists in that the states' laboratories can obtain reagents—diagnostic materials necessary to analyze for biological agents—only from the CDC. The CDC cannot keep up with the demand.

Only 25 states have enough hospital beds to deal with a moderately severe flu outbreak. ("Moderate" is determined by averaging the hospitalization statistics of the relatively mild 1968 flu outbreak and the severe 1918 flu epidemic.) This is truly a sobering illustration of how strained the nation's resources would be in a major disaster.

Equally disturbing is the fact that 40 states have a shortage of nurses—not just to deal with a major disaster, but to deal with present health-care demands. Moreover, a recent survey reveals that even more severe staffing shortages loom in the near future, because baby boomers are retiring and vacancies aren't being filled adequately.

What events could trigger a national health emergency?

Think about the consequences of multiple disasters occurring simultaneously. In mere days, the United States could be reduced to needing international aid to survive.

Terrorism

Terrorism of all kinds probably comes to mind first, including agroterrorism; bioterrorism; and chemical, radiological and waterborne terrorism.

In 2004, then Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson startled Americans from complacency with the observation, “For the life of me, I cannot understand why the terrorists have not attacked our food supply, because it is so easy to do.” Agroterrorism is the “...deliberate introduction of an animal or plant disease with the goal of generating fear, costing economic losses, and/or undermining stability” (ibid., p. 5).

Bioterrorism involves the use of biological agents such as germs or biotoxins to cause disease or death in people, animals and plants. Examples in the TFAH report are anthrax, smallpox, botulism, salmonella and E. coli. The United States recently called for tighter measures to prevent even toiletries and cosmetics from being used as weapons (“Bioterrorism Experts Call for Measures to Protect Beauty Products,” Dec. 13, 2006, CareFair.com).

Ominously, only 10 states have the capacity to test for chemical threats. The CDC identifies “over 60 toxic substances that could be used as chemical weapons by terrorists. Many of these are regularly used commercial and industrial chemicals that could be ‘weaponized’” (TFAH report, p. 18).

Terrorism expert Richard A. Falkenrath testified last year before the U.S. Senate that chemical facilities “fly off the page” when one considers possible terrorist targets. The dual factors are those with “the greatest possibility for mass casualties and [facilities that] are *the least well secured* at the present time...” (Eben Kaplan, “Targets for Terrorists: Chemical Facilities,” Dec. 11, 2006, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/publication/12207_target_4_terrorists, emphasis added).

Probably radiological threats receive the most publicity today, especially the potential explosion of a “dirty bomb,” which could spread radioactive material over a heavily populated area. Food and water sources are also vulnerable to this type of terrorist attack. Radiation could also be widely dispersed by destroying a nuclear facility.



Reuters/Igor Kroi

Veterinarians put bird carcasses into a plastic sack in the village of Peski in northern Ukraine June 14, 2006, after the first appearance of bird flu in the region.

Diseases

Several types of diseases could also trigger a national health emergency, including a pandemic flu, diseases spread by insects, foodborne diseases, waterborne diseases and diseases carried by animals that can spread to humans.

The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that “a severe pandemic [flu] could result in 1.9 million deaths and 9.9 million hospitalizations in the U.S.” (TFAH report, p. 5).

Recent examples of diseases spread by insects include the West Nile virus, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and malaria.

Examples of diseases carried by food include botulism, salmonella, E. coli, shigella (which causes dysentery) and norovirus (which causes “stomach flu” or gastroenteritis). Every year, 325,000 Americans are hospitalized and 5,000 die from such diseases, so this is already present as a health threat.

Water can carry some of the same diseases, as well as cholera, typhoid, hepatitis and polio—to name only a few. Blessed with good quality drinking water and relatively clean recreational water, Americans can easily take this benefit for granted. One has only to look at the developing world to see what life would be without it.

Avian flu is a prime example of a dis-

ease carried by animals that can spread to humans. The World Health Organization warned that the world was closer to a pandemic during 2004 (due to the avian flu) than it has been at any time since the 1968 flu. (See “Avian Influenza: Assessing the Pandemic Threat,” January 2005, www.who.int/entity/csr/disease/influenza/H5N1-9reduit.pdf.) Other examples in this category include mad cow disease, rabies and SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration estimates the losses of a significant mad cow outbreak in the United States at up to \$27 billion.

Natural disasters

Last (but hardly least) are natural disasters, including hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, fires, drought, floods and tsunamis.

Hurricane Katrina was a disaster unlike anything the United States had seen in modern times. Early predictions for 2007 are for 14 named storms and seven hurricanes—three of them “major.” At least one is predicted to make landfall.

Lessons from Katrina shocked Americans into a sober awareness of their powerlessness in the face of nature’s fury, as well as of serious shortfalls in the nation’s ability to manage that level of disaster satisfactorily. Among the serious

shortcomings revealed was the ability to meet the needs of children, the disabled and the chronically ill.

The TFAH report highlights the dangers inherent within what it calls America's "just in time economy." That is, food, water and medicines arrive by truck and train shortly before they are consumed. There is never a large inventory on hand, especially in metropolitan areas.

Is the United States vulnerable to tsunamis? Dr. John Rundle, a scientist at the University of California, Davis, warns: "The risk for tsunamis like the one we saw in Sumatra is very real and very present and very possible" (Edie Magnus, "Could a Tsunami Hit the U.S.?" *Dateline NBC*, Jan. 9, 2005).

Of course, no natural disaster is precisely predictable.

There are several active volcanoes in the United States; the most active currently is Mt. St. Helens in Washington, which is growing a new lava dome. The Yellowstone caldera (the crater formed by a volcanic explosion or the collapse of its cone) is closely monitored and does not show the potential for an immediate eruption.

Scientists anticipate major earthquakes in the San Francisco Bay region anytime in the next 30 years; a major one is overdue in the Parkfield, California, area. Other U.S. regions are not exempt from earthquakes, including the Midwest, where major quakes destroyed entire towns in the early 1800s.

Flooding, drought and tornadoes can strike almost anywhere at anytime. Currently, extreme drought continues in the northern high plains states, the northern Rockies and northern Minnesota.

Think about the consequences of multiple disasters occurring simultaneously. Imagine a radiological attack by terrorists combined with a major earthquake. What about a devastating hurricane and a volcanic eruption in conjunction with localized flooding or drought? In mere days, the United States could be reduced to needing international aid to survive.

Is that an unreal scenario, the makings of only a made-for-entertainment movie?

The worst yet to come

Typically, when a major disaster occurs, many people cry, "Why did God do this?" Or "Why did God allow this to happen?" The truth is that God isn't involved in most

disasters, for they are human-caused or occur in the course of natural events.

Divine intervention is rare. Yet biblical history shows that God has used disasters, sometimes stirring willing human agents and sometimes ordering nature. God used a series of disasters to humble and eventually break the spiritually wayward 12-tribe nation of Israel.

He has reconstituted a powerful modern Israel today. I refer not to the small state of Israel, but to the mightiest Israelite nation in the modern world, the United States (see our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* for the historical and biblical proof). In the same way that it came time for God to use disasters as a last measure to deal with America's Old Testament ancestors, so such a time is foretold for our world.

Much is said about the indisputable generosity of Americans, demonstrated by individual charitable donations and volunteerism, as well as by official governmental action. Yet that doesn't cancel out the behavior of those who increasing-

ly reject any concept of a God who would restrict or control their personal choices.

There is a God—a Father—who, like a responsible human father, stipulates expected behavior for His children. Calling it "controlling" is pejorative and myopic. God's parental guidelines, summarized in the Ten Commandments, are comforting, protective, positive and healthy.

Bloated with prosperity, America feels comfortable in turning away from the God of the Bible. The time will come when God will decide with sadness that He must use the last option—a series of disasters that will virtually remove the United States' superpower status. It won't be the end of the world, but rather the restructuring of the world.

Don't take our word for it. Read the preview in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. And read the booklet mentioned above, which brings in numerous other scriptural prophecies and combines them with history and current events.

For the United States, the worst is yet to come. ❖

How Can You Make Sense of the News?

www.wnponline.org

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly, that it's almost impossible to see it all out.

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- An online blog discussing the latest news and trends.
- Audio discussion (podcasts) of what's happening in the world around us.
- Links to significant news items from hundreds of news sources around the world.
- Free booklets to help you better understand Bible prophecy.

To understand the meaning behind the news and where the world is headed, visit us at www.wnponline.org today!

World News & Prophecy

Is American Isolationism on the Rise?

Americans show growing signs of wanting to withdraw from an increasingly complex and frightening world. Is the isolationism of earlier decades about to return? And what would the consequences be?

by Melvin Rhodes

For the last 18 months I have been serving on the *Lansing* [Michigan] *State Journal's* Community Advisory Board (CAB). This has meant attending regular monthly meetings, and it has given me the opportunity to write a monthly article for the paper.

Recent meetings have been particularly interesting.

Like most newspapers, the *State Journal's* readership is declining as younger people prefer to get their news electronically, rather than the old-fashioned way. That is, of course, if they are interested in news at all. Declining readership also means declining advertising revenue as advertisers look to other media outlets to try to reach those who are younger and have higher disposable incomes. Some time ago, an article I read predicted that the last American newspaper would go out of business in 2030, based on current rates of decline in readership.

The paper's response to this has been to increase local news coverage at the expense of national and world news. Local news now dominates the front page every day. "Local news sells!" we've been told repeatedly. It makes sense. People can easily get their national and international news elsewhere, but local papers remain the best source of in-depth local news.

Not only financial pressures are driving newspapers toward a more parochial outlook. Readers are also becoming more withdrawn, increasingly desiring isolation from the rest of the world. This has been evidenced at recent CAB meetings.

One board member summed it up very well. "I'd much rather read about the rescue of the cat stuck up a tree on the other side of town, than read news from Iraq or Afghanistan. Why should I care about what goes on in those places? That news doesn't impact me!"

Well, at least the person was honest. What was, perhaps, surprising was how many of those present felt the same way.

However, the reality is somewhat different—news from Iraq and Afghanistan does impact newspaper readers in Lansing, Michigan, whether they like to admit it or not. Some people just don't see it yet.

Consequences of defeat

At the time of writing, the United States and its coalition partners appear to be bogged down in the conflict in Iraq. In addition, Taliban fighters are again causing problems in Afghanistan.

These two wars, however, are only part of the challenge the West is facing at this time, a challenge so complex that most people cannot even begin to understand it. Consequently, they would rather pretend it's not happening! People can understand the need to rescue a cat stuck up a tree, even if it's on the other side of town. They have trouble understanding the complexities of radical Islam, the sectarian violence of Iraq or the medieval mind-set of the Taliban!

One reason for this limitation is ignorance of religion. Western society is predominantly secular. Even most people of faith are largely secular, confining their religious observance to one hour on a Sunday morning, if it's convenient. Often the mall or the football game wins out! So it's difficult for people to comprehend a religious fanaticism that wants to force its beliefs on everybody else. Yet that is exactly what is happening.

Viewing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as localized, few see the wider challenge of radical Islam. Polls show most Americans want a U.S. pullout from Iraq immediately or within months. Few have thought of the consequences of defeat, for that's exactly what a pullout would be. It might be dressed up as a handover to a fully functioning, democratic, civilian government, but it wouldn't be seen that way throughout the Middle East. It would be perceived as a victory of Islam over infidels, the nonbelievers from the West.

As most Americans seem to be increasingly inclined to turn their backs on the rest of the world, Christians are encouraged to watch what is happening in the world and especially the Middle East.

Emboldened by a perceived triumph directly from Allah, radical Islamists would come after the United States as a nation and Americans as individuals. No American would be safe anywhere on the planet. The dream of Islamic ascendancy over the decadent West would be within reach. Undoubtedly, one weapon they would use would be oil—using domination of the Persian Gulf to restrict Western oil supplies, thereby seriously damaging Western economies.

Without a strong Christian faith, the West is unable to defend itself from Islamic radicalism. In an age of secularism and multiculturalism, Islam is seen as just another religion, equally valid with Christianity and Judaism. Radical Muslims do not see things the same way.

Up to and including World War II, America won its wars because Americans had a clear vision of good and evil, right and wrong. This was the result of a strong biblical foundation that went back to colonial times. An absolute conviction that God was on America's side emboldened Americans as they went to war—and they won.

Today Americans no longer have that conviction or the sense of unity that comes from a shared faith. God has been left out of the picture in the current conflicts. Consequently, God is breaking the pride of the nation's power (Leviticus 26:19). Having the greatest military force in the world is insufficient when a nation turns its back on God!

The turning away from the true God that has taken place in the modern nations that are descended from ancient Israel (notably the United States, Great Britain, the nations of northwestern Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Canada) has warped the thinking of their peoples, so that most are largely oblivious to the great threat that looms over us!

In the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, chapter 28 warns of the consequences of national sin, of turning away from our Creator. "The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth"

(verse 25)! Nations will be afraid to do business with us for fear of reprisals from the radicals.

While many Americans see the last century as America's century, in reality the second half of the 20th century saw the wider West in global strategic retreat. One hundred years ago, the world was dominated by the Western colonial powers. After World War II, the Europeans dismantled their empires, unable to maintain control in the face of rising populations across the third world, while the number of Europeans was in decline. The European powers withdrew from their overseas territories, giving rise to dozens of independent countries, some of them in the Middle East.

While the Western powers were preoccupied with the Cold War, the Arab world was convulsed by the spread of nationalism, with the ascension of dictators like Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Hafiz al-Assad (Syria) and Saddam Hussein (Iraq).

Rise of radical Islam

In 1979 a more serious challenge arose with the overthrow of the pro-Western shah of Iran and the coming to power of the ayatollahs, establishing a radical, theocratic government in Tehran. Almost three decades later, Iran is emerging as the dominant power in the Middle East. If the United States withdraws from the region, Tehran will be a regional superpower. President Ahmadinejad claims it has already become "a nuclear power."

Iranians see Iran as a "sunrise" power and the United States as a "sunset" power. Already Iranian power and influence encompasses the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories—all radical Islamic groups that hate the West.

Syria, a nation condemned by Washington for supporting terrorists, is also within Iran's sphere of influence. Iran and Syria are increasingly being mentioned as the two nations Washington must talk to in order to be able to withdraw from Iraq. In other words, Syria and Iran will fill the vacuum left by America.

Other nations are increasingly wor-

ried about this. Iran, a non-Arab country, is predominantly Shia, while most Arab countries are Sunni. Other nations in the area see Iran's rise as a major threat to their security. Some also want nuclear weapons to counteract Iran's.

The cauldron is about to boil over—just as Americans want to abdicate from their global superpower status. American withdrawal will not end the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. These will be lost, with both nations succumbing to radical Islam. This will then spur the bigger war, the global war between the jihadists and the West. Only, as most Americans withdraw into their cocoon, America may not be around to fight it.

Instead, there will be another global superpower, a short-lived revival of the original West, the old Roman Empire, as 10 nations (or groups of nations) come together "with the beast" (Revelation 17:12-13). The 10 "give their power and authority to the beast," the supreme leader of the new federation. His influence and charisma will be such that "all who dwell on the earth will worship [the Beast]" (Revelation 13:8)! This superpower will exist right up to the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the 10 "will make war with the Lamb" (Revelation 17:14).

This superpower will be centered in Europe. Just as American isolationism between the two world wars of the 20th century resulted in major developments in Europe, so U.S. isolationism will again spur developments in the nations that once comprised the Roman Empire.

The good news is that "the Lamb will overcome them" (Revelation 17:14), defeating the Beast power. Jesus Christ will return to save humankind from itself (Matthew 24:22), from a worldwide nuclear conflict that will be centered on the Middle East.

As most Americans seem to be increasingly inclined to turn their backs on the rest of the world, Christians are encouraged to "watch" what is happening in the world (Matthew 24:42), so that they can "also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour [they] do not expect" (verse 44).

Watch what is happening in the Middle East, a focal point of Bible prophecy. ❖

A Europe Without Borders— The “Schengen Zone”

The Schengen Treaty eliminates immigration checkpoints along the borders of participating European countries. Now 26 countries have signed on, including three non-European Union states. Will this treaty serve as a model for the stalled political union of a core Europe?

by Paul Kieffer

In November 1973, my employer in Düsseldorf, Germany, sent me to a printing company near London to deliver some 200,000 return envelopes that were to be stitched into a magazine we published. The editorial work on the magazine was done in Germany, but because of lower costs and other considerations, the printing was done in England.

On my trip, I drove a small delivery van stuffed with boxes of envelopes. When I reached the Dutch-German border near Arnhem, I had to show my passport to enter the Netherlands. I also had to pay a transit security deposit for the envelopes, since I told customs officials I would be taking them to England and not delivering them in the Netherlands.

When I reached the Dutch coast for the ferry trip over to England, I again had to show my passport as I left the Netherlands. I also did some more paperwork for Dutch customs to get my security deposit back.

Today I sometimes cross the Dutch-German border at the very same point as I did some 33 years ago. What a remarkable difference there is today! There are no immigration or customs officials checking passports at a booth on the autobahn. Instead, you just slow down a bit from the high speeds allowed in Germany to the 120 kilometers an hour (about 75 miles an hour) allowed in the Netherlands on the freeway and continue on your way.

What makes crossing the border today so different? Of course, one reason is what the European Union (EU) has become in the last 30 years. Goods can be bought and sold easily across national borders as long as they are not subject to restrictions (most are not).

The other difference, though, is the Schengen Treaty, which eliminates immigration checkpoints along borders of countries that are signatories. The countries participating in the Schengen Treaty comprise the Schengen zone. That zone

may not be as well known as the eurozone (for Europe’s common currency, the euro), but it has been in existence several years longer.

Background of the Schengen Treaty

In 1985, France, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the Benelux countries signed a treaty to eliminate border controls among them. The location for the treaty signing was symbolic—aboard the ship *Princesse Marie-Astrid* on the Moselle River near the town of Schengen, located in Luxembourg on the border with France and Germany. The treaty went into effect 10 years later, and the number of countries having signed the treaty has now increased to 26, including three non-EU states, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. There is no requirement for EU member states to sign the treaty. The Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom are not signatories and are unlikely to sign anytime soon.

To date, 15 of the signatories have implemented the treaty, comprising the current Schengen zone. Each Schengen country has the responsibility to provide border controls for its non-Schengen external borders. In exchange for fulfilling this obligation, there are no border or immigration controls on the movement of people within the Schengen zone when they travel from one Schengen country directly to another. That is why my trips today from Germany to the Netherlands (and elsewhere within the Schengen zone) have become so convenient.

All Schengen member countries have external borders, even if they are landlocked. Luxembourg is an example of a landlocked Schengen country, and the Czech Republic and Switzerland will be as well, once they implement the treaty sometime in the next two years. Luxembourg’s land borders are all joint borders with Schengen countries, but it also has an international airport. Luxembourg fulfills its Schengen responsibility

Each signatory to the Schengen Treaty has the responsibility to provide border controls for its non-Schengen external borders. In exchange, there are no border or immigration controls on the movement of people within the Schengen zone.

ity by ensuring that all non-Schengen visitors who enter Luxembourg via its airport have an appropriate visa for the Schengen zone.

Switzerland's participation in the Schengen Treaty is an interesting development for a country that prides itself on its neutrality. Thousands of Germans cross the German-Swiss border every day to get to their jobs, and Swiss shoppers frequently head for France, Italy and Germany to purchase items at lower prices in the eurozone. The prospect of having strict border controls on travelers across its borders to the surrounding Schengen zone was a looming long-term headache that is now solved by Switzerland's impending implementation of the treaty.

The Schengen treaty also permits its participating countries to suspend implementation for a short time if a country deems the suspension necessary for national security. Just last summer Germany suspended the Schengen Treaty during the 2006 World Cup tournament, and France did likewise in 2004 on the 60th anniversary of the D-Day invasion.

Schengen countries can also make individual customs inspections within their own borders as long as there are no general passport inspections on joint Schengen borders. I occasionally see German border police checking vehicles at rest stops along the autobahn after they have crossed into Germany from the Netherlands. Dutch drug laws are more liberal than Germany's and some people attempt to return to Germany with drugs obtained in the Netherlands.

The Schengen Treaty and implications for the European Union

No doubt many people equate the Schengen Treaty with the European Union. In fact, however, the Schengen Treaty was originally not an EU treaty. Instead, it was signed independently of the EU by five countries, all of which also happened to be EU members.

Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands proceeded with the Schengen agreement at a time when no consensus could be reached within the broader EU on eliminating internal border controls.



Reuters/Ina Fassbender

Poland's President Lech Kaczyński and France's President Jacques Chirac with German Chancellor Angela Merkel Dec. 5. Chancellor Merkel's negotiating skills will be tested in trying to get the stalled EU constitution back on the agenda.

Later EU agreements have essentially adopted the provisions of the Schengen Treaty, now making it in a sense an EU accord.

The success of the Schengen Treaty among its original participants may have prodded the EU into adopting its provisions. The Schengen agreement shows that EU members may enter into treaties among themselves when there is no EU-wide consensus. There is no EU prohibition on doing so. The drive for full political union of Europe may cause some EU nations to strike a Schengen-like agreement.

The EU is largely divided into two groups. One group, including the Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom, would prefer to see the European Union be an enhanced free-trade zone. The other group is interested in achieving full political union, including the founding members of the EU's forerunner, the European Economic Community.

With the addition of two more countries on January 1, 2007 (Romania and Bulgaria), the current EU decision-making process has become even more cum-

bersome. The single nation veto power remains the big obstacle to streamlining the EU's structure—something last year's failed EU constitution was designed to do.

With Germany assuming the six-month rotating EU presidency this month, many pin their hopes on Chancellor Angela Merkel's negotiating skill to get the stalled constitution back on the EU agenda. If she is unsuccessful, talk will surely surface again about the need for a "Europe of two speeds" or a "core Europe" of nations willing to proceed on their own toward full political unity.

Bible prophecy foretells a union of 10 kings forming a powerful political force at the time of the end (Daniel 2:42-44; Revelation 17:12). It will arise from within Europe and likely be much different from the existing structure within the EU. How it moves from the present configuration to the final prophesied form is yet to be determined.

The Schengen Treaty of 1985 shows that it can be done. Its greatest accomplishment may be the precedent it sets for this looming monumental reconfiguration of Europe. ❖

Five Significant Trends of 2006

What are some of last year's really important benchmark events and trends? How does the Bible pass judgment on these happenings today?

by John Ross Schroeder

Last year was heavy with happenings of great significance. We selected five of the most crucial trends that will inevitably shape our future world during this age of man.

Number one: The erosion of American power

Fifteen years ago the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union collapsed as a major superpower. The United States reigned supreme as a superpower perhaps without precedent in all of world history. In the aftermath of the demise of Soviet power over Eastern Europe, President George Herbert Walker Bush spoke of a new world order and even of a kinder, more compassionate America.

Yet today the United States is perceived by many observers as a declining power in the world. The war in Iraq has been stalemated for now and the war in Afghanistan is heating up again. Iran and North Korea threaten to become aggressive, dangerous members of the nuclear club.

Strenuous objections to potential Iranian nuclear weaponry by both America and Israel have been virtually ignored for a long time. Now the United Nations has finally acted, at least in part.

According to *The Sunday Times*: “By unanimous vote, the security council banned exports of nuclear-related technology and materials to Iran, ordered a freeze on overseas assets held by Iranians involved in nuclear research and placed limited restrictions on their ability to travel abroad” (Dec. 24, 2006).

On the financial front, London and Hong Kong have captured valuable business from New York City—long the world’s financial capital.

The Associated Press reports that corporations making their initial public offerings (IPOs) of shares preferred these investment hubs to New York for two primary reasons. First is the stringent accounting rules the United States has put in place to lessen white-collar crime (it’s easier for companies to go elsewhere than to meet these regulations). Second is the booming Chinese economy.



Reuters/Yuri Kochetkov

Russian President Vladimir Putin meets Shell's CEO Jeroen Van der Veer Dec. 21, as Russia's gas monopoly Gazprom takes over half of the Sakhalin-2 project.

(If you would like to understand why American power is declining from a historic and biblically prophetic point of view, request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Number two: The emerging resurgence of Russia

Russia only blocked gas supplies to Ukraine for two days last January. Yet the implications for a potentially energy-starved Europe were enormous. The cutoff even had a temporary impact on gas supplies to Western Europe. Very recently, Moscow threatened to double Georgia’s oil prices.

European nations suddenly woke up to the reality of their energy dependence on Russia and President Vladimir Putin’s option of using this power as a lever in his political and economic conflicts with Europe. Since that time, Moscow muscled Dutch Shell Oil out of its Russian investments and then turned its sights on BP.

One may well ask, Is Putin trying to “reassemble” the Soviet Union through economic blackmail? The lead editorial in *The Economist*

This article highlights five major problems that have significant prophetic overtones on the direction mankind is headed in today's world.

frankly tells us, “Russia’s habitual abuse of its energy muscle is bad for its citizens, its neighbourhood and the world” (Dec. 16, 2006).

Number three: The rise of aggressive atheism

The publishing of Oxford Professor Richard Dawkins’ most recent book, *The God Delusion*, reenergized atheists around the globe, particularly in Britain and Europe. According to a *Sunday Times* feature article, “Professor Richard Dawkins has caused a sensation this year [2006] with the runaway success of his anti-religious book *The God Delusion*” (Dec. 24, 2006). This unusual work blamed all forms of religion (focusing on Christianity) for our insecure, uncertain and problem-plagued world of today.

Professor Dawkins has been described as “almost evangelical in telling Christians they are misguided in their faith” (*Seven Magazine, The Sunday Telegraph*, Dec. 17, 2006). He is even planning to influence our schools.

According to a feature article in *The Sunday Times*, “The Oxford Professor and campaigning atheist is planning to take his fight against God into the classroom by flooding schools with anti-religious literature” (Nov. 19, 2006).

On a trip late last year to Northern Ireland, mainly by train, this writer saw at least two individuals reading *The God Delusion* intently. In one case I sat down opposite a businessman and a conversation about the book ensued. It turned out to be a friendly discussion in which I pointed out some of the flaws in the author’s rationale.

Two weeks later I encountered two atheists reading the book in a local Northwood (near London) coffee shop, followed by another friendly discussion.

(If you would like more information concerning the core issues about this subject, request our free booklets *Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*)

Number four: The intense vilification of Israel

Polls have shown that far too many Europeans actually believe that the state of Israel is a greater menace to world peace than rogue countries like Iran

and North Korea. Also the nonaligned nations that met in Havana, Cuba, all heartily endorsed one resolution—their condemnation of Israel.

Iran has even offered to arm the other enemies of Israel with rockets. In addition, Iran convened a two-day “Review of the Holocaust” conference, including 60 researchers (actually Holocaust deniers) from 30 nations, to supposedly demonstrate that the Holocaust was a myth. In twisted reasoning, somehow this serves as an additional pretext for the president of Iran to continue to call for the wiping of Israel off the map—one of his consistent themes in 2006.

One of the points of the Iraq Study Group recommendations on Iraq involved the restoration of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. It seemed to some observers to be heavily weighted against the state of Israel.

For example, it suggests that the Shebba Farms region that Israel occupies in the strategic Golan Heights be given to Syria—without anyone asking Israel about the idea! (For further understanding, ask for our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.)

Number five: The onslaught of sex outside of marriage

American pornographers have more or less succeeded in defending themselves under the pretext of free speech. Liberal attitudes toward illicit sex have gained ground in the United States. Many American teenagers are losing their virginity before they are old enough to legally drive. One survey showed that four in 10 teenagers had experienced sexual intercourse before age 14.

The media is at least partially responsible for this sad state of affairs. Briefly run your eyes over the covers of newsstand magazines sometime. Suggestive articles about sex tend to dominate many of these publications.

Illicit sex, however, is far from just an American problem. Internet pornography is available everywhere. For instance, in Britain almost 40 percent of the male population has logged onto sex Web sites. Illicit sex has become “consumerized” on a massive scale.

Serious biblical warnings

The Bible warns humankind to

avoid all types of illicit sexual conduct along with many other moral pitfalls.

The apostle Paul told the Colossian brethren: “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things *the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience*” (Colossians 3:5-6, emphasis added throughout). Notice that all these offenses speak directly or indirectly to sexual misbehavior.

Paul further warned: “In the last days perilous times will come” (2 Timothy 3:1). He went on to detail some of the characteristics that would plague the last days. “For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God” (verses 2-4).

These passages fit well the behaviors of peoples of our Western nations today. And as astonishing as it may seem, many of the people acting in this manner are outwardly religious and may even attend church regularly. Paul continues: “*Having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*” (verse 5).

This article has highlighted just five major problems that have significant prophetic overtones on the direction mankind is headed in today’s world. There is but one reliable, true source with the answers to the increasingly complex problems the world is facing.

That source is, of course, the Holy Bible. We have prepared for our readers a timely booklet that helps us to understand from Scripture why man is faced with crisis after crisis, with no real solutions on the horizon.

To really understand the significance of not only the key happenings in 2006 but even more importantly, what will occur in the weeks, months and years ahead, request our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* ❖

“EQUAL,” (Continued from page 16)

over the last 500 years have been between those who equally profess following the “Prince of Peace” and, yet, unequally treat one another without respect or dignity. Some have played out on the battlefields of Europe; some in the halls of churches around the United States.

That same kind of battle is occurring in Islam over the matter of rightful earthly succession of “The Prophet.” Just look at a virtual classroom in real time. It’s called Iraq, in which Shiite and Sunni battle each other between both bowing toward Mecca in prayer.

“The cold within”

After 6,000 years it’s apparent we still haven’t gotten the big picture of God’s love. Long ago I heard a poem that gripped me as I heard it read. I copied it down and often give it a look to measure the equality meter of my heart. Here is the poem:

“Six humans trapped by happenstance, in dark and bitter cold. Each one possessed a stick of wood, or so the story’s told.

“Their dying fire in need of logs, the first woman held hers back, for on the faces around the fire, she noticed one was black.

“The next man looking ’cross the way, saw one not of his church, and couldn’t bring himself to give the fire his stick of birch.

“The third one sat in tattered clothes, he gave his coat a hitch. Why should his log be put to use, to warm the idle rich?”

“The rich man just sat back and thought of the wealth he had in store, and how he could keep what he had earned, from the lazy, shiftless poor.

“The black man’s face bespoke revenge, as the fire passed from sight. For all he saw in his stick of wood, was a chance to spite the white.

“The last man of this forlorn group, did naught except for gain. Giving only to those who gave, was how he played the game.

“The logs held tight in death’s still hands, were proof of human sin. They didn’t die from the cold without, *they died from the cold within*” (author unknown).

The principles and prophecies of Scripture reject the world of “them and us” and speak of a new kind of society. The inclusive embrace of God’s Word began preparing a people to understand equal-

ity before God as far back as the days of Isaiah. He spoke of a time when “the LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10).

It was hard for the recipients of Isaiah’s message to comprehend the magnitude of what “all the nations” truly meant. Luke, the Greek doctor, would record John the Baptist citing this scripture (Luke 3:6) to an audience accustomed to their philosophy of one-upmanship: “We have Abraham as our father.”

Why are people so concerned about who we are and where we come from, rather than what God is doing with all humanity and our common destination?

Jesus would lay down the gauntlet again and again in His ministry. The God of the universe was different from the petty gods of washed-up empires covered by the sands of time. He spoke of a Being who “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Jesus was prying open “the vaults of opportunity.”

God shows no partiality

The men who heard those marvelous words from the Savior’s mouth did not immediately understand. It would be years before Peter could utter, “I perceive that God shows no partiality,” as he sat down with the Roman Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:34). “Three-fifths thinking” was thrown out of the Church. Every human being would be considered a candidate to receive God’s affection and to experience the joy of His love.

Paul, who had been a “Hebrew of the Hebrews,” would scripturally cement God’s revelation with these words: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26-28).

But such words are not simply philosophical platitudes to give us a feel-good approach about ourselves and others. They help us understand prophecies regarding the coming Kingdom of God on earth. Isaiah 2:2 speaks of a world in which “all nations shall flow” to Zion, the city we now know as Jerusalem.

It will certainly be a welcoming environment, because it is clearly stated from the mouth of these future pilgrims, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths” (verse 3).

It sounds as if everyone will be willing to throw a stick in to keep the glow of God’s ways alive, not only for themselves, but also for others.

Until that time we have some serious homework to prepare for such a world. It’s time to stoke the fire through our relationships with others. It is time to treat people with respect.

It’s time to fulfill the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:26, which speaks of those to whom God will give “a new heart” and “a new spirit.” He says, “I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you.” It is a Spirit that motivates us to understand the simple math of God’s way of thinking—that every person is equal to every other, not “three fifths” or “subhuman.”

Possessing a big vision in a lonely walk

But at times it can be a lonely walk. In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote a letter to fellow clergymen who desired him to stop his campaign against institutionalized and legalized discrimination. They wanted him to stop, not because they didn’t think their cause was just, but because they had lost hope.

Now King was in jail and the cause seemed stalled. His response to them is known today as “The Letter From the Birmingham Jail.” It is in his response to hopelessness that we can see our way forward and take the steps of “this is the way, walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21), as we exemplify in thought, word and deed that all men are created equal.

King wrote, “Let us hope the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not-too-distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.” Signed: “Yours for the cause of peace and brotherhood, Martin Luther King.” ❖



Robin Webber

In Brief... World News Review

Should Biggest Debtor Nation Be Worried?

"If the United States was a small or less-developed country, financial alarm bells would already be ringing. The U.S. current account deficit is well above the 5%-of-GDP standard the IMF and others use to pronounce economies in the developing world vulnerable to financial crisis" (John Miller, *Dollars and Sense*, January/February 2005).

For the first three quarters of 2006, the current account deficit totaled \$655.9 billion, putting it on track to reach \$874.5 billion for the entire year. The current account deficit "essentially measures the nation's debt with the rest of the world, which must be financed by loans from abroad or asset sales to foreigners.

"Some economists are worried that foreign investors will lose their appetite for US assets, causing the dollar to fall sharply and forcing interest rates higher to attract the needed investment" ("US Q3 Current Account Deficit Grows to 225.6 bln usd, Equals 6.8 pct of GDP," *Forbes.com*, Dec. 18, 2006).

Not only is the United States the biggest debtor nation in the world, now "foreigners hold more than 50% of our debt, which makes them majority owners," says Todd Harrison (*MarketWatch.com*, Dec. 20, 2006).

The United States has been the largest economy in the world, and the U.S. dollar has served as the world's reserve currency for decades, since the British currency lost that advantage after World War II. Britain had gone from the world's biggest creditor in 1913 to become a net debtor after two costly world wars. With the United States now as the biggest debtor, can its dollar still continue to be in demand? Will other nations keep accepting the flood of dollars and buying the billions in American treasury bonds necessary to keep it afloat?

The Bible warns, "The borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). And in a prophesy of the results of not obey-

ing God, the Bible says that the foreigner "shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him" (Deuteronomy 28:44). The handwriting is on the wall.

Saudi King Says Arab World Waiting to Explode

AFP reported on Dec. 9, 2006: "Saudi King Abdullah opened the annual summit of Gulf leaders with a warning that the Arab world was on the brink of exploding because of conflicts in the Palestinian territories, Iraq and Lebanon.

"Our Arab region is besieged by a number of dangers, as if it was a powder keg waiting for a spark to explode," King Abdullah said. He was addressing the heads of state of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Arab Times of Kuwait reported Dec. 10 that the leaders were instructing their security agencies to come up with a joint plan to deal with the risks arising from the situation in Iraq, including "population displacement, terrorist and criminal acts and the smuggling of weapons...and infiltration" of militants across borders.

The recommendations also called for protecting the GCC states from the potential "sectarian repercussions" of the conflict in Iraq. The Sunni-dominated GCC countries have Shiite minorities, except Bahrain where Shiites are in the majority (although its ruling family is Sunni).

In apparent response to Iran's nuclear program and Israel's admission to having nuclear bombs, the Gulf countries also announced plans for a joint atomic program. "The countries of the region have the right to nuclear energy technology for peaceful purposes," said Abdul-Rahman al-Attiya, secretary-general of the GCC.

GCC leaders also discussed steps toward establishing a common market by 2007 and a single currency by 2010.

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by Robin Webber

All Men Are Created Equal

Two hundred thirty years ago, a group of men far apart from the grip of the Old World wrote a declaration that has been the seminal vein of hope in the hearts of people.

It was a declaration based on this simple principle, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Here in one sentence is a summation that God would desire each of us to have the same start in life.

Yet declarations and deeds do not always go hand in hand. The framers of this document wrote as men of their time. They wrote as Englishmen about to embark on a profound social experiment in the New World.

But who would be invited to fully participate in their world? At that time, slavery was extant throughout the colonies; to “push the envelope” meant to lose the southern colonies if not more. The immediate need to forge a union trumped the need to explore the fullness of what equality meant.

Their answer of momentary convenience would soon be framed in the Constitution that granted slaves a “three-fifths status” in calculating electoral balance in the emerging states. Simply put, that means not fully human and thus not equal. The answer was pushed off onto future generations. A war between the states would have to be waged to expand the concept of equality.

Defaulting on a promissory note

Over 40 years ago, one social commentator observed about America’s progress toward equality:

“It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this

promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked ‘insufficient funds.’ But we refuse to believe the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check. . .”

Martin Luther King Jr. pointed out that America, in spite of its other notable qualities, had come up short. But America was by no means alone. The concept that all men are created equal has never come easy.

Much of history offers even less than a bad check. The Egyptians contemptuously looked down upon the shepherds known as Hebrews and enslaved them. The Mesopotamian empires decimated whole peoples and ethnically cleansed the realms of their opponents.

The Greeks looked upon all who were not Hellenic as “barbarians,” and the Romans often did not give their slaves any formal names lest they grow attached to a sub-form of humanity.

The Jewish world viewed “the nations” (non-Jews) as “unclean” rather than the next objects of God’s love and embrace. These same “good religious folk” looked contemptuously upon their neighbors the Samaritans, who shared a common God, but not the same mountain worship place.

Since the time Christ walked upon this earth, religious folk have squabbled and even come to blows over who is right, who is in charge and who is closest to the original intent of Christ’s message.

Yes, some of the greatest battles in Western civilization

(See “EQUAL,” page 14)