



## In This Issue:

August 2007 | Vol. 10, No. 7

### Will the Special Relationship Survive?

by Darris McNeely . . . . . 1

### Restoration: View From the Front Porch

by Darris McNeely . . . . . 2

### Papal Authority, Protestants and Prophecy

by Paul Kieffer . . . . . 5

### British Values Under Serious Threat



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by John Ross Schroeder . . . . . 7

### The Wonderful World Beyond Today... War and Peace

by Mike Bennett . . . . . 9

### A Page on the World: A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900

Reviewed by Darris McNeely . . . . . 12

### This Is the Way... Wise Men Still Seek His Star

by Robin Webber . . . . . 16

# Will the Special Relationship Survive?

*We'd better hope so. The unique relationship that America and Great Britain have forged for more than a hundred years has done much to foster freedom, open markets and good will. When it passes, the world will be a different place.*

by Darris McNeely

**W**hen Tony Blair announced this spring that he would step down in late June as Great Britain's prime minister, immediate speculation began as to the future of relations between Britain and America.

Blair and President George W. Bush have had a very close working relationship since 9/11, with Britain being the leading partner in the subsequent war on terror and the ground battles in Afghanistan and Iraq. Blair took a fair bit of criticism, especially from his home press, for the unabashed cooperation he gave to Bush. Prior to President Bush's election, Blair developed close ties with former President Bill Clinton.

Blair's successor, Gordon Brown, is known to favor America (he has regularly vacationed in New England), but is under pressure to distance himself from President Bush. Recent statements from Brown appointees indicate there may be a change in tone rather than substance. No one for now really looks for significant changes to occur in this Anglo-American partnership.

### Tests of the relationship

A recent article by John O'Sullivan in London's *Telegraph* shows the mistake it has been when any British leader has thought of distancing Britain's foreign policy from



Reuters/Larry Downing

*U.S. President George W. Bush gives a ride to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown at Camp David, Maryland, July 29.*

America's. In the early 1970s when Great Britain joined the then European Community (now EU), Prime Minister Edward Heath said Britain would pursue policies closer to those of France and Germany.

"With Opec quadrupling its oil prices and Arab countries threatening an oil boycott, this looked like a combination of hard-headed national interest and European idealism.

"In fact it was foolish self-deception. Heath's posturing took place almost immediately before a series of geo-political threats to Britain (and Europe) revealed the necessity of the link: Opec, hyper-inflation, the installation of Soviet SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe, terrorism, crises in southern

(See "RELATIONSHIP," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

# Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

## View From the Front Porch

It is midsummer and there seems to be a lull in the news as I write. No big event or crisis has erupted. You can tell this by the headlines on the Internet—there are none. Right now it seems the biggest news is the release of the last Harry Potter book and the further antics of young, misguided Hollywood starlets.

Years ago I gave some talks called "Life on the Front Porch." I used the example of the front porch of Mackinac Island's Grand Hotel with its long veranda and many large rocking chairs. This spot is perfect for whiling away an hour on a summer afternoon with a glass of tea while watching a storm move across the Straits of Mackinac. Somewhere in this scene time seems suspended, hanging softly on the passing wind.

I used this picture to illustrate something about prophecy and God's plan. Too often when we study prophecy, we get caught up in the speculative aspects of "when will Christ return?" or "who are the two witnesses of Revelation?" Granted, these are among the most interesting parts of the subject. But everyone who gets too specific on these and other points always ends up looking like, well, a false prophet.

When you look at the flow of events in the Bible, from creation forward to today, you see a lot of high points such as the time of Abraham, the Exodus, David and Solomon, and Christ and the apostles. But these events are separated by at times hundreds of years when not much seems to be happening.

But something is happening in those in-between years. Everyday life is taking place. People are "marrying and giving in marriage." Babies are born and families grow. People rejoice and mourn within the normal cycles of life and death. Life goes on, and sometimes it is no more exciting than sitting on a front porch and watching the hours slip by.

But that's okay. God did not determine that we would always be hyped up in alert mode. Prophecy is not to be used that way. Prophecy is a compass that helps us see our world for what it is, from God's point of view. We can understand the high points of history and know that God is guiding the world to a point where He will completely take over with the appearance of His Kingdom.

Until then we are to follow Christ's instruction in the parable of the pounds, "Do business till I come" (Luke 19:13). What is that business? It is the business of the Kingdom of God in the life of each of us.

Christ came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel!" (Mark 1:15). The knowledge of that Kingdom has come to your life and mine, and it is the guiding star of each day. We live by the laws of the coming Kingdom today, and that makes all the difference.

Enjoy the life you have and make the most of it within the framework of God's way of life. Understand that at times life is experienced while sitting on a "front porch." Nothing grand or dramatic in the scheme of God's plan may be happening at that moment. Your life may be calm and tranquil. But events can be building on life's horizon that can sweep through and change everything. We have to be ready, and we prepare by obeying God and seeking His will in our lives.

I learned this one day while sitting on the front porch of the Grand Hotel and watching a storm build and move across the Straits of Mackinac. This dramatic scene etched a lesson in my mind. It helps me keep a balance. I hope it does for you as well.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

## “RELATIONSHIP” (Continued from page 1)

Africa, the rise of the Soviet Navy, the invasion of Afghanistan. Europe could not possibly deal with these crises without the US” (“Special Relationship Will Survive—as Before,” July 14, 2007).

It was not until Ronald Reagan entered office in 1980 that this relationship was solidly reaffirmed. Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher forged a deep relationship based on the understanding that the fortunes of the two nations were firmly linked.

The late 1980s saw the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain that divided Europe. As Germany began to reunite, President George H.W. Bush tried for a time to place more reliance on Germany, rather than Britain. This was rationalized because Germany had a stronger economy than Britain and reunification was a priority in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse.

O’Sullivan shows how premature this action was. “Before Washington could relax, however, Kuwait was invaded by Saddam Hussein. Germany was very little use in that conflict despite its large economy. It had a land-locked army, a constitution that forbade intervention abroad, and a national pacifist sensibility.

“What Washington needed was allies with armies, intelligence services, strategic mobility, and a foreign policy tradition of upholding international order.

“Indeed, the British were sometimes more determined than Washington. Over Kuwait Thatcher issued her famous encouragement: ‘This is no time to go wobbly, George.’ She and John Major helped to win the first Gulf war and make it internationally respectable.

“The special relationship was once more in favour where—with wobbles over Kosovo and Iraq—it has remained in both capitals,” John O’Sullivan wrote (ibid.).

O’Sullivan concluded that this “special relationship” is anchored in two facts. “First, because Britain and the US (and Australia, Canada, New Zealand and India) share a common language, culture, and legal and political traditions, they tend to see the world in much the same way. The ‘Anglosphere’ countries believe in a liberal international order and are more prepared to uphold it by force than other liberal powers.

“Second, since 1941 Britain and the US (and, again, countries such as Australia, Canada, etc.) have developed practices of mutual cooperation in fields as various as

war, trade, electronic spying, investment, and international institution-building” (ibid.).

O’Sullivan is correct on these two points but leaves out the most important reason for this ongoing relationship.

### The biblical dimension

America and Great Britain, and the other English-speaking nations, are joined as they are because their existence, identity and power are rooted in the biblical promises made to the patriarch Abraham and his descendants. Because God made promises to reward the obedience of this man, these peoples have inherited earth’s choicest lands and in modern times have exercised a global dominance that is unparalleled in world history.

World leaders do not recognize this truth, but it represents the missing biblical dimension in world affairs.

Without this key, you cannot fully understand why today’s world works as it does. It explains why Great Britain, through its past empire, ruled more than a quarter of the world’s people and a fifth of its land. With this knowledge you can know why America has grown to become the largest single power the world has known.

Because of God’s blessings, these two nations over the past 250 years have largely left a legacy that has done more good than harm, wherever they have gone.

This is not to ignore or excuse mistakes made in the treatment of other peoples. God will hold the United States and Britain accountable for actions that have strayed from the high standards set out in the book these English-speaking nations have spread around the world—the Bible. But despite today’s trends of relativism, multiculturalism and revisionist history, the English-speaking nations have a legacy that is higher than most. Where they have gone they have lifted humanity toward what Churchill described as a “broad sun-lit upland.”

The full story can be found in our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. A copy can be read or requested on the Web at [www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org) or by writing to the nearest office listed on page 15.

### Joseph’s blessings overflow

The biblical patriarch Jacob prophesied the blessing these two nations would be as he lay dying. His sons were gathered around his bed while he told them what would become of their descendants “in the last days” (Genesis 49:1).

Verse 22 contains the vision for Joseph, whose two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, carried the promise to their descendants, Great Britain and the United States. Notice what it says: “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall.”

Ephraim and Manasseh were to be rich and blessed with material abundance. No modern nations fit this description any better than America and Great Britain.

This aspect of the prophecy is brought out in a recently published work, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900* by Andrew Roberts. This history covers the period from 1900 to the present and provides a detailed narrative of the impact of Great Britain and America during this period.

When the economic history of this period is studied, the unique American form of capitalism stands out as a system that has brought great wealth not only to America but to other nations who have adopted its fundamentals. Roberts comments, “. . . throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first it was the Anglo-American form of capitalism, of free enterprise, free trade and laissez-faire economics that has consistently produced more prosperity than any other model” (2007, p. 22).

Between 1844 and 1862 the British Parliament enacted legislation, called Company Acts, that guaranteed business interests and enabled the growth of market capitalism. These limited liability laws ensured that investors would only lose what they put into the firm.

“That, along with the public trading of shares of equal value, opened up the modern capitalist system that has brought prosperity to every society that has ever properly adopted it, while civilizations that once outstripped the West yet failed to develop private sector companies—notably China and the Islamic world—fell farther and farther behind” (ibid., p. 39).

To this day, as evidenced by the Heritage Foundation’s Index of Economic Freedom, the nations that have been directly touched by this form of economic system rank highest in basic aspects of freedom dealing with trade, business, property rights and other essential aspects of economic development. Hong Kong and Singapore, two examples of former colonies influenced by Great Britain, ranked along with the English-speaking nations in the top 10. Their standard of living ranks among the highest in the world.

British and U.S. generosity has also “blessed” the nations. The United States has spent billions of dollars relieving AIDS distress in Africa and providing debt-relief throughout the third world. When the massive tsunami hit Indonesia in late 2004, American and Australian naval ships were the first to arrive with food and medical supplies to begin relief efforts.

Roberts turns around an expression to illustrate the benefit many of the less fortunate nations receive from Anglo-American abundance.

“The hackneyed line that ‘When America sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold’ also has its obverse side, that when virtuous phenomena take place in America, the rest of the world benefits. When American doctors find a cure for various diseases—as they do more than any other nation—all can celebrate.” He praises, without fully understanding the power of his phrase, “America’s willingness...to extend her birthright across the globe” (ibid., pp. 639-640).

More could be illustrated from many examples. Indeed, Joseph’s birthright, real-

ized in these modern peoples, is a “fruitful bough by a well; [whose] branches run over the wall” to the far corners of the earth. History speaks for itself.

The English-speaking peoples are not inherently better than others. Their blessings and place among the nations are the result of God’s promises. Yes, they have enacted superior systems of government that safeguard individual liberty, property rights and public safety. Yes, they have economic systems that reward initiative and hard work while creating opportunity for amassing wealth.

But credit for those basic freedoms enshrined in law must ultimately be given to God. The principles behind many of them are found in the pages of the Bible. So, to the degree those laws and principles have been followed, the credit lies with God.

### Coming time of “Jacob’s trouble”

There is every reason for this special relationship to continue. The ties of language, culture, history and prophecy are too deep. But that is not to say there will be continued smooth sailing. There are many factors at

work that will dramatically alter their role in the world.

We who live in, and love, the United States and Great Britain, must realize that despite our exalted role and national blessings, God is not pleased with the many national sins that continue to eat away like a cancer within our body. There is a moral and spiritual sickness that, if not addressed and changed, will result in God removing His hand of blessing from these nations.

The Bible foretells a period called “Jacob’s trouble” when there will be national distress and tribulation. We have covered this point in many past articles in *World News and Prophecy*.

There are powers today, circling like vultures, that wish the United States and Britain harm and want to take the leading role in world affairs. The war on terror is but one example of scattered Islamic fundamentalists connected by a desire to end the dominance of the West, especially America. China continues to build its military capability and seeks to dominate Asia and remove all American influence from the region.

And then there is Europe, a sleeper slowly emerging as a superpower that will one day challenge America and Great Britain for the role of global power.

Until then, America and Britain continue to work in tandem, promoting their brand of democracy and capitalism. The special relationship continues. But when their day in the sun concludes, it will be a different world than today. And those who seek their demise may find themselves wishing for a return to the time when the Union Jack and Stars and Stripes flew together over the world. ❖

## How Can You Make Sense of the News?



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This eye-opening site offers you a perspective you won't find anywhere else—the perspective

of God's Word, the Bible. Here's some of what you'll find:

- Articles analyzing world news in the light of Bible prophecy.
- 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](http://www.wnponline.org) today!



### Recommended Reading

Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada 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*.

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# Papal Authority, Protestants and Prophecy

*Will the Catholic Church's controversial restatement of its belief about the church derail ecumenical dialogue? What does the future hold?*

by Paul Kieffer

**O**n July 11, 2007, the Vatican restated its position that the Catholic Church is the only true church established by Jesus Christ. In a brief document titled “Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church,” the Vatican’s doctrinal office repeated controversial claims made in a doctrinal paper published seven years ago, “*Dominus Iesus*.”

According to the Vatican, other Christian denominations may have certain elements of biblical truth, but they cannot claim apostolic succession—the ability to trace their bishops back to the apostle Peter. Rome therefore reasons that such denominations cannot properly be called churches.

The response of various Protestant leaders was to be expected. The idea that non-Catholic churches are deficient because they do not accept papal authority and the primacy of the pope generally caused offense and was seen as a blow to the interdenominational dialogue fostered by the late Pope John Paul II. On the other hand, the Vatican’s unequivocal position gives a clear indication what the word *ecumenical* means for the Catholic Church.

The new Vatican document was signed by U.S. Cardinal William Levada, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and personally approved by Pope Benedict XVI before publication. Pope Benedict is also the man responsible for appointing Levada to his position as the Vatican’s doctrinal watchdog, a position that Benedict held before becoming pope. And it was Benedict himself who, as German cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, wrote the paper seven years ago that first irked Protestants.

As part of his effort to establish a distinct church identity, Pope Benedict apparently wants to clarify some of the confusion resulting from the Second Vatican Council of 1964, when the term “sister churches” was used in reference to non-Catholic denominations.

Benedict’s position is that apostolic succession is an important key to identifying the only true church. A “sister church” is therefore a denomination that can trace its roots back to Peter as the supposed first pope, but is currently separated from the Roman Catholic Church as a result of an earlier schism.

In the Vatican’s view, one church in this category would be the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The clarifying statements released July 11 and seven years ago make another part of the Second Vatican Council clear: For the Catholic Church, the word *ecumenical* means movement on the part of the others. There won’t be a restoration of Christian denominational unity involving Catholics and Protestants meeting halfway. Instead, if there is to be unity, non-Catholics will meet the Vatican on its terms by recognizing papal authority.

## **Protestants already accept papal authority**

One church leader probably surprised by the Vatican’s new document may have been the head of Germany’s Lutheran Church, Wolfgang Huber. Just one day after the Vatican statement was released, Bishop Huber responded to the Vatican by saying that the Lutheran Church is not willing to pay every price for the sake of the ecumenical movement.

Perhaps Bishop Huber should not have been surprised in the first place. After all, just one month ago he indirectly confirmed the authority of the Catholic Church over his own Lutheran Church—and nearly all other non-Catholic churches.

In June 2007 the Lutheran Church found itself siding with the Roman Catholic Church on an issue that has surfaced in Germany several times in the last few years. It involves Germany’s “store closing law,” which mandates that normal business may not be conducted on Sundays and holidays.

In today’s Germany a paragraph adapted from the prewar Weimar Constitution provides constitutional protection for Sunday as a day of rest from work: “Sunday and state recognized holidays enjoy legal protection as days of rest from work” (paragraph 139).

In decisions rendered in 1992, 1995 and 2004, Germany’s Supreme Court in Karlsruhe has confirmed that employers have the constitutional obligation “to protect the rest from work on Sunday and holidays.”

So what’s the problem? For years the city of Berlin, which is also one of Germany’s 16 federal states, has taken the lead in an attempt to get around the “store closing law.”

*For the Catholic Church, the word ecumenical means movement on the part of the others. There won’t be a restoration of Christian denominational unity involving Catholics and Protestants meeting halfway.*

In 1999 a “shopping Sunday” raised eyebrows when over 50,000 people showed up on a Sunday in August at a large Berlin department store. Late last year Berlin approved a change that allows stores to be open on 10 selected Sundays this year from 1 to 8 p.m. Other German states also have “shopping Sundays,” but none has as many as Berlin.

Last month, Berlin’s Catholic archbishop, Cardinal Georg Sterzinsky, announced his church’s plan to take the city of Berlin to court in an attempt to get the city to reduce the number of “shopping Sundays.” Cardinal Sterzinsky accused the Berlin senate of making Berlin the federal state in Germany that least respects the value of Sunday.

“I deeply regret that Berlin has to be the example for eroding the constitutional protection given to Sunday,” Cardinal Sterzinsky emphasized, adding that Sunday should be a day of rest and spiritual uplifting.

The issue of Sunday as a day of rest is where Lutheran Church leader Wolfgang Huber agrees with the Catholic Church. His own church will also be a party to the legal challenge against the city of Berlin. In a press release Bishop Huber emphasized that Sunday has been a Christian religious holiday in Western culture for 1,700 years.

In voicing support for the lawsuit, Bishop Huber acknowledges indirectly that Sunday was not a religious holiday for Jesus, His disciples and the first Christians. Of course, he is right about that. The first Christians did not keep Sunday as their weekly day of rest. Instead, they kept the Sabbath, commonly referred to as Saturday in today’s weekly cycle.

So which church made Sunday a Christian religious holiday many years after Jesus and His disciples walked the earth? The Roman Catholic Church!

James Cardinal Gibbons, Catholic educator and archbishop of Baltimore at the beginning of the 20th century, was blunt about the authority of his church. In a book called *The Faith of Our Fathers* he wrote: “You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.”

Without realizing it, any Christian who

observes Sunday as the weekly day of rest has already accepted the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, symbolized by papal authority. In so doing, that person is already on the road to true ecumenical unity the way the Vatican envisions it: a Christian world united under the leadership of the pope, who claims to be a successor to the apostle Peter.

Viewed this way, one has to wonder why the leader of Germany’s Lutheran Church and other Protestant church leaders were upset about the Vatican’s latest document on the one true church. For all practical purposes, Lutherans and other Sunday-keeping Protestants already accept papal authority for changing the Bible day of rest from Saturday to the Catholic day of rest, Sunday. They already accept Catholic authority for traditional holidays like Christmas and Easter instead of the days the Bible commands.

Since they already accept that authority, it would seem logical and consistent for them to accept the pope’s authority on others matters too.

### **Prophecy provides the answer to church unity**

Bible prophecy indicates that the question of church authority in the traditional Christian world will likely be solved in the coming years by the appearance of a dynamic church leader.

In prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation, the Bible describes a succession of empires, beginning with Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar’s, that will culminate in an end-time resurrection of the Roman Empire just prior to the promised return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

The final appearance of the Roman Empire will be a political union of 10 kings dominated by a religious system called “Babylon the Great” that emanates from “the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (Revelation 17:1-2).

The true Church of God is pictured in the Bible as a chaste bride waiting to be married to Christ. The harlot of Revelation 17 is a deceptive religious system masquerading as a true system of worship.

The final resurrection of the Roman Empire, like the original empire and its

subsequent “resurrections,” will be centered in Europe. It appears that it can be seen today in its embryonic form in the European Union. That does not mean that all current EU nations will be part of the final configuration, but those that choose to participate will combine to form a short-lived, powerful union influenced by a traditional religious system based in Rome, the modern heir of ancient Babylon.

Since the “great harlot” of Revelation 17 is pictured as continually being the dominant religion of the “beast” system, it follows that the final revival of the Roman Empire will be influenced by the same traditional religious system that has been allied with the earlier attempts to restore the Roman Empire. In other words, it will be a “Christian” influence.

Revelation 13:11-14 confirms this viewpoint by describing a “beast” that looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. A lamb is a biblical symbol for Jesus Christ, and the dragon is a biblical symbol for Satan the devil.

In other words, this particular “beast” is some kind of religious authority appearing or claiming to represent the true lamb—Jesus. In reality, though, it is a tool of Satan. This religious beast causes the world to worship another beast (verses 1-9) and enforces obedience to its dictates (Revelation 13:16), which will be contrary to the law of God.

It is this religious beast that Satan will use in the end-time to persecute the true followers of Jesus who have His testimony and keep the commandments of God (Revelation 12:17).

### **Miracles and the “man of sin”**

One of the special characteristics of this religious power will be its ability to perform miracles, including calling down fire from heaven (Revelation 13:13). In so doing, it will deceive the vast majority of people (verse 14).

We find a similar prophecy given by the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2. Here as well a great religious deception will be perpetrated by an individual who will even claim to be God. The Bible calls this end-time religious leader “the man of sin.”

Notice what it says: “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind

(See “PAPAL,” page 13)

# British Values Under Serious Threat

*According to one recent poll, "Nine out of ten people [in the United Kingdom] believe that the social fabric of Britain is under threat because of family breakdown and rising crime" (The Daily Mail). Britain is following the same tragic path as all other Western nations. Basic values and standards are gradually being subverted on many levels. What can be done about it?*

by John Ross Schroeder

One British tourist guide laments that "the cult of celebrity, junk food and binge drinking has replaced tea, cricket and manners as national symbols." It is thought that "one in six adults is either dependent on alcohol or rated a hazardous or harmful drinker." Hospitals have seen a 14 percent rise in admissions for drinking problems in the last year.

## Family and marriage breakdown

One major monthly supplement titled a long feature article "Is Anyone Faithful Any More?" American writer Pamela Druckerman spent three years studying marital infidelity in several prominent Western nations. Surprisingly, "she discovered that on average the British cheat more than the Americans—and the French" (*Observer Sunday Supplement*, July 2007).

One woman was quoted in the article as saying, "I cheated because I believe pleasurable sex between consenting adults is no big deal." Her cheating career began during her teenage years. Another person said, "Sometimes we cheat because we're just greedy, because we want more."

Pamela Druckerman found that adultery was a major problem in every country she visited. We urge our readers around the world to request the free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. This full-color, attractively printed publication presents many biblical principles in support of traditional marriage. It also shows how we can cultivate and improve our marriages. You might say it is a happiness manual, based on God's Word.

## Lacking basic integrity

Recent statistics show a 5 percent increase in violent crime in Britain. But in this article we will focus on a different type of crime.

A survey by Keele University in northern Staffordshire revealed an appalling lack of basic



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*Binge drinking, cheating, pilfering and general contempt for the law are becoming more prevalent.*

honesty among far too many British citizens. Cutting corners in basic morality is more prevalent in the West today than previously thought possible.

Over a third use cash in order to avoid paying tax. Nearly a third keep very silent when mistakenly given too much change by a clerk or cashier. Nearly 20 percent pilfer small items from the office. Over 10 percent manage to avoid paying their TV licenses. The list goes on and on.

Incredibly, "The worst perpetrators are said to be highly paid people facing temporary financial difficulties" (*The Times*, June 25, 2007). Professor Suzanne Karstedt, a criminologist from Keele University, stated, "Contempt for the law is as widespread in the centre of society as it is assumed to be rampant at the margins and among specific marginal groups."

## Archbishop attacks a materialistic Britain

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams charged British society with being "fantastical-

*In Britain "one in six adults is either dependent on alcohol or rated a hazardous or harmful drinker." Hospitals have seen a 14 percent rise in admissions for drinking problems in the last year.*

ly materialistic.” He stated: “We seem to be tolerant of all sorts of behaviour, yet are deeply unforgiving. People demand legal redress for human errors and oversights... We shouldn’t be misled by an easy-going atmosphere in manners and morals; under the surface there is a harshness that ought to worry us” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, March 25, 2007).

One of the archbishop’s major concerns is “the erosion of Christian belief systems.” Here he is getting very near to the nub of the problem that plagues most industrialized nations.

Noted British historian and author Martin Gilbert also commented on this general malaise affecting many modern nations. “Jews, like Christians, were swept up by the almost universal secularism of the late twentieth century. Family life, which when the century began was a marked feature of Jewish existence, has faced the same strains and disintegration that beset the non-Jewish world *amid the secularism and agnosticism of affluence and modernity*” (*From the Ends of the Earth: the Jews in the Twentieth Century*, 2001, pp. 362-363, emphasis added throughout).

### The biblical viewpoint

Obviously you have some interest in God and the Bible or you wouldn’t be reading this article. Everything we write is from a biblical viewpoint. This is a Christian magazine that emphasizes prophetic news and trends in the world. The Judeo/Christian Bible undergirds and supports our whole approach to national and world problems.

God is not pleased when we transgress biblical moral standards. When normally righteous King David of Israel committed two terrible crimes, God’s Word says: “The thing that David had done *displeased the LORD*” (2 Samuel 11:27).

Yet when the king repented, God was quick to forgive, although He imposed severe temporal penalties partly because much greater responsibility is incumbent on rulers who influence many thousands by their actions. They are expected to set the right example, while avoiding scandal and corruption.

After David’s heartfelt repentance, the prophet Nathan told David, “*The*

*LORD also has put away your sin*” (2 Samuel 12:13). Those must have been among the most comforting words ever said to the king.

### Christian conduct important

From early on, the apostle Paul displayed a great interest in appropriate ethical behavior. “Brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us *how you ought to walk and to please God*. For you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2).

Then Paul went on to give the brethren at Thessalonica one or two striking examples of proper ethical behavior—including the importance of sexual self-control.

Yet we have all made serious mistakes of one kind or the other and are in need of mercy and redemption. Although we firmly witness against all types of bad behavior and strongly encourage repentance and Christian conduct, *World News and Prophecy* recognizes that God does mercifully forgive repentant sinners who have broken His spiritual law.

Both the apostles Peter and Paul owned up to *past* bad behavior on the part of early Christians. Peter wrote: “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in

doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4:3).

Paul added: “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another” (Titus 3:3).

### God calls sinners to salvation

But how does God Himself react to those *truly repentant sinners* whom He has called (or is calling) to salvation?

Notice the next few verses in context. “*When the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared*, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration [water baptism] and renewing of the Holy Spirit, [which] He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (verses 4-7).

If you have been affected by some of these negative trends afflicting our Western societies and would like some help in embarking upon a new life, request our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. ❖

## Britain: A Great Place to Live

One American author opened his *Daily Mail* and read the following: “Forget afternoon tea, cricket on the village green, roast beef and good manners. Britain is suffering an identity crisis as our genteel traditions are eroded by an obsession with TV talent shows, junk food, binge-drinking and porn and diluted by multiculturalism.”

This particular writer then acknowledged that there is a lot of truth in this frank assessment. Yet in his extensive travels through the British Isles, in the service of *National Geographic*, he has also witnessed another side of this green and pleasant land. He observed that Britain is still brimming with many charming and lovely people of basic integrity.

I have to concur with this assessment because some of them reside on my block in the greater North London area. For instance, our next-door neighbors are very honest and helpful folk. They have a key to our home and often look after our dog when my wife, Jan, and I are both away for the day.

In this magazine we constantly warn our readers about the horrific consequences of the bad behavior that the apostle Paul told Timothy would occur at the time of the end (see 2 Timothy 3:1-7). But this is done in the hope that the gospel message will get out in ever greater intensity—effecting a reverse movement in the right direction.



# The Wonderful World Beyond Today

## War and Peace

*How will true peace come to this troubled planet?*

by Mike Bennett

**H**uman history is, at its core, the story of wars. We study what led up to them, what weapons were developed and used, who was hurt most by them, who was considered the winner and what was done to prepare for the next one.

The spaces in between wars are often referred to as peace, but too often they are merely times of sorrow and recovery from the war just past or fear and preparation for the war to come. Precious little peace can be found in human history.

After two devastating world wars, the nations gathered in San Francisco, California, in 1945 to found an organization “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind” (Preamble to the United Nations Charter). But in spite of that lofty goal, between 1946 and 2002, there were 226 armed conflicts by one count (John D. Wright, *Guide to the State of the World*, 2005, p. 80).

Why is man drawn inevitably toward war? Why have our best efforts failed to bring peace?

### Causes of war

The Bible reveals that the cause of violence goes all the way back to the rebellion of Lucifer, who became known as Satan (Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18). “You became filled with violence within, and you sinned,” Ezekiel records about this rebellion (Ezekiel 28:16). Satan is described as a murderer, a roaring lion seeking prey and a dragon making war in heaven and on earth (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:7, 17).

Satan, humanity’s greatest adversary, currently rules this world, and broadcasts his attitudes of hate and violence into the minds of men (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2). His influence helps amplify our natural selfishness to a fevered pitch as described by James:

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war” (James 4:1-3).

And so we find ourselves in a world that desperately needs and desires peace, yet which is far from it. Cries of “peace, peace” are too often wishful thinking, political maneuvering or outright deception (Jeremiah



Wikimedia Commons

*Let Us Beat Swords Into Plowshares, a sculpture given by the Soviet Union to the United Nations in 1959.*

6:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:3). Paul accurately described the human condition this way:

“Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and *the way of peace they have not known*” (Romans 3:15-17).

Thankfully the Bible reveals that Jesus Christ will rescue this world from the final throes of the most destructive world war, before we annihilate ourselves (Matthew 24:22). Under His rule the elusive way of peace will finally be taught.

### Swords into plowshares

Outside the United Nations buildings today, a famous sculpture of a man beating a sword into a farm implement captures the longing of humanity for peace, and hints at the way it will truly come. The inspiration for the statue—and the true hope for disarmament and peace—comes from a beautiful prophecy in Isaiah.

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

“Many people shall come and say, ‘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.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

“He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke

- “Either war is obsolete or men are”—*R. Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983).*
- “There is little for the great part of the history of the world except the bitter tears of pity and the hot tears of wrath”—*Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924).*



*After the most devastating war in human history, there will be an incredible amount of cleanup and rebuilding to do. But this time people will be able to rebuild knowing that it won't all be destroyed again.*

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 2:2-4; repeated in Micah 4:1-3).

What a wonderful vision! Finally disputes between nations will be resolved without resorting to the horrors of war, which only plant the seeds of future conflict. At last nations will be forced to disarm, but they will soon realize they have nothing to fear, since their neighbors will all be disarmed as well.

War colleges will be shut down, and the militaries disbanded. No more will the young, with their bright hopes and great potentials, be used as cannon fodder. Instead of investing the best minds and greatest resources into developing weapons of destruction, nations will be able to invest in making life better for all their citizens.

Today some of the most impoverished nations in the world import inordinate amounts of arms. Weapons make up 33.5 percent of Eritrea’s imports and 20.5 percent of Ethiopia’s (Wright, p. 87). Gone will be these wasteful arms races, and today’s dangerous neighborhoods—like the Middle East, where 40 percent of arms exports go—will be peaceful at last.

### The way of peace

Though Christ’s rule will begin by halting wars using supernatural force, soon peace will spread through education in the

way of peace. Christ’s followers are taught to become peacemakers even in this present age (Matthew 5:9), and will teach others in the world to come.

Paul described some of the elements of this way of peace in his letter to the Romans: “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.

“On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:16-21, New International Version).

Many other biblical passages detail the attitude and approach of the peacemaker (for example, see Romans 8:5-8; 14:17-19; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 14:33; Philippians 2:3-5; 4:6-9; and James 3:17-18).

The way of peace, coupled with the justice and mercy of God’s government, will provide effective conflict resolution on the personal and national level. Ultimately, every conflict can have a win-win solution

that will benefit all parties for eternity.

### Rebuilding and renewal

After the most devastating war in human history, there will be an incredible amount of cleanup and rebuilding to do. But this time people will be able to rebuild knowing that it won’t all be destroyed again in a few years by another war.

This time the rebuilding can be done in a sensible and sustainable way. Cities will be clean and safe. Villages and farmlands will be productive and beautiful. Picture these scenes from the words of the prophets:

“I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them” (Amos 9:14).

“So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited’ (Ezekiel 36:35).

Even Jerusalem, perhaps the most fought over piece of real estate in history, will finally live up to the meaning of its name as a city of peace and safety:

“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” (Zechariah 8:4-5).

A world without war will be incredibly better than today’s world. But a world with true peace—resulting from following God’s way of peace—will be fantastic almost beyond human imagination! ❖

### Recommended Reading

Jesus Christ brought good news—the gospel—but few understand why His promise of a coming Kingdom is the best news this world could ever hear. Request or download our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom* for the biblical answers.



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

Web site at

[www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org)

# Genocide Survivor: “I Hope We’ve Learned Our Lesson...”

“One day we were neighbors, and the next day the massacre began.” That’s how the survivor of a tribal massacre described the shocking turn of events that led to the murder of 18 of her family members. Her tragic story cuts to the heart of humanity’s inability to find lasting peace...

If it weren’t for the sign outside the gate, the Catholic Church in Ntarama would seem little different from other churches in Rwanda.

But in April 1994 horrifying events occurred that turned this church into a genocide memorial site. The sign says in French, English and the local Kinyarwanda dialect that nearly 5,000 people were murdered on this site—many in a single day.

Pacifique Rutaganda and Dancille Nyirabazungu met us at the gate and explained that they were survivors of the attack at the church. Now they are state-appointed guides and caretakers of the site.

To try to understand how something like this could happen, I had already read some background on the events of 1994. Especially useful was Philip Gourevitch’s 1998 book *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families*.

Mr. Gourevitch explains how the two largest groups in Rwanda are the Hutu and the Tutsi tribes. Many researchers today believe that they did not actually begin as distinct ethnic tribes so much as economic entities. Under the precolonial Rwandan monarchy, the king was Tutsi and Tutsis were favored for government posts. But the barriers between the groups were porous. It was possible for a Hutu who succeeded financially to officially become a Tutsi.

When European colonial powers arrived, however, they hardened the division, going so far as to issue ethnic identification cards in 1934. Hardening the tribal divide meant the path to advancement was closed to Hutus, since the European colonizers employed Tutsis to rule the country and discriminated against the Hutus when it came to educational and career opportunities (pp. 56-57).

In 1959 violence broke out as organized groups of the majority Hutus attacked Tutsis. By 1961 the Europeans convened Hutu leaders, abolished the Rwandan (Tutsi) monarchy and declared Rwanda a republic. The Europeans then pulled out, declaring Rwanda independent in 1961 (pp. 60-61). The book details the unrest, propaganda and attacks that continued building through the 1990s.

On April 6, 1994, Rwandan (Hutu) President Habyarimana’s plane was shot down. The Hutu Power movement immediately blamed the attack on the Tutsis, though it now seems more probable that he was eliminated by the Hutu Power movement itself.

The president’s death provided a convenient and powerful ral-

lying cry to attack all Tutsis in “self-defense.” The violence broke out almost immediately throughout the country, as many Hutu villagers followed the call of their tribal leaders to kill all Tutsis.

This is where Dancille and Pacifique picked up their story. Pacifique said his family members knew from past experience that when the violence began they needed to find a safe place to hide. His father, who had survived the killings in 1959, told him, “Don’t worry, my son, we will go to the church.” Church buildings had been respected places of safety in 1959.

As the events of 1994 began, hundreds, then thousands of Tutsis from miles around took refuge in the Ntarama church and on the grounds.

But then, four buses of militia and soldiers of the presidential guard arrived. The refugees huddled in the church with the doors barred. Then it happened: Men armed with sledgehammers knocked holes in the walls and tossed in hand grenades, killing and maiming many and stunning the rest. Others then broke open the doors, whereupon militia and regular soldiers armed with rifles, clubs, machetes and even bows and arrows killed every man, woman and child they were able to find still alive inside.

Dancille and Pacifique were among the few who, in the confusion, survived by running out the back door. Dancille said, “When you are so panicked, you don’t even think of

your own children; you just run.” She told me she lost her husband, her two children, her mother-in-law, father-in-law, two brothers-in-law and others—18 family members in all.

Dancille continued, “These people became like animals. The [Hutu Power] government was responsible for this: One day we were neighbors, and the next day the massacre began.”

Dancille and Pacifique showed us around the church and grounds. The church had been left much as it was following the violence. As a testimony to the magnitude of the genocidal attack, the bones had not been removed and buried, but rather left on the floor. I was shown a mud-brick building with walls and metal roof blackened on the interior from fire. The people hiding inside had been burned alive.

The magnitude of what I was seeing and the obvious evidence of such cruel violence made the whole scene rather surreal. It didn’t seem possible that this could really have happened, as if it all somehow came from another world. But sadly, it did indeed come from this world—the same one in which you and I live.

Summing up her thoughts on these atrocities, Dancille stated: “I hope this will never happen again. I hope people have learned their lesson.”

—Joel Meeker



*Genocide survivors Pacifique Rutaganda and Dancille Nyirabazungu outside the church where nearly 5,000 were murdered in 1994.*



# A Page on the World

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

## A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900

*Andrew Roberts' history continues where Winston Churchill's ended, showing the blessings enjoyed by the United States and the countries that made up the British Empire.*

Reviewed by Darris McNeely

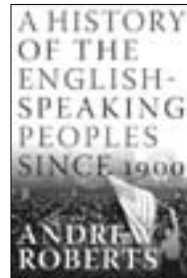
*This book goes against the conventional wisdom of popular culture media and academia regarding the empire and power generated by Great Britain and America. Roberts makes no apology nor does he enter into hand-wringing guilt over the position these nations have attained.*

**R**egular readers of *World News and Prophecy* know we understand the modern nations of Great Britain and America are the inheritors of the promises made to the biblical patriarch Abraham by God beginning in Genesis 12. There God told Abraham to go to a far country and he and his descendants would become a great people. The details of the promise are unveiled throughout Genesis to Abraham's descendants, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob, before he died, passed on the promises to his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph.

Those promises, realized in our modern time, include abundant natural resources, great wealth and power among the nations. Fulfillment of those physical promises in all their fullness and detail is one of the keys to understanding the Bible, prophecy and God's limitless mercy with all nations and peoples. The apostle Paul understood this when he wrote concerning the physical descendants of Israel, "Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!" (Romans 11:12).

The proof of God's promises being fulfilled in these modern nations is a beacon of hope that the fullness of the spiritual blessings, salvation offered to all nations through Christ, will be fulfilled. Rejection of this vital key has led to confusion among all religions as to what God is doing today in this world. Our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* gives all the details of this story.

Now comes a book that helps give the much-needed corroboration from history. Andrew Roberts has written *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900*, published this



year in America by HarperCollins. This history borrows the title from the series written by Winston Churchill and published in 1956. Roberts continues on from where Churchill ended. Reading Roberts' work is essential to understanding just how these peoples rose to power and used it to shape the 20th century.

This book goes against the conventional wisdom of popular culture media and academia regarding the empire and power generated by Great Britain and America. Roberts makes no apology nor does he enter into hand-wringing guilt over the position these nations have attained.

Read this book to see another side to history and to see to what extent these nations have inherited the birthright. Read this book to really understand the role the English-speaking nations have had in bringing more personal freedom and economic prosperity to their people and those they either ruled or liberated, than any other nation or empire in history. Read this book to counter the soft mush that passes for history in today's school curricula.

Consider this example of how Roberts handles the dark side of their history: "A characteristic of the English-speaking peoples displayed both in South Africa and in the Philippines at the dawn of the twentieth century, and then fairly regularly ever since, was their tendency towards ruthlessness in warfare." He then refers to unfortunate incidents in wars involving both countries including the recent example of Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

He concludes, "Even so, once the relevant authorities were apprised of the facts of the case they acted decisively, through courts-martial.

No one in history has done more for the concept of human beings having certain inalienable rights than the English-speaking peoples, and it is often solely because of their belief in the rule of law that abuses ever come to light and are punished...[it] is not that the English-speaking peoples never commit crimes in wartime, but rather that their open societies and free press tend to ensure that these are punished while many other societies' crimes rarely are, or are even acknowledged as such" (p. 30).

Much can be said of the "special relationship" between America and Great Britain today. But we know this was not automatically created at the birth of America in 1776 and the years following. America's break from England took a number of years to overcome. First there was the skirmish called the War of 1812, during which British troops burned the White House in Washington. Once the two stopped fighting each other, America had to fight its own Civil War to determine its future as one united nation.

But by the turn of the 20th century the two could seriously work together to create an imperium unlike any other. It would be needed. Roberts defines four assaults upon the role defined for the two nations.

First was the Prussian militarism of Germany, which plunged Europe into the chaos of war in 1914. The goal of Kaiser Wilhelm was to dominate the continent under what he later described as "a United States of Europe under German leadership." Had this occurred, Britain's existence as an independent power would have ended. But prophecy did not ordain it so. America entered the conflict in 1917 and made the decisive difference.

The second assault was fascist aggression spearheaded by Hitler and Mussolini in World War II. Once again Britain stood alone against Nazi Germany's aggression until America's arsenal of democracy was mobilized. At the end of the war the European continent lay prostrate and Britain was an exhausted empire that was soon to be dismantled.

But the third assault rose from the ashes in the form of Soviet Communism. Russian forces did not retreat from



*Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill worked together to fight Hitler.*

their forward positions at the end of the war. Churchill described it as an "iron curtain" that had fallen over Eastern Europe, and it would not be lifted for 45 years. During this time America and the Soviet Union were locked in a cold war that involved proxy conflicts in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. It ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The fourth assault is Islamic terrorism and the war on terror. This assault has a defined emergence on Sept. 11, 2001, but its roots were growing years before. It continues today and perhaps will be the catalyst toward another crisis the Bible defines as a time of "Jacob's trouble" when the modern descendants of Jacob enter a period of testing and trial at the end of the age.

When this time comes, the period when the English-speaking nations dominate the world will be over. It will then be a different world ruled over by a revived system the Bible calls Babylon the Great. But that is another story.

Andrew Roberts has written a marvelous ode to the special relationship between two unique nations and their scattered brothers. The history covers a period when the world has moved from the age of horse and buggy to the space shuttle. It is the most fascinating period of human history, and it all was foretold in your Bible. Read this book as an affirmation of what God foretold to Abraham and thank Him for those blessings. ❖

"PAPAL," (Continued from page 4)

or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (verses 1-4).

The actions of this "man of sin" will go beyond the actions of any previous prophetic figure when he proclaims "he is God." Note that he does not claim merely to represent God or to be as God, but rather he claims he is God.

To pull this unprecedented work of deception off will require the behind-the-scenes help of the archdeceiver of mankind, Satan the devil, who will provide "signs, and lying wonders" (verse 9) to accomplish the job.

The final revival of the Roman Empire will take place under the influence of a religious system called "Babylon the Great" and its charismatic, miracle-working leader-prophet. He will have an electrifying effect on nominal Christians of all denominations, who may profess Christ but are generally ignorant of His teachings and the Bible.

Not knowing what the Bible says about the deceptiveness of miracles (see Deuteronomy 13:1-4), millions of these Christians will be swayed by the supernatural signs performed by this dynamic, Satan-inspired religious leader.

Those miracles will have an immediate unifying effect and will no doubt resolve the question of the "one true church" for traditional Christianity. The few who refuse to accept the leadership of this false prophet and his church will be persecuted.

Oddly enough, at this time true Christian unity will be just ahead as the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, returns to the Mount of Olives with thousands of resurrected saints to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth.

When that happens, all discussion on denominational supremacy and apostolic succession will cease, as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings will establish His government and teach the entire world the true Christian way of life (Isaiah 2:1-4). ❖

“STAR” (Continued from page 16)

they were available to follow the sign when it did come, and they were willing to go wherever it led them.

The bottom line is they moved beyond knowledge to action, and that made and continues to make all the difference in the world.

### The seamless interventions of God

It has been more than 2,000 years since that journey wrought by a beckoning star, and the first coming of the Christ child can seem like distant history. That’s five times the duration of quiet between Malachi and the time of Christ. Yes, it seems like forever and more!

But our Heavenly Father, the One who inhabits eternity, looks at the first and second comings of His Son as one seamless activity. God, because He is God, has looked far into the future and brings us as His invited audience forward to understand and come to appreciate His great love for us even when at times He seems far away and out of touch.

As you read this column, autumn will be knocking on our seasonal door in the northern hemisphere. We will be entering what I like to call “the season of kingdoms.” It is in this time of year, not the humanly appointed winter solstice celebration of Dec. 25, that the King of our lives first came to earth.

Oh yes, there was heraldry involved with proclamations of angels, visiting shepherds and the before-mentioned celestial light show illuminating the way. But most of mankind missed the first coming. But come Immanuel did, not in our prescribed time by our human clocks, but in the right time! Not in how we would have done it, but in how God knew it had to be performed. God’s perfect interventions are always better than the best of our human machinations.

### God chose to pitch a tent

John, the Gospel writer, spells out in crystal clear fashion how the God Being called the Word “became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).



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*Wise men from the East came seeking the King of the Jews. Their unwavering purpose is summed up in their own words: “For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:2). What do these wise men of old have in common with us?*

It is of note that the word *dwelt* comes from the Greek term *skenoo*, which means to literally “pitch a tent” or “to tabernacle.” It is John, under the inspiration of God, who shows us that God decided to “pitch a tent” within the wilderness of the human condition.

It is this statement that differentiates Christianity from all other religions. It reveals that God is not merely some benevolent “First Cause” and absentee faraway cosmic babysitter. The One known as the Word separated Himself from the privileges of His divine station and volunteered to be placed on a bed of straw in a dark and smelly manger, because “there was no room for them in the inn.”

It is in the framework of this humble setting that God interrupts human history. It is here in this perfect “palace of humility” that He reveals the incredible attributes of the godly servant. The apostle Paul shares how the “quiet of the centuries” was shattered in Galatians 4:4: “But when the *fullness of time* had come, God sent forth

His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.”

### The time was ripe

No, God was not late, for the time was ripe! God not only created time, but is the master of timing. It was in this moment of historical convergence of the Roman Empire, the Greek language and the Jewish Diaspora that the bright light, heralding the birth of a king in the autumn, was on display.

But this light was more than a celestial flashlight guiding the footsteps of camels. Rather this heavenly sentinel showed how all along God had worked “loudly” behind the scenes in preparation for the entrance of our Savior. He had moved empires, spread languages and scattered His religious folk around the Mediterranean Sea so that their religious house might be a springboard of understanding to grasp the fulfillment of Isaiah’s words.

But Christ’s pitching a tent among humanity is not left standing alone in the Gospel accounts. Remember how

I mentioned the seamless nature of the comings of Christ to our world and how the autumnal time that approaches can be called the “season of kingdoms”? It is noteworthy that the biblical festivals of Trumpets and Tabernacles are observed during this time frame. These God-ordained observances, centering on the saving works of God through Jesus Christ, bring us into remembrance that Jesus Christ is returning to this earth to establish His Kingdom.

Many who read the Bible can accept a first coming, and thank God for a good story of a baby, shepherds and wise men. But a true and responsive believer accepts that a first coming demands a second coming, and that a first coming must precede a second coming. And do you know how you know you believe that? Because, when you come into contact with the reality that God became a helpless baby, and that He loves us so much that He is going to enter human history once again to rescue humanity from itself—a major change takes place.

Yes Christ is going to pitch a tent once more. But next time it will be in holy splendor and not merely straw. Revelation 21:2-3 gives us a sense of what is to occur, when speaking through the apostolic writer:

“Then I, John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’”

Right there in the middle of this triumphant declaration of God’s plan is the word *dwell*. That’s right, *skeno* or “to pitch a tent” is right there at the end of the good book. It’s kind of a graphic and simple term, to remind us that God never changes His plan, from the manner till now and beyond. He wants us to know He is coming and will plant Himself in our lives when times are troubled and seemingly quiet as to the “voice of God.”

### “The Bright and Morning Star”

That’s why the book of Revelation speaks of a star—the “morning star”

that is. It doesn’t get the same attention as the one mentioned in Matthew, but it’s just as important and it’s the one you and I have been given to focus on and follow now!

It is interesting that Revelation 2:28 speaks of this morning star as a gift given to the Church. Jesus, the risen Christ in heaven, says, “I also have received from My Father; and I will give him [speaking of His followers] the morning star.” And then it says in verse 29: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

We are granted further definition of this gift in the last chapter of the Bible. Interestingly, this star is mentioned here as one of the last pivotal items that God asks us to consider through Christ. It is here in Revelation 22:16 that Christ defines this gift to the Church as Himself.

Notice, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches, I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

Why does Christ reserve this name to Himself? Consider for a moment that it is the morning star that appears when it is darkest and coldest. It is the appearance of this sentinel of light that gives hope for the dawning of a new day. It is when it is coldest and darkest in human history that He enters time and space one more time.

### “Follow Me”

How wise will we be? The wise men of old set a course for us to consider. It’s interesting that Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star of Revelation, always came to His followers with one message: “Follow Me” (Matthew 4:19; John 21:19).

Perhaps it is the encouragement of Jesus’ own words of “follow Me” that points us to the admonition of Isaiah 30:21: “This is the way, walk in it.”

Like our counterparts from yesteryear, today’s wise men will be open, available and willing as they still seek and wait upon a star. It is time to look up and follow! ❖



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by Robin Webber

## Wise Men Still Seek His Star

**T**wo thousand years ago, men of the East gazed into the heavens and were drawn to a star. They were compelled by something beyond themselves to follow its light.

Perhaps they were familiar with ancient Israel's literature that spoke of a time when "a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17).

Again, they may have pondered and acted upon the colorful depiction of Isaiah 60:1-3 where it declares, "Arise, shine; for your light has come!... The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."

Their account in Matthew 2 is a story of faith set in motion to encounter the revelation of that star. Their unwavering purpose as recorded for future generations is summed up in their own words: "For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:2).

As we know from the familiar passages related to the first coming of Christ, these strangers from the East were not foreign to the protocol worthy of a ruler and thus offered gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ child. Their anticipation was matched with the realization of being summoned to appear before a king.

### The "voice of God" quieted?

What do these wise men of old have in common with us, and how might we tap into their wisdom? And why turn our sights in reverse to the first coming of Christ when so much of this magazine is devoted to current events and future prophecies?

Actually, there are amazing similarities! Let's come to appreciate that at the time of Christ's birth it had been 400 years since the "voice of God" had been recognized and accorded stature as Holy Scripture. There had been no sure word from the Lord since the time of Malachi the prophet. A bestial system with an iron boot held sway over much of the world. The people of Judea had already experienced the force of Rome for nearly three generations.

It was a time of darkness in which there was a bubbling to the surface of anticipation, not too far removed from desperation, for a special deliverer sent by the Almighty. And yet God Himself appeared "quiet" in the arena of events.

In one sense, there was no secret about what was to transpire. God had foretold the coming of the Messiah. How often had the words of Isaiah 7:14 been read: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" or the "x-marks-the-spot passage" of Micah 5:2 that declares: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting"?

Oh yes, the people of that time had much to consider! But did they comprehend? Well, that would be another matter. Yet there would come a time when all the pieces began to come together and these men, called magi, with all their accumulated human wisdom did the smartest thing of all. They remained open to God's lead. They made sure

(See "STAR," page 14)