



In This Issue:

February 2008 | Vol. 11, No. 2

The Changing Face of Christianity in Britain

by John Ross Schroeder 1

Restoration: Lighten Up!

by Darris McNeely 2

Sarkozy, Europe and Religion

by Darris McNeely 5

Vacuum of Leadership Grips Kenya

by John Elliott 7

Moon Race Redux



by Cecil E. Maranville 10

In Brief: World News Review

by Darris McNeely and Mike Bennett 13

This Is the Way... Four Little Words With Big Meaning

by Robin Webber 16

© 2008 Jupiterimages Corporation

The Changing Face of Christianity in Britain

There are now more Catholics attending church in Britain than Anglicans. Meanwhile nontraditional Christian groups are growing in numbers and influence in the United Kingdom. But are all these various brands within Christendom truly based on the teachings of the Judeo-Christian Bible?

by John Ross Schroeder

In the 16th century, King Henry VIII broke away from the Roman Catholic Church over divorcing Catherine of Aragon, and his subsequent marriage to Anne Boleyn. The Church of England began shortly afterward, and it grew in numbers for a very long time.

Fast forward to 2007. In mid February of last year came the astonishing prediction that “Roman Catholicism is set to become the dominant religion in Britain for the first time since the [Protestant] Reformation because of massive migration from Catholic countries across the world” (*The Times*, Feb. 15, 2007).

Then in late December we saw the headline “Britain: A Catholic Country” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Dec. 23, 2007). Former Prime Minister Tony Blair is among the more recent converts.

Traditional Christianity in decline

Yet attendance figures of both these Christian faiths continue to drop (the Anglican by a greater degree) as they have for several decades. Another *Sunday Telegraph* feature article stated



Attendance figures for both Anglican and Catholic churches continue to drop in Britain, the Anglican by a greater degree.

that “attendances are falling at traditional churches” (Dec. 23, 2007). The number of Christian clergy in most denominations has also declined rather sharply in recent times.

But in spite of the aggressive campaigns of militant atheists like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, “the percentage of people identifying themselves as atheists remains low at around eight per cent” (*Britain in 2008*). Another 10 percent consider themselves agnostics. Others merely say that they

(See “BRITAIN,” page 3)

© 2008 Jupiterimages Corporation



World News and Prophecy is published monthly, except April and October, by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Drive, Milford, OH 45150. © 2008 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage pending at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices.

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).

Managing editor: Darris McNeely

Senior editors: Cecil E. Maranville, Melvin Rhodes, Robin Webber

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder

Copy editors: Becky Bennett, Doug Johnson
Layout/design: Mike Bennett, Peter W. Eddington

Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

The United Church of God provides *World News and Prophecy (WNP)* as an educational service for interested persons. The purpose of *WNP* is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of current events in the light of Bible prophecy. Although the staff strives for truth and accuracy in its reporting, analysis and Bible commentary, *WNP* is not a doctrinal publication. Articles do undergo both an editorial and a review process.

Unsolicited materials: Due to staffing limitations, unsolicited materials sent to *World News and Prophecy* will not be critiqued or returned. By their submission authors agree that submitted materials become the property of the United Church of God, an International Association, to use as it sees fit. This agreement is controlled by California law.

Subscriptions: *World News and Prophecy* is sent free to members of the United Church of God, and all who request it. There is no subscription price. To request a subscription, write to *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, phone (513) 576-9796 or download from www.ueg.org. For international addresses, see page 15.

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

World News and Prophecy online: Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed. The next issue is scheduled to be available by March 7, 2008, on the Internet at:

<http://www.wnponline.org>



"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Lighten Up!

Do you ever get tired of all the bad news you see exploited in today's 24/7 media? You know the type I'm talking about. Today's news is filled with out-of-control celebrities who have more money than common sense. Every time you hear of a girl abducted from a mall parking lot, you shudder, knowing the odds of her safe recovery are slim. There are a lot of bad people today.

There is very little good news coming out of the political campaigns. Accusations, attacks and "spin" are the common stock of political debate. While real problems need hard, honest solutions, you seldom hear these discussions on the campaign trail. You are left with a frustrated feeling at an appalling lack of leadership.

News is not news, it seems, unless it is sensational, absurd or tragic. Let someone slip and make a huge public mistake, and every detail of the incident has to be unearthed, analyzed and discussed as it goes through the news cycle. Seldom do we see a focus on people and events that reflect positive contributions to society.

Let's be honest. There is a lot of bad news in today's world. And then you turn to the Bible and prophecy. There you read of tribulation, plagues, war and famine. You read of the fall of nations and age-ending chaos. We face a dramatic future.

Each month as we prepare *World News and Prophecy* our staff is faced with all these topics. We decide what we will write about. We watch world news and strive to fully understand the gravity of events taking place around the world. We analyze them in light of what the Bible tells us about human nature and God's plan. We write with clarity and always with the goal of giving you a measure of hope that there is light at the end of the long, dark tunnel that life seems to be.

There are times we wonder whether we might be approaching a point where "prophecy fatigue" sets in. You can write month after month on these subjects and face the moments when you wonder whether you have lost your effectiveness and your audience has grown tired of hearing what you have to say.

You wonder whether you should "lighten up."

When I reach those moments, I turn to an episode from the life of Jeremiah the prophet. He was tired of his gloom-and-doom message, and his audience was tired as well. His message of violence and plunder to come on the nation was ridiculed. Every day he faced hostile reaction from the nation's leaders and the man on the street. Depressed, he wanted to withdraw—go "off the air" and stop "publishing" (Jeremiah 20:7-9). For a brief period he decided to "lighten up" and read the sports pages, as it were, before he read the front page. But then he was made aware of other bad things happening to good people and creating more problems on the streets. He was back to the front page and moved to once again preach God's warning message: "But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; *I was weary of holding it back, and I could not*" (verse 9, emphasis added).

Throughout the ages everyone who has been used of God to preach His message of repentance in advance of the coming Kingdom has faced the same dilemma. They grow weary of the message and want to bail out. Some shrink in fear of what others may say about them. But all true servants of God have had to step up to the plate and do the job of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is the only way forward.

This column is titled for one of the Bible's most encouraging statements, which refers to the glorious return of Christ, "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). This hope helps lighten the burden on all of us who see all the bad news of today and pray "Your kingdom come."—*Darris McNeely*



Darris McNeely

“BRITAIN” (Continued from page 1)
are not religious. Nonetheless, about 72 percent of the British population still identifies itself as Christian.

A “fuzzy fidelity”

Yet what we are apparently seeing is a sort of “fuzzy fidelity” among the “fuzzy faithful.” These are the terms used by Professor David Voas of the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research in Manchester, England. He talks about a “fuzzy fidelity, an attitude of uncommitted but real interest in God and spiritual matters. Its adherents include half the population of Britain and similar proportions in other European countries.

“This group has only a vaguely defined notion of a ‘divine entity,’ and says it makes little difference to their lives” (*Britain in 2008*). According to Professor Voas, “Many continue to pray but have relinquished specific Christian beliefs such as Jesus being the Son of God. They go to church only for the main festivals or for life’s rites of passage” (ibid.).

Individuals in these nontraditional groups express their beliefs and practices in various ways:

- I don’t believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some sort.
- I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others.
- I can’t remember the last time I went to church.
- I have my own set of spiritual beliefs—just my own little voice.

Somewhere in the process of time the relevancy of God has been lost to these people. Our Creator has been marginalized along with His great office and power. At some point in the past, either these individuals or their parents (or perhaps a previous generation) probably attended church services regularly and subscribed to a more traditional version of Christianity.

But was even that truly based on the teachings of the Bible?

Enter the New Testament Church

What about first-century apostolic Christianity? What ever happened to the Church that Jesus built? Do the churches and various nontraditional groups of

today really reflect the beliefs and practices of the early New Testament Church?

Some who have diligently studied church history have discovered that most Christian denominations have absorbed many pagan and secular traditions—philosophical, cultural and religious—into their basic belief systems.

(To understand more, request our free booklet *This Is the United Church of*

God. The sidebar on page 20, “What Did the Early Church Believe and Practice?” shows what the Bible says about the Church’s original teachings. We challenge you to contrast these biblical truths with what is generally taught today.)

Over the centuries there has been a virtual explosion of contradictory practices and conflicting factions in the Christian world. Over time a counterfeit

A False Religious System

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John saw a vision of a woman wearing scarlet and riding a beast with seven heads and 10 horns. This woman represents a false religious system responsible for the persecution and murder of God’s saints over the last 2,000 years. It will play a major role in world events just before the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

This particular woman is rightly branded in Revelation as a faithless harlot (prostitute). “And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Revelation 17:5).

But what does she symbolize? “And the woman whom you saw is that great city *which reigns over the kings of the earth*” (verse 18). She will be the pride of this world, yet she will also have been the relentless and ruthless persecutor of true Christians. God has clearly stated that this woman is “drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (verse 6, emphasis added throughout).

Her influential relationships reach into the highest political and social circles in national governments and the business world: “The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury” (Revelation 18:3). Always remember, however, that our Creator has her lawless activities firmly in mind, knowing that “her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities” (verse 5).

Symbolically, God calls this harlot city—with her intimate but corrupt entanglements in international affairs—*Babylon the Great*. Her cultural and religious roots go back to ancient Babylon, the city where mankind rebelled against God soon after the great flood in the time of Noah (Genesis 11:4, 9).

How influential will this great city become? John related: “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of 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 [spiritually] drunk with the wine of her fornication’” (Revelation 17:1-2).

An angel had explained to John that “the waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are *peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues* [languages]” (verse 15).

Citizens of many lands, speaking many different languages, will enthusiastically embrace her satanic approach toward personal and spiritual relationships. They will welcome, with approving fascination, her influence and power over them. She will boast: “I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow” (Revelation 18:7).

God, however, labels her as the mother of harlots, a city full of abominations. He condemns her spiritual practices and will see that she comes to destruction along with every corrupt cultural and religious tradition she has foisted upon the earth. To understand more, request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

Christianity has arisen. In the first century Jesus Christ and the apostles predicted that false ministers and false brethren would emerge, and indeed had already begun to appear in the apostles' time.

After about 400 years, by the time of the Emperor Constantine, much of Christ's original gospel was hardly recognizable.

The warnings of Christ and His apostles

Consider the words of Christ Himself: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name...and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5; compare 2 Peter 2:1-2, emphasis added throughout). These many deceivers would claim the name of Christ and His authority, but teach an altogether different brand of Christianity—based not on God's Word, but human traditions instead.

Even in Jesus' day He told the scribes and the Pharisees that their religious practices were "making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition which

you have handed down" (Mark 7:13). These same practices continue right down to our day.

The apostle Paul warned us all not to accept human traditions in place of the true teachings of Christ. "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men...and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

The New Testament speaks of both a false and a true Christianity. What about the true one?

The Church Christ built

Jesus Christ spoke of His little flock that would enter the Kingdom of God (Luke 12:32). He clearly stated that He would build His Church (Matthew 16:18). Later during that first century, the apostle Peter described the genuine Church of God. "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." He continues this glowing description:

"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:5, 9-10).

The apostle Paul adds: "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone*" (Ephesians 2:19-20).

So the true Church is built upon the apostles (representing the New Testament) and the prophets (representing the Old Testament), joined together by Jesus Christ. "In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (verse 21).

Peter also urges his readers to "be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets [the Old Testament], and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior [the New Testament]" (2 Peter 3:2).

Pillar and ground of the truth

Paul called it all "the church of the living God, *the pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Timothy 3:15). You need to know more about *The Church Jesus Built*. Please request or download our free 68-page booklet by that title. It explains about a spiritually transformed people, describing their mission as well as their responsibility to God the Father and Christ the Son. ✦

Recommended Reading

The book of Revelation remains mysterious to most people today, but offers great insight into the events leading up to one of the world's most momentous events—the return of Jesus Christ! For more information, request a free copy of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 15, or request or download it from our Web site at www.wnponline.org

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 sort it all out.

Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? Is prophecy coming to pass before our eyes? How can you know the answers?

You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the World News & Prophecy Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy.

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 today!

Sarkozy, Europe and Religion

The term European Christianity is not contradictory. Religion is alive in Europe and continues to play a unique role. In the future it could play an even larger role beyond its borders.

by Darris McNeely

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has been making headlines in France of late with several statements about religion. This might not be a big deal in America where religion this year has been a major topic in the presidential primary. But in France, officially a secular country, when the president talks too much religion, people get upset.

Speaking to a group of foreign ambassadors on Jan. 18, President Sarkozy said the “return of religion in most of our societies” was a reality and that “only sectarians do not see it.” He expressed concern that religious revival not come only in fundamentalist forms that were exclusive and closed.

Earlier in the week Mr. Sarkozy spoke in Saudi Arabia and said that religion should hold a bigger place in the social and political life of France. In this speech he mentioned God 21 times. He said Islam is “one of the greatest and most beautiful civilizations the world has known.” He was especially effusive about Saudi leaders whom he described as those who “appeal to the basic values of Islam to combat the fundamentalism that negates them.”

Before the pope

Perhaps the most interesting speech Mr. Sarkozy gave was on Dec. 20 in Rome before Pope Benedict XVI. President Sarkozy was there to be made a canon of the Church of Saint John Lateran, something done for French heads of state going back to the time of Henry IV.

Excerpts of the speech include praise for the Catholic Church, as well as a recognition that in these modern times there was a need for “religious convictions” to counter destructive trends caused by secularism. Speaking as a politician, Mr. Sarkozy expressed the need to be “enlightened by opinions that reference norms and convictions which are free from immediate contingencies.”

President Sarkozy spoke directly of France’s Catholic heritage, something Europe as a whole has been reluctant to do, at least



Reuters/Alberto Pizzoli

Pope Benedict XVI meets France’s President Nicolas Sarkozy at the Vatican Dec. 20, 2007.

officially. “My presence among you this evening is a testimony of France’s faithfulness to her history and to one of the major sources of its civilization.

“Faced with the disappearance of values, and with the upheavals our societies are experiencing, I want to say by my presence that we need the contribution of the Catholic Church, as of the other great religious and spiritual doctrines, to enlighten our choices and construct our future.”

He also said, “It is in the interests of the Republic that there exist also a moral reflection inspired by religious convictions. First because secular morality always runs the risk of wearing itself out or changing into fanaticism when it isn’t backed up by hope that aspires to the infinite.”

Uproar over remarks

Reaction to these recent speeches has been interesting. Some see them as a break with a French tradition and a law dating back to 1905 that officially separates the church and state in France. This has grown into a political taboo for leaders to speak publicly about religion.

One member of the National Assembly, socialist Jean Glavany, spoke critically of the

Nicolas Sarkozy’s speech included praise for the Catholic Church, as well as a recognition that in these modern times there was a need for “religious convictions” to counter destructive trends caused by secularism.

speech in Saudi Arabia: “A speech citing God not only on every page, but on every line, creates a fundamental problem for the republic.”

France’s republican model of government recognizes the rights of the individual citizen over that of any religious or ethnic group. France has cultivated a doctrine called *laïcité*, a strict form of secularism that derives historically from the bitter rejection of the authoritarian Catholicism of the past. By this doctrine, all reference to religion must be excluded from the public sphere.

The issue is larger than Christianity. A debate is going on in France that involves ways to accommodate the growing numbers (over 5 million) and influence of Muslims. The Muslim community would welcome reforms in French law that would allow for funding of mosques and expand the training for imams. Some observers go so far as to say that Mr. Sarkozy’s real motive with this talk is to pave the way for further Islamization within French society.

When President Sarkozy was interior minister, he negotiated with moderate Muslim leaders to create the French Muslim Council, a representative body of French Muslims recognized by the government. This council arranges Muslim chaplaincies in the army and prisons, secures Muslim cemeteries, certifies Muslim food laws and builds—with government financial support—new mosques and prayer halls.

Little wonder that his recent comments have stirred controversy. Mr. Sarkozy assumes there are moderate elements within Islam that can be accommodated within French society. And why should he not feel that Muslims can be assimilated into French society? After all, the French president himself is the son of a Hungarian immigrant with a Jewish lineage.

Role of religion

On the surface it might seem that such religious talk would be welcomed by the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict has been a long and outspoken critic of Europe’s slide

into secularization. He has made the reversal of this trend a cornerstone of his papacy. But some believe church leaders are reserved about any reforms that could upset the status quo and create a backlash against the Roman Catholic Church.

For any major European leader, and especially the president of France, to begin making overt speeches on faith and religion is significant. Europe has gone so far to distance itself from its Christian roots that it excluded mention of Christianity in the preamble to the European Constitution. Yet Europe cannot ignore religion, Christian or otherwise. The growing numbers of Muslims within its borders alone will not allow this.

Religion continues to play a major role in world affairs. As much as some would like to see it disappear from the public square, it simply will not. In Europe, where many have proclaimed the culture to be “post-Christian,” the story is mixed. Much has been made of Muslim immigration and its impact on culture and politics. Declining birthrates among native European populations has led to the conclusion that in a few years the Muslim population will be the largest on the continent. If present rates continue, this will be true.

But there could be more to the story than just birthrates. The large Muslim population, the desire for Muslim culture to be maintained and the need for mosques and training of imams highlights the role of religion. Religion has not disappeared from the continent. Though the term *European Christianity* might appear to be an oxymoron, there is still the legacy and historic memory of Christian culture waiting to reassert itself.

Revival to come

Religious sociologist Philip Jenkins is one who feels that Christianity may be about to revive its ancient roots, expand and grow into something quite dynamic. Writing in a recent book, *God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe’s Religious Crisis*, he shows that a broad interest in religion and Christian spirituality still survives in Europe.

He writes: “From a grassroots level...the immense attention paid to religious concerns and Europe’s heritage in the past few years probably will drive more Europeans to take a renewed interest in their Christian roots, to rediscover what it is that so many academic experts seem to be consigning to oblivion” (2008, p. 287).

Far from the death of Christianity, Dr. Jenkins sees a revival of Christian influence spreading from Europe to other world centers and sparking a time of revival similar to the great missionary and evangelical movements of the 19th century. The very thought of “death,” he feels, could create a “resurrection” of Christianity that would become a major influence in the world.

Emergence of a dominant religious leader

Bible prophecy shows that out of the present religious strife and confusion that continues to confound the world will come a period of religious clarity. Revelation 13 describes the emergence of a dominant religious leader. He will bring an order to the scene through the use of miracles, something the modern world has not seen.

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men” (verses 11-13).

There is coming a time of religious revival and its impact on the world will be profound. Those who seek to worship God in spirit and in truth will find themselves the object of persecution when it occurs. Examine what you believe and test it according to Scripture. When this day arrives, you will know whether you have built on sand or on rock (Matthew 7:24-27). ❖

Vacuum of Leadership Grips Kenya

Stable, tourist-friendly Kenya turned violent after a disputed presidential election. This highlights a crisis in leadership in today's world.

by John Elliott

"President [Mwai] Kibaki and the Orange Democratic Movement leader Raila Odinga have met for the first time since the disputed General Election and shaken hands before a battery of journalists" ahead of face-to-face talks. This report from Kenya's *Daily Nation* newspaper came late on Jan. 24, 2008, after a mediation contingent led by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan met privately with both sides.

Unfortunately, Mr. Annan has said that full talks could take a full year to complete. As of yet, the result of these high-level meetings has not been nearly as positive as was hoped.

Tragically, they have done little to stem the tide of ethnic cleansings in Kenya's Rift Valley area. Scores of helpless civilians have been massacred and burned by armed youths who have closed the country's main highway and barricaded key towns.

There can be no positive outcome of such violence. The only "benefactors" of these atrocities are the ruthless politicians who encourage them. While corrupt politicians may seem to profit from the situation, the victims of this ongoing disaster are not limited to the dead and wounded. For those citizens who survive, the turmoil serves to worsen personal poverty and hinder the ability to maintain the interpersonal relationships that are necessary for their continued survival.

Additionally, the interruption of supplies, fuel, food and transportation make the toils of daily life in Kenya even worse. A potential collapse of the tourism and agricultural industries are also a foreboding reality.

As Aidan Hartley wrote in the Jan. 11, 2008, *New York Times*, "On the political front, perhaps the best we can hope is that Big Men will reach a deal and the tribes will put away their machetes and rifles." Then the local residents can "return to their daily struggle to survive."



Reuters/Thomas Mukoya

Former UN chief Kofi Annan talks with President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga Jan. 29.

Two types of leaders

In the Bible, Proverbs 29:2 states, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan."

A "leader" is defined as one who affects the behavior of another. Each of us must make a choice as to who and what we will allow to influence our behavior. In general, there are two types of leaders. To put it most simply, there are upright, honest and just leaders; and there are also corrupt and dishonest leaders.

Jesus spoke of Satan as the leader and "father" of liars and murderers in John 8:44. He presents God as the leader and "Father" of those seeking love and peace. Sadly, there seems to be only one of the two types of leadership available in the world right now. The predominant type of leadership is very apparent in Kenya at the moment.

Change needed

Kenyans want and need change, including

There can be no positive outcome of the wave of violence in Kenya. The only "benefactors" of these atrocities are the ruthless politicians who encourage them.



Kenyan children play next to a vehicle destroyed during post-election violence in Nairobi's Kibera slum Jan. 19.

a change of leadership. Without it, life seems nearly hopeless. Realistically, what type of change is available to them? What are the present leaders and politicians offering the citizens of Kenya? The incumbent president, Mwai Kibaki, based his campaign on promising to give the people more of the same, keeping the status quo.

His rival, Orange Democratic Movement leader Raila Odinga, has a long history of pursuing personal power at all costs, including involvement in an attempted coup in 1982. Odinga promises change, but what type of change? At what cost? There is considerable evidence that Odinga is just another politician, saying what-

ever it takes to be elected.

Whether or not Odinga has meant what he has said or not, he has demonstrated a lack of concern for his own Christian-based country and Anglican religion. Neither of these men has demonstrated a genuine love and concern for anything other than power and money.

According to the BBC, this Kenyan population "has seen successive governments rob billions from the public purse in well-documented scandal" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7205762.stm>).

It cannot be denied that the two rival presidential candidates of Kenya are filthy rich and are becoming

increasingly wealthy. Meanwhile, the average Kenyan survives on one U.S. dollar per day. Kenyan politicians pay themselves more than their counterparts in the West and hoard stashes of corrupt funds that stagger the imagination.

Conditions such as these are not uncommon throughout the continent of Africa. However, it is quite shocking that this is taking place in Kenya, a country that is supposed to be a democratic model. It appears that Kenya's "democracy" only goes as far as allowing its citizens to vote for the next round of politicians who will pilage them for the next five years.

Tribal tensions reignite

As the wealthy squabble over power and politics, the resulting chaos opens the door for a restless population to attempt to take local matters into their own hands. In the current vacuum of godly leadership, the tribal tensions that have been and continue to be an integral part of Africa have been reignited. As a result, some 800 deaths and countless thousands of mutilations have occurred as of the date of this writing.

Ethnic reprisals and police crackdowns have been so widespread and severe that the International Criminal Court is monitoring events in the country. Angry youths from warring tribes bring terror to towns and communities, and the economy is often at a standstill. The main highway through Kenya has been frequently disrupted by mobs burning supply vehicles, stopping buses and killing passengers, and looting and burning businesses and residences.

While these acts of brutality appear to be extreme cases, stop to consider that the Kenyan government leaders, police and military have often demonstrated similar methods in order to get what they want.

The Kalenjin tribe, best known for their champion marathon runners, has used these current tribal strains to demand a clearing of all tribes from their ancestral lands. Portions of their territory in the Rift Valley were taken by the British during colonial rule. Later, the British sold the lands to

World News and Prophecy Seminars

If you find this publication interesting and helpful, you may be interested in attending a weekend *World News and Prophecy* seminar. Seminars are planned for:

- **Charlotte, North Carolina**, March 22 (Darris McNeely, Paul Kieffer).
- **Vancouver, British Columbia**, April 5 (Darris McNeely, Robin Webber).
- **Penticton, British Columbia**, April 6 (Darris McNeely, Robin Webber).
- **Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**, May 31 (Melvin Rhodes, Robin Webber).

For more information, please go to www.wnponline.org.

others, instead of returning them to the Kalenjins.

Throughout the years, this region has become home to Maasai herdsman migrating from the Sudan, and to Kikuyus who were displaced by British colonists. The Rift Valley is also a great tourist attraction, associated with the most famous game parks in Africa, including the Maasai Mara and Serengeti.

Now, the Kalenjins are claiming the huge Rift Valley region in Kenya, from Tanzania to Ethiopia. During recent peaceful decades, there has been an assimilation of people from various tribes resettling throughout Kenya, including the area that the Kalenjins view as their territory.

While they have been tolerated on a local level, these “foreigners” have never really been accepted. Consequently, the Kalenjins have begun attacking and burning local villages belonging to the other tribes. They have even set fire to the offices and homes of the local government representatives.

Throughout the Rift Valley, from Sotik up through Eldoret, homes have been torched and people killed. Numbered among the dead are approximately 40 Kikuyu women and children who were burned alive in a church. Champion Kalenjin and Kikuyu runners were also among those slaughtered in the attacks.

In a heartbreaking response to the murder of members of their tribe, young Kikuyus in the Eastern Rift Valley have sworn to kill three people for every one of their members killed by other tribes. Raids through the areas of Nakuru and Naivasha have seen at least 100 deaths within a few days, including the burning alive of women and children.

Only God can solve the problem

The resulting interruption of transportation that brings maize and other food to the famine-stricken region has caused what food is available to be priced at a level that is out of reach for many citizens.

A United Church of God deacon in Kenya reported, “We are now in another world. Commodities prices



Kikuyus wave clubs and machetes near the town of Naivasha Jan. 28. Protests erupted in west Kenya after a weekend of horrific ethnic violence in the Rift Valley.

have hiked up; transportation is too high; life has changed dramatically. But, this is where we are now. We are just praying, since only God is able to solve the problem and bring our country [back to the] normal life we were used to.”

Reviewing the ebb and flow of personal ambitions, struggles for power and obsession with property that are taking place in Kenya and, to a greater or lesser extent, in other countries today, can be a truly disheartening experience.

However, in stark contrast to these tragedies that are brought about in part by a lack of proper leadership, there is one leader who is bringing a different kind of change through a different method. This leader focuses not on Himself and His own ambitions, but on the good of others.

He devoted His time and limitless resources to create the physical universe that all humans inhabit, in amazing detail and complexity. He then divested Himself of all power and glory, and came to earth as a mortal man to give humankind a lone example of right behavior. He gave His life to serve and to help others to have life, and to have it abundantly. He offers His entire inheritance and a sharing

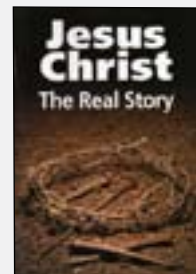
of His power to all who will join Him. His true leadership is defined by law, justice, mercy, prosperity, happiness and peace.

It is He, the ultimate leader, who will eventually bring both Kenya and the entire world to peace.

To read more about this leader, be sure to request or download the booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. In the meantime, we must dedicate our behavior to be influenced by the Leader of leaders, as we wait for His perfect Kingdom to come. ❖

Recommended Reading

Jesus Christ brought good news about His coming government. His life was the perfect example of leadership that will transform this world for the better. Request or download our free booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* to learn more.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 15, or request or download it from our Web site at www.wnponline.org

Moon Race Redux

Many nations are committing fortunes to reach the moon! You may be surprised to learn which countries are in the race—and even more surprised by what they seek. Scientists are calling it the perfect fuel, saying it will change the world as we know it.

by Cecil E. Maranville

King David marveled at the solar system he could see from earth. He wrote in Psalm 19:

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

“In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat” (verses 1-6).

The sun has been “saying” something that the world didn’t “hear” until 1985. And humankind is only now gearing up to do something about it.

The sun is beautiful, magnificent, awe-inspiring—and it is streaming a rare element into the moon’s dust that may well change our world forever.

Fifty years have passed since the United States responded to the Russian Sputnik with a successful American satellite launch in early 1958. The race for space that followed is now a subject for history. Likely, the Tom Hanks movie *Apollo 13* about the aborted lunar mission informs more people than textbooks do about this bygone era.

First moon race, a contest between ideologies

Why did America go to the moon? At the time, there was a fierce Cold War competition between the United States and Soviet Union over virtually every issue possible. The moon race was a proxy contest between capitalism and communism; the free world and the shadowy world behind the iron curtain.

On May 25, 1961, U.S. President John

F. Kennedy spoke before a specially convened joint session of Congress to deliver what he called an extraordinary State of the Union speech.

Noting that this speech is traditionally given only once a year, President Kennedy asserted that the nation was in an extraordinary time, which called for dramatic action. Citing the Soviet achievement of its Sputnik launch four years before, he ignited the vision of America with these words:

“I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish.”

He framed America’s motivation: “If we are to win the battle that is now going on around the world between freedom and tyranny, the dramatic achievements in space which occurred in recent weeks should have made clear to us all, as did the Sputnik in 1957, the impact of this adventure on the minds of men everywhere, who are attempting to make a determination of which road they should take.”

Thus, the moon race was an economic and technological competition between the world’s superpowers. The American president defined it as necessary to help humankind choose “freedom over tyranny,” implying that the winner of the race would literally shape the political structure of the world.

America, of course, won, placing men on the moon as Kennedy proposed, before the decade was out on July 21, 1969. Yet, I know of no developing nations that subsequently chose democracy over communism because of America’s victory.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) boasts of many

The latest space race has many new players, like China, India, Japan, Germany, South Korea and others. What’s the moon’s new attraction?

now everyday technological advances that the space program made possible. “Every day, in a variety of ways, American lives are touched by space technology. Since 1976, over 1,500 documented NASA technologies have benefited U.S. industry, improved the quality of life, and created jobs. The Apollo program has helped change the way of life in America” (www.sti.nasa.gov/tto/).

Critics of the program argue that it’s an incredibly expensive way to conduct research and development! These technological advances could have been discovered for a fraction of the hundreds of billions of dollars through which the U.S. space program has burned.

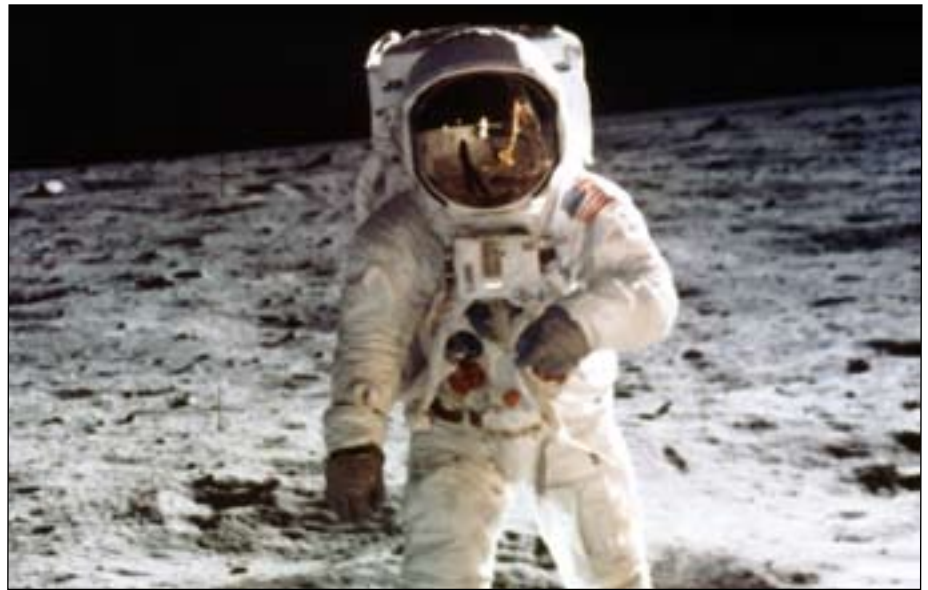
Why the United States is going again

So why is a new race to the moon underway? NASA is soon to dust off its Apollo series technology to return to the moon. In January 2004, President George W. Bush announced a renewed American commitment to space exploration, including returning to the moon.

Citing “a spirit of discovery” as motivation, he also pointed to technological spin-offs from past NASA work: “The exploration of space has led to advances in weather forecasting, in communications, in computing, search and rescue technology, robotics, and electronics.

“Our investment in space exploration helped to create our satellite telecommunications network and the Global Positioning System. Medical technologies that help prolong life—such as the imaging processing used in CAT scanners and MRI machines—trace their origins to technology engineered for the use in space.”

Soviet communism aged, corroded and collapsed, outspent by the American capitalist juggernaut. The Soviet Union broke apart in the 1990s, but in recent years Russia has reemerged as a world economic power. It is diverting some of its newfound wealth into



© 2008 Jupiterimages Corporation

The moon race of the 1960s was an economic and technological competition between the world’s superpowers.

its space program. Russia, too, is returning to the moon.

Is history repeating itself? Is Russia out to settle an old score with the United States to see which power can outdo the other? No, this is a different world altogether from the Cold War era.

Illustrative of the change is the fact that China is a top-tier player. While unquestionably far behind American space technology, China has come incredibly far from 1957 when Chairman Mao complained in uncustomary frankness “that China was so underdeveloped that it couldn’t even put a potato into space”! (Fred Guteri, “Race to the Moon,” *Newsweek*, Oct. 11, 2007).

China actually already sent a probe to the moon in November 2007. It plans to land a rover there by 2012 and to conduct soil sampling by 2017. There are rumors of a possible manned landing by 2020.

It’s a crowded field—and a rush for the “gold”

But there are still more nations headed to the moon. The names may surprise you: India (probe to launch in March this year; joint mission with Russia to put rover

on moon by 2011; study mineral resources, 2012-2015; considering a manned mission to follow); Japan and Germany considering individual moon probes around 2010; South Korea (probe by 2015; orbiter by 2020).

Moreover, several of these nations are partnering with other nations, such as Brazil, France, Ukraine, Canada and, not surprisingly, the European Union.

Why? What’s the big draw? Are all nations suddenly bitten by the discovery bug? Why would they duplicate what each other is doing? Within President Bush’s 2004 speech lays a possible reason. Almost incidentally, he mentioned: “Also, the moon is home to abundant resources.”

That’s an understatement. There’s a modern “gold rush” developing as nations pack their lunar mining tools. Only, it’s not gold they’re after, it’s helium, specifically the isotope helium-3 (He3). It’s all about meeting the energy needs of the earth.

This all stems from lunar soil sample #75501, collected by geologist astronaut Harrison Schmitt on Dec. 13, 1972, on the Apollo 17 mission. Thirteen years later,



In the new race to the moon, many nations seem to be looking at space exploration as a way to tap resources useful back on earth.

engineers at the University of Wisconsin discovered significant quantities of helium-3 in that sample. Helium-3 is relatively plentiful in lunar soil, in contrast to only small amounts on earth.

Lest I lose you at this point, I want to jump ahead to the potential commercial value of helium-3. Russian space geologist Erik Galimov summed it up by acknowledging that the nation that colonizes the moon will “*put the rest of the world in its knees as hydrocarbons run out*” (*Izvestia*, quoted by John Lasker, “Race to the Moon for Nuclear Fuel,” *wired.com*, Dec. 15, 2006, emphasis added).

The unbelievable potential of helium-3

Consider these facts:

- Supporters call helium-3 *the perfect fuel*, with enormous commercial and national defense potential.
- Harrison Schmitt estimates that a single space shuttle load of helium-3 (approximately 25 tons) could supply the entire energy needs of the United States for a year.
- Scientists estimate the moon has about 1 million tons of helium-

3, enough to power the world for 1,000 years!

- Just the Sea of Tranquility (site of Apollo 17’s landing) holds enough helium-3 to power the world for hundreds of years.

- The nuclear reaction involved with turning helium-3 into electrical power is so clean a process that a helium-3 plant could theoretically be built in the middle of a big city.

- Helium-3 is worth approximately \$40,000 per ounce.

- Compared with the energy from oil, helium-3’s potential value is \$4 billion a ton (Julie Wakefield, “Researchers and Space Enthusiasts See Helium-3 as the Perfect Fuel Source,” *SPACE.com*, June 30, 2000).

A gift from God?

The source of helium-3 takes us back to Psalm 19’s praise to the Creator for the awesome star He made for our solar system. The sun is constantly pumping out enormous quantities of helium, which solar winds carry toward earth. Only a small part of this is helium-3, and earth’s magnetic field pushes it away.

But the moon does not repel

the isotope. Consequently, God’s creation has been bombarding the moon for perhaps billions of years with helium-3. Meteor strikes stir the helium-3 and drive it deep into the dust and rock of the lunar surface, where it waits for those who would mine it.

As exciting as this all sounds, it won’t be easy. Even the supporters of developing power from helium-3 say that a viable process is still decades away. Detractors doubt that it’s even possible. If all goes well, Harrison Schmitt admits it will take a million tons of lunar soil, heated to 1470 degrees Fahrenheit to liberate and harvest 70 tons of helium-3.

That’s why the nations in the race are planning not just to reach the moon, but also to establish bases there from which mining operations could be handled.

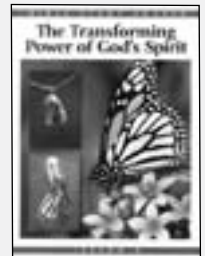
And, as far off as success of this project might be, the world’s wealthiest nations are literally pouring billions upon billions of dollars into the race to be among those to win the prize of helium-3.

If God allows this world to continue for decades, the nation or nations to reach and develop the moon’s resources will dominate the world. But maybe God has provided this seemingly marvelous clean source of power for the world to come, the Kingdom that Christ will establish on this earth. ✦

Recommended Reading

The Bible reveals what is coming in the future and what God wants us to do to prepare for what’s ahead. To help you understand this best seller, request a subscription to the 12-lesson *Bible Study Course*.

This fully illustrated course is helpful, enlightening—and it’s free.



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

www.wnponline.org

In Brief...

World News Review

Can Gaza Conquer Egypt?

The recent breakout of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip poses a challenge for both Egypt and Israel. The blockaded strip of land on Israel's southwest border butts up against the Mediterranean Sea, with Egypt forming its southern border. More than 1.5 million Palestinians are crowded into what amounts to a prison.

For 10 days in January and February a wall separating Gaza from Egypt was breached, and thousands of Palestinians poured into Egypt and the Sinai. Many were carrying rockets and bombs, which no doubt will be used against either Israel or Egypt.

Gaza is part of the shame that is the Palestinian problem. No Arab nation has fostered a solution for the decades-old problem. Israel is not the only nation to blame for the plight of the Palestinian refugees. While the animosity between Palestinian and Israeli is very apparent, no Arab state can claim to be the great benefactor. The Arab nations of the Middle East have ignored, abused and exploited the Palestinian issue since 1948. It is a ticking time bomb that will one day explode into another major conflict in the region.

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article asked, "What if Gaza were to conquer Egypt?" (Jan. 29, 2008). The key to this possibility is the connection between Hamas, which rules Gaza, and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, a stronghold of power and Islamic fury in the heart of the Egyptian state. Many see the Brotherhood as mounting a major challenge to Egypt's ruling class when President Hosni Mubarak dies.

During the recent breakout, the Brotherhood organized 70 demonstrations throughout Egypt protesting Israel's economic blockade of Gaza. "Arm us, train us and send us to Gaza," chanted the demonstrators, along with "O rulers of Muslims, where is your honor, where is your religion?"

The *Wall Street Journal* article speculates the Brotherhood's real target is Hosni Mubarak's regime and the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty that it supports.

Egypt is a military regime. Many feel its upper ranks have been infiltrated by the Brotherhood and that upon Mubarak's death the regime may seek an agreement with them to secure its position and power.

Should something like this happen, Egypt would change its position with both the United States and Israel. The Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty would be in jeopardy. America would have a major foreign policy crisis on its hands.

While America Picks a President, Europe Plans to Too

The 27 members of the European Union are set to ratify the Lisbon treaty by next year, creating, among other things, the new office of president of the European Council.

Currently the EU's leadership is rotated between the member countries every six months, while the new president will hold office for two and half years.

Who will be selected for this new job? That seems even harder to predict than who will be the next U.S. president.

German magazine *Der Spiegel* Online reported, "Tony Blair is one prominent name that has been bandied about recently. The former British prime minister is said to have a good shot, and he has powerful friends. French President Nicolas Sarkozy has thrown his support behind Blair for reasons of both personality and politics" (Jan. 28, 2008).

But the magazine noted that many others in Europe, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, aren't as impressed.

One thing is for sure. Americans will likely miss the behind the scenes and even open jockeying for this powerful new position while caught up in their own presidential election.

Who Is Keeping the U.S. Economy Afloat?

The subprime credit crisis and business slowdown in the United States are yielding more evidence that the economic clout of the United States is waning.

The energy-rich countries and major exporting countries are awash in U.S. dollars. "These vast savings have to go somewhere, and sovereign wealth funds—the investment arms of these nations—have provided infusions of cash to otherwise desperate American financial firms," said Fareed Zakaria in the Feb. 4, 2008, *Newsweek*.

"Imagine what the U.S. economy would look like without these investments. Many of its most illustrious banks and financial companies would have gone bankrupt, triggering cascades of gloom and doom across America," he wrote.

Mr. Zakaria noted the disconnect between what the U.S. presidential candidates are talking about and the real world where the U.S. president must plead with the Saudi king to ease oil prices.

"Meanwhile Middle Eastern fund managers and Asian consumers are quietly keeping the U.S. economy afloat," he said.

Contributors: Darris McNeely and Mike Bennett

“WORDS” (Continued from page 16)

Thus, rather than face the facts, Belshazzar chose to gloat over victories from “the good old days.” They brought out the sacred vessels of his grandfather’s Judean conquest and drank from them as they praised their pagan gods. Bad move! This was a raw and unadulterated abomination before the Great Disposer of all events.

While God is long-suffering, ultimately He will not be mocked. He will answer at the right time, in the right way, and His judgments are sure. Verse 5 says that “in the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote...[on] the wall.”

You can just imagine how this shook the audience. This account describes how the king’s knees were knocking against each other. Obviously, the ruler wanted to know what was written on the wall. But no one present could interpret the meaning of the four little words written in Aramaic. Perhaps they were just scared to do so.

Finally the queen suggested that one of the wise men of old “be brought out of mothballs” and given an opportunity to grant understanding to the king and his audience. She was lofty in her praise of him as she described him as a man “in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God... light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him” (Daniel 5:11).

Once again, after many years, Daniel, now perhaps nearly 80 years old, stepped upon the stage of empire as he represented a greater and ageless kingdom. He had not rushed in like the other wise men, only to be stymied. Daniel wanted to be sure all knew his interpretation had no bias. The outcome was too great to slant the news!

Beware the heart lifted up!

The aged interpreter began to offer perspective in verses 18-22 as he informed the foolish ruler that “the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your [grandfather] a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor.”

He described how the great ruler’s “heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride.” Therefore “his heart was made like the beasts” until “he knew that the Most High God rules in the king-

dom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.”

Yes, Nebuchadnezzar had in a sense been “benched” for seven years till he understood who is boss. Now with this stated, Daniel directly confronts Belshazzar. He indicts him for his lack of humility and refusal to learn the lessons of history visited upon his grandfather. As George Santayana, the philosopher, so aptly put it: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

Daniel made it plain as to what motivates God’s activity. It is not the size of the walls around us, but the size and condition of our heart within us that makes the difference. The prophet Isaiah grants us perspective regarding the God of Daniel—our God—when he writes, “Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales” (Isaiah 40:15).

Belshazzar was condemned because he lifted himself up. Daniel told him, “The God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified” (Daniel 5:23).

The four little words

Now, Daniel identified the author of the handwriting on the wall. The unsigned signature of this startling message that transformed the king’s body into quivering Jell-O is none other than God Almighty.

It is here that four little words, brief and to the point, shake a kingdom and define the future. Everybody’s eyes focus on the wall. It says, “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.”

Daniel boldly interprets it. “MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it.” Mene is repeated twice for emphasis. “TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”



© 2008 Jupiterimages Corporation

During Belshazzar’s party, suddenly “the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote...[on] the wall.”

It is of note that in societies of antiquity such as ancient Egypt, there are murals depicting the dead being set before scales to be measured. What is intriguing here is that Belshazzar becomes the “living dead” before the judgment seat of God.

It didn’t take long for those four little words to rumble in the annals of history. Verse 30 tells us “that very night” the king was slain. Wow, what happened? The Persian general Ugbaru, King Cyrus’s clever military strategist, recognized that he could not go over the walls, so he went under by diverting the Euphrates River into an old channel dug by a previous ruler. This reduced the water level well below the river gates. The rest is history, as the Persians and Medes waded thigh deep into a city that was caught asleep.

What do the words mean for us?

But what does this mean for us in the 21st century? Prophecy is often dual in nature—or what might be defined as “layered” as it builds toward a future climax. The Babylonian king who was removed from his throne as he spoke (Daniel 4:31) and that king’s grandson who was “in the

same hour” admonished by God (Daniel 5:5) and was “that very night slain” (Daniel 5:30) foreshadow a scenario yet to occur between God Almighty and what He reveals as a Babylonian-type system yet to arise.

Again, there’ll be three key ingredients: 1) God, 2) a worldly ruler and 3) an end-time “Babylon.” Revelation 13:1, 4-6 identifies this system as “a beast,” just like the original head of the golden kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar, who became like a beast when God removed his kingdom from him.

Just like ancient times, people are going to be amazed at this future system. They are going to marvel, “Who is like the Beast?” (verse 4), just like mankind did long ago when they gawked at the immensity of Babylon’s nine-story walls and said, “What’s the use? If you can’t beat ’em, join ’em.”

It is of note that God further defines this future system with its mix of political and religious power as “Babylon” in Revelation 17:1-6. In verse 4 the politico-religious system is identified as “having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations.” Note that a religious vessel is being used in a wrong fashion just like long ago on that night before Babylon fell.

“In one hour your judgment has come”

What’s truly amazing is that in its foolish arrogance this future Babylon is going to fight against God. Just imagine that for a moment. Humans are going to have the pride and the false security that comes with it to fight their very Creator! Revelation 19:19-20 plainly states that this Beast system identified with Babylon is going to gather “together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.” Utterly incredible, isn’t it? But God has seen the future and brings it to us.

Jesus Christ not only brings us these troubling tidings, but encourages us that this system is going to be as swiftly destroyed as ancient Babylon. Consider how similar the language in Revelation 18:9-10, 15-19 is to that of Daniel’s prior experience. This future system, seemingly safe in its own vaunted opinion, will likewise discover “in one hour your judgment has come” (verse 10). It is repeated for effect in verse 17: “For in one hour

such great riches came to nothing.” Then, as now, God will not be mocked.

So what do we learn?

What lessons may we learn from these four little words with a big meaning?

Lesson one: There is an “hour of judgment” visited upon all humanity, not just Belshazzar. All nations and peoples, then and now and in the future, will be “measured and weighed” on the same common scale. That scale is found in Revelation 14:6-7, which defines an everlasting gospel in which we are to 1) fear God, 2) give Him glory and 3) worship Him.

Why? “For the hour of His judgment has come.” The lesson of the four little words is that God did not just wind up the universe and let it go. He chooses to intervene when, where and how He chooses. Ask Belshazzar!

Lesson two: We need not be afraid. God grants us the same “excellent Spirit” that guided Daniel. It is identified in the same passage (Daniel 5:11-12) as being the Spirit of the Holy God. Yes—the Holy Spirit is at work in us as well to guide us with understanding in the emergence of any system or society that confronts the sanctity of God. A scripture is great, but Daniel’s story gives us something to hold on to. “We read to know we are not alone,” as C.S. Lewis said.

Lesson three: Babylon and its mighty bulwarks reminds us it is not the size of the walls in front of us, but the size and condition of our hearts inside of us that is the ultimate strength that God centers on. Solomon spoke to this when he focused on how our Righteous Judge “weighs the hearts...and keeps your soul” (Proverbs 24:12).

Yes, God is a God of judgment, and He weighs and measures nations and people alike—past, present and future. The good news is we do not have to be weighed and “found wanting.”

Perhaps the encouragement found in Isaiah 30:21 of “this is the way, walk in it” is best realized in the words of Daniel when He reminds not only kings, but us, to remember that it is “God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways.” ❖



Robin Webber

How to Contact Us

AFRICA and ASIA (except as listed below): United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia. Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122

BENELUX countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands
BRITISH ISLES: P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts, WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569 E-mail: info@ucg.ca

CARIBBEAN: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

EAST AFRICA (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda): United Church of God—East Africa, P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200 Kenya. E-mail: kenya@ucg.org

FIJI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 11081, Laucala Beach Estate, Suva

FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

GERMANY: Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228 - 9454636 Fax: 0228 - 9454637 E-mail: info@gutenachrichten.org

ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy. Phone/Fax: (+39) 035-4523573 E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org

MALAWI: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi. E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

MAURITIUS: P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes. E-mail: mauritiust@ucg.org

NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Auckland, 1015, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

NIGERIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 2265, Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria. Phone: 01-8113644 E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

PHILIPPINES: United Church of God, P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines. Phone: (+63) 82 224-4444 Cell/Text: (+63) 918-904-4444

SCANDINAVIA: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 3535, 111 74, Stockholm, Sweden E-mail: sverige@ucg.org

SOUTH AFRICA (and Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland only): United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205. Phone/Fax: 043 748-1694

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796

TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 2617, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

UNITED STATES: *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. Phone (513) 576-9796. E-mail info@ucg.org

ZAMBIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. Phone: (02) 226076. E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

ZIMBABWE: United Church of God, Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare. Cell Phone: 011716273 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

Internet access on your computer:

Along with www.wnponline.org, the United Church of God’s home page www.ucg.org gives you access to *The Good News*, booklets and links to our international Web sites: www.ucg.ca (Canada), www.ucg.org.au (Australia), www.labuonanotizia.org (Italy), www.goodnews.org.uk (British Isles), www.ucg.org.ph (Philippines), www.ucgeastafrica.org (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) and www.ucg-rsa.org (Southern Africa).



by Robin Webber

Four Little Words With Big Meaning

During the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln gave one the shortest yet most meaningful speeches in history. The two-minute address spoke to a crucial moment in the nation’s history. Lincoln spoke in a redemptive tone about the judgment of God upon a single nation and what might yet be accomplished.

Today that speech is known as the Gettysburg Address. It was so short that it was only afterward that people would begin to recognize the gravity of what was spoken.

In the annals of human history is there any more poignant and crisper message than the Gettysburg Address? If so, where?

Yes, there is a shorter message given long ago that also came to jolt a nation. Actually only four words were conveyed to those assembled. This message changed the course of not only a nation, but the entire world. It, too, would have to be later interpreted for its significance. Its meaning comes down to our day and has incredible prophetic implications for the future.

Far from the dirt roads and fields of Gettysburg, we enter a different time and place at the royal court of Babylon as described in Daniel 5:1-5.

It is here we discover the actions of Belshazzar, the coregent of Babylon and grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, staging a gigantic banquet for 1,000 of his closest cohorts. Many of us are familiar with this biblical event, but what is the story behind the story?

Oh, those walls!

Extrabiblical literature can help set the stage for this particular night. Herodotus, the Greek historian, offers this

interesting detail of what may have preceded the great banquet:

“A battle was fought at a short distance from the city, in which the Babylonians were defeated by the Persian king, whereupon they withdrew within their defenses. Here they shut themselves up, and made light of his siege, having laid in store for many years in preparation against this attack” (*Persian Wars*, Book 1, Sec. 190).

Those defenses described by the historian were purported to be walls that were 90-feet high and so wide that six chariots could ride side by side at the top. Babylon stood seemingly impregnable and invincible for the ages!

We may not realize that by this time the city of Babylon stood alone as its soon-to-be conqueror, Persia, already stretched from Media on the east to the shore of the Aegean Sea on the west. Babylon was not simply in the way—it was to be the final, great prize!

Building on the thoughts of Herodotus, the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* informs us that, although the Babylonians were aware of the Medo-Persian threat outside their magnificent and unassailable city, they knew beyond a doubt that no army could penetrate their fortress walls. They were secure in the knowledge that their walls had not been “stormed by invaders in over a thousand years” (Vol. 7, p. 70).

The folly of pride

Oh yes, human nature loves denying reality. It can be amazingly delusional! After all, bad things happen to everyone else—right? Why is it so often we foolishly dream of being the exception, rather than the rule?

(See “WORDS,” page 14)