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Coping With the Current Housing Crisis

Last year was the worst year for U.S. foreclosures since 1932, at the height of the Great Depression. And 2008 looks set to be even worse. The economy may be in trouble, but there are steps you can take to prepare for the coming downturn.

by Melvin Rhodes

On a recent Sunday afternoon, as my wife and I were leaving our home, a lady pulled up in a car and started to put a “For Sale” sign on our front lawn. I shouted out that I thought she must have the wrong house. She laughed and assured me that the other side of the sign had an arrow pointing to a house further down our street, which she was trying to sell.



Reuters/Erin Siegal

A foreclosure sign is seen in Antioch, California.

The lady was a real estate agent, so I took the opportunity to get an update on the housing situation in our neighborhood.

“How are houses around here selling?” I asked.

“In this pocket,” she answered, “better than average.”

“Well, that’s good,” I responded. “How much have home values declined?” was my next question.

I was totally unprepared for her answer.

“Last year they dropped 19 percent! This year they are expected to go down a further 25 percent.”

We bought our home exactly two years ago. I already knew that the average price of homes in the Lansing, Michigan, area dropped 11 percent in

the first 12 months we were in our home. Our local newspaper confirmed what the agent said about the second year—in 2007 they dropped a further 19 percent and are expected to go down by 25 percent this year. This means that, by the time we have lived in our house three years, it will have lost about 50 percent of its value—half of what we paid for it.

According to the *Lansing State Journal*, in the fourth quarter of 2007 Lansing was the worst hit urban area in the country (“Prices Cut, but Homes Unsold,” Feb. 15, 2008).

We realize that we are not the only people in America who are los-

(See “HOUSING,” page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Broken Cisterns

Jeremiah stood on a street in Jerusalem and gave one of his typical strong and pointed sermons. People rushed around him with the business of the day. Some stopped for a while to listen while others passed on, too busy.

This day's message focused on the theme that people had gone after gods "which are not gods" (Jeremiah 2:11). Nothing like this had been seen among the gentile nations—people changing their gods—yet God's chosen people, Israel, had done just that.

The result was a spiritual restlessness reflected in many social problems that seemingly had no solution. The cause of the problem was twofold. God, through Jeremiah, summed it up in one sentence, "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water" (verse 13).

I thought of this passage recently when I read the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey done by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. The survey documents the diverse and dynamic religious population of America.

The survey says the United States is 78 percent Christian, and the majority Protestant segment, about 51 percent, is about to lose its majority. More than 25 percent of American adults have left the faith of their childhood for another religion or no religion at all. When moves from the many branches of Protestantism are considered, this number rises to 44 percent.

The survey reveals a fascinating perspective on the current U.S. religious scene. It is clear there is a churning taking place as people move in and out of different denominations, beliefs and positions. Generational divides have affected traditional views about religion and faith. One religious sociologist said there is a "dropping confidence in organized religion, especially in traditional religious forms."

Nearly half of adults are moving from one faith to another, from one denomination to another in search of something they find missing from religion.

Let me suggest what that missing dimension might be. It can be found in Jeremiah's sermon. American religion, like that of ancient Judah, has forsaken the true God. Churches have gone after other gods in the form of teachings, beliefs and religion that are not the faith delivered by Christ and the Church He founded.

Today's churches are not based on the true teachings of the Bible and resemble in faith and doctrine the pagan religions of the ancient world more than they do the Church of God described in the book of Acts.

American religious leaders have carved into the bedrock of society broken cisterns that cannot hold the "waters" of biblical truth. Like water from a cracked jug, the life has seeped out, leaving hollow shells that do not satisfy the deep spiritual needs of this generation.

The people who flow into and out of the churches are not always finding the answers to the burning issues of their lives. The church on the corner may provide a nice sermon and good music. People may flock in to attend social events, ball games and classes on health or finance. Today's megachurches provide a total lifestyle program for today's audience. But scratch this shallow surface and look at the core beliefs; you'll find they do not square with the Bible. In the end people are not spiritually satisfied.

The solution lies in a return to biblical truth. Restoring the true faith is the first step in achieving meaning in life and answers to the big questions. There is a cure for spiritual restlessness. It begins by worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“HOUSING” (Continued from page 1)

ing. Hundreds of thousands, even millions, of couples find themselves in a similar situation. It's also the case that there are still some areas of the country where house prices continue to rise, so the situation across the United States is uneven. Other countries are also affected by the slump in house values.

In the United States, last year was the worst year for housing since 1932 at the height of the Great Depression.

Not the only negative

Housing is not the only negative in the U.S. economy at this time. NBC's Brian Williams highlighted four big problems on his nightly news program Feb. 26.

“A long string of rather scary indicators today...” began Mr. Williams.

In elaborating, he listed four negative economic indicators:

“Inflation heading sharply higher... Home prices sharply lower... Oil prices setting another record... Consumer confidence plummeting...”

The nightly news failed to mention the other big financial negative news of the same day—the U.S. dollar falling lower, crashing through the psychological barrier of over \$1.50 to the euro.

The following evening, the BBC News' Katty Kay quoted the chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, who had earlier updated Congress on the economic situation: “The U.S. economy is faltering and something must be done about it.” Ms. Kay added: “How to fix it, though, is the hard part because there are so many things going wrong at once.”

An EU finance minister a few weeks ago criticized the U.S. federal government, blaming the world's financial crisis on its reckless overspending. A few hours later, the Bush administration announced the economic stimulus package, which will only add to the deficit, causing recurring seismic shockwaves around the international financial markets.

The upcoming U.S. election is not going to cure anything, with candidates making reckless promises of further deficit spending, either on universal health care or stronger defense.

Overspending by the federal gov-

ernment only worsens the financial crisis confronting the American people. Deficit spending drives the dollar down. In turn, this raises the cost of oil (gasoline) and other commodities, thereby driving up the rate of inflation. Additionally, we are passing on the debt with added interest to our children and grandchildren, leaving them with a burden they will not be able to bear.

Prepare for challenges ahead

What can Americans do to prepare for tougher times ahead?

1) Before buying a house, *count the cost*.

This is a biblical principle. Jesus Christ said: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish’” (Luke 14:28-30).

It's still that way in much of the world. When a man has money, he will buy land. He will start building when he comes into more money, but won't finish the house for many years.

In the Western world, we borrow from banks to buy houses that are already built. Banks have been very generous, even lending 100 percent of the money required without carefully checking that the borrower can afford the loan. These loans are known as subprime loans and are the loans that have been a primary cause of the current housing crisis. Encouraged by banks and other financial institutions, people borrowed more than they could afford.

Make sure you plan your budget wisely, ensuring that you have enough to make that monthly mortgage payment. Do not assume that your income will increase. Rather, plan for the possibility of a decrease or even a temporary loss of job.

2) *Get an education or qualification and work hard.*

Not everybody is book smart. But most people are smart in at least one area. Those who are book smart should go to college and earn a degree that can ensure a good career. Those

who are more skilled with their hands should make sure they get qualified as a mechanic, plumber, electrician or whatever field they choose.

Realize that any career can be affected negatively by a slump in the economy, but by getting qualified you are doing what you can to ensure steady employment.

However, a qualification is meaningless if you don't work hard. It won't be long before an employer sees that you are not contributing.

“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest” (Proverbs 6:6-8).

Ants are diligent, always working hard, always preparing for what's ahead. We need to be the same way.

3) *Beware of borrowing.*

The United States is the most indebted nation in the world, indeed, the most indebted in history. According to a recent report on the BBC World Service, Americans lead the world in personal debt, with Britain and Australia in second and third place.

Former French President Charles de Gaulle famously refused Britain entry into what was then the European Common Market, dismissively referring to the Anglo-American economic model as “the Anglo-Saxon debtor countries.” Accumulated debt has, of course, given us faster growth rates than the continental Europeans in the past, but perhaps that is now going to change as the debts have finally caught up with us.

Whereas countries that use the euro are forbidden to overspend by more than 3 percent, the U.S. government routinely overspends by more than twice that percentage. With the economic stimulus package, a further 1 percent has been added to that debt load.

But governmental debt is only part of the problem. Personal debt is also at an all-time high and Americans, in the main, are addicted to deficit spending at the household level. Now that credit has become harder to obtain, the result will likely be a recession, with the economy going backwards for a while.

Americans and people in other countries similarly affected by the credit crunch are going to have to spend less.

An item on a television news program in February highlighted auto loan debt. Some people “have” to have a new car every year or so, whether or not they have the money. Before they have paid off one car, they buy another, carrying over the outstanding amount from their earlier loan. Some people with average incomes have car payments of over \$600 a month! No wonder so many are defaulting on their car loans.

Others are addicted to other material possessions. If not cars, it might be electronic equipment, cell phones, DVDs or video games. Such addictions are nothing less than coveting, the breaking of the Tenth Commandment (Exodus 20:17). People want what they can’t afford and get themselves into deep financial trouble because of it.

Sitting in a restaurant recently with my wife, we noted that the number of customers remained the same in spite of the dire economic situation Michigan finds itself in and increased restaurant prices. Where do people get the money? The vast majority simply pay with a credit card, borrowing against tomorrow.

On the brink of a recession, the less debt a household has, the better prepared they are to weather the storms that lie ahead.

Stay out of debt. Pay down debts you already have. Live within your means. If you haven’t got the cash to pay for it, you can’t afford it.

4) *Stay close to God.*

Americans are learning, as many around the world already know, that no human government or man-made economic system can provide total security, financial or otherwise. Only God can—so it’s important to always stay close to Him.

Jesus Christ understood fully the

folly of looking to material possessions for security.

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Another important factor in sound financial management is the biblical principle of tithing. A tithe is 10 percent of a person’s increase.

Note the following words and apply them to America during these difficult economic times. “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation” (Malachi 3:8-9).

In the next verse, the nation is promised great prosperity if it returns to God, which includes obeying the instruction to tithe. As it is with nations, so it is with individuals.

A house is just a physical possession like any other. It’s been inspiring to see, when natural disasters strike and people lose their homes, how they pick themselves up and move on, building again and looking to the future. Take note of the principles given above and try to weather the world’s financial crisis. Other generations have survived. We can too. ❖

Recommended Reading

The United States, Britain, 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*.

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!

What Manner of Person Should You Be?

Why are you interested in prophecy? Is your goal to decipher all the obscure biblical prophecies that await fulfillment? Be careful. God's purpose for prophecy may be different than yours.

by Darris McNeely

Once I knew a person who thought he had every detail of prophecy worked out. He had a chart to show when the end-time prophecies would be fulfilled. He even thought he knew the year and day of Christ's return.

There was one problem.

The years and days came and went and the prophecies were not fulfilled. This person was a sincere student of the Bible. He feared God and obeyed His teachings. His mistake was not in having an interest in prophecy. It was in trying to predict the timing of events that are known but to God. He failed to understand how God intends prophecy to be used by His servants.

How about you? Have you done the same?

Do we know more than Jesus?

Prophecy has always held a fascination for people. We want to understand what lies in the future. Whenever a major world event occurs, people scurry to those who profess knowledge of its prophetic significance to try and understand what it all means. Every time a crisis erupts in the Middle East, we see an increase in traffic to our Web sites. People are reading and downloading our prophecy material.

And that is fine. But to what end? Is it to be wiser and smarter in prophecy than someone else? Is there the hope of saving oneself through access to special "secret knowledge" of these ancient prophecies? Whatever our motivation might be, we should be sure it aligns with the purpose and plan of God.

When we study Bible prophecy, we should keep in mind one fundamental principle. God alone knows exactly when and how it will all come together. When His disciples wanted to know the timing of the restoration of the Israelite kingdom, Jesus plainly said, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:7).

God alone knows when events like Christ's return will occur. Even Jesus said He did not know the day and hour (Mark 13:32). So who are we to try and surpass that knowledge?

With God in charge of the timing of the big events, our goal should be vigilance and understanding of the times and events of the world. With faith in God that a day of judgment is coming when God's Kingdom will be restored, we have other things to do. Prophecy, world events and the signs of the end of the age will be a motivation to endure to the end.

Peter's charge

Near the end of his life, the apostle Peter desired that members of the Church understand some things about prophecy. He wanted them to maintain a balanced perspective that avoided all the extremes that come with the subject.

Peter knew his life was drawing to a close. For years he and the Church looked for and expected the coming of Christ. But it had not occurred. Now he saw the need to remind people of certain basic principles. These would serve as a source of instruction after his death (2 Peter 1:12-15).

He began by encouraging them to diligently build into their lives the qualities of faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance and godliness. Brotherly kindness and love were to be hallmarks of their lives and help them abound in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5-8).

These are the basic Christian qualities that form the character of those who seek to enter the soon-coming everlasting Kingdom of Christ (verse 11). The Kingdom of God had not come in Peter's lifetime, but it was still a strong reality that framed each day of his life.

No private interpretation

Peter and the other disciples had been eyewitnesses of the power and majesty of Christ's earthly works. They saw and spoke with the resurrected Christ. All those events were true. Their lives were changed forever by those events.

They connected the prophecies from the Old Testament to Jesus and understood the fulfillment of those many prophecies. To Peter and John and the others, prophecy had been fulfilled

Whatever our motivation for studying prophecy might be, we should be sure it aligns with the purpose and plan of God.

in their lifetime. They understood fully the messianic prophecies about Christ's first coming.

Through the decades following Christ's ascension, they had come to see that the time when the Kingdom would be restored, at Christ's second coming, would lie beyond their time. They would not live to see it. But this did not diminish the reality of that hope. This is what he wanted the people to understand. It is what we clearly see two thousand years later.

Peter said, "We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (verses 19-21).

A key to understanding Bible prophecy is to let the Bible interpret itself. Don't try to read into passages meaning that is not there. Prophecy is not to be approached like a riddle that needs great mental gymnastics to solve. God's Spirit moved men to speak certain prophetic words and God alone can interpret their meaning for us.

Vanity and self-importance can lead us to assign meanings to passages before God is ready to reveal to His servants the true understanding. "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

After a lengthy chapter (2 Peter 2) where he shows the folly of false teachers, Peter returns to the sure promises of God's revelation.

Scoffers in the last days

God's true teaching has always suffered attack in this world controlled by unseen evil spiritual forces. Doubt and cynicism have been directed toward the teaching of the prophets and the apostles by those who work their own agenda. Peter foretold that scoffers would come in the last days saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:3-4)

We live today in an age of unbelief. We see a continual battery against faith and biblical truth. Popular books and movies cast doubt on the divinity

of Jesus. Countless theories are always brought forth to discredit the accuracy of biblical stories. New discoveries of lost books attempt to rewrite the story of the Gospels, casting doubt on revealed truth.

The ongoing debate between evolution and creationism as explanations for the origin of life keeps people arguing about a truth of fundamental importance to Christianity. Our society is designed to tear down rather than foster belief in God and the truth revealed in the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is a reality of our daily life. Peter saw this in his day and sought to rally the faith and confidence of God's elect.

He wrote a succinct statement that summarizes the love of God for all ages. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Here is the real reason to study prophecy and keep abreast of today's world in anticipation of the world to come.

God's patience with this world is remarkable and encouraging. He does not want any to suffer for sin and unrighteousness. Those who preach the gospel of peace know they hold the message that can turn people's lives around. The news of God's love for all, expressed through the sacrifice and life of Jesus of Nazareth, can turn despair to joy and sorrow to hope.

Such news is the reason for the dedication of the saints through history. It is the reason you hold this publication in your hands today. There is a group of people who want you to hear the message of the Kingdom and turn your life around in worship of the true God.

The ultimate goal of prophecy

The prophesied events of the Bible will come to pass. A time of world trouble unlike any in past history, the time of "great tribulation," lies straight ahead of us. Christ's triumphant return is sooner than many would like to consider. And all this will catch an unsuspecting world by complete surprise (2 Peter 3:10).

Peter tells us why we should watch and understand our world. It is not to gain knowledge that swells our pride and ego. Its purpose is not to focus only

on saving our physical life. The real reason we study prophecy is to learn God's way and become motivated to live it better and share the good news.

"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:11-13). We can be "hastening" the coming of Christ by being involved in and supporting the efforts of preaching the gospel message such as the one you are reading right now.

Here is the ultimate reason we study Bible prophecy—so that it might shape our thinking and eventually our character to become like God. Because we know this world is passing away and a new one is coming, we prepare today for a role in that coming Kingdom. It is real to us and drives each day of our lives with passion and zeal. It is the only goal worth sacrificing for. For those who grasp that vision today and who pursue it diligently, there awaits a crown of righteousness that will not fade away.

Expand your mind and open your heart to the scriptures that reveal the reality of today's world and the coming events that will transform this present evil world, ushering in the glorious Kingdom of God. Join us in this work and let your life become a living sacrifice for God. ✦

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*.

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Turkish Prime Minister in Germany: Compliments and Controversy

Will Turkey become a full member of the European Union? The underlying debate centers on whether it would bring too much Islamist influence into the EU.

by Paul Kieffer

Emotions ran high in the German city of Ludwigshafen at the beginning of February when a fire in an older apartment building claimed the lives of nine Turks.

The fire on Feb. 3 had Turkish newspapers writing about arson as a possible cause and wondering whether emergency personnel in Ludwigshafen had responded quickly enough to the blaze. Dramatic film footage captured parents throwing an infant out of an upstairs window to save the child's life.

German officials immediately began work on determining the cause of the fire, which most likely was the result of an electrical short circuit in the basement of the building.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, already scheduled to open the annual Munich Conference on Security on Feb. 9, decided to visit Ludwigshafen on his way to Munich. About 2,500 people gathered in a prominent square to hear Prime Minister Erdogan's comments on the disaster. With the cause of the fire still undetermined, one person in the crowd held a sign with the words "Yesterday the Jews, today the Muslims," implying that the fire was arson.

In the charged atmosphere following the fire, Erdogan's speech in Ludwigshafen had an immediate calming effect. He said that Germans and Turks were united in their sorrow, and he made a point of publicly thanking German authorities for their quick reaction to calls for help. His acknowledgment effectively defused earlier criticism of what was perceived to be a delayed response.

In light of Erdogan's later comments during his visit to Germany, German Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble defended Erdogan's words, praising his



Reuters/Harald Dettborn

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks at the 44th Conference on Security Policy in Munich Feb. 9.

"considerable contribution to de-escalation" of the tense situation following the tragic loss of life.

No "privileged partnership" for Turkey

Two days after his visit to Ludwigshafen, Erdogan's speech officially opened the annual Munich Conference on Security. Erdogan wasted no time in stating his country's position on the question of EU membership. As his foreign minister had done two weeks earlier in Davos during the World Economic Forum, Erdogan again rejected the notion that Turkey would accept a "privileged partnership" as an alternative to full membership in the European Union. "We know where we want to be," he emphasized, "and that is full membership."

The fact that Erdogan even had to mention the "privileged partnership" option reflects the current state of the ongoing negotiations on membership. "Privileged partnership" has long been the talking point for Germany's conservative "Christian" par-

With its high birthrate, Turkey would replace Germany as the EU's most populous country by about the year 2020—if Turkey gains membership.

ties. However, with the formation of the current grand coalition government comprised of the Socialists and “Christian” conservative parties—normally traditional opponents vying for power—the “privileged partnership” option was downplayed.

Although French President Nicolas Sarkozy has been less vocal on the issue in recent weeks, he made headlines after taking office last May with his strong opposition to Turkish membership. Sarkozy argued that Turkey, being a predominantly Muslim country, really does not belong in Europe. With Sarkozy’s reservations on Turkish membership, Germany’s “Christian” party leaders have again been talking about an alternative to full membership.

In his Munich speech, Erdogan referred to the negotiations on membership by saying that it is unfair to change the rules once the game has started.

Since Turkey is largely responsible for the slow progress, Erdogan’s criticism seemed odd. After Turkey refused to provide access to its ports for unrestricted trade with EU member Cyprus in 2006, the EU froze negotiations on eight chapters of the negotiation package. Presently Turkey has initiated talks in six of the 35 policy areas that are a part of the membership negotiation process.

Erdogan also attempted to deflect concerns over a non-Christian country becoming part of the EU. In what appeared to be a direct reference to the different viewpoint expressed by Pope Benedict in September 2006, Erdogan described Islam as a religion of “peace and tolerance,” adding that no one needs to fear a Muslim Turkey in the EU.

In a later speech at the conference, Christian Socialist Union (CSU) party leader Erwin Huber was compelled to respond to Erdogan’s remarks. Huber emphasized that his concerns about full membership for Turkey were not intended to discriminate against the Turkish people.

According to Huber, the EU has about exhausted its capacity to integrate new members, which is the main

reason for his desire to see Turkey accept the offer of a “privileged partnership.”

Integration without assimilation

The day after his speech in Munich, Erdogan spoke before a packed house at the Cologne Arena. About 16,000 Turks from Germany and even a few from Belgium and the Netherlands filled the arena to hear his plea not to lose their Turkish identity. According to Erdogan, integration within the host country’s society is acceptable, but assimilation is not.

German news media later wondered why Erdogan doesn’t accept a similar status for the Kurdish minority in Turkey. Erdogan had earlier voiced support for having Turkish-language schools and even a Turkish university in Germany.

His speech in Cologne drew strong criticism from party leaders across the political spectrum in Germany and again heightened concerns about a “parallel society” of Muslims coexisting in Germany with German society. Germans are not the only Europeans who fear the entrenchment of an Islamic “parallel society” in Europe.

That fear may be deeper than some analysts realize. Most political leaders in the European Union pay lip service to the prospect of Turkish membership, provided that Turkey meets all criteria for admission. Those politicians who do voice reservations over the impact of Turkish EU membership are considered to be well right of center, but their opposition also resonates with voters who are not right-wing.

One example would be Dutch parliament member Geert Wilders, whose film on Islam has even drawn a warning from Iran. Wilders is in favor of refusing permission to build any new mosques in the Netherlands, and wants to see an end to Muslim immigration.

Wilders proclaims he has nothing against Muslims themselves, but he can’t stand their religion, which he calls an ideology instead of a religion. Wilders is Roman Catholic, and he wants the Dutch government to offer

payment to induce Muslim immigrants to return home.

Pros and cons of Turkish membership

If Turkey’s bid to join the European Union is successful, ideas like those proposed by Geert Wilders will be finished, as far as Muslim Turkey is concerned. In opening negotiations with Turkey, the European Union is at a crossroads that may well determine Europe’s future.

Those who favor Turkish membership see it obligating Turkey to be permanently aligned with Western cultural values and Europe’s legal system and approach to human rights. They also emphasize the “bridge function” that Turkey could play between the non-Islamic majority of Europe and the Islamic Middle East, symbolized by the two bridges across the Bosphorus in Istanbul.

Those who have concerns about Turkish membership argue that the issue in admitting Turkey is not its potential bridge function to the Islamic world, but rather cementing a growing Islamic minority as an integral part of European population. Turkish population is expanding at 1.6 percent annually. With its high birthrate, Turkey would replace Germany as the EU’s most populous country by about the year 2020.

The day that Turkey enters the European Union, the Muslim portion of the EU’s total population would jump from a current 5 percent to 20 percent. The population of nearly all EU countries is currently on the decline. Turkish membership would therefore mean that the overall EU population decline would slow but not cease. By contrast, the percentage of Muslims in the EU would steadily grow.

Restrictions on the EU’s freedom-of-movement arrangement for EU citizens would likely be in force for the first years of Turkish membership. However, Turkish citizens would eventually be free to live and work wherever they want within the European Union, a prospect that does not appeal to many Western Europeans, who feel that there are



Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his wife Emine wave after making a speech in Cologne, Germany, Feb. 10.

already enough Turks in their countries as it is.

A secular, democratic Turkey?

Turkey has had associated status with the European Union since 1963, when it first applied for admission. Since then other EU nations have been admitted to the EU, even though they applied for membership after Turkey.

In 1993 the EU attempted to standardize the criteria that all candidates for admission are required to fulfill. In Turkey's case, that part of the "Copenhagen criteria" long considered doubtful includes the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the respect and protection of minorities.

While Turkey has clearly made progress in those areas, recent developments give some observers cause for concern. Since the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923 under the leadership of its first president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the principles of "Kemalism" have included the separation of church and state. The state does not interfere in religious affairs, and religion—the Islamic faith—does not interfere in the affairs of the state.

In today's Turkey this means that the wives of the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and recently elected President Abdullah Gül are not allowed to attend official state receptions. The reason? As

Muslims, they both wear the traditional Muslim head covering for women, and wearing the head covering would be viewed as religious influence at an official state affair.

Until this year, young women in Turkey were also not permitted to wear the head covering at Turkish universities, the result of a 20-year-old court decision interpreting the Turkish constitution. In an interview with the *Financial Times* newspaper, Erdogan once described the ban on head coverings as a political issue that needs to be resolved so Turkey can be like countries in Western Europe where Muslim students are permitted to wear a head covering at universities.

Erdogan's argument that Turkey should have a similar policy as in Western Europe ignores the fact that Turkey is quite different from Western European countries. Those Muslim students wearing a head covering at universities in Western Europe are a minority of the total student population. Muslim students there who wear a head covering have little or no influence on other Muslim women who decline to wear the head covering.

By contrast, Turkey is a predominantly Islamic country. Some Turkish university professors believe that in smaller communities the lifting of the ban will lead to a situation where a majority of Muslim students would

wear the head covering, forcing those women reluctant to do so into donning the veil to avoid being ostracized socially. Their concerns appear justified in a country where even unfounded rumors can lead to beatings or even the murder of young women considered to be immoral.

In January a constitutional amendment lifted the ban on head coverings at Turkish universities. While some feel this minor change is insignificant, others believe it will lead to greater Islamic influence in Turkish society.

Prime Minister Erdogan and Turkey's President Abdullah Gül are both from the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which some see as having a closet Islamic agenda. The wives of both men wear the Muslim head covering, which prompted the Turkish military to issue a warning about departing from the Kemalist doctrine when Gül's candidacy for the presidency was announced. The chief of the Turkish General Staff did not attend Gül's inauguration following his election as president last August.

The last intervention by the Turkish army in Turkey's domestic politics was in 1997, resulting in the resignation of the country's first Islamist prime minister since the founding of the Turkish Republic. Any future intervention to counter a perceived move toward an Islamic republic would put negotiations with the EU on Turkish membership on hold indefinitely. The same would apply if Turkey were indeed to move toward greater Islamic influence. Either scenario would make Turkey's ability to provide for "the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy" questionable.

Oddly enough, a failed bid to join the EU could turn out to be a catalyst for greater Islamic fervor in Turkey. If rejected by the EU, Turkey would also likely turn to its historic realm of influence: the Middle East. With a competent, well-equipped military, Turkey could provide a measure of stability in a region poised to be destabilized by future U.S. troop withdrawals from Iraq. Like a rejected suitor, Turkey might also become a thorn in the side of the European Union as part of a Middle East whose most potent weapon lies under the sands of Arabia: petroleum. ❖

In Brief...

World News Review

One Dreadful Week in America

Ted Anthony of the Associated Press described several tragic events in the United States in one week. He lamented: "Ugly things. Violent things. Elemental things. The forces of nature and human anger unleashed in concentrated form across the land. Water and fire, gun and sky, bringing destruction, death and misery. And tears" (Washington Post.com, Feb. 10, 2008).

It could be argued by secular observers that there is nothing at all we can do about destructive, death-dealing tornadoes (killing 59 in the South), but most disturbing of all is human anger completely out of control. Five dead in Los Angeles, six murdered in Missouri, five women killed in Chicago, three people gunned down in Louisiana. An unbelievable carnage occurring in one week, followed about a week later by 18 hurt and four killed at an Illinois University shooting.

Violence filled the earth before the time of Noah's Flood (Genesis 6:11). Jesus Christ clearly stated that conditions prior to His second coming would be like those before the great Flood of Noah's time. It is a sobering parallel and the overall principle certainly applies. See our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*

Is a World Recession Now Possible?

Recent headlines and dropheads (directly under those headlines) in *USA Today* are not encouraging. For instance: "Inflation, Falling Home Prices Fuel Anxiety. Home sales decline again; prices tumble as inventories swell; reports add to case that US is at the brink of a recession."

It used to be said that when America coughs, the whole world catches a cold. Some spin-off becomes obvious when one reads another headline and drophead in *USA Today*. "Woe Canada: Catching USA's Economic Chill. No. 1 trading partner among first to feel our pain." And then in *The Times* (London): "Europe Decline Could Be Worse Than Expected, Brussels Admits. Eurozone growth is set for sharp fall. US downturn and market turmoil blamed."

Media hype? Yes, there is always an element of that. But there is reason to believe that in this case the smoke does indicate a fire. A feature article in the *Financial Times* blames America's failing house sector as the chief culprit, saying that macro-economic measures were proving helpful, but that mortgage lending support was still highly inadequate.

Lawrence Summers, former U.S. secretary of the Treasury and a professor at Harvard, said: "It appears that house prices are down by 5-10 per cent from their peak, with derivatives markets predicting further declines of about 20 per cent. Price falls of this magnitude are likely to mean more than 10

m[illion] would have negative equity in their homes and more than 2 m[illion] foreclosures would take place over the next two years" (ibid., Feb. 25, 2008).

If you need help in coping with your own personal financial situation, request or download our free booklet *Managing Your Finances*.

Changing Face of Religion in America

Said a feature article in *USA Today*, "The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey released today by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, documents new peaks, deepening valleys and fast-running rivers of change in American religion" (Feb. 26, 2008).

Several things are happening. Major churches showed moderate declines, including the Roman Catholic, the Baptist, the Methodist and the Lutheran denominations. Yet Christianity clearly dominates the religious scene in the United States with nearly 80 percent of the adult population indicating an allegiance.

In summary, "The major Christian denominations are losing numbers fast. Only non-denominational Christian churches showed growth, outpacing losses. 'Two in three people who say they grew up as Jehovah's Witnesses have left the faith. Any one of 10 people you meet is a former Catholic,'" says Luis Lugo, Pew Forum director (ibid.).

Several church authorities seem to agree that "there's no question that change is afoot and that doctrine and denominations are losing their hold on Western Christian nations." In fact, there has been a monumental shift away from the doctrines of the New Testament Church. To learn more, read or request our free booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.

Worldwide Shift From Country to City

The United Nations recently declared that for the first time in history, "More people in the world live in the town than in the country" (Charles Moore, *The Spectator*, Feb. 23, 2008). Rural life has had an enormous impact on humanity throughout the millennia. This monumental change has taken place principally over the last 200 years in the West—and much of the rest of the world has been following.

Charles Moore commented: "What are its effects? A crisis of the great religions, whose language of elemental truth assumes an understanding of what it is to be a good shepherd, to sow and reap, to have murrains of cattle and crops that fail" (ibid.). It's impossible to fully understand many of the illustrations Jesus Christ and His apostles used without a fundamental grasp of these subjects.

Contributor: John Ross Schroeder

Should the West Encourage German Military Expansion?

Adverse security circumstances have caused the United States, the United Kingdom and other Western countries to pressure Germany into taking a more active military role in Afghanistan and other theaters of conflict. But what are the potential consequences from a biblical/historical perspective?

by John Ross Schroeder

A recent *Newsweek* world affairs feature article firmly stated: “Germany was expected to play a big role in European security. *But its defense policy has gone AWOL*” (Feb. 25, 2008, emphasis added throughout). How can this be, since Germany has sent over 3,100 soldiers to Afghanistan (behind only the United States with some 27,000 troops and the United Kingdom with 7,800)?

The rub is that all German soldiers are stationed in the much more peaceful northern part of Afghanistan doing humanitarian work like helping to dig wells and construct schools. The south remains where the war against the Taliban is at its fiercest. Further, the German army has strict instructions from Berlin to avoid counterinsurgency combat activities. Principally the Americans and British, but also Canadians, Danes and Dutch troops, are bearing the brunt in losses of life and serious injuries.

A wary German public

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates recently sent a stern letter to his German counterpart Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung. In this communiqué he reportedly complained of German refusal and demanded the deployment of its soldiers to the troubled southern provinces of Afghanistan.

According to the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, “Mr. Jung replied in similar mode with a ‘direct and stern’ letter to Mr. Gates” (*The Times*, Feb. 2, 2008). One German source stated that “our given location was in the North and that is where we are staying.”

Berlin’s adamant refusal to commit soldiers to battle clearly reflects the overwhelming popular will of the German populace. Recent polls indicated that “86 percent of Germans...say the *Bundeswehr* should not be fighting anywhere. And 61 percent want even the non-combat missions pulled out” (*Newsweek*, Feb. 25, 2008).

But notwithstanding the German defense minister’s response to Secretary Gates, late last

year he also stated, “We must convince the public that these [military] missions are firmly in Germany’s interests” (*Financial Times*, Dec. 4, 2007).

Hans-Ulrich Klose, a lawmaker in the 614-strong German Bundestag, has openly called for troops to be sent into the fight in southern Afghanistan. Other lawmakers are of a similar cast of mind, but hesitate to contradict the country’s popular will—which is reflected in the *Bundeswehr*’s rather run-down condition.

In comparison to America, France and Britain, percentagewise Germany spends relatively little of its GNP on the military. According to the *Newsweek* feature article, the *Bundeswehr* is both vastly underfinanced and underequipped. Even its humanitarian role is said to be inadequately financed and poorly coordinated.

Current German military philosophy

Karsten Voigt is a senior politician and German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s chief diplomatic envoy on U.S./German relations. He said: “The fact that sometimes soldiers have to fight and win battles has dropped out of the [German] consciousness since the second World War. We have to recognise that the government has a different position to the majority of the population” (*Financial Times*, Dec. 4, 2007).

Wolfgang Ischinger is Germany’s ambassador to Great Britain. He said, “Germany had so often been told that their military had done ‘many awful things’ it was hard to persuade them that they should get involved in another conflict” (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Feb. 17, 2008).

Although Germany is apparently considering increasing troops to Afghanistan by 1,000, it is with the provision that their role will be confined to the more tranquil north. Ambassador Ischinger also said to *The Sunday Telegraph* in London: “You have never been in the situation, certainly not in the last century, where you thought that the military had no role at all abroad, *but that was the consensus in Germany [even among the*

The German peoples have chosen the path of pacifism, which the West itself urged upon them in the aftermath of World War II. Now to meet a current security crisis, some of the chief Western powers are pressuring them to undertake further military conflict. But where will it end?

establishment] as recently as 12 or 13 years ago” (ibid.).

Wider European philosophy

Undergirding contemporary German thought is a wider pan-European philosophy that has steadily gained adherents on the Continent. It runs something like this. “Europe, in short, is the *not-America*. . . [A] quite popular [concept] in Europe today. You hear and see it made repeatedly, often in cruder forms, but always with the same themes: solidarity and social justice, the welfare state, secularism, no death penalty, the environment and international law, peaceful solutions and multilateral, transcending [national] sovereignty, *counterbalancing the US*” (Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World*, 2005, p. 56).

American writer Robert Kagan has, perhaps unwittingly, reinforced these concepts on the European intelligentsia. In one of his books he indicated that Americans still operate in an anarchic world where individual nations must use military might. Europeans, on the other hand, are moving in the direction “of laws and rules and transnational negotiation. . . a post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity” (*Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, 2003, p. 3).

Other side of the story in Germany

However, there are influential German voices trumpeting a full military role for the nation. Jan Techau is director and Alexander Skiba is program officer of the Alfred Oppenheim Center for European Policy Studies at the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin.

They cowrote the following for the *International Herald Tribune* (Feb. 8, 2008): “The decision by Germany’s coalition government to dismiss the Pentagon’s request for the deployment of German combat troops in the south of Afghanistan is a grave foreign policy blunder. Not only will Berlin’s refusal create serious damage in the relationships with its closest NATO allies; it will also reduce Germany’s room for maneuver on other security challenges. . . *When it comes to using its military might, Germany’s political elites seem paralyzed.*”

On a national level even powerful modern governments must make

hard choices. Meeting the needs of the moment may not always correspond well with meeting the dangers of the future. Those well acquainted with both biblical and secular history see that pressuring Germany into greater military involvement may carry grave risks for future world security.

We should never forget that even as late as the very early 1930s, the Nazis were a relatively small minority of the German population, and it seemed but a dream that Adolf Hitler would ever assume the summit of power in Germany. But that happened in 1933.

Even now underneath the vast majority of current popular political opinion in the country, there is a hard core of minority feelings that the 12-year Nazi regime (1933-1945) was not so bad after all. According to one poll published in Germany’s *Stern* magazine, “A quarter of Germans believe aspects of the Nazi era were positive” (*The Guardian*, Oct. 11, 2007).

One observer noted, “It is particularly alarming that younger people are increasingly positive about national socialism.” Another voice lamented, “Hitler left the world much more than Auschwitz and the autobahns, but it’s something people gladly forget or suppress” (ibid.).

Both Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt, two U.S. presidents in times of severe national crisis, told their respective American audiences, “This generation cannot escape history.”

Lessons of contemporary history

Historical accounts do not have to be a few thousand years old to constitute important lessons for the present. Recent history can be very relevant to our current needs. The first 50 years of the 20th century have much to teach us. During that period the English-speaking peoples fought two world wars with Germany (1914-1918; 1939-1945).

The German peoples have chosen the path of pacifism, which the West itself urged upon them in the aftermath of World War II. Now to meet a current security crisis, some of the chief Western powers are pressuring them to undertake further military conflict. Undoubtedly, sooner or later, Germany will bow to repeated urgings and embark upon a much greater military role.

But where will it end?

If the English-speaking peoples continue on their present path of growing disobedience to God’s way of life (see the *Good News* feature article “Redefining Morality: A Torrent of Trouble Threatens to Engulf Us,” March/April 2008 issue), the principle of cause and effect will inevitably bring them down.

But how? Bible prophecy clearly indicates that national punishments upon the United States, Britain and others will come from a convergence of nations in Central Europe—centered upon one powerful country in particular.

Some 3,500 years ago Moses spoke to our forefathers of such a nation. “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand” (Deuteronomy 28:49). Prophecy embraces the principle of duality and repetition. What happened once in ancient times to the house of Israel (721-718 B.C.) can occur again at the time of the end.

In this respect does Isaiah 10:7 also have something to teach us? “*Yet he does not mean so, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off not a few nations.*” The present leadership in Europe may have absolutely no such intention of punishing the English-speaking nations for their sins. Yet that will not prevent future leaders from carrying out the mandated task (see verses 5-6).

Conditions change with time. During the days of the patriarch Joseph, the favor of the Egyptians rested upon ancient Israel. But the time came that “there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph” (Exodus 1:8). Then the troubles soon began.

May our peoples learn the lessons of both ancient and contemporary history, repent of their present course of action and direction, turning back to God’s ways by the millions.

To help you to more fully understand the background, we recommend the following free booklets: *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* They are available either in print or they can be downloaded from wnponline.org. ❖



A Page on the World

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

The Marketing of Evil

David Kupelian's book is subtitled "How Radicals, Elitists, and Pseudo-Experts Sell Us Corruption Disguised as Freedom" (2005, ISBN-13: 978-1581824599).

Reviewed by Aimee Zahora

The January/February 2008 issue of *The Good News* contained a sidebar titled "Q: When Is a Constitution Not a Constitution? A: When It's a 'Treaty.'" This title caused me to consider a similar question. Q: When is a theory not a theory? A: When it's evolution.

David Kupelian's book *The Marketing of Evil* pointedly addresses how the theory of evolution has reached the widely accepted status of scientific fact, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Kupelian also uncovers the grotesque strategies used to legalize abortion.

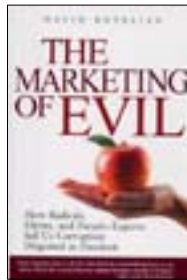
His book is not for the faint of heart or for those who wish to escape reality. Instead, his book is for those who have an insatiable desire to seek out truth in its absolute sense. *The Marketing of Evil* will open your eyes to the disgusting reality that we find ourselves living in—what one might call a matrix of evil.

In addition to the controversial issues of evolution and abortion, Kupelian delves into topics such as separation of church and state, the meltdown of the family as a result of marriage being redefined and a distorted worldview created by illusions that the media portrays as reality.

Kupelian begins his account by exposing strategies that homosexual activists used to launch the gay rights movement. He focuses on the result of intentional psychological marketing jargon surrounding the phrase "gay rights." Instead of using the term *homosexual*, activists selected the word *gay* because of its positive connotation associated with the word *happiness*. The term *rights* brings to mind the basic freedom of citizenship that an individual enjoys. With this kind of marketing, a once taboo practice gradually became acceptable.

Another remarkable example Kupelian shares is the research of Alfred Kinsey, a former zoologist at Indiana University. Though Kinsey's area of expertise was in the study of animals, he began conducting research on sexual behavior in adults and children. This research gained him the title "Father of the Sexual Revolution."

His research is considered foundational to the study of human sexual behavior, is referenced in numerous subsequent publications and conferences on the topic and has



been portrayed for many years as scientific, credible and objective.

However, the data he used is largely based on abnormal populations, which he then normalized to apply to the general population. In fact, 86 percent of his subjects were abnormal and included sexual psychopaths, sex offenders, prisoners, male prostitutes and promiscuous homosexuals.

Kupelian also addresses Christianity today in its severely watered-down form. He cites a study by Christian pollster George Barna that concludes born-again Christian adults in the United States both think and act in a way that is virtually identical to nonbelievers. New churches have sprung up that appeal to the masses. These new churches tolerate widely opposing views and beliefs regardless of whether the perspectives are biblical.

The Marketing of Evil embarks the reader on a fascinating and eye-opening journey. Chapter by chapter, example after example, Kupelian describes marketing tactics used by educators, the media and religious leaders to repeat phrases and terminology in a manner that solidifies misrepresented, distorted and blatantly untrue statements into something that the human psyche passively accepts as truth.

The Bible warns of a time when people will call evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). Our world widely accepts the repetition of ideas, whether true or false, moral or amoral, as truth based entirely on the shallow proof that the idea has been publicly and repeatedly circulated.

Ephesians 6:12 describes our current condition, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

This complex web—this matrix of evil—surrounds us, and only one choice will secure our eternal freedom from these shackles.

That choice is described in Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live." Won't you choose it? ❖

“HOW LONG” (Continued from page 16)

the book of Revelation crescendos to its literal fulfillment.

How often have we all dreamed of a world of our own, where our lives would be stain- and pain-free, and the very word *stress* would be obliterated from our personal dictionary? That type of existence may sound indescribably wonderful to us. However, have you ever considered that God uses the difficult times in our lives to mold and groom us to enter into His worthwhile eternity? A life without challenges would hinder us from being fully developed by the Master Potter for our incredible future as rulers in His Kingdom (Revelation 5:10).

At this point, you may be thinking, Who, me? What can I possibly have to offer? There is one thing that must be made absolutely clear regarding our ability to have the spiritual fortitude that is required to make it through this life. Becoming prepared for future service to our Maker is not dependent upon our natural abilities alone.

What is truly important is how we respond spiritually to what is happening to us and around us. Our lives are made up of a long series of decisions regarding our emotions, thoughts and actions. Life is designed to challenge us.

Throughout all of this, we can be assured that we're never alone. Remember what Christ said? He told us that we have a Guide who has personally experienced the difficulties of life. Revelation 22:16 reveals Him as the Morning Star. Christ is likened to that gleaming beacon that appears in the earliest, darkest and coldest hours of the day to grant us light and remind us that the night is passing away.

Being spiritually realistic requires us to focus on the reality that Jesus did not

promise us a joyride through life. What He did promise us is far, far greater. He promised us a kingdom. The fact is that before we can wear a crown, we must bear a cross. That takes time.

Climb and never settle for less!

As our hearts cry out, “How long, O Lord?” let's concentrate on another aspect of our “heart work.” We must keep climbing and never settle for less. Why is that?

As children, most of us loved to climb. If you've forgotten how that felt, just watch your own children or grandchildren. As they grow and develop, our little ones begin to climb from one piece of furniture to another. Before you know it, they progress to climbing monkey bars on the playground. The next thing you know, they're up in the trees.

If we are not careful, the experiences that come with age can cause this natural desire to climb to be extinguished. We may actually allow a basic element of God's creative design within us to be thwarted.

As the spiritual children of God, we should be just like we were as little children, when climbing was the most natural thing in the world. It's always a breath of spiritual fresh air to read the millennial call that beckons us to “go up to the mountain of the LORD,” where “He will teach us His ways” (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2).

Do you realize that the word *mountain* in this scripture is a prophetic symbol for what actually amounts to a kingdom? This kingdom is not of man, however, but is the very Kingdom of God! In Hebrews 12:28, we are told that God has promised us a kingdom that “cannot be shaken.” God's Kingdom is eternal. It will never fail!



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God has set an incredible journey before us. Once God has revealed to us the mountain that He wants us to climb, we must make a critical decision. Who will we take as companions on this path? Jesus Christ has already positioned Himself as our seasoned guide, but what about our human hiking buddies? We must choose wisely.

Any experienced mountain climber knows that it is not only his personal equipment that is essential to success. He has learned that it is imperative that he take along the right companions for the trail before them.

The same principle holds true for us as Christians. As we wait for the Lord, it is vital for us to have Spirit-led brethren around us. We must surround ourselves with people who are focused on the Kingdom of God, rather than their own “kingdoms.”

We need people who concentrate on God's good promises, instead of their own problems. We should associate with people who remind us that God is not “slack concerning His promise” to ultimately intervene in human affairs (2 Peter 3:9). We ought to choose to walk with people who treasure and seek to strengthen the ascending spirit that God has provided us so that we can continue on our day-to-day march toward eternity, instead of becoming mired in the downward spiral of today's culture.

We will not find such people among

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.

those who chose to stop climbing a long time ago. No, these are the individuals who will be friends enough to provide us with a spiritual reality check when we need it. They will be the ones who remind us that “pain is inevitable—it’s only misery that’s optional” and that we must make a choice. Again, this takes time.

The staying power of a steady heart

As we beg for the answer to “How long, O Lord?” we must remember to never take the staying power of a steady heart for granted. At times, we may wonder just what it is that allows one person to move forward in faith during a trial, while another is left paralyzed by fear. The gift of a steady heart is the key that is held by those who are able to move through their daily challenges in this life, as well as those who will persevere by God’s grace in the tribulation to come.

Those who guard their steady hearts are prepared to accept the fiery darts of life. They realize that their existence is but a fleeting moment, shaping them for what they will be in the wonderful world that God has planned for tomorrow.

As a result, they are able to tune out the siren’s song of a life without pains, stains and stress. Those with steady hearts recognize and always remember the role that they will play in service to both God and the citizens of God’s Kingdom. They succeed because they don’t lose heart!

Jesus warned us, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). However, He also reminds us that we have hope. He promises us that He has “come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

Always honest and direct, Jesus proclaims that before we will be granted life, we will be exposed to a thief who comes to destroy life. That thief is none other than Satan, who wants nothing more than to rob our hearts of hope and joy.

We do have a joy. It is a joy that is locked deep down in our hearts by God’s Spirit. It envisions a glorious future reality, when the trumpet will sound and the dead will arise, when those who are living will join them in the air and Christ will descend on the Mount of Olives. It is the true and pure joy of the knowledge that one day, every single tear that

results from this life will be wiped away. We must cling to this beauty and excitement stirring within us!

In 2 Corinthians 4:16-17, the apostle Paul proclaims, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Here, Paul reminds us that compared to the glory of eternity, the trials that we suffer both now and in the future are considered “light.” Additionally, he advises us that although the present time seems that it will go on forever, our lives are but a “moment.” Finally, Paul tells us that what God sets before us is not designed to spiritually destroy us, but to enhance His work in us.

A precious second in time

As we reflect on the question “How long, O Lord?” we find that there are many spiritual lessons that can be learned. Let’s conclude with a reminder that God not only created time, but is the master of timing.

With this thought in mind, allow me to share the story of a conversation between a young boy and God. The young boy asked God, “What are a million years like to You?” God replied, “A million years are like only a second.”

This led the boy to ask, “What is a million dollars like to You?” God replied, “A million dollars is like a single penny.”

So the boy boldly asked God, “Can I have one of Your pennies?”

God paused and then replied with a knowing smile, “Yes, My son, but it will take a second.”

Through this humorous story, we can come to more fully comprehend an aspect of the millennial refrain found in Isaiah 30:21: “This is the way, walk in it.”

God’s way guides our hearts to understand and appreciate that He will answer all of our questions, including “How long, O Lord?” He will do so at the right time and in the right way. He will never be late “in bringing many sons to glory.” ❖



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by Robin Webber

“How Long, O Lord?”

As you traveled in the family car as a youngster, do you remember asking your parents the age-old questions, “Are we there yet? How long till we get there?” Your parents may have responded, “Oh, five more minutes.”

After a few more miles and what seemed like a lot more waiting, your questions turned to pestering. Again, you asked, “How much longer?”

“Hold on,” came the reply from the front seat. “It’ll just be five more minutes.”

Indignantly, you responded, “But you said that 10 minutes ago!”

The similarities between this familiar family scenario and one of the great questions of biblical prophecy invite us to explore what is found in Revelation 6:9-10. In these verses, Christ opens the fifth seal, which signifies the coming Great Tribulation. As He does so, the martyred saints symbolically cry out, asking, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

The earnest question in this apocalyptic vision mirrors the intense inquisitiveness of God’s people down through the ages. We all want to know, When will we get there? How much longer until the Kingdom of God arrives, in all its fullness and glory? In verse 11, the answer comes. The saints are told that “they should rest a little while longer.”

We can’t know the answer to the question of how long we will travel this road of faith. What we can come to understand, however, is the way in which we

are to move forward in this life. We have some work to do. We might call it “heart work.”

Being spiritually realistic

As the timeless echo of “How long, O Lord?” reverberates through our hearts during our challenging moments, there is one thing we must remember. We must be sure that we understand that part of our “heart work” is to be spiritually realistic about our calling from God.

On the last evening of His physical life, Jesus gave us two profound pieces of advice. In John 16:33, He proclaimed, “In Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

In one breath, Jesus effectively gives us a preview of what is coming in our lives. First, He lets us know that we are going to face tribulation. We might as well call it “trouble on steroids.” As Christians, trials are something that we will have to get used to. Secondly, Jesus reminds us, that through it all, we have the best company that we could ever ask for—Him!

I recognize that these concepts may very well be the exact opposite of some commonly held ideas regarding the Christian life. Many hold a sincere belief in what I call “faith formulas.” These formulas misrepresent faith by declaring that God would always spare the Christian from terrible trials if he or she lives a godly life.

God’s plan for our lives doesn’t follow the pattern of “five more minutes and we’re there.” We cannot necessarily expect to receive this type of response, either to the trials that we face now or to the challenges the saints will experience as

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