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Seeking Security in a Dangerous Age!

Global economic and financial turbulence stalk the world—along with a growing food and energy crisis. Apocalyptic doomsaying is seen in newspapers everywhere. Can you survive whatever perils may come your way? What or who will be your anchor?

by John Ross Schroeder

Phrases like “nine meals from anarchy” are no longer casually dismissed as apocalyptic nonsense. Consider these factors: What if the flow of oil was suddenly and sharply curbed? What if truck and rail transportation was severely hampered by serious fuel shortages and, as a result, food began to disappear from supermarket shelves?



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We know that we are in trouble. What we don't know is how bad it may become. Is this merely a temporary economic crisis, however severe, or one that will lead directly to the fulfillment of the major biblical prophecies detailed in the books of Daniel and Revelation?

Author Paul Roberts stated in *USA Today*: “Global demand [for food] is soaring, yet arable land and water are becoming scarce. Fertilizer costs are rising, and then there are the climate swings. *So what's the world to do?*” (“Today's Food Crisis Isn't a Blip,” May 23, 2008, emphasis added throughout). Very good question!

A darkening world picture

Overall population growth and rising standards of living in countries like China, India and Brazil put growing pressure on precious food supplies.

Overall population growth and rising standards of living in countries like China, India and Brazil put growing pressure on precious food supplies.

Professor Roberts continued: “Global meat consumption will more than double by 2050... Most of the world's readily farmable acres are already in crops... In fact, the world is actively losing farmland—to erosion, overgrazing and development. Even in the USA, the inexorable spread of suburbs, malls and golf courses costs us nearly 2 acres of farmland for each birth or new immigrant.”

True, we have coped in previous crises by employing new technologies, massively increasing irrigation and using powerful new fertilizers to generate higher crop yields. Human beings can be and

(See “SECURITY,” page 3)



World News and Prophecy (ISSN 1942-1001) 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 paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices.

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

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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.ucg.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.

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

WNP—10 Years On

This issue marks the 10th anniversary of *World News and Prophecy*. It is hard to believe that we have published 100 issues and that a decade has swept by.

Each issue of *WNP* is assembled from contributions of writers and editors scattered around the world. I am amazed at the manner in which we can do editorial work in the Internet age. The entire publication is put together by people who are separated by thousands of miles. *WNP* is a product of the age of the Internet.

I was curious about the topics we covered in that first issue. Would our analysis hold up 10 years later? Were our topics dated, that is, so narrow in focus as to be without lasting value? It has been years since I looked at the first issue, so I went to our online archives at www.wnponline.org. Here is what I found.

Our lead article asked, "Why *World News and Prophecy*?" A critical point was made. "We will do our level best to rightly divide the word of truth... The material is presented to help stimulate your thinking and motivate you to watch and pray.

"In times like these, it is easy to fall into the attitude of, 'My master is delaying his coming' and 'begin to beat [our] fellow servants' (Matthew 24:48, 49). The person who falls into this frame of mind, and action, will not be prepared for the return of Christ (Matthew 24:51)..."

"Contrast the attitude of 'my master is delaying His coming' with, 'Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing' (Matthew 24:42, 44-46).

"So doing" refers to watching and praying so you will be ready. Obviously, so doing can refer to doing the work of God in general, but in this context, it refers to watching and praying for the purpose of being ready for the return of Christ."

Another article covered the Asian financial crisis, making a point that pertains to today's economic problems. America's central role in the world economy could eventually lead to "enormous resentment from the rest of the world community. Perhaps a new player will have to enter the economic world scene to avoid such damaging speculation, much of it fueled by greed" ("The Achilles' Heel of Global Banking").

It goes on to quote an economist's speculation that a new economic leader, possibly Europe, would emerge "in 10 to 15 years." Europe has indeed emerged as a leading market since then, and the euro is currently stronger than the dollar.

Times are changing. Today we have a global economic crisis, and American financial methods are at the center of the cause. Subprime loans and hedge funds are just two of the culprits. At stake is the credibility of the American financial industry and the confidence in the economic policies of the U.S. government. It is not likely that America will slip into a depression, but it is evident from comments and concerns expressed in foreign capitals that America's time as the economic leader of the world could be coming to an end.

The key factor in this equation is the guiding hand of God, not the head of the Federal Reserve Bank. God has blessed America with its wealth. When He sees it is time to withhold that blessing, the tables will turn and the world will suddenly be different.

That's why you need to keep reading *WNP* to help you stay current with news and trends analyzed in the light of Bible prophecy. It is better than any other source to which you can go. As we start our second decade of service—keep watching.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“SECURITY” (Continued from page 1)
 have been very resourceful. Yet the crisis over natural resources is probably just beginning, and we have yet to see how bad it will become. The threat to our security and well-being certainly appears to be real and deepening.

A feature article in *Time* magazine predicted that “the 21st century will overturn many of our basic assumptions about economic life” (Jeffrey Sachs, “10 Ideas That Are Changing the World,” March 24, 2008). Up until now, some



“In the USA, the inexorable spread of suburbs, malls and golf courses costs us nearly 2 acres of farmland for each birth or new immigrant.”

areas of the world have largely escaped widespread suffering, but that may change sooner than we think.

Time went on to say: “In some locations, societies have outstripped the carrying capacity of the land, resulting in chronic hunger, environmental degradation and a large-scale exodus of desperate populations.” Keep in mind how crowded our planet is, which means such problems can spread rapidly!

Western civilization in serious jeopardy

A *New Scientist* article stated: “We believe our global, technological society is immune from collapse. If only it were true. As the networks that connect us become ever more intricate and finely tuned, modern civilization is becoming increasingly vulnerable” (Debora

Mackenzie, “The End of Civilization,” April 5, 2008).

Could the consequences resulting from something like a global pandemic bring society to its knees? Human civilization is considerably more precarious than we realize!

Some observers believe that the hour is getting late, that the peace and prosperity the Western nations have enjoyed may be coming to a swift end. For example, the geopolitical balance and economic influence of nations may be gradually shifting to Asian countries like China and India—accompanied by a growing crisis over global natural resources.

As an insightful article in *The Tablet* stated, “Changes in the distribution of economic activity across the world will change the balance of political and military power” (Nicholas Boyle, “The Hour Is Getting Late,” May 10, 2008). Economic power is inevitably followed by political and military power.

Of course, unanticipated catastrophic events can considerably alter the course of global trends in ways many have never imagined before.

The disturbing leadership deficit

The stark reality is that a handful of nations and Western institutions keep order in the world and strive to keep terrorist activity at bay. But they need the active and loyal support of their peoples and allies. *Financial Times* columnist Philip Stephens recently observed that “the West has prospered because of its commitment to an international system grounded in rules as well as military might” (“A Message From Obama for Those Infuriating Europeans,” July 18, 2008).

However, public confidence in governmental leadership has weakened to disturbingly low levels. The United States is still the world’s only superpower. Yet only three in 10 Americans approve of the U.S. president’s job performance. Confidence in Congress is even lower, currently ranking in the single digits. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan plus more recent economic difficulties, such as the housing crisis and skyrocketing gas prices, have hurt the popularity of nearly all politicians.

It’s not only U.S. leaders who are unpopular. In Britain Melanie Phillips

reported that “the stench is becoming overpowering. Political sleaze scandals are raining down upon us like the unstoppable effluent from a burst sewer pipe... Endemic sleaze is a symptom of decay, not just for a beleaguered prime minister, but for democracy itself that is in trouble” (“This Epidemic of Sleaze Is a Sign Our Democracy Itself Is Decaying,” *Daily Mail*, June 30, 2008).

Earlier this year Ms. Phillips also stated in her regular column: “The core problem besetting Britain, as in the U.S. and other Western countries, is a chronic absence of political leadership. This is because politicians are themselves led by focus groups and their wish-lists. Leadership, by contrast, means identifying a core issue and dealing with it regardless. That core issue is crystal clear to all with eyes to see. *It is the pincer attack being mounted against this country: the onslaught against its identity, Western values and social fabric from both our nation-hating, amoral intelligentsia and the steady encroachment of radical Islamism*” (*Daily Mail*, Feb. 4, 2008).



Public trust in governmental leadership has reached disturbingly low levels.

Another feature article by author Andrew Marr summed up the public’s general impression of political leadership: “Celebrity tat, prurience and self-indulgence rule. *Our leaders seem small. Gloom over the globe’s future is endemic*” (“Mankind on the Brink,” *Daily Mail*, Dec. 29, 2007).

Former *Daily Telegraph* editor

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Charles Moore stated: “With rising oil prices and a collapsing economy, never has the need of leadership become more necessary—and less in evidence” (“Look at the Leaders of the Western World—and Be Afraid,” July 12, 2008). For the most part, average citizens do not support national leaders the way they once did.

Peter David, foreign editor of *The Economist*, writing in *The World in 2007*, clearly stated: “The world has an authority deficit. Authority is draining away from international institutions, from the big world powers (including the super-power) and from the nation-state itself” (“The Authority Deficit”).

But where does all this leave you and your family? How can you personally cope with world and regional conditions? Whom should you trust? What should you do?

Living by faith

God is more than just *aware* of current world conditions and where they are leading us. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows how to lead His people through rough and uncertain periods.

God tells us to *live by faith*. It is not just a matter of *having* faith, but *exercising* this crucial spiritual quality to help bring us through difficult and dangerous times. The context shows that it is used this way in the Old Testament by the prophet Habakkuk, who said, “I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He [God] will say to me *and what I will answer when I am corrected*” (Habakkuk 2:1). Notice that he was actively seeking God’s help with his concerns and, if need be, Habakkuk was willing to alter his personal conduct.

Continuing: “Then the LORD answered me and said: *Write the vision and make it plain* on tablets, that he may run [act swiftly] who reads it. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie*. Though it carries, wait for it; *because it will surely come*” (verses 2-3).

Habakkuk was only one of the Hebrew prophets to whom God gave visions and revelations of future happenings. The previous passage may certainly be applied to end-time prophecy as well as its more immediate application to the

ancient nation of Judah. Much prophecy is dual in nature. (To learn more, request or download our free booklet *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*.)

This passage in Habakkuk assures us that God’s predictions for the future *will surely* come to pass. They are not in question. As the apostle Peter wrote hundreds of years later, “For prophecy never came by the will of man, *but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:21). Earlier Jesus Christ had said of the end time, “For these are the *days of vengeance*, that *all things* which are written [in the Old Testament] *may be fulfilled*” (Luke 21:22).

Through the writings of Habakkuk, God reveals a major spiritual key in helping us cope with the coming world crisis. “Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; *but the just shall live by his faith*” (Habakkuk 2:4). Arrogant and foolish pride will get us nowhere with God. Instead He requires humility on our parts as we learn to live by faith.

Later in the book he appeals directly to God to spread His basic message at the appropriate time. “O LORD, *revive Your work* in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years *make it known*; in wrath *remember mercy*” (Habakkuk 3:2). He concluded the book by saying “The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills” (verse 19). God Himself will enable us to live by faith just as He did Habakkuk in times past.

Behaving properly under God’s providence

Yet another Hebrew prophet also spoke about the importance of humility as a quality of God’s true servants. “Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. [If so] *It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD’s anger*” (Zephaniah 2:3-4).

At a later time Jesus Christ spoke to His contemporary followers and to His disciples down through the centuries, especially at the time of the end: “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and *cares of this life*, and that day come on you unexpectedly. *For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth*” (Luke 21:34-

35). This prediction is global in nature. It is an end-time prophecy that we should all heed.

Continue Christ’s vital words: “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man [Jesus Christ]” (verse 36).

Christians to live by faith

Years later the apostle Paul wrote: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes [who has faith]... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written [in the Old Testament book of Habakkuk], *The just shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:16-17).

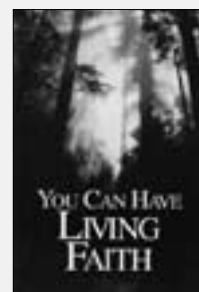
Make no mistake. Traumatic and tragic end-time events are going to test the faith even of true Christians. We may be on the threshold of entering that period of time when the major prophecies of Daniel and Revelation will be fulfilled. It is especially then that the just will be called on to truly live by faith (see Romans 8:31-39)—knowing that even when facing very difficult and despairing circumstances, God’s salvation is sure.

Recommended reading

Several free booklets will enhance your understanding of the concepts addressed in this article. Request or download *You Can Have Living Faith*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* ❖

Recommended Reading

As traumatic events occur, what assurance can we have of a positive outcome? How can we have faith in a faithless world? What can we do when it seems God doesn’t hear? Request or download a free copy of *You Can Have Living Faith*.



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The Mediterranean Union: Another Roman Empire?

A media circus was in high gear as U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama was greeted in the Middle East and Europe as a political superstar in late July 2008. But a potentially far more important development in that part of the world the week before garnered little attention.

by Tom Robinson

On July 13, leaders of 43 countries surrounding the Mediterranean (from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East) joined together in Paris, France, to launch a new regional union—the Mediterranean Union or, as it's now officially called, the Union for the Mediterranean. "It brought together around one table for the first time dignitaries of such rival nations as Israel and Syria, Algeria and Morocco, Turkey and Greece" (Associated Press, July 13, 2008).

This was a dream come true for French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who championed the creation of the bloc upon assuming office just a little over a year before. Sarkozy chaired the meeting jointly with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak—the two serving as interim copresidents, as the union is to operate under a copresidency of north and south.

This is a stunning development, not only for the speed of the union's formation—coming just over a year after it was proposed—but for its plausible ties to end-time events foretold in the Bible.

Revitalizing an earlier process

The union goes beyond the stalled 1995 Barcelona Process (named after Barcelona, Spain, where the conference was held), in which the European Union (EU) and many of its neighbors to the south and southeast formed the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to promote regional stability and prosperity.

That partnership failed to achieve much of anything due to political apathy and lack of agreement on major issues.

Sarkozy proposed his union with grander aims—as "a means to end all hatreds, to make way for a great dream of peace and a great dream of civilization" (quoted in *International Herald Tribune*, July 6, 2008).

And he initially limited it to nations bordering the Mediterranean. This, in his opinion, would have given it a greater chance of success than the Barcelona Process—there being fewer parties who

would have to agree on issues and more in common regionally among the partners.

The union was also meant as a way to shore up relations with Turkey, an important bridge state between Europe and the Muslim states of North Africa and the Middle East. Sarkozy had fiercely opposed Turkish membership in the EU, so this was offered as a consolation. Turkey, however, was late in coming to the party—not agreeing to the Mediterranean Union until it had assurances that this would not hamper its efforts to join the EU.

No doubt the proposed union was also meant to elevate France's status in the EU and in the world. It would revive France's old colonial ties to North Africa and the Middle East. And the absence of Germany and other EU states not bordering the Mediterranean would have put France in the driver's seat.

Pressured to compromise

Germany and other northern EU states, however, were outraged at being cut out of this bloc that would take on a European character and use European funds. After a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Sarkozy agreed to inscribe the new union within the EU framework of the Barcelona Process and include all EU member states.

He dismissed criticism, however, that he had planned the union as an exclusively French project. And he particularly thanked Merkel for her support of the project: "It made me happy to see how she defended the Union for the Mediterranean... That was really the German-French axis" (quoted at EurActiv.com, March 14, 2008).

To achieve wider acceptance, the initiative has been scaled back, so touchy issues like immigration have given way to projects on solar energy, marine pollution and antiterrorism coordination. But it's a start, and major issues will likely follow.

Some consider Sarkozy's plan to have faltered. But if that's so, we must wonder why so

The Union for the Mediterranean "brought together around one table for the first time dignitaries of such rival nations as Israel and Syria, Algeria and Morocco, Turkey and Greece."



Syria's President Bashar al-Assad (center) is greeted by France's President Nicolas Sarkozy (left) and Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak (right) at the Union for the Mediterranean summit July 13.

many heads of state gathered to launch the union, including Arab leaders sitting down at the same table with Israel's prime minister. This was certainly a diplomatic coup.

Return of empire foretold

Notably absent from the meeting was Libyan leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi, although he sent a representative.

Angry that original plans for only a few southern European and North African states were changed to include the whole EU and the Middle East, including Israel (making it, in his words, "very dangerous" for him to support), Gaddafi boycotted the meeting, saying, "We shall have another Roman Empire and imperialist design. These are imperialist maps and designs that we have already rolled up. We should not have them again" (quoted by Bruno Waterfield, "Gaddafi Attacks Sarkozy Plan for Union of the Med," *The Daily Telegraph*, July 10, 2008).

Indeed, you, too, may find that the map of this new union looks strikingly like the one in the back of your Bible of the ancient Roman Empire. That empire likewise surrounded the Mediterranean—the Romans taking pride in referring to it as *Mare Nostrum*, "Our Sea."

Frankly, Gaddafi in this case is right. Another Roman Empire is indeed where things are headed even though most of the participants are themselves blind to it.

Bible prophecy reveals that the Roman Empire—the fourth in a succession of ancient empires—will be resurrected in the last days (see Daniel 2; 7; Revelation 13; 17). We have long seen this coming together in the increasing political integration of the European Union, which began with the Treaty of Rome in 1957. But in the past few years, integration has greatly picked up speed. And now we have a larger union encompassing the breadth of the ancient Roman Empire and then some.

Leaders of north and south also prophesied

Of further interest is the north-south copresidency of the new union. A lengthy prophecy in Daniel 11 details the historical struggle in the Middle East between powers to the north and south of the land of Israel. The "king of the South" of the end time will attack the "king of the North," the ruler of Europe who will retaliate and occupy parts of North Africa and the Middle East, including Israel (verses 40-45).

While North and South here are often thought to be separate political entities entirely, they could initially be participants in some sort of union who subsequently turn against one another.

Worth considering in this regard is Gaddafi's warning that the EU blueprint for the Mediterranean will be a

pretext for a new generation of terrorists. "I believe this project of the Union for the Mediterranean would increase illegal migration and terrorism and give a justification to Islamist extremists to step up jihad attacks. These extremists would explain it [the Mediterranean Union] as a crusade against Islam and European colonisation," he said.

"They will talk about jihad in Europe. This project is frightening. This project is dangerous. They will interpret it as a new crusade to contain Muslim forces. They will see it as a new colonialism and they will accuse the Arabs [i.e., the Arab leaders] that they are traitors, who have abandoned principles and sold out their countries" (Waterfield, *The Daily Telegraph*).

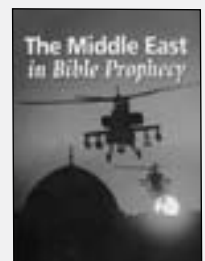
That could lead to further European incursions into Muslim areas to deal with terrorism. Thus, a bloc meant to promote cooperation and peaceful exchange could end up causing greater division and even outright war.

In any case, those who place their hope in this union to bring peace to the Middle East and even the world will be sorely disappointed. For prophecy speaks to this as well, warning us of a time of false peace to be followed by the worst period in human history.

To learn more about what the Bible says will happen in Europe and the Middle East in the years to come, be sure to read our free booklets *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. ❖

Recommended Reading

To better understand the roots of the conflict between Islam and the West, request a free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. This fully illustrated booklet takes you on an eye-opening journey through history and the Bible to grasp the roots of this conflict, and where it will lead.



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Europe and the Church Part 4: Union of Church and State

Even in this very secular age, many European countries continue a tradition established in the fourth century of a close relationship between church and state. The origins of this system take us back to one of the most significant leaders in history—Roman Emperor Constantine the Great.

by Melvin Rhodes

A bust of Emperor Constantine the Great stands outside York Minster in the north of England. This is where the young pagan military commander was proclaimed emperor by loyal troops upon the death of his father, Constantius. The year was A.D. 306.

Constantine the Great remains one of the most significant political figures of all time.

But Constantine's accession to the throne was not welcomed throughout the empire. During the following years, he had to fight for his position, finally emerging victorious after a battle at the Milvian Bridge near Rome, on Oct. 28, 312.

"In this sign, conquer!"

Immediately prior to the battle, Constantine was said to have seen a vision in the sky of a flaming cross with the Latin words *in hoc signo vinces* above it. The words mean, "In this sign, conquer!" Constantine immediately ordered that all the shields and standards of the army should carry the Christian symbol, a monogram of the first two letters of the Greek word *Christos*. Supposedly, the young emperor had changed his religion.

While many down through the centuries have believed the simple account of Constantine's vision and conversion to Christianity, others have questioned it. "The cross that appeared in the sky...and the banner in the form of a cross which mysterious messengers are supposed to have delivered to Constantine, were evidently a product of the public's imagination. The reality was the victory of Constantine and the issuance of the Edict of Milan between February and June of 313, which declared the freedom of all and any religious cult" (Claudio Rendina, *The Popes: Histories and Secrets*, 2002, p. 40).



Roman Emperor Constantine

Victorious in battle, Constantine was about to change the fortunes of the Christian church dramatically. "As a result, the person of the emperor became popular with the Christians, appearing as a protector of their religion" (ibid., p. 40). A new relationship was born—a special relationship between church and state that continued down through the centuries of European history.

From persecution to triumph

Prior to Constantine, the Christian church had endured waves of successive persecutions. For 250 years, the various emperors of Rome had tried, with varying intensity, to wipe out the Christians. But they had not succeeded. A major contributory cause of the intense persecutions was that the loyalty of both Jews and Christians was constantly questioned, as they would not comply with the laws that required emperor worship.

Even in the time that Constantine was

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With Constantine a new relationship between church and state was born—a special relationship that continued down through the centuries of European history.

the emperor in the West, Galerius, the emperor in the East, continued to persecute Christians, until he was on his deathbed. Six days before Galerius' death he permitted Christians to practice their faith, on condition they prayed for him.

In an incredible twist, when Constantine needed a new religion to unite the empire, the Christian church offered a solution. "Constantine...put order and stability, the rule of law, before any other religious consideration" (Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 1979, p. 88.)

"The main reason why he had favored Christianity...was because he believed that it would encourage unity in the empire" (Michael Grant, *Constantine the Great*, 1993, p. 161).

Constantine had "not much knowledge of the Bible" (ibid., p. 151). However, he was inadvertently contributing to the fulfillment of

biblical prophecies about the Roman Empire and the close relationship that would develop between it, its successors and the church to which it gave recognition.

"The relationship between the church and the emperors starting with Constantine to the end of the Roman Empire in the East (also known as the Byzantine Empire, AD 330-1453) worked much like a marriage. Much of it was improvised, and the lovers quarreled at times and manipulated each other to get what they wanted" (Bradley Nassif, "A Marriage Made in Byzantium," *Christian History*, Winter 2005).

"He [Constantine] was also the divinely appointed defender of the faith, the *'pontifex maximus'*—a Christianized pagan title for the supreme leader of religion which effectively made the church a department of the state. This meant that heresy and treason were equated. In the sixth century, Emperor Justinian

described the relationship between church and empire as a harmonious 'symphony'" (ibid.).

The Bible does not describe the relationship as a "harmonious symphony" or as a marriage. Rather, it describes the union as one of "fornication" (Revelation 17:2). The analogy is appropriate. Whereas in a marriage, a man and wife ideally give themselves to each other, a couple that is fornicating is simply trying to get from each other. There is no real commitment, or they would marry. Fornication then is an uneasy relationship. This is the way it has been between church and state through the centuries.

"Constantine really thought he was above the Church, a 'bishop of the bishops' (to use his own description)... But he did not understand the profound spiritual significance of Christianity. He imposed it for purely political motives that, for him, meant above all the security of the State. And for it he even resorted to assassination, liquidating his colleague of the East, Licinius, and condemning to death certain family members, like his second wife Fausta and his son Crispus" (Redina, p. 41). Clearly, the "Christian" Constantine had no qualms about breaking the laws of God, including the command that forbids murder.

Council of Nicea

Constantine plainly used the church to achieve imperial unity. Even this, however, did not go according to plan. The church was greatly divided over a number of issues. In an attempt to bring greater unity, the emperor convened a council at his expense to enable religious leaders to meet at one of his palaces. The historic Council of Nicea took place in A.D. 325.

"It is not certain who was selected as chairman of the Council... Yet it was to Constantine, who held such strong views about the subordination of church to state, that everyone looked" (Grant, p. 172).

"If Constantine really hoped that his intervention might prove effec-

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tive, it can only have been, once again, because he was more concerned about imperial unity, which he regarded as all-important, than about theological principles, which seemed to him so pettifogging and pedantic” (Grant, p. 170).

“Shut up and become united”

Earlier, he had “told the contestants to shut up and become united” (ibid.). Unity was extremely important to the emperor, who had fought constant battles for many years in an attempt to unite the empire. “For he liked the idea of backing Christianity because he wanted to have its effective organization on his side” (ibid., p. 151).

“Constantine was not a theologian—in fact, at the time, he was technically not even a Christian! But his push for closure resulted in consensus after only one day. His main goal was imperial unity, not theological accuracy” (Nassif). The emperor was not a Bible student and not even a Christian at the time of the council, but he was still clearly “in control of religion” (Grant, p. 166).

“The order of the day was to resolve the question about the eternity and divine status of the Son of God” (John Anthony McGuckin, “The Road to Nicaea,” *Christian History*, Winter 2005).

This should be clearly understood: *The issue of exactly who Jesus Christ was and His relationship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit was resolved by a biblically illiterate non-Christian serial killer in a single day!* This is, to put it mildly, a highly questionable basis for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity!

The Trinity was not the only doctrine Constantine imposed on the church.

He was also responsible for sanctioning Sunday as the official day of rest, thereby without any biblical authority changing the true seventh-day Sabbath observed by Jesus Christ and the apostles to a day that had been observed by pagan Romans in honor of the sun god.

Constantine, “too, was apparently behind the elevation of Sunday

as a public holiday and day of rest, despite a manifest solar [pagan] background. ‘All magistrates, city-dwellers and artisans,’ decreed Constantine in 321, ‘are to rest on the venerable day of the Sun...the day celebrated by the veneration of the Sun should not be devoted to swearing and counter-swearing of litigants, and their ceaseless brawling’ (ibid., p. 184).

Another issue resolved during the council was the date of Easter, supposedly the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus.

“One of the most vexing problems in the early church concerned when to celebrate Easter. The Greek-speaking Eastern church insisted that it had to be on the date of Jesus’ resurrection [actually, His death]—Nisan 14, the Jewish Passover—regardless of the day of the week. The Western, Latin-speaking church, on the other hand, decreed that it had to be on the day of the resurrection—[which they believed was] Sunday—regardless of the date. The Council of Nicaea decided that Easter should be celebrated on a Sunday” (Paul L. Maier, “Taking Care of (Church) Business,” *Christian History*, Winter 2005).

For biblical proof that the resurrection was neither on Nisan 14 nor Sunday, please download or request our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?*

A very different church

It should be clear to dedicated Bible students that the church Constantine presided over was very different from the Church of Jesus Christ and the first-century apostles.

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians, “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Clearly, it is possible for Satan and ministers who serve his purpose to pass themselves off as Christians.

Jesus had said: “My kingdom is

not of this world” (John 18:36). His disciples knew that His Kingdom would not be established until His second coming. They had asked: “When will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3).

The early Church understood that the Kingdom of God would be established at Christ’s return, not by a quasi-political church organization. By the time of Emperor Constantine, the church believed *itself* to be the Kingdom of God on earth.

That church had also become a vital component of the state’s administrative system. “Constantine was said to have placed the entire resources of the state at the disposal of the papacy” (Grant, p. 198).

Constantine certainly changed religion from that of his predecessors. After him, other pagan emperors wore the purple. A new relationship between church and state began under Constantine that continues to this day.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the century following Constantine, it was the church that would carry on the Roman language, Roman laws, Roman system of government and many of the beliefs of the Roman religion. The church would also give its blessing to successive revivals of the Roman Empire, thereby fulfilling the prophecies of your Bible. ❖

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 Christ! For more information, request a free copy of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.



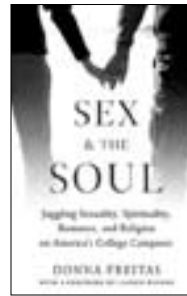
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Hooking Up and Losing Out

A growing number of American college women are “hooking up” with college men, seeking out sexual encounters with no strings attached. What are they looking for—and what are they getting? They profess a deep spirituality, so why are they rejecting religion?

by Cecil E. Maranhille

Earlier this year, a blockbuster book was published about the sexualization of American college students. Donna Freitas, assistant professor of religion at Boston University, authored *Sex and the Soul* after conducting a nationwide survey on this issue. The book project was an outgrowth of the class she teaches on dating. Her report and her analysis offer a sobering insight into today’s America—and what it portends for tomorrow’s marriages and families.



CEOs, millionaires or professors... [placing] all the power in the hands of men” (Review of *Sex and the Soul*, www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6534280.html).

It raises concerns on a number of levels to learn that young adults would think and act in this manner.

No in-depth study is necessary to realize that youths come to college along a highly sexualized pathway, having watched thousands of hours of TV, movies and video games that are saturated with sexual themes. Commonly, they include the image of an aggressive female, who dresses, walks and talks provocatively even from preschool age! (Hence the name “prostitots” for preteen girls who are totally immersed in pop culture.)

College students are living away from their parents’ restraints and under administrators who don’t forbid or discourage sexual encounters. These administrators seem more interested in not being accused of discriminating against men or women than they are in providing moral leadership for students. In addition, liberal professors openly promote sex without boundaries in the name of social liberty. These circumstances present powerful temptations to students to give in to their natural sexual drives.

Not surprisingly, college men and women are confused. Are they burning their way through sensual appetites simply because they can? Actually, that’s not what they set out to do. Freitas’ research revealed that women are looking for relationships; that they choose sexual encounters in the hopes of finding someone to date, as strange as that might sound. Also not a surprise is the fact that hooking up isn’t proving to be a positive way to discover a wholesome dating partner!

The women in American colleges eventually want to find a man with whom they can settle into a lasting marriage that produces happy and healthy children. The women seem oblivious to the fact that their chosen method

Dr. Freitas found that nearly all college youth assume that every other college student is sexually active. This way of thinking puts tremendous pressure on an age group that wants to be liked and wants to fit in with its peers.

It’s the primary reason that an increasing number of college women are aggressively pursuing college men to “hook up.” “Hookups are defined as physically intimate encounters occurring outside long-term relationships” (Elizabeth Redden, “Sex and the Soul,” *Inside Higher Ed*, 2008).

“A hook-up is a brief sexual encounter between two partners who don’t necessarily know each other before and who don’t necessarily want to know each other after. And, it’s free” (Harvey C. Mansfield, “Hook-Up or Shut Up,” *The Wall Street Journal Online*, April 29, 2008, p. A11).

Oh, no, it’s not free! That’s part of what Dr. Freitas discovered through her research. She also learned from the testimony of many students that this increasingly common behavior isn’t making either the women or the men happy. It leaves them all degraded and dissatisfied.

Hooking up now part of today’s culture

Hooking up has virtually become a culture, a way of life for American colleges. *Publisher’s Weekly* calls it a “hypersexualized culture,” telling of theme parties “in which young women may dress up as whores, maids or schoolgirls while their male counterparts are powerful

Hooking up isn’t making either the women or the men happy. It leaves them all degraded and dissatisfied.

will make it extremely difficult for them to realize their hopes!

Wanting spirituality but rejecting religions

Another revelation in Freitas' research was the discovery of a deep desire within these same college students for spirituality. Hence, the last part of the book's title, "...and the Soul." Wouldn't you think that spiritually minded young people would exercise restraint, saying no to sex outside of marriage? The book reports that students at evangelical colleges by and large think this way.

But not students of secular or even Catholic colleges (Boston University, where Dr. Freitas teaches, is a Catholic school). There is an enormous disconnect between their strong sense of spirituality on the one hand and having no sense of boundaries about sexual behavior on the other.

Student after student told Dr. Freitas that religion doesn't provide them with any guidelines for the issues they face. By "religion," they mean organized or structured religion, which they equate with telling them what is wrong and not what is right. They want to hear more than just "Don't do that."

Positive guidance

Listen! Here is an "organized religion" (*World News and Prophecy* is published by a religious organization, the United Church of God) that tells you God created sex for good! He made it to be highly pleasurable, not for the sake of satisfaction alone, but to help bind male and female together in an enduring marriage relationship.

Before you say, "There you go again, telling me that sex is only for marriage," consider this: Wanting spirituality, marriage and family, while rejecting any boundaries about sexual behavior, just doesn't work. It's as unrealistic as wanting to experience the rush of skydiving and to eventually land safely, but without the restraints of wearing a parachute. It's exciting only for a short while.

But there is a way to have what you want: The companionship of a strong relationship with someone of the opposite sex, marriage, family—and sexual intimacy.

Don't reject religion merely because many people misrepresent it or fail to live it as they should. True religion has much good to offer in the way of guidelines about the challenges that life presents. We have three rich resources to offer you: First, our booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. You'll discover that marriage has a profound spiritual significance and that the Bible shows the way to achieve this objective, from friendship to dating to courtship.

The second is our magazine for young adults, *Vertical Thought*. The good and the bad of Facebook and MySpace, what girls need to know before marriage, what guys need to know before marriage, self-esteem or self-worth—these are just a few of the topics covered in recent issues. Additionally, *Vertical Thought* offers a weekly commentary written by young Christian men and women on current issues that they and their peers face daily. And there are online features unavailable in the print edition, which you can check out at www.verticalthought.org.

The third resource is *Beyond Today* television programs and podcasts that address the toughest challenges today throws at us. Two recent programs are on safe sex and stopping porn addiction. Check these out at www.beyondtoday.tv.

You may be surprised to learn what's in the Bible

In addition, the Bible offers leadership where today's institutions fail to do so. For example, consider the counsel the book of Proverbs lends on the issue of whether women ought to hook up with men. Here is a composite of a sexually aggressive woman described in chapters 2, 5, 7 and 22. (These descriptions were written as advice to Solomon's son and were contrasted with "wisdom," also personified as a woman. God does not have a double standard—men are also expected to save sex for marriage, and women should avoid sexually aggressive men.)

Silky words of flattery drip from her lips. She chooses her clothing in a way that reveals her sexuality enough to tease the interest of the man she wants. She projects an air of recklessness, of not being bound by convention. The last

image she wants to convey is that of a wife or mother. She can be found hanging out wherever the action is, eager to party. She kisses provocatively, sending clear signals of sexual interest. And she blatantly says, "I'm prepared for sex. I want you to join me!"

(I hope I don't offend anyone who is unfamiliar with the Bible. Please read these chapters, and you'll see how plainly God speaks to this issue!)

These same chapters speak of the downside of such an approach to sex. Here is a composite of the problems a woman would face. (Men making these choices face similar consequences.)

She forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God. She is unstable. Her behavior leaves her with bitterness, instead of satisfaction. She's crossed a line of trust; passed a boundary, which should make any man ask if she could be trusted to be faithful as a wife. Her choice results in much pain. Instead of drawing her into a lasting relationship, her choices draw her into a quicksand of grief. She is a seducer, and parallels with a harlot are obvious. She is, in a word, immoral.

Some say that "forsaking the companion of her youth" might mean that this is a married woman. But "companion of her youth" might also be a poetic reference to the husband she hasn't yet married. That is, by pursuing sexual encounters, she is striking a powerful blow at her future marriage relationship, inflicting damage on it.

Forgetting the covenant with her God bears more discussion. One telling discovery Dr. Freitas made was in the language used by students she interviewed. They spoke of "the walk of shame," referring to the long walk to their dorm after a night of hooking up, feeling guilty about and regretting their choice. Women also told of struggling with their sense of the lack of God's forgiveness for their behavior.

They need to know that there is hope. Wanting forgiveness is the beginning, but they also need to change their thinking and their behavior. Discover the way out of bad choices, the way to forgiveness as well as the way to true spirituality through another of our publications, *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. ❖

Will Israel Attack Iran?

Worries about a nuclear-armed Iran are real, and Israel is in the crosshairs. Will the Israelis act, and if so, when?

by Jerold Aust

Can you hear the time bomb ticking in the Middle East? If you flinch under the weight of the escalating price and humiliating dependence on foreign oil, if you hear the threats from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad against Israel and the West and if you hear Ahmadinejad's defiant rejection of the West's oft-repeated demands for Iran to cease and desist from enriching uranium, then you do indeed hear the Iranian bomb ticking in the Middle East. Could it go off in the not-too-distant future?

Israelis cannot just wait for the bomb to go off; they live next door. Will Israel attack Iran and if so, when? Recently, Israel conducted an obvious military exercise over the Mediterranean Sea near Greece. The idea of this military exercise was to show that Israel's planes would fly the distance necessary to mount a mission to knock out Iran's nuclear facilities. Israel's implied threat is simple and direct: If enrichment continues, we could strike!

Israeli military exercises over the Mediterranean

Putnam Media Managing Editor Rick Pedraza wrote an insightful article for Newsmax.com titled "Bolton: Israel Will Strike Iran if Obama Is Elected." It addressed a recent Fox News interview of former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton. Pedraza commented on Israel's massive air force exercise over Greece, which the Greek, Israeli and U.S. forces later confirmed was a test run for a strike on Iran's main uranium enrichment plant.

The ordinary person may not have considered Israel's determined, strategic and geopolitical defense against Iran's covert and overt threats of nuclear warfare. Bolton has: "I think if they are to do anything, the most likely period is after our elections and before the inauguration of the next President.' They'd have to make a judgment

whether to [strike] during the remainder of President Bush's term in office or wait for his successor" (www.newsmax.com/newsfront/bolton_israel_iran/2008/06/25/107224.html).

Remarkably, and counterintuitive to what might be considered a public norm, "Bolton believes Arab countries will support an Israeli strike, effectively ending Iran's nuclear ambitions, while *publicly denouncing it*" (ibid., emphasis added).

Former Ambassador Bolton thinks that if Senator John McCain wins the presidential race, the Israelis might postpone the attack, offering, "McCain's stance on Iran 'is far more realistic than that of the Bush administration'" (ibid.). Mr. Bolton thinks that Iran would not respond immediately to a strike since they would fear an American reprisal.

Israel, a very tiny nation

With all the saber rattling, Israel has little recourse but to take a very strong military stand, no matter the threat. This small nation is surrounded by overwhelming numbers of Arab states. Israel occupies a pitiful pinch of real estate blanketed by its Arab neighbors, many within its own borders. Every inch of Israel's territory is seen as critical to its safety.

It's easy to discover why Israel is in such a precarious and highly dangerous geopolitical position, a tempting prize for its larger neighbors. Israel, with an area of about 8,000 square miles, is 1/20th the size of California. Israel is 260 miles long with a 120-mile coastline and is 70 miles across at its widest point. Israel is surrounded by more than 20 Arab nations equal to more than 630 times its size, more than 50 times its population—and the surrounding nations currently hold all the oil.

U.S. presidential influence in the mix

With only a few months until the American presidential elections, Israel should and likely will give the Bush

Tiny Israel cannot just wait for the Iranian time bomb to go off—they live next door.

administration one more chance to stop Iran's rush to enter the atomic and nuclear age. If nothing concrete happens before January 2009, it's possible that Israel will wait no more.

Will or can the United States do more than offer veiled threats to Iran, considering the U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan? The surge is working in Iraq, but Iraqi police alone aren't yet able to keep the peace. Taliban fighters are attempting to regain a foothold in Afghanistan. There is speculation that the United States may transfer troops from Iraq to Afghanistan to quell the Taliban surge.

The perplexing entanglement in the Middle East brings to mind Winston Churchill's 1939 radio broadcast in which he referred to forecasting the reaction of Russia to German aggression: "It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma [i.e., a puzzle, difficult to solve]; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest."

Perhaps the key to the Iranian threat, counterintuitively, might just be the Arab nations' fear of Iranian hegemony right next door. Though they are overwhelmingly Muslim, the majority of Iranians are ethnically Persians rather than Arabs. The Iranians are also predominately Shiite Muslims (like the majority in Iraq), which makes the Sunni Muslims who control the rest of the Middle East's oil quite nervous.

If there's a military strike on Iran, either from Israel or the West, oil could spike to over \$200 a barrel, further alienating the West from unsympathetic oil cartels. Gasoline could rise to \$6 a gallon if not more.

It is clear that any U.S. intrusion into Iranian affairs would provoke a strong reaction from surrounding Arab countries, at least verbally. But would they do more? Consider that Iran's neighbors would not like Iran to have the bomb. Privately they would like a leveling of the playing field. An Iran with nuclear weapons would be a threat to the Arab nations, as well as to Israel. So don't



Reuters/Tsaifir Abayov

Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak reviews an honor guard during a visit to Hatzetim Air Force Base in southern Israel. Will Israel's planes be called on to attack Iranian nuclear facilities?

assume that threatening rhetoric from nearby Arabic nations means that they are in league with Iran on this hot topic.

The U.S. presidential race is being weighed in the balance by both Iran and Israel. Both Iran and Israel will play out their hands based on how tough they think the next U.S. president will be on Middle Eastern geopolitics.

Will Israel survive?

Will Israel strike at Iranian nuclear facilities? If they conclude they need to, they probably will. It's a matter of self-preservation. With the recent announcement that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert will step down after September elections, that seems more likely. Olmert has generally been viewed as a weak and ineffective leader, particularly in military matters.

What will be the outcome of all this? It won't be what most people would expect. Ironically, the Bible shows the Middle East and Israel being invaded by a European-based power described by Daniel as the king of the North (Daniel 11:40-41).

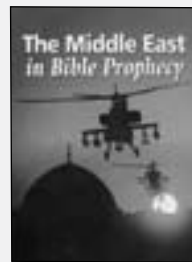
Zechariah describes a terrible attack on Jerusalem, with half the city going into captivity (Zechariah 14:1-3).

But after all this, the inhabitants of the Middle East—Jews, Arabs and Iranians alike—will not be thinking about bombs but plowshares (Isaiah 2:4)!

To understand these prophetic events better, request or read online our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. ❖

Recommended Reading

To better understand the roots of the conflict between Islam and the West, request a free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. This fully illustrated booklet takes you on an eye-opening journey through



history and the Bible to grasp the roots of this conflict, and where it will lead.

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“EAR” (Continued from page 16)

pronoun, “we.” Yes, “we!” Not *they*, not those people, not everybody else. Yes—we!

The pronouns we use about ourselves and others are always telling. Those tiny defining words tell God what we think of others, and they tell others what we think of them. Have we ever listened to the language we use to segregate ourselves from the foibles of this world? Daniel, while indeed a righteous individual, does not separate himself from his community. He laments, “*We* have sinned and committed iniquity, *we* have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have *we* heeded Your servants the prophets” (verses 5-6, emphasis added throughout).

There is something to say for the individuals who humble themselves and cast their lot not too far from their neighbor. Perhaps it is that person who does not cast himself too far from his neighbor who gains closer access to God’s ear. Perhaps it is when our “pronoun personality” matches Daniel’s that we begin to punch a hole in that seemingly concrete ceiling above us to lift our prayers to a God who now leans in and takes notice.

Knowing what belongs to whom

As we continue to eavesdrop on Daniel, we note his words display spiritual discernment in his appropriation of what belongs to whom when it comes to the matter of ownership as well as “owning up.”

In verse 7, Daniel, without the slightest hesitation, declares, “O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face.” But please notice this is not simply a momentary confessional to rack up points. He reiterates the gulf between Creator and creation again in verse 8 as he repeats, “O Lord to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we [there’s that ‘we’ again] have sinned against You.”

Daniel doesn’t dwell on the sin, but rather on God’s magnanimity as he proclaims, “To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him” (verse 9).



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“For we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies,” Daniel prayed.

It is noteworthy how quick Daniel is to remind God that he realizes for every effect there is a cause and that Judah’s choices to disobey God caused it to reap the whirlwind. He knew God is true to His Word.

In verse 13 we sense the anguish in Daniel’s voice that, even as disaster came his people’s way, they weren’t interested in praying or repenting so they might “turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth.”

Daniel’s analysis of ancient Judah’s brazenness and refusal to alter its immoral ways could not help but remind me of America’s reluctance to examine its spiritual and moral compass after 9/11. After a few days of collective sorrow and reflection, the populace went back to business as usual in its ongoing slide away from Judeo-Christian ethics and morality. The alarm clock went off, but America chose to turn it off—put it on snooze! What about you?

Please smile again

But let’s get back to listening to Daniel as his prayer penetrates that ceiling above. We notice a profound pivot point of optimism appear in Daniel’s plea. Even with full admission of his people’s shortcomings, Daniel not only acknowledges God’s privilege and need to punish His wayward people, but also now implores

Him to consider a new future for Jerusalem.

He boldly reminds God that He was the One who had rescued their ancestors from Egypt (verse 15). Daniel further implies “enough, enough” as he pleads, “Let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain” (verse 16). He then invites God to cause His “face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate” (verse 17). Simply put, that means to smile once again on the Temple Mount.

It is now that Daniel ramps up his appeal in a plea that denotes a union of heart, soul and mind as he beseeches the Disposer of All Events: “O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name [C’mon, it’s Your town!]; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake” (verses 18-19).

It is here that Daniel offers a powerful guideline for praying for this world around us, our own personal lives and the need for the restoration of the Kingdom of God on this earth. It is not about us! It is not about what we have achieved because of any righteous deeds. He shoves himself out of

the picture for the moment. Rather, it is about a merciful God whose reputation is to be understood by the nations and upheld for who He is! It's "for His name's sake" that He needs to respond without "delay," be it for Jerusalem of old or for a world headed for destruction in our day.

Daniel was pretty selfless, wasn't he? And he didn't hesitate to be bold before God with urgent pleas like "open Your eyes," "listen," "act," "don't delay!"

The prophet in need of answers was not bargaining with God à la Abraham or Hannah, but worshipping God in prayer as he expressed in full measure God's goodness. Daniel was selfless, fairly blunt and highly effective in knocking a hole through that perceived concrete ceiling above us that can thwart our interaction with God.

"At the beginning...the command went out"

Now, what's amazing as we kneel by Daniel is to realize his lips are still moving and his heart is still churning for God to fulfill His promise toward Jerusalem when Gabriel, the angel, appears. Verse 21 mentions he had been "caused to fly swiftly." Why? It was urgent for God to respond to this man with heart.

He further states in verse 23 a stunning, yet encouraging, disclosure that "at the beginning of your supplications the command went out." Yes, "at the beginning"! Here Daniel was going on and on, while God had already heard, seen the need and responded. So often we don't realize how loudly God is working behind the scenes for us even when it seems so humanly quiet.

Gabriel's express purpose was to: (1) inform Daniel of details, (2) give him skill to understand the vision and (3) comfort Daniel, reminding him "you are greatly beloved."

As the "70 weeks" prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) would unfold before him, Daniel would be encouraged with the news that God would be true to His promise and restore Jerusalem for a specific purpose. He would be given the precise measurement of time between the Jews returning to rebuild Jerusalem and the purposeful

visitation of the Messiah (none other than Jesus Christ) to witness within its walls. Daniel would be granted an understanding that more had to be accomplished than this coming of the Messiah would do and that the gentile kingdoms would predominate until God's determined time of final action in the future (verse 27).

Go and be ready to meet the answer to your prayers

What have we learned from this brief time with Daniel in prayer as he pours out his heart to God? How do our prayers move beyond the ceiling above and penetrate the throne room of God? Here is what has come to our attention.

Before God will alter events, be it globally or personally, we have got to alter our hearts. It starts with us when we understand and express that it is all about God and not about us, except as we faithfully subject ourselves to His purposes. It's not about bargaining with God, but trusting God that He will answer in ways that we cannot even imagine. And yes, He will give us the details, grant the understanding and always, yes, always, seal it with the stamp of relationship, because like Daniel we who seek to obey Him are "beloved."

It is in the words of Daniel that we shine a light on the admonition of Isaiah 30:21 that states, "This is the way, walk in it." It is a way that looks up to heaven for answers rather than below. It is a confidence that our prayers can penetrate that ceiling above and not just bounce back. It is a knowing assurance that we can tell God, straight out, "O my God, incline Your ear."

And why? Because, it is "the way" that we knock on heaven's doors for answers to the very real issues at hand. A knock that sounds like this: "For we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies."

Time to get up now and go meet the answers to your prayers. Like Daniel's, they are coming your way. ❖



Robin Webber

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by Robin Webber

“O My God, Incline Your Ear”

Have you ever prayed only to wonder if the words in your heart made it above the ceiling? Perhaps you’ve pondered if anybody up there is even listening. Oh yes, we’ve all at times wanted to shout, “Hello! Anybody home?”

At times, I’ve wondered if I’m just like a big bat sending out prayerful sonar signals that only bounce off the ceiling back upon my already burdened heart, leaving me further blinded to the Almighty’s reality for me. How about you?

We desire to know that God does respond to our pleas when the words of our heart approach His throne with humility and reverence.

Long ago the prophet Daniel entered into a conversation with God about something near and dear to him. It concerned the fate of Jerusalem. The events surrounding this prayer resonate with the heavenly assurance granted to another prophet, Amos the shepherd, through whom our Maker promised, “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

Yes, God promises that He will make His followers aware of His purpose, plans and provisions, but let’s ask ourselves, “What allows our prayers to gain access above that ceiling over our heads?” Bottom line: How do we go from a dead-end monologue to a connective dialogue that ushers forth results?

Kneeling by Daniel

Let’s kneel down beside Daniel and listen in as he pours his heart out to God as recorded in Daniel 9.

He’s been studying God’s message to Jeremiah, and he has “put two and two together” and realized that the 70 years of desolation foretold for Jerusalem (Jeremiah 25:11-12) is coming to an end (Daniel 9:2).

It is at this point that Daniel sets his face toward the Lord God (verse 3). The phrase “set my face” illustrates a powerful determination on the part of this man to bore in and not let go until he gains further clarification of God’s intentions regarding Jerusalem.

The words don’t convey a meandering of mind or purpose, but a full frontal assault on the issue at hand. It also reminds us that in his determination, Daniel is talking to the only One who can satisfy his thirst for understanding about events on the ground that are affecting him and the ones he loves. Why is it so often we spend our time muttering to others or ourselves rather than laying it out before the only One who can offer us solutions?

At this juncture, we lean in closer so as to hear better. What Daniel *doesn’t* say is noteworthy. He does not rant, “Look, God at what You have allowed! How could You do this to me and mine?” On the contrary, Daniel voices an astute awareness of the One before whom he kneels: “O, Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments.”

We or they?

But what is truly telling as we listen in (remember we’re kneeling right beside him) is his use of the
(See “**EAR**,” page 14)