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The Millennium: The Vision That Won't Die

What does the Bible really say about the Millennium, the prophesied 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ? Is it a fantasy or a promise on which you can stake your future?

by Darris McNeely

In 1972 President Richard Nixon stunned the world with his historic trip from Washington to China to meet with Communist Party chairman Mao Zedong. President Nixon observed, "The chairman's writings moved a nation and have changed the world." Chairman Mao more realistically replied: "I have not been able to change it. I have only been able to change a few places in the vicinity of Beijing."

This was the assessment of one of this century's most powerful rulers about the lasting effect of his ideas and reforms on the world's most populous nation.

In a later publication President Nixon's secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, reflected that Mao "could not escape the nightmare that shadowed his accomplishments and tormented his last years: that it might all prove ephemeral, that the exertions, the suffering, the Long March, the brutal leadership struggles would be but a brief incident in the triumphant, passive persistence of a millennial culture which had tamed all previous upheavals, leaving little more in their wake than the ripples of a stone falling into a pond."

What a commentary about one of the century's most influential political ideas. Communism, like so many others, has risen and fallen on the



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China's Communist Party leader, Mao Zedong, meets with President Richard Nixon on Feb. 29, 1972. Communism is yet another form of human government that has failed to create a utopian world.

tides of time. Like many other movements, communism may yet see itself consigned to the dustbin of history. Another effort at creating a utopian world will have been tried and found wanting, joining the many other political and governmental systems that failed to last even a few centuries, much less 1,000 years or more.

Yet there is one idea, first put to writing a few thousand years ago but (See "MILLENNIUM," page 3)



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Managing editor: Darris McNeely

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

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder
Senior writer: Paul Kieffer

Copy editors: Mike Bennett, Doug Johnson
Proofreaders: Becky Bennett, Debbie Pennington
Layout/design: Elizabeth Cannon, Peter Eddington

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Not by Might nor by Power

September marks the 70th anniversary of the start of World War II in 1939. Ceremonies across Europe will note this time as leaders of former antagonists, Germany and Russia, will commemorate it with speeches about peace, unity and better understanding. Unmentioned in all this will be a fundamental cause of the great global conflict.

World War II, like any past war, sprang from failed ideologies of nations bent on creating utopian world orders based on their views. Hitler wanted a world based on Nazism. Stalin desired a rule based on the totalitarian views of communist socialism. Both men created monstrous systems of evil that led to the death of tens of millions of humans. So much for peace and happiness.

This has been the legacy of every humanly devised government and social system intending to create the perfect world. No system created by man has brought about the utopian world promised by God through the prophets of the Bible. These images of a world at peace have inspired the ages.

Isaiah's vision of the wolf living with the lamb, the leopard lying down with a goat and a little child in the midst of this pastoral scene is one of the most beautiful and hopeful in the entire Bible. Venomous snakes are rendered harmless as children interact safely with them. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6-9).

This scene has been drawn by artists as "the peaceable kingdom" and stands as the ideal hope for mankind. Yet sadly, despite the best efforts and intentions of philosophers, politicians, religious leaders and social reformers, it has not happened. At no point in history has any human agency been able to create this scene for any appreciable length of time.

Reading through the prophets you must conclude that only God can bring about the reality called the Millennium, the thousand-year-long reign of Christ on the earth as the long foretold Messiah. Every revolutionary of the modern world has tried to impose his or her vision of a perfect and just world. The murder of millions of people has been justified in the human pursuit of this goal.

In this issue we have an article about the age-old dream to have the entire world at peace. Reading the scriptures on the subject and studying the historical path of the teaching, there is only one conclusion you can draw. It is that if you believe in God and His Word, the Bible, you must believe it is in His power to bring about the conditions of the messianic age. You must also conclude that it is only God, not any humanly devised system or substitute, who can create this perfect world of peace, justice and harmony. Its creation rests only with God and no other human effort.

The words of Zechariah 4:6 remind us such realities must come from God. "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts."

To believe God and live with this vision of the future in your mind is to anchor your life around the most important goal and hope a human can have. Living by the laws and principles of that coming Kingdom can make all the difference in your life today. The reign of the Kingdom of God on this earth is more than a dream. It is a living reality that can lift your life beyond anything you can imagine for yourself. Seize it now and begin to live it today.



—Darris McNeely

Darris McNeely

“MILLENNIUM” (Continued from page 1)

not born of human imagination (2 Peter 1:21), that promises a world of peace and prosperity for all. It is the biblical teaching of the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. We call it, appropriately enough, the Millennium.

This truth, which connects with some of the Bible’s earliest statements and is abundantly expressed by the Hebrew prophets, continues to hold the imagination of many over the centuries, in spite of attempts to undermine and explain it away.

God’s promise of a millennial kingdom stands as a symbol of hope for mankind. A study of the sayings of Scripture and a review of efforts to overturn this teaching can help us understand our world and the promised peace of the Kingdom of God.

The future foretold

In the book of Revelation the apostle John records that after the second coming of Jesus Christ the saints will reign with Him for 1,000 years.

“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years... Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4, 6, emphasis added throughout).

These verses summarize the Bible’s many references to the age to come. It is from this verse that we can define the initial period as the Millennium, which simply means “thousand years.”

The book of Revelation provides a summary of other biblical descriptions and promises about the millennial age and beyond. God, through His servants, foretold this period



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Isaiah wrote of a future time when the very nature of animals will be changed to one of peace. His prophecies offer a glimpse of a new age and a new way of thinking that will encompass all aspects of life.

time and time again. It was the hope of Israel’s prophets throughout much of that nation’s history, especially during the nation’s downfall and captivity. This same hope was shared by the apostles as they questioned Christ about the restoration of Israel’s ancient kingdom (Acts 1:6).

Isaiah, writing during the time of Israel’s decline, offered a clear picture of this future when he wrote of a time when Israel would be reunited under one leader and the knowledge of God would fill the earth:

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD... The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

“The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious” (Isaiah 11:1-10).

Isaiah’s stirring words remain unfulfilled. They have fired imaginations for centuries and crystallized the concept of the Millennium. Isaiah describes a complete change in the physical order. No part of the world we know will be left unchanged.

The nature of man will change to allow the building of a just world based on God’s Word and His laws. The deception that has gripped

the world will dissipate as the true knowledge of God's plan spreads to all humanity after Christ's return.

Confirmation from other prophets

Ancient Israel didn't live to experience this prophesied transformation of society. This dream, this vision, never materialized during the time it was a nation. Nor has it been fulfilled since.

From the bleakness of captivity and loss of Jewish national sovereignty, the prophet Daniel was given the promise of an enduring Kingdom that would replace the failed efforts of human rule:

"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall *never* be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and *it shall stand forever*" (Daniel 2:44).

In yet another vision Daniel saw the promise of a literal kingdom

encompassing the earth: "Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed... Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Daniel 7:14, 27).

In the midst of the Babylonian captivity, God showed the Jewish people that a kingdom would come on the earth under a divine ruler. There was no doubt this promise was of a literal, earthly kingdom. The Jews expected the Messiah to restore their kingdom and national greatness. But just as a fuller understanding of the words of Daniel's prophecies was for a future time, so

would the coming of this everlasting Kingdom have to wait.

Christ's promise to fulfill prophecy

Centuries after Daniel's day, the angel Gabriel revealed to Mary that her Son Jesus would be the head of this Kingdom: "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:33).

During His ministry Christ spoke clearly of His destiny to fulfill these scriptures. He showed that His followers would be among those who would reign in this Kingdom: "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

The expectation of 2,000 years ago in the Holy Land was that a Messiah would overthrow Roman rule and restore an Israelite monarchy. Many who followed Jesus Christ, including His closest disciples, believed He was the One who would restore the Kingdom to Israel. But on the day of His death He said that His Kingdom was not of that day and age. "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36).

The time for Christ's Kingdom to be established was not at hand—not during the age of man—in "this present evil age," as the apostle Paul put it (Galatians 1:4).

The early New Testament Church preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God extensively in the following decades. It was the central idea and hope for which the followers of Christ gave their lives in devoted service.

Persecution and heresy

Near the end of the first century the Church and the truth of God's Kingdom came under severe attack from both within and without. The integrity of Christ's teachings was (See "MILLENNIUM," page 12)



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Wake Up to Events in Europe!

As the world currently focuses on Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Israel—not to mention a biting recession—it's easy to overlook important European events. Yet the European Union (EU) stands once again perched on the brink of approving the Lisbon Treaty (really the renamed EU Constitution), which is designed to drastically increase the structure, power and influence of this transnational governmental body. What will happen to Europe in the long run?

by John Ross Schroeder

For the last several years, the world's media has been rife with predictions concerning the potential collapse of the EU. For instance, Mark Steyn wrote in the *The National Post* in Canada, "To the list of polities destined to slip down the Eurinal of history, we must add the European Union and France's Fifth Republic. The only question is how messy their disintegration will be" (May 1, 2002).

Adding to many Internet blogs and newspaper and magazine articles, several books have been written about the so-called coming demise of the European Union.

According to Bible prophecy, any eventual demise of the present 27-nation EU could quickly be followed by a new grouping of European nations at the core of a powerful combine described in the book of Revelation.

While it is certainly true that there are severe social and economic problems in England and on the European continent, contemporary history shows us that incredibly powerful dictatorial regimes have emerged out of severe economic conditions. A deep depression and hyperinflation were major factors in bringing Hitler to power in Germany, for example.

Why the far right is reemerging in Europe

The current economic recession has produced a growth in extremist, right-wing parties in many corners of Europe. Some are even beginning to influence European legislation. The loss of trust in mainstream political parties also looms large in this growth of extremism.

The British National Party (BNP) is a case in point. The fallout from the scandalous behavior of many British members of Parliament (MPs) has advanced the cause

and influence of this right-wing party whose perceived racist policies are regarded as unacceptable by many mainstream commentators.

In fact, Britain stands in the midst of one of the nation's worst political crises in its long history, prompted largely by revelations of abuse of public funds. Columnist Max Hastings commented, "All governments end in failure. But never in modern British political history has there been a collapse as startling and dramatic as that which is taking place at Westminster this week" ("Indignity and Chaos Rule: Who Will Put This Exhausted, Discredited and Ridiculous Regime Out of Its Misery?" *Daily Mail*, June 7, 2009).

A recent editorial in *The Spectator* reveals how citizens are reacting. "British democracy is at a low ebb. Polling data shows that more than 80% of voters think that MPs put their own and their parties' interest ahead of those of the country; that three quarters do not trust MPs to tell the truth" ("Enough, Already," June 6, 2009). (Of course, the popular standing of the American Congress is not much better.)

Daily Mail columnist Stephen Glover summed up this sad state of affairs from an overall perspective: "*We will continue to be poorly governed, no matter which party is in power.* The root problem underlying all other problems is *the low quality of our political class.* Most MPs have little or no useful experience outside politics. Some of them are too young. Not many of them are intellectually distinguished..."

"Nonetheless these people rule us. They attempt to govern us. They spend, or mispend, billions of pounds of our money. They take us to war. They make huge decisions about our lives. And they often make a muck of things" ("The Sad Truth Is Our

The implications of Britain saddled to a more powerful and influential European Union frighten those who truly understand European history.



Leader of the far-right British National Party Nick Griffin is escorted away from a news conference after protestors disrupted the event. The BNP's perceived racist policies are regarded as unacceptable by many mainstream commentators.

MPs Are Second Rate,” June 4, 2009, emphasis added throughout).

The New Statesman magazine observed, “The country is in the midst of the worst parliamentary crisis in living memory as well as the worst recession; and the Parliamentary Labour Party is in disarray” (“Comrade Turns

on Comrade in the Dying Days of New Labour,” June 4, 2009).

Earlier this year, *Daily Telegraph* columnist Christopher Booker stated that “the standing of Parliament last week fell to the lowest level in its 800-year history” (“They Fiddle While Brussels Rules,” *The Sunday Telegraph*, May 17, 2009).

Fear of future rule from Brussels dominates the concerns of many members of the Conservative Party. They see a coming European superpower whose power and influence would seriously challenge the United States and further dwarf Britain’s already declining role in the world.

A European superpower in the making

Many in Britain view the possibility of a federal Europe with a jaundiced eye. Conservative Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague is very concerned about “the creation of a new EU president, an EU foreign minister...[and] a legally binding Charter of

Fundamental Rights, the significant expansion of EU powers over areas such as criminal justice and more [that] has led the President of the European Commission to proclaim that *the Treaty gave the EU ‘the dimension of empire’*” (“Labour Has Left Britain on the Fringes of Europe,” *The Spectator*, May 30, 2009).

Yet as things stand now, the British people will have virtually no say on the contents of this treaty, having been denied a previously promised referendum.

The Lisbon Treaty will be imposed on the citizens of the United Kingdom without their democratic consent. Mr. Hague went on to write, “The Treaty is almost identical to its predecessor, the EU Constitution [previously rejected by both France and the Netherlands], to whose text the [British] government sought 275 amendments, of which only 27 were accepted.”

The implications of Britain saddled to a more powerful and influential European Union frighten those who truly understand European history.

Yet a *Daily Mail* feature article tells us: “Britain is willing to provide all our Armed Forces to fight under the EU flag in future wars, a minister has revealed. Europe Minister Caroline Flint said that *every operational unit of the British Army, the Royal Navy and RAF will be on offer as part of an EU ‘force catalogue.’* This would help form a 60,000-strong joint EU military reaction force to police the world’s trouble-spots” (Matthew Hickley and James Slack, “Now All of Our Forces Are on Offer as Part of an EU ‘Catalogue,” April 3, 2009).

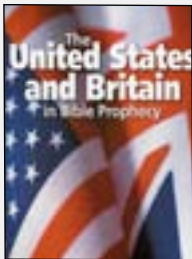
The basic EU currency, the euro, bears watching as well. “Officially launched as a theoretical accounting unit for 11 EU nations in 1999... [the euro] has become, by default, the second most important international reserve currency after the U.S. dollar” (Joseph Harriss, “Funny Money,” *The American Spectator*, May 2009).

A report by the private intelligence company Stratfor warns of a potential long-term threat for America: “While the European Union is nowhere near becoming a federated state, it has the potential to become a major power one day that could become hostile to

Recommended Reading

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

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



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

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U.S. interests. Obviously this is not a near-term threat, but we need not look back even a century to see how rapidly and thoroughly allies can become enemies” (“Geopolitical Diary: Courting Turkey,” April 7, 2009).

Think about how almost overnight the Berlin Wall fell, followed by the shattering of the Soviet Union and the return of capitalism to Eastern Europe. Nations can also form military alliances much sooner than expected.

To understand the awesome implications of a potentially aggressive and powerful United States of Europe, request our free booklets *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*

The overlooked prophetic dimension

The growth and influence of godless secularism has severely reduced the role and influence of the Bible in the Western world—particularly in Western Europe. Many men and women have already rejected the God who could help them cope with coming events far worse than 9/11.

Yet only God’s Word can tell us what’s really going to happen—and how to respond. Bible prophecy will not be denied. “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). God is the real mover and shaker—the unseen Hand in all of history.

He is still very much on His throne and remains in complete control of world events. Yet as long as humanity believes we can solve our problems without the help and guidance of our Creator, God will continue to give us plenty of rope. Made in His image, we are creatures of free choice, and God allows us to get into serious troubles, big time.

Yet our turnaround, nationally and personally, can only come when we repent of our own way of living and submit to God’s plan and purpose for humankind.



Reuters/Alexandra Beier

German Chancellor Angela Merkel awaits a Christian Social Union party meeting with Bavarian Horst Seehofer. The conservative CSU is set to defy her on tax policy and ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, which, after ratification, will become the European Union’s constitution.

In the New Testament the apostle Paul tells us about the Creator’s decisive role in geography, history and even in influencing power politics behind the scenes. “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings [habitation, King James Version]” (Acts 17:26).

Yet Paul was only paraphrasing what Moses had previously stated some 1,500 years before in the Old Testament. “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you...: When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples” (Deuteronomy 32:7-8).

The table of nations in Genesis chapter 10 tells its own story. The concluding passage states, “These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their

nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood” (verse 32).

Jesus Christ said: “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes” (Matthew 11:25). God the Father has the ultimate authority and the ultimate power to make things happen in this world. He is well able to intervene in the affairs of nations and in all our lives.

If we truly submit ourselves to Him, He will reveal marvelous truths to us that heads of nations simply do not comprehend and understand. “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

To understand much more about God’s overall plan and purpose and also what He requires of you spiritually, request or download our free booklets *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* and *What Is Your Destiny?* ❖

Is 2012 the End of the World?

An ancient Mayan calendar mysteriously ends at the winter solstice in the year 2012. Is this a sign that the Mayans knew that December 2012 is the end of human history? The History Channel, Newsweek magazine, major movie studios, booksellers and dozens of Web sites are fanning the 2012 craze. Should you be building a shelter and stowing away food for the coming disaster?

by Gary Petty

The predictions are of total devastation! According to some forecasts, entire cities will be destroyed by enormous tsunamis, earthquakes and Category 5 hurricanes; meteors will rain down fiery death from heaven; and human history will come to a violent end.

The hype is based on a mixture of speculation about Mayan calendars, the book *The Bible Code*, some ancient Eastern prophecies, the writings of Nostradamus and passages from the biblical book of Revelation.

Other 2012 scenarios picture a wonderful change in human consciousness and the ushering in of the New Age of Aquarius. John Major Jenkins, author of *Maya Cosmogony*, describes the coming New Age this way: "Around the year we call 2012 a large chapter in human history will be coming to an end. All the values and assumptions of the previous World Age will expire, and a new phase of human growth will commence."

While movie special effects of a tsunami crashing into the Himalayas can be visually spectacular, the answers to your future can't be found in speculations about Mayan calendars, or in the writings of Nostradamus or a New Age guru. The real answers to the questions about the end of the world are found in the only true source of prophecy—the Bible.

Many people believe that the Bible, specifically the book of Revelation, predicts a fiery destruction of humanity. A close study of the book shows that, although Revelation does contain descriptions of terrible future events, it is ultimately a book about hope.

Could you use some hope in your life?

If you are like the rest of us, you could probably use more hope in your life. You might be worried about the mortgage, the kids and the job. And with all the hype, you now have to worry that the end of the world is just around the corner. The book of Revelation shows us

that there are reasons life is so hard, and there are keys to help you discover hope in your future.

Many 2012 scenarios predict the total destruction of humanity and leave you with no hope for your personal future. The book of Revelation is more than gloom and doom and predictions of the violent end of the world. Underneath all the graphic images of death and destruction is a message of hope for the future of humanity and for you personally.

A central theme of hope runs through the entire Bible and culminates in the book of Revelation. The message is why human societies fail and how the problems will eventually be solved. This message of hope centers around seven basic concepts that apply to you personally:

1. You have a special purpose in life, and there are solutions to your problems. You can keep applying the same old solutions to the same old problems, and you will keep arriving at the same old problems. You must turn to the Creator of life as the source of the solutions to life's problems.

2. God created you in His image, but is His purpose being fulfilled in your life? Most people today are not fully aware of God's plan and are not actively participating in it. This is why humanity suffers from anguish, war, hatred, greed, inequality and disease.

3. You can experience a relationship with God and live your purpose. God can heal you spiritually, emotionally and physically.

4. This change can only take place when you accept your need to change and believe change is possible through God's involvement in your life.

5. You must seek God's way of life that is outlined in the Bible. The Bible isn't just an ancient book of stories. It is relevant to your life as God's instruction book for how life works.

6. Jesus Christ is coming to save the world, and you need to be preparing for that day by becoming a disciple. Jesus Christ is coming

While humanity will not be destroyed in 2012, the Bible also reveals that the New Age scenario is not your destiny. The solutions to human problems will not come from mysticism but from the Creator of life.

to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth. It will be a Kingdom based on God's universal values and laws. His government will create a new agricultural system, pollution-free manufacturing, a universal educational system, one world religion and peace and prosperity.

7. Your ultimate destiny is to become a child of God, and you can have a child/Father relationship with Him now.

Nothing can bring more happiness, hope, love and power into your life than living by this basic biblical theme.

The end of the world?

So what does the book of Revelation reveal about the end of the world?

Revelation was written toward the end of the first century by the apostle John, apparently the last of Jesus' original 12 disciples. It is a divinely inspired prophecy predominantly concerned with the events preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ.

John's visions reveal that before Christ returns humanity will suffer devastating wars, disease pandemics, religious strife and famine on a global scale. Many of these happenings are trends we see announced in daily headlines and newscasts today.

Watching your world teeter on economic chaos can leave you anxious. Nightly news reports of possible pandemics, the ongoing crisis between Israelis and Palestinians, rogue nations developing nuclear weapons, religious and racial tensions, and predictions of environmental disasters can make you want to crawl into a hole and hide from all the bad news.

Don't despair! In the Olivet Prophecy Jesus declared that He will return to save humanity from total destruction (Matthew 24:22). Revelation tells us about the time of deliverance Jesus predicted.

In Revelation 19 John gives us a description of the return of Jesus Christ: "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

"And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

"Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

"Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, 'Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.'

"And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

"And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:11-21).

John describes a terrible time when governments unite to fight what they see as an invasion from outer space. Many people believe that this is the end of the story, but this is not the scenario revealed by God to John. He writes that Jesus will establish God's Kingdom on the earth for a thousand years, bringing peace and prosperity (Revelation 20:1-7).

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah was inspired to predict what the earth will be like during the reign of Jesus Christ. One passage, in Isaiah 2:2-4, states: "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

"Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of

Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

"He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

What should you do?

Humanity is not going to be annihilated in a great fireball caused by asteroids or exploding atomic weapons. The Bible clearly shows that humanity is not going to experience extinction in 2012. Sometime in the future, Jesus Christ will return to save humanity from destruction. Between now and then you can live in hopeful anticipation of that day by turning the control of your life over to your Creator.

Are you willing to give up your own ideas about how life works and turn to your Creator for the solutions? God wants more than a profession of faith from you. He wants you to become His child, live by His standards, accept His values as the Creator of the universe and serve with Jesus Christ at His return. The hope is in the believing—the hope is in the doing—and the hope is in living daily God's purpose for your life.

While humanity will not be destroyed in 2012, the Bible also reveals that the New Age scenario is not your destiny. The solutions to human problems will not come from mysticism but from the Creator of life.

Through the advanced newscast of Revelation, God tells us that there are some very bad times ahead; but this book also tells us that there is coming a unique and total change of society. Jesus Christ is returning, not as a baby in a barn, but as Lord of Lords and King of Kings to establish God's Kingdom on the earth. He is coming to save the world.

It will be the beginning of real life and prosperity without war, crime, disease epidemics and hopeless poverty. It will be a time when all people will know the Creator and live His ways. There is a fantastic future waiting for humanity.

Christians live in anticipation of that day. It is the foundation of our hope. ❖

Europe and the Church, Part 12

A Period of Change for the Papacy

In 1870 the First Vatican Council declared the pope infallible while solidifying his role as supreme spiritual and administrative head of the church. As Europe became embroiled in two World Wars, this decision laid the foundation for Pope Pius XII, whose influence in political events of the time has become a subject of investigation.

by Melvin Rhodes

Pope Pius XII was the only man in fascist-controlled Europe who conceivably could have stood up to Hitler and condemned the Holocaust. Instead, he chose not to.

In my New King James Version of the Bible, Revelation chapter 17 carries the title: “The Scarlet Woman and the Scarlet Beast.” The chapter is a prophecy about seven revivals of the Roman Empire that culminate in the second coming of the Messiah (verse 14).

“The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits” (verse 9). These are seven great empires that involve the church, the “woman” mentioned here.

The two women of Revelation

A woman is sometimes used to symbolize religion. In Ephesians 5 we see the analogy between marriage and the relationship Christ has with His Church. Just as the Church submits itself to Christ, so the wife should submit herself to the husband (Ephesians 5:22-25).

In Revelation chapter 12 we read an account of “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars” (verse 1). This woman symbolizes God’s people Israel, both the physical nation of Israel in the Old Testament and the spiritual nation of Israel, the true Church, in the New Testament. Satan hates the woman and goes to war with her and her offspring “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (verse 17).

This Church is not to be confused with the false church that is described in chapter 17 as “the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (verses 1-2).

The apostle Paul warned in 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 that “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.”

The false church, pictured as a harlot, a church that compromises, or sells itself for gain, was prophesied to commit “fornication” with the “kings of the earth.” This is a political church. God’s true Church stays out of politics, heeding the words of Jesus Christ that His Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Fornication, however, is not the same as marriage. In marriage there is commitment. Each partner tries to please the other in order to make the marriage successful.

In a relationship based on fornication, there is only “get.” Each partner is trying to seek his or her own. This is the way it has been throughout the history of church and state. Each has used the other for self-centered gain, just as two people fornicating use each other.

The church in the 19th century

By the time of the French Revolution, after 15 centuries of the supremacy of the political church, there was a great deal of anticlerical feeling. The French Revolution was an anticlerical revolution. Napoleon learned later that it was better to use the church for his own ends—he was crowned by the pope in 1804. But the 19th century was a difficult time for the church in France, in Italy and elsewhere. The papacy had lost its landholdings (the Papal States) under Napoleon. These were restored by the Congress of Vienna, only to be lost again during the period of Italian unification in the 1860s.

“Ever since the Reformation, the papacy had been reluctantly readjusting to the realities of a fragmented Christendom amid the challenge of Enlightenment ideas and new ways of look-

ing at the world. In response to the political and social changes that gathered pace in the aftermath of the French Revolution, the papacy had struggled to survive and exert an influence in a climate of liberalism, secularism, science, industrialization, and the evolving nation-state. The popes had been obliged to fight on two fronts—as primates of an embattled Church and as monarchs of a tottering papal kingdom. Caught in a bewildering series of confrontations with the new masters of Europe, the papacy had been attempting to protect the Church universal while defending the integrity of its collapsing temporal power” (John Cornwell, *Hitler’s Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*, 1999, pp. 4-5).

Within the church there was division between the centrists who believed in stronger papal power and those who argued for decentralization by giving more power to the bishops. “The triumph of the modern centrists...was sealed at the First Vatican Council of 1870 against the background of the Pope’s loss of his dominions. At that Council, the Pope was declared infallible in matters of faith and morals as well as undisputed *primate*—supreme spiritual and administrative head of the Church” (ibid., pp. 5-6).

Pope Pius XII

In the century following the doctrine of papal infallibility, the most autocratic pope was Eugenio Pacelli, who became Pope Pius XII on the eve of World War II in 1939. He was and remains one of the most controversial popes in history, largely due to his failure to speak out against Hitler and the Holocaust. His career in the Vatican bureaucracy leading up to the papacy is very revealing of the political power and influence of the church when it comes to worldly politics, the very politics Jesus Christ told His disciples to stay out of.

“In his capacity as highly favored undersecretary, and as a coming figure in the world of international diplomacy and law, [Pacelli] now became involved in a series of negotiations that contributed significantly to the extreme tensions between Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the period preceding the outbreak of the First World War...

“At precisely 11:30 on the morning of June 24, 1914, just four days before Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated at Sarajevo, representatives

of the Holy See and the government of Serbia sat down in the *salone* of the Secretariat of State to put their signatures to a treaty known as the Serbian Concordat” (ibid., pp. 48-49).

The concordat between the Vatican and predominantly Orthodox Serbia came at the expense of Austria-Hungary, which had previously been the protector of Catholics in the region.

“Vienna reacted to news of the concordat with outrage. ‘The Austrian press and people,’ wrote the Italian ambassador from Vienna on June 25, ‘consider the Serbian Concordat a major diplomatic defeat for their Government’” (ibid., p. 50).

Cornwell continues, “The result was a sharp increase in anti-Serbian rhetoric and calls for action. When the archduke was murdered in Sarajevo only days later, emotions were already volatile. The Serbian Concordat undoubtedly contributed to the uncompromising terms that the Austro-Hungarian Empire pressed on Serbia, making war inevitable” (ibid., p. 51).

World War II

Pacelli’s contribution to global conflict did not end there.

He was papal nuncio (ambassador) to Bavaria from 1917-1929, during which time he became very knowledgeable on German affairs. Made a cardinal in 1929, he was appointed secretary of state the following year.

After Hitler came to power on Jan. 30, 1933, Pacelli on July 20 signed a concordat with the German diplomat Franz von Papen that gave the Catholic Church complete freedom within Germany, in exchange for which the Church would stay out of politics. This meant the end of the Catholic Center Party, the only party big enough to counteract Hitler. The treaty was seen as a major triumph for Hitler, who was now well on the way to turning Germany into a dictatorship.



Wikimedia Commons

Eugenio Pacelli (far left) watches the signing of the Serbian Concordat on June 24, 1914.

It is interesting to observe that one man in the Vatican bureaucracy contributed to both world wars! As Pope Pius XII, he was the only man in fascist-controlled Europe who conceivably could have stood up to Hitler and condemned the Holocaust. Instead, he chose not to.

This is not surprising when the history of the church is taken into account. The roots of anti-Semitism lie within the church, which has always taught that the Jews killed Christ. Medieval Europe, dominated by the church, persecuted the Jews for centuries.

Foreshadowing the 1933 deal with Hitler, the Vatican had signed a pact with Mussolini in February 1929 that made Catholicism the only legal religion in Italy and gave the church the authority to impose the Code of Canon Law on the country. The Catholic Popular Party, which was similar to the Catholic Center Party in Germany, was disbanded and its leader went into exile. Members of the church were told to stay out of politics. Hitler welcomed the agreement, interpreting it as support for fascism.

The church’s involvement in worldly politics is a direct fulfillment of the prophecy in Revelation 17 that speaks of false religion and secular political leaders in cahoots with one another.

Today, Pius XII is in the process of being canonized by the Catholic Church. ❖

“MILLENNIUM” (Continued from page 4)

subverted by heresy. The Roman government killed many Christians, including Christian leaders. The apostle John was exiled on the Aegean prison island of Patmos.

At the height of this crisis John received Christ’s revelation that affirmed the truths of the triumphal establishment of the Kingdom of God. The knowledge of the Millennium gave the Church encouragement, as it always has done for those who look to God for their hope (1 Peter 1:3; 5:4).

During this tumultuous epoch the teaching of the literal Kingdom of God on earth became mixed with forms of heresy and in some circles was discredited. In the second, third and fourth centuries the concept of a literal earthly reign of Christ came under the most severe attack.

There were misguided attempts by some to predict the time of the return of Christ, contrary to His own teaching (Matthew 24:36, 44; 25:13; Acts 1:6-7). Montanus, a self-proclaimed prophet of the third century, founded a movement predicting the imminent second coming of Christ. Some gnostics also adopted a form of millennial teaching.

Origen, the third-century Alexandrian thinker, arrived at a radically different conclusion about the Kingdom of God. The focus of

his view “was not upon the manifestation of the kingdom within this world but within the soul of the believer, a significant shift of interest away from the historical toward the metaphysical, or the spiritual” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, “Millennialism”).

Because of the influence of Origen and similar thinkers, the Kingdom of God came to be viewed not as a literal future kingdom, but as a *spiritual* kingdom subject to varying interpretation. The scriptural references were to be understood as symbolism and allegory, not to be taken at face value.

Holding fast

In the midst of these heresies, many still held to faith in a coming Kingdom as it had been received from the apostles. “Bishop Papias of Hierapolis, a disciple of St. John, appeared as an advocate of millenarianism. He claimed to have received his doctrine from contemporaries of the Apostles, and Irenaeus narrates that other ‘Presbyteri,’ who had seen and heard the disciple John, learned from him the belief in millenarianism as part of the Lord’s doctrine. According to Eusebius (Hist. Eccl., III, 39) Papias in his book asserted that the resurrection of the dead would be followed by one thousand years of a visible, glorious earthly

kingdom of Christ, and according to Irenaeus (Adv. Haereses, V, 33), he taught that the saints too would enjoy a superabundance of earthly pleasures” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1914 edition, “Millennium”).

In these early centuries, among the last known proponents of the teaching of the 1,000-year earthly reign of Christ’s Kingdom was a bishop of Laodicea named Apollinaris. By the fifth century the doctrine was largely overwhelmed by the views of Augustine, the most influential theologian of the Catholic church. His teaching that the *church* was the Kingdom of God on earth replaced the biblical teaching that God would intervene in history and establish a Kingdom that would never end.

In Augustine’s view, God had already triumphed over Satan, and His Kingdom was a spiritual matter in the hearts of men, manifest in the role of the church on earth. “The millennium had become a spiritual state into which the church collectively had entered at Pentecost—the time of the reception of the Holy Spirit by Christ’s disciples soon after his Resurrection—and which the individual Christian might already enjoy through mystical communion with God” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, “Millennialism”).

This coincided with Roman Emperor Constantine’s official adoption of Christianity as the religion of the empire. From this point there was no need for a literal belief in Christ’s reign on earth. The church had become politically and spiritually wedded to the power of the empire.

What historian Edward Gibbon called “the ancient and popular doctrine” now became an appendage with little use or support. He writes: “But when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ’s reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism” (*Decline and Fall of the*

The knowledge of the Millennium gave the Church encouragement, as it always has done for those who look to God for their hope.



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Roman Empire, Great Books edition, 1952, p. 188).

A dark age descends

Augustine's view became the accepted teaching of the church. Whatever remained of the belief in the literal rule of the Kingdom of God on earth went underground. It was virtually unheard of for approximately 1,000 years, until the period that followed the Protestant Reformation. It is interesting that this medieval period has been called the Dark Ages of Western civilization. It is as if the lights went out on learning and the advancement of culture on all fronts. Historian William Manchester describes the period as a "portrait...of incessant warfare, corruption, lawlessness, obsession with strange myths, and an almost impenetrable mindlessness" (*A World Lit Only by Fire*, 1992, p. 3)

A close look at this "medieval millennium" reveals a time during which religious authority took on the form of a literal, triumphant kingdom on earth. Manchester continues: "As aristocracies arose from the barbaric mire, kings and princes owed their legitimacy to divine authority, and squires became knights by praying all night at Christian altars. Sovereigns courting popularity led crusades to the Holy Land. To eat meat during Lent became a capital offense, sacrilege meant imprisonment, the Church became the wealthiest landowner on the Continent, and the life of every European, from baptism through matrimony to burial, was governed by popes, cardinals, prelates, monsignors, archbishops, bishops, and village priests. The clergy, it was believed, would also cast decisive votes in determining where each would spend the afterlife" (ibid., p. 11).

During this time the advancement of Western civilization had largely ground to a halt, and "nothing of real consequence had either improved or declined. Except for the introduction of waterwheels in the 800s and windmills in the late 1100s, there had been no inventions of significance. No startling new ideas had appeared, no

new territories outside Europe had been explored. Everything was as it had been for as long as the oldest European could remember" (ibid., pp. 26-27).

Dawn of a new world

The Bible reveals that a world of light will result from the return of Jesus Christ. The social order effected by the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth will be far different from anything ever produced by human effort.

Nations will seek out the way of God. Fear will be banished from among the peoples of the earth as righteousness—obedience to God's law (Psalm 119:172)—guides international relations.

Endless conflicts will disappear, and the art of warfare will be forgotten. Families will grow stronger with each generation and produce a tightly knit society that will not come unraveled (Micah 4:1-5). When God's Kingdom arrives, there will be nothing to deny its long-held promise and hope of bringing peace on earth.

As we have seen, the teaching of the Millennium begins early in the Hebrew Scriptures and continues through the book of Revelation. Christ's last words on the subject are perhaps the clearest and plainest in the Bible. Jesus Christ, the true author of the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:1), says there will be a period of 1,000 years during which the resurrected saints will reign with Him in a just and benevolent Kingdom on this earth. Will we take Christ at His word and believe what He said?



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During the Millennium, families will grow stronger with each generation and produce a tightly knit society that will not come unraveled.

Ideas are a powerful force in human affairs. They have sparked revolutions and toppled centuries-old dynasties. They can sometimes arise in the humblest of ways to create large followings. Mao Zedong took a relatively modern idea and with it ruled the most populous nation on earth. Yet by his own admission he failed to change a deeply rooted ancient culture.

The millennial rule of Jesus Christ, an idea that is older than time, will endure and ultimately transform the world. ❖

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“AS HE IS” (Continued from page 16)

conquered Jerusalem had come up to the temple to get a peek at the God of Israel. They wanted to look into the eyes of whoever lay behind that veil in the temple. They figured He must be something to look at to cause such zealous devotion among the Jews.

Nebuchadnezzar’s generals, Antiochus Epiphanes, Pompey the Great and Titus all gave it a try in their times. All came up empty. No image of God lay on the other side of the veil in the Holy of Holies. God alone decides to whom He will offer the privilege of a personal encounter and at what level.

But now, a special need

But now, it was toward the end of the first century. The ongoing, day-by-day struggle was difficult for the followers of Christ. The long-awaited return of Jesus had not materialized. He said He would return, but where was He?

Almost all of the original apostles chosen by Christ were dead. Persecution leading to martyrdom was becoming rampant under the Roman Emperor Domitian. The persecution 20 years before under Nero had been horrible, but now it was really bleak!

Now it seemed John, alone, remained alive of all those who had heard Jesus’ voice, seen Him in face-to-face encounters and literally handled Him (1 John 1:1-2).

In addition to the physical touch of day-to-day life with Jesus of Nazareth, John along with a few others had experienced the radiant transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17:1-3).



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Yes, John seemed to be the one human link to connect the years gone by with the promised eternity that lay ahead, but he was getting old. Special times create special needs. It was time to stir up the heart. It was time to awaken what God had in store. It was time to inform all those who would strive to emulate Christ that all they were going through would be worth it.

Again, John starts this thought in 1 John 3:1 by describing “what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us.” The Greek words convey the thought that such affection is not of this world! In a folksy way, one might say, “It sure isn’t from around here.” Of course not! It’s divine!

John then reminds those who might be discouraged that “we should be called children of God.” Our status with God does not require us to wait for the future. The relationship is already in play. We are not awaiting adoption, only the full inheritance,

which in part, assures us that “we shall see Him as He is.”

Seeing the unfathomable

The apostle then reminds his audience and reinforces their sagging enthusiasm by saying, “when He is revealed” (verse 2), speaking of Christ’s second coming to this earth. Yes, in God’s perfect timing, the exalted Christ shall once more be seen by all who remain alive after the Great Tribulation, the heavenly signs and the Day of the Lord.

But the revealing becomes personal to those of a spiritual nature. It moves beyond simply the sounding of the seventh trumpet as human beings become acquainted with their Maker. For converted Christians John says, “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” Those who have been granted the reward of immortality will see things that human eyes alone cannot see.

It was during this same general time of John’s ministry that God granted “the disciple whom Jesus loved” one more peek at what lay in store for us all. Its details are captured in the book of Revelation. It is in Revelation that God threw the window of heaven’s throne room wide open.

John describes the exalted Christ as “One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were

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like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength” (Revelation 1:13-16).

In verse 17 John adds a moving description that makes this unlike the divine encounters of old: “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades [the grave] and of Death. Write the things which you have seen’” (Revelation 1:17-19).

The picture comes alive

This statement moves beyond defined grandeur. It moves to the tangible relationship of personal connection that here, once again, Christ reaches out and touches John just as He did so many others during His earthly ministry.

Have you ever been to an art gallery and beheld something so beautiful that you almost involuntarily reached out to touch it? I have—that is, until the guard reminded me to refrain.

But in Revelation 1 the scenario is reversed. It is the picture that is truly alive, reaching out of the frame of eternity, touching mortal man and reminding him of a scene on a hill so long ago with his brother and Peter at the transfiguration.

The book of Revelation and John’s vision are but the invitation to behold and “see Him as He is.” Our arrival is yet ahead.

John’s fellow apostle Paul had made a similar allusion to what awaits. Writing years before, Paul declares: “He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

Can you imagine your personal invitation and experience at the resurrection, being welcomed by Christ and touched, embraced and encouraged to move into the unapproachable light

of God’s dynamic presence and the inner workings of His Kingdom? The spiritual firstfruits are called to be at the epicenter of God’s throne room as pillars in His temple to support and display His purpose, plans, promises and provisions in all realms that exist before Him (Revelation 3:12). Does such a future seem distant, vague and impossible?

Imagine no more!

Imagine no more! This is prophetic reality unlike Moses’ glimmering peek-in-a-rearview-mirror experience or John’s vision. Instead, our future God-given, immortal bodies will enable us to experience Him in fullness once and forever.

Such wonderment does not come by wishful thinking on our part. The apostle John concludes his hope-filled insight in 1 John 3 by stating, “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:3).

Such purity does not come in a vacuum, whether it is A.D. 85 or 2009. It is a purity that is deepened and sustained as this world grows further and further apart from the intentions of our Heavenly Father. It is a hope that stays alive in our everyday interactions and troubling circumstances. It is a hope that stays vibrant as this “present evil age” (Galatians 1:4) moves through turbulent times such as the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord.

It is in this hope that members of the Body of Christ around the world proclaim this prophetic reality of ultimately seeing God as He is, as they assemble around this time of the year to observe the annual festivals mentioned throughout Scripture. (You may wish to order *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for all Mankind.*)

How then do we approach the unapproachable light and view it straight on? In regards to such a hope, perhaps the message of Isaiah 30:21 (“This is the way, walk in it”) is best realized in the simple words of Jesus Christ when He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). ❖



Robin Webber

How to Contact Us

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

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

BENELUX countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands

BRITISH ISLES: P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999

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

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

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

EASTERN EUROPE AND BALTIC STATES: United Church of God, Head Sõnumid, Pk. 62, 50002 Tartu Postkontor, Estonia

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1140, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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by Robin Webber

We Shall See Him as He Is

Two thousand years ago, the apostle John prophesied a resounding declaration regarding God that “we shall see Him as He is.” Normally when we think of John’s prophetic writings, our eyes turn to the book of Revelation, but this statement is found in 1 John 3:2. Nonetheless, this resounding assurance to true believers fits all the traits of prophecy, including *foretelling* what cannot be known by natural means.

John starts out in 1 John 3:1, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us” and then seamlessly transitions into verse 2 of foretelling that which is yet to occur as we experience the fullness of God’s love by seeing “Him as He is.” Just imagine personally encountering God!

But why were the words “we shall see Him as He is” written to the original audience, and what do we gain by this prophetic promise? Think about it for a moment. After writing such profound words, John must have sat back in his chair or even walked around in his room as the power of what he had just written began to sink in. John must have been smiling a little as he began to contemplate what it meant to behold God in such a one-on-one fashion.

The beginning of close encounters

He realized, as did every man taught from the Hebrew Scriptures, that his God was not to be considered in similar terms as those of the pagan gods. The all-knowing and ever-present God who inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15) was not like the gods of the nations.

An ancient believer’s view of God was far different from what John’s declaration was projecting. In former

times, God had revealed His sovereignty and covenant desire toward the patriarch Job and others in terms of power and the order of nature and divine intervention, but not in terms of close encounters that depict glancing upon deity.

Perhaps John continued to smile at such revelation when he considered how Moses had desired to behold God’s glory (Exodus 33:18-23). It was a time in which Moses needed encouragement that God had not forsaken the children of Israel. God gave Moses a glimmer of His glory; even so, God did not allow Moses to directly gaze upon Him.

God declared, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” The physical deliverer of Israel stood behind a rock as the ultimate Deliverer of Israel passed by. Moses only saw His back, but it was seemingly more than enough to grant him that much-needed encouragement!

John might have gone out of the house and lingered a little more with this revelation. We can imagine him thinking of the imagery set before Ezekiel, as the portable throne room of God passed by in the whirlwind with “the likeness of the throne...with the appearance of a man high above it” (Ezekiel 1:26).

It was here that God revealed to Ezekiel what Israel had forsaken: the holiness of God and their dire need to grasp what they had so carelessly rejected. Even so, the imagery is set in tones of cosmic distance and divine omnipotence.

Perhaps historically John quietly chuckled as he considered how many of the invading forces that had

(See “AS HE IS,” page 14)