

WORLD NEWS *and* PROPHECY

Biblical Perspectives on Current Events

December 1999

Vol. 2, No. 10

Apocalyptic Prophecy— the End of Time?

Or is it the end of the beginning? The popular media portrays apocalyptic prophecy in an overtly negative light. Is this the whole story of God's wonderful plan for restoring peace to the earth?

by Darris McNeely

How many times have you heard it said, "The world is coming to an end"? Whenever someone writes or speaks about the subject it seems to conjure up images of gloom and doom, fear and dread. Prophecy can have very dark overtones and leave an impression of total cataclysm when handled in an irresponsible manner.

A recent issue of *Newsweek*, an American weekly news magazine, had as its cover story the subject of end time Bible prophecy. Featured in the issue was a dreadful picture of the last judgment complete with bodies descending into hell. The title of the lead article was, "The Way the World Ends." Throughout the piece references were made to the end of

the world and the idea that time will come to a close with the unveiling of the prophecies of the book of Revelation and the second coming of Jesus Christ. Overall the piece left a distinctly negative impression about prophecy in general and end time prophecy in particular. Most articles written in the mainstream press follow this approach.

Make no mistake, the prophecies of the Bible that speak of plagues, tribulation and woe are serious and very real. The cataclysmic events that lead up to the coming of Christ will produce a time of trouble



unlike any previous period of human history. Every student of history knows there have been some pretty horrible epochs of the past. Historian Barbara Tuchman wrote a book titled *The Distant Mirror*, in which she chronicled the tumultuous 14th century that saw, among other catastrophes, the plague called

the Black Death. Our own 20th century has been dubbed the bloodiest in history. Yet Daniel the prophet was told that in the end time "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a

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World News and Prophecy is published monthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, publisher of *The Good News* magazine, 5405 Dupont Circle, Suite A, Milford, OH 45150. © 1999 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.

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Its purpose is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of the answers Christ gave to His disciples' questions: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

Editor: Don Ward
Managing editor: Darris McNeely
Senior editor: Melvin Rhodes
Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder
Copy editors: Doug Johnson, Cecil E. Maranville
Layout/design: Peter W. Eddington, Mike Bennett

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

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

International addresses:

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

BAHAMAS: United Church of God, P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas. Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566

BRITISH ISLES: P.O. Box 4052, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK13 7ZF England. Phone: 0181-386-8467 Fax: 01257-453978

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada
Phone: (416) 231-9379, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (416) 231-8238

FIJI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 10-577, Nadi, Fiji.
Phone: 723-678

FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, B.P. 51254, 45002 Orléans Cedex 1, France

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

ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24100 Bergamo, Italy
Phone: 0039-035583474 Fax: 0039-035582140

The NETHERLANDS: United Church of God Holland, P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands

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

SOUTHERN AFRICA: United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa
Phone/Fax: 043 748-1694

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: United Church of God, P.O. Box 458, Big Sandy, TX 75755, U.S.A.
Phone: (903) 636-4928

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Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed. The next issue is scheduled to be available on January 6, 2000, on the Internet at <http://www.ucg.org/html/literat.shtml#4>.

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

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nation, even to that time” (Daniel 12:1).

Sin and rebellion against the will of God will bring the world to its most critical juncture. Unless God intervenes through the return of Christ and shortens time, “no flesh would be saved” (Matthew 24:22). A balanced understanding of biblical prophecy comes only from reading all that the scriptures have to say about the future of mankind and this world. The good news is mankind will not destroy life from off the planet, time will not come to an end and justice and peace will be brought to the earth. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of God and Christ in a sweeping reform of every human institution (Revelation 11:15).

The positive message of mankind’s future is tragically buried beneath the misunderstanding perpetuated by much of today’s media. Narrow minded, erroneous interpretations of God’s whole design for human life cast biblical prophecy and religion as a whole in a negative light.

Why it must get worse before it gets better

First let’s understand why this age-ending peril will engulf the world. God takes no pleasure in the suffering of mankind. From the beginning of man’s time on earth there has been a separation from the knowledge represented by the tree of life in Genesis chapter 2. The decision to take from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil set the human family on a course that is opposite of the true plan of God. The result has been a story of struggle and suffering, which is summed up by an old adage about life that says man is born, suffers and then dies. There are peaks of beauty and excellence that have been achieved but at the end of the 20th century we still see more war, poverty and disease than is comfortable to an honest mind. Trying to comprehend why so much evil runs through the world leaves far too many without true faith or hope in the living God.

God’s loving, yearning stance is evident in the inspired statement of Ezekiel 18:23, “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord God, ‘and not that he should turn from his

ways and live?’” Man was created with the potential to rise above the human level and walk and live in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), but sin and its aftermath have prevented most from realizing this spiritual goal. When we come to events at the close of the age as depicted in Revelation, two additional scriptures show us why a worldwide tribulation will engulf the world.

The seals of the book of Revelation are a multitude of calamities that represent the “great day” of God’s wrath upon the world. As they are poured out in the sequence of events we find that man does not yet come to his knees in heart-rending repentance before God. Notice Revelation

defiant system whose roots go back to the Tower of Babel. Even the patience of God will run out when this evil system grips all nations. God will move to end its reign for all time. “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities’” (Revelation 18:3–5).



PBS Frontline’s Web page on their show about apocalyptic prophecy

9:20–21, “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.” Sadly it will take more to break man’s pride and rebellion.

The world will be in the grip of a power defined as Babylon the great (Revelation 18:2). This religious-political system will be the final global effort to spiritually enslave mankind in the

It is to save the world and to fulfill the hope of human existence that God intervenes by sending Jesus Christ on His triumphant return as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). With the source of all evil, Satan the devil, bound and put away from the presence of mankind, God will then be ready to establish the fullness of His kingdom upon the earth.

The restoration of all things

In one of his first sermons to those gathered in the temple in Jerusalem, Peter made reference to the primary goal that

God has desired since the beginning. “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19–21).

It is God’s plan to restore “all things.”

What was first removed that must then be restored? It is the rule of God upon the earth. Christ came announcing the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:14). The gospel of the kingdom of God is about the restoring of God’s way of life to the human family. This way, based on the eternal spiritual law of God, was removed at the time of Adam and Eve’s decision to listen to the words of the serpent. It is a way of love, rooted in an outgoing concern for the welfare of others, devoid of an overriding concern for the self. Verse 21 is a prophecy of the wonderful coming kingdom of God on earth. This is a positive view of the future beyond the negative headlines of today and the world-shaking events of the end of the age.

The coming kingdom of God will restore the knowledge of the true God to all peoples. The prophet Habakkuk says that knowledge of God will cover the world as the waters of the sea cover the earth (Habakkuk 2:14). When human relationships are built upon God’s way, then peace will be built into a network of relationships that will produce order and harmony among peoples.

The fifth kingdom

The book of Daniel records the dream of Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar in which he saw a great image. The interpretation by Daniel showed it to be a prophecy of four empires that would culminate in the establishment of a fifth—“a kingdom which shall never be destroyed [the kingdom of God].” God’s kingdom will be a divine rule that will never be replaced, unlike the previous kingdoms. It shall “break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

Take special note of the phrase “the kingdom shall not be left to other people.” To whom is it left? The answer to this helps us understand a vital part of the grand purpose of life. When we understand to whom the kingdom will be given, we will then have a key to properly understanding prophecy. We will understand why the terrible prophecies of the future must come to pass. Beyond this we also see the hope God holds out to all mankind. The future does not end with Armageddon and a battle between Christ and the Antichrist. Those events are only passages to a time when God’s reign will supplant all human rule and bring about the conditions that will result in the salvation of humanity.

Into a far country

In spite of a world that has been deceived by Satan, God has always worked with individuals and groups to prepare a people to assist Christ in restoring peace to the world. God works with a sure and proven plan for the ages.

In the days prior to His death, Jesus perceived that His followers expected the imminent appearance of the kingdom of God. Knowing this would not be the case, He told a parable of a nobleman’s journey to a far country to receive a kingdom. To each of his servants, the ruler gave a sum of money. His departing instruction was, “Do business till I come” (Luke 19:11–13). The servants, in this case those who wait on the coming of the Lord, are to spend their lives preparing for His return. The money represents the calling and gifts of God to those He calls. As the parable shows, with the return of the ruler, an accounting will be required of those entrusted with the calling and knowledge of the kingdom. There are rewards according to how much increase each person has achieved (verses 14 to 27).

The parable of the talents shows that those called out of the world in advance of the kingdom are being prepared to reign with Christ. Like the nobleman who entrusted money to his servants, God has entrusted to His elect the understanding of the kingdom and how it will function. Those called now, in advance, are to prepare for an eternity of service.

Those who overcome this world, who endure to the coming of Christ, will qualify for places with Christ in the structure He is now building (John 14:1–3). The kingdom will be given to those saints and they will reign with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

This, too, is a part of prophecy that must be understood along with the apocalyptic visions. God will not punish without cause or without a promise and a hope beyond.

The end of the beginning

The future that God has planned is full of positive hope for mankind. Look at the final question the disciples asked Christ prior to His ascension to heaven: “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Restoring not only Israel, but also the entire world to a place of peace, justice and equity is the focal point of God’s plan. The reign of Christ over the kingdom of God on earth is the good news beyond the age-ending troubles that the Bible foretells. What comes to an end is the unrighteous rule of man’s governments that have never achieved peace. Christ’s return will end forever the fear of war and its terrible consequences.

During the Second World War British Prime Minister Winston Churchill spoke of the turning point which came with the Allied landings in North Africa in the fall of 1942. At last, after months of battle, there was a breach that could lead to victory. Speaking to a group in London he said, “Now is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

The terrible events that end with the return of Christ as King of kings will not be the “time of the end.” They will merely be “the end of the beginning.” The apostle Paul describes it beautifully: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:20–21).

Properly understood, prophecy offers a positive and hopeful new beginning for mankind. ❖

Panama: Another Major Sea Gate Relinquished

The Panama Canal is an engineering marvel and a symbol of "The American Century." What is the significance of America's decision to turn it over to Panamanian control?

by Melvin Rhodes

Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Suez, Aden, the Maldive Islands, Ceylon, Singapore and Hong Kong are legendary sea gates en route from the British Isles to the Far East. These gates gave Great Britain mastery of the seas for over two centuries, a period that came to be known as the "Pax Britannica." They played a vital role in times of military conflict. Without them it is doubtful the Allies would have won the two world wars.

For those who traveled west there was Bermuda, one of the first sea gates to be acquired by the British Crown, the first with its own parliament and still a British possession. Further west there were all the island possessions of the Caribbean. Further south the Falkland Islands enabled the Royal Navy to control the area around Cape Horn. St. Helena, Ascension Island, the Cape of Good Hope around South Africa, Mauritius, the Seychelles and Diego Garcia were all strategically located "gates" that controlled key sea passages around the globe, granting the British people unrivaled dominance of the seas.

Later the United States was to join Great Britain as a world power following the Spanish-American War of 1898. The peace settlement that followed the war saw the United States become a major sea power with the acquisition of its own sea gates in important locations. The Philippines and Guam gave America a major Pacific presence, while Puerto Rico and a military base in Cuba extended American influence in the Caribbean. Hawaii was also annexed in 1898. But the most important was yet to come.

The Spanish-American War had brought home to Americans a weakness that had been noticed before, one which could easily be resolved with the modern technology that was now available. The weakness was due to simple geography, the fact that it took a long time for a ship on one of the country's coasts to travel to the other coast. All

ships had to go around Cape Horn at the southern end of South America, one of the most hazardous shipping routes on earth. Even if that had not been a problem, distance alone meant that any sea travel from coast to coast took a considerable period of time.

The 1898 war itself demonstrated a military weakness when the U.S. had to quickly dispatch the battleship Oregon to Cuba after the U.S.S. Maine was blown up in Havana Harbor. Victory in the Caribbean was said to depend on the Oregon. Instead of the 4,000 miles from San Francisco to Cuba the trip would take today through the Panama Canal, the Oregon had to travel 12,000 miles around Cape Horn, a journey that was expected to take two months. There were long periods when there was no news of the ship and Americans followed her journey with mounting concern and excitement. Then 67 days after leaving the West Coast, she was spotted off the coast of Florida, arriving just in time to play a role in the crucial Battle of Santiago Bay. Those 67 days emphasized the growing importance of a path between the seas, linking the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and removing the need for lengthy and dangerous journeys around Cape Horn.

Roosevelt's ambitious dream

American President Theodore Roosevelt was to be the driving force behind the building of the Panama Canal. Indeed, it was to be the greatest accomplishment of his administration, the one which Roosevelt was to be most proud of and the one which caused the most controversy and division. "Roosevelt was promoting neither a commercial venture nor a universal utility. To him, first, last, and always, the canal was the vital—the indispensable—path to a global destiny for the United States of America. He had a vision of his

The same God who gave the United States and Great Britain the world's major sea gates also said that because of national disobedience He would take them away.

country as a commanding power on two oceans, and these joined by a canal built, owned, operated, policed, and fortified by his country. The canal was to be the first step to American supremacy at sea” (*The Path Between the Seas*, by David McCullough, 1977). McCullough adds: “All other benefits resulting, important or admirable as they might be, were to him secondary.”

Roosevelt might not have bothered to build the canal had he known that it would remain in American hands for less than a



Gatun Locks of the Panama Canal

century. On the last day of 1999 the United States will cede control of the canal to the nation of Panama, under the terms of a revised treaty agreed to during the Carter administration. In turn Panama hands over the administration of this vital sea gate to a private Mainland Chinese company, which, like all other companies in China, is subject to Chinese government control.

Roosevelt was correct. The building of the canal was to be a major step toward America’s global domination of the world, replacing Great Britain as the world’s major naval power by the end of World War II, ushering in the Pax Americana which has given the world over 50 years of unprecedented prosperity.

Before suddenly assuming office following the assassination of President William McKinley at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, Theodore Roosevelt had been heavily influenced both by his own war experiences in the 1898 war with Spain and by

an influential book written by a member of the faculty at the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island. The writer’s name was Alfred Thayer Mahan and Roosevelt had met him when he himself had been invited to lecture there on his specialty as a historian, the War of 1812.

Mahan’s book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, was published in 1890 and had become an international bestseller. Interestingly, 1890 was also the year in which the U.S. Census Bureau declared that there was no longer any land frontier. Mainland America was complete. Mahan received honorary degrees at Oxford and Cambridge universities before being invited to dine with Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace. Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm II, anxious to build a navy to rival Britain’s, ensured that copies of Mahan’s book were given to every one of his naval captains and officers. Japanese military colleges adopted the book as a text, while at home, Yale and Harvard were to confer honorary degrees upon him. He was enthusiastically supported by members of Congress. “It is sea power which is essential to every splendid people,” Henry Cabot Lodge declared from the Senate floor.

“By tracing the rise and decline of past maritime powers, he had arrived at the extremely simple theory that national greatness and commercial supremacy were directly related to supremacy at sea” (ibid. McCullough).

Dream fulfilled

The building of the Panama Canal was one of the greatest engineering feats of history. Interest in the project began soon after the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869. Suez, the artery of the British Empire, connecting Great Britain with its Indian and other Asian possessions, was built by a French engineer, Ferdinand de Lesseps. When the International Congress of Geographical Sciences met in Paris in 1879 and voted to support the construction of the Panama Canal, the 74-year-old de Lesseps undertook the task of constructing the waterway. The project failed some years later, and it was left to the United States to pursue in the new century.

The United States waited for the Colombian Congress to debate its request to build a canal across Colombian territory. Preoccupied with a civil war between 1899 and 1903, the Colombians hesitated. The people of Panama then revolted against their Colombian rulers and the United States accepted the rebels’ offer of a treaty that granted the United States sovereignty (total control) over a 10-mile-wide Canal Zone in exchange for an annual payment to be made to the new Republic of Panama. Although the U.S. denied any direct involvement in the rebellion against Colombia, U.S.-Colombian relations suffer to this day. Relations with Panama have not been easy either.

Work on the canal began in 1904 but little progress was made before 1906 due to disputes over the type of canal that should be built. Completed in 1914, the canal is 51.2 miles long. Ironically, the year of completion saw the commencement of World War I in Europe and among European colonies around the world. This war was to see America’s involvement in world affairs increase and leave the U.S. a rival naval power to Great Britain.

Importance of sea gates foretold

The acquisition of sea gates by the two major English speaking powers was prophesied in the Bible thousands of years ago. The modern descendants of Abraham, through the patriarchs Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, were to become the greatest single nation in history (the United States of America) and the greatest multitude or commonwealth of nations (the British Empire and Commonwealth). (See Genesis 48.) They were to possess the gates of their enemies (Genesis 22:17; 24:60).

Just as the acquisition of these sea gates gave the two nations worldwide preeminence, so their loss would dramatically illustrate declining power and military might. Major turning points in the decline of Great Britain were the loss of two of the most strategically important sea gates. The United States is following a similar path to its brother as it, too, loses sea gates seen as vital to national security

by previous generations of Americans.

Two of the major turning points in the decline and fall of the British Empire were the loss of Singapore to the Japanese in 1942 and the loss of the Suez Canal to Egypt 14 years later. Singapore was Britain's major naval base in the Far East and considered impregnable. It easily fell to the Japanese who invaded from the north, through the jungles of British Malaya, a direction from which the British had not anticipated any threat. This was a major psychological blow to British pride, the biggest defeat the Empire had ever suffered at the hands of an Asian nation, thereby sending a very powerful message to other Asians that it was possible to defeat a seemingly invincible superpower. The British were later to regain control of Singapore following the defeat of Japan in 1945. Ironically, they voluntarily withdrew from the base a quarter of a century later as they could no longer afford to base troops there.

Suez was the final death-blow to hopes of continued empire. A group of radical army officers overthrew Egypt's King Farouk in 1952 promising to rid the country of foreign influences. They began agitating for Egyptian control of the canal and finally seized it in 1956. British, French and Israeli troops invaded Egypt. International financial pressures against Britain followed, and the Eisenhower administration refused to help, thereby effectively ending British and French control of the Suez Canal. The ripple effect was the collapse of both colonial empires and the proliferation of new states around the world that has complicated international diplomacy in the closing years of the century.

The loss of superpower status

Could the same fate befall the United States? In the less than 25 years since the 1977 Panama Canal Treaty which agreed to the 1999 hand over to Panamanian control, the U.S. has lost its military bases in the Philippines and scaled down the size of its military forces in other parts of the world. At the same time American military commitments have increased, with more and more pledges of support and involvement in minor nations throughout

the world, a burden the U.S. increasingly tries to share with its NATO allies and the United Nations. This paradox is sometimes referred to as "imperial overreach," the same problem that afflicted Great Britain in its declining years. It's the tendency of a superpower to overcommit itself in an effort to try to maintain its leadership role. Eventually global commitments effectively result in no commitment, as forces in each area are too thin on the ground to cope. Current trends suggest the U.S. is following the same path as its predecessor as world superpower, Great Britain.

Who Benefits?

It is interesting to note that the company chosen to operate the Panama Canal is a Hong Kong based company. It is, therefore, like all companies operating from the Peoples' Republic of China, subject to the influence and control of the Chinese leadership in Beijing. In a conflict, this could bode ill for the U.S. and its allies.

The last few years have seen China make considerable gains at U.S. and British expense. The withdrawal from the Philippine bases of American forces early in the 1990s left China a more powerful nation in the region. The hand over of Hong Kong by Britain to China in 1997 elevated China to the status of second-richest country in the world in terms of its gold and foreign currency reserves. This frees China to spend much more of its wealth on military projects. Macao's return to China on the same day as the hand over of the Panama Canal frees China to concentrate its efforts on taking back Taiwan, a move which, if successful, would make China the richest nation on earth in terms of its reserves.

The possible dismemberment of Indonesia would also leave China stronger. Any decline in the power of Indonesia would naturally result in a comparative strengthening of Chinese power and influence. India is a potential rival, but is too preoccupied with its rival Pakistan to get too involved in any struggle with China.

China benefits, too, from the commercial domination of many nations in

The same God who gave us the sea gates also said that because of national disobedience He would take them away. "I will break the pride of your power" (Leviticus 26:19). The consequences of this will be just as great as the rewards were—the rise to international greatness will be followed, in time, by a decline into oblivion.

Oblivion, that is, until divine intervention in world affairs re-launches the good fortunes of America, the British family of nations and ultimately all nations in a much happier world with sea gates open for all in the Millennium of the Bible. ❖

the region by its Chinese diaspora, Chinese people who have settled throughout the area. Ironically, the former British sea base of Singapore is populated mostly by Chinese people whose ancestors moved there during colonial times. Their nation is now a thriving city-state whose people are richer than many in the Western democracies.

Any perceived threat from Beijing is likely to cause Japan and Russia to build up the size of their military forces. Now, with the hand over of the Panama Canal, Chinese influence may extend into Central and South America.

The recent trade agreement admitting China to the World Trade Organization (WTO) will likely give another boost to the nation's rapidly growing economy. However, there is also concern that the agreement opening up China to more foreign competition could lead to internal unrest as hundreds of thousands of Chinese people lose their jobs during the restructuring that will take place. China is an awakening giant. An unstable giant could spread instability throughout the region.

One hundred years ago, at the dawn of the 20th century, Britain's period of domination was drawing to a close, with the United States already on the horizon as the new superpower. We now see history repeating itself, this time with the United States currently dealing with the realities of "imperial overreach" while China and others seek to expand their influence. ❖

The Coming Superstate

Superstates have existed in various forms through the ages, but not in the way they are forming today. Many world leaders are planning on creating a system that will exercise hegemony over the whole world. Their plans will eventually lead to a beast system that will rule over the earth. But then a superstate will come on the scene and usher in the true Millennium.

by Don Ward

Colloquial use of the word *super* implies that which is of great excellence and strength.

In the technical sense, *super* denotes that which is above or superior in rank. So *super* denotes that which is over, above or beyond and a *superstate* is a state that is over or beyond other states.

Nimrod creates superstate

Shortly after the Flood, God divided the earth among the families of Noah (Genesis 10:32). As they journeyed from the east they came to the land of Shinar. At Shinar, Nimrod led a rebellion against God's command for the descendants of Noah to re-colonize the earth. He knew that it would be impossible for him to rule over the families of the earth if they were scattered abroad. So he inspired the building of a tower that the people would look to so they would not be scattered abroad (Genesis 11:4). But God intervened and confounded the languages of the people, thus forcing them to be scattered through the earth.

As the families of Noah settled their lands they eventually developed into nation-states. God is the author of families, tribes and nations. God's historic desire is for nation-states to live according to His laws. The government of nation-states is supposed to serve the people of that nation. Just as a loving father provides for the needs of his family, the nation-state should provide for the needs of all its families. God gave the families of Noah an inheritance in the earth. That inheritance or land was given to those people to sustain them. It was theirs to have and to hold. Thus the nation-state is to main-

tain sovereignty over its land and people. Sovereignty means that nations have the right to hold their land and govern their people.

Some nation-states developed in a way that allowed freedom for the individual to grow and prosper. Other nation-states developed along dictatorial lines and subjugated their own people. The annals of history stand in silent testimony to the success or failure of nation-states.

Many of the dictators of nation-states gained enough power, resources and control over their people to conquer other nation-states. Names like Alexander the Great and Ghengis Khan come to mind. The subjugated countries were called empires because they were under one ruler. But empires were built through the conquest of nation-states.

The creation of today's superstate

Today, a great superstate is being created in far more subtle ways. A superstructure is being imposed over the nations through a different form of conquest. That conquest is mainly economic, but it has far-reaching political and military implications. The modern superstate is being developed in the name of globalization. The concept of globalization flows so easily from the lips of the world's political and economic leaders. However, the leaders of the European Union have identified globalization as one of the obstacles standing in the way of their quest for complete union. So the new president of the EU states that Europe must be transformed into a superstate in order to compete in the global economy.

*Bible
prophecy
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great
superstate
and a
universal
religion are
going to rule
over the earth
before Christ
returns to
establish His
kingdom.*

In a recent speech, European Commission President Romano Prodi stated that “globalization means above all the impossibility of escaping from the challenge of the markets: in our world, it has become hard to hide. Shutting oneself up in a fortress makes no sense, given that the two central features that have accelerated globalization, namely information technology and financial markets, have no frontiers.” Prodi went on to say that “in order to tackle these issues, Europe needs a new political dimension” (Electronic Telegraph, April 13, 1999). The new political dimension that Prodi advocates is the federalization of Europe. This means a central government or super government imposed over the existing member states. Prodi has recently released the report for developing a superstate.

Prodi commissioned the report shortly after being appointed president of the European Commission. Members of the council of “wise-men” include Richard Von Weizsacker, former president of Germany, Jean-Luc Dehaene, a former Belgian prime minister and Lord Simon of Highbury, former chairman of British Petroleum.

At the heart of the report is a proposal that would strip member states of their veto powers over a wide range of issues. At the present time member states have veto powers on European Union security, foreign policy, justice and home affairs. But most importantly they have veto powers over tax matters. Moreover, the report advocates reshaping of the Union’s bureaucracy into a federalized European government (Electronic Telegraph, October 19, 1999).

Fundamental changes proposed for European superstate

President Prodi’s plans for the formation of a European superstate have outraged some members of Britain’s Tory party. Tory critics have

accused Prodi of setting out a “nightmare scenario” for Europe. After the report was released, British Prime Minister Tony Blair jumped on Prodi’s bandwagon and agreed that majority voting should replace the old veto system; otherwise “any country could stop, any change at any time.” The Tories condemned such a move as a “blueprint for a European superstate” (Electronic Telegraph, October 18, 1999).

Blair is now feeling the political heat at home and may soften his stance, especially on the tax issue. The peoples of member states are not anxious to have bureaucrats in Brussels impose a tax on them.

Perhaps the most startling legislation that is being considered in the EU is a federal judicial system. The European parliament has recently

Today, a great superstate is being created in far more subtle ways. A superstructure is being imposed over the nations through a different form of conquest.... The modern superstate is being developed in the name of globalization.

proposed by a broad majority the creation of a single European legal system, corpus juris. If the corpus juris system is adopted by member states, it would replace English and Scottish law. The ancient English habeas corpus of trial before jury would be replaced with an inquisitorial system. Under corpus juris an EU official would be able to have anyone arrested and imprisoned indefinitely without presenting any evidence that would warrant an indictment. Instead

of a person being presumed innocent until proven guilty, one would have to prove his or her innocence. Even if a person is found innocent, he or she could be re-arrested immediately on the same charges.

Britain’s reaction to this proposal has been very strong. On May 30, 1999, the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities issued a damning report on “Corpus Juris,” the EU’s plan for a common criminal code and the establishment of a European Public Prosecutor (EPP).

Entitled “Prosecuting Fraud on the Communities’ Finances—The Corpus Juris,” the Select Committee’s report raises serious objections on the grounds that it would involve major changes to U.K. criminal law, it lacks a proper legal basis in the EU and EC Treaties, there are serious questions about its feasibility, the EPP would not be accountable to democratically elected representatives and there is inadequate protection for defendants’ rights (individuals could be held in custody without charge, for up to nine months).

Lord Stoddart of Swindon, chairman of the Campaign for an Independent Britain, welcomed the report: “I am pleased that the Select Committee has analysed Corpus Juris so thoroughly and exposed it for what it really is, i.e. an attempt to take away our traditional right to trial by jury and replace it with a dictatorial European Public Prosecutor with immense powers. Such an arrangement would be an affront to all that we hold dear in this country.

“What I find particularly astonishing is that Labour MEPs [members of the European Parliament] voted so overwhelmingly in favour of such a flawed and dangerous proposal in the European Parliament on 13th April. I was under the impression that it was the policy of Her Majesty’s Government to oppose Corpus Juris and to veto it if necessary. In fact, only one British MEP and an Ulster Unionist voted against the proposal” (URL: www.bullen.demon.co.uk/prjuris.htm).

NATO to become the army of the United States of Europe

After the 50th anniversary meeting of NATO, an official communiqué was issued stating that the EU is to be given full access to NATO planning and capabilities. A special command structure is to be created that would allow the Commission to command European NATO troops in a wide range of possible operations.

These operations could include humanitarian or peacekeeping duties in Europe, including the whole Euro-Atlantic Region. This means it would include most of Russia and the Balkans. Their powers could include stopping secession from the European Union.

Following this communiqué the president of the European Commission announced that he hopes this move will lead to the formation of an EU army, navy and air force. If this plan is implemented, the armed forces of EU member states would no longer be under the direct control of national governments. This plan has already been executed with the participation of NATO's superpower, the United States of America, in recent operations in the Balkans. Presently NATO—under the auspices of the United Nations—is involved as peace enforcers in the Balkans. In fact almost every military action in recent years has been conducted under the banner of the United Nations or NATO.

The European superstate is rapidly becoming a reality. It should be noted with great emphasis that even though this superstate is emerging very rapidly, it is still subservient in many ways to the United Nations.

U.S. leaders favor global administration

Many of the top officials in the Clinton administration are convinced that in order for the world to solve its collective problems, the world must

become a global administration. In practical terms this means the dissolution of the nation-state in its current form. In reality the nation-state would continue to function but as a vassal state to the global authority. This superstate has already been imposed over the nations to a large degree. The United States and its allies formulate and execute foreign policy in the forum of public opinion as determined by the United Nations.

No other member of the Clinton administration reflects the desire for global government more fervently than Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. He believes the United States may not exist in its current form in the 21st century—because nationhood throughout the world will become obsolete. Talbott restated his position recently as he was profiled

The nations that comprise this satanically inspired superstate will fight against the returning Jesus Christ and the saints.... At that critical juncture in human history Jesus Christ will establish His kingdom over the earth.

in the *New York Times* for the second time in six months.

Just before joining the Clinton administration, Talbott wrote an essay titled "The Birth of the Global Nation" that was published in the July 20, 1992, issue of *Time* magazine. In the essay, Talbott stated that he is looking forward to government run by "one global authority." He continued the theme by giving his hopes for the future of humanity and nationhood by asserting, "here is one optimist's reason for believing unity will pre-

vail...within the next hundred years...nationhood as we know it will be obsolete; all states will recognize a single, global authority. A phrase briefly fashionable in the mid-20th century—"citizen of the world"—will have assumed real meaning by the end of the 21st." Strobe Talbott may be more of a prophet than he realizes.

God's answer to the coming superstate and the religious power

Bible prophecy reveals that a great superstate and a universal religion are going to rule over the earth just before Christ returns. No nation will be able to make war against this superstate and this religious authority.

Moreover, every person on earth whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life will be deceived into worshipping the beast (Revelation 13:4–8).

The nations that comprise this satanically inspired superstate will fight against the returning Jesus Christ and the saints. "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:12–14, King James Version throughout).

At that critical juncture in human history Jesus Christ will establish His kingdom over the earth. "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15). This superstate will rule the earth in righteousness and love. Nations will beat their swords into plowshares and they will learn war no more. Yes, the superstate is coming! ❖

A New Military Might in the Middle East

Nations that initially formed a common market now move to form a common military. It's a logical and necessary step. But what effect will it have on its members and the rest of the world?

by Cecil E. Maranville

Several years ago, six nations joined their economic forces for the sake of creating a free trade zone that would mutually benefit all members. Their combined economic force is an undisputed powerhouse in the world economy. As time progressed, the member states realized that they also needed to give serious consideration to forming a joint military force due to potentially hostile neighbors that threatened the prosperity of their economic community.

Like many regions of the world, the member states of this common market depended upon the U.S. military might for protection. However, it became increasingly necessary that the market members invest in developing their own modern military with a focus on becoming independent of the U.S.

So far this could appear to be the story of the European Union and a description of the evolution of a European defense force. But this article is not about the politically hot topic of the development of a European army.

In actual fact, it refers to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a common market in the Persian Gulf consisting of Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). GCC Secretary-General Jamil I. Alhejailan explains its history and purpose:

“The GCC was created in 1981 for many of the same reasons that the European Union was formed. The objective was not to form a military or security alliance aimed at specific external threats, but to create a political and economic community that would strengthen GCC institutions and foster economic growth and development.

“Like the European Union (EU), the GCC area has become a single market in which goods, capital, and people can move freely. The



The Gulf Cooperation Council is a common market in the Persian Gulf region made up of Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

creation of common external tariffs and free trade agreements with other economic communities are our next goals. The GCC countries have also achieved a high degree of economic coordination and convergence. Exchange rates between the six member states have remained fixed for more than a decade; inflation rates have converged and the economies follow similar economic cycles” (*Middle East Insight Magazine*, May-June 1999, “Can the GCC Control Oil Production?”).

A military alliance

Although a military alliance was not within the initial parameters of the GCC’s foundation, circumstances have changed.

The GCC’s 20th summit opened in Saudi

Although a military alliance was not within the initial parameters of the Gulf Cooperation Council’s foundation, circumstances have changed.

Arabia on November 27, 1999, with one of its main objectives the increased integration of the militaries of its member states. Stratfor, the intelligence analysis group, reports that the GCC members are “striving for an unprecedented level of integration between their militaries” (“Gulf Militaries Make a Big Move,” November 17, 1999, emphasis added throughout).

The summit follows on the heels of a meeting of the defense ministers of the GCC while attending an international air show in Dubai, U.A.E., in mid-November. “Military cooperation between Gulf states has passed some important stages...with a view to coming to an agreement and bringing them closer together” said Secretary-General Alhejailan (AFP, “Gulf Arab States Meet to Set Up Mutual Defence [sic] Pact,” November 16, 1999).

The pact, signed by all GCC defense ministers, presents an image of firm resolve, stipulating, “all outside aggression against a GCC member state is considered an aggression against all the members,” said Kuwaiti Defense Minister Sheikh Salem Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah (ibid. AFP).

Bahrain’s defense minister reported to his government “the [Dubai] meeting discussed a number of issues aimed at fostering military co-operation and coordination among GCC states to serve the strategies and objectives of the states in bolstering security and stability in the region...” (*Bahrain Tribune Daily*, November 23, 1999, “High Hopes From GCC Summit”).

This all comes on the heels of a recently sealed \$6 billion deal by which the U.A.E. will obtain 80 sophisticated fighter aircraft—F-16s—from the U.S. An increase in armaments in the Gulf is a sensitive issue, as the U.S. seeks to maintain a tactical balance between regional states, especially with Israel.

Peninsula Shield reinforced

Military allegiances are not new to the GCC, but the proposed level of materiel, technology and financial commitment is unprecedented. “Peninsula Shield,” a Gulf defense

force established in 1986, proved woefully inadequate to counter the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Nonetheless, in the words of Secretary-General Alhejailan, it remains “a symbol of military cooperation” (*Kuwaiti Times*, “Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait Most Dangerous Gulf Challenge,” November 21, 1999).

That cooperation thus far has produced a relatively small standing army of 4,000 men currently based in Hafar al-Batin in Saudi Arabia. Jolted by the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait, the GCC has significantly increased its air power since the Gulf War. Prior to the war, the GCC was virtually without air power with the exception of the Saudi air force of 62 F-15s.

“If the belief that the United States can be counted on diminishes, the GCC states may wish to be able to provide for a significant portion of their own defense.”

“Today, nearly all of these nations have advanced fighter aircraft, including F-16s in Bahrain, Mirage 2000s in the U.A.E. and Qatar, and Tornados, plus more F-15s, in Saudi Arabia. Oman and Kuwait still lag behind, as Oman is still using the British-made Hawks it had 10 years ago and Kuwait only maintains a few Mirage F1s” (ibid. Stratfor).

Note that as arms merchants, the Americans (F-15s and F-16s), French (Mirage 2000s) and the British (Tornados) recoup some of their considerable expenditures on oil.

The lack of hardware was only part of the weakness of the GCC defenses. Equally important was the lack of coordinated command and control facilities that could manage a joint operation. U.A.E. chief of staff General Mohammad bin Zayed al-Nahayan

called on the GCC to overcome these obstacles, telling GCC chiefs of staff in October, “We must increase joint manoeuvres [sic], exchange expertise and step up our capacities so as to build a unified air defence [sic] system for the GCC countries to rely on ourselves” (ibid. AFP).

Key to integrating forces is telecommunications, for which the GCC committed \$70 million at their 1997 summit. In addition, \$88 million was approved for purchasing a radar network (from U.S.-based Hughes) at the Dubai meeting of GCC defense ministers. “While earlier GCC meetings had discussed integration, this meeting is one of the few instances where concrete steps may actually be taken. Integrating radar systems is a significant step and will likely lead to combining others” (ibid. Stratfor).

Oil revenues help pay the tab

Paying for all of this has been aided by surging oil revenues. Oil prices are now at a nine-year high—the highest since the Gulf War—and more than double what they were at the beginning of 1999. Michael Young of Deutsche Bank forecasts that the trend will continue, based upon the ever-increasing demand for oil and “the expectation that OPEC will keep production below 27 million barrels per day through March of 2000” (BBC, “Business: The Economy, Oil Prices at Three-year High,” November 11, 1999).

GCC’s secretary-general keeps a practiced eye on the oil market. His forecast mirrors that of the Deutsche Bank. “The revival of oil demand growth in the next year or two is now widely expected. The combination of low prices and the recovery of the Asian economies will stimulate demand. The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts an increase in global oil demand of 1.4 [million] barrels per day (mbd) in 1999. More importantly, in its December 1998 World Energy Outlook, the IEA forecasts world oil demand to increase from 72 mbd in 1996 to 94.8 mbd in 2010.

This represents an increase of 22.8 mbd” (ibid. *Middle East Insight*).

Where this may be heading

What is the future for the GCC military? In the short term, it will most likely continue to coordinate with U.S. interests in the Gulf. More significant is the long-term trend.

“[A] Gulf alliance may ultimately become less beholden to the U.S. military presence. As a result [of the threat posed by Iraq and Iran], the U.S. presence is appreciated and even encouraged, for now. But U.S. strategy in the region is drifting. And if the belief that the United States can be counted on diminishes, the GCC states may wish to be able to provide for a significant portion of their own defense.... *But if the regional balance of power changes, the GCC may step out on its own*” (ibid. Stratfor).

Without doubt, that is an “if” that’s bound to find its way to reality. Given the volatility of Middle East politics, it’s a virtual certainty that the balance of power in the Gulf *will* change.

What does Bible prophecy indicate for the Gulf region? As most readers of *World News and Prophecy* realize, prophecy pivots on the nation of Israel (not the same as the *nation-state* called Israel), with an end time emphasis on the correlation between a revitalized modern resurrection of the Roman Empire and the descendants of the ancient tribes of Israel. Rome’s Empire was seated in Europe, the likely site of its reconstitution. The predominant descendants of Israel, who have inherited both benefits and bane foretold by God’s prophets, are the United States, Britain and its former colonies. Some of the descendants of another of the ancient tribes, Judah, occupy and govern the nation-state of Israel.

These regions and nations all currently play major roles in the modern world. They affect and are affected by events in the Persian Gulf region. Without doubt, the seeds are already being sown for more dramatic changes, which are precursors of the pre-Armageddon alignment of the world’s nations.

Daniel foretold Middle East geopolitics

Daniel was stirred to write in detail of Middle Eastern geopolitics. One of his visions foretold the clash between Alexander’s army and that of the Medo-Persians, which resulted in the young Greek’s dominance of the known world (Daniel 8). Crucial to this article is what happened *after* Alexander the Great died a premature death.

“Therefore the male goat [symbolic of Alexander of Macedon] grew very great; but when he became strong [at the peak of his empire and in his 30s], the large horn was broken [he died a premature death], and in place of it four notable ones [generals of his army] came up toward the four winds of heaven [each ruled a segment of the former empire, divided into east, west, north and south]” (Daniel 8:8).

Later, at the hand of the angel Gabriel, Daniel was told that at the time of the end there would be conflict between two powers respectively called “the king of the North” and “the king of the South.” Palestine and Jerusalem will be the geographical focal point of this conflict (Daniel 11:40–45)

Some commentators in an attempt to explain Daniel’s writings as historical rather than prophetic interpret this to refer to “the end of Antiochus Epiphanes.” Many also interpret these writings as relating to the Jewish peoples, viewing the prophecy in the narrow context of the Middle East alone.

However, examining the rest of the book of Daniel clearly reveals that he was indeed inspired with a vision of *the world’s powers* from his day through to and including the return of Jesus Christ to establish the kingdom of God on earth. It’s therefore consistent with the entire book to understand the final verses of chapter 11 as a reference to the end of the age of man—shortly before Christ’s return.

The “king of the South”

However, who is “the king of the South”? Clearly this is also an end time power. As the final “king of the North”

is not yet fully configured, so also “the king of the South” remains obscure. At the peak of his power, some have speculated that the Shah of Iran might fulfill this role, as he surged towards his objective to create a modern Persian military power. With his demise, watchers of Middle Eastern affairs considered the possibility that the religious government that succeeded him would emerge as a contender for this provocative role in the end time.

Saddam Hussein in neighboring Iraq took on a warlike profile that appeared more likely to be the principal protagonist. Because of Daniel’s prophecy, many Bible students looked at the Gulf War (Desert Storm) as a catalyst that would begin a domino action of events leading to the denouement of the age of man. Based upon the same thinking, some predicted disaster for the United States’ continuing military actions against Iraq.

Iraq and its bellicose leader still pose a serious threat to world security—although intelligence analysts speak of an expected change of government in Iraq. It is in response to the threat from Iraq and Iran that the GCC member states realized their need for a security force. Their members are peaceful—not to be compared with the radical elements in the region. The GCC is intent on strengthening and protecting the economies and territories of its member states.

So another significant military force is evolving.

Geographically, they are *south* of Jerusalem, the focal point for relative directions in prophecy to north, south, east or west. That’s in contrast to Iraq and Iran, which lie to the northeast. Of course *World News and Prophecy* is not making a prediction that the GCC will evolve into the “king of the South” of Daniel 11:40, as we do not make predictions. However, we *do* watch for significant trends in world news, comparing them with the Bible’s predictions.

The Persian Gulf and the GCC’s greatly increased commitment to military strength in concert with its formidable economic capability bear watching. ❖

“WALLS,” (Continued from page 16)

the three architects of that event came together to be honored in Berlin for their cool-headed direction of that emotional drama. Williams squarely focuses on the challenges that faced Gorbachev, Kohl and Bush as they collectively maneuvered through “the hopes and fears of November 9, 1989, when the world as they knew it changed overnight.” It struck me that hope and fear are very close neighbors in the realm of human emotions. Yet, one tends to supersede the other in climactic moments. She quotes Kohl, then German chancellor, “It was like being on a frozen sea when it begins to break up, beginning with one enormous crack.” He goes on to share that he “worried that the euphoria in the first hours of eastern Germany’s freedom could escalate into bloody chaos.” As chancellor, he was sitting right on top of the crack.

Mikhail Gorbachev, then head of the now defunct Soviet Union, had a different set of challenges. In his own words, “Some Red Army generals and KGB figures clearly wanted to take more decisive action to keep East Germany in the Soviet orbit, but no serious threat of military intervention was ever considered.” Gorbachev warned former East German Presidents Krenz and his predecessor Honecker that there would be no Soviet intervention to keep them in power if the people of East Germany wanted democracy and free elections. During a visit to East Germany, Gorbachev had told Honecker that “history punishes those who are late”—a profound statement indeed. And it’s a somber indictment upon those who don’t understand history. What goes up, must come down!

The book of Ecclesiastes alludes to this cycle. “[There is] a time to break down, and a time to build up...a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather...a time to keep, and a time to throw away” (chapter 3:3, 5, 6). Recognizing the start and finish of these cycles in world affairs and having the courage to confront them is the difference between simply being a politician and becoming a statesman. Windows of opportunity come and go. Knowing *when* to do something and boldly moving through that opening is just as important as knowing *what* to do!

“We moved towards history”

Williams added Kohl’s touching emotional tribute to the steady leadership of the leaders of the two superpowers. “Without these two world powers and what they did, the confidence that they had in us, none of this would

have been possible.” Kohl was on the edge of tears and patting Gorbachev’s hand as he recalled the historic moment. Williams accurately captures the geopolitical trauma of that time. Many in Eastern Europe were wary of German reunification, but with Gorbachev’s consent, along with that of the U.S., Britain and France (the governing powers of post-war Germany), the fears of Poland and other victimized nations of World War II were allayed. Gorbachev gave sharp definition to the moment and action: “We didn’t resist reality, we moved towards history.”

Former President Bush, the third player in this drama, related some of the dilemmas of his role in removing this obstacle of fear and repression. Williams states that Bush at that time had concern that too much celebration of Cold War victory might backfire on the Soviet leader. “We in no way wanted to make life more complicated for Gorbachev.” This fear comes to the fore again and again in recently declassified papers of Bush’s administration surrounding this period of superpower cooperation. Some in Washington felt that Bush was “too restrained.”

As we look back, it’s clear that Mr. Bush chose not to put his energy into “a morning-after party of Western victory,” but rather into the peaceful dismantling of a terrible wall. The lessons of history are fraught with the evidence that overdone victories and rigid peace terms are merely the seeds of despair, as well as of the next conflict. Gorbachev credited both Bush and Kohl by telling of the trust he had “in both men to keep the emotions of the period under control to avoid further upsets in the roiling Soviet Union.”

“Moving towards history” can come with a price tag. As Williams goes on to state, “ironically, the three world leaders whose close coordination and confidence in one another allowed the denouement of East Germany’s liberation to transpire without bloodshed also paid a price.

“Gorbachev was ousted from the Kremlin in 1991, Bush would lose an election to Bill Clinton in 1992, and Kohl’s 16-year reign as Germany’s leader ended last year. Yet at the end of the 10-year commemorations to the Berlin Wall’s demise, these men were lauded by the world famous Soviet-born cellist, Mstislav Rostropovich. He memorialized the entire affair with a musical eulogy dedicated to the fallen victims who were killed in their attempt to escape over the wall and to the leaders who knew ‘when to cast away stones.’ Rostropovich defined the concert as a personal tribute to these ‘three great men, these three great kings.’”

These three men put their energy into the peaceful dismantling of the Berlin Wall. The lessons of history are fraught with the evidence that overdone victories and rigid peace terms are merely the seeds of despair, as well as of the next conflict.

Shouldering the responsibility

As I read this article about worldly leaders tackling an obstacle together, certain biblical principles began to resonate through my mind. Here, at one pivotal point of world history, were three men with different languages, ideologies, agendas and faiths (or the absence of faith). Yet together, whether they understood it or not, they were attuned to some powerful godly principles in destroying a divisive wall and building bridges towards healthy relationships. At the end of the ceremonies, Gorbachev looked around and said, “We managed to shoulder this responsibility well.” These three men didn’t act alone, but are thought of as a union of three just as Rostropovich dubbed them “three great men, three great kings.”

God vividly illustrates in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 that working together simply produces more strength and well being for all involved. “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

President Bush in his pivotal role as leader of the free world showed great concern not to overtly blow the victory horn. What does your Bible say about pride? How do we relate it to diplomacy abroad and in our homes? Proverbs 16:18 warns that “pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall,” but verse 19 continues with the encouragement: “Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.” “The Fall of the Wall” could have been great spoil! Instead, there was humble, sensitive outgoing concern by leaders who rose to the level of statesmen. Notice the warning and encouragement of Proverbs 13:10: “By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom.”

A world without walls

Notice in Isaiah 2:12–17 what God declares He is going to do when He introduces a new civilization to this earth. “For the day of the LORD of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up—and it shall be brought low—upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; upon all the high mountains, and upon all the

hills that are lifted up; upon every high tower, and upon every fortified wall; upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all the beautiful sloops. The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.” What goes up, will come down once and for all.

The kingdom of God is going to dramatically alter human history. There will be no more succession of kingdoms, armies or walls built on the graves of previous earthly societies. The “Ageless Kingdom” will, henceforth, simply be—there will be none other to take its place. Isaiah 26:1–2 reveals that this kingdom has a different form of protection. “We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in.” Humanity will no longer spend its collective intellect and creative energy on walls—whether literal or in the form of myriad weapons—but come to trust in a world that will see its citizens focus on relationships with God and one another, “eye to eye and heart to heart.” All will enjoy freedom of movement, freedom to grow, freedom from fear and freedom to see one another, because no wall blocks their view.

Don’t resist the reality

If the truth were known, all of us have a lot more walls in our life than is spiritually healthy for a Christian. Not walls of stone like the Berlin Wall or even the garden wall out your back door, but walls put up over time between family, friends and fellow Christians that appear just as formidable as any of the great walls of history.

The reality is not whether we have personal walls to confront, but what we are going to do with them. It takes a lot of wasteful energy to maintain and sustain barriers of fear, be they brick or be they emotion. Let me ask a simple and direct question to you the reader. How many walls have you put up between yourself and others this past year, and how many bridges have you built towards others who aren’t necessarily your first choice of neighbors, friends, coworkers or family members? Your answer to this question is a revealingly accurate measurement as to how much you truly want to be a part of a future “world without walls.” Yes, we all have some work to do in “bridge building.”

Three wise men in their time oversaw the demolition of a wall that lay in their path. Their wisdom echoes the millennial refrain, “This is the way, walk you in it,” as they shouldered the opportunity not to resist the reality before them, but moved towards the future, together. ❖

If the truth were known, all of us have a lot more walls in our life than is spiritually healthy. Not walls of stone, but walls put up over time between family, friends and fellow Christians that appear just as formidable...

This Is the Way... Building Walls or Building Bridges?

by Robin Webber

Walls have always had an incredible impact on human society. These man-made structures have been used for various functions over the millennia. They have been used to defend cities, to seal off entire populations from entering an empire—or to prevent a country's own citizens from leaving. It has often been noted that the one human structure that can be seen from outer space is the Great Wall of China. This fact alone is an amazing commentary on the diversity of human history.

What goes up must come down

One of the best known maxims of all times is “what goes up, must come down!” This note of wisdom holds true not only for the law of gravity, but also for the forces of human history. Most walls have ultimately failed to achieve their designated purpose. They have been gone over, gone through or gone under by their attackers. Some tumbled by divine will. Others simply crumbled as they outlived their now forgotten purpose. So why do we keep building walls if ultimately they don't work? In our time, we witnessed the peaceful collapse of the most famous wall of modern

time, the Berlin Wall—the cornerstone of the great “Iron Curtain” that created two Europes for much of this century. This imposing structure, too, has fallen—in a far different way than most.

Recently, *Los Angeles Times* staff writer Carol J. Williams wrote a thought-provoking article titled “Wall-Toppling Trio Honored at Berlin Reunion” that commemorated the 10th anniversary of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall (November 11, 1999). Her article personally challenged me to contemplate the delicate balance of that pivotal moment. In fact, it allowed me to fully focus on the fact that it is often easier to build a wall than it is to take one down. She shared the personal recollections of George Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev and Helmut Kohl regarding this pivotal event. Their reflections on this historic moment are a seminar in statesmanship, and provide Christians with a valuable lesson.

Hopes and fears

The *Los Angeles Times* article reports on the “victory lap” of 10 years after “the Fall of the Wall” when
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