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Where Are We Now in Prophecy?

Are today's headlines foretold in the pages of your Bible? Is there a message of hope beyond the gloom and doom news cycle of today's world? Jesus Christ was a prophet; He forecast the overall sequence of events of the world from His time on into the future. His futuristic message was current then and it's current today.

by Darris McNeely

Occasionally we receive inquiries from students of prophecy who ask, "Where are we now in Bible prophecy?" People naturally want to understand where we are in the march of end-time prophetic events.

Someone recently sent me an e-mail about a fantastic scenario of the end time based on several nonbiblical events. It sought to pinpoint exactly where we were prior to the coming of Christ and the end of the age. I can't fault a person for wanting to understand. After all, it was the apostles who first posed the question to Christ while in Jerusalem. "What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" they asked.

Like the apostles, we ask the same question. We want to know how close we are to the time of 10 kings appearing and the time of a great fearsome person or system called "the beast." We want to know who the "false prophet" may be.

Daniel the prophet sought the same detailed understanding of the fantastic visions given to him in his day. Servants of God through the ages have wanted to understand their times, whether they were living in the end days and if they would be among the generation to see Christ return in His glory.

Students of Bible prophecy are like the disciples and Daniel. We want understanding and we want to know when—when will the Beast power come together,

when will the Great Tribulation begin. We want to know who will be the man of sin from 2 Thessalonians. We want to construct elaborate timelines to align references to days and weeks, all in an attempt to determine, "as close as we can without setting dates," the time when Christ will return. Like the precision mind of an engineer, we analyze a complex prophecy like Daniel's 70 weeks, attempting to put together the pieces of a historical, geographical and theological puzzle that only God can divine.

But where do we begin to answer this question of the ages? Rather than in Matthew 24, let's go to what Christ revealed to John while the apostle was on the island of Patmos. Doing so will help us get an overview that is critical to keeping a balanced perspective on prophecy.

Balance is a critical key

So often we want to get into the minutiae of prophetic subjects with the intent of understanding everything. Sometimes we want to know all the secrets now, forgetting that God will veil them until the time when He wants to reveal all.

Amos says, "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Would we not do better to adopt a larger overview of Bible prophecy, accepting what God chooses to

(See "NOW," page 3)



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The mission of *World News and Prophecy* (WNP) is to provide United Church of God members and other interested persons with commentary and analysis of selected world news topics in the light of Bible prophecy. Its purpose is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of the answers Christ gave to His disciples' questions: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Day of Rain, Day of Sun

As I write this column, the political convention season is in full swing as the two leading candidates for the U.S. presidency are presenting their cases to their parties and the American people. Rhetoric flows. Challenges are thrown down. And promises for a better tomorrow are made, as they are every four years in an endless cycle that has the same refrain. Honestly, take away the faces and you can almost use the same speeches every four years.

This could be called the summer of the American presidency. We have the conventions and candidates gearing up for a tough, acrimonious campaign. But earlier we had another presidential moment, one that does not come too often. In early June America laid to rest its 40th president, Ronald Reagan. America may not have all the pomp and circumstance of its mother country, but when it holds a state funeral, it does so with style, grace and the appropriate majesty. The weeklong remembrance and celebration of this man's life was a welcome pause in the political season.

June 11 was the day for a national ceremony and burial. The National Cathedral in Washington was set for a gathering of national and world leaders. Dawn brought rain. Watching the soldiers carry the casket from the Capitol Rotunda down the steep west steps, you held your breath hoping they would not slip on the wet pavement. Headlights from the limos cut a path of light through the streets as the procession made its way to the service.

All the living American presidents were gathered for the service. Two of them gave eulogies. The words of the hymn "The Mansions of the Lord" concluded the service.

To fallen soldiers let us sing / Where no rockets fly nor bullets wing / Our broken brothers let us bring / To the mansions of the Lord

No more bleeding no more fight / No prayers pleading through the night / Just divine embrace, eternal light / In the mansions of the Lord

Where no mothers cry and no children weep / We will stand and guard to the angels sleep / All through the ages safely keep / The mansions of the Lord.

The hymn is a call for a time when strife ceases and the pain of war is removed from mothers and children. It speaks to the age-long hope of all peoples. What most don't understand is that this hope will only be realized when Jesus Christ returns to this earth in the power of the heavens and restores the just and righteous rule of the Kingdom of God. God's eternal gospel carries that message of hope. I have read enough of the life of Ronald Reagan to know he held a deep desire to rid the world of nuclear weapons and end the possibility of nuclear holocaust. It was perhaps the defining theme of his presidency.

A presidential jet carried Reagan's body back to California where it was laid to rest later that day on the grounds of his presidential library in Simi Valley. In contrast to the rain of the morning, the day ended with a beautiful western sunset framing the ocean, the hills and the flag-draped coffin. It was a fitting conclusion for a man who looked at America as a "shining city on a hill." He wished her to have a "bright new dawn ahead."

Reagan's wish will come true. Not in this age and not at the hands of today's aspiring leaders. It will be true in the age to come when those who exercise power will be as those described by King David. "He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain" (2 Samuel 23:3-4).

—Darris McNeely

“NOW,” (Continued from page 1)

reveal and what He chooses to hide? Doing so would keep us from getting mired in the swamps of intricate details, which experience teaches us are tricky and treacherous.

In the first pages of the book of Revelation we see who the Revelator is. He is Jesus Christ. Notice in chapter 1: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw” (verses 1-2).

Here we focus on a little-understood role of Jesus. It is His role in telling the future, prophesying of things to come. This is a vital dimension of Christ’s ministry, which few fully understand and appreciate.

Here at the beginning of Revelation the scene is set. It is a glimpse of Christ in glory, in heaven among angels and stars and lamps, His face radiating power like the sun. In His hands He holds the power of the stars in heaven. His words carry force and weight and importance.

John describes the awesome scene: “I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,’ and, ‘What you see, write in a book . . .’ Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands 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 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.

“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 and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and



Photo © 2004 www.photos.com

The wailing wall in Jerusalem. Jerusalem plays a key role in end-time prophecies, when it will see the “abomination of desolation” and be surrounded by armies.

the things which will take place after this” (Revelation 1:10-19).

Christ is in charge of the events of the world. Nothing takes place without His and the Father’s notice (Revelation 4:11).

Christ the Revelator

During His earthly ministry Jesus spoke of a world to come in precise and unmistakable terms. It is a world where death, the enemy of man, will be destroyed: “But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more” (Luke 20:35-36, King James Version).

To His closest followers, those who would form the Church’s foundation as apostles, He said: “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30, KJV).

The reign of Christ, the first 1,000 years of which are called the Millennium because of the reference in Revelation 20 to a 1,000-year time span, will produce

this wonderful age. Many more scriptures, beyond the scope of this article, paint a picture of peace and productive cooperation among peoples and nations. It will be the utopian experience foretold by Isaiah, Ezekiel and other prophets. Peace, like a river, will flow through all the earth.

Before this time of peace there will be a time of world trouble and upheaval like none before. Christ spoke of these events as well with precise certainty. Notice the following unmistakable, interrelated events He foretold.

In Matthew 24, His longest prophetic lesson, Christ spoke of the “abomination of desolation,” involving a holy site in Jerusalem (verse 15).

A related unmistakable event is military operations around the city of Jerusalem. Notice Luke 21:20, “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh” (KJV). He warns those who are faithful followers to flee, indicating they will know who they are and exactly what they should do. These events will signal the beginning of another event called the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-16, 21).

Jerusalem has been surrounded and conquered many times in the past, but this section speaks of a time yet ahead when a sequence of specific events will coincide in a perfect prophetic storm.

Additionally, Christ indicates there will be a great spiritual deception (Matthew 24:24) that will even threaten to deceive the elect, God's chosen. Herein is a puzzling matter. The world is full of many students of the Bible who have accurate insight into today's world events and the connection to prophecy. They, too, look for



"Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is . . . But how is it you do not discern this time?" (Luke 12:54-56)

a power in Europe to arise and dominate the world. They look in all the right places for the appearance of two individuals, one secular and one religious, in fulfillment of Revelation 13. So why will there be a deception so great that only "the elect" will escape? What will they understand that many other people tuned in to prophecy will not?

Part of the answer lies in understanding how the Holy Spirit works in the people of God. The Spirit does lead us into all the truth as Christ said it would. Christ's faithful people worship Him in spirit and in truth, keeping themselves unspotted from this present evil world. Through the Spirit in them, they have the ability to understand the times and to be vigilant in their personal affairs. The spiritual deception of the end times will not impair their judgment.

Right now we are in a time best described as one of broad trends. We do "see darkly" in some cases as we await specific fulfillments. On the other hand, we

can see an unrelenting erosion of morality in society. General trends are important to understand. For if the elect are not able to identify and understand them, then deception is very likely. Sometimes a societal change takes place over several decades.

A recent *Wall Street Journal* column gave an example of how Western society has changed its morality over the past 40 years. There is a current revival of a play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, first produced in 1960, currently running on Broadway. The story is of a family set in 1950s America. It is an intact nuclear family where everyone works hard and dreams of success. An important moment in the plot comes when a character announces she is pregnant and has decided to have an abortion. She has already put \$5 payment toward the action with a neighborhood back-alley abortionist. Of course, in the 1950s abortion had not been legalized in the United States.

When this play first came out in 1960, it stirred agonizing emotions. Abortion was a moral matter dealing with the sanctity of life. Societal norms weighed heavily against this choice. But the reaction of a 2004 audience reflected a monumental shift in societal values in the ensuing decades:

"They heard the young woman say she was about to end the life of her child, and they applauded. Some of them cheered. It was stunning. The reaction seemed to startle the actors on stage, and shake their concentration.

"I was startled. I turned to my friend. 'We have just witnessed a terrible cultural moment,' I said. 'Don't I know it,' he responded. Afterwards, thinking about it, I said to my friend, 'When that play opened that plot point was understood—they knew it was tragic. And that was only what, 40 years ago.' He said, 'They would have known it was tragic even 25 years ago.' And it gave me a shiver because I knew it was true. So much progress followed the 1960s, in so many ways, but applauding abortion isn't progress. It's ugly" (Peggy Noonan, "'Raisin' and Falling," April 29, 2004).

Changes like this indicate a worsening moral climate in America and other large Western nations. Those who "sigh and cry" over the abominations of our nations are getting fewer and fewer. Trends like these lead to a time when faith will be scarce among the nations of the earth.

Christ spoke of discerning the times in which one lives. "Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?'" (Luke 12:54-56).

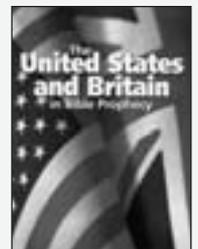
We have not seen the specific events to which Christ refers. When we do, they will be unmistakable to the elect. In our lifetimes we have seen a steady decline in the glory and strength of two peoples, America and Britain, two nations descended from two brothers upon whom the name of Israel and that of his fathers, Isaac and Abraham, had been placed (Genesis 48:16). (For a full biblical and historical explanation of why we identify these nations with Israel in prophecy, see our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

America and Britain have been a "multitude in the midst of the earth." They have dramatically influenced the past 200 years. That we can talk about the divine connection openly and in the midst of freedom and prosperity is an anomaly of history. It is due to God's ultimate mercy. But after this comes a judgment.

Where are we in prophecy? We are in a time when we should be watching, learning and repenting. It is a time to heed the warnings of Jesus Christ, the Revelator and greatest of all the prophets. ❖

Recommended Reading

To help you better understand the overview of prophecy, we have prepared several booklets. Please request *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*.



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

After Arafat

A second contentious dispute between Yasir Arafat and a second prime minister over the control of the Palestinian Security Services shows the world what kind of leader Arafat is—and what the Palestinian Authority will be like when he is gone.

by Cecil E. Maranville

Yasir Arafat, president of the Palestinian Authority (PA), isn't gone—yet. But his megalomaniacal leadership has put in place what will happen when he is. Already, sporadic gun battles take place in the streets of Palestinian towns and cities, as clan leaders and warlords jockey for power. For the most part, they still submit to Arafat, who strangely remains a symbol of opposition to Israel. But these gangs are positioning themselves to seize advantage when he is gone.

The legacy Arafat leaves will likely ensure that peace with Israel will not take place for a long time. But it will also ensure wretchedness for the people he is supposed to lead into security and nationhood.

Sources told *Time* magazine that Arafat said, "I know how to protect the Palestinian interests better than anyone else," when meeting with Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia (Matthew Rees and Jamil Hamad, "Arafat Under Fire," July 25, 2004). "I'm not going to surrender," he added, as if the latest dispute was a personal attack on him, instead of a revolt against the rot that permeates his organization.

Speaking of Arafat's leadership, Palestinian legislator Hana Ashrawi said, "We should put this one-man-show behind us" (*Jerusalem Post* Online Edition, July 26, 2004). She told of troubling rumors of a high volume of sales of weapons in both Gaza and the West Bank.

Arafat has governed the 3.7 million residents of the Palestinian territories like so many ruthless dictators in Middle East history, not like a democratically elected president. Of course, there has been only one presidential election, in 1996, and no date set for another. And, in that election, he saw to it that the only opponent he faced was a 73-year-old female social activist.

"Leadership" by force and bribery

Throughout his years of notoriety, from international terrorist to quasi head-of-state, he has managed those who might take over from him with Machiavellian skill. Instead of serving the people he presides over, he ensures that



Reuters/Loay Abu Haykel

Palestinian Authority President Yasir Arafat

the powerful continue to fight among themselves, thus controlling his people through carrot and stick. He channels millions of dollars of foreign aid to businessmen loyal to him and bribes government officials to remain in his camp.

Using the Al Qsa Martyrs' Brigade—a militia within the PA that is listed by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization—he wields his mafia-style control through lynchings, shootings, kidnappings, arrests and threats of violence—against Palestinians!

As often happens with those corrupt to the point of arrogance, Arafat in blatant nepotism appointed his unpopular and incapable cousin, Musa Arafat, over all PA security forces in late July. Musa in the past headed one of the many branches of security in the PA, military intelligence.

Violent protests erupted throughout the Palestinian territories. About 300 armed men seized the governor's office in Khan Yunis, a city in the Gaza Strip, holding it for several hours until the security officers received assurances

Clan leaders and warlords are beginning to jockey for power when Arafat is gone.

they would not lose their jobs in retribution for their rebellion.

Included in the 300 were members of the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, indicating that Arafat no longer has the full support of this violent and heavily armed terrorist band.

Others were members of the Palestinian Security Services—a concept that needs some explanation. According to the Oslo Accord of 1993, the PA could have only a police force—nothing approaching a paramilitary or military organization—that numbered no more than 30,000.

But the PA's security force numbers between 40,000 and 80,000, and its members carry automatic weapons, have armored vehicles, antitank and anti-aircraft missiles. Even at the low estimate of 40,000, the PA would be the most heavily policed territory in the world. And with that kind of weaponry, the security services are the beginnings of an army.

There are 12 different services operating within the Palestinian Security Services. They clash and compete with each other—sometimes violently. One of the services, Force 17, is a private security group of 3,000 whose sole responsibility is the protection of Arafat.

Palestinian cement builds Israeli barrier

In a stunning revelation on the heels of the International Court of Justice's decision that the Israeli barrier wall is illegal, a damning report by Palestinian legislators claims that Palestinian companies sold hundreds of thousands of tons of cement to Israel to create the wall, all with the knowledge and approval of Arafat.

"The report reveals that the cement originally came from Egyptian companies which supplied it at a huge discount of \$22 . . . a tonne to help rebuild dilapidated Palestinian houses or buildings bulldozed by the Israelis.

"Between September 2003 and March this year, 420,000 tonnes of cement were allegedly sent to three big Palestinian companies. According to the report, however, only 33,000 tonnes were sold in the Palestinian market. The vast bulk was transported to Israel on

trucks owned by the three firms. According to [Hassan] Khreishe [one of the report's three authors and council member from Tulkarm, a city in the West Bank], the cement was then sold with a mark-up of at least \$15 a tonne—and possibly as high as \$100—making profits of well over \$6 million . . . for company executives" (Inigo Gilmore, "Palestinian Cement for Israel Barrier," *The Telegraph* of Calcutta, India, July 26, 2004).

The report asserts that Arafat's government approved the transactions; that Arafat personally knew of the business

Thanks to the generosity of nations willing to send aid to the Palestinians, Arafat has hundreds of millions of dollars to work with, which he seems to use as he chooses . . . His personal worth is estimated to be at least \$1.3 billion.

dealings for five months before the report made them public, and that he did nothing to stop it, all the while condemning the construction of the wall.

Pilfered millions

Thanks to the generosity of nations willing to send aid to the Palestinians, Arafat has hundreds of millions of dollars to work with, which he seems to use as he chooses. Last September the International Monetary Fund found that he diverted \$900 million of donated monies into his private bank account. His personal worth is estimated to be at least \$1.3 billion. *CBS News* reported an additional fund of \$800 million that Arafat funneled into an account in the name of his wife, Suha, and daughter, in addition to \$100,000 given to Suha monthly by the Palestinian Authority.

In February of this year, French prosecutors opened an investigation into money laundering, focusing upon \$15 million paid into Suha Arafat's account between July 2002 and July 2003. Mrs. Arafat spends most of her time in Europe, living the luxurious

lifestyle of a queen. The French satirical publication *Le Canard Enchaîné* reported that Suha paid 2 million euros out of those funds to an interior decorator who is frequently employed by the world's jet-setters.

Using the huge resources of international aid as he chooses obviously gives Arafat untouchable power in the Palestinian Authority. Yet his family's luxury stands in horrible contrast to the poverty of the Palestinians in the camps of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Jessica Stern in *Terror in the Name of God* (2003) writes of seeing raw sewage pumped onto the sand surrounding Palestinian camps in which people live in depressing squalor, most of them without jobs.

Stern says that both Arafat's Fatah party and the Islamic terrorist group Hamas actually want to keep the Palestinians in poverty, because it keeps them dependent and therefore controllable. People would literally starve were it not for handouts from their corrupt government or from the terrorists.

This has nothing to do with Israel, but rather the leadership of Arafat. Had he condemned the intifada begun in 2000 by the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade instead of funding it, had he used the hundreds of millions of aid dollars to help Palestinians develop the businesses and skills to be self-supporting instead of as his personal treasure, had he stopped the rampant corruption within the Palestinian Authority instead of encouraging bribery and kickbacks, had he ordered the establishment of a police force instead of trying to create an army, had he brought the many tribal factions together instead of stirring up infighting, the Palestinian people would have a state of their own today.

Legacy of criminal self-indulgence

How will history remember Arafat? I believe it will judge him as a greedy, self-important man who caused grievous harm to his people.

Arafat's declaration, "I'm not going to surrender," to his most recent prime minister in the most recent blowup over who has authority over the Palestinian Security Services is telling. It's all about

Arafat. It's always been all about Arafat.

The crux issue is that security services must be taken out of Arafat's control and put under the prime minister. That is what Egypt and "the Quartet" (Russia, the United Nations, the United States and the European Union) demanded. That is what the first Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, was to do; it was what he tried to do; it was what he resigned over failing to do.

And in spite of promises that finally Prime Minister Queria will have authority to reform the security services, you can be sure that Arafat hasn't surrendered actual control.

Egypt borders the Gaza Strip and fears that, after Arafat, the Islamic terrorist group Hamas will take control. For their sake, Egypt pressed Arafat to reform the security services and put an end to the infighting between the various branches. Arafat refused Egypt's advice.

He seems to be doing the same with the Quartet's demand. Julie Stahl, CNSNews.com's Jerusalem bureau chief, cites Israeli intelligence sources as saying Arafat is waiting out what he hopes will be a change of administrations in Washington. The most frequent guest in the Clinton White House, Arafat is reportedly angered by the Bush administration's refusal to treat him with such deference. Whether a Kerry White House would embrace Arafat is uncertain, as so many revelations of corruption have surfaced in recent months.

Disaster in the wings

Why don't the Palestinian people overthrow the tyrant? As noted above, he controls the purse strings of their survival and he is willing to use his militia to enforce his will on them. But beyond these factors, he controls or bullies the media and the schools.

"While charming diplomatic dupes in the West with beautiful English-language statements, he has for years been rallying Palestinians to Jihad—in Arabic. It's all part of Arafat's cult of death. It starts by brainwashing youths not long after they are out of diapers, and the incitement continues with the bombardment of constant anti-



Reuters/Ammar Awad

Palestinian President Yasir Arafat, right, flashes a victory sign as Prime Minister Ahmed Queria looks on during a rally outside his headquarters in Ramallah Aug. 2. Palestinian areas have been rocked by upheaval in recent weeks, including kidnappings, street protests and gun battles between militants and security forces, in the biggest internal challenge to Arafat since he returned from exile a decade ago.

Semitism and calls to arms over radio and television. With so much venom injected into Palestinian hearts and minds, it's a fair question if peace can come even after Arafat exits stage left" (Joel Mowbray, "Arafat's Poisonous Reign Finally Being Challenged," Townhall.com, July 26, 2004).

A senior Fatah official told *Time's* Matthew Rees and Jamil Hamad that party leaders gave Arafat notice two years ago to clean his house up. Now it is dawning upon them that Arafat will not change. But if anyone other than Arafat attempts reform, for example Prime Minister Queria attempting to disarm the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade and other militias, Arafat has the people so primed that reform will appear to be giving in to Israeli interests.

Jane's Intelligence in its Feb. 18, 2004, foreign report suggests that a post-Arafat Palestinian Authority will fragment into small groups of warlords with their own armed forces. None will be large enough in itself to have the weight

to speak for all Palestinians. Any moderates who see that they could actually have their state through negotiations with Israel would not have any strength without the backing of warlords—who would not back negotiations.

After Arafat, then, there will be chaos in the PA. What's the worst that could happen? I mentioned above the fear that the Egyptians have of Hamas taking control of the Gaza Strip. An activist group calling itself Tanzim is closely allied with the terrorist Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade in the West Bank. The alliance views their joining arms with Hamas as a post-Arafat strategy for controlling the West Bank region too.

Think of what that means—radical Islamic terrorist control of land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. Arafat alive has been a disaster. Arafat dead could actually be worse.

Keep up with how events in this dynamically critical area of the world relate to prophecy with our free booklet, *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. ❖

Intelligence Failure—From Listening to the Wrong People?

Sept. 11 and the war in Iraq have both been partially blamed on bad intelligence. It came as no surprise to this World News and Prophecy writer.

by Melvin Rhodes

It comes as no surprise to my wife and me that there are fundamental weaknesses in American intelligence.

A little over 25 years ago we were residents in the West African nation of Ghana. At the time we were living under a military government known as the Supreme Military Council II (Reconstituted). The complicated name was to distinguish it from an earlier SMC that was in power at the time we arrived in Ghana in May of 1978.

The first SMC was led by General Ignatius Acheampong. He was removed from office in a palace coup six weeks after we arrived in the country. We first heard about the change on the BBC World Service from London, England. Another military leader replaced him, Major-General Fred Akuffo.

At the time the country was in rapid economic decline. You could say the economy was in free fall. With inflation estimated at about 600 percent a year (estimated because there was no government department trying to keep track of it) and worsening shortages of food, detergents, toiletries and other essentials, there were constant rumors of coups and countercoups. Such is life in the Third World.

Although we were faced with our own very real challenges just trying to survive it all, we did try to keep up with what was happening elsewhere. In January of that fateful year, 1979, the shah of Iran was overthrown. Looking back now 25 years, we can see how fateful a year it was, for subsequent events have plainly shown that the overthrow of the shah was the first victory for Islamic fundamentalism and a defeat for the U.S.-led West.

For months the U.S. State Department had been receiving intelligence reports from Iran that said the pro-American shah was stable and that the demonstrations occurring daily in different parts of the country were put on by a few rabble-rousers.

Intel turned out to be wrong. Very wrong.

And we are living with the consequences to this day.

Instability in West Africa

Why was it not a surprise to my wife and me? Because the same intelligence reports were going back to Washington D.C. from Accra, Ghana. According to intelligence, the government of Ghana was popular and stable.

The reports were also decidedly wrong. On June 4, 1979, Ghana's government was overthrown in a bloody coup that was uncharacteristic of the country. A new, anti-American, leftist military regime came to power with the aid of the radical Arab nationalist (now supposedly reformed) Colonel Gadhafi of Libya. Gadhafi himself had overthrown a pro-American monarchy in Libya 10 years earlier—after which he closed down British and American military bases in the country and kicked out most of their nationals.

Why did intel get it wrong in both Tehran and Accra? And, undoubtedly, in Tripoli back in '69? And later in other West African countries as one nation after another copied events in Ghana?

I believe the answer to that can be found in the affluent suburb of the Airport Residential Area in Accra. This is where most diplomats and expatriates (foreign nationals working in the country) live. Today houses there rent for about \$3,000 per month. This is in a country that has an official per capita income of about \$30 per month. Yes, per month.

How can some afford to rent at \$3,000 per month and others live on \$30 per month?

Well, Ghana's no different from other Third World nations. There's a small ruling elite that takes almost all the national wealth, leaving the vast majority (well over 90 percent) with little or nothing to live on.

Small elite group rules

This was illustrated very well by a segment

Intelligence reports have been wrong before. Although the reasons for failures are probably as complex as the elaborate intelligence communities themselves, consider an outsider's speculation about one simple factor that rarely seems to be given proper weight.

on CBS's *60 Minutes* program on July 18, 2004.

The news item came from Equatorial Guinea, another West African nation, but one which, on paper at least, is wealthy. Equatorial Guinea has oil—enough oil for every man, woman and child to receive something in the region of \$6,000 per year, per person, if its revenues were evenly distributed.

Instead, over 90 percent of the people live on less than one dollar a day.

It didn't take the *60 Minutes*' team long to discover why.

The president of the country lives in fabulous palaces in his native country, has two multimillion-dollar mansions in Washington, D.C., and has a son living in Paris' Ritz Hotel in a style that would make Dodi Fayed seem like a pauper. Dodi, you will remember, was Princess Diana's companion the night she (and he) was killed. He was receiving a monthly allowance of \$100,000 from his father, without doing any work.

If *60 Minutes* is correct, the son of the president of Equatorial Guinea lives a similar lifestyle to Dodi—driving around all day in a very expensive Lamborghini, spending millions on frivolous items bought at the best stores in Paris.

Why do the people put up with this president? One answer to that is that he is a lot nicer than his uncle, the previous president whom he overthrew more than two decades ago. The previous president, the first leader of the country after independence from Spain, was Macias Nguema, who killed an estimated one third of all the people in his country.

What was particularly interesting in this report, however, was the connection between the president of Equatorial Guinea and U.S. oil companies. Because his country sits on massive reserves of oil and because the United States needs the oil even more now with all the uncertainties in the Middle East, the current president of this West African nation is a frequent visitor to Washington.

I wouldn't be surprised if intelligence reports are coming back to Washington saying that his regime is



Reuters/Pool/Jacques Brimon

Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo holds talks with French President Jacques Chirac at the Elysee Palace in Paris, July 21, 2004.

stable and popular and that American interests are secure there.

But how would intelligence agents know any different?

Diplomats live in a different world

From my experience in Ghana, I believe that most people connected with the various embassies (whether involved in intelligence or not) spend most of their time socializing with each other. They have a very high standard of living with beautiful spacious homes. Their children attend expensive private schools. There is very little contact with the average citizen—unless they sit down and talk with their servants, which few are inclined to do.

A few weeks before the 1979 coup that overthrew the government of Ghana, we were visiting our American neighbor. He worked for USAID, the developmental arm of the U.S. government overseas. We were discussing the situation in Ghana. All four of us agreed that something dreadful was about to happen. We knew this because we were in tune with the ordinary people in the country, people who were truly suffering under an oppressive and

incompetent government, a government that had led people down the path to financial ruin.

It came as no surprise to us when the country erupted into violence a few weeks later. Nor will I be surprised when I hear on the news that the president of Equatorial Guinea has been overthrown and the assets of U.S. oil companies seized. A fabulously wealthy president presiding over a nation of paupers isn't going to enjoy power very long. As CBS showed, tongue in cheek, his popularity has already declined, from 99.7 percent in an "election" held a few years ago, to a mere 97.5 percent in a recent "election!"

The *60 Minutes* report showed the beautiful homes of U.S. oil workers in Equatorial Guinea—all built on prime land sold to them by the president, all protected by high walls. Neither oil workers nor intelligence agents, it seems, have much contact with the locals.

My experience tells me you can get more accurate information listening to American missionaries and aid workers, rather than the diplomats and intelligence agents who, it seems, live on the wrong side of town. ❖

Britain's Declining Respect for Biblical Values

Traditional values, like basic respect for the rights and dignity of others, are fast disappearing from a society steadily undermined by secularism and growing ignorance of the Bible. How do we rebuild a culture of respect?

by John Ross Schroeder

Spiritually speaking, what is being taught in the educational system can be very detrimental to our young people.

Have you experienced a driver carelessly cutting in front of you recently? Or walked past a group of youths who hurled abuse and foul language in your direction? What about people pushing in line? Today we see a serious and growing erosion of traditional biblical values such as respect for the dignity and rights of others.

"It's a tradition we have lost as our values are eroded," stated British Home Secretary David Blunkett as he "blamed parents who fail to accept responsibility for instilling *values of respect* in their families and a breakdown of neighbourliness in villages, towns and cities" (*Daily Mail*, May 21, 2004, emphasis added throughout).

Of course, Britons in the hundreds of thousands still show respect for others while conducting their daily lives. They not only behave in an orderly, civilized manner, but also have raised their children to imitate their own conduct. Nonetheless, many observers freely acknowledge a serious and growing erosion of traditional biblical values.

Myriads of examples

Newspaper columnist Melanie Phillips laments the waning of the quality of respect in the British Isles: "*You can see examples everywhere in the myriad incivilities of everyday life: the shouting and swearing in the streets, the lighted cigarettes dangled carelessly in children's faces by rush-hour crowds; the casual slovenliness on the Tube [subway], as passengers anti-socially chomp their way through hamburgers and leave rubbish littering the carriages.*

"You see it in schools where teachers find it increasingly impossible to impose their authority upon badly behaved pupils. You see it in those children's parents who proclaim the impossibility of controlling their children and then threaten teachers with physical violence

if they dare to discipline them" (ibid.).

There is no question that there are some very big holes in the British national fabric, as in other Western nations. Relationships are becoming increasingly fragile. The land is full of broken marriages, lonely people, single mothers, confused and uncared for children—accompanied by a marked decline in courtesy, civility and good manners—in another words, plain old common sense in showing respect for others. Even the standard of driving has suffered in recent years and road rage is now becoming all too common.

This general decline in traditional values is not without its major causes, and ignorance of biblical standards constitutes a fundamental one.

The decline in Judeo-Christian influence

As British author Leo McKinsty observed: "*Children growing up today know nothing of the central tenets of Christianity: the Ten Commandments, the four gospels, the Sermon on the Mount . . . We are living in a religiously illiterate society, where young people are not even given the opportunity to decide for themselves whether they believe in God or not because they are so ill-informed about the religion which built our civilization*" (*Turning the Tide*, 1999, p. 6).

Jonathan Sacks, the chief rabbi of London, adds: "We have become less religious, and religion was the classic source of our belief in a revealed morality, commandments engraved on tablets of stone. We have become more culturally diverse, and we now know that what seems wrong to one group may be permissible in a second, and even admirable in a third" (*Faith in the Future*, 1997, p. 17).

Spiritually speaking, what is being taught in the educational system can be very detrimental to our young people. For example, one Oxford

professor wrote: “Some people think that the Ten Commandments are a set of universal moral rules, which everybody should obey. But they are not. They are addressed to the Jews . . . Again these are not universal moral rules for the whole world” (Keith Ward, *God: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 2002, p. 73). A shocking view indeed!

The observing of biblical standards is definitely on the wane in the British Isles and elsewhere in the Western world. Confusion reigns as to what is right or wrong, good or bad, truth or error. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah looked at his own age, and what he saw certainly applies to ours. He wrote: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20).

Remedies for root causes

Clearly the fact that our culture is in crisis testifies to the existence of a moral universe ruled by basic spiritual principles. There is a cause for every effect. “The curse causeless shall not come” (Proverbs 26:2, KJV).

Hear again the leading Jewish rabbi, Jonathan Sacks: “*In teaching our children moral relativism we have placed them in a world without a moral compass*, even hinting that there is no such thing. In the name of tolerance we have taught that every alternative lifestyle is legitimate and that moral judgment is

taboo, even ‘judgmental’ . . . A political order based on liberty and tolerance has yielded a Britain significantly less tolerant and more violent, harsh and abrasive than the one my grandparents knew” (op. cit., pp. 14-15).

Some solutions are being offered. British Home Secretary Blunkett has called for “police and government to work together to find ways of reversing the decline” of simple respect for the dignity of other human beings (op. cit.). Melanie Phillips adds: “Respect can be

*We urge a change of heart
and a turning to an altogether
different direction—
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obedience to God’s basic
spiritual law, the Ten
Commandments.*

restored, but only if we acknowledge limits to selfishness and impose again the disciplines that create respect for oneself and for others” (ibid.).

While these solutions are certainly a start, we who preach Christ’s gospel must emphasize a restoration of respect for the God who created human beings and for the laws He established for our good. We urge a change of heart and a turning to an altogether different direction—one of love for others by obedi-

ence to God’s basic spiritual law, the Ten Commandments.

The biblical solution

What the prophet Isaiah wrote so many centuries ago applies equally well today: “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1). For what purpose? To restore the abundant blessings that spring from obedience to God’s laws.

Isaiah also wrote: “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land’” (Isaiah 1:18-19).

Luke’s version of the Great Commission emphasizes repentance in particular: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

The United Church of God publishes a substantial booklet about God’s law, *The Ten Commandments*, showing how each and every one is as powerful, active and unchanging as the physical law of gravity. This basic spiritual law is the summation of God’s absolute standard for the conduct of all people. You cannot afford to be without this publication and the companion brochure called *Making Life Work*. They are both free for the asking. ❖

Once Upon a Time: Our Green and Pleasant Land

World-famous British novelist, the late George Orwell, wrote of his countrymen in 1941:

“Their extreme gentleness, their deeply moral attitude to life . . . the gentleness of English civilisation is perhaps its most marked characteristic. You notice it the instant you set foot on English soil. It is a land where bus conductors are good-tempered and the policemen carry no revolvers” (*The Lion and the Unicorn*, 1941).

Writing 14 years later in 1955, American anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer echoed Orwell’s words and added his observations: “The English are certainly among the most peaceful, gentle, courteous and orderly population that the civilised world has ever seen. The control of aggression has

gone to such remarkable lengths that you hardly ever see a fight in a bar [pub] and football crowds are as orderly as church meetings” (quoted in Norman Dennis, *Rising Crime and the Dismembered Family*, London, 1993).

Today no author in his right mind could conscientiously write such glowing words. What we now see about us has happened in one or two generations. The behavioral changes within one century are truly astonishing.

Yet reversal is possible if we would only begin again to teach the spiritual absolutes regarding how a society should behave. The Christian pulpits in the Western world have a serious duty—an awesome responsibility for which they will be held accountable. ❖

Radical Liberalism

Lawyers argue in U.S. courts that pornography falls under the constitutional right of free speech.

There is a strong movement to replace Judeo-Christian influences in schools with extreme multiculturalism. Radical feminists denounce concepts of the traditional family. Homosexuals want to totally redefine marriage. What is happening to America?

by Gary Petty

The American republic was founded on ideals of liberal democracy rooted in concepts of individual freedom and equality. The political and social liberalism of the early 21st century is in many ways radically different from the ideals of the founding fathers. U.S. culture reflects a radical or modern liberalism created by two centuries of political and social evolution.

To understand the origins of modern liberalism, you have to go back to the time in Western civilization known as the Enlightenment. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, Europe entered the thousand-year period of the Middle Ages. It was a time of political fragmentation and feudalism, as well as an age of grand cathedrals and monarchs who claimed divine privilege.

Europe suffered confusion and horror in the 14th century with the Hundred Years' War, the Black Death (which killed one third of the population throughout the territory between India and Iceland) and the anarchy that followed in the wake of disease and war. During the next century, the economic structure and social life of Europe experienced dramatic changes, including a cultural renaissance—a revival of art, literature and music.

Medieval Catholic theologians believed the church was establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. Earthly kings received their authority from the clergy. Corruption in the church's hierarchy, and a papacy more concerned with temporal politics than spiritual purity, eroded trust in pontifical supremacy.

In the 16th century, religious protestors launched the Reformation. Protestants began to challenge papal rule and eventually to challenge the idea of the divine right of monarchs. Science flourished and philosophers began to assert that all human problems could be solved by reason.

These trends produced a period in European history known as the Age of Reason, or the Enlightenment, extending throughout the 1700s. The philosophers of the Enlightenment didn't see human nature as hopelessly corrupt, instead suggesting that solutions to humanity's problems were rooted in reason and scientific thought. This

laid the foundation for the emergence of political and social liberalism, placing value on personal liberty and equality instead of duty to king and clergy.

Some Enlightenment philosophers accepted the idea of the biblical Creator, while others rejected the miracles and supernatural events claimed in the Bible. For some Enlightenment philosophers, the Bible contained good teachings, but they sought to strip it of the miraculous workings of God. Even the divinity of Jesus Christ was questioned.

The founding of the United States

The founding fathers of the United States attempted to create a government promoting ideals of the Enlightenment, like personal liberty, equality and the positive aspects of human nature, while still promoting the moral teachings of the Bible. They believed that the human tendency to turn freedom into lawlessness could be checked only by the ideals of a diverse yet moral Christian heritage.

At the same time, they rejected the class system and religious hierarchy of the Middle Ages. The influences of the Enlightenment can be seen in the Declaration of Independence. The most famous quote in American history is Jefferson's: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed . . ."

In the American republic, equality and the personal pursuit of life, liberty and happiness replaced the old ideals that life was lived under the restrictions of a state church and a monarchy ordained by God. Government was no longer seen as an instrument of divine authority, but as a human institution, elected by the populace, designed to protect individual rights ordained by God.

To understand the origins of modern liberalism, you have to go back to the time in Western civilization known as the Enlightenment.

Many of the founding fathers feared that democracy would unleash anarchy. There had to be limits to the concepts of equality and the pursuit of individual happiness. In 1781 they created the Articles of Confederation to govern the relationships between the states. Within less than seven years this new government was in disarray. So, “in order to create a more perfect Union,” these remarkable men created the Constitution of the United States in 1787.

From its inception as a nation, the people of the American republic struggled with the limitations of the rule of law, which restricts behavior for the good of society, and the philosophy of equality and personal freedom. Most founders believed that the entire experiment relied on a commonly accepted morality based on the Christian Bible. Over the next two centuries the moral teachings of the Bible became less influential in an increasingly hedonistic society.

Trends in radical liberalism

Robert Bork, nominated for the U.S. Supreme Court by President Ronald Reagan, outlines the two major precepts of radical liberalism in his controversial book *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*. One is what he calls “radical egalitarianism,” or the attempt to control the equality of outcomes instead of providing equal opportunities. The second is “radical individualism,” an idea promoting the eradication of personal limits for self-gratification regardless of societal consequences.

We can see this second precept in the promotion of pornography. Sexual freedom is one of the tenets of the radical liberal philosophy. Historically, Christian churches have opposed pornography in defense of the sacredness of sex in marriage.

Liberalism states that there can be no governmental enforcement of religion, and that pornography is a right in the pursuit of happiness. In the name of freedom, new laws are passed and pornography becomes an issue of free speech. The lawful proliferation of pornography eventually allows it to become tolerated and even accepted in print, movies, television and on the Internet.

The nation has come a long way from the founders’ concept of freedom of religion, which was intended to promote a

diverse Christianity as the foundation of society. Three major radical liberal trends have had an enormous impact on Christianity:

First is the idea that all concepts of morality are equal. Freedom to pursue happiness has come to mean that there are no absolute truths, and all morality is based on subjective criteria.

Second is radical feminism. Since most of the Bible was written by men, many feminists approach Scripture with a “victors write history” interpretation. This means that anything that doesn’t fit feminist dogma can be discarded as male influence, instead of divine revelation.

Third is the democratizing of churches so that teachings reflect current culture, instead of the church being a moral authority, holding culture to higher standards. A good example is the controversy in many Christian denominations over the ordination of homosexual clergy. The biblical teachings of sin are subjected to a culture of acceptance.

Radical liberalism and the Bible

The most-quoted verse in the New Testament is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This certainly shows that God places an enormous value on the individual. He created human beings to be His children. Each person has abilities and personality traits that make him or her a unique creation.

But it is a far cry from recognizing the value of the individual, to the concept that freedom entitles people to abolish all boundaries of personal behavior. When reading Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, it is apparent that His emphasis is not on personal rights, but on personal responsibility, character and the law of God. The rights of the individual can only be protected in a society in which each citizen acts on a deep-rooted sense of responsibility to restrict harmful and immoral behavior.

The Bible reveals that all individuals are equal in the opportunity to receive the love of God, but all are not equal in abilities or in outcomes of life. Jesus illustrated God’s thinking on this through the parable of the wealthy man who goes on a journey and gives each of his servants different responsibilities. He gives one 10 talents, another five and another one. When he

returns the servants have to give an accounting. Two of the servants used their talents wisely and are rewarded. The third hid his talent and is punished. All had unique abilities, all had equal opportunity, but not all outcomes were equal.

The paradox of the human condition is that true liberty can only be protected through laws that restrict behavior harmful to society. The Creator of the universe knows how life works. He has given humanity a set of laws that protect the rights of the individual, the family and the greater society. They’re called the Ten Commandments.

The U.S. Constitution is one of the most incredible documents ever written. It is the pinnacle of the concepts of the Enlightenment, tempered by the realization of the need for the rule of law and a recognition of the necessity of the moral restrictions of the Christian Bible. But in the final analysis, the Constitution can’t fix the real problem with human government. All human governments eventually fail, because they are run by beings with a nature that is a mixture of good and evil.

As Christians, we must never forget that the only real solution to the problems of human government isn’t human. It is the return of Jesus Christ to establish His Father’s Kingdom on this earth. ❖

This article is an excerpt from a recently aired Good News radio program. Good News radio is heard on stations across the country. For a listing of stations and times or to download radio programs, go to www.ucg.org/radio. While online you can also order the booklet offered on this program, The Ten Commandments.

Recommended Reading

The Creator of the universe has given humanity a set of laws that protect the rights of the individual and the community. Our free booklet *The Ten Commandments* explores these vital principles that are so often ignored.



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

“POLITICS,” (Continued from page 16)

States,” June 8, 1783. What were the pressing demands in that immediate moment of time? It was a period of dynamic infighting and increasing fragmentation as the various former colonies, now each independent states, but not yet a federal union, were being swayed by their own personal agendas. This vacuum of a functioning governmental structure could have had devastating results.

It was a time very similar to the period found in the book of Judges of which it was said, “In those days, there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

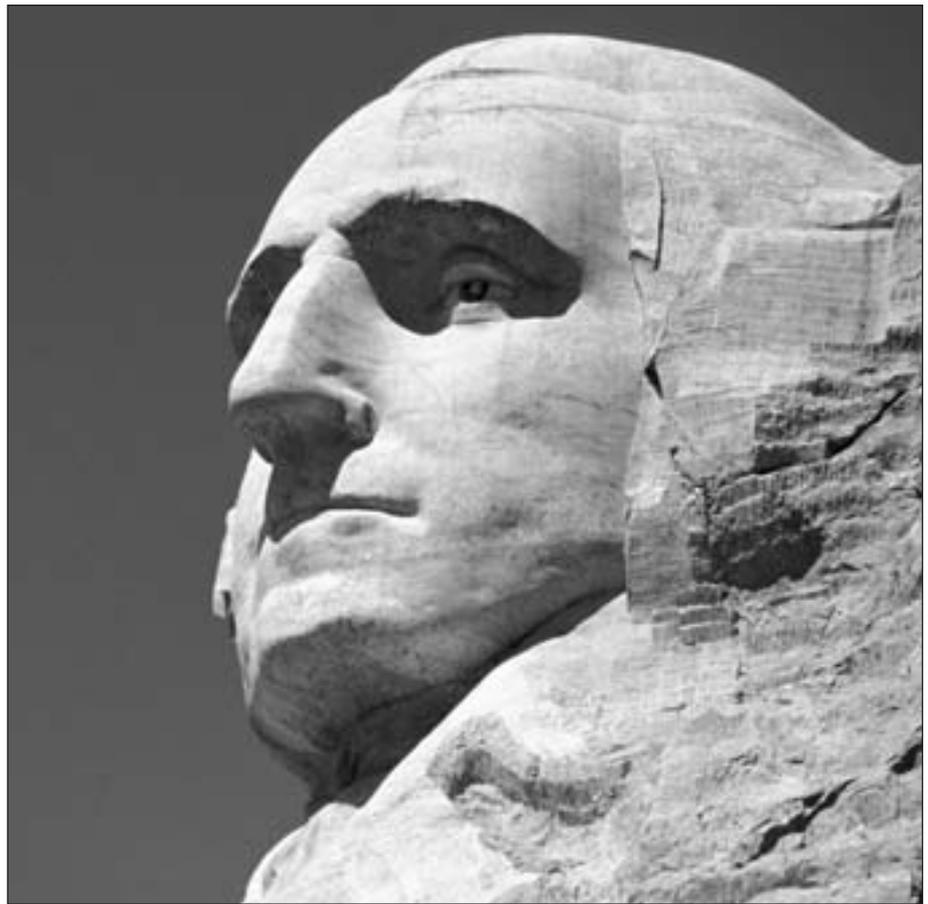
Scripture not only shines a light on this period of darkness, but the history books clearly lay out a portrait of devastation in the wake of the French and Russian revolutions in which party spirit ripped the national fabrics asunder.

Washington understood the delicate and fragile moment at which he had been called to be a light in the darkness. It was at this crucial moment that he penned the following:

“I now make it my earnest prayer, that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in His holy protection, that He would incline the hearts of the Citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to Government, to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow Citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for their brethren who have served in the Field, and finally, that He would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all, to do Justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the Characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in those things, we can never hope to be a happy Nation.”

“What does the LORD require?”

Washington’s prayerful plea is but an echo of the resonating virtues that God spotlights in Micah 6:8. Here we find a way of being, yes, a purpose



Because of these characteristics and more, Washington was elected by the people as the first executive officer of the grandest political experiment yet to occur in the course of human history. But even so, when it is all said and done, Washington was a man.

beyond self, beyond party politics, beyond the ways of this world when left to its own devices. “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Because of these characteristics and more, Washington was elected by the people as the first executive officer of the grandest political experiment yet to occur in the course of human history.

But even so, when it is all said and done, Washington was a man. Like all men he had his faults and weaknesses, and like all men his time has come and gone. He left office worn out and troubled by the burgeoning nemesis of party factions that were emerging around

Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson.

Oh, how we could use such a man today, even with all his humanity, to handle wisely and courageously the vexing problems of this irritated global village called earth. A person like Washington, who could rise above party spirit or the personal need to be reelected at whatever cost. A person unlike the proverbial politician who had changed his views rather radically and was being congratulated by a colleague who said, “I’m glad you’ve seen the light.” The politician responded, “I didn’t see the light. What I felt was the heat!”

Such a story adds meaning to God’s Word as found in Psalm 146:3-4: “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a

son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plan perishes.”

“I am the light of the world”

But there is good news. News beyond politics! News beyond the exploits of a human hero. *World News and Prophecy* is dedicated to the sure reality of the coming global emergence of the One who is beyond party affiliation. In fact, He is the “All-wise Creator” and “Disposer of Events” that Washington claimed as his guiding compass.

Infinitely greater than a thousand Washingtons is the One coming back to this earth, the Creator of life, the One who blessed the United States and its birth among the nations and who offers us a greater hope far beyond that which the best of men can possibly bequeath to us. Not merely one who has come “to see the light” or to be motivated by the heat of an upset electorate, but rather the very One who proclaims: “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

Remember the incredible description by Leroy Brownlow regarding Washington? Well, look at what the Bible has to say about the soon-returning King of Kings, Jesus Christ, in Isaiah 11:1-5:

“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. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.”

Being about the “humble imitation”

This is beyond man. This is beyond

politics. But this is not beyond your ability to learn more, appreciate more and become a part of the greatest campaign in human history—the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

For now, it is spread (in the words of Washington) in “humble imitation” of the Divine Author. It is spread person by person, need by need and deed by deed.

It is a willingness to build bridges even over troubled waters, rather than to sustain the walls of fear, suspicion and self-proclaimed rightness. We find more than ample fertile ground for this campaign in our homes, offices, communities and congregations of worship. Why? Because party spirit, the spirit of politics, the spirit of “enemy formations of them vs. us,” is always lurking with-

This is beyond man. This is beyond politics. But this is not beyond your ability to learn more, appreciate more and become a part of the greatest campaign in human history—the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

in the recesses of every human heart.

It is in the words of one man, an individual who was not swayed by politics but by a visionary ideal, whose voice guides us to move above the roar of the crowd and the heat of the moment. His plea of civility is synonymous with the good walk as found in Isaiah 30:21 that cries out for those who will hear to follow: “This is the way, walk in it.”

George Washington’s was a way of life that acknowledged that God “would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all, to do Justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind.” Such a call to action awaits us. It is beyond the politics of today. But it is not beyond your ability to act—now! ❖

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by Robin Webber

Beyond Politics

America is now fully immersed in the sizzling summertime dynamics of its presidential election season. Every four years the political temperature in this country reaches the boiling point as partisan politics fan the flames of "party spirit."

This national spectacle has a wide-ranging global audience due to the reality that the individual who becomes president of the United States becomes the single most influential human being in the world for the next four years.

The stakes are high not only for America, but also for the rest of humanity. Unfortunately, today's partisan feelings seemingly run even higher as American society is basically split right down the middle as to the future course of the oldest of all modern-day republics.

A giant shadow

But was there ever a different time and style, before the coarseness of American politics created a split personality in the national psyche? Was there ever a time when people could basically agree on one man to lead them? Yes, there was, but we have to go back over 200 years to find it.

What was it that allowed the revolutionary Americans to even consider the office of the executive after they had just overthrown a monarchy? The answer comes down to one man and his extraordinary character.

His historical shadow still casts a giant silhouette from coast to coast across this republic. It is his name that dots the capital of his country. It is his monument that towers above all others in a city designed to showcase monu-

ments. It is his name alone among all its presidents that is claimed by one of the 50 states.

Amazingly, it is this one individual and his character, not his party affiliation, that sculpted the job description of an executive office that had not yet been envisioned or implemented in the realm of human history. The office did not shape him. His lifetime values shaped the job description of what has become the most important job in the world. The man's name was George Washington.

Perhaps Leroy Brownlow sums it up best in his journal *Today Is Mine* in his entry for Feb. 22 titled "Worthy to Rule":

"When a man treasures the rights of men—as Washington did; and prefers principle to profit—as Washington preferred; and believes that man was not designed by the 'All-wise Creator' to live for himself alone—as Washington believed; and is courageous enough to stand up to opposition—as Washington stood; and towers above trickery and partisanship—as Washington towered; and refused to be a king—as Washington refused; and trusts in 'the All-wise Disposer of events'—as Washington trusted; and sees heroics in ragged men with a cause—as Washington saw—that man is truly worthy of rulership and a place in the hearts of his countrymen."

A guiding compass

Perhaps Washington's guiding compass of virtue and morality can best be discovered in his "Circular to the
(See "POLITICS," page 14)