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Alexander, the Man Who Would Be God

Millions remain fascinated by one of history's most intriguing and successful conquerors. An ancient source sheds new light on his achievements—and his downfall.

by Darris McNeely

The story of Alexander the Great is one that is both old and new. More than 23 centuries after leaping from Greece to conquer most of the known world, his story continues to fascinate modern audiences and inspire scholarly study. New books pore over the ancient chronicles of his conquests, and two new motion pictures will portray both the factual and romantic aspects of his fame. But at the end of the day, many questions remain unanswered.

How should we understand Alexander the Great today? Is there an overlooked source that refers to his exploits in the context of God's design for history and mankind? You may be surprised to know that Alexander's exploits are mentioned in Bible prophecies that are ignored by modern scholars in their quest to understand his historical significance. The Bible has a great deal to teach us about God's hand in history and why events transpire the way they do.

The beginning

Alexander was born at Pella in 356 B.C. His father, Philip, king of Macedon, had assembled the Greek states into a coalition that laid the foundation for the army Alexander would take to Asia. His mother was Olympias, with whom he had a close relationship. She was a devotee of the god Dionysius and is said to have astonished the royal court by bringing snakes into their presence. The marriage was stormy. When Philip was assassinated in 336, 20-year-old Alexander moved



Alexander the Great remains the stuff of legends and Hollywood.

quickly to consolidate power and assume the kingly title.

Persia was the enemy of Greece, and there were old scores to settle. Alexander inherited his father's ambition and vision to be more than a regional monarch. Before taking on the empire to the east, he first had to consolidate his own power. He took his troops north, as far as the Danube, and south in Greece to neutralize any regional opposition. He was now ready for the invasion of Asia.

In one of the most remarkable junctures of history, the renowned philosopher Aristotle schooled Alexander. Part of the curriculum was the study of Homer's

(See "ALEXANDER," page 3)



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Editor: Don Ward

Managing editor: Darris McNeely

Senior editors: Melvin Rhodes, Robin Webber

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder

Copy editors: Becky Bennett, Doug Johnson, Cecil

E. Maranville

Layout/design: Mike Bennett, Peter W. Eddington

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"Cold" Peace or Real Peace?

It is tragic when terrorists attack innocent civilians, whatever the "cause." It is doubly sad when it is done to coincide with the biblical Holy Days that foreshadow peace among all peoples.

Last month on Oct. 7, a pickup loaded with explosives detonated at a Hilton hotel in Taba, a popular Red Sea resort area. Thirty-two people died and more than a hundred were injured by the blast. It was the worst attack on Egyptian soil in more than six years, but it wasn't an attack on Egyptians. Thousands of Israeli tourists were enjoying the holiday season there, in spite of their government's warning of the high possibility of attack. One Israeli said, "Until [the blast] it was so great, peaceful and quiet, with beautiful sea and friendly people. It was a dream holiday. In a thunderclap it became a nightmare."

Beyond the human toll is the damage to Israeli-Egyptian relations. The two nations have had an uncertain peace since signing a treaty in March 1979. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat paid for that overture with his life when Islamic terrorists from within his own people assassinated him in 1981. Some say it is a "cold" peace that exists today between the two nations.

The 1979 treaty was preceded by several bitter wars, including the Six Day War of 1967 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The latter was on another key biblical Holy Day and caught the Israelis by surprise. Every October Egyptian television replays the success of the 1973 battles, and it is a source of pride for its citizens to this day. The fact that these battles, and not the subsequent peace, are a source of national pride speaks to the reason for underlying tension between all Arab states and the small nation of Israel. Even when they find the way to peace, the threat of violence lurks close to the surface and threatens to once again throw the region into upheaval.

The Oct. 7 bombing came at the end of the biblical Feast of Tabernacles. Many prophecies show this festival foreshadows the future time when the Messiah reigns in Jerusalem and nations will go there to learn of the ways of God (Isaiah 2:2-4). As it happens, I was returning from observing this festival when I heard of the bombing.

You may not know that many thousands of people gather around the world each year to celebrate this Christian festival. It is observed as a foretaste of the world to come, a world when people will learn the way to live at peace.

A unique prophecy tells how Egypt, and other nations that resist the will of God, will be treated in that day. "And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King . . . , on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16-18).

Egypt is singled out here because of its historic relationship with God and His people. Remember that Egypt held the descendants of Jacob as slaves for several generations. In the future, after God's Kingdom is on this earth, Egypt will become a blessing along with Israel. "In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border . . . Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the LORD and perform it" (Isaiah 19:19, 21).

It will take the restoration of God's Kingdom to see the reality of these visions. Pray for that day, when God will bring a permanent peace between these two peoples that will show the way for the entire world to live in harmony. —Darris McNeely

“ALEXANDER,” (*Continued from page 1*)

Iliad, the story of the Trojan War. Alexander styled himself after the great warrior Achilles and carried a volume of the story on his travels, quoting frequently from its pages. What began at Troy, a great struggle between Europe and Asia, was to be continued at the hands of this new Achilles. No more than 40,000 troops started on this most daring of all kingly expeditions. Over the next 11 years he traveled further and conquered more than any monarch before him. He would never again see his homeland.

Decisive battles

Speed and daring were the hallmarks of the major battles that decided the course of Alexander’s reign. At three major engagements within four years, the Persian Empire was crushed.

In 334 B.C., at the Battle of Granicus, he met the first Persian army, quickly defeating it. Alexander was a soldier-king who often fought in the front lines with his men. At this first engagement his life very nearly came to an abrupt end. About to be struck from behind, the king was saved by the quick action of one of his men who severed the Persian’s arm. Historians have been tempted to speculate how the whole course of history would have been changed had Alexander died at that time. Perhaps, as we will see, it might be better to seek understanding of the spiritual dimension of history so often ignored by secular historians.

Next, at Issus, the full force of the Persian army, more than half a million men, was gathered behind the standard of Darius III. By employing new tactics, slicing through the line at an angle rather than launching a full frontal assault, the Greek troops were able to get behind the enemy flank, routing the larger Persian force and sending it into chaotic retreat. Darius fled so quickly that his treasury and family were left at the mercy of Alexander. Darius offered to make Alexander his son-in-law and give him all of Asia west of the Euphrates. But nothing less than unconditional surrender would satisfy the Greek king.

For all intents and purposes this finished effective Persian resistance. There would be one more battle, in 331 B.C. at Gaugamela in what is today northern Iraq. Here Darius III was killed by his own men

when he attempted to be the first to abandon the battle, as the Greek troops crushed the last vestige of the numerically superior or Persian force.

Within four short years Alexander had defeated the massive Persian Empire. After 329 B.C. he had no major opponent. Alexander’s empire eventually stretched from Greece to modern Pakistan, occupying the former empires of Egypt, Babylon and Persia.

“To the ocean”

The Greeks thought the world’s land mass was surrounded by what they called



Alexander the Great was one of the key figures of history foretold centuries in advance in the pages of the Bible.

“the ocean.” To reach this point would be to come to the end of the earth. Once the area that is now Iran was secure in 327 B.C., there was no real need to go further east. But the allure of going to earth’s end was too great. Alexander pushed his troops ahead to what one Roman author said was “all that a mortal man was capable of.”

No army or power effectively stood in his way as he marched through Central Asia and what is today Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. In Afghanistan he met the same kind of fierce nomadic tribal culture that endures to this day. He founded cities and struck alliances, which began to stretch his men and his ability to maintain effective control. Alexander’s first real “defeat” was when his soldiers refused to go further. At the River Hyphasis (modern Beas) in India the long years of marching

and privation came to a climax. “This far and no further” was their cry.

Without support from his troops, he was forced to turn back to the west. What remained was the less glorious, more mundane task of consolidating and managing the world empire. Aristotle had once taught him that it was more difficult to organize peace than to win a war, that the fruits of victory in war will be lost if the peace is not well organized. But Alexander would not have the time, or perhaps the ability, to prove whether he could effectively manage all that he had conquered.

The march back to Babylon took a physical toll on the morale of the troops and the health of their leader. Trusted lieutenants abdicated for home, troops mutinied and his closest friend and confidant, Hephaestion, died. Grief, frustration and the long years of warring had taken their toll. By June 323 B.C., Alexander lay dying of fever and infection. His soldiers gathered around to ask what would become of his empire, and he reputedly replied that it should go “to the strongest.”

It took two decades for the dust to settle, but when it did there were four divisions of the empire among four of his generals. The two most powerful sectors were the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt and the Seleucid in Asia Minor.

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Mentioned in Bible prophecy

The average person today viewing a major motion picture of the life of Alexander may not realize that this luminous ancient figure is mentioned in Bible prophecy. The prophet Daniel, writing first from the courts of Babylon and then Persia (long before Alexander defeated its empire), saw visions of the future that included the rise of this Greek empire.

In the second chapter of Daniel, the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, dreamed a terrifying vision that none of his wise men could interpret. It was only when he called in the young Daniel that an explanation was given. The dream was of a huge four-sectioned image with a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, a belly and thigh of bronze, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay.

In verse 36 Daniel was inspired by God to give the interpretation. “This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has

given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold.

“But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others” (Daniel 2:36-40).

Through this dream, God was showing the progression of four empires that would arise and dominate much of the earth in their day. Students of Bible prophecy correctly identify these empires as Babylon (head of gold), Persia (chest and arms of silver), Greece (belly and thighs of bronze) and Rome (legs of iron and feet of part iron and clay). In the dream a “stone was cut out without hands” and struck the image on its feet (the fourth empire) and then “filled the whole earth” (verses 34-35). Verse 44 reveals that this is the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth. The fact that the fourth empire is struck by the stone indicates a continuation of that system in some form until the coming of Christ.

Daniel actually lived during the first two of these empires. As a captive Jew in Babylon at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, he witnessed the workings and power of the head of gold. Later, during the reign of Belshazzar, God gave Daniel a vision, which expanded on the earlier dream of Nebuchadnezzar. It is recorded in chapter 7. Daniel wrote down the images of his dream, which must have left a troubled mood upon him. Notice what he saw: “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.

“And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: ‘Arise, devour much flesh!’ After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard,

which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns” (Daniel 7:2-7).

These four beasts again represent the four empires beginning with Babylon. The Greco-Macedonian Empire is identified with the third beast, which is like a leopard. Its attributes fit the historical description of Alexander’s army and its tactics. As already noted, Alexander’s army was small but powerful and quick, like a leopard. It tore at and easily defeated the massive bearlike (powerful, but less agile than a leopard) empire of the Persians.

Daniel had one other vision that includes a reference to Alexander’s

When a man makes such claims of divinity, he often is near the end of his time and suffers a reversal. Alexander was dead within years of his public boast.

Empire. It fits in with history with remarkable accuracy. In this vision (chapter 8), he was by a river when he saw a ram with two horns, one horn being higher than the other. God’s angelic messenger told Daniel the ram represented the Persian kingdom, composed of Persia and Media. The different lengths of the horns showed that Persia overshadowed Media. This ram advanced in three directions and no other power could withstand its advance.

It became a great power until a new power arose in the form of a male goat from the west (verse 5). This goat had a “notable horn” between the eyes. Notice the interpretation in verse 21, “And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king.”

Clearly, this horn is Alexander. The prophecy even mentions the breakup of the kingdom upon Alexander’s death into four smaller kingdoms. “As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four

kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power” (verse 22).

Daniel made one further reference to Alexander’s empire in the very long prophecy of chapter 11. Verses 3 and 4 refer to a “mighty king” to arise and to do very much according to his will.

Of course modern scholarship utterly rejects the idea that Daniel wrote his book in the sixth century B.C. The idea that anyone could predict with such accuracy the coming of future kingdoms such as Greece and Rome is simply an academic heresy. Admitting such would require belief in a God who controls history and also foretells it in advance. It would require admission that the Bible is the true word of the one God who created the universe. No such admission is likely to be forthcoming.

Claiming to be as God

Late in his life Alexander actually made the claim to be a god. In 324 B.C. he sent word back to Greece that he claimed descent from Zeus-Ammon and wished to be considered divine. This was not a sudden change, for it began during his days in Egypt. While there he made a trek into the desert to Siwa where there was a shrine to Ammon, the chief Egyptian deity. There he inquired about his divinity and received assurances from the priests that he was of divine parentage. Whether the Greeks believed this or not, it is important to understand it as a key to how he brought Egypt under his dominion. Egyptians were used to looking to their pharaoh as divine.

Kings and emperors commonly reigned as divine rulers, virtual incarnations of gods, in the ancient world. Roman emperors would also make such claims. (Later the dynamic would change as church and state came to be represented by two rival, yet interdependent, leaders during the Middle Ages.)

When a man makes such claims of divinity, he often is near the end of his time and suffers a reversal. Alexander was dead within years of his public boast.

In his assertion, Alexander was like a religious leader prophesied to come in the end time, claiming to be divine. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul states in chapter 2:4 that this person “sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” Revelation 13 speaks of a system to arise at the same time, which will have both civ-

(See “ALEXANDER,” page 7)

Different Elections—Same Issues

Outside the United States, the same issues confront candidates in other elections.

by Melvin Rhodes

The United States is not the only country that has been going through an election campaign.

During the last few weeks, I've had the opportunity to closely observe the Canadian and Australian elections. New Zealand and the United Kingdom are also going through the early stages of elections, expected to be held next year. The prime minister of each country determines the date of the election, though elections must be held within a prescribed period: five years for the United Kingdom and Canada, three for Australia.

All four nations have a similar parliamentary system. They are all constitutional monarchies with Queen Elizabeth II as their head of state. Their prime ministers are not directly elected. People in each individual constituency vote for their representatives in parliament. Whichever party has the majority of seats then takes charge of the government, with the leader of the party becoming prime minister.

All four countries have a long history of political stability and, like America, have had democratic institutions since colonial times. The four nations are all that remain of the "multitude of nations" descended from the biblical patriarch Joseph's son Ephraim (Genesis 48:19; see our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* to trace this fascinating history). Collectively, as the British Empire, they were a superpower before the United States.

All five countries, America included, have a great deal in common. Change the names of the personalities involved in electioneering, and you wouldn't know which country you were in. The issues being debated, it seems, are the same everywhere.

Of course, there are some local issues that vary from country to country. But the main issues are common to all.

One of these is health care.

Increasing costs of health care

All five countries have massive numbers of



Australian Prime Minister John Howard celebrates after winning a fourth term Oct. 9 (photo Reuters/Will Burgess)

Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States all have a great deal in common. All share a common history.

baby boomers coming up for retirement. These will need more health care as they age. Where is the money coming from?

At the same time, advances in medical care mean that people are demanding more options, which, in turn, help people live longer, during which time they require ever more health care. Who is going to pay for it?

The four parliamentary democracies all have government health-care systems. Even in the United States, the government is heavily involved in providing medical care. Almost 50 percent of all medical care in the United States is covered by Medicare (for the elderly) or Medicaid (for some of those who have no private medical insurance). A recent survey in the United States showed that those who benefit from Medicare and Medicaid are the most satisfied with their medical care; those

depending on private insurance were the least happy.

What it all seems to come down to is this: People everywhere want first-class medical care, but they don't want to pay a high premium for it!

In Canada, the national government and the leaders of the provinces had to work together to come up with an additional \$18 billion (Canadian) for the medical system.

In Australia, in the closing days of the election campaign, leaders of both main parties were making various promises to improve the system. With high taxes already in place, I wondered where the money was going to come from. Higher taxes, still?

In England, health care has been an issue for decades. When the government-run National Health Service was first introduced in 1948, it was the envy of many nations. No longer is that the case. People routinely wait months (or years) for surgery. The government has made health care a priority and has diverted considerable sums of money to improve the system, but the public perception is that it's still inadequate.

Perhaps the lesson to be learned here is that health care is a bottomless pit—no matter how much you spend on it, you can always spend more.

In the United States, health care is still a private matter for roughly half the population. Typically, large employers provide health-care coverage for their employees, with employees usually having to pay a deductible amount in full and then co-payments, often in the 10 to 25 percent range. Employees can pay into special tax-free funds to cover their expenses. The paperwork for all this is quite horrendous, which, in turn, means higher overhead for doctors and hospitals.

Health-care costs have risen way above the rate of inflation. The United States now spends about twice as much of its GNP on health care as any other Western nation (14 percent against 7 percent in the United Kingdom). Americans like to think that they have the best health-care system in the world (but then again, so do the British).

The World Health Organization

(WHO) begs to differ, listing the United States at 37th in a world league of health-care systems. This ranking took into account longevity, infant mortality rates, preventive care and many other factors. The United States had a higher rate of infant mortality than most Western nations and lacked terribly when it came to preventive care. There's a simple explanation for this—private medicine cannot make money out of preventive care, whereas government medical systems have a vested interest in preventing sickness so that they save money further down the line!

According to the WHO, France had the best system. The United Kingdom was 18th on the list; Canada was at number 30. In fairness, it should be pointed out that France's very generous medical system is giving it serious

Al-Qaeda, responsible for the attacks on Sept. 11, Oct. 12 and many other occasions, has listed four of these five countries as priority targets.

economic problems in other areas and cut-backs are increasingly likely. And Canada's system had to be bailed out recently with that extra \$18 billion.

A further complication here is the low birthrate in all five countries since the post-World War II baby boomer generation. Not one of the five countries has a birthrate that can support its growing elderly population. Faced with rising government expenditure for health care and retirement pensions (social security) in the coming years, all five countries allow immigration by younger people from developing nations with high birthrates.

Putting aside the social problems that this is creating, particularly in the inner cities of all five countries, these countries haven't asked the question: Will people from Asia and Africa, where extended family systems are the norm, be willing to pay out to support

elderly white people whose children don't want to take care of them?

In a democracy, such questions don't matter yet. That particular question won't need answering until three or four elections down the line, and politicians only think as far as the next election.

Security concerns

National security is another major issue under discussion in all five countries, though somewhat less so in out-of-the-way New Zealand.

The United States, United Kingdom and Australia have troops in Iraq. All three countries have lost nationals in terrorist attacks, either on or since Sept. 11, 2001. Australia lost almost 100 of its citizens in the Bali bombing one year later, on Oct. 12, 2002. A bomb attack on the Australian embassy in Jakarta in the run-up to the election was a further reminder of the threat from Islamic militants. The leader of the opposition Labor Party, Mark Latham, argued that Australia was suffering from terrorism because it supported the Bush administration in Iraq.

Similar arguments are being made by many in the United Kingdom. Even in America itself, Democrats suggested that a change in administration, with a subsequent change in foreign policy, would bring about a decrease in terrorism and worldwide anti-Americanism.

All three countries are clearly divided on the issue of national security. Opinion polls show the division to be approximately 50-50.

What is interesting, though, is how at a time of increased threats to their national security, cutbacks in defense expenditure are either being considered or are already being put into practice.

New Zealand's military, by some accounts, is almost nonexistent today. Many New Zealanders feel that their geographical location makes it unlikely that anybody will attack them. And, if any country did, Australia would quickly come to their aid, as the Australians wouldn't want a hostile power to attack their close neighbor.

The United Kingdom is reducing

the size of its military yet again. Already less than 25 percent of what it was when Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1952, and committed to more wars by this prime minister than any before him, the British military is clearly over-stretched.

Canada, one of the six countries targeted on al-Qaeda's recent hit list, seems content with a small military and is trying to keep a low profile, staying out of everything as much as possible.

Meanwhile, the current Australian government of Prime Minister John Howard, reelected Oct. 9 to a fourth term in office, gives priority to the ANZUS treaty, whereby Australia, New Zealand and the United States have committed themselves to aid each other in the event of attack. Australians have committed troops to Iraq, just as they did to Vietnam.

Even the United States has to carefully assess the costs of troop commitments, before making any more, because it is so expensive to deploy and supply soldiers far from home. This comes at a time when international terrorism is creating ever more trouble spots around the world.

One reason for the lack of funds for the military is the need for ever greater funds for health care and other social programs. So far, the United States is covering both needs by "borrowing" from future generations through the accumulation of massive deficits—not an option in the other four countries.

Governments in democratic nations have to listen to the people, if only to remain in office. The dilemma for democratic countries in this age of global Islamic terrorism will be to give the people what they want, while at the same time ensuring their safety. The 1930s showed the folly of defense cuts at the expense of domestic considerations, nearly resulting in a catastrophic defeat at the hands of the Nazis.

Al-Qaeda, responsible for the attacks on Sept. 11, Oct. 12 and many other occasions, has listed four of these five countries as priority targets. Only New Zealand was not listed. The two other countries on their priority list were Italy (presumably for supporting the United States in Iraq) and

Spain, which was ruled by the Muslim Moors for centuries and is therefore subject to a territorial claim. Spain withdrew its troops from Iraq following a major series of terror attacks on Madrid in March. Italy may do so when the present prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, is no longer in office. This would then leave the four English-speaking countries listed as the top targets of Islamic terror.

Given the mutual defense treaty between the United States, Australia and New Zealand, one has to wonder when al-Qaeda will realize the strategic and relatively low risk value in targeting New Zealand. Such an attack could cost the United States and Australia considerable sums to deploy forces to New Zealand to protect it against further attacks.

But why this unique connection between these English-speaking countries in today's world? God's inspired revelation to His creation, the Bible, shows us that all five nations are descended from one of the 12 sons of Israel. All share a common history and destiny.

The commonly called "Lost Tribes of Israel" may be discovered and understood from the very pages of the Bible found on your shelf or by your bedside. If you would like to understand more about the United States and the nations of the Commonwealth, please request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. ♦

Recommended Reading

What is ahead of us now? What does the Bible say about the future for nations like the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand? We offer a well-researched booklet that can help.

Request *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. It is free of charge.



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"ALEXANDER," (Continued from page 4)

il and religious power (a ruler called "the beast," backed up and supported by "another beast"—religious in nature—that has the power to deceive and work miracles). Working together for a time, they will enslave men and defy the power of God in one last human effort to achieve a one-world system apart from God.

Alexander wanted to bring together the peoples of Europe and Asia into the same system—one-world government. He came closer than any man, before or after, to accomplishing this goal. This fusion of peoples into one system did transform the world. After Alexander's death, there was the continued struggle for power, but the world he touched was transformed. Greek ideas and culture were spread.

A new world was created that eventually settled under the uniform yoke of Rome. The ideas of Aristotle, Plato and Socrates were spread and became a foundation for Western civilization. It was into this hellenized world that Christ was born and founded His Church.

To this very same world that Alexander molded, the Church took the words of the true gospel about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. Yes, the true story of a God who would become man—the reverse of Alexander's ambition. Yet, where a man who claimed to be a god failed, the One who was God and became man succeeded.

What different yet contrasting stories! One man was born in a royal court and died in Babylon. Another as a baby was laid in a manger and died in Jerusalem. Yet Christ, who died almost at the same age as Alexander, laid the foundation for God's eternal Kingdom.

Alexander sought by cruel force of arms to forge his vision of one world. Ultimately his attempt failed, just as all other attempts have failed. He fought and traveled over a part of the world where peace is still sought.

The Middle East is still the stage where civilizations clash. The final clash will ultimately include the city of Alexander's death, spiritual Babylon, vs. the city of Christ's ascension—"Jerusalem above." The story of kingdoms is not yet over! The God who became a man, Jesus Christ, is coming to extinguish and crush the system symbolized in part by the man who would be a god. ♦

Focus on Sudan—More Than a Humanitarian Crisis

The disaster in the Darfur region of Sudan is called “the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today.” Why doesn’t the United Nations simply stop it? Why don’t the world’s powerful nations step in to end the crisis? This article separates the tangled issues to show what is happening and why, as well as what to expect next.

by Cecil E. Maranville

What do you know about Sudan? Until recently, most in the West would likely have said, “That’s the little African country that the U.S. attacked with cruise missiles during the Clinton administration.”

And that is partly true. The United States destroyed what it said was a nerve gas manufacturing plant in Khartoum, Sudan’s capital, in August 1998. (Sudan maintains to this day that it was a pharmaceutical plant.)

But Sudan is not a little country. It is the largest nation in Africa, about 25 percent of the size of the continental United States. The Nile River traverses it from north to south, and all of this mighty river’s tributaries are partially or entirely within Sudan.

Its extensive borders touch Egypt, Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea. It even has 500 miles of coastline on the Red Sea. Its eastern boundary is not far from the new base of the U.S. Combined Joint Task Force in Djibouti, from which counterterrorism in the Horn of Africa is coordinated.

In January of this year, the world suddenly took notice of Sudan, when 100,000 refugees poured into neighboring Chad. While the world news seems taken up with Iraq, Sudanese continue to die at a rate of *10,000 per month*. U.S. officials warn that even with the massive international relief effort underway, hundreds of thousands more will die.

The U.S. Congress declared the matter genocide. So, why doesn’t the international community stop the slaughter? Ah, now we begin to step into the complexities. The UN’s World Food Program says the death rate “isn’t actually genocide,” and the UN has appointed a commission to study whether that term should be used. This all seems to be so much “fiddling while Rome burns.”

In January of this year, the world suddenly took notice of Sudan, when 100,000 refugees poured into neighboring Chad. The U.S. Congress declared the matter genocide. So, why doesn’t the international community stop the slaughter?

The ethnic and religious face of Sudan

The principal ethnic groups are black (52 percent) and Arab (39 percent). Seventy percent are Sunni Muslim (many blacks are Muslims), and they live mostly in the north. Twenty-five percent practice pagan African religions and 5 percent are Christian.

The nation is extremely poor. Only about 7 percent of its land is arable, but approximately 80 percent of its workforce toils in agriculture, mostly in the southern states. With its debt equaling nearly 90 percent of its GDP, Sudan faces staggering economic problems.

The Darfur region lies in the north and west, populated by non-Arab and Arab nomadic tribes. As a further illustration of the complexity of the situation, over 90 different tribes inhabit the region!

Drought is a perpetual threat. When it hits, the nomads migrate south to find water for their livestock. The southern farmers do not appreciate this, but they have lived with it for generations. Whenever there was a dispute, the elders of the tribes got together and worked matters out.

Two major things have changed. Khartoum did away with the tribal justice system and required complainants to go through government bureaucrats. And the drought has lasted so long that thousands of nomads have taken up more or less permanent locations around the shrinking waterholes of the south. So the nomads and farmers have been in constant conflict.

Civil war

Completely separate from this crisis, for the past 22 years the north and south have fought a bloody civil war, which killed 2 million and displaced another 4 million people—mostly from the non-Muslim south.

Like so many African nations, Sudan was

once part of the British Empire and gained independence in the 1950s. Today Sudan's law is part British and part Islamic. The government has a facade of democracy, but it actually is a dictatorial alliance of the military and the (Islamic) National Congress Party.

Since 1983, the government has tried to impose sharia (Islamic) law on the entire country. The south has resisted vigorously, and fought bitterly for more of a say in the government.

The divisions are principally Muslim versus non-Muslim. Even though Muslims are the majority, some of them claim that they are the ones whose existence is threatened.

A journalist told of an imam who was addressing a group of about 200 Islamic men. In fiery passion, the cleric warned all to be ready to join a jihad against forces seeking to destroy all Muslims. As he finished, all drew their daggers and thrust them skyward with an angry shout of unity.

In the past two years, various facilitators, including the United States and the European Union, have helped the warring factions work toward peace. Until Darfur, it looked like the civil war would come to an end soon.

Haven for terrorists

The 1990s brought another factor to the equation. The combination of Muslim fervor and extreme poverty made Sudan a ripe recruiting ground and a safe haven for Islamic terrorists. ABC News once offered this simple profile of a terrorist: Someone with nothing to lose. Many thousands of young Sudanese men could be so described.

The last three U.S. administrations designated Sudan a state sponsor of terrorism. When Saudi Arabia expelled Osama bin Laden in 1991, he went to Sudan, where the United States believes he trained terrorists, plotted terrorist attacks and made weapons—perhaps chemical ones. Under U.S. and Saudi pressure, Sudan expelled him in 1994, but the United States still lists Sudan as a state that sponsors terrorism. Just last month, the United States froze \$143 million in assets of a Sudan-based charity that was intended for terrorism.

At the same time, Sudan has been cooperating in some ways with interna-



A group of displaced Sudanese women drink water from a hole dug in the sand at the Seliah camp in western Darfur. The camp is home to thousands of Sudanese who have fled their villages due to fighting (photo Reuters/Antony Njuguna)

tional efforts against terror. However, because of its continuing ties to terrorism, the United States does not trade with Sudan.

The spark that ignited Darfur

In August 2003, another dynamic exploded itself on the country—literally. A small rebel group attacked an airport in El Fasher, a city in Darfur, shooting up five military planes and two helicopter gunships and killing 100 people.

This began the cascade of deadly events.

Khartoum desperately wanted to convey to the world that it was at long last becoming a stable nation, so it wanted the Darfur uprising quashed—and fast. A few thousand troops could easily have rounded up the poorly organized and poorly armed rebels, but the government turned instead to Arab militias for help.

There are numerous small Arab tribes in the north, each with its own private army or militia. To Khartoum, it was simple. The Arab Muslim tribes were natural enemies of the rebels. But

the Arabs were also the natural enemies of the peaceful non-Muslim Darfurians. Instead of merely fighting the people responsible for the attack on the airport, the Arab militias began shooting everything that moved.

They burned villages to the ground, stole whatever property they wanted and systematically raped women and girls, utterly terrorizing the peaceful citizens.

Khartoum had unleashed a monster. Yet the government officially denies authorizing the pillaging. For their part, the Arab militias innocently protest that they are only patriots responding to their government's cry for help.

Immediately, the non-Arab people of Darfur began to flee for their lives. When Khartoum could no longer hide the crisis from the outside world, it relaxed its tight restrictions on relief workers entering the country. When the humanitarians came, they found huge numbers of displaced Darfurians wandering *within Sudan*.

At first, the relief workers did not fathom what was happening. One said, "These are the happiest I.D.P.'s [inter-

nally displaced persons] that I have ever seen." They thought that the situation therefore couldn't be as bad as some were claiming. But it soon became clear that the "happiness" of the refugees was simply relief at the sight of foreigners. The refugees believed that the Arab militias would now stop killing them.

When relief workers asked the fleeing Darfurians who was terrorizing them, they replied, "Janjaweed." Not the name of any ethnic group, it is instead their epithet for bandits or highwaymen; it means, "devils on horseback."

In time, the horrifying size of the crisis began to take on definition. There are between 1 and 2 million homeless Darfurians in Sudan, in addition to those who fled the country. And they have been starving to death by the thousands.

Khartoum argues that the Darfurians can safely return home anytime, and it refuses to disarm Arab militias, saying that not all of them are Janjaweed. (It doesn't want to alienate this powerful group.) Yet the Arab militias continue their raping and pillaging. And the survivors are so terrorized that they are telling relief workers they will never be willing to return to their home regions.

Many wonder why the United Nations doesn't impose sanctions on Khartoum to force it to stop the killing and the rampaging. It would likely be blocked from doing so by China, which has let it be known that it would veto a Security Council resolution.

Sudan still officially denies the catastrophe is as bad as the Western press says it is. Libya, Egypt, Nigeria and Chad released a joint statement in October, standing by Sudan and flatly rejecting any "foreign intervention."

Two choices

Career Africanist John Prendergast says Sudan has two choices: cooperation or intransigence. It needs to cooperate with the peace negotiated with its southern population, with international relief organizations and with counter-terrorism efforts.

But how can the 1 to 1.5 million Darfuran refugees ever feel safe enough to return to live among Arab tribes that raped and murdered their families? And what of the 4 million displaced by the civil war? All is compli-

cated by the fact that the unforgiving drought continues.

If Khartoum continues to be stubborn, Prendergast warns that the civil war will resume and spread to more fronts, with the south declaring independence. Since most of the nation's oil and natural gas reserves are in the south, Khartoum and its Arab/Muslim allies aren't going to let it slip away easily.

North Africa will likely figure prominently in the merging of nations into a perfect storm of international conflict. See *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* for details of this aspect of the situation.

Sudan's largest supplier and its largest buyer is China, with its burgeoning appetite for petroleum products.

The United States likely will be a loser no matter what it does. Some will criticize it for "overstating the crisis" for political reasons. Others will criticize it for not doing enough to stop the genocide. And the United States fears it will lose in a much more important area: It believes that al-Qaeda is now aggressively recruiting in the Sahel region . . .

Another large trading partner is the European Union, which is steadily increasing its influence in world affairs. We believe that both China and the European Union will play major roles in end-time prophecies, as our booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* explains.

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So, the situation appears to defy any human solution—but help will come from another source. The prophet Amos wrote: "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, 'When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it'" (Amos 9:13).

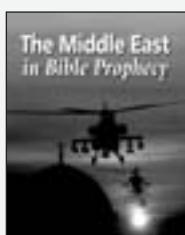
If you read this promise in context, you will find that it is speaking of the Messiah restoring the land of Israel. But God is not a God of the Israelites alone. Christ isn't returning to bless only Jews or Christians. He is coming to bring blessings and peace to the entire world. What God promises for Israel shows the way that He will bless all mankind, when it turns to Him for help.

In that not-too-distant future, Christ will end the disastrous drought cycle, bringing needed rain to Sudan. Further, "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people [correct those who need it]; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks [they will voluntarily fashion their weapons into productive agricultural implements]; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4).

You may recognize this prophecy as the one on the statue that sits in front of the UN's New York headquarters. The United Nations cannot bring it to pass, but the One who inspired it can—and will. ♦

Recommended Reading

You need to understand what is prophesied to yet happen in the Middle East. Whether you realize it or not, events there are destined to affect the lives of every person on earth. Request



The Middle East in Bible Prophecy to explore the Bible teaching on this vital subject. It is provided free of charge.

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

Out of Sight—Out of Mind!

What is the European Union (EU)? This is not such a strange question when you realize that many, if not most, Americans are largely unaware of vitally important EU activities such as the signing of the new Treaty of Rome. Yet Bible prophecy shows that future events in Europe will shock America and the world—perhaps in the not-too-distant future.

by John Ross Schroeder

The European Union does not exist on the American political landscape” (*International Herald Tribune*, Oct. 19, 2004). These are the stark words of Anne-Marie Slaughter, dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University.

A previous Associated Press report from Brussels stated that “most Americans . . . acknowledged that they did not know much about the 25-nation European Union with 77% saying [in a Gallup Poll] they knew little or nothing” (*International Herald Tribune*, June 8, 2004).

However, as we shall soon discover in this article, ignorance of European affairs will not be bliss for any nation or its citizens.

Signing a new Treaty of Rome

By the time you read these words, leaders of the EU nations will have signed a brand-new Treaty of Rome (still to be ratified by individual members). You may recall the *original* Treaty of Rome created the six-nation European Economic Community; that has now grown into the 25-nation European Union.

Senior journalist Quentin Peel remarked that “the solemn ceremony is taking place in the Italian capital [Rome], where the founding treaty was signed in 1957” (*The Financial Times*, Oct. 14, 2004). The symbolic significance will not be lost on those who have watched the unfolding of events in Europe over four decades and more.

And we must not underestimate the Italian role in the European Union for the last five years. It was under Romano Prodi’s presidency that the EU has acquired a single currency, drawn up a constitution and picked up 10 new states” (*The Sunday Times*, Oct. 17, 2004).

Bible prophecy strongly indicates that the city of Rome will play a decisive future role in a European combine known in Scripture as “the beast.” The book of Revelation tells us of the emergence of a vast end-time empire governed from a great city God labels “Babylon the Great” (Revelation 17:5, 18).

“The time of Jacob’s trouble”

These future events correspond with “the time of Jacob’s trouble” mentioned in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 30:7). To really understand biblical prophecy, you have to know the identity of the modern descendants of the patriarch Jacob (whose name God changed to Israel) and where they dwell today. (This knowledge, taken from the Bible and other reliable historical sources, is made known in our extensively researched, full-color brochure *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Please request your free copy today.)

The source of much of this future trouble for America and Britain will come from a United States of Europe. That is why it is so necessary to observe and understand European affairs of state today. We cannot afford to continue in ignorance.

What we see presently in Europe is most probably the gradual creation of the necessary governmental infrastructure. The current European nations certainly are mostly democratic and don’t appear on the surface to be any threat to world peace.

What the Bible predicts for Europe will likely be precipitated by a very serious future crisis of some sort. The severe economic conditions in Germany of the 1920s and early 1930s produced Hitler, who undoubtedly was under the direct influence of a powerful but unseen coconspirator.

A sinister source lurking behind the scenes

The apostle Paul tells us that we Christians don’t struggle against flesh-and-blood human beings, but instead with wicked spirits in high places (Ephesians 6:12). The Bible reveals that this is not God’s world. The unseen rulers are fallen angels (or demons) who serve Satan the devil, “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Scripture says Satan has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). It is the devil who will bring about the eventual emergence of “the beast” and his associate “the false prophet.” Paul describes Satan’s methods: “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of

The source of much of the future trouble for America and Britain will come from a United States of Europe. That is why it is so necessary to observe and understand European affairs of state today.

Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, New International Version). (To better understand the role of Satan the devil, please write for our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

We should not assume that major happenings of a catastrophic nature do not lie directly in our path. Sept. 11 should have taught us to expect the unexpected. The book of Revelation shows us that 9/11, as horrendous as it was and still is, will eventually pale into insignificance in comparison to the cataclysmic events prophesied to occur in the end time.

Have you read the book of Revelation? If not, it should become a priority on your reading list. If you need some help and guidance in understanding its message, please request our free brochure *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

Prophetic disclosures of Daniel and Revelation

Modern Europe lies within the geographic soil inhabited by the old Roman Empire. Its latter revival is extensively prophesied in the Old Testament book of Daniel and the book of Revelation. These two biblical books combine to give us a true picture of both historical and prophetic events.

The prophet Daniel, interpreting

Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a colossal human image, spoke of a series of kingdoms to arise on the world scene. The Babylonian empire was to be followed by three other kingdoms, identified in history as the Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian and finally the Roman, empires (Daniel 2:28-40).

As Daniel prophesied, the Roman Empire proved to be more dominant and enduring than its predecessors, lasting for centuries. Indeed the original empire has already experienced a number of revivals with one final one still to emerge.

The Bible prophesies that a group of 10 kings or national leaders will give rise to a future union that will fulfill certain end-time Bible prophecies. Some will be much stronger than others.

The book of Revelation adds more details. "The ten horns which you [the apostle John] saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [symbolic of a short time] as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb [at the second coming of Jesus Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:12-14).

Daniel speaks of those who will assist Christ. They are the saints of the Most

High God (Daniel 7:27)—patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; judges like Deborah; prophets like Moses and Elijah; kings like David. Their numbers include all truly converted Christians since the time of Christ. This is truly good news that will follow the catastrophic events to chasten the inhabitants of our present world.

Essential reading and studying

In no way could any individual article about the European Union do any more than highlight crucial future events in a generalized, overall manner. To grasp the various aspects, facets and critical detailed knowledge, you will also need to request and read our free brochures *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*

All of the booklets and brochures mentioned in this article dovetail together to form a complete picture of future prophetic events. It will require a great deal of reading and studying to truly comprehend the vast scope of what is currently forming in Europe. In the pages of *World News and Prophecy* we are urgently trying to raise the prophetic awareness level of the American people (and that of the inhabitants of other nations too).

Matthew 24:14 sums up this mission. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (King James Version). ♦

The New Treaty of Rome—Why a Dangerous Document?

The signing by heads of state of the new Treaty of Rome gives formal approval to the new European Constitution, although it still needs ratification by national parliaments, including citizens' referenda in some EU countries.

This one supreme legal document supersedes the founding document of the Treaty of Rome (1957), the Single European Act (1986), the Maastricht Treaty of European Union (1992) and other formal agreements at Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2000). Clearly the new document is all-encompassing.

The articles themselves in the constitution contain some worrying provisions. For instance, one article broadly states: "This constitution shall have primacy over the laws of the Member states" (Article 1-5). If that isn't a formula for ceding of national sovereignty to Brussels, what is?

Article 1-15 also raises grave concerns. It reads: "The common foreign and security policy shall cover all aspects of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security

policy and unreservedly, in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity." Once this is in force, will Britain even be able to render help to America as it has done in the war with Iraq and in its aftermath?

David Heathcoat-Amory, a member of the actual drafting body, said: "The big issue is whether power remains at Westminster [in Britain] at all, or it goes to Brussels, and under this constitution there will be massive further transfer to Europe" (*The Daily Telegraph*, June 19, 2004).

A *Daily Mail* feature writer summarized British fears: "It will create a new European state of which we will all be citizens. It will be able to sign treaties and join international bodies and its law will supersede our own. Britain will become a mere region within its federal embrace." A very disturbing thought!

Notwithstanding the good intentions of present EU statesmen, the Bible foretells the eventual emergence of a European superstate with terrifying results for the whole world. ♦

In Brief... World News Review

“Holy” Land Far From Holy

The nation of Israel is often called the Holy Land, but that isn’t an apt description of its inhabitants’ present lifestyle.

Israeli Justice Minister Yosef Lapid reported in August that there are as many as 3,000 prostitutes in his nation today. An additional element of sadness to the story is that the prostitutes did not choose this life. The Russian mafia lures women in destitute situations with assurances of a better life. It takes them to Egypt and then smuggles them into Israel.

The women have to “work off” what they “owe” for transportation to their new country. Their smugglers charge them between \$4,000 and \$10,000 each. *Fox News* reported that each one earns about \$200,000 year for her “masters,” which adds up to an annual take of about \$62 million for the smugglers.

Of course, the reason the scheme is profitable is that there are Israelis and tourists who are the “customers.” In plain language, they are committing fornication or adultery. Not only are they injuring themselves (and their spouses) physically and spiritually, they also are making it possible for vile men to take advantage of women who simply want to live free and earn a decent living.

The Israeli government is taking steps to interdict the smugglers. But until its citizens individually commit to obeying the Seventh Commandment, the crime will continue to pay, and the smugglers will continue their evil trade.

Government in turmoil

On a related topic, fractures within the ever-contentious Knesset threaten to bring down the Sharon government over its policy on settlements in the Gaza strip. Three government ministers, including former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, are threatening to resign.

Ironically, Prime Minister Sharon initially helped lead the way for Israelis

to settle in this mostly Palestinian territory on the Egyptian border. Now he is trying to lead the way for the dismantling of the Israeli towns there in his pursuit of peace with the Palestinians.

Jewish settlers are angry with Mr. Sharon for this turnabout in policy. Many of them paid with blood in battles with Palestinian militias that tried to force them out. Now it seems to them that their government is abandoning them.

Of course, Mr. Sharon’s objective is to find a way for Jews and Palestinians to live together in harmony. But hatred runs too deep for peace to take root.

Israel will again be a Holy Land, but only after Christ returns and establishes a new government in Jerusalem.

Javier Solana—the Face of the EU

Javier Solana is the European Union’s foreign minister. His full title is “Secretary-General of the Council of the EU and High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy.” And he is every bit as influential as the lofty title implies. Here is his schedule for just seven days in October:

- Meet with minister for foreign affairs for Macedonia to discuss that country’s progress along the road to integration into the EU.
- Issue a statement of support for the recent Kosovo elections, criticizing the Kosovo Serbs for their low turnout.
- Participate in meeting of all EU chiefs of police to discuss European security and defense—an immensely important matter in a time of great terrorist threat.
- Meet with NATO’s North Atlantic Council, which is responsible for the security of member states and is the most important decision-making body of NATO, according to its handbook.
- Visit Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Khartoum, Sudan. Addis Ababa is host-

ing a meeting of the African Union (AU), whose forces are entering the Sudan to try to end the genocide occurring in Darfur. The EU has promised to finance over half of the AU’s costs. Dr. Solana is meeting with the Sudanese government in Khartoum to help negotiate continued efforts to end the 22-year civil war.

- During the same visit, meet with representatives of Somalia to help facilitate its peaceful reunification.

• Meet with the Palestinian Authority’s minister of foreign affairs, Nabeel Shaath, to help get Israel and the Palestinians back on track toward peace. Frustrated with the virtually defunct Road Map to Peace, the EU wants to resuscitate it and is launching what it calls the Street Map to Peace.

- In the same time frame, issue a public statement of praise for the Israeli Knesset’s decision to pull its settlements out of Gaza.

As we go to press, there are reports that Yasser Arafat is seriously ill. Should Arafat die, Dr. Solana will undoubtedly have a hand in helping the Palestinians regroup and redefine themselves under new leadership.

Clearly, Dr. Solana is a busy man, but more than that, his work shows that the EU is extending its footprint of influence throughout greater Europe, the Middle East and in North Africa.

In a startling development, Dr. Solana says that the EU is considering sending “a police mission on the ground” to help train Palestinian security forces, which must police Gaza if the Israeli army pulls out. Think of that—European troops in Israel to help ensure peace. Students of Bible prophecy will immediately think of Christ’s warning, “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:20). A police mission is not the complete fulfillment of this significant prophecy, but it shows how readily it could be fulfilled.

Contributor: Cecil E. Maranville

“TEARS,” (Continued from page 16)

pointment with ourselves. Such tears spill forth from the corners of our eyes. They often come unexpectedly and at the most embarrassing moments. They surprise us, for they unmask who we really are to others and ourselves. Such tears flow from that inner vault of our well-protected ego—the spot where we plant the “no trespassing” sign!

Why? Because we don’t want people to know who we really are, and perhaps most importantly, we don’t want to comprehend who we really are! The disciple known as Peter shed such tears when he had to confront himself. Luke 22:61-62 explains how “the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.”

Earlier, he had proudly said he would never deny Christ, but his fear and anger got the best of him. Perhaps such tears sound familiar or perhaps we are yet to shed such tears, because we refuse to see ourselves as others see us, or most importantly, as God sees us. There comes a time when everyone with whom God is working must see himself or herself.

Some of us have shed tears of humiliation. These tears often come to us when we are alone and feel abandoned. We beat ourselves up over matters that sometimes we can’t even audibly explain to others, much less to ourselves. The well runs deep with such tears—all the way to the very pits of our stomachs—and we can feel it.

Perhaps we, too, have cried alongside the woman mentioned in Luke 7:36-37. She is described as the “woman in the city who was a sinner.” Most commentaries will tell you that she was most likely a prostitute. And that was why there was such an uproar from the “religious crowd” looking on as “she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head” (verse 58). Sometimes we have no words, but can only reach out with our tears and seek forgiveness and understanding. We can’t even explain it to ourselves, but God accepts our tears of repentance. Even though “fallen” before man, we are granted stature by

God when we truly repent. Yes, tears can be part of spiritual healing, helping us connect with God.

Last, but certainly not least, are tears of grief that are no strangers to most of us. Most of us have experienced the

and see.’ Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’”

There is much to be considered in these few brief words. Whether He was grieving with the others over His friend or at the despair of their grief because



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Sometimes we cry until there are no more tears that can be shed, but our heart is still drowning in sorrow from the incredible separation we feel.

anguish of a loved one’s death. Such tears tend to spill involuntarily from the inside corners of our eyes and slowly but surely work their way down to our lips where we taste the salty bitterness of life’s most crushing blows. Sometimes we cry until there are no more tears that can be shed, but our heart is still drowning in sorrow from the incredible separation we feel.

Jesus wept

Such tears of sadness can be seen on the face of Jesus as He came upon a community mourning the death of a good man. He had been a companion of the deceased individual. We pick up the next rolling moments of this unfolding saga in John 11:33-36 where we are told, “Therefore, when Jesus saw her [Mary, Lazarus’ sister] weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come

they lacked hope in God, it is a remarkable moment when we see God touched by man and, in turn, reaching out to touch man in deepest empathy. In this tender moment, recorded for our assurance, we can come to fully appreciate that God understands our frustrations, our incredible feeling of separation and our being so all alone.

The comforting and very real truth is that we are never truly alone when we cry. Long ago, the psalmist David melodically set down the words, “You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book” (Psalm 56:8, New Living Translation).

Whether we have had frightened tears, sad tears, shame-filled tears or even unshed tears—God is aware of each and every one. Oh no, we are not alone. But the challenge before us is to see beyond the filmy veil of our tears to a time when they will cease to exist. Just remember, it’s not only a general

prophecy for humanity at large, but also much more than that—it's a promise from God to you personally.

God isn't going to change His mind

God has been thinking about this a long time and He isn't going to change His mind. Long ago, in the time of Isaiah, God began to share this significant event by stating, "He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces" (Isaiah 25:8).

Ever missed a parade? Ever missed a cab? Never had flowers delivered to you? Has life seemingly passed you by and good things only happen to everyone else? When God says "all," that means all faces will be touched by Him. That means yours too! God builds upon this thought nearly 700 years later in His revelation to us through the apostle John in Revelation 7:17, saying, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Did you happen to notice the focus of concern getting even more specific? Not simply "all faces" are mentioned, but now it is spoken that "every tear" will be dealt with. A loving God doesn't miss one tear of yours.

What is being spoken about here is not simply an absence of tears, but a presence of real solutions. For every effect there is a cause. Verse 17 clearly portrays that "the Lamb [that is Jesus Christ] who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters." This is the full, unhindered access to godly instruction that humanity has rejected. When mankind's collective eyes are opened to understand God's way of life, and people stop doing what causes pain and tears, the tears will cease—except perhaps tears of joy.

Keep this picture in your mind

Coming full cycle, let's look again at Revelation 21:4 in which we are elevated from this world of tears to one in which "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Have you ever wiped a tear from the eye of your child or perhaps the cheek of a girlfriend or the face of your husband? It is one of the ultimate bonds of unspoken communication—of tender affection and love that

demands no return other than knowing someone cares.

This is the picture of God that He wants us to carry in our hearts. A picture that colors our thoughts, and thus our actions, that portrays God as being near, so very near that whatever we go through now in this world of tears will be worth it to simply be there to experience the ultimate moment of divine connection.

World News and Prophecy will continue to bring sobering news concerning this world of tears in which we presently exist. But we must see beyond the folly of man entrapped in his ways, and see—may I say sense and feel—the fullness of God's ultimate good news—a world in which there are "no more tears." Until that time, we must learn and come to emulate the

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example of the fallen woman whose tears flowed toward her present hope and future reward, rather than her past—now forgiven.

Our tears must come to rise in chorus with those mentioned in Ezekiel 9:4 whose sighs and cries reach the heavens regarding a world that rejects the ways of God. Like Christ, we must come to an appropriate spiritual maturity to "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

Until that time, let us allow the words of "the Spirit and the bride," as found in Revelation 22:17, to be our guide toward that better tomorrow. It is in the fullest measure of Isaiah 30:21, which states, "This is the way, walk in it," that "the Spirit and the bride [the Church of God] say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!'"

Come to a world with no more tears. ♦

How to Contact Us

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KENYA: United Church of God, Kenya, P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200 Kenya. E-mail: kenya@ucg.org

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

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

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

NIGERIA: United Church of God—West Africa, P.O. Box 1715, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria. Phone: 234-1-791 8009 E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

PHILIPPINES: United Church of God, P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines. Phone: (+63) 82 241-0150 Cell/Text: (+63) 0918-904-4444

SCANDINAVIA: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England E-mail: sverige@ucg.org

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

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

TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 127, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

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

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

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

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*“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,
‘This is the Way
walk in it...’” ISAIAH 30:21*

by Robin Webber

No More Tears

May I ask you a question? When was the last time you were brought to tears? You know what I'm writing about. I mean those times when you received sobering news about a loved one's condition or simply when rotten consequences of your own choices came crashing down all around you. Scared, shocked or frightened by either sad news about others or by your own troubles, you cried. That is, we cried—for each of us has been there. If that salty fluid has filled and glistened your eyes or crept down your cheeks or touched your lips with its salty savor, then please relax and read on, for you are not alone.

Tears are part and parcel of the human condition. In describing life's seasons, Solomon poignantly shared with all of us in Ecclesiastes 3:4 that there is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” Since the time of Eden, since the beginning, the history of humanity has been a “trail of tears.” In fact, the Bible can be called, along with its many other titles, a “book of tears.” It is after all the divine diary of all shed tears—not merely man-made tears, but tears shed by God.

God will wipe away every tear

But the good news is that your Bible reveals an incredible prophetic promise about a future time when things will be dramatically different from anything that exists now or ever has. It is a promise from our heavenly Father that ultimately must become more real than any human premise that touches us—be it past, present or future.

Let's read together what God would have us understand, embrace and internalize. Yes, we need to internalize

it so deeply, in the safe place of our hearts, that no one, not even we ourselves, can rob us of such a wonderful truth. God clearly brings His future to us and vividly describes in Revelation 21:3-4 when a loud voice from heaven will say, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

Understand that this isn't simply pretty biblical prose set in apocalyptic metaphor to comfort us when we are down-and-out or simply “done in” with our human moments. This set of verses is speaking to the transformation of the human realm, as mankind has experienced it, into God's realm, His Kingdom. This isn't simply a calming of frayed nerves or some surgical procedure to remove our tear ducts. It is the inauguration of the fullness of the Kingdom of God. It is God's future that He is inviting us to—if only we can see through our human tears. And, when this does occur, it will be greatly welcomed.

This present age of tears

But before we can fully appreciate this “New Age of No More Tears,” we must first understand this present world of tears. I'm talking about emotional tears that affect the health of our bodies and affect other human beings. Think for a moment about the different types of tears in our human experience.

Some of us have shed angry tears or tears of disappointment. (See “TEARS,” page 14)