

BEYOND TODAY

Envisioning a Better World Tomorrow

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Supplanted
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A World In Transition . . . to What?

In our January–February 2025 issue, we explored the sense of dramatic change at play all over the world with governmental changes, and how God's plan urges all people to seek Him in times of turbulence.

A Turning Point to Ruin or Resurgence?

I was reading the editorial by Tom Robinson, and as always it was spot on. America and the world are in danger, as Mr. Robinson tell us. The danger is imminent [unless] Mr. Trump leads his people to a national repentance. Knowing him, do we think that there will be an epiphany? I hope so, but it will be unlikely. What I think is that Mr. Trump was saved by our God to bring peace. If he fails the nation, the world will drop on their knees. But then it will be too late. I hope I am wrong and pray that our Lord be merciful with us. Thank you for your literature.

From the Internet

The Unadvertised Side Effects of Pornography

Thank you for this article. I can appreciate that the Scripture in Psalm 139:14, which says that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made,” applies to both men and women.

From the Internet

Current Events & Trends: “A daily walk or equivalent could add 11 years to one’s life”

This discouraged me. 160 minutes a day is 2½ hours a day. I get 20-30 a day as I am able. That’s a tall order if I need to increase to 160 per day!

From the Internet

Sorry the intent was not clear. This did not mean to say 160 minutes of straight walking or some other exercise is needed. It meant broken up throughout the day, staying active and moving about the home or office or grocery store as you're able. While the increments may not total up to the figure given in the study, any increased activity will be beneficial.

Readers expressing thanks for Beyond Today

I just wanted to thank each one of you at *Beyond Today* and everyone that makes it

possible for people to receive the magazine, literature and other things. I enjoy everything I receive, and then I pass it on to others. Prayers to each one of you that contributes to make this possible to do what you do! Please keep me on your mailing list.

Subscriber in Texas

I have been getting *Beyond Today* magazine for several years now and would like to know if it's possible to get all the magazines since the beginning. They have helped me get a better understanding of the Bible. My understanding of the Bible now is like day and night. I still have a ways to go and was hoping there was a way to receive all the magazines since the beginning. I appreciate everything you have done to help me understand the Bible better. I look forward to improving my understanding and being a better person in the eyes of God.

From the Internet

We're glad to hear our material has been helpful! We don't have back issues in print, but every article and PDFs of every issue going back to 1995, including when our title was The Good News, are available for free on our website UCG.org/learn.

Prisoners learning from Beyond Today resources

I have learned quite a lot about what has been happening around the world, through a biblical view and in general, through *Beyond Today*. I would like to thank you for helping me to see world events properly and to be preparing for the world to come after I am released from my incarceration. I hope that someday you would be able to do a few articles on how the Spirit of God has been moving though the world, and especially here in correctional institutions. Many people have turned to God during our

incarceration in prisons through Christian educational programs. Thank you.

Reader in prison

Please keep sending me *Beyond Today* magazine! I've never seen the Bible taught so plainly or with the depth that you all do. I've never learned so much in such a short time. I am fully convinced that the Christianity I grew up in withheld a lot of stuff from me. All the topics in your material are complex of themselves, but it's wonderful because I can follow every train of thought you give. I am an army vet, but I experienced a very traumatic event while serving. The problem was that I didn't allow Jesus to heal me a long time ago. Instead, I took matters into my own hands, as broken and limited as I was. But trying to figure out God's way isn't easy. All of you make this task easier. Having *Beyond Today* on the Edovo platform, and all the free literature—I can tell, you guys really do care! Thank you! Yours in Christ.

Reader in prison

Question about fellowship

I would like to observe the Sabbath day of worship and associate myself with other believers in Christ Jesus.

Reader in Arkansas

We have congregations all around the world. Visit UCG.org/congregations to find the one closest to you and reach out to the pastor to find out when services are. He'll be glad to hear from you!

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Sensing a Shift in the Air

Predicting the weather is difficult, especially weeks in advance. Still, we can recognize changing patterns. We can tell when it's getting warmer, with summer approaching. Yet at times we may perceive when it's dropped down into colder temperatures more than usual. Sometimes we can just feel something is different, yet we must pay attention to informed analysis and applied reason to help us better prepare for the days ahead. Perhaps a new front is moving in.

Likewise, paying attention to global news trends with proper perspective will aid us in seeing where events are headed and preparing wisely.

We've recently seen significant shifts in relations between the United States and Europe, as laid out in our cover story "Winds of Change in Europe." Leaders in Europe expressed outrage over what they've perceived as abandonment of their interests, with U.S. President Donald Trump not involving them in initial talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin about the Ukraine war and telling European nations to see to any peacekeeping needs there themselves without American security guarantees.

The divide was exacerbated by Trump's introduction of 10 percent tariffs on the world at large—and higher for some nations seen as treating the importing of American goods more unfairly. This is a historical change from a lengthy period of America having almost no tariffs on other countries while others have routinely imposed high tariffs on U.S. goods or disallowed sales of American goods through other rules. Some believe this protectionist swing will set off a worsening trade war, further tank stock markets and lead to higher inflation. But the economic turmoil could settle down, especially if many nations decide to be cooperative and if energy costs are brought down through other policies, reducing costs across the board. Time will tell.

In any case, it's clear that the rift between America and other Western nations has widened. This is not to say the divide is unbridgeable. A strengthened United States could attract a measure of unity. Moreover, populist movements in Europe, quite opposed to many current leaders, have gained ground in recent years. Some might gravitate toward a more populist, anti-globalist America. On the other hand, some of these are very nationalistic and would rather pull away from reliance on a U.S.-led NATO—as well as from their European neighbors, being concerned especially to stem the tide of immigration and preserve local culture.

We must recognize, though, that the globalist agenda led by Western elites is very far advanced—and it also reaches deeply into the United States. Further, the moral decay of our nations is still everywhere evident. Even if America does experience a time of resurgence, it will not last. The decline of the United States will resume, as with the United Kingdom before—as the Bible informs us (see our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*).

And eventually we will see the rise of Europe under a terrible tyranny—sad to contemplate at this 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, celebrating the overthrow of the Nazi regime in Germany. We note more about that in this issue and in our free study guide *The Final Superpower* (available to request or download at ucg.org/mj25).

Part of that tyranny will be a controlling religion—a return to authoritarian tradition that is dramatically different from the Christianity of the Bible. At this season of Pentecost, we reflect on God's founding of His true Church and, in this issue, consider the corruptions of traditional Christian religion. Further, we delve into the marvel of God's desire for a close covenant relationship with His people—and the help He offers through His Holy Spirit.

Meanwhile, the storms of this age continue to rage with grievous happenings around the world. The earthquake in Myanmar has brought terrible suffering. Atrocities against fellow man continue, even in the name of religion. And looming over the horizon a terrifying tyranny is coming. It's not here yet, but with changing winds the storm is brewing.

May we all weather these elements until the clouds at last break with the coming of Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom and set the world free. In that wonderful time of peace and healing, the whole world will be invited into covenant to learn and live the way of God under His great blessings.

Yet you don't have to wait until then to turn to Him. As He says, "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). Indeed, as the apostle Paul proclaimed, "He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). Do you sense a shift in the air—not just in the world but now in your own life? God may be signaling for your attention. Let Him motivate a shift in you!

Tom Robinson, Managing Editor
Beyond Today Magazine

WINDS OF CHANGE IN EUROPE

Eighty years ago this May, the Second World War ended in Europe. In the eight decades since, major winds of change have swept across the continent twice. Current developments could lead to the most dramatic winds of change ever to blow across the nations of Europe.

by Paul Kieffer, Beyond Today office manager in Germany

On May 8, 1945, celebrations erupted around the world to mark the end of World War II in Europe. On Victory in Europe Day, or V-E Day, Germany surrendered its military forces unconditionally to the Allies. Germany's surrender ended years of devastating conflict and allowed European nations to begin the process of rebuilding and recovering from immense suffering and destruction.

Recovery was not uniform, however, as Europe was soon divided into opposing blocs. The countries in Western Europe liberated by the Allies would become thriving democracies, while those liberated in the East would become subject to the Soviet Union and be occupied by Soviet military units for decades.

We look back here over postwar history and consider where current events are headed in Europe, and what that ultimately means for the world at large.

The Soviet boot on Eastern Europe—the Iron Curtain

At the Yalta Conference, held in a Russian resort town in the Crimea Feb. 4-11, 1945, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin made important decisions about the postwar world, especially Eastern Europe. The American and British delegations generally agreed that the future governments of European nations bordering the Soviet Union should be “friendly” toward the eastern power. The Soviets promised to allow “the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people” in all territories in Eastern Europe liberated from Nazi Germany.

However, it soon became evident that the Soviet Union would not permit such free elections. On March 5, 1946, Churchill, now former prime minister, visited Westminster College in

Fulton, Missouri and gave what became popularly known as his “Iron Curtain Speech.” In Churchill’s words:

“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow.”

When the three western zones in Germany became the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) in 1949, the Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a defensive alliance between Western European countries and the

United States and Canada, was established in April 1949, and when West Germany joined in 1955, the Soviet Union responded with the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance of Soviet-dominated eastern European nations to counter NATO.

Instead of a peaceful harmonious Europe after World War II, the continent was divided into the opposing blocs of the Cold War for 40 years until the next winds of change swept across Europe.

Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact

Mikhail Gorbachev fundamentally and unexpectedly changed the course of the Cold War when he became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985. His policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) signaled a liberalization of Communist government control. They also masked a deeper economic crisis driving this change and undermining the entire Soviet system, making it difficult for Moscow to maintain support for its Eastern European satellites. And when protest movements threatened in Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany, Moscow could not help.

This was dramatically demonstrated in East Germany when the Berlin Wall, symbol of the Iron Curtain and of a divided Europe, came down in November 1989 just months after the 40th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Within two years, the entire Soviet system collapsed with the dissolution of the Soviet

Union in December 1991.

Arising from the Soviet collapse were 15 independent countries, including Russia itself, the Baltic States and Ukraine. The Eastern European countries formerly under the Soviet boot later applied for membership in the European Union. On May 1, 2004, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined the EU. This was the largest enlargement in the EU's history, both in terms of population and number of states. Romania and Bulgaria then joined in 2007.

The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact also allowed its former members to become NATO members. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined in 1999. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia then became members in 2004. Notably, Poland and the three Baltic states all border Russia—*despite a verbal agreement during German reunification talks that the NATO alliance would not expand eastward to Russia's border.*

The “peace dividend” expected with the end of the Cold War was short-lived. The initial honeymoon period in U.S.-Russian relations ended abruptly as it became increasingly clear that each country's geopolitical goals were incompatible in various respects. Russia opposed the eastward expansion of NATO, although it eventually accepted the inevitability of NATO's expansion to include Poland, a former Warsaw Pact member, and the three Baltic states.

The war in Ukraine and the new Trump administration

Regime change in Ukraine became a major concern in 2014, when a pro-Russian Ukrainian president was replaced by a Western-oriented government. Less than a week later, Russian forces seized Crimea, which had originally been Russian territory but was given to Ukraine by Russia in 1954. Russia was willing to accept Ukraine later becoming part of the EU *but opposed NATO membership and threatened military intervention to prevent it.*

With the annexation of Crimea, Russia provided support to pro-Russian separatists who were fighting the Ukrainian military in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine. Like Crimea, this region was once part of the Russian Empire. In February 2022, Russia shocked Europeans by launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, beginning the largest conflict in Europe since World War II. NATO countries had not intervened in Crimea, but now began individually supporting Ukraine with financial aid, military equipment and training in advanced weapons systems.

Russia's military intervention in Ukraine was a rude awakening for Europe, revealing its military weakness and dependence on the United States and the NATO alliance for its defense. French President Emmanuel Macron was the first to emphasize the need for a European military structure independent of the United States. German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius even said publicly that Germany's army, the



Left to right: Crowds on the Champs-Élysées in Paris celebrate Victory in Europe at the end of World War II with a joyful procession; Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin discussing postwar plans for Europe at the Yalta Conference; the Berlin Wall, which divided between Communist East Germany and democratic West Germany, breached and falling in 1989 after the restructuring of Communist policies in the Soviet Union.

Bundeswehr, must prepare to wage war by 2030—a statement that in years past would have earned public ridicule and condemnation.

The new U.S. Trump administration's handling of the Ukraine conflict has caused a lot of upset among European leadership. The open quarrel with Ukrainian President Zelensky and his dismissal from the White House, the suspension of military aid to help bring Ukraine to the table to negotiate a ceasefire, and the U.S. decision to conduct the initial phase of peace talks without Ukrainian and European participation made it clear that the transatlantic relationship will no longer be “business as usual.”

More galling to them was the U.S. position that the Europeans provide security guarantees for a peace agreement as next-door neighbors, with President Trump vaguely stating that America would just make sure everything goes well. European leaders took this to mean that any peacekeeping troops they sent in would not have assurance of U.S. backing if attacked (as Ukraine is not a NATO member). Trump has warned of direct fighting between U.S. and Russian military personnel as threatening nuclear war.

The sentiment of many Europeans is that America has now defaulted on its position as long-recognized leader of the free world.

At the Munich Security Conference in mid-February American officials confirmed that the initial peace talks on ending the Ukraine war would take place without the Europeans and Ukrainians. French President Macron then convened an emergency meeting in Paris right after the Munich conference for several European nations. The meeting turned out to be the first in a series of consultations to deal with the new situation. European leaders were adamant that they would not allow themselves to become divided by President Trump's policies.

Need for a “supranational organizational unit”

Dr. Stefan Bierling, a political scientist who lectures at the University of Regensburg in Germany, described the shock Europe experienced with America's abrupt change on support for Ukraine: “This is the worst possible accident after 75 years of the Americans, quite frankly, dragging us along on their coattails in world affairs. Now all of a sudden we're on our own, we're like Kevin [the young boy] in the movie *Home Alone*, and we don't really know how to defend ourselves against this unpeaceful, malicious environment.”

The first weeks of the second Trump administration have done more to unify Europe than anything else since World War II. The

sentiment of many Europeans is that America has now defaulted on its position as long-recognized leader of the free world.

It's realized that no individual European nation could replace the United States in this respect, but there is thought that a unified Europe could in time wield sufficient power. Yet how can that be achieved?

Europeans appear willing to assume the responsibility for security safeguards when a settlement is negotiated to end the Ukraine war. But since any joint effort would have to be managed outside the NATO structure, questions of logistic coordination and financing first need to be addressed. Without American support, initial estimates on necessary increased European defense spending ranged from 500 billion to a trillion euros and an increase in European troop strength by at least 300,000 soldiers. Since European NATO members rely in varying degrees on American military equipment, increased defense spending would also mean increased European military production to offset any dependence on the United States. (But see “Europe not able to go it alone militarily—yet” on page 12.)

The current European Union framework does not provide for joint defense planning and financing directed by the EU headquarters in Brussels. Bierling emphasized the dilemma faced by European countries in their desire to coordinate their military efforts: “It's not just a question of cooperation, it's primarily a question of what individual states have to contribute, because defense policy, like foreign policy as a whole, is still the sovereignty of individual members of the European Union, including individual members of NATO. *There is no real supranational organizational unit*” (emphasis added).

Yet that lack of a “supranational organizational unit” in Europe is prophesied to change! As European leaders met for the first time following the Munich Security Conference, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot proclaimed that “winds of unity” were blowing across Europe.

Macron's initiatives in Europe's response to America prompted Russian President Vladimir Putin to describe the French president as a would-be new Napoleon. Napoleon was the head of a Catholic-recognized revival of the Holy Roman Empire. Putin's characterization unwittingly foretells a future unified Europe that corresponds with the details of biblical prophecy.

The winds stirring a succession of empires

The prophet Daniel in a vision beheld “the four winds of heaven . . . stirring up the Great Sea” (Daniel 7:2). Out of the churning waters came a succession of four beasts representing empires. A composite image of these creatures is found in Revelation 13, the succession of kingdoms culminating in the Roman Empire—which through revivals would continue to the end time.

These prophecies present two themes running through European history—a tyrannical political system and a false religious system partnered with it. In Revelation 17:1-2 the



The Ukraine crisis may well be the initial phase of an expansion of Europe's military capacity, enabling it to no longer be dependent on the United States or the NATO alliance.

apostle John sees a vision of how the relationship between church and state would play out in Europe's history: "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls [of end-time plagues] came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.'"

The "many waters" represent "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues" this false religious system rules over (verse 15). And fornication with political powers here is a figurative way of describing selling oneself or one's favors for material gain or advantage. The Roman church endorsed state rulers, promoting popular allegiance, in return for the state ensuring the church's protection, advancement and enrichment. The church described here has been a powerful force in European history, involved in the various resurrections of the Roman Empire through history.

Verse 10 shows that there would be seven "kings"—rulers who, with church sanction, would lead these imperial revivals. The last one "has not yet come." He will lead a final revival immediately before the second coming of Jesus Christ. We can identify the first six of these revivals as: Justinian, Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles V, Napoleon and the Mussolini-Hitler axis.

The groundwork for the final resurrection of the Roman Empire began with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which established the European Economic Community or Common Market, forerunner of today's European Union. As currently constituted, the European Union cannot be the final formation of the seventh and last Roman revival—though it can well lead into it.

The coming European superpower

The Bible is clear that the final revival involves 10 "kings"—which today could include presidents, premiers or prime ministers—"who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [indicating a very short time] as kings with the beast" (verse 12).

"The beast" is the title Scripture gives to the leader of this end-time power bloc, which is likewise called "the beast," given its savage nature in the tradition of its tyrannical predecessors. Together the rulers forming this alliance "will make war with the Lamb"—the returning Jesus Christ (verse 14).

The Scriptures do not give clear indications of what will

bring about the transition to the "ten kings" at some point in the future. Verse 13 says that the 10 leaders in this final union will be "of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast." In other words, those 10 leaders will *voluntarily cede* their "power and authority" to a central authority.

It might seem hard to believe, but this prophecy describes Europe's future! The most likely scenario to cause this would be a crisis that individual European nations could not cope with individually. The European Union's current structure allows for what many call "two-speed" integration, with unification of "core" member nations willing to advance to full political union without the others being required to participate.

This option is one way the prophecy in Revelation 17 could be fulfilled within the current EU framework. A "coalition of the willing" is the term already being used in Europe for its current response to the Ukraine crisis.

Does this sound far-fetched? Other observers have predicted the possibility of a unified Europe arising out of a U.S. drawback from its roles in the international order. Around 15 years ago the Canadian newspaper *Ottawa Citizen* had this to say: "If and when the United States begins to retrench, no certain thing but a real possibility, the European Union may well begin to fill the vacuum in the Western world . . . If one goes back five centuries . . . Europe suddenly came together under the leadership of the young dynamic Habsburg Charles V, who ruled from Belgium . . . Europe enjoyed a global reach under his reign, not only by military might but by 'soft power' and diplomacy" ("The Decline of America," Dec. 24, 2009).

The Ukraine crisis may well bring about the initial phase of an expansion of Europe's military capacity, enabling it to no longer be dependent on the United States or the NATO alliance. The prophecy of the Beast in Revelation 13 foretells the world's future astonishment over the rise of this militant power: "'Where is there anyone as great as he?' they exclaimed. 'Who is able to fight against him?'" (verse 4, *The Living Bible*).

Keep watching developments in Europe and changes in the relationship between Europe and the United States. The winds are churning up the masses and key players. At some point, what God has foretold will come to pass! [BT](#)

DIVE DEEPER



The key to understanding what's happening in the world and where events are headed is found in God's Word. For an overview, request or download our free study guides *The Final Superpower* and *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Scan the code or visit ucg.org/mj25 to find them both.





South African Land Grab Prompts U.S. Invitation

In the face of the taking of Afrikaner farmland, the U.S. administration is offering citizenship to these displaced white farmers. What's happening in South Africa, and will we see an end to racial inequity?

by Jim Tuck

The new American administration has offered to grant a “rapid pathway to citizenship” and thereby “safety” to white Afrikaner farmers in South Africa, accusing their government of treating them “terribly.”

A CBS News article reported recently that President Donald Trump “had previously pointed to new land expropriation laws in South Africa that he claims are racist and a breach of the White farmers’ human rights. In reaction to the laws, he has halted all foreign aid to South Africa . . . [and] signed an executive order accusing the South African government of adopting racist laws that discriminate against Afrikaners, an ethnic group made up primarily of the descendants of Dutch settlers who started arriving in the country hundreds of years ago and now amount to about 13% of the population. He specifically called out a law that was passed to allow the government expropriation of some privately owned land without compensation” (“What’s

the Truth Behind Trump Offering White South African Farmers U.S. Citizenship?” March 10, 2025).

The South African government denies this characterization, but there are serious concerns about people being pushed off their land. What’s going on, and why should it be important to us?

Crumbling empire gives rise to local tyranny

A 2017 land ownership audit found white South Africans possessed 72% of the country’s farming and agricultural land, while black South Africans possessed only 4%. The expropriation, to resolve the disparity by redistribution, can be applied to any land in South Africa, no matter whether it is rural or urban. The ongoing land grab in South Africa is a continuing sign of the disintegration and decline of the once great British Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth of Nations, also often referred to as the British Commonwealth, is an international

association of 56 member states, the vast majority of which are former territories of the British Empire. The population of the British Empire at its zenith was approximately 458 million people in 1922, covering an area of 13.7 million square miles. At one time, the vast Commonwealth that sprang from the former empire was a great British-reared “family of nations” that came together for mutual and friendly discussions. Times have changed, and no longer are the relations between nations and their peoples as cordial.

This is not the first time white farmers and ranchers have had their lands expropriated in southern Africa. In 1965 in Rhodesia, now called Zimbabwe, “European” farming interests were nearly 33.7 million acres, and the number of farms in this sector was 6,266, giving an average farm size of 5,376 acres. Farmers and ranchers were pushed off their lands by force, and in some cases whole families were wiped out by so-called “liberators.” Many of

those ousted fled to Zambia and began large farms raising maize and tobacco.

Robert Mugabe became the first prime minister (1980–87) of the newly organized state of Zimbabwe. He was a black nationalist of Marxist persuasion. Eventually establishing one-party rule in his country, he became dictator in 1987, ruling for 37 years and amassing a vast fortune while greatly impoverishing the Zimbabwean people. South African tabloids were filled with articles about the great riches Mugabe and his family accumulated over the decades, including lands and mansions. His most valuable property is Hamilton Palace in Sussex, England, worth more than 40 million euros. In addition, he owned more than 37,000 acres of land in Zimbabwe, including estates that were taken away from ousted white farmers.

Leaders like Mugabe seldom rule with the best interests of the people in mind. He came in as a liberator, but went out as a tyrant. He destroyed the economic power of Zimbabwe's white community, which was based in their possession of the country's most fertile land. Under Mugabe, life became more difficult for the Zimbabwean people than when they lived under colonial rule. Mugabe eventually was forced to resign in disgrace in November 2017 to prevent his impeachment, and the news sparked jubilant celebrations in the nation's streets. He died Sept. 6, 2019.

It should come as no surprise that Mugabe was celebrated as a hero in South Africa, which is going down the same path. Current South African leaders view Mugabe as a great revolutionary leader who fought racial oppression and Western imperialism.

One cannot help but wonder whether there will be further disintegration of the Commonwealth nations in Africa and others that might choose to follow South Africa's example. What nation could be next?

And where would it end? Should land in the United States be given back to Native Americans? That question has been on the table for quite some time,

and in some cases Indian tribes have successfully reacquired some of their lands.

The end of all prejudice and racism is coming

Racism and inequality persist in South Africa nearly 25 years after apartheid. Apartheid is an Afrikaans word meaning “separateness” or “the state of being apart.” Unequal access to education, unequal pay, segregated communities and economic disparities continue to exist.

Will the land grab in South Africa bring about peace and tranquility? No,

it will not. Wherever there is strife over land, minerals, water or any rights, there will be prejudice and violence.

One of the traits of human or carnal nature apart from God's Spirit is prejudice. Prejudice crosses all color lines, along with many other characteristics of man's unrepented nature—jealousy and envy, competition and strife, resentment of authority, vanity, lust and greed. And these, sooner or later, result in violence! Much of the time such violence is caused deliberately, orchestrated by deep state activists who push their own ideology and deliberately stir up strife among the grassroots.

We're warned in 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

Satan the devil cleverly stirs up strife among people. He doesn't want them to get along. We need to learn how Satan attacks so we “will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11, New American Standard Bible). He stirs up hatred and strife between people over skin color or their status in life. He strives to cause us to doubt what God instructs us to do in the Bible.

When Jesus establishes the Kingdom of God on the earth as King of Kings, He will rid the entire world of all prejudice. There are two things that will bring about racial peace. First, human nature will be changed. Secondly, the segregation-integration issue will be settled in a way to bring peace, and there will be no discrimination anywhere, with one race being supposedly superior over another. Opportunity for success and well-being will be equal for everyone.

Then human beings from the time of birth will learn—as the apostle Paul

The God of all creation “has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26).

said to the Athenian philosophers on the Areopagus or Mars Hill—the God of all creation “has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26).

We are not of a “white” blood, or “black” blood, or “brown” blood, or any other ethnically distinct blood. We are all descended from the same ancestral father and mother, Adam and Eve. Ultimately God our Father is going to make all people into one family in spirit and love for one another.

Think of all the suffering human beings have endured because of strife between people over skin color or some other senseless reason. Imagine all the crying and tears over violence, mayhem and killing of one another based on race. God will bring it to an end! May that day come quickly! [BT](#)

DIVE DEEPER



The past blessings of the British Empire and Commonwealth have served a great purpose in the world. But the UK's influence is now waning. To better understand, request or download our study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. And to see the blessings Christ's return will bring to the world, also send for *Christ's Reign on Earth: What It Will Be Like*. Both study guides are available free. [Scan the code or visit \[ucg.org/mj25\]\(http://ucg.org/mj25\) to find them both.](#)



Europe not able to go it alone militarily—yet

As pointed out in our cover story, concerns over not being able to rely on American military defense cooperation has led European leaders to start pressing for their own military partnership independent of the United States. But this will be monumentally difficult for some time, due to where things stand and the massive expenditures involved.

The European Union's rearmament plan unveiled in March said the build-up had to be mostly from within ("ReArm Europe: Two-Thirds of Arms Procurement Must Be EU-Made," The European Conservative, March 19, 2025). But that seems very unlikely. As one report notes, incoming German leader "Friedrich Merz's dream of European 'independence' from America will have to remain as such for quite some time, thanks to years of governments harming their own national



New German leader
Friedrich Merz.

defense capabilities" (Michael Curzon, "German Defense CEO Dampens Merz's Hopes of U.S.-Independent Military," The European Conservative, March 20).

A piece at *The National Interest* argues that Europe needs America to help it build up its capabilities before ever being able to stand on its own—and that such help would need to come now rather than later (Can Kasapoglu and Peter Rough, "European Strategic Autonomy Is an Illusion," March 28).

A *Financial Times* op-ed was titled "Europe Must Trim Its Welfare State to Build a Warfare State" (Janah Ganesh, March 5). That's a hard pivot. Is there a will for that?

Wall Street Journal editor Gerard Baker writes: "There's another possibility, and it seems just as plausible: Europe's much-vaunted transformation doesn't happen after all. Set aside the deep-rooted demographic and structural economic problems that bedevil Europe and the lingering commitment to ruinous environmental and domestic social policies. It isn't clear even now that Europeans are truly serious about pooling their efforts and bolstering their own

defense against the perceived threat from the east.

"Italy and Spain last week objected to the European Union's plan for more aid to Ukraine. European nations far from the front lines of Russia don't see the threat in the same way that Germany or Poland does. France persuaded other EU countries to exclude British companies from competing for contracts in a new defense fund unless the U.K. gives Paris what it wants on—wait for this—fishing rights. For all its bold talk, Europe could easily remain economically hidebound, politically divided and militarily weak even as tensions with the U.S. rise dramatically" ("After a Long Decline, Europe Tries for a Comeback," *WSJ*, March 24).

Yet as the *Financial Times* piece notes, real fear over surviving could push toward a militarized Europe. While things are clearly not at this level, it is possible that today's divide could be a step toward such an eventual outcome. As our lead story explains, a remilitarized Europe will eventually arise. Again, request or download our free study guide *The Final Superpower* to learn more.



Atrocity: 70 Christians beheaded by jihadists in Congo church

The horrific massacre of 70 Christians in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been disturbingly underreported in the media. Open Doors UK, a human rights group focused on persecution against Christians, and several other organizations have related details of what happened.

On Feb. 13, 2025, militants from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an Islamist group linked to ISIS, captured these innocent victims from the village of Mayba and brutally beheaded them inside a Protestant church in Kasanga, North Kivu. The bodies of the victims

were discovered days later, leaving the community paralyzed with grief and fear. Many survivors were too terrified to bury their loved ones due to ongoing lack of security in the area. Local church leaders, overwhelmed with sorrow, have expressed despair, unsure of how to pray or cope with such overwhelming violence.

The DRC has been plagued by decades of violent conflict, with the ADF and other armed groups perpetuating terror. Despite this, international response to this specific massacre has been minimal. The tragedy highlights a grim pattern of

Christian persecution in the region. It also reminds us that the end of this age will be characterized by increasing religious persecution.

We mourn over those who've suffered such monstrous evil. Let us all pray for God to bring comfort and healing—but above all that His Kingdom would come soon to eradicate the vile deceptions of Satan and to bring righteousness and peace to the world. Of course, many will continue to wonder why God would allow such evil to go on. To help make sense of it, we recommend our free study guide *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*

Update on red heifers in Israel: none suitable



We reported in our May-June 2024 issue about the delivery to Israel of five reddish-brown cows that were seen as eligible for the purification sacrifice of the red heifer mentioned in Numbers 19 to be able to resume the Israelite sacrificial system, a factor in end-time prophecy. It later came out that some of these were no longer fit sacrifices due to finding a few white hairs on them. Now it's been reported that they've all grown white hairs. The head of the Temple Institute's Red Heifer Project, Azariah Ariel, has stated "At this moment, we don't have in our possession in Israel a red heifer that is verifiably kosher and suited for the ceremony . . . The question now is how to proceed" (Israel365 News, March 7, 2025). It's noted that the animals are occasionally inspected to see if disqualifying hairs remain.

This would seem to be a setback for resumption of the sacrificial system. But it may be that we don't have the full story, as there could be a desire to hide the status of any red heifers since there are extremists who might attempt to destroy any viable candidates. If the new reports are factual, that is no indication of prophecy being stopped or delayed. God will bring about what He has foretold regardless—and He says that sacrifices will be cut off shortly before Christ's return, meaning they must resume prior to that. For more on what Scripture says will happen in Jerusalem and the wider region in the years ahead of us, request or download our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

Massive devastation and loss of life in Myanmar earthquake

The southeast Asian nation of Myanmar, still called Burma by the U.S. government, was already suffering war and turmoil before the calamitous 7.7-magnitude earthquake of March 28, officially named “the Big Mandalay Earthquake.” By April 7, the death toll had surpassed 3,600 and was still climbing, with many still missing (AP, April 7, 2025). It’s awful to see the devastation, great loss of life and aftermath for the survivors, with so many needing basic necessities.

A temporary ceasefire was called but attacks continued. Speaking of local residents in the city of Mandalay, a UN humanitarian chief stated that almost 20 million people were already in need in this community, adding: “So it’s a compounding crisis. It’s

earthquake, on top of conflict, on top of huge existing need” (“Myanmar Fighting Continues Despite Post-Earthquake Ceasefires,” BBC News, April 7).

The sad reality is that, as we approach the end of this age, we will see an increase in suffering and death from both earthquakes and wars. Jesus Christ specifically referred to these calamities as “the beginning of birth pains” (Matthew 24:6-8, New International Version)—using the metaphor of labor contractions, which come with increasing frequency and severity.

But why does God allow such widespread suffering? He is certainly not powerless to intervene. And rest assured, He does intervene—and ultimately He will intervene for the whole world, but the timing is according to His perfect wisdom and plan. There’s

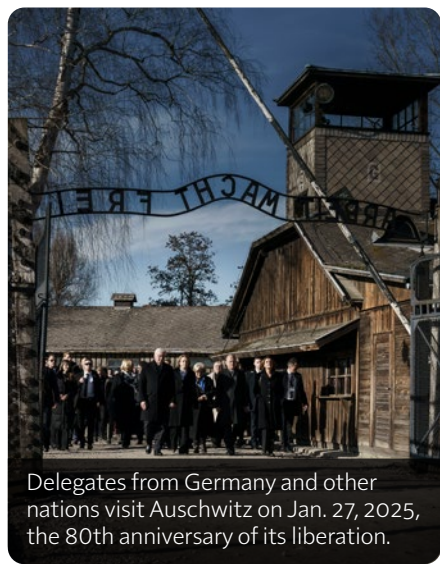
no need for despair in the face of such tragedy. For God will restore what has been lost—and that includes people’s lives. To better understand, be sure to download or request a copy of our free study guide *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*



Devastation in Mandalay, Myanmar after its earthquake on March 28, 2025.

Uncovering the fact that the Holocaust was widespread across Europe

Eighty years on from the end of World War II in Europe, it’s a fitting time to pause and reflect on the horror of what the Jewish people endured under the Nazi regime. Earlier this year was the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the infamous Nazi concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz.



Delegates from Germany and other nations visit Auschwitz on Jan. 27, 2025, the 80th anniversary of its liberation.

But the Nazis did not perpetrate such evil in isolation. A recent book by the director of the University of London’s Holocaust Research Institute sheds light on the terrible atrocity.

A *Daily Mail* article explains, conventional histories of the Holocaust typically focus “on the ‘industrialised’ killing in death camps such as Auschwitz, the so-called ‘final solution,’ with trainloads arriving and being almost instantaneously dispatched to the gas chambers and the crematoria. But this was only

part of the story, argues leading Holocaust specialist Professor Dan Stone . . .

“The fact that we need to get our heads around—and which many countries still find uncomfortable and refuse to recognize—is that the Holocaust was not solely a German project, but a pan-European crime with tens of thousands of active perpetrators all over the continent” (“Holocaust Europe Wants to Cover Up,” Jan. 27, 2023).

Stone further writes: “Although the persecution of the Jews that led to the Holocaust was a German project—a point which cannot be overemphasized—it chimed with the programs of many European fascist and authoritarian regimes. Without the willing participation of so many collaborators across Europe, the Germans would have found it much harder to kill so many Jews.”

Based on recent research, he says that “rather than a tale of German occupation, deportation and murder in death camps, the Holocaust should really be seen as a series of interlocking local genocides. The Holocaust was certainly driven, and largely perpetrated by Germans, but actual participation went much further. Countries such as France, Norway, Croatia, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania persecuted, expelled and killed Jews. And they did so, not under duress from Berlin, but because to do so fitted with their own long-held anti-Semitic views and nationalist aspiration.

“How else, Stone asks, can you explain how the Nazis were able to deport Jews across Europe and beyond, from Norway to Crete, Alderney to the Caucasus, the Baltic states to North Africa? Collaboration and complicity were everywhere . . .

“The lesson he wants us to press home from the Holocaust, is not just about intolerance or hatred or the dangers of bullying, which, he fears, is what conventional Holocaust education and commemoration teaches. It is that deep and irrational passions can move human beings to collude in terrible things. And nothing in the end can stop people from supporting these dark forces in times of crisis.”

Though awful to contemplate, that horrifying period was a forerunner of a worse time of trial and suffering yet to come—on not just the Jewish people again, but on the other nations of modern Israel as well. A successor to Hitler’s Reich, a final revival of the Roman Empire, will come to rule over Europe and bring destruction and enslavement on the Israelite peoples. It’s vital to understand their identity. Read our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* for more understanding of what’s coming. And take heed now of your vital need to be devoted to God.



How 8 False Feasts **SUPPLANTED** God's 8 True Feasts

The Bible lists eight festivals God gave as times of worship for His people. Yet traditional Christianity has rejected all of these and substituted for each one something fraudulent.

Will you persist in this with the world at large—or choose what God says to do?

by Mario Seiglie

Many would be surprised to learn that just as God reveals eight feasts or festivals He calls “My feasts,” found in both the Old and the New Testament and listed together in full in Leviticus 23, there are also eight main unbiblical feasts that traditional Christianity has effectively established in their stead. Was this replacement legitimate?

The Bible tells us not to adopt false religious practices to worship God in place of what He’s commanded (Deuteronomy 12:29-32). It also tells us not to judge a matter before hearing it (Proverbs 18:13). So let’s briefly consider each of these substitutions to better see which practice is the right one. (Much more detail is covered in our study guides offered at the end.)

1. Sunday for the Sabbath

This first of God’s feasts was to be observed *on a weekly basis*, while the other seven were *annual* feasts, occurring just once a year.

Leviticus 23:1-3 mentions about the Sabbath: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: *‘The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.* Six days shall work be done, but *the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation* [or commanded assembly]. You

shall do no work on it; it is *the Sabbath of the LORD* in all your dwellings” (emphasis added throughout).

Keeping the seventh-day Sabbath (from Friday sunset until Saturday sunset, as the Bible defines days) had been directly commanded in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11). Yet today, many people regard Sunday, the first day of the week, as the day for Christian worship. Astonishing as it may seem, if we look through the entire Bible, we find there is *not one example* of a man or woman of God who quit keeping the Sabbath day and started observing Sunday instead! In fact, Sunday is never mentioned in Scripture as being a weekly holy day or one of God’s feasts.

Surprisingly, even as late as A.D. 440 a famous Catholic church historian, Socrates Scholasticus, revealed that Christian believers were still assembling on the Sabbath everywhere except in Rome and Alexandria. He states, “For although *almost all churches* throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries *on the Sabbath* of every week, yet the Christians of *Alexandria* and at *Rome*, on account of some ancient tradition, have *ceased* to do this” (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book 5, sect. 22). Another Catholic historian of that day, Sozomen, also attested to the same fact.

A major factor that led to the abandonment of Sabbath-keeping in these

two cities was a strong anti-Jewish attitude. Yet it was not until the Synod of Laodicea around A.D. 364 that Sabbath-keeping was officially banned among Christians in the Roman Empire.

As a result, history shows it was the Catholic church that imposed its will over the Roman Empire to exclusively observe Sunday instead of the Sabbath. Nonetheless, the Roman church was unable to fully stamp out the Christian Sabbath, which continued to be observed in secret during the vicious religious persecutions. And it continues to thrive even to this day around the world.

Thus, a man-made feast, Sunday, was eventually substituted for a biblically based feast, the Sabbath, that had also been kept by Jesus Christ and His apostles (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2).

2. Good Friday for Passover

The next feast, the first annual one, is listed in Leviticus 23:4-5: “These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations [again, commanded gatherings] which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. On the fourteenth day of the first month [on the Hebrew calendar] at twilight is *the LORD’s Passover*.” This was the day Jesus died, with “Christ, our Passover . . . sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The New Testament observance of Passover was later swapped out for

a festival that came to be known as “Good Friday” as part of Easter Week.

“The Nicaean Council [in A.D. 325—1,700 years ago],” says the *Jewish Voice*, “abandoned the Jewish calendar for the Gregorian (the calendar we commonly use today) and declared the resurrection [of Christ] would be celebrated the first Sunday after the new moon following the Spring equinox. It’s unfortunate, to say the least, that this Council went to such great lengths to *separate* what God designed to coincide. The *disassociation of Passover and Good Friday on the calendar* has been *sadly effective* in keeping much of the world from seeing God’s intended connection between Passover and Jesus, between Old and New Covenants” (“Passover and Good Friday Converge,” April 6, 2022).

Consequently, “Good Friday,” part of the *Easter celebration* that week, took the place of the Christian Passover—so that many Christian believers today memorialize Good Friday while knowing little or nothing about the Passover and its relevance for them.

3. Easter Sunday for the Days of Unleavened Bread

The next of God’s feasts that was changed was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It says in Leviticus 23:6, “And on the fifteenth day of the same month is *the Feast of Unleavened Bread* to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.”

This was displaced by what became known as Easter Sunday.

As *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* explains: “There is *no* indication of the observance of the *Easter festival* in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic Fathers . . . The first Christians *continued to observe the Jewish festivals*, though *in a new spirit*, as commemorations of *events which those festivals had*



Biblical directives have been replaced with a celebration based in pagan traditions focused on sunrise and fertility, with eggs and rabbits.

foreshadowed” (11th ed., p. 828).

The apostle Paul told Christians to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (1 Corinthians 5:8). Jesus was raised from the dead during this festival. In context, that was part of leading us out of sin and death and into righteousness—integral to the meaning of the feast. Yet that is all forgotten in the exclusive focus on the supposed resurrection day. And in fact Jesus was not resurrected Sunday morning, as many believe (see our study guides offered below).

Biblical directives have been replaced with a celebration based in pagan traditions focused on sunrise and fertility, with eggs and rabbits.

4. Whitsunday for Pentecost

The next feast that was changed was the biblical Pentecost. Leviticus 23 says, “Count fifty days [from a special offering during the Feast of Unleavened Bread] to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD . . . And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you . . . It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations” (verses 16, 21). Fifty days here gives us the term

Pentecost, derived from the New Testament Greek word for “fiftieth.”

It commemorated the offering of firstfruits of harvest to God and was the day the Christian Church began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4, Christians of this age being a kind of “firstfruits” in God’s spiritual harvest of humanity (James 1:18; John 4:35—and learn more about this festival, which comes at this time of year, in our Questions & Answers on page 30).

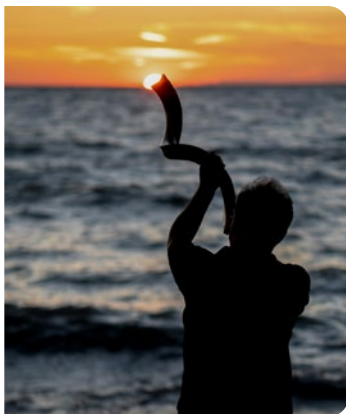
With the changed timing of Passover, the 50-day count to Pentecost was also changed. This new festival sometimes coincides with the biblical

festival but often doesn’t. In Britain and among some Christian groups in other countries the new observance is called Whitsun or Whit Sunday. The “white” in the name is seen by some as recalling the white garments of people getting baptized in medieval times. But others see the parades and pageants of this occasion as recalling earlier pagan traditions—emerging from a conflation of the Celtic holiday Beltane (May Day) and summer solstice rites of June. “Green week” leading to this Pentecost in Slavic countries is linked to the cult of the dead and spring fertility rites, with focus on birch trees and nature spirits.

As church historian Jesse Hurlbut remarks about the human-instituted feasts of the church in Rome: “The forms and ceremonies of paganism gradually crept into the worship. Some of the old heathen feasts became church festivals with change of name and of worship” (*The Story of the Christian Church*, 1967, p. 78).

5. Halloween and All Saints’ Day for the Feast of Trumpets

The next biblical feast supplanted was the Feast of Trumpets. Leviticus 23:24 says, “Speak to the children of



Instead of celebrating a pagan holiday of departed souls used to claim saints go to heaven at death, the Feast of Trumpets focuses on the true afterlife in a resurrection from death.

Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.’”

This fall festival in the land of Israel, called the Feast of Trumpets, was eventually substituted by a Catholic festival now celebrated as Halloween.

John Chrysostom, a famous fourth-century Catholic bishop, contemptuously admitted there were Christians still keeping the biblical feasts: “The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: *the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of Tabernacles, the fasts* [Day of Atonement]. There are many in our ranks who say they think as we do. *Yet some of these are going to observe the festivals* and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. *I wish to drive this perverse custom from the Church right now*” (*Against the Jews*, Homily 1, para. 5). He, of course, advocated instead the keeping of Catholic man-made feasts rather than God’s festivals spelled out in the Bible.

The term Halloween is a contraction of “All Hallows’ Evening,” the beginning of All Hallows’ Day or All Saints’ Day, as established by the Catholic Church. A Catholic mass is held in the evening to prepare followers for honoring those who have supposedly gone to heaven. Yet today it’s mostly celebrated in the Western world by children dressing up as witches, goblins and other costumed characters and going “trick or treating.” These elements are well known to have derived from pagan fall festivals.

How was the eve of All Saints’ a substitute for the Feast of Trumpets? The true biblical feast foreshadows the return of Jesus Christ with the blowing of trumpets (Revelation 8-9), culminating

False Worship Days Introduced in Ancient Israel

As recorded in 1 Kings 12:25-33, when the nation of Israel split following the death of Solomon into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Nebat became king over the northern tribes. Concerned that regular trips by people from the north to worship at the temple in Jerusalem to the south might shift their allegiance to the southern kingdom, leading to uprising against him, he devised innovations in the national worship system to prevent that.

Part of the change involved setting up golden calves to worship in Dan and Bethel, the extremities of the country, evidently meant to represent the true God who had brought their forefathers out of Egypt (the Hebrew *elohim* translatable as God as well as gods, plural—as with the golden calf made at Sinai). Jeroboam employed syncretism, a blending of religions, in his new worship system. Yet God considered it the worship of demons (2 Chronicles 11:15; see 1 Corinthians 10:20). The king also appointed his own priesthood, not exclusive to the tribe of Levi per God’s commands.

Furthermore, “Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah” (1 Kings 12:32). He created a substitute feast in place of the Feast of Tabernacles that was like it. Perhaps he added a 13th month to the calendar in a year that Judah didn’t—to push everything off a month. Whatever the case, this personally devised feast and worship system was a vile affront to God.

For his counterfeit religion, including changing the days of worship, Jeroboam remained infamous, the Bible repeatedly calling him the one “who had made Israel sin” (2 Kings 10:31; 13:6; 14:24). Other Israelite kings are said to have “walked in the ways of Jeroboam” (1 Kings 15:33-34; 16:19). We’re also told that “Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin” (2 Kings 17:21). The nation never turned back from this evil even 200 years later, and God sent national captivity as judgment: “For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets” (verses 22-23).

Let it never be said that replacing the worship system God gave with some alternative practice is acceptable to Him. As we read in Deuteronomy 12:29-32, we must adopt nothing that originated in false worship, being careful to follow exactly what God says to do.

—Tom Robinson

with the last trumpet announcing His triumphant coming to the earth and the resurrection of God's faithful people throughout the ages (Revelation 11:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

As Jesus said about His return, "And He will send His angels with *a great sound of a trumpet*, and they will gather together *His elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31).

Halloween, in contrast, supposedly celebrates the "saints" of the Catholic Church going to heaven—yet for many has returned to its pagan roots in a celebration of the dead as wandering ghosts. Instead of celebrating a pagan holiday of departed souls used to claim saints go to heaven at death, the Feast of

this day pointed to the atoning work of Christ. It also pointed to the removal of Satan as an instigator of sin.

In the counterfeit festival system, All Saints' Day is very closely linked with the next day, All Souls' Day, focused on those who have died, especially those imagined to be still in purgatory, a lesser version of hell that allows purification through punishment. The doctrine on purgatory was established at the Second Council of Lyon in 1274. It states people can pray to the dead saints who can intercede on behalf of those atoning for their sins in purgatory, enabling them to make their way to heaven more quickly.

Note that this Catholic feast deals with the subject of atonement for sins and a person's final destination,

removed as the perpetrator of sin and deception (Revelation 20:1-3).

7. Christmas for the Feast of Tabernacles

Next, Leviticus 23:34 says, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be *the Feast of Tabernacles* for seven days to the LORD . . .'" It is to be a time of great rejoicing, giving thanks for all God's provisions: "... and you *shall rejoice before the LORD* your God for seven days" (verse 40; see Deuteronomy 16:15).

The greatest celebration in the mainstream Christian world comes late in the year at the time of Christmas, the supposed observance of Christ's birth. Yet it has pagan roots, though not often



During Christ's reign all nations will be taught "to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16-19). Christmas, on the other hand, will be no more.

Trumpets focuses on the true afterlife in a resurrection from death, when Christ's followers will reign with Him "on the earth" (Revelation 5:10).

6. All Souls' Day for the Day of Atonement

The next of God's feasts pushed aside was the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 23:27 says: "Also the tenth day of this seventh month [of the Hebrew calendar] shall be *the Day of Atonement*. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls [a reference to fasting]."

Among the Jewish people the time from the Feast of Trumpets to Atonement was seen as a judgment period each year that looked ahead to future judgment—with a big focus on atonement or the means of forgiveness of sin. They sadly did not recognize that

themes *central* to the biblical Day of Atonement—yet not at all in the same way. The New Testament connects Christ's atonement for our sins with the biblical Holy Day: "But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year [on the Day of Atonement], not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance . . . And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, *so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many*. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrew 9:7, 27-28).

The false teaching of "All Souls' Day" is based on the unbiblical doctrine of the immortality of the soul and purgatory, vying against the meaning of God's genuine Day of Atonement, which looks ahead to the removal of sin in the future, at Christ's return, when Satan is at last

readily admitted. Religious historian Samuele Bacchiocchi remarked: "Do Christian sources openly admit the borrowing of the date of such a pagan festivity? Obviously not. To admit borrowing a pagan festival, even after due re-interpretation of its meaning, would be tantamount to an open betrayal of the faith. This the Fathers [early Catholic writers] were anxious to avoid. Augustine and Leo the Great [famous Catholic leaders], for instance, strongly reprimanded those Christians who at Christmas worshiped the Sun rather than the birth of Christ" (*From Sabbath to Sunday*, 1977, pp. 257-258).

The Feast of Tabernacles of late fall looks ahead to the time when Christ will rule all nations with His resurrected followers for 1,000 years (see Revelation 20:4-6). Christians who have observed the Feast of Tabernacles with this understanding know how much

rejoicing there is, yet with the biblical moderation that is taught in the Scriptures. During that feast there is no pressure to spend into debt exchanging gifts or to use so many pagan-derived decorations, such as Christmas trees, mistletoe and Yule logs.

During Christ's reign all nations will be taught "to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16-19). Christmas, on the other hand, will be no more.

8. New Year's for the Eighth Day

Lastly, Leviticus 23:36 states, "On *the eighth day* you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it." Right after the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles celebration is another feast called "the Eighth Day" (also in Nehemiah 8:18). It's connected to the prior feast, but its meaning extends beyond.

What substitutes for the Eighth Day, to complete the duplicity of these man-made festivals? The Catholic feast celebrating the New Year, reestablished by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. It takes place on what many have regarded as *the eighth day of Christmas*, just as the biblical Eighth Day is a week after the start of the Feast of Tabernacles.

As one writer notes: "The pagans of Rome engaged in debauchery and resolutions for the new year—something modernity has embraced . . . Most of Western society has returned to revelry and resolutions . . . on what is *the eighth day of Christmas*" (Erick Erickson, "It's a New Year, but for Many, the Same Problems Still Exist," *Orange County Register*, Jan. 7, 2025, p. 11).

Of course, it's evident that this New Year's feast of man-made tradition has nothing to do with the biblical feast it replaced. The biblical Eighth Day represents a true new beginning for all who have been duped by the devil into following false worship traditions. (Again, see our study guides below to learn more.)

To sum up, then, just as God established eight holy feasts during the year (the weekly Sabbath and the seven annual festivals), so there are, among the many man-made Catholic feasts, eight in particular across the year that by fraud have drawn focus away from the meaning of the biblical feasts originally taught and practiced by the New Testament Church.

Having seen both sets of festivals, which will you choose to observe? **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



We don't have room here for more extensive examination of the fraudulent substitutes for the biblical festivals. To learn more, be sure to read our free study guides



Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe? and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Scan the code or visit ucg.org/mj25 to find them both.

Invited Into Covenant

God is not offering forgiveness of sins for us to continue as we are, with mere vague hopes for tomorrow. He offers us a deeply committed relationship with awesome promises for eternity—one to which we must also commit.

by Don Hooser

The more we understand God's true religion compared to all other religions, the more we will be awed by what our Creator God offers us lowly human beings! God's true religion is, of course, the one that is accurately based on His revelation to mankind—the Bible.

Psalm 103 lists many of the magnificent *benefits* God offers us. His love, mercy and generosity are astounding! King David pondered: "I often think of the heavens your hands have made, and of the moon and stars you put in place. Then I ask, 'Why do you care about us humans? Why are you concerned for us weaklings?'" (Psalm 8:3-4, Contemporary English Version).

What is even more astounding is how God humbly offers us a *covenant* by which He *obligates Himself* to lovingly and thoroughly take care of us—now and throughout the future—as long as we remain faithful to Him and continue to repent when we fall short.

Do we appreciate what it means to live in a covenant relationships with God?

Early biblical covenants

Covenants are mentioned many times in the Bible. The English word "covenant" appears in the New King James Version 313 times! The Old Testament reveals several



With GOD!

covenants, especially those God made with the patriarchs.

But just what is a covenant? It's generally a formal legal contract or agreement between two or more parties—one that spells out what each participant agrees to do or supply, detailing promises and responsibilities.

Since God has supreme authority and power, what prevents Him from reneging on the covenants He makes and retracting His promises? His pure holy character, which includes the fact that He will never lie and will always live up to His promises. The Bible affirms this over and over!

One of the covenants God made with people was the Sabbath Covenant, wherein God said His Sabbaths would be a “perpetual covenant” and a “sign” between Him “and the children of Israel forever” (Exodus 31:16-17). Even today, the Sabbath continues to be an important sign that helps to identify the people of God.

Before the ministry of Jesus Christ, Jewish worship had continued under the terms of the broader covenant that God had made with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, referred to as the Sinai Covenant or the Old Covenant—Hebrews 8:13 declaring it “old” with the introduction of the new.

This article focuses more on the *New Covenant* that Jesus Christ, the “Mediator of the new covenant,” instituted and introduced (Hebrews 12:24). To thoroughly understand the New Covenant and the many controversial claims made about it, we recommend our free book *The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law?* (offered at the end of this article).

The former covenant was valuable and wonderful in

countless ways. In fact, all that God taught with the Old Covenant—including the Ten Commandments and many other principles—serves as the essential foundation and introduction for the New Covenant (see the companion article “Tablets of Stone” on page 22). Even the many “blood sacrifices”—the sacrifice of animals by the shedding of their blood—were deeply meaningful, as they were prophetic and symbolic of Jesus Christ dying by the shedding of His blood.

The Old Covenant established a special relationship between God and His people, with God committing Himself to take care of the nation of Israel as long as Israel was faithful to Him. God offered the Israelites awesome blessings that would follow their continued obedience.

In fact, God was not just to be the Ruler of Israel as their King. For He even referred to His covenant relationship with His people as a marriage, in spiritual terms, saying that He “was a husband to them” (Jeremiah 31:32). But they grievously broke the covenant (same verse). He viewed the nation of Israel—later split into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah—as a faithless wife committing adultery with false gods and foreign political powers.

Hebrews 8:7-8 explains that the “fault” of the Old Covenant was not with the rules God gave but the people's inability to faithfully continue in God's ways due to spiritual weakness. They did not have the “heart” in them to believe,

Jesus initiated this New Covenant with Israel among His disciples, offering them a cup of wine the night before His death, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).

trust and obey God (see Deuteronomy 5:29; 9:24). The Old Covenant also did not offer the opportunity for ultimate forgiveness of sins or the receiving of God's Holy Spirit empowering obedience and the granting of eternal life.

A better covenant—providing forgiveness and help to obey

God said that He would ultimately “make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jeremiah 31:31). It was “a better covenant . . . established on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). Under the terms of this covenant, God would not do away with His laws, as many imagine,

He forgives those who sincerely repent, regarding them as sinless through Christ's sacrifice.

but would write them into His people's hearts and minds—and He would forgive their lawbreaking, remembering their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:33-34).

It would be a new marriage agreement. One of Jesus' Kingdom parables compared God's Kingdom with a marriage (Matthew 22:1-14). Revelation 19:6-9 reveals that the Church is engaged to marry Jesus Christ at His return! Ephesians 5:22-33 emphasizes the profound parallels between human marriage and the marriage of the Church to Christ. The Church as a spiritually renewed Israel is a forerunner in the relationship God intends to have with the rest of Israel and those of all nations who will submit to becoming part of it.

Jesus initiated this New Covenant with Israel among His disciples, offering them a cup of wine the night before His death, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). The purchase price for His spiritual Bride would be steep, as only His actual shed blood in death could provide atonement for sin.

This covenant depends on God totally forgiving us! A fundamental part of God's plan of salvation is His provision for forgiving people of their sins. When a person called by God repents and is baptized, all of the sins of his past life are forgiven, no matter how evil some of them were (Acts 2:38).

Paul quoted God as saying, "For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins" (Romans 11:27).

When the Bible speaks of God's forgiveness, it means total forgiveness. Isaiah 1:18 quotes God as saying, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow . . ." Once God has forgiven us, He regards us pure and sinless!

A psalm of David says: "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy . . . He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:8-12).

This amazing grace, this amazing mercy and forgiveness, is based on Jesus Christ's willingness to suffer and die to pay the penalty for all of our sins.

To maintain our harmonious covenant relationship with God, we must live by God's "instruction manual," the Bible, and repent and ask for God's forgiveness whenever we sin (see Luke 4:4; 1 John 1:9). The Bible tells of numerous people who had been guilty of great sins and then God forgave them after they repented. Amazing grace, indeed!

Please understand that God's requirement that we live in obedience to Him is not promoting salvation by works. We could never earn salvation! But God's commandments define the character of God, and our passionate desire must be for our character to be more and more like God's character. God's grace is not "cheap grace"—the counterfeit grace that promotes permission to keep sinning (see Jude 4).

Moreover, we can't succeed on our own. We must have God's help and empowerment. The New Covenant offers the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit, again described as having God's laws written on our hearts and minds instead of on tablets of stone. This will give us the heart needed to remain faithful. We commit to this process at repentance and baptism to then receive the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Yet we should understand that remaining faithful does not mean we will not sin any more in this life. No human being except for Jesus Christ lived a perfectly sinless life. Converted Christians still commit sins at times (see Romans 7; 1 John 1:8). Thankfully, under the terms of the New Covenant God offers, He forgives those who sincerely repent, regarding them as sinless through Christ's sacrifice. And He helps us to grow in spiritual conversion and obedience through the rest of our lives, as long as we continue to yield to Him.

Taking on Christ's "yoke"

In contemplating this covenant relationship, it's clear that what God offers us and what we can offer God are far from equal! To illustrate, imagine someone promising to give you a million dollars every week if you simply mow his yard! Preposterous, right?!

But what God offers us is more amazing than that! He offers "exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). He offers us everlasting life as glorified spirit beings in His divine family and Kingdom!

And what does He require of us? He does *not* require, as many religions do, a life of asceticism and extreme self-denial. Rather, we are to "love God and keep His commandments . . . and His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:2-3). And He will even help us to do that and will forgive us on repentance when we stumble. The result is our being blessed with happy and wholesome lives filled with love, joy, peace and other elements of godly character (Galatians 5:22-23).

In fact, Jesus said: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:10-11). Our Good Shepherd lays down His life for us—the weak little sheep—while we have so little to offer Him by comparison!

A covenant can be compared to animals being *yoked together* so they are together helping to pull a plow. Amazingly, God's covenant pictures our being yoked with Jesus Christ into a *partnership*, a *team*! Obviously, Christ supplies the real *power* in this team!

Notice what Jesus said to encourage us so we won't be frightened by this responsibility: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30).

When Jesus said His yoke is easy, He was referring to our part in bearing it. Jesus has shouldered the difficulty and heaviness of the yoke! Christ has sacrificed for us in countless ways and continues to help us!

Human life is often hard because we have the downward pull of selfish human nature, and we are surrounded by many temptations and sometimes persecutions in today's world that is still ruled by Satan the devil. Jesus warned that the gate is narrow and the path is difficult that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14).

Always remember this promise from the apostle Paul: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be

people to love him—only to obey, serve and worship.

In contrast, the true God has humble, sacrificial love that surpasses our comprehension! Consider the fact that the Bible is *God's book of love*—expressing His love for people and how people must learn to love God!

The main point is this: In no other religion does the god offer to enter a *covenant* to *forever obligate* himself (or herself) to take good care of the people—even if the people remain faithful to that god. And, certainly, even with pagan myths of dying and saving gods, in no other religion does the god make such a *willing sacrifice* for the people—certainly not a monumental sacrifice such as God the Father sacrificing His Son and Jesus Christ sacrificing Himself!

Clearly, God the Father and Jesus Christ passionately desire to share Their joy with others! To accomplish this, They have a great master plan of salvation for producing Their divine family, who, as we saw, will share in Their divine nature! What will that be like? King David wrote, "In Your



A covenant can be compared to animals being yoked together so they are together helping to pull a plow. Amazingly, God's covenant pictures our being yoked with Jesus Christ into a *partnership, a team!* Obviously, Christ supplies the real *power* in this team!

tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Jesus warned His present and future followers that we can anticipate many trials, temptations and persecutions in the future. And then He comforted them with these words: "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). And He further gave assurances of success as long as we continue to draw near to God through Him.

God's true religion is utterly unique

Compare true, biblical religion with any other worship system. In some religions, the god offers *no benefits*, only threats of punishments, perhaps averted through appeasement. In other religions, a deity may capriciously grant *some* benefits, yet with worshipers having no assurance of consistently and continually receiving those benefits. The god may be seen as granting them to enhance his or her own reputation, not out of genuine care for the people. In pagan religions, the god doesn't love the people and doesn't ask the

presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

God is calling relatively few in this age to understand and live by His ways today. Yet these are firstfruits in a great spiritual harvest of mankind, as God desires to ultimately offer salvation to everyone (compare James 1:18; 2 Peter 3:9).

If you are already part of the spiritual people of God, the Bride of Christ, having accepted the terms of the New Covenant, rejoice with great joy and remain faithful! If you have not yet, turn to God with all your heart and seek to be brought into this most magnificent covenant relationship with God and Jesus Christ! **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



For a greater understanding of the covenant relationship God offers us and what He expects of us under its terms, request or download our comprehensive book *The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law?* And for guidance regarding your readiness to commit your life to God, also obtain our helpful study guide *What You Need to Know About Baptism*. Both are available free. **Scan the code or visit ucg.org/mj25 to find it.**



Two Tablets of Stone



by Don Hooser

We find 15 verses in the Bible that tell us that God inscribed the Ten Commandments on *two* tablets (tables or slabs) of stone. Being engraved on stone emphasizes the importance and permanence of the Ten Commandments.

But *why two* tablets rather than one? The answer evidently concerns the role of commandments in His covenant with His people.

All 10 on each, written front and back

Many imagine that some of the commandments were written on one of the tablets, and that the rest of the commandments were written on the other tablet. But as many scholars have concluded, Scripture and historical context appear to indicate that *all* of the Ten Commandments were engraved on *each* stone! “The tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written” (Exodus 32:15).

In that case, on each stone, part of the commandments would have been written on one side and the rest on the other. God was certainly able to make the letters small enough to fit all of the Ten Commandments on each tablet, writing front and back!

This would mean that each tablet was a duplicate of the other—so that if one were flipped over next to the other, all the commandments would be visible together.

But why would God form two copies? These tablets represented key terms of the *covenant* God was making with the people of Israel! A covenant is a binding agreement or contract between two or more parties.

The Bible refers to the tablets as “tablets of the Testimony [or declared witness]” (Exodus 31:18; 32:15; 34:29) and “tablets of the covenant” (Deuteronomy 9:9, 11, 15). The Ten Commandments were a major part of God’s *revelation* to Israel and the core terms of God’s *contract* with Israel.

The New Testament refers to this covenant as the “old” covenant in comparison with the “new” instituted by Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:13). Various passages connect the Ten Commandments with this covenant God made with Israel (see Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 1 Kings 8:9; 2 Chronicles 5:10; Hebrews 9:4).

Importantly, though, the commandments themselves were *not* the covenant, as these laws existed before the covenant. Rather, the covenant involved the *agreement* of the people to *obey them* and all else that God, their Lord and Deliverer, would command.

A copy for each side

Again, though, why two copies? Consider this fundamental fact about the nature of a formal “covenant.” For two parties entering into a legal contract there would normally be at least two copies of the written agreement—one copy for each party to the agreement. Ancient Middle Eastern treaties often required duplicate copies. And it appears that at Mount Sinai, God made one copy of the covenant for Himself and the other copy for Israel! He obligated Himself to the terms of the covenant, and Israel agreed (initially) to be obligated to the terms of the covenant. *The covenant was binding on both parties, so each party would own a copy of the terms spelling out their obligations!*

God instructed Moses and Israel to protect and carry both tablets in the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 10:1-5). Note that 1 Kings 8:21 and 2 Chronicles 6:11 speak of the Ark containing “the covenant of the LORD.”

These scriptures further support the fact that the Ten Commandments represented the covenant between God and Israel.

Another question is: Why would God’s copy and Israel’s copy both be kept together in the Ark? This arrangement would emphasize the intimate relationship between God and His people. The Ark was holy—it belonged to God. We could perhaps say that God invited Israel to keep its copy in His Ark. What an honor for Israel! And quite practical too—the Ark being the safest place for the preservation of both tablets.

To summarize, it can be surmised that God wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets because they represented a sacred covenant between God and Israel. Similar to other ancient contracts, one tablet would have been for God, and the other for Israel—each to consider their own commitments and those of the other.

Foreshadowing the New Covenant

In Jeremiah 31, God foretold a New Covenant with Israel, and the New Testament shows God’s intent to expand a renewed Israel to include people of all nations. Rather than this covenant being engraved on stones, Hebrews 10:16 quotes Jeremiah 31 in stating: “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.”

It’s clearly a much “better covenant” for several reasons (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6; and see the companion article “Invited Into Covenant With God!” starting on page 18).

Those who enter this New Covenant with God and remain faithful to it will be rewarded with everlasting life in the Kingdom of God! It entails seeking forgiveness for breaking God’s commandments and, with His help, obeying them. Deeply consider this astounding opportunity! **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



Jesus Christ said, “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). Far from doing away with these laws, the New Covenant actually involves God writing them in our hearts and minds. For a fuller understanding of these broad principles, request or download our free study guide *The Ten Commandments*. Scan the code or visit ucg.org/mj25 to find it.



5 Major Roadblocks



The pursuit of happiness is a natural human desire, yet few people seem to find it. Here are five common roadblocks to happiness, according to the Bible, followed by some instruction for how we can achieve it.

by Becky Sweat

Ask people what they want out of life and often the answer will be along the lines of “to be happy.”

We indulge our whims, wishes, dreams and passions in search for this elusive bliss. Yet very few seem to find it. Even with a successful career, affluent lifestyle and active social life, a persistent feeling of dissatisfaction still lingers.

A 2024 Gallup poll revealed just how widespread unhappiness has become, reporting that less than half (47%) of Americans say they are very satisfied with their lives. Of course, even without polls it's obvious that many aren't happy, especially when we look at the news or go on social media.

One reason is that people often have a distorted view of what happiness entails. Many see it as simply an emotional state, resulting from the attainment of external achievements or possessions, or as the outcome of doing something “fun” or “pleasurable.” Happiness is then viewed as something that comes and goes, depending on whether our desires are being fulfilled. Yet that thinking magnifies the problem, as we likely won't be doing what we

should to achieve real, lasting happiness, and we may even be doing things that impede it.

So, what is a more accurate definition of happiness? What is the best way to achieve it? What are some common barriers to happiness? The Bible, sometimes referred to as our “instruction manual for life,” elaborates a great deal on the answers to these questions.

Hundreds of passages in the Bible address this topic. Now the words *happiness* or *happy* are not always used; terms like *joy*, *joyful*, *rejoicing*, *gladness* and *contentment* might be used instead. However, all these concepts are linked together. If we're joyful or filled with gladness, we're also happy and content.

Summarizing these biblical passages, to be happy is a matter of being satisfied and at peace with the circumstances of our lives through good times and bad. It's not a temporary feeling, nor is it dependent on whether life is “going great” for us, but is rather a way of thinking, believing and living. It's a matter of being focused on what has eternal value, and not being totally consumed by our present desires for this life. It

entails being content even during trials because we know that God will bring about good from them (Romans 8:28) and that He has a purpose for what we're experiencing (Isaiah 64:8; Philippians 1:6). We can rejoice because we know God's ways work and His promises are sure no matter what happens.

The Bible expounds on numerous pitfalls that can sidetrack us in our pursuit of happiness. What follows are five such obstacles. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but it lays out some of most common thieves of joy. When we better understand what makes us unhappy, we will be able to better see the paths to true happiness.

1. Constant complaining

Philippians 2:14 says to “do all things without complaining and disputing.” There are many reasons God doesn't want us to be complainers, but ultimately it's because it destroys us. Complaining never makes us feel better. On the contrary, if we're depressed it makes us more depressed. If we're upset, it makes us more upset. If we feel down, it dampens our mood even

more. Those on the receiving end of our whining also feel worse.

The fact is, it is impossible to complain and feel satisfied or at peace at the same time. When we focus our attention on what we're not happy with, we rob ourselves of the opportunity to experience and appreciate the blessings God has given us. We might not even recognize all the "good" that is right in front of us.

Case in point: I remember a camping trip with several families when it rained the entire weekend. The mosquitoes were out in full force, and we'd forgotten to bring bug spray. Our sleeping bag foam pads were not effective cushions for the hard, bumpy ground. Yet our group had made a pact of sorts that we weren't going to spend the weekend griping about our very obvious "camping challenges." Instead, we decided to focus on the fact that we were all grateful to have this time together. If we had grumbled the whole time, we wouldn't have been thinking about the people we were with and building each other up. That camping trip was many years ago, and today it serves as a happy memory.

2. An "always wanting more" mindset

We can get into the false way of thinking that to be happy we need more "stuff." A lot of times this mindset manifests itself as financial greed, which the Bible cautions against. Hebrews 13:5 says, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have" (New International Version). Ecclesiastes 5:10 adds, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income" (English Standard Version). Preoccupation with accumulating material things can make us restless and discontented. Once we've obtained what's new, bigger or better, we often see something else we want.

As with complaining, we can become so fixated on wanting something else that we no longer savor what we already have. I've known people who spent

much of their lives working lots of overtime so they could afford "more stuff," and in hindsight they regretted this, as their relationships with family members and friends weren't as healthy as they could have been (as they hadn't made the time to nurture them). Yet it's our connections with others, starting with our relationship with God, that provide real purpose and fulfillment to our lives.

A well-known Bible verse reads, "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). Being content frees us from the pressures and stress that people put themselves through to try to obtain more material things. While it's not inherently wrong to work hard for some nonessential extras, if our pursuit of material things has us neglecting vital relationships, we will live unfulfilled lives.

3. Comparing ourselves to others

At times, we've probably all fallen into the comparison trap. Our coworkers or neighbors might tell us about their upcoming pool construction, their new country club membership or their kids' academic successes, and we might feel shortchanged because we don't have those things. Or we might go on social media and see posts about other people's seemingly idyllic lives and impressive accomplishments. We forget that the information we're presented with isn't always the full story. We just know we feel sad or fed up because our own lives seem to be lacking in comparison.

The Bible warns us against comparing ourselves with other people: "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

When we compare our careers, finances, families or achievements with others, we'll almost always encounter others who top us, which can make us dissatisfied with our own lives. It's a

form of competition that never leads to happiness. Rather than make comparisons with others, a better idea is to compete with yourself. Strive to become a better version of yourself each day. Seeing personal growth can provide a sense of fulfillment.

4. Self-absorption

The natural human tendency is to be egocentric. We're typically focused on our own feelings and perspectives, and what we think and want. But while this might be a natural way of thinking, being self-absorbed only makes us discontented. None of us gets exactly what we desire all the time. Other people don't always do what we want them to do. And when that happens, if we've got a "me-first" mindset we'll be unhappy because our desires aren't fulfilled. A key to feeling at peace is not expecting or insisting things always go "our way."

Another reason self-absorption is problematic is because it doesn't show love to other people. Philippians 2:3-4 instructs us: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (NIV). When we get our focus off ourselves, the people we're interacting with will be happier, and so will we.

I can think of a time when I felt wronged by a coworker and I hadn't considered any point of view other than my own. I obsessed way too much about what happened and allowed my emotional pain to take over my thinking. All this did was make me unhappy. It wasn't until I tried to better understand the other person's perspective, acknowledging that she was facing her own challenges, that my unhappiness started dissipating. Instead of being preoccupied with my own hurt, I started trying to encourage her, which boosted her demeanor—and I was happier too.

While we do need to take care of ourselves, that should not be our main focus. A well-known verse in this regard is Acts 20:35: "There is more happiness

in giving than in receiving” (Good News Translation). Whether we’re offering a gift, our time, our concern or our understanding, it is incredibly satisfying to give to others—even if that means making personal sacrifices or putting our own desires on the back burner.

5. Short-term thinking

Another human tendency is to become so preoccupied with the challenges and hardships we face *right now* that we can’t see past them. We might not be able to grasp the “silver lining” or how things might eventually get better when we’re in the heat of a fiery trial or facing a huge obstacle or test. We just know we are struggling or scared or feel worn out.

Now we don’t have to pretend the pain and disappointments aren’t real. But we shouldn’t get stuck on this kind of short-term thinking either.

If the present “negative realities” are all we allow into our minds, we will never experience joy or peace of mind. We will only become very depressed or bitter. Colossians 3:2 says, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (NIV). We need to always keep in mind God’s long-term plans for humanity and what He is accomplishing in us—especially when we’re hurting.

Experiencing tests and trials is one way we can grow in godly character strengths, such as perseverance, patience and hope (see James 1:3-4; Romans 5:4). We also learn lessons, gain valuable insights and hopefully draw closer to God. In 2 Corinthians 4:17, we’re told, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Acknowledging the good that can come out of our



We will be happy when we follow God’s laws, delight in God’s instruction and meditate on it day and night, and keep God’s decrees and seek Him with all our heart.

circumstances, even when what we’re enduring is really tough, can help us cultivate a joyful mindset.

Final thoughts: How to achieve true happiness

Achieving true happiness is a matter of avoiding pitfalls like those noted here and then striving to understand and obey God’s instructions for how to live, as spelled out in the Bible. The Bible assures us that we will be happy when we follow God’s laws (Proverbs 29:18), delight in God’s instruction and meditate on it day and night (Psalm 1:1-2), and keep God’s decrees and seek Him with all our heart (Psalm 119:2).

God’s commands show us how to love Him and our fellow human beings, and emphasize that we are not to make pleasing ourselves our top priority.

Heeding is the way to a truly fulfilling, meaningful existence. As we strive to follow God’s teachings, we will come to see that His way of life leads to positive outcomes, which builds our trust in Him. Trusting in God brings peace. Proverbs 16:20 tells us that “whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he.” As we learn to trust God more, we will increasingly look to Him for guidance and security, which further builds our sense of peace.

Moreover, as we see God’s hand in our lives, we’ll realize we have much to be thankful for. We will be able to see all that’s “right” about our lives and put our problems into perspective, grasping the ultimate good to come from our present circumstances. This promotes a

contented mindset.

There have been difficult periods in my life when things were definitely not “going my way,” yet I still felt content. I knew God was taking care of me, and I was seeing firsthand how biblical principles were helping me work through my struggles. That’s what I was grateful for and what dominated my thinking. This is the kind of happiness that doesn’t disappear even when our “current realities” are unsettling or dismal.

There’s certainly nothing wrong with enjoying “temporary pleasures.” We all can benefit from that kind of emotional boost at times. But we always need to remember that real, lasting happiness comes from learning to live God’s way of life, drawing close to Him and making His ultimate goals for us our hope too. **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



A fervent trust in God and His promises will assure us of His care and ultimate plans for us—and will lead us to live as He tells us to, the pathway to peace and happiness. To learn more about developing this vital quality, request or download our free study guide *You Can Have Living Faith*. Scan the code or visit ucg.org/mj25 to find them.



Grace

Under Pressure

In striving to live as followers of Jesus Christ there will be difficulties—yet difficulties we can face boldly as yielded instruments of God.

by Robin Webber

Experience bears out the adage: “Life is what happens when you’re busy making other plans.” We should know by now to expect the unexpected. Why then do we allow ourselves to become paralyzed when the unexpected happens? Allow me to be frank: Disciples of Jesus Christ are not exempt from a challenged life. It’s true that God lovingly watches over us, but we are not promised a Teflon-coated existence in the here and now. Jesus Himself was no stranger to adversity and dire circumstances, but He rose above the moment with His eyes on eternity for us (Hebrews 12:1-3).

How can we prepare for that which unexpectedly comes and not allow circumstances to drag us down, but rather take the opportunity to emulate Jesus’ example and heed His invitation of “Follow Me”? (See Matthew 4:19, emphasis added throughout.)

Playing through on one string

Allow me to share a story from nearly

200 years ago. The famed violinist and composer Niccolò Paganini took to the stage before an adoring audience, not realizing the challenge it would bring. Playing on his four-stringed instrument with orchestral accompaniment, its strings began to snap one by one until only one remained, and yet he played on. The audience roared its approval. At the end, he again offered a solo encore with his beleaguered one-string violin.

Paganini could have left the stage at the first string’s snap. And surely by the third string’s demise he could have called it an evening, smiled (or frowned?) and exited. But there was that moment of personal inward encounter in which he determined to stand his ground. He afterward related, “I always thought the music came from my violin, but tonight, I realized the music comes from me.” This episode, which could have been disastrous, became a demonstration of grace under pressure.

It’s amazing when one individual perseveres under stress from the

unexpected to create a meaningful impact on others—especially in spiritual terms, inspiring people to commit to do their utmost and play it through. By God’s grace that person can be you. Oh, we may not be a celebrity like Paganini, but we are called from Above to be a child of our Heavenly Father and learn to play off the greatest example ever set—that of Jesus the Messiah! In a sense God has elected at this time to select “one-stringed human instruments”—far less than perfect like Paganini’s violin—“that no flesh should glory” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29), with His melody of life flowing through us to others.

Perhaps you’re thinking, “Easier read than done.” But let’s face it—there will be hurdles. The question is how we will meet a sheer moment of encounter that might stop us in our tracks and paralyze our witness of Christ living in us (see 2 Corinthians 13:5). It may be an argument with your spouse, dealing with a defiant teenager or the unruly neighbor across the street, or the rear

tire found flat just as you're leaving for vacation. How about a rift between you and someone you were close to in church after a perceived wrong was shared with everyone else instead of the two of you talking it out and realizing it was a misunderstanding?

Advancing despite the obstacles

We may not have intentionally planned the moment, but how do we display grace under pressure when “the best laid plans of mice and men,” and of developing disciples of Christ, go awry—when the violin strings snap?

Here are a few steps along the way to press forward as we heed the invitation of “Follow Me.”

Step 1: Face up to the duty of your calling. Reflect on Mordecai's refrain to his adopted daughter Esther, now queen of Persia, as the door of encounter was set before her, where standing up for her people the Jews meant putting her life on the line: “Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). When the moment of challenge comes, grab hold of your calling as a citizen of the coming Kingdom of God that now awaits in heaven (see Philippians 3:20) to be a witness of a better way rather than what comes so naturally left to our own devices. Always remember that Jesus never said it would be easy, but He assured us it would be worth it.

Step 2: Stop, look and listen. Slow down and spiritually breathe. Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychologist who survived the Auschwitz concentration camp, wrote in *Man's Search for Meaning*, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.” A related quote often attributed to Frankl declares: “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and our power to choose our response. In our response

lies our growth and our freedom.”

Choosing the right response in that space requires the proper frame of mind. As 1 Peter 3:15 tells us: “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you *with meekness and fear* [or humility and respectful reverence]” (American King James Version). James 1:19 further cautions us to “be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” In that space between stimulus and response we have a choice over what will dominate our heart—focus on the fleeting present moment or eternity with God.

Step 3: Strive to be prepared. We don't find our values in trial; we take them into the fray with us and hold on. Meeting the moment doesn't just happen! We need to be ready beforehand. Shakespeare in his play *As You Like It* penned, “All the world is a stage,

and all the men and women mere players; they have their exits and their entrances...” How do we enter the stage of life prepared for the telling moments that will come and exit in a manner that glorifies God? We must learn and hold on to His Word. This will strengthen our spiritual impulses, helping us to be fore-armed as we heed the grand invitation from Above of “Follow Me.”

The psalmist prays to God in Psalm 119, “Let Your hand become my help, for I have chosen Your precepts” (verse 173). Yet notice earlier in the same psalm how deeply the safekeeping of such help from Above saturates the petitioner: “With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! *Your word I have*

hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (verses 10-11).

Consider how these verses played out when Jesus was “alone on stage” in the temptations of the wilderness during a physically weakened state of a lengthy fast (Matthew 4). Here He was buffeted by Satan, who employed the same seemingly surefire traps he used as the serpent in Eden to snare Adam and Eve in Genesis 3—“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Humanly, as the Son of Man, this would have been a breaking point—but all played out so differently from Satan's objective.

Each time ordinary human strings would have snapped, Jesus hit the note of “*It is written*” in three movements, answering every challenge with remembered Scripture (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). In

Always remember that Jesus never said it would be easy, but He assured us it would be worth it.

every downbeat, the living Word (John 1:1-3) showed us “the what and the how”—that the music was within Him and not merely notes on a page on a shelf back in Nazareth. It's not what you *know* but what you *are*—expressed in what you *do* or *don't* do. It's at such critical moments yet ahead for us to meet them in harmony with the example of the One who goes before us and bids us, “Follow Me.”

Until next time, keep looking up and press on in your calling to follow Christ—letting the grace of God flow through you, His instrument of choice. BT

DIVE DEEPER



Does the receiving of grace from God mean that we are granted forgiveness for failure with no responsibility to live as He calls us to? The fact is, God expects us to change—not on our own but with His help. To better understand, request or download our free study guide *What Does the Bible Teach About Grace?* Scan the code or visit ucg.org/mj25 to find it.





P.S.A.L.M.

A Formula for How to Make Good Decisions

by Caleb Creech

The average person faces countless decisions each day. The vast majority of those have little-to-no long-term impact on us, but are mostly insignificant, preferential decisions, like “Do I want the watermelon or cherry sucker?” How should we, as Christians, go about making sound decisions about aspects of our lives that really are important and consequential? Let’s take a step back to basic algebra. When solving an equation, there’s a specific order you have to use to work through problems or you’ll come up with the wrong solution, even if you correctly solved the individual components throughout the problem. Some people use the acronym *P.E.M.D.A.S.*—or the mnemonic *Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally*—to help remember the appropriate order (Parentheses, Exponents, Multiplication, Division, Addition, Subtraction).

When it comes to decision-making as a Christian, we can use a similar approach. Any time we are faced with a critical decision, we can work our way down a sort of “order of operations” of Christian decision-making using the acronym *P.S.A.L.M.*

PRAYER

Our first step in any major decision-making should always be to bring that decision before our loving Father in prayer. In Matthew 7:7 we are urged, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” God is eager and ready to help us in all facets of life. It’s important to remember our dependence on Him and the wisdom He offers. Go to Him and pour out your heart and ask for Him to be actively involved in the process—to guide you and grant you wisdom as you make your decision.

SPECIFIC BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION

Once we have prayed, our next consideration should be: Is there an answer in black and white (and sometimes red) as a *direct instruction* in God’s Word? In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Some examples of specific biblical instructions are: “You shall not commit adultery”; “Let another man

praise you, and not your own mouth”; and “Obey God rather than men” (Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 27:2; Acts 5:29). The vast majority of the chaos in our current society stems from the situation warned against in Isaiah 5:20: “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!” Only God has the right to declare good from evil, and His Word must be the primary basis for all Christian decisions.

APPLYING BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Sometimes after diligent searching we aren’t able to find a direct instruction from God’s Word, but there might be biblical principles that can be applied to the situation. For example, we aren’t given direct instructions on exactly what clothes to wear, but we can certainly find guiding principles about the topic. In 1 Timothy 2:9, we’re told to be modest in appearance. In 1 Corinthians 8:9, we’re urged to avoid becoming a “stumbling block” for others. And in Deuteronomy 22:5 we read, “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.” While we aren’t given the specifics as to how they would apply to us in our culture today, the principles are there to be our guide.

LAWS OF MAN

In Acts 5, Peter and the other apostles were being scolded by the high priest for teaching in the name of Jesus Christ, and we can read their response in verse 29, listed above: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” But what about when societal law does not conflict with God’s law? Romans 13:1-2 states: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.”

These verses clearly show that God allows for there to be rules outside of His Word, and that they are to be given by those in positions of authority. These could be leaders in our church organization, government officials, teachers or bosses. As long as the rules aren’t in conflict with God’s law, we are told that we should be subject to them. It is our Christian duty to be respectable citizens, family members, students and employees when the law of God is not being violated. An example of this could be a minimum age for driving a car on a public road. That doesn’t violate God’s law, and therefore a Christian should make the appropriate choice to follow the rule.

MOTIVATIONS

Evaluating our motivations for making a certain decision requires examining our consciences and intentions too. Why? Because only we can truly know and evaluate what’s going on inside our hearts. We must be willing to take some time and honestly evaluate ourselves. What is drawing you toward a certain choice? Maybe a particular course of action is fine in and of itself but our reasons for wanting to go that route are not. Motivations, intentions and consciences need to be influenced by the Word of God but can differ from person to person, each of us being told to, with God’s help, work out our salvation with appropriate fear and trembling before Him (Philippians 2:12). It’s great to be able to share our blessings with others and donate money or volunteer to help out, but if our motivation is so we can post it on TikTok for views, then we need to reevaluate what we’re doing.

In addition to the elements above, keep in mind that when it

comes to making important decisions, it can be very helpful to seek counsel from others. The Bible is full of scriptures urging us to seek counsel in decision-making, such as Proverbs 11:14, which states, “Where there is

*Only we can truly know and evaluate
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We must be willing to take some time
and honestly evaluate ourselves.*

no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” It is important to pick our counselors wisely, though, as we should be leaning on people who have the same belief system and passion for following God’s way. When we’re younger, it’s best to start with our parents. Other great resources are our pastors and trusted adults in our congregations. Even if these individuals don’t have experience with the exact situation, they can give you general guidance and help lead you to the appropriate person for the specific situation.

This certainly is not a complete list, and I’m sure there are many other considerations that could come into play along the way in a decision-making process. Life can be complicated, and sometimes we can feel like we’re being pulled in every direction all at once. But my hope is that this gives you a basis to consider as you work through the many important decisions you’ll come to in your Christian journey. May you go forth and lead a spiritually fulfilling and successful life as God has purposed for you. **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



How can we strengthen our connection with God to develop His way of thinking and living? What do we do to receive His guidance in making the choices He would have us make? There are powerful tools available to help us attain needed wisdom and build godly character. Be sure to download or request your copy of our free study guide *Tools for Spiritual Growth*. Scan the code or visit ucg.org/mj25 to find it.



Q: What significance does the Feast of Pentecost have for Christians?

A: Pentecost, which this year falls on June 1 (starting the night before at sunset), is one of God's Holy Days listed in Leviticus 23—and, not coincidentally, the day on which the New Testament Church began in Acts 2.

For the ancient Israelites, this festival marked the offering of the initial produce or “firstfruits” of the wheat harvest (Exodus 34:22). Called “the Feast of Weeks,” it came seven weeks or 50 days (the name *Pentecost* is from the Greek for 50th) after an offering of firstfruits of the smaller barley harvest presented during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see Leviticus 23:4-22).

In a special ceremony the priest would lift up two loaves of bread before God as an offering. The offering recognized God as the One who blessed Israel and gave the people the fruit of the harvest. It was a great festival of both hope and joy.

According to Jewish tradition this was also the same day that God had given Israel the Ten Commandments. But the Israelites did not have God's Holy Spirit in them, so they failed to obey the immutable spiritual laws God had given them.

In the New Testament, we see a deeper and more profound parallel. Jesus Himself was the first of the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23), represented by the waved barley sheaf during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And His followers of this age are represented by the firstfruits of the harvest at Pentecost, a spiritual harvest of

humanity (compare James 1:18; Luke 10:1-2; John 4:35).

Jesus in returning to heaven after His resurrection was not, He promised, going to leave His disciples as orphans (John 14:18). He had said that both He and the Father would come to them by and through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (verses 16-23).

Before His ascension, He told them, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry [or wait] in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). That power is the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples on the day of Pentecost with the witness of miracles, as we read in Acts 2.

In that event, the Church of God suddenly came into being—with many more people also added. These were now the firstfruits of the people of God, the first part of God's harvest. Through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit they, and we too, would now be able to truly overcome sin—obeying the commandments as God desires. And through that same power, God's Church would take the gospel to the entire world—looking toward more people being added and becoming part of God's spiritual harvest today and anticipating the abundant harvest of the future. **BT**

DIVE DEEPER



To learn much more about the Feast of Pentecost and all of God's festivals, request or download our free study guide *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. And for more on the nature and role of God's Spirit, be sure to also read *The Power of the Holy Spirit*. Scan the code or visit ucg.org/mj25 to find them.



New Film Highlights Divine Providence in America's Founding

by Tom Robinson

Coming up on the 250th birthday of the United States, filmmaker Tim Mahoney and his team, creators of the “Patterns of Evidence” movie series exploring the events surrounding the biblical Exodus and early Israelite history, have produced a new docu-drama, *The American Miracle: Our Nation Is No Accident*.

The movie is inspired by Michael Medved's bestselling book titled *The American Miracle: Divine Providence in the Rise of the Republic*, presenting the forgotten story of God's miraculous intervention. Medved serves as the principal narrator in the film.

We're shown how the hand of God must have been involved in the lives of principal U.S. founders—particularly George Washington, who was remarkably preserved from death again and again—as well as in the highly improbable success of the Americans against the British.

Our staff having been given an early viewing, it can be reported that the film is well worth seeing. It entertainingly and movingly offers many interesting details not often taught in popular education.

The movie admits that America has often not



done as it ought—a failure not of founding principles but in not living up to them. There is discussion of the evil of slavery, along with its ending in Massachusetts and what's known as the 3/5 compromise in the U.S. Constitutional debate—which is not what many now think.

One of the historians interviewed disagrees on

the role of divine providence—concluding simply that George Washington was a genius because he knew when not to fight, when to retreat. Yet even the retreats were at times miraculous!

Not meaning to spoil, but in seeing the record of miracles, I was intending to include in this review Benjamin Franklin's amazing quote at an impasse at the Constitutional Convention about how all the delegates had seen evidence of divine intervention in answer to prayer throughout the Revolution, how he was convinced of the truth that God governs in the affairs of men, and that they needed to turn to God again in prayer. How delighted I was to see this speech from Franklin acted out word for word! That's something you don't see every day.

The movie, over 2 hours, has a post-credits scene that looks ahead to a sequel, Medved noting that the American miracle was not concluding but was just beginning.

The American Miracle: Our Nation Is No Accident will appear in theaters nationwide June 9-11 only. The trailer and more information are available at americanmiraclemovie.com. **BT**

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