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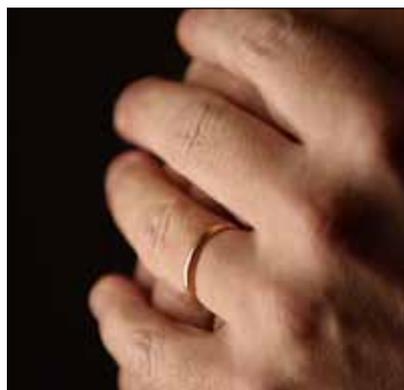
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Just What Is the Millennium?

The old Latin word Millennium doesn't appear in the English Bible, but it has been used to describe a prophesied time of peace. Is it a biblical allegory, or will it be real? What should the Millennium mean to you?

by Don Henson

Many people have heard that the Bible talks about a period of peace known as “the Millennium,” but they aren’t quite sure what that means. The many views among Christian denominations and religious teachers don’t help clear up the confusion.

What is the Millennium described in the Bible? Is it merely a nice-sounding ideal or an allegory? Or is it a time the Bible describes as real? Let’s explore the answers straight from the Bible.

Although the Bible does not specifically use the word *millennium*, it clearly refers to a period of 1,000 years that will serve as the turning point for humanity. It reveals that during that time the world will finally achieve the elusive ideals of peace, prosperity and purpose. It is assuredly not merely a dream, wish or fantasy; rather, the Millennium holds a sure promise of hope for humanity.

To understand the prophesied Millennium, let’s set the stage by briefly describing events that will take place immediately before the beginning of this 1,000 years.

A world in peril

Shortly before His death, Jesus’ disciples asked Him what events would occur before the end of the age and His return to earth (Matthew 24:3). Jesus warned that the future would bring religious confusion and deception, war, natural disaster, persecution and tribulation, even as the gospel would spread to all the



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Not only will man’s nature change for the better, but even the nature of animals will be different.

world (verses 4-14). Then He told them that those who are watchful and obedient could be protected from the destructive events that would yet occur (Luke 21:18, 28, 36).

Jesus went on to prophesy that immediately before His return the world would be gripped by unparalleled difficulties so severe they would threaten humanity with extinction: “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no,

(See “MILLENNIUM,” page 3)



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Though Prophecy Shall Fail

One of the best benefits I receive as editor of *World News and Prophecy* is the feedback I receive from readers. The feedback takes all forms. There is always the critic who may disagree with some analysis we have of a news item or point of prophecy. At times people write to express appreciation for the work we put into each issue. By far the greatest joy we receive is from those readers who see the real purpose we are trying to communicate about all of God's Word.

Robin Webber applies his unique approach to prophecy in his column each issue. He is not so much concerned about analyzing all events against a timeline of prophecy as he is concerned about the application to our daily walk with God. Many readers connect to this approach and are drawn into deeper study of the Scriptures. Robin's style teaches that we must have a ready heart at all times as we study what God is saying through prophecy.

Our other writers who focus on world events, always point to the ultimate good news and hope presented in the Bible. To appreciate the "good," we have to understand why the "bad" exists. It is always a challenge to balance the two extremes in our articles. The world is filled with bad news. Our goal is to present the hope of a better world to come to fill in that important dimension secular writers miss.

Occasionally I receive letters from readers that encourage. The encouragement comes not only from their uplifting words but from realizing they understand our goal is to take prophecy beyond the realm of dates and beasts and predictions to that of a heart toward man and toward God. In short, prophecy fits the teaching of Jesus Christ about loving God and each other.

A reader recently wrote to me about learning that God's law teaches us you cannot help others without helping yourself. Kindness and love cannot be given away—they always come back. This reader practices the way of give in daily acts of serving and providing for people's needs. I believe many of our readers do the same. Through this they are living a pure and undefiled religion (James 1:27).

From God's law of love flows every principle that helps us live with one another successfully. The principles of faith, discipline, responsibility and many other positive character traits form an ethic for life. Prophecy comprises both teaching and warning not to stray from the ways of our Father.

This magazine is about a heart for prophecy and God. It is about responding to God's teaching to love Him and our neighbor with all our might. When we do this, we get in alignment with God's plan and purpose for our lives. The details of prophecy are left to God, and we can then focus on the broader principle of love.

That is what Paul understood when he wrote, "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2).

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“MILLENNIUM” (Continued from page 1)

nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22).

He said the time of turmoil would be followed by dramatic signs in the heavens, and then He would return in power and glory. “The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 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” (verses 30-31).

From Paul’s writings we learn that the gathering of “His elect” at the “sound of the trumpet” is the resurrection of faithful Christians: “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep [dead]. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

Rejoicing or rebellion?

Jesus said the “tribes of the earth will mourn” at His return (Matthew 24:30). That statement seems odd, since you would expect that all would rejoice at His second coming. Why does mankind resist, rather than rejoice, when Christ returns?

Revelation 18 gives us more background information. This chapter describes the destruction of an economic, political and religious system called Babylon the great (verse 2). But before its destruction it will be the source of great wealth to those who are part of this pervasive system (verse 3). Verses 9-20 describe the abundance and prosperity this system will bring to the nations and their shock and fear at its sudden destruction.

In a vain effort to protect their system, and because Satan has deceived them, the armies of the world will fight

against Jesus when He returns (Revelation 19:11-19). Verse 20 describes the destruction of the political and religious leadership of this ungodly system.

Having destroyed Babylon the great, Jesus will deal with the unseen “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4), Satan. Revelation 20:1-2 tells of John’s vision of this future time: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”

The Millennium begins

The prophecy goes on to show that Satan will be bound so he can no longer deceive humanity (Revelation 20:3). Although many Old Testament prophecies reveal what will take place during the Millennium, this is the first specific reference to a period of 1,000 years.

The “elect” gathered “from the four winds” (Matthew 24:31), who will receive eternal life when Jesus returns (1 Corinthians 15:51-52), includes those who were persecuted because they refused to be part of the ungodly system the Bible calls Babylon. Now resurrected and having received God’s gift of eternal life, they will rule the earth with Jesus Christ during this time.

“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4).

The reign of the Messiah

Daniel 7 contains another prophecy of events that culminate in the establishment of God’s Kingdom. Verses 13 and 14 describe Jesus Christ being given this kingdom: “I was watching in



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The nations will be richly blessed. For example, crops will be so abundant that the preparations for the next year’s planting will be slowed because the current year’s harvest hasn’t even been completed.

the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”

Jesus Christ’s return to establish God’s Kingdom on earth will fulfill the prophecy recorded long before His birth: “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever” (Isaiah 9:7).

Jesus will return to a battered and beaten earth. People will have endured a time of terrible tribulation, bloody battles and horrifying disasters. Zechariah 14 summarizes events surrounding Christ's return and the beginning of the Millennium.

Verses 1-2 discuss "the day of the LORD," the time just before His return when Jesus begins to intervene in world affairs and set the stage for His second coming. Verses 3-5 speak of His battle against the nations and His descent onto the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem. Verses 6-9 describe Jesus' impact as He immediately begins to comfort earth's inhabitants and institute God's way of life.

The "living waters" mentioned in verse 8 symbolize the healing that will spread out to all lands from Jerusalem.

A world of prosperity and peace

The Millennium is the first 1,000 years of the eternal Kingdom of God. The purpose of the Millennium is to establish God's government on earth and provide a way for every person, protected from Satan's deception and temptation, to prepare to receive an eternal inheritance in God's Kingdom.

Isaiah was inspired to record many prophecies of the Millennium. He describes a world completely different

from ours in which Jesus Christ will rule over all the earth. People from all nations will seek to learn God's law and live according to it. As a result, society will have an entirely new orientation and approach based on godly values. Humanity's creativity and resourcefulness will be used for peaceful purposes instead of war and destruction.

Isaiah further prophesies that not only will man's nature change for the better when Satan is removed from the scene, but even the nature of animals will be different: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6).

A prophecy by Amos shows the earth benefiting under Jesus Christ's rule. The nations will be richly blessed. For example, crops will be so abundant that the preparations for the next year's planting will be slowed because the current year's harvest hasn't even been completed. "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it'" (Amos 9:13).

Those who are part of the resurrection that takes place when Jesus returns

are also described as teachers who will give people guidance and direction in God's way of life (Isaiah 30:20-21).

Faithful Christians who prepare in this life for the Kingdom of God will reign with Jesus Christ in the Millennium. As kings, priests and teachers, they will have the privilege of assisting Him in governing and teaching mankind the way and the truth of God.

A world filled with purpose

Why will the world be so different during the Millennium? God will provide what is sadly lacking in today's world. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

When people live according to the knowledge of God, they will experience peace and prosperity—the result of understanding the true purpose of life and how God intends humanity to live. It's difficult for us to grasp how negative an influence Satan is on our lives. We live in a world that lacks the knowledge of God, an understanding of His instructions and the purpose of life. We can only try to imagine what the world will be like when it is saturated with God's truth and humanity is free to pursue the purpose for existence.

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant between God and humanity. Jesus established this covenant (Matthew 26:28); but during this time when Satan is present to spread his deceptions (Revelation 12:9), God has called relatively few to enter into that covenant.

During the Millennium, however, when Satan is bound and God fills the world with knowledge of Him and His ways, mankind as a whole will have an opportunity to enter into this covenant.

The promise of salvation through the New Covenant will not be limited only to descendants of Israel, but will extend to all mankind. In reference to Jesus' work of salvation, one of Isaiah's prophecies puts it this way: "Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give

(See "MILLENNIUM," page 13)



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Michigan Paper Campaigns Against High Divorce Rate

As the state of New York joins the other 49 states in allowing no-fault divorce, a surprising bill before the Michigan legislature aims to make divorce for couples with young children more difficult.

by Melvin Rhodes

God hates divorce. We're told this in Malachi 2:16, which adds, "For it covers one's garment with violence."

Surprisingly, my local newspaper also seems to see the connection between divorce and violence.

Michigan, like all the other states in the United States now that New York has changed its law, has a no-fault divorce law. That means that if any married person wants out of a marriage, he or she can get out of it. There doesn't have to be a reason. "More than 80% of... divorces are unilateral," my local paper reported ("There's Plenty to Discuss About Divorce," *Lansing State Journal*, July 9, 2010).

The *Lansing State Journal* believes this needs to change.

Every year, in Michigan alone, there are 30,000 children affected by divorce. That is 30,000 young children who will no longer share the same home with Mom and Dad. Usually, the children stay with Mom, and Dad lives elsewhere. As the total family income remains the same, this results in considerable hardship and even dire poverty.

Divorce is the number one cause of poverty. According to a recent *Dateline* documentary on NBC, 60 percent of children who do not have enough to eat are the children of divorce, living with a mother who is often destitute.

Highlighting the link with violence, the *Lansing State Journal* warns that these children are the most vulnerable in our society and the ones who are most likely to fill our prisons a decade or so down the line.

Yet the prevailing attitude of many when justifying their own divorce is: "Children are resilient!"

Trends and tragedies

I remember watching the Middle Eastern news channel al-Jazeera some years ago while on a visit to West Africa. This was at

a time when the United States was lecturing a Middle Eastern nation on its human rights record. One lady from the region made the comment: "Who are the Americans to lecture us on human rights? The basic right of every child is to have two parents, yet half America's children don't." Good point.

The U.S. divorce rate is about 50 percent. Half of all American marriages end in divorce.

On a recent visit to Turkey, I asked our tour guide what the divorce rate was in the country. He said it was 3 percent. So I started checking the Internet. India has an even lower divorce rate of 1.1 percent, or 11 couples in a thousand!

It might surprise some today to learn that the U.S. divorce rate was much lower a century ago. There was a time when divorce was frowned upon and socially unacceptable. Of course, that was also a time when people were more aware of biblical teachings against divorce and for the sanctity and lifetime commitment of marriage.

The fact that it has become much more acceptable in the last few decades is a contributing factor to the exponential increase in the number of divorces.

"A team of researchers led by Brown University's Rose McDermott looked over material from a study of 12,000 Massachusetts residents since 1948 and concluded that divorce is contagious," wrote the *Lansing* paper on its opinion page leader. "A bill to restrict divorce, Senate Bill 1127, was filed in February." So far, it has not progressed any further.

Continuing, the paper said: "The state of Michigan has a vested interest in the welfare of its children. It's long been known that divorce can lead to all sorts of negative outcomes for children. As such, Michigan should reverse the last 30 years of policy and restrict the use of no-fault divorce for couples with minor children."

We live in a very self-centered age. Selfishness abounds. Marriage, however, requires a couple to care for each other. A successful marriage requires selflessness.



God not only hates divorce, He never intended it to happen in the first place.

What the Bible says about the attacks on marriage

The apostle Paul's predictions in 2 Timothy 3:1-2 help us understand why divorce is more prevalent today. "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves."

Not just men, of course, but women also. This is a very self-centered age. Selfishness abounds. Marriage requires a couple to care for each other. A successful marriage requires selflessness; selfishness is detrimental to marriage.

Paul also wrote of how the relationship between a man and a woman is similar to the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church" (Ephesians 5:28-29).

God not only hates divorce, He never intended it to happen in the first place. Jesus Christ said: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matthew 19:8).

A primary reason for divorce is mentioned in the very next verse. "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9).

A prophecy about the end time states it very clearly: "They commit harlotry continually" (Hosea 4:18). The sexual immorality that is prevalent in the Western world today directly contributes to the high divorce rate. People who have had multiple sexual partners before marriage are highly unlikely to settle down and commit to one partner for life after marriage—they will eventually revert to their previous bad habits.

God hates divorce—and the United States and other Western nations largely ignore Him!

Nation continues to mock God

Cal Thomas, the conservative syndicated columnist, had an article in the same paper on Aug. 13, 2010, warning the United States against further mockery of the Almighty, this time over the trend toward same-sex marriage.

"The decision by a single, openly gay federal judge to strike down the

will of 7 million Californians, tradition dating back millennia [not to mention biblical commands, which the judge decided, in his capacity as a false god, to also invalidate] is judicial vigilantism equal to *Roe v. Wade*" ("California Ruling Shows U.S. Immorality," *Lansing State Journal*).

Roe v. Wade was the Supreme Court case that legalized abortion in 1973. Neither of these seismic changes to the nation's culture was approved by the majority in a democratic process.

Thomas continued: "Most great powers unravel from within before invading armies [or in America's case, terrorists] conquer them. A preacher might develop a good sermon on how nations fare when they mock God."

Later in the column, Thomas wrote: "Abraham Lincoln concluded that our Civil War might have been God's judgment for America's tolerance of slavery. If that were so, why should 'the Almighty,' as Lincoln frequently referred to God, stay His hand in the face of our celebration of same-sex marriage?"

Although there are many people in the United States and other Western nations who are trying to be faithful to their spouses, recognizing that this is what God wants and expects of those who follow Him, increasingly it seems people just do what they want to do regardless of what God says.

Thomas continued, "A nation that loses its moral sense is a nation without any sense at all. Muslim fanatics who wish to destroy us are correct in their diagnosis of our moral rot: loss of a fear of God, immodesty, especially among women, materialism and much more."

In conclusion, Cal Thomas quoted Scripture: "None of this should surprise anyone who takes the time to read and understand what happens to people and nations that disregard God... 'Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint,' which is paraphrased in the Living Bible, 'When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild' (Proverbs 29:18); and 'In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit' (Judges 21:25)." ❖

Out of Hibernation: The Russian Bear

What role will the resurgent Russia play in end-time events?

by Rod Hall

Recently when 10 Russian spies were discovered living comfortably on American soil, many viewed it as just a quaint throwback to the Cold War era. Often Russia is thought of as the “defeated” opponent from 20 years ago when the Soviet Union disintegrated, leaving America as the only great power with unparalleled economic and military capacity.

But Russia is stronger both economically and militarily today than most people realize. And Bible prophecy reveals it is destined to play a major role in end-time events.

From Russia with love

The spy scandal broke in June when the United States uncovered a ring of suspected Russian secret agents who were using false identities to try to gather sensitive U.S. intelligence.

FBI counterintelligence agents explained that the Russians had communicated with Moscow by concealing invisible text messages in photographs posted on public Internet sites, and some had met with Russian diplomats.

The espionage drama was characterized as episodes reminiscent of the Cold War, scenes straight out of a spy novel and made to be a Hollywood blockbuster.

And American intelligence experts even characterized 28-year-old Anna Chapman as a spy right out of the James Bond movie *From Russia With Love*.

Within days all 10 were sentenced to time served and whisked by jet to Vienna in a shroud of secrecy, as part of the biggest spy swap since the end of the Cold War.

From Communism to depression

But this espionage drama does not illustrate that Russia is a defeated Cold War relic. In fact, not only does Russia today have an extensive intelligence operation, but the Russian bear is also bounding back strongly from a major economic meltdown.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) was a single-party political system dominated by the Communist Party. When its economy stagnated in the mid 1980s, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev introduced *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) in an effort to modernize Communism. But his initiatives inadvertently released forces that by December 1991 splintered the Soviet Union into Russia and 14 other independent republics.

Russia’s economy moved away from a globally isolated and centrally planned system toward a more market-based and globally integrated one. Democratic reforms were implemented by the first post-Soviet Russian president, Boris Yeltsin.

But an economic crisis, almost twice as deep as the Great Depression of the 1930s, soon struck all post-Soviet countries. And within a couple of years of the new millennium the economy of Russia had degenerated to the point that its gross domestic product (GDP) was only about half of what it had been in the early 1990s.

Clawing its way to revival

However, as the new millennium dawned, the Russian bear was standing up to this major economic challenge. During President Vladimir Putin’s two terms in office, Russia shifted its previous democratic ambitions toward a more centralized semiauthoritarian state that carefully manages major industries and national elections.

A decade of sustained economic growth, averaging 7 percent a year, pulled Russia back from the brink. This amazing turnaround resulted from the effective use of rising oil prices, increased foreign investment, higher domestic consumption and greater political stability. By the end of 2008 Russia was the world’s sixth largest economy. And it quickly rebounded more than a year ago from the worldwide recession.

The first half of this year its GDP grew by 4.2 percent according to the Associated Press

It is a mistake to view Russia today through the prism of the 1990s, when its economy and military were in shambles and its government was paralyzed. Russia is now stronger than many people realize.



Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (second from right) welcomes the crew aboard the nuclear missile cruiser Pyotr Veliky (Peter the Great) July 4, 2010. In June Russia introduced the new “fourth generation” nuclear submarine, touted to be the quietest in the world.

(“Russia’s Economy Expands 4 Percent in January Through June as Commodity Prices Rebound,” July 19, 2010). And it is projected to continue to grow by around 5 percent through next year.

Today much of Russia’s economic growth continues to be fueled by abundant natural resources available in the world’s largest country in land area. It is the number one oil producer and oil exporter—recently passing Saudi Arabia. It also leads the world in exporting natural gas.

It is a mistake to view Russia today through the prism of the 1990s, when its economy and military were in shambles and its government was paralyzed. Russia is now stronger than many people realize.

Mother bear—lost in the global forest

In spite of Russia’s major economic resurgence, it has been thrashing through the global wilderness groping for a new place—much like a wandering mother bear that has lost her cubs.

Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, summarizes Russia’s quest in *Foreign Affairs*: “Two

decades after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the fall of the Berlin Wall, and nearly 20 years after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia has shed communism and lost its historical empire. But it has not yet found a new role.

“Instead, it sits uncomfortably on the periphery of both Europe and Asia while apprehensively rubbing shoulders with the Muslim world. Throughout the 1990s, Moscow attempted to integrate into, and then with, the West. These efforts failed.”

During President Putin’s second term, “Russia abandoned its goal of joining the West and returned to its default option of behaving as an independent great power. It redefined its objectives: soft dominance in its immediate neighborhood; equality with the world’s principal power centers, China, the European Union, and the United States; and membership in a global multipolar order” (“Russia Reborn,” November/December 2009).

The disintegration of the Soviet Union has left Russia feeling it is surrounded by a group of countries that it sees as hostile to its interests to various degrees and

heavily influenced by the United States, Europe and, in some cases, China.

Top Russian leaders have made it clear that they intend to reassert their influence in the former communist states of Europe, whether those countries want it or not. And they have been using technological, economic and military means to do so.

More placid bear?

At the end of last year it looked like the Russian bear of old was still rising anew. But more recently, signs are emerging that Russia may be responding to U.S. President Obama’s offer last year to “reset” relations.

Russia wants and needs better relations with the West in order to meet its goal of doubling foreign direct investment in the next four years and moving away from overreliance on energy exports.

Russia’s recent overtures include the unusually quick and quiet unwinding of the spy scandal, on seemingly mutually beneficial terms; the backing of the U.N. resolution imposing sanctions on Iran; and permission to transport cargo through Russia to the war theater in Afghanistan.

In an article titled “Russia Sees Positive Effects of a Less Confrontational Foreign Policy,” Germany’s international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* says, “Nuclear deals, trade agreement, signatures on international treaties: Russia has been in a cooperative mood since the turn of the year...

“Russia seems to be a very different animal. The snarling bear with a sore head has been replaced by a more placid beast and while it may not be ready to roll over and have its tummy tickled just yet, Russia certainly seems less likely to take a bite out of its rivals than at any other time in the past year” (July 19, 2010).

But many experts remain leery, including James Kirchick, as he discusses in the *New York Daily News*: “Russia continues to be marked by domestic authoritarianism and aggression beyond its borders... Press freedom has declined precipitously since Prime Minister Vladimir Putin came to power 10 years ago...

“A recently ‘leaked’ Russian foreign policy document cites NATO enlargement...as the greatest threat to Russian security, underscoring the paranoid mindset that dominates Kremlin thinking.

“And nearly two years after its invasion of Georgia, Russia continues to occupy 20% of the country’s territory, has illegally recognized two separatist provinces as ‘independent’ states and stands in violation of a European Union–brokered ceasefire” (“I Spy a Nuisance, Not a Partner: Beyond the Espionage Case, Russia Is Belligerent and Defiant,” July 4, 2010).

Growing military muscle

Above all, many are concerned about Russia’s aggressive revitalization of its military muscle over the past decade. The extensive conventional and strategic military complex it inherited from the Soviet Union is being reinvigorated with increasing acceleration. Some even speculate they may be preparing for a new Cold War.

Russia still maintains its military bases in Armenia, Tajikistan, Georgia, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan. It has over 1 million military personnel on active duty. This is the largest force on the European continent and the fourth largest in the world.

In July it conducted the largest military exercise in its history, with more than 20,000 troops and extensive air, land and sea hardware, “Vostok–2010.”

Russia today has the world’s largest stockpile of nuclear weapons, the largest tank force and the second largest fleet of ballistic missile submarines. It is the only country with a modern strategic bomber force, besides the United States. And its surface navy and air force are among the strongest.

In June Russia introduced the new “fourth generation” nuclear submarine, touted to be the quietest in the world. And the Russians are testing the new lighter and more sophisticated RSM-6 Bulava submarine-launched intercontinental missiles capable of carrying six to 10 MIRVs (a missile with two or more warheads designed to strike separate enemy targets) with a range of 6,200 miles.

In July they installed a new missile system in the military region around St. Petersburg, capable of striking some EU and NATO member states, including Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Finland.

Defense expenditures have more than quadrupled over the past decade, reaching \$61 billion annually in 2009, the fifth largest in the world. And defense spending

will increase by an additional 60 percent over the next three years, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Oliver Bloom, “Russia Plans 60% Increase in Defense Budget by 2013,” July 30, 2010).

And Russia continues as the number two arms supplier to the world, behind the United States. It has more than doubled its sales to 80 countries over the past decade.

Russia’s major military revitalization assures its growing political and economic strength will be backed by one of the world’s strongest military operations.

Key prophetic relationships

Russia’s increasing military and economic ties with China and India will likely directly impact prophetic end-time events.

Last year marked the 60th anniversary of the Chinese-Russian diplomatic relationship, which has grown even closer since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was further enhanced about a decade ago with the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation and a regional security organization consisting of the two countries and four other Central Asian states—the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

SCO has deepened cooperation in economic, cultural and security areas. And under its auspices extensive joint military exercises have been conducted over the past five years.

Bilateral trade totaled \$38.8 billion in 2009. China imports most of the arms needed to modernize its army from Russia.

For several decades one of Russia’s closest strategic, military, economic and diplomatic relationships has been with India. India is the second-largest market for the Russian arms industry and the two countries have conducted joint military drills for years.

Prophetic significance

What this all adds up to is that the Russian bear has emerged from hibernation. It is not the defeated Cold War relic of the past. And its political, economic and military resurgence will likely have major prophetic significance in events leading to Jesus Christ’s return.

The Bible reveals that at the time of the end, during the Great Tribulation, the

world will be dominated by a commercial, political and military union of 10 leaders centered in Europe that combine power with the “beast” for a short period of time (Revelation 17:12-14). This “beast” power will wield such tremendous military might that the whole world will question, “Who is able to make war with him?” (Revelation 13:4).

The prophet Daniel refers to this power as the “king of the North” (Daniel 11:40). He will sweep down with major military force, occupying Jerusalem and much of the Middle East in response to aggressive actions by the king of the South (verses 40-43).

This dramatic military move rallies a massive counterforce both east and north of Jerusalem. “But news from the east and the *north* shall trouble him” (verse 44, emphasis added throughout). Some translations render “trouble” as “alarm” or “frighten him” (English Standard Version, Good News Bible and Jewish Publication Society). East of Jerusalem is China, India and many nations east of the Euphrates River that will likely coalesce into a troubling and alarming eastern military alliance.

Russia lies to the north of Jerusalem. Whether acting out of self-interest or in a coalition with eastern nations, its actions trouble or frighten the king of the North. “Therefore he shall go out with *great fury to destroy and annihilate many*” (verse 44).

It is unlikely this kind of massive attack would occur unless those being attacked also have powerful military operations. The Bible gives no indication of how many will die on the northern front of this horrific end-time battle. But the eastern front death toll is staggering. Ultimately a third of humanity will perish (Revelation 9:13-19).

The rise of the Russian bear is destined to have a major impact on these end-time events leading to Christ’s return.

Thankfully the Son of God will literally return to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16) and will save humanity from self-destruction. Then Russia and all nations will forgo their historical national agendas as every knee will be given the opportunity to bow before Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (Philippians 2:9-11; Isaiah 9:6). ❖

Eurabia: A Voice Cries Out in Defense of Europe's Heritage

With birthrates among traditional Europeans in decline while population growth in Europe's Muslim communities soar, one European voice asks whether Europe wants to preserve its cultural and religious identity.

by Paul Kieffer

If the present trends continue, Europe will slowly become what Geert Wilders calls "Eurabia"—a continent whose traditional heritage becomes drowned out by a fast-growing Muslim community—now a minority, but possibly a majority of Europe's population in the future.

Members of Western democratic parliaments are known to voice concerns on issues beyond their own national borders. Topics like human rights, poverty, AIDS in the developing world and other issues sometimes echo from the halls of Congress, the British Parliament, Germany's Bundestag and elsewhere.

Perhaps the most memorable example of a member of parliament (MP) speaking out on a perceived danger abroad was British MP Winston Churchill during the 1930s. On numerous occasions Churchill warned his country of the danger it faced from the ascent of German dictator Adolf Hitler. Accused of "scaremongering," Churchill did not relent. When British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned as a hero from his 1938 meeting in Munich with Hitler, proclaiming "peace in our time," Churchill predicted a future "day of reckoning."

The rest of the story is history.

For the last six years a Western European politician has made it his mission in life to warn his own countrymen—and anyone else in Europe who will listen—about a threat staring Europe in the face within its own continental borders. The threat he perceives is the demise of Europe's traditional cultural and religious identity as a result of the gradual Islamization of Europe.

Who is he? He is Geert Wilders, a member of the Dutch parliament and a vocal opponent of "Eurabia."

Who is Geert Wilders?

Some readers of *World News and Prophecy* may not recognize Geert Wilders' name. After all, the Netherlands is not one of the world's larger countries and most people—even in Europe—do not follow the Dutch domestic political scene closely. Wilders is 47

years old and was born in the city of Venlo on the Dutch-German border. He was raised a Roman Catholic but left the church upon reaching adulthood. Despite leaving the Catholic Church, Wilders supports what he calls "Judeo-Christian values."

After completing his education, Wilders traveled to the Middle East, where he lived in Israel for a time and also visited some of the neighboring Arab countries. The impressions he took home from those visits have shaped his personal assessment of Islam, which he says is similar to the viewpoint of none other than Winston Churchill. Churchill, as a young man, served as a soldier and war correspondent in the late 1890s in British India (in what is today Pakistan) and the Sudan.

Churchill summed up his perception of Islam's effects on its adherents: "The effects are apparent in many countries. Improvident habits, slovenly systems of agriculture, sluggish methods of commerce, and insecurity of property exist... Individual Moslems may show splendid qualities—but the influence of the religion paralyzes the social development of those who follow it."

And Churchill concluded: "No stronger retrograde force exists in the world" (*The River War*, 1899).

At the beginning of his political career, Wilders worked as a speechwriter for the conservative-liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). He moved to Utrecht in 1996 and was elected to the city council and in 2002 to the lower house of the Dutch parliament.

Wilders had problems with his party's position on admitting Turkey as a member of the European Union, leading him to form his own party in 2004, now called the Party for Freedom (PVV). EU membership for Turkey would eventually mean more Muslims living elsewhere in Europe, although Wilders

already sees Europe's cultural and religious heritage threatened by the current Muslim population of Europe. Wilders points out that 100 years ago there were fewer than 100 Muslims living in the Netherlands, compared to nearly 1 million today out of a total population of some 16 million.

Wilders pulls no punches about his desire to see limits placed on the influence of Islam in the Netherlands and Europe. He is against the use of any language but Dutch in mosques located in the Netherlands. He also opposes the construction of new mosques in his country.

Speaking in the Dutch parliament, he once said that the Koran should be banned in the Netherlands, adding that if Islam's holy book were to be stripped of passages proclaiming violence, it would be reduced to the size of a comic book.

With this opinion, Wilders is on the same page as Pope Benedict XVI. In a speech given in Regensburg in September 2006, Benedict quoted a medieval Christian emperor who equated Islam with violence: "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached."

Accused of being a racist, Wilders counters by saying that he does not hate Muslims. Instead, he just hates Islam. On his own blog, Wilders summarizes that viewpoint: "The purpose of Islam is the total submission of oneself and others to the unknowable Allah, whom we must serve through total obedience to Muhammad as leader of the Islamic state (suras 3:31, 4:80, 24:62, 48:10, 57:28). And history has taught us that Muhammad was not at all a prophet of love and compassion, but a mass murderer, a tyrant and a pedophile. Muslims could not have a more deplorable role model."

Growing popularity and power

Geert Wilders is typically characterized by the mainstream media as being a right-wing populist, an anti-Islam agitator or xenophobic. And yet twice in annual public opinion surveys he was rated the second-most-

popular politician in the Netherlands. In order to remain independent, his PVV refuses to accept a government subsidy available during election campaigns (all other Dutch parties accept the government subsidy).

In June's parliamentary elections, Geert Wilders' party, the PVV, won 24 of the 150 seats in the lower house, a remarkable increase over its previous result of nine seats in 2006. Wilders has agreed to support a minority coalition government formed by two other conservative parties, which will give him considerable leverage in the new government.

Wilders has had to pay a price for his stance on Islam, however. He has received numerous death threats and has been constantly accompanied by six bodyguards since a letter threatening his death was found in the apartment of the Islamic fanatic who assassinated Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in broad daylight on a street in Amsterdam in November 2004. His bodyguards "stand outside the door when I go to the bathroom," he once said.

Wilders never sleeps two nights in a row in the same location. Because of these security restrictions, he is able to see his wife only once every two weeks. Wilders has described his life as "essentially living in a prison."

Muslim population growth in Europe

Wilders sees the increasing Muslim population in Europe as one of the most



Reuters/Paul Hackett

Muslim shoppers walk in a market in east London June 26, 2010. Britain plans to put a temporary limit on the number of non-European Union migrants to prevent a surge of foreign workers arriving before a permanent cap is introduced next April.

serious threats to the preservation of Europe's traditional cultural and religious heritage. It comes as no surprise that he opposes continued immigration from Islamic countries and Turkey's bid for full EU membership, which would eventually open Europe's gates to unrestricted Turkish immigration.

Muslims currently account for about 5 percent of the European Union's population. If Turkey's bid for EU membership is successful, on the day Turkey becomes a member the percentage of Muslims living in the EU will increase to 20 percent. But current population numbers are only part of the story. Turkey would also soon be the

EU's largest country. Based on current population trends, Turkey will surpass Germany's 82 million inhabitants by the year 2020 and may have as many as 100 million people by the year 2050.

However, even if Turkey does not become a full member of the European Union, the percentage of Muslims living in Europe will double within 15 years. Europe's Islamic community is experiencing a population explosion. At the same time, the traditional non-Muslim population of Europe will decline by an estimated 3.5 percent. Europe's traditional non-Islamic population is slowly but surely dying out.

Germany's birthrate is a prime example of the population decline among Europe's traditional nationalities. Statistically each woman in Germany currently has 1.36 live births during her childbearing years, far below the 2.1 average considered necessary to maintain a country's population. Given current trends, the research by the private Institute for Population and Development in Berlin indicates that the number of children born in Germany will drop 50 percent by the year 2050.

The declining birthrate is most acute in the former East Germany, where the average birthrate since the unification of Germany in 1990 is 0.77 live births. Reiner Klingholz, the director of the private Berlin Institute for Population and Development, summarized the situation with some humor: "With the Vatican as the exception, that's the lowest birthrate anywhere in the world."

If this situation continues unhindered, it is only a matter of time before the Islamic community in Europe becomes a sizable minority and even a majority of Europe's total population. In 2005, for example, there were more children of Islamic parentage born in France than people of a traditional French background.

Although not directly related to Europe's declining birthrate, it is also interesting to note that the number of Europeans who profess to be Christians has declined noticeably in the last 100 years. In 1900 approximately 95 percent of Europeans were members of the Christian faith. At the beginning of the 21st century that percentage had

dropped to 75 percent, with a sharp increase in the decline just in the last 25 years.

For example, since 1980 the population segment that identifies itself as Christian in Belgium declined by 20 percent; in the Netherlands, by 18 percent; and in France, by 16 percent. Today's Europe is also the only continent witnessing a decline in the number of Catholics. The annual number of



Reuters/United Photos

Dutch politician Geert Wilders of the Party for Freedom celebrates after the announcement of the results for the general election in The Hague, Netherlands, June 9, 2010.

infant baptisms in the Philippines is now more than the combined annual total for France, Italy, Poland and Spain.

If the present trends continue, Europe will slowly become what Geert Wilders calls "Eurabia"—a continent whose traditional heritage becomes drowned out by a fast-growing Muslim community—now a minority, but possibly a majority of Europe's population in the future.

Europe's religious future

Bible prophecy shows that Europe's traditional religious heritage will wield considerable influence in the future, but

in a way not imagined by Dutch MP Geert Wilders. The book of Revelation contains a prophecy about 10 kings who collectively form a "beast" that Jesus Christ will conquer and destroy upon His return to the earth.

We read about them in Revelation 17:12-14: "The ten horns which you saw are *ten kings* who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast... These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them" (emphasis added).

Those 10 horns are part of a "beast" described in verse 3 as having "seven heads and ten horns," with the 10 horns—the final 10 kings who will fight against Christ—apparently representing one of the seven heads. Each of the seven heads is a "mountain"—biblical symbolism for a kingdom or empire—with its king (verses 9-10). Verse 10 clarifies that the heads appear in chronological sequence, and the final "head," or king (verse 10), will appear as the 10 kings symbolized by 10 horns (verse 12).

This sequence of rulers is dominated by a religious system called "Babylon the Great" that emanates from "the great harlot [city] 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" (Revelation 17:1-2). The true Church of God is pictured in the Bible as a chaste bride waiting to be married to Christ. The harlot of Revelation 17 is a deceptive religious system masquerading as a true system of worship.

As the modern heir of ancient Babylon's mystery religion, the city of Rome is described as "drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Revelation 17:6). It is a historical fact that Rome, more than any other city, under the influence of a great religious system, has orchestrated the persecution and martyrdom of "those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). Even early church writers recognized the connection between Babylon and Rome by interpreting Peter's use of the word "Babylon" in 1 Peter 5:13 to mean the city of Rome.

Pictured as a harlot sitting astride the “beast” of which she is the cultural and spiritual center, this infamous city has exerted a vast influence over the earth’s “peoples, multitudes, nations and languages” (Revelation 17:15, New International Version). For a while she has enjoyed the status and fame of being the city that “reigns over the kings of the earth” (verse 18).

In other words, it appears that the composite “beast” of Revelation 17 is the so-called Holy Roman Empire—the resurrected Roman Empire dominated by the modern descendant of the ancient Babylonian mystery religion. The final resurrection of that empire will not be influenced by Islam, but by the same religious system that has dominated it since A.D. 554.

Geert Wilders and Europe’s future

While no one can predict what course Geert Wilders’ political future may take, it is interesting that his position on Muslim population growth in Europe is consistent with Bible prophecy. Islam has never been the religion of the Holy Roman Empire, nor will it be in the future. Since the “great harlot” of Revelation 17 is pictured as continually being the dominant influence on the “beast” system, the Islamic minority in Europe apparently will not grow to such an extent that it will prevent the traditional religious system of the Holy Roman Empire from exerting its influence in the end-time “beast” power.

With the fast-growing Islamic minority in Europe, what are the implications for Europe’s future vis-à-vis the Islamic community and Islamic immigration? There would appear to be several possibilities—all of which could be listed as action points for Geert Wilders’ Party for Freedom. They include the following:

- Immigration from non-EU, Islamic countries may be restricted at some point in the future.
- Residency for some—perhaps a majority—of non-EU Islamic people living in Europe may be revoked at some point in the future.

In the current liberal atmosphere in Europe, restricting immigration for peo-

ple of the Islamic faith, or even deporting some of those who are already here, seems unlikely. However, the violent reaction in the Netherlands to the murder in broad daylight of Dutch movie producer Theo van Gogh by a Moroccan in November 2004 shows what can happen in a tense confrontation. Any restrictions placed on immigration from Islamic countries would certainly strain relations between the European Union and the Islamic world.

Meanwhile, Geert Wilders continues his efforts to preserve Europe’s heritage from Islamic influence. In July Wilders announced an international “freedom alliance” to spread his anti-Islam message across the West.

He told the Associated Press in an interview that he will launch the international movement later this year, initially in five countries: the United States, Canada, Britain, France and Germany. This “is not just a Dutch problem... it is a problem for the entire free West,” he said. Wilders has been invited to speak in Berlin on Oct. 2, 2010, to launch his movement in Germany. It is the first invitation he has received to speak in Germany since he founded his Party for Freedom, and Wilders plans to give his presentation in German.

With his effort to defend Europe’s traditional heritage against growing Islamic influence, Geert Wilders is a man to watch. He would be surprised to learn what kind of resurgence of traditional religious fervor lies in Europe’s future.

Despite the current demographic trends in Europe, Bible prophecy indicates that the dominant religious influence on the final resurrection of the Roman Empire will not be Islam. Instead, it will be the same one that has existed for centuries in previous revivals of the Holy Roman Empire—that of “Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth” (Revelation 17:5).

With the Muslim population explosion in Europe, the final configuration of that last resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire may occur sooner than some people think, while Europeans of a traditional heritage are still the obvious majority in Europe. ❖

“MILLENNIUM” (Continued from page 4)

You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

Eternal life offered to all

Societies will be based on the law of God, which will be taught to all nations (Isaiah 2:3). People will learn to obey God from their hearts, motivated by understanding, love, devotion and appreciation.

The apostle Paul wrote that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

As Jesus rules on earth during the Millennium, people will have the opportunity to learn about Him and God’s plan for salvation. All will have the opportunity to come to see Jesus as their Savior, realizing they can enter into eternal life only through Him (Acts 4:12). Finally recognizing Jesus as Savior and King, people will honor, worship and obey Him (Philippians 2:9-12).

Prophecy need not be confusing

Confusion and misunderstanding about the Millennium abounds, but the Bible is clear. The Millennium is the first 1,000 years of God’s eternal Kingdom. During that time Jesus will establish God’s government, the world will be at peace, and mankind will flourish as the knowledge of God fills the earth. Humanity will come to understand and prepare for its eternal destiny in God’s family and Kingdom.

In His Word God has revealed much about the Millennium that strengthens our faith, sense of purpose and hope for the future. We hope that you will continue your study to learn of and prepare for your part in God’s incredible plan for you.

This article has only briefly discussed some of the many prophecies of the Millennium and Jesus Christ’s coming rule on earth. To discover more of what the Bible teaches about this exciting new world, be sure to download or request *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. To better understand how the Millennium fits with God’s plan as laid out in Bible prophecy, please see *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. ❖

“ALL THINGS” (Continued from page 16)

the fullness of the gospel message surrounding Romans 8:28 that they have internalized?

You might be saying, “Just you wait a minute! I’ve got enough challenges right now with my family, this rotten economy, my house payment, the boss who targets me every day; and now you want to squeeze me in between past and future martyrs!”

Yes, that’s exactly what I want to do! I am reminded of Jeremiah’s straightforward challenge: “If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?” (Jeremiah 12:5).

Jeremiah is saying, Get ready! We are now in training for something bigger yet to occur. You are not responsible for the rise and fall of empires or the coming of the False Prophet or the wholesale moral decline of the modern-day descendants of Israel. But you are responsible to God for how you incorporate the powerful depth of the gospel that has been personally revealed to us.

Let’s learn a vital lesson

Let’s go back and learn a vital lesson about how to read the Bible by carefully examining Romans 8:28 in the context of the entirety of God-breathed revelation. So often we make the presumptuous error of just grabbing one scripture out of its contextual framework and running with it. This is equally troublesome, whether we are handling prophecy or God’s promises.

You see, friends, Romans 8:28 is much more than a goody-two-shoes bumper sticker for the righteous. The fullness of Scripture clearly indicates that bad things do happen to good people—even people of faith. It also plainly declares that if Christ suffered, so shall we. The difference for a Christian is that suffering serves an eternal purpose far beyond any initial human awareness.

Let’s come to understand that Romans 8:28 is but the gateway verse to the good news of why God could



Photo illustration: Flickr.com/Patrick Tanguay and Elizabeth Cannon

Just like bumper stickers placed on a car, time and the elements can wear away the words we want stuck on our hearts.

never abandon us! Too often, this verse is framed in isolation, rather than allowing it to open the door to explain the fullness of God’s purpose toward humanity.

Let’s look at the whole verse for a moment. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). It is here that the phrase “His purpose” is given substance; it is the spiritual glue to keep Romans 8:28 tightly sealed in our minds and hearts.

The substance that supports a promise

Verse 29 begins by revealing two dynamic aspects of the gospel message. It says, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

The first foundational undergirding of why “all things work together for good” is that God “foreknew” what He had in store for all those He created “in His image” (Genesis 1:26-27). God did not discover His purpose along the way, but plainly states His intentions toward us from the beginning. He saw the overriding grand purpose of His creative acts before He started.

In one sense, you might say, “He saw us before we were.”

His unwavering purpose has always been to transform the human race from the dirt of Eden to the incredible fullness of His spiritual image by “bringing many sons to glory” (Hebrews 2:10). Isaiah 46:9-10 grants us the dimensions of this divine “foreknowledge” by stating: “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’”

“All things work together for good,” because there is a purpose being worked out here below, and you are a part of it! God planned your existence. You are not an accident of evolution headed for destruction, but a child of God with a destiny.

The second foundational undergirding of why “all things work together for good” is that God “predestined” you to be “conformed to the image of His Son” right now! You might say, “This is my moment.” When Adam and Eve rejected God’s sovereignty in their lives, a plan of return went into motion. Revelation 13:8 speaks of “the

Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Predestination is not about being spiritually cemented into salvation or damnation ahead of time by an unmovable God. It's about the incredible opportunity of being selected now by a loving Heavenly Father to embrace the reality of God's greatest gift to us, His Son.

Not everyone has been granted that opportunity yet. God in His love and wisdom has given you that blessing now. Ephesians 1:11-12 explains: “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”

Our purposeful selection by God now is directly linked to trusting in Christ. We trust in the same Christ who said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46). What enabled and empowered Him to do this even as He was nailed to a piece of wood? Simply put, He understood Romans 8:28.

I chose you!

The third, fourth and fifth foundational underpinnings of why “all things work together for good” are displayed in Romans 8:30. It simply says, “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Let's remember during those times when we get challenged on the journey of life or as we twist and turn through the fulfillment of prophecy, that God called us. He started the process; we didn't. Yes, we were sought out and desired. It doesn't get any better than that!

Jesus indicates we were divinely selected when He proclaimed, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (John 15:16).

What kind of fruit? Spiritual fruit such as realizing “all things work together for good” even when our

personal life or the world is seemingly crumbling around us. And because we are justified and made right before God through Christ's sacrifice and resurrected presence at the right hand of God, we can come before our Heavenly Father. As we are confronted with issues, both personal and global in scale, we can place them into the hands that sculpt eternity.

The last undergirding spoken of in Romans 8:30 is glorification. This refers to a literal existence that is no longer earthbound, caught in the web of time and space. It is a transformed life that lives by more than a bouncy-sounding scriptural bumper sticker that can be peeled off by the first thing that goes wrong. Such spiritual radiance is able to say, no matter what the current dilemma, “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever” (Matthew 6:13).

Let it be!

How often does God quiet the fears and trepidations of His loved ones, whether it be in the persecuted first-century Church, the Body of Christ right now or for future saints during the Great Tribulation, by simply reminding us, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)?

As we move through present challenges and future prophetic occurrences, let's realize that Romans 8:28 is more than a trite phrase to appease human disappointment. It is in a great sense the essence of “the word of their testimony,” the testimony of the saints of God down through the ages. It is the spiritual fuel that allows us to not only run with the footmen, but also keep up with the horses as personal trials and prophetic events stampede around us.

Perhaps it is in a few words of Mary, the mother of Christ, that the echo of “this is the way, walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21) is best understood in relationship to “all things work together for good.” As she was confronted with the fulfillment of prophecy in her life, she uttered, “Let it be” (Luke 1:38). ❖



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by Robin Webber

All Things Work Together for Good!

When we are dealing with the challenging issues of prophecy, it is always good to pause, take a deep spiritual breath and gain a sense of perspective as to what is truly going on down here.

Perhaps one of the most quotable phrases among people of faith is the encouragement found in Romans 8:28. The apostle Paul wrote, “All things work together for good...” If ever there was a reassuring, bumper-sticker type of scripture to place on our hearts and minds—this is it!

But, just like the bumper stickers placed on our cars, time and the elements can wear away the words we want stuck on our hearts.

We contemplate some of the challenging times that lie before us in an increasingly godless society. We see how external spiritual or temporal forces can peel away our faith and tear our spiritual enthusiasm to shreds. In the face of these negative forces, we had better think again and grasp the substance behind this phrase, “All things work together for good.” As many have noted, “It doesn’t mean all things *are* good by themselves, but ultimately they work for the good.” If you understand that, the bumper sticker holds on a little longer.

At times, bumper stickers won’t do!

But the Scriptures indicate specific events that are going to alter the spiritual landscape of God’s “elect.” At that time, paper-thin faith with trite bumper-sticker religiosity won’t do!

Jesus clearly warned us of times ahead by stating, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no,

nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22).

The books of Daniel, Jeremiah and Revelation, along with Christ’s Olivet Prophecy recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, bring the future to us by depicting a clash of civilizations between God’s Kingdom (Daniel 2:44) and the realm of Babylon (Revelation 17:5).

For some of the saints, the clash with Babylon in its various manifestations has come and gone. Let’s realize the book of Revelation was initially written to real people by a real God who proclaims that “all things work together for good.” Consider the impact of Jesus Christ’s message on the brethren in first-century Smyrna. “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

Needing to move beyond the moment

Most likely the words of the book of Romans had been read in Smyrna and throughout the seven churches of Asia Minor. Could Romans 8:28 have helped them to move beyond their moment of suffering by recognizing “all things work together for good,” and thus a witness for God? What will allow people in the future to “not love their lives to the death” by overcoming Satan, the dragon, “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11)? Is a part of that testimony

(See “**ALL THINGS,**” page 14)