


# *The* Good News

January-February 2005

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



## ***You Can Win the War Against the Family***

Alexander: The Man Who Would Be God • Parenting: What Makes It Work?  
When Do I Get a Break? • Is the United States Still a Moral Nation?



## Will the Family Survive?



**W**e're here to help. A major purpose of *The Good News* magazine is to share with you practical, workable solutions to the problems of everyday life.

One area that definitely needs help is the family. The overwhelming pressures against it seem insurmountable. The family is surrounded and beleaguered on all fronts, from media to finances to school and finally by the subtle undermining of culture. Can these influences be counteracted?

Media pressures are enormous. Television is slowly but surely poisoning the family with amoral influences and toxic trends that redefine family roles even as they destroy them. Traditional family values are ridiculed while single life is promoted as the modern norm. Father once knew best; now he's lucky to be noticed—and when he is, he's often the object of ridicule.

Movies, music and television undermine traditional values by promoting sex, drugs and violence. Boys are encouraged to wear

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gang clothing; girls are influenced to wear next to none.

Educational systems subvert traditional values by removing God and godly morals from the classroom and replacing them with evolution, simultaneously ridiculing religion and morality. As if TV, movies and music weren't bad enough influences, sex education and free birth control in schools only encourage sexual activity and experimentation even more. Condoms, not control, is the message children are given.

Sadly, it only gets worse as our teens grow up and go away to college or university. There, away from home, overwhelmingly liberal faculties (not to mention overwhelming social pressures) continue a subtle, subversive assault on traditional family values.

What's the end result of this witches' brew of antifamily factors? Nearly half of U.S. marriages now end in divorce. Increasingly, many couples never even bother to marry. Precious babies grow up in almost-families; kids are never quite sure that Mom or Dad won't move out or be replaced by a new live-in lover.

Remarkably, some government policies and programs actually *penalize* marriage. Married couples may face higher tax rates simply because they're married (the "marriage penalty"), while some antipoverty programs and even social security punish those who marry by cutting benefits.

The One who created marriage and the family (Genesis 2:24) says that human beings, left to their own human reasoning, are headed to self-destruction (see, for example, Genesis 6:5-6; Proverbs 16:25; Matthew 24:21-22). The prophet Jeremiah tells us that human nature, the same nature that creates and perpetuates all external and internal family pressures, is *incurable* (Jeremiah 17:9).

However, our Creator can change human nature, and with His help you can have a direct hand in changing it! When it is changed, many of these pressures on the family will be reduced significantly.

How can we counteract these very real, very dangerous pressures on the family? We encourage you to read the information in this issue and then put it to work in your life. Your family can win the war being waged against it!

—Jerold Aust, Senior writer

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# You Can Win the War Against the Family

*Modern pop culture is robbing children of their innocence while undermining their character growth by addicting them to random violence, filthy language and explicit sex. In spite of this subtle brainwashing, you can still win the war being waged against your family.*

by Jerold Aust

It wasn't all that long ago that the typical American family was very different from that of today. They had no second (or third) automobiles, no home entertainment systems, no cell phones. Some had no television, and those that did often received only one or two stations.

And there were a lot more things they didn't have, either—such as drug problems, rampant sexual promiscuity, huge numbers of broken homes, violent schools and crime-infested neighborhoods.

People worked long hours helping their families make a living and keeping food on the table. Family entertainment often amounted to eating a cold watermelon on a warm day or making ice cream from scratch. Most families spent much more time together then. Parents showed their children love—not by showering them with money and things but by giving them of their time and lives.

When relaxing in the evening watching television, family members often watched together. “Family hours” programming on TV really meant something—programs the entire family could watch together.

Many parents also would read to their children—children's stories and stories from the Bible. Sometimes the family would pray by the bedside together.

## Voices in the wilderness

It seems that those days are long gone. Some counselors note that many families today are narcissistic, meaning that they are so caught up in themselves that they seem to be pursuing the American day-dream rather than the American dream (see “The Culture of Narcissism,” page 6). Everyone wants something for nothing; isn't that what TV teaches?

Indeed, modern media bears heavy responsibility in this. More than street drugs, random sex and violence, the subtle, degrading effects of the media are steadily



**Sexual innuendos and filthy language are common fare in television series, even those aired during the family hours. Writers and producers are continually testing the waters to see what mainstream society will allow and endure.**

undermining the family. Certainly there are voices crying out against the destructive effects of mass media.

The late comedian, talk-show host, musician and author Steve Allen wrote 52 published books on a variety of subjects. Perhaps his most effective was his last, *Vulgarians at the Gate: Trash TV and Raunch Radio—Raising the Standards of Popular Culture* (2001). In this book, Mr. Allen discusses the role of mass media in endangering the family. Who better to admonish media than Mr. Media himself?

Mr. Allen's book lays bare the unembarrassed and amoral attempt of the media to undermine and erode the family by producing all kinds of lewd scenes on prime-time television. Sexual innuendos and filthy language are common fare in television series, even those aired during the family hours. Writers and producers are continually testing the waters to see what mainstream

society will allow and endure.

About a decade earlier, movie critic and author Michael Medved, now a popular radio talk-show host, alarmed many people with his exposé on how Hollywood has set itself against traditional American standards and values. In his book *Hollywood vs. America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values* (1992), he gets to the heart of the matter.

In a section of his book titled “The Assault on the Family,” he wrote of popular culture's “clearly demonstrated and uncompromising contempt for conventional family values.”

“The music industry shamelessly promotes promiscuity, motion pictures focus relentlessly on family dysfunction and divorce, while television programs broadcast the deadly message that kids know better than their doltish and irrelevant parents,” he explained.

“... The contrast between private contentment and public pessimism that shows up in major polls mirrors the huge chasm between our own view of the world and Hollywood’s—between the relatively happy real-life experience of most American families and the grim and poisonous visions that regularly emerge from the entertainment industry. Those antifamily images have become so deeply ingrained in our national consciousness that few Americans can summon the courage or the strength to dismiss them as the destructive

## Today’s Music: What’s the Message to Our Kids?

In *Vulgarians at the Gate* (2001), author Steve Allen shared with his readers the sadistic brutality of some rap lyrics. For example, the Geto Boys wrote the song “Mind of a Lunatic.” The rapper’s lyrics speak of a woman who was abducted by the rapper, dragged back into her house and raped at knifepoint. Though she begged for her life, the rapper killed her and molested her corpse.

Mr. Allen then discusses the philosophical argument as to whether this cultural fare is acceptable or whether it’s dangerous and destructive. Obviously Mr. Allen—himself the author of thousands of song lyrics and the score for several musicals—was very much opposed to it.

Under the assumption that no children would be reading his book, he felt “it is important to include at least a few all-too-typical examples of the genre so that there can be no doubt as to what is at issue. Today’s purposely offensive material is much closer to men’s room graffiti than to the art practiced by America’s best song-poets” (pp. 250-251).

Then Allen shares the filthy, obscene and lewd lyrics of 2 Live Crew from the 1991 CD *As Nasty as They Wanna Be*. The cesspool lyrics, unprintable in *The Good News*, detail illicit sex and a complete lack of respect for human life. Regrettably, such obscene, violent, misogynist lyrics are all too common in what passes for music today.

Movie critic Michael Medved offers samples of similarly disgusting and degrading messages on pages 97-105 of his landmark 1992 book *Hollywood vs. America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values*.

Parents who care about their children will screen their media diet and will teach their children by word and example a much healthier way to think and live.

distortions that they are” (p. 96).

### Modern media reshaping the mind

We live in an age of discordant, corrupting entertainment. In decades past, many

parents enjoyed relatively clean entertainment when attending a theater or stage show, if they had the time and money. True, some relatively moral entertainment exists today, but it’s increasingly difficult to find. The ratio of redeemable to raunchy entertainment has changed dramatically in the past few decades.

Some parents are becoming aware of blatant media decadence. As Mr. Medved wrote in the beginning of his book: “America’s long-running romance with Hollywood is over. As a nation, we no longer believe that popular culture enriches our lives. Few of us view the show business capital as a magical source of uplifting entertainment, romantic inspiration, or even harmless fun.

“Instead, tens of millions of Americans now see the entertainment industry as an all-powerful enemy, an alien force that assaults our most cherished values and corrupts our children. The dream factory has become the poison factory.

“The leaders of the industry refuse to acknowledge this rising tide of alienation and hostility. They dismiss anyone who dares to question the impact of the entertainment they produce as a ‘right-wing extremist’ or a ‘religious fanatic.’ They self-righteously assert their own right to unfettered free expression while condemning as ‘fringe groups’ all organizations that plead for some sense of restraint or responsibility” (p. 3).

That was written more than a decade ago. Today we find that the entertainment industry hasn’t changed its basic thrust.

Programs such as *Sex and the City* have openly discussed and depicted all kinds of lurid sexual situations. The series first aired on cable TV because, as its producer explained, “I wanted to do an R-rated show about adult sexual relationships that had no kind of censorship, moralizing, or judgment” (quoted by Allen, p. 50).

While that series glamorized sexual promiscuity, another series, *The Sopranos*, glamorized Mafia activities. Countless other series have introduced gay characters in an overt attempt to portray homosexuality as normal and equivalent to any other lifestyle.

Renowned clinical psychologist and TV talk-show host Dr. Phil McGraw, in his book *Family First*, discusses the degrading influence of media: “A huge influence is the massive media machine—five hundred TV channels, the Internet, the radio, the newspapers. If you don’t think so, just consider the now-unequivocal evidence that

violent television and films, video games and music increase aggressive and violent behavior in children, teenagers and even adults” (2004, p. 8).

Children have great difficulty evaluating what’s good and what’s bad for them. That’s where we parents come in.

### Origin of the war against the family

The war being waged against families and children isn’t new. In fact, it has been going on since the very first family was formed on earth—the family consisting of Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel.

They had no television, no magazines and no movies to seduce and addict Adam and Eve’s sons. Yet Cain murdered his own brother and pleaded innocence before His Creator (Genesis 4:8-9). Still, Cain didn’t murder his brother alone; other factors played a big role in this sad event.

What were these factors, and how do they play a role in the war against the family today?

Human nature is a consistent factor not just in the war on the family, but in all human relationships. Jesus Christ said that human nature is a mix of human good and evil (Luke 11:13). The evil part of our human nature didn’t come from God (Genesis 1:31). Instead, because we were created with freedom of choice, we often willingly choose evil because it appears more appealing to us (compare Ephesians 2:1-3).

Adam and Eve learned this the hard way. Humankind hasn’t looked back since, assuming that human reasoning is the best and only nature there is. This, of course, isn’t true (Proverbs 14:12).

Because today’s mass media appeal so strongly to our baser instincts and cravings, they are a powerful motivator and shaper of our thoughts, attitudes and habits (compare Romans 7:18-23). Inevitably this spills over into our families and relationships with others.

Another factor also plays a major role—Satan the devil. Few people understand his influence, yet it is so powerful that the Bible refers to him as “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). He is this world’s unseen ruler at this time.

What most parents don’t know is that this evil being is out to destroy mankind (1 Peter 5:8). If he can’t influence us to kill one another through warfare, violence and crime, he’ll make us miserable in any way he can—including through the destruction of normal marriage and family relationships. And the evidence shows he’s been

remarkably successful. Of course, our own selfish nature and cravings play right into his hands.

### Creating the best family environment

You can protect and nurture your family in down-to-earth, practical ways. Helpful books such as Dr. Phil's *Family First* identify practical steps in building a strong family. But no book is better when it comes to protecting and nurturing the family than God's Word, the Holy Bible. Here, then, are some practical, effective steps we can take to protect and nurture our families, using the very best manual as our guide.

- *Put God first* (Matthew 6:33). God says that He must come first in our lives for us to reap the blessings of a successful family. How do we put Him first? We *honor God by keeping His laws*.

This may be an unpopular concept in today's societies. But consider this: You and I keep the laws of the land automatically, do we not? Why, then, must we assume it's too difficult to obey God's laws?

We honor the rules we find in an automobile manual to help our cars run better and last longer. So why would we spurn the very manual God gives us so our families can run more smoothly? Don't let the god of this world continue to fool you into thinking that the true God's laws are too hard for us to keep.

- Secondly, *love your children* in the way God defines love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). It's one thing to say you love your children, but it's quite another to *show* them and tell them.

Personal example speaks much louder than words (James 1:22-25), so if the parental example is poor, the child can be damaged for a lifetime. A good parental example can help your child grow up in a positive environment, able to withstand the many battles waged against him or her.

- Third, *show a genuine interest in your children*. Parents can throw money at their children and presume this is a good thing. Yet people who do this usually wind up with spoiled, disrespectful and uncontrollable brats. Your children need something far more valuable than money—they need *you*!

- Fourth, *communicate with your children*, keeping in mind where they're coming from. The old saying that children should be seen and not heard is wrong. Just the opposite works best: They should be heard so the parents can discern what kind of example they are setting and what

## The Culture of Narcissism

In Greek mythology, Narcissus was a young man who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. It is from his name that we get the word *narcissism*, a love for oneself.

Christopher Lasch, author of *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, contends that consumerism has gotten a lock on the American psyche through the drowning in momentary pleasures and trivial pursuits.

"The pursuit of self-interest, formerly identified with the rational pursuit of gain and the accumulation of wealth, has become a search for pleasure and psychic survival . . .," he wrote. "To live for the moment is the prevailing passion—to live for yourself, not for your predecessor or posterity" (1991, pp. 30, 33).

This fact has not been lost on modern media. In fact, they have helped create this exact situation. Our children and young adults are being bombarded with the notion that life is governed by luck, not by hard work, education and focus. If you don't have what you want, you can urge or compel others to give it to you.

Such is the culture of narcissism, an excessive love or admiration of self. And where do you find the source of such unrealistic brainwashing? You need look no further than the nearest TV or radio.

values they are imparting. Children will often reflect what they see in the parent's example.

Of course, they are going to pick up wrong habits from other students at school and from friends. Still, parents influence their children more than anyone else or any other institution, especially during their most formative years.

Studies show that by age 5, 80 percent of a child's future outlook and values have been set. These formative years are the most pliable; these are the years that attentive and sensitive parents set their children's future for good. Teach your children in these formative years. Read good literature to them.

- Fifth, *add humor to your family's life*. Sometimes parents take themselves too seriously. Adding a little humor here and there is helpful to the family. Life is serious enough and families have to face plenty of trials regardless of their situation. Humor is like the spice of life. It helps to balance out the tediousness of life and gives children a healthier perspective toward their future.

- Sixth, *be directly involved in your children's lives*. They need their parents

to pray with them, read the Bible with them and talk about God's way. Parents should give children the gift of an intimacy with God by including them in their prayers, especially during their formative years.

One couple I know laid their children on the bed as one or both prayed kneeling beside it. Their children absorbed a natural intimacy with God before they could even talk, hearing their dad and mom pray to God regularly that way.

- Finally, parents, *monitor your children's media*. See what they're watching on TV, listen to their music, check out the games they're playing. If you allow your children to watch prime-time TV and it's a little dicey here and there, watch it with them and offer a balanced perspective on what you see. If it gets too bad, turn it off or turn to another program that the whole family can watch.

My wife and I always talked with our son and daughter about TV programs while they were on, asking them questions about what they saw. Your children will still look to you if you provide them the loving concern and care they so desperately need in a world set against your family's welfare.

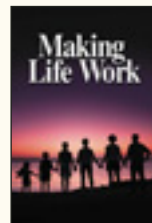
### Fight the good fight

The stakes in this battle against the family are high. Modern popular culture is robbing our children of their innocence while undermining their character growth through a steady diet of violence, foul language and explicit sex.

Thankfully, you can still win the war being waged against your family if you create the best family environment possible. In a successful family, the parents put God first, applying practical principles to help prepare their children to enjoy happy and productive lives. Get to work now to win the war being waged on your family! **GN**

## Recommended Reading

The Bible is packed with practical, timeless guidance on the major issues of life. We've gathered some of its best advice on marriage, parenting, family issues, career, finances, friendships and more into a practical, full-color guide called *Making Life Work*. Why not request your free copy today?



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# Successful Parenting: What Makes It Work?

*Many parents can find themselves overwhelmed when it comes to parenting.  
What biblical keys can lay the right foundation?*

by Larry Salyer

**W**hen John F. Kennedy Jr. died tragically in a plane crash with his wife in 1999, a number of friends, relatives and former mentors came forward to recount the young man's childhood experiences. Commenting on his reputation among those who knew him well, *Newsweek* remarked: "The one child of the 1960s who had the greatest chance of growing up strange and insecure turned into one of the most centered and easygoing guys around" (July 26, 1999, p. 52).

How could this young man, raised with all the publicity and pressure focused on the Kennedy family, turn out to be so normal?

What struck me in reading and hearing the analysis of his life in the media were the repeated references to his mother Jackie's determination to bring her children up with that specific goal in mind.

I'm not asking anyone to leap to the conclusion that Mrs. Kennedy was a paragon of child-rearing know-how. We might not precisely share her vision of what a child should become. But I do want to emphasize that she had a specific goal and was willing to expend considerable effort toward achieving it.

Speaking of her efforts to protect her children, *Newsweek* continued: "She kept them away from the worst excesses of their cousins, some of whom were living fast and loose and experimenting with drugs." Concerning the later relationship between Jackie and her then-adult son, *Newsweek* noted that John "loved his mother dearly and spoke often and intimately with her" (p. 47).

Many parents today would count themselves successful if their children would speak to them at all!

What is it that causes children to become



the kind of adults they do? How is it that one tiny, innocent baby can grow up to be a selfless humanitarian, while another becomes a mass murderer?

Virtually all authorities on child development conclude that the adult "product" springs from both its genetics (nature) and its environment (nurture). What is not so widely agreed upon is the relative proportion of these two influences. Let's briefly examine this and then look at what we as parents can do on the nurturing side.

## Cultivating through love

Notice what one mother and author says in her book, *I Didn't Plan to Be a Witch: and Other Surprises of a Joyful Mother*: "Contrary to what we may have heard,

children are not like clay—which we can mold into whatever we want if we try hard enough. They are seedlings. The seed of what they are has already been planted from the moment they began their existence. Some may be orange trees and others might be lemons. It is our job, as their gardeners, to observe, water, expose to the sun, weed, provide fertilizer, and nurture, in order to make the most beautiful plant possible from the seedlings we are given" (Linda Eyre, 1996, p. 107).

The gardening analogy is certainly appropriate and biblical. Jesus Christ used such symbolism many times. In the book of John, He tells us: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:1-2).

This principle is of critical importance as a foundation for child rearing since God, as our Heavenly Father, is bringing up *spiritual* children (Romans 8:16).

In fact, when we study the Bible carefully, we come to understand that God is actually focused on a tremendous goal for His children. He is working to make us *just like Him* in mind and character. That's right! He *works* at it—just as Jesus described in the book of John. All His efforts are for our *ultimate good* and for our *eternal benefit*. He loves us beyond measure and wants to give us every good and perfect gift (James 1:17).

And in His love for us, He has allowed us, too, to become "creators" in this physical realm. After He had placed the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden, God instructed them to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). In Psalm 127:3-5 we read: "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are

the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them . . ."

Children, therefore, are given to us as blessings. Not only are they to be a source of joy and strength, but they are also intended to present us with an opportunity to pour out our love on them. This is one way our Heavenly Father teaches us to be like Him. It should be understood, then, that *the right foundation of all effective child-rearing practices is true love for our children*—godly love that focuses on their well-being and ultimate success.

We know that a mother's love for her child is an emotion that's part of her nature. Yet even as wonderful and powerful as it is, it doesn't match the perfect, outgoing love that God has for us.

The good news is that God *can* and *will* give us His kind of love for our children—if we *ask* Him for it. For our part, we must strive to measure all of our actions against His perfect standard. If we do, it will have an immediate and powerful impact on the way we interact with our children!

If you will stop and think about the conflicts you may have with your children, you'll likely be able to see that they often result from the child wanting to act in a way contrary to the image—present and future—you have in your mind. Children don't always fit neatly into the molds we

in parent-child relationships? Present-day experience tells us that provocation of children, most often young teens, results from a conflict of interest between parents and children.

It may be the result of selfish motives on either or both sides. Or it may stem from differing visions or goals for the future that we've already discussed. And this can be a formidable stumbling block. For there aren't many things more frustrating than someone you love vehemently disagreeing with you when you're sure you are right!

Mom and Dad often seem to assume that their children will just naturally see things the same way they do and will thus fulfill their vision. They may assume that if a child doesn't conform to this vision



## We cannot expect our children to instantly conform to what most of us only learned after many years in the school of hard knocks.

create for them—even those that are solely for their own benefit.

But even if they *could* “fit the mold,” perhaps they're not meeting those expectations because we haven't properly explained what we expect from them. Without such communication and instruction, our goals for our children's future are probably doomed to failure. And given the difference in maturity levels, there's little chance of parents and children *accidentally* visualizing the goal the same way.

### Friction over unmet expectations

In Ephesians 6:4 we find instruction on child rearing from the apostle Paul. He says, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath . . .” We'll look at the rest of this verse shortly. But for the moment, let's consider this question: Why would he say such a thing?

Maybe it's because this problem was as common in the first century as it is today. Why *is* there so much friction and anger

or image, he or she is simply rebellious.

However, in my experience as a longtime teacher, counselor and—let me admit—mistake-prone parent, I've found that the culprit is most often something else. It's the *failure of the parents to properly convey how they expect their son or daughter to behave*—as well as the failure to provide them with the necessary tools to *learn* and *adopt* that behavior.

Now, think about children who are very young. As soon as most toddlers learn to draw or color pictures, they like to proudly present them to their parents. Imagine just how crushed a little child would be if his father were to scold him for having drawn a stick man because Dad wanted to see a picture of a tree. A ludicrous example? Of course. But it serves to drive home an important point.

Though all of us would label such a parental reaction as outrageous, we may be doing the same kind of thing when it comes to behavior and personality traits.

I have often observed in a grocery store or some such public place a mother shouting at a toddler to behave. But what do you suppose the word “behave” really means to the youngster? Even for adults, “behaving” is a complex concept, molded by such diverse factors as our *own* parents' values, our social environment, cultural mores and God's spiritual law.

The point is that we cannot expect our children to instantly and automatically conform to what most of us only learned after many years in the school of hard knocks. We should hold them responsible only for what we have thoroughly and patiently taught them. Doing otherwise would be correctly perceived by them as unfair.

### Does our love for our children match God's love for His?

Now let's look at the rest of Ephesians 6:4: “. . . but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Paul completes the previous thought about not provoking children to wrath by encouraging parents to teach and nurture their offspring in the spirit of love and concern evident in God's attitude toward *His* children. Nurture and admonition work hand in hand to motivate and direct a child toward effective growth and development.

Let's pause to reflect on a sad truth. All too many mothers and fathers either never intended to become parents in the first place, or never understood in advance the incredible amount of effort and commitment that rearing children would require. As a result, many are frustrated with the lack of time and freedom to pursue their own interests after children come along.

In far too many cases—and, of course, even *one* would be too many—parents develop actual *antagonism* toward their own flesh and blood. The cause can be jealousy, selfishness, competition, vanity or any number of other wrong motives. And the antagonism will only be eliminated when the parents become spiritually mature enough to put their children's welfare at least on par with their own.

The work of educating and training a child the way God wants us to is a *labor-intensive* job. It requires a level of personal sacrifice that does not always come naturally to us. We will succeed in it only if our true motive is the kind of love for our children that *God* has for *His* children on a spiritual level.

### Life is a classroom

When the Almighty called His people out



of Egypt, they had been wrongly educated for centuries. They had practically lost all knowledge of the instruction the Creator had given to their forefathers. So, in His love, He took the time to carefully instruct them in His way of righteous living.

Then, through the prophet Moses, God exhorted them to *preserve* His way of life by passing it on to their children, from generation to generation. In so doing, He also gave them—and us—an important formula for instructing and guiding the young.

We can glean much practical wisdom from a few short verses in Deuteronomy 6: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart” (verse 6).

Note that *true and effective moral or ethical teaching must be rooted in personal conviction*. We can hardly expect our children to internalize a way of life that we don’t believe and practice ourselves. Our words of instruction would be hollow indeed. And there would be no proper parental example to *reinforce* our instruction.

But once we are *committed* to the right way, Moses tells us how to convey it to our children: “You shall teach [God’s words] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up . . . You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (verses 7-9).

Without examining every detail, let me point out here that Moses is using terms that *describe our everyday routines*. He’s talking about a *way of life*, not some peculiar ritual.

Nevertheless, I’ve known Christian parents who’ve tried to apply these verses using a strict, literal interpretation of each activity mentioned. The religious instruction of their children was scheduled according to these daily routines. I’ve also observed that parents who take this approach usually have very little *natural* interaction with their children. For some, such a legalistic view became a trap that obscured the priceless instruction God was *really* giving.

Of course, it’s fine if you want to literally write out the Ten Commandments on the doorposts of your home. You could make it an interactive Bible project that would be both instructive and fun for the whole family. But how tragic it would be if you *substituted* the rote task of writing words for what God *really* wants for all Christians: “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in *their hearts*, and I will write them on *their minds*” (Hebrews 10:16,

New Revised Standard Version).

God wants us as parents to be committed to *living* by a set of righteous values and then to pass them along to our children throughout life. And this is to be done, not in a formal way only, but also through all the typical daily activities that bring the family into natural togetherness.

I have known many parents who complained that their children hated to sit still for daily Bible study or simply showed no interest. From the instructions God gave, it’s clear that He anticipated this a long time ago! He knew that so-called religious instruction, *apart from practical examples and application*, is usually of little value.

If conducted properly, the process of teaching through daily experiences that God outlined for families would require *quality time* spent between parents and children as well as the continual communication that stimulates mental development.

This is the *nurture* to which the apostle Paul referred in Ephesians 6:4. God, who designed and built the marvelous human brain and body, foresaw the need for such nurturing. We neglect providing it to the peril of our children and ourselves. Yet, as crucial as teaching by word and example is, it still does not always prevent a child from making mistakes or choosing to disobey.

### Dare to discipline

Sadly, most children do not live with the constant companionship of their parents and siblings. Some are even left in day-care centers from *infancy*, often deprived of critical contact with their parents except for short periods in the morning and evening.

Nor are they educated exclusively by their parents. School, scouting, summer camps, sports and a whole host of other endeavors bring them into regular contact with other children and adult supervisors. They may be exposed to a wide range of personalities and examples. To a point, of course, this is good. Children need varied life experiences and social contacts to learn to live in the real world—an often *inhospitable* world.

But there’s a downside as well. These same situations subject our children to influences that often *contradict* the teaching and examples given at home.

This emphasizes the importance of teaching children properly in the home environment, so that any negative outside influences will be mitigated. Moreover, no matter how well we train them, they are subject to the vagaries of human nature and the influences of a very real Satan, the god

of this world (see 2 Corinthians 4:4).

Mistakes and wrong behavior will *inevitably* occur. When they do, parents must be the first to impose a suitable penalty to call attention to the inappropriate acts and help the child learn to discern between right and wrong (see Proverbs 22:6; 29:15).

Let’s return to the example of God’s instruction to the nation of Israel. “And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, *because you obey the voice of the LORD your God*” (Deuteronomy 28:2, emphasis added throughout).

We see that God promised special blessings to His people if they would obey His voice. But there was a flip side to this coin. For if the people would *not* obey, a very *different* result would follow: “But it shall come to pass, if you do *not* obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these *curses* will come upon you and overtake you” (verse 15).

These prophesied blessings and curses reveal the principle of *discipline*. There are *rewards* for obedience and *penalties* for disobedience. This serves as advance warning that right and wrong will lead to different results and consequences. Some of those, of course, happen automatically, as we all discovered as children. But other forms of correction must be imposed by a loving parent—following God’s example—to help steer a child through the difficult character-building stages of life.

We find this principle of proper, loving discipline echoed in the New Testament: “For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” (Hebrews 12:6-7).

This passage and the following verses make it clear that some form of chastisement—that is, *punishment*—is necessary to direct children toward the right way of living. It reveals that *correction and punishment are appropriate acts of parental love*. Parents who truly love their children will establish values and standards, educate their children in them, and provide a system of discipline to help young minds learn the difference between right and wrong.

Carried out in a timely and consistent manner, appropriate discipline in the early years can save a child from a great deal of pain and trouble later on. Notice this counsel given in Proverbs 19:18: “Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your

*Continued on page 27*



# World News and Trends

## An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

### Global distrust of political leaders

Citizens of the world fear for their safety and security, perhaps primarily because they don't put much confidence in their political leaders. The Gallup International polling organization carried out a survey of some 50,000 people in 60 countries last year. This poll revealed that most nations distrust their politicians in a major way.

Worldwide, a disturbing 63 percent believe their politicians are dishonest. Regionally, Latin America tops the poll with a whopping 87 percent holding that view, followed closely by West Asia and Africa with 84 percent and 82 percent respectively. Germany is not far behind with a surprising figure of 76 percent, considerably above the aver-

age statistic in Western Europe at 46 percent.

In the United States and Canada the figure is 50 percent. On the positive side, the mistrust figure is very low in the Netherlands at 12 percent, which means that well over 80 percent of the Dutch trust their politicians to be honest. An incredible 97 percent of Singapore's citizens believe in the honesty of their leaders.

Particularly in the West, there are reasons for the belief that politicians are not only dishonest, but behave unethically. The absence of authority and the erosion of privacy in our e-mail age are two specific reasons.

A *Sunday Times* writer stated: "We live in an

age in which authority is absent . . . In America the decline of authority has been particularly swift. The erosion of privacy means that every public figure has soiled his laundry on the Internet—affidavits and all. Only recently [during the previous administration] the presidency was reduced to evidence about oral sex" (Dec. 5, 2004, emphasis added throughout feature).

One of the great lessons of the Bible is that although we need to deeply respect our leaders, we should not put our ultimate trust in them. The Scriptures teach us that we should trust God. (Sources: Reuters, *The Sunday Times* [London].)

### Pope reiterates religious stance on Europe

Rocco Buttiglione, a Roman Catholic and friend of Pope John Paul II, was unable to become European justice minister in the European Commission after the EU parliament objected to his conservative views on homosexuality and single mothers.

According to *The Guardian* (Nov. 8, 2004) he afterwards "began a public campaign to form a European 'Theocon' movement for those who believe that traditional values should be part of public

life." Mr. Buttiglione stated that he has been the recipient of thousands of letters of support.

Further measures have been taken by others of like mind. An article in the online *Telegraph* reported that "more than a million people are

### The Vatican is not happy with the fact that the proposed European Union constitution does not specifically mention Christianity.

going to deliver a petition to Tony Blair and fellow EU leaders calling for changes to the constitution recognising Europe's Christian heritage. Refusing

to accept a secular 'fait accompli' from Brussels, a Christian coalition is demanding that each EU state publish its version of the constitution preamble with references to God if desired" (Nov. 29, 2004).

Perhaps more importantly, "the move has the backing of Pope John Paul II, who has repeatedly condemned the 'moral drift' of Brussels. 'One does not cut the roots of one's birthright,' he told pilgrims this summer [2004]" (ibid.).

The Vatican has not been happy with the fact that the proposed European Union constitution does not specifically mention Christianity. According to the Vatican-based ZENIT News Agency, during a recent meeting with Romano Prodi, outgoing president of the European Commission, the pope reminded him of the symbolic value of Rome as the site of the signing of the original Treaty of Rome in 1957 as well as the new constitution in 2004.

The pope clearly stated: "Whoever speaks of Rome, speaks of the radiation of universal juridical and spiritual values. The Holy See favored the formation of the EU before it was juridically structured, and has followed the successive stages with active interest. It has always felt the need to express openly the just expectations of a great number of Christian citizens of Europe, who have so requested it.

"This is why the Holy See has reminded all that Christianity . . . has contributed to the formation of a common conscience of European peoples and has helped enormously in shaping the civilizations. Whether or not it is recognized in official documents, it is an undeniable fact that no historian will be able to forget" (Oct. 28, 2004).

Whatever the outcome of the current campaign, religion eventually is going to have the last word in Europe—notwithstanding the secular EU. If you would like to understand why, please request or download our free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Sources: ZENIT News Agency [Vatican], *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian* [London].)

### China's growing world influence

News that the Chinese and the Iranians have been in the process of forming a major alliance is just one more indication that China is increasingly at the fulcrum of much that is happening in the world.

NewsMax reported "a major growing alliance between 'axis of evil' member Iran and communist China. The relationship which has been nurtured by both countries for decades, is growing exponentially now, primarily out of China's insatiable energy needs and Iran's increasing hunger for consumer goods, as the economies of both countries continue to expand . . . What it could mean for the long haul is a stronger, more menacing Iran and China, each buoyed by needs being met by the other . . ." (November 18, 2004)

"Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the growing Iran-China alliance is the Islamic

republic's access to the improving technology being developed, deployed and utilized by the People's Liberation Army. Nowhere are U.S. concerns greater than in the area of ballistic missile technology" (ibid.).

At the same time, German Chancellor Schroeder is now making a strong bid to broaden Germany's trade with China. *The Financial Times* recently reported that "China's weight in global trade is so great that even a hiccup could shake some markets" (Dec. 7, 2004).

China's increasing global influence is even reflected by the supposition that "rising tensions with China may add impetus to Japan's gradual shift to a more assertive military" (*Newsweek*, Nov. 29, 2004). Add to that EU readiness to end the ban on weapons sales to China, threatening to cause a transatlantic rift with the United States.

It would be wise to watch events in China and Southeast Asia in general. (Sources: NewsMax, *International Herald Tribune*, *Newsweek*, *The Financial Times* [London].)





## Increasing middle-aged promiscuity

**D**isturbing trends in the moral behavior of those over 50 are increasingly coming to light. *The Sunday Times* reported that in Britain, "the divorce rate among couples in their fifties and sixties is rising sharply" (Dec. 5, 2004). Not surprisingly, this trend has been accompanied by growing promiscuity among seniors.

According to the *Daily Mail*, "The incidence of some diseases in the age group has almost doubled

in five years as more adopt a free-and-easy attitude to sex. The result has been an outbreak of sexual health problems" (Dec. 6, 2004).

The Health Protection Agency in Britain reported substantial increases in most types of STDs in women over 50. Also, cohabitation among those over 50 has reached 425,000.

The *Daily Mail* article continued: "The rise of divorce and decline of marriage is said to have played its part in changing attitudes to sex in an age group usually settled with a partner and family responsibilities." (Sources: *The Sunday Times*, *Daily Mail* [both London].)

## The continuing tragedy of unsafe abortions

**U**nsafe abortions are a problem of global proportions, most particularly in Asia. Thousands of women have experienced serious long-term effects with debilitating physical injuries, not to mention long-lasting psychological problems.

A report given at *Countdown 2015*, a London conference sponsored by the UN reviewing methods of improving reproductive health around the world, estimated that "almost 200 women die each day after having a botched abortion"—amounting to some 70,000 deaths a year.

Up to 10 million Asian women have unsafe abortions annually, accounting for half of all pregnancy-related deaths. The figures stand at about five million such abortions for both African and Latin American women each year, with a 44 percent death rate in Africa and surprisingly only 6 percent in Latin America. Elizabeth Maguire, president of the American organization Ipas, stated that "forty women every minute undergo an unsafe abortion." She added that these are preventable.

Ms. Maguire also said: "Changing the laws and effectively implementing those changes is the only way to ensure that women can fully exercise their right to decide whether and when to have children." However, a trustee of a U.K. charity in this field, Nuala Scarisbrick, countered with this thought: "What women need is help and encouragement to continue with their pregnancy. We should not impose our rotten [Western] values on the developing world."

In the United Kingdom, "Britain's largest provider of abortions stands accused of advising women to circumvent British regulations on late terminations by flying to a clinic in Barcelona [Spain] where the operation is provided—illegally." *Daily Telegraph* reporter Charlotte Edwardes went to witness this "chamber of horrors" where doctors are allegedly aborting unborn babies at a stage when there is every chance of a reasonable and healthy life.

Too many women, in a state of desperate confusion, view abortions as "a morally viable option" even in the late stages of pregnancy. Abortion denies a child's right to life. In God's way of thinking, it is a clear violation of the Sixth Commandment—"You shall not murder." (Sources: *The Daily Telegraph*, BBC Web Site [both London].)

## Ten Commandments or ten suggestions?

**W**hat did Moses bring down from Mt. Sinai: the Ten Commandments or ten suggestions? Do people still believe in the Ten Commandments, or are they outmoded? When is it right to murder your fellow man? When is it right to lie about your neighbor or steal from him?

God gave humankind the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5) so we can learn to

honor Him, to let Him guide our lives. Jesus Christ summarized the Ten Commandments in the Gospels: First, love God with all of your heart and mind. Second, love your neighbor as you love yourself (Matthew 22:37-39). These two great commandments sum up the first four commandments and the last six respectively.

Although these laws rankles human nature (Romans 8:7), God is not a God of suggestion but of commandment. If you'd like to learn more, request your free copy of our booklet *The Ten Commandments*.

## Some good news on the sexual front

**A**ccording to *Sunday Times* reporter John Harlow in America: "The U.S. government's statistical watchdogs have noticed a confluence of social and sexual trends that will warm the hearts of the American right." Among reports emanating from the U.S. National Vital Statistics System are indications that an increasing number of American teenagers are taking their religion seriously, along with "the largest number of young women getting married since the dawn of the permissive age" (Dec. 5, 2004).

Further, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that the number of teenage pregnancies is down for the 12th consecutive year. A CDC spokesperson said, "American women are behaving more responsibly than previous generations."

Let us hope that these statistics are accurate and that they mark a trend that will long continue. (Source: *The Sunday Times* [London].)

## Where are women's magazines headed?

**W**hat kind of magazines are men reading nowadays? For that matter, what are women reading? Look at any well-stocked magazine rack and you'll see seemingly endless glossy, slick magazines for both men and women.

Consider the December 2004 issue of *Cosmopolitan*, a highly regarded and popular woman's magazine. The word *cosmopolitan* means "so sophisticated as to be at home in all parts of the world" (*The American Heritage Dictionary*).

The titles on the cover advertise the main stories in the issue. They include "Sex He'll Go Wild For," "Feel Hot Naked," "The Sex Article You Must Read With Your Boyfriend" and "Caught With Their Pants Off." The titles are highly suggestive. Need we ask what message they're selling?

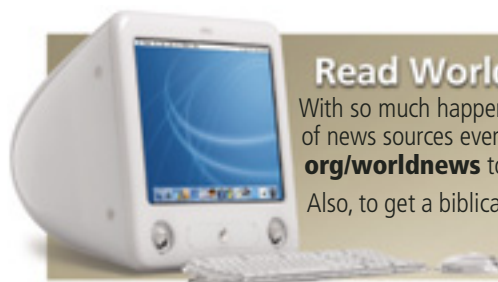
The article titles assume that such language fits well with the moral standards of their intended audience. One would only hope the magazine's readers would pay close attention to another article title offered on the cover: "Five Ways to Make Smarter Choices in Life." Apparently the magazine staff missed the irony.

With content like this, no wonder the apostle Paul foretold that in the end time, men and women would be "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4).

## Read World News and Trends Every Day

With so much happening so quickly in today's world, how can you keep up? The *Good News* staff reviews dozens of news sources every day to bring you what's truly important. Visit *Current World News & Trends* at [www.ucg.org/worldnews](http://www.ucg.org/worldnews) to find links to the most important news stories from across the globe.

Also, to get a biblical perspective on major events, visit [www.ucg.org/commentary](http://www.ucg.org/commentary) for a weekly commentary on the trends shaping our world—and what they mean for you.



# Major International Challenges Confront President Bush's Second Term

*The world looks very different four years after President Bush took office. What challenges lie ahead for the second Bush administration?*

by Melvin Rhodes

**F**ar from being an irrelevant book written thousands of years ago, the Bible is a book with a great deal to say about today's world. Between a fourth and a third of the Bible is prophecy, much of which is yet to be fulfilled. A great deal has come to pass in recent decades, but much remains ahead.

The book of Daniel reminds us that God “changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings” (Daniel 2:21). God is in charge. His plan is to establish His Kingdom on this earth with Jesus Christ at its head. This gospel—good news—of the Kingdom of God was the message Jesus Christ brought to the world (Mark 1:14).

But before Christ's return, certain events are prophesied to take place. We are now living through events that appear to be building up to the fulfillment of these end-time prophecies.

## Major shifts on the world scene

At the end of World War II, the United States and the countries of the British Empire were victorious allies, while the Axis powers of central Europe lay in ruins. The Middle East was largely an unimportant region of little interest except for its oil.

But even in 1945, students of Bible prophecy knew all this had to change for biblical prophecies of the end time to be fulfilled.

The Middle East was set to become a major area of conflict with the birth of the modern Jewish nation of Israel in 1948. Meanwhile, defeated Germany and other countries in Europe were prophesied to unite and form a new superpower. A third development of the postwar world was to be the decline of the English-speaking nations, with the collapse of the British Empire and the relative decline of the United States in relation to other nations.

To varying degrees all three of these

developments now engulf us. All are shaping up as major foreign policy challenges confronting the second Bush administration.

## The Middle East cauldron

In the Middle East the United States, Britain, Australia and other allies are already fighting a difficult conflict in Iraq. Having removed a ruthless despot, they now face the challenge of replacing him with a democratically elected government in a country that has suffered almost five decades of dictatorship.

The run-up to the election at the end of January is likely to be particularly violent as those opposed to a democratic system try to thwart the whole process.

The United States seems determined to stay the course, with talk of keeping troops in the country for many years to come, hoping to ensure democracy. The Bush administration's fervent hope is that other nations in the region will want to copy Iraq and introduce a democratic system in their own nations.

But Iraq may not be the greatest challenge confronting the United States in today's Middle East. That dubious distinction may well be the seemingly insoluble Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Prior to 1914, when World War I started in Europe, the Middle East “was of only marginal concern . . . The region had become a political backwater . . . Few Europeans of [Winston] Churchill's generation knew or cared what went on in the languid empires of the Ottoman Sultan or the Persian Shah . . .

“There was little in the picture to cause ordinary people living in London, or Paris, or New York to believe that it affected their lives or interests . . . The passions that now drive troops and terrorists to kill and be killed—and that compel global attention—had not yet been aroused”

(David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 2001, pp. 24-25).

This situation would have to change for Bible prophecy to be fulfilled. And change it has!

When asked by His disciples what would be the sign of the end time and His second coming (Luke 21:7), Jesus Christ showed the importance of Jerusalem in end-time events (verse 20). He then said, “For these are the days of vengeance, *that all things which are written may be fulfilled*” (verse 22, emphasis added throughout).

## Conflict without end?

At the end of World War I, the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, which had dominated the region for centuries, lay in ruins. New nations emerged out of the rubble. Other territories temporarily came under British or French control.

The British for a time had control of Iraq, a responsibility that cost hundreds of British lives. They also had control of Palestine under a League of Nations Mandate, the maintenance of which led to the deaths of many more British soldiers. So in 1947 the British announced that they were pulling out. Then, a few months later, the Jewish state of Israel came into existence following a vote of the United Nations.

The birth of the Israeli state was the beginning of a conflict that still has no end in sight. Yet its existence was not remotely possible until the fall of the Ottoman Empire, which had controlled Jerusalem for four centuries since 1517.

Troops of the British Empire entered the city in December 1917, exactly 400 years later. Jerusalem remained in British hands until divided by the United Nations in 1948. Nineteen years later, Israel captured the Jordanian portion while defending itself against Arab invasion in the 1967 Six-Day War. It remains today a disputed city with the potential for being



a major threat to world peace.

### Conflict over Jerusalem to the end

Modern “Israel” is not the same as the Israel of the Old Testament. The modern state of Israel is the national home of the Jews, the people of the tribe of Judah, one of the 13 tribes constituting the people of Israel. Judah, after a time of captivity and exile, was prophesied to regain control of the area prior to the second coming of the Messiah.

In the Old Testament prophetic book of Zechariah we note that Judah and Jerusalem are to be at the very center of end-time events: “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a

Islam. American involvement in the Middle East, including its support for Israel, led directly to the attacks of Sept. 11.

Many are hoping that President Bush will turn his attention to the area and bring about peace. Following the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, hopes have risen that a new Palestinian leader might be able to convince the Palestinian people of Israel’s right to exist, thereby opening the door to a possible long-term peace agreement. However, ancient animosities run deep in this bloodstained region.

### Iran the next trouble spot?

But the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and

all around the Persian Gulf—as well as threatening the very existence of Israel. Iran also stands to gain from Iraqi elections, as Iraq is likely to come under the control of the majority Shia population, leading to increased ties between the two countries.

Added to the problems of Iraq, Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are the ongoing challenges of international terrorism, which has its roots in the Middle East. Compounding the difficulties is the fact that the United States, and indeed much of the Western world, is heavily dependent on Mideast oil to fuel their affluent economies.

Also complicating America’s problems in the Middle East is the European Union. Nowhere are the two powers more at odds. While the United States backs Israel, the EU is more sympathetic to the Palestinians. Most of the countries in the EU opposed the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and are now anxious to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue before America takes possible action.

### The EU’s rising power

A recurring theme of the last 1,500 years has been the repeated attempts to unify Europe—in essence reviving the Roman Empire, which collapsed near the end of the fifth century.

In the past, uniting Europe was temporary and always accomplished by force. Today the nations of Europe are coming together voluntarily, forming an ever-closer union as they integrate economically, politically and militarily. The 25-nation EU is now the world’s biggest trading bloc, with 450 million people within its borders. Other nations, including Turkey, are trying to join.

While some of these countries remain supportive of the United States, the EU and America often have conflicting interests. This is certainly the case in the Middle East. It is also increasingly true in other parts of the world.

Revelation 17 shows us that a future union of 10 “kings”—today we might call them premiers, prime ministers or presidents—will combine their energies and forces to form a final end-time superpower called “the beast.”

“The ten horns . . . are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and



***Shocking as it may seem to Americans, the Sept. 11 attacks gave millions of people around the globe hope—hope that the United States could be brought down as the world’s dominant power.***

cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem” (Zechariah 12:2).

Another prophecy that speaks of Christ’s return makes it plain that this is still to take place in the future: “For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem . . . Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations . . . And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east . . .” (Zechariah 14:2-4).

The United States is Israel’s main financial and military backer. American support for Israel (Judah) is a major element in the growing divide between the West and

Iraq are not the only two problems the United States must deal with in the Middle East. There is also Iran.

For more than a quarter century Iran has been a major thorn in America’s side. Before 1979 the shah of Iran was a reliable American ally. His overthrow was a major blow to the United States. Iran’s resulting revolutionary and radical Islamic fundamentalist regime has been calling America “the Great Satan” for the past 26 years and has been instrumental in helping to spread turmoil throughout the region.

The country now appears ready to acquire nuclear weapons, which could threaten American interests and U.S. forces

they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb [Jesus Christ] . . ." (verses 12-14).

From these verses of the Bible we see that national leaders are going to come together for a short time ("one hour" in John's vision, signifying a brief period) and will fight Jesus Christ at His return.

Revelation 18 further reveals that these nations are going to be at the head of a worldwide economic system called "Babylon," a continuation of the Roman Empire and the other gentile empires that preceded it as foretold in Daniel 2 and 7.

This economic system appears to even now be coming together through the European Union, the world's biggest trading and economic bloc.

The EU accounts for well over half the world's trade. Trade disputes between the United States and the European Union have been increasing in recent months, with America often having to back down in the face of European clout. The EU's currency, the euro, has also been rising at the expense of the U.S. dollar, which has suffered an ongoing crisis of confidence largely due to America's rising trade and budget deficits.

Europe's growing strength has enabled the French and Germans to distance themselves from the United States on the world scene. Rejecting American leadership over Iraq, these two nations have been quite vocal in disagreeing with Washington.

France, a former colonial power, currently leads a UN bloc of third-world nations that oppose and seek to counter American domination of the globe. Many in both France and Germany—and also in other European nations—see the rising EU as a rival to U.S. power, a new superpower in the making.

In May 2004 the 25 leaders of the EU nations signed a new Treaty of Rome set to bring about a federal Europe, uniting politically to revive the ancient dream of a united Europe. Economic unity has already been achieved, political unity is being worked out and military unity is in the first stages.

The coming four years are likely to see the United States forced to come to terms with this new superpower. The increased strength of the euro against the dollar is already adding to the pressure on Washington from Europe.

### Declining American power and prestige

In the last three months I've spent time outside of the United States with friends and family in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Ghana and England. Sadly, as an American citizen, I have to report that it's increasingly difficult to find people in any of these countries who could be described as pro-American. Rather, disillusionment with the United States and plain old anti-Americanism are increasingly the order of the day.

This is undoubtedly the biggest foreign policy challenge for the second Bush administration—how to restore America's credibility and prestige.

America is increasingly perceived around the world as a bully. Violent movies coming out of Hollywood have added to this negative impression. In the last decade, satellite television has introduced increasing numbers of people around the world to American culture, further adding to a world perception of America being home to a very violent society.

Once the hope of the world, the country that twice helped liberate Europe from military domination is increasingly seen not as a liberator, but as the greatest threat to world peace. The Bush administration is often described in the world's media as being "out of control." This only adds to fervency for the European Union to act as a counterbalance while others turn to the United Nations.

### Views toward United States shift

It's been only a little more than three years since the terrorist attacks on the United States on Sept. 11. In the aftermath of those attacks, the United States seemed to have the sympathy and support of the entire world. Today, the world seems increasingly united against America. What has gone wrong?

Iraq is often said to be the main reason

for this change. But anti-Americanism goes back a lot further than Sept. 11, 2001.

While Sept. 11 initially shocked and appalled decent people around the world, shortly afterwards it led to a major change in perception. The world had seen—live on television—the world's greatest power humiliated by a handful of terrorists from a comparatively backward part of the world.

Shocking as it may seem to Americans, this gave hundreds of millions of people around the globe hope—hope that the United States could be defeated, brought down as the world's dominant power. As one man in West Africa put it to me: "Muslims feel that Americans are trying to take over the world. They feel that Osama bin Laden will stop them."

It is not only Muslims who feel that way. How else can you explain posters of the world's leading terrorist for sale at the side of the road in non-Islamic third-world countries?

There is a widespread sense that American culture is taking over everywhere. This is made worse through pervasive American television programs, movies and music that promote values alien to most people. Whereas 50 years ago America was respected around the globe, today the reverse is the case. The biblical book of Proverbs contains a timeless truth that sums it up well: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

America now finds itself in a similar position to its predecessor as the world's greatest power, Great Britain.

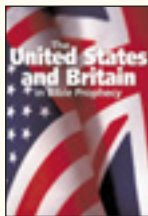
In 1942 Britain suffered a humiliation in some respects similar to what America experienced 60 years later. It was the fall of Singapore, Britain's biggest naval base outside of the British Isles.

The island fell to the Japanese, then perceived as a backward nation. The fall of Singapore had a ripple effect around the region. It was a major setback for the British Empire. People now realized that the British could be defeated. In a similar way, Sept. 11 has led people to believe that the United States is no longer invulnerable.

Fourteen years later, the British were to suffer a similar defeat when they lost the Suez Canal in 1956. This time they won the war militarily, but then were forced out of Suez by the Eisenhower administration, which applied economic pressure. Could the rest of the world apply similar economic pressure on the United States over Iraq or a future area of conflict involving America?

## Recommended Reading

For further insight into what's behind America's moral decline and the serious problems facing the nation, you need to understand the remarkable story brought to light in our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Why is the long-troubled Middle East such a focal point of Bible prophecy? What should we be looking for to happen in this region? You need to read our eye-opening, full-color booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. Download or request your free copies today!



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[www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org)



The United States today needs to borrow \$2.5 billion *per day* to finance its deficit and enable it to carry on as the world's superpower. When Britain reached the point where it had to start borrowing from the United States, its days as the world's policeman were numbered. History shows that this also happened to other nations before it. The same pattern is now being repeated with the United States.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges for the second Bush administration is to put the nation's finances in order. Without sound finances and a stable currency, American leadership of the world will be increasingly threatened.

These then are some of the major challenges for American foreign policy over the next four years, but by no means are they all. Other areas of the world will also pose

challenges, from the rising power of China, India and Japan to the growing threat from a nuclear North Korea. Added to these is the constant threat of another event like Sept. 11.

Whatever happens, the next four years promise to be interesting ones, with the world likely to look quite different when the American electorate next chooses a president. **GN**

## The U.S. Supreme Court: Presidential Decisions Impact National Morality

**A**s President George W. Bush begins his second term in office, many important issues lie before him. Of course, the issue that immediately jumps to everyone's mind is national security—how to keep the country safe from terrorist attacks and what actions to take if any attacks succeed.

But another matter in which the president will likely have to make choices is actually of more preeminent concern. Indeed, it is an issue that may well help determine how safe the country will be in the long run. That pivotal matter is the makeup of the U.S. Supreme Court.

### Choices that can transform society

Notice what noted economist and author Thomas Sowell stated in a Nov. 4, 2004, column about what was at stake in this past presidential election: "Can you imagine what it would be like to have a . . . liberal [president] filling federal courts across the country, including the Supreme Court, with liberal judges who would be turning more criminals loose for decades to come, as well as repeatedly over-ruling the voting public's right to govern themselves on such things as gay marriage?"

"With so many elderly members on today's Supreme Court, the choices of their successors will be historic in their consequences. Those consequences could be tragic if they are replaced with more Justices who think their job is to impose their own pet notions or—worse yet—to be guided by what is in fashion in other countries, instead of what is set forth in the Constitution of the United States that they are sworn to uphold."

Indeed, this is not a mere political issue. It is a decidedly *moral* issue. The Supreme Court, as the ultimate arbiter of what acts are legal, plays a key role in setting the moral tone of the nation.

Consider the high court's ruling in the *Roe v. Wade* case that legalized abortion in 1973. This was not a popular decision. Abortion had been viewed as murder—a crime and a sin. But the legalizing of abortion through the supposed wisdom of our highest judges gave it increasing popular acceptance—to the point that today it is viewed by nearly half the populace as a woman's "right."

To many, the notion of rolling back *Roe v. Wade*, even by those who don't agree with it, is unthinkable—even as the lives of a million and a half unborn babies continue to be taken every year.

Yet the downturn had begun earlier than the 70s. The court decided to ban school prayer in 1963—against the wishes of the vast majority of the public. The effects of this ruling, and of further banishment of God and the Bible from public life since, have been devastating. Rates of crime and immorality soon skyrocketed. It only makes sense. Take away God and religion, the basis of morality, from children's education and the result is a generation that is less moral than before. Repeat with each generation and it only gets worse. Throw in a curriculum based around the theory of evolution, telling students they are really nothing more than intelligent animals, and the seeds are sown for societal disaster.

Of course, parents bear some responsibility for failing to combat the downturn at home. And yet parents are forced to compete with a public education system that paints them and other archaic forebears as out of touch with scientific reality.

Consider the Supreme Court's decision in the light of the fact that its own sessions open with this appeal: "God save the United States and this honorable court." In fact, the men who wrote the U.S. Constitution and the First Amendment preventing a federal establishment of religion nevertheless elected to have congressional sessions opened with prayer.

John Jay, first U.S. chief justice and one of the three men most responsible for the writing of the U.S. Constitution, made his views clear when he said: "Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is *the duty*, as well as the privilege and interest of *our Christian nation*, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers" (emphasis added throughout).

In 1891 the U.S. Supreme Court made this remarkable statement: "Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of the Redeemer of mankind, and it's impossible that it should be otherwise: and in this sense and to this extent *our civilization and our institutions are emphatically Christian*" (*Church of the Holy Trinity v. The United States*).

So how have we arrived where we are today? Through presidential appointments of judges (given lifetime appointments) who judge based more on their own ideas than on the intent of the Constitution. These see the Constitution as a "living" document to be interpreted differently as society changes. Yet that's what constitutional amendments are for—which are to come only through Congress and state legislatures, not judicial rulings.

Thomas Jefferson, who gave us the now-misconstrued phrase "separation of church and state," explained well how the U.S. Constitution is supposed to be interpreted by judges, saying: "On every question of construction [of the Constitution] let us carry ourselves back to the time when the constitution was adopted, recollect the spirit of the debates, and instead of trying what meaning may be squeezed out of the text, or invented against it, conform to the probable one in which it was passed."

### Much hangs in the balance

This is the approach of conservative judges like Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, one of whom will likely be nominated for the position of chief justice when the current conservative chief justice, William Rehnquist, retires. And further retirements seem likely, which will bring additional Supreme Court appointments.

Since the Senate confirms federal judicial appointments, we may well see liberal senators fight vigorously to prevent the court from any possible swing to the right. If the national leadership holds the line against pressure to compromise, the moral slide of the nation may be slowed. But if they give way, we may well see America's moral decline start to snowball more than it already has.

The more a nation heeds and follows the moral values God has given in Scripture, the more blessed and secure that nation is. On the other hand, the more a nation rejects godly values, the more curses it brings on itself.

A nation that expels God from public life should not expect His protection when threats and attacks come, whether from without or within. Of course, God is merciful and often protects us in spite of ourselves. But for a nation to overtly reject God is certainly not the way to ensure His help.

Thus, the president's appointments to the Supreme Court may prove more important in the long run than trying to root out and find terrorists. Yet even more vital than that would be for the nation and its leaders to bow to God in repentance and humility and seek His forgiveness and direction.

Though the country does not seem at all poised to take such a step, that should not stop you from taking it. All of us have an individual responsibility toward God. Let's make sure we're fulfilling it. No matter which way the nation goes, it remains our job to stand for God and His truth.

—Tom Robinson

# Is the United States Still a Moral Nation?

*The recent election showed that almost half of the U.S. electorate is uncomfortable with a president who is open about his religious faith and has stated that Jesus Christ is the Person he most admires. What about the other half? They may claim to get their values from the Bible, but do they really?*

by John Ross Schroeder

**W**hen Americans celebrated Thanksgiving in November, some believed that *two different "nations"* took time out to commemorate what the Plymouth fathers were so thankful to God for in 1621. These early pioneers reaped a considerable harvest after a bleak period of great hardship and starvation.

But consider further the popular notion that America is a nation divided along the lines of those who uphold traditional biblical values and those who do not. The facts reveal a much more complex picture.

## The role of moral values

The role of morality has been heavily debated as a result of the November presidential election. Many people jumped to erroneous conclusions based on exit polls showing that the single issue prompting most voters to cast their ballots the way they did was that of morality—concerning gay marriage, abortion and the like.

Journalists and columnists on both sides of the Atlantic bought into this simplistic picture. One British writer put it this way: "Half the people believe the government has no place in personal healthcare decisions, including abortion. The other half believe abortion to be murder. Half the people believe sexual orientation should not be of concern to government; half say homosexual unions will lead to the end of civilisation" (*The Guardian*, Nov. 10, 2004).

In terms of the recent election, however, a number of American and British commentators would take issue with simple scenarios like this one. For instance, columnist Charles Krauthammer pointed out that "the exit poll is just a single poll. We had dozens of polls in the runup to the election that showed that the chief concerns were the war on terrorism, the war in Iraq and

the economy" (*The Washington Post*, Nov. 12, 2004).

Many attributed President George W. Bush's victory to the gay marriage referenda in a number of states, particularly the one in Ohio. Mr. Krauthammer showed this reasoning to be false. He wrote: "George Bush increased his vote in 2004 by an average of 3.1 percent nationwide. In Ohio the increase was 1 percent—less than a third of the national average. In the 11 states in which the gay marriage referendums were held, Bush increased his vote by less than he did in the 39 states that did not have the referendum. *The great anti-gay surge was pure fiction*" (emphasis added throughout article).

Furthermore the states with the highest divorce rates are, generally speaking, in the southern portion of the United States. Paradoxically, the states with the lowest divorce rates are on the more liberal upper east coast of the United States. Massachusetts voted for John Kerry to the tune of 62 to 37 percent. President Bush took Texas 61 to 38 percent. Yet the Lone Star State has a higher annual divorce rate with 4.1 per thousand inhabitants to Massachusetts' 2.4.

As British *Sunday Times* writer Andrew Sullivan summed up the situation: "Those parts of America that uphold traditional values are *not* those where traditional values are healthiest" (Nov. 28, 2004).

How could this be?

## Christians and unbelievers: strikingly similar behavior

Surveys in the United States by religious

pollster George Barna consistently reveal that there is not much difference between the moral actions of Christian believers and unbelievers. For instance, those professing to be "born again" Christians divorce just as often as nonbelievers.

A new study by his organization, the Barna Group, "shows that the likelihood of married adults getting divorced is



**It may come as a surprise to some that generally speaking, the Bible on the whole is not the source of Americans' values. While it is true that many of our society's moral values originally came from the Bible, the real roots of what should be Christendom's beliefs have largely been rejected.**

identical among born again Christians and those who are not born again . . . Among married born again Christians, 35% have experienced a divorce. That figure is identical to the outcome among married adults who are not born again: 35%" ([www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org), Sept. 8, 2004). (For further information, see "Christians in Name Only.")

Another *Sunday Times* writer put her finger on the problem. She stated: "The moral values of America derive more from



tradition than from dogma. From a sense of family and community *rather than from Scripture or church*" (Nov. 7, 2004).

### What's the source of our beliefs?

What is American morality—and that of most of the Western world—based on? What is the source of our values and standards? It may come as a surprise to some that generally speaking, *the Bible on the whole is not*.

While it is true that many of our society's moral values originally came from the Bible, the real roots of what should be Christendom's beliefs have largely been rejected. The vast majority of mainstream Christians have cast aside about 75 percent of the Bible—the Old Testament. And even the grace of God (emphasized in the New Testament) has been turned into license to disobey His laws (Jude 3-4).

How does the Bible view our national conduct in the West? Ezekiel 20 is a pivotal

than obey the laws He had revealed to them in the wilderness. Idolatry and Sabbath breaking consistently characterized their bad behavior (verses 13-21). (Observing the Sabbath may not be important to most modern people today, but the Bible repeatedly shows that it remains very important to God. To understand why, please request our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*.)

After a long period of patience and persistent right teaching, God finally "*gave them over to statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by*" (verse 25, New International Version). Israel came under the tragic influence of the pagan religions of neighboring nations, even to the point of sacrificing their own children.

Then in the New Testament the apostle Paul picked up on this theme in explaining why the gentile nations also went badly astray. Their once-enlightened leaders not only turned to base wickedness them-

London *Times* correspondent Tim Reid observed this about American morals while reporting from Washington D.C. for *The Times*. "For a people accused of re-electing their President based on a zealous embrace of moral values, *Americans have a funny way of showing it*. The hottest new US television sensation is a suburban whodunit *dominated by adultery, murder and four voluptuous fortysomething housewives*" (Nov. 24, 2004).

The show to which he referred, *Desperate Housewives*, has already attracted 25 million viewers and is rapidly becoming the number one TV program in the nation. Even *Sex and the City* took a while to catch on. But not this new prime-time soap, which taps into lesbian behavior in addition to the normal sexual vices afflicting mankind. (To understand the biblical laws and principles that ought to permeate our love lives, request or download our free *Good News* article reprint titled "Marriage and Family.")

### Suppressing the truth of God

Our bodily network of nerve endings brings us pain and discomfort when something goes awry. It acts as an alarm system to help us ward off and cope with dangers to the human body.

God also gave us something similar to keep us out of harm's way spiritually—our consciences. When aberrant lifestyles result in pain and discomfort, you'd think we would heed the warning signals and take appropriate action to avoid problems.

Often this is not how it works out in practice. Instead we deceive ourselves by ignoring the principle of cause and effect and then allow ourselves to engage in even further rebellion against God and His laws. Finally He has no other alternative but to give us over to our lawless behavior as we drift further and further away from His truth, bringing more and more suffering on ourselves and others.

Throughout this process we either tend to ignore serious spiritual problems or attempt to cast them aside by deceptive explanations of our lawless conduct. Our formerly sensitive consciences gradually become hardened.

Since we do not wish to retain God in our knowledge (Romans 1:28), He gives us over to following our own sinful ways of life—a sure road to suffering and death (Romans 6:23). We find ourselves very far from God, cut off and in desperate need of someone to intercede for us.

*Continued on page 27*

## Christians in Name Only?

**A** 2003 poll of American adults found that while 91 percent "absolutely believe" or "mostly believe" Jesus Christ was a real historical person, they are much fuzzier on the implications of that belief. Of those surveyed, significantly smaller percentages actually believe He was born to a virgin, was resurrected from the dead, was the Son of God or was divine (Scripps Howard News Service report, Dec. 26, 2003).

When it comes to actual Bible knowledge and understanding, the numbers drop even further. A 1990 Gallup Poll found that only half of American adults interviewed could name a single one of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and only 37 percent could name all four! And while 70 percent could name the town in which Jesus was born (Bethlehem), barely one person in four could name even half of the Ten Commandments or identify Jesus as the person who gave the Sermon on the Mount (George Gallup, Jr., *The Role of the Bible in American Society*, 1990, p. 17).

Sadly, these numbers may well be considerably worse in other Western countries where people don't even make much of a pretense of going to church. What such disturbing trends lead to is the result discovered in a 2003 survey by the Barna Research Group. It found that among professing Christians, *half* considered cohabitation and "enjoying sexual thoughts and fantasies about someone" who was not their spouse to be morally acceptable; roughly *a third* considered adultery, pornography, drunkenness and having an abortion to be morally acceptable; and *one in five* thought the same of homosexual behavior (Barna Research Online, Nov. 3, 2003, report).

Keep in mind that these percentages aren't for the population as a whole, but for people who claim to be Christian! What we have, then, is a Christianity in which millions accept Christ in name but know little about Him, what He did and what He taught. Or, worse yet, perhaps they do know what He taught—but choose to ignore or reject it!

If you would like to know what Jesus is really like as well as what He taught, please request or download our free booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.

—Scott Ashley

chapter. It explains why God has hidden Himself from most of mankind—why He lets us go on our own way rather than intervening in our nation's affairs today.

In this account God would not allow the elders of ancient Israel to consult Him (Ezekiel 20:2-3). He explains why in the remainder of the chapter.

After God delivered the Israelites from their bondage in the land of Egypt, they chose to continue in disobedience rather

selves, but they also suppressed or held back the truth of God from others (Romans 1:18-20).

Finally "*God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity . . . They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator . . .*" (verses 24-25, NIV). In principle, this is what the prophet Ezekiel recorded ancient Israel as doing in chapter 20.

# Alexander the Great: The Man Who Would Be God

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

by Darris McNeely

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

How should we understand Alexander the Great today? Are you aware of an overlooked source that refers to his exploits in the context of God's design for history and mankind?

You may be surprised to know that Alexander's exploits are mentioned in Bible prophecies ignored by modern scholars in their quest to understand his historical significance. The Bible has a great deal to teach us about God's hand in history and why events transpire the way they do.

## A man on a mission

Alexander was born at Pella in 356 B.C. His father, Philip, king of Macedon, had assembled the Greek states into a coalition that laid the foundation for the army Alexander would take to Asia.

His mother was Olympias, with whom he had a close relationship. She was a devotee of the god Dionysus and is said to have astonished those at the royal court by bringing snakes into their presence. The marriage was stormy. When Philip was assassinated in 336, 20-year-old Alexander moved quickly to consolidate power and assume the kingly title.

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

opposition. He was now ready for the invasion of Asia.

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

Alexander styled himself after the great warrior Achilles and carried a volume of the story on his travels, quoting frequently from its pages. What began at Troy, a great struggle between Europe and Asia, was to be continued at the hands of this new Achilles.

No more than 40,000 troops started on this most daring of kingly expeditions. Over the next 11 years he traveled farther and conquered more than any monarch before him. He would never again see his homeland.

## Decisive battles establish an empire

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

In 334 B.C., at the Battle of Granicus, he met the first Persian army, quickly defeating it. Alexander was a soldier-king who often fought in the front lines with his men. At this first engagement his life very nearly came to an abrupt end. As an enemy soldier moved to strike him from behind, the king was saved by the quick action of one of his men who severed the Persian's arm.

Historians have been tempted to speculate how the whole course of history would have been changed had Alexander died at that time. Perhaps, as we will see, it might



*Alexander and his soldiers assault the Mediterranean coastal city of Tyre in one of his most difficult victories. Furious at the city's determined resistance, Alexander killed all the male defenders and sold its thousands of women and children into slavery.*

be better to seek understanding of the *spiritual* dimension of history so often ignored by secular historians.

Next, at Issus, the full force of the Persian army, more than half a million men, was gathered behind the standard of Darius III. By employing new tactics, slicing through the line at an angle rather than launching a full frontal assault, the Greek troops were able to get behind the enemy flank, routing the larger Persian force and sending it into chaotic retreat.

Darius fled so quickly that his treasury and family were left at the mercy of



Alexander. Darius offered to make Alexander his son-in-law and give him all of Asia west of the Euphrates. But nothing less than unconditional surrender would satisfy the young Greek king.

For all intents and purposes this defeat finished effective Persian resistance. There would be one more battle, in 331 B.C. at Gaugamela in what is today northern Iraq. Here Darius III was killed by his own men when he attempted to be the first to abandon the battle, as the Greek troops crushed

to come to the end of the earth. Once the area that is now Iran was secure in 327 B.C., there was no real need to go farther east. But the allure of going to earth's end was too great. Alexander pushed his troops ahead to what one Roman author said was "all that a mortal man was capable of."

No army or power effectively stood in his way as he marched through Central Asia and what is today Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. In Afghanistan he met the same kind of fierce nomadic tribal culture

managing his enormous empire.

Aristotle had once taught him that it was more difficult to organize peace than to win a war, that the fruits of victory in war will be lost if the peace is not well organized. But Alexander would not have the time, or perhaps the ability, to prove whether he could effectively manage all that he had conquered.

The march back to Babylon took a physical toll on the morale of the troops and the health of their leader. Trusted

## Alexander Reads About Himself in the Book of Daniel

**A**lthough Alexander the Great conquered Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and surrounding countries, modern historians have little to say of him visiting the Holy Land. Yet ancient history says that he had a most remarkable encounter there, not only visiting the temple in Jerusalem but also making a sacrifice to the God of Israel.

Most modern historians dismiss the story, but one wonders just why they do. Could it be they would have to admit there is a God of history who controls the course of nations?

The noted first-century Jewish historian Josephus records the king's visit to Jerusalem and a meeting between Alexander and the high priest, Jaddua.

In 332 B.C. Alexander besieged and defeated the coastal cities of Tyre and Gaza in his march toward Egypt. During this campaign he turned toward Jerusalem. Alexander had already demanded men and supplies from the Jews, who were under the rule of Alexander's mortal enemy, the Persian king Darius. The high priest hesitated, saying that while Darius lived they would honor their pledge. Alexander was angry and began a move on the city.

Well aware of the danger, Jaddua asked the people to pray to God for His mercy and protection. Then, says Josephus, Jaddua had a dream as to how to entreat the Macedonian king. He and the other priests dressed in their priestly robes and, accompanied by others dressed in white garments, formed a procession that went out of the city to a carefully chosen place to meet the king.

Alexander then did the unexpected. Alone, he approached the high priest and members of the procession and greeted them.

When asked by one of his generals why he welcomed this group, Alexander replied: "I did not adore *him*, but that God who hath honoured him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit [garment], when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is, that having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the

divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind" (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 11, chap. 8, sec. 5, William Whiston translation, 1981).

Josephus records that Alexander then accompanied the priest into Jerusalem and the temple, where he "offered sacrifice to God, according to the high priest's direction, and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests."

Alexander's visit was capped by a briefing from the book of Daniel, written several centuries earlier, which foretold the rise and conquests of Alexander. "And when the book of Daniel was shewed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present . . ." (ibid.)

Many scholars regard Josephus as a reputable historian on the same footing as other ancient authorities such as Tacitus. Why, then, is this remarkable record of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem so casually dismissed as a fabrication?

Many simply cannot accept that the book of Daniel, which foretold Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire several centuries before the Macedonian king was born, could have been divinely inspired. So rather than accept Daniel's book as a work inspired by God through the Jewish prophet in Babylon during the sixth century B.C., they argue that it must have been written long after Alexander lived and died.

Believing it impossible for such a tale to be true, they have to dismiss not only Daniel's book but this remarkable account by a studious and respected ancient historian. After all, they reason, Alexander could not have been shown a book that had not been written!

Obviously Josephus, writing in the first century, believed the story to be true and included it in his history. It's amazing how modern scholars pick and choose what they deem as "accurate" from ancient texts. Anything they disagree with, they simply dismiss as inaccurate and untrue. Yet this account of Alexander's visit to the Jerusalem temple remains an amazing vignette that confirms the inspired prophecies of God recorded in the book of Daniel.

the last vestige of the numerically superior Persian force.

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

### "To the ocean"

The Greeks thought the world's land mass was surrounded by what they called "the ocean." To reach this point would be

that endures to this day. He founded cities (many named after himself) and struck alliances, which began to stretch his men and his ability to maintain effective control.

Alexander's first real "defeat" was when his soldiers refused to go further. At the River Hyphasis (modern Beas) in India the long years of marching and privation came to a climax. "This far and no farther" was their cry.

Without support from his troops, Alexander was forced to turn back to the west. What remained was the less glorious, more mundane task of consolidating and

lieutenants abdicated for home, troops mutinied and his closest friend and confidant, Hephaestion, died.

Grief, frustration and the long years of warring had taken their toll. By June 323 B.C., Alexander lay dying of fever and infection. His soldiers gathered around to ask what would become of his empire, and he reputedly replied that it should go "to the strongest."

It took two decades for the dust to settle, but when it did there were four divisions of the empire among four of his generals. The two most powerful sectors were the

Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt and the Seleucid in Syria.

### Alexander's empire foretold by Daniel

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

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

In verse 36 Daniel was inspired by God to give the interpretation. "This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold.

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

Through this dream, God was showing the progression of four empires that would arise and dominate much of the known world in their day. Students of Bible prophecy correctly identify these empires as Babylon (head of gold), Persia (chest and arms of silver), Greece (belly and thighs of bronze) and Rome (legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay).

In the dream a "stone was cut out without hands" and struck the image on its feet (the fourth empire) and then "filled the whole earth" (verses 34-35). Verse 44 reveals that this is the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth. The fact that the fourth empire is struck by the stone indicates a continuation of the Roman system in some form until the second coming of Jesus

Christ to establish the Kingdom of God.

Daniel actually lived during the first two of these empires. As a captive Jew in Babylon at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, he witnessed the workings and power of the head of gold.

### Another vision of Alexander's rise

Later, during the reign of Belshazzar, God gave Daniel a vision, which expanded on the earlier dream of Nebuchadnezzar.



**Daniel foretold the coming of Alexander the Great, depicted here in a mosaic from the Roman city of Pompeii, twice in his prophetic book, written centuries before Alexander was born.**

It is recorded in chapter 7. Daniel wrote down the images of his dream, which likely left him in a troubled state of mind.

Notice what he saw: "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

"And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!' After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns" (Daniel 7:2-7).

### The meaning of the four beasts

These four beasts again represent the four empires, beginning with Babylon. The Greco-Macedonian Empire is identified with the third beast, which is like a leopard.

Its attributes fit the historical description of Alexander's army and its tactics. As already noted, Alexander's army was small but powerful and quick, like a leopard. It tore at and easily defeated the massive, bearlike (powerful, but less agile than a leopard) empire of the Persians.

Daniel had another vision concerning Alexander's empire. It likewise fits in with history with remarkable accuracy.

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

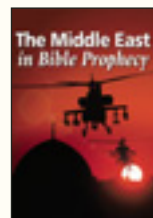
It became a great power until a new power arose in the form of a male goat from the west (verse 5)—from the direction of Greece. This goat had a "notable horn" between the eyes. Notice the interpretation in verse 21: "And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes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

Clearly, this horn is Alexander. The prophecy even mentions the breakup of the kingdom on Alexander's death into four smaller kingdoms. "As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power" (verse 22).

The book of Daniel makes one further reference to Alexander's empire in the very long prophecy of chapter 11. Verses 3-4 refer to a "mighty king" who would arise after Persia's period of dominance and

### Recommended Reading

The amazing rise of Alexander the Great and his empire is only a small part of the story of the Middle East as spelled out in Bible prophecy. To better understand all of Daniel's remarkable prophecies, and others that preview the unfolding saga of the Middle East to this day and beyond, request your free copy of our booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.



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accomplish his own will before his kingdom would then split into four parts.

Of course, modern scholarship utterly rejects the idea that Daniel wrote his book in the sixth century B.C.—several centuries before Alexander rose to power—in spite of plenty of internal evidence that this is indeed when it was written. The idea that anyone could predict with such accuracy the coming of future kingdoms such as Greece and Rome is simply an unacceptable academic heresy.

Admitting such would require belief in a God who controls history and also foretells it in advance. It would require admission that the Bible is the true word of the one God who created the universe. No such admission is likely to be forthcoming.

### Claiming to be divine

Late in his life Alexander actually made the claim to be a god. In 324 B.C. he sent word back to Greece that he claimed descent from Zeus-Ammon (that is, the chief Greek and Egyptian deities whom they considered to be the same god) and wished to be considered divine. This was not a sudden change, for it began during his days in Egypt.

While there he made a trek into the desert to Siwa, where there was a shrine to Ammon. There he inquired about his divinity and received assurances from the priests that he was of divine parentage. Whether the Greeks believed this or not, it is important to understand it as a key to how he brought Egypt under his dominion. Egyptians were used to looking to their pharaoh as divine.

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

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

### Two who reshaped the world

In his assertion of divinity, Alexander was like a religious leader prophesied to come in the end time, one who also will claim to be divine. In 2 Thessalonians 2:4, the apostle Paul foretells that this person “sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

Revelation 13 speaks of a system to arise

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

Alexander wanted to bring together the peoples of Europe and Asia into the same system—one-world government under himself. He came closer than any man, before or after, to accomplishing this goal.

This fusion of peoples into one system did transform the world. After Alexander’s death, there was the continued struggle for power, but the world he touched was transformed. Greek ideas and culture were spread far and wide (a transformation known as hellenization).

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

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

### A story far from over

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

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

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

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# When Do I Get a Break?

*Are you working more and relaxing less? Doing more but never getting everything done? Running here and there but only running yourself down? Maybe it's time you took a break!*

by Les McCullough

In today's world of rush here, hurry there, a haggard lament often arises with a weary sigh: "When do I get a break? I never have any time for myself. I'm up before dawn getting ready for work, commute an hour or more, work at least eight hours, commute home arriving after dark—and I'm beat."

Family responsibilities add to the load. Many a mom tells the same story:

"I was up at 3 a.m. to comfort a child with an upset stomach, then got out of bed at 5 a.m. to make lunches for everyone, put a load of clothes in the washer, fix breakfast, get the children dressed and off to school, and get ready for work. I leave from work to pick up the children after school and go home. Then I take the clothes out of the washer, put them in the dryer and prepare dinner. After dinner, I do the dishes and get the children ready for bed.

"That doesn't include doing the ironing and cleaning the house. I don't have time to be exhausted, but I am. Just after midnight one of the children is having a nightmare and needs comforting. Finally I get back to bed and start the whole thing over again at 5 a.m."

## Working more, relaxing less

It seems there's never time to sit back and relax—and if we do, we feel guilty. What's the answer? Life is much more than the 40 hours a week on the job. How in this complicated 21st century (filled with time-saving devices!) can a person find time to take a deep breath and just sit down? Is it possible?

The calendar has Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and others. It seems there is a day for everything—but where is *your* day? Many people don't even have time for a vacation!

Sound familiar? One of the major complaints people have is about finding time for themselves or their family. Historically, after World War II, Americans had the shortest working week in the world. Now, according to Boston College professor Juliet Schor, they have the longest. Her comment is that the average American

worker now puts in 200 hours per year more than in 1973.

Astonishing, isn't it? People are so desperate for some free time that, states the Center for a New American Dream, half of the work force would trade a day off for a day less pay.

All these things are complicated by the fact that as soon as a tiny break presents

to fill every minute of every day.

## What's the answer?

Do you need a break enough to take advantage of such a time? Do you want to hear about it? How badly do you want that break? Is it enough to trade a day of pay for a day off? Are you sure?

Oddly enough, there is a time expressly



**Stress and overwork is a major health problem today. Hypertension results from never making the time to relax. These 24 hours were made to relieve that problem, among many others.**

itself, a compulsion to fill it takes over. We immediately rush to surf the net, talk on the cell phone, play a computer game, take one of the kids to soccer and another one to tennis or something. We find it nearly impossible to sit still.

That is a part of the problem. Most people aren't comfortable unless something is going on. Society has convinced us that we should never just sit without something happening.

Sitting quietly and contemplating a beautiful sunset is almost a lost art, as is staring deeply into a crackling fire. It's sometimes joked that those who practice yoga sit and contemplate their navel. I'm not recommending that, but we do need to learn how to rest or enjoy free time without something being scheduled

made for just that. It's a time for a person to take a break—designed for all men and women, regardless of how busy their week may be.

You may be thinking, "I'm always behind and can't get everything done as it is." If that's the case, making some time for yourself isn't going to make that much difference. You'll still be behind, but you will have had a break—and maybe now you can get more done in the remaining time than you would have otherwise.

Every one of us has 24 hours in our day. We all have seven days in the week, totaling 168 hours. You might say, "And I still don't have any free time!"

Yet 24 of those 168 hours are intended specifically to give you the break for which you long. They are designed to



be a special time for the whole family. Parents think of their working week, but children need a break as well. Many of them won't slow down long enough to take time for an appropriate meal. If they do, it's usually to gulp it down and rush off to something else.

### Starting at the beginning

Could you handle a time to relax? What would it be worth to you?

Let's start at the beginning. A supreme Creator exists who made all things, including you and me. He fully understood the mind of man and knew men and women would crowd the week with their own activities. He also knew the tendency of humanity to ignore personal health and welfare in favor of keeping busy.

So He created a day and set it apart as a rest day. He actually *commanded* that man take a break each week. You can read it for yourself in His instruction book for us, the Bible.

After six days of creating a wonderful world for man to dwell in (as well as creating man himself), we find that God rested from all His work. "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:1-3).

Did He bless it and sanctify it for His own use? The answer is a resounding *no*. God doesn't need to rest. This is simply telling us He ceased the work of the physical creation. Why, then, did He set apart the seventh day? He was *setting us an example* that *we need a break* from physical activity.

Jesus Christ spelled this out in Mark 2:27-28: "And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'" He plainly says that the seventh day, also called the Sabbath, was *made for man* as a time to take a break from our everyday routine as well as a time to worship God.

*There* is your break. *There* is a 24-hour period every seven days in which you can renew your energies, both mentally and physically. Stress and overwork is a major health problem today. Hypertension results from never making the time to relax. These 24 hours were made to relieve that problem,

among many others. It gives us a specific "break time" every week.

When God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, one of those commandments dealt directly with the Sabbath: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work . . ." (Exodus 20:8-10).

This is not an idle comment. The day God made for man—the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week—is intended to be acknowledged by man by using the time differently from the normal workday. Most of humanity has ignored this particular commandment down through the ages.

### God concerned for His creation

God the Father is a patient and loving individual. He is concerned about the welfare of His creation. He has given humanity time to accept His commands, but eventually He does run out of patience.

Reread Exodus 20:9-10. His instruction is very specific: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work . . ."

The question is *why*? Why is it so important to take a day off from *all* work, regular and otherwise? If this is a day made for man, why not just do as you please? It is made for man, but it is a special time that has been set aside—hallowed—by God *not only to rest but to be reminded of the Creator of all things*.

Here is what He told the ancient nation of Israel: "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you'" (Exodus 31:13-14).

Then in verse 17 He adds: "It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

### A blessing waiting for you

This statement was made to the nation God had chosen to be His special people, but it applies to all humanity. Jesus isn't just the God of the Israelites. He is the Savior of all humanity. That is clearly shown by His comment that "the Sabbath was made for man." We see it is *more* than only a day of rest. It also *identifies* the one keeping it with

*the Creator God who made it.*

In society today, people wear all manner of identifying signs or symbols. Each nation has its own flag. Some wear a jacket, shirt or hat displaying the name of their favorite team, player or political party.

This verse says that keeping the Sabbath is an identifying sign, too. The Sabbath day identifies those who wish to truly honor the Creator. It also says to all who see, "I belong to and worship the God who made all things. My loyalty is to Him above all else." It also gives a much-needed break every week.

Someone might say, "I'm just not interested in religion." He or she still needs a break, so why not use the day that was created for that purpose? It is important. The Sabbath is a break for you, and it's also a time to learn about the Father of mankind.

The truth is there are great blessings in learning to "take a break." It helps to fight stress and gives the body a chance to recuperate from the toils of the week. The pressure is off.

It gives you an opportunity to sit back and relax, and even to have the chance to watch a beautiful sunset without feeling guilty. It is an opportunity to read to the children or to simply sit and talk with them, tightening the bond of love and respect between a parent and child and their God.

You *need* a break. You need a time when the pressures of work are set aside. Whether you're a man, woman or child, you need a chance to take a deep breath and just relax. Now the question is, *do you really want a break*? Are you willing to accept the time God made for you to have a break? It is important to you. It is important to identify yourself with the Creator of the universe.

Will you do it? Will you finally learn to "take a break"? It's in your hands. Do it! **GN**

## Recommended Reading

How much do you know about the biblical Sabbath day? Which day of the week is it? Why was it instituted, and when? Is it still binding or relevant to Christians today? Did Jesus keep it or do away with it? What about the apostles and early Church—which day did they keep? You'll find answers to all these questions and more, straight from the pages of your Bible, in our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*.



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Phoenix	ch. 24, 98, Sundays 4 & 5:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.
Prescott	ch. 13, Tuesdays 1 p.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.
Prescott Valley	ch. 13, Sundays 9 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Mondays 9 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. & 3 p.m.
Tucson	ch. 73, 74, Sundays 8 & 10 a.m.; Saturdays 8 & 9:30 a.m.

### Arkansas

Mena	ch. 19, Sundays 2 p.m.
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### California

Alamo	ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Berkeley	ch. 26, Mondays 10 a.m.
Chatsworth	ch. 34, Fridays 10:30 p.m.
Clayton	ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Concord	ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Danville	ch. 26, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Dublin	ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
El Cerrito	ch. 26, Mondays 10 a.m.
Fremont	ch. 6, Mondays 11:30 a.m.
Hayward	ch. 28, Tuesdays 10 p.m.
Lafayette	ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Livermore	ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Marin County	ch. 26, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
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Menlo Park	ch. 77, Mondays 6 p.m.
Moraga	ch. 26, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 & 9:30 p.m.
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Novato	ch. 71, Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.
Orange County	ch. 3, Sundays 11 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; ch. 6, Sundays 11:30 a.m. & 8:30 p.m.
Orinda	ch. 26, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Palo Alto	ch. 77, Mondays 6 p.m.
Pasadena	ch. 56, Sundays 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Pleasant Hill	ch. 26, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Pleasanton	ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Richmond	ch. 26, Mondays 10 a.m.; Tuesdays 7 p.m.
Rossmore	ch. 26, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
San Diego	ch. 23, Saturdays 6 a.m.
San Francisco	ch. 29, Sundays 11 a.m., Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
San Jose	ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
Santa Clara	ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
Santa Rosa	ch. 72, Sundays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 3 p.m.
S. Pasadena	ch. 6, Thursdays 4 p.m.
Van Nuys	ch. 25, Saturdays 10 a.m.
Verdugo Hills	ch. 20, Fridays 9 p.m.
Walnut Creek	ch. 6, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.

### Connecticut

New London	ch. 24, Tuesdays 6 p.m.
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### Florida

Tampa	ch. 19, Sundays 9 a.m., Thursdays 12 noon ch. 20, Sundays 9 a.m.
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### Illinois

Arlington Heights	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Aurora	ch. 6, 10, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Bartlett	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Bristol	ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Buffalo Grove	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Chicago	ch. 36, times vary
Des Plaines	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Elk Grove Village	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Glenview	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Golf	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hanover Park	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hoffman Estates	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Lincolnwood	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Montgomery	ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Morton Grove	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Naperville	ch. 17, Sundays 10 a.m.
Niles	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
North Aurora	ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.

Northbrook	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Oswego	ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Palatine	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Romeoville	ch. 6, weekdays 6 p.m.
Schaumburg	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Skokie	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Streamwood	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling	ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wilmette	ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

### Indiana

Bloomington	ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne	ch. 57, Sundays 12:30 p.m.

### Iowa

Iowa City	ch. 18, Tuesdays 12:30 p.m.; Fridays 5:30 p.m.
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### Kentucky

Hopkinsville	ch. 23, Thursdays 12 noon; Saturdays 10 a.m.
Paducah	ch. 2, Tuesdays 4 p.m.; Thursdays 10 a.m.

### Maryland

Frostburg	ch. 19, Tuesdays 2 p.m.
George's Creek	ch. 19, Tuesdays 2 p.m.
Keyser	ch. 19, Tuesdays 2 p.m.

### Massachusetts

Cambridge	ch. 22, Sundays 10 a.m.
Shrewsbury	ch. 33, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 7 a.m.

### Michigan

Ann Arbor	ch. 17, Thursdays 4 p.m.
Grand Rapids	ch. 25, Tuesdays or Wednesdays 11 a.m.
Kalamazoo	ch. 19, Sundays 8:30 a.m.
Midland	ch. 3, Thursdays 12:30 p.m.
Traverse City	ch. 2, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

### Minnesota

Austin	ch. 6, Sundays 7 p.m.
Blaine	ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Centerville	ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Circle Pines	ch. 15, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7 p.m.
Eagan	ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Ham Lake	ch. 15, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7 p.m.
Inver Grove Hts.	ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Lexington	ch. 75, Mondays 6:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 1:30 a.m.
Minneapolis	ch. 10, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays 7:30 p.m.; Sundays 10:30 a.m.
Rochester	ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Spring Lake Park	ch. 18, Wednesdays 9:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Willmar	

### Missouri

Jefferson City	ch. 3, Mondays 5 p.m.
St. Charles County	ch. 18, Saturdays 10 p.m., Sundays 8 a.m.

### Montana

Billings	ch. 7, Sundays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.
Helena	ch. 11, Sundays 3 p.m.

### New Mexico

Albuquerque	ch. 27, Saturdays 3 p.m.
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### New York

Brooklyn	ch. 34, 67, Sundays 10 a.m.
Hauppauge	ch. 20, Saturdays 7:30 a.m.
Long Island	ch. 20, Sundays 6:30 a.m.
Manhattan	ch. 56, Sundays 7 a.m.
Rochester	ch. 15, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.

### North Carolina

Charlotte	ch. 21, Saturdays 2 p.m.
Greensboro	ch. 8, Sundays 1 p.m.

### North Dakota

Fargo	ch. 12, Wednesdays 5 p.m.
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### Ohio

Akron	ch. 23, Sundays 6:30 a.m.
Centerville	ch. 23, Fridays 2:30 a.m.
Dayton	ch. 12, Tuesdays 2 p.m.; Fridays 6 a.m.
Defiance	ch. 23, Fridays 2:30 p.m.
Enon	ch. 5, Sundays 11 a.m.
Fairborn	ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood	ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Vandalia	ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Xenia	ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

### Oregon

Canby	ch. 5, Sundays, Tuesdays 10 a.m.
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Eugene	ch. 11, Mondays 6 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 a.m.; Thursdays 12 midnight; Fridays 6 p.m.
McMinnville	ch. 11, Tuesdays 8 p.m.; Wednesdays 12 noon
Oregon City	ch. 11, Mondays 9 p.m.
Portland	ch. 21, Sundays 9 p.m.; Mondays 9 p.m.; Thursdays 8 p.m.
Salem	ch. 11, Sundays 6 p.m.
	ch. 23, Sundays 11 a.m. & 9 p.m.; Mondays 7:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.; Wednesdays 3:30 p.m.; Thursdays 12 noon; Fridays 6:30 p.m.
Woodburn	ch. 11, Sundays 9 a.m.

### Rhode Island

Entire state	ch. 14, Sundays 8 a.m.; Fridays 10:30 a.m.
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### Texas

Arlington	ch. 16, Mondays 1 p.m.
Austin	ch. 11, Mondays 6 p.m.; Thursdays 6 p.m.
Corpus Christi	ch. 10, Sundays 5 & 8 p.m.; Mondays 3 p.m.; Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Dallas	ch. 14B, Sundays 10:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.
Del Rio	ch. 19, Sundays 9 a.m.; Wednesdays 5 p.m.
El Paso	ch. 15, Mondays 1 p.m.; Thursdays 3 p.m.
Houston	ch. 17, Thursdays 12:30 p.m.
Laredo	ch. 2, Thursdays 7 p.m.
Longview	ch. 10, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Fridays 12 noon
San Antonio	ch. 20, Sundays 8 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.

### Virginia

Hampton Beach	ch. 71, 74, Sundays 10 a.m.
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### Washington

Bellevue	ch. 29, 77, Tuesdays 4 p.m.
Olympia	ch. 22, 29, Mondays 7 & 7:30 a.m.; Fridays 9:30 & 10 a.m.
Seattle	ch. 29, 77, Tuesdays 4 p.m.
Spokane	ch. 14, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Vancouver	ch. 11, Sundays 1 p.m.; Wednesdays 12 noon; Thursdays 7 a.m.

### West Virginia

Morgantown	ch. 3, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 3 p.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.
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### Wisconsin

Beloit	ch. 12, Thursdays 6:30 p.m.
Eau Claire	ch. 11, Sundays 2 p.m.
Kenosha	ch. 14, Mondays 7:30 p.m.; Thursdays 5:30 p.m.
Madison	ch. 4, Sundays 10:30 a.m.
Milwaukee	ch. 96, Mondays 7:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.
Stevens Point	ch. 3, Mondays 10:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.

## Radio Log

For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or listen to programs online, visit [www.ucg.org/radio](http://www.ucg.org/radio).

### Arizona

Douglas	930 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Globe	1240 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Sierra Vista	1470 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.
Tucson	940 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.

### California

San Diego	760 AM, Sundays 6 a.m.
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### Florida

Orlando	540 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.
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### Indiana

Indianapolis	1070 AM, Sundays 7 a.m.
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### Louisiana

New Orleans	870 AM, Saturdays 9:30 p.m.
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### New York

Buffalo	930 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.
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### Oklahoma

Tulsa	740 AM, Sundays 8 a.m.
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### Tennessee

Memphis	600 AM, Sundays 9 a.m.
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### Virginia

Norfolk	850 AM, Sundays 10 a.m.
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### West Virginia

Wheeling	1170 AM, Mondays 12:30 a.m.
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# The New Intolerance

*One state allowed license plates that read "2Sexy" and "2Hot4U," yet denied a person who wanted to put "Pray" on her plates, claiming it would violate separation of church and state. Has political correctness, touted to promote tolerance, actually created a new intolerance toward Christianity?*

by Gary Petty

**T**he various *Star Trek* television shows and movies have reflected and influenced culture in the United States for more than 30 years. The programs feature space travelers who "explore strange new worlds and seek out new life and new civilizations." These intrepid explorers live by the "prime directive," which absolutely forbids interfering with another culture.

It seems that, at the beginning of the 21st century, *Star Trek's* prime directive has become a cultural mantra in the United States. The concept that all cultures, all religions and all human ideas are inherently equal is the battle cry of those spouting the new tolerance and promoting the concept that there are no absolute truths.

What is actually happening is that many concepts considered absolute truths by a majority of Americans for hundreds of years are being replaced, not with nonconfrontational tolerance, but with a *new* set of absolutes advanced with missionary zeal.

You don't believe it? Just ask someone who is proabortion if she is tolerant and accepting of someone who is pro-life. Or ask someone who supports homosexuality and gay marriage if he believes that a Christian who believes homosexuality is a sin is equally entitled to hold his position.

## A changing landscape

William Watkins outlines the dramatic changes taking place in America's moral landscape in his book *The New Absolutes*. Let's look at some examples.

A few decades ago most people in the United States believed that the Christian religion formed the foundation of a moral society, although other religions were

to be tolerated. The new absolute is that anything to do with Christianity must be eradicated from all public forums while non-Christian religions are promoted as a positive multicultural experience.

Researcher George Barna reports that 44 percent of Americans contend that "the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths." Of course, any-

committed parents. The new definition of family is a revolving door of temporary relationships.

An old absolute promoted the notion that sexual activity was an emotional and physical bond confined to the institution of marriage. The new absolute promotes the idea that sexual relationships are to be freely experienced between any two consenting adults, even those of the same sex.



**The concept that all cultures, all religions and all human ideas are inherently equal is the battle cry of those spouting the new tolerance and promoting the concept that there are no absolute truths.**

one who has even skimmed these books knows that, while there are some similarities, they are opposed to each other in many important ways.

Another old absolute held that marriage was a sacred institution ordained by God and that divorce constituted a terrible personal failure. Marriage was defined as two people united for life. Children were to be nurtured in this environment of two

Not to accept this new absolute is to be seen as "homophobic," a misused word denoting an unnatural fear. Some sociologists go so far as to claim that human beings instinctively need to mate with different people on a regular basis and that lifelong marriage interferes with nature.

Years ago most people in this country believed children were a blessing from God and parents had a sacred obligation



to care for them. The new absolute sees children as a lifestyle decision. If having a child interferes with personal desires and goals, the fetus can be aborted. Not accepting this new absolute is to risk being branded as wanting to enslave women by denying them freedom over their own bodies.

Society's past belief in marriage and the value of human life was rooted in a Christian view of human beings having been created in the image of God, not that they are just a higher form of animal controlled by instinctive urges. The human capacity for good and the value of personal character, molded by measurable standards, were seen as ideals worthy of personal sacrifice.

Our society isn't just sliding into a morass of no absolutes, but turning into a culture of intolerance toward many traditional values that shaped much of America's history.

### An intolerant religion

If you were to compile a list of intolerant and oppressive religious beliefs, what would they be? Maybe the list would include any religion that taught that you must accept its leader for salvation, or proclaimed that it is the only true religion and denied other religious beliefs. The list might include any religion with prohibitions against homosexuality or strict guidelines for divorce.

The following is a true story about the leaders of a Jewish religious sect. Some ministers performed what many claimed was a public miracle. These religious men were required to appear before the national government.

We pick up the account: "And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, 'By what power or by what name have you done this?'"

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.'

"This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the

chief cornerstone.'" Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved'" (Acts 4:5-12).

This new religious sect claimed that salvation was possible only through their Leader, Jesus of Nazareth. Do the teachings of the New Testament apostles of Christ still apply to Christians today? If the Bible is the inspired Word of God, then eternal salvation *cannot* come through Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam. You cannot have it both ways.

Contemporary Jewish leaders were appalled at the apostles' teaching. Notice their reaction in verses 13-18: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

"But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, 'What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.'

"And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."

The proclamation of Jesus the Christ as the only means of salvation was so intolerant in first-century Jewish society that the religious leaders forbade His teachings.

### Christian tolerance

Do you claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ? If you do, do you understand what He really taught?

If you want to be a true Christian, then it's time to read and apply the teachings of Christianity's Founder. You have the historical account of His life right there in your own home. The first four books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—contain the story of the man who claimed to be the divine Son of God. Do you know what He taught about divorce, or sexual fantasies, or obligations for taking care of elderly parents?

Here's a reality check: There is absolute good and absolute evil. Good and evil aren't mere philosophical concepts, but very real thoughts, emotions and actions. Walking into a school with an automatic

weapon and gunning down other teenagers in cold blood is genuine evil, just as using a tube to suck out the brains of a baby and calling it "partial birth abortion" is also genuine evil.

Does this mean that Christians are to oppress other religions? Should Christians launch another Crusade against Islam or take violent action against people who run abortion clinics?

Jesus instructs His followers to love their neighbors and even their enemies. Christianity is, in a real sense, the most tolerant of all religions in that the followers of Christ are to be kind to all people regardless of their beliefs. At the same time, Christians are expected to take a stand in the public forum as examples of the teachings of the Bible. Christ told His disciples not to hide their light.

Jesus makes a remarkable statement to His disciples in John 15:18-21: "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me."

Jesus tells His disciples—then and now—that if they live and preach His message, people will eventually persecute them *in the name of Jesus Christ*. Many people who claim to follow Jesus actually find His teachings intolerant.

If the Bible is the inspired Word of God, then it makes claims to being the objective measure of truth. If there is no absolute truth, if there is no good and evil, then the Christianity of the Bible is a fairy tale.

A major theme in the *Star Trek* programs is good guys vs. bad guys. Most people like to think there is some form of good that eventually wins out over evil, but the prime directive isn't the criteria for determining the ultimate good. The Creator has given us His definition of reality. It's contained in the Bible.

Christians are called to participate in the cosmic battle between good and evil. This warfare makes the plot of science fiction seem trite—because the Christian's ultimate outcome is eternal life in the Kingdom and family of God. **GN**

# Parenting

Continued from page 9

heart on his destruction.” The phrase “while there is hope” makes it plain that the penalty is for the long-term good of the *child*, not for the “satisfaction” of the *parent*.

And here, a slight warning may be in order. Acceptable and legal methods of punishment vary from nation to nation and from culture to culture and may not be permitted at all in some societies. Parents must exercise wisdom at all times.

Continuing in the passage we read earlier in Hebrews 12, we see a potential problem. Referring to human fathers, the author writes, “For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but [God chastens us] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness” (verse 10).

In contrast to our Heavenly Father, as flesh-and-blood fathers we may punish according to our limited understanding, and perhaps at times with a wrong motive. All discipline *should* be done *in love*, without antagonism, and be accompanied by a clear and objective explanation of the wrong behavior and the right alternatives.

And while there can, and sometimes *should*, be a degree of “righteous anger” involved—at the sin and not the child—punishment should *never* be a lashing out at our children over personal hurt or offense they’ve caused us. But as we just saw from the Scriptures, human parents don’t always succeed in this regard.

Volume after volume has been written, and many more will follow, on the subject of healthy child development and effective parenting. Much of what is being learned by experts in the field today is valid and helpful. When it is accurate, you’ll find it to be in harmony with the Bible—for God *created* the family unit and He *designed* the laws that govern it.

There’s still much we can *all* learn. But the most important thing is to diligently and consistently apply the principles we *already* know. We have here covered the three broad, fundamental elements of parenting—*love, instruction and discipline*. We hope that you as a parent will continue to educate yourself and keep abreast of new scientific insight and knowledge that is in harmony with the foundation of *all* knowledge, the Bible.

God has given us the responsibility of rearing our flesh-and-blood children, who all have the potential to ultimately become His own *spiritual* children. We owe it to Him—and to them—to succeed! **GN**

# Moral Nation

Continued from page 17

Thankfully, the same God who is justifiably angered by our wayward national lifestyles (Romans 1:18) still loves us deeply and wants to guide us into a very different, law-abiding way of life. He desires Christians to realize that it is the height of futility to call Jesus Christ “Lord, Lord” and yet still persist in *not* doing what He plainly says (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46). God has unchanging standards of moral behavior. His spiritual law is eternal!

He wants all of us to deeply respect His Word (Isaiah 66:2) and to understand that the love of God is defined and expressed by the keeping of His commandments (1 John 5:3). (To understand why, request or download our free booklet *The Ten Commandments*.)

The Bible reveals that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can deliver us from the very unpleasant consequences of our sinful behavior. Jesus came to save us *from* our sins—not *in* our sins (Matthew 1:21). The apostle Peter adds: “To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, *in turning away every one of you from your iniquities [sins]*” (Acts 3:26).

Our Creator is a compassionate and gracious Father who longs to forgive our transgressions of His law when we sincerely repent from the heart—and to set us firmly on the path of righteousness, which is defined by His laws (Psalm 119:172).

Readers of *The Good News* don’t have to follow the crowd. The law plainly says: “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil” (Exodus 23:2). And Peter warned his listeners to “be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40).

You can take a decisive turn off the destructive national path so many are on and discover God’s infinite mercy and forgiveness in a new way of life. A fresh start awaits you. A new and vibrant way can be yours. You can achieve what a previous generation rightly termed *abundant living*—a way of life based on the eternal moral principles of God’s Word.

But you have to take the initiative. To learn much more, please request or download our free booklets *Making Life Work*, *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. Also please let us know if you would like to counsel with a United Church of God minister in your area. He would be glad to answer your questions and to help you embrace God’s way of life. **GN**

## Is It Anti-American to Criticize the Moral Conduct of the United States?

**M**ario Cuomo, former governor of New York state, recently wrote in *USA Today*: “The brilliance of the Founding Fathers has been confirmed by the astonishing success of their experiment in republican democracy” (Dec. 7, 2004). Yet the United States owes far more to God than those founding fathers, who played a pivotal pioneering role in shaping the nation’s destiny, could imagine.

Strange as it may sound, many Americans are the descendants of the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (later renamed Israel). The nation has been a major recipient of the great national blessings that God repeatedly promised would come to Abraham’s descendants (Genesis 13:16; 15:5; 17:5-7; 18:17-18; 22:16-18).

These astounding blessings were never completely fulfilled in ancient Israel and Judah. But these and other promised blessings *have* been fulfilled primarily in the United States, Britain and other major English-speaking nations. (For the biblical and historical evidence of America’s true national and prophetic identity, please request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

With incredible national blessings comes heavy national responsibility! Like our forefathers in ancient Israel, we have an obligation to live up to our heritage and godly calling as a nation.

The United States, along with Britain, has spread more Bibles around the world than any other countries by far. This fact deepens America’s responsibility to live by the laws given in the Word of God, setting a right example for other nations.

Today the United States is seriously neglecting obedience to God’s Ten Commandments. Many, in fact, don’t even know what they are! It is the duty of God’s Church to call these moral failures to the attention of our peoples. It is *not* anti-American to see a nation traveling in a wrong direction and to urge a national course correction.

Midge Decter, American author, social critic and recipient of the National Humanities Medal, delivered a thought-provoking lecture during a conference on marriage and the family. Her concluding words bear heavily on this theme: “Let’s take back our country. Let us be decent, civil and even loving to our homosexual fellow citizens, but draw the line on what they stand for and everything else that makes light of our existence.”

“For the privilege of living in the most nobly founded, the freest and the richest country in the world we owe nothing less, not only to ourselves but also to the oncoming tide of generations. We are given the choice of leaving them with a blessing or a curse. Not so many people in the world have that choice. I hope we can go down in history as having deserved it” (*Imprimis*, November 2004).

—John Ross Schroeder





# Letters From Our Readers

## **“Crime: How Will It Be Stopped?”**

No matter how you look at it, the crime rates in this country are horrible. But what do we expect when we take God out of the schools? If we teach kids that they evolved from animals, how else do we expect them to behave? But if we teach them that they are special beings created in God's image by a loving Creator and also teach them to love each other as God loves us, then the crime rate would not be so high.

*T.K., Del Rey, California*

## **“Christmas: The Curious Origins of a Popular Holiday”**

Your article on the origins of Christmas was so truthful. I pray for all to see the truth of this pagan holiday and come to know that the Feast of Booths [Tabernacles] is more accurately the time of our Messiah's birth.

*S.S., Internet*

I would like to cancel my subscription to your magazine. There have been other articles that have made me feel this way, but the clincher was your piece on Christmas. I will absolutely not stop celebrating Christmas because of a single secular book's notations. To me, what better time than Christmas to show how the Lord came here to earth to save us.

*K.J.H., Lakewood, Ohio*

On pages 18-20 of the November/December issue, the legitimacy of Christmas is attacked. Most Christians do not believe that Jesus was born on December 25th. Many, in fact, realize that this was a pagan holiday in the ancient world—one that was usurped intentionally by the church for the celebration of Christ's birth. But to conclude that Christians should shun the holiday as a pagan festival is beyond both Scripture and plain reason. To use Old Testament prohibitions against idolatry as an argument against Christmas is a poor application of Scripture.

*Mr. & Mrs. C.B., Internet*

*When God has given us seven annual Holy Days in the Bible to observe, revealing His plan for mankind, why do we need to “usurp” a pagan holiday and relabel it as Christian? The Old Testament is as much a part of the Bible as the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and these biblical Holy Days and*

*festivals are found throughout God's Word. Why should we continue to insist on observing a day that is simply not in the Bible?*

*To discover the truth about the Holy Days that God commands in His Word, please request or download our free booklet God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind. Also ask for our free booklet Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?, which quotes from many reputable sources showing the pagan origins of Christmas and its customs.*

## **Atheist finds God**

I was an atheist most of my life and have just now found the Lord. I have to tell you that *The Good News* is extremely informative to me as a new believer and the free booklets you offer are outstanding. I've been on a continual researching and studying feast ever since I came to the Lord about two years ago.

*K.B., St. Paul, Oregon*

## **“A fire back in my heart”**

I wanted you to know that after my husband of 25 years died, I backslid and went the wrong way—pushing everything good in my life away from me. But since I have been receiving your *Good News* magazine and your *World News & Prophecy* newsletter, the wonderful articles have put a fire back in my heart for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Right now I am reading your booklet *The Church Jesus Built*. I'm on page 50, “A falling away from truth begins.” It is a very powerful booklet. I would recommend this to everyone to read. I am also taking your *Bible Study Course*. I'm 56 years old and I've read and studied the Bible most of my life. But after your *Bible Study Course*, I discovered there was a lot I still did not know. You are never too old to learn.

*C.P., Bokoshe, Oklahoma*

## **Letters from Africa and Asia**

As a believer living in an area where one cannot easily get literature dealing with Christianity, your free publications are of paramount importance to me and to fellow Christian brothers and sisters. We have been using these materials as references during group discussions and church services. Since accessibility to the Internet is now unthinkable, we depend on your printed material.

*T.H., Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

Thank you for sending me *The Good News* and the free booklets. I am 26 and an Eritrean citizen. Before I learned about you I wanted to know and serve God, but couldn't find information about the way. After I got your magazine and the booklet *Who Is God?*, my questions received answers. Here in our country there is no United Church of God congregation, so please send me whatever you think will benefit me. I need your help in order to grow.

*H.T., Eritrea*

I am continuously reading *The Good News* and find that it increases my knowledge of world affairs and related events. As I always keep a close eye on the happenings around the world, this is especially helpful to me. When I mention the word “God” to my friends, my comrades in arms doing research work, they become so infuriated that they begin to call me mad, unfit for doing scientific research and a lot more. Even though some of them accept the existence of a supernatural being, they believe they can explain everything with the help of science.

*D.K., India*

*Why not request and politely show them our free booklets Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist? and Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe? Arguing with friends who don't readily grasp the truth of God is usually counterproductive.*

I have wanted to write to you for months to thank you for the wonderful publications *The Good News*, *World News & Prophecy* and your booklets. It is so comforting and edifying to have things like these come into my home for more than one year now. I've learned so much with every issue and gained more understanding of God's truth and His plan of salvation for mankind. Thank you so much for the love and support in sending us God's ministers to visit us here, even though we are only very few. They are really God's shepherds who help us to grow spiritually.

*P.B., Malaysia*

*Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to The Good News, Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254, U.S.A., or e-mail ginfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).*



# Questions & Answers

**Q: Thank you for sending your *Fundamental Beliefs* booklet. I was intrigued by this statement on page 4: “The Holy Spirit of God is not identified as a third person in a trinity, but is consistently described as the power of God.” What am I to infer from this statement?**

**A.C., Cornwall, England**

A: Because so many have been taught erroneous concepts of the nature of God, it can be difficult to accept that the Bible does *not* teach the Trinity doctrine. Consider this admission in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, edited by Bruce Metzger and Michael Coogan, in its opening words under the entry “Trinity”:

“Because the Trinity is such an important part of *later Christian doctrine*, it is striking that the term does not appear in the New Testament. Likewise, the developed concept of three coequal partners in the Godhead found in *later creedal formulations* cannot be clearly detected within the confines of the [New Testament] canon” (1993, pp. 782-783, emphasis added throughout).

The Holy Spirit is spoken of in many ways in the Bible that clearly demonstrate that it is not a divine person. For example, it is referred to as a gift (Acts 2:38; 1 Timothy 4:14). We are told that the Holy Spirit can be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and that it can be poured out (Acts 2:17). The Holy Spirit must be stirred up within us (2 Timothy 1:6), and it also renews us (Titus 3:5). These are certainly not the attributes of a person.

If God were a Trinity, surely the apostle Paul, who recorded many of the theological underpinnings of the early Church, would have comprehended and taught this understanding. Yet we find no such concept in his New Testament writings.

Paul’s standard greeting in all 13 epistles that bear his name (with only minor variations in wording) is: “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” *Yet not once in these greetings does he mention the Holy Spirit.* It is *always* left out. This is an inconceivable omission if indeed the Holy Spirit were a person coequal with God and Christ.

Paul clearly states: “There is one God,

the Father, . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 8:6). He makes no mention of the Holy Spirit as a divine person.

If the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be found in the Bible, when and from where did it emerge? *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* goes on to explain that the doctrine was not formulated until long after Jesus Christ and the apostles had passed from the scene. “This issue is debated over the following centuries” and wasn’t resolved until the “councils of the *fourth century and beyond*” (ibid.). Regrettably, by that time Christendom had been heavily influenced by non-Christian concepts and teachings from various pagan sources.

For an in-depth examination of what the Bible says about the nature of God and much more biblical evidence that God is *not* a Trinity, please request or download our free booklet *Who Is God?* Also, to understand the Bible description of the Holy Spirit as the power of God at work in the lives of believers, request or download *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

**Q: Which day is the Sabbath for Christian believers? Why do modern-day Christians worship on Sunday?**

**J.E.T., Internet**

A: The institution of the seventh-day (Saturday) Sabbath as a weekly day of rest and worship goes all the way back to creation week in Genesis 2:1-3. God set the example for humankind by resting on that specific day. Indeed the Creator “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” The word *sanctify* means “to set apart for a holy use and purpose.”

When God led Israel out of Egyptian captivity, He again instructed them about the need to observe the Sabbath day (Exodus 16:23-30). Later God incorporated His instruction to keep the Sabbath day holy as one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11). Kept from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, observant Jews still honor this same day as God’s Sabbath.

During Jesus’ earthly ministry He set an example of Sabbath keeping (Luke 4:16). And after Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension to His Father, the early first-

century Church continued to observe the seventh-day Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4).

In the centuries that followed, however, a satanic apostasy gripped the church and only a relative few remained faithful to apostolic teaching and doctrine (please see the chapter on “Counterfeit Christianity” in our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*).

The seventh-day Sabbath was one of the first doctrines that fell under attack, along with many of Christ’s other teachings. Those who propagated these false doctrines began to observe the first day of the week, Sunday (the day commonly used to honor the sun god in the Roman Empire), as the official day of rest.

That practice soon became almost universal among professing Christians and remains so today. But scattered groups of believers have continued to observe God’s true Sabbath through the centuries. To learn more, please ask for or download our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest*.

**Q: Do you use the King James Version? This is the only Bible that is truly inspired of God, so it is a very deep concern of mine considering the scriptures quoted in your magazine. Please let me know.**

**J.H., Internet**

A: We recognize and appreciate that some of our readers may prefer the classic English of the King James Bible of 1611. But we also believe that the New King James translation, an updated version of the King James Version with more modern language, is usually equally accurate and has the advantage of clear, reader-friendly wording. That is why we selected it as the standard translation for United Church of God publications.

Of course, we occasionally refer to other versions when they make the meaning of particular passages clearer. The fact that no Bible translation is as accurate as the original documents is explained in our free booklet *How to Understand the Bible* and our free reprint article *Which Bible Translation Should I Use?* Both are free for the asking from any of our offices.





(2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4).

These were momentous events in the history of the Jewish people back then. But the most amazing thing is that Isaiah prophesied in the late 700s B.C., long before Cyrus was even born! In fact, Cyrus didn't conquer Babylon and free the Jews until 539 B.C., more than a century and a half after Isaiah prophesied of him *by name* (see Isaiah 45:1), as well as his role in God's plan. So awesome is our God that He made this known long before the fulfillment of the event!

### Prophecy impacts the lives of God's people

Just as the Jews were impacted by the Babylonian captivity and the fall of Babylon some 70 years later, so people will

# Why Prophecy?

by Ralph Levy

**T**he Bible contains a great deal of prophecy. In fact, between a fourth and a third of the Word of God is prophetic. And students of the Bible know that Jesus Christ plays a prominent role in many of these prophecies—especially those set in the end time. If God saw to it that so much of our Bible concerns prophecy, there must be a good reason for it.

So *why prophecy*? What does it have to do with practical matters of Christian living? And why should you take any interest in the subject?

### Prophecy proves who God is

Through Scripture we learn that God accurately foretells the future. The prophet Isaiah recorded His words: "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" (Isaiah 46:9-10). Unlike false gods, the true God accurately and faithfully tells His people about the future, what's yet to come and the hope beyond the time of trouble.

God also throws out a challenge when He asks, "Who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, let them show these to them . . . Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one" (Isaiah 44:7-8).

These passages tell us that only God can reveal the end of the story as well as the beginning.

In the prophecies of Isaiah, we find references to the birth of a great Persian king named Cyrus. Cyrus was used by God to bring down the powerful Babylonian empire and let the Jews go free from captivity and return to Jerusalem

yet be impacted by the events foretold in Scripture. Wars will take place; freedom to worship God in peace will be taken away; persecution, and even martyrdom, will come upon Christians.

Before Jesus Christ returns to rule the earth, the Bible speaks of a time of trouble called the "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21). It will be a time of suffering for all the world, but especially for the nations called "Israel" in the Bible—that is to say, the English-speaking nations of the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as well as much of northwestern Europe.

To learn more about God's perspective on prophecy and what He says will happen to these nations, download or request our free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* at [www.ucg.org/booklets](http://www.ucg.org/booklets).

Our younger readers have never lived in a world at war. The last world war ended in 1945, well before most of us were born.

Yes, there have been other wars since: Korea, Vietnam, various wars in the Middle East, the Balkans and Africa, and

more recently two wars in Iraq. Yet these wars have had less impact on our lives than the future wars described in the Bible or the two great wars of the 20th century. For most of us, life has provided relatively uninterrupted safety and prosperity. We've never had to go hungry and never had to run to a bomb shelter for cover.

Yet the Bible tells us such bad times *will* come on the world, and with greater force

I recall a conversation I once had with a young man who had come to study at a Bible college as a result of his interest in end-time prophecy. His fascination with prophecy didn't immediately carry over into Christian living. He told me he came to study prophecy, but later discovered, "Now I have to do all that other stuff too!"

That's right, we have to do all the "other stuff" too! It isn't all mysteries about

**Some people spend too much time digging into Bible prophecy, at times becoming unbalanced. Others say that prophecy has little to do with the practical side of life, so it's not that important. Yet just living in these uncertain times should tell us that we need to understand the real purpose of prophecy.**

and power than ever before! Hard as it is to imagine, the world will have to suffer much more before the second coming of Jesus Christ than at any other time in history. And Christians—God's own people—are not going to escape without feeling the impact of some of these events.

For those who have never experienced the pain and suffering of world war, it's a good idea to learn a little about what it meant to live through the horrors of the late 1930s and the 1940s. Study the history, visit some of the war museums and read some of the biographies and autobiographies of those who went through it. As you do, remember that it will be God who will bring an end to the wars that are yet to come before the return of Jesus Christ.

### Prophecy prompts us to grow

In the face of hard times to come, the New Testament contains many admonitions about the attitude and actions God's people should adopt.

Notice Jesus Christ's warning: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36). In other words, these prophetic warnings aren't there just for fascination, but to prompt us to righteous living. We have to *do something* with the knowledge of prophecy!

The apostle Peter ties it in. "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness . . . ?" (2 Peter 3:11). Prophecy is a prompt for us to live God's way, to follow the ways described as holy conduct and godliness.

beasts and speculations about dates. If we understand prophecy, we must *live right*, according to the laws and instructions of the Bible. And really, that's much more of a challenge than coming up with lots of details about prophecy!

### Prophecy provides hope!

When we think of prophecy, especially end-time prophecy, we most often focus on the horrors to come at the end of this age. Yet the most *certain* event in all biblical prophecy is the one that's most hopeful—the second coming of Jesus Christ. Many prophecies stress that God determined long ago that Christ will come again, establish the Kingdom of God and save humanity from itself. That's about the best news any of us could possibly hear!

The time of suffering will be short. The Bible tells us the worst of it will last only 3½ years (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2-3; 12:14; note, "a time and times and half a time" refers to a year, years and half a year). Afterwards, these terrible days will begin to seem like a bad dream as the saints of God begin to reign with Christ in the Kingdom of God (Daniel 7:27). A much, much better time awaits us and all humanity.

Prophecy ultimately points us to some very, very good news: that Jesus Christ will return! That He will set up a glorious Kingdom on earth, which will provide the world with a far better life than it ever experienced under any human government! And that God Himself will offer life and happiness to all, through His laws and His Son Jesus Christ!

Isn't that good news? **GN**



## Want to Learn More?

If you like reading our youth articles in *The Good News*, take a look at our new magazine, *Vertical Thought*, at [www.verticalthought.org](http://www.verticalthought.org).

This magazine is specially written for our younger *Good News* audience. Each issue is packed with helpful insight and eye-opening articles to help today's young adults get the most out of life—both now and in the future.

You'll uncover lots of fascinating facts, meet many interesting people, discover what's really going on behind the scenes in our world, learn answers to your questions and find practical, down-to-earth guidance on all kinds of subjects.

Visit [www.verticalthought.org](http://www.verticalthought.org) today!



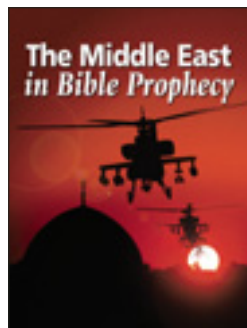
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# Why So Much Conflict in the Middle East? Will It Ever End?



Why has the Middle East been the center of so much conflict over the centuries? Why is it torn by hatred and bloodshed today? What are the roots of these problems and how will they be solved?



Astonishingly, this history of conflict was prophesied thousands of years ago in the pages of your Bible. In Zechariah 12:2-3, God foretells that Jerusalem would be “a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples,”

driving them mad in their conflicts over Israel’s ancient capital. He also described Jerusalem as “a very heavy stone” that would “cut in pieces” those who gather against it. Could any words better

describe the futile efforts for peace in this strife-torn city?

But the Bible reveals so much more. Its prophets foretold the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms that would rule this region. Egypt, Israel, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome all came and went—but a great end-time conflict will eclipse them all and bring humanity to the brink of extinction.

When will this happen? Can we know how will it come about? Be sure to request your free copy of the eye-opening booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* to understand these crucial events!



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