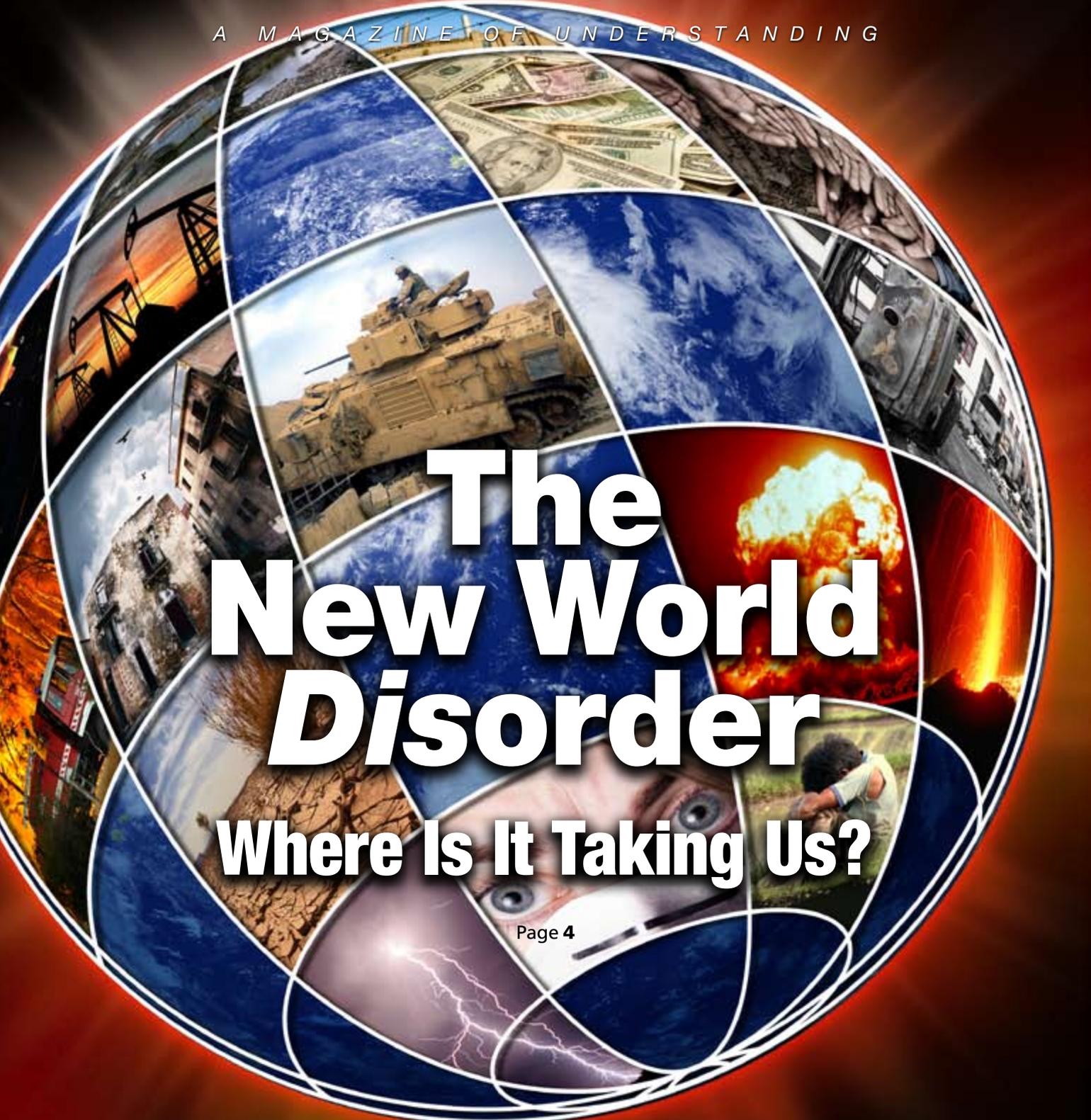


The *Good News*

July-August 2009

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



The New World Disorder

Where Is It Taking Us?

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I'll admit up front that I'm not qualified to explain the complexities of world economics. Nor are our *Good News* writers economic experts. Oh, we regularly explore diverse issues such as money matters, world politics, education or the environment, but we don't stake claim as experts in those fields. No, our niche, honed over decades, is in taking world events and trends and examining them in the light of the principles and prophecies of God's Word.

So when General Motors became the latest American business giant to declare bankruptcy, we did not regard it as merely an isolated economic earthquake. Rather, we placed it within the larger milieu of many other disturbing events that are stirring a growing unease in people, perhaps like you, who ask, "Can someone tell me what in the world is going on?!"

Bankruptcy serves as a potent metaphor for this issue's focus on the

Humanity is heading down its own perilous road toward a far more serious type of bankruptcy.

world's "disorder"—the inability of leaders and common folks alike to get a grip on the chaotic spread of problems, conflicts and stresses.

Whether it strikes a small family or a corporate monolith, bankruptcy is a traumatic last resort for coping with a long series of events that, spinning out of control, finally result in economic disorder. This doesn't happen in a vacuum. Through the ripple effect, many other people and businesses suffer damage.

Nor do such collapses happen overnight. Industry analysts, for example, looking down GM's road a long time ago, foresaw the dead end and leaned on the warning horn. Consequently, few people were surprised when the predicted crash occurred.

Likewise, anyone familiar with God's Word understands that humanity is heading down its own perilous road toward a far more serious type of bankruptcy. For those who fail to see, stop and turn around, the impact is unavoidable, and it will be severe!

I'm talking about moral and spiritual bankruptcy—the impoverishment of the human spirit! Just as undeniable economic laws guarantee certain results from certain financial actions, undeniable and inescapable moral and spiritual laws are equally at work in our lives.

One of the most fundamental is this ancient biblical maxim: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). No, we're not out-of-touch religious fanatics brandishing this scripture to self-righteously "tut-tut" those whose actions we disapprove. Rather, it distresses us that people do not grasp the absolute truth of this law of life!

It burdens us that our morally relativistic culture has led so many to doubt whether "righteousness" and "sin" actually exist, or to be clueless as to how to define them. We are pounding on the horn, warning that any individual or nation failing to recognize and reverse its moral wrong turn will pay the high price of spinning out of spiritual control!

On the other hand, we're also loudly proclaiming *good news*. That is (to further the economic metaphor), just as some people are money-wise and surviving tough financial times, you can be *spiritually* wise and secure your future. God stands ready to teach you how to be spiritually rich, how to use an accurate moral compass, how to strengthen your character in a spiritually weak and disordered world.

In the midst of this worldwide "spiritual recession," the timeless ethics and standards of God are the only reliable source of true world order. The world around you may not be able to see that. We're glad you can!

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

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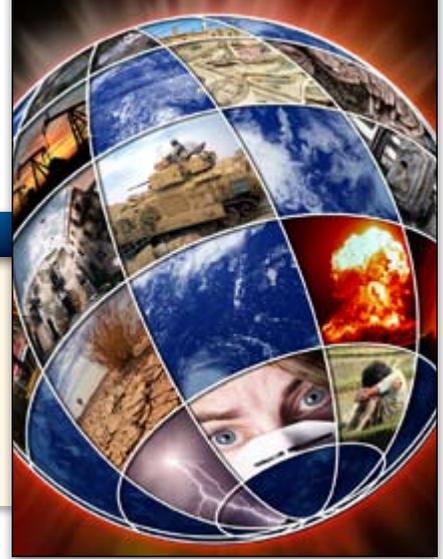
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The New World *Disorder*: Where Is It Taking Us?

by John Ross Schroeder

Why does the world seem to be crumbling into chaos? Can we restrain the forces of anarchy? Is it possible to right the course of our severely straying civilization and solve our problems? Sadly, we seem to have no comprehension of the unseen spiritual forces arrayed against us, and we either reject or ignore the God who offers the only viable solutions to the enormous problems afflicting our troubled age.

The tragedies afflicting this war-torn world multiply with every passing year. As I write, one headline in *The Times* of London is “The Hidden Massacre,” noting that “20,000 civilians were killed in Sri Lanka’s final assault on [the] Tamil Tigers” (May 29, 2009). The article goes on to state that actual casualties are triple the official figure, the deaths caused by indiscriminate shelling of a heavily populated refugee area.

The Times’ front-page cover article and two pages of text and photos reveal the horrendous facts unearthed by investigative journalists. The article went on to say that “Sri Lanka was cleared of any wrongdoing by the UN Human Rights Control Council.”

An accompanying article explained that “support for this deeply flawed resolution came from the usual suspects—China, Russia, India, Pakistan and a clutch of Asian and Islamic nations determined to prevent the council ever investigating human rights violations in their own or any country.”

Such horrors should make us think: Where is this world headed? Where are we in the biblical time frame of prophetic events? Just what’s going on?

Our world on the precipice

Today’s secular prophets—knowledgeable, right-thinking authors and journalists—are sounding the alarm.

Author and educator James Martin,

founder of the Institute for Science and Civilization at the University of Oxford, soberly warns us: “At the start of the 21st century, humankind finds itself on a non-sustainable course—a course that unless it is changed will lead to catastrophes of awesome consequences. This could be humanity’s last century, or could be the century in which civilization sets sail towards a far more spectacular future” (*The Meaning of the 21st Century*, 2007, preface).

The choices and options of humanity are narrowing sharply. Intelligent observers of the world scene recognize that we must alter our ways soon or face eking out a bare existence in a shattered and disordered world. Either we are fast running out of time or we may have already passed the dreaded point of no return.

Current affairs author and historian Robert Harvey previously articulated his own stark warning: “Unless action is taken as the warm glow of sunset on the twentieth century is replaced by the pale light of dawn on the twenty-first, we will gaze towards the same horizon of global horrors as our great-grandfathers, this time through a nuclear haze. The world is a much more dangerous place than it has been for nearly half a

After describing chaotic world conditions to occur in the time of the end—which sound disturbingly like those we are beginning to see all around us—Jesus Christ said, “All these are the beginning of sorrows.”



century” (*Global Disorder*, 2003, p. xxxii).

Czech patriot and former President Vaclav Havel has stated that “cultural conflicts are increasing and are more dangerous today than at any time in history” (quoted by Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 1997, p. 28).

Hopeful euphoria proves to be only illusion

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, world leaders like American President George H.W. Bush (1988-1992) spoke hopefully of a “new world order.” The accompanying euphoria in the media closely resembled a similar atmosphere that followed in the wake of World War I (1914-1918)—supposedly “the war to end all wars.”

The noted philosopher and author Frances Fukuyama labeled the previous bad history of humankind “the end of history”—with humanity presumably poised to transition into a liberal utopia. The United Nations, many thought, would finally assume its rightful place in the world, with its peacekeeping and peace-making dominating a new age of harmony among nations.

But all this euphoria soon proved to be based on a deceptive illusion! If indeed this period was a brief window of opportunity during which humankind could have installed a new world order, it soon passed into history without any observable positive actions in that direction. Instead, what the world would soon see were horrendous terrorist tragedies like 9/11, the severe weakening of governmental authority, and a growing intensity of religious, tribal and ethnic conflict—exacerbated by radical Islamic ambitions.

The late Harvard professor and political

analyst Samuel Huntington (1927-2008) summed up some of our ever-increasing problems rather well just over a decade ago in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*:

“The West’s victory in the Cold War has produced not triumph, but exhaustion. The West is increasingly concerned with its internal problems and needs, as it confronts slow economic progress [now a severe world recession], stagnating populations [disturbingly low birth rates among Caucasians], unemployment, huge governmental deficits, a declining work ethic, low savings rates, and in many countries including the United States social disintegration, drugs, and crime” (p. 82).

How accurately prophetic this brief summary turned out to be. And how much worse the world has become since these sobering words were written!

But as the popular saying goes, “You ain’t seen nothing yet.” After describing chaotic world conditions to occur in the time of the end—which sound disturbingly like those we are beginning to see all around us—Jesus Christ said, “All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:8, emphasis added throughout).

The news we wish would go away

The comments above reflect only an overall summary. The specifics are stark and scary.

Consider the current recession. The previously exalted symbol of U.S. capitalism, the giant automaker General Motors (GM)—at its peak responsible for a 10th of the national economy—promises nine weeks of total manufacturing shutdown this summer with a number of plants probably never reopening. Its humbling bankruptcy move, which involves shedding some 21,000 jobs and 2,600 auto dealerships, has cast shadows over the American economy.

The federal government is to take a 60-percent ownership stake in the company. As some have noted tongue-in-cheek, now GM stands for “Government Motors”! Is the United States fast becoming a socialist country?

Chrysler, America’s third-largest carmaker, had earlier suffered the indignity of having to declare itself bankrupt. Almost 800 dealerships face closure. Ford perilously hangs on, largely because it’s in a better cash position than the other two. Detroit is quickly becoming an economic wasteland.

Ruinous government deficits plague both the U.S. federal government and many of the individual states. California alone struggles with a massive \$21.3 billion deficit gap between revenues and spending. The gold rush appears to be over in the Golden State.

At the federal level, President Obama's budget deficit levels reach into the \$2 trillion range—four times as great as the largest deficits under the George W. Bush administration. Huge inflation and/or unwanted tax increases wait ominously on the horizon. We have forgotten the biblical proverb telling us that “the borrower is servant to the lender” (Proverbs 22:7). At some point the day of reckoning must come.

Troubling news from overseas

What about the news from abroad? *The Times* stated on May 28, 2009, that “North Korea announced yesterday that it was abandoning the armistice that ended the Korean War 56 years ago [in 1953], and threatened war if there were any attempts to search its ships for weapons of mass destruction.”

The recent underground test of a Hiroshima-sized nuclear weapon, the restarting of a reactor to produce nuclear material, the test-firing of new missile designs, threats of a thousand-fold military retaliation if provoked—what's next for this rogue state? Obviously North Korea has been raising the stakes, explicitly so by its threatening war with South Korea. The North's army stands at 950,000 compared with the South's 420,000. Whether in men or armaments, South Korea's inferior numbers cut across all categories.

No wonder the famous American World War II hero General Douglas MacArthur wanted, during the Korean War, to deal with North Korea once and for all—being willing for his nation to pay the inevitable price in negative world opinion. Men of lesser stature settled for a stalemate—the division of the country into the two Koreas along the 38th parallel. Now, after a half-century of tensions, we could be back at square one.

Longtime British journalist and author Max Hastings is known for telling it as he sees it. His headline in the May 28 *Daily Mail* reads: “North Korea's ruler may be mad. But his threats expose the impotence of America and the amorality of the Chinese.”

This veteran journalist goes on to highlight the sad truths that most of North Korea's 23 million people “live

on the brink of starvation” and “almost half its pitiful national income is squandered on the armed forces and nuclear programme.” The People's Republic of China remains in a much better position to restrain North Korea but doesn't. China has its own ends in mind.

The North's national leader, Kim Jong Il, rivals Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe as

tinues in the 21st century] . . . have been internal and non-quantitative: *involving either structural changes or intellectual, moral and spiritual factors* . . . in one way or another . . . “*the will to survive*” (1964, pp. 22-24).

With these comments we are getting somewhere. “Moral and spiritual factors” imply belief in God and a set of standards

Only God can rescue humankind by sending Jesus Christ back to earth to save us from the chaos we have created.



a ruthless dictator who cares little about the welfare of his own people, willing to let them starve so he can maintain power. “Like a roaring lion and a charging bear is a wicked ruler over poor people,” Proverbs 28:15 tells us.

Hastings continued with his most telling point: “The very fact that he [Kim Jong Il] feels able to rattle his sabre at all *speaks volumes about the shifting global order and in particular about the shrunken authority of the U.S. and her allies.*”

What's behind the West's general decline?

Back in the mid-1960s, political theorist James Burnham wrote a book titled *Suicide of the West*. He began by noting that between the years 1900 and 1960 the West lost considerable ground both in territory and population in comparison to the rest of the world. Burnham sought to understand why.

His conclusions are no surprise for those who truly understand the Bible: “The contraction of the West cannot be explained by any lack of economic resources or of military and political power . . . We must therefore conclude that the primary causes of the contraction of the West [which con-



such as the Ten Commandments. Loss of belief in a divine Creator combined with situation ethics has played a big role in the declining influence and authority of the United States, Britain and other nations in the Western world.

Our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?* shows how far these root causes reach back into the past: “Starting several centuries ago, and prompted by the theories of men such as Charles Darwin—who fabricated a way to explain creation without the Creator—many people began directly challenging the authority and inspiration of the Bible. They began to ridicule, as a mere myth and superstition, the existence of a spirit world, long accepted without question by those who believed the Bible.

“In the world's leading universities skeptics challenged the validity and accuracy of the Bible, and scientific reasoning . . . became the order of the day. Generations

of leaders were taught to discard anything that could not be measured by scientific methods” (2001, p. 10).

Having cast away the revelation found in God’s Word, people cast away the knowledge that sheds so much light on the current tragic state of our world.

The Bible reveals the existence of a spirit world wherein hundreds of millions of righteous angels honor and serve God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:11). However, not all of the angels God created remained righteous. God’s Word indicates that a third of them chose to follow the archdeceiver Satan the devil in a rebellion against their Creator (Revelation 12:4). Our free booklet

Is There Really a Devil? explains the story of the angelic world.

The zeitgeist afflicting mankind

The book of Revelation, written by the apostle John, contains one of the most pivotal passages in the Bible. Revelation 12:9 tells us, “That serpent of old, called the devil and Satan, . . . *deceives the whole world.*”

Stop a moment and think about this one single verse. It tells us that *the vast majority of the inhabitants of this world are out of step with God.* Most people *believe things that are simply not true.* They are taken in by *false and lying philosophies of all kinds.*

Another biblical passage also penned

by John expresses this same basic spiritual deception: “We know that we [true Christians] are of God, and *the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*” (1 John 5:19).

Many blame other human beings for their problems. Nations tend to blame other nations. But true Christians know that “we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits . . .” (Ephesians 6:12, New Living Translation).

It was stated at the beginning of this article that the human race as a whole has no real comprehension of the spiritual forces

The Warnings Are Loud and Clear—But Are You Listening?

Martin Gray was one of the few Warsaw Jews to escape the death camp at Treblinka. Captured in Warsaw in 1943, on arrival at the camp he was chosen for work details instead of being marched to the gas chambers immediately after exiting the boxcars.

Only a teenager, Martin labored on several work crews before being assigned to the “excavator pit”—the mass graves where thousands of bodies of men, women and children were buried daily. Martin soon learned that those who worked in the mass graves were themselves killed after a few weeks. No one was to be left alive to reveal to the world the truth of what went on in the camps.

Martin escaped by tying himself with belts to the underside of a truck, then hiding in a load of clothing on a train. As soon as he jumped off the train he was on a mission: He knew that if he could only tell Jews in other towns and villages in Poland that the Nazis planned to kill them all, he would be able to possibly save them.

Martin slipped from town to town, telling everyone he could about Treblinka, the gas chambers, the mass graves and thousands of dead every day. Did anyone listen?

In his own words, “I shouted, ran back and forth among them. They drew away from me and immediately went back to work as if I didn’t exist . . . ‘Listen to me, I’m a Jew, a Jew, like you! You’ve got to believe me: they’re killing us, all of us! Do you know about Treblinka?’ They didn’t even look up . . . They carried on with their work as if I weren’t there, as if Treblinka were just some lunatic’s nightmare” (*For Those I Loved*, 2006, p. 153).

Later, Martin tells how he watched from a distance as the Nazi troops rounded up all the people in those villages, loaded them into trucks and sent them to their deaths at Treblinka. “Why didn’t they listen, why didn’t they believe me?” he shouted to himself.

Would people today listen to similar warnings? Are warnings being given now that people are intentionally choosing not to listen to?

Do our everyday headlines contain strong warnings about a dire future? Consider these recent items you may have glossed over:

- U.S. national debt reaches \$63.8 trillion. “The latest increase raises federal obligations to a record \$546,668 per household . . . That’s quadruple what the average U.S. household owes for all mortgages, car loans, credit cards and other debt combined” (*USA Today*, May 29, 2009).

- North Korea tested a nuclear weapon, launched several test missiles and abrogated the 1953 truce agreement—effectively declaring war on South Korea, Japan, the United States, Britain and other nations that were a part of the 1951-1953 “police action” should they try to

interfere with North Korea’s ambitions—and threatened a “thousand-fold” military retaliation if provoked.

- “The End of Christian America” headlined *Newsweek* magazine’s report on a dramatic drop in the number of Americans identifying themselves as Christian. “Many conservative Christians believe they have lost the battles over issues such as abortion, school prayer and even same-sex marriage, and that the country has now entered a post-Christian phase,” stated the article (April 13, 2009).

- In Pakistan, “the government is progressively losing control of its own population and territory. And you’ve got Al Qaeda sitting right in the middle” of a country that has more than 100 nuclear weapons, according to a top terrorism expert (Australian Broadcasting Corporation News, June 3, 2009).

This sampling of alarming headlines points to some very difficult times ahead. The world as we have known it is rapidly coming to an end. But is anyone taking notice, or are we just going about our daily lives as if there’s nothing to be concerned about? Are we repeating the experience of the Poles who heard Martin Gray but closed their minds to what he was saying?

Jesus Christ gave several crucial warnings in His most detailed prophetic message. He foretold a coming time of suffering just before His return that will be the worst the world has ever experienced. He said, “For then will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world” (Matthew 24:21).

He even prophesied that the majority of the world will not listen to any warnings, but will close their ears like the Poles who heard Martin Gray. Jesus said that this time of unprecedented trouble “will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:35).

He also warned about what we should be doing as we see this time approaching and stated that there could be a way of escape: “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” (verse 36). To be able to escape, you will have to listen to and heed what you hear.

The United Church of God strives to help our readers understand current world news and what it means for each one of us. Be sure to continue reading *The Good News* and subscribe to our *World News and Prophecy* newsletter or read it online if you are not already doing so. Our *Beyond Today* television program and our *Bible Study Course* can also help increase your ability to discern what is truly taking place in the world around us and to be prepared for what is on the horizon. You can find links to all of these resources at our Web site, www.GNmagazine.org.

—*Rex Sexton*

arrayed against it. That was speaking principally of the invisible demonic realm that has power to influence the minds of human beings to first contemplate and then commit acts of supreme folly.

A word sometimes used to describe the intellectual, moral and cultural climate of an era is *zeitgeist*, which literally means “the spirit of the time.” Most fail to realize that the real source behind the spirit of the time of almost all of human history, the basic attitude of the age, remains the unseen demonic realm headed by Satan the devil, “the *god* of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Zeitgeist is a German term, and Central Europe will be at the heart of one of the greatest deceptions ever to afflict humankind. A new superpower will emerge there from the geographic area where part of the old Roman Empire was located.

Both the Old Testament book of Daniel and the New Testament book of Revelation describe a final revival of the Roman Empire (the fourth great geopolitical power described by Daniel) headed by two charismatic individuals whom the Bible calls “the Beast” (its political leader) and “the False Prophet” (its religious leader).

Speaking of people at the time of the end of this age, God’s Word tells us that “they worshiped the dragon [Satan] who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’” (Revelation 13:4).

Such is the amazing extent of this deception that the world’s inhabitants will actually worship the devil and his chief human instrument, who blasphemes God (verse 6). But so complete is this satanic deception, backed up by misleading signs and wonders (verses 13-14), that the vast majority will have no inkling of what’s really happening to their world.

Even today most people are simply not interested in God’s warnings from the pages of the Bible. When awesome events demand urgent action, when frightening world conditions require the soberest con-

templation and the deepest introspection, the many millions doze.

Take a quick look at a magazine newsstand sometime. Most periodicals are either trashy or simply a waste of valuable time. You often search in vain for something worthwhile to read. Today’s massive obsession with the lives of celebrities, people who often drift from one meaningless experience into another, defies sound reasoning.

Human beings cannot rescue themselves

This article has quoted a number of secular sources from books and newspapers. Most were written by individuals who’ve studied world trends for many years, and their contributions to human understanding should be deeply appreciated. Yet most of them think that if they could just get world leaders to follow their particular recommendations, things would turn out all right in the end.

Wisdom from a deeply respected American founding father will tell us otherwise. After their presidential terms ended, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson carried on a lengthy correspondence until both died on the same day, July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress. In a letter dated July 9, 1813, Adams told Jefferson:

“While all other sciences have advanced, that of government is at a stand[still]; little better understood; little better practiced now, than three or four thousand years ago. What is the reason? I say, parties and factions will not suffer, or permit[,] improvements to be made.

“As soon as one man hints at an improvement, his rival opposes it. No sooner has one party discovered or invented an amelioration of the condition of man, or the order of society, than the opposite party belies it, misconstrues it, misrepresents it, ridicules it, insults it, and persecutes it” (quoted by Norman Cousins, *In God We Trust*, 1958, p. 231).

This is the Achilles’ heel of democratic government—rife with party spirit and strife. Adversarial opposition parties focus mainly on attaining high office rather than helping those in power rule wisely.

Imperfect human governments (including multistate organizations like the United Nations and the European Union) are not going to get a handle on this disordered world’s megaproblems. A new president will not change the direction the United States is headed. A change of administration will not halt the nation’s seemingly irreversible decline in morals and character.

Only the coming of a *divine* government, *God’s* government, can overcome human imperfections and misjudgments. The Bible tells us this will bring “the times of restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). Then, and only then, shall we have the good government that humanity has always longed for. No other solution will work.

Only God can rescue humankind by sending Jesus Christ back to earth to save us from the chaos we have created. He will restore right government. Revelation 11:15 proclaims a wonderful announcement that will be declared throughout the earth at that time: “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” **GN**

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Four Biblical Keys to Understanding World Events

by Mario Seiglie

Important world events are happening all around us. But what do they mean? Can we understand? Here are four key principles for analyzing world events from an all-important biblical perspective.

Most geopolitical experts would agree that we have witnessed three tectonic shifts in world politics in the last three decades. These tectonic shifts—changes that have strong and widespread impact—include:

- Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 revolution in Iran that spawned the spread of radical Islam to the far corners of the world.
- The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 that freed Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics in the northern Middle East.

- The Sept. 11, 2001, attacks against the United States that led to the war on terror, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Now we are witnessing a possible fourth tectonic shift—the worldwide financial crisis, described by many economists as the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

How great is this latest shift? *Half* of the world's wealth in the financial markets disappeared in 2008—some *\$50 trillion*. “This crisis is the first truly universal one in the history of humanity,” stated former International Monetary Fund chief Michel Camdessus. “No country escapes from it. It has not yet bottomed out” (“Global Financial Assets Lost 50 Trillion Last Year,” Bloomberg News Service, March 9, 2009).

No one knows how much longer it will last or, due to unprecedented global government deficit spending, how much *long-term* damage will be done to the world's economies. We could be observing the end

of the free market system as we know it and the beginning of another that will have far more government involvement, control and regulation in many nations—including the United States. At least, that is the current trend.

How are we to make sense of things? Surprising as it may seem to some, the best place to start is the Bible—the written revelation of the Creator God. The Bible encourages us to consider world news in the light of scriptural teachings, including prophecy of what is to come. But how are we to go about this?

Wouldn't it be great to know certain tried-and-true biblical guidelines to properly analyzing so many bewildering world events? Wouldn't *you* like to make sense of it all, to know where such trends are headed?

In Luke 21:29-36 Jesus Christ said: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near . . . *Watch* therefore, and *pray* always that you may be counted *worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass . . .*” (emphasis added throughout).

He was referring to future end-time events and warning us to be on the lookout for what is happening around us so we will not be lulled into complacency or deceived by leaders with smooth words or deceitful signs.

So how can we properly analyze world events? Of course, we have the specifics

of Bible prophecy. But we also have more general principles. Here are four biblical keys to determining what to expect from various nations and national governments when examining the world scene:



Human nature has not changed for thousands of years.

The Bible is quite realistic when analyzing the human heart—meaning a person's inner motivations. It says in Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is *more deceitful* than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (New American Standard Bible).

Yes, the Bible says human nature is egocentric, deceitful and sick at its core, although few will admit to that personally. And nations are simply a collection of individuals guided primarily by self-interest.

In his classic book *Politics Among Nations*, the late professor Hans Morgenthau put it this way: “Human nature, in which the laws of politics have their roots, *has not changed* since the classical philosophies of China, India, and Greece endeavored to discover these laws” (1992, p. 4).

Why is human nature the way it is?

To understand, we have to go back to our original parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. There they made a fateful decision for mankind when they chose to disobey God's instruction and eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil instead of the tree of life (Genesis 3:11-19). From then on, man has lived in a fallen world—one ruled largely by his own greedy, selfish reasoning rather than by God's spiritual laws.

In fact, Romans 8:7 tells us, “And so people become enemies of God when they are controlled by their human nature; for they do not obey God's law, and in fact they *cannot* obey it” (Good News Bible).

Wouldn't it be great to know tried-and-true biblical guidelines to analyzing so many bewildering world events?

Despite all the “rose-colored-glasses” views of humanity, the reality is that self-interest still rules supreme. We clearly see this in the social, governmental, religious and financial sectors of the world.

Indeed, a principal factor that guides much of human nature is the invisible influence of Satan the devil. He not only deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9), but coaxes all people into selfishness and sin—the opposite of God’s way of out-flowing love. Ephesians 2:1-3 tells Christians that before conversion they “were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, *the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.*”

Yes, the reality of world politics is that it’s swayed by this powerful but perverse spirit being.

Satan even boasted to Jesus Christ about his control of and authority over the earth’s governments: “Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him *all the kingdoms* of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘All this authority I will give You, and their glory; *for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.*’” (Luke 4:5-6).

We often hear from political leaders that everything they do is motivated by the best of intentions for the welfare of everyone. We likewise often hear that human nature is intrinsically good. But good intentions and good feelings aren’t enough. Look at the world around us. The global financial system—supposedly guided by the smartest among us—has ended up, largely due to so much greed and corruption, in a severe economic crash.

Regarding world politics, do you know what World War I was called? It was labeled “the war to end all wars.” Yet World War II soon followed, and nearly a century later terrible wars still rage and have become far more deadly. Regardless of the best of intentions, the self-exaltation of human nature, aided and intensified by Satan’s negative influence, remains constant.

None of this is new. More than two centuries ago America’s first president, George Washington, wrote: “A small knowledge of human nature will convince us, that, with far the greatest part of mankind, *interest* is the governing principle . . . Motives of public virtue may for a time, or in particular instances, actuate men to the observance of a conduct purely disinterested; but they are not of themselves sufficient

to produce a persevering conformity . . .

“It is vain to exclaim against the depravity of human nature on this account; the fact is so, the experience of every age and nation has proved it and we must[,] in a great measure, change the constitution of man, before we can make it otherwise. No institution, not built on the presumptive truth of these maxims can succeed” (quoted in *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. 10, p. 363).

The lesson is this: When watching global political events, we should remember that human nature has not changed and is essentially based on self-interest.

So don’t be fooled by claims of nations or political leaders basing their policies on altruistic notions or the welfare of others. Acceptance of such assurances has often led to catastrophic results—such as British leader Neville Chamberlain’s appeasement of Adolf Hitler that, along with other factors, eventually led to World War II.

A more modern example was former U.S. President Jimmy Carter’s naive view of the Soviets, which contributed to their invasion of Afghanistan. After he told the American people they had to dispel “an inordinate fear of communism,” the Soviet leaders listened and felt they now had a freer hand to bully their neighbors.

Two years later, in 1979, they invaded Afghanistan with the intention of making it part of the Soviet empire. After his initial shock, Carter exclaimed about the Soviet premier, Leonid Brezhnev, “I can’t believe he lied to me.” Yet if he had considered the Soviet ideology and self-interest more rationally, he would have been more careful.

This takes us to the second key, which follows naturally from the first.

2



Each nation seeks its own self-interest and exercises power to that end.

Jesus Christ spoke bluntly about the reality of politics and national leaders. “You know that in this world kings are tyrants,” He told His disciples, “and officials lord it over the people beneath them” (Matthew 20:25, New Living Translation).

Seismic shifts in world politics have occurred in the past decades, some are occurring now, and more will be coming in the days ahead.

The exercise of power may sometimes be subtle rather than overt—but it is still primarily based on self-interest and control.

“Power may comprise anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man,” wrote Professor Morgenthau. “Thus power covers all social relationships which serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls the other . . . For if we look at all nations, our own included, as political entities pursuing their respective interests defined in terms of power, we are able to do justice to all of them . . . We are then capable of pursuing policies that respect the interests of other nations, while protecting and promoting those of our own” (pp. 9-11).

Sadly, few nations are able to exercise their power without abusing it. So don’t be surprised when you see the misuse of power by the mighty. It has been going on for millennia.

Almost 3,000 years ago King Solomon noted: “Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter—on the side of their oppressors *there is power*, but they have *no* comforter” (Ecclesiastes 4:1).

Yet this “oppression” will usually be cloaked under lofty ideals. “All nations are tempted,” added Professor Morgenthau, “and few have been able to resist the temptation for long—to clothe their own particular aspirations and actions in the moral purposes of the universe” (p. 11).

As Proverbs 21:2 tells us, “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts.” Yes, it is part of human nature to disguise with good intentions and high moral goals what it often wants for selfish reasons.

So we should be very skeptical when

leaders take drastic actions that have long-term consequences under the guise of having others' "best interests at heart." It's always good to have a healthy skepticism and look for what they would deem *their* best interests under the circumstances to judge what is being done.

This leads us, then, to the third key for understanding world events.

3



Each nation expresses its own interest through its national character.

Nations generally have certain character traits that do not change over time. What is embedded in the national character of a people will continue through the centuries.

The Chinese have not essentially changed their way or culture of doing things and neither have the British, Americans, French, Germans, Russians, Africans, Hispanics or Arabs.

The famous English poet and philosopher Samuel Coleridge wrote in describing this national character: "There is an *invisible spirit that breathes through a whole people*, and is participated by all, though not by all alike; a *spirit which gives a color and character both to their virtues and vices*, so that the same action, such I mean as are expressed by the same words, are yet *not the same* in a Spaniard as they would be in a Frenchman" (*Essays on His Own Times*, 1850, Vol. 2, pp. 668-669).

The Bible expresses the national character of a people by comparing it to the attributes of different animals. In Genesis 49, for example, several of the tribes of Israel are compared to diverse animals. In Daniel 7:4-7, the Bible compares the Babylonian Empire to a lion, the Persian Empire to a bear, the Greek Empire to a multiheaded leopard and the Roman Empire to a mighty beast. In Revelation 13 and 17, we also see nations depicted in the end time with the attributes of wild beasts.

Perhaps not so coincidentally, today's most powerful nations are also traditionally compared to animals: the United States to an eagle; Russia to a bear; China to a dragon; and the European Union, as some

of its coins depict, to a woman (Europa) riding a bull.

Consequently, it is important when analyzing world events to take into account the national character of a people.

Again, Professor Morgenthau showed great insight in stating: "*National character cannot fail to influence national power*; for those who act for the nation in peace and war, formulate, execute, and support its policies, elect and are elected, mold public opinion, produce and consume—they all bear to a greater or lesser degree the imprint of those intellectual and moral qualities which make up the *national character*."

"The 'elementary force and persistence' of the Russians, the individual initiative and inventiveness of the Americans, the undogmatic common sense of the British, the discipline and thoroughness of the Germans are some of the qualities which will manifest themselves, *for better or worse*, in all the individual and collective activities in which the members of a nation may engage" (p. 133).

In regards to Europe, which has a key role in Bible prophecy, it's well worth remembering what journalist Luigi Barzini wrote about national character in 1983: "The future [of Europe] is in the laps of the gods. It will probably be decided, once again, by Germany's decisions. And Germany is, as it always was, a mutable, Proteus-like, unpredictable country, particularly dangerous when it is unhappy" (*The Europeans*, 1983, p. 267).

Again, nations have a type of behavior all their own—so don't forget to take it into account.

This brings us to the fourth key.

4



Each nation seeks a balance of power to offset dominance by others.

The *balance of power* is a key element to understand how nations act. Alliances are frequently formed to offset other power centers.

As historian J. Allen Smith explains: "The fact that *no country alone* is sufficiently

strong to feel secure against any possible combination of opposing states makes necessary the formation of *alliances* and *counter-alliances* through which each state seeks to ensure the needed support in case its safety is menaced from without" (*The Growth and Decadence of Constitutional Government*, 1933, p. 241).

We see this formation of end-time alliances in the description of the feet of the image that depicts the last of the world empires described in the book of Daniel.

Daniel 2:41-44 says: "Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a *divided* kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it [strong nations or peoples], even as you saw iron mixed with clay [weak nations or peoples]. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a *mixture* and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed" (New International Version).

The Expositor's Bible Commentary says about Daniel 2:43, "The text clearly implies that this final phase will be marked by some sort of *federation* rather than by a powerful single realm."

The crux of this fourth point is: When analyzing world news, it's important to take into account the alliances made by the different nations—noting that they have their self-interest at heart.

Coming changes in human nature

So does this leave us with a pessimistic view of world events? Is there no hope for the future? Not at all! What we have considered so far is simply a *realistic* perspective of the present global situation. Thankfully, the Bible also provides an *optimistic* outlook in the long run.

We do know we will see a coming time of great distress due to nations acting like predators against other nations (Matthew 24:7, 21). But the *good news* is, the four key factors here based on man's present human nature will finally be changed for the good after Jesus Christ's return!

Let's note how the four factors will be very different during Christ's reign over the earth.

1. *Human nature will finally be changed and Satan will be put away.* George

Continued on page 21

Don't overlook the importance of events in Europe

In a world currently focused on Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Israel—not to mention a biting recession—it's easy to overlook important European events. Yet the European Union (EU) stands once again perched on the brink of approving the Lisbon Treaty (really the renamed EU Constitution) designed to drastically increase the structure, power and influence of this transnational governmental body.

Many in Britain view the possibility of a federal Europe with a jaundiced eye. Notice the reaction of Conservative Shadow Foreign Secretary William Hague, who is very concerned about “the creation of a new EU president, an EU foreign minister . . . [and] a legally binding charter of Fundamental Rights, the significant expansion of EU powers over areas such as criminal justice and more [which] has led the President of the European Commission to proclaim that *the Treaty gave the EU ‘the dimension of empire’*” (“Labour Has Left Britain on the Fringes of Europe,” *The Spectator*, May 30, 2009, emphasis added throughout).

Yet as things stand now, the British people will have virtually no say on the contents of this treaty, having been denied a previously promised referendum. The Lisbon Treaty will be imposed on the citizens of the United Kingdom without their democratic consent. Hague went on to write, “The Treaty is almost identical to its predecessor, the EU Constitution [previously rejected by both France and the Netherlands], to whose text the [British] government sought 275 amendments, of which only 27 were accepted.”

The implications of Britain saddled to a more powerful and influential European Union frighten those who truly understand European history. Yet a *Daily Mail* feature article tells us: “Britain is willing to provide all our armed forces to fight under the EU flag in future wars, a minister has revealed. Europe Minister Caroline Flint said *that every operational unit of the British Army, the Royal Navy and RAF will be on offer as part of an EU ‘force catalogue.’* This would help form a 60,000-strong joint EU military reaction force to police the world's trouble-spots” (Matthew Hickley and James Slack, “Now All Our Forces Are Put at Europe's Disposal,” April 4, 2009).

The basic EU currency, the euro, bears watching as well. “Officially launched as a theoretical accounting unit for 11 EU nations in 1999, the euro has become, by default, the second most important international reserve currency after the U.S. dollar” (Joseph Harriss, “Funny Money,” *The American Spectator*, May 2009).

A report by the private intelligence agency Stratfor warns of a potential long-term threat for America: “While the European Union is nowhere near becoming a federated state, it has the potential to become a major power one day that could become hostile to U.S. interests. Obviously this is not a near-term threat, but we need not look back even a century to see how rapidly and thoroughly allies can become



Major American policy shifts pressure Israel

Ethan Bronner, reporting in Jerusalem for the *International Herald Tribune*, raises an important question in regard to U.S.-Israeli relations: “Iran seems to be hurtling toward nuclear weapons capacity, Hezbollah could win Sunday's election in Lebanon [thankfully, it did not] and Hamas is smuggling long-range rockets into Gaza again. *So why is President Barack Obama focusing such attention on the building of homes by Israeli Jews in the West Bank?*” (“Obama Puts Israelis to Test,” June 6-7, 2009, emphasis added throughout).

This latest move on the diplomatic chessboard has put enormous pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. “[It] underscores one of the biggest shifts in American policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in three decades. While every administration has objected to Israeli settlement building in occupied lands, *the Obama administration has selected it as the opening issue that could begin to untie the conflict*” (ibid.).

The American administration hopes that halting and then removing these Israeli settlements will encourage Saudi Arabia and other Arab states to offer Israel concessions in trade, tourism and direct diplomatic ties. However, this controversy over settlement policy isn't the only Israeli concern with shifts in American policy.

According to Leonard Doyle, writing in Washington, D.C., for *The Sunday Telegraph*, “Israel is also rattled by Mr. Obama's willingness to attempt dialogue with Iran, seen by Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. [Avigdor] Lieberman [Israel's foreign minister and deputy prime minister] as the biggest threat to the Jewish state” (“Obama Will Lay Down the Law to Israel,” May 17, 2009).

The *International Herald Tribune* article went on to say that “Israelis have turned rightward and most analyses suggest that the reason is a growing fear of regional threats, notably Iranian-backed parties like Hezbollah and Hamas, on Israel's borders.” Earlier in April Netanyahu stated: “We will not

allow the Holocaust deniers to carry out another Holocaust against the Jewish people. This is the supreme duty of the state of Israel” (“Ahmadinejad Calls Israel ‘Racist,’” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 21, 2009).

Yet as Doyle reports in his *Telegraph* article, “the Obama administration has also broken a long-standing taboo against discussing Israel's nuclear weapons, by calling for Israel to declare and give up its weapons arsenal, said to number around 50 warheads. A senior State Department official said that the US wanted Israel to sign the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and commit to disarmament.”

But will Iran convincingly commit to not constructing nuclear weapons? On a recent trip to

Israel, CIA Director Leon Panetta's “message to the Israeli prime minister was that Iran will not be a serious threat even if it develops a nuclear weapon” (ibid.).

So the noose continues to tighten around the state of Israel. This important question emerges: Will American foreign policy put Israel in an untenable position with its enemies—greatly increasing its security concerns and placing its population potentially in mortal danger?



For help in discerning the direction these disturbing trends are headed, request or download our free booklets *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Daily Telegraph* [London], *International Herald Tribune*, *The Wall Street Journal*.)

request or download our free booklets *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (Sources: *The Spectator*, *Daily Mail* [both London], *The American Spectator*, Stratfor.)

allow the Holocaust deniers to carry out another Holocaust against the Jewish people. This is the supreme duty of the state of Israel” (“Ahmadinejad Calls Israel ‘Racist,’” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 21, 2009).

UN Nuclear Agency focuses on Iran, Syria

A report by the United Nations Nuclear Agency says that Iran has increased its number of centrifuges enriching uranium [to almost 5,000] and that inspectors have discovered traces of manmade uranium at a second site in Syria, heightening concern about possible undeclared atomic activity there" ("Atomic Agency Singles Out Iran and Syria," *International Herald Tribune*, June 6-7, 2009). Yet a headline feature article in the June 7, 2009, *Sunday Times* was "Obama Woes Syria in Push for Peace."

According to the Reuters communiqué, this increase in Iran's centrifuges "has made it more difficult for U.N. inspectors to keep track of the disputed nuclear program." Neither Iran nor Syria are friends of Israel or the West.

The June 1, 2009, *Newsweek* cover article about Iran was titled "They May Not Want the Bomb." It postulated that "Iranians aren't suicidal . . . Iran isn't a dictatorship . . . Iran might be ready to deal . . . They are not fanatics." The article intended its readers to take a "reality check." The text begins with "Everything you know about Iran is wrong, or at least more complicated than you think."

No doubt the state of Israel will still remain somewhat skeptical about the basic character of the Iranian leadership and its intentions. (Sources: *International Herald Tribune*, *Newsweek*, *The Times* [London].)

The grim dilemma of human government

Governments get into deep trouble when many things go wrong at once. Britain stands in the midst of one of the nation's worst political crises in its long history, prompted largely by revelations of abuse of public funds. Editor and journalist Max Hastings commented: "All governments end in failure. But never in modern British political history has there been a collapse as startling and dramatic as that which is taking place at Westminster this week" ("Indignity and Chaos Rule: Who Will Put This Exhausted, Discredited Regime Out of Its Misery?" *Daily Mail*, June 4, 2009).

The New Statesman magazine observed: "The country is in the midst of the worst parliamentary crisis in living memory as well as the worst recession; and the Parliamentary Labour Party is in disarray" ("Comrade Turns on Comrade in the Dying Days of New Labour," June 8, 2009). Earlier, *Daily Telegraph* columnist Christopher Booker had stated that "the standing of Parliament last week fell to its lowest level in its 800-year history" ("They Fiddle While Brussels Rules," *The Sunday Telegraph*, May 17, 2009).

A recent editorial in *The Spectator* reveals how citizens are reacting. "British democracy is at a low ebb. Polling data shows that more than 80% of voters think that MPs [members of Parliament] put their own and their parties' interest ahead of those of the country; that three quarters do not trust MPs to tell the truth" ("Enough, Already," June 6, 2009). (The popular standing of the American Congress is not much better.)

The media prognosis, however, may be a bit premature. Sometimes governments hang on and live

to try to govern another day. Said the *Financial Times* weekend editorial: "At the end of the worst week of his political life, [Prime Minister] Gordon Brown is still standing—just. *The question is whether he can still govern.* That must be answered because, with the challenges it is facing, Britain desperately needs a government" ("Time Runs Out for Gordon Brown," June 6, 2009, emphasis added throughout).

Daily Mail columnist Stephen Glover summed up this sad state of affairs from an overall perspective: "*We will continue to be poorly governed no matter which party is in power.* The root problem underlying all other problems is *the low quality of our political class.* Most MPs have little or no useful experience outside politics. Some of them are too young. Not many of them are intellectually distinguished . . . Nonetheless these people rule us. They attempt to govern us. They spend, or misspend, billions of pounds of our money. They take us to war. They make huge decisions about our lives. And they often make a muck of things" ("The Sad Truth Is Our MPs Are Second Rate," June 4, 2009).

What Glover just described applies, in varying degrees, to all human governments throughout history. Humanity's desperate need is for the government of God to rule all nations. Its coming remains the heart of the message this magazine proclaims. Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come." And we look ahead to the day of this awesome declaration: "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15). Then—and only then—will human beings be fairly and justly governed (download or request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*). (Sources: *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Financial Times* [all London].)

President promotes perversion

LGBT is an acronym that stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender." You'll probably be seeing it more often in the coming months, especially after U.S. President Barack Obama declared June 2009 "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month" for the United States.

"LGBT Americans have made, and continue to make, great and lasting contributions that continue to strengthen the fabric of American society," his proclamation stated. "I am proud to be the first President to appoint openly LGBT candidates to Senate-confirmed positions in the first 100 days of an Administration. These individuals embody the

best qualities we seek in public servants . . . The LGBT rights movement has achieved great progress, but there is more work to be done."

The president went on to explain his intent to promote such causes, declaring, "My Administration has partnered with the LGBT community to advance a wide range of initiatives." He listed international efforts to decriminalize homosexuality and domestic efforts to strengthen hate crimes laws, support for homosexual civil unions and adoption rights, outlawing workplace discrimination and ending the U.S. military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

"During LGBT Pride Month, I call upon the LGBT community, the Congress, and the American people to work together to promote equal rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity," his proclamation continued.

Not surprisingly, we find no mention in the proclamation of a biblical perspective, though it isn't hard to find in the Bible. God's view is easily discerned in Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:24-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Deuteronomy 22:5.

An ongoing lament throughout the Bible is God's sorrow over leaders who reject Him, leading their people astray. Particularly poignant in this instance is Isaiah 3:9-12: "*They declare their sin as Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves . . . O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths*" (emphasis added).

The people of America (and the same goes for any other nation) will surely rue the day they "call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). (Source: White House presidential proclamation, June 1, 2009.)

How Can You Make Sense of the News?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the *World News and Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening site offers you a perspective so badly needed in our chaotic and confused world—the perspective of God's Word, the Bible. Visit us at www.WNPonline.org today!





What's at the Heart of National Problems?

In the Bible we find page after page of God's warnings to ancient Israel of the inevitable negative consequences of national and individual sins. But are we any different? Is there a message here for us today?

The Bible tells us that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, King James Version). The fundamental laws of God were summarized for us in the Ten Commandments, which you can read in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. (We also offer a free booklet that explains these titled *The Ten Commandments*.)

The ancient Israelites were told that if they obeyed those laws, everything would go well for them and their new nation would be truly blessed in every conceivable way. But they were also warned that if they disobeyed those laws, negative consequences would surely follow.

Do these promises and warnings apply in our personal lives and on the world scene today?

Blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience

Many people, ignorant of these laws, have learned the hard way that breaking them, even without knowing them, carries a penalty. For example, the Seventh Commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Millions of people have broken this law and learned to their regret that the negative consequences are often endless, leaving a trail of devastated and miserably unhappy lives.

In the recent financial scandals that have plagued the British Parliament, its members, largely ignorant of the commandments, have discovered the hard way that breaking the commandment that says “you shall not steal” (verse 15) can cost you your job. At the very least, nobody will trust you again.

Other laws may not be so obvious. The Fourth Commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (verse 8), also carries within it a penalty for violation.

God revealed the Sabbath to the ancient

Israelites. The root word in Hebrew means “cessation from work.” Human beings need a day of rest once a week just to rejuvenate themselves physically. They also need a day to focus on God.

Worshipping Him in a congregational setting was commanded in Leviticus 23:3: “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation.” This is still commanded in the New Testament, in Hebrews 4:9 and 10:25. Jesus Christ set us the example by regularly attending services in the synagogue on Sabbath days (Luke 4:16) in accordance with God’s instructions as to how we are to worship and honor Him.

Another commandment is even more difficult to obey, its full spiritual intent encompassing so many aspects of our lives. It’s the First Commandment, which tells us clearly that we should set no other gods before the true God (Exodus 20:3). He must come first in our lives—above all else. To keep this commandment we need to be continually examining ourselves, as it is too easy for so many other things to get in the way of God and our relationship with Him.

The Eternal God, who through Moses led the Israelites out of slavery into their own land, emphasized repeatedly the need to live in accordance with His laws.

Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 are two biblical chapters that describe God’s promises of blessings for obedience and painful consequences for disobedience. This was not just a warning to a few individuals; it was a collective warning to the nation of Israel.

In the course of time, because of disobedience, the kingdom of Israel (10 of the 12 tribes) and the kingdom of Judah (primarily the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, known as the Jews) suffered foreign conquest and

were taken into slavery as a direct result of their national sins. You can read all about this in the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament.

But more importantly, *the listed blessings and curses are a clear warning to the English-speaking peoples and others today who are the modern descendants of the ancient Israelites.*

A prophesied time of trouble

The prophet Jeremiah wrote of a time of trouble that would severely affect the Israelites before the second coming of the Messiah. Jeremiah 30:7 warns: “Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it”—after going through that trouble, that is.

Jacob is another name for Israel, the biblical patriarch from which the 12 tribes of Israel sprang. Prophetically, it refers to the descendants of those tribes—foremost among them being the major English-speaking nations today.

This coming terrible time of unparalleled trouble will be the direct result of national and individual sins. In Leviticus 26, the same chapter that promised great blessings for obedience, we find a warning that if the nations of Israel do not repent, God “will punish you seven times more for your sins” (verse 18). In other words, conditions will grow far worse.

As the nations of the Western world, many of them descended from ancient Israel, turn progressively further and further away from the laws of God, this will be the result. We see the sad result of broken laws already. The mess that the American and British peoples find themselves in is a definite consequence of turning away from God’s law.

One cause of national financial problems

Consider the financial mess we’re in. It’s rooted in our breaking of the laws of God.

God gave mankind the basic family unit. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

Four thousand years later, the apostle



We see the sad result of broken laws already. The mess that the American and British peoples find themselves in is a definite consequence of turning away from God's law.

Paul affirmed the importance of the family unit when he wrote: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). He also wrote, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Until well into the 20th century, this family system was still the basic unit of society on both sides of the Atlantic and throughout the British Commonwealth countries. It remains the foundation of the rapidly expanding nations of India and China, even today.

But in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the nations of northwest Europe, the family has been increasingly undermined, replaced by a complicated social welfare system that has exhausted government

coffers and attracted millions of people from third-world countries who want to enjoy the same benefits.

Ironically, in most countries this has led to a dramatic fall in the birthrate of the founding ethnicities. Immigrant groups, however, are more likely to take advantage of the generous benefits offered to parents by producing larger families.

Now we see tens of millions of people largely dependent on the state. We also have millions employed by governments busily *redistributing* the wealth from productive members of society to the nonproductive—instead of creating new wealth, which was the priority of our ancestors and remains the priority of the fastest growing nations of today.

This overly generous welfare system, creating a whole class of people dependent on government (and who will consistently vote for whoever promises them the most), has been

made possible by excessive borrowing. Yet all too often the high standard of living people enjoy in their personal lives has also been made possible by massive borrowing, with millions of people wallowing in debt.

Everybody naively thought it could go on forever. But it couldn't, and now we're starting to see it all unravel.

Broken laws lead to great national problems

God's laws cannot be broken with impunity—there are always negative consequences, even if it takes decades to see them clearly.

Contributing to the breakdown of the traditional family in the Western world has been the sexual revolution, which coincided with the expansion of the welfare state. In the United States, President

Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" in the mid-60s coincided with the growing use of the birth control pill, which revolutionized attitudes toward sex. The result is accurately described in Hosea 4:10: "They shall commit harlotry, but not increase."

Sexual promiscuity, the pill and the breakdown of the family clearly contributed to the decline in the birthrate, which is a major factor in the current financial crisis.

It is also contributing to a seismic shift in demographics. As the majority ethnic population declines in each of the Western democracies, more people are needed to do the work and pay the taxes that take care of the growing numbers of the elderly. Workers have to come from somewhere, so these people are being "imported" from third-world countries, radically changing the culture and face of their new homeland.

Abortion is another major factor in this and another example of the negative consequences of breaking one of the laws of God, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). The United States alone currently aborts about 1.3 million babies a year—roughly the same number of immigrants it takes in each year, mostly from third-world countries with high birth rates.

It really doesn't make any sense, does it?

More results of broken laws

All of this is a recipe for financial disaster. It could also lead to racial conflict in some countries as resentment builds against immigrants who are often blamed for taking jobs away from the native citizens. Extremist parties are gaining strength in many European countries, largely on an anti-immigrant bias.

We could put it all right quite simply by restoring the God-given family unit, making it once again the fundamental building block on which society is built. This would save hundreds of millions of dollars, pounds and euros and free up millions of government employees for more productive labor.

Other countries, those now replacing the West as the wealthiest and fastest-growing economies, did not destroy the family system in the first place. Their success is still largely the result of a culture built on a strong family system.

We can see this by looking at some of the immigrant communities in Western

Who's Behind The Good News?



Who's behind *The Good News* magazine? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *The Good News* free to all who request it. Simply put, *The Good News* is provided by *people*—people from all walks of life, from all over the world.

But those people have a common goal: **to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to observe what Christ commanded** (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought—the wonderful *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that have long plagued humankind. Through the pages of *The Good News*, various booklets (also free) and our *Beyond Today* TV program, we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten our very survival.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God's purpose and plan for us as taught by Jesus Christ.

The United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services in your area, contact us at the appropriate address on page 2. Visitors are always welcome.



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nations. They retain their strong family system against the predominant cultural tide. Ironically, a restoration of the family system will likely be the consequence anyway when the financial system collapses and there is no more borrowed government money to hand out as welfare payments!

Of course, the breakdown of the God-designed family unit is not the only problem in our societies. Greed has also contributed greatly to our financial problems. The idea that we can have something now without paying for it by putting it on a credit card, or that government can pay for its promises to citizens by increased borrowing or creating money out of thin air, goes against the spirit of the Tenth Commandment, “You shall not covet” (Exodus 20:17).

Breaking the Fourth Commandment has also contributed to our nation's fiscal problems. Opening stores seven days a week only encourages overspending, adding to our debt load. More importantly, ignoring this command also contributes to the family breakdown by replacing any semblance of a day of rest and family togetherness with a day when family members run in all different directions.

Worst of all, though, it adds to the national sin of breaking the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (verse 3). Rather than putting God first in our lives, we have had an attitude like that described in Revelation 3:17: “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing”—when the reality, God says, is that spiritually we are “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” (The same delusion on a national scale is referred to in Hosea 12:8.)

A plea for change

We can see a lot wrong everywhere we look—and it's set to get worse as we progressively turn away from God.

However, while Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 warn of dire judgment on disobedience, the same chapters call for *repentance*, a national and individual turning away from sin. Notice Leviticus 26:40-45: “But if they confess their iniquity [sin] and the iniquity of their fathers . . . then I will remember My covenant with Jacob . . . for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God.”

This promise is beautifully echoed in 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If My people who are called by My name will humble them-



God's laws cannot be broken with impunity—there are always negative consequences, even if it takes decades to see them clearly.

selves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Our nations are unlikely to change before the return of Jesus Christ to this earth—but *you* can. God “*now commands all men everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30). Follow His admonition in Philippians 2:12 to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”! **GN**

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A Modern Menace: Emerging and Reemerging Diseases

by Becky Sweat

Worried health officials have declared the latest swine flu outbreak to be a worldwide epidemic, though so far it has proven not to be as deadly as first feared. But is this a warning of greater dangers to come? Does Bible prophecy give any indications?



This past April, when the first cases of H1N1 swine flu were detected in Mexico and the United States, health officials around the world went on high alert.

Surveillance measures were put in place. Pharmaceutical companies stepped up production of antiviral drugs. In cities with confirmed cases, schools were closed. Large public gatherings, such as sporting events and concerts, were canceled. Malls, restaurants and other public places were empty. The

scenes were very similar to what happened during the SARS and avian flu outbreaks that unfolded in Asia earlier this decade.

Aided by modern transportation, the virus spread rapidly. On June 11, with more than 125,000 confirmed cases and 140 deaths in 73 countries, the World Health Organization (WHO) finally declared the never-before-seen virus a pandemic—a global disease outbreak. The organization had long hesitated to take such a step—declaring the first global flu epidemic in

41 years—lest widespread panic result.

What the final outcome will be remains to be seen. With the arrival of summer in the northern hemisphere—and warm temperatures that flu bugs don't like—the spread slowed considerably. While there have been a large number of infections, this strain has been milder than originally feared and has been responsible for a relatively small number of fatalities.

Still, “that may only be the lull before the storm,” warned Richard Besser, M.D., acting director of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. His concern is over what will happen this fall when the traditional flu season begins. “What has been seen with previous outbreaks is flu goes away in the summer,” he noted. “But during the winter flu spreads better, so the virus could go away and come back.”

“I believe we are not out of the woods yet,” added Christopher Ohl, M.D., associate professor of medicine in the section on infectious diseases at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. “I am concerned this virus is going to be with us for a while. It could change, become more virulent, have an increased secondary transmission rate . . . in the future.”

Of course, the spread of swine flu isn't the only disease problem health officials are concerned about right now. Let's consider the scope of the threat before us, look at some of the underlying causes, and see what light the Bible sheds on how the situation has developed and where things could go from here.

Deadly pathogens emerging or reemerging

Currently the WHO is monitoring *about 40* emerging infectious diseases. These have been around only a few decades.

The list includes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), Ebola, dengue hemorrhagic fever, Lassa fever, Nipah, Hendra, hantavirus, Marburg, monkeypox, mad cow disease (BSE), severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), West Nile virus, Lyme disease, Legionnaires' disease and the cyclospora parasite. These pathogens—disease-causing agents—have either mutated or genetically recombined to become new strains or novel microbes, or they may have

The spread of swine flu isn't the only disease officials are concerned about. Currently the World Health Organization is monitoring *about 40* emerging infectious diseases. These have been around only a few decades.

existed for millennia but weren't discovered until recent years.

According to the WHO, at least one new infectious disease has emerged each year since 1980, many of which evade traditional therapies and have no vaccine or cure. "There are far more virulent, very difficult-to-treat infectious diseases today than there were 20 or 30 years ago," warns Klaus Stohr, D.V.M., Ph.D., director of the influenza task force for the WHO in Geneva, Switzerland.

At the same time, old infectious diseases once believed to be controlled, such as tuberculosis, staphylococcus, cholera, malaria, hepatitis, influenza and diphtheria, are *reemerging* as deadly new, often drug-resistant strains, or are springing up in new regions of the world.

With so many deadly pathogens coming on the scene, notes Dr. Stohr, "infectious diseases are once again the leading cause of death in the world—something that hasn't been the case since the pre-antibiotic era of the early 1900s." Of the estimated 57 million deaths that occur annually in the world, the WHO estimates that 15 million of them are directly caused by infectious diseases. Millions more deaths are due to secondary effects of infections.

Scientists have identified close to 200 bacterial, viral, parasitic and fungal pathogens that are linked with emerging and reemerging infections among human beings. There could be another 1,000 out there, according to Dr. Stohr. They just haven't been introduced yet into the population.

At least 75 percent of these pathogens are zoonoses—meaning they are transmitted between animals and people—which makes these diseases even more problematic. Transmission can occur through direct contact with an infected animal's blood, saliva, urine or feces, or via an intermediate vector—typically an insect or rodent—that gets the pathogen from an infected animal reservoir and then passes it to people.

"Zoonotic diseases cannot usually be eradicated due to the fact that it is not possible to eliminate all of the animal reservoirs or vectors that might be carrying the zoonosis," explains David Freedman, M.D., professor of medicine in the division of geographic medicine at the University of Alabama.

"Even if you developed a vaccine and a cure for a particular zoonotic disease and it was somehow possible to simultaneously treat every person in the world that had it," he observes, "there are still animals that can transmit that disease back to humans and continue the spread of that pathogen."

Deadly epidemics prophesied

If you are familiar with end-time Bible prophecy, none of this may be a surprise to you. Perhaps what immediately comes to mind is the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, and in particular the fourth.

The apostle John describes the horse and rider this way: "When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, 'Come and see.' So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And *the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades* [the grave] followed with him" (Revelation 6:7-8, emphasis added throughout).

The latter part of this verse refers to death resulting from "the beasts of the earth." Considering the huge number of deaths described here, this could well refer to epidemics caused by animals that transmit and carry infectious diseases.

In Jesus' parallel prophecy in Matthew 24, He reveals the true identity of this pale green horse: "And there will be . . . pestilences" (verse 7). The fourth horseman symbolizes climactic, globe-encircling plagues and pandemics. We need only consider the devastating "black death"—bubonic plague that killed tens of millions worldwide in three great waves—to understand how horrifyingly real this prophecy can be.

Many factors behind pandemics

That's the simple explanation for why these outbreaks will intensify. Yet there are a lot of factors behind these pandemics. Many believe mankind is actually creating its own disease problems, albeit unintentionally.

"In almost every case humans are the most important single factor in the surge of new diseases, whether it's feeding cow tissue to cattle to cause mad cow disease, people eating exotic animals in the case of Ebola, or air travel spreading dengue around the world," claims Thomas Monath, M.D., chief scientific officer with Acambis Inc., a vaccine development company based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

We are not simply victims of emerging infections, he says, but we're making changes in our environment or lifestyles to cause the emergence or spread of disease. Most of the change that has occurred involves several key areas.



• Agricultural practices and consumption of exotic animals

One of the primary

ways new diseases emerge is through what biologists call "genetic recombination." This can happen when two or more animal species come in contact with each other and exchange the viruses that each carries.

"Two different viruses may infect the same cell. Then the genomes get jumbled, and a totally novel virus emerges—which contains genetic material from both parental strains," explains Roy Anderson, fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) and professor of infectious disease epidemiology at Imperial College of the University of London.

One way this is happening more and more is through a farming method which is becoming an increasingly common practice in Asia.

"Ducks or chickens are kept in cages hung above pigs, which are housed in pens directly above fishponds, where other types of fowl may also swim and eliminate their own wastes," notes Bruno Chomel, Ph.D., D.V.M., a veterinary epidemiologist specializing in zoonotic diseases at the University of California College of Veterinary Medicine.

Farmers use this method to save money on pig feed and increase yields of fish. The pigs feed on the duck droppings, and the pig manure fertilizes the fishponds. "The problem is, it puts ducks and other waterfowl, which are major reservoirs of influenza viruses—although it doesn't affect *them*—in direct contact with pigs, which may also be harboring influenza viruses," Dr. Chomel says.

A pig that eats duck droppings can take in any viruses the ducks may have, which may include both avian and human flu viruses. Those can combine with the pig's influenza viruses, and then they'll all be mixed up inside the pig's stomach.

That is how the H1N1 influenza virus—which is a mixture of avian, human and pig flu viruses—came to be. One of the reasons scientists are so concerned about the current swine flu outbreak is that it could recombine with a more virulent strain before returning to the northern hemisphere in the fall flu season.

"If a human flu virus, which is easily transmissible to humans, combines with a virulent and novel duck or swine flu, that is when you have problems," Dr. Chomel says. "You get the worst of both, together in one virus."

Recombination can also occur when humans eat nondomesticated exotic animals. In China, exotic animals like civet cats, coral snakes, tree shrews, flying squirrels, badgers, martens and pangolins are considered delicacies. In Africa, monkeys, apes, aardvarks

and rats are all popular meat choices. Guinea pigs, capybaras and armadillos are commonly eaten in Central and South America.

When people consume these meats, any viruses the animal may have been carrying can combine with viruses the person may have. The result may be a new pathogen that infects human beings.

That is apparently how HIV, the deadly virus that causes AIDS, emerged. HIV is a fusion of the simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV), which infects monkeys and apes, and a similar type of virus that infects people. "SIV was transferred to humans as a result of monkeys being killed and eaten or their blood getting into cuts or wounds on the hunter," Dr. Freedman says.

The bottom line, says Dr. Chomel, is "the practice of consuming wild species opens the door for a much wider variety of pathogens—those of wild animals—to come in contact with humans and develop transmissibility."



• Changing land use increases contact

Ecological changes often cause disease emergence. "There are

environments in the developing world that used to be quite remote that are now much less so as a result of human activities like deforestation, dam projects, irrigation, road construction and extensive agriculture," says Jim Hughes, M.D., director of global infectious disease programs at Emory University and former director of the National Center for Infectious Diseases at the CDC.

These remote wilderness areas are home to some unique microbes—bacteria, parasites or viruses not found anywhere else. When people enter these ecosystems, they encounter these pathogens for the first time. For example, mankind's first contact with the Ebola virus occurred in the late 1970s when people began clearing the rainforests of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The animal inhabitants themselves can also contribute to the spread of deadly microbes. "Once forests are cleared, the wildlife that used to live there have no choice but to migrate further out in search of food and land in which to live," says Stephen Corber, M.D., director of prevention and control for the Pan American Health Organization in Washington, D.C.

"A lot of times they end up in suburbs and farming communities where they make

contact with people," he says. "If they're bringing diseases with them, that's when you have problems."



• Rapid international travel allows quick spread

Since the third quarter of the 20th century, individuals have been able to travel huge distances in a matter of hours—well within the incubation period of many infectious diseases. "Today anyone can get on a plane and get to the other side of the world in a matter of 24 to 36 hours," notes Dr. Hughes.

The speed of travel enables someone in North America, Europe or Asia to go on safari in Kenya, pick up the Ebola virus or some other pathogen, fly back home, pass unnoticed through immigration and customs checks, and then spend the next few days back at work before suddenly getting sick. During the incubation period—the time between getting infected and developing clinical signs of disease—this person may expose hundreds of people to the virus.

"People can be spreading disease and not even know they are ill," warns Hugh Pennington, M.D., Ph.D., president of the Society for General Microbiology in the United Kingdom and honorary professor of medicine at the Institute of Medical Sciences at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland.

This is in sharp contrast to past days when people traveled by ship. It may have taken several weeks to travel from one continent to another. "If someone had picked up a virus before getting on the ship, he would have developed that disease while still on board," Dr. Pennington says. "Upon arrival, it would have been obvious to port authorities which passengers were sick and needed to be quarantined."

As illustrated by the recent rapid spread of the H1N1 swine flu virus, modern travel can allow deadly pathogens to quickly outrace our best preventative measures.



• Poverty and disease inextricably linked

Not surprisingly, the poorest nations usually have the worst problems with infectious diseases. Sadly, poverty levels appear to be on the increase for much of the world. According to a 2008 United Nations

report, more than 80 countries have *lower* per capita income today than at the beginning of the 1990s.

"As poverty levels climb, so does the incidence of disease," says Dr. Anderson. The poor are often malnourished, lack understanding of proper hygiene, have no access to medical care and live in densely populated slums—perfect conditions for the transmission of diseases.

One of the most desperate regions of the world is sub-Saharan Africa. A 2004 World Bank report found that close to half the population in this region lives in poverty, and this percentage is projected to increase in the years ahead.

But, warns Dr. Anderson, "This is not just a concern for Africa." Just as diseases do not stay in the poorer parts of a town, they do not confine themselves to poorer nations. "Many of the diseases that Western nations are contending with today got their start in the developing world," he adds.

Sooner or later, there's a visitor to a disease-infested area, or someone from that area travels to another region and then transports the pathogen to a new part of the world.



• Urbanization aids disease transmission

Increasing numbers of people, particularly in the developing

world, are moving from rural areas to large cities to find work. In this way, contagions that may once have been obscure and localized in sparsely inhabited villages reach large population centers. Once in a city, the newly introduced infection multiplies among the local population and then spreads farther along highways and railroads and by airplane.

Many end up living in overcrowded "megacities"—huge urban conglomerations of 5 million or more residents. There are at least 41 megacities in the world today, most of which are in less-developed nations. In contrast, 50 years ago there were just eight megacities in the world, all but two of these in developed countries. Experts predict that by 2015, 59 megacities will exist, 48 in developing nations.

"Pathogens like dense populations because it promotes transmission from person to person," Dr. Anderson explains. Because the populations of megacities have grown so rapidly, most are not prepared to deal with such large numbers of residents, nor are their local

economies usually strong enough to finance a lot of city improvements.

“Sewage and water systems are often inadequate, resulting in water supplies that are tainted with deadly bacteria,” Dr. Anderson says. “There may not be enough hospitals, so when people do get sick, they cannot get the medical care they need.” Additionally, he adds, most megacities are located in tropical or subtropical regions where infectious microbes thrive.



• Forced displacement due to war or civil strife

The United Nations estimates there to be a record high of 35.6 million refugees and internally displaced persons in the world today. These are people who’ve been forced to flee their homes due to internal conflict, war or persecution. The majority are from war-torn regions of sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Southern Asia and Latin America. In recent years the number of displaced people has steadily risen due to the increasing number of conflicts in the world.

This trend has a direct impact on the proliferation of infectious diseases. “Refugees are often in poor health and very susceptible to infectious agents. Any pathogens they may be infected with are transported with them on their route and to wherever they end up,” Dr. Monath explains.

Not only that, he continues, “the temporary settlements or camps they may be living in are typically overcrowded, have poor sanitation, are infested with rodents and other vectors, and the food and water supplies may be contaminated—just what bacteria need to flourish.”

A case in point would be the 800,000 Rwandan refugees who migrated into Zaire in 1994. Cholera and shigella dysentery swept through the camps, killing nearly 50,000 people in the first month.



• Human morality and disease

The 1960s brought dramatic changes in human morality, particularly in terms of sexual behavior. “Whereas having multiple or concurrent sexual partners was unacceptable in the early 1900s, by the latter half of the 20th century it had become the norm in many societies,” notes Dr. Pennington.

Not only had “casual sex” among heterosexuals become acceptable, men having sex with other men became more commonplace. At the same time, intravenous drug use became rampant, with drug users often sharing needles with other injectors.

It all fueled the spread of HIV, hepatitis C, genital herpes and other sexually transmitted diseases—all of which are transmitted through the transference of body fluids.



• Overuse of antibiotics creates deadly new superbugs

Widespread antibiotic use—often when antibiotics weren’t called for—has created new antibiotic-resistant bacteria. “Patients will often insist they need an antibiotic when they have a cold or the flu, and sometimes doctors will give in to these demands,” observes Trish Perl, M.D., director of hospital epidemiology and infection control at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. The problem is that colds and flu are caused by viruses, which are not treatable with antibiotics.

According to the CDC, up to 40 percent of antibiotics prescribed in doctor’s offices are for viral infections. This is not always due, however, to patients demanding they get an antibiotic. Sometimes physicians prescribe antibiotics when they can’t make a definite diagnosis or “just in case” bacteria are present.

“With so many antibiotics in the environment, we’re pressuring these bacteria to evolve into resistant strains,” Dr. Perl asserts. “A particular drug may be prescribed so much that sooner or later the bacterium outsmarts it and learns how to grow within that environment.” At that point, the particular drug is no longer effective at treating that type of bacteria.

Dr. Pennington explains the process this way: “Any population of organisms, bacteria included, naturally includes variants with unusual traits—in this case, the ability to withstand an antibiotic’s attack on a microbe. When people take antibiotics, the drug kills the defenseless bacteria, leaving behind—or ‘selecting’—those that can resist it. These renegade bacteria then multiply and become the predominant microorganism.”

Adding to the problem, North American livestock producers have been unnecessarily feeding antibiotics to their animals to

The only real solution to the threat of devastating contagions is to turn to God in repentance—seeking and remaining committed to His ways.

try to promote growth and as a preventative disease-control measure. This has turned the livestock into a reservoir of drug-resistant germs. When people eat undercooked, contaminated meat, they can become infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Today there are drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis, malaria, streptococci and salmonella—to name a few “superbugs” that have emerged in recent years. Because they have the antibiotic-resistant gene in them, they are considered to be genetically new organisms. “Some infections are now so resistant to the drugs we have available that they are virtually untreatable,” Dr. Hughes says.

The infamous “flesh-eating bacteria,” methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), is one of these terrifying new superbugs regularly making headlines.

Biblical perspectives

To students of the Bible, many of the factors just discussed are obvious violations of biblical instruction. A lot of the zoonotic diseases plaguing our modern societies would never have become a problem if people weren’t consuming exotic or biblically “unclean” animals, which harbor a lot of contagious diseases that domesticated “clean” animals do not. We’re told in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 which types of animals should and should not be eaten.

Many of those living in overcrowded megacities and refugee camps are faced with inadequate waste disposal systems, resulting in contaminated food and water supplies. This is another area addressed in the Bible. Deuteronomy 23:9-14 says that human wastes were to be buried outside the community, away from where people were living.

The Bible is clear about what constitutes sexually immoral behavior, which is the root cause of the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases plaguing our planet.

In Leviticus 18 and 20, God prohibits incestuous relationships, extramarital and premarital sex, homosexuality and unnatural acts with animals. Homosexuality is specifically addressed again in Romans 1:27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:18 that “he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”

Ultimately though, disease outbreaks and pandemics are a result of mankind’s broken relationship with God.

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He told them: “If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you” (Exodus 15:26).

On the other hand, God warned of consequences for disobedience, including disease outbreaks (Leviticus 26:21, 25; Deuteronomy 28:15, 21-22, 27-28). Nevertheless, the Israelites persistently disobeyed Him. So has every society since, and mankind continues to reap the consequences.

The only real solution to the threat of devastating contagions is to turn to God in repentance—seeking and remaining committed to His ways. You as an individual can turn to God, and He will see you through the dark times ahead. This includes worsening pandemics, as the world at large is not yet ready to submit to God’s will.

Today, humanity as a whole is cut off from God. His promise of protection from disease isn’t there, but someday it will be. Jesus Christ will return to earth and establish God’s everlasting Kingdom (Revelation 19:11-16). We can look forward to that day when mankind will be united with its Creator and will receive all the blessings of living God’s way of life—which includes good health and a world free of disease outbreaks. **GN**

Four Biblical Keys

Continued from page 11

Washington, quoted above, mentioned that self-interest would be the main motivator of the politics among nations because “we must in a great measure, *change the constitution of man, before we can make it otherwise.*”

The Bible promises just such a change in “the constitution of man”—his fundamental makeup—beginning at Christ’s coming: “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: *I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people*” (Jeremiah 31:33). Ultimately, all of mankind will be brought into the same relationship with God.

At the time of Christ’s return, Satan the devil will be put away and no longer sway nations to follow selfish and violent ends (Revelation 12:9; 20:1-3).

2. *Nations will not seek self-interest, but the interest of others.* Once the nations are converted and receive God’s Spirit, they will no longer view themselves as rivals but as colleagues. They will *all* seek to obey God and end war.

We read of this profound change in national attitudes in Isaiah 2:2-4: “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and *all nations shall flow to it.* Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths’ . . . They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war anymore.*”

3. *National character will not be used to oppose, but to build up.* With their nature changed, nations will instead use their talents to cooperate and build each other up.

We read in Isaiah 19:23-25 of nations that were formerly enemies: “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts

shall bless, saying, ‘Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.’”

4. *There will be no more need for balance of power; there will be only one power over all the earth.* All nations will learn God’s ways and keep God’s holy feasts together in harmony and peace. Jesus Christ will be the head of government over the entire world, and there will be no competing powers.

We read in Zechariah 14: “And the LORD *shall be King over all the earth . . .* And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem *shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles*” (verses 9, 16). In learning to worship the true God in the way He commands in His Word, the Bible, all nations will finally learn the way to true peace and cooperation with one another.

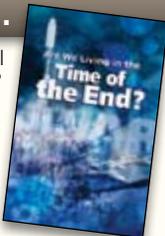
Be alert and on guard

Seismic shifts in world politics have occurred in the past decades, some are occurring now, and more will be coming in the days ahead. Jesus Christ tells us that we need to be alert to such things and spiritually on guard as the time of His return draws close (Mark 13:33-37). Use these four keys regarding nations today to avoid being deceived by carnal political or religious leaders. Power politics is a reality, and it’s vital to keep our eyes open and our perspectives firmly grounded in biblical truth.

As Christ admonished us, let’s intelligently watch what happens around us and always be in an attitude of praying, “Thy Kingdom come!” In doing so, let us be mindful of the way the four keys here will be quite different when that Kingdom is finally established over all nations. **GN**

To Learn More...

What major events and trends will precede Jesus Christ’s return? Do deadly diseases and epidemics play a role in end-time events? Does Bible prophecy provide the answers? You need to know! Request or download your free copy of *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* This eye-opening free booklet reveals what is foretold in your Bible!



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Can we understand where our troubled world is headed—and why? Does Bible prophecy give us any indications? Are there specific trends we should expect and look for? To help our readers discover the answers, we’ve prepared the eye-opening booklet *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. Request or download your free copy today!



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God's Appointment With You

by John Ross Schroeder

Did you know that God set aside a special day so you can have meaningful, lasting contact with Him? Nearly 6,000 years ago our Creator declared the seventh-day Sabbath a day of rest and fellowship with Him.

On any given week our fast-paced, modern lives may embrace several appointments, some of which we don't relish keeping. Few look forward to a tooth-extraction date with the dentist or even a periodic medical checkup. There's no telling what our physician may discover.

Of course most health-care professionals seek to lengthen our lives and make them more pleasant. Yet no matter how capable and competent, they cannot deal effectively with the wide-ranging scope of our human anxieties and uncertainties, along with our financial, work and marital problems.

Only God has the inherent ability to deliver us from all our problems. Only His Word can tell us what our priorities ought to be.

Driving us far from God

Yet our modern societies are not designed to begin, build and enhance a proper relationship with our Creator. Instead, our society mostly widens the gap between God and ourselves—driving us far away from the divine help we all need to cope with life in an increasingly complex, fast-paced world.

Many today are in a state of perpetual confusion, being weighed down with various problems and anxieties. "Hurry sickness" is one symptom and has become the malaise of our Western world. Life in the fast lane is taking a tragic toll.

One journalist frankly confessed: "I am pathologically impatient and incapable of waiting for anything. I'm always stomping

out of shops, bars or restaurants because the [line is] too long and I can't be bothered to wait." Today we hear of road rage—and even supermarket-cart rage! As a result of our chronic impatience and always being in a hurry, some become miserable, lonely, stressed-out and sick.

Too many of us don't sleep all that well. Many continually gorge on fast foods, not taking the time to prepare healthy meals. We've allowed time to become an *enemy* rather than a friend. We are badly misusing one of our most valuable resources. Most of us have lost the knack for properly budgeting our time. We don't realize how important the biblical admonition to "redeem the time" is to our whole well-being (see Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5).

We always seem to have so much to do that we find virtually no time left for regular contact with our Creator. The world has largely cast aside the biblical keys that would unlock the door to God's presence and help in our lives.

A God-like view of time

A psalm attributed to Moses gives us some much-needed perspective. "LORD," it begins, "You have been our dwelling place in all generations . . . Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:1-2). When God takes center stage in our minds, we start to think differently—to mirror His thoughts rather than our own.

But all of us grow older every day, and the clock is ticking. Our physical lives are composed of just so much time. Many

today are already past the 70 years the psalm mentions and are wondering just how much time is left to them.

As the psalm states: "We finish our lives like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (verses 9-10).

Our Creator wants us to grasp the implications of the fact that we won't live forever in the flesh. We all need to learn to use our time properly: "*So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom*" (verse 12, emphasis added throughout).

Our visionary thoughts should extend to a future time beyond our physical lives. God offers the gift of eternal life to those who meet His conditions and surrender their wills to His. But we have to take sufficient time *now* to think about our real future in the age to come.

Enter God's seventh-day Sabbath!

A day devoted to God

Leviticus 23 is one of the great chapters of the Bible. When we truly understand its implications, it becomes a divinely revealed map of God's plan and purpose for humankind.

It begins: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "*The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations [sacred assemblies, NIV], these are My feasts*"'" (verses 1-2). God is the Revealer of truth, and Moses is the agent speaking directly with the people on His behalf. These are *God's* festivals, and He has exclusive rights to them. They belong to Him and not to any person or group of people.

The Hebrew word translated "feasts" here is *mo'edim*, which means "appointed times" (verse 4) or "appointments" as we would say today.

The first one mentioned is the weekly Sabbath—to be observed from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. "Six days shall work be done, *but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation*. You shall do no work on it; it is *the Sabbath of the LORD* in all your dwellings" (verse 3).

The rest of the chapter is devoted exclusively to seven yearly festivals containing seven Holy Days (annual Sabbaths). As verse

Observing the Sabbath is an integral part of the Ten Commandments. It is no less valid a commandment than the other nine specifically designed to cover our relationships with other human beings and God.

From Sabbath to Sunday: How and Why the Change?

When did Sunday, the first day of the week, come to be seen as a substitute for the seventh-day Sabbath commanded in Scripture?

The change is connected in part to waves of anti-Semitism that swept the



Constantine the Great

Roman Empire as a result of the Jewish wars in the first and second centuries. At that time, many among the scattered early Christians erroneously began to distance themselves from biblical practices that were commonly viewed as Jewish. This included obeying God's Sabbath command.

Simultaneously, false teachers arose from within the Church just as the apostle Paul had prophesied (Acts 20:29-30), introducing pagan teachings and beliefs. Over time, the majority of those professing to be Christians drifted from the original teachings and practices of Christ and the apostles. (This history is spelled out in more detail in our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*.)

In the third and fourth centuries, as the Catholic Church gained favor in the Roman Empire under the emperor Constantine the Great, it increasingly incorporated customs adapted from pagan worship (a process called *syncretism*). Among these was the elevation of Sunday, the day devoted to honoring the sun god, a deity worshipped by Constantine and very popular with the masses in the Roman Empire.

Meanwhile, those who held to the original teachings of Christ and the

apostles were increasingly persecuted. By A.D. 365 an edict by Catholic leaders at the Council of Laodicea declared: "Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather, honouring the Lord's Day [meaning Sunday in this context]; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ [i.e., excommunicated or disfellowshipped]" (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 19, p. 148, emphasis added).

Most Catholic and some Protestant theologians are willing to admit that Sunday observance cannot be justified from the Scriptures. Notice what James Cardinal Gibbons, archbishop of Baltimore early in the last century, wrote in *The Faith of Our Fathers*: "Is not every Christian obliged to sanctify Sunday and to abstain on that day from unnecessary servile work? Is not the observance of this law among the most prominent of our sacred duties? But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify" (1917, p. 89, emphasis added).



James Cardinal Gibbons

The truth about other important aspects of the Saturday/Sunday controversy is addressed in our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*. Why not request your free copy today?

4 states, "These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times." The intriguing explanation of their significance is beyond the scope of this article. To help you better understand them, we recommend that you read our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*, available through our Web site or by mail (see page 2 for our address nearest you).

Here we concentrate on your divine appointment with God set for every seventh day.

Observing the Sabbath day

We all need rest from our general labor and occupational work. So the Creator commands us to rest every seventh day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). The Sabbath commandment *actually dates from creation* since God Himself rested on that *first* seventh day and sanctified it—set it apart—as an example for all mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:1-3).

Spiritual fellowship with others of like mind is one of the most beneficial tonics to the human psyche. We all need it! Of course, this can only succeed in and

through our fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3). Successful relationships, whether with God or man, all require quality time.

A weekly day of rest enables us to use the other six days much more profitably. People who work seven days a week generally burn out sooner rather than later. As well as physical and mental rest, we need sufficient time to meditate, thinking about those matters that bring us special meaning and divine purpose.

The Sabbath provides time and space for families, couples and friends to draw closer together. This seventh-day rest provides precious time for prayer and to read and study the Bible, the book that tells us how to live in ways that are infinitely rewarding, purposeful and fulfilling. It is also a time for assembling with others for collective worship, as the term "convocation" in Leviticus 23:3 denotes a commanded assembly (compare Hebrews 10:24-25).

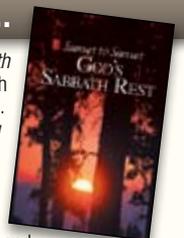
Observing the Sabbath is an integral part of the Ten Commandments. It is no less valid a commandment than those six specifically designed to cover our relationships with other human beings—do

not murder, do not steal, do not commit adultery, etc. It is one of the vital first four that help us to express love to our Creator, worshipping Him in a proper and respectful manner.

All too many in mainstream Christendom are either dismissive or ignorant of this weekly get-together with their Creator and are missing out on the spiritual edification that observing the seventh-day Sabbath provides. Why not start keeping your weekly appointment with God? **GN**

To Learn More...

Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest shows from the Bible which day is the real Christian Sabbath. This booklet also discusses how to observe this weekly Holy Day in a balanced and practical manner. This publication will open up fresh vistas of biblical knowledge that can bring peace and order to your personal life. Download or request your free copy today!



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Meekness and Gentleness: Strength With a Tender Touch

The biblical qualities of meekness and gentleness are misunderstood and undervalued in today's society of extremes—where all too often people tend to angrily overreact or passively underreact.

by Don Hooser

Elephants are so strong they have frequently been used for logging—to carry large logs and even uproot trees. But these giants are usually gentle, especially when tamed from a young age.

The elephant's trunk in particular is an example of strength coupled with precise control. Its trunk, with more than 40,000 individual muscles, is strong enough to rip branches from trees but sensitive enough to pick up a single blade of grass!

The trained elephant illustrates the great value of having both strength and careful gentleness—unlike the proverbial “bull in a china shop.”

Compared to English, the Greek language has more precise words for describing the valuable quality of trained animals like elephants and horses. The New Testament uses those same Greek words for a virtue God wants His people to develop.

When the apostle Paul lists “meekness” as the eighth attribute among the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:23 (King James Version), he uses the Greek noun *praotes* or *prautes*—and “meekness” is the closest translation for the Greek word used here. (Similarly, the closest English translation for the related Greek adjective *praos* or *praus* is “meek.”)

We are to be meek (*yielded, teachable, responsive*) first of all in our relationship with God, and secondly meek (*humble, gentle, respectful*) in our relationships with people. To become this kind of person, God must tame and train us!

A word with a closely-related meaning is *magnanimous*, defined as “generous in forgiving; avoiding resentment or revenge; unselfish.”

Meekness is an important part of true love. “Love is patient, love is kind . . . It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5, New International Version).

The Bible places great value on meekness.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek [Greek *praus*], for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). That’s a mighty big reward for being meek!

But since “meek” is no longer a popular or commonly used word, modern Bible translations frequently substitute the almost-synonymous word “gentle.” Scriptures quoted in this article are mostly from the New King James Version, which uses “meek” and “gentle” interchangeably.

However, be aware that gentleness refers mostly to *actions*, whereas meekness refers to *attitude*—one’s *whole state of mind* as well as actions. Meekness *produces* gentleness. This explains why meekness is one of the beatitudes—beautiful *attitudes* for which God promises blessings (Matthew 5:5).

Meekness is not weakness!

Many people confuse “meek” with “weak.” It’s regrettable that they rhyme because godly meekness *requires strength!*

For a physical comparison, if you were badly injured and needed someone to *gently* carry you, wouldn’t you want someone who was *really strong*? You wouldn’t want a person who might stumble or clumsily struggle with you!

Adding to the confusion is the idea that hair-trigger angry reactions are “normal.” As a result, some people assume that a person who doesn’t retaliate tit for tat must be afraid or mousy. But true strength is shown by a secure individual who stays cool, thinks first and then responds in the way that will best help the other person. “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

Consider God! He is *all-powerful*, but He never misuses His power. He is the perfect Father who never overreacts, is gentle with His often-unruly children and always does what is best for us.

Consider also the example Jesus Christ set while on earth. Although He could call on divine power, He was approachable,

sympathetic, kind and loving. He said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am *gentle* and lowly [humble] in heart” (Matthew 11:29, emphasis added throughout). He used His power for healing rather than hurting. Remember His words: “*Learn from Me.*”

Fruit of the Holy Spirit

The greatest power on earth is the power of the Holy Spirit. It is this Spirit—God’s Spirit—that enables people to be far more meek and gentle than they could ever be without it, as Paul shows in his letter to the churches of Galatia.

Paul knew that the Christians there were backsliding into hostile attitudes and personal conflicts. He wrote that some were “biting and devouring each other” (Galatians 5:15, NIV). He urged them to “through love *serve one another*” (verse 13), reminding them, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (verse 14).

What the Galatians needed was to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16). And what did he say is the *result* of following the lead of God’s Holy Spirit?

Paul went on to write of how that Spirit would transform our lives: “But the fruit [product, effect] of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, *gentleness*, self-control” (verses 22-23).

What a great solution! God doesn’t leave us on our own to work up these virtues. By putting our faith in God, repenting of our sins and being baptized, we can “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). And that gift includes *wonderful fruit!*

Then, to continue bearing spiritual fruit, think of yourself as a branch. The key is to stay attached to the trunk of the true vine, Jesus Christ (John 15:1-6).

It’s easy to see how the attributes among the fruit of the Spirit overlap and relate to each other. Meekness and gentleness relate very closely to love, longsuffering (being

patient and not short-tempered), kindness and self-control.

It's also easy to see how desperately we human beings need God's Spirit to overcome the "works of the flesh"—the ugly and evil tendencies of human nature (Galatians 5:19-21). We surely need meekness and gentleness in place of "hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions"!

Later we see how important gentleness is when it comes to helping someone caught up in a sin. Paul said, "You who

ical fighter, *no*. A spiritual fighter, *yes*. Right after Paul wrote to Timothy to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness," he went on to say, "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:11-12). This kind of fight is not against people but against evil influences, especially those of Satan and the demons (Ephesians 6:11-12). We are to use spiritual weapons, not physical weapons (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Successful spiritual warfare requires great courage and endurance. Paul wrote, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, *be brave, be strong*" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

But in our relationships with people, we are not to be combative or argumentative—we are to be *peacemakers*.

Paul also wrote: "Love one another with brotherly affection . . . Live in harmony with one another . . . Repay no one evil for evil . . . If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live *peaceably* with all" (Romans 12:10, 16-18, Revised Standard Version).

When someone hurts you, just take it rather than hurting back. That's what Jesus meant by loving everyone and turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-45).

Since we all like to be treated gently, why not treat everyone else gently? "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). That's the Golden Rule!

Qualities that relate to meekness and gentleness

As with the fruit of the Spirit, other scriptures also show us how certain virtues go hand in hand. Paul said we are to "walk . . . with all lowliness and *gentleness*, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in

love" (Ephesians 4:1-2).

He also wrote that we should "put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, *meekness*, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (Colossians 3:12-13).

Meekness includes voluntarily "submitting to one another" (Ephesians 5:21).

In a long passage, Peter spoke of the importance of submission of all kinds—Christians toward government (1 Peter 2:13), servants toward masters (2:18), Christ's example of submitting to His tormentors (2:21-25) and wives toward their husbands (3:1).

Peter also encouraged wives to emphasize inner beauty rather than outer beauty—"the unfading beauty of a *gentle* and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:4, New International Version). Then in verse 7, he exhorted husbands to be *true gentlemen* and to *honor* their wives.

To everyone, Peter wrote, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with *gentleness* and respect" (1 Peter 3:15, NIV).

Two scriptures use another Greek word that specifically means "gentle." One says that "a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be *gentle [eepios]* to all, able to teach, patient" (2 Timothy 2:24).

And the other one beautifully shows Paul's great love for those in the churches he watched over: "But we were *gentle [eepios]* among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

The world sorely needs this kind of TLC—tender loving care!

Grow in meekness and gentleness

To keep your attitudes and actions meek and gentle, you will need to swim upstream against the culture's current of rudeness and roughness. Paul foretold that "in the last days . . . men will be lovers of themselves . . . unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal" (2 Timothy 3:1-3). Doesn't that describe much of the content on television and in movies?

God is calling people out of such darkness to be "the light of the world"—to set the right example for others (Matthew 5:14). That's a tall order. But God is ever ready to help us. Pray earnestly for His help. And make a habit of reading God's Word so it can transform your thinking and way of life.

Remember that an important part of being that shining light is having godly meekness and gentleness. And someday the whole world will be a peaceful and happy place. That someday is when Christ returns and the meek inherit the earth! **GN**



The trained elephant illustrates the great value of having both strength and careful gentleness.

are spiritual restore such a one *in a spirit of gentleness*, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). Paul not only meant we should show gentle words and actions, but *also a humble attitude* rather than a superior and self-righteous approach (see verse 3).

To fight or not to fight?

Should a Christian be a fighter? A phys-

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UNITED STATES

Alaska
Anchorage ch. 18, Fri 4 p.m.

Arizona
Prescott ch. 13, Sun 5 p.m.; Sat 3:30 p.m.
Prescott Valley ch. 13, Sun 9 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Tucson ch. 72, 120, Sun 9:30 a.m.
ch. 73, 98, Sat 9:30 a.m.

Arkansas
Fayetteville ch. 18, Sun 10 a.m.; Wed 6 p.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

California
Anaheim (west) ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Clayton ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Concord ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Costa Mesa ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Cypress ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Danville ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Eureka ch. 12, Fri 8 p.m.
Fountain Valley ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Garden Grove ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Hayward ch. 28, Tue 10 p.m. (monthly)
Hemet ch. 3, Fri 2:30 p.m.
Huntington Beach ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Lafayette ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Livermore ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.
Los Alamitos ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Marin County ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.
Martinez ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Midway City ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Modesto ch. 26, Thu 8:30 p.m.; Fri 6 p.m.
Monrovia ch. 16, 98, Tue, Thu and Sat 4:30 p.m.
Novato ch. 71, Tue 9:30 p.m.
Orange ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Orinda ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Palo Cedro DCA cable link, Thu 10 a.m.
Pasadena ch. 56, Sun 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Petaluma ch. 26, Sun 9:30 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Wed 6 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.
Pleasant Hill ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Rossmoor ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Sacramento ch. 18, Mon 6:30 p.m.
San Diego ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.
San Francisco ch. 29, Sun 9:30 a.m.
San Jose ch. 15a, Wed 4:30 p.m.
Santa Clara ch. 15a, Wed 4:30 p.m.
Santa Rosa ch. 30, Sun 7:30 p.m.; Sat 10:30 a.m.
Stanton ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Walnut Creek ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Westminster ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.

Georgia
Cornelia ch. 4, Sun 6:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.

Hawaii
Hilo ch. 53, Sun 10 a.m.; Thu 7:30 p.m.

Idaho
Boise ch. 11, Wed 7:30 p.m.

Illinois
Arlington Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Bartlett ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Brookport ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Buffalo Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Chicago ch. 36, times vary
Des Plaines ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Elk Grove Village ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Glenview ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Golf ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Hanover Park ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Hoffman Estates ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Lincolnwood ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Metropolis ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Morton Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.

Naperville ch. 17, Sun 10 a.m.
Niles ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Normal ch. 20, Sun 9 p.m.
Northbrook ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Palatine ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Romeoville ch. 6, Sun 9 a.m.
Schaumburg ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Skokie ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Springfield ch. 4, Wed 12 a.m., 8 a.m. & 5 p.m.
Streamwood ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Wilmette ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.

Indiana
Bloomington ch. 3, Sun 9:30 p.m.
Evansville ch. 7, Mon 5:30 p.m.; Tue 6:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne ch. 57, Sun 8:30 a.m.
Valparaiso ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.

Iowa
Des Moines ch. 17, Sun 11:30 a.m.

Kentucky
Owensboro ch. 72, Sun 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Paducah ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.

Massachusetts
Boston ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
Cambridge ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
East Longmeadow ch. 5, Sun 11:30 a.m.
Greenfield ch. 17, Tue 6:30 a.m.; Sun 6 p.m.
Palmer ch. 12, Tue 11 p.m.
Worcester ch. 13, Thu 10 a.m.

Michigan
Ann Arbor ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.
Grand Haven ch. 22, Mon 4 p.m.
Grand Rapids ch. 25, Tue or Wed 11 a.m.
Kalamazoo ch. 95, Sun 9 & 9:30 a.m.
Michigan City ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.; Thu 7 p.m.
Midland ch. 3, Tue 5:30 p.m.
Mt. Pleasant ch. 3, times vary
Potosky ch. 2, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Fri 5 p.m.
Redford ch. 12, Mon 6 p.m.
Traverse City ch. 2, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Fri 5 p.m.
Ypsilanti ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.

Minnesota
Albert Lea ch. 13, Sun 10:30 a.m.
Austin ch. 13, Sun 10 a.m.
Blaine ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Bloomington ch. 16, Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.
Brooklyn Center ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Brooklyn Park ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Centerville ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Circle Pines ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Crystal ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Eden Prairie ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Edina ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Golden Valley ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Ham Lake ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Hopkins ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Lexington ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Lino Lakes ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Litchfield ch. 10, Sun 2 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 12:15 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wed 3 a.m., 8:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Maple Grove ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Minnetonka ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
New Hope ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
New Ulm ch. 72, Sun 5 p.m.; Thu 10 a.m.;

Osseo ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Plymouth ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Richfield ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Robbinsdale ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Rochester ch. 10, Sun 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.
St. Charles ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.
Spring Lake Park ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Wabasha ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.
Winona ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.

Missouri
Cape Girardeau ch. 5, Sun 7:30 a.m.; Tue 6:30 p.m.; Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 7:30 p.m.
Jackson ch. 5, Sun 7:30 a.m.; Tue 6:30 p.m.; Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 7:30 p.m.
Jefferson City ch. 3, Wed 6 p.m.
Poplar Bluff ch. 54, Tue 4 p.m.
Springfield ch. 26, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Wed 7 p.m.

Montana
Billings ch. 7, Sun 6 p.m.; Sat 11 a.m.
Helena ch. 11, Sun 3 p.m.
Missoula ch. 7, Sun 11 a.m.

Nevada
Carson City ch. 10, Wed 7:30 p.m.
Reno/Sparks ch. 16, Wed 7 p.m.

New Hampshire
Laconia ch. 25, 26, Sun 7:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m.

New Jersey
Newark ch. 19, Sun 10 a.m.; Sat 11 p.m.

New Mexico
Santa Fe ch. 16, Sun 10 a.m.; Mon 6:30 p.m.

New York
Binghamton ch. 4, Thu 5:30 p.m.
Bronx ch. 70, Mon 3 p.m.
Brooklyn ch. 56, 69, Sun 10 a.m.
Canandaigua ch. 12, Sun 2 p.m.
Long Island ch. 20, Mon 10 p.m.
New York ch. 57, Sun 7 a.m.
Oneonta ch. 23, Mon 6 p.m.; Wed 9 p.m.
Queens ch. 35, Tue 8 p.m.; Thu 3 p.m.
Woodbury ch. 56, Sun 10 p.m.; Thu 4:30 p.m.
ch. 115, Sat 3 p.m.

North Carolina
Charlotte ch. 21, Sat 1 p.m.
Durham ch. 18, Wed 7:30 a.m.
Hickory ch. 10, Sun 7 p.m.
Raleigh ch. 22, Tue 6:30 p.m.

North Dakota
Bismarck ch. 12, Sun 2:30 p.m.
Fargo ch. 12, Tue 10:30 a.m.

Ohio
Athens ch. 23, Sun 7 p.m.; Wed 7 p.m.
Brunswick ch. 21, Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 12:30, 4:30 & 8:30 a.m.; 2:30, 6:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Bryan ch. 4, Sun 11:30 a.m. & 8:30 p.m.; Mon 8:30 p.m.
Cincinnati ch. 18, Sun 10:30 a.m.; Tue 10 p.m.; Thu 11 p.m.; Sat 6:30 a.m.
Cincinnati (Union Twp.) ch. 5, Sun 12 noon; Thu 6 p.m.; Wed 11 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.
Dayton ch. 12, Sun 11 a.m.; Wed 7 p.m.
Defiance ch. 5, Sun 12 noon; Thu 6 p.m.
Fairborn ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Greenville ch. 3, Thu 8 p.m.
Huber Heights ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 12, Sun & Sat 9 a.m.
Springfield ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Urbana ch. 1, daily 6 a.m., 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Vandalia ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Wash. Court House ch. 3, Wed 2 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.
Xenia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.

Oregon
Eugene ch. 29, Tue 2 p.m.
McMinnville ch. 11, Sun 5:30 p.m.; Wed 8 p.m.
Medford ch. 15, 95, Sun 5 p.m.
Monmouth ch. 17, Sun 11 a.m.
Portland ch. 22, Sun 7:30 p.m.; Thu 8 p.m.
Salem ch. 23, Sat 4 p.m.
ch. 23, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Fri 2 p.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh/Moon Twp. ch. 21, 14, Sun 12 & 2 p.m.

Rhode Island
Entire state ch. 14, Fri 10:30 a.m.

Texas
Austin ch. 11, Mon 8:30 p.m.
Dallas ch. 14B, 74, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 9:30 p.m.
Del Rio ch. 19, Sun 9 a.m.; Wed 5 p.m.
El Paso ch. 15, Mon, Fri, Sat 1 p.m.
Fort Worth ch. 28, Tue 5:30 p.m.; Thu 1 p.m.
Longview ch. 26, Tue 2 p.m.; Sat 9 p.m.
San Antonio ch. 20, Mon 10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Virginia
Charlottesville/Chermerle County ch. 13, 14, Wed 10 p.m.
Hampton Roads ch. 71, 74, Sun 10 a.m.

Washington
Bainbridge Island ch. 12, Sun 9:30 a.m., 6:30 p.m., 11 p.m.; Sun-Sat 1 a.m.; Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat 5 a.m.; Tue, Thu 5:30 a.m.
Everett ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.
Kennewick ch. 13, Sun & Tue 8:30 p.m.
Olympia ch. 22, 29, Sun 9 a.m.; Thu 10:30 p.m.
Spokane ch. 14, Sat 5:30 p.m.
Vancouver ch. 11, Sun 11 p.m.; Mon 5 p.m.; Sat 11 a.m.

West Virginia
Morgantown ch. 3, Mon, Wed & Fri 3 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.

Wisconsin
Beloit ch. 12, Thu 6:30 p.m.
Eau Claire ch. 96, Sun 2 p.m.
Kenosha ch. 14, Sun & Mon 7:30 p.m.
Madison ch. 4, Sun 12:30 p.m.
Milwaukee ch. 96, Mon 2 p.m.; Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 2 p.m.
Omro ch. 19, Sun & Sat 1 p.m.
Stevens Point ch. 96, 98A, 98A-1, Mon 5 & 9:30 p.m.; Tue 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.
Wausau ch. 96a, 981d, 98a, 980d, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Sat 9 a.m.
West Allis ch. 14, times vary

CANADA

Nationwide
Vision TV, Sun 7 p.m. (PST)
Star Choice Digital ch. 399, Sun 10:30 a.m. (EST)

Alberta
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sun 8:30 a.m.

British Columbia
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sun 7:30 a.m.

Manitoba
The Christian Channel MTS ch. 21, Sun 9:30 a.m.

New Brunswick
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 11:30 a.m.

Newfoundland and Labrador
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 12 noon

Northwest Territory
The Christian Channel Northwestel ch. 226, Sun 8:30 a.m.

Ontario
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 10:30 a.m.
The Christian Channel Cogeco ch. 186, Sun 10:30 a.m.

Saskatchewan
The Christian Channel SaskTel ch. 282, Sun 8:30 a.m.



A Lesson in Prayer

by **Beyond Today** host Gary Petty

You've probably heard about the power of prayer and how prayer can bring about wonderful changes in your life. But have you ever prayed and nothing happened? Have you recited the same words over and over, hoping God would somehow help you make a decision or supply an answer to an unsolvable problem? It's not that God doesn't care. The problem could be that you don't know what Jesus taught about prayer.

Have you ever stood in a church service and like some mechanical drone recited these words: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen."

Then you walked away with no understanding of the kingdom, no power and no glory of God in your life. Sound familiar?

This passage is what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer, found in Matthew 6:9-13. Yet what Jesus gave here is actually an *outline* of how to approach God and is more accurately a *model* prayer. Let's consider what it reveals.

Start with proper focus and priorities

Taking a careful look at this model prayer, we see that Jesus says to begin your prayer by honoring God. How many times have you started your talk with God with the "gimmies"? You know—give me a new car, give me a new job, give me a new house . . .

Jesus said to begin your prayer with praise for God's greatness. Many times we approach the awesome God as if He were a genie in a bottle waiting to grant us our wishes, instead of with an attitude of humble worship that is due the Creator of the universe.

Jesus next said to pray, "Your kingdom come." We must long for God's rule to be established throughout this earth—and in our own lives today.



What are the important priorities in your life? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His followers not to have anxious worry about their physical appearance or clothing. He told them to look at God's creation and see the power, love and genius of the Creator and trust in Him.

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus told His disciples not to fret over daily needs but to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." God blesses those who have set His priorities in their lives.

If you don't see God's blessings in your life, you should ask yourself, "Are God's priorities the main priorities in my life?"

If you're going to have God fulfill His purpose in your life, then everything you do must be founded on two simple principles. Jesus said that the two greatest commandments are to "love the LORD your God with all your

heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40). These two commandments must be the basis of all your priorities if you want to receive God's blessings.

A matter of unconditional surrender

In the model prayer we are next told to pray, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

At the Battle of Fort Donelson during the American Civil War, the Confederate general asked for terms of surrender. The Union commander Ulysses Simpson Grant answered, "No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted." After that it was said that Grant's first two initials, U.S., stood for "Unconditional Surrender."

In your relationship with your Creator, He grants you no terms except unconditional surrender. Unconditional surrender means to give up control over your own life and give your life to God. Handing over control of your life to God is daunting.

How can you have the courage to unconditionally surrender your life to God? Think of the most exciting sporting event you ever watched when your favorite team won. Remember the anxiety and emotional ups and downs as the game hung in the balance.

Now think about watching the highlights of that game later. You experienced excitement, maybe even wanting to see the game repeated over and over, but the anxiety of possible defeat was gone. It's the same players, the same drama, but the difference is that *you know the outcome*.

To accept God's will in your life, you must have *faith in His promised outcome for you*. When you have that kind of trust in God, His power is unleashed in your life. It's not always easy, but God will be with you through all the ups and downs, and He will ensure the final victory.

Next Jesus said to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." It's important that we take our physical needs to God. But notice, you do this *after* you have honored Him and



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asked for His will in your life. God wants you to bring your job needs, bodily aches and pains, family problems and financial difficulties to Him for wisdom and counsel. He wants to intervene in your life to make every day a wonderful, spiritual adventure, but first you must acknowledge Him as the source of your life and blessings.

Looking again to Matthew 6:33, if we put God and His way first, He will see to it that all our needs are met.

Forgive to be forgiven

Next in the prayer outline Christ gave, we are told to ask God, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." The debt here is what we owe for the sin we've committed—essentially personal suffering and death. In a similar passage, Luke 11:4 records Jesus' words as "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us" or, as the New International Version interprets this, "everyone who sins against us."

Thankfully, God offers us forgiveness for the terrible things we've done against Him. In return He expects all of us to extend forgiveness to others.

Forgiveness is giving up the emotional need to punish someone who has treated us in a hurtful way. A disciple of Jesus named Peter realized that to forgive someone seven times was remarkable. Jesus told him to forgive a great deal more than that (Matthew 18:21-22). Forgiving others isn't easy, but you will never experience true peace of mind until you do.

Jesus explained the need for forgiving others in a parable about a man who owed a king a great amount of money. The man was brought before the king and begged for time to get the money together. The king, out of the goodness of his heart, showed the man mercy and forgave his debt.

This man then went out and found another man who owed him a small debt. The second man begged for time, but the forgiven man demanded payment and threw the second man into debtors' prison. The king found out and told the man whom he'd forgiven, "Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" He then turned the man over to suffering until he paid what had previously been forgiven him.

Explaining the point of the story, Jesus warned, "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (Matthew 18:23-35).

When you refuse to give up the desire for

revenge, you not only twist your own emotions into anger and bitterness, you damage your ability to respond to God's forgiveness. Once you become obsessed with the wrong someone else has done, you start down a long road of anger and despair.

What, then, must you do? Consciously decide to not dwell on the offenses of others. You must replace the thoughts of hurtful treatment from others with positive thoughts of God in your life.

Break the bonds

We are next instructed in the model prayer to ask, "Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." The wording in the first part of this verse can be misleading, since God tempts no one (James 1:13). Instead, "each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (verse 14).

The Greek word translated "temptation" here would be more accurately rendered as "trial" or "test"—as in the New Revised Standard Version, which words this as "do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one."

The intent of Christ's words is twofold: first, that we should understand we have an unseen spiritual enemy, Satan the devil (1 Peter 5:8), from whom we need to ask God for His protection and help; and second, that we might be humble and teachable enough to learn our lessons now so we won't have to be put through sore trials to be corrected.

We must be aware that Satan will use our weaknesses against us. Perhaps your weakness is an uncontrollable temper, sexual lust, resentment toward your spouse, envy, alcohol abuse or—you fill in the blank. Satan wants to enslave us to sin, but God wants to break whatever bonds tie us down. Take your weakness to God and ask Him to protect you from situations that will tempt you to sin and from the tricks and temptations of the devil.

Jesus ends His prayer outline with an expression of confidence in God's ability to answer the prayer: "for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Thus, your prayer is to end by once again praising God.

This model prayer isn't a magic formula where you recite the special words and power is released in your life. It is an outline teaching you how to have a personal relationship with your Creator. When you have trouble praying, use this outline to personalize your talk with your Creator. Learn to pray as Jesus prayed! **GN**

Beyond Today television program

I just watched my first episode of *Beyond Today* on your Web site and would like to thank you for the information in it. I will be watching the telecast more often now that I know I can get it on the Internet. I already subscribe to *The Good News* and other publications and always find them fulfilling and accurate for today. My circumstances have changed recently due to the financial crisis. My job was made redundant. Your magazine has helped me keep faith and my sanity during this hard time. I have now found some part-time work and hope to rebuild my confidence.

T.P., Melbourne, Australia

You may also wish to request or download our free booklet You Can Have Living Faith. Interested readers can watch Beyond Today programs online at www.BeyondToday.tv.

"Search and you will find," says the Bible. Finally, in my old age the Lord is opening my eyes to the truth of the Kingdom of God. For years I was told that the Kingdom is within you (Luke 17:20-21, King James translation). Praise the Lord! I am out of that along with some friends. It's the program *Beyond Today* that opened our eyes to the truth. Would you please send us three sets of your *Bible Study Course* lessons?

M.B., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

We have mailed three copies of the first lesson of the Bible Study Course. Luke 17:21, to which you refer, should have been translated "For the Kingdom of God is among you" (Revised English Bible; compare New Revised Standard Version). Jesus Christ was present among His disciples as the preeminent direct representative of that coming Kingdom. And through His miracles and teachings the reality of God's reign was made evident. To learn more, request or download our free booklet The Gospel of the Kingdom.

The Good News

Thank you for the article "When Nations Fall" in the March-April *Good News*. I come from Zimbabwe, and so I find this issue fascinating.

P.G., Bedford, England

I was just given a copy of the March-April *Good News*. I haven't had a chance to read it all yet, but what I have really quickly convinced me of the importance of new things. The Questions and Answers column had the best-written explanation I have ever seen on the subject of the misplaced comma in Luke 23:43. This passage is a favorite of mine for checking the quality of any translation, among numerous other such passages. I request that you please add me to your mailing list.

H.H., Palestine, Texas

If any readers would like to further understand the accurate explanation of Luke 23:43, the account about the thief on the cross, request or download our free booklet Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?

I am one of the enthusiastic readers of your *Good News* magazine. I want to declare that you are doing a great job of spreading religious beliefs in an age when God has been forgotten.

S.A.P., Tehran, Iran

Thank you very much for the subscription renewal letter for *The Good News*. Kindly renew the same. Please note that many articles—especially about Israel, world issues, the second coming of Jesus, European countries, the financial crisis, etc.—are very informative. I have had the opportunity to share them with other believers in our church.

J.V.M., Bahrain

Please accept a small donation to help share *The Good News* and your other free publications with others. We like to voluntarily support this work as coworkers in the effort to proclaim the true gospel to all nations.

Reader, Ontario, Canada

Bible Study Course

It has been some time since I began to receive your *Bible Study Course*

lessons, and I must apologise most sincerely for not having been in contact and to acknowledge your kindness and consideration in sending each lesson over the last few months. I have so much appreciated the course and the information in each of the lessons—some of which I have been able to refer to in one or two of my assignments for the first year of a foundation degree in theology. There was a renewal form included with lesson four and, unfortunately, I overlooked it. So I am enclosing the renewal form.

D.M., Cumbria, England

Readers appreciate booklets

Just a word of thanks to let you know that I appreciate reading your booklets very much. I can hardly put one down once I receive it and start reading. I just turned 89 years of age and have grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I want to send them these booklets. I truly hope and pray that they will help them get on the right track with God. Enclosed is a cash donation to help cover the cost of my request.

E.L.B., Cincinnati, Ohio

I love the booklet that you sent me. I don't how or why you got my address. But thank you for this booklet from the bottom of my heart. I'm Roman Catholic and I've had so many questions about Jesus' death and why we celebrate 40 days of Lent.

I.V.R., Bakersfield, California

Thank you for your assistance. I have enjoyed reading and using your materials because of the fact that they don't get sidetracked into denominational issues or theological opinions but stick pretty well to the Scriptures. Sometimes I wish our own materials did as good a job of doing that. I am a bishop with the Independent Reformed Catholic Church. I think sometimes that churches and pastors develop the belief that their job is to win converts to a denomination, and they lose sight of the fact that in reality it's to make disciples of Christ.

Presently I am teaching a small Bible study class for children. Our next area of study is the Ten Commandments and how they are essential in guiding us not only in our Christian ethics as God's law, but how we may abstractly as well as traditionally utilize them in our daily lives as well. I have already read your free booklet *The Ten Commandments*, and I feel it would be ideal as one of the bases of our biblical study.

B.D., Dalzell, South Carolina

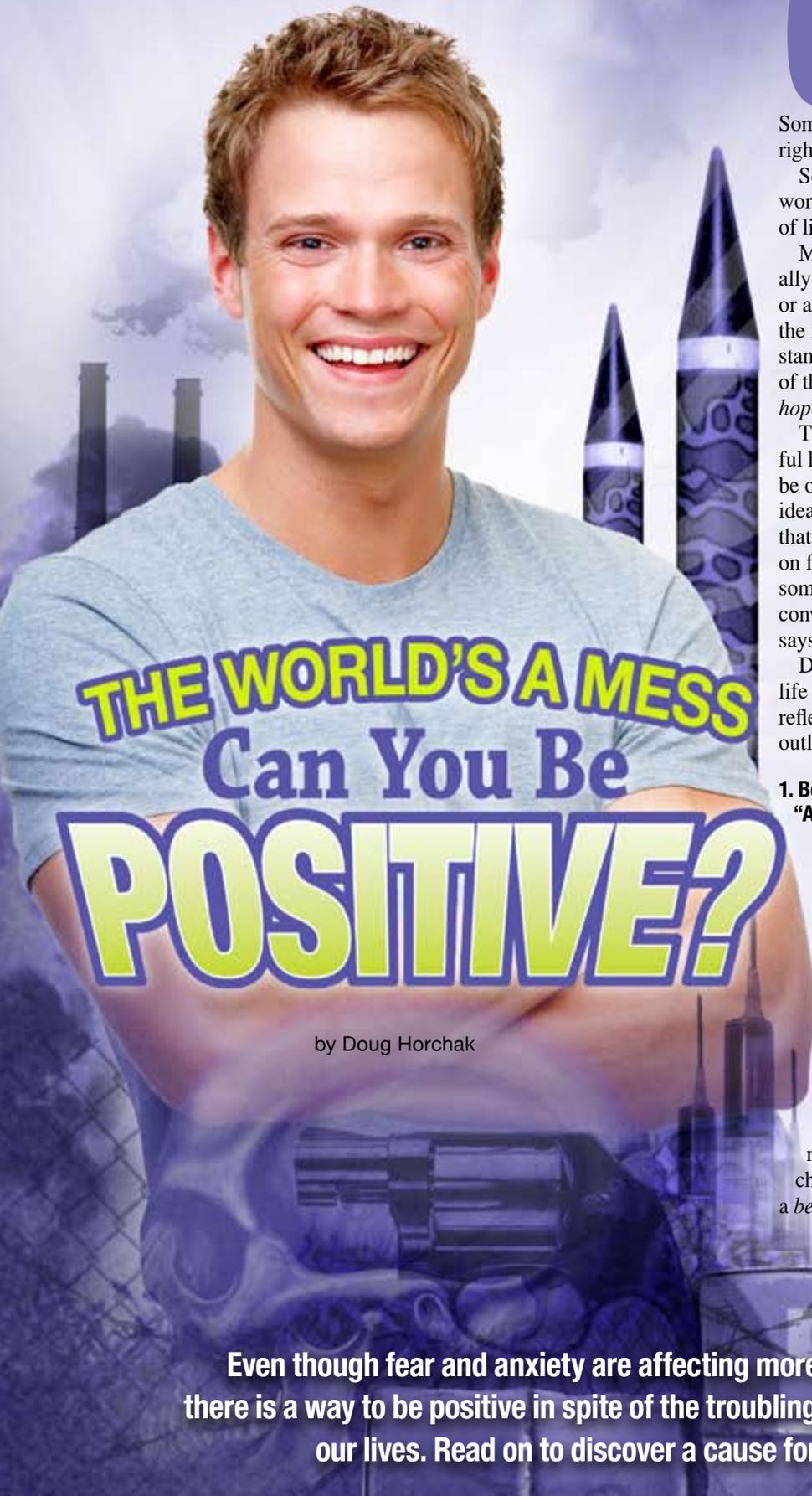
I want to compliment you and the staff for a beautiful set of booklets and wonderful scholarship. I am getting so much out of them. I've had 17 years in the ministry and have graduated from two seminaries. Yet I've never seen such beautiful layouts, such vivid photos, and clear writing from your editors. I am a strong believer in daily Bible study.

I don't know how you manage financially, but I want you to know that I will be contributing each month as God enables me, in order to keep your ministry going. Again thank you and God bless you, your donors and the staff that works so diligently on these booklets you send out. I read and study every one. They are not lost on me.

M.K., Leesburg, Virginia

Although all our publications are offered free of charge to make them available to as many as possible (in line with Jesus' instruction "Freely you have received, freely give"), we do appreciate the generous support of our readers who are willing and able to provide financial support. Even more important are the prayers of all of God's people that the gospel would be effectively spread to all nations (see Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20). God's system of financing His ministry is clearly revealed in our free booklet What Does the Bible Teach About Tithing? Also, if you would like to know how the Church accomplishes the Work of God today, ask for our free booklet This Is the United Church of God.

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to *The Good News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254-1027, U.S.A., or e-mail gninfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).



THE WORLD'S A MESS
Can You Be
POSITIVE?

by Doug Horchak

Even though fear and anxiety are affecting more and more people, there is a way to be positive in spite of the troubling news that dominates our lives. Read on to discover a cause for optimism!

Given the world in which we live, with the deteriorating global economy, the increasing conflicts between nations and the endless fear of terrorism in regions around the globe, it would seem that these are impossible times for optimism.

Some would even say you'd have to be out of your right mind to be positive at a time like this!

So what about you, your family, your friends? Are worry, concern and pessimism affecting your view of life in today's world?

Many think the real choice is between two mutually exclusive options: being either a blind optimist or a hardened pessimist. However, a further look at the facts (including the Bible) will help us understand that there's a positive choice involving neither of those two options. That third choice is being a *hopeful, informed and optimistic realist!*

The key word here is *hope*. However, meaningful hope must be based on fact and conviction to be of any value. These days, too many people have ideas and opinions about this world and its troubles that don't offer a lot of hope. But hope that is based on facts enables a person to look at the future with some optimism, with an understanding and deep conviction that things *will* get better because God says so!

Do you want to have genuine optimism about life and the future? If your answer is "yes," then reflect on these three action steps toward a positive outlook:

**1. Believe God's promise:
 "All things work together for good."**

History reveals that life for the true Christian in Rome during the first century was quite difficult. The problems included a tough economy, legal slave trade, gambling and sex trade, pagan worship and *persecution*. Yet through it all, Paul said, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose" (Romans 8:28, emphasis added).

Revealing why he was so positive, Paul cited God's promise of a better future (Romans 8:18-25). Considering the difficult times in which we now live, God also says to us (as Paul did to the church at Rome) that there is *hope*. God promises a *better future*. But what is behind that promise?

2. Discover that the future will be better—not worse!

God's Word shows us that we live in a world with an immediate future that isn't pretty. Look around, and you'll see the evidence everywhere.

Almost 2,000 years ago on the Mount of Olives, on the east side of Jerusalem, Jesus Christ told His disciples that in our generation man's troubles would increase: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22). This is a pretty nasty description.

God's Word also reveals that much of humanity's efforts to solve its problems will, in the *short term*, end in failure. While current efforts to prop up the worldwide financial system might work in the short term, the longer range prospects are not good.

But here's the key: The Bible also reveals that the return of Jesus Christ will take place to clean up the mess! His arrival will usher in the only hope for humanity being saved from itself. The apostle Paul refers to Jesus Christ as "our hope" in 1 Timothy 1:1. The hope that Jesus Christ will bring is that of a new government based on the spiritual laws of God, administered by those whom God calls now, in this life.

Imagine . . . a utopia of real peace! The prophet Isaiah was allowed to see, in vision, the beginning stages of this divine government in action.

In Isaiah 2:2-3 we read: "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

Think about a time in the future when most people will *choose* to obey laws that will lead to cooperation and peace. This will be a time when most will seek understanding and direction from their Creator about His law and its application to life. What a change that will be!

The Bible also shows that the nations will eventually choose to learn and apply

the way of peace. They will no longer teach the way of greed or practice the carnage of human violence that has defined humanity's efforts to solve its problems over the millennia.

As the prophet Isaiah explains, "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4).

3. Remember God's promise: "I'll never leave you!"

In the midst of our world's troubles—economic failure, terrorism, disease, social unrest and moral decadence—God promises to be with us. In Hebrews 13:5-6 we read: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"

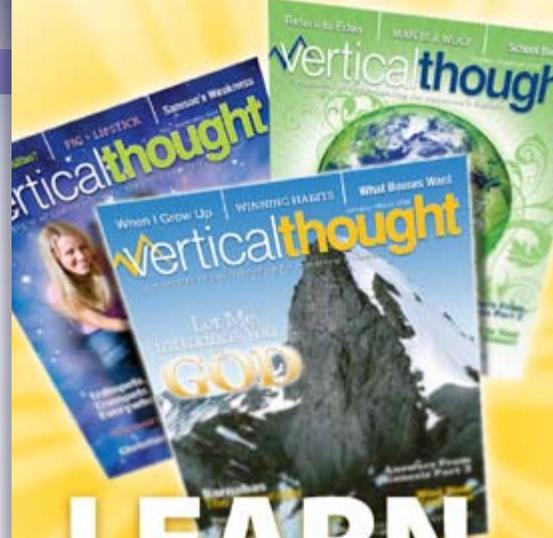
The Bible also tells us that when evil comes, God will see us through. As the prophet Isaiah revealed to ancient Israel, "In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you" (Isaiah 54:14).

The same is true for us today. God can protect us and we need not fear! So our ability to reap true *hope* and *optimism* is based on our personal efforts to understand and live God's way!

The future of mankind is hopeful! There is much to be thankful for! While the darkness before the dawn may be sobering, God has a plan that is more optimistic than anyone could imagine! To read more about this hope-filled future, read or request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom* at www.GNmagazine.org/booklets.

Though we live in this troubled world, we don't have to be troubled in mind or heart. There is a way of life that provides joy, happiness and real hope for the future. Don't become overly fearful about the troubling events in the world that you cannot control. Take advantage of the opportunities God gives you to understand His plan, and serve Him.

Believe God's promise to His people in Deuteronomy 31:6: "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid . . . for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." **GN**



LEARN MORE!

If you like reading our articles for teens and young adults in *The Good News*, be sure to take a look at our companion magazine, *Vertical Thought*, at 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 guiding today's young people in getting 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.

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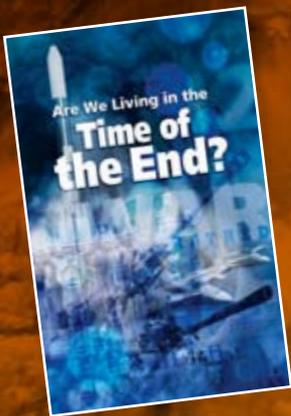
What Does Bible Prophecy Tell Us About the Time of the End?

For thousands of years people have been fascinated with predictions of the end of the world. If we look into the inspired writings of the biblical prophets and apostles, we find many prophecies that refer to the time of the end. Should we take them seriously? Are world conditions such that these prophecies could be fulfilled in our day?

Jesus Christ Himself talked of a future time so horrendous that no human lives would be spared “unless those days were shortened” (Matthew 24:22). Did He have our time in mind?

Many biblical warnings leave us in no doubt that increasingly cataclysmic events will occur before God’s direct intervention in human affairs. These terrifying prophecies will see their fulfillment at some future time. The crucial question is *when*.

The eye-opening booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* examines exactly what Jesus, His apostles and the biblical prophets really said about the intriguing days they refer to as the time of the end. Download or request your free copy today!



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