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The Majority: Unknowing, Unaware and Unconcerned

Most people have scant appreciation of the constant dangers that stalk our planet. The presence of God in our lives is our only sure protection.

by John Ross Schroeder

Skilled U.S. and Western diplomatic teams calmed the Indian and Pakistani antagonists just when things appeared to be getting out of control. Personal warnings from President Bush and his team had lowered the heat on the Kashmir dispute. In effect these two nations had been threatening each other with mutual nuclear destruction. They had approached the brink of nuclear warfare. But brinkmanship of this type is a deadly game in today's technological world.

Experts feared that India and Pakistan could have set off an uncontrollable chain reaction of events—not only killing an estimated 12 million people, but threatening the breakdown of our entire modern world.

A *USA Today* cover story summed up the acute dangers: "Beyond such mind-numbing casualties, the first nuclear exchange in history would decimate the economies of both nations and likely trigger a collapse of world financial markets that could spur a worldwide depression. Destruction and famine would send millions of refugees to neighboring countries. . . . The world would face a humanitarian crisis greater than anything that it has seen before" (June 4, 2002).

The overall damage would be catastrophic. Even the geopolitical fallout is incalculable. Southeast Asia would become lawless to the extent that terror-



Reuters

Pakistan tests missile May 25

ists could operate almost unhindered. The Western war against terror might collapse in such dire circumstances.

Strong monsoons could be the carriers of deadly radioactive fallout to neighboring nations—perhaps even reaching faraway Britain. In addition to a projected 12 million deaths, an estimated 7 million would be injured and

(See "MAJORITY," page 3)



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Restoration

ACTS 3:21

Greed Is the News of the Day

In the parable of the unjust steward Jesus said, "The sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8). Looking at some of the recent spectacular business failures in the American economy reminds me of this biblical story of a businessman who let his brilliant talent become tarnished by greed and power.

Last November it was Enron, the Houston, Texas, based energy company, which collapsed almost overnight when accounting fraud overestimated profits by \$600 million. The stock drastically dropped in value, thousands lost jobs and millions of dollars were lost by investors both large and small.

Arthur Andersen, Enron's auditor, lost business and credibility when it was revealed that documents were shredded to cover up major bookkeeping mistakes. Andersen was one of America's largest and most respected firms. Its fall is part of a mounting credibility gap spreading over much of corporate America.

In late June WorldCom, the second-largest long-distance company in the United States admitted that the company had claimed regular operating expenses as capital expenses over five consecutive quarters in 2001 and 2002. This allowed the heavily indebted company to overstate earnings by \$3.8 billion, artificially inflating the company's value. The U.S. Justice Department will launch a criminal investigation against WorldCom, and the company is laying off 17,000, or 28 percent of its staff.

Confidence is a strong suit for any nation. As the global markets watch company after company implode due to fraud and larceny, the value of the dollar sinks on international currency markets. Recent weeks have seen gains against the dollar by other currencies, notably the euro. A weakened dollar could negatively impact the European and Asian economies resulting in shifts of influence and power. Nothing can be taken for granted in today's rapidly shifting world.

Which leads to a strong warning for American business leaders. Don't give in to the selfish pulls of personal ambition and vanity. Don't look only at the bottom line of profit or stock value as the measure of success. Thousands of people have staked their futures on your decisions. It is not only those around the boardroom table to whom you answer. You answer as well to those around the kitchen table. Build your company around values and principle, which will enable it to last decades and beyond. Build with future generations in mind.

The book of James makes one specific indictment of the rich who mishandle wealth. "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you" (James 5:1-6).

I have an idea as a summer seminar for business leaders. Study the parable of the unjust steward and other passages that deal with money (Luke 16:1-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-19). They offer a primer on priorities for those who handle the finances of companies.

—Darris McNeely

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<http://www.ucg.org/wnp/>

“MAJORITY,” (Continued from page 1)
dying—a humanitarian catastrophe of the greatest magnitude.

A world of nuclear weapons

The Economist estimates that India may possess perhaps 95 nuclear weapons and Pakistan about 50. And despite a recent treaty theoretically lowering the number of their mononuclear weapons possessed by the United States and Russia, their respective arsenals remain truly awesome.

The nuclear club also includes Britain, France, China, possibly Israel and South Africa and, most worrying, Iraq and Iran in perhaps the not too distant future—if they don’t have them already. Noted British broadcaster and newspaper columnist John Humphrys stated the obvious: “Since nuclear weapons cannot be dis-invented proliferation will continue . . . The more states that join the nuclear club, the greater the possibility the terrorists will get their hands on a nuclear device” (*The Sunday Times*, June 2, 2002).

The nuclear weapons club is going to keep growing! There are all kinds of potential scenarios to worry about. In particular the West is currently concerned with securing the present government of Pakistan. If the administration in Islamabad should pass to unsavory adversaries, “nothing would be more dangerous than weapons of mass destruction in the hands of the Taliban or al Qaeda” (Jon B. Wolfsthal, *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 16, 2001).

Fears have even been expressed about rogue generals, in defiance of either constituted civilian or military authorities, launching their own version of a nuclear war.

A very disturbing realization

One of the scariest truths to emerge out of this recent Asian confrontation is public reaction itself. As veteran British columnist Hugo Young wrote in *The Guardian*, “We’re witnessing the banalization of nuclear weapons. Suddenly they seem to have lost their unique horror. Pakistan and India needed teaching about this truth and may not yet have learned it even with a potential of 12 million deaths held out for their inspection” (June 6, 2002).

Mr. Young was referring to those in government, but the reaction from members of the public is truly astonishing. Worry has been scorned. In speaking of the stark reality of nuclear conflict, one *London Times* reporter from Delhi, India, marveled, “The depth of misconception, among ordinary people, who are pushing for their government to go to war, is alarming” (June 3, 2002).



Reuters/Kamal Kishore

Indian soldier waits with convoy to go to Pakistan border June 16

For instance, one Indian antagonist said: “I don’t care whether I live or die, we must punish Pakistan.” Another stated, “If we want to have nuclear war, let us.” Frightening!

But what about the West?

Gone is the U.S. fallout shelter craze of the ’50s and early ’60s. We’ve “outgrown” such fears and realized there would be little protection from such measures. Warning times would probably be almost nonexistent and the thought of suddenly escaping big cities via freeways or motorways is rightly judged ludicrous.

The Sept. 11 terrorist tragedy has sobered us, highlighting our vulnerabilities. The recent “dirty-bomb” scare reinforced the reminder somewhat.

However, it is doubtful that most really grasp the true extent of the potential dangers we face daily. Over and over

again *World News and Prophecy* has solemnly warned its readers that we live in a very dangerous world, punctuated by serious crises of every stripe and kind.

Although God’s overall plan for the future is made plain in the pages of the Bible, He has not revealed all details about what will happen in the short term, either next week, next month or next year. What we can guarantee is that God

is on His throne—overseeing events transpiring in this world. He has a vast army of angels to do His bidding all the time. He is on the job on a 24-hour basis, even while we are asleep in our beds.

God is in charge

We can take great comfort from the many scriptures that tell us that God is watching over His people. He is fully aware of the dangers that we face as today’s world trends and events become worse and worse. Remember the inspired words of Jesus Christ spoken when He walked this earth as a human being: “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, *Lord of heaven and earth* . . . ’” (Matthew 11:25). Here He fully acknowledges the awesomeness of God the Father and His absolute sovereignty.

The apostle Paul was inspired to
(See “UNCONCERNED,” page 6)

Is Britain Rediscovering the Commonwealth?

Celebrations to mark the queen's Golden Jubilee centered on her role as head of the Commonwealth, the 54-nation multicultural organization that was once the British Empire. After decades of neglecting the institution, is Great Britain now strengthening its Commonwealth ties?

by Melvin Rhodes

It was as a correspondent on the Fox News Channel who pointed out the irony. Speaking from outside Buckingham Palace where a million people had cheered the queen during the fly-past that ended official celebrations of her Golden Jubilee, viewers were reminded that while the British people are celebrating, two of Britain's former imperial possessions are poised on the brink of a possible nuclear war.

Sadly, that is far from the only post-imperial problem!

The four days of rejoicing for the reign of Queen Elizabeth II culminated Tuesday, June 4, in a regal procession through the streets of London, as the queen rode in the state gold carriage for only the third time in her 50-year reign. The first occasion was for her coronation, the second for her Silver Jubilee (25 years), the third for her Golden. The purpose of her journey was to attend a service of thanksgiving at St. Paul's Cathedral.

The British have a great deal for which to be thankful. Clearly, the crowds were expressing thanks for a political system that has given them a longer period of political stability and the prosperity that usually goes with it than any other major nation. At the same time most Britons are aware that a great deal of this stability is owed to the royal House of Windsor, direct descendants of the Hanoverian kings who assumed the throne in 1714. The British have no more respect for their politicians than do the people of any other democracy, but they love the queen, who is increasingly seen throughout the Commonwealth as a universal grandmother.

Other nations, too, have been able to benefit from this political stability, inheriting the same political system and maintaining a direct

link with the crown. Queen Elizabeth II is head of state of 16 fully independent countries.

Head of the Commonwealth

Additionally, she is head of the 54-nation Commonwealth. These countries were almost all colonies of Britain when she became queen. They had their own national parliaments, which took care of most internal matters, while the British government was responsible for their foreign and military affairs. A British governor, appointed from London, was resident in each of these colonies and ensured that close ties to the mother country were maintained.

All of this changed during what some are calling the Second Elizabethan Age, a period during which Britain dismantled her empire. With successive British governments falling over themselves to get out of the empire business as fast as possible, it was left to the queen to work with the former colonies, turning them into the modern Commonwealth. Although she has no direct political role, the queen has played a vital part in this transition from Empire to Commonwealth. As one commentator on BBC America put it, "She has personally molded the Commonwealth into what it is today."

The Jubilee celebrations reflected this reality. A procession of 4,000 Commonwealth nationals, representing all the nations that make up the present-day organization, paraded aspects of their culture before the queen and her family. Afterwards, all were invited to Buckingham Palace, an invitation not extended to the earlier British participants.

Formerly made up of nations ruled mostly by peoples of British descent, the

The queen has played a vital part in this transition from Empire to Commonwealth.

As one commentator put it, "She has personally molded the Commonwealth into what it is today."

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Commonwealth today is multiracial. Another change is in the systems of government of member nations. The "Old Commonwealth" was made up of individual nations, each independent of the other, but each giving direct loyalty to the crown, thereby sharing in Britain's system of government. Today, 38 of the Commonwealth nations are republics, with their own presidents. They still recognize the queen as head of the Commonwealth, but many of them have long since lost the political stability they once had. Sadly, that absence of political stability has also meant serious economic decline for many member nations.

Post-imperial problems

On the very day of the celebrations, the news from Zambia (formerly the British colony of Northern Rhodesia) was of impending famine. This rapidly followed news of famine in neighboring Malawi (formerly Nyasaland). These two nations, with Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia) all formed the "British" Central African Federation prior to independence. During that time, all were major food exporters. They had a surplus of food that was sold to other nations, with the foreign currency earnings then used to enrich the lives of their peoples in other ways.

Sadly, the British farmers who were the main creators of that wealth have mostly left or been forced out under land redistribution legislation which has increasingly impoverished their nations. (Officially, "drought" is to blame, but there have always been periodic droughts.)

Food shortages and diseases across Africa are serious but do not threaten world security. The likelihood of conflict between India and Pakistan does. These two nations, until 1947 governed as one under the British Raj, have fought each other three times since independence. The difference now is that they are both nuclear powers. Another change is that this region is crucial to America and Britain's War on Terror. A conflict between the two belligerents would severely hamper allied efforts to deal with al Qaeda's terrorists and those who aid them.

Forgotten now is that Indian troops



Reuters/Chris Ison

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II travels to St Paul's Cathedral June 4

often played a crucial role in British wars prior to India's becoming a sovereign nation. In World War II 2 million Indians volunteered to fight in Britain's armed forces, the biggest volunteer army in history. These troops were used extensively in different theaters of war. Earlier British actions in Afghanistan gave opportunities for Indian forces to fight alongside British forces. Had Britain retained its empire, most of the soldiers fighting al Qaeda today would no doubt be Indian nationals.

The other major threat to present world peace was also a British territory prior to the Second World War that saw the end of Britain's preeminence in the world: Palestine. The continuing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians was a major contributing factor to the events of Sept. 11, with no end in sight for terrorist attacks against U.S. and British interests.

Contrasting two Elizabeths

Yes, the British themselves can be thankful for the stability and prosperity that they have enjoyed. But the words of the archbishop of Canterbury, spoken at the service of thanksgiving, though in one sense correct, are in another very real sense misleading.

When he referred to the queen's Golden Jubilee as the "height of the Second Elizabethan Age," listeners were

mindful of the time of the first Queen Elizabeth, who reigned from 1558 to 1603, five years less than the present queen. Then England was a small country, fighting for its life against despotic European powers that wished to bring her back under the authority of Rome. Realizing that trade and security were impossible in Europe, the English started to sail around the world, establishing colonies in far-flung places. The British Empire slowly came into being. Its foundation was laid during the time of the first Queen Elizabeth.

The Second Elizabethan Age has seen the total dismantling of that empire, not by the queen herself, who has worked tirelessly to turn it into the modern Commonwealth. She is a constitutional monarch, whereas Elizabeth I was an executive monarch. While England was far stronger at the end of the reign of the first Elizabeth than it had been at the beginning, the end of the Second Elizabethan Age will see the country much weaker than it was in 1952. The present queen's reign has, in fact, been a turbulent one for much of the world, including many of the Commonwealth countries.

While much affection remains throughout the world for Queen Elizabeth herself, this weakening of the country's relative power and influence bodes ill for the future. Continued mem-

bership in the European Union threatens Britain's independence and sovereignty every bit as much as the Spanish Armada did in 1588, though not as dramatically. Additionally, the continuing War on Terror poses serious security questions for Britain and the United States.

Stability itself is relative. After three centuries on the throne, another European family toured its empire receiving the adulation of their people. Millions turned out to greet them and to show their loyalty and affection. Four years later, they were overthrown and their dynasty ended. The monarch was cousin to England's King George V, grandfather of the present queen. The monarch was Czar Nicholas II, ruler of Russia. The same fate befell the kaisers of Germany and Austria-Hungary, also extremely popular just a few years earlier. A nation's fortunes can change suddenly and quite dramatically.

Daniel 2:21 says that God sets up and removes kings. Doubtless, He set up the House of Windsor (then Hanover) in 1714 to prepare for the promised blessings about to come Joseph's way. (For more about this subject, see *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. It's available free of charge from any of our offices listed on page 2.) Britain's constitutional monarchy was a foundation stone of the British Empire's success. It still makes a major contribution to Britain and the Commonwealth.

But the queen's Golden Jubilee hides an uncomfortable reality—the prophesied “multitude of nations” (Genesis 48:19) does not carry the overall impact or influence that it did at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. Although she has worked continuously to preserve it in its weakened form, the fact remains that it is no longer a military force with Britain at its head. Rather, its biannual conferences are merely a sentimental reunion of old friends who were all once a part of the greatest empire the world had ever seen.

Meanwhile, Britain (Ephraim) itself continues to “pursue the east wind” (Hosea 12:1), entangling herself more and more in Europe, the very continent from which the first Elizabeth did so much to free the country. ❖

“UNCONCERNED,” (Continued from page 3)
repeat this truly profound expression when he encountered the Athenian philosophers. He said: “Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God who made the world and everything in it, since *He is Lord of heaven and earth. . .*” (Acts 17:23-24).

Some 600 years before the time of Christ, ancient King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon learned this lesson the hard way. Daniel told him that time for repentance had run out and the king would be punished “till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (Daniel 4:25).

God is the Ruler! Yet in His wisdom He has chosen to extend mankind a lot of rope. At times in history matters have really gotten out of hand before He has chosen to intervene in an obvious manner. Taking away man's free choice runs contrary to His overall purpose and He will only limit our free moral agency under circumstances that seriously threaten His master plan for humankind.

The great Flood of Noah's time was just such an occasion. Wickedness became universal and in order to preserve the human race as civilized beings, God was forced to destroy all but eight people. Then their descendants refused to spread out over the earth, instead remaining together for no good purpose to build the Tower of Babel. The sudden manifestation of multiple languages persuaded them to change their minds.

Much later in history, God miraculously rescued the nation of Israel from Egyptian subjugation by opening up the Red Sea. Then many hundreds of years down the line God sent His Son into the world to die for our sins. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life—setting us all an example of how to conduct our selves before God and neighbor.

Special intervention in our individual lives

During His ministry, Jesus Christ continually helped ordinary people to cope with their difficulties. He healed many of all types of serious physical ailments, distressing emotional illnesses and life-threatening psychological

problems caused by demonic influence and possession.

In our modern world today multiple types of diseases and mental health problems dog our lives. We have to cope continually with the stress of living at perhaps the most dangerous time in history. As never before we need to be sure of *the presence of God* in our lives—trusting and relying on Him to deliver us from whatever circumstances in which we may find ourselves.

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah calls for the comforting of God's people (Isaiah 40:1). He tells us that our Creator is enthroned above the circle of the earth (verse 22). He proclaims the greatness and mercy of God throughout this section of Scripture.

God is above all and in ultimate control of whatever forces may threaten His people. He says: “Do not fear; *I will help you*. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for *I myself will help you*,” declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 41:13-14, NIV). In this New Testament age, the Church is the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).

Keeping in constant contact with God

Even if it does not realize it, this generation is in dire need of God's intervention and help. We face uncountable dangers of every type and kind. Those few who are privileged to know and understand their Creator should draw ever closer to Him in regular prayer and Bible study.

Moses tells us that Cain went out from the presence of God (Genesis 4:16). None of us can afford to follow his path of disobedience to God's law. Instead we need to rejoice in the fact that spiritually we “have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22).

If you have contact with the Creator God and He has revealed Himself to you, this is the most precious reality in your life. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6). That's a promise! ❖

Ever Increasing Crime— Will It Ever End?

“Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence” (Ezekiel 7:23). Must we accept crime as a way of life? Why aren’t prisons solving it, and is there anything we can do about it personally?

by Graemme Marshall

The above statement voiced by God through Ezekiel suggests the need to prepare more chains for imprisonment, because of increasing crime. It shows ancient Israel awash with violence. Are we any different today? The sobering facts about widespread crime in North America show that Ezekiel’s message is still applicable.

The total number of prisoners in the United States increased from 319,000 in 1980 to 1.3 million in 1999. Another 523,000 people were also in jail. This translates into 1 in every 150 Americans being in prison or jail. This is disturbing for a society perceived as law abiding and which inscribes its currency with “In God We Trust.” Crime and a godly society are not compatible.

These figures look even worse when contrasted with Canada’s 1998 incarceration rate of only 135 per 100,000, less than one-fifth the U.S. rate. What is even further alarming is that this doesn’t include additional criminals who are still at large (*Encarta*, “National Criminal Justice Commission”).

How many criminals are out there?

We know it is not possible to lock up all offenders who deserve to be imprisoned and that some criminals are never captured. Space and budget constraints even prevent many of those caught from going to prison. Yet the United States has one of the world’s highest crime rates, as well as the world’s highest rate of imprisonment. *More than five times* the number of existing prisons (including those currently under construction) would be required to incarcerate all those convicted of crimes in the United States.

Since 1980, the United States has engaged in the largest correctional buildup of any country in the history of the world. During this time the number of Americans in prison and jail has tripled to 1.5 million. Within some minority groups, this rate has increased ten-

fold. What is happening to the “land of the free”?

Consider the man-hours required for just the fingerprinting, photography and paperwork involved. Stuffed into police files are about 50 million criminal records—enough to represent nearly one-fifth of the entire U.S. population. One would think the extraordinary expansion of the criminal justice system would have made at least a small dent in the crime rate! But no.

We also learn that 2 percent of the potential male workforce is behind bars! What a tragic loss of manhood for the nation. In some areas, close to half of young African Americans are in the criminal system. In many cities one third of all young African American men aged 18 to 34 are under super vision—either in jail or prison, on probation or parole or awaiting trial. Shouldn’t we mourn this failure of young manhood, of their potential, aspirations and dreams?

Nearly 94 percent of all prisoners in U.S. prisons are male; the rate is 97 percent in Canada. Despite the high rate of imprisonment, crime has not been reduced, and few of us feel any safer.

Turnstile justice

Authorities acknowledge that rehabilitation attempts have largely failed and the system is plagued with repeat offenders. The fact that more than 9 out of 10 inmates currently in prison will be released at some point adds to the growing worry of recidivism.

Almost every U.S. and Canadian prison operates programs that are part of inmate rehabilitation. Most offer counseling and educational programs designed to help inmates with drug or alcohol dependencies or mental health problems. But experts generally agree that little rehabilitation among inmates occurs and since the 1970s, U.S. prisons have reduced the scope and availability of programs. Confirming this is a constant 65 percent rate of

The sobering facts about widespread crime in North America show that Ezekiel’s message is still applicable.

repeat of fenders over the past two decades. This means almost two thirds of those released are convicted again for committing new crimes. About 40 percent of Canada's released inmates are subsequently convicted of new crimes, with 20 percent later convicted of a violent one.

Frightful trends face the prison system

It has been estimated that one quarter of all inmates are victims of sexual assault each year during incarceration. There is a rapid spread of HIV and crowded prisons provide a prime setting for AIDS epidemics. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in 1995 more than 24,000 prisoners (2.3 percent of all inmates) tested positive for HIV. The overall rate of confirmed AIDS cases for prisoners in 1995 was more than

Stress and burnout are especially likely to occur during the first year of a correctional officer's job, and annual turnover rates of prison personnel range from 14 to 38 percent.

What governments could try

Instead of locking up offenders, which only hardens them and gives them more skills for crime, innovative systems that have offenders serve society could be tried. There are huge areas of community need in every city and town. For example, there are parks and gardens to tend; roadsides, rivers and beaches to clean up; railways, bridges and buildings to maintain; and the aged to serve in care facilities and hospitals. It takes careful thought about what could be done if a government would use its power and authority to do it. Valuable physical labor in serving oth-

every precaution to harden yourself as a target: your car, home, personal property and your personal security. Be aware of crime and avoid dangerous situations. Many local law enforcement officials offer helpful tips about not becoming a victim of crime.

Return to the value of looking out for one another. Encourage a sense of community in your neighborhood. Know your neighbors and do things for each other, as you watch out for each other.

Be willing to get involved for others. Be wise and do it safely rather than risk physical danger. Know who to call in any emergency. Of course, the best emergency call to make is to God in heaven by instant prayer for divine assistance and protection.

Our criminal problem is immense. And the fabric of values in society needs to change greatly. To illustrate, a Canada Supreme Court clerk wrote how he enjoyed sitting on appeal cases, because law clerks then have the chance to look at the legal issues in an objective way. "Whereas, when we become lawyers, our focus will be on how to win."

He explained further, "To win a case in court, one wag once noted: 'If the law is on your side, pound on the law; if the facts are on your side, pound on the facts; if neither is on your side pound on the table'" ("Clerking for the Supremes," *Inside Airlines Magazine*, May 2002).

We can conclude Ezekiel summed up life today quite well. The prophet Isaiah spoke similarly: "For your hands are defiled with blood . . . No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth . . . the act of violence is in their hands . . . So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey" (Isaiah 59:3-4, 6, 15).

Where then is hope for our future? It has to be in the returning Christ and His divine government, with the power to implement righteousness on earth. We'll see genuine transformation: "Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise" (Isaiah 60:18).

No more prisons. No more wasted manhood. No more fear for personal safety. ❖

Where then is hope for our future? It has to be in the returning Christ and His divine government, with the power to implement righteousness on earth.

six times the rate for the general population. Despite the preventative measures taken in prisons to eliminate transmission of the AIDS virus, the number of HIV-infected prisoners continued to grow during the 1990s.

Gangs exist in every U.S. prison and tend to form along racial or ethnic lines. An inmate gang subculture is also pervasive in international prisons. Many of these gangs have evolved elaborate social organizations with hierarchies of authority. In many respects, they have taken the control of prisoners away from administrators. Gangs create a network able to harm those who violate their code or who resist them. Penalties the formal prison system can inflict pose much less of a threat than dangers from gangs.

The social and communal structure of prisons can actually impede rehabilitation and reintegration back into normal society. Inmates acquire attitudes and knowledge from other prisoners that strengthen their desire to engage in criminal behavior, as well as improving their knowledge and skills in committing crime.

In 1997 there were more than 14,000 assaults upon correctional personnel.

ers might bring about a real change in life values.

The justice system could increase offenders' awareness of the pain suffered by their victims. Confront offenders with the impact of their crime. Introduce them to compensation claims and needs—even if they must work upon release to repay the harm done. After all, shouldn't they repay the damages they caused in some just measure?

But can we have much hope of any of this? Probably not. That's what Ezekiel's prophecy for our time indicates. In simple truth, relative to the millions of crimes that are committed each year, the justice system imprisons only a small fraction of all offenders. Those who do go to prison are likely among the worst predatory criminals.

Americans are paying a heavy human and financial toll for government failure to know what to do about crime. Given the U.S. crime rate, that toll is bound to become heavier over the next decade.

In the meantime, protect yourself

Given the worrying crime rate, take

A Deadly Epidemic

Between 300,000 and 600,000 Americans will die this year, not from terrorist acts, but from a chronic disease growing so rapidly that it is now officially called an epidemic. You'll be shocked to find out what and how widespread it is.

by Cecil E. Maranville

The official death toll for those who perished in the bombing of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, is now set at slightly over 2,800. Adding those who perished in the Pentagon bombing, the total figure is between 2,900 and 3,000. The sudden, violent loss of people of all ages shocked the United States and the world. Multiple billions of dollars have been spent since to investigate how the evil perpetrators accomplished their wicked deeds and on preventative measures that will hopefully guarantee that such horrible loss will not be repeated.

But this isn't an article about terrorism. It's about a threat that is guaranteed to take the lives of between 100 and 200 times as many as died on that fateful day last year. Because these deaths will not occur suddenly, because there are no violent visual images associated with them that can be broadcast repeatedly to a TV-oriented public, most people will be completely unaware of their happening.

How do I know that? Because that many people died last year from the same epidemic, and most of us never knew it.

The problem is obesity. A staggering 61 percent of American adults are overweight or obese. The United States officially views obesity as the number two cause of preventable death (behind smoking). So serious is this problem, and so fatal are its consequences, that one would expect it to be on the lips of every American.

Smoking-related illnesses kill 400,000 people a year, and smoking is a high profile "public enemy." Yet conservative estimates place the number of deaths related to obesity at 300,000. Two highly respected public health doctors wrote an article that was published in 1993 that stated a high-end estimate of over 582,000 (J.M. McGuinness and W.H. Foye, "Actual Causes of Death in the United States," *JAMA*, 1993, Nov. 10:270(18): 2207-12). The National Institutes of Health (NIH) place the high-end estimate at 587,000.

It's not that people are completely unaware. The constant bombardment by television and print advertising about weight-loss products and programs indicate that there's a colossal market.

Indeed, over \$30 billion is spent every year on

these products and/or programs. Why are Americans overweight? Critics of the United States might be quick to point out how soft people have become. There's some truth to that perception. Eric Schlosser has written a best-selling book, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. According to Schlosser, Americans spend more money eating in restaurants than they do on higher education or new cars. And most of those "restaurants" are of the fast-food variety. What Americans eat "has changed more in the last 40 years than in the previous forty thousand" (George Will, "Supersize Menace," 2002, Washington Post Writer's Group).

Not an American problem alone

Before we condemn the Americans, we need to take a look at the problem of obesity in the rest of the world. It is not, as the facts bear out, just "an American problem." The International Obesity Task Force (IOTF) reports: "The prevalence of obesity is rising to epidemic proportions at an alarming rate in both developed 'westernised' and less developed countries around the world" (www.iotf.org, emphasis IOTF).

How prevalent is it? IOTF research reveals obesity has increased between 10 and 50 percent in Europe in the past decade. Obesity has more than doubled in the United Kingdom in the same time frame. Regional studies of African countries' higher socioeconomic groups reveal a high prevalence of obesity. Data is difficult to come by from the Middle Eastern countries, but the limited information available shows that the problem is serious—higher in Middle Eastern women than women in most Western countries. It's a significant problem in the wealthier Caribbean nations. Brazil reports the problem as increasingly common—surprisingly among lower income groups. Obesity in Japanese men has doubled since 1982.

The IOTF reports that obesity exists in nearly 40 percent of Yugoslavians and in approximately 30 percent of Greeks. The problem afflicts more than 20 percent of Romanians and Czechs. England, Finland, Germany, Scotland and Slovakia are not far behind.

This isn't an article about terrorism. It's about a threat that is guaranteed to take the lives of between 100 and 200 times as many as died in the attacks Sept. 11.

Even countries that have difficulty with providing enough food for their citizens are experiencing a significant problem with overweight and obesity. The number of overweight people in Ghana, for example, is only slightly less than the number of those who are underweight.

How can this be true? Sometimes culture is a factor. Weight gain is associated with an image of prosperity and success in some countries. Obesity is a sign of high social status and prosperity in the Polynesian and Micronesian societies of the Western Pacific region. "In 1991 for example, over 75% of urban males in Western Samoa were classified as obese" (ibid., emphasis IOTF).

Some of the same factors that have led to American obesity contribute to the problem the world around. The more modernized a country becomes, the more its citizens own cars; and the people often travel only short distances. They do less walking or cycling. At home, the availability of modern appliances and ready-made foods has significantly decreased manual labor. Also, many of those ready-made foods are high in calories and fat.

In the workplace, many jobs have become more sedentary, requiring less physically demanding labor. In public places, there are more automatic doors, elevators and escalators, so people climb stairs less often.

Perhaps one of the greatest contributors is the fact that more and more people live in urban centers. With cities comes crime, which prevents people from going out for exercise and/or leisure activities. There are also metabolic, genetic and psychological contributors to obesity. (These factors are conclusions drawn from international research done by the American Obesity Association and reported on its Web site, www.obesity.org.)

How it kills

How can obesity cause death? Obesity contributes greatly to the risk factor of a number of illnesses. Some that you probably would guess are: Type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure and osteoarthritis. Some that you might not be aware of include: birth defects, several types of cancer, carpal tunnel syndrome, chronic venous insufficiency, daytime sleepiness, deep vein

thrombosis, end stage renal disease, gallbladder disease, gout, impaired immune response, impaired respiratory function, infections following wounds, infertility, liver disease, low back pain, several obstetric and gynecological complications, generalized pain throughout the body, pancreatitis, sleep apnea, strokes, surgical complications and urinary stress incontinence (ibid.).

Actually, this is only a partial list, as various researchers reported a host of additional problems. Of course, there are attendant psychological problems, such as lower self-esteem (in cultures that do not prize obesity) and clinical depression.

The staggering number of deaths caused or greatly contributed to by obesity is shocking in itself. Let's translate "61 percent of adult Americans" into actual numbers, so we have an idea of the scope of the problem. The NIH estimates that 120 million U.S. adults are overweight or obese. For perspective, that compares with 800,000 to 900,000 Americans who are infected with HIV, 9 million with cancer, 16 million with diabetes and 26 million with heart disease.

It's difficult to get a handle on the total cost, because studies report only a fraction of the total amount. But a 1998 study estimated the direct medical costs at \$51.64 billion, and the NIH estimates that the cost is \$100 billion (NIH statistics quoted by the American Obesity Association).

Biblical warnings of disease

World News and Prophecy keeps track of trends and reports them in the light of Bible prophecy. How does this problem, called "an escalating epidemic" by the World Health Organization, fit into the framework of prophecy? Two major end-time prophecies warn of disease epidemics so great that they threaten a large percentage of the world's population. Revelation 6 contains the often-called "four horsemen of the apocalypse" prophecy.

Jesus told John to write: "So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth" (verse 8).

Jesus Himself said: "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against

kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:7). He added these chilling words: "All these are the beginning of sorrows" (verse 8), meaning that they precede the crisis at the close of the age of mankind. They don't constitute the actual crisis in themselves, horrible though they are.

Typically, disease epidemics are triggered by famine and food shortages. Could the physical weakness caused by obesity be a precursor to even more serious problems caused when widespread food shortages occur?

Our booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* both contain additional information and explanations about these key prophetic references.

Obesity incidence in children

One of the most serious trends in the American population is the rapid rise in percentage of children and adolescents who are obese. From 1976 to 1980, 7 percent of American children aged 6 to 11 were obese. The figure was 5 percent for those between the ages of 12 and 19. Those statistics shot up to 13 percent and 14 percent by 1999. The increase is alarming and portends an accompanying increase in disease and health care costs (American Obesity Association).

Again, it isn't just an American problem: 23 percent of school-age children in Tonga were considered obese in 1986 and 40 to 50 percent of 10-year-olds in Malta are overweight or obese. About 30 percent of children in the same age group in Munich, Germany, and Verona, Italy, are obese. The numbers are 20 percent for children this age in Nancy, France, and 15 to 20 percent for the same aged youth in the United Kingdom and Sweden. Approximately 20 percent of the 10-year-old girls in Hungary are obese, while the number runs closer to 40 percent among the boys (ITOF).

A way out

We noted above that some \$30 billion is spent each year by Americans on dietary products and programs, as they attempt to combat overweight and obesity. Unfortunately, the immediate tendency of human nature is to choose the costliest

(See "EPIDEMIC," page 13)

In Brief...

World News Review

Crime's Relentless Rise in British Cities

Said a recent editorial in *The Sunday Times*, "Rising crime figures, disclosed in this newspaper last week, merely confirmed what many people know: That the streets of Britain are unsafe and that muggers attack anybody, regardless of age or infirmity" (June 23, 2002).

The Financial Times added its voice with the statement, "Armed crime is soaring in Britain—a sign that government policies depriving people of the right to protect themselves have gone badly wrong" (June 22, 2002). Especially in urban areas, people are having to cope with an increasingly lawless environment. This *Financial Times* feature article continued: "From 1991 to 1995, crimes against people in inner cities increased 91 percent. And from 1997 to 2001 the rate of violent crime more than doubled. Your chances of being mugged in London are now six times greater than in New York." Hard to believe!

As one lady exclaimed: "I have lived in the rape capital of the world, Johannesburg, but I feel more terror in the West End [of London] than I ever did in South Africa" (*Daily Mail*, June 23, 2002). The comparisons are truly astonishing. "England's rates of assault, robbery and burglary are far higher than America's and 53 percent of English burglaries occur while occupants are at home, compared with 13 percent in America where burglars admit to fearing armed homeowners more than the police" (*Financial Times*).

The media blames the British government, and some responsibility for this state of affairs surely lies with those governing the nation; but the real underlying causes are spiritual in nature. The establishment churches no longer emphasize the Ten Commandments, and parents in today's secular England have sorely neglected both religious teaching and wise discipline.

Europe's Next Hurdle— an Inclusive Identity

The remarkable progress made in the past 50 years of relative peace to unify many of the nations of Europe into what now constitutes the European Union has not been achieved without difficulty. Differentiated by language, ethnicity, conflict and varying economic systems, the unification of these unique entities has been described by some as the "European Miracle."

Gerard Mestrallet, CEO of the French/Belgian energy and water giant, Suez, says, "When I look back, every step of building Europe has been a miracle." It seems, however, that more

miracles will be needed to forge one critical element of unity that has yet to emerge—a truly European identity untainted by nationalism, ethnic rivalry and antagonism.

In fact, Europe is in the middle of an identity crisis. Not only are the people of its constituent parts being asked to subjugate centuries of individuality to the greater calling of a united Europe, the flood of immigrant workers into some countries and the rising tide of refugees and asylum seekers from outside the Union is adding a volatile catalyst to the mix.

Not many would agree with European President Romano Prodi that "we in Europe have found a way to express our regional, national and European identities without undermining any of them." The swing to the political right in France, Holland and Germany in recent times is symptomatic of an unrest simmering, and occasionally boiling over, in some parts of the Union.

The euro has replaced most national currencies, and rules and regulations flowing out of European Commission headquarters in Brussels now seem to affect the lives of 380 million Europeans more than their still-existing national parliaments. Some companies that were sources of patriotic pride, such as Telecom Italia, Ericsson and Kirch, are faltering or falling under the new economic realities of the EU. But such economic and structural challenges will be met. It is the identity crisis, compounded by the immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, that will be a higher hurdle to clear.

Europe is not yet ready to accept a significant influx of largely non-white, non-Christian residents as full citizens. Adverse economic conditions in Europe at the present time mean that many of these people are unemployed and disadvantaged within cultures that are as foreign to them as their presence is to the European-born citizen. These conditions have resulted in rising crime, violence and racism in many European cities and towns. The move to the right mentioned earlier has been heavily influenced by this unrest.

Recent times have seen attacks on immigrant hostels in Germany, race riots in northern Britain and an anti-France demonstration at a government-sponsored football match in Paris. About 80,000 fans of mostly Arab descent jeered as the French national anthem was played, pelted Cabinet ministers with water bottles and finally charged the playing field. It was a clear indication of the disconnection of immigrants from mainstream French society.

Further polarization is being caused by the Israel/Palestine conflict in the Middle East. This is reflected in outbreaks of anti-Semitism in a largely pro-Palestine European Union, with a significant number of Muslims among the immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The memories of anti-Semitism before and during World War II have not faded for many.

The creation of the European Union in the past 50 years, from a diverse base of ethnic, national and cultural identities, has not yet coalesced into a truly European identity. Perhaps, as Mestrallet believes, what has happened to date has been miraculous. More miracles may be needed before Europe becomes the united economic, political and military superpower to rival the British Empire of the 19th and 20th centuries and the United States of the last 60 years or so. Time will tell. Keep developments in Europe on your radar screen.

Source: *Business Week*, May 20, 2002.

Japan Rethinking Joining the Nuclear Club?

Just when things cool down between nuclear neophytes India and Pakistan, another alarm is sounded by Japan as it contemplates arming itself with nuclear weapons. That's all Asia needs, another house with the ultimate weapon in global warfare.

As the *International Herald Tribune* reports, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda recently became the most senior Tokyo official to open the door to nuclear weapons. Fukuda said Japan's "peace constitution" does not rule out nuclear weapons. The times have "changed to the point that even revising the constitution is being talked about," he noted. "Depending upon the world situation, circumstances and public opinion could require Japan to possess nuclear weapons" ("So Much for Japan's Nuclear Taboo," Robyn Lim, June 13, 2002, www.ihf.com/articles/61117.htm).

In 1998 North Korea tested a long-range missile over Japan. It is believed North Korea possesses nuclear capability. China has nuclear weapons targeted on Japan. All this has Japan rethinking prior commitments to abstain from the nuclear club. Japan's policy here is based on three principles, "that it cannot make or possess nuclear weapons, or allow them to be introduced into the country" (ibid.).

One of the rules of international politics is that things change. A nation must always put its own interests ahead of others if it is to survive. As long as Japan chooses to be protected under the American nuclear umbrella, it will likely not choose to arm itself with weapons of mass destruction. If Japan chooses another option, then to survive in its hostile neighborhood it may see no other alternative than to go nuclear.

Adding to potential instability is another recent report that China is negotiating to buy eight submarines from Russia. This would increase their tactical ability to blockade Taiwan and challenge U.S. naval supremacy in the seas near China (*International Herald Tribune*, June 25, 2002, www.ihf.com/articles/62411.html).

Such a deal would "very significantly enhance" the Chinese navy's "ability to influence events in the East China Sea," said Bernard Cole, an expert on the Chinese navy at the National War College in Washington, D.C. How? "First, by enforcing a blockade against Taiwan, if Beijing adopts that course of action, and also by posing a serious problem for opposing naval forces attempting to operate in the area. No part of naval warfare is

more difficult than detecting, localizing or neutralizing submarines" (ibid.).

Since Taiwan broke with Communist China in 1949, the mainland has sought to reconnect their "lost brothers." One of the main pillars of American foreign policy has been its pledge to protect Taiwan's sovereignty. Conversely, China has sought to remove American influence from the region and will stop at nothing to accomplish this geopolitical imperative.

Despite its military deficiencies, compared to America's technological superiority, China continues to move ahead with plans to become the dominant Asian power. China's impact in this region will continue to grow in the coming years. How this will affect American interests and other international relations will be an important area to watch.

Consequences of an Indian-Pakistani Nuclear Exchange

Covering the ominous threat of nuclear war between India and Pakistan, Fox News reporter Shepard Smith interviewed Steven Garner on May 29, 2002. Dr. Garner is the chief medical officer at St. Vincent's hospital in New York City. Fox News called him "perhaps New York City's foremost expert on disaster preparedness."

What would happen if a nuclear weapon such as those in the arsenals of India and Pakistan were detonated? Perhaps 122,000 people would die per detonation. So if the two nations exchanged only one weapon each, nearly a quarter of a million casualties would result immediately.

Additionally, anyone within 100 miles who looks at the detonation would be instantly blinded. Of course, radiation continues to kill beyond those destroyed in the initial blast. The "kill zone" of the type of nuclear weapons these nations have is 2,500 square miles. That's why Britain and the United States warned their citizens to leave both countries at the height of the tension. Clearly, some military personnel who are fighting the War on Terror would be in the kill zone of radiation fallout.

How far would the radiation fallout extend? According to Dr. Garner, it would definitely reach the U.S. mainland. How damaging it would be at that point is anyone's guess and might be difficult to measure. Consequences would present themselves in increased cancer rates—something that might be difficult to attribute to a single cause.

Back to India and Pakistan, there is an additional and frightening result of radiation poisoning beyond the kill zone. Radiation is known to lower the immune system of those exposed to it. People outside of the kill zone would suffer enough radiation poisoning to seriously lower their immune system, resulting in the eruption of diseases that haven't been serious problems for decades. And new diseases will arise.

Regardless of what radiation fallout does in other parts of the world, the diseases that spring from radiation poisoning in the war theater will spread around the world, warned Dr. Garner. He cited how difficult it is to contain disease in this world of regular international travel.

Thankfully, it appears that India and Pakistan have moved back from the brink of a nuclear exchange. But the rhetoric between these long-time antagonists leaves one with little confidence that the threat has disappeared.

Jesus warned that as mankind approaches the end of this age, we would hear of “wars and rumors of wars” (Matthew 24:6). Modern technology has raised the ante in this no-win game, so that “rumors of wars” are exceedingly disturbing. Christ went on to encourage His followers to remain calm, assuring them that this bad news is necessary just before the close of the darkest time of human history. And, with the close of this evil age will come the dawning of the wonderful world of peace under the management of God’s Kingdom.

Egypt Is Trying to Obtain Nuclear Weapons

Western intelligence agencies have reached the conclusion that Egypt is taking steps to obtain nuclear weapons. According to a report by the German daily *Die Welt*, Egypt intends to mine natural uranium in the Sinai Peninsula and enrich it to weapons’ grade material with the help of Chinese technology. The material would then be used on long-range missiles.

Egypt has denied the existence of any military nuclear project. The International Atomic Energy Agency, located in Vienna, confirmed that it has no information on nuclear developments in Egypt. The paper claimed that despite the denial, there have been increased hints that Cairo was stepping up its attempts to attain and enrich uranium, so as to be able to produce nuclear weapons in the future.

In January of this year, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak set out for an official trip to China. During the visit the two countries signed an agreement on cooperation. Most of the details of the agreement have remained confidential, although security sources believe that the agreement between the two countries regards cooperation on matters of research, development, use of uranium sources and especially “Chinese aid for mining natural uranium in the Sinai Peninsula.”

Sources: Ha’aretz Service, *Die Welt*.

Scientists Mix Spiders With Goats

As comic book hero Spider-Man fills cinemas with his webby adventures, prepare to meet an equally shocking and astonishing creation—Spidergoat.

Scientists have combined the DNA from a goat and spider to create an animal which produces silk that is five times stronger than steel. The fiber, derived from the goats’ milk, harnesses the huge strength of silk spun by spiders.

The breakthrough could be worth millions because the silkmilk fiber can be used to make body armor that is far tougher than normal bulletproof vests, while weighing little more than a cotton shirt.

The hybrid goats were created by the insertion of a single gene from an orb-weaving spider into a fertilized goat egg.

The amazing genetically-engineered goats are outwardly normal, but carry the gene responsible for production of a spider silk protein. Each goat is only 1/70,000th spider, but when fully grown the females produce a milk which can be treated to produce a fiber with spider-silk strength.

The animals are believed to be the first commercially-viable creatures made from the DNA of two species.

Nexia, the Canadian biotech company that produced the goats, hopes the fiber—dubbed Biosteel—could take a large chunk of the billion-dollar market in industrial fibers.

Source: *Sunday Telegraph*.

Contributors: Bill Eddington, Cecil E. Manville, Darris McNeely, John Ross Schroeder and Jim Tuck

“**EPIDEMIC,**” (Continued from page 10)

solution. Not only is it expensive to purchase these products and programs, but also there are a number of serious side effects from ingredients many of them use.

The American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns consumers to avoid any products that contain aristolochic acid. It damages the kidneys and has caused certain types of cancers. The products may list this ingredient as “aristolochia,” “bragantia” or “asarum.”

Some herbal weight-control products use ephedra, also known as ma huang. Many safety issues cloud this ingredient’s effectiveness too. It’s been reported to cause nausea, dizziness, headache, skin rash, nervousness, moodiness, depression, heart racing, breathing difficulty, vomiting, blurred vision, addiction, disorientation, low blood pressure, gastrointestinal problems, chest pains, heart palpitations—even death.

The FDA has recalled all products containing another ingredient, tiratricol. It’s also known as triiodothyroacetic acid or TRIAC. It’s actually a powerful thyroid hormone and may cause heart attacks or strokes (source for FDA information: [www.obesity.org/subs/consumer alert/](http://www.obesity.org/subs/consumer%20alert/)).

Overweight and obesity have to be taken seriously. People would be wise to begin with a physical checkup. Genetic and metabolic factors cannot be changed, and we don’t mean to minimize them or to imply that obesity is easily controlled by everyone. But even the effect of these factors can be lessened in many instances. Psychological and environmental factors can definitely be controlled.

The cheapest and most effective solution is to reverse some of the curses of modernization: return physical activity to your normal life. It may not be practical to walk or cycle instead of driving a car, and it may not be safe to go out alone if you live in a large city. But most people can take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator. And there are numerous types of inexpensive exercise equipment, which can help put back into your life the good things that labor-saving “benefits” have taken away.

Think about it: 100 to 200 times as many Americans will die in 2002 from obesity as died on that terrible 11th day of September 2001. Many more around the world will die from the same cause. And, for most people, it’s a totally preventable cause of death . . . ❖

“WALLS,” (Continued from page 16)

back alleys of adjacent urban areas between Jews and Arabs.

Now Sharon embraces the plan for a structural separation. Such a wall will be 10 feet tall. It will be made out of concrete or high wire fencing. Additional deterrence on either side of the wall will be a six-foot high stretch of barbed wire; a six-to-eight-foot ditch with a sand bottom to show foot-

wake up in the morning, wondering what day we are coming into. The fence is a must.” Now, the Israeli armed forces guard the nearby highway to protect highway workers from the snipers firing their bullets from nearby fields.

On the other hand, the Palestinians regard the very same fence with a completely different view. They feel that any such barricade will further strip them of employment, freedom of movement, dignity and perhaps most importantly the land itself.

The barrier wall is already being detected as absorbing more land than originally intended. Stack quotes Nabil Kukali, a Palestinian economics professor, as lamenting, “It’s apartheid; they are putting us in prison. I swear to God we suffer every day.” His life of spending four hours to get through Israeli checkpoints just to get to work is about to become even more complicated.

Perceptions are unique

The complications do not merely rest on the Palestinians but the Israelis as well. The whole project is so controversial even within Israel that they are having a difficult time coming up with a name for this deterrence structure. In different circles it is given various titles such as an obstacle, buffer zone, fence and border. Perhaps much of the confusion goes back to the initial question as to whether the structure is “walling someone in or walling someone out.” Perhaps Israeli Defense spokesman Yarden Vatikay, who simply called

it a “security perception,” gave the most accurate title.

Perceptions are indeed unique. The great lesson of history is that all walls are ultimately breached. The Persians of old found a way to go under the seemingly impenetrable 100-foot high walls of ancient Babylon. The great walls of Constantinople that stood against all comers for 1,000 years were finally breached by the invention of the cannon ball.

The Berlin Wall of the Cold War that divided the two great economic systems of capitalism and communism finally outlived its “security perception,” it was finally overwhelmed one evening by ordinary German citizens who said enough is enough, as they broke through the greater wall of psychological fear. Now pieces of that wall of fear are sold as souvenir trinkets of a bygone era.

Thinking beyond the immediate need

Before any wall is put up, those who would build it must weigh the long-term consequences. Yes, there may be immediate gains. But other factors come to the fore that may not

Reuters/Gil Cohen Magen



An Israeli worker wearing bulletproof jacket and helmet works by the wall Israel is building to demarcate the West Bank town of Qalqilya from Israel June 3

prints. Surveillance cameras will be monitoring the entire area. Welcome to the Holy Land!

It wasn't always like this

But it wasn't always like this. Reporter Stack writes how the Israeli mayor of Kfar Sava “visited back and forth with his counterpart in the nearby Palestinian village of Kalkilya. They spoke of a shared sewer system, garbage routes, a hospital, and a day care center for Palestinian mothers. In those days, Palestinian workers set out at dawn to tramp the dusty road to Israel. They hung around on the roadside, waiting for foremen to come by with offers of farm and construction work.”

But since the beginning of the current Intifada, all that has changed. As Stack reports, “just a few months ago a young Kfar Sava girl was killed when a Palestinian sniper opened fire on a group of students.” This town is situated just a short walk from the West Bank. Now the mayors don't talk. As Mayor Yitshak Wald of Kfar Sava bluntly states, “All of us

have been at first considered due to the momentary desperation of events.

For example, the Israelis may ultimately seal the fate of “the Jewish settlers” in the West Bank. How will Israel exercise sovereignty over and provide security for these scattered groups that dot the West Bank on the other side of the new wall? Is it possible that the settlers will have to come back to the other side of what is referred to as the “green line” that was the pre-1967 borders of Israel?

Beyond that, such a wall does create in a real sense acknowledgment of another peoples’ territory. By laying down such a line in the sand, can that same line be used later to establish a permanent state? Is that what Israel wants? Last of all, and perhaps most importantly, it’s one thing to put up a wall. Indeed it consumes financial and human expenditure to do so. But to sustain and maintain such an edifice is where the real investment comes into play. Sometimes such walls should never have been built in the first place or have outlived their usefulness, but we keep them up simply because “they are there.”

Long ago, God spoke to the tribes of Israel in Deuteronomy 28 in a series of pronouncements often called “the Blessings and the Curses.” As the wandering tribes of Israel were about to settle permanently into the land, God wanted to make sure they never forgot that He was ultimately their Deliverer.

These statements of blessings and curses are not simply historical anecdotes—they continue to have prophetic significance to our day. God still has “unfinished business” with Israel, of which the Jewish people are but one part.

Deuteronomy 28:52 offers the warning, “They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the LORD your God has given you.”

Amazingly, the nation of Israel today, which is host to some of the most religious people on earth, is also smitten with many of the same ills of immorality and biblical lawlessness that plague much of the rest of Western society. Much like America, Israel has a veneer of religiosity. But scratch the surface a little deeper, and a different morality is pervasive. For every holy spot in Jerusalem, there is an alternative lifestyle spot in Tel Aviv. When a nation increasingly separates itself from its God-given heritage, no walls, no armaments and no military strategy can thwart the will of God as revealed in His Word.

“For Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest”

It is a time of trial for the peoples in the Middle East. Many nations are offering peace plans and solutions to an age-old problem. Many people are vigilant in their determination to break down the walls of suspicion and terror. Suffering occurs on both sides of those walls.

But there is one major party not mentioned in your local newspaper who is going to make a significant difference in the politics of this region. It’s none other than God Almighty! Even when heaven above seems quiet on proceedings down here below, God is working behind the scenes.

Isaiah 62:1 declares, “For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns.” That is not Jerusalem’s story today, so it must be speaking of the future.

Ultimately, God is not going to forsake Jerusalem. In fact Zechariah 14:4, speaking of the returning Messiah, declares, “In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.” No man-made device can either “wall in” or “wall out” the God of Heaven from performing His final rescue plan for spiritual Israel, the Body of Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:16), or the unfinished business of restoration He has for the physical descendants of Abraham and the peoples of the whole earth.

Exactly what will occur after the literal return of Jesus Christ to this earth? At that time, “in that day,” God proclaims wonderful events will take place. There will still be walls, but not made out of mortar or wire. Isaiah 26:1-2 proclaims, “In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in.”

Isaiah 60:18 further defines these future times: “Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise.”

The people of the Middle East, and for that matter the people of the entire world, will come to understand there is really no practical defense other than surrendering to God, and allowing Him to fight their battles. God’s will being done on earth as it is in heaven will remove the walls from the land, when salvation will be offered to Jew and Arab alike.

What walls are we building?

Until that time, here’s an important concluding thought for each of us to consider in our personal lives. What walls are we building about us, whether knowingly or unknowingly? And if we are building walls, why? Are we walling people out or walling people in? Or are we perhaps walling ourselves in by a long-term commitment to hold that barrier in place?

Have we thought out exactly what demands will be placed on us, as well as on those we consider our antagonists? Walls can take up a lot of space and take up a lot of us. The lesson of history is that walls don’t always end where they begin and they never really hold out everyone forever.

As another wall is being constructed in the Holy Land for seemingly justifiable reasons, my mind goes back to another time and another conflict not too long ago. It is the historical snapshot of one man in front of another wall making an earnest request to the keeper of the wall. It is in his request that the spirit of Isaiah 30:21 is heard loud and clear—the spirit of “this is the way, walk in it.” The man was Ronald Reagan and the request was, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.”

Little did President Reagan realize that he was on to something even bigger than what reared up behind him at that time. Just imagine an entire world without walls. Just think about it, because God does. He longs for the day when all the walls will come tumbling down. How about us? ❖



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This is the Way

ISAIAH 30:21

by Robin Webber

When the Walls Come Tumbling Down

It has often been stated that the one man-made object that can be viewed by the naked eye from space is the Great Wall of China. This reality is a splendid indictment regarding man's stay on earth. Allow me to explain. The wall is splendid in regards to its size and the scope of such a project. The indictment within the same statement is the testament to man's brutality to his fellow man that would inspire the need for such an edifice in the first place.

The Chinese are not alone in the ingenuity of their attempts to protect themselves. There is a fascinating portfolio of walls that come down to us through the ages. Some were larger, longer and older than others. Many are familiar to even a casual student of history.

Hadrian's Wall spanning northern England for 73 miles was built by the Romans to "wall out" the Scots and Picts from Latinized England. Conversely, the Berlin Wall of Cold War fame was built to "wall in" the East Germans from escape to "the West."

Some walls are made of brick and stone, while other ramparts are simply psychological in nature. The "Iron Curtain" of the last century was a composite of brick, wire, moat and at times simply a very real mental and emotional blockade thwarting any crossing of an understood line of demarcation. All walls have a common element, which cements them together through the ages. It's called fear—fear of what's on the other side.

Now in the 21st century a new wall emerges. It will be built by people not known for their walls. In fact, for hundreds of years, they were the ones literally "walled in" to the ghettos of Europe by others. Now the Jews of Israel

hold the keys as they pursue building a barrier between themselves and the Palestinians.

Los Angeles Times staff writer Megan K. Stack brings to light the details in an article dated June 17, 2002, entitled, "Israel Gives in to Fence." In the land that has long been famous for the walls that came tumbling down, a new barricade is going up. Let's take a closer look at this development through the reporting of Megan Stack and at the same time learn some important lessons for those who would build walls.

A new wall for old enemies

In this claustrophobic part of the world, where any meaningful breathing room is seemingly exhausted, Stack reports, "this spring, Israel is doing something it has long avoided; building a wall between itself and the swath of desert, orchards and hills known as the West Bank. Barbed wire and motion detectors, concrete barriers and razor wire are sprouting steadily over the rough ribbon of land." "Bulldozers continue to flatten dirt along the northern frontier. It is considered a very real possibility that soon the Palestinians of the West Bank will be completely walled off from Israel proper.

The prime minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, was deeply opposed to such a project until the recent round of homicide bombings that have killed scores of Israelis. Why? No matter how many roadblocks, checkpoints or military incursions into the West Bank, the radical Palestinian snipers and homicide bombers keep on coming through desert, over old farm roads, and through the

(See "WALLS," page 14)