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Words No One Wants to Hear From God

As in so many wars in the past, combatants, their families and fellow citizens in the present and soon-to-be wars call on God for help. They sincerely expect that a divine being blesses, even orders their efforts and that His supernatural intervention will guarantee safety and success. Their hearts would melt should they hear what God has told others.

by Cecil Maranville

Listen to the cries for God’s involvement in war, and you will realize that those prayers cannot all be answered to the satisfaction of the petitioners. They conflict with each other, as has been true since Cain killed his brother, Abel.

Do you ever ask yourself what God is thinking, as He hears the songs and the prayers?

Passionate voices belt out “God Bless America,” as U.S. troops depart their home areas for postings in the Iraqi war theater. Along Highway 80, which runs due north from Kuwait City to Iraq, a banner reads, “God Bless USA Troops” just outside Camp Coyote, temporary home to approximately 100,000 U.S. military personnel.

Boone, Iowa, Mayor George Maybee sent off the soldiers of National Guard mechanics unit, Company D with: “God speed to you. God bless you and hurry home.”

Hannibal, Missouri’s, hometown newspaper ran a series of responses from readers who wanted to submit names of men and women deployed for war under the headline, “Keep Service Personnel in Thoughts and Prayers” (Feb. 25, 2003).

Mrs. Toni Bloom wrote a sober editorial in *The Oregonian*, having received in the mail the last will and testament of her 25-year-old son, Cpl. Jason Eric Bloom. Preparing and sending one’s will to the next of kin is standard operating procedure for a soldier headed off to war. The way she calls on God is deeply moving.

“Help me to believe this is necessary and just—not merely the arrogance and self-righteousness of the mighty. Help me have faith that this is truly a fight of good against evil.

“And more than me, help the thousands of soldiers who are today on their way. *God bless them, God protect them, God help them all*” (“In My Opinion,” Feb. 23, 2003, emphasis added throughout).

Diverse religions and diverse views

Not every American thinks of God the same way—or makes the same requests of Him.

The Chicago Tribune asked local ministers, rabbis, priests and Islamic leaders how they answered questions about the impending war. The minister of the Pilgrim Baptist Church said they

(See “WORDS,” page 3)



**World News
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BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT EVENTS

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Restoration

ACTS 3:21

A Moment of Decision

By the time you read this we may well know the course of the next few years in the Middle East. More than 200,000 American troops are massed to invade Iraq and take out the regime of Saddam Hussein and destroy his suspected weapons of mass destruction. In a speech before the American Enterprise Institute on Feb. 26, President George W. Bush stated that the "dangers of our time must be confronted actively and forcefully . . . we are prepared to disarm Iraq by force."

In what was his clearest statement to date explaining his vision for the Middle East and the world, he went on to say that "success in Iraq could also begin a new stage for Middle Eastern peace and set in motion progress towards a truly democratic Palestinian state."

Mr. Bush sees democracy and Western ideals as the key to reversing the old patterns of conflict and removing the generations of hatred and bitterness that prevent the lasting solution for peace which so many have sought. It is hoped that a new democratic regime in Iraq will be the first step toward changing other Arab states and creating Western-style governments based on the freedom of the individual and economic openness. In short, this is a vision of a completely different Middle East than what we see now.

This won't be the first time this method has been tried. More than 80 years ago in the aftermath of World War I, the great powers gathered in Paris to decide what to do with the Arab peoples of the collapsed Ottoman Empire. The nations of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine (later partitioned to form the modern state of Israel) and Saudi Arabia were among the nations created at that historic conference. Unfortunately, the problems that have plagued the region since were sown within the lines drawn to form the map we see today. Will a new American-led effort to redress the area's ancient problems result in a lasting peace? Time will tell, but history is not on America's side.

A new Gulf War will be different from the one fought 12 years ago. With the exception of Britain, America is largely alone in this fight. It is leading a much smaller coalition force than it did at that time. America's values and prestige are on the line as never before. If it wins, the rewards could be great. If America stumbles in this war, the leadership of the world will be up for grabs.

The book of Daniel shows a future armed force entering the Middle East focused on entering the Holy Land (Daniel 11:40-41). The motive of this army will be different in many ways from that of the United States. The result will be a brutal occupying force, which Revelation shows will impact the whole world. For further understanding, please request our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

In this issue of *World News and Prophecy* we again focus your attention on the sure hope of God's promises as the key to traversing these uncertain times. It is easy to be worried by the immediate issues of life. But a Christian looks beyond today's world to the time when God will intervene to restore the eternal values of His Kingdom. Those who inherit that world will be focusing on that godly way of life. Nothing shall move those who have made God their refuge and fortress.

—Darris McNeely

Read *World News and Prophecy* as soon as it is completed. The next issue is scheduled to be available by May 8 on the Internet at:

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

“WORDS,” (Continued from page 1)

were against war, but their “prayers are for Colin Powell, especially” (Staff Reporters, “Mixed Messages,” Feb. 25, 2003).

(He didn’t say what they asked God to do for Secretary Powell.)

Rabbi Asher Lopatin said of his Anshe Sholom B’nai Israel congregation: “One of the things that we do that is very important is we say a prayer for the soldiers of the United States and Israel . . . We also say a prayer for the government of the United States . . . and we pray that God helps them make the right decisions” (ibid.).

Praying to God for soldiers means asking that He grant them success and safety in battle. Of course, “success” for soldiers on one side of a conflict means defeat or death for those on the opposing side.

Imam Mohammed Amin Kholwadia is the director of an institute for higher learning for Arabic and Islamic studies. Of prayer, he said: “During prayer time, we will mention [the politics of war] . . . to develop the spirit of the Muslim community towards prayer—and that they should turn to God for advice and comfort, strength and patience . . . [Prayer time] will not be something where we make any sort of radical judgment for or against any government in the prayer. It’ll just be for the well-being of every human being” (ibid.).

That sounds nice, but what does it mean? With one war ongoing and another pending, opposing sides seek to defeat each other. What request does God hear from this group and what can He answer?

Generalities, mixed messages

Pastor John Buchanan of the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago relates: “I think that every Sunday since the crisis has emerged and heated up we have continued to pray for peace, and in addition prayed for the president and his advisers and for the secretary of state and the important decisions they’re in the process of making. We have prayed every Sunday for the men and women in our armed services and their families, and we have prayed for the Iraqi people and their leaders and we have prayed for the United Nations” (ibid.).



Praying to God for soldiers means asking that He grant them success and safety in battle. Of course, “success” for soldiers on one side of a conflict means defeat or death for those on the opposing side.

Let’s break this down. God hears a request for peace. And, He hears a request that He give insight and judgment to the national leaders of the United States, as well as the national leaders of Iraq. But these want the defeat of each other. He also hears a prayer for the American soldiers. The men and women in the armed services of the United States are trained and prepared to kill the enemy until his government surrenders or is destroyed. War is not “nice.” A prayer for the American armed services is a request that God guides their weapons straight and true.

Morris Taylor, a member of the administrative body of Evanston’s Bahai community, says of his group: “We hope and pray that all conflicts like this will be resolved quickly and as peacefully as possible” (ibid.). Several other denominations were similarly general in their responses.

“Conflicts like this . . . resolved . . . peacefully” makes it sound like we’re talking about a minor dispute or misunderstanding between people in their

community. Is that how God views the ongoing and pending conflicts? It’s not how radical Muslims view it.

“Righteous” viewed differently

From another perspective, a message believed to be from Osama bin Laden called the impending Iraqi war, “the war of infidels led by America and its allies” (“Bin Laden’s Message: Fight the ‘Crusaders,’” Reuters, *The New York Times*, Feb. 15, 2003.)

Being completely clear, bin Laden and company say this is a religious war, the godless versus the godly. Only, in their perspective—and their prayers—the godless and the godly are reversed from those the Americans and their allies are praying for.

Continuing, “We stress that the loyal intentions that the fighting should be in the name of God only . . . We remind that victory is from God alone.”

God is on our side, is what radical Islam claims. He is not on your side, they say to the Americans and “the Coalition of the Willing.” The objective of extremist Muslims is plain. They want to fight, terrorize, kill, destroy and defeat all who are not Muslim—unless or until they convert.

The tape continues: “We say to honest Muslims that they must *move, incite and mobilize* the nation amid these great events to liberate themselves from the establishment of these oppressive, unjust, apostate ruling governments, which in turn are enslaved by America, and to *establish the rule of God on earth.*”

To the radical Muslim, the Iraqi question is only a part of the great cause, the great war of Islam vs. Christianity.

Read his words: “*This crusade war is primarily aimed at the people of Islam* regardless of the removal or survival of the socialist government or Saddam.”

By using the word *crusade*, bin Laden (or whoever recorded the tape) invokes the historical Christian crusades against the Ottoman Empire-ruled Jerusalem. He defines all Western interest in the Middle East as a crusade of Christians vs. Muslims.

“The *Muslims as a whole*,” he continues, “and in Iraq in particular, should

pull up their sleeves and carry *jihad* against this oppressive offensive and to make sure to stock up on ammunition and arms. This is a duty for them [implying, *a religious duty*].

“It does not hurt that in the current circumstances, the interests of *Muslims* coincide with the interests of the socialists in the war *against the crusaders*, taking into account our belief and declaration of the *apostasy* of the socialists.”

Clearly, radical Muslims involve God’s name not only to defeat whatever nations eventually go after Saddam

Our purpose is to stir you to think, as war is again imminent, that unless people change, the day will soon come when God will tell America and Britain the words no one wants to hear Him say.

Hussein’s regime, but to defeat Christianity and replace it with Islam worldwide.

“God, be on our side”

So, how does God hear the prayers of the radicals? Most readers of *World News and Prophecy* would be startled by the very suggestion that God would hear their prayers at all. But, it’s important that we understand the Muslim radicals are certain *theirs* are *the only* prayers heard and answered.

Over 90 percent of Americans believe in God—in some form. The above mix of religious expressions gives a small insight into how scattered and nonspecific American religious views are. Nonetheless, Americans freely call on God to bless the cause of the “Coalition of the Willing” in the present war against Islamic terrorists and the pending war against an Islamic nation, Iraq.

Is this a war of Christians against Muslims? No, but it can be interpreted that way. That is, only the radical Muslims put that forthright label on the war on terrorism, but the peoples set to face off against each other in the pending Middle East war are in fact largely Christians and Muslims. Muslim

extremists would love to sell the Christian vs. Muslim concept to all Muslims.

Does God take sides?

Does God take sides in wars? We have to turn to the Bible for the answer, but it’s an absolute yes, He does. We know the David and Goliath record, and there are many other events like it when God’s participation gave the poorly armed and outnumbered the victory. Not that there always had to be a David vs. Goliath scenario, for there were other wars when God’s people were the better

armed and in greater numbers than the enemies they defeated.

The American-led “Coalition of the Willing” is anything but a shepherd with a sling vs. a heavily-armed giant. There’s absolutely no reason whatsoever that the coalition would fail to defeat and overthrow Saddam Hussein—is there?

There may well be reasons for getting bogged down in protracted small-arms street fighting, establishing a new government and caring for Iraqis whom *Hussein* poisons with chemical or biological weapons. Then, there is the aftermath of how Arabs, particularly Muslims incited by radicals, interpret the act of crushing Saddam.

Words no one wants to hear from God

I titled this piece, “Words No One Wants to Hear From God.” They are: “*I am no longer on your side; I am now against you.*”

The book of Amos tells of a time when ancient Israel was relatively strong with every reason to expect that they could defeat any enemy that attempted to overwhelm them. But God, for cause, withdrew His blessing.

How would you feel if you heard

God speak those words to you? How would you feel if He spoke those words to those going to war, now, the sons and the daughters, the fathers and the mothers in the armed services of the American-led “Coalition of the Willing”?

Are we prophesying a defeat for the West and a victory for the Iraqi dictator? No, but we want you to think. God, for cause, withdrew His blessing from ancient Israel. What cause?

The shocking reality is that conditions in Israel at the time were similar to what they are in America today. There was a mix of religions. People generally believed in God, but they altered most of the ways He initially laid out for their worship. They had religious holidays and church services, but they lived what we would call “liberal” lifestyles—and they still prayed for God’s blessing.

But the day came when He said, “No, I can’t give it to you anymore.” When that day came, no amount of arrows and spears (precision-guided missiles), no deftness in wielding sword or sling (marksmanship), no superiority in spies (intelligence) made any difference. Israel—who always counted on God to be on their side—lost.

Why do we bring this up? First, we learn how God thinks by reading the history of the Bible. The lesson should sober any people of faith who count on God to grant them safety and success in war. More specifically, the mantle and the name of Israel now sit primarily on the shoulders of the United States and Great Britain. They are the inheritors of the blessings and the responsibilities.

The book of Amos is more than a history; it’s a prophecy. The day will come when God says to modern Israel, for cause, “I am not with you anymore; I am against you.”

We’ve told you often in the pages of our publications how our peoples turned away from God. Our purpose is to stir you to think, as war is again imminent, that unless people change, *the day will soon come* when God will tell America and Britain the words no one wants to hear Him say. ❖

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Dealing Effectively With a World of Terrorism and Tragedy

From Sept. 11, 2001, until now and unfortunately on into the foreseeable future, we have lived and are living in a different world—too often blighted by the specter of fear. How does our Creator advise us to respond to the fears within us all?

by John Ross Schroeder

Remember the inspiring testimony of Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli astronaut, direct from space: “The world looks marvelous up here, so peaceful, so wonderful . . .” Indeed his words are very similar to how the Genesis account describes God’s magnificent creation.

Col. Ramon went on to say: “The atmosphere is so thin and fragile, and I think everybody, all of us . . . have to keep it clean and good. It saves our life and gives us life” (*Independent on Sunday*, Feb. 2, 2003).

This may be understood as a positive testimonial to our Creator—a badge of honor suitably due to His divine majesty. Everything He had made is simply described in Genesis as “very good.” And like Adam and Eve were told to “dress and keep” the Garden of Eden, mankind was also divinely commanded to populate and rule the earth, suitably subduing it in a right manner.

A sobering reality check

How different is the fresh perspective of this brave and courageous Israeli astronaut (tragically lost only a few minutes from scheduled touchdown) from many standing on the earth. In New York City, “a stone’s throw from Wall Street and the site of the World Trade Center, most models of gas masks have sold out; the only nuclear, chemical and biological suits left are extra-large. Fifteen minutes after closing time, the queue at the security equipment store’s checkout is still 10 people deep” (*The Financial Times*, Feb. 15, 2003).

Some who walk on solid ground, freely breathe the earth’s precious air and bask in the rays of the sun, must now contemplate a future day when we may be forced to don space suit-like gear (perhaps somewhat like that of astronauts) just in order to survive deadly chemical and biological attacks—poisonous gases deliberately injected into

the atmosphere by murderous terrorists.

In spite of the *Columbia* tragedy, while they yet lived those seven astronauts had temporarily escaped the stark reality of the earth’s present condition. You need only to turn on your TV to fully understand the damage human beings can inflict first on themselves and then on their precious habitation, our own planet called earth.

We may well ask: How can those of us who desperately want to continue bringing our lives into harmony with our Creator’s will cope with what is coming?

Needed comfort from Isaiah 51

One particular chapter in the book of Isaiah is of inestimable help. God is speaking here in the first person. He specifically addresses those who are already living God’s way. Most of our readers may readily identify with this spiritual position.

Our Creator says: “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD” (Isaiah 51:1, New International Version throughout). Does this describe you? If so, you are on the right road to eternal security and enjoying God’s help and assistance in the meantime.

The chapter continues: “Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many” (verse 2). The wondrous implications of this sublime passage are explained in our free booklet (available on request), *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Further, the book of Genesis, combined with the books of Romans and Hebrews, shows how Abraham became the forefather of our Christian faith.

In briefest summary Hebrews 11:8 says: “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, *even though he did*

How can those of us who desperately want to continue bringing our lives into harmony with our Creator’s will cope with what is coming?

not know where he was going”(emphasis added).

The faith of Abraham and David

Notice first of all that Abraham’s faith was solidly coupled with obedience, the keeping of God’s commandments (Genesis 26:5). Secondly, it was patiently exercised in trusting the Creator to lead him safely through arenas of alien life and geography completely unknown to him.

Generations later King David of Israel was inspired to write: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no

Regrettably, this is the somber direction of our world today, increasingly heedless of God and His righteous ways. But the true Christian is even now a citizen of the heavenly Kingdom (Philippians 3:20). He or she actively looks forward in faith to an eternal city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:13-16).

However, God gives us further knowledge of a better world on this earth in Isaiah 51: “Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations” (verse 4). Note from reviewing verse 1 that God is still addressing His own peo-

If we first seek His Kingdom and His righteousness, God will see to our physical, material and even psychological necessities.

After all, Jesus told us that the Father knows our needs in advance.

evil” (Psalm 23:4). David knew in advance that God was with him in spite of all the trials that were to mark his life. He also knew the terrorism of his time firsthand and He resolutely condemned it again and again. David despised those who “shed the blood of war in [time of] peace.”

We do not know in advance exactly how God will deliver us from the future evils of terrorism. But what we do understand is that Isaiah calls upon us to exercise the believing, obedient faith of Abraham. (You may wish to request our free booklet *You Can Have Living Faith*.)

The sure knowledge of a better world

Isaiah 51 continues: “The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing” (verse 3). This is primarily a brief word picture of the wondrous millennial reign of Christ, and only secondarily a distressing reminder looking back at what had happened in the last days of the age of man—specifically mentioning ruins and wasteland.

ple, the firstfruits of His righteousness, and not the children of disobedience. And whatever Isaiah may have personally had in mind when he penned these words under divine inspiration, the New Testament now identifies the Church as God’s nation (Matthew 21:43), the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16).

Nonetheless, this particular passage in Isaiah anticipates Christ’s millennial reign of peace and prosperity—emphasizing its secure undergirding of universal obedience to God’s law and divine justice.

The narrative goes on: “The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.” Fervent hope is the constant companion of a truly biblical faith.

To whom is God talking?

In this long passage in Isaiah, God never once forgets the nature of the audience that He is addressing. “Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have my law in your hearts” (verse 7). Today God’s people are truly converted, obedient Christians who continue to internalize His holy law.

Nonetheless, beginning in that same verse God goes on to counsel His very own people with the words:

“Do not fear the reproach of men or be terrified by their insults.” Then a little later in this same chapter, the Creator challenges us by asking: “Who are you that fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass, that you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction?” (verses 12-13).

Truly the Bible is an up-to-date book. Today we are confronted by similar fears very much like those that our spiritual forefathers had to wrestle with and overcome. We could do with the same attitude of mind as former President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945) when he boldly said in the dark days of the economic depression in the 1930s, “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.”

Jesus Christ tells us not to even fear those who might kill the body, but have absolutely no power over their victims’ eternal destiny. The Personage He told us to fear and respect is God the Father, the one who has the awesome power to give or deny us eternal life (see Matthew 10:28).

The God who comforts His people

Our Creator resolutely tells us: “I, even I, am he who comforts you” (Isaiah 51:12). Our God has said: “I have put my words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of my hand” (verse 16). God’s people are charged with the challenging task of getting the true gospel out to this unbelieving and disobedient world, but not without His accompanying divine help and protection.

If we first seek His Kingdom and His righteousness, God will see to our physical, material and even psychological necessities. After all, Jesus told us that the Father knows our needs in advance. Yet in a spirit of thanksgiving, we should still make our requests known to our Creator (Philippians 4:6), asking Him to aid us in casting out our anxieties—learning to trust in Him alone.

“The Lord is my helper” (Hebrews 13:6). ❖

Mortgage Bubble About to Burst?

Millions of Americans are heavily burdened with first and, in many cases, second mortgages. People reached for "the American dream" of owning their home—but often a home somewhat beyond the reach of their incomes. Additionally, they pulled needed cash out of home equity through refinancing. Who controls these loans? What do creditors receive in return for their money? Are we about to experience a financial restructuring on a world scale with shocking consequences for the United States?

by Melvin Rhodes

The Old Testament book of Deuteronomy warns Israel of the consequences of disobedience to God's laws. The Israelites were given a choice—they could obey God and be blessed or disobey God and suffer the inevitable consequences.

One of the blessings for obedience was that Israel would "lend to many nations, but . . . not borrow" (Deuteronomy 28:12). The reverse would happen if the Israelites disobeyed: "The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail" (verses 43-44).

America is clearly starting to reap the negative financial consequences of disobedience, as a recent article in *The American Conservative* shows. Written by San Francisco financial analyst Robertson Morrow, the article is titled, "Living With the Bubble" (Feb. 10, 2003).

"As a percentage of personal income, mortgage debt has risen from 51 percent 25 years ago to over 100 percent today," points out Mr. Morrow. "In the last 5 years, mortgage debt has risen by 60 percent, or \$2.2 trillion, an amount roughly the same as the profits of every American corporation for the last five years and twice China's exports to the entire world."

In a society where debt has become a national way of life, does this really matter?

Mr. Morrow says it does. "One problem with borrowing all this money is that people might not be able to pay it back. Another is that, for the foreseeable future, Americans will be spending a large proportion of their income on debt service. This will constrain

consumer spending—two thirds of the economy—which will retard economic growth for the remainder of the decade. Slow economic growth will inhibit income growth, preventing us from earning our way out of the hole into which we have dug ourselves."

Housing has been one of the few sectors of the U.S. economy that has been doing well.

Lower interest rates have encouraged new homebuyers, while at the same time those already owning their own homes have refinanced their mortgages, often enabling them to get further into debt with new purchases. This cannot go on, as Mr. Morrow shows.

Refinancing has its limits

"Moreover, at some point, we will exhaust the supply of money available using homes as collateral. In 2001 and 2002,



Americans extracted \$300 billion in cash from their existing homes through refinancing and home equity loans. This infusion of cash is what has fueled rising consumer spending in the face of recession.

"As Americans have increased their debt to finance the greatest consumer spending spree in the history of the world, we have become one of the most indebted people on the planet."

“Why did a rational capitalist society choose to lend people too much money, and why did rational capitalist Americans choose to borrow more than was good for them?”

“Three reasons: The first is that the federal government dominates mortgage borrowing. The second is that modern finance has made it easier to succumb to the human temptation to borrow now and worry later. The third is that foreigners have—perhaps naively—been willing to lend Americans whatever we wanted. In short, American capitalism has been corrupted by government subsidies, value-free modern finance, and globalization.”

Ominously, Mr. Morrow adds: “As Americans have increased their debt to finance the greatest consumer spending spree in the history of the world, we have become one of the most indebted people on the planet. Near the center of this degeneration is the transformation of the home mortgage from a means of savings to a means of spending.”

When the bubble bursts and house values fall, millions of Americans will be in deep trouble. Much of their debt will be owed to foreign nations, America’s former debtors turned creditors.

“An indispensable aspect of the debt binge is the willingness of foreigners to lend us the money. Not only is 20 percent of mortgage debt sold to foreign banks and other foreign buyers outright, but modern finance has made all liquid instruments de facto fungible. Even when foreigners buy other American financial assets, they are propping up a market of which mortgages are a part. Take the foreign buyers out of the equation and the whole thing collapses, and plentiful, cheap mortgage debt is no longer available to Americans.”

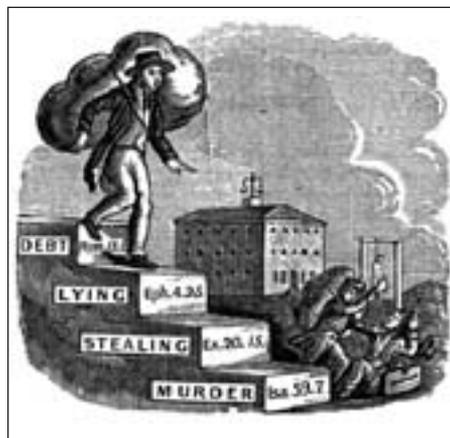
In other words, Americans have become dependent on the willingness of foreign banks to continue their lending to a people already awash with too much debt. Well, Mr. Morrow did say that they were “perhaps naively” continuing to lend.

“Without foreign buyers, the wave of cash-out refinancing and home

equity loans would reverse, and we would return to the normal mode of gradually paying down mortgages.”

The banker has become the borrower

There was a time when the United States loaned to other nations. During both world wars American banks loaned money to the British and others when they most needed it to con-



The way society views debt has changed greatly over the years.

tinue their war effort. After 1945, the American Marshall Plan helped Europe to recover from the ravages of war. America continued to invest in and loan to other countries.

It was the Vietnam War that began the big debt problem. The unpopular Vietnam War was fought without any increase in taxation at the same time as expanding social programs were introduced by the federal government. The rising costs of both put pressure on the dollar and, by 1971, the United States had to forego the link between the dollar and gold. No longer could people around the world rely on America to back up the dollar with gold on demand at \$35 an ounce. For the last 30 years the U.S. dollar has been unredeemable currency, relying solely on confidence to maintain its value, its real worth unsupported by the precious metal.

In recent years, America’s foreign debt has increased rapidly, receiving very little attention at home. While

concern is expressed about the federal budget deficit—the difference between the amount the federal government receives in taxation and the amount it spends—the growing trade deficit has hardly been noticed. Yet, December’s trade deficit was over \$40 billion, the highest on record and the biggest trade deficit of any nation in the history of the world.

Ideally, a nation will balance its total trade with other nations. That means it will sell to others goods to the same value as what it buys. Selling more equals a trade surplus, selling less is a trade deficit. As Americans overspend on foreign goods, the money used has to go somewhere. Some is used to buy up American companies or land while a great deal of the rest is simply loaned to Americans, ironically enabling them to refinance their mortgages, spend the money saved and get even deeper into debt.

As Mr. Morrow puts it: “The foreign-debt bubble, and therefore the mortgage bubble, is a necessary consequence of our trade deficits. When we run a trade deficit, foreigners are giving us their goods not in exchange for our goods but in exchange for something else of value. Subject to trivial quibbles, this can only be two things. The first is foreign investment: when we give them a factory in America or a claim on a factory in America. The second is debt.”

Simply put: “One necessary consequence of the present trade mess is that America is inexorably becoming a nation of debtors and other nations—principally Japan and her Asian imitators—nations of creditors. What this really means is that an entire society (ours) has become biased in favor of consuming things, while others have become biased in favor of owning things.”

This also means that other countries have the power to pull the plug on the U.S. economy. What would be the consequences of this?

Potential global financial restructuring

“The global money market is a fickle lover. Once money stops blow-

ing into a debt bubble, the bubble bursts, and no financial intervention can restore it. Just ask the Malaysians, the Russians, the Argentineans, or the U.S. telecommunications industry.”

Bringing it down to the consequences for American homeowners, Mr. Morrow states: “What does this mean for the individual homeowner? The imprudent will suffer. Debt will become harder to assume, housing costs will fall, and consumer spending will sag. Those who refinanced to extract cash, took out a second mortgage, bought more house than they could afford, or failed to save, risk deep financial pain when the housing bubble bursts. Homebuyers depend on their jobs to make their mortgage payments, and the economic contraction caused by a squeeze on consumer spending will put those jobs in jeopardy. Even the prudent will suffer due to the irresponsibility of others: one’s financial mistakes are not solely one’s own business.

“Risk to the global financial system is even greater. For the first time in financial history, a major debtor nation owes its debt in its own currency. This means that rather than exporting goods to buy foreign currency to repay that debt, we can just print the money. We inflate the dollar to pay off foreigners in money that is not worth very much. Creditors will oppose destroying the dollar, but they lack the political clout of millions of American debtors. This opens the possibility of major inflation or polarization of the American political system between those serving the interests of foreign creditors and those representing American mortgage-holders. Neither is an attractive possibility, for either means the U.S. economy should be prepared to take a bubble bath.”

Mr. Morrow may be overly optimistic when he writes, “creditors will oppose destroying the dollar.” Since World War II, the U.S. dollar has been the preferred currency of international trade and finance. However, the dollar’s recent slide in value against other currencies reflects a lack of confidence in the U.S. currency, part-



“One necessary consequence of the present trade mess is that America is inexorably becoming a nation of debtors and other nations—principally Japan and her Asian imitators—nations of creditors. What this really means is that an entire society (ours) has become biased in favor of consuming things, while others have become biased in favor of owning things.”

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ly due to the trade deficit and war jitters. At the same time, the increased value of the euro, the one-year-old European currency, shows increased confidence in the new currency, increasingly in demand around the world.

The bursting of the American debt bubble will impact the major creditor nations adversely along with the United States itself. The creditor nations are “Japan and her Asian imitators.” A major reversal in the American economy would naturally affect these other countries first and foremost.

All nations would be affected, but the nations of the European Union would be impacted least. The euro could easily take over from the dollar as the world’s major trading currency. By default, Europe would become the only engine capable of pulling the world economy out of recession.

What can we do?

Christians can prepare by paying down debts as quickly as possible. When the bubble bursts, the lower your debt burden, the better.

Christians should also strive to keep a spiritual perspective when it comes to money. History shows that eventually all paper currencies fail and all economies collapse. Jesus Christ reminded His followers of what is most important when He said: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal” (Matthew 6:19). He added, “Seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33).

While we should do what we can to sensibly prepare for coming problems, we should not worry unduly about the physical, concentrating rather on our relationship with God, who is able to take care of us in every situation. ❖

Visions of Judgment: The Ride of the Third Horseman—Famine

With the potential for the food-producing countries to feed the entire globe, it's hard to imagine how famine could grip the earth in the crisis that ends the age. Yet, the third seal opens to a horrifying scene of food scarcity that leads to global famine. How could this happen? What will be the result?

by Darris McNeely

Right now people are suffering from famine in many parts of the world. Famine has returned to Ethiopia where nearly 6 million are in desperate need of emergency food supplies in order to avert starvation. Perhaps another million require immediate help in Eritrea. In southern Africa, 14 million people in six countries currently suffer from food shortages.

With the opening of this seal comes a period of severe famine unlike any in the past. While there have been famines throughout history of varying severity, it appears this will be worse.

More than 2 million people have died in the past decade in North Korea due to food shortages caused by a combination of flood, drought and bad government policy created by Kim Jong Il, the nation's dictatorial ruler, who currently threatens the use and/or sale of nuclear weapons. Many feel this is a periodic ploy to gain concessions, including supplies of food, from the world community. (See "Kim Blamed for North Korean Drought," *Washington Times*, Jan. 6, 2003.)

Famine is a scourge that appears cyclically throughout history. Sometimes it is caused by drought, blight, floods and other natural means. At other times, it is caused by inefficient or outright malevolent government policy.

In today's global society, there should be no real obstacle to alleviating the effects of food shortages wherever they occur. Modern agricultural methods create bumper crops in the developed world resulting in massive amounts of food production, more than enough to feed the hungry of the world. There is no reason to expect people to starve when this is coupled with the means to transport food to any location in the world. Yet famine and suffering from food shortages continue—and grow.

The third horseman

We come now to the third horseman's ride. Notice what it says in Revelation 6. "When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come and see.' So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of

scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine'" (Revelation 6:5-6).

The Expositor's Bible Commentary explains: "This amount suggests food prices about twelve times higher than normal and implies inflation and famine conditions (Matt. 24:7). A quart of wheat would supply an average person one day's sustenance. Barley was used by the poor to mix with the wheat." Oil and wine are symbols of plenty. The reference here can indicate there will be pockets of abundance in the midst of famine. Christ's reference to famine "in various places" (Matthew 24:7) indicates the same possibility.

With the opening of this seal comes a period of severe famine unlike any in the past. While there have been famines throughout history of varying severity, it appears this will be worse. We have all seen pictures of famine in our time, usually in parts of drought-stricken Africa. In 1984, a famine in Ethiopia developed through natural means, but was aggravated by the unstable government. Millions were at risk.

Fortunately, a massive humanitarian effort from around the world stopped the famine from killing as many as predicted. (Even then, corrupt government officials withheld some of the donated food as a weapon to starve their political opponents.) This was testimony to the generosity of the many wealthy nations and the global means of transport that is available. However if a nation's social fabric begins to unravel, then larger problems can set in. The crises in southern Africa may be a foretaste of larger tribulations to come.

Prelude to an apocalypse?

The six southern African countries of Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique currently suffer from large food

shortages and will need help for months to come. But food is not the only problem. The famine is aggravated due to the AIDS epidemic that grips the continent. About 25 percent of the adult population of these countries is infected with the virus. As the adults succumb to this plague, there are fewer people left to plant and harvest the crops. Worse yet, as the adult community dies, the knowledge needed for survival is not passed to the younger generation. Consequently, the society loses its ability to produce food—even if weather and soil conditions were optimal.

A recent article in Britain's *The Economist* gave the story of one woman whose personal tragedy represents the larger unfolding catastrophe.

"In the past, when food was short, Jenerah Michelo, a Zambian subsistence farmer, could buy or beg from neighbours. But then her husband died of AIDS, leaving her with six children, a nearly empty food pot and a debilitating virus in her bloodstream. Now she is too feeble to forage, and neighbors are reluctant to help because she is a 'patient.' Foreign donors sometimes bring food and tablets to treat convulsions. But the medicine should be taken after a full meal, 'so I get side effects, I become weak and dizzy, I cannot manage.' She cannot get hold of anti-AIDS drugs, but if she could, they too would be useless without adequate nourishment" ("Cursed, Twice Over," Feb. 13, 2003).

In President Bush's January State of the Union address, he pledged \$15 billion in emergency medical aid to Africa over the next five years. This is a generous, noble and helpful step in a mounting battle. But medicine alone will not solve the crisis. Other factors, not the least of which is education, are needed. Another major need is food. A person infected with the HIV virus needs extra calories, especially protein, as well as powerful drugs, to keep it from developing into AIDS. When there are massive food shortages, the death toll keeps rising.

In rural Africa today, the future looks bleak. In fact, the future is dying. The combination of famine and disease is hitting mainly those who are in their most productive years, those under 40.



Famine is listed in Revelation 6 as the third seal, which follows the horsemen of war and false religion. While nature can be a cause of famine, quite often war and misrule, malignant political or religious ideology, are prime factors.

A majority of victims are women who traditionally do most of the farming. As parents die, the children leave school to take care of themselves and other children in the family. The tribal village has been the traditional backbone of African society, but it is beginning to crack under the strain of loss from the famine.

A social breakdown is occurring in many areas of Africa due to the twin problems of famine and disease. *The Economist* ended its report by saying, "Indeed, there are signs of such a breakdown in Mrs. Michelo's village: her family cannot help her, her neighbours will not, and some have even been stealing her chickens. Such theft was unknown during previous food shortages, as was hoarding by the better off, which has now become commonplace" (ibid.).

Famines of the past

Famine is listed in Revelation 6 as the third seal, which follows the horsemen of war and false religion. While nature can be a cause of famine, quite often war and misrule, malignant political or religious ideology, are prime factors. A look at past famines in history can give us an idea of how devastating they can be to society.

During the 20th century there were

two humanly engineered famines with devastating consequences. In 1932-34, the Soviet dictator Josef Stalin sought to suppress Ukrainian nationalism by forcing a system of collectivized agriculture upon the peasants. Food supplies were removed to the cities, crops failed and food supplies were barred from the region. This manmade famine resulted in the starvation of between 6 and 8 million. This famine was a state-sponsored attempt at genocide.

China's "Great Leap Forward" in 1958-60 resulted in mismanaged food production and the disruption of distribution chains. Fertile rice fields were plowed over and factories built on them. Farms were collectivized. Farmers who knew only the land were at a loss as to what to do in and with factories. Coupled with bad weather, the result was the death by starvation of 20 million people during 1960 and 1961.

Famine in prophecy

Step back into the book of Leviticus for a look at God's warning to man through the example of Israel. Here we can see the pattern of false religion, war, famine and pestilence in the instruction to Israel to remain faithful to their relationship with God.

Leviticus 26 is a chapter of promis-

es from God, the promise of blessings for obedience and of curses for disobedience. The first step toward blessings is true religion, or faithfulness to the true worship of God. “You shall not make idols for yourselves; neither a carved image nor a sacred pillar shall you rear for yourselves; nor shall you set up an engraved stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God. You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD” (verses 1-2).

For keeping His statutes and commandments, God promises “rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their

The world will not end, and human life will not be extinguished. The Bible gives us hope that the light will dawn out of the chaos at the end of the age. It is when we keep our eyes firmly focused on this truth that we can have hope beyond the tensions of our present world.

fruit . . . you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land . . . For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you” (verses 3-9).

By avoiding false religion, Israel would be able to receive divine blessings of peace and material abundance. Good health, the absence of disease, would follow. In other words, the horsemen of apocalyptic disaster would not ride through their land as long as they obeyed God and worshiped Him in truth.

This promise applies to all nations, and in time, they will receive the promised benefits if they, too, live the way God reveals. Until then, we will continue to see the cyclical occurrence of famine by all causes—people by the millions dying when they could live.

In the parallel account in Deuteronomy 28 God details the horror of a people stricken with the curse of famine. Perhaps this warning serves to illustrate the stories from history

wherever famine has occurred for whatever reason. It bears our study here to understand what lies ahead for this world when the third horseman rides.

For disobedience to the covenant—the basis of the loving relationship between God and Israel—God says He would bring a nation from afar to besiege and blockade the cities. All the food stores would be forcibly taken. The resulting starvation would cause the social structure to unravel at a frightening speed. The results are hard to read but read them we must.

“You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your

daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you. The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind, so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege . . .

“The tender and delicate woman among you . . . will refuse to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter, her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of everything in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates” (Deuteronomy 28:53-57).

Famine-induced cannibalism is the lowest depth of depravity to which a nation can sink. Scenes like this have occurred in history and God says they can happen again. Reading this in the light of today’s headlines is profoundly sobering. These are the deeply distressing events that inevitably occur when men and women become entrenched in a pattern of disobedience to God’s laws, stubbornly refuse to submit to their

Creator and ignore His warning messages.

Hope in the midst of horror

Jesus Christ wept over the fate awaiting Jerusalem in the first century. He knew that scenes such as this would occur within the “city of peace.” He wanted to gather them into a loving and protective embrace and keep them from such tragedy. But their sins and defiant attitude would not permit the necessary repentance. All He could do was leave them to impending desolation and the cruel lessons of experience (see Matthew 23:37-39).

There is one horseman yet to ride in this grisly scenario. We will see in our next installment that he rides in tandem with this third horseman. We have not yet seen the depths of the trial that awaits the world, as the seals of Revelation are opened. Lest we lose hope, perhaps this is the time to consider again the ride of the fifth horseman, Jesus Christ.

In His Olivet prophecy, Jesus gave the first description of these seals—and His prediction is unerring. There would be a time of great tribulation, greater than any previous world conflict and unless the days would be brought up short, no human flesh would survive. No treaty, no cease-fire, no human being, would be able to stop the age-ending cataclysm. Events will drive the world into an out-of-control spin. But for the sake of a remnant called “the elect,” “the days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22).

Too often, people speak of this period as “the end of the world” or by some other similar gloomy name. The world will not end, and human life will not be extinguished. The Bible gives us hope that the light will dawn out of the chaos at the end of the age. It is when we keep our eyes firmly focused on this truth that we can have hope beyond the tensions of our present world.

The time when God conclusively intervenes in history is drawing near. Out of the midst of this destruction, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. Everyone will see His appearing in the clouds of heaven (Matthew 24:30). God speed that day, as we all pray, “Your kingdom come.” ❖

Increasing EU Presence in Latin America

The people of Latin America are voting for leaders whom they hope can lift the region's millions from the grips of poverty. The gap between rich and poor has become the main issue throughout the region and therefore a primary theme of regional leaders, whether conservative or liberal.

by Fred Nance

In Brazil, the voters recently elected a leftist leader for the first time in their history. Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva declared that combating poverty will be his first priority in South America's largest country.

According to *Latin Trade Magazine* (October 2002), 211 million people in Latin America are poor—that's 44 percent of the population. They are demanding that their leaders do something. All Latin American leaders agree that trade will be a key component to the turning around of their terrible economic performances and recurring economic collapses. Many nations in the region are racing to make trade deals to try to revive their stagnant economies and to compete in the global market.

Bible prophecy shows that international trade will indeed be pivotal to the health of the world's economy, revealing a coming massive economic system that will lift many nations to prosperity, even to luxury.

Neglect by the United States

"The United States is no longer focusing efforts on Latin America," says Thomas G. Travis of Sandler, Travis and Roseberg trade consultancy" (*Latin Trade Magazine*, October 2002). Confusion in the U.S. administration's Latin American policy has led to a wilting of U.S. influence and credibility throughout the region. "If you look at the events that are likely to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda in the near future, you will conclude that President Bush will not be able to return to his pre-Sept. 11 emphasis on Latin American affairs until at least early 2005, say Latin American officials" ("Region Expects More Neglect by U.S.," *Miami Herald*, Nov. 24, 2002).

Before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President Bush said that this would be the "Century of the Americas." He envisioned that a Free Trade Area of the Americas would be in place by

2005, which would produce a market of 800 million people in the Americas, stretching from the Arctic to Antarctica. But since the terrorist attacks, the attention of the United States has shifted to fanatic Islamic terrorism, Iraq, the Middle East and North Korea.

Meanwhile, Latin America is suffering one of the worst economic crises of its history. Ironically, Congress recently granted the president fast-track authority to negotiate trade deals, but according to a recent *New York Times* article, the chances of negotiating such a far-reaching hemispheric deal are at best even. "With Latin American countries reeling from the global economic downturn, a financial meltdown in Argentina and distress in Brazil, disillusionment with free trade [with the U.S.] is running high in many quarters" ("Brazilian Rallying Neighbors Ahead of Meeting With Bush," Nov. 2, 2002).

The recently elected president of Brazil has been openly critical of the proposal of a Free Trade Area of the Americas, saying it would lead to the annexation of Latin America by the United States.

The neglect of Latin America by the United States at a time when the region needs the most help is allowing another world power to gain an advantage in trade and influence in the region.

Solidifying ties with Europe

Brazil's new president recently made an unofficial visit to Argentina and Chile, calling for a "new regional strategic relationship to allow us to retake control of our own destiny and build our own future. We are seeking true integration, following the example of the European Union," said Mr. da Silva (*ibid.*).

The Mercosur Trade Union, with members Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and associate members Chile and Bolivia, is the world's third-largest trade group. The European Union has become Mercosur's lead-

The neglect of Latin America by the United States at a time when the region needs the most help is allowing another world power to gain an advantage in trade and influence in the region.

ing trade partner since signing an accord in 1999.

Chile recently signed a big trade deal in May 2002 with Europe, which took effect on Jan. 1, 2003. According to *Latin Trade Magazine*, 95 percent of Chilean products bound for the European Union will be duty-free within three years, representing \$17 billion in trade. Europe's billions of dollars of trade is a major portion of Latin America's business. In fact, European Union trade with Latin America doubled in the 10 years between 1990 and 2000.

Mexico already has signed a free trade deal with the EU that went into force on July 1, 2000. The EU is Mexico's second largest trading partner after the United States. EU companies have much the same access to the Mexican market as their NAFTA competitors. Mexico has become the world's ninth largest economy, mostly from the export of manufactured goods.

According to Fernando Cardesa, director of EU cooperation with Latin America, the European bloc has set the signing of free trade deals with all Latin American nations as a political goal.

This may seem to be a "sleeper issue" on today's turbulent world scene. But keep your eyes on future developments, as struggling Latin American nations work to make trade deals to lift their impoverished people from the ugly face of poverty.

Europe's historical, cultural *and religious* ties with Latin America could lead to a future expansion of commerce between the two, resulting in a powerful trading bloc.

Prophesied prosperity

Latin American and other nations' desires to be free from the shackles of poverty and to be made rich through commerce will finally happen according to Bible prophecy. The 18th chapter of the book of Revelation describes a coming great religious-economic power, called by the symbolic name "Babylon," that will cause those nations associated with her to prosper. According to verse 3, trade and commerce will be a cornerstone of the relationship as the merchants (trade

partners) become rich through their relationship with this great power.

It is only in the last decade that free trade between these nations has been promoted and now is increasing rapidly. Note the mysterious language of Revelation 18:9: "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning." And, verse 11, "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore."

The nations' anguish at the ceasing of trade and commerce with this Babylon shows how powerful it will be for a limited time in the near future: "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate'" (verse 19). The merchants' lament that we read here is *after* the collapse of a super economic engine not yet built. The prophecy enigmatically gives us a glimpse of the end of the story, allowing us to project what happens beforehand—literal-

ly in the months and years ahead of us. The description of wealth acquired through trade will lift nations to the level of luxury until this Babylon falls.

(For an explanation of the strange-sounding symbolic language such as "fornication," as well as for the full details of this economic-religious system, see our booklet, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.)

The desire for increased free trade between Latin American nations and the EU is an interesting development in world news. This may seem to be a "sleeper issue" on today's turbulent world scene. But keep your eyes on future developments, as struggling Latin American nations work to make trade deals to lift their impoverished people from the ugly face of poverty. ❖

"HEART," (Continued from page 16)

themselves to be bondservants to Christ. And, because they have given their all in covenant with God, He in turn promises to give us His all!

It's always encouraging to read the end of the Bible, because when it is all said and done, our God wins! And if He wins, we win—His victory is ours! Why then is that heart of yours still "shakin' like Jell-o"? Because, as we all need to be reminded, "the devil is in the details." So as Satan chooses to play with our heads, we need to stay with God's promises to maintain our moorings.

The big headlines of heaven

First of all, we need to continuously remember that the really big headlines are being made above, not down here below. We don't have to pop on the Internet to find "the latest" to become even more depressed, but rather seek fortification from Isaiah 46:9-10 that assures us: "For I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'"

Yes, He is our source, not some unnamed advisor quoted under condition of anonymity. He gives context and purpose, not shaded by liberal or conservative bias—just godliness.

Imagine a front-page banner headline blaring—"Archangel Michael's Forces Poised for Action." No, it's not in your paper or mine. But God sounds forth an incredible promise to His faithful ones in these troubling times. Daniel 12:1 proclaims, "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book."

Speaking of heavenly armies securing God's promises in times of doubt, consider this scenario found in 2 Kings 6:15-17. Elisha's servant was being overwhelmed by current events. The enemy—the feared Syrian army—was surrounding them. The passage reads: "And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an

army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?' So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' And Elisha prayed, and said, 'LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

Enemies are all around us, today

Just like the bug-eyed young man, we, too, can naturally stay focused on our modern-day "Syrians" rather than the reassuring promises of God. And sure, the modern-day enemies are numerous with names like North Korea, international terrorism a la al Qaeda, Saddam Hussein and beyond that an emerging geopolitical threat that Scripture defines as the Beast and the False Prophet (Revelation 13 and 16).

But remember, Christ gave a gift called "My peace." This peace can only abide in us when our eyes stay opened to the promises of God. As writers for a prophetic publication like *World News and Prophecy*, we have an obligation to our readers, not to simply point out the dangers, but, more importantly, to expand and enhance your spiritual vision to see the incredible forces engaged in God's great abiding plan of rescue.

Such a promise is found in Matthew 24:21-22. None other than Jesus Christ—the Carpenter, the Prophet and the returning world-ruling King—offers it! "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."

Christ clearly states some specific promises here. Humanity will not annihilate itself. And, what is implied is that the force that shortens those days will not simply attempt to do limited "nation building," but will start the entire world over again in harmony under Christ.

"He Cannot Deny Himself"

But what happens when the shoe does drop—and drops on you? Will Christians suffer along with others? Are

we promised a trouble-free life? No! Christ didn't say we would be trouble-free, but "Let not your heart be troubled." The apostle Paul in one of His last writings before his execution rehearses promises from a hymn of the early Church. It's known as "the Song of the Martyrs," and its promises must have been very reassuring to Paul. The promises in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 flow as follows:

"For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.

"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.

"If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful;

"He cannot deny Himself."

The English word *martyr* is derived from the Greek word *martus*. It is defined as "a witness." So often we think of martyrs in terms of being dead, rather than being a living witness of faith. Yes, a day-by-day, event-by-event witness of "let not your heart be troubled," because we believe and embrace the reality of "He cannot deny Himself," meaning His promises are true. Such a living witness allows us to bring much more to life than what life brings to us.

Morning stars and thunder

No, God cannot deny His Christ, and Christ cannot deny His promises which are embedded in one of His self-described names found in Revelation 22:16—"the Bright and Morning Star." Christ concludes the entire book—and in that sense the entire Bible—with His name of promise. We come to fully appreciate it when we consider how and when the morning star appears. It shines when it is coldest and darkest, just before the dawning of a new day.

The human premise is that it is cold and dark. The godly promise realigns our heart to consider that the One who created the morning star for such a dark and chilling time as this shall appear.

A week ago, a dark and chilling storm rumbled through Los Angeles. I went to the back door to watch the lightning display. I called out to our granddaughters, Meghan and Kailyn, to come and see. I could hear their little feet scurrying my way. All of a sudden thunder shook the air. Kailyn, all of 3, screamed,

"I'm s-c-a-r-e-d," and turned around in her tracks only to run into Grandma's arms.

Susan, my wife, gently told her that God's voice could sound like thunder to remind us of His loving power. I watched Kailyn's body language immediately return to normal. She had become relaxed with knowing that there wasn't just a lot of light and scary noise outside, that God was not apart from the storm, but that He was in the storm with her. We all then stood there as a family framed in a doorway watching and hearing God at work—not only in the wonders of nature, but also in the heart of a child.

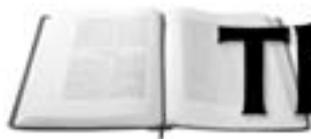


My granddaughter was no longer afraid when she realized God had power over the storm. As the prophetic and personal storms of life intensify, we can be comforted by that fact as well.

Yes, the prophetic and personal storms of life will intensify. So, hold onto those promises!

Perhaps the millennial refrain found in Isaiah 30:21, "this is the way, walk in it," is best found in the actions of a little 3-year-old girl who upon hearing the name of God, allowed the fury of the storm to settle into proper perspective. Her precious little heart got untroubled in a hurry. From the mouth and walk of babes may we learn Christ's ageless encouragement—"Let not your heart be troubled."

I think I'm ready for another cup of coffee now. ❖



This is the Way

ISAIAH 30:21

by Robin Webber

“Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled”

“Iraq could be planning a chemical or biological attack on American cities through the use of remote-controlled drone planes equipped with GPS tracking maps, according to U.S. intelligence.”

That’s what greeted me this morning as I sat down, opened up my paper and drank my coffee. Great, just what I needed to start the day! Spoiled a good cup of coffee! More importantly, it could spoil my mind, if I allow it to do so. Your newspaper is probably reading a lot like mine these days—seemingly, more bad news than ever. War is in the air! It’s “on the mind.”

It’s one thing for a student of prophecy to read Matthew 24:6, which describes a time of “wars and rumors of wars.” It’s quite another matter when they actually start to happen one after another so that it can even paralyze the faith of the faithful. Add to that our own personal trials, and we potentially have a recipe for disaster. If we let it—and in that “if,” there’s a choice.

Peace I leave with you

Nearly 2,000 years ago, the Carpenter from Galilee gave us a framework to guide us through today’s despair. It was not meant to be trite philosophy, but a personal anchor to securely moor us in times of great insecurity. The very night He spoke, multiple prophecies were coming to a collective bursting point. The Carpenter’s world and that of His followers was about to be turned upside down and unalterably changed. In less than a day, He would be dead.

The Carpenter, who was also a Prophet and the very Son of God, squarely laid out a blueprint of hope to build upon in John 14:27-28, saying, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I

give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away, and coming back to you.’”

Embedded within this multifaceted gem-like statement, we discover He gave His followers three specific steps to understanding the future and one incredible responsibility to uphold for Him. Let’s work our way through these steps, together. He said: 1) He was going to be taken away. 2) He would leave something called “My peace.” 3) He is coming back! And in between all of these scriptural dynamics, with all this said, He offered the loving reassurance of “let not your heart be troubled.”

God’s promise versus our human premises

The peace that Christ mentions is something He owns by experience and shares with those who seek Him. It is a direct gift from God to those who truly believe and focus on His promises, and not simply our ever-present human premises that can so easily send us into faith paralysis.

It’s been said, “Courage is simply fear that lasts a moment longer.” As we take a moment longer, let’s begin to focus on God’s promises rather than our human premises. As we do, our knees may still be knocking together, but the shaky walls of our heart can begin to firm up.

In these anxious times that swirl about us, I often take comfort in the remarkable promise God offers in Amos 3:7: “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” Now, we may not have many “live” prophets currently roaming through the land today, but we do have many people who have literally given

(See “**HEART**,” page 14)