

The Good News

July-August 2015

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

THE COMING End TO War

The Worst World War Is Yet to Come 8 • America: Drastic Changes 70 Years Later 15
Lessons From the Greatest Generation 22 • Wanted: Leaders to Lead Well! 31

BEYOND
TODAY
UNDERSTANDING YOUR FUTURE

What Is the Time
of the End? page 28





The surrender of Germany, the first atomic bomb detonation at Hiroshima, the second A-bomb blast at Nagasaki, Japan's capitulation—the world is now remembering the greatest war in all of human history, a conflict in which 60 to 70 million people died.

When I was a child, World War II was still very fresh in people's minds. At least four TV series set in that war aired weekly, and movies about the war appeared regularly. Like many boys, I had a sizable collection of American, German and Japanese toy soldiers.

At that tender age, I fully expected that I'd join the military when I grew up, just as my father and most of my uncles had done in the war. It seemed the natural, logical thing to do.

But along the way something happened to change my thinking.

Although I had no interest in the Bible at the time, my parents started taking it very seriously. They began making fundamental changes in their lives that affected everything we did. It began to rub off on me as I too started to take the Bible seriously and prove that it was the inspired and unalterable Word of God.

It said that we are not to take up the sword of war and that we are

The cause of war is the ingrained selfish, greedy nature that leads people to covet what others have.

not to fight in the conflicts of this world's governments (see Matthew 26:52; John 18:36). "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," it added (Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Romans 13:9; Leviticus 19:18).

I learned that Scripture revealed the bottom-line cause of war—the ingrained selfish, greedy nature that leads people to covet what others have. As the apostle James put it: "What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from the cravings that are at war within you? . . . You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your evil desires" (James 4:1-3, Holman Christian Standard Bible).

I began to realize that the story of human history is a story of endless wars and that the words of Isaiah 59:7-8 explain our world of unending violence: "Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; . . . wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known . . . they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace."

It dawned on me that those words described me too, and that if I were to ever have a life that would be pleasing to God, it would have to begin with a change of my heart and mind. Now, 45 years later, I'm still working on that change, still trying to become more like God and less like me.

And although our headlines are full of terror, atrocities and global unrest starkly reminiscent of that horrifying and bloody time 70 years ago, my mind is at peace and my heart full of hope—hope in the coming Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ will establish on earth at His return.

This hope is summed up well in Isaiah 2:4, which speaks of the time to come: "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

I so look forward to that time. I hope you'll join us in praying fervently, as Jesus Christ commanded, "Your Kingdom come!"

—Scott Ashley, Managing editor

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NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

United States: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: www.GNmagazine.org E-mail: info@ucg.org

Canada: United Church of God—Canada, Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada

Phone: (905) 614-1234, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 614-1749 Website: www.ucg.ca

Caribbean islands: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027

Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: www.GNmagazine.org E-mail: info@ucg.org

Spanish-speaking areas: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.

Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: www.ucg.org/espanol E-mail: info@ucg.org

EUROPE

Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, Netherlands

British Isles: United Church of God, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts, WD19 6FZ, England

Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 020-8386-1999 Website: www.goodnews.org.uk

Eastern Europe and Baltic states: Head Sõnumid, Pk. 62, 50002 Tartu Postkontor, Estonia

France: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

Germany: Vereinte Kirche Gottes/Gute Nachrichten, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany

Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637

Italy: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy

Phone and Fax: (+39) 035 4523573 Website: www.labuonanotizia.org E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org

Scandinavia: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027 E-mail: norden@ucg.org

AFRICA

Cameroon: United Church of God Cameroon, BP 10322 Bessengue, Douala, Cameroon

East Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius: United Church of God—East Africa

P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200, Kenya E-mail: kenya@ucg.org Website: www.ucgeastafrica.org

Ghana: P.O. Box AF 75, Adenta, Accra, Ghana E-mail: ghana@ucg.org

Malawi: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi Phone: +265 (0) 999 823 523 E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

Nigeria: United Church of God—Nigeria, P.O. Box 2265 Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria

Phone: 8033233193 Website: www.ucgnigeria.org E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

South Africa: United Church of God—Southern Africa, P.O. Box 1181, Tzaneen 0850, South Africa

Phone: +27 79 725 9453 Fax: +27 (0)86 572 7437 Website: www.south-africa.ucg.org

E-mail: UnitedChurchofGod.SA@gmail.com

Zambia: P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia Phone: (0026)0966925840 E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

Zimbabwe: P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe Phone: 0773 240 041 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

PACIFIC REGION

Australia and all other South Pacific regions not listed: United Church of God—Australia

GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax: (513) 576-9795 E-mail: info@ucg.org

Fax: 07 55 202 122 Website: www.ucg.org.au E-mail: info@ucg.org.au

New Zealand: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1140, New Zealand

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Tonga: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 518, Nukualofa, Tonga

ASIA

All except Philippines and Singapore: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027,

Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: info@ucg.org

Philippines: P.O. Box 4774, MCPD, 1287 Makati City, Philippines Cell/text: +63 918-904-4444

Website: www.ucg.org.ph E-mail: info@ucg.org.ph

Singapore: United Church of God, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia

Website: www.ucg-singapore.org E-mail: info@ucg.org.au

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United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.

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Table of Contents



Cover Feature

The Coming End to War

As the world reflects on the great conflict that was the second World War, two great questions are inescapable: Could it happen again? And will humanity ever find lasting peace? **4**

The Worst World War Is Yet to Come

As we remember the end of World War II, we must realize that an even greater global conflict is coming. . . . **8**

Will Humanity Perish in a New Nuclear Age?

In spite of a new 21st-century Cold War and fresh fears of atomic-fueled human extinction, a surprising and sure hope will intervene. **10**

America: Drastic Changes 70 Years After the End of World War II

As America and the world note the anniversary of the conclusion of World War II, what is important for us to learn about the great changes in the United States and other Western nations since that moment 70 years ago? . . **15**

This Was Their Finest Hour

Largely forgotten is the role the British Empire and Commonwealth played in the Allied victory in World War II. Yet these were the only nations that fought in the war from beginning to end. . . **19**

Character Lessons From the Greatest Generation

Americans who established American greatness during and just after World War II have been called “The Greatest Generation.” But what traits made them great? **22**

What Is the Time of the End?

It seems like every time we turn on our TVs, open a newspaper, or follow the trends on social media, there’s bad news. How long can it last? Are we in the time of the end? **28**

Wanted: Leaders to Lead Well!

People often equate a leader with good leadership. While history is filled with poor leadership, there are positive examples to learn from—among them Abraham Lincoln and the greatest leader of all time. **31**

Bandaging Spiritual Wounds: The Missing Component

While caring properly for physical wounds is imperative, treating spiritual injuries also requires critical attention. Discover God’s plan to heal people spiritually by providing them with a vital missing divine component. . . . **34**

“Abide in My Word”

Is our 24/7 world crowding out your time in the Bible? Your life depends on putting first things first! **36**

Regular Features

Current Events and Trends	<i>An overview of conditions around the world</i>	26
Beyond Today	<i>Television log</i>	29
Letters From Our Readers	<i>Readers of The Good News share their thoughts</i>	38
Questions and Answers	<i>Answers to your questions about the Bible and Christian living</i>	39

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THE COMING FLOOD TO WAR

As the world reflects on the great conflict that was the Second World War, two great questions are inescapable: Could it happen again? And will humanity ever find lasting peace?

by Scott Ashley



Seventy years ago the greatest bloodbath in human history came to a sudden and shocking end. With the dropping of the first atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese emperor Hirohito capitulated. After six long years of war, the epic conflict that was the Second World War was over.

Some 15 million soldiers, sailors and airmen had died in battle, many cut down in the prime of life. Another 25 million were wounded. Estimates of civilian casualties, much more difficult to calculate, range from 30 to 50 million dead from bombs, bullets, starvation and disease. Russia and China alone each suffered 15 to 25 million total deaths.

Across Europe and Asia, entire cities were heaps of smoldering rubble. Economies and infrastructure were devastated. Millions of women had lost their husbands; tens of millions of children would grow up fatherless.

The war was over. The only real winner was death.

A sobering milestone

This year marks a sobering milestone, the 70th anniversary of the end of that war. Those who were alive to witness and

For the first time in history, Jesus Christ's chilling prophecy that before His return, humankind would be able to bring about self-extinction became a grim reality.

remember that great conflict are rapidly passing from the scene. In the United States, some 400 veterans of the war go to their final rest every day.

Among them were my father, who died more than 20 years ago, and several of my uncles, one of whom passed away this May at age 93. Like many who were called to serve their countries at that time, this uncle was silent about his wartime experiences. Nearly every young man of that generation participated in the war in some way, and for some the emotional and mental wounds, not to mention physical, never completely healed.

“Only the dead have seen the end of war” is a statement usually attributed to the Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 427-347 B.C.). It's a sad commentary on the human condition that these words ring as true today as they did then, 24 centuries ago.

Human history is a chronicle of wars. In their 1968 book *The Lessons of History*, historians Will and Ariel Durant concluded that “in the last 3,421 years of recorded history only 268 have seen no war” (p. 81).

Think about that statement. This means that for every year of relative peace, the world has suffered from nearly 13 years of war!

World War I, which was hailed at the time as “the war to end war” and sometimes “the war to end all wars,” proved to be anything but. Barely 20 years after those hostilities ceased, Europe was again turned into a continent-wide graveyard. Nations and their leaders seemed to have learned nothing other than how to slaughter each other in ever-increasing numbers with greater and greater efficiency.

Humanity facing extinction for the first time

The end of World War II also marked the doorway to another milestone in human history—the *capacity for human self-extinction*. The massive research projects and technological advances introduced or paved the way for such advanced weaponry as jet-powered fighters and bombers, ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, biological warfare and ICBMs.

The desperate arms races on both sides culminated in the proliferation of nuclear weap-

ons, which for several generations now have threatened the human race with annihilation. For the first time in history, Jesus Christ's chilling prophecy that before His return, humankind would be able to bring about self-extinction became a grim reality.

Witnessing the successful test detonation of the first atomic bomb at White Sands, New Mexico, project director Robert Oppenheimer later remarked that it brought to mind the words of an ancient Hindu religious text: “*Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.*”

The immolation of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki several weeks later, killing hundreds of thousands, showed how this previously unthinkable weapon could bring about the destruction of worlds (see “Hiroshima: When Hell Came to Earth,” beginning on page 6).

Those bombs, which had a destructive

power of only 15 and 21 kilotons (15,000 and 21,000 tons of TNT) are dwarfed by today's weapons, which are typically hundreds of times more powerful. A single submarine today carries more than 300 times the destructive power of the Hiroshima bomb. One giant Russian H-bomb detonated in 1960 was more than 3,000 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Its mushroom fireball stretched 40 miles high, almost eight times the height of Mt. Everest!

Life-threatening conditions in the end time

In one of Jesus Christ's last days with His disciples before His impending crucifixion, they asked Him about when He would return as He had promised: “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3).

He proceeded to give a lengthy prophecy recorded for us in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. He foretold several major trends, starting with religious deception that would permeate the world.

“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars,” He continued. “See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:6-8).

He went on to describe persecution of His true followers even as the message of the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God would be spread to the world—“and then the end will come” (verses 9-14).

Summing up the time of global turmoil that would precede His return, He warned: “It will be a *time of great distress such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again*. If that time of troubles were not cut short, *no living thing could survive*; but for the sake of God's chosen it will be cut short” (Matthew 24:21-22, Revised English Bible, emphasis added throughout).

Consider this carefully: *Only with the dawn of the nuclear age that ended World War II could this prophecy of human self-extinction be fulfilled*. Never before in history did human beings have the capacity to kill every living thing. Now, with a worldwide arsenal of more than 20,000 nuclear warheads, we have that ability to kill every human being on the planet *many times over*.

And that doesn't even consider the capa-



bility to wipe out the human race through other means such as chemical and biological weapons (nerve gases, ricin, anthrax, etc.)—or weapons we don't even know about.

How will peace come?

Even as He warned about where humanity's rebellion against God would lead the world in the time leading up to His return, Jesus offered hope. And although the world will go through a horrifyingly destructive coming world war far more devastating than the carnage of World War II (see "The Worst World War Is Yet to Come," beginning on page 8), it will finally experience peace—a peace made possible only by the intervention of the Savior of mankind to physically save us from ourselves.

This hope was at the heart and core of

the gospel, *the good news*, that Jesus taught. His gospel was a continuation of the messages of the Hebrew prophets who preceded Him—with the added dimension of how we may share in that coming Kingdom through coming to know and receive salvation through Him.

Notice several prophecies of the peace that will prevail in this world-ruling Kingdom He will establish on earth at His return:

"In the last days, the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem will become the most important place on earth. People from all over the world will go there to worship. Many nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him.'

"For in those days the LORD's teaching

and his word will go out from Jerusalem. The LORD will settle international disputes. *All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end*" (Isaiah 2:2-4, New Living Translation 1996).

God's Word foretells that even the nature of wild animals will be changed so they will dwell peaceably with human beings and other animals (this also symbolizing peace among nations through people coming to know God and His ways):

"In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard and the goat will be at peace. Calves and yearlings will be safe among lions, and a little child will lead them all. The cattle will graze among bears. Cubs and calves will lie down together. And

Hiroshima When Hell Came to Earth

Early one August morning, Tsutomu Yamaguchi was preparing to return home from the town where he had spent the last three months on business. Employed by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries in Japan as a draftsman, he had been working over the summer on a shipbuilding project. He was heading out on a bus to the station with two of his colleagues when he realized he had left something behind. His friends continued on while he returned to the company dormitory to retrieve it. Once he did, he began walking back toward the shipyard.

Mr. Yamaguchi remembered the day well: "It was a flat, open spot with potato fields on either side. It was very clear, a really fine day, nothing unusual about it at all. I was in good spirits."

But that would change in an instant for him and the approximately 245,000 others in Hiroshima that day—Aug. 6, 1945. The Americans had dropped 720,000 leaflets two days earlier warning that the city would be obliterated—but no one paid any heed. Now the reality had come.

"As I was walking along I heard the sound of a plane, just one. I looked up into the sky and saw the B-29, and it dropped two parachutes. I was looking up into the sky at them, and suddenly . . . it was like a flash of magnesium, a great flash in the sky, and I was blown over," he explained (quoted by Richard Lloyd Parry, "The Luckiest or Unluckiest Man in the World?" *The Times* [London] website, March 29, 2009).

The plane he saw was the *Enola Gay*. It just completed its mission of dropping the first atomic bomb ever used in a military operation.

He continued: "When the noise and the blast had subsided I saw a huge mushroom-shaped pillar of fire rising up high into the sky. It was like a tornado, although it didn't move, but it rose and spread out horizontally at the top. There was prismatic light, which was changing in a complicated rhythm, like the patterns of a kaleidoscope. The first thing I did was to check that I still had my legs and whether I could move them. I thought, 'If I stay here, I'll die.'

"Two hundred yards ahead, there was a dugout bomb shelter, and when I climbed in there were two young students already sitting there. They said, 'You've been badly cut, you're seriously injured.' And it was then I realized I had a bad burn on half my face, and that my arms were burned."

Mr. Yamaguchi's story is one of thousands of first-hand accounts of the

horrifying devastation that one bomb created. One patient of Michihiko Hachiya, who was the director of the Hiroshima Communications Hospital, recounted this story, which Hachiya kept in a diary along with dozens of other stories he heard from patients at that time:

"The sight of the soldiers . . . was more dreadful than the dead people floating down the river. I came onto I don't know how many, burned from the hips up; and where the skin had peeled, their flesh was wet and mushy . . . And they had no faces! Their eyes, noses and mouths had been burned away, and it looked like their ears had melted off. It was hard to tell front from back" (Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, 1986, p. 726).

With one bomb, approximately 140,000 people were killed. Every individual who survived had his or her own account of the suffering they witnessed, and those accounts numbered in the tens of thousands.

The magnitude of the destruction is beyond comprehension. No words can adequately describe it.

How could we do this?

The capacity of people to kill each other entered an entirely new and never-before-imagined age that day. For the first time in history, the dreadful prophecy that mankind would face extinction if not for the return of Jesus Christ was conceivable (Matthew 24:22).

Over the next several decades following World War II, ever more powerful atomic weapons were developed across the globe in the period known as the Cold War. The most powerful one ever tested was a Russian hydrogen bomb with an explosive power more than 3,000 times that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

Today, the nuclear arsenal of just the United States and Russia (to say nothing of India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, France, China and other countries known to possess nuclear weapons) is sufficient to destroy the inhabited portions of the earth multiple times over.

Why did the United States drop the bomb in Japan that day? To more quickly end the war, which had already claimed millions of lives. The American military was gearing up for a massive land invasion of Japan, but if the bomb could be used and proved effective in forcing Japan to an unconditional

lions will eat grass as the livestock do.

“Babies will crawl safely among poisonous snakes. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes and pull it out unharmed. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the LORD” (Isaiah 9:6-7, NLT 1996).

The reign of the Prince of Peace

All of this will be possible through the true Messiah and Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. Notice this well-known prophecy of His reign, which is immortalized in Handel’s *Messiah*:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be

called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

“Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

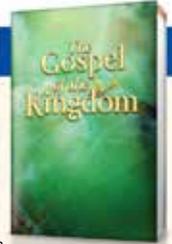
But you don’t have to wait until His return to experience “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). You can now live free of worry, fear and confusion over where our world is headed.

How? Respond to His invitation in Isaiah 55:6-7: “Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him

return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

He’s waiting to hear from you! **GN**

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surrender first, then the lives of perhaps hundreds of thousands of Allied servicemen and millions of the Japanese could be spared.

In his history of the Second World War, British wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill summarized the thinking behind the decision: “To avert a vast, indefinite butchery, to bring the war to an end, to give peace to the world, to lay healing hands upon its tortured peoples by a manifestation of overwhelming power at the cost of a few explosions, seemed, after all our toils and perils, a miracle of deliverance” (quoted by Rhodes, p. 697).

Of course this was still an unimaginable toll for those who lived in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And since then the world has lived in the shadow of the Bomb.

The peace achieved in this world always comes with other problems.

Apocalyptic forerunner

To get a picture of the events Jesus foretold that will happen before He comes back, imagine the desolation in Hiroshima on that horrible day and multiply it *the whole world over*. In that coming time of worldwide turmoil and disaster, every citizen of every country of the world will be at risk.

The final chapter of the book *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* by Richard Rhodes, quoted from in this article, is titled “Tongues of Fire.” Its account of Hiroshima’s devastation—beginning months in advance with the American military preparing an island from which to launch this and other attacks

on Japan, and concluding with page after page of firsthand survivors’ recollections of the misery they witnessed that day—is enough to make one’s heart begin to pound (as mine did). Rhodes relates this chilling account:

“There was a fearful silence which made one feel that all people and all trees and vegetation were dead,” remembers Yoko Ota, a Hiroshima writer who survived. The silence was the only sound the dead could make . . . They were nearer the center of the event; they died because they were members of a different polity and their killing did not therefore count officially as murder; *their experience most accurately models the worst case of our common future*. They numbered in the majority in Hiroshima that day” (p. 715, emphasis added).

Only one thing can give us hope in the face of such unspeakable destruction remaining a possibility for the world at large—God’s promise of intervention and salvation.

“How can they keep developing these weapons?”

Whatever happened to Mr. Yamaguchi? After getting his bearings and finding cover at an air raid shelter that terrible day, his wounds were bandaged, and he spent the night. The next day he and his companions managed to return to their hometown—Nagasaki. Despite his wounds, he reported for work two days later, Aug. 9, 1945.

At work, he and his boss were having a conversation when the second atomic bomb detonated above the city, killing tens of thousands as the first blast had done in Hiroshima. Mr. Yamaguchi was not injured in the second blast, and he and his wife both went on to live into their 90s. They both died in 2010, and are survived by three children. He is the only person officially recognized by Japan for having survived both atomic blasts, though there were others.

“I can’t understand why the world cannot understand the agony of the nuclear bombs,” he said in an interview not long before his death at age 93 (quoted by David McNeill, “How I Survived Hiroshima—and Then Nagasaki,” *The Independent*, [London], March 26, 2009). “How can they keep developing these weapons?”

There will be a day Mr. Yamaguchi will have his wish fulfilled. God speed that day!

—Mitchell Moss



The Worst World War Is Yet to Come

At this 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, we must realize that an even greater global conflict is coming—with horrors on a scale never before seen. *by Tom Robinson*

The 20th century was witness to the most terrible wars in human history. Thankfully we haven't seen anything on like scale in the 70 years since World War II. But will there ever be a time like this again, when genocidal leaders in attempting to rule the world wreak death and havoc on this level?

Your Bible says there will be such a time. In the face of growing world crises, a charismatic leader akin to the worst dictators of the past will ultimately arise in Europe with promises of peace and safety. Ten other leaders will unite with him, giving their national sovereignty over to this ruler for a short time. The biblical book of Revelation refers to both the power bloc and its leader as "the Beast"—a revival of the Roman Empire.

In fact, this revival will follow the pattern of the Holy Roman Empire in returning to the church-state union of medieval times. The Beast ruler will form a partnership with the prophesied False Prophet, the leader of the great false church system known as Babylon the Great (Revelation 17)—religion being seen as a means to hold the politically unstable empire together. False miracles will convince the masses to follow the False Prophet and the Beast.

Despite its weaknesses, the European power will, like its predecessors, be transformed into a war-making apparatus. An astonished world will ask: "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Revelation 13:4). Yet there will indeed be war—the very worst ever.

North-south conflict—the spark

Conflict between this coming European superpower and a Middle Eastern coalition will be the final manifestation of the struggle detailed in the prophecy of Daniel 11 between powers to the north and south of the Holy Land—Syria and Egypt respec-

tively in ancient times, with the northern power eventually becoming Rome and its successors. Verse 40 says that at the time of the end the king of the South will push or ram at the king of the North.

Psalms 83 presents a confederation of nations, now Muslim, united in common cause against Israel. This may equate to the final kingdom of the South, perhaps centered in Egypt, the largest Arab state, or possibly Saudi Arabia, homeland of Islam.

Daniel 11:40 shows that some kind of provocative action will be launched from this region against the final king of the North, the European Beast power. It might be a major terrorist attack, in line with jihadists' dreams of striking against European Christendom. In any case, this is the spark that ignites a new world war, as we next see huge retaliation by the northern power, which includes its forces invading and occupying parts of the Middle East and North Africa—and entering the Holy Land (verses 40-43).

America and other nations devastated

We are also told in Daniel's prophecy that "many countries shall be overthrown" by the European power at this time (verse 41). Other passages reveal the horror of what this entails. It ultimately means disaster for the nations descended from the so-called lost 10 tribes of Israel—particularly the United States and the other nations of British descent (see our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* for more explanation).

Jesus said these events would be followed by "great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). The same time is spoken of in Daniel 12:1 and Jeremiah 30:7, the latter verse calling it "the time of Jacob's trouble"—Jacob being the progenitor of the tribes of Israel.

So the Great Tribulation is initially the time of suffering to come particularly on the descendants of ancient Israel for their rebellion against God—to be followed by a year-long "Day of the Lord" judgment on the world at large (Isaiah 34:8).

The prophet Ezekiel wrote prophecies for his own day and the end time—many with dual application to both. Note that Ezekiel 5:4 foretells that a fire would go out "into all the house of Israel." And yet the northern tribes of Israel *had gone into captivity about 150 years earlier*.

This prophecy, then, was apparently directed to the last days. So it's certainly disturbing to read God's warning that one third would die by disease and famine and another third by the sword of warfare, with the remaining third being carried away into captivity and scattered (verses 12-13). Some try to apply this exclusively to the siege of Jerusalem in Ezekiel's time, but a parallel prophecy occurs in Zechariah 13:8-9, given long after Jerusalem's ancient fall.

Thus, if the descendants of ancient Israel today in their modern nations were estimated at around 300 million people, that means 100 million would die through disease and famine and another 100 million would die through war—this death toll for just these people being far more than the deaths among all nations in World Wars I and II.

Then another 100 million would be scattered, pursued and taken captive, and other passages seem to say that only a tenth of those will survive (see Amos 5:3; Isaiah 6:11-13, Living Bible). This would leave only 10 million survivors. The genocide against the Jews in the Nazi Holocaust, horrific as it was, is far smaller in comparison.

In Ezekiel 6:6, God further warns the descendants of ancient Israel, today's major English-speaking nations, "In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste." The destruction of Judah in Ezekiel's own day utterly pales in comparison to what this verse actually says. What we're apparently being told here is that major cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Chi-

cago, Toronto, London, Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland will be obliterated.

Perhaps we can now see how there could be such a huge death toll as that described in chapter 5. This appears to require the work of nuclear weapons or some other new superweapons—perhaps in conjunction with natural catastrophes from God including drought, famine, disease epidemics, earthquakes and other disasters (compare Leviticus 26:31-32; Deuteronomy 28:24).



The vast destruction in these biblical prophecies appears to require the work of nuclear weapons—in conjunction with catastrophes from God including drought, famine, disease epidemics and earthquakes.

The prophesied destruction is utterly horrific. But, barring unexpected national repentance, it *is* going to happen.

Eastern forces attacked and counterattack

Yet some parts of the world will not fit easily into this European-centered, pseudo-Christian system. Consider the rest of the Muslim world—the many Islamic states across south-central Asia over to Indonesia. And how will major nations of the East—like Russia, India, China and Japan—view all this?

They will no doubt be alarmed over European actions in the Middle East. The Islamic states especially will be incensed over European occupation of Muslim lands.

The ruler of the Beast power will be troubled by “news from the east and the north”—the direction of these countries across Asia—and will launch a strike to force their submission (Daniel 11:44). As laid out in Revelation 9:1-12, the war machinery of the Beast (as both arise figuratively from the abyss—see 17:8), portrayed as locusts and scorpions (perhaps helicopters and tanks from the van-

tage point of visions in the preindustrial first century), will prevail for several months.

The mention here of inflicting pain without killing may refer to the use of chemical or biological agents or new pain rays or other weapons yet to be developed. Revelation lists this as the first of three woes (9:12)—these corresponding to the last three trumpet blasts of the book.

The second woe is a massive counter-offensive by Eastern forces with a vast mili-

tary force of 200 million troops, resulting in the destruction of much of Europe and a third of mankind killed (verses 13-19). The death toll here is in the *billions*—far beyond any war ever. It would certainly seem to imply the unimaginable horror of another devastating exchange of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

Then, with the third woe, in which seven last plagues are poured out on the earth, something amazing will happen: “The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn” (Matthew 24:30). Sadly, a defiant mankind will yet refuse to repent of its evils.

On the earth events will spiral even further out of control. The European dictator’s establishment of his capital in the Holy Land (Daniel 11:45) will lead armies from the Eastern powers to march toward Israel, intent on finishing the job of wiping out this competing superpower.

Then, just as the two sides prepare to fight a final, climactic battle (Revelation 16:16)—just when it seems that humanity will reach the brink of self-extinction—then

God will intervene (see Matthew 24:22).

The brightness of Christ’s coming

Jesus Christ will then come in glory to Jerusalem—but it will be to battle. The nations will be angry at this turn of events (Revelation 11:18). Apparently the Beast and Eastern kings will see the returning Lord as a common enemy, for “all nations” then march to Jerusalem to fight Him (see Joel 3:1-2, 9-17; Zechariah 14:1-15). Yet He will vanquish them.

For many, their flesh will dissolve away while they’re still standing (verse 12)—such will be the power of the returning King of Kings. The Beast ruler and False Prophet will be cast into a lake of fire (Revelation 19:20).

The saints who accompany Jesus Christ, His converted followers from this age, will also have a part in meting out judgment at that time (see Psalm 149:5-9). Jesus said His followers do not fight today, as His Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). But when His Kingdom comes to take over this world, we will assist in bringing God’s justice—tempered, of course, with His mercy.

Sadly, it will take all this to set humanity on the right course. For it’s not until the world comes to the most horrific, nightmarish period of history ever, with unconscionable misery, that the way forward into lasting peace can begin to be taught and learned on a global scale.

But you do not need to wait until that time! If God is opening your mind to understanding His ways, you can turn to Him right now and receive His help in building His character, in rejecting the ways that lead to war and striving for peace.

And let the hope of God’s coming Kingdom encourage you through the worsening conditions of the world around you. Yes, dark days are coming. But the brightest future imaginable lies just beyond! Hold tight to that hope, and never let it go! **GN**

Learn More

The Bible reveals many more details about the sequence of end-time events that will usher in Christ’s return. To gain a more comprehensive picture, download or request our free study guides *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.



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Will Humanity Perish in a New NUCLEAR A

In spite of a new 21st-century Cold War and fresh fears of atomic-fueled human extinction, a surprising and sure hope will intervene. But many will suffer first, and all of us face a choice. *by Mike Snyder*

How dangerous is our world today? Global security, warned U.S. Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey in mid-2015, “is as uncertain as I’ve seen in 40 years.” Drawing from direct experience gained from the Vietnam War and on through two Gulf Wars, the general summed it up: 21st-century American military might has fallen to “the bottom edge of our manageable risk.”

Can we expect to survive under such global uncertainty in a world bristling with weapons of mass destruction? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is a confident *yes*. But before we explore the underlying reason for this confidence, let us first see what we face.

A world under dire threats

The bewildering risks referred to by Gen. Dempsey include emerging Armageddon-style threats all over the planet. Here’s a short summary:

- A nuclear saber-rattling Russia today parks a new generation of mobile atomic battlefield weapons on Europe’s borders.
- China blasts American inaction as North Korea builds a fully functional nuclear arsenal and tests submarine-

launched ballistic missiles.

- As Iran single-mindedly pursues nuclear-weapons technology and missiles to deliver such weaponry, a nervous Saudi Arabia threatens to weaponize its civil nuclear technology platform.

- Mistrust and paranoia govern nuclear policy in India and Pakistan—foes who have already fought several wars in recent decades.

- A Russian newscaster boasts that the former Soviet Rodina (or Motherland) is readily capable of pounding its long-time Yankee foe into “radioactive ash.”

Ominously, there’s more. State and non-state terrorists have come into thermo-nuclear play. Maddeningly, global officials are “unsure” as to the degree that Nuclear Material Unaccounted For (MUF) exists—including fissionable uranium and plutonium unaccounted for or outright lost. With more than 400 known incidents of theft or loss of nuclear material since 1993, some estimates claim that the world is literally awash in bomb-grade MUF available to terrorists for “small” weapon construction or “dirty bomb” contamination!

A devastating new Dark Age?

Experts solemnly warn that small-scale

nuclear weapons detonated in the atmosphere high above unprepared American, Russian or European populations could trigger a new, fearsome and near-instantaneous Dark Age with a paralyzing nuclear-generated electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack.

Various scenarios include a surprise attack launched by small ships in commercial harbors or through illicit drug trade routes, or simply from an ordinary-looking freighter in international waters several miles off the coast. Such a devastating detonation could instantaneously knock out entire electrical power grids across vast areas for a year or more.

Except for some specially protected military and government equipment and installations, anything connected to the electrical grid might be internally “fried” by a high-energy pulse and become useless.

It could mean that virtually all trucks, trains, cars and planes would be instantly immobile and inoperable, severing critical food-supply chains. A disabled electrical system means that irreplaceable fresh water supplies would be cut to zero across whole regions. Anything run by or relying on computers would cease to function, including the Internet. Radios and televisions would be useless.

With electricity nonexistent and food supplies cut off, millions would quickly starve, and millions more would freeze with the onset of winter. Vulnerable elderly and those dependent on medications would die swiftly, cut off from critical aid. With

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the disappearance of medical supplies and modern sanitation and health care, diseases would make a deadly comeback.

One federal report darkly notes that a successful widespread EMP attack against the continental United States could result in more than 280 million deaths—90 percent of the present U.S. population—in just the first year. Ironically, there would be no direct blast damage. Society, bereft of modern and necessary support, would simply rip itself to pieces as survivors desperately tried to fend for themselves.

The upshot? “Nuclear terrorism is the most serious danger the world is facing,” states Mohamed El Baradei, former International Atomic Energy Agency director and Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Robert Gates, former Secretary of Defense for Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, adds: “Every senior leader, when you’re asked what keeps you awake at night, it’s the thought of a terrorist ending up with a weapon of mass destruction, especially nuclear.”

Is it little wonder that South Korea, one of the most technologically advanced nations on earth, moved to a state of high alert in 2015, urging its citizens to “be ready to go to war tonight”?



All of this, plus other potential catastrophic global issues, led the editors of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to reset the famous Doomsday Clock earlier this year to a symbolic “three minutes to midnight”—midnight symbolizing global catastrophe that could end civilization.

Is there a way out?

Despite the hope-sapping reality of this nuclear age, we *can* have confidence that humanity will indeed survive its manmade atomic fate. Perhaps surprisingly, one ancient source has consistently warned of the cumulative march toward global destruction, with the first such account recorded more than 3,000 years ago.

And the same source delivers incredibly good news! Beyond that prophesied dark future comes a time of unparalleled peace, cutting short the insanity of a power-addicted mankind. Humanity is headed toward radioactive catastrophe for a reason, as we shall shortly see.

Nearly 2,000 years ago, sitting across the Kidron Valley from the Jerusalem temple, Jesus Christ had much to say to His disciples about our present time. Here on the Mount of Olives He gave His longest recorded prophecy, outlining the sequence of events that would lead up to a cataclysmic era, an amazing time wherein tumultuous, mind-raising upheaval would dissolve into the spectacular establishment of the long-awaited Kingdom of God.

“Nuclear terrorism is the most serious danger the world is facing.”— Mohamed El Baradei, former International Atomic Energy Agency director

This Kingdom, the ultimate hope of all mankind, will be ushered in with Jesus Christ’s open triumphal return to the very mountain from which He was then speaking.

But before that marvelous day, a deceived and nearly mad society would froth up to engulf the world in what Jesus described as a demonically driven “*great tribulation*,” such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, *nor ever shall be*” (Matthew 24:21, emphasis added throughout). The New International Version makes the level of prophesied devastation even plainer: This time is “*never to be equaled again*.”

The scale of this prophesied “great tribulation” defies the capacity of the human mind to comprehend. It transcends the

expressive ability of human language, requiring biblical writers to use simple similes and metaphors of “like” and “as” to describe its staggering magnitude.

The apostle John may have found it a challenge as he attempted to faithfully record the prophesied sequence of this terrible time: “The sun became as dark as black cloth, and the moon became as red as blood. Then the stars of the sky fell to the earth like green figs falling from a tree shaken by a strong wind. The sky was rolled up like a scroll . . .” (Revelation 6:12-14, New Living Translation).

Even costly computer-generated special effects and movie digital animation cannot adequately express the prophesied devastation that awaits a deceived and rebellious world!

But here again is good news! These same prophecies promise astonishing deliverance and redemption. As Jesus related the sequence of end-time events on the Mount of Olives, He calmly assured His disciples: “If those days [of great tribulation] had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect [His spiritually called-out true disciples] those days *will be shortened*” (Matthew 24:22, NIV).

So we have the unbreakable promise of Jesus Christ Himself that humanity will

not end in a nuclear holocaust. The simple earthly presence of the very children of God—those who’ve humbly accepted the calling to be heirs and recipients of God’s amazing promises—will prevent global human extinction. Through many authoritative statements, the Bible clearly shows that at the last moment, when a crazed humanity totters on the brink of gruesome annihilation, God will send Jesus as King of Kings to forcibly intervene. The human race will not be utterly vaporized in an atomic furnace.

Pulling the nuclear trigger

But prior to that intervention, the Bible employs powerful language and imagery that indicates that mankind *will* pull the nuclear trigger in what the Bible calls “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4).

Ezekiel 6:6 warns the end-time nations of Israel, which includes the United States and Britain, “In all your dwelling places



the cities shall be laid waste” (see our free study guide *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*). Revelation 9:15 mentions a third of mankind being killed, and nuclear war seems a likely reason. And there could well be smaller nuclear strikes or terrorist incidents before this global conflagration.

As current news analysts presently debate, experts don't fear that a nuclear exchange will commence with the United States and Russia first hurling unspeakable thermonuclear devastation at each other. Far more likely is for small terrorist groups or smaller nations—without the complex safeguards possessed by larger nations—to launch a volley of atomic death. As is well known, before his death al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden ordered his followers to secure a tactical nuclear weapon to use against the West.

So what do we have? Speaking before the assembled Congress of the United States on March 3, 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thundered: “The greatest danger facing our world is the marriage of militant Islam with nuclear weapons.” He further warned that current events could “spark a nuclear arms race in the most dangerous part of the planet . . . And the Middle East would soon be crisscrossed by nuclear tripwires. A region where small skirmishes can trigger big wars would turn into a nuclear tinderbox.”

This echoes critical biblical prophecies, where previously small and militarily inconsequential nations unexpectedly arm themselves with devastating power. The prophet Joel foretold this: “Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the *weak* say, *I am strong*” (Joel 3:10).

What would be the effect of a “small” exchange? As the nuclear disasters of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Chernobyl and the recent Fukushima Daiichi meltdown in Japan eloquently demonstrate, the world remains woefully unprepared to deal with even a single nuclear catastrophe.

On the Internet you can find the heart-rending film clips of the World War II atomic aftermaths—burned and suffering Japanese children and other civilians. The radioactive fallout from the melted Soviet reactor core at Chernobyl bloomed thousands of miles across Europe and Asia, boosting a plume of cesium-137, strontium-90 and other radioactive particulates over multiple nations. Floating radioactive slag presently drifts across the Pacific from the



Atomic bomb over Nagasaki, Aug. 9, 1945



Ruins of Hiroshima



Nagasaki ruins two weeks after U.S. atomic attack

The Bible—a remarkable collection of ancient and authoritative writings—reveals actionable knowledge that explains why we're in this present position and how we got here.

Fukushima nuclear plant, destroyed by a tsunami caused by an earthquake.

The 1954 *Castle Bravo* hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific soberly illustrated the long-range potential trauma from radioactive fallout, lethally contaminating a Japanese fishing boat, the *Lucky Dragon (Daigo Fukuryu Maru)*, nearly 100 miles away from the test blast. The entire crew suffered from severe radiation sickness. Aikichi Kuboyama, the radio operator, died. The first to die from a hydrogen thermonuclear blast, he left these words: “I pray that I am the last victim of an atomic or hydrogen bomb.”

Yet the nuclear stage is expanding. National security agencies of many nations worry about unprotected ports. At any given moment thousands of ocean-going container ships crisscross the seas carrying hundreds of thousands of large freight containers, most large enough to carry a nuclear device. Various formal studies and scenarios point to upwards of \$1 trillion in devastating economic impact and severe disruption from

a single terrorist nuclear incident.

The roots of coming destruction

Of course, these facts leave us with some serious questions. How did humanity get to this point in the first place? Why does God allow such evil potential to even exist? And why would God, who is defined by love (1 John 4:8), allow the mind-numbing deaths of multiple millions of people in the future?

An incinerating radioactive fireball is certainly *not* God's desire for humanity eternal future!

So what does God intend?

The late Jonathan Schnell, a respected journalist and analyst, provided remarkable insight during the first Cold War in his then-highly popular book *The Fate of the Earth*. During the early 1980s, many feared that nuclear war between the Soviet Union and America was not only possible but probable. Schnell captured this important thought:

The possible “extinction by nuclear arms,” he wrote, “. . . would be the utterly meaningless and completely unjust destruc-

Photos, from left: Thinkstock, Wikimedia



The destroyed remains of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor



Ruined reactors at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant

beings Adam and Eve misused this capacity for freedom of choice. They made terrible decisions that have had far-reaching consequences. Consider this critical fact: The Bible reveals that while God is all-powerful, He also presently allows a powerful evil spirit being to influence global events. As John, an eyewitness of the life of Jesus Christ, solemnly warned at the close of the first century: “The whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19, NIV).

The statement means exactly what it states. As part of His incredible plan, God allows a great fallen archangel, now known as Satan, to exert a powerful influence over humanity. God allows people the free will to make a choice—to choose God’s way of abundant life or to choose a path of darkness that is alluring but full of broken promises.

Human beings make and reaffirm that choice many times a day. Satan’s way of darkness is easy. It offers a slippery notion of *moral relativism*, giving people opportunity to make up their own standards of right and wrong apart from God’s revealed directives.

That’s essentially what Adam and Eve did. As the biblical account records, they rejected God’s way of life through allowing themselves to be deceived and turning

The lethal deceit that produces catastrophe and warfare is first spawned by a harmful spiritual influence.

to disobedience. They exercised their free will and made a very bad choice. That bad choice reverberates down to us today.

The right way vs. destroying each other

So what represents the right choice, the right exercise of free will? The Bible explains how we are to conduct ourselves, how we should treat others and how we should have a direct relationship with God. That direct relationship, made possible by the astonishing sacrifice of Jesus Christ, is broadly laid out in the first four directives of the great moral law—what we commonly know today as the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). And the remaining six commandments broadly—but firmly—outline how we should treat each other.

The Ten Commandments are summarized in what Jesus described as the two greatest commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” and “Love your neighbor

as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31, NIV).

So what do these ancient laws have to do with hideous modern megatons of potential nuclear destruction? How could they have any bearing on the possible fearful atomic devastation described earlier?

Consider what James, the younger half-brother of Jesus Christ, wrote in the early part of the first century: “What causes fights and quarrels among you?”

Continuing, James laid out the answer: “You want something but you don’t get it. *You kill and covet*, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God” (James 4:1-2, NIV).

As this deadly lust spirals up—breaking specifically the Eighth and Tenth Commandments—human beings collectively lay plans on larger and larger scales.

Have you ever heard of the Third Reich—a barbaric vision that was to “liberate” the German-speaking peoples and restore the German-based Holy Roman Empire? What about the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere that Japan aimed to conquer in the 1940s to “free” Asians and Oceania from Western influence?

What about today’s Russian hegemony in Ukraine? There are, of course, many others.

These are all historical facts. And the

tion of mankind by men. To imagine that God is guiding our hand in this action would quite literally be the ultimate evasion of our responsibility as human beings—a responsibility that is ours because . . . *we possess a free will that was implanted in us by God*” (emphasis added).

That points up the root cause of the coming “great tribulation” that will be fueled in part by deranged nuclear conflict. It also carries the core of the solution. Let’s briefly take a look at this background.

The Bible—a remarkable collection of ancient and authoritative writings—reveals actionable knowledge that explains why we’re in this present position and how we got here. Thankfully, it shows the way out, a way to a marvelous and breathtaking future. These ancient writings authoritatively reveal an all-powerful God who acts deliberately.

According to His plan, nearly 6,000 years ago God presented His creation with a choice. As the book of Genesis records, God created human beings with the capacity for free will. He gave them then—as He continues to do today—the capacity to make decisions for themselves. Back then, again as He does today, He provides critical instruction and literal commands that lead directly to peace, prosperity and an abundant life.

As most are familiar, the first human

blood of these collective covetous and lawless acts—made possible and promoted by unrestrained human free will—covers millennia of human history.

Lethal global deception

Note this critical fact: The lethal deceit that produces devastating diplomatic

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catastrophe and warfare is first spawned by harmful mental and spiritual influence. As the apostle Paul wrote some 2,000 years ago: "The god of this age has *blinded the minds of unbelievers*" (2 Corinthians 4:4, NIV).

The god of this world—whom the Bible reveals as Satan the devil—does everything in his power to prevent people from reaching their incredible human potential, a potential that involves God "bringing many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10, NIV). That's why the apostle Peter warns us to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

When it was noted earlier that the vast majority of humanity is deceived, it wasn't intended as an insult. As we saw, the Bible reveals that the *entire world* is controlled by the devil. Continuing the terrible cycle begun millennia ago, humanity in large measure continues to reject what James described as "the perfect law that gives freedom" (James 1:25, NIV).

And consider that Jesus noted this principal trend of the time of the end: "*Lawlessness will abound*" (Matthew 24:12). People will declare the law of God to be done away and embrace tenets that try to justify what the Bible plainly

and its often terrifying events simply reflect the collective and accumulated consequences of the breaking of God's laws and commandments.

Ironically, humanity could bypass all of this prophesied destruction by turning to God. Ample biblical precedent exists (see Jeremiah 18:7-8; Jonah 3). God makes available a distinct choice to all nations, as He does to you and me. If you have read this far, it is likely that God is opening that choice to you. What is it?

"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses . . . I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. *Now choose life*, so that you and your children may



Many biblical prophecies attest—unless there is massive and widespread change in humanity's rejection of God, we'll see global nuclear devastation.

defines as sin! It's important to remember that the Bible further defines sin as lawlessness—the willful breaking of God's commandments (1 John 4:3). And it states that "the wages of sin is *death*" (Romans 6:23).

Clearly the attitude of covetousness that leads to lawlessness and death is not what God desires. He wants us to apply our free will in a different direction. Note what God says to us today through the prophet Ezekiel: "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take *no pleasure* in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. *Turn!* Turn from your evil ways! *Why will you die . . . ?*" (Ezekiel 33:11, NIV).

Turning to God

How can God foretell the future? We must understand that much of prophecy

live" (Deuteronomy 30:19, NIV). The promises of God's Word are unbreakable. What's the right choice to receive them? We must surrender our own free will, becoming like little children in adopting and embracing an attitude of teachable and grateful humility, to find God.

But time is advancing. As many biblical prophecies attest, unless we see a massive and widespread change in humanity's present rejection of God, deceived governments and leaders will bring about global war and nuclear devastation.

On the day God presented the gift of the Holy Spirit to humanity, the apostle Peter delivered possibly the most important relevant advice for us today:

"*Be saved from this perverse generation*" (Acts 2:40).

No advice is more timely! **GN**



AMERICA

Drastic Changes 70 Years After World War II

As America and the world mark the anniversary of the conclusion of World War II, it's important that we consider the great changes in the United States and other Western nations since the Allied victory 70 years ago. *by Darris McNeely*

Seventy years ago the guns in Europe and Asia fell silent as World War II concluded. After six years of battle and the loss of many millions of lives, the Axis powers of Germany and Japan surrendered to Allied forces. Soldiers returned to civilian life. Two world wars in 34 years had reshaped the global map.

Suddenly America stood in front of the world as the dominant power. It was a moment of great opportunity.

The scene

In 1945 Europe was shattered. Hitler's

Third Reich was over. Germany was bled both physically and morally. The Nazi regime abused the Teutonic virtues of a proud and fruitful nation to terrorize the world with a bestial brand of horror. France, Belgium and the Netherlands were brutally violated and pillaged by the six years of occupation. Add to this the residual devastation from World War I, and Europe needed serious help for a fresh start.

The Russian-dominated Soviet Union suffered enormous losses at the hands of the Nazis. Its troops pushed far into Europe, and when the surrender came it occupied half of Germany, Poland and other Eastern

European nations. The Soviet empire made territorial gains it didn't want to give up. The Western powers led by the United States had real concerns that Soviet troops might push further west, seeking larger gains in retribution for war losses.

The prostrate condition of Western Europe posed grave peril for the future. The armies of Europe were broken. Great Britain was drained financially. It still held its colonies, but its glory was in the past. The British Empire would recede. It would no longer be able to assert itself as it had in the past.

In Asia, Japan was pushed back into its island borders and had lost several islands in the north to the Soviets. With the dropping of two atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and threats of more to come, the nation was coerced into submission. Japan surrendered on the deck of the American battleship *USS Missouri* (pictured above). Under General Douglas



MacArthur, an American-led occupation force settled into control of the nation.

By September 1945, America surveyed a worn and tattered world. Unlike other nations, it hadn't suffered the impact of relentless bombardment, invasion or occupation. Other than the 1941 Japanese bombing of the American naval fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in 1941, and the invasion of Guam and several of the Aleutian Islands, no U.S. soil experienced the war firsthand. This safety, coupled with vast material resources, allowed America to produce ships, tanks, planes, food and other material to supply Allied troops throughout the Pacific, North Africa and Europe.

America's rise to military, economic and political dominance positioned the country for what would become its great historic role in world affairs. What it did for the postwar world was unprecedented among the nations.

America the great provider

In 1947, U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall gave an address at Harvard University outlining a bold initiative to provide money to assist in rebuilding the economies of Europe, especially that of former foe Germany. What became known as the Marshall Plan eventually poured billions of dollars of development aid into Europe.

Recovery in Europe was slow. The populations were open prey for social upheaval. With the Soviet Union threatening to absorb more territory, it was necessary to bolster the defeated and weary. America alone had the economic power to sustain others. Congress approved the plan, and in only a few years the European economy was on the rise. American troops remained in Germany. In time a new alliance between North America and Western Europe called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed, with joint defense forces arrayed on the continent.

Extending a helping hand to rebuild the economy of a defeated enemy was an unprecedented move. It was a practical necessity in shoring up the West against Soviet ingress, but it still remains one of history's most remarkable acts of generosity.

America's postwar presence in Europe was essential to restoring economic and political order. By remaining engaged with troops, money and close political relationships, the United States did the exact opposite of its actions in Europe after World War I ended in late 1918. At that time America went home and left Europe to its own

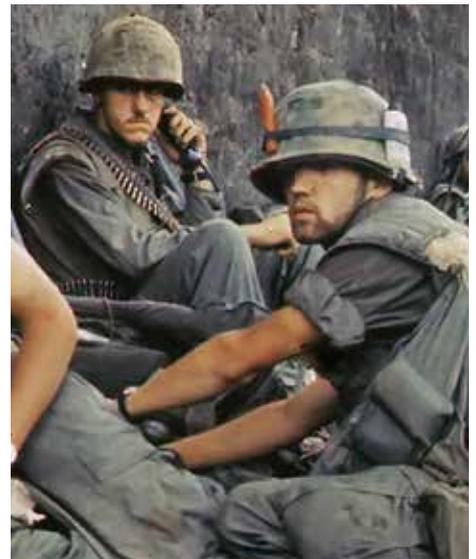
devices. The result was social chaos, Hitler and World War II. U.S. leaders would not repeat the same mistake in 1945.

Concurrent with the rebuilding in Europe was an even more dramatic restructuring of the conquered Japanese state. Japan had been led by a cult of the emperor. Centuries of tradition had established the holy warrior culture that erupted in the 1930s. In 1945 America imposed a military rule that replaced emperor worship with a Western-style democratic government. Japan's constitution was rewritten, and it included a non-violent clause that remains to this day.



Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq. None of these conflicts were openly declared wars as was World War II. None ended with the kind of victory achieved in World War II. None allowed America to reshape the regions in any manner as they did after World War II.

In the case of Korea, the peninsula was divided into two nations, North and South Korea. The North remained a communist state, and today, with an unstable and erratic government, it is a major source of international terror and a clear threat to the region. American troops still patrol the fragile border between the two states,



Since 1945 the United States has been involved in five major conflicts requiring massive deployment of troops. None ended with the kind of victory achieved in World War II.

The years that followed the end of World War II were the zenith of the American century. Historians have even termed America's newfound position an "empire." The United States became the indispensable nation by all essential measurements of a great power.

America's prime position remains to this day in spite of setbacks in recent years and many calls for other nations to rise to take their turn in the spotlight of the world stage. Current U.S. leadership has downplayed America's world role by a policy of "leading from behind" and deemphasizing the country's status as an exceptional nation. A less prominent America is the world's new reality.

It's different today

Since 1945 the United States has been involved in five major conflicts requiring massive deployment of troops and materiel—Korea, Vietnam, the Persian

keeping a peace that could evaporate should the North Korean government gamble that an invasion would not be met with enough resistance to force it back.

America entered Vietnam with the intent of containing the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. More than 500,000 troops fought. More than 50,000 died before a treaty was signed in early 1973. Vietnam was left a divided country—the communist North and the democratic South.

But in early 1975 North Vietnam invaded the South, and within two months the South Vietnamese army and government collapsed. Vietnam became a fully communist state. America did not shape this region into its own democratic image, and the blow to morale had significant repercussions in the following years. Vietnam became a buzzword for American defeat and limitation.

Fast forward to 1991. America had expe-

rienced a comeback in terms of its will and pride of power. The decades-long Cold War with the Soviet Union was coming to a close as the monolithic Soviet Union was cracking under the weight of economic and political decline.

In the Middle East, Iraq under Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invaded the tiny Persian Gulf nation of Kuwait. In response President George H.W. Bush led the United States to assemble a coalition of nations that successfully drove Iraqi forces back into their own borders, liberating Kuwait in the process. But the region was still not safe.



In 2001, the United States experienced its greatest terrorist attack at the hands of al-Qaeda, whose leader Osama bin Laden was being harbored in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. When demands to turn him over were refused, President George W. Bush launched a massive military campaign with the help of close allies (and eventually the NATO alliance). The United States and its partners dislodged the Taliban and took control of much of the nation, but resistance continued, especially after America's efforts became divided due to the next big conflict.

In 2003, concern that Iraq's Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and was flouting United Nations resolutions led President George W. Bush to order another invasion. This time Hussein was overthrown, and an occupying Allied force set about trying to install a democratic form of government—a new attempt at nation building like in postwar Europe and Japan.

But most in this formerly dictator-ruled Muslim nation did not understand this Western style of rule, nor did Western leaders grasp how challenging it would be to instill such a change. The same proved true

in Afghanistan. Religious and ethnic divisions in this region have proven resistant to Western-style reform.

In 2013 America pulled its ground troops out of Iraq after a decade, leaving the Iraqis to fend for themselves in resolving their differences and combating Islamic fundamentalism. The result has been a humanitarian disaster.

The past year has seen the rise of a radical terrorist organization proclaiming a renewed caliphate. The group known as the Islamic State or ISIS is imposing a rigid reign of terror through the parts of Iraq and Syria it controls. The central government in Iraq has not been able to mount a credible defense of its northern borders and cities. In effect, the Iraqi state left behind by America no longer exists.

The War in Afghanistan is still not over, nearly 14 years after it started. U.S. and NATO forces officially ended combat operations in 2014, but America intends to maintain a residual force there until the end of 2016. Bin Laden was eventually found and killed in Pakistan, a supposed ally in America's war on terror. Yet Afghanistan itself has for a while been on the verge of Taliban reconquest.

To kill a people

Where Vietnam became a byword for American failure after the mid-1970s, Iraq and Afghanistan are taking on that mantle for this generation. It seems the sacrifice in lives in towns like Ramadi, Fallujah and Marjah have been for nothing. Such impotence and miscalculation kills the soul of a people. The sight of America's wounded warriors from these Middle Eastern wars creates cynical disregard for the vain political statements made by leaders.

The United States entered the Middle East to bring justice to its attackers and to unseat a dangerous tyrant. But soon it took on the noble mission of installing Western-style democracy to the region—except this region did not possess the necessary cultural foundation to sustain such change. Events to date have shown the folly of that plan. Today the Middle East is a region in conflict on many fronts. The American-led invasions of 2001 and 2003 and the Arab Spring of 2011 have contributed to

unrest and civil war in several countries from North Africa to Pakistan. The lack of American resolve and leadership in the region has significantly contributed to a crisis that has global implications.

That's not to say that the United States hasn't played a significant role in the world. It has. The last half of the 20th century was the apex of what is often called the American Century. The political, military and economic power of America continues to be the single most effective element in the balance-of-power equation of today's world.

On balance, when all is measured, the United States, along with the other English-speaking nations of the world, has contributed from its God-given blessings to the well-being of many peoples. From medicine to education to direct charitable aid, in so many cases America has benefited the world.

These words need to be carefully considered against the doubt, the attacks and the indifference toward the power and wealth and global dominance of America. Islamic fanatics call America "the Great Satan." Russia and other totalitarian regimes portray America as an evil "hegemonist" force, bent on undermining their security. Terrorists hate American culture and seek to destroy it and its citizens.

Sadly, even some America leaders and intellectuals undermine its role in the world by subtle criticism and doubt. America to them is not "exceptional." America, this line of thinking goes, is like every other nation and should feel "guilty" for having so much more than others. Denying the nation's many blessings from God, they see the country's biblical, Christian heritage as a source for shame and loathing.

As a result, we have entered into a time of many thinking it would be better to retreat from the world and let others bear the burdens long shouldered by the benevolence of America.

Recent U.S. actions have been less intrusive and more managerial. America is an empire, but a reluctant one. It is more willing to lead from behind, using drones and carefully managed insertion of special forces teams to perform surgical cuts to the enemy.

But such reticence on the world stage creates a vacuum of power, and history teaches us that other, more malignant, forces will always fill a vacuum. As America retreats, the world is becoming a more fragmented and dangerous place.

A hinge of history

Seventy years after the conclusion of World



War II is a time for Americans to wake up and realize the signs of the times. The world has reached what historians call a “hinge of history.” The door of history is opening into a different time. Events are turning the world into something far different than what was created in the last 100 years.

We have to go to the end of the First World War to better understand the shape of the world today. With the Middle East crisis, the borders of states created in the wake of that war a century ago are being erased and redrawn. The limits of American power are now exposed, with unforeseen and unintended consequences ahead. And Europe—ever present, ever dangerous—still rumbles like a dormant volcano with the potential to erupt on the world, spilling a molten flow to scorch all in its path.

To the prophet Habakkuk God said: “Look at the nations and watch and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told” (Habakkuk 1:5, New International Version).

God was answering Habakkuk’s complaint that “justice is perverted . . . [it] never prevails” (verse 4). Everywhere he looked in his nation, the prophet saw destruction and violence and unresolved conflict (verse 3). He grieved that his country, Judah, so blessed by God, was so morally and ethically corrupt. We could survey the culture of America in 2015 and say much the same.

God’s answer revealed the rise of a new power called Babylon, an efficiently cruel empire that could quickly move through a land, destroying and consuming all in its path. Babylon was the instrument God would use to deal with the decayed culture of Judah, the remnant of the nation of Israel.

America and the English-speaking nations are in the same position as Judah in this scene from the ancient prophecy. These verses about moral decline could describe events any day in the United States.

The past year saw race riots erupt on the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland. Street violence is a raw symptom of the breakdown of the family structure among the black American community. This moral collapse has been eating away at black America for the better part of the 70 years since the end of World War II.

In 1965 a government report titled “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” described the negative impact of the breakdown of the nuclear family (one with a father and mother present) within the American black community. The report

foretold that unless certain economic and cultural trends were not reversed, a total breakdown of families in this community was guaranteed. We are seeing the continued effects today. Instead of improving, the breakdown of the family has spread to other segments of American society

Seventy years following the end of World War II, America is in a “valley of trouble.” It does not understand the depth of the peril it faces.

with devastating consequences.

America is entering another presidential election cycle. The issues the candidates are debating and the qualifications of the individual candidates reflect the current moral, political and even spiritual condition of America. Cynicism surrounds this election cycle. The political leaders of the nation lack moral clarity in addressing and dealing with the pressing issues facing America. Look for this election cycle to highlight the deepening divide within America on all fronts. Regardless of who wins the presidency in 2016, America will face a changed world.

A new world without America?

The critical question of the hour is what America’s role will be in this changed world. For more than six years of the current presidential administration, the United States has not shown effective world leadership in the areas that matter. What matters is moral and spiritual leadership. America has lost its way and has not led the world on the high ground of morality and ethics.

The nation’s time to build a region and shape the destiny of peoples seems to have passed. Whatever vestige of righteousness America had 70 years ago in the wake of World War II has evaporated like the dew in the morning sunlight.

The United States leads the world in creating and glamorizing godless lifestyles of every form. Through its Hollywood entertainment complex it exports every kind of immorality and perversion. Adultery, pornography, drugs and addictions, and every form of sexual immorality are put into music, film and television and exported throughout the world.

On the home front, the issue of same-sex marriage has replaced abortion as the litmus test for social correctness today. This fact alone speaks volumes about the spiritual condition of the land.

The question is whether it’s too late to turn

around this decline and restore the nation to a previous standard of right and wrong.

It’s not our place to answer this question. It’s our place to point out the problem and show the way forward for any who might choose to read their Bible and believe what it says. It’s every person’s responsibility to

follow God to a better, more righteous life. It’s our place to stand in the public arena like the prophets of old and place the words of God before the people. What will you do with what you’ve heard?

Seventy years following the end of World War II, America is in a “valley of trouble.” It does not understand the depth of the peril it faces. But people of faith—people who know there is a God—someone one like you who has read this far in this article—understand that something is wrong with the world and our peoples.

It’s time to shake yourself from the fog and stupor surrounding the issues and reach out to God, who is faithful and who will bring the nation and the world through this time of trouble. His purpose stands. God cannot lie. You can get to know that God now. You can step into the story He is creating. You can make sense of your life and escape the frustration and futility you see around us.

God says, “I will . . . transform the valley of trouble into a gateway of hope” (Hosea 2:15, New Living Translation). Grab hold of that hope today and begin making a better life for yourself and others your life touches! **GN**

Learn More



The story of the United States is truly remarkable—how a small collection of ragtag colonies hugging the Atlantic coast grew to become the greatest superpower in world history. But more amazing still is that this story was foretold long ago in the pages of your Bible—along with the nation’s coming decline and destruction. It’s a story you need to know! Download or request your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* today!

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This Was Their Finest Hour

Largely forgotten today is the role the British Empire and Commonwealth played in the Allied victory in World War II. Yet these were the only nations that fought in the war from beginning to end.

by *Melvin Rhodes*

Magda Goebbels was the wife of the Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. On May 1, 1945, she poisoned six of her children, immediately before committing suicide along with her husband. World War II was almost over. Frau Goebbels could not bear to live in a world without National Socialism (Nazism).

Most of the world did not feel the same way. Those who believed in freedom of the individual triumphed over tyranny, ending the war with Germany exactly one week later, on May 8, 1945. The war with Japan was to last three more months.

For the British people, the war had lasted six years. Six years of bombing. Six years of rations. But it was also six years of incredible resolve, a determination to not succumb to defeat no matter what it might take in terms of national and personal sacrifice. In stark contrast to Magda Goebbels, the average British citizen did not want to live under National Socialism.

The title of this article is taken from a speech before the British House of

Commons on June 18, 1940, by Winston Churchill, who had been appointed prime minister the previous month. The country was in dire straits, faced with a German invasion and conquest, the same fate that had befallen the other countries of Western Europe in the preceding weeks.

Many in Britain wanted to cut a deal with Hitler, giving the German dictator dominion over Europe. The Battle of Britain was about to begin, with Britain's Royal Air Force fighting the German Luftwaffe in the skies above the United Kingdom and surrounding waters. If Britain were to have lost that battle, the United States might have had to sue for peace on Germany's terms—and the world would live under National Socialism. Hitler promised a Thousand-Year Reich (or Empire), a perversion of the 1,000-year or millennial rule of Jesus Christ revealed in the Bible.

Stirring the defense of civilization

Churchill's speech was necessary to share with the British people the very real dilemma facing them. At the same time it

rallied them to the cause of defeating fascism rather than compromising with it.

His speech ended with the following words:

“What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire.

“The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands.

“But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour.’”

In popular mythology, Britain stood alone. In a sense it did, as no other European countries could help her. But in another sense, Britain did not stand alone.



Winston Churchill knew that, even though many of his countrymen did not. He looked to aid from the Empire and Commonwealth and eventually America—under the guidance of God.

He said in a speech earlier the same month: “We shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God’s good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old” (June 4, 1940).

The Empire’s role

Throughout the war, from the very beginning when London declared war on Germany on Sept. 3, 1939, Britain had the support of its empire and commonwealth.

This was the greatest empire in history. At the time the war started, it controlled a quarter of the world’s land surface. Every part of the Empire was involved in the war, either in the fight against Germany or the fight against Japan in the Far East. Note what Churchill said earlier in his “Finest Hour” speech:

“We have fully informed and consulted all the self-governing Dominions, these great communities far beyond the oceans who have been built up on our laws and on our civilization, and who are absolutely free to choose their course, but are absolutely devoted to the ancient Motherland, and who feel themselves inspired by the same emotions which lead me to stake our all upon duty and honor.

“We have fully consulted them, and I have received from their Prime Ministers, . . . from all these eminent men, who all have Governments behind them elected on wide franchises, who are all there because they represent the will of their people, messages couched in the most moving terms in which they endorse our decision to fight on, and declare themselves ready to share our fortunes and to persevere to the end. That is what we are going to do.”

This was to be a collective effort. The Dominions were the self-governing nations of the Commonwealth at that time—Canada, Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Their parliaments all supported Britain against Germany. But that wasn’t all. British colonies, nations of the Empire that were not fully self-governing, all joined in the war effort.

The greatest contribution was from India. The viceroy of India (the British governor) declared war on Germany shortly after Britain’s declaration of war. More than 2½ million Indians voluntarily fought on Britain’s side, the greatest volunteer army in history.

They were used just about everywhere against some of the most sophisticated fighting forces in the world. They performed admirably in Europe, Africa and Asia. India also became the base for American operations in China.



Australian troops in action in North Africa during the Second Battle of El Alamein, 1942

Commonwealth troops fought just about everywhere against some of the most sophisticated fighting forces in the world.

Other parts of the Empire were just as loyal to Britain in the war, even though they were not able to contribute the same number of men or resources as India. The Royal West African Frontier Force of the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, sent troops to Burma, Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and Italian Somaliland.

South Africans were sent to fight in North Africa against Hitler’s General Rommel. Many also flew with the Royal Air Force in the European theater of war. Southern Rhodesians fought alongside British pilots in the Battle of Britain.

Almost a million Australians, both men and women, served in the Second World War. They fought in military campaigns against Germany and Italy in Europe, the Mediterranean and North Africa, as well as against Japan in Southeast Asia and other parts of the Pacific.

Michael Savage, the prime minister of New Zealand at the outbreak of war, rallied the country with these words: “Both with

gratitude for the past, and with confidence in the future, we range ourselves without fear beside Britain. Where she goes, we go. Where she stands, we stand.”

New Zealanders were to serve with the British and Rhodesians in the Royal Air Force as it fought above the skies of Europe.

The oldest dominion, Canada, played a major role in the war, declaring war exactly one week after Great Britain. By the end of the war, the country had over 1 million people in uniform out of a total population

of 11 million. Canada’s contribution was so great that it emerged with the fourth-largest air force in the world and the fifth-biggest navy.

Few today realize the incredible contribution made to the Allied victory in World War II by the dominions, colonies and territories of the British Empire and Commonwealth.

Churchill’s own role

At the same time, Winston Churchill was, without a doubt, the man of the moment, the right man for the job.

His official biographer, Sir Martin Gilbert, who died a few months ago, was an annual visitor to Hillsdale College in Michigan, where he spent two months every year giving students lectures on Churchill. I attended one of those lectures a few years ago. Afterwards, I asked him what would have happened in World War II if Churchill had never lived. His considered response was insightful: “We wouldn’t have gotten very far.”

Churchill's military experience and his global perspective were second to none. At the lecture Gilbert gave that evening, he showed how Churchill's sinking of the French fleet following the country's defeat in 1940, although controversial to this day in France, illustrated that the man would stop at nothing to defeat Nazi Germany. This single act influenced U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt to support him, knowing he would not compromise.

Churchill wrote in his monumental his-



Canadian pilots training in Scotland in 1940



Indian soldiers in Burma, 1944

tory of the war: "I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial . . . I thought I knew a good deal about it all, and I was sure I should not fail."

In a wider sense, this was also the British Empire's appointment with destiny. It was as if the Empire's three centuries had prepared it for this moment—the defense of the Western world, of freedom and democracy, of civilization itself.

Fulfillment of biblical prophecy

In Victorian times, as the Empire was

expanding and as the Commonwealth was given birth with the independence of Canada in 1867, many believed they were fulfilling a biblical prophecy about the two sons of the patriarch Joseph, the son of Jacob (Israel).

In Genesis 48, Joseph brought his two sons before his ailing father to receive the customary blessing. Jacob carefully placed his hands in blessing the two boys, granting Ephraim, the youngest, the greatest blessing, promising that his descendants would

become "a multitude of nations" (verse 19), the same as the "company of nations" earlier promised to Jacob (Genesis 35:11).

Ephraim's elder brother, Manasseh, was prophesied to also become a great nation, the United States, "but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he" (Genesis 48:19).

The "multitude of nations" has always been united by a common loyalty to the throne. The United States was to separate from the multitude of nations, to sever its tie with the Crown, in order to become the great single nation that Churchill called "the Great Republic."

Today, 70 years after the end of World War II, the Empire and Commonwealth are largely forgotten by much of the world. Many people I talk to in Britain are unaware of the fact that before the United States came to dominate the globe, Britain and its dominions constituted the greatest power on earth, as Jacob foretold of the multitude of nations.

World War II was, indeed, their finest hour. However, the British Empire was not to last a thousand years, any more than the Third Reich did. Before the decade was over, Britain had lost its Indian Empire (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma and Ceylon) and, a decade later, was dismantling the rest. Faced with a similar threat today, Great Britain would find itself virtually friendless, no longer able to command the support it could count on in 1939.

As regards the other main protagonists, the dominions and India, they have largely

gone their separate ways. Canada now has much closer ties with the United States than with Great Britain. Australia and New Zealand have closer ties to their Asian neighbors; South Africa is oriented toward Africa, and Rhodesia no longer exists.

Remarkably, Germany now dominates Europe as it did in 1940. Only this time its domination has been achieved peacefully through the European Union and the European Central Bank. What the future implications of German dominance mean for Europe and Britain remains to be seen, but it's supremely ironic that 75 years after Germany achieved military dominion over Europe, it now dominates the continent economically. The British and Allied victory over the Third Reich did not have the effect of keeping Germany down.

The world has changed dramatically in the last 70 years. Looking back, it's clear that the Second World War finished off the British Empire. And for 70 years the world has been dominated by the United States. Yet now we see Washington's period of domination also rapidly coming to an end.

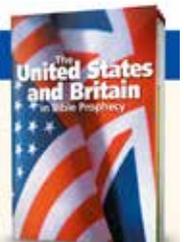
We are reminded of the words of the prophet Daniel in Daniel 2:21 about the all-powerful God: "He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings."

Our Great God is ultimately behind the rise and fall of nations.

The verse adds that it is possible for those following God to understand the course of history and see what the future holds: "He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding."

We hope you'll continue reading this magazine to see God's hand in history and how end-time events are coming together as foretold in His Word centuries ago! *GN*

Learn More



Few understand the remarkable story—foretold in the Bible many centuries ago—of the dramatic rise of the British Empire and the United States, powers that would dominate the world for much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Britain has faded from its position of greatness. What will happen to the United States? You need to know! Find the answers in our eye-opening study aid *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy!*

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Character Lessons From the Greatest Generation

American newsman Tom Brokaw labeled them *The Greatest Generation*—those Americans who grew up during the Great Depression and went on to establish American greatness during and just after World War II. But what character traits made them great? *by Mike Kelley*

It's been more than a decade since renowned NBC newsman Tom Brokaw published *The Greatest Generation*, his tribute to the generation of Americans who grew up during the Great Depression and carried the nation through World War II.

Inspired by the veterans he met June 6, 1994, at the 50th anniversary celebration of D-Day, he interviewed dozens of them all across the country. The more he talked with them, the more convinced he became that they possessed qualities of character seldom seen in any other generation of Americans.

Not many of them are left. The youngest are in their mid-80s, and they are dying at the rate of more than 8,000 per week. Most now live in nursing homes or with their children. Their voices are nearly stilled, but the lessons of their lives shine as beacons for today's generations that often find

their values odd or old-fashioned.

To say these men and women were remarkable is to put it lightly. By the time they became young children, the prosperity and optimism that prevailed at the end of World War I, when they were born, was gone, replaced by the harsh economic realities of the Great Depression.

As they were becoming young men and women, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor ensured America's entry into World War II. In defense of freedom and democracy, that war would demand the best the young men and women of this generation had to offer. When the nation needed commitment, honor, sacrifice and courage, they responded in the millions. And when the war was over, they used those same character traits to build postwar America into the world's greatest national power.

What traits made them "the greatest

generation"? Let's examine a few.

A sense of responsibility

Childhood should be a time of fun and learning, free from the responsibilities of adulthood. But for millions of them, as children of the Great Depression, life was difficult. Adult responsibilities came early. By age 14 or 15, many young men were working to help support families that might include eight to 10 siblings.

As Brokaw points out, it bred into the men and women of that generation a sense of responsibility that served them well a few years later when the war broke out. They were of course appalled later on when long-held values changed, when they would look on their children and grandchildren and see a totally different attitude.

Wesley Ko epitomized that sense of responsibility. A gifted young Chinese-American who grew up in Philadelphia, Ko's preacher father could not afford to send his son to college. While still a teen, Ko went to work in a local printing shop where, after Pearl Harbor, his boss appreciated his work so much that he offered to get him a draft deferment.

But young Ko had a sense of patriotism

and enlisted in the Army instead. He was sent to officer candidate school at Ft. Benning, Georgia, becoming a second lieutenant. Then came three years of almost continuous combat in North Africa, then Sicily, then Italy, followed by D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge before the war in Europe ended in May 1945.

After the war Ko returned to Philadelphia to start his own printing business with his brother and a friend. He married and raised a family. Life was good until 1985, when a series of government actions and some bad business decisions caused his printing business to fail.

At age 70, well past retirement age for most, Ko found himself almost a million dollars in debt. He could have declared bankruptcy but chose not to. "I just didn't feel comfortable with declaring bankruptcy,"

the Army's famed 82nd Airborne division, September 1944 found Broderick in combat in the Netherlands. One day he made the mistake of standing too high in a foxhole. From several hundred yards away, a German marksman sent a bullet through Broderick's temple. Though he recovered, the damage to his brain left him blind.

Gripped by self-pity, he lost the will to move on with his life. Why had God let this happen to him, he wondered. But then he prayed for a miracle. "If I can't have my eyesight back," he asked God, "could you find a girl for me to marry?" God did not answer immediately, but several years later he met and married a wonderful woman who would be his partner for life.

Tom got hold of himself, learned Braille and studied the insurance field. He learned he had a head for business, and by the early

manufacturer. But whose responsibility was it that a boy was dead? The answer should be obvious.

Commitment to marriage and family

Historians, sociologists and other observers have long recognized that strong families are the basis of strong societies. Decades ago, famed historian Edward Gibbon wrote that a major cause of the demise of the Roman Empire was the breakdown of the family. No one had to teach this to the greatest generation; they knew it intuitively. The 1920s and 30s were a time of large families, strong families by today's standards.

These families stayed together. Of course, they had to during the Depression. In an era largely devoid of today's extensive social service network, Americans knew that to survive they had to depend on their families.

Lloyd Kilmer remembered the early 1930s growing up on a farm in Minnesota. When his father lost his farm in bankruptcy, the family moved to the nearby town of Stewartville. Everyone in the family went to work wherever they could. Lloyd sold newspapers and sacked groceries to help out with the family finances. He avoided wearing shoes in the summer so he could have a pair in the winter.

In millions of cases, when a young married man went off to war, his bride moved in with her parents or his parents. Grandparents helped raise the children, providing love, training and discipline. And should that dreaded knock at the door come, telling a young wife that her husband had been killed in action, she was still truly part of a larger family.

Such was the case of Jeanette Gagne. Her husband Camille, a native of Quebec, was killed during the Battle of the Bulge. That Western Union telegram shattered her whole existence. For several years, until she remarried, it was her family that provided emotional support and helped her raise her infant son Robert.

To the greatest generation, divorce was a serious matter, almost scandalous. Unlike today, marriage was not a "trial run" to see if it might work out. Brokaw writes of Scottie Lingelbach, whose husband Dale died of melanoma at an early age. She never remarried but laments the divorce of her daughter: "Never did I realize it would happen in my family. Divorce was so uncommon."

She voiced concerns about the downward drift of families: "What concerns me most

During the Depression, an era largely devoid of today's social service network, Americans knew that to survive they had to depend on their families.



he said. "I just didn't think it was the honorable thing to do, even though it would have been easier."

In our day and age, when many Americans declare bankruptcy at the drop of a hat, we should be inspired by such an example.

World War II took a terrible toll in lives. Some 294,000 young Americans never came back from far-flung battlefields. It also left in its wake some 1.7 million U.S. soldiers who came back with every imaginable disability.

Tom Broderick was one of them. Part of

the 1950s established his own insurance agency. Over the years the agency grew. Tom and his wife Eileen became prosperous. Their family grew to seven children, and Tom became a respected member of his community.

Broderick did not blame the world for the loss of his eyesight. He knew it was his fault for standing too high in the foxhole. He took responsibility for his actions and for his life. He realized he made a life-changing mistake, but nevertheless he could

move on from that mistake.

Many observers of contemporary America have observed our lack of personal responsibility. Our culture often says, "It's not my fault." It's all too easy to blame others when life's train gets derailed.

Some members of the legal profession thrive on this. Brokaw relates the true story of a father whose son was accidentally killed while at a friend's house. It seems his son's friend found a gun and, not knowing it was loaded, pointed it at him and pulled the trigger. The father sued the gun



about the future is the breakdown of the family. We were willing to make sacrifices so that I could stay home with the children. Now couples both work so they can be more affluent. We would rather delay gratification to ensure that our children had a nice home environment.”

Typical of that generation were John and Peggy Assenzio. They married a month after Pearl Harbor, but had known each other as children growing up in Brooklyn. Trained as a medic, he was assigned to the 118th Combat Engineers and sent to the Pacific Theater to become part of General Douglas MacArthur’s island-hopping push towards Japan.

John saw combat up close—saw men get blown up, arms and legs fly through the air, and often had to wipe the blood from his face. It was a horrifying experience, and it stayed with him for life.

After the war, John went back to Brooklyn and picked up where life left off for him and Peggy in 1942. They wanted a family, and they had two sons. John went back to his old job as a salesman for an import-export firm. But he would often have terrible nightmares; he would thrash around in his sleep, knocking over lamps and shouting. Always Peggy would be there, offering comfort and peace. Despite frequent disagreements, their marriage grew stronger with the passing years.

They, too, bemoan the fact that divorce has become commonplace. Couples these days “don’t fight long enough,” says Peggy. “It’s too easy to get a divorce. We’ve had our arguments, but we don’t give up. When my friends ask whether I ever considered divorce I remind them of the old saying ‘We’ve thought about killing each other, but divorce? Never.’”

A strong work ethic

As Brokaw points out, Americans of that generation knew what it was like to work hard. Although the industrial revolution was far advanced by the early 1930s, America at that time was still much more of an agrarian nation than it is today. Millions lived on farms, and were used to work that went from dawn to dusk, work that was very physical and mostly outdoors. The callused hand was a badge of honor, the proud mark of a hard-working man or woman.

But most Americans toiled in factories, mills and mines at work that could be just as physically demanding. Hardly the clean, highly automated environments of today, Depression-era factories were often noisy,

The Blitz Spirit

Although never invaded, apart from the Channel Islands, Britain suffered considerably during the Second World War. Bombing raids during the Blitz (September 1940 to May 1941) killed 43,000 people, half in London, and destroyed a million houses in the city.

Other major cities, industrial centers, ports and docklands suffered too—Edinburgh, Liverpool, Cardiff, Sheffield, Birmingham and Bristol to name a few. Clydbank in Scotland had only seven houses out of 2,000 left intact. The naval port of Plymouth also lost much of its housing, and every night 50,000 of its inhabitants reputedly left the city to sleep in open fields. Bombing destroyed much of Coventry, along with its munitions factories.

To safeguard the children of these cities, many were evacuated into country areas, staying with strangers who were willing to look after them for the duration of the air raids. Those left behind in the cities would spend the nights in bomb shelters or in the Underground (subway) stations.

Ivy Gilbert, whose daughters had been evacuated to Wales, arrived home after a night in an air-raid shelter to discover an unexploded bomb had crashed through the roof of her house in the East End of London. With it lodged in her bedroom, she had no choice but to join the one in six people in London who were homeless during those terrible nine months.

How did they cope with such hardships? A key part of the answer was something called the “Blitz spirit”—the idea that everyone was in this together and was fighting a common enemy. Any resistance, even just keeping up morale, was considered a victory against Hitler. Whether this feeling was a reality or a myth invented by the government of the time to try to keep people from becoming

despondent and discouraged is debated in high school history classes to this day.

Certainly there was a sense of everyone pulling together, from people giving their gardens over to growing vegetables for easing the food shortages to Girl Guides collecting everything from paper,



string and old saucepans to recycle for the war effort. In spite of so many disturbed nights during the Blitz, absenteeism from work was minimal. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (parents of the current Queen Elizabeth II) tried to reinforce this notion of the Blitz spirit by visiting bomb shelters and speaking to those sheltering there.

Whether it originated in the people themselves or was engendered by the government, this spirit helped many in Britain through the devastating destruction and grief of the Blitz—and through the following 4½ years of war and the shortages that continued even after its end. Such widespread community spirit seems to be sadly missing from society today.

—Barbara Fenney

dirty and hot. Steel mill temperatures could easily reach 135 degrees in the summer.

In an era before today’s safety regulations, factory work could be dangerous, with unique ways to suffer serious injury or death. A drop of 2,000-degree molten steel could burn right through a hand. Dozens could be killed at once if methane gas exploded in a coal mine.

After Pearl Harbor, the nation mobilized for an all-out effort. It was perhaps the proudest time of American history. The ramp-up to war energized an economy that, more than a decade after the stock market crash of October 1929, had still not fully recovered from the Depression.

With the return of industrial jobs that paid good wages, working men by the

thousands streamed into the factories of America. Those good wages were welcome, but there was something else to work for—victory. Victory over one power that had blindsided the United States, and another whose evil ideology sought to enslave the world. Every tank, gun and airplane that rolled off the assembly line was another nail in the coffin of totalitarian tyranny.

Charles Briscoe grew up the son of an itinerant farmer who moved from place to place across the Great Plains. He remembered the Dust Bowl years, when dust storms would blow up quickly, reducing visibility to a few yards while forcing people to breath through handkerchiefs. As he grew, Briscoe discovered he had a knack for mechanical work. Asked by a neighbor to

help repair a John Deere tractor, he got the parts and rebuilt the engine—never having worked on one before.

After completing high school, Charles enrolled in a school for sheet-metal work, a relatively new trade at the time. In 1940 he moved to Wichita, Kansas, to work for the Stearman Division of Boeing. He did not know it at the time, but he would be in

The mission was urgent. Years later he recalled, “We worked seven days a week, often twelve to fourteen hours a day.” Boeing, it was said, tried to find farm boys like Charles, who were used to working long hours, and who also were inventive and resourceful.

And then there was “Rosie the Riveter.” With millions of men in uniform and America needing vast industrial output, there was only one solution. By the hundreds of thousands, the women of America put on coveralls, picked up the hammers and wrenches the men had left when they enlisted, and learned to perform the industrial jobs they never dreamed they could do. By 1943, it was largely through their efforts that America became “the Arsenal of Democracy.”

By the time Dorothy Haener graduated from high school in Michigan in 1942, the Ford Motor Company plant in nearby Willow Run had converted from making cars to making B-24 bombers. She

much more religious nation. A belief in God helped get many struggling people through the Great Depression. That same belief sustained soldiers fighting on far-off battlefields. When Army chaplains held religious services, they were normally well attended.

On the home front, millions of prayers went up as wives, sweethearts, fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters prayed for the safe return of their loved ones in uniform. And if they did not return, families relied on God and their faith for the strength to bear the grief and continue on in life.

Such was the case for Helen Van Gorder. Her husband Charles, an Army surgeon with the rank of captain, had volunteered for a special D-Day assignment. He would be part of a two-man surgical team attached to the 101st Airborne Division. They would set up medical/surgical units right in the middle of the fighting instead of behind Allied lines.

They were in the thick of fighting right through the Battle of the Bulge. It was during that epic battle that Charles and another doctor were taken prisoner. In all, through his harrowing experiences as a POW doctor and in escaping from a POW camp on the Russian-Polish border, Charles Van Gorder was gone for 30 straight months.

Back home Helen gave birth to their first son, Rod, who died shortly after birth. She continued to work as a nurse. Her two brothers joined the army and were both killed in action. It was about this time that she learned Charles had been taken prisoner. It would seem Helen’s world was coming apart, yet her faith saw her through. “Since I was a little girl I’ve had trust in the Lord,” she said. “I had faith it would all work out.”

Hebrews 11:1 tells us that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of thing not seen.” Helen Van Gorder believed that God was ultimately in charge of all human events and that regardless of the losses she endured there was a purpose to it all. Faith was the guiding principle of her life, as it must be for all of us.

The greatest generation wasn’t perfect. It produced its share of criminals and societal misfits. Yet the hardships, the trials of this tumultuous time in history, instilled in millions the character traits that helped produce some of the finest men and women in the nation’s history. But by and large, they were a generation that launched America’s modern greatness. We can learn so much from the character traits that made them this way! **GN**



The hardships, the trials of this tumultuous time, instilled in millions the character traits that helped produce some of the finest men and women in the nation’s history.

the right place at the right time to help with development of the B-29 Superfortress, America’s first truly long range bomber—the bomber that could reach Japan.

got a job as a parts inspector, working nine hours a day, six days a week.

“I had always expected to get married and raise a family . . . that’s the way I was raised,” she said. She learned she could be independent; she was proud of her work. Like so many women in those circumstances, work gave her a sense of empowerment. She later became active in the United Auto Workers, where she held several leadership roles.

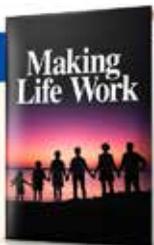
Faith in God and the future

Current polls show a continuing decline in church membership and religious observance. According to recent public opinion polls, less than half of Americans today register any serious religious belief. It seems God is increasingly out of the picture for many.

America of the 1930s and 1940s was a

Learn More

The character of many in previous generations was shaped by belief in and trying to live by the Bible. It was widely understood as the guide for a good and productive life. We’ve gathered some of the Bible’s best advice on marriage, parenting, health, finances, career, friendships and more into a free booklet, *Making Life Work*. Download or request your free copy today!



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Current Events & Trends

by Milan Bizic, Rudy Rangel and Tom Robinson

Nuclear talks stoke further Saudi-Iranian conflict

America remains mired in difficult, dangerous relationships with Middle Eastern states. These often conflict with other attempted diplomatic efforts in the region, as is the case with the current Iranian nuclear negotiations. While the U.S. government under President Barack Obama attempts to craft an agreement to please all parties, American ally Saudi Arabia is forced to prepare for a seemingly inevitable future of competing with a nuclear Iran.

Columbia University's Steve Coll wrote in *The New Yorker* of the brewing political, diplomatic and ideological conflict among the three countries: "Iran and Saudi Arabia have long been engaged in a contest for regional influence, sometimes openly, sometimes covertly, and often violently. If Obama does reach a deal to cap Iran's nuclear program, it could release Tehran from economic sanctions, replenishing its depleted treasury and enlarging its scope for regional



U.S. and Saudi troops in joint training.

maneuvering . . . The [Saudi] royals see a U.S. deal with Tehran as, in the words of Prince Turki al-Faisal, a former Saudi intelligence chief, a historic 'pivot to Iran'" ("Saudi Shakeup," May 25, 2015).

Whether or not American overtures toward Iran represent a "pivot" or some sort of historic shift to Tehran and away from Riyadh, the die of further conflict between Shiite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia has been cast. Once again, the United States finds itself allied with states that endorse extremism and violence across the region and across the world. Once again the United States finds itself strange bedfellows with states that resent everything it represents. And once again the United States finds itself in the center of a Middle Eastern conflict to which there are no human answers.

The only hope we have for a stable, peaceful Middle East is the return of Jesus Christ. He will establish His Kingdom and dissolve the human leadership that has caused so much violence. To learn more, download or request our free study guide *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Source: *The New Yorker*.)

A lonely future for Israel?

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli government, the newest version of which is just a few months old, continues to have problems with its closest allies in diplomacy and in generating positive public opinion for Israel. Following an election in which Netanyahu appealed more to his supporters and further angered his detractors, Israel finds itself more isolated from its allies than at any time in recent history.

The continuing thorn in the West's relations with Israel is the issue of Palestinian statehood. The hotly debated Iranian nuclear issue is providing a brief distraction from the statehood issue, but as *The Economist* points out, the time of reckoning may be near:

"The American administration lacks the stomach for more than one diplomatic crisis with Israel at a time. An accord with Iran will be followed by a show-down in Congress, where Israel's many supporters will try to scupper the deal. In the meantime, the French are gathering support from Arab and European governments. The resolution is expected to call, among other things, for Jerusalem to serve as the capital of both Israel and Palestine" ("Israel's Foreign Relations: Contra Mundum," May 21, 2015).

We may be looking at a very lonely future for the state of Israel in the years just ahead—a future in which its closest allies no longer guarantee support and protection in the way they once did.

In Luke 21:20 Jesus prophesied a time in which the city of Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies. That time will bring great trouble on the city and nation, with many former allies turned enemies. In the end, the Jewish nation's current alliances won't be its salvation. Rather Jesus, the true Jewish Messiah, will return to the very land of Israel itself and save the Jews and ultimately all of mankind from destruction (see Zechariah 12 and 14). (Source: *The Economist*.)

Isolation a major factor in addiction

Drug addiction is viewed by many in terms of chemical dependency—where the body and brain become altered to the point of apparent physical need that drives compulsion to stay on the drugs. This is valid to some degree. However, other addictions can take control of people's lives that have no chemical hooks—yet they could perhaps involve some physical rewiring of the brain's thinking pathways. Of course, many others see drug addiction as a moral failing that is easy to say no to if only one would just do so. And some do exert character to stop. But often this comes with help—or at least a sense of belonging among other people.

As pointed out in a recent *Huffington Post* blog, the theory of the predominance of chemical dependency in drug addiction was first established through rat experiments and later promoted in 1980s anti-drug advertising, yet was flawed:

"The experiment is simple. Put a rat in a cage, alone, with two water bottles. One is just water. The other is water laced with heroin or cocaine. Almost every time you run this experiment, the rat will become obsessed with the drugged water, and keep coming back for more and more, until it kills itself . . .

"But in the 1970s, a professor of Psychology in Vancouver [named] Bruce Alexander noticed something odd about this experiment. The rat is put in the cage all alone. It has nothing to do but take the drugs. What would happen, he wondered, if we tried this differently? So Professor Alexander built Rat Park. It is a lush cage where the rats would have colored balls and the best rat-food and tunnels to scamper down and plenty of friends . . .

"What happened next was startling. The rats with good lives didn't like the drugged water. They

mostly shunned it, consuming less than a quarter of the drugs the isolated rats used. None of them died" (Johann Hari, "The Likely Cause of Addiction Has Been Discovered, and It Is Not What You Think," Jan. 20, 2015).

Moreover, Alexander reran the early experiments of isolated rats but after 57 days moved them, now addicted, to the Rat Park community. And strikingly, after some withdrawal, they soon stopped the heavy drug use and went back to normal life.

People are not rats, of course. Deep psychological and spiritual factors no doubt keep people in bondage to various addictions even in a positive environment. Yet a positive environment with companionship, particularly of loved ones, is surely a major factor in avoiding and overcoming addiction. It was pointed out that while a huge figure of 20 percent of U.S. soldiers in Vietnam became addicted to heroin, some 95 percent simply stopped when they came back home, very few with rehab.

God created us to be social creatures—to need connection with other people. Yet human connection in today's society is minimal—with more than ever feeling isolated and alone. Bruce Alexander told the author "that for too long, we have talked exclusively about individual recovery from addiction. We need now to talk about social recovery—how we all recover, together, from the sickness of isolation that is sinking on us like a thick fog."

We should all recognize that our care and being there for those around us struggling with addictions could be all the difference in helping them overcome. And if you're trapped in something yourself, please try to reach out—to God and to other people. (Source: *The Huffington Post* Blog).

Extreme building security

A prophecy in Zechariah 8:4-5 foretells: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there'" (New International Version.)

This is such a hopeful passage. A society where children are playing in the streets, where grandparents are joyfully watching as they walk by or sit in rocking chairs, seems like a lost dream—particularly in Jerusalem, which has suffered from random terror attacks. This prophecy reveals the beautiful future God has planned for us—a future the world so desperately needs. The word "again" here shows that the world has left a time of peace it once enjoyed.

A recent *Financial Times* article concerning

militarized building security reminds us that the time of peace God has in store for us is certainly not here yet. The article reports: "The new US embassy [in London] is 'like a Norman castle,' says Stephen Graham, professor of cities and society at Newcastle University. 'It even has a moat and is set back, with empty space to protect it from truck bombs or blast,' he adds. 'This is the logic of what an antiterrorist city would look like'" (Lucy Killgren, "Safety Obsession Creates Risk of 'Fortress' Cities," May 26, 2015).

The designers have done what they can to hide the security features and make it feel like a peaceful environment—moat and all. The state of the world leads us to protect ourselves in ways not imagined to be necessary not too long ago. This is not what the God of peace wants for His creation.

Thankfully, the time is coming when Jesus will return to put an end to war and fear. We so look forward to that wonderful time when the children can once again play in the streets. (Source: *Financial Times*.)

200 million fewer hungry than in 1990

In the mid-20th century, food shortages and hunger were a big concern. Some progress has since been made, but hunger has yet to be eradicated.

A recent *New York Times* article reported there is less hunger today than in 1990, with 200 million fewer people in the world now living with hunger than did then (Rick Gladstone, "U.N. Reports About 200 Million Fewer Hungry People Than in 1990," May 27, 2015). "But the report also illustrated failures, especially in parts of Africa, where in some regions more than one in three people remain hungry. Twenty-four African countries currently face food crises" (ibid).

No matter how hard we try, it doesn't seem like food shortages will go away. Population growth coupled with water shortages do not lead to a bountiful future. Some scientific advancements have led to the mass production of foods, but there may be unforeseen outcomes. The long-term effects of genetically modified organisms remain to be seen. But the slight increase in food is encouraging for the time being.

The Bible does warn of increasing famines before the return of Jesus. We will see more shortages and suffering. But thankfully that's not the end of the story.

"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it" (Amos 9:13). At that time, "everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree [having personal shelter and sustenance], and no one shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:4).

God plans to intervene in the world's problems. The hunger issue we have struggled with will be eradicated. God gives us so much hope for His coming Kingdom of peace and abundance. (Source: *The New York Times*.)

hand, the starry expanse overhead was meant for us. Today it is something to wonder at, considering our place in creation. Israel's King David wrote, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:3-4).

But in the future, as Scripture also reveals, the entire vast universe is to be part of our inheritance—with the Kingdom of God centered here on the earth. To learn more about your awesome future, be sure to send for or download our free study aid *What Is Your Destiny?* (Source: *The New Yorker*).

Seeking human survival in outer space

Who hasn't looked up into the night sky and wondered what it would be like to travel through the far reaches of the universe? Outer space is fascinating. There is so much of it, and we, on our little planet, are just a speck. Trekking through the cosmos makes for great science fiction movies, TV shows and books. And the reality of human space exploration, tiny leaps by comparison, is nonetheless awe-inspiring.

For a while now, many have been concerned with threats to human survival on earth and look up to the heavens for an answer—but not from the One who can actually help, the very Maker of it all. Instead, some imagine super-intelligent aliens who will guide us to solve our problems. Those in the SETI program (the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) keep probing for such life out there.

Others look to other planets for a possible new home. Right now U.S. astronaut Scott Kelly is on the International Space Station for a year to research the effects of living in space long-term on the body. His

twin brother remains on the ground, being monitored simultaneously as a control measurement. As a recent *New Yorker* article explains, "it's 'a stepping stone' to 'Mars and beyond'"—that is, initially a manned Mars mission and eventually colonization of Mars and other planets (Elizabeth Kolbert, "Project Exodus: What's Behind the Dream of Colonizing Mars?" June 1, 2015).

Elon Musk, founder of the private aerospace company SpaceX, which has sent supplies to the station by rocket, is working on a plan for a "Mars Colonial Transporter," seeing this pursuit as vital. "Are we on a path to becoming a multiplanet species or not?" he has asked. "If we're not, well, that's not a very bright future. We'll simply be hanging out on Earth until some eventual calamity claims us" (ibid.).

Of course, what's to guarantee human survival elsewhere?

The Creator God precisely designed us and the earth for us to be able to live here. And He gave human beings the job of tending this precious environment. Our mission is not to escape our planet. On the other



Some scientists have envisioned Mars being reengineered to be habitable like earth.

How can you make sense of the news?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. *So are we.* That's one reason we produce the *Beyond Today* daily TV commentaries—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. These eye-opening presentations offer you a perspective so badly needed in our confused world—the perspective of God's Word. Visit us at ucg.org/beyond-today/daily!





What Is the Time of the End?

It seems like every time we turn on our TVs, open a newspaper or follow the trends on social media, there's bad news. How long can it last? Are we in the time of the end? *by Beyond Today host Steve Myers*

Who could forget the devastating images from the typhoon that hit the Philippines in 2013, or the 2011 tsunami that seemed to come close to causing a nuclear meltdown in Japan? What about the stunning destruction from hurricane Katrina in New Orleans?

Bad news isn't limited to natural disasters. So many people lost so much in the 2008 financial crisis. In fact, the ripples of that event are still felt in continuing economic woes around the world.

Then there's bloodshed. Fighting in the Middle East, tensions with Russia and Ukraine, North Korea's threats, ethnic cleansing in Africa and India and Burma, race riots in the United States—and the list goes on.

What about the constant fear of diseases becoming pandemic? Ebola, AIDS, malaria, the flu, even measles is becoming a problem.

What does it all mean? Some say these things point to the end of the world. What does the Bible really say about it?

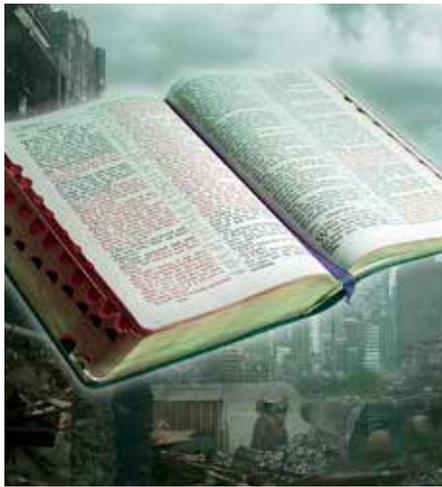
The end of the world?

Will the world really end? If so, how? Will it be by natural disasters, nuclear war, disease epidemics or some other devastating factor? The only source that will give you the facts about what people call “the end” is the Word of God—the Bible. What does the Bible say about this crucial and disturbing question?

Jesus promised He would return to the earth. He told us: “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself” (John 14:2-3).

His disciples earlier asked Him, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3, King James Version).

Religious people aren't the only ones



The Bible does prophesy the end of the world as we know it—but not in the way you might think.

asking these questions. Many others express concern about the possibility of the end of the world. Politicians, educators, even scientists, foresee potential world destruction from a number of causes—whether global pollution, killer diseases, overpopulation, a collision with a comet or asteroid or weapons of mass destruction. Experts share the concern that we could see the end of civilization as we know it.

No wonder we live in an age of anxiety—wherein so little seems certain. For many of the world's citizens, every single day is an existential crisis. Millions upon millions go to bed every night not knowing what the next day will hold. Will they have food to eat and water to drink? Will the area they live in erupt in violence and bloodshed?

Even if you live in a prosperous and peaceful nation, society is never more than a few disasters away from total meltdown.

Here's truth to rely on: You don't have to live in uncertainty and fear, with some vague sense of the end of the world. You can discover that the Bible details specifics about what's called “the time of the end.” And yes, it does prophesy the end of the world as we know it—but not in the way you might think. There is more to the story, and God wants you to know that there is hope.

End of an age, not the world

When Jesus' disciples asked Him about “the end of the world,” they weren't talking about the “world” in the sense of our physical planet, the earth. The Greek word used here, *aionos*, from which the English *aeon* or *eon* is derived, literally means an age, an epoch, or an era of time. Many Bible versions render the word as “age.” So Jesus wasn't talking about our physical planet being totally destroyed. He was specifically

talking about the time of man's wayward self-rule. This is what will come to an end.

The apostle Paul called the present era that began with Adam and Eve's sin “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). For “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19), so that Satan is effectively “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The age “which is to come” (Ephesians 1:21) begins with Christ's return to establish His Kingdom on the earth.

Scripture spells out that our present age—of civilization and society as we know it today—will terminate in unimaginable destruction and violence that will climax at the return of Christ. In the New Testament alone, more than 300 verses refer to these events.

Paul and the other apostles understood that at the end of this age, man's corrupt civilization will be swept away, and a new



era will then dawn. Can we know the signs that will lead up to the time of the end of this age? What are those signs that will signal the end of man's rule under Satan's influence and that terrible time of trouble?

Jesus responded to His disciples' questions by giving several warning signs.

Signs of the end of the age

Jesus mentioned various signs in His famous Olivet prophecy, recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

For instance, He talked about famine (Matthew 24:7). There will be an extreme scarcity of food. This could be caused by weather—such as drought or unusual temperatures that destroy crops. It could even come from government corruption. Regardless of the cause, Christ foretold that many people will be starving to death.

Next, He mentioned pestilence (verse 7), referring to deadly epidemics of disease. It's very possible that we'll see widespread outbreaks of terrible killer illnesses like Ebola, smallpox, AIDS and pandemic flu.

Jesus also mentioned earthquakes (verse 7). We've already seen the destruction that earthquakes can cause when they hit heavily populated areas. Japan and Haiti are some recent, extreme examples. Such will become more and more frequent and deadlier as the end approaches.

Our health and our safety will be threatened due to these increasingly disruptive events that will occur. But that's not all.

Our lives will become more and more chaotic as we experience what Jesus foretold: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (verse 6).

Just look around today. So much of the world is already involved in conflict in one way or another. This sets the stage for a more destructive and difficult time when "nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" on a massive scale (verse 7).

With mounting civil war and unrest, it's not too hard to imagine increasing campaigns of ethnic cleansing as opposing tribes and religions fight for dominance. Nations will fight for sovereignty—and not just for power, but over natural resources and strategic locations.

The development of high-tech weapons of mass destruction that have the ability to annihilate the human race is a sure sign of the end of the age. Jesus taught about this destructive potential being a sign of the end in saying, "If that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive" (verse 22, Revised English Bible).

False prophets and false christs

All of these things will put our physical lives in danger, and yet Jesus warned about another serious threat—a threat to your spiritual life.

He tells us that many deceivers will come claiming to represent Him (Mark 13:6) and

that "false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (verse 22).

Prophecy shows that these counterfeits are out to deceive everyone they can. In fact, there will be a marked rise in false teachings and widespread heresy and sacrilege. Have you wondered if it's already begun? Would you recognize it?

Just imagine—there will be so many false religious doctrines and false religious teachers that true believers will experience the persecution Jesus warned about. He says: "Watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them" (Mark 13:9).

No doubt, these are sobering times.

The good news is that God gives us this warning for a reason. He wants us to understand what's coming, and He wants to help us through it and give us hope. There's a better time coming, not just for those who hear this message today but for all people.

An age of lawlessness

We live in an age of awesome scientific and technological advancements that have brought mankind so much good, but also the ability to extinguish human life.

World conditions point to the fact that we are heading into difficult times. Jesus taught that the troubles and evils will not be caused by only external events. It won't just

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be wars and natural disasters and diseases.

He prophesied about a very specific kind of people during this time. These attitudes and behaviors of people are one of the signs of the end time. Christ said, "Because of people breaking the laws and sin being everywhere, the love in the hearts of many people will become cold" (Matthew 24:12, New Life Version).

Is this evident today? Think about that for a moment. These people are said to be lawless. They don't want to follow the laws of man, let alone the laws of God. Respect for the law fades, and the protection and safety that should come from the law will vanish.

Doesn't that way of thinking start in the home? Have children become increasingly disobedient to parents and authority? Do you think that the family unit, the basic building block of society, has deteriorated? Is it fair to say that as the family unit breaks down even further, society will continue to negatively reflect that breakdown? That's what your Bible forewarns!

People will be greedy and selfish, loving things and money more than people. We're already there. Look at bargain-hunting at pre-Christmas sales. We're no longer surprised by trappings, shootings, stabbings and brawls over mere electronics or the latest kid's doll.

The Bible reveals that we'll see more looting and stealing and people hurting others to get what they want. And society rubs off on all of us to varying degrees. We watch the news reports and we shake our heads. But are we sure that we're not part of the problem?

An unloving world

We're given a thorough listing of the characteristics of people of the end time in 2 Timothy 3: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy . . ." (verses 1-2), and the list goes on.

Think about how pride leads to so many problems. People are less likely to apologize. They'll be more likely to antagonize and provoke others and take control to prove themselves superior.

Hasn't this already begun?

The list of end-time attitudes continues: ". . . unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good . . ." (verse 3). So people become cruel and vicious towards each other. Ethnic rivalries flare, racial tensions ignite and people lose a sense of empathy for those around them.

With no self-control, people act out their

callous impulses without regard for the lives and well-being of others. They turn on each other to save themselves, to serve their own needs, out of greediness, or perhaps out of hatred even for those closest to them.

Society spirals further out of control as people are no longer loyal and become traitorous, not just against their country but against their friends and family.

Bible prophecy says that the combination of world events and the character of people living at the end time would be like a horror movie coming to life. The admonition the apostle Peter gave in his own day applies even more so now: "Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40).

A time to change

The prophecies of the end time aren't given just to frighten you. God doesn't want us to live in terror. He warns us of what's to come for a specific purpose.

He warns us so we won't be caught off guard. Now you may think, "But how *could* we be caught off guard? Aren't these signs immense and obvious?"

We have to realize that many people will dispute even the *possibility* of the end of the age. You've heard the skeptics—so many today saying: "We've always had earthquakes and war and disease—these things don't point to the end of anything."

Yet God inspired Peter to write that "in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation'" (2 Peter 3:3-4, New International Version).

Even though the signs are evident and unmistakable, there are those who will doubt. Many will be caught off guard. Jesus said, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly" (Luke 21:34).

You see, God loves us, and He warns us so we can seek to change our lives now! If you understand what's coming, the only wise action is to turn to God in repentance and start obeying Him. We're told that God "now . . . commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed [Jesus Christ]" (Acts 17:30-31, NIV).

It is not a question of whether or not man's corrupt civilization will end. God's Word says it will. Our biggest concern shouldn't be *when* it will end. Instead, our

main focus should be to seek God and be prepared spiritually *now* for the times that are coming: "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36, New American Standard Bible).

Prepare by seeking God now

Now is the time to draw close to God. Now is the time to change. Now is the time to have a relationship with Him. He wants us to seek Him in heartfelt repentance and faith, leading to baptism and receiving His Holy Spirit (see our free study guide *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* to learn more).

Ultimately, Bible prophecy tells us the dreadful time of the end is the precursor to the most spectacular event that will happen on earth—the return of Jesus Christ!

We can look forward to that awesome event and remain faithfully obedient while waiting for it. Jesus gave us a promise: "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). So we shouldn't live in terror. Yes, the end time is a period of unprecedented world trouble. But it's also the threshold of God's Kingdom!

We must spiritually prepare for the time of Christ's return, regardless of when it comes: "So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober . . . For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:6-9, NASB).

Take comfort in God's promises and the knowledge that He's made available about the end time. The good news is that it's not too late to change. Begin *today* by letting God lead you to deeper understanding through His Holy Bible. Dedicate yourself to getting to know God even better and learning His ways thoroughly.

If we prepare ourselves spiritually, this can

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Wanted: Leaders to Lead Well!

People often equate a leader with good leadership. While history is filled with poor leadership, there are positive examples to learn from—among them Abraham Lincoln and the greatest leader of all time. *by Jerold Aust*

Stanford University lecturer and best-selling author Jim Collins illustrated the difference between a leader and leadership in these terms: “If I put a gun to your head, I can get you to do things you might not otherwise do, but I’ve not practiced leadership; I’ve exercised power. *True leadership only exists if people follow when they have the freedom not to.* If people follow you because they have no choice, then you

are not leading” (*Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, 2005, p. 13, emphasis added throughout). People often assume that if someone presents himself as a leader, he is. The stock market and broader history suggest otherwise. Fluctuation in the value of a company’s stock may reflect the company leader’s perceived leadership qualities. Often, a stock goes up or down depending on whether the company leader’s competence is perceived as credible. The panorama of human history displays

a severe shortage of credible leaders—yet there have been a few. In the 20th century, British Prime Ministers Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher come to mind. U.S. Presidents Ronald Reagan, John Kennedy, Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt, or even much earlier Presidents Abraham Lincoln and George Washington are considered good to great leaders by many. From the beginning of time, people have cried out for good leadership! We don’t just



People have long cried out for good leadership. Let’s learn from past leaders, both good and bad, and consider the world’s great need for the right kind of leadership.

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The panorama of human history displays

want it, we need it. Let’s learn from past leaders, both good and bad, and consider the world’s great need for the right kind of leadership.

Abuse of power and tyranny

History is chock full of bad leaders—many infamous. The more narcissistic, incompetent and tyrannical leaders are, the more they play on the gullibility of the human condition. Naiveté has two sides—sweet and bitter. People want to believe the best in others, whether they’re good or secretly evil.

In 2014, economist Jonathan Gruber, architect of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), blatantly characterized the American voter as stupid. He was immediately censured by the same people he insulted, many appalled that a so-called public servant viewed the public with such contempt.

In both secular and biblical histories, entire societies have acquiesced to such leaders throughout time for a number of reasons. These leaders eventually reveal themselves as either tyrants or simply incompetent and lazy. In the worse cases, they may be all three at once.

Adolf Hitler was a hypnotic leader who duped a great many in the German nation into thinking they were the super race. Many millions died.

Joseph Stalin controlled the entire Soviet Union through brutal intimidation and spreading fear. Many more millions died.

King Herod of Judea in the first century B.C. had Jewish baby boys murdered in an attempt to kill the Christ child, who he thought might replace him as king (Matthew 2:16). He was consumed by ambition and jealousy.

Such wicked and oppressive rule, in flagrant violation of God’s laws, brings terrible consequences to those who must suffer under it—in stark contrast to rule by those following godly principles. As Proverbs 29:2 states, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan.”

Great need for good leaders

All the above serves as prologue to a hypothetical “wanted” poster—similar to the most-wanted criminal posters in U.S. post offices, but this one crying for and demanding, “Wanted: Leaders to lead well!”

Many leaders take advantage of their power because they can. They sell the people the “sizzle” without the steak. They rely on form rather than substance, and smoke and mirrors instead of transparency. Motivated by selfishness, their legacy is disgraceful.

With Christians, the only legacy God permits is that we follow Jesus Christ in everything (Philippians 2:10-11). Good leadership follows in the footsteps of Christ’s perfect legacy.

Photos: Wikimedia



This involves a sense of duty and, in the face of this important responsibility, humility. It's not about promoting oneself as a great leader.

As Collins writes: "No matter how much you have achieved, you will always be merely good relative to what you can become. Greatness is an inherently dynamic process, not an end point. The moment you think of yourself as great, your slide toward mediocrity will have already begun" (p. 9).

Honest Abe: a good leader

President Abraham Lincoln led the United States of America through the most difficult of times, the American Civil War. Lincoln didn't want the nation to divide; he wanted to preserve the Union.

Many withstood him, and some tried to undermine him—even within his own government. History shows that he handled the diversities of opinions and emotional outbursts by employing good leadership principles.

For instance, he gave recognition and respect to those who earned it and took the responsibility for failures on himself. That's transformational leadership. That's a testament to Lincoln's *character*.

The very first and most important attribute of good leadership is good *character*. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld highlighted character in leadership: "The strength that matters most is not the strength of arms, but the strength of character; character expressed in service to something larger than ourselves" (quoted by Jeffrey Krames, *The Rumsfeld Way*, 2002, p. 19).

Lincoln was certainly an example of that. A good friend of his once pressed him to remove General-in-Chief Henry Halleck. The president focused on the responsibility of his office, responding: "I am compelled to take a more impartial and unprejudiced view of things. Without claiming to be your superior, which I do not, my position enables me to understand my duty in all these matters better than you possibly can, and I hope you do not doubt my integrity" (quoted by Donald Phillips, *Lincoln on Leadership*, p. 51). Lincoln knew the importance of integrity in a leader's character.

Although Abraham Lincoln was a great U.S. president, he was a mediocre businessman. His honesty exceeded his business acumen. Long before he became president, Lincoln and William Berry opened a general store in New Salem, Illinois. What

Lincoln didn't know was that his partner was a heavy drinker. When Berry died in 1835, Lincoln was left with a very large debt—of which he paid back every penny.

Later his presidential supporters remembered his honesty and labeled him with the moniker "Honest Abe," which helped promote him in his bid for the presidency. Lincoln believed in doing the right thing. He counseled, "Never add the weight of your character to a charge against a person without knowing it to be true" (p. 54).

Lincoln also believed in sharing with others. When he reached the top of his profession, he turned and reached down for the person behind him.

Good leadership demands good character.

Involvement and respect

Leaders should always *show genuine respect for those they lead and connect and interact with them*. When President Lincoln realized he must replace General Fremont with General Hunter, he was open with both men.

Lincoln's presidential supporters remembered his honesty and labeled him with the moniker "Honest Abe."

He wrote to General Hunter on the topic of respecting and being involved with his troops: "General Fremont is losing the confidence of men near him, whose support any man in his position must have to be successful. His cardinal mistake is that he isolates himself, and allows nobody to see him; and by which he does not know what is going on in the very matter he is dealing with" (quoted by Phillips, p. 14).

More than 120 years later, Tom Peters and Robert Waterman wrote a best-selling book titled *In Search of Excellence*. Lincoln, in 1860, already practiced what these authors "discovered" in 1982. Peters and Waterman introduced a revolutionary approach to modern leadership called MBWA or Managing By Wandering Around, which included "roving leadership," "being in touch," or "getting out of the tower" (Phillips, p. 14).

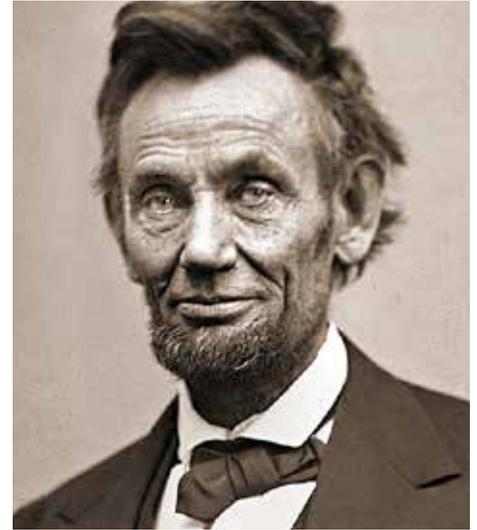
Abraham Lincoln was a master of involvement with and showing respect for his troops. He realized that *they were the ones who would complete the job*.

Leading by following

Lincoln's leadership even included following the lead of others in various matters,

a seemingly counterintuitive action that inferior leaders ignore or dismiss.

It might seem superficially contradictory, but it's a simple truth that *good leaders follow others' lead*. Abraham Lincoln was quick to accept responsibility when major battles were lost but quick to publicly commend his generals who won their battles—



acknowledging that he had gone along with their decisions.

In a note to General Sherman after he captured Savannah, Lincoln wrote: "Now, the undertaking being a success, the honor is all yours; for I believe none of us went farther than to acquiesce . . . But what next? I suppose it will be safer if I leave General Grant and yourself to decide" (quoted by Phillips, p. 99).

Transformational leadership

The type of leadership exemplified by President Lincoln is both transactional and transformational.

James MacGregor Burns (1918-2014) was a distinguished figure in the study of leadership, considered by communication scholars as the best in the business. He believed in leaders interacting with those they lead. Through the relationship formed, followers can be transformed into good leaders.

Burns discovered that good leadership is lacking in modern societies because it is generally misunderstood. As he wrote:

"Many acts heralded or bemoaned as instances of leadership—acts of oratory, manipulation, sheer self-advancement, brute coercion—are not such. Much of

what commonly passes as leadership—conspicuous position-taking without followers or follow-through, posturing on various public stages, manipulation without general purpose, authoritarianism—is no more leadership than the behavior of small boys marching in front of a parade, who continue to strut along Main Street after the procession has turned down a side street toward the fairgrounds” (*Leadership*, 1978, p. 427).

Burns defines good leadership in these terms: “Leadership is leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations” (*ibid.*, p. 19).

This pretty well sums up Burns’ transactional and transformational leadership model. The transactional model of good leadership is exhibited by leaders who focus on the beliefs, needs and values of their followers. The world has witnessed a few good leaders who’ve exemplified this model.

Burns’ research into great leadership describes what Abraham Lincoln practiced. Lincoln’s character came from his devotion to the Bible. Yet there’s another example of good leadership that far surpasses Lincoln’s.

The greatest leader ever

Effective leaders follow rules of effective leadership; truly *great* leaders follow the holy leadership laws of Almighty God. God is the Author of great leadership, and He set His Son, Jesus Christ, as the ultimate standard for superior leadership on the earth.

Before Jesus lived His life as a human being, the world had no fleshly example of perfect and divine leadership. Men such as Noah, Abraham and Moses, and women such as Sarah, Ruth and Deborah showed good leadership based on living God’s laws. Still they could not perfectly keep the laws of God. That was accomplished by

Christ. His is the ultimate model for those who would pursue great leadership.

In their book *The Leadership Lessons of Jesus*, authors Bob Briner and Ray Pritchard point out characteristics of Jesus’ superior leadership that we should strive to attain. Let’s note a few.

- “*Leaders take care of their people.* A leader takes care of his followers and those important to his followers. Those you are leading can only be effective when their needs are met. An effective leader understands this and is sensitive to it. Serve your followers and their families” (1997, p. 14).

- “In the gospel of Mark we see where Jesus went personally to a woman who was ill, took her by the hand, and raised her up (Mark 1:31). He didn’t pass this need [to help her] on to others nor did he require that others bring the woman to him. Jesus’ model of superior leadership teaches that people need and deserve personal attention. He never shirked this responsibility and He never will” (p. 14).

- “*Leadership requires discipline.* A leader is disciplined. If you expect discipline among your followers and lack it in your own life, your followers will first lose respect for you and then grow to resent you” (p. 16). Jesus disciplined Himself every minute of His life on earth. He set aside time for solitude and private and personal prayer. Self-discipline is more difficult in an affluent world with its many distractions. No matter the age, great leaders discipline themselves and sacrifice their personal desires for the benefit of humankind.

- “*The Servant Leader* is one who dedicates his life to serve others first. ‘If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all (Mark 9:35)’” (p. 182).

“The concept of the servant/leader is difficult for many to grasp today . . . Literature extolling Atilla the Hun, telling us ‘you don’t get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate,’ and generally teaching a me-first, in-your-face, slash-and-burn leadership style is the norm” (p. 183).

This is not the type of service-driven leadership Jesus modeled and taught His disciples to emulate. A Christlike leader must put the *needs of others* ahead of his own needs or desires. This is the essence of great leadership, and it’s only possible by following the example of Jesus Christ.

Called to service and leadership

Are you willing to make the sacrifices necessary to become a great leader? Jesus did. Will you? God provides to human beings who submit to Him the spiritual qualities to progress from being good followers to good leaders (see Proverbs 15:33). Good leaders are always good followers.

God expects Christians to become great leaders who can lead others to everlasting success in the context of free choice. Recall the assessment of true leadership given by Jim Collins at the outset: “True leadership only exists if people follow when they have the freedom not to” (p. 13). God Almighty allows people free choice whether to follow His lead (Deuteronomy 30:15).

Followers of Christ learn to lead as He leads: “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. *Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave.* For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28, New Living Translation).

Today, in an increasingly leaderless world, the cry goes out for the right kind of leaders! Thankfully, God promises that superior leadership will come to the whole world through a returning Jesus Christ, who will rule in honesty and justice, with fairness and equity for all (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-5). He wants us to then reign in righteousness with Him. That requires preparing *now*—to be leaders who will lead well! **GN**

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Bandaging Spiritual Wounds: The Missing Component

While caring properly for physical wounds is imperative, treating spiritual injuries also requires critical attention. Discover God's plan to heal people spiritually by providing them with a vital missing divine component. *by John LaBissoniere*

The year was 1920, and young newlyweds Earle and Josephine Dickson were enjoying their life together. However, they had one small problem. Josephine hadn't yet mastered her many new cooking and housekeeping duties, so she burned or cut her fingers while preparing meals.

Although they carefully wrapped these wounds using cotton balls and gauze, the method was cumbersome and inconvenient. Earle, who was employed at a surgical-dressing manufacturer, began thinking that there must be a better way to care for Josephine's minor injuries.

So he cut small squares of gauze, covered them in a thin fabric known as crinoline and placed them on strips of adhesive tape. The little bandage squares worked quickly and easily on cuts and scrapes. Soon thereafter Earle shared the invention with his employer, who considered it innovative and highly practical.

What began as a simple idea in the home of newlyweds soon became Band-Aid® Brand Adhesive Bandages, the world's first self-adhesive dressings for small wounds, produced by the Johnson & Johnson Company.

Ancient and modern wound care

Today self-adhesive bandages are a staple in medicine cabinets and first-aid kits. What's more, they hold an important place in the legacy of dressing and medicating injuries. An article titled "The History of Wound Care" relates:

"One of the oldest medical manuscripts known to man is a clay tablet that dates back to 2200 BC. This tablet describes, perhaps for the first time, the 'three healing

gestures'—washing the wounds, making the plasters and bandaging the wound" (*The Journal of the American College of Wound Care Specialists*, April 19, 2012).

In ancient times plasters, which refers to medicated wound dressings, included ingredients such as oil, honey, vinegar and wine, which offered some protection from infec-



tion. The famous Bible story of the Good Samaritan describes how he used oil and wine to treat and bandage the wounds of a man who had been attacked, robbed and left for dead (Luke 10:34).

Beyond those early methods, many of the greatest advances in injury care began taking place in the 20th century. Today there are more than 5,000 wound-care products including semipermeable films, spray-on and foam dressings, advanced honey dressings and many others.

Treating physical injuries properly is criti-

cal in aiding the body's natural healing processes. However, it's imperative to address another aspect of wound care, which centers on often unrecognized *spiritual* injuries.

Isaiah 1:6 declares: "From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment." God through Isaiah was speaking figuratively of the dreadful *spiritual* condition of the people of Israel. Yet this scripture applies equally to all former and current human societies.

The deficient human condition

Men and women the world over are tormented by severe spiritual wounds that need bandaging and healing (Proverbs 17:22). People afflict one another through acts of selfishness, violence and abuse, which ignite anguish, heartache and despair. But why does this appalling circumstance exist? At its core is the proclivity of people to decide for themselves what is right and wrong—under Satan the devil's deceptive, malicious influence (Proverbs 14:12; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

The Bible reveals that God gives every person the "spirit in man," which imparts to the mind everything that facilitates human knowledge, creativity and achievement (1 Corinthians 2:11-12). Yet even with this spirit, the human mind is *limited and incomplete* (Romans 8:7). It's incapable of *godly* love or *higher* spiritual comprehension (1 Corinthians 2:10).

Although people have a narrow, often superficial ability to believe in and appreciate God, they of themselves are *incapable* of comprehending His breathtaking purpose in creating humankind (Psalm 8:5-6). Also, while they can obey God's commandments at least in the outward letter of the law—for example, not stealing, lying or murdering—

they are unable to truly obey the weighty spiritual *intent* of the commandments (1 Corinthians 2:14; Isaiah 55:8-9).

This deficient human condition results in most people having little or no interest in spiritual matters (Romans 3:11; Ephesians 4:17-18). It also prompts actions motivated primarily by selfishness, deceit and arrogance, generating wretched emotional and spiritual wounds (Jeremiah 17:9; Galatians 5:19-21).

The result of this egregious situation is portrayed in a passage in which people figuratively grasp what is happening to them: “Therefore justice is far from us, nor does righteousness overtake us; we look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness” (Isaiah 59:9).

Writing bitter lessons of failure

But why has God permitted this? The answer is summarized in Psalm 127:1: “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” This means that *nothing* spiritually durable can be constructed unless the Creator is involved.

In creating human life, God gave people freedom to govern themselves. Throughout history they have designed, built and operated their own political entities, economic systems and religions. But all such structures have failed. Why? Because God was excluded from their plans or labors (Proverbs 14:12). The result is the suffering, tyranny, wickedness and poverty that have afflicted humanity since the Garden of Eden.

In His perfect wisdom our Maker has permitted people to *write* these tragic, bitter lessons of disaster and failure. He wants them to come to the *unmistakable conclusion* that without Him, their *own* way of living results in painful spiritual wounds and death (Jeremiah 10:23). He has therefore activated a plan to show them how they can avoid those consequences through honoring Him and obeying His living laws (Matthew 22:37; 19:17).

Many traditional Christians believe, however, that the commandments God gave the Israelites in His covenant with them on Mt. Sinai were flawed and that Jesus Christ came to abolish them. But Jesus said exactly the opposite (Matthew 5:17).

Although there was a flaw in that covenant it was *not* with the commandments. “But God found fault *with the people* and said: ‘The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah’” (Hebrews 8:8, New International Version, emphasis added).

The trouble was with the Israelites’ *hearts*

and *minds*—with *their thinking and attitude* (Numbers 15:39). They *could* have obeyed, at least in the letter of the law, but they didn’t have a *heart* to do so (2 Corinthians 3:14-16). The same condition afflicts people today.

The missing component revealed

Is there a solution to this dilemma? Yes! God’s purpose and plan is to provide all human beings with a *critical missing spiritual component* that will make them complete (Romans 8:14). What is this divine component? It is the *essence* of God’s own mind, power, righteousness and holiness, described in Scripture as the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:11).

Joining the human spirit with God’s Spirit can empower a person to replace damaging thoughts and attitudes with a strong, sincere willingness to love and obey God and care genuinely for others (Romans 8:5-8; 2 Peter 1:4). In giving people His Holy Spirit, God begins the process of healing their spiritual wounds (Psalm 147:3).

But He has not *yet* activated all elements of His plan! God is *not* bandaging all spiritual wounds or offering His Holy Spirit to most people *at this time* (Romans 11:8). He is allowing the vast majority to *remain* spiritually blind (Romans 11:25).

Jesus Christ made this fact plain when His disciples asked Him why He used parables to teach the people. He replied that only *they*—His true followers—were permitted to know the “secrets of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13:11, NIV), but the *others* were not (verse 13).

Why didn’t Jesus heal the people’s minds and hearts immediately? Wouldn’t it have been good for their spiritual wounds to be cleansed and bandaged? The answer is that *they were not yet ready* for God to call them (Matthew 13:14-15). Was God being unfair? No, because He has a marvelous plan to *eventually* give every person *who has ever lived or will live* the opportunity to know Him and His way of life (Romans 9:14-15; 2 Peter 3:9).

Everyone will be given an opportunity

Every person who has died without having had access to God’s Spirit will be resurrected as a *physical* human being and offered that divine gift (Hebrews 8:10). “Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live” (Ezekiel 37:13-14). In God’s blueprint for spiritual healing and salvation *no one* will be left behind except the incorrigibly

wicked who reject the offer of salvation.

But for now, He is calling only a *few* people to escape the darkness of this world (John 12:46; 1 Corinthians 1:26-27). Upon repentance, baptism and the forgiveness of their sins, God gives them His Holy Spirit. This begins the process of healing *their* spiritual wounds so they can pursue a fresh, new life of service to God and fellow man right now and in His coming Kingdom (Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 5:10).

Prior to conversion, the people God calls into His Church have suffered the consequences of living in this world of sin. Feeling the pain of their spiritual injuries, they’ve needed bandaging and healing (Hebrews 12:12).

But just as it takes time to heal physical wounds, the same is true for spiritual injuries, since the penalties of sin can sometimes have long-term effects. Divine healing of a Christian’s past sinful ways requires that he or she exercise deep faith and patience while building a steadfast relationship with God through Jesus Christ (Revelation 14:12; Jude 1:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Spiritual darkness will end forever

Throughout their lives Christians must bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). While fulfilling this responsibility, their *own* pain subsides as they are spiritually renewed. As this occurs they look forward with eager anticipation to the awesome future period when *all other people* will have *their* spiritual wounds soothed, bandaged and healed beginning at Jesus’ second coming (Ezekiel 34:16; Malachi 4:2).

They will all be offered full, divine knowledge of God and His ways. God says: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

When that day arrives, the spiritual darkness that has enslaved humanity throughout history will finally come to an end (Isaiah 29:18). All people will be offered the vital missing component of God’s Holy Spirit so their spiritual wounds can be bandaged and healed completely.

But for now, God is calling only a few. Indeed, He may be inviting *you* to be part of His Church. Will you answer His call so He can begin bandaging and healing *your* spiritual wounds? He awaits your answer! **GN**



Follow Me

“Abide in My Word”

Is our 24/7 world crowding out your time in the Bible? Your life depends on putting first things first! *by Robin Webber*

A young man asked an old minister to baptize him. “Sure, son,” the minister replied. “Follow me down to the river.” Wading in together, the minister asked, “Are you ready?” The young man said, “Absolutely!” Suddenly, the minister thrust him under the water and held him there. He was finally pulled up. “What was that about?” asked the exasperated young man. “That’s your first lesson,” responded the minister. “When you want to experience God as much as you want to breathe, it’s only then that I can be your guide. Come back then, and we’ll have another lesson.”

Desiring to truly experience God is more than a cute line in a story, of course. It’s something we face every day. To experience God we have to spend time, lots of time, with His personal self-disclosure to us—the Bible, the Word of God. And we will only spend that time when we realize how precious it truly is—valuing it as what our very life depends on!

Jesus made this connection plain, stating, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed” (John 8:31). The word translated “abide” here means to remain, continue or dwell. So Jesus describes His followers as those who *live* in His Word. This is vital to responding to Jesus’ admonition, “Follow Me.” Increasingly sucked into a culture of 24/7 distraction, we must strive to stay connected with God.

Understanding the challenge today

Let’s be honest about the pressures of society and, yes, our addictions to its siren’s call. Today’s culture is incredibly demanding as knowledge expands and attention spans shrink. Today, we’re encountering more people knocking daily on the doors of our mind than our forefathers ever experienced. It’s doing something to us. It’s creating a dependency culture that permeates our existence.

The author of a recent book provides this

illustration: “Several years ago I was in an intense meeting requiring no interruption. As we were getting started the leader asked us all to turn off our mobile phones. We all complied except for one individual. She began to gently protest that she needed the phone on but would keep it on vibrate. An interesting power struggle ensued.

“As we all watched with growing interest, the leader insisted that she turn it off. ‘You’ve got to be kidding me!’ she pleaded, her eyes nervous and searching. ‘I always have it on; please, just let me put it on

an incredible opposite correlation to our need to create a 24/7 connection with God that’s never broken—never turned off! This connection with God is always essential, no matter what room of life we’re in at the moment. What God desires from us is trading one 24/7 existence for another!

Understanding the challenge today

We can’t truly experience God without remaining connected to His Word. And we won’t remain connected without keeping in mind that our life depends on it. This will bring the deep yearning expressed in Psalm 42:1-2: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” Think of the semi-arid climate of the Mid-



Today’s culture is incredibly demanding as knowledge expands and attention spans shrink.

vibrate.’ The passion and panic in her voice was startling. You would have thought he had asked her to disown her firstborn . . . She was completely flustered at the thought of being unconnected” (Jim Mindling, *Learn to Breathe*, 2013, p. 80).

Again, let’s be real: Setting and maintaining quality time to breathe in of God’s Word is a struggle in a world that never stops coming at us, demanding our time. And yet—to experience God like the old minister told the young man—we must!

The current 24/7 cultural climate provides

dle East where this was written. Water is everything! It’s life! So are the words of the Bible. Jesus said in John 6:63, “The words I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life.”

We know this intellectually, and we may have every good intention of connecting with God in such a 24/7 manner, but we keep putting it off until it’s convenient. The simple truth, though, is that it’s never humanly convenient. Knowing something is needed and actually doing what’s needed are two different worlds with two different outcomes. The Bible never opened might as

well be the Bible discarded, for the intimacy God wants with you can't begin either way.

You may be familiar with Christ's messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation 2 and 3. They offer approval in some regards but register concern in others, then prompting toward what God desires.

Consider whether Jesus might say something like this to Christians today: *“To the elect of God in Christ in the 21st century: These things says He who is holy: I know your works. You say you know Me, even as the world around you increasingly denies Me. Nevertheless, I have this against you: You say you love Me but avoid drinking in My words of life, as if you have life within yourself and have no need of further intimacy with Me. Even so, open up your hearts to My words, and I will be your God, and you will be My people.”*

If the shoe fits, how do we begin to heed Christ's call of “Follow Me” and trade our current 24/7 world for His? Jesus pointed to the how in stating, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher”

Let's be frank. You all make time for what you value most. If it's important to you, you'll find time to do it.

(Luke 6:40). Truly following Christ means becoming like Him. So how do we do that?

Making Scripture your first language

The Gospels show that Scripture was Jesus' “first language,” as He constantly quoted or alluded to it. When He taught or conversed with people, it saturated His existence. He rarely faced a challenge in which He didn't answer with Scripture.

How often did He say things like “It is written” or “Haven't you read the Scripture”? (See Matthew 4:4-10; 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31; Mark 12:10, 26.) This was His life. He emphatically tells us, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). This was itself a quote from Deuteronomy 8:3. (And compare Job 23:12: “I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”)

The words of Jesus' “first language” were His last words as a human being when He stated on Golgotha, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46; see Psalm 31:5).

We truly have a unique challenge in finding time to imbibe of God's words due to the velocity of the world around us. The pace in biblical times was much slower. Yet there

were still distractions. Jesus warned of the cares of this world choking out God's Word (Matthew 13:22).

And His prescription was the same then as now—slow down and put first things first: “Don't worry about your life . . . Look at the birds . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow . . . How God clothes the grass of the field . . . Therefore do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ . . . or ‘What shall we wear?’ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:25-33).

Abiding in the vine

Jesus spoke of the intimate, 24/7-connected relationship God seeks with us by comparison with a grapevine. He said in John 15:1-8 that if grapes are to be produced by any given branch, that branch must be directly connected to the life-giving vine. It's a fascinating analogy in which the word *abide* (again, remain or dwell) is used eight times. Any branch that's not fully connected to a vine may produce leaves but not fruit, and it's ultimately pruned and cast away.



Jesus concludes: “If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples” (verses 7-8).

Here Christ colorfully depicts Himself as the life-giving vine into which we must remain plugged (the life-giving Spirit of 1 Corinthians 15:45) so that God, the master harvester, might reap fruit. Can you imagine never recharging your smartphone and expecting ongoing results in mankind's 24/7 world? God's way also follows cause and effect. And He does have expectations of us!

He doesn't desire mere “leafy” Christians, but those who bear fruit to His glory, that our lives might be enriched now.

Staying connected

The element in Christ's vine analogy of remaining in Him as we remain in His words leads us back once more to His previous statement in John 8 with surrounding text: “Then Jesus said to the Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide [continue, dwell, live] in My word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’” (verses 31-32).

Discipleship begins by believing. Believing what? That there's a loving Creator with an awesome plan for your life and all humanity. That He has your best interest at heart and has given you a divine GPS navigator called the Bible to guide you from being “a bag of dust on two legs” to ultimately sharing worthwhile spiritual eternity with Him. This connective device becomes so valuable to you that you rely on it in staying informed and formulating every decision set before you in a new 24/7 existence—one based on the words of life.

The term “disciple” is translated from the Greek word *mathetes*, meaning learner. It entails a progressive existence, ever learning by staying connected to the teachings of the lifeline God has given us unto eternity. When our Bibles remain closed, it's a telltale sign of the death of true discipleship and disregarding the call of “Follow Me.”

But, but, but!

In reading this you may be saying: “That's me. I do desire to be a disciple, but all ‘the buts’ keep getting in the way!” Okay. We've all been there. But why do we allow the urgent to crowd out the important? You say, “I don't have the time.” But the reality is, you don't have time *not to!* Let's be frank. You make time for what you value most. If it's important to you, you'll find time to do it or stop everything and make it happen.

In so doing, watch how God goes to work when you've made the determination to dwell in His Word—somehow expanding time that humanly seems nonexistent. Claim the promise of God that says, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

There's no time like *now* to connect to God and enter His 24/7 world, responding to Christ's invitation of “Follow Me” by abiding in His Word! **GN**

Letters From Our Readers

Comments about the May-June issue

Thank you for the thought-provoking article "The Power of the Holy Spirit." I am a Christian and spend many hours reading the Bible. I love listening to and reading the many educational programs and articles the United Church of God produces. They are a huge help and a considerable comfort to me.

From the Internet

I prayed and asked God to give me strength and wisdom when I am with my other religious friends in my daily life. Your article "The Parable of the Tares: God's Field" was God's answer to my prayer. I thank God for speaking to me through this article.

From the Internet

Regarding your article "Choose the Best Answer," the best answer would be "Choosing to love God as He has chosen to love those who love Him." Your website is wonderful because you have lots of Bible studies available to help people understand the Bible. Thank you!

From the Internet

Thanks for the recent issue on Easter

I just received my copy of your wonderful magazine that focuses on Easter. It explains the truth and has taken away all the confusion I once had. I know other people who I think really need to read your magazine too. They need to believe the truth instead of the lies they have been told.

From the Internet

Thank you for sending me the March-April 2015 issue of *The Good News*. I have told so many people about the story behind Easter. I am amazed that we all have been deceived for so long. One of my Christian friends wants to take the magazine to his homeland to show all his Christian friends in that region.

Reader in Adelaide, South Australia

Thank you for the positive feedback! Always feel free to share your copy of our magazine with your friends, family and acquaintances. You can also share links from our website with them or send a gift copy by contacting the office nearest you in the front of the magazine or clicking on the "Free Subscription" link on our website at www.GNmagazine.org.

Appreciation for literature and *Beyond Today TV* program

Thank you very much for your literature. All of it is deep in the knowledge of God's Word; it is a wonderful way of learning and growing. It has really given me more insight into Christianity and how to practice it. Please keep spreading this knowledge more and more. Thank you for showing me true Christianity and the truth of God's Word.

Reader in Khayelitsha, South Africa

Thank you for sending your booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* I wish I could find the words to let you know how on-target your teaching on this subject is. I think it's great for Christians to keep up with the times and address current concerns. I also think Christians need to

ponder their calling and constantly keep trying to do well. I find it so lovely how you have caught the attention of other Christians in the right way. Thank you wholeheartedly and collectively.

From the Internet

Your publications have been so helpful in directing my Christian friends and relatives to the scriptures that answer so many of their questions. Seeing their excitement in putting the pieces together is exciting for me as well, and strengthens my faith. There is so little I can do physically after surviving life-threatening health incidents, but perhaps God has given me more time to plant a few seeds of knowledge in the hearts of others.

From the Internet

There are not enough words to express my gratitude to God for opening my spiritual eyes to read His true words and for your endless work you're doing for our Lord Jesus Christ and God's Kingdom. May God continue to bless you for blessing me with God's truth and every booklet you have sent me.

Reader in Harrow, England

I seldom miss the *Beyond Today TV* program. God bless you for preaching the truth about God's Word.

Viewer in Saskatchewan, Canada

Legalistic articles?

I moved into a new house two years ago and have been receiving this magazine from the subscription of the previous homeowner. I wish I could say that the publication has been a blessing to my housemates and me. As a young Bible-believing evangelical, I would read your magazine with hope, but would quickly be disappointed after turning the last page.

One theme running deep in your magazine is the concept of legalism (like that of the Pharisees). As a small example, your latest issue's final article attempts to convince readers of the dangers of tattoos. There certainly can be downsides to getting a tattoo on a whim, but in my experience there are many solid Christians who have decided to get tattoos as personal reminders of Christ's work in their lives. There are many more examples of this thread of legalism but for lack of time and printing space, I will leave it to one for today.

Reader in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

The United Church of God, which publishes The Good News, looks to the Bible as its source for every belief, practice and teaching. Our approach is to let the Bible interpret the Bible. Jesus explicitly stated that He did not come to abolish the law (Matthew 5:17). While various physical ordinances such as animal sacrifices are not now required of us, as we are sanctified by the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (see Hebrews 9:26; 10:1-14), we must nevertheless follow the spiritual intent of the law, applying its principles to our lives today. The New Covenant that Jesus instituted involves God writing His law on our hearts (see Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10). What could that mean other than that we are to strive to obey what God told us to do?

As mentioned in the article, there is a specific command against getting tattoos (Leviticus 19:28). So is it legalistic to apply that to our day? Using a tattoo as a Christian witness does not make it acceptable. The Christian world has adopted pagan holidays in supposed promotion of Christ—but God says this is forbidden (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32). God will not accept acts meant to honor Him if they are disobedient (see 1 Samuel 15:22-23).

And as to the point about our teaching being reminiscent of the Pharisees, Jesus criticized their hypocrisy—promoting human tradition over biblical law and seeking the appearance of righteousness (Matthew 15:1-9; 23:1-36). Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed theirs and that if we are to inherit eternal life, we must keep God's commandments (Matthew 5:20; 19:17).

*We offer a free comprehensive book that thoroughly explores this subject. It's called *The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law? Request or download a copy at www.ucg.org/booklets/NC. See especially its sidebar "Confusion Over Legalism: What It Is and Isn't" (scroll down at the above link).**

Looking for a congregation to attend

We are interested in any meetings of your church in this area. We have been members of a Baptist church nearby, but after conducting some Bible studies,

Visit *The Good News* on Facebook

Are you on Facebook? If so, visit our *Good News* magazine page. See what other readers are saying. Find links to interesting articles and Web commentaries. Become a *Good News* magazine Facebook fan!

I really enjoy *The Good News* magazine. It gives a good understanding of the Bible and highlights information not given in mainstream Christian faiths. I highly recommend this magazine to all.

- K.T., *Good News* magazine Facebook fan



www.facebook.com/GoodNewsMagazine



Questions & Answers

Q. Do converted followers of Jesus Christ face judgment?

—Internet reader

A: Hebrews 9:27 states that “it is appointed for all men to die once, but after this the judgment.” And the apostle Paul told Christians, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10; compare Romans 14:10).

Yet the apostle Peter wrote, “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17-18). The “house of God” is God’s Church (1 Timothy 3:15), comprising all true Christians. Thus, a converted Christian’s time of judgment is *now*—in this life—though ultimate judgment will be declared in the future at the resurrection.

As Peter says, we are judged according to how we “obey the gospel of God.” This includes obeying God’s commandments (see Matthew 19:17; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Revelation 22:14). Too many who profess to be Christians or religious do not practice in their daily lives what the Bible teaches.

For example, in a recent Barna survey only about one fourth of those who consider themselves Christians placed faith as their highest priority in life. Barna concluded that there is a significant disconnect between what religious people say and what they do. That must not be so among true followers of Christ.

As Paul wrote, over time one’s work will become clear (1 Corinthians 3:13)—the fiery trials and tests we experience in this physical life revealing the character we have developed (Romans 5:3-4). Everyone’s personal spiritual house is going to be tested and tried by fire right down to the depths of its foundations. So we must take heed how we build our spiritual house. Again, God is judging His Church now.

Yet we must realize that this judgment is an evaluation over the course of our Christian lives and not an immediate sentencing. And Jesus, to whom

all judgment has been committed because He lived as a human being, is sympathetic to our condition and intercedes for us with the Father as our High Priest (John 5:22, 26-27; Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15). He knows that we will not achieve instant perfection in the flesh but must mature and grow throughout our years to become more and more like Him.

While human, we will still sin at times even after conversion, but God is merciful, always willing to forgive us upon repentance and faith in Christ to save us. As the apostle John wrote:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may *not* sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation [or atonement] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 1:8-2:2, emphasis added).

Yet for converted Christians there is no longer atonement if we stop repenting—that is, stop striving to obey God (Hebrews 2:1-3; 6:4-7; 10:26-31, 35-38). So we must continue in the process of conversion with God to make our “call and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). And we can have confidence in God to see us through (Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 13:5). He helps and encourages us, but He also chastens us for disobedience at times to keep us on the right path—for our ultimate good (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Then at the end we can hear words like these from Christ: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21). Our individual rewards in God’s Kingdom at the resurrection will also be determined through God’s judgment of our works in this life (Matthew 16:27)—judgment that, again, is with mercy, for, as God assures us in James 2:13, “mercy triumphs over judgment.”

we now know that most ministers in this country are basically walking away from the teachings of the Bible. They don’t teach things like observing the Holy Days. Your magazine is a true blessing.

Reader in Texas

I thank my Heavenly Father for your website. I have been “hungry and thirsty for righteousness” like it says in Matthew 6:6, looking for understanding about the Kingdom of God, and I was brought to UCG.org. Brothers, all of you at the United Church of God are doing a great job. Your booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom* changed my entire Christian life. I would like to know whether there is a UCG congregation near me. God bless your work of preaching the Kingdom of God. Thank you once again. I am looking forward to understanding better.

Bangalore, India

We’re glad to hear that you are interested in finding other believers to fellowship with near you! Please go to our website ucg.org/congregations/all to find our congregation nearest you with contact information.

Helping support *The Good News*

I enclose a donation towards your very welcome magazine. It is a great comfort to me at my age of nearly 85. I find time is going so fast these days. I wonder if God is speeding up the world for Christ’s second coming. I cannot imagine a more wonderful sight.

Reader in St. Leonards-on-Sea, England

Thank you so much for your wonderful magazine. I have just finished rereading the article “If a Man Dies, Will He Live Again?” from the May-June 2014 issue. I found it so interesting, and it has answered my questions. I enjoy *The Good News* so much and appreciate all you are doing to spread the gospel. Please find enclosed my small donation towards the good work you do. Thank you most sincerely.

Reader in Forrest Beach, Queensland, Australia

I will send donations to you within the next few days. We thank God so much because there is no one I know who gives subscriptions for free, especially in these times of economic crises. You’re truly God’s instrument through information dissemination of God’s plan for salvation. Your magazine is a thousand times better than others. May God shower blessings on your organization!

Reader in Iloilo City, Philippines

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BEYOND TODAY

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

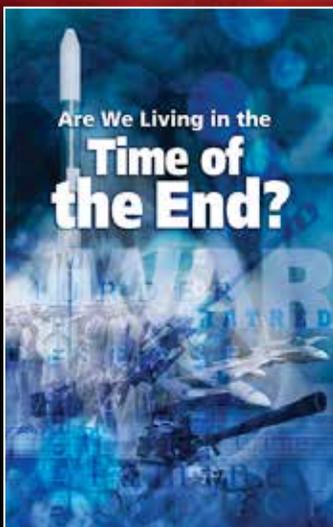
For thousands of years people have been fascinated with predictions of the end of the world. If we look into the inspired writings of the biblical prophets and apostles, we find many prophecies that refer to the time of the end. Should we take them seriously? Are world conditions such that these prophecies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

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

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

Our eye-opening study guide *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* examines exactly what Jesus, His apostles and the biblical prophets really said about the intriguing days they referred to as the time of the end. You need this vital information!

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