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Is the British Union in Danger?

Historically during the last 300 years the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has suffered only relatively minor threats to its unified existence. Even the 1997 decision to create a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly was probably taken with the hope of mollifying and even diminishing nationalistic movements. Now a major threat to the union of England and Scotland is just over the horizon. What does it mean for the English-speaking peoples?

by John Ross Schroeder

Although civilization in the British Isles is thought to reach back well over two millennia, Great Britain itself has only been in existence for 300 years. The historic date is 1707, the year the Parliament of Great Britain met for the first time. Forty-five Scottish MPs (members of Parliament) and 16 peers joined this new Parliament in Westminster.

A United Kingdom had been founded and established. It was the capital event of that era. The benchmark treaty itself was termed “the Act of Union.” The newly formed Great Britain would be ruled by a parliament at Westminster under a single royal crown.

Major points about the merger

But why did the two countries join together? Although the corollary causes are considerable, the root cause was economic. Scotland’s economy was insubstantial at the time.

British historian Norman Davies has studied, researched and written on the merging of the two countries and has summarized his thoughts in



Reuters/David Moir

Scotland’s First Minister Alex Salmond and his deputy Nicola Sturgeon before his first cabinet meeting May 17.

a book titled simply, *The Isles: A History*.

He stated: “The English Bill of Union (1706) was prepared unilaterally as a document which the Scots could either take or leave. It was presented at a moment when the bargaining power of the Scots was weak; and it was accompanied by the promise of a very large sum of money” (2001, pp. 523-524).

Christopher Whately, professor of
(See “BRITISH,” page 3)



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Managing editor: Darris McNeely

Senior editors: Cecil E. Maranville, Melvin Rhodes, Robin Webber

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder

Copy editors: Becky Bennett, Doug Johnson

Layout/design: Mike Bennett, Peter W. Eddington

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Britain in History and Prophecy

This issue of *World News and Prophecy* took on a theme dealing with Great Britain and its world role. Melvin Rhodes was moved to write about Queen Elizabeth's recent trip to America, while John Ross Schroeder wrote about the potential break of Scotland with England and significant changes in what has been a 300-year union.

Most of us lack an appreciation of the Act of Union in 1707 that united England and Scotland into the Kingdom of Great Britain. The politics and policy of a bygone age seem to have little relevance to the 21st century. But as the article brings out, the Act of Union was in part an effort to remove continental Europe's influence from the British Isles. It would prove to be a key step in Britain's rise as a world power.

It followed another event in 1688, the Glorious Revolution, when England confirmed the Protestant succession to the throne by inviting William of Orange to assume the title of king of England. With this, the question of whether England would have a Catholic sovereign was settled. Catholicism's influence upon England was severed.

God had a larger role for the people of Britain to play upon the world stage. People from the British Isles would flow out into other areas of the world, and Britain would spawn a "company of nations" (Genesis 48:19) according to the promises made long ago by God to Abraham and his descendants. The 18th century saw the expansion of British influence to the far-flung regions of the world, setting the stage for the empire to come in the 19th.

Another key event in this story came in 1776 when the colonies along the East Coast of what would become the United States of America rebelled against the policies of King George III and established themselves as a sovereign nation. America would then rise to become that single great nation prophesied alongside its brother (see Genesis 48:19).

The story of these two nations—the fulfillment of a biblical saga about two brothers—is the epochal story of the last 200 years. During this time the English-speaking nations have grown large and influential on the world stage, all according to the timeless promises of God. It has been a time when the rest of the world has benefited from the wealth, culture and overall policies of these two peoples. This, too, is something God prophesied of the descendants of Joseph in the last days (see Genesis 49:22).

You may not like to read words like these. But the facts of history prove the prophecies of God to be fulfilled in the story of these two nations. The last two centuries have been shaped by the English-speaking nations led by Great Britain and the United States. They have been exceptional peoples bound by a common language and a shared destiny even they have not fully understood. What they have done has made them the envy of the world.

A recent book, *A History of the English Speaking Peoples Since 1900* by Andrew Roberts, has caught a lot of attention and comment. Roberts takes the name given to a series done by Winston Churchill. Churchill ended his story at the turn of the 20th century. It is here that Roberts picks up the chronicle and brings it forward to today.

I will admit to mixed feelings reading the work, but there is one unmistakable fact that emerges—America and Great Britain, in spite of their flaws, "are the last, best hope for mankind." When they are finally surpassed by another power, some of those who do not yet understand what their position has meant to the world will mourn them.

Today, Queen Elizabeth's duty to crown and country seems like a throwback to a bygone era. The significance of the possible breakup of the union will be missed by the masses. But you can understand the history behind the history by reading our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. It would be good for Americans to read it during the July Fourth holiday. It opens up a little-known aspect of world history to readers from all nations. You will have a deeper appreciation for the legacy of both countries.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“BRITISH” (Continued from page 1)

Scottish history at Dundee University, has stated: “There was undoubtedly a very strong economic dimension to the Union.”

It should be noted here, however, that Scotland retained its legal system, universities, local town charters and the Kirk (the Presbyterian Church)—and much of its distinctive culture (as it does to this day).

Foreign policy issues were also a major consideration. The Act of Union was also an English ploy to keep France out of the business and influence of the British Isles. According to the late author Magnus Magnusson’s *Scotland: the Story of a Nation*, “The major preoccupations of Queen Anne’s reign were national unity (through the 1707 Act of Union) and the War of the Spanish Succession against France (1702-1707)” (p. 540).

Winston Churchill’s great ancestor, the duke of Marlborough (Lord John Churchill), won major European military battles at various points in 1704, 1706, 1708 and 1709.

The long road to eventual British Union between England and Scotland had been preceded by many ups and downs. Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell actually annexed Scotland, but that came to nothing when the English monarchy was restored. The Scottish Parliament would occasionally pass provocative legislation like the Wine Act, which allowed for the importation of French wines, ignoring the English trade embargo against the French.

Naturally, Louis XIV of France supported Scotland in its disagreements with England and at one point had even hinted at a potential invasion. As Magnus Magnusson observed, “Scotland, in English eyes, was now endangering England’s national security in the War of the Spanish Succession against France” (ibid., p. 545). After all, the duke of Marlborough required many Scottish soldiers to help England in its battles with the French. The need for political union became paramount.

Queen Anne herself spoke favorably of the Act of Union in a public speech from her throne. She said: “I

consider the Union as a matter of the greatest importance to the wealth, strength and safety of the whole [British] island...” (ibid, p. 528). Notice that she mentioned wealth first.

The queen’s assessment has proven very true. Scotland’s economic fortunes soon improved and the new nation would for a time constitute the largest free trade area in Western Europe. As Harvard historian Niall Ferguson has pointed out, “Now Scotland’s surplus entrepreneurship, medics and musketeers could employ their skills and energies even further afield in the service of English capital and under the protection of England’s navy” (*Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, 2004, p. 40).

A benchmark merger

As Norman Davies relates: “[Queen Anne] was no longer ‘Queen of England’ and ‘Queen of Scotland’, but ‘Queen of Great Britain’ in both substance and style... On 29 April, 1707, the Queen issued a proclamation requesting Parliament to reassemble in its new form and under its new title [the Parliament of Great Britain].

Two days later, on 1 May, 1707, the new Parliament assembled. That was the day to which the British state, the United Kingdom of Great Britain started to function. *It was the day when modern British history began*” (*The Isles: A History*, p. 528).

There is no question that England could never have attained its glory days of empire without a unified, basically cooperative England and Scotland. Nor could the United States of America ever have reached its zenith with divided nations of North and South. At least initially, Abraham Lincoln saw the preservation of the American union as the primary purpose for the North going to war over southern secession (1861-1865). Slavery became more and more important as the war progressed.

On a personal note, I resided in the United States for the first 40 years of my life. Married to a British subject, I have lived in Britain for over 30 years and have developed a great love for the whole of the British Isles—including England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland (both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland), the Isles of Man and Wight, etc. This love affair with

Why the Separatist Movement in Scotland?

The reasons put forward for separation are historical in nature as well as contemporary. Well over a year ago *Sunday Times* columnist Minette Marrin stated: “Scots feel more Scottish and less British than at any time since 1707, according to some surveys, led astray, possibly, by films such as *Braveheart*” (Jan. 15, 2006).

Celebrities like famous Scottish film actor Sir Sean Connery (the first and most popular James Bond) are among the strong supporters of the Scottish National Party (SNP). The Scottish separatist movement has found an effective, charismatic leader in the person of Alex Salmond of the SNP. He has made independence a major goal in his life.

Desire for a nonnuclear Scotland is a contemporary reason for separation. If this occurs, the submarines that carry the Trident nuclear missiles (crucial to British defenses and national security) would have to be moved out of Scottish waters to somewhere south of the border.

Energy is another critical factor. The real possibility of unwanted new nuclear power stations on Scottish soil weighs heavily in the minds of some members of the SNP.

Somewhat understandable natural resentment at historic dominance by England may be the biggest factor (though often unspoken) in the current drive for separation. ❖

the British Isles began not long after I first touched down at Heathrow in July of 1976 on a combined business and holiday trip. After only two weeks, I wanted to live in Great Britain. My wife, Jan, was in total agreement.

I normally travel by train from London to Edinburgh once or twice a year on assignment. One of my early ancestors on my mother's side was Jonathan Hill of Edinburgh. The thought that Scotland, after a time, might no longer be a part of the United Kingdom troubles me greatly.

Instead of a celebration

The magnificent achievements of Great Britain have often been celebrated in both book and film. One would think that such a successful 300-year union would be a cause for multiple national celebrations this very year. But such is not the case. Instead, many voices in Scotland are calling for national independence. Even some English citizens think that the Scots

should leave the United Kingdom.

The issue hit the front pages earlier this year when the Scottish National Party (SNP) for the first time gained more votes than the Labour Party in the Scottish Parliament. Alex Salmond of the SNP is now first minister. He has promised Scots a referendum on leaving the United Kingdom in 2010.

Both the outgoing prime minister, Tony Blair (whose grandfather lived in Glasgow), and the incoming prime minister, Gordon Brown (a Scot), have gone out of their way to support the preservation of the English-Scottish union as a paramount rearguard action. Both have spoken and written very much in favor of retaining the union.

In the interests of the strength of unity, what took so long to bring together should not be allowed to come apart. As Magnus Magnusson commented, "For nearly three centuries, commentators and partisans have argued passionately about the 1707 Union of Parliaments. Was it

the ultimate betrayal of the Scottish nation? An altruistic act of far-sighted statesmanship? Or simply a pragmatic response to the inevitable?" (*Scotland: the Story of a Nation*, p. 554).

Or was the union in the providence and plan of God? Was the hand of God behind the scenes?

The historic and prophetic meaning

First Great Britain and then the United States of America played major roles in the world during the last 200 years. If the 19th century was the British century, the 20th was an American century. The meteoric rise to power and influence of these two great powers was prophesied in the pages of the Judeo-Christian Bible. Both nations are basically descended from the patriarch Joseph of the book of Genesis.

But Holy Scripture has also predicted that severe threats to their national well-being would surface if they disobeyed and rejected their Creator God. The United Church of God has prepared and published a special free booklet that traces the origins of the English-speaking peoples, as well as summarizes in some detail their prophetic fortunes in the future.

Please request or download *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Without the knowledge set forth in this free booklet, you cannot really understand what is happening in our world or where it is headed. ❖

How Can You Make Sense of the News?



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- Audio discussion (podcasts) of what's happening in the world around us.
- Links to significant news items from hundreds of news sources around the world.
- Free booklets to help you better understand Bible prophecy.

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Recommended Reading

Britain, the United States, Australia, Canada and other English-speaking peoples have played a major role in modern world history. What does the Bible say about the role they will play in the future?



Request a free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Contact any of our offices listed on page 15, or request or download it from our

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www.wnponline.org

China Looks to Africa

China's philosophy toward African politics, coupled with its voracious appetite for energy and raw materials, makes an alliance with Africa ideal. But does Africa benefit as much as China does? And where does this alliance leave the United States and the European Union?

by Cecil E. Maranville

With its GDP growing at a phenomenal rate of 10.7 percent last year, China is in the market for oil, natural gas, aluminum, copper, nickel, cobalt, platinum, precious stones and iron ore. Where is it shopping? Increasingly, the answer is Africa.

China's trade with Africa last year was up a whopping 40 percent over 2005, reaching \$55.5 billion (all monetary amounts in U.S. dollars). Trade grew 700 percent in the 1990s, doubled from 2002 to 2003 and nearly doubled again in the first 10 months of 2005. As China rapidly increases its African ties, Africa is releasing some of its ties to the United States, Europe and Japan.

Africa, rich in the natural resources China needs, but poor in infrastructure, is hungry for investments. China has the money to spend on Africa's resources (more than \$1.3 trillion, mostly in U.S. dollars). Beijing also has the technology and the skilled personnel to build bridges, roads, dams, stadiums, hospitals, schools, railroads and government office buildings. Beijing's presence is felt in all but a few African nations, for the Chinese are into everything from mining to farming—even launching satellites for Nigeria! The Chinese do quality and low-cost work, and they do it in a fraction of the time that African firms would take.

A Sino-African relationship seems mutually beneficial, but there is more to the story.

Just minding business

In the 1960s and '70s, China's foreign policy toward Africa was heavily ideological, as Beijing sought to shore up its support in the Cold War. The stadiums, roads and hospitals it built then were to buy favor with the African nations. The Chinese largely withdrew from the continent in the 1980s, concentrating on matters at home. But the 1990s saw a different China return with a more sophisticated foreign policy. No longer did the Chinese seek to promote socialism; rather, they said they just wanted to do business.

In contrast, the Group of Eight (G8)—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States and Russia—link aid and trade for African nations to requirements that they improve human rights and lessen government corruption.

Many Africans resent this, seeing it as political interference. China, on the other hand, says what Africa does is Africa's business. The Chinese are willing to do business with even the most dictatorial governments.

At a recent meeting of G8 finance ministers, German Finance Minister Peer Steinbrueck renewed the group's pledges of African aid. But he repeated the G8's expectation that African leaders would manage the aid responsibly. In advance of the meeting, Germany publicly criticized China for lending money without accountability.

What corrupt official would choose funds from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (tied to expectations of reform) over low-interest loans, grants or outright bribes from the Chinese? G8 nations fear that the Chinese approach is undoing reforms that took decades to accomplish. Angola, for example, received a \$2 billion aid package from Beijing with no strings attached and no encouragement to better the country's citizens. The majority of Angolans live in poverty, while a few elite skim income from petroleum product sales for themselves.

Western companies shy away from investing in parts of Africa that promise low or little return, but Chinese firms—supported by the state—are willing to invest and build nearly everywhere. The Chinese do not mind losing money on some ventures in order to make their collective relationship with Africa profitable. Moreover, Americans and Europeans aren't as prone to using bribes and under-the-table payments to get things done, an approach that does not bother Chinese businesses.

A different 9/11 wake-up call

Sept. 11, 2001, was a wake-up call for Beijing, not about terrorist attacks, but about securing its oil supply. Seeing the United States move into Afghanistan and Iraq, China doesn't want to be tied to supplies that the United States could shut off. Last year, it overtook Japan as the world's second-largest importer of oil.

It doesn't want to depend on the politically unstable Middle East for its supply, so Beijing now buys 30 percent of its oil from Africa. China has oil interests in Algeria, Angola, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, Sudan and the Republic of Congo.

Beijing now buys 30 percent of its oil from Africa. China has oil interests in Algeria, Angola, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, Sudan and the Republic of Congo.

Few people realize that the southern portion of Darfur, that tragic Sudanese region beset with war, might be rich in oil reserves.

Beijing purchases between 65 and 80 percent of Sudan's oil production. In January, China announced it would buy 45 percent interest in a giant off-shore Nigerian oil field for \$2.27 billion.

In addition to buying African natural resources, China is willing to lend prodigious amounts of money at little interest and over long terms. Many loans turn into grants. The Chinese recently wrote off \$50 billion in African debt! In 2006, China dropped tariffs on 190 commodities from 25 African nations.

In May, Beijing announced approximately \$20 billion in infrastructure and trade financing for Africa over the next three years. Some of the earmarked projects include rebuilding Angolan and Nigerian railroads, as well as a hydroelectric dam in Ethiopia.

More taking than giving?

But is China taking more from Africa than it is giving? Donald Kaberuka, president of the African Development Bank Group, warned of a never-ending "disease" in African economics, a reliance on exporting natural resources for income, rather than developing those resources locally into products that could be sold.

The Chinese level of involvement alarms some Africans, who resent what they perceive to be imperial overtones reminiscent of European domination. Some Africans wonder if China is actually exploiting them. Africans need jobs, but the Chinese are bringing laborers along with their engineers to build the roads, the bridges and the highways. Over 80,000 migrant workers from China have moved to Africa to work on Chinese projects there.

Chinese firms are underbidding African companies for projects, causing further resentment. China exports manufactured products to Africa, selling them for less than the Africans could make these items, undercutting the local economy in another way. There are also fears that the Chinese workers are likely to send money back to their families in China, rather than spend it in Africa.

Not free of political motives

In spite of China's official policy, its motivations aren't free from politics, for it

lobbies for African support of the one-China policy, denying diplomatic support for Taiwan. Currently, only five African nations are still Taiwan's diplomatic allies—São Tomé and Príncipe (a tiny island nation in Gulf of Guinea), Swaziland, Burkina Faso, the Gambia and Malawi.

Preoccupied with the war on terror, the United States focuses its attention on north and eastern Africa, seeking cooperation on counterterrorism. The United States has allowed its interests in other parts of the continent to flag, leaving a wide-open opportunity for Beijing to extend its influence.

Cleverly, the Chinese have established manufacturing plants in Africa, from which they can ship products to the United States, thereby circumventing U.S. tariffs on products from China.

China wants to counter U.S. influence wherever possible. When the Americans withdrew their oil companies from Sudan, China stepped in with its companies to fill the void. China repeatedly thwarted UN Security Council attempts to sanction Sudan for its government-sponsored purge of its Darfur province. (The helicopter gunships used to shoot Darfurians were provided to the Sudanese by China.)

Similarly, when the Americans and Europeans withdrew from Zimbabwe over its land reform policy and human rights record, China stepped in. During the recent election, China provided President Robert Mugabe with a radio-jamming device to block radio signals from stations supporting the opposition parties. When no Western power would recognize the legitimacy of the election, Beijing did. China also provided Zimbabwe with 12 fighter jets and 100 military trucks. The Chinese even designed Mugabe's 25-room mansion (complete with helipad) and donated their unique cobalt-blue tiles for the roof.

Not surprisingly, Mugabe calls China his "number one friend."

Why would China bolster Mugabe? Zimbabwe has the second-largest deposits of platinum in the world, as well as ferrochrome, uranium, gold, silver and copper—more than 40 minerals in all. Zimbabwe used to sell its vast tobacco crop at an international auction, but now, the tobacco goes directly to China as payment for loans and investments.

When François Bozizé violently seized the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2003, the African Union

(AU) immediately revoked CAR's membership from the AU. China responded by extending a \$2.5 million interest-free loan, and then, welcoming Bozizé as an official visitor to Beijing in 2004. Mollifying this affront, last month China signed a \$150 million agreement to expand the AU's headquarters in Addis Ababa.

China also sells arms to the Africans, to almost anyone who will buy them. While much of the world was concerned about a potential war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Beijing was selling arms to both countries! During a UN embargo from 1998-2000, China sold them over \$1 billion in weapons to use to fight each other.

The future

Currently, it appears that China will continue to be a powerful influence on the African continent. Moreover, it is likely that some African governments will increasingly shift their allegiances from the West to the Orient. Two sets of biblical prophecies help us anticipate what will happen: (1) Those that say modern-day Israel would shrink from its dominance of world affairs and (2) those that foretell an alliance of nations south of Jerusalem will provoke a major war with another alliance located north of Jerusalem.

In the first set of prophecies, modern Israel includes the United States, Great Britain and members of its commonwealth, as well as the state of Israel. As shocking as it seems today, American military, political and economic power will indeed cease to lead the world.

The second set of prophecies springs from Daniel and Revelation; they are summarized in Daniel 11:40-45. These verses tell of a "king of the South" doing something so provocative to a "king of the North" that he reacts by taking over the region of Palestine. On the basis of what we can observe today, we anticipate that the king of the South will be an alliance of Muslim nations from northern Africa through the Middle East and that the king of the North will be a core of European nations, smaller than the present EU configuration.

We'd like to tell you more about these important matters through our booklets *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. See page 15 for Internet and mailing addresses. ❖

What It Means to Be a King in the Kingdom of God

In early May Queen Elizabeth II visited the United States as part of the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown settlement. The queen remains the world's best-known monarch. Her life contains many lessons for Christians, whom Christ will make kings in the Kingdom of God.

by Melvin Rhodes

To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first English settlement in North America, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II was invited to share in the celebrations in Jamestown, Virginia. The colony of Virginia was named after the first Queen Elizabeth, the "Virgin Queen," while Jamestown Island and the James River were named after her successor, King James I, the same king who authorized the first official translation of the Bible into English.

It was the queen's fifth state visit to the United States and her fourth as monarch. Previous visits were in 1951 before she became queen, 1957 when she attended the 350th anniversary of the Jamestown settlement, 1976 for the Bicentennial and 1991.

Americans mingle with the monarch

Toward the end of her weeklong visit to the United States, the queen spent time with President George W. Bush at the White House. Thousands of visitors were able to mingle with the president and the monarch on the White House lawn. In the evening, President Bush hosted a white-tie dinner at the White House, the first by the present administration.

All 140 invited guests received a personal invitation, handwritten by a calligrapher. Everybody was informed that when the queen stops eating, everybody stops eating! All guests met both the queen and the president.

The welcome given to the queen during her visit to the United States was described by one television commentator as "jubilant." Partly this was appreciation for Britain's role as America's main ally. But, commentators agreed, it was mostly out of respect for the 81-year-old woman who has spent her life doing her duty, serving the peoples of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Actress Helen Mirren received an Oscar for "the role of a lifetime" as the queen in the movie

of the same name. Mirren said the person who quite literally has had the role of a lifetime is the queen herself, who became queen at the age of 25 and has held a 24/7 role as Britain's head of state for over 55 years.

And yet her role is nothing compared to the role that true Christians will have in the coming Kingdom of God.

We will be kings and priests

The biblical book of Revelation was given to "show [Christ's] servants...things which must shortly take place" (Revelation 1:1). In verse 6 of chapter 1, we read that He "has made us kings and priests." Powerful angels singing a song of praise to the Lamb of God, also say of the saints, "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth" (Revelation 5:10, NRSV).

A central message of the Bible is the promise of the coming Kingdom of God. "Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14). His parables are full of insight into the coming Kingdom, which will be established upon this earth at His return.

In Revelation 20 we are taken forward into this time of Christ's return and of the resurrection of the saints, those whom God has called. "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years... This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4-6, emphasis added).

Stating that the saints will be both kings and priests clearly means there will be no separation of Church and state in the world of tomorrow. Resurrected Christians will fulfill dual roles, both as secular and spiritual rulers.

The future world-ruling Jesus Christ is described

Queen Elizabeth received a warm welcome, mostly out of respect for this 81-year-old woman who has spent her life doing her duty, serving the peoples of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth of Nations.



U.S. President George W. Bush escorts Britain's Queen Elizabeth II during an arrival ceremony at the White House May 7

in Revelation 19:16 as “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS,” a title so awesome that it’s written in bold capital letters. If Christ is King of kings, then who are the other kings He will be over?

That’s the role to be filled by His loyal followers, those “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

Kings and queens live in grand mansions, called palaces. Many of you will have visited Windsor Castle, the queen’s home just outside London. Others will have visited Buckingham Palace, her London residence. In the time of Jesus Christ, royal residences were even grander. His disciples perhaps had Roman royal palaces in mind when He said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration [the resurrection], when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

Unlike the first-century disciples, most people today do not live under kings. They have little concept of what it means to be a king. By looking at the life of Queen Elizabeth II we receive an insight into what it means to be a ruling monarch.

What does it mean to be a king?

You are king for life.

During the royal visit to the United States, it was frequently observed that the queen has met with 10 U.S. presidents. She has also had 10 British prime ministers (Gordon Brown makes the 11th). Additionally, there have been numerous prime ministers in the other nations of which she is queen. This brings home the simple fact that a monarch’s role, in contrast to a politician’s, is for life. Queen Elizabeth came to the British throne on Feb. 6, 1952. She will remain queen until she dies.

A major difference between the kings who rule with Christ and the present British monarch is that the future kings will be spirit beings. “Over such the second death has no power” (Revelation 20:6). We “shall reign with Him for a thousand years.” Verse 5 explains that there will be another resurrection after the first thousand years of Jesus Christ’s rule on earth. This resurrection reveals that there will be even more people to rule over, so our positions aren’t limited to just 1,000 years.

You can become king suddenly, unexpectedly. Always be prepared.

Although Princess Elizabeth had known since December 1936, at the age of 10, that, upon the death of her father, she would become the reigning monarch, her ascendancy was still unexpected. Her father, King George

VI, had plans to go on a South Seas tour of countries that were a part of the British Empire, in early 1952, accompanied by his wife. When his health would not permit it, he asked his daughter and son-in-law to go in his stead. He saw them off at the airport on Jan. 31.

Six days later, while in the African colony of Kenya, Princess Elizabeth became queen. The imperial tour was hastily cancelled as the new queen and her husband returned to London.

Jesus Christ warned us to “watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42). He added, “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (verse 44). Earlier, He said, “of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (verse 36).

We must always be ready to assume our office of kingship. It doesn’t matter how long we have to prepare, but prepare we must. Princess Elizabeth had a little over 15 years to prepare for her role. Her son, Prince Charles, who will turn 59 later this year, has had much longer. From the time that we receive the Holy Spirit, we need to take our calling to be a king very seriously and ensure that we are preparing for rulership with Jesus Christ in His Kingdom.

A king must uphold the law.

There was a time in England when the king could do anything he wanted to do. But that has not been the case for centuries. In 1215 King John was forced to sign the Magna Carta, which formed the basis for the Anglo-American legal system. One of its fundamental principles was that everybody was subject to the law, including the king. This principle eventually led to the beheading of King Charles I in 1649 and the establishment of the short-lived English Republic.

This principle of equality before the law does not exist in most countries, including many European ones. America inherited it from England. It was said in 1974 that the Magna Carta brought down President Nixon.

In ancient Israel kings were expected to know and obey the laws of God.

“Also, it shall be, when he sits on
(See “KING,” page 13)

When Will There Be War No More?

War is part of life in our present world. It has been so throughout human history. Why? Will it ever end? The Bible shows that it will!

by Gary Smith

We need only to watch the news to see death and destruction around the world. Every day we can see the carnage that comes from armed conflict.

The number of those who have died on the field of battle throughout man's history is truly staggering. In World War II, the worldwide death toll numbered nearly 54 million. What might the toll be in a future world war, when casualties include even more civilians?

Why has war been so common to man's history?

German Gen. Helmuth von Moltke in "Doctrines of War" makes observations about man's perceptions that help explain why war is so commonplace in our world: "Eternal peace is a dream and not even a beautiful one, while war is an element of God's world order. In war, the most noble virtues of man unfold, which would otherwise slumber and become extinct: courage and abstention, loyalty to one's duty and willingness to make the sacrifice of one's life; the experiences of war are a lasting influence, strengthening a man's ability for all future" (Lawrence Freedman, ed., *War*, 1994).

Is war truly a positive way of life? Is war the way God ordered the universe? Is peace only a dream? Will humanity ever live in a world in which there will be no more war?

War the order of the universe

Where did war originate? It wasn't with humankind, but rather it began with a thought in the mind of a heavenly being.

Ezekiel 28:12-15 describes this remarkable creature. He had numerous qualities that made him unique. He had great capabilities. The king of Tyre in this chapter is a created cherub that had access to God's



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In World War II, the worldwide death toll numbered nearly 54 million.

very throne. This angelic being came to have an inflated opinion of his "perfection." In time, pride, arrogance and selfishness caused this cherub, now known as Satan, to come to a momentous decision.

The prophet Isaiah also wrote of this being, revealing the shocking truth that he and one third of the entire angelic host mounted a war against their Creator (Isaiah 14:12-15). Satan came to the conclusion that he deserved to sit upon God's throne, and he sought to overthrow Him in a violent coup.

Revelation 12:7-9 gives us more insight into this heavenly conflict. "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." The rebellion was quickly put down.

With Satan's selfish ambition, war was introduced into the creation. Clearly, God

From Cain's day forward, man has applied his fertile mind to making better and more deadly weapons and to perfecting military tactics to insure maximum killing power. Where will it all end?

did not establish war as part of His ordered creation.

War enters the human realm

Satan turned to God's creation of humankind to introduce war into the human realm. The first presentation came about as Cain murdered his brother in a fit of jealousy (Genesis 4:1-8).

Interestingly, God offered Cain another way to work out the conflict with his brother and be pleasing to Him. The Eternal warned Cain that his attitude would lead to sin, if he did not control his impulses (verses 6-7). Cain did not heed God. Instead, he chose the way of violence and murdered his brother (verse 8).

In the biblical account is a most telling statement about why conflicts often end with violence. When God asked Cain about where his brother was, Cain replied, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). Cain's focus was upon himself with no consideration for his brother.

The violent path chosen by Cain is the path that humanity has followed to this very day. It is a path covered in blood and death.

War perfected

From Cain's day forward, man has applied his fertile mind to making better and more deadly weapons and to perfecting military tactics to insure maximum killing power. He has perfected his ability to attack from the air, the land, the sea or even from outer space. Man's killing skills have reached the point at which he can kill millions from a distance. Massive killing has almost become like a video game. The advent of nuclear weapons brought humanity to the brink of total destruction, the ability to annihilate all life from the planet.

In *Carnage and Culture*, Victor Davis Hansen chronicles the war-making abilities of Europe and the United States. He points out, "War is ultimately killing" (p. 8). This nonsense statement bluntly reminds us that the death of one's opponent is the purpose for going into battle.

Further, he writes that the West



"Alexander's revolutionary practice of total pursuit and destruction of the defeated enemy ensured battle casualties unimaginable just a few decades earlier."

came to dominate the world through warfare. "The Western way of war is so lethal precisely because it is so amoral—shackled rarely by concerns with ritual, tradition, religion, or ethics, by anything other than military necessity... The idea of annihilation, of head-to-head battle that destroys the enemy, seems a particularly Western concept... Westerners, in short, long ago saw war as a method of doing what politics cannot, and thus are willing to obliterate rather than check or humiliate any who stand in their way" (pp. 21-22).

The goal of war is to win, doing whatever is necessary to achieve the destruction of the enemy, regardless of the morality.

The renowned conqueror Alexander the Great exemplified this approach to warfare.

"Alexander brilliantly employed decisive battle in terrifying ways that its long-conquered Hellenic inventors had never imagined—and in a real stroke of genius he proclaimed that he killed for the idea of brotherly love... To Alexander the strategy of war meant not the defeat of the enemy, the return of the dead, the construction of a trophy, and the settlement of existing disputes,

but, as his father had taught him, the annihilation of all combatants and the destruction of the culture itself that had dared to field such opposition to his imperial rule. Thus, Alexander's revolutionary practice of total pursuit and destruction of the defeated enemy ensured battle casualties unimaginable just a few decades earlier" (p. 83).

The Roman Empire went on to learn from Alexander and perfect his approach to war more fully. Daniel 2:40 describes the Roman military machine, "And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others." The Romans built their empire through warfare.

In summary, war is cruel and bloody and its purpose is to kill, defeat and conquer. Man has perfected his war-making ability to the point where it will bring an end to all flesh if not for the intervention of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:21-22).

War fills our world

Have you ever stopped to consider on how many levels conflict permeates our world?

We find it between spouses and between families. We have sibling rivalry. Regularly we find gyms and stadiums filled with thousands of frenzied fans cheering for their favorite teams as if it were life and death. On the political front, running for office is a no-holds-barred war. And in many parts of the world, gangs rule neighborhoods and battle with their rivals for “turf.” Throughout the world, we find regional and ethnic groups, competing religions and power blocs all willing to battle for their cause.

War is easy for humankind because it is so easy for men and women to be divided over issues. It’s easy for us to take offense, to be hurt and, in response, to take revenge in word and action. Ultimately, humankind finds war an easy choice.

Our world is filled with it. It is not the way God originally designed things, but it is the way the god of this world has ordered his kingdom (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Why is war so commonplace?

War abounds because God is on the sidelines. In the Garden of Eden, the parents of humankind decided to live apart from God and determine right and wrong for themselves. That choice set our world on a course in which war is a fundamental part.

The apostle James addressed the fundamental reason war takes place: “What leads to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members? You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment, and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have, because you do not ask” (James 4:1-2, The Amplified Bible).

The simple fact is that personal ambition and a lack of self-control still drive the way of war.

The ancient prophet Isaiah tells us that war is an inherent part of humanity’s sinful nature and that, until repented of, it keeps people from knowing the path to peace (Isaiah 59:7-8). But humankind most certainly knows the path to war.

Yet, wars have never resolved anything on a permanent basis. World War I was to be “the war to end all wars.” And yet, it only set the stage for an even more savage conflict, World War II.

War has never been eliminated because humankind has never resolved the problem of our nature. In other words, man has never been willing to be his brother’s keeper.

War no more

In spite of the dismal record of almost constant warfare, the Bible promises the coming worldwide Kingdom of God in which peace will prevail.

There are several reasons that will be the case.

First, the ruler of that Kingdom, Jesus Christ, will usher in a time of peace. “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” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

In addition, Satan, the author and inspirer of war, will be removed for a thousand years (Revelation 20:3). When released briefly at the end of the thousand years, Satan will incite war again! However, the rebellion will be short-lived, and then he will be cast out forever (Revelation 20:7-10).

Moreover, man will no longer learn to make war (Micah 4:3). There won’t be any military schools.

What way will people learn instead of war? They will learn how to resolve conflicts individually and collectively without violence. They will learn that God’s way is infinitely better than taking up arms, that war only brings about destruction (Ecclesiastes 9:18).

Mankind will learn the way of righteousness. Righteousness, the application of God’s law, will produce peace (Isaiah 32:17). In essence, man will learn to be his brother’s keeper. As men and women seek to apply the wisdom taught them by God, this will create a peaceful, positive atmosphere in which all people can live.

Rather than battle each other, people will learn to wage a personal spiritual warfare against their own nature (2 Corinthians 10:1-5).

Between now and then, we will sadly hear of wars and rumors of war (Matthew 24:6).

With the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom, Christ will lead the world into a time of peace. He will make war to cease (Psalm 46:9) and the citizens of the Kingdom of God will neither hurt nor destroy each other (Isaiah 65:25).

Outside the United Nations building in New York City is a statue, picturing Isaiah 2:4, with a sword being beaten into a plowshare. So far, that image has only been a dream, but the reassuring news from the Bible is that this will become reality.

In the Kingdom of God, there will be no more war. The utopian peace that some men have always longed for will characterize the wonderful world to come.

Read more in our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. ❖

Recommended Reading

Jesus Christ brought good news—the gospel—but few understand why His promise of a coming Kingdom is the best news this world could ever hear. Request or download our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom* for the biblical answers.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 15, or request or download it from our Web site at www.wnponline.org

The Wonderful World Beyond Today

Priority #1: Human Survival!

What has brought humanity to the brink of extinction, and what can—what will—be done to save us?

by Mike Bennett

Our news reports—and the world’s top secret intelligence reports probably even more so—reflect a dangerous world. Dozens of hot spots seem ready to explode into wider violence. Weapons of mass destruction are falling into the hands of despots and terrorist groups. Tensions between races, nations and groups of nations seem to be continually increasing.



The world won't end this way...

age?” (Matthew 24:3, New International Version).

Jesus’ answer was breathtaking in its scope, but one phrase surely caught their ears. “For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world till now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, *no one would survive*, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened” (Matthew

The future of humanity is at stake! Jesus Christ identified the time of His return as a time when human extinction was possible. But He promised He wouldn't let that happen!

But what would an outsider see? What if today’s world were part of a science fiction story? What would a visitor from the stars see? All the same problems, of course, but perhaps a different perspective would give a chance for the visitor to see more clearly the patterns of human behavior that have led to these predicaments.

Consider this description of our time that comes from a perspective beyond the human sphere:

“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, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

The apostle Paul, 2,000 years in advance, nailed this list of many of the causes of humanity’s ills. God’s Spirit showed clearly the things we are doing that are making our world more dangerous by the minute.

“No one would survive”

Jesus Christ’s disciples knew even then that the world was getting worse and worse, and would finally reach a point where these and other evils would crescendo to a final climax. Jesus had told them He would return to begin a new age of peace. So they asked this Man (who they knew was also God in the flesh), “When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the

24:21-22, NIV, emphasis added).

The future of humanity was at stake! Jesus Christ identified the time of His return as a time when human extinction was possible. But He promised He wouldn’t let that happen!

His feet will stand...

Jesus Christ will literally return to this earth! In the same way the disciples saw Christ ascend into the clouds after His resurrection, He will return through the clouds to this earth, this time with power and great glory (Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:30).

That’s the biggest news story in history (see sidebar, page 13), especially since if He did not come, humanity would destroy itself. Mankind continues to find more ways that we can obliterate every man, woman and child off the face of the earth.

Biblical prophecy describes in detail the time of great distress, or tribulation, that will envelope the earth. Wars, disasters, famines and disease epidemics will decimate the population.

Finally, when the nations of the world gather for battle at a place called Armageddon (Revelation 16:14, 16), Christ must swiftly intervene before it is too late. Sadly, the nations will not recognize or welcome their Savior, but will fight Him.

“Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east” (Zechariah 14:3-4).

The battle will be over swiftly, ending the pain-

ful age of human misrule. Finally a new day will dawn—a day fresh with the promise of peace and fulfillment, of joy and purpose, of happiness and accomplishment. The nightmares of history will fade, and the dreams of mankind will begin to come to life.

The time after Christ's return will be wonderful beyond imagination! No wonder Christians have always prayed, "Your Kingdom come!" At the end of the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ tells us, "Surely I am coming quickly." And we fervently respond with the apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

The events leading up to Christ's return are described in detail in several of our brochures. For more information, download or request your free copies of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy, Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. ❖

The Biggest News Story in History: CHRIST RETURNS!

Who: Jesus Christ, who came the first time to pay the penalty for our sins to become our Savior, returns to put an end to sin as our King (Revelation 11:15!)

What: Christ puts an end to human misrule and sets up the long-promised Kingdom of God (Daniel 2:44).

When: In the nick of time before humanity destroys itself (Matthew 24:22). Christ gave signs to identify the end time, but did not reveal the "day and hour" (Matthew 24:36).

Where: Starting with Jerusalem, this Kingdom will spread over the whole earth (Zechariah 14:3-4; Acts 1:11-12; Matthew 5:5; Revelation 5:10; Daniel 2:35).

Why: Christ returns because it is part of God's plan to show love for everyone, to bring many children to glory (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9; Hebrews 2:10).

How: God's laws—the way He designed the universe to work—will be taught, and obedience to them will bring real peace and prosperity. But most of all, following these holy laws will bring humanity into a loving family relationship with God and with each other (Isaiah 2:2-4). ❖

"KING," (Continued from page 8)

the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book... And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel" (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

The queen has been exemplary in her obedience to the laws of England. In the same way, we should be exemplary in our obedience to the laws of God.

Be careful not to lose your throne.

A king can lose his throne. This happened to the queen's uncle, King Edward VIII, in December of 1936. Edward had only become king in January of the same year. At the time he was a single man. It soon became clear that he was involved with a woman who had been married twice.

He was given a choice by the parliaments of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions. He had to choose between the woman, Mrs. Simpson, and what was then the most prestigious position in the world, the throne of the British Empire. Edward's decision was to abdicate in favor of his brother, who became King George VI.

Only recently did official government papers about the abdication become available, following the death of the queen mother, who was married to King George VI. These papers revealed that Mrs. Simpson was not being faithful to the king, whom she later married.

Edward had given up the throne for nothing!

There's an important spiritual lesson for all of us here.

In Revelation 3:11 we are admonished to "hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." It's easy to lose out on our future as kings and priests, ruling with Jesus Christ. We can easily get distracted by other people or things that get in our way. We can let another person become an obstacle to our salvation.

Edward VIII, as the eldest son of the future King George V, was born to be king when he entered this world in 1894. His investiture as prince of Wales, heir presumptive to the British throne, was in 1911. Twenty-five years later he was king, but only for a few months. He got distracted by somebody else and gave his crown away.

Don't let this happen to you. Not only must we avoid carnal temptations that can lead us astray from God, but we must also be careful not to let resent-



King Edward VIII abdicated the throne in December 1936.

ment or bitterness trip us up on our spiritual journey.

Looking ahead

During the queen's visit to the United States, one television commentator remarked that the queen's popularity on both sides of the Atlantic has increased as people have lost respect for their politicians. There is a lesson for us here. When we look at worldly leadership, we mostly see bad examples. Self-seeking and even lying are common problems afflicting many politicians. Like the queen, we must remain above that, maintaining a higher standard, which emphasizes our duty to God and to others.

Let us also remember that our role in the Kingdom of God will far surpass the leadership role of any worldly monarch or president. We have an eternity to look forward to, immortality where we will be ruling alongside our Savior and Elder Brother, Jesus Christ. ❖

“PICTURE” (Continued from page 16)

girl with a stuffed animal at her feet. She and her parents were killed by a car bomb. With his head shaking in despair, he explained to Sanders that the photo had been taken just a few days before and was now going into the processor to be preserved for next of kin.

Farouq’s coworker, Munim, mentions one recent request regarding a 3- or 4-year-old boy wearing an orange basketball tank shirt. He was proudly seated atop a plastic tricycle, his scraped knees hugging the sides. Through the magic of computer software, the technician transports the image into a fantasy world in which he is joined by Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse with the backdrop of a white picket fence, while Dumbo the Elephant is soaring high above. Indeed, this masterpiece of a make-believe existence is worlds apart from the violence of what his everyday life was like. The identifying caption merely says, “The Happy Martyr,” for the boy, too, is now dead.

Imprinted on my mind

When asked how he died, Munim replied sharply, “I don’t ask about the details. I don’t want to know!” The reporter surmises it’s too painful to delve further. Even though the work is depressing, Farouq and Munim realize they cannot turn customers away.

They never know what’s on the film their customers bring in, because the customers feel if they tell, then their film might be rejected. It is not until the technicians insert the negatives into their equipment that the stories unfold in all their anguish, be it a car bombing, an accidental shooting, a decapitated body or the corpse of a man tortured and killed by an electric drill.

Sanders relates how the horror has transformed Farouq: “At first, the images moved him to tears or turned his stomach. Now they’ve become oddly normal, because there are so many horrendous pictures.”

So Farouq and Munim steadily work with their computer to magically enhance the photos of the now-dead subjects with a mix of sunsets, waterfalls, flowers, clouds and religious memorabilia as backdrops that transport the dead and the grieving into a different world. Their customers take the results and place them



Photo illustration © 2007 Jupiterimages Corporation

They never know what’s on the film their customers bring in, because the customers feel if they tell, then their film might be rejected. It is not until the technicians insert the negatives into their equipment that the stories unfold in all their anguish...

on their walls at home, trying to remember a different and better time.

But recently, business has been changing. No longer do they deal principally with pictures of “the martyrs,” but rather with passport photos. Why? So many are trying to leave Iraq! In fact, when he can save up enough money, Farouq is planning to join the exodus.

He says that since the violence escalated a year ago, business is down by 75 percent due to the crippling effect of curfews. He hopes to open a photo lab in a far less stressful environment. But he worried aloud about “how this is affecting my psyche, because these images are imprinted on my mind.” If a picture is worth a thousand words, just imagine the length of story that has been written in Farouq’s mind through all the vivid photos.

A picture worth a thousand years

How then do we bring together the

photo display that my family saw on Mother’s Day and the horrible images that Farouq is most likely still processing at this moment?

Well, there is one picture that supersedes anything mentioned to this point. It is a picture worth 1,000 years! It is the pictorial collage of the promised Kingdom of God coming to this earth as caught by the open shutter of Scripture.

Can you stay with me a moment? And don’t worry, it won’t be 800 scriptures or take an hour like our home video. But I will tell you this much before we get started. It’s worth every ounce of your life’s devotion! So where does our millennial collage begin?

Let’s start with the subjects of Farouq’s inner turmoil, the little martyrs. Isaiah 65:20 describes a future time when, “No more shall an infant from there live but a few days; nor an old man that has not fulfilled his days...” Picture that!

Zechariah 8:4 adds color with, “Old

men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets." Picture that!

Then let's add Micah 4:1-4 as it outlines in vivid detail how "the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains [nations and governments], and shall be exalted above the hills, and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways and we shall walk in His paths.'

"For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples and rebuke strong nations afar off; 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. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid."

Let's push the pause button on this one, because it's one long roll. Picture all of that! One frame at a time, please.

But there is more to add to the collage of millennial snapshots. Amos 9:13 speaks of a time ahead 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." Picture that!

Isaiah 19:23-25 lays out a frame of geopolitical harmony, "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria... In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, 'Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.'"

Iraq now occupies the ancient land of Assyria and most Arab nations think of Israel as an adversary. Picture the change!

A picture for those tough times

Just two more brief snapshots of the Kingdom and we've got the col-

lage done for now. But don't forget, it's not really over, because it stretches for eternity.

Remember earlier, when I mentioned tears? Well, ours were tears of joy on Mother's Day. But there are tears of pain and grief that need to be tended. Our Father in heaven has an encouraging snapshot for us to carry deep in the recesses of our hearts and minds. When the going gets so tough that we can barely stand it, we can think of this picture.

Revelation 21:4 grants us the moving photo of a God who will "wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying." Now, picture that, and hold on to it real tight!

And now the last snapshot to delicately place in the collage, because it's for Farouq and for all of God's children who have seen more than a human being ought to see. Remember how Farouq said the images of all that he had developed in his photo lab had been "imprinted on his mind"? Well, let's complete the collage with Isaiah 65:17, which offers the encouraging picture of God creating "new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind." Picture that!

Until that time ahead when our good Father summons His entire family to gather together before Him with a deeper joy than we can now know, let's allow Paul's admonition to be the guiding light to fulfill the column title, "this is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21).

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Now, picture that; and let's make sure we have the same focus that God has. ❖



Robin Webber

How to Contact Us

AFRICA and ASIA (except as listed below): United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia. Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122

BRITISH ISLES: P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569 E-mail: info@ucg.ca

CARIBBEAN: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

EAST AFRICA (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda): United Church of God—East Africa, P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200 Kenya. E-mail: kenya@ucg.org

FIJI: United Church of God, P.O. Box 11081, Laucala Beach Estate, Suva

FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

GERMANY: Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228 - 9454636 Fax: 0228 - 9454637 E-mail: info@gutenachrichten.org

ITALY: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy. Phone/Fax: (+39) 035-4523573 E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org

MALAWI: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi. E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

MAURITIUS: P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes. E-mail: mauritiust@ucg.org

The NETHERLANDS: United Church of God Holland, P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands

NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Auckland, 1015, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

NIGERIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 2265, Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria. Phone: 01-8113644 E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

PHILIPPINES: United Church of God, P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines. Phone: (+63) 82 224-4444 Cell/Text: (+63) 918-904-4444

SCANDINAVIA: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 3535, 111 74, Stockholm, Sweden E-mail: sverige@ucg.org

SOUTH AFRICA (and Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland only): United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205. Phone/Fax: 043 748-1694

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796

TONGA: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 2617, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

UNITED STATES: *World News and Prophecy*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. Phone (513) 576-9796. E-mail info@ucg.org

ZAMBIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia. Phone: (02) 226076. E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

ZIMBABWE: United Church of God, Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare. Cell Phone: 011716273 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

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by Robin Webber

Picture That!

This past Mother's Day, we had the pleasure of gathering together with our three daughters, their husbands and our five precious granddaughters. After a lot of family commotion, we were all asked to gather together in one room.

As I took a seat, it was just nice to look around and see all the family gathered together. It was then that I slowly gazed around the room taking in one-by-one my wife, our daughters, the grandchildren and our sons-in-law. Life was good! I remember taking one of those mental snapshots we all take at times such as these.

Life is rich, but...

And then, the announcement came. Our daughters presented to Susan, my wife, their Mother's Day present for her. They had produced an hour-long video program from over 800 digital photos about our family. They added a sound track of all of our favorite family music, sentimental tunes that we had grown to love together over the years.

Picture after picture would bring out highlights of our lives together, from a hospital birth room, a first walk, a day at the park, the face of a grandkid glistening with tears, goofy faces that weren't so goofy now, Thanksgiving meals, great-grandparents and pictures taken when nobody was supposed to be looking. Surprise!

For an hour we strolled down memory lane, reminded by pictures and melodies how rich life can be if we can only get over those bumps along the way. My wife and I both had more than a few lumps in our throats, and our eyes glistened with tears of joy. Such a flood of memories! It was so very rich.

What a stark contrast jumped out at me the very next morning when I was catching up on some back newspapers. Edmund Sanders, staff reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, wrote "In Focus, A Nation's Mourning," which appeared on May 5. Unlike the day before, there was no music, but only the painful and sobering reality of life's images for far too many in this present age of man.

An open shutter of woes

Through Sanders' lens on Iraq, I was taken into a small, crowded commercial storefront in the troubled city of Baghdad. He took his readers into a photo lab run by a Christian Iraqi named Farouq. At the age of 37, this gentleman's eyes have seen a lot of photos.

Like all photo labs his work used to center on graduations, weddings and baby photos. After Saddam Hussein's fall from power, for a brief time there was a springlike condition of various aspects of life budding for the first time in a long while. During this time, computers became more extant in Iraq, and everyone wanted pictures for what they hoped would be the dawning of a new society.

But these days, Sanders reports that Farouq now has a more somber duty as "his tiny photo shop has become an open shutter on Iraq's woes." Farouq sadly explained, "Almost all my work is now focused on martyrs." He is speaking of the civilian casualties of this country's violence. Farouq lamented, "This job is my mirror to know what is going on in my country. And things are getting worse."

His work of recent date included the photo of a little

(See "PICTURE," page 14)