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# The EU Versus the Irish Republic: What Does It Mean?

*Most Irish citizens simply do not want a European superstate. This is the basic message of Ireland's startling "no" vote on the Lisbon Treaty. But the much more powerful European elites clearly want it very badly! Bible prophecy strongly indicates that forces for federal unification ultimately will prevail in Europe—bringing about a new superpower.*

by John Ross Schroeder

**W**ith its rejection of the Lisbon Treaty, the Irish Republic has defiantly stood in the gap. The British Labour Party (now the party of government) failed in principle to keep the commitment made in its last election manifesto to have a referendum. The Lisbon Treaty is just a papering over of the already rejected European Constitution, since the actual contents are about 98 percent the same.

The convenient change in terminology from a "constitution" to a "treaty" provided the excuse the EU member nations needed to avoid referendums.

### A treaty for a superstate

One Irish citizen voting in Cork, Treasa O'Brien, said, "This Treaty will increase militarization and neoconservatism of Europe. I'm pro-European, but the EU started as an economic system. *This treaty will turn the EU into a superstate*" (*Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 2008, emphasis added throughout).

Recently I was in the Republic of Ireland for a few days on Church business, and I never heard a good word about the Lisbon Treaty. One person in Dublin Connolly railway station was speaking against it and giving out writ-



A "no" vote campaigner hands out a leaflet June 11, the day before Ireland's vote on the Lisbon Treaty.

ten material advocating a "no" vote.

Several key elements of the Lisbon Treaty render it very dangerous to the sovereignty of the individual nations of the European Union. These include the creation of a full-time president, powers to develop a single European foreign policy and defense system and yet more power for the European Parliament. Much national sovereignty has already been lost over the years.

EU law says all 27 member states have to ratify the treaty. Only the Irish Republic has democratically held a ref-

(See "EU," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

# Restoration

of all things..." ACTS 3:21

## Joel and the Start of the Church

**R**ecently I was reading Acts 2 and the sermon the apostle Peter gave on the Feast of Pentecost, the day that marks the beginning of God's Church. Peter quotes from the prophecies of Joel in verses 17 through 21. But have you ever wondered why?

The passage speaks of God's Spirit being poured out on all flesh, of young and old prophesying, of their dreams and visions. It speaks of signs in the heavens and a time when the "sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD" (Acts 2:20).

This passage is mixed with good and bad pronouncements. When you look at the source, one of the minor prophets of the Old Testament, you will read of horrible events. Locusts devouring the grain and famine and mourning occupy most of the first chapter. It goes downhill from there.

The prophecy of Joel is one of the most dire in the entire Bible. The bad news definitely outweighs the good. The book ends on an uncharacteristically blunt note by speaking of the desolation of Egypt and Edom. By contrast, the prophecy says God dwells in Zion, that Judah and Jerusalem "abide forever." In essence, it says, God's nation wins over all others! I have to admit, Joel's prophecy is hardly the message I would first think of for the inaugural sermon for a Church based on brotherly love and mercy.

But Joel is where Peter was inspired to turn for his opening lines. In thinking about this, I came to a conclusion. On Pentecost God was starting a new entity, the Church of God. It would be a spiritual body of believers called from many different nations. No longer would God work only with one nation, Israel, the descendants of Abraham. This new body of believers would be empowered with the Holy Spirit to go into all the world, preach the gospel of the Kingdom and make believers. This would be a hard job in a world openly hostile to the true gospel.

Revelation 12, for example, is a condensed history of the Church through the ages. It shows the persecution engineered by Satan against the "woman who gave birth to the male Child" (verse 13). It shows the dramatic scene of Satan as the "accuser of our brethren" before the presence of God (verse 10). Satan, through those he is influencing in human governments, has sought to overthrow the Kingdom of God, as well as the messengers of that government since the beginning. Note the sober pronouncement of verse 9, that he has deceived the entire world.

Could it be that Peter's reference to Joel's prophecies was in part a signal that though the task before believers would be challenging, there would always be the constant aid and comfort of God's power through His Holy Spirit? Was God reminding us through this reference to Joel's stark prophetic book that the Church would develop in a hostile environment (Matthew 11:12)?

The Church Jesus founded has for the most part been a small and often persecuted group. There are times in history it would be difficult to even find its location. Today it is still small, but it carries out its biblical mandate to preach the gospel to the world. Its existence today is proof of God's faithful promise that nothing would prevail against its work.

This column takes its name from another sermon of Peter's in Acts 3. There he spoke of a time when all things would be restored (verse 21). We are not there yet. There will be some tough times before it happens. But we have God's assurance that He will see us through the perilous journey. Take comfort in that promise. The Kingdom of God is coming to this earth.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“EU” (Continued from page 1)  
erendum of its citizens. This Irish rejection happened in spite of strong verbal pressure brought by Brussels and Irish politicians on the electorate.

The pressure to reverse the Irish “no” vote has just begun. The European Union will not give up this constitution cum treaty that easily.

### **Franco-German pressure begins**

According to *The Sunday Times*, “The Irish government is expected to bow to Franco-German pressure and hold a second referendum to try to rescue the Lisbon treaty that voters rejected this month” (June 22, 2008).

Irish opponents of the treaty will certainly be outraged. But to ensure the treaty’s future passage, indications are that the European Union may be willing to make certain key concessions on Irish defense neutrality and sovereign rights to its own national abortion laws. Another

Irish vote is contemplated in the spring of 2009.

By July 1, the French will have taken over the rotating European Commission presidency. The same article reported that French President Nicholas Sarkozy “is determined to ‘save’ the EU... He said European leaders had already mandated France to ensure the EU ‘does not grind to a halt.’”

Already President Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel “have exerted subtle pressure on Ireland and its potential allies [the Czech Republic and Poland, see accompanying sidebar] by threatening the end of the EU’s enlargement east if the Lisbon treaty does not come into force” (ibid.).

### **Public ignorance is a huge factor**

The Irish citizenry took the Lisbon Treaty much more seriously than most Europeans. In fact, most European citizens know little about the terms of the

Lisbon Treaty and what it portends for the future. Jamie Smyth, European correspondent for *The Irish Times*, headlined his article on the subject, “Citizens of Europe United in Ignorance of the Treaty” (June 6, 2008).

He noted in the text: “The gap between Europe’s citizens and what they know about the Lisbon Treaty is a big one.” This prevailing public ignorance enables the European Union to slowly take national sovereignty by stealth.

Still, citizens in the Irish Republic have stood in the gap, at least temporarily. One observer stated: “The people of Ireland have shown enormous courage and wisdom in analyzing the facts presented to them and making the decision they have” (BBC News online, June 13, 2008).

### **Where is Europe headed?**

Former French President Jacques Chirac proclaimed his stunning vision of Europe back in 2002. It included: (1) A European military force independent of NATO; (2) a European police force; (3) a greatly strengthened Franco-German combine; (4) a new European constitution; (5) a strengthened European president elected by a European council (*The Times*, June 17, 2002).

Elections occur and presidents change, but Frances’ policies toward the European Union clearly remain relatively the same. Does it matter whether Mr. Sarkozy, Mr. Chirac or someone else occupies the chief office? Regardless of personalities or political leanings to the left or right, *the domination of Europe by a single voice is the ultimate goal.*

Political, economic and military national sovereignties would be lost. This generally accords with the broad biblical vision given in the books of Daniel and Revelation. (For the intriguing details, please see the accompanying sidebar, “A New Superpower to Emerge,” excerpted from our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* Please request a free copy in print or download it from [www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org).)

### **The good news beyond the bad**

The good news is that when these biblical prophecies (which dovetail in the books of Daniel and Revelation) are finally and completely fulfilled, the

## **A New Superpower to Emerge**

Does Bible prophecy foretell a revival of the Roman Empire? Indeed it does—it is prophesied extensively in Daniel and Revelation, as the following excerpt from our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* shows:

Daniel, interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a colossal human image, spoke of a series of kingdoms or empires to arise on the world scene. The first of these, said Daniel, was the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar himself (Daniel 2:28-38). Comparing history with other prophecies, we can understand that these four kingdoms were, in order, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian and Roman empires.

Speaking of the fourth and final kingdom, the Roman Empire, Daniel said it would be “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” (verse 40). Rome indeed proved to be more dominant and enduring than its predecessors, swallowing up all remnants in a reign that lasted for centuries...

The Bible prophesies that a group of 10 “kings,” or national leaders, through alliances or other arrangements will give rise to a union that will fulfill these end-time predictions. Daniel’s prophecy indicates these leaders will preserve their cultures and languages, so it will not be an integrated group of states, such as the United States, but 10 individual political and cultural entities united for a common purpose. Some countries will be much stronger than others.

Notice that the book of Revelation gives more details: “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [a relatively short time] as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb [Jesus Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen and faithful” (Revelation 17:12-14).

The current moves to expand and solidify the European Union appear to be a precursor to this prophesied power. ❖

Kingdom of God will have taken up residence here on earth.

Read this amazing forecast proclaimed by Daniel the prophet: "In the time of those kings [leaders of a coming Europe-centered superpower] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed... It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it [the Kingdom of God] will itself endure forever" (Daniel 2:44, New International Version).

This astonishing biblical prophecy accords with the second coming of Jesus Christ when God the Father will give Him "authority, glory and sovereign power... His dominion is an everlasting dominion...and His Kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14, NIV).

But Jesus Christ will not rule alone. The resurrected, glorified saints of God will assist Him. "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His [Christ's] kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all

rulers will worship and obey him" (verse 27, NIV).

After Christ's second coming, at last these age-old problems and divisions in Europe (and the rest of the world) will be permanently solved. Unity and peace will finally prevail on a global basis.

This could be your awesome future legacy. Down through the age of man, God has been calling and preparing people to assist Christ during the Millennium (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6). The Father is still in the process of calling this select group to rulership during Jesus' prophesied millennial reign (Acts 2:39).

But He will not force anyone to accept this precious calling. To understand how you can be a part of this select group of God's firstfruits (James 1:18; Romans 8:23), request or download our free booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

### Recommended reading

There is much more to this intriguing chain of events than we can possi-

bly relate in one brief article. For further knowledge, request or download our free booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. These three publications will make the impact of these prophecies plain and show you just how they are all tempered together to ultimately bring about the fulfillment of God's glorious plan and purpose for all humankind. ❖

## EU Pressures Poland and the Czech Republic

According to *The Times*, "Fears that Eastern European countries are preparing to follow Ireland's rejection of the Lisbon treaty have increased tensions... The Continent's leaders are refusing to accept that the treaty is dead, despite the dramatic Irish referendum rejection last week, and are determined to persuade the Czechs and the Poles, seen as the two [EU countries] most likely to suspend ratification, to complete the process" (June 19, 2008).

The Lisbon Treaty has been passed by the Polish parliament, but President Kaczynski may well decide to withhold his required signature until he sees how the Irish Republic will react to increasing EU pressure.

A constitutional court challenge has taken place in the Czech Republic. Although President Klaus has gone so far as to declare the Lisbon Treaty dead, the Czech government as a whole hasn't yet given a clear statement of what it may decide.

Large nations (or combines of countries) know how to put economic and political pressures on smaller ones. At the present time resistance is still possible, but when these biblical prophecies about the end-time alignment of nations begin to be fulfilled, smaller nations will be hard-pressed to have a say in their individual destinies. ❖

## How Can You Make Sense of the News?



[www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org)

**S**o much is happening in the world, and so quickly, that it's almost impossible to sort it all out.

Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? Is prophecy coming to pass before our eyes? How can you know the answers?

You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the *World News & Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy.

This eye-opening site offers you a perspective you won't find anywhere else—the perspective

of God's Word, the Bible. Here's some of what you'll find:

- Articles analyzing world news in the light of Bible prophecy.
- An online blog discussing the latest news and trends.
- 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.

To understand the meaning behind the news and where the world is headed, visit us at [www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org) today!



# The Next Colossal Fulfillment of Prophecy!

*Every time I saw them, they asked the same question, "What's going to happen next in prophecy?" But time proved they truly didn't want to know the answer! They wanted only to observe. What about you? Are you a spectator or a player?*

by Cecil E. Maranville

**T**wo brothers lived in the beautiful foothills of the Canadian Rocky Mountains on a cattle ranch. They had asked my church to send a minister to answer their Bible questions, and I drew the assignment.

The first time I met them, they asked, "What's going to happen next in Bible prophecy?" We discussed the subject at some length. It was clear to me that they had studied the Bible's prophecies in detail. In addition to talking about what might happen next, I also showed the brothers the underlying purpose for all prophecy—something they had overlooked.

I called on them some weeks later and they asked the same question. They asked it again on my third visit. Every time, I attempted to stir them to look deeper into this important subject. I was unsuccessful.

Eventually, I realized that they actually didn't want to know; they only wanted to observe! They were students of prophecy to be sure, but they were spectators, not players. They wanted only one thing out of studying prophecy: They wanted to know if the world was close to its end. We parted company on friendly terms.

What's the difference between being a spectator and a player in regards to prophecy?

## **Prophecy becomes personal**

Typically, spectators of prophecy are looking for disasters. It's true that Jesus foretold that in the time of the end "there will be famines [critical food shortages], pestilences [disease epidemics], and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:7).

Christ later added through John in Revelation the famous vision of the Four Horsemen, which includes predictions of catastrophe on a world scale. (Read what



Reuters/Frank Polich

*Residents of Canton, Missouri, help to sandbag the levee along the Mississippi River June 17. The flooding caused billions of dollars of damage.*

Jesus told John in Revelation 6. And at [www.ucg.org/reprints/pdf/horsemen.pdf](http://www.ucg.org/reprints/pdf/horsemen.pdf), you can read "Horsemen of the Apocalypse," a series of our articles that explain their symbolism. For those without access to the Internet, you can request them from the address listed on page 15.)

So, it's natural for a student of prophecy to watch for major catastrophes. But what makes one "a player"? Perhaps that's an apt description of someone in the midst of one of those catastrophes!

I have friends in Iowa who have been sending me pictures of the rising rivers. The flooding there has caused an estimated \$2 billion in property damage as of this writing. There will be an attendant cost in the loss of the corn crop and the destruction of livestock. In fact, food costs began to rise as a result in a matter of days.

Shortly before the river began to flood,

*While prophecy may deal with a significant person, a group of people, a nation, a region, the entire earth, the weather, diseases, natural catastrophes and wars, the ultimate application of prophecy is personal.*



*For some, prophecy is merely a hobby. Their outlook is no different from that of the little child in the backseat of the family car asking, “Dad, are we there yet?”*

the same weather system triggered a “shower” of tornadoes that struck the central United States, one zeroing in on a Boy Scout camp, where four young teens lost their lives and nearly 50 more were injured.

Hurricane Katrina pummeled the Gulf coastline of America in 2005, smashing or flooding thousands of homes and businesses, reshaping the physical and the political landscape of the nation for years to come.

Everyone whose property was destroyed—everyone who was injured or who lost a loved one—might well feel that he or she was experiencing the fulfillment of prophecy.

Do you recall your feelings when you learned of the so-called Christmas Tsunami in 2004, the one spawned by a 9.0 earthquake? When a calamity of that magnitude strikes anywhere on earth, many feel themselves in a prophetic zone. The same can be said of the twin disasters this May, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (Burma) and the nearly 8.0 earthquake in Szechuan China.

The question on the minds of many when in a “prophetic zone” is, “Is this the beginning of the end?”

People who were never particularly religious seek God. Those who already have a relationship with God want to renew and deepen it.

But in time, the flood waters recede; that which was destroyed is rebuilt; the news cycle moves on to other issues; and people leave the “prophetic zone” and get back to living as they choose to without much thought of God.

Living through these crises does not automatically make one “a player” in Bible prophecy.

### **More than a marker for “the end”**

Prophecy is more than merely a roadmap by which you might guess where humankind is (or where you are) in God’s timeline. It’s a mistake to think of the Bible as a “GPS” location finder! You know, a device that gives you directions vocally and will tell you, “Turn right at the next intersection” or, “Turn around; you missed your exit!”

There are countless millions of people generally familiar with Bible prophecy, who are waiting for “the sign” that tells them it’s time for them to make major changes in their

lives, because “the end (or *their* end) is coming.”

Bible prophecy doesn’t work that way. There are indeed examples in the Bible when it suited God’s purpose to make a detailed prediction about an individual. But can you imagine how huge the Bible would have to be to include such prophecies for only a small percentage of humanity?

Prophecy of necessity covers broad time spans, but it is precise enough to get the attention of those who read and/or hear it. The purpose of prophecy isn’t simply to predict tragedy or the end of the age.

Another purpose is to help people discover: (1) that there is a Creator God, (2) that He has expectations for how they should live their lives and (3) that He will require them to comply with those expectations for their good!

You don’t have to experience a near-death tragedy, lose a loved one or have your personal property destroyed to be in “a prophetic zone.” You can choose at any time to realize the purpose of prophecy. You don’t have to come close to death to come close to life!

### **Some won’t get the point**

For some, prophecy will remain merely a hobby, a curiosity. They want to know what is going to happen just so they can be in the right place to see it unfold. To them, catastrophe frankly has an element of entertainment to it.

For those young men I met decades ago in the Canadian Rockies, prophecy was simply a marker by which to judge how close they were to the end of the age. They were respectable people, but they were only onlookers to the Bible’s prophecies. Their outlook was no different from that of the little child in the backseat of the family car asking, “Dad, are we there yet?”

Those brothers didn’t understand the purpose for prophecy. They saw nothing in prophecy that caused them to change the way they

were living. That's what "a player" does; that's the difference between a spectator and a player.

Jesus, the greatest Prophet, continued the theme He and His Father inspired the Old Testament prophets to declare: The Kingdom of God is coming from heaven to earth. This is another way of saying "the gospel."

When beginning His public ministry, He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). "Gospel" means "good news." The greatest good news is that Jesus will establish one world government, which is subject to the laws of God. This will result in everyone changing his or her behavior, the meaning of "repent."

While prophecy may deal with a significant person, a group of people, a nation, a region, the entire earth, the weather, diseases, natural catastrophes and wars, the ultimate application of prophecy is personal. It is God speaking to you, for your benefit, nudging you to change the way you live.

### Here's the question to ask!

Perhaps the most appealing question is, "What's going to happen next in Bible prophecy?" But the better question is, "What does prophecy show me that I need to do?" Even the book of Revelation, which some might say is the ultimate book of prophecy, is in the end about human behavior and the consequences of the choices that people make. It gives an array of messages, all with the common purpose of urging us to change our behavior so God can give us all that is in His heart to give us.

The first few verses of Luke 13 contain a snapshot of two tragedies that occurred in the first century, during Jesus' ministry. They help us interpret such modern tragedies as the Myanmar cyclone and the Indonesian tsunami.

One, the execution of people literally in the act of worshipping God by an unjust government, has some parallels with the millions in Myanmar whose lives are threat-



*Cyclone Nargis victims in Myanmar prepare to leave the Central Relief Camp after the authorities decided to close the camp on June 2. Many said that their villages are still flooded and uninhabitable.*

ened today not by a storm so much as by their government's actions. The other, the collapse of a tower that killed many innocent victims, has parallels with the innocents who die in earthquakes and tidal waves today.

Of both, Jesus said we ought not think that the victims deserved to die or that they were being made to pay for sin with their lives. Instead, He said that survivors ought to think at such a time about their personal behavior; whether that behavior is what God expects. "I tell you... unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5).

Christ wasn't warning them that they would die at the hands of other people or in a natural disaster; He was speaking of "perishing" in the spiritual sense. That is, they would never realize the potential for which God through Jesus created them.

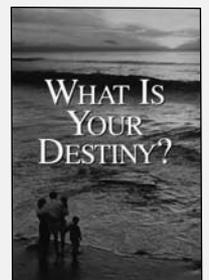
Sometimes, disasters that hit us or those we love can shock us into becoming "players" in Bible prophecy, but we don't have to wait until then. We can choose at any moment to become participants in the underlying purpose for Bible prophecy. This booklet will put you

on the right track: *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* Don't assume that just because you believe there is a God that your life is in line with God's purpose.

What is the next colossal fulfillment of Bible prophecy? It can be what is happening within you... Have the courage to step aside from what those around you are thinking about prophecy and investigate its truest value with the help of our booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* ❖

### Recommended Reading

Why did God create human beings in the first place? Does the Bible reveal a great divine plan and purpose? Why has it been hidden from most of mankind? These questions are answered in the free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* Request or download your free copy today.



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[www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org)

# Watching and Understanding With *World News and Prophecy*

*Now more than ever, it is vital that you develop a worldview that gives understanding of today's world events.*

by Darris McNeely

**N**early every morning I read three newspapers and check a number of Internet sites to see the current news, gather ideas and look for trends developing in the world. In addition I am always reading books on history, current events and biographies to gain deeper insight into world events and those making the news. I guess you could call me a news junkie with an insatiable appetite for information.

How can we process and make sense of all this information? What process can we use to form an accurate worldview that transcends the normal analysis from the mainstream media?

We can begin with the same question the disciples asked Jesus that day on the Mount of Olives when they wanted to know “when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). Christ had just pointed to all the magnificent buildings of the temple and predicted that it would all come down.

It wasn't long before Christ's words were initially fulfilled in the clash between Jerusalem and the armies of the Roman Empire. The city was destroyed in A.D. 70 when Rome projected its power into this corner of the empire and demolished the Jewish state. The Jews revolted and Rome responded. It was a major political clash that changed history and fulfilled a key biblical prophecy.

But understand this: When it happened, most of the inhabitants of the land did not realize its meaning. Jesus' words were forgotten by most, remembered by a few and misunderstood by the rest. Without an anchor solidly planted in the Word of God, we, too, will miss the meaning of world events that shape our present and future.

Jesus Christ was a prophet! We should



*Ten years of World News and Prophecy—this issue is the 100th.*

pay attention to His words so that we might understand the prophetic significance of current events. His answer to the disciples described the course of events from that time to today and on to His dramatic return.

## **WNP's mission**

That is why we use this verse within our mission statement: “The mission of *World News and Prophecy* (WNP) is to provide United Church of God members and other interested persons with commentary and analysis of selected world news topics in the light of Bible prophecy. Its purpose is to help readers discern the times and increase their awareness and understanding of the answers Christ gave to His disciples' question: ‘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).”

Do you notice our intent? We want to help you to “discern the times and increase... awareness and understanding.” We don't want you to be like the citizens of Jerusalem in the first century, caught like birds in a trap, who, though warned by Christ, did

*We believe God's Word gives us the framework to understand the context of our lives in this fast-paced modern technological age.*

not know what was in their near future.

We believe God's Word gives us the framework to understand the context of our lives in this fast-paced modern technological age. Using the Bible as the foundation of knowledge, we can chart a course through the maze of information thrown at us through all forms of media. God's revealed Word, then, is the lens through which we view politics, philosophies and religions of the entire world.

When I read a news story or write an article or make a public presentation at one of our *World News and Prophecy* seminars, this shapes my approach.

This publication is nearing its 10th anniversary, having run 100 issues full of articles on world events and Bible prophecy. We strive to craft every word of every issue from a view that God is in control of the major trends and events of history. As Daniel's prophecy reveals, God sets up leaders and kings over nations and He controls the course of nations and empires (Daniel 2:20-21; 4:25). Nothing happens of which He is not aware.

### **WNP seminars**

For more than six years the writers of *WNP* have conducted public seminars for our readers. We have traveled across the United States and internationally to meet with readers and continue the conversation begun within these pages.

Through these seminars we are able to make in-depth presentations on topics such as "The Mark of the Beast," "The King of the South," "Europe's Long Dream" and many other topics. It has been helpful to meet with readers and hear their ideas about the Bible and see their enthusiasm for hearing a discussion of prophetic topics. Many travel hundreds of miles to attend.

I have found that many young people are especially interested in Bible prophecy. They want to learn more of the details and to connect the events of today's world to the major prophetic trends. They see the value

of having a God-centered approach to the world. *World News and Prophecy* gives them a perspective they do not find elsewhere.

Within the past 12 months we have conducted seminars in nine locations. The coming year will see us conduct seven additional seminars. Be watching here for announcements of these seminars so you can attend.

### **WNP online**

We began the online version of *World News and Prophecy* four and a half years ago when it became apparent we needed to update stories and provide commentary between issues. Blogging and podcasting technology had developed to enable communication to be done on the Web with ease and quickness.

At [wnponline.org](http://wnponline.org) you will find all back issues of *WNP*, along with the blog and podcast, *Longitude*. Commentary can be found on a wide range of topics meant to encourage and help discern the times and the news. You can set an RSS feed to read the blog through a Web reader as it is updated.

We have taped many of the *WNP* seminars presented over the years, and you will find them archived there as well. Watch them on your computer or download them to watch or listen to on your iPod or MP3 player.

### **The view from the Kingdom**

Back to my original thought. How do we process all the information available today? How are our views and opinions shaped? It is very simple. We strive to always look from the vantage point of the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

The Bible reveals the truth of the coming Kingdom to replace all human kingdoms. The book of Revelation shows that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet voices in heaven say, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15).

Though the literal realization of this Kingdom is future, the Bible

gives us many details of how this time will revolutionize all human relationships and institutions. All things will become new as the way of God is taught from Jerusalem to all the nations. A complete restoration of all things will take place throughout human society.

With God's law and way clearly seen in Scripture, it is logical to form a solution for the problems and ills of society. The solution is the application of the laws and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. The way out of the wars and upsets of nations is to apply the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. They work on the individual level and will work on the international level.

Some say they won't work. How do they know? Have they ever seen these teachings actually applied in the manner Christ taught? No, they haven't. And don't look for them to be completely applied as long as humans are running the governments.

But this forms my worldview: I live in this world today as a citizen of the future Kingdom of God. I strive to treat people as they should be treated—with the principles of the Sermon on the Mount as my guide. I examine the social and political issues around us from the perspective of the way God dealt with Israel and the nations with which they came into contact.

Pilate was told by Christ that His Kingdom was not of this world, and so I don't look for any government or political philosophy to provide the ultimate solution. At best, I pray for a wise, just and humane government for all people—while framing the entire prayer with the hope of "Your kingdom come," as Jesus told us to pray daily.

As you read *World News and Prophecy*, and all other literature produced by the United Church of God, keep these principles in mind. God is moving history to a time when He will intervene to end human rule on this planet. The coming of His Kingdom is as certain as the rising of tomorrow's sun. God speed that day! ❖

# Armageddon: Countdown to Global Peace

*Writings on Armageddon have proliferated in the past 50 years. The term Armageddon has morphed into an end-of-the-world symbol, forecasting a catastrophic image for the future of mankind. In truth, the events attached to and following Armageddon will usher in global peace for all mankind! Few have ever understood what the term Armageddon actually means.*

by Jerold Aust

**P**resident Ronald Reagan, during the threatening Cold War years, sometimes referred to a coming Armageddon. Considering the probability of a disastrous nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States of America and desiring to provide Americans with an all-inclusive defense against a major Soviet nuclear attack, President Reagan came up with a nuclear defense program called the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

The president delivered a speech about this plan in 1983; the press referred to it as Star Wars, since SDI was conceived by Mr. Reagan to destroy incoming nuclear warheads in the heavens above. It was a masterful rhetorical device. He felt this might be a workable deterrent to Soviet aggression.

The Soviets reacted sharply and negatively, assuming that the United States had some military plan so extraordinary that it required their immediate attention (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, citing George Shultz, *Cold War: Reagan's Star Wars Initiative (Shultz Memoirs)*, [www.margaretthatcher.org/commentary/displaydocument.asp?docid=110632](http://www.margaretthatcher.org/commentary/displaydocument.asp?docid=110632)).

During the Reagan years (1981-1989), the president spoke various times of Armageddon. I often wondered how many millions of viewers thought that Armageddon literally meant the end of the world. It appeared they did and that he did. I know of no leader throughout modern history who didn't think this.

I also wondered how much President Reagan really understood about the ingredients that make up the Armageddon concept. Since Mr. Reagan was a man who had firm and insightful beliefs about people, God and the Bible, did he understand the truth about Armageddon? More importantly, do you understand the meaning and end results of Armageddon?



Scott Ashley

*Excavation at Megiddo, a city with a long history of conflict that gives its name to Armageddon.*

## What is Armageddon?

The English term *Armageddon* comes from a combination of Hebrew words *Har* and *Megiddo*. *Har* means hill and *Megiddo* is roughly translated, “a place of troops.” The valley of Megiddo is on the south and east side of the ancient city of Megiddo. The Bible calls the hill of Megiddo, Armageddon (Revelation 16:16).

Well-meaning people have taken the term *Armageddon* and morphed it into the final and all-destructive war of mankind. It's as if we've made this term into “armed-Megiddo,” which is true in part, but not true linguistically (see above) and biblically: “And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16).

This then is what Armageddon is. Knowing what it is helps us to understand what it is not. Megiddo was and is a magnet for war.

## Armageddon and war

It has been said that there have been more wars fought at or around either the valley of

*The Bible shows great armies will gather at Armageddon before moving toward Jerusalem to fight the returning Jesus Christ.*

Megiddo or the hill of Megiddo than any other spot on earth. Megiddo is located at a very critical junction in Palestine; it lies at the intersection of most important trade routes also used by armies heading north or south. This is why there have been so many wars fought in, on and around the strategically located hill of Megiddo.

“Megiddo [was an] important town of ancient Palestine, overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon (Valley of Jezreel). It lies about 18 miles (29 km) southeast of Haifa in northern Israel. Megiddo’s strategic location at the crossing of two military and trade routes gave the city an importance far beyond its size. It controlled a commonly used pass on the trading route between Egypt and Mesopotamia, and it also stood along the northwest-southeast route that connected the Phoenician cities with Jerusalem and the Jordan River valley” ([www.britannica.com/eb/article-9051799/Megiddo](http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9051799/Megiddo)).

An example of Megiddo’s critically strategic location was addressed by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the article “Megiddo—The Solomonic ‘Chariot City’” (Nov. 20, 2000). “Megiddo is mentioned many times in Egyptian royal inscriptions from the 15th to the 13th centuries BCE [before the common era]. They attest to the city’s importance as the center of Egyptian administration in Canaan and as a logistical base on the road north” ([www.mfa.gov.il/MFA](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA)).

So why does the Bible mention Armageddon in connection with an end-time event in the book of Revelation?

### **Armies will gather at Megiddo**

The purpose of Armageddon in the very end time is to set the stage for the greatest battle ever fought. Yet that greatest battle will not be between the armies of the prophetic Beast and the army of 200 million soldiers of the kings of the East (Revelation 16:16)!

A cursory glance at Revelation 16 together with the morphed idea about Armageddon can cause people to assume this false notion. The truth of this great event is found in Revelation 16, and it tells the true story

of Armageddon, which isn’t the same as the mythical one.

### **The invitation to Jerusalem**

Revelation 16 tells us that God dries up the mighty Euphrates River so that the great armies of the East can walk across it. “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” (Revelation 16:12).

They will be headed straight for the larger Valley of Jezreel and on to the hill of Megiddo on its west side. Immediately south of Megiddo will be the great armies of the Beast power, identified in both Revelation 13 and 17, called the king of the North in Daniel 11:40.

The king of the North (likely a future incarnation of today’s European Union and its leader) will have been in the Middle East after counterattacking the king of the South (which could well be a confederation of Islamic states and its leader). Europe’s counterattack will come quickly.

The king of the North will surround Jerusalem after conducting a blitzkrieg on the king of the South and its confederated states.

“At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon.

“He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels.

“But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he

shall come to his end, and no one will help him” (Daniel 11:40-45).

### **Jerusalem: the battle of that great day of God Almighty**

If you read Scripture carefully, you *will not find the final battle of this age* raging at the hill or valley of Megiddo. You will find that Armageddon is a staging place for all the armies surrounding Megiddo. “And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16). The operative word here is “gathered.”

Two verses earlier you will find these critical words: “For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, *to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty*” (verse 14, emphasis added). God allows lying spirits to persuade the kings of the earth to move down to Jerusalem. Har-Megiddo (Armageddon) is where they all meet. Jerusalem is where the returning Christ will confront and destroy them. The battle of that great day of God Almighty takes place at and around Jerusalem (Zechariah 14).

### **Armageddon sets the stage for global peace**

Christ will declare war on all these kings and destroy them and their armies (Revelation 19). The birds will pick clean their bodies and the Beast and False Prophet will be burned up in the lake of fire (verse 20). God’s great day of battle will bring unprecedented carnage on the tyrants that moved from Megiddo (Armageddon) to Jerusalem. The blood will run as deep as the height of the bridle on a horse (Revelation 14:20). God reveals in graphic terms how the tyrants will die: Their flesh, eyes and tongues will dissolve while they stand (Zechariah 14:12).

Only then can global peace come about, beginning at Jerusalem. Armageddon is not the final battle between great kingdoms of armies but the staging place where they are motivated to go up to Jerusalem for the battle of that great day of God Almighty! In truth, Armageddon signals the final countdown to global peace foretold centuries ago in the pages of your Bible. ❖

# Europe and the Church, Part 3

## The Early Church

*The first Christians expected Jesus Christ to return in their lifetime, bringing an end to the Roman Empire. But the empire was set to continue for many centuries. The relationship between the early Church and the state caused turmoil in the Church and led to the development of a very different church.*

by Melvin Rhodes

*In the first century of the Christian era, Church and state were in conflict. The relationship between Church and state was to be a constant theme throughout history.*

Jesus Christ came “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14). In Luke 9:1-2 we see the 12 disciples were also sent out to preach this central message of the coming Kingdom of God. “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”

After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we see the apostles preaching the same message. The apostle Paul, who was called to be an apostle after the original 12, “went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8). At the end of the same book we see Paul continuing in “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:31).

The Jews of Christ’s time and the early Christians, many of whom were Jewish by birth, were very aware of Old Testament prophecies about the Kingdom. They were familiar with the prophecies revealed in the book of Daniel, which had been revealed to Daniel in the sixth century before Christ.

When the disciples asked Jesus: “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of this age?” (Matthew 24:3), He replied with a quote from the book of Daniel: “Therefore, when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet...” (Matthew 24:15).

The same book of Daniel revealed a sequence of successive gentile empires that would all have a profound impact on the Jewish people. Daniel had been taken as a slave to Babylon, the first of these empires, during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar in 604 B.C. God used him powerfully. In Daniel chapter 2 we see God using this prophet to reveal to

Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of a dream. In his dream, the king saw a progression of four great empires, the first of which was his (Daniel 2:36-38). After Babylon another great kingdom would arise, Persia, “then another,” Greece (verse 39).

After these three, there would come a “fourth kingdom,” the Roman Empire (verse 40). This would be followed by the Kingdom of God: “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (verse 44).

Inevitably, the expectation of the early Christians was of the imminent return of the Messiah.

For much of his ministry the apostle Paul himself thought that Christ’s return was near. He wrote to the Thessalonians: “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:15). He wrote similar words to the Corinthian church: “We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51).

What they did not understand was that the Roman Empire would last for centuries. After the final demise of the Latin Western Empire in A.D. 476, there were to be 10 prophesied revivals of the empire down through history, culminating eventually in the second coming of the Messiah. God prophesied this in Daniel 7:7:

“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.”

A horn is a symbol of royal power. After the fall of the Western Empire, there were to be 10 revivals of the empire, leading ultimately to Christ’s return.

“I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated... and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him” (verses 9, 13).

It was not for the early Christians to know how long it would be before Christ’s return. The disciples’ asked Christ immediately prior to His ascension into heaven: “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Consider Christ’s answer: “It is not for you to know times and seasons which the Father has put in His own authority” (Acts 1:6-7).

Not only was the Messiah returning after their lifetime, the early Church was to come under an onslaught of persecution.

### Persecution

After much of central Rome was destroyed in the disastrous fire of A.D. 64, Emperor Nero blamed the Christians. Nero himself is thought to have been the likely arsonist, but he blamed Christians as convenient scapegoats. They were a new religion that rejected the Roman gods and refused to worship the supposedly divine emperors. Additionally, their preaching of a coming King and Kingdom could be considered treasonous.

Terrible persecution resulted as Christians were cruelly martyred for their beliefs. The apostle Paul was among those arrested and apparently executed. He reminded Christians that Jesus Christ had predicted His followers would suffer persecution (John 15:20), adding, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

It appears that the apostle Peter was executed about the same time as Paul. Persecution was only set to worsen.

Between A.D. 66 and 70, the province of Judea revolted against the Romans, which helped to turn the peoples of the empire against the Jews. As the early Christians were considered a sect of Judaism and shared many beliefs in common with the Jews, including observance of the seventh-day Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, Christians also suffered

the wrath that came down upon the Jews.

### Turmoil in the Church

By this time, some of Christ’s followers had left the faith. Others were compromising with the pagan religion of Rome. Eventually, such compromising would lead to a form of Christianity that was very different from that of the early Christians.

There had been false Christians from the beginning, the “tares” mixed in with the wheat that Jesus Himself had warned about in Matthew 13:24-30. Judas Iscariot had betrayed Him. Later, the apostles had to contend with Simon the Sorcerer, who “also believed,” but who corrupted the faith (Acts 8:9-24).

The apostle Paul warned the Galatians about their “turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel” (Galatians 1:6). A similar warning was given to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11:4.

Later, Paul warned that after his “departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29-30). He even said that Satan’s ministers would actually transform themselves into “ministers of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:15), just as “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (verse 14), passing himself off as a fake Messiah.

After the death of the apostles Paul and Peter, later in his ministry the apostle John observed that many members had left the fledgling Church. “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us” (1 John 2:19).

In his second epistle he wrote that “many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7).

Things worsened. In his final epistle he wrote about a Church leader, perhaps the pastor, casting the truly faithful out of the congregation (3 John 9-10).



*John received the Revelation while imprisoned on Patmos.*

Jude wrote, encouraging the faithful “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed...ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4).

Syncretism was taking place. (This is a mixture of religious philosophies, which in this case was a blend of human-devised concepts with the original teachings of Scripture.) Some Christians were compromising to fit more into Roman society.

The apostle John was the last surviving apostle. Under the Emperor Domitian (81-96) he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. Domitian cruelly persecuted the Jews and the Christians, who were indistinguishable to the Romans.

There on Patmos John received the Revelation of Jesus Christ. This book finally helped the true followers of Jesus Christ to see that His return would be in the distant future.

In the first century of the Christian era, Church and state were in conflict. The relationship between Church and state was to be a constant theme throughout history. It wasn’t until the fourth century, over 200 years later, that an attempt would be made to reconcile the two—but by that time, the church (a physical and political organization) was very different from the Church (the spiritual body) of Jesus Christ and the apostles. ❖

“WORTHY” (Continued from page 16)

### Dramatic about to occur!

The God of heaven introduces Himself as a conveyer of light and power in contrast to the darkened world below. The piercing brilliance of light into a dark world has a shattering effect on the psyche of man.

The stage is being set for the appearance and entrance of God into the affairs of man. With terms like *trumpet* (verse 1), *lightning* and *thunder* (verse 5), Christ inspires John to set a stage reminiscent of the trumpets, lightning and thunder of Mt. Sinai of old. Something even more dramatic than God’s encounter with ancient Israel is about to occur. But what can it be? And through whom?

This unique view through heaven’s door reminds us that everything that exists was created and is controlled in heaven; that God works with a plan that encompasses even “after these things” (4:1)—past the brick wall of our human imagination.

God wants us to give our attention and allegiance to His heavenly Kingdom, rather than despairing over the world of man. God commands the “eyes of our heart” to focus on Him alone; to look up rather than around.

Beyond the roaring glow of divine light and glory, John perceives “in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals” (5:1).

Scrolls of the time typically were made of papyrus and could be as long as 30 feet. At times they had clay or wax seals at critical points to maintain the confidentiality of what lay within. They had to be opened in a sequential manner, with one aspect of the message leading to the next, without disclosing the full content ahead of time. There are many thoughts about the number *seven*, but certainly it can convey that within this sealed scroll lay the complete revealed plan of God.

### The moment arrives

The stage is now set. It’s time to

position ourselves for the “Kodak moment.” The God of all history, beyond any beginning or end, is about to roll out His plan, but its details are tightly bound by those divinely imposed seals. So close, yet so far! What lies within that can offer any glimmer of hope to the age-old inquiry of the saints: “How long, O Lord?”

And then an angel makes a loud proclamation: “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” (5:2). John looks all around and comes to one conclusion: No one is stepping forward. No one is worthy. He declares, “And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it” (verse 3).

Utter despair sets in, as John discloses in verse 4, “I wept much.” He is totally frustrated. Had not God promised earlier to this man that “I will show you things which must take place after this” (Revelation 4:1)? But now, those seals! And no one is stepping forward.

Isn’t this the same God who had promised in the words of Amos, “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants” (Amos 3:7)? But the supernatural revelation comes to a standstill! No one is stepping forward.

### “Stop weeping!”

And then a message comes via one of Jesus Christ’s envoys, as found in Revelation 5:5: “Do not weep.” It is, was and shall always be one of the most healing of Jesus’ messages to those He encounters; whether it’s when He shares this encouragement with the widow of Nain in her utter despair at the death of her son (Luke 7:13) or whether it’s when He addresses the plight of Jairus regarding his daughter’s death (Luke 8:52).

His caring ministry, be it in heaven or on earth, never ceases. It knows no bounds, it is seamless and the message always remains the same: There’s no need to cry anymore!

But why? We are now about to witness the emergence of Jesus Christ on center stage. It is He who steps forward and by merit can open



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*“See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals” (Revelation 5:5, New International Version).*

the seals. The heavenly herald proclaims in verse 5, “See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals” (New International Version).

So what comes into John’s view? What does he look for? You would think a lion, but no! Revelation 5:6 describes an incredible visual double take. Instead of seeing a lion with all of its power and size, we find John discovering “in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”

Christ continues even in heaven to portray His sacrifice for all of God’s children. It is real. It is tangible. He is forever our sacrifice! It is a title and visual concept that God never wants us to move too far from in our thoughts. Thus the term *lamb*

is mentioned 29 times in the book of Revelation.

### Both Lion and Lamb

Here, Christ is called a lion, which depicts authority and power, and yet at the same time the same One “who is worthy” is depicted as a lamb to show His submissiveness to the will of God. In one look at the ascended Messiah, John sees both the majesty of a lion and the meekness of a lamb.

As the *Life Application Bible Commentary* describes, “Christ the



*Christ continues even in heaven to portray His sacrifice for all of God's children. It is real. It is tangible. He is forever our sacrifice! Lamb is a title and visual concept that God never wants us to move too far from in our thoughts.*

Lamb was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all; therefore, only He can save us from the terrible events revealed by the scroll. Christ the Lamb won the greatest battle of all. He defeated all the forces of evil by dying on the cross. The role of Christ the Lion will be to lead the battle where Satan is finally defeated... Christ the Lion is victorious because of what Christ the Lamb has already done.”

As Christ steps forward to claim His privilege to share and execute our Heavenly Father's will upon this earth, the hosts of heaven sing a “new song” proclaiming, “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9-10).

### “Come up here”

Yes, there is a time in the future when God is going to draw a line in the sands of time. God Almighty is not a cosmic absentee landlord. He is much more than simply a “first cause” of the creation. He has designs upon you and me, as part of all humankind, which is made in His image and likeness. For now, He allows the world to go the course of its choosing. Unfortunately, that path is “a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

Who then will champion life that truly is life-giving? Who will cross the line and step forward when the fate of this earth hangs in the balance? Who is there for us, standing alone, when no one else shows up or ventures forward? I think you know.

Let's learn a lesson from the apostle John's vision of the court of heaven. It's in the words of the “first voice” of Revelation 4:1 that we may hear echoed the admonition of “this is the way, walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21) as the messenger beckons, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place.”

The message is loud and clear and meant for us today. Keep the eyes of your heart looking “up here” to what God is choosing to perform, and do not worry who among us might dare to step forward, because God has already chosen a Champion, and He is more than worthy. ❖



Robin Webber

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“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,  
**This is the Way**  
walk in it. . .” **ISAIAH 30:21**

by Robin Webber

## “Who Is Worthy?”

**E**ver toed a line drawn in the sand when the call is made for a volunteer to step forward and take up a daunting challenge? Almost involuntarily, you look up and down the line to see who is responding, only to discover that no one is moving forward to accept the challenge. Nobody feels competent to accept the call to action.

You’re hoping someone will, lest you have to respond and you’re unsure if you’ll have what it takes. You’re “sweating bullets.” The seconds and minutes of waiting melt into what seems hours. Everyone’s body language is a “show and tell” of uneasy resignation that the call went out, but no one is going to respond. No one feels worthy.

Perhaps you have experienced this moment of drama in a high school gym class, a military boot camp or a summer youth program where everything was “cushy” until you were asked to step forward and make the difference.

But this story isn’t reserved for you or me or, for that matter, the here and now. It parallels the above-mentioned scenario, but with one noticeable difference: Someone does courageously step forward—once and forever.

It is one of the incredible prophetic “Kodak moments” in which the scriptural signpost in the book of Revelation tells you: Photograph the moment; develop it in your heart, and bring it out repeatedly to remember its message. Where, when, why, who and how does this memorable snapshot take place in the realm of the prophetic landscape?

### The door to heaven opens

Revelation’s message opens with the ascended Jesus Christ walking in the midst of the churches to encourage them as they remain in a wayward world apart from God. The end of chapter 3 speaks of Christ knocking on doors of those whom God is calling and then, a new door opens, not on earth, but in heaven (chapter 4:1).

Why is this transition from earth to heaven so important? The saints in this apocalyptic vision remain in a troubled world. Spiritual danger, as well as physical harm, appear to be their destiny. Everywhere are bewildering and seemingly insurmountable challenges to remain true to the divine calling.

As with the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel, God opens the heavens to the apostle John, to help us recognize and appreciate what has been rejected by humanity at large—the holiness of God! John describes how a voice commanded him to “come up here, and I will show you things that must take place after this.”

Then John, in vision, is placed before a “throne set in heaven, and One [who] sat on the throne” (verse 2). Rather than describe God Almighty in anthropomorphic terms, the apostle describes a shining world of light beckoning with the brilliant shimmer of shining gems, rainbows, lightning and fire created by seven fantastic lamps (verses 3-5).

(See “**WORTHY,**” page 14)