



In This Issue:

Sept./Oct. 2008 | Vol. 11, No. 8

Not by Might or by Power

by Darris McNeely 1

Restoration: Enduring Words

by Darris McNeely 2

Georgia on Moscow's Mind

by Paul Kieffer 5

Europe and the Church, Part 5: The Identity of the Little Horn



by Melvin Rhodes 7

The Rapture—A Popular but False Doctrine

by Cecil E. Maranville 11

This Is the Way... Immanuel—"God Is With Us"

by Robin Webber 16

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Not by Might or by Power

The ideal of a "peaceable kingdom" has held men's imaginations for centuries. Many efforts have been made to create this perfect utopia. How will it come—by human effort or by the power of God?

by Darris McNeely

In the 1880s an English author and social reformer named Thomas Hughes came to the woods of eastern Tennessee in America and founded an experimental colony called Rugby. Rugby was to be a place where Hughes' ideas of a just and equitable society could be realized. There would be no class or social distinctions such as those of England. In Rugby, through agricultural endeavors and support of various crafts, men and women could realize their potential in a planned and structured community.



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Humanity has long sought to create Utopia, the perfect, peaceful place today found only at the end of the rainbow.

Buildings went up. An inn was built. Hundreds of believers from England and America were attracted to the growing site. A small bit of England, without the class distinctions, was carved out of the Tennessee wilderness. For a time a thriving community attracted worldwide attention to the ideal that a planned community could produce a small utopian world. Rugby was even called a "New Jerusalem."

Unfortunately, Rugby did not endure. Typhoid struck one year, killing several. In time the financial backers pulled out, the economy changed and severe winters took their toll on the enthusiasm of the people. The inn burned and was not rebuilt. Gradually

the money, the zeal and the people disappeared, leaving behind only a few to hold to the dream.

You can visit Rugby today, as I did a few years ago, and see a historic remnant of another noble quest to found a community on social ideals. It is one of many such communities across America and the world. Such communities were founded with the goal of making social changes that would produce "utopia"—a place where justice and peace would reign.

The problem with all of these efforts is they did not succeed. Eventually they had to conform to the reality of the world to survive. Go to Shaker Village

(See "MIGHT," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Enduring Words

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is one of the great speeches of American history. Delivered by America's 16th president at the dedication of a military cemetery after a great Civil War battle, the speech is concise. Yet it captures the essence of the conflict that threatened the survival of the United States of America.

I had a chance recently to read a handwritten copy of the speech at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield, Illinois. It is written on less than two sheets of stationery. Reading the speech in Lincoln's own hand lets you see the speech in a different light from the normal mode of text in a book. It gives you a sense of the time it took to carefully craft into precise words and phrases the central idea Lincoln wanted to convey on the awful battlefield of that great conflict.

Douglas Wilson writes in *Lincoln's Sword* that Lincoln knew that public opinion "always has a 'central idea,' from which all its minor thoughts radiate." In 1863 that central idea was whether all men were created equal. Thomas Jefferson had enshrined the idea in the Declaration of Independence when he penned, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal..." Yet in Lincoln's day the country was tearing itself apart over the practical reality that all men were not treated as equals.

Slavery was the evil practice at the heart of the Civil War. Treating fellow humans as property, subhuman in theory and in practice, had torn the country in two. Lincoln understood the nation could not exist in a divided state, and he waged war to restore the union enshrined in the Constitution. He took the occasion of the cemetery dedication to give this speech that conveys a simple and eloquent truth.

He said, "We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain... and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." What a noble thought—that men would die for deeply held beliefs. Yet what a tragic shame that this ideal is enshrined in the crucible of war. Better that men would live to make men free just as Christ today lives to make men holy!

Lincoln achieved his goal to focus the nation on the real reason for the war. He knew that courage and commitment alone weren't enough to sustain the people through the war. Fatigue sets in when casualties are counted. "Is it worth the cost?" people ask. "What are we fighting for?" Lincoln knew he had to cast a higher vision to sustain the effort. In the end he did. The Union was saved and America went on to become the prophesied great single world power (Genesis 48:12-19).

It takes vision to see beyond the moment and focus clearly on the promise of the future. To capture the central idea of the mission is a rare gift in a leader.

This is the season in America for political speeches. But will the ideas match the times in which we live? Global economic uncertainty coupled with the changing perception of America's leadership role are threatening to create a world order quite different from the present. The times call for words that lead us to the clarity and comfort of God's Word. Of human speeches there are many, but none offer the insight we get from the revealed words of the Bible. It is there we find God's "central idea" for all of us. There we find the reason for our life and the purpose God is bringing to pass.

Lincoln's words restored a sense of mission for a profound human effort. God's enduring Word offers the path for restoring lasting freedom for every human. Put your heart and mind to the study of those words, for they lead to eternal life as sons of glory.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“MIGHT” (Continued from page 1)

in Kentucky or the Amana Colony in Iowa and you will see the same. The real world is cruel and unbending in its treatment of such efforts. Noble as they are, they have never worked. This is not to disparage any effort to bring about peace or justice, but the stark reality of history shows man's inability to create “the peaceable kingdom.”

The promise of the prophets

Throughout the Old Testament books of the Bible we read prophecies of a time when peace would pour from the streets of Jerusalem under a restored kingdom led by a descendant of King David. These messianic passages fueled an ages-long hope among the Jews that they would see their kingdom restored.

Notice the essence of the promise from Isaiah. “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people 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 shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

“He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:2-4).

In another passage the prophet paints one of the most enduring scenes of peace and harmony. Not only were the Jews given hope from its imagery, but also countless others through the ages have yearned for the life it pictures.

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall

judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall



*Today lions hide in the grass.
But soon they will eat it!*

eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:1-9).

These prophecies never came to pass in Isaiah's day. Jerusalem fell captive to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The last king was taken to Babylon in exile along with the majority of his subjects. Seventy years later, in fulfillment of a prophecy by Jeremiah, a group of Jews were allowed to return to the city and begin a rebuilding project.

To that generation and others to follow, the prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel and other prophets took on new meaning. They hoped that God would fulfill His promise—that one day the kingdom

of Israel would be renewed. Through the generations this expectation of a Messiah grew. With each generation the vision of this Kingdom changed till it became unrecognizable in comparison to the message of the prophets.

At times men would take up arms to overthrow the yoke of foreign rule and the people would hope in vain their “Messiah” had appeared. In the second century B.C. the Maccabean revolt offered a faint promise that was quickly extinguished. No leader, no matter how capable or brilliant, could bring to fruition the promises of the prophets.

Christ's mission

When Jesus Christ came announcing the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14), His teachings and miracles soon gathered a following. The Jews wanted to make Him their king (John 6:15). But His first coming was not the time when God's Kingdom would be restored to Israel. The Jews could not easily grasp this idea, in spite of the fact that Jesus told them that the long-sought Kingdom, the time of restoration, was not near (Luke 19:11).

His death shattered the hope of many. Only a few beyond His immediate disciples remained in the days following His death. A man suffering the ignominious death of crucifixion could not be the Messiah. Again the promise and the dream of the Kingdom was not realized.

However, Christ's first coming merely set the stage for the events leading to the fulfillment of the promised Kingdom. The fulfillment of the ancient prophecies was for a time yet in the future. This dimension was hard for believers and unbelievers alike to grasp at the time. Christ's parables of the Kingdom of God were such that people were not to understand the full meaning (Matthew 13:11). (That remains true today.) This led to the inevitable confusion when, after the founding of the Church of God, time marched on and no Kingdom appeared.

The apostle Peter came to understand this near the end of his life. He wrote to members of the Church that he and they would die without seeing the Kingdom (2 Peter 1:15). Yet Peter's hope didn't diminish, for he had person-

ally seen the majesty of its King (verse 16). Peter's words point us to the future, looking for the day of the Lord and a time of "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:10-13).

The Millennium

The apostle John's visions of the end time added one element to the visions of the prophets. The living Christ gave this last surviving apostle the vision that His rule on earth would include a period of 1,000 years following His second coming (Revelation 20:4). From this verse we get the term *Millennium*, Latin for 1,000.

Terms such as *millennial* or *Millennium* are then used to reference this time of peace and justice under the reign of Christ. Revelation is explicit that this reign of Christ will replace all forms of human government (Revelation 11:15).

The idea of the Millennium, the Kingdom of God, is revealed in stages throughout the Scriptures to give us the broad picture of God's intent to restore to the earth, a time when His government

and rule over all is total and complete. There are many related Scriptures that amplify the idea of what is to come.

They reveal that man will no longer learn or practice the customs of war. Nations will be taught a culture based on the eternal law of God. The result will be one generation after another of equality and justice. Economic policies will build sustainable markets that will not be prey to the cyclical ups and downs we see today.

The Bible reveals a festival season that keeps this vision alive in God's people's minds. It is called the Feast of Tabernacles. You can learn more about this and other festivals in our booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. God's festivals are Christ-centered and point to the future period when Christ will reign on the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Not by might...

God's Kingdom will not come by the might or power of any human. That

is the inescapable conclusion of both Scripture and history. The best efforts of human society have failed and will always fail to create anything close to the prophesied Kingdom. Human nature is incapable of producing any lasting equitable system. Nothing short of divine intervention can bring to pass the vision the Bible gives on the Kingdom of God. God Himself confirms this in plain, but powerful language: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

Author Norman Podhoretz wrote a book called *The Prophets: Who They Were and What They Are*. One of his conclusions regarding their visions was profound. He speculates that Isaiah's visions of swords beaten into plowshares are among the most influential in all of Western literature, generating "tumultuous moral and political ambitions."

"But concerning the vision of a perfect world, I would say this: if one believes in God, one can—indeed must—accept that it is in His power to bring about so miraculous a transformation at the End of Days. But if one believes in God, one must by the same token also accept that it is only in His power to perform these miracles, and not in the power of mere mortals like ourselves" (2002, p. 324).

Look no more to the efforts of man to create the "peaceable Kingdom." Look to God and His direct intervention into the course of history to bring His Kingdom to this earth. Pray for that Kingdom to come. ❖

How Can You Make Sense of the News?



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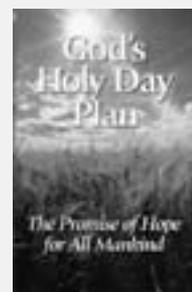
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Recommended Reading

Few people realize that the Holy Days given in the Bible help us understand God's plan for all humanity. You need to understand what the Bible says about these days and what they teach us! Request a free copy of *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.



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

Georgia on Moscow's Mind

The August miniwar between Russia and Georgia was not simply a local conflict about ethnic groups. It has huge implications for the NATO alliance and Europe's future energy security.

by Paul Kieffer

The guns of August are now silent in the Caucasus region, following a two-week conflict between Russia and Georgia, which was formerly part of the Soviet Union. European and American news media had different accounts on who was to blame for the outbreak of hostilities.

It seems clear that on Aug. 1 South Ossetian separatists attacked a military vehicle used by Georgian military observers, injuring five soldiers. This wasn't the first such incident in recent years, and in the past Georgia had repeatedly assured its neighbors that it wanted to settle the South Ossetia impasse by peaceful means.

Instead of an immediate response to the attack, it was six days later when Georgia's President Mikhail Saakashvili sent his troops into the rebel province of South Ossetia on Aug. 7. Early the next morning Russian troops entered the province from the north. Saakashvili may have misjudged Russia's response, or at worst he walked into a trap laid for him by South Ossetian separatists and the Russians themselves.

Russia pressed the attack by bombing Georgian military installations well beyond the borders of the rebel province. Within days Russian troops had also entered undisputed Georgian territory from South Ossetia and another rebel province to the west, Abkhazia. By the time a ceasefire was in place, some 1,700 people were dead and 120,000 Georgians were left homeless.

Why would Russia be so interested in South Ossetia? The Georgian province borders Russia but is within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia. However, for over a decade the Georgian government has had little control over the province after it declared its independence in the mid-1990s.

Prior to last month's fighting, Russia had frequently warned Georgia against military action to drive separatists out of South Ossetia. In addition, in the last decade many South Ossetians obtained Russian passports

and do not consider themselves to be part of Georgia.

The real issue for Russia is not an ethnic conflict, since South Ossetians and Georgians have lived together for decades without major ethnic tensions. Russia's disproportionate display of force against a country with insignificant military assets appears to reflect a geopolitical strategy to counter encirclement by the NATO alliance. It also sends a clear message to Europe about energy dependency.

Russian response to encirclement by NATO?

The strategic direction of Russia's foreign policy must be viewed in terms of the Soviet Union's demise. As the dominant region of that state, Russia was basically synonymous with the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union ceased to exist, Russia lost one fourth of its territory and about one third of its raw energy resources. In addition, the fear of being entrapped or surrounded has been a hallmark of Russian foreign policy for over a century, predating the rise of the Soviet Union.

When the four World War II allies agreed on a peace treaty in May 1990 that ended the official state of hostilities with Germany and allowed the two German states to unite, the handwriting was already on the wall for the Soviet Union. With Hungary and then the German Democratic Republic ("East Germany") having opened their borders to the west the previous summer, the iron curtain had become porous.

Moscow foresaw the loss of its Eastern European alliance and the eventual integration of its members into a growing European community of nations. As a result, it seems Moscow's view is that during the negotiations on German reunification it obtained a verbal promise that there would be no expansion of the NATO alliance eastward. Moscow sees the enlargement of NATO to include former Soviet bloc countries like

Why would Russia be so interested in South Ossetia? Its show of force was to counter NATO's expansion and to send a reminder to Europe about its dependence on Russia for energy.



Russian military vehicles drive near the Georgian town of Gori Aug. 18. Russia's massive show of strength sent a message far beyond Georgia's borders.

Poland, the Baltic States, Hungary, etc., as a violation of that informal understanding on Eastern Europe's future. Of course, no such assurance can be found in the official treaty signed in Moscow.

Add to that mix this year's April NATO summit held in Bucharest, Romania, where U.S. President George W. Bush urged America's NATO partners to put Ukraine and Georgia on an accelerated path for membership in the alliance. Bush's plan was a direct challenge to German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

With tensions between Georgia and Russia and energy disputes between Russian energy giant Gazprom and Ukraine in recent years, Merkel was concerned that Bush's plan would offend Russia. After all, Germany gets a lot of its energy from Russia, so good relations between the two countries are important. (Germany is Russia's biggest single trading partner, having transacted \$52.8 billion in bilateral trade in 2007.)

One month prior to the Bucharest summit, German Chancellor Merkel minced no words about her country's position on Georgia's bid to join NATO: "Countries that are enmeshed

in regional and internal conflicts cannot become NATO members." "It's too early," she added upon her arrival in Bucharest for the NATO meeting.

Viewing NATO's encirclement of Russia from Moscow's eyes helps us to understand Russia's response to Bush's proposal. Although the Cold War is over, having the NATO alliance directly on Russia's territorial border from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea gives some observers the impression of a reverse Cuban missile crisis. Before the summit, Russia's foreign minister Sergei Lavrov had warned NATO against "playing with fire," and Russia's NATO ambassador Dimitri Rogozin announced a "dramatic shift" in his country's relationship to NATO if the two countries were put on a fast-track for membership.

After Bush's request was not approved, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop-Scheffer stated his belief that if the two countries wanted to be part of NATO, membership for Georgia and Ukraine would be just a matter of time. That response was disappointing for both countries, but perhaps more for Georgia, where 77 percent of Georgians had voiced support for NATO member-

ship in a national referendum held last January.

European observers wonder whether Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili's decision to use force in South Ossetia might have been a tactic to put the issue of Georgian NATO membership back on the alliance's agenda. Most analysts believe that he totally misjudged the level and intensity of the Russian response, although it strains credibility to think that the Americans hadn't informed him that the Russians could and would hit back hard.

With its military response Russia appears to be drawing a line in the sand on NATO's eastward expansion. It has sent a clear signal to the West that the alliance will have to contend with Russian intervention if Georgia becomes a NATO member and any attempt is made to rein in the rebel provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Divide and control

Viewed strategically, Russia sees Georgia as an outpost of American foreign policy. America, not Europe, pushed for Georgian NATO membership. While last month's mini-war was being waged, America sent humanitarian relief supplies via military transport channels—an unusual step for a third party when two countries are at war. By contrast, Europe waited until the fighting was over.

Within Europe the immediate response to Russia's military response was mixed. The former east bloc countries of Poland and Estonia were quick to condemn Russia's action in sharp tones. It seems no coincidence that after 18 months of negotiations between the United States and Poland over a new missile shield for Europe—with part of the military hardware to be installed on Polish territory—the two countries signed an agreement while Russian planes were bombing targets inside Georgia.

The European response farther to the west was different. The other Western European nations did condemn the Russian response, but their words were much less forceful than

(See "GEORGIA," page 13)

Europe and the Church, Part 5

The Identity of the Little Horn

Who is the little horn of Daniel 7:8, the horn with “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words”? Since this article is the fifth in a series that began in the May 2008 issue, readers should be aware that some of the content builds on information explained in previous installments. You can find all of these articles on the World News and Prophecy Web site at www.wnponline.org.

by Melvin Rhodes

The prophet Daniel, receiving a vision from God, was “considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words” (Daniel 7:8).

The “fourth beast” of Daniel 7:7 is described as a great military power that was to be “dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. . . [with] huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet.” As explained in part 2 of this series (June 2008), this prophecy is fulfilled in the Roman Empire. Many students of prophecy recognize that the historic world-ruling kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome were pictured by the great beasts in this vision. In contrast now we read of another “horn,” again symbolizing royal power and authority, whose strength is not in military might, but in its “mouth speaking pompous words.”

Later in this chapter we read more detail of this horn.

“Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them” (verses 19-21).

Again, we see here that the military power comes first. The Roman Empire began in the pre-Christian era. But again we read that this other nonmilitary horn comes out of the Roman Empire. It’s described as “a mouth which spoke pompous words.” We are also told that it would



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The fourth beast of Daniel was fulfilled in the powerful Roman Empire. What was the little horn that grew out of it?

make “war against the saints,” the true followers of God.

Continuing in verse 25, we read that “he shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law.” Who could this be talking about? Who could have changed “times and law”?

The answer to this is found in history. Remember, Daniel was writing hundreds of years before these events were to happen. Even skeptics who don’t believe the book of Daniel was written in the sixth century B.C. have to admit that it was in existence at least one or two centuries before Christ because that’s the accepted dating for the Dead Sea Scrolls, which include the book of Daniel. So this prophecy clearly long predated the events it describes here.

Verse 25 ends with these chilling words: “Then

The Bible describes a false religious system that comes out of the prophetic fourth beast and tries to pass itself off as Christian. What does it all mean for us today?

the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.” The true followers of God were to be persecuted for a long period of time by this little horn.

In the book of Revelation, written six and a half centuries after Daniel, we read again of this persecution of God’s true servants. Again, it’s in the context of the Beast powers.

The book of Revelation is the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” to the apostle John (Revelation 1:1).

John writes: “Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion” (Revelation 13:1-2).

In this vision, John sees a composite of the first three beasts of Daniel chapter 7, the lion, bear and leopard, reflecting that the Babylonian, Medo-Persian and Greco-Macedonian empires rapidly succeeded one another and that they had similar characteristics. Could it be that they all shared a common source of their power? Notice, “The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2). Satan is the great dragon who deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He is also the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4) who wields great power over human affairs.

John continues: “I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast” (Revelation 13:3). The Western Roman Empire suffered an apparent mortal wound when it fell in A.D 476. But unlike most powers that fall and disappear, its “deadly wound was healed” and it would be resurrected. Notice in verse 4 the religious dimension: “So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’ And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

“It was granted to him to make war

with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (verses 4-8).

In verse 11 John sees “another beast



Odoacer conquered Rome in A.D. 476 and deposed the last Western emperor, Romulus Augustulus. This was the official end of the Western Roman Empire.

coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.” Jesus Christ is described as the Lamb of God, while Satan is a dragon. So this Beast with “two horns like a lamb” is a tool of Satan trying to pass as a representation of Jesus Christ. “And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Here we see described a false religious system, which comes out of the fourth beast and tries to pass itself off as Christian. It is a counterfeit form of Christianity. As Daniel 7:25 says, it would “change times and law.” A study of church history reveals that in the first four centuries after Christ died, doctrinal upheavals occurred in the Christian church that centered on changing the God-given day of worship from the Sabbath to Sunday (changing times) and teaching that the law of God was done away (changing laws).

Jesus Christ did not teach either of these things. Rather, He said: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill [that is, to live to the full, thereby setting an example for all people]” (Matthew 5:17).

In Revelation chapter 12, we read that

the false religious system, inspired by Satan, “went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17). This points to an end-time continuation of a centuries-old tactic. History shows us that the true Christian apostolic Church was nearly wiped out by this false form of Christianity that became the official church of the Roman Empire in the early fourth century.

In Revelation 13:15 “the image of the beast” is associated with worship and with religious persecution of those who will not worship in that way. It should be apparent that this image is a religious organization allied with the political power of the Beast. This religious power is brought to life by the one who “exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed” (verse 12).

The image, that is, the religious institution reflecting the power of the state, was to coexist with the empire from the conversion of Emperor Constantine until the fall of the Western Empire almost two centuries later.

Who is the little horn?

“The true successor of the Western Empire was the Papacy.” These words were written by L. Elliott Binns in an introduction to his definitive work *The Decline and Fall of the Medieval Papacy* (p. v).

Binns’ book cover states: “Not only was the Papacy the true successor to the Roman Empire; it was also the Empire’s mirror image.”

Writing of events that occurred in the latter half of the seventh century, historian Paul Johnson observed: “The Roman Church still spoke for the Empire” (*The Offshore Islanders*, 1972, p. 57). “Politics and religion were inseparable” (ibid., p. 49). Does the papacy fit the Bible description of “the image of the beast” (Revelation 13:15)?

Notice the similarities between the empire and the successor church.

“Though the administrative centre of the Empire had been transferred to Byzantium, the state religion was still centrally conducted from Rome. Already indeed its chain of command, and its contacts with outlying regions such as Britain,

were maintained in a more regular fashion than the political and military functions of the Empire. Christianity still had a working international infrastructure.

“This religion, by its very nature, was centralized, universalist, authoritarian and anti-regional. It was run by a disciplined priestly caste, commanded by bishops based on the imperial urban centres, under the ultimate authority of the Bishop of Rome itself, the spiritual voice of the western Empire. Its doctrines were absolutist, preaching unthinking submission to divine authority: the Emperor and his high priest, the Bishop of Rome, in this world, and a unitary god, who appointed the Emperor, in the next” (ibid., pp. 29-30).

There was, however, a difference.

“Under the pagan Empire the centre of unity had been political, the paramount authority that of the Emperor himself; so long as the supremacy of the state was recognized men might hold many different kinds of creeds and philosophies. The middle ages developed along exactly oppo-

site lines; its centre of unity was religious, the Roman Church; whilst alongside this religious unity there might go any number of political variations” (Binns, p. 3).

In other words, religious freedom was nonexistent throughout the Middle Ages, the period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the modern age at the end of the 15th century.

Church and state—an uneasy relationship

In Revelation chapter 17 we read a prophecy of the false religious system and its relationship with the governments of this world, a relationship that was to dominate the period from the giving of the Revelation to the apostle John, all the way to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

This relationship is starkly described: “With whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (Revelation 17:2). When people are drunk, they don’t know

what they are doing. False religion is like that. Humanity is ignorant of the fact that Satan “deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

When you look back at the history of the last two millennia, no institution has so dominated the world for such a long period of time as that of the papacy.

If the Church of Rome is the “image of the beast,” then that church is mentioned fairly extensively because of its political role—a role made more formidable by the Vatican being a state as well as the headquarters of a universal church. Despite the fact that Jesus Christ said that His Kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), here is a church that has played a major political role for two millennia. This false church is described as a “harlot” (Revelation 17:1), selling herself for temporal gain.

The ascendancy of the church began with Emperor Constantine (see part 3, August 2008), but the church really began rising to power when the Empire in the

Three of the First Horns Plucked Out by the Roots

In Daniel 7:8 the prophet Daniel writes: “I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots.”

As we have learned in the accompanying article, the “little” horn is the papacy. Who, then, are the three horns plucked up by the roots before the rise of the papacy?

The expression “plucked up by the roots” suggests that these horns were not there long enough to put down deep roots. Again, history helps us understand this prophecy.

In the fifth century, the same century in which the Western Roman Empire collapsed, we read of three barbarian leaders who took control of the city of Rome. The term *barbarian* was used by the Romans to describe all non-Romans.

The Roman Empire in the West fell in A.D. 476. Prior to its fall, Rome had been sacked by the Vandals in A.D. 455.

Another invasion came in 476 when a German chief, Odoacer, led his army into Rome, deposing the last Western emperor, Romulus Augustulus. The previous year Odoacer had been chosen by contingents of three barbarian tribes, the Scyri, Heruli and Rugii, to be their leader. After successfully conquering Rome, he had himself “proclaimed king in the barbaric fashion, and governed Italy with moderation under the theoretical tutelage of the emperor of the East” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article, “Ancient Rome”).

Odoacer’s deposing of the last emperor is the official end of the Western Empire. The Eastern Roman Empire ruled from Byzantium, founded by Constantine in the early part of the fourth century, was to continue until 1453.

Odoacer was overthrown by Theodoric the Great, king of the Ostrogoths, at the request of the Eastern Emperor Zeno. Theodoric had himself proclaimed king of Italy at Ravenna in A.D. 494, ruling until 526, a long reign that secured tranquility and prosperity for his subjects. “His Goths, few in number, were established in the north; elsewhere he preserved the old imperial administration, with senators as prefects” (ibid.).

These three leaders weren’t Catholic, but the papacy rose to great power during this time period. In 452 Pope Leo I (Leo the Great) left Rome to personally persuade the invading Attila the Hun not to attack Rome. It was during Leo’s reign that the primacy of Rome was first claimed. “Through the mouth of Leo, Peter has spoken!” claimed the assembly at the Chalcedon Church Council in late 451 (*The Popes*, by Claudio Rendina, 2002, p. 65). The papacy was to play a major role in the succeeding seven revivals of the Roman Empire. The three horns “plucked out by the roots” did not involve the papacy.

Ten years after Theodoric’s death, the Eastern Emperor Justinian decided on an invasion of Italy with a view to reviving the Roman Empire. A new era in church-state relations was about to begin with the woman (the church) riding the Beast.

West fell. "When there was no longer an Emperor in the West and the link with the East was but slender, papal Rome took the place of imperial Rome" (Binns, p. 11).

The relationship between the church and the state dominated European politics right down until modern times. Even today, some European countries still maintain a close tie between the established church and the state.

The relationship has not always been an easy one, which is exactly what prophecy said would be the case. "Fornication" (Revelation 17:2) is never an easy relationship. Whereas the physical relationship between a husband and wife is based on love and commitment, two people fornicating temporarily use each other, each seeking what he or she can get from the other.

That's the way it has been with the church-state relationship throughout history. At various times, the two have come together for mutual benefit, but much of

the time they have struggled for preeminence over each other.

In verse 7 of Revelation 17, we see a description of the false church, pictured by a woman, and the "beast that carries her." Again, the analogy here is an appropriate one. Anybody who has ridden a horse knows that the rider is not always in control. The church may think it can control the power of the state, but it often loses control. This Beast the woman rides is described as having "seven heads and ten horns." In verse 9 we see that "the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits."

In the Bible, a "mountain" is symbolic of a great nation or empire, compared with smaller nations depicted as hills. For example, in Isaiah 2:2 we see the coming Kingdom of God depicted as a mountain that "shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills." The government of God will eventually be over all the great nations as well as the smaller ones.

Since the Beast the woman rides would correspond to the Roman Empire, its seven heads or mountains would be revivals of the Roman Empire. The papacy was to continue the Roman system down through the centuries, often taking a political role, but also heavily involved in attempts to revive the Roman Empire, "the seven heads...on which the woman sits" (Revelation 17:9).

But before that, three kingdoms not controlled by the false church would be uprooted (see "Three of the First Horns Plucked Out by the Roots").

Remember, the little horn of Daniel 7:8 has "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words." This little horn wields enough power to pluck up kingdoms, yet is not described as a true political power. It is a religious power, also described as "the image of the beast." Almost 2,000 years of history shows the consistent presence of a great Roman church allied with the various revivals of the Roman Empire. ❖

A Partial Chart of Prophecies of World Empires

Daniel 2 The IMAGE	Daniel 7 The FOUR BEASTS (state) (church)	Revelation 13 BEAST (state) IMAGE (church)	Rev. 17 BABYLON & BEAST	Explanation of symbols	Events fulfilled in history	
Head of GOLD v. 32, 38	1st Beast like LION v. 4			1st HEAD of prophetic BABYLON	Chaldean Empire (Babylon)	
Chest & arms SILVER v. 32, 39	2nd Beast like BEAR v. 5			2nd HEAD of prophetic BABYLON	Persian Empire (Medo-Persia)	
Belly & thighs BRONZE v. 32, 39	3rd Beast like LEOPARD 4 heads v. 6			3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th HEADS of prophetic BABYLON	Greece, under Alexander and 4 divisions	
Legs of IRON v. 33, 40-43	4th Beast strong like IRON with 10 HORNS v. 7, 23-24	BEAST with 7 HEADS & 10 HORNS v. 1-2		7th HEAD of prophetic BABYLON with 10 HORNS	Roman Empire, in 2 divisions, West and East	
		Deadly wound v. 3			Rome falls A.D. 476	
	1st HORN (uprooted)	1st HORN		3 HORNS, kingdoms not controlled by the papacy	Vandals	
	2nd HORN (uprooted)	2nd HORN			Heruli (Odoacer's government)	
	3rd HORN (uprooted)	3rd HORN			Ostrogoths	
		LITTLE HORN v. 8, 20-22, 24-27	Lamb/Dragon & IMAGE v. 11-18	WOMAN who rode BEAST v. 1-2	Ruled the Beast, BABYLON the Great	False Christianity image of Roman Empire government

The Rapture—A Popular but False Doctrine!

The rapture, often called “the blessed hope,” is sadly more hoax than hope, even though the man who started it had no intention of deceiving anyone. You need to know what the Bible actually says!

by Cecil E. Maranville

The rapture is widely taught and believed in Christianity today. Popular books and movies spin themes around this doctrine that essentially teaches Christ will come back twice, first coming only into the atmosphere to snatch believers away to heaven for several years; then actually returning to set foot on the earth.

We live in a time when most are content to get their knowledge of religion secondhand, preferably through dramatic presentations, including stage, screen and novels.

But you cannot afford to neglect your personal responsibility to prove the truth!

Those willing to take a careful look at the Bible will see that the rapture theory doesn't stand up to the scrutiny of God's Word.

The rapture was popularized in the 1970s by Hal Lindsey's writings (*The Late Great Planet Earth*, etc.) and more recently by Jim Jenkins and Tim LaHaye in their *Left Behind* fictional books and films. But where did the idea of the rapture originate?

The origin of the rapture theory

Credit for its origin generally goes to John Nelson Darby, a 19th-century theologian.

Let's define some common terms to help one navigate the technicalities, for in reading about the rapture, you will often encounter the words *postmillennialism*, *amillennialism* and *premillennialism*. First, the root word, *Millennium*, comes from the Latin for 1,000 years. Religiously, it refers to the first 1,000 years of Christ's reign over the Kingdom of God on earth (Revelation 20:4).

A postmillennialist believes that Christ returns to establish the Kingdom on earth after the 1,000 years; an amillennialist doesn't believe that the Kingdom is coming at all; a premillennialist believes that Christ returns before the Millennium to set up His Kingdom as described in Revelation 20:4.

In the century before Darby, Daniel



Does the Bible teach that Christ will come first just to snatch believers away?

Whitby pushed the philosophy of postmillennialism in England. “This interpretation maintains that present gospel agencies will root out evils until Christ will have a spiritual reign over the earth, which will continue for 1,000 years. Then the second advent of Christ will initiate judgment and bring to an end the present order” (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 1988, “Millennium”).

Postmillennialism gives life to the idea of “the social gospel” and the belief that the Church can actually bring about the Kingdom by its actions. It has led to many Christian churches involving themselves in politics on the premise that they are virtually obligated to lobby governments in the direction of godliness.

There were also amillennialists in Darby's day. He labored to correct both false teachings. Darby believed, rightly, that Jesus Christ would return to earth to establish and rule over the Kingdom of God. Darby was a premillennialist.

But in his zeal for countering error, he added another—the rapture theory. He believed he understood a new truth, an idea that had not been taught in the history of Christendom.

The story of how a new prophetic teaching became so popular is a fascinating one. But it's important to examine the biblical underpinnings of belief in a secret rapture.

While he was most likely sincere, sincerity alone does not make one right.

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20, New International Version).

How do we know whether God inspired John Darby with new understanding? It actually would not be difficult to verify. Jesus said, “...the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35), meaning Scripture agrees with itself.

If the rapture were truly a biblical doctrine, it would mesh with all other scriptural references to Christ’s coming. But it does not stand up to that test, as we will see.

Scofield picks it up

“Darby’s pre-tribulational view of the rapture was then picked up by a man named C.I. Scofield, who taught the view in the footnotes of his Scofield Reference Bible, which was widely distributed in England and America. Many Protestants who read the Scofield Reference Bible uncritically accepted what its footnotes said and adopted the [rapture doctrine], even though no Christian had heard of it in the previous 1800 years of Church history” (“Catholic Answers,” <http://www.catholic.com/library/Rapture.asp>).

Both Darby and Scofield claimed that the “day of Christ” refers to the rapture and that “the day of the Lord” refers to the actual second coming several years after the rapture.

In fact, “the day of the Lord” and “the day of Christ” both refer to Christ’s return to the earth throughout the Bible—that is, to the time when He will step foot on earth. So also do the phrases, “the day of the Lord Jesus Christ” and “the Lord’s Day.” They all speak of His actual descent and setting His feet on this earth (Zechariah 14:1-4). This fact further discredits this principal premise of Darby and Scofield. (See our booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* for further information about this subject.)

The heart of the case offered by Darby, Scofield and their modern counterparts is based upon the English

words “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

Thin proof

For such a seemingly major doctrine, one might expect a weighty argument, but this is what is offered in The Scofield Bible’s Reference Notes (1917 Edition): “...‘caught up’—Not church saints only, but all bodies of the saved [that is, not only the living, but also the dead], of whatever dispensation, are included in the first resurrection... [It] is peculiarly the ‘blessed hope’ of the Church (cf Matthew 24:42; 25:13; Luke 12:36-48; Acts 1:11; Philippians 3:20, 21; Titus 2:11-13.”

This offers surprisingly little information, considering how many accept the rapture doctrine based upon these notes. Additionally, all of the references he cited are about Christ’s return and the believer’s need to be ready for that event. None of them speak of a “near return” by Christ to snatch away believers.

Some rapturists today cite Acts 8:39, saying it uses the same Greek word that is translated “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. They say that the fact the Spirit of God “caught [Philip] away” shows that 1 Thessalonians 4:17 means that the saints are caught away to heaven. Yet the Spirit did not transport Philip to heaven, but rather from one place on the earth to another.

The saints of 1 Thessalonians 4:17, on the other hand, rise to meet the Lord in the air. (We’ll cover more on this point in the next article in this series.)

The words “blessed hope” also often appear in rapture literature. In fact, “The Blessed Hope” is the name by which some denominations refer to the rapture doctrine. They take “blessed hope” from Titus 2:13, where Paul writes, “looking for the blessed hope, and the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

The implication is that the word “appearance” conveys something secretive and sudden; that is, the rapture. Therefore, “blessed hope” becomes a sort of shorthand for the rapture in literature and films on the doctrine. A few other New Testament references that mention “the appearing of Christ”

are also often cited, as if these scriptures strengthen their case.

But all of these are simply referring to Christ’s coming, either the first time as a perfect sacrifice for sin, or the second time, as an invincible King.

Flawed foundation

The word *rapture* comes from the Latin *rapere*, meaning, “to seize” or “to abduct.” It is translated from the Greek word that is rendered “caught up” in English Bibles today.

All advocates of the rapture agree that the main argument is based on 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Here the argument stands or falls.

First, look at verse 17 in the New King James Version: “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

The Greek verb for “caught up” is *harpagesometha*. Does it convey the sense of an abduction here? No, “[it] combines the ideas of force and suddenness seen in the irresistible power of God” (Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Revised Edition, 1984, p. 94).

Why would Paul use such a strong word? Let’s allow the Bible to speak for itself. The context of the subject begins in verse 13 and concludes in verse 11 of the next chapter. Paul wrote this section of the letter in answer to concerns of the local Christians.

As you read verse 13, you discover that Christians in Thessalonica were grieving over the unexpected deaths of members of their congregation.

Albert Barnes comments: “There seems some reason to suppose...that some of them believed that, though those who were dead would indeed rise again, yet it would be long after those who were living when the Lord Jesus would return had been taken to glory, and would always be in a condition inferior to them” (*Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*, notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Paul wrote that they should not grieve over this: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus [believers who had died]” (verse 14).

Was he responding to a worry about whether Christ would rescue believers from the Great Tribulation? No, nothing is said of this.

Nor is there anything in these verses that intimates Christ making a swooping pass by the earth to snatch off a few people to take them to heaven. These verses refer only to the doctrine of the second coming, at which time Jesus sets foot on the earth.

A reunion with friends who died

There is more to Paul's encouragement. Dr. Morris observes, "There will be a reunion with Christ, but there will also be a reunion with the friends who have gone before" (Tyndale).

The Commentary on the Whole Bible by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown observes something further. "The leading topic of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica having been the coming kingdom (Ac 17:7), some perverted it into a cause for fear in respect to friends lately deceased, as if these would be excluded from the glory which those found alive alone should share. This error Paul here corrects."

Verse 15 amplifies the point: "We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep."

Verse 18 reiterates this main point: "Therefore comfort one another with these words." Paul sums it up in verses 10-11 of chapter 5 (there is no chapter break in the original text): "...that whether we wake or sleep [remain alive or die], we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing."

Any claim that "the comfort" of these verses was about being snatched away to heaven takes incredible license with the Bible.

Paul's reason for using such a strong word as *harpagesometha* was to reassure people that, at Christ's return, God would reunite believers who remain alive with believers who had died. The dead won't be behind in any way!

But why will the saints meet Christ in the air? We will cover that in the next article. ❖

"GEORGIA" (Continued from page 6)

their Eastern European counterparts. The United Kingdom was an exception with its stern reaction. French President Sarkozy was the butt of criticism when his initial proposal for a cease-fire did not include any demand that Russian troops withdraw from Georgian territory.

With the disagreement within NATO on how to proceed with Georgia's bid for membership, it seems Russia's disproportionate response may be part of a tactic to put a rift between America and its NATO partners in Europe and to probe the "old Europe"—"new Europe" divide.

The flow of energy from east to west

Before the dust from the August miniwar had settled, analysts in Europe were questioning what Russia's real motives for its intervention may have been. Although Russian planes bombed military sites in Georgia, observers noted that the east-west energy pipeline routes did not appear to be affected, although the oil pipeline was shut down for two days. It seemed almost as if Russian pilots had strict orders not to bomb near those routes. While that might seem like a cautious approach on Russia's part, it also sends the message of, "We could have if we had wanted to do so."

A large part of the energy resources that Russia lost when the Soviet Union disintegrated are located in the region surrounding the Caspian Sea. According to some American estimates, as much as one third of the world's oil reserves are found in this area. Georgia itself has no oil or natural gas resources worth mentioning, but all energy transported from Azerbaijan to the West, avoiding Russian territory, flows through Georgia.

There is no question that the oil and gas pipelines routed through Georgia give the country strategic importance. A major oil pipeline from Baku in Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey came online in 2005 and will eventually supply 1 million barrels of oil a day. A southern Caucasus

gas pipeline runs through Georgia to Turkey and is being extended to Austria with completion scheduled for 2012. Europe considers this pipeline essential to reducing its growing dependence on Russian natural gas.

In an editorial titled "The Bear and the Mouse," Josef Joffe, publisher-editor of the respected German weekly *Die Zeit*, urged German Chancellor Merkel to be firm with Russian President Medvedev, "Do you want to be a wealthy, respected power or be like the old Russia—unsure and aggressive, fearful and bullying? We can't wage war and don't want to, but we will not allow you to bring the last pipelines outside of Russian control into the hand of the Kremlin" (*Die Zeit*, Aug. 14, 2008).

Prophetic implications

Bible prophecy seems to indicate that Europe will also look elsewhere to solve its growing energy dependency on Russia. *World News and Prophecy* has repeatedly outlined the future emergence of a final resurrection of the Roman Empire immediately preceding the prophesied return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

That revival, like the original empire, will be centered in Europe. It is the power called the "king of the North" in the final verses of Daniel 11, where it is prophesied to enter the Middle East, including the Holy Land. While religion will be a factor in this prophetic development, geopolitics and economics will also have their part as they so often do in human conflict (James 4:1-2).

Approximately 60 percent of the world's oil reserves and 40 percent of the world's natural gas reserves are located in the Persian Gulf region of the Middle East—an energy magnet for Europe, which will be importing 90 percent of its oil by the year 2030.

The Georgian-Russian conflict of August 2008 is just one small part of the larger puzzle involving the future relationship between Russia and Europe, Europe and the United States and the issue of Europe's growing dependence on imported oil and natural gas. ❖

“IMMANUEL” (Continued from page 16)

This one word’s all-encompassing impact was not lost on the author of one of the Gospels. Matthew utilizes the term when telling the message of the angel to Joseph concerning the birth of Jesus. “So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:22-23).

The apostle Paul would later be inspired to say, “When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman” (Galatians 4:4).

God clothed with human skin

“God with us” was a reality! He was there—no longer merely by prayer before an altar or by vision, nor simply by magnificent public worship or private devotion, nor by simply a “still small voice” or the trembling of an earthquake. Now the Divine had come to earth clothed in human skin to walk and talk among His own creation and die in their midst.

John spells out in crystal clear fashion how the God being called the Word “became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

The word *dwelt* comes from the Greek word *skenoo*, which means to literally pitch a tent or “to tabernacle.” It is John, under the inspiration of God, who shows us that God



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The One known as the Word separated Himself from the privileges of His divine station and volunteered to be placed on a bed of straw in a manger.

decided to “pitch a tent” within the wilderness of the human condition, becoming “God with us.”

It is this statement that differentiates Christianity from all other religions. It reveals that God is not merely some benevolent “First Cause” or some faraway absentee cosmic babysitter. The One known as the Word separated Himself from the privileges of His divine station and volunteered to be placed on a

bed of straw in a manger. Rather than being surrounded by seraphim, cherubim and the other celestial hosts, the Word, now Immanuel, chose to dwell among us by being placed on a “throne of straw” in a place used for barnyard animals.

Making the impossible possible

It is in this moment of Immanuel’s prophesied birth to Mary that we begin to gain a sense of God’s saving work. It is at Immanuel’s conception that God makes the impossible possible by taking the young Mary, who hadn’t engaged in sexual relations with any man, and blesses her in bringing forth a child. It is always God’s greatest miracle to take that which is nothing and bring forth abundance. God, in His mercy, works with you and me, telling us, “You’ll be Mine.”

It is Mary, who prophetically utters words of jubilee (release) to describe the impact of God’s purposes through Immanuel.

“He has scattered the proud in

World News and Prophecy Seminars

If you find this publication interesting and helpful, you may be interested in attending a weekend *World News and Prophecy* seminar. Seminars are planned for:

- **Detroit, Michigan**, on Sept. 13 (Darris McNeely and Melvin Rhodes).
- **Dallas, Texas**, on Nov. 1 (Cecil Maranville and Melvin Rhodes).
- **Minneapolis, Minnesota**, on Nov. 15 (Robin Webber and Paul Kieffer).
- **Louisville, Kentucky**, on Dec. 25 (Darris McNeely and Melvin Rhodes).
- **Tampa, Florida**, on Jan. 17, 2009 (Melvin Rhodes and Robin Webber).
- **St. Petersburg, Florida**, on Jan. 18 (Melvin Rhodes and Robin Webber).
- **San Antonio, Texas**, on Jan. 31 (Darris McNeely and Robin Webber).

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the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty” (Luke 1:52-53).

These are words spoken long before by the prophets to depict a moral, social and economic upheaval of staggering proportions to bring about a world made right by One who knows the plight of the common individual (Isaiah 40:3-5, 29).

It is this revelation of a future revolution of spiritual proportions, led by none other than the heavenly Jesus Christ, to which *World News and Prophecy* gives voice in every article as we eagerly anticipate the second coming of Immanuel.

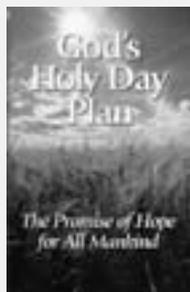
In fact, it is during this autumn season of the year that Immanuel was born. It is in the times of trumpets (one of God’s annual Holy Days, Leviticus 23:24) and harvest, not the dead of winter, that Immanuel would come among us.

As followers of Immanuel in today’s world, we are granted the privilege of observing those same annual biblical celebrations of God’s saving work, but now in the light of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, with the eyes of our hearts focused on His second coming.

(For more information on this, see our booklets *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* and *God’s Holy Day*

Recommended Reading

Few people realize that the Holy Days given in the Bible help us understand God’s plan for all humanity. You need to understand what the Bible says about these days and what they teach us! Request a free copy of *God’s Holy Day*



Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind.

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

www.wnponline.org

Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind.)

These biblically prescribed Holy Days keep us secure in Christ’s active ministry in our everyday lives. They point us to the future completion of our Heavenly Father’s will for humanity as summed up in this prophetic encouragement:

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell [skenoō or “tabernacle”] with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:1-3).

The exclamation point

Yes, the ultimate active sense of this one comforting word *Immanuel*, “God with us,” is the exclamation point of God’s comforting prophetic promises.

It is in the words of Michael Card’s “Immanuel” that footsteps of “this is the way, walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21) guide us through life’s joys or sorrows.

The guiding words of this song are a combination of Isaiah 7:13, Isaiah 60:1 and Romans 8:31. Let’s follow this path toward an incredible future.

“A sign shall be given
 “A virgin will conceive
 “A human baby bearing
 “Undiminished deity
 “The glory of the nations
 “A light for all to see
 “Hope for all who will embrace
 “His warm reality
 “Immanuel
 “Our God is with us
 “And if God is with us
 “Who could stand

against us

“Our God is with us
 “Immanuel...”

Yes, it is one word, just one word, *Immanuel*, that makes all the difference! ❖



Robin Webber

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by Robin Webber

Immanuel—“God Is With Us”

Last night I was mulling over what I might write for this monthly column. I began flipping through the Rolodex of my mind to see all the places, people and events we’ve explored together over the past 10 years.

A decade on the way

We’ve ventured into the deserts of the Middle East, the jungles of South America and the happenings in my front yard with my wife and grandchildren. We’ve wandered through the palaces of Jordan and Oman, sat in a graveyard at Gettysburg and listened to George Washington in a tavern in the Hudson River Valley. We’ve sat in a foxhole in World War I as two opposing combatants faced each other. Most recently through the words of Revelation 4 and 5, we’ve visited the throne room of God.

That’s just a small portion of the places we have traveled and the people we have met as we explored God’s encouraging directive of Isaiah 30:21, “This is the way, walk in it.” This column’s goal has always been more than simply stretching your mind about prophetic occurrences. It seeks also to firm up and widen your heart to properly receive the revelations of God regarding the future. This column also seeks to help you deal with the current challenges that confront us in a world apart from God.

Sometimes I wonder what is left to cover or what more might I share. Perhaps it’s time to “call it a day” (or perhaps “a decade and a column”) and move on! And then I ask myself, if I had one

parting word to pass on, what possible entry might I share?

It is amazing how God opens minds and hearts when needed and especially when we ask. Coming out of the recesses of my computer’s speakers on my desk was a beautiful song titled “Immanuel,” composed and sung by Michael Card. It is this name with prophetic overtones that provides the sure handle that squarely fits each event that comes our way.

Imagine the impact

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to offer this prophetic utterance at a time of great despair in the history of God’s covenant people. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah were rife with disobedience, intrigue and a seemingly hopeless future. It was at this moment of despair that God planted a prophetic nugget into the soiled landscape of man’s affairs.

It was then, when the kingdoms of men were farther than ever from the original atmosphere of Eden, that Isaiah 7:14 proclaimed, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” The name *Immanuel* means “God is with us.”

Imagine! What an incredibly different world that would make if we allowed that one name to impact every thought and deed in every living moment. Yes, God is with us! What better word and gift is there to possibly share?

(See “**IMMANUEL**,” page 14)