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What Will the Next President Face?

In the days of biblical Israel a king had various advisers in his court to advise him how to run the nation based on the Word of God. Samuel guided Saul. Nathan counseled David. The prophet Isaiah brought God's will to Hezekiah. These men of God were independent voices representing the word of God to the king.

Imagine the next president of the United States taking office on Jan. 20. It is the first full working day for the new chief executive. What might he hear if a servant of God entered the Oval Office with an analysis of the world and America, along with recommendations from the Bible of how God would expect the president to govern? Let's imagine.

by Darris McNeely

Good morning, Mr. President. Let me congratulate you on your new responsibilities and may I offer sincere wishes for your success as you take the helm of the world's wealthiest and most powerful nation. Your inaugural speech yesterday made clear your intent to maintain that position for the nation while at the same time seeking to reach out to both friend and foe to forge a bond of respect and cooperation.



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What biblical message would the next occupant of the Oval Office need?

You are coming into office at perhaps the most critical time in America's existence. The financial crisis of recent months is the most severe in this generation. America's relative position in the world faces the greatest challenge since the end of World War II. Iran's nuclear program could soon produce a weapon capable of destabilizing the entire Middle East. Many wonder what your administration will do to counter this threat.

Other world problems demand your

attention and leadership. The security and prosperity of this nation and the maintenance of the current world order are at stake. Many voices are offering advice on the way forward. Here is an analysis and counsel from God's Word. The choice is yours as to which way you, and the nation, will go.

Global financial crisis

Your administration is inheriting a
(See "PRESIDENT," page 3)



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Managing editor: Darris McNeely

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

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder

Senior writer: Paul Kieffer

Copy editors: Becky Bennett, Doug Johnson
Layout/design: Mike Bennett, Peter W. Eddington

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

The Wealth of a Nation

When I was a child I used to play with a large plastic punching bag that was weighted at the bottom. You could hit this figure all day long and it would bounce right back into an upright position.

I have thought about the resilience of this toy as I have watched the global financial crisis unfold in recent weeks. The loss of wealth has been staggering. The Bank of England estimated that by the end of October \$2.8 trillion had evaporated from world financial ledgers.

But when you consider the U.S. economy is valued at over \$14 trillion, you see there is still a lot of wealth left over, especially in America. Now I have to confess, I have no concept of how much \$1 trillion is, much less \$14 trillion. These are numbers with a lot of zeroes behind them. But what I do know is America is a vastly wealthy country and it can take, and has taken, a big hit and can bounce back. As I write, that appears to be what is happening even as the country seems to be settling into a long recession.

Don't mistake what I am saying. There will be more bad news ahead for major U.S. companies. Many workers will lose their jobs. There will be some hard times ahead. But the U.S. economy is very large, very deep and very entrenched in the global world. It is not going away overnight, and it will be around for some time yet, even if in a different role in relation to the rest of the world.

America's wealth is staggering. There has been nothing like it in all history—a land of bounty stretching from sea to sea. A land with vast forests, mineral-rich lands and waterways traversing the continent, all waiting to build a powerful country. Rich fields waiting for the plow and seed that would feed a growing nation and spill over to feed a hungry world. And all of this, as an American president once said, waiting as if by the preparation of God for the right time and people.

Indeed it was.

America fits the description in the book of Micah. "Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, that tarry for no man nor wait for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, who, if he passes through, both treads down and tears in pieces, and none can deliver. Your hand shall be lifted against your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off" (Micah 5:7-9).

America's military, economic and political power is a wonder of the modern world. Those who study the geopolitics of the modern world do grasp this undeniable fact. It is why the nation has been able to absorb the shock of the current financial meltdown. Other nations would have gone under from such a loss. But, like that punching bag toy I used to play with, America keeps bouncing back.

Few comprehend that God is the true source of this tremendous wealth. He promised Abraham blessings that could not be counted. Those with eyes to see can view this reality today. I give God thanks that this nation has been able to weather the storm thus far. I pray we may learn humility and gratitude before it is too late. I know that God has blessed this land for His purpose. It remains for us to submit ourselves to His care and mercy.

Much has changed since last Thanksgiving. But there is still much to be thankful for. Think about the abundance we have. Remember it all comes from God. Lastly, pray for a restoration of true thanksgiving toward God, the source of every nation's wealth.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“PRESIDENT” (Continued from page 1)

global financial crisis that comes once in a lifetime—“once in 100 years” as former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said. The geography of Wall Street has changed. Financial institutions such as Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns and Merrill Lynch have gone out of business or were forced to sell themselves to other banks to keep operating.

Investors have lost billions, if not trillions of dollars as the stock market has staggered. Shortsightedness, greed and speculation in housing and real estate by buyers, sellers and lenders, which led to the subprime mortgage fiasco, resulted in a global credit crisis. Billions of dollars in loans were repackaged and sold as investments on which no one could place a true value. Loss of confidence in these items led to a precipitous drop in the stock market and to a lockdown of credit. The contagion spread around the world, creating fear and uncertainty.

The speed and ferocity of this crisis makes it far different from others of the post-World War II world. Governments and banks have had no previous experience with the scope of the shock and stresses generated by this global financial storm. America has lurched toward more government control of the financial markets while Europe has been exposed as unprepared and ill-equipped to handle the crisis.

That the epicenter of this storm has been in the West, primarily the United States, has caused the rest of the world to reassess its relationship and dependence on America. Nations like India, China and Brazil have usually been on the receiving end of advice and sometimes aid from the ruling order, led by America.

This crisis is different. New and resurgent powers such as India, Brazil and Russia can now exert a great deal of influence. They have accumulated reserves of foreign currency, having learned lessons of the past. Their foresight is helping to lessen the impact this global crisis would otherwise have had on them.

Your fellow world leaders will tell you, Mr. President, that an era is ending. The United States must realize it can no longer dictate or control global order. The time when nations and regions can be made in America’s image is over. For



The next resident of the White House comes to office at perhaps the most critical time in America’s existence, facing challenges at home and abroad.

more than two centuries America and Great Britain have fashioned the world’s financial, political and cultural order.

America is still vital to the global economy with its huge market, consumer culture and technical innovation. The world economy still needs America; it is too big to let fall. But the time when it was *everything* to the world is coming to a close. The rest of the world will form bonds and relationships to insure their continued growth and prosperity. They see that to continue a dependence on America to call the shots puts their well-being in jeopardy. It is not the end of the world, but it is the end of *a* world.

What does God expect you to do? Learn this lesson. Debt is not good. Debt as a way of life will lead to a multitude of sins and social ills that will bring a nation to its knees. America has wallowed in debt to a point that is nearly unbearable. To finance homes, goods and a lifestyle people could not afford required dependence on nations like China and Saudi Arabia to buy and hold bonds, treasury notes and dollars. They financed a drunken orgy of spending that has resulted in trillions of dollars of debt, thus mortgaging future generations.

Written in the law God gave to ancient Israel is a financial principle for the ages: “The borrower is servant to the

lender” (Proverbs 22:7). Sir, it is time you worked to return this nation to financial ethics based on godly principles that will insure stability and prosperity for all. The nation is on the brink of a financial slavery that will break its power. It may not be too late, but time is running out.

Relations with the Islamic world

Mr. President, your predecessor was forced to focus his foreign policy on radical Islamic terrorists. The devastating attacks on the homeland on 9/11 stunned the country into the reality of terrorist activity aimed at America. American troops were committed to action in Afghanistan and Iraq, with Iraq becoming the center of attention.

The Taliban were driven from power in Afghanistan—at least temporarily—and Saddam Hussein was deposed by invading Iraq. Massive numbers of troops, more than 12 brigades, have been occupied in Iraq. At times it looked bleak, as if America might lose this battle as guerrilla insurgencies whittled away at both Iraqi civilians and American troops. But the past two years saw a renewed surge of troops and commitment that turned the tide and stabilized the country.

While it now appears troops can begin to be withdrawn, the long-term stability

of the Iraqi government will no doubt be tested by Iran, Syria and other terrorist forces. Whether the American-delivered Iraqi-style of democracy can survive in the tough neighborhood of the Middle East is yet to be seen.

This success has not been without a cost. American prestige throughout the world has suffered. Directly intervening to topple a sovereign government, no matter how brutal and corrupt that government might be, carries a cost in today's world. It has been a costly war. Billions of dollars were spent in the sands of Iraq and whether that cost was justified is as yet unproven.

And there is the human cost. Whenever the lives of young men and women are spent on foreign soil, the anguish of their loss haunts their families, as well as the communities and towns from which they came. The country has yet to tally the full cost of the wars in human terms.

You, Mr. President, will be faced with deciding how many U.S. troops to withdraw and at what speed. You

will be tempted to move those troops to Afghanistan to counter an insurgent Taliban.

The pressure and need to maintain stability in this region is strong. Pakistan, the world's only nuclear-armed Islamic nation, is walking a tightrope between support for the West and radical Islamist elements that would seize control given the opportunity.

With Afghanistan and Pakistan, the United States is walking into a bed of quicksand that has devoured other armies in the past. In the 19th century Great Britain could not control the area nor could the Soviet Union in the 20th—in spite of the Soviet's commitment of 120,000 troops. Even Alexander the Great, back in the fourth century B.C., could not fully subjugate this region.

The fact is that with all its other commitments (not to mention its budget deficits), America does not have enough military resources to commit to the region to make a lasting difference. It will be a challenge to know what to do and for

how long. To withdraw too many troops too soon from this mountainous region would invite disaster, something the world does not need.

And then there is Iran.

The next nuclear power?

Mr. President, you have been left unfinished business with Iran. This radical Islamic state has been actively pursuing a nuclear weapon. Its president curses the state of Israel and threatens to wipe it off the map. Among its clerical leaders runs a strong messianic belief in the end of the world and the return of the Mahdi, a mystical religious leader who supposedly will usher in a reign of Islamic peace upon the world.

Many experts believe that when Iran develops a nuclear weapon its leaders will not hesitate to use it to advance their Islamic vision. To protect themselves, Sunni Muslim states will feel the need to develop or obtain their own nuclear arsenal. The entire region would face even greater instability.

A recently completed high-level task force, chaired by two former U.S. senators, stated that this would be the "first and most pressing national security issue the next president will face."

The committee concluded that "an Islamic Republic of Iran with nuclear weapons capability would be strategically untenable. It would threaten U.S. national security, regional peace and stability, energy security, the efficacy of multilateralism, and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime. While a nuclear attack is the worst-case scenario, Iran would not need to employ a nuclear arsenal to threaten U.S. interests.

"Simply obtaining the ability to quickly assemble a nuclear weapon would effectively give Iran a nuclear deterrent and drastically multiply its influence in Iraq and the region...allowing the Middle East to fall under the dominance of a radical clerical regime that supports terrorism should not be considered a viable option" ("Stopping a Nuclear Tehran," *Washington Post*, Oct. 23, 2008).

It seems this group even recommends building up military assets in the region to provide the option of an American or allied military strike against Iran.

Permanent solutions to the problems of the Middle East have eluded every

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one of your predecessors. Events will draw you as well into this unique mixture of “faith, hope and fantasy.” Before you make your decision about what to do, I suggest you understand what few will admit, that the God of all the earth guides the course of nations. He alone determines the rulers of the people and the boundaries of the nations. Carefully consider the following lessons before committing to any long-term policies.

A lesson from history and prophecy

You would be wise to read the prophecies of Daniel to understand what God has in store for this region. Focus on the pride that overcomes leaders when they do not recognize the power that God holds over the course of empires and peoples. It is the cardinal sin of world leaders when they see only the raw physical power of the state and cannot discern the spiritual dimension of world affairs.

I have taken the liberty of bringing a copy of the Bible today. Let’s examine it here for a few minutes. Notice what God revealed to the prophet Daniel and what the prophet said to Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar when Babylon was at the peak of power in the Middle East. God gave the king a symbolic dream about the future that troubled his spirit, and none of his counselors could interpret it.

It was a dream of a tall image “whose splendor was excellent...and its form was awesome” (Daniel 2:31).

“This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.

“Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:32-35).

Mr. President, here in a few sentences Daniel traced the outline of history from the fifth century B.C. till the time ahead of us when Christ inter-

venes in world affairs to establish His Kingdom throughout the earth. God gave to Daniel special understanding in geopolitics that continues to teach us today. You can learn from this book of prophecy, but only if you adopt the perspective that Daniel held.

Daniel understood three principles that wise leaders will heed. Failure to learn these lessons could be costly to your new administration.

Three lessons

Before Daniel entered Nebuchadnezzar’s throne room he consulted with his three closest friends and advisers, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, asking that they join him in seeking God’s understanding of this dream (Daniel 2:17-18).

God’s answer was quick and it contains three principles (verse 21).

First, God changes the times and the seasons. God has power over history and the long-term course of world events. World empires, world wars and the destiny of nations are in His control. History can only be understood from this foundational truth.

Second, God removes kings and raises up kings. No world leader occupies his or her office without the consent of God. It is not the genius of a well-run political campaign that has brought you to the Oval Office. It is not the hundreds of millions of dollars spent over the many months of campaigning that led to your electoral victory. You, sir, sit at this desk this morning because God allowed it. It was not determined by your platform, policies or charisma. Remember this and you can avoid the great all-consuming sin committed by many in high office—pride.

Third, God gives wisdom, knowledge and understanding to the wise. Seek and trust in Him, look to His Word as the foundation of knowledge, and He will give you the wisdom necessary to chart a correct course for the nation during these turbulent times.

Mr. President, the reason this nation has prospered throughout its remarkable history is because of God’s direct blessing. But whether that blessing will continue is contingent upon the attitude and the behavior of the country’s leaders and its citizens.

Sir, if you will listen to and obey what God says and lead your people to listen and repent too, you can be assured of God’s watchful care over this country. If you will call the nation to listen to these words and understand how far the country has fallen from this knowledge, then you can lead a turnaround that could preserve the country’s blessings. The choice is yours. I can only place this before you for your action.

I have more to say on this but have exceeded my allotted time. I will come again and discuss more of what lies ahead for you and the United States.

With that, the man of God leaves the Oval Office. The president sits for a moment, thinking about what he has heard. These are hard sayings and they run counter to what he has always believed about the world of power he now handles. He has many questions about the man’s advice tumbling through his thoughts.

The president rises and walks out into the Rose Garden. The air is brisk and cold; the sky a clear bright blue. The wind scatters a few leaves along the walk leading from the office to the executive mansion. Before he can fully gather his thoughts about what he just heard, a voice calls from the open doorway. “Mr. President, your national security adviser is here to give you the daily briefing.” He turns and walks quickly back into his office. The questions he has will have to wait for the next visit.

End of Part 1 ❖

Recommended Reading

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



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www.wnponline.org

Is America Living Up to God's Standards?

The Bible is clear about basic morality. How is the United States doing?

by John Ross Schroeder

Our apologies to other countries for focusing this article on the United States, but in recent years America has been the unceasing target of an avalanche of media criticism from much of the rest of the world. America is held responsible for the current financial crisis, the Iraqi conflict and several other mega problems now afflicting humanity.

But rather than judging ourselves by worldly criteria, the Bible says that ultimately we will stand or fall by how well our people are living up to the standards and values of God's Word. How are we doing in our Creator's eyes? Are we meeting His expectations?

Let's first consider the current economic crisis—and even more importantly, a few of its basic causes.

Economically, the country is obviously threatened

It's obvious that America is in deep economic trouble. The "big three" automakers (a weather vane for a country so dependent on the automobile) are all in dire economic straits. General Motors (GM) and Chrysler stand on the verge of bankruptcy, and the two are reputedly seeking financial aid from the American government.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, "Without a merger and possibly an assist from the U.S. government, two of Detroit's big three could run out of cash within a year... U.S. car and truck sales are down 13% through September this year. GM sales have fallen about 18% while Chrysler's are down 25%, Ford's sales are down 17% so far this year. Ford's condition isn't considered as grave as that of GM and Chrysler because it has more cash on hand" (Jeffrey McCracken and John Stoll, "Bankruptcy Fears as GM and Chrysler Seek U.S. Aid," Oct. 28, 2008).

Clearly the big three are struggling to survive.

To narrow our financial focus, take a brief look at Vallejo, California. According

to a *Guardian* (London) article, "The city has financially gone bust. Pushed over a financial precipice by wider economic woes, Vallejo's city authority has declared itself bankrupt..."

"Funding for police, firefighters, senior citizens, road maintenance, libraries and parks is up in the air until a bankruptcy judge has scoured the books. The city of 117,000 people is \$17 million (£8.7m) short of what it needs to pay the bills" (Andrew Clark, "A Sign of the Times in Bankruptsville, USA," June 14, 2008, emphasis added throughout).

Other cities (and states) are also in deep financial difficulties.

But what are these "wider economic woes" that Vallejo obviously holds partially responsible? *Time International* magazine stated: "For years the financial markets roared along as if there was nothing to fear. Now it's pay-back time—and all of us will be suffering the pain" (Andy Serwer and Allan Sloan, "The Price of Greed," Sept. 29, 2008).

So in an overall sense, what basically brought about our current financial woes? One American Protestant minister said: "We're greedy. America consumes more than its share of most everything. Gasoline, food, plastic, you name it. On a personal level, millions of us are overweight, overspent and overleveraged. The subprime mortgage crisis is all about people wanting more than they can afford. And despite greed's appearance on the list of 'seven deadly sins' and the Bible's admonishment to refrain from excessive borrowing, the average American carries more than \$2,000 in credit-card debt on top of his household mortgage.

"Collectively, we behave pretty much the same way. The unpaid balance on our national credit card now tops \$10 trillion" (Oliver Thomas, "Ungodly Hubris," *USA Today*, Oct. 28, 2008).

This pastoral observer may not be right on target with his views, but he is uncomfortably close in most respects. The Bible warns

The Bible says that ultimately we will stand or fall by how well our people are living up to the standards and values of God's Word. How are we doing in our Creator's eyes?

us against covetousness and the danger of being in debt to others. The book of Proverbs in particular says a great deal about how we should handle our personal financial affairs. (Request or download our free booklet *Managing Your Finances*.)

Concerning America's national greatness

No rational, sane American citizen wants to denigrate his or her homeland. I have lived abroad in England for 32 years, but I still love America and respond emotionally when the "Star-Spangled Banner" is sung at U.S. sports events (televised in the early hours of the British morning). Yet I cannot ignore that the transgressions of God's spiritual law (and the attitudes of compromise toward it) are beginning to badly undercut America's greatness.

Today it appears that the country is evenly divided about the validity of the Ten Commandments. Those of us who adhere to them seem to have been fighting a rearguard action to defend them for several decades. Exactly where the moral



Reuters/Punit Paranjpe

General Motors' President Frederick Henderson speaks at a newly inaugurated plant in India Sept. 2. GM's struggle to survive is a weather vane for the broader U.S. economy.

tipping point is located, we don't yet know. But negative national news and trends show that we may be perilously close to the cliff—the point of

no return when it is too late to turn around. This, of course, assumes we haven't passed that point already.

Some 3,000 years ago God began to give both the northern nation of Israel and the southern nation of Judah a warning and time to repent before He pulled the plug. Finally a Hebrew prophet said of the kingdom of Judah that even if Noah, Daniel and Job were present before God in that nation, these three righteous men would only save themselves—not the nation.

In light of the present economic affliction and the threat of worse to come, several insightful observers have been looking back at the phenomenon of America's greatness in the world. A Scotsman, Sir Malcolm Rifkin (British foreign secretary from 1995-1997), wrote an instructive commentary for *The Sunday Telegraph* (Oct. 26, 2008):

"But America's dominance was not merely military. Its economic wealth was far greater than any other state. The US dollar has been the world's reserve currency since the decline of [British pound] sterling. Its language shared with the UK, was

(See "AMERICA," page 13)

Compromising With Morality

Even more serious and dangerous than our financial shortcomings is the American attitude of compromise toward sexual morality.

A recent long feature article in *The Atlantic* stated that "polls show that Americans are almost evenly divided on questions like whether porn is bad for relationships, whether it's an inevitable feature of male existence, and whether it's demeaning to women" (Ross Douthat, "Is Pornography Adultery?" October 2008).

Rather than viewing porn stars as tragic figures earning their money from illicit sex, they are often accorded minor celebrity status. U.S. porn revenue exceeds the combined revenues of ABC, CBS and NBC. Do we see how far we have descended downwards in the way we view God's law against adultery and fornication?

The Atlantic article also observed that "most Americans, devout or secular, are inclined to distinguish lustful thoughts from lustful actions... Intercourse, after all, involves physicality, a flesh and blood encounter that the Internet Explorer and the DVD player can't provide, no matter what sort of adultery the user happens to be committing in his heart."

Yet Jesus Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). To whom are we ultimately going to have to give account? Transient societal views of this world? Or Jesus Christ Himself (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10)?

Europe and the Church, Part 6

The First of the Seven Mountains on Which the Woman Sits

After the uprooting of the three little horns (Daniel 7:8), with the growing power of the papacy, Europe was now set to witness the first attempted restoration of imperial Rome under the Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian. This was to be the first of the “seven mountains on which the woman sits” (Revelation 17:9).

by Melvin Rhodes

Seventy-eight years after the fall of the Western Empire, the “deadly wound” was healed (Revelation 13:3) by Justinian’s imperial restoration.

Daniel 7:7-9 showed that the Roman Empire would continue in different forms right down until the second coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

There were to be 10 horns or 10 revivals of the Roman Empire. A horn is symbolic of aggressive strength, and it is associated with political authority and power. It can also symbolize royalty.

In addition, an extra horn was prophesied that would not be a military power like Rome and the other 10, but would be a “mouth speaking pompous words” (verse 8), a reference to the false religious system based in Rome.

Before this horn reached preeminence, the same verse says “three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots,” a prophecy that was fulfilled in the three barbaric tribes that briefly subdued Rome in the fifth and early sixth centuries.

The other seven horns prophesied in Daniel 7 were to follow the ascendancy of the Roman church. This church, pictured as a woman in the book of Revelation, was to “sit” on the seven, in an uneasy relationship likened to “fornication” (Revelation 17:2).

In contrast to the marital relationship where a husband and wife give themselves to each other, fornication is purely “get,” with each participant looking out for him or herself. So it has been with the European church-state relationships down through the centuries.

The remaining seven horns of Daniel 7 are described with different symbolism in Revelation 17:9: “Here is the mind which has

wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.”

The woman is the “great harlot who sits on many waters” (verse 1), “with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (verse 2). This false church was prophesied to play a major role in politics down through the centuries.

A constant theme running through the last two millennia of European history has been the church-state relationship. It has not always been an easy one. The analogy of “fornication” is apt as the two were only committed to each other as long as it served their own interests.

During that 2,000-year period, the Roman church has been a constant. No dynasty or political institution has lasted as long as the church has. The power and influence of the church has had its ups and downs, but it remained in some form and remains to this day.

One reason for its great political role has been its political status—the Papal States in the Middle Ages and Vatican City today have been secular political powers as well as spiritual forces. This makes the Roman church unique out of all the religious systems of the world. It is the reason Scripture highlighted its future role in prophecy.

During the fifth century the Roman Empire in the West declined and fell even as the spiritual authority of the church increased. Eventually, the church replaced the secular power.

“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” (Paul Johnson, *The Offshore Islanders*, pp. 29-30).

Herein lay the origins of modern European history. Continental Europe has always tended toward authoritarian forms of government, whereas the peoples of the British Isles, “The Offshore Islanders” in Paul Johnson’s words, developed somewhat differently, with a greater emphasis on individualism and equality, symbolized by the medieval King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

“The Roman Church strongly and repeatedly condemned Round Tables” (ibid., p. 51). The church taught a strictly hierarchical system, inherited from the Roman state. The church was and remains the prophesied mirror “image of the beast” (Revelation 13:15).

Well into the last century the church taught the divine right of kings, that God put the king in power and that the people should obey his dictates. In the same way, the people were taught that the church was the Kingdom of God, and the head of the church, the pope, the “Vicar of Christ.”

The word *vicar* means “in place of.” His dictates were *ex cathedra*,

a Latin expression meaning “from the chair,” referring not to a literal chair, but to the pope’s office. The Roman church teaches that when the pope speaks in an official capacity, his words infallibly carry the authority of God.

Between the king and the pope, the people were subjugated for well over a thousand years. Only with the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century did we see the beginnings of religious and political freedom.

Thanks to the church, the Roman system never went away. Directly or indirectly, the church enabled ambitious political figures to attempt reviv-



Emperor Justinian

als of the original Roman Empire. These seven attempts at resurrecting the Roman Empire are the prophesied “mountains on which the woman [church] sits” (Revelation 17:9).

First revival of the Roman Empire

The first revival of the Roman Empire was less than a century after the fall of the Western Empire in A.D. 476. Following the “first three horns that were plucked out by the roots” (Daniel 7:8), the Roman Empire in the East still thrived under Emperor Justinian, one of the most important figures of European history.

His empire, ruled from Constantinople, dominated the Eastern Mediterranean and included the Holy Land and Egypt. Constantinople was the New Rome, also built on seven

hills. The empire in the east was to last another thousand years, until the year 1453.

Justinian’s dream was to restore the western provinces of the empire to his dominions. In order to achieve his goal, the emperor realized the need for religious unity. But Christendom was divided, primarily over the issue of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

The Monophysites believed that Jesus Christ had only one nature, a divine one. Catholics believed that His nature was dual, both divine and human. Led by the pope in Rome, this view prevailed in the West, while Monophysitism was popular in the East.

The Council of Chalcedon (in modern-day Turkey) declared Monophysitism a heresy in 451, just as the Council of Nicea over a century earlier had ruled about Arianism. However, this left the Eastern Church torn between Catholic orthodoxy and the heresy of the Monophysites.

Justinian’s predecessor, his uncle Justin, had reconciled with the church of Rome in 518. His prelates had signed a letter of reconciliation supporting Rome and the decision made at Chalcedon, but the heresy continued.

Justinian, who came to the throne in August of 527, supported the decision of the Council of Chalcedon and of Catholic orthodoxy, but he did not want to alienate the Monophysites who were dominant in the provinces of Egypt and Syria. His wife, the influential and powerful Empress Theodora, was also sympathetic to the Monophysite cause.

Scheming with a Roman deacon called Vigilius, Theodora agreed to help him become pope in exchange for a promise that he would negate the decision of the Council of Chalcedon. Vigilius did indeed become pope but failed to fulfill his promise.

Justinian was finally forced in May 553 to convene the Second Council of Constantinople (the Fifth Ecumenical Council), in yet another attempt to reconcile the Monophysites. The Council finally agreed on a compromise that basically upheld the previous decision but leaned toward satisfying



Empress Theodora

the Monophysites. Few were satisfied with this compromise.

Pope Vigilius initially refused to accept the decision of the Council, but finally yielded under pressure in February 554. By way of thanking him, Justinian granted the pope an imperial document known as the Pragmatic Sanction, which confirmed and increased papal temporal power. The papacy was under the thumb of the Eastern emperor, but only temporarily.

Religious divisions between East and West were to continue for five more centuries, before the two halves of the old Roman Empire formally and finally divided in 1054. The Catholics and Orthodox remain divided to this day.

However, even though Justinian failed to resolve differences between the two largest factions of Christendom, the old pagan religion supposedly ended during his reign through a combination of new laws, discrimination and persecution. In truth, many of the beliefs from the old pagan religion had already been incorporated into the new state religion.

It wasn't just in religion that Justinian profoundly influenced the future course of European history. His legal code, commonly called the Code of Justinian, also left an enduring legacy on the continent of Europe. It is still the basis of civil law in many countries. This further helps us understand the historical divide between the English-speaking

countries and the continental Europeans.

“Because of the deference granted to whomever writes the Laws, and the absence of a jury to rule on matters of fact, the Civil Law tradition is fundamentally friendlier to tyrannical regimes than the [English] Common Law...”

“As Lord Coke put it, under the Common Law, every man's house is his castle; not because it is defended by moats or walls, but because while the rain may enter, the king cannot; under the Civil Law, the king is bound by nothing at all. Justinian left the European nations that grew out of Roman soil more than just the law; he bequeathed them autocracy, as well” (William Rosen, *Justinian's Flea*, 2007, p. 131).

“By establishing the position of the emperor—by extension, any anointed ruler—as the legislator of divine will, the *Lex Sacra*, the Code was an essential, perhaps *the* essential, endorsement for what would eventually become the divine right of kings” (ibid., p. 130).

Victory and defeat

Justinian saw himself as reviving the Roman Empire with himself as the emperor, once again uniting both East and West. When the persecuted Catholics of North Africa appealed for aid against their Arian Vandal oppressors, Justinian sent the greatest general of his age, Belisarius to achieve victory. He quickly succeeded and the territories that had once been a part of Rome's Empire were now added to the territory of the New Rome, Constantinople.

Soon after, Justinian set his eyes on recovering Italy from the Ostrogoths, where the Arian King Theodoric had turned against his Catholic subjects. After Theodoric's death this persecution only intensified. Once again, Justinian sent Belisarius to take care of things. It took until 554 for Italy to be subdued.

So 78 years after the fall of the Western Empire, the “deadly wound” was healed (Revelation 13:3).

The imperial restoration that he achieved was the first of a number of attempts to revive the empire, as we shall see.

In spite of his military triumph and his ecclesiastical and legal achievements, Justinian's reign paved the way for the ultimate fall of the Byzantine Empire, the eastern Roman Empire founded by Constantine. His military conquests did not last long after his death on Nov. 14, 565, at the age of 83. He had reigned for 38 years.

It was to be almost a thousand years before Byzantium fell, but the seeds of its destruction were sown in Justinian's time, due to a factor totally beyond his control. For during his long reign the world experienced the first outbreak of bubonic plague. The fact is that in long term, Justinian's dream was defeated by the simple *flea*.

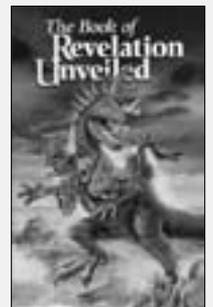
“In the middle of the sixth century, the world's smallest organism collided with the world's mightiest power. Twenty five million corpses later, the Roman Empire, under her last great emperor, Justinian, was decimated” (Rosen, book cover).

The deaths of 25 million people paved the way for the triumph of Islam in the following century. Less than a century after Justinian's death, much of his empire had been conquered by the followers of the prophet Muhammad. Eventually, the descendants of those conquerors wiped the entire Byzantine Empire off the face of the earth!

But the Roman Empire in the West was to see more revivals down through history. ✦

Recommended Reading

The book of Revelation remains mysterious to most people today, but offers great insight into the events leading up to one of the world's most momentous events—the return of Christ! For more information, request a free copy of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.



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

Web site at

www.wnponline.org

The Rapture Is Wrong: The Saints Don't Rise to Run Away

The Bible says the saints rise to meet Christ at His return. But they aren't snatched away to heaven. They rise in the air to perform a fitting salute to the King of Kings and then join Him, not in heaven, but on the earth. If this is different from what you have heard or believed, you need to prove what the Bible actually says!

by Cecil E. Maranville

In Part 1 last issue, we showed that the rapture wasn't taught until approximately 1,800 years after Christ began the New Testament Church!

Today's teachers of the rapture weave numerous biblical references into their narratives, but John Darby and other early rapture advocates based their belief on two verses: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

In particular, they believed the words "shall be caught up" in verse 16 conveyed the idea that Christ would snatch the saints away. Combining this with the biblical teaching that God would protect His people in the end-time Tribulation, they projected that Christ would take the saints to heaven during that period.

Doctrine must come from the Word of God, not the word of man. What does God's Word say? As Part 1 of this series explains, the Greek for this phrase conveys a sense of force and suddenness, but it doesn't suggest abduction or snatching away.

Paul was comforting members of the Church of God in Thessalonica who were grieving over believers who had died. The survivors feared that their loved ones would lose out on participating in God's glorious Kingdom. Christ inspired Paul to put in plain words the truth of the matter. Those who died didn't go to heaven. They were in their graves. But that didn't mean they would lose out on the marvelous Kingdom of God or that the believers still living would have any advantage.

"We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep [dead]" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Paul's message was that the dead would rise. The biblical term for rising from the dead is *resurrection*. A parallel reference is 1 Corinthians

15:51-53, which plainly tells us that God resurrects deceased believers to spirit at "the last trumpet," the same "trumpet of God" mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Verse 51 of 1 Corinthians 15 also reveals that God will also change to spirit those believers still living at Christ's return.

That change is what enables the saints to rise in the air to meet Christ. Human beings can't just go up in the air! But spirit beings can! In the first resurrection, God changes mortal saints into immortals (1 Corinthians 15:53).

The rapture theory says Christ takes the saints to heaven to spare them from the Great Tribulation. But spirit beings don't need to be rescued from anything that the physical realm might inflict. They can't be hurt by physical events. It therefore makes no sense to think that Christ must take them to heaven to protect them from the evils on earth.

The trumpet tells us the timing

What is the significance of the trumpet of which Paul wrote? The book of Revelation tells of seven trumpets sounded by seven angelic beings at the end of the age. The drama builds through each event announced by a trumpet blast until the seventh and final angel sounds. His announcement is the finale, the last and greatest event: The return of Jesus Christ to inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth.

"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, '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).

Scripture doesn't allow for a rapture of the saints to heaven for an interim of several years! To the contrary, "the last trumpet" announces

Scripture doesn't allow for a rapture of the saints to heaven for an interim of several years! To the contrary, "the last trumpet" announces Christ's return to rule over the earth.



“The expression translated to meet is kind of a technical term ‘for the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary.’” Above, an artist’s conception of such a procession in India in the 1820s.

Christ’s return to rule over the earth. Reading the full message of Revelation along with Matthew 24 shows that the timing is critical; that human governments are in the process of destroying the earth. Jesus comes not only for spiritual salvation, but also to save humankind from destroying itself. It is an emergency demanding immediate intervention.

You can read about this in our booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. All of our literature is available at www.wnponline.org/litreq.

Allowing the Bible to interpret itself, it is unmistakably clear that Christ comes to the earth at the time described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 to fulfill the countless prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, the King of Kings, to save the world. Considering all this, it is unreasonable to say that He comes briefly only to leave, not to return for years!

The ancient prophecy of Zechariah confirms the immediacy of Christ’s intervention on the heels of history’s greatest crisis.

“Behold, the day of the LORD is coming... For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people

shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives” (Zechariah 14:1-4).

Throughout the Bible, “the day of the LORD” refers to the time of God’s intervention in human affairs. It does not come subtly, stretched out over years, but rather with suddenness and with force—the precise sense of the Greek word translated “shall be caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Protection for the saints

Therefore, believers aren’t taken off the earth during the Great Tribulation. But God *will* protect believers during this time of stress. The most specific reference to the protection that God promises for His people at the end of the age is in Revelation 12.

Revelation 12:14 says, “But the woman [symbolic of the Church of God] was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness *to her place*, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”

There is more to the story. The context tells us that at least part of God’s Church will suffer persecution while God

protects the rest of the Church. “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (verse 17). Most likely, the result of this persecution will be martyrdom.

The Bible records many ways by which God protected His people in the past, but does not reveal specifically how, where, when—or even all of the “who” that He will protect in the end. However, we can have confidence that He will reveal what we need to know at the essential time. In the meantime, our focus must be on the spiritual preparation for Christ’s return and the establishment of our Father’s Kingdom (Matthew 24:38-51).

Why the saints rise to meet Him

There is one question yet to answer: Why would the saints rise to meet Christ in the air, when He is on His way to the earth to defeat evil and to establish the Kingdom of God here? Why not simply wait for Him to arrive?

Those who teach the rapture make much of this issue, claiming that it buttresses their theory. In fact, the truth of the matter actually further discredits their erroneous teaching.

We need to look at the meaning of the Greek term translated “to meet” that Christ inspired Paul to use in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Dr. Leon Morris writes in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*: “The expression translated *to meet* is kind of a technical term ‘for the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary’...and is very suitable in this context.”

Notice that it pertains to a newly *arrived* dignitary, not to one who is merely passing through. In no way does it convey that Christ only enters the atmosphere and then reverses course, as He snatches believers away to heaven.

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words adds that the Greek word “is used in the papyri of a newly arriving magistrate. ‘It seems that the special idea of the word was the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary’” (1985, “Meet”).

The resurrected saints rise in a respectful gesture to welcome the arriving dignitary, “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16). The

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary notes that “when a king enters his city the loyal go forth to meet him.”

As well, the word tells us where the saints go after rising to meet the returning Christ. F.F. Bruce’s *International Bible Commentary* explains: “*To meet* is used in the papyri of the official reception given to a visiting governor, whom his citizens escort into the city from which they have come to meet him” (1986, notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Jesus’ loyal subjects, the resurrected saints rise from the earth to meet Him as He comes to govern the world, and they escort Him back to the earth—at that time, not years later.

The same reference we cited above from Zechariah confirms this: “And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south... Thus the LORD my God will come, *and all the saints with You*” (Zechariah 14:4-5, emphasis added).

The truth of 1 Thessalonians 4

In conclusion, let’s summarize what 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 actually says.

- Christ’s return is proclaimed by an angel’s trumpet blast; it is clearly not a secret matter.
- The fact that some believers had died doesn’t mean they would be left out; they will be resurrected to join Christ as He returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.
- Living believers will also be changed to spirit to join those resurrected from the dead.
- All the saints will form a welcoming party that rises to meet Christ and escort Him back to earth; absolutely nothing is said or implied about going to heaven.

In related scriptures, we have seen that Christ indeed continues through the air to the earth after the saints meet Him. His return is the prophesied second coming, not a clandestine snatch and grab of the saints.

We have also seen that the resurrected saints who meet Christ will immediately begin to serve with Him in the Kingdom of God on the earth (Revelation 20:6).

There is no rapture. There *is* a resurrection at the second coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. ❖

“AMERICA” (Continued from page 7)

fast becoming the chosen alternative language for the rest of the world. Capitalism, which it championed, had vanquished both socialism and communism...

“The triumph of the United States has not emerged out of a vacuum. It was the latest expression of the extraordinary success and expansion of Western power and European civilisation. Britain, Spain, France and then the United States had conquered India, humbled China, colonised Africa, exploited South America and converted Japan. That Western domination has been the defining characteristic of our planet for well over two centuries.”

What is surely coming

Then Sir Malcolm warned: “That phase of world history may now be coming to an end. The changes we are seeing in the global economy are not only a threat and challenge to the unique power of the United States. They may also be a watershed for the political, cultural and economic domination that Europe and America have enjoyed for centuries. This will be difficult for Europeans as well as Americans to understand and accept.”

But there is yet another important dimension in assessing the national destiny of the American people. Most do not understand the true origins of first Britain’s and then America’s national greatness. Most do not realize that the Bible shows that God is the behind-the-scenes Author of the emergence of British and American success in the last 225 years.

From God’s telling viewpoint, the nation’s ultimate standing in the world is dependent on how its people live. Our Creator is giving America and Britain every chance to turn to His way of life expressed by the Ten Commandments. God allowed 9/11 to happen, followed by Hurricane Katrina and other disasters, and now He is hoping that their serious economic difficulties will turn Americans back to Him (see 2 Peter 3:9).

After a national tragedy people

usually experience a brief repentance. The prophet Hosea stated that our faithfulness is like the dew on the ground in the morning (Hosea 6:4). It soon disappears!

The United States in prophecy

The legacy and destiny of the biblical patriarch Joseph have resulted in the emergence of Britain, and then America, as dominant world powers. Prophecies in both Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 foretold that the descendants of Joseph would be doubly blessed beyond measure by our Creator. These prophecies have been fulfilled by the Anglo-Saxon peoples during the last 225 years.

But consider this. The 10 tribes of the nation of Israel (Samaria) failed to heed the warnings of the prophet Amos (8th century B.C.) and the nation of Judah ignored Jeremiah (6th century B.C.). Both countries suffered national captivity. Will God treat America any differently if it continues on its present path of increasing disobedience to the Ten Commandments? (See Malachi 3:6.)

Do we believe that the Creator has somehow lost His power and can no longer intervene in His creation and the lives of His people?

We are perilously close to what Jeremiah referred to as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7). It will be a period of great distress for the United States, Britain and the Commonwealth countries of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and also South Africa—those peoples descended from the biblical patriarch Jacob.

The whole compelling story of our English-speaking peoples of today is told in our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. History, legacy and future prophecy are all covered in detail.

You cannot afford to be without a copy. You cannot understand present world news and trends without this unique biblical and historical knowledge. Be sure to request or download a free personal copy. ❖

“TRUST” (Continued from page 16)

and Paris as in Charles Dickens’ story, but Plymouth and New York City.

Religious separatists settled Plymouth as a religious haven devoted to the worship of God. On the other hand, New York (New Amsterdam) was founded as a gateway to trade, finance and pleasure.

Since those early times, America has always had a dual personality with conflicting drives. Amazingly, these opposite poles of spiritual heart and precious metal come together in American coins imprinted with “In God We Trust.” The question is, which is more real? What we hold in our hands or what is imprinted in our hearts?

Today, we find America increasingly turning away from the values of the Scriptures. Unfortunately, the Ten Commandments have become the “Ten Suggestions” for far too many. Increasingly this God-blessed birthright nation has moved away from a society with freedom of religion to an increasingly sad country with freedom from religion. Thus, its moral fabric has weakened.

Rather than people living before their God and living within their means, we have chosen New York over Plymouth as a national model.

Let’s realize for every cause there is an effect. We read in Deuteronomy 28:43-44 how a blessed nation that turns from its God-given birthright would have foreigners lending to them, and “he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.” Did I hear China?

What is made plain from the biblical record is that when God either withdraws His blessings or punishes a system that confronts Him, it can happen overnight. Revelation 18:10, 17, 19 mentions three times how the final culmination of the Babylonian system headed by “the beast” is going to fall in “one hour.”

Much of this same chapter is devoted to describing the mercantile and voracious financial habits of this system opposed to God. It describes how those invested in this corrupt regime will weep over its demise and



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While our financial portfolios may shrink, it has given all of us an opportunity to raise our spiritual portfolios by dealing in the currency of faith underlined in the reality that indeed “In God We Trust.”

wonder how this could have happened.

Verse 17 chillingly describes how “in one hour such great riches came to nothing.” Such words, right now, are almost too close to home, aren’t they? But it shows how quickly matters can change (the implication of those words, “one hour”).

No spiritual golden parachutes

What is equally loud in the Scriptures is the fact that God has not chosen to fully isolate His followers from this world. In His final prayer on the night of His betrayal, Christ plainly spoke these words: “I do not pray that You should take them out of this world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15).

What? No offer of a spiritual golden parachute from the ills of this corruptive society? Scripture reminds us of a different reality. The faithful patriarchs of Genesis had to endure famine and be on the move. The children of Israel went through the first three plagues visited upon Egypt. The apostolic Church of Jerusalem

suffered from famine alongside their Jewish countrymen. Each in turn had to learn “In God We Trust.”

Each generation of covenant people has to learn to pray for their “daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). Each generation of faith-driven folk has to come to grips with whether their riches are in God or in treasure they have laid up for themselves. Jesus advised that “he who lays up treasure for himself...is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

The psalmist David makes a powerful observation regarding those who honor God and have “In God We Trust” embedded in their hearts and not only on the coins in their pocket. David comments, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread” (Psalm 37:23-25).

Please notice that David didn’t say “begging for steak,” but for bread.

In other words, our basic life needs would be provided. This is the same David, who in utmost confidence, declared, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). He knew even in calamitous times that He was never alone or forgotten.

How's your faith temperature doing right now with so much stirring in this boiling cauldron of global financial insecurity?

Taking a "faith check"

Let's take a "faith check" by squarely facing the words of the greatest Shepherd of all. Jesus challenges and comforts us at the same time in Matthew 6:25-33:

"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

When I mention a faith check, that doesn't mean that we will simply passively sit back and do nothing. Of course not! God helps those who help themselves. Neither does

that mean that, as we are confronted with challenging circumstances, our knees won't be shaking. That's natural. But there is a difference between having shaky knees and a shaky heart. Because it is in such times we discover whether "In God We Trust" is simply engraved on our coins or etched into our character.

Oh yes, we have every privilege to be concerned and to responsibly respond where and as we can, but we have no God-given responsibility to be worried. That is homegrown down here below!

Herbert Lockyer dissects worry best when he says, "Worry produces doubt in a threefold direction. 1) God's love is doubted. Worry implies that He cares little for His blood-washed children. 2) God's wisdom is doubted. Worry indicates that He is not able to plan for His own, that He does not know what is best for them who belong to Him. 3) God's power is doubted. Worry says His grace is not sufficient for our needs."

Is your spiritual stock on the rise?

As the global markets turn and churn, please understand one thing. You are not lost in this picture and God knows right where you are. In fact, your stock may be on the rise. While our financial portfolios may shrink, it has given all of us an opportunity to raise our spiritual portfolios by dealing in the currency of faith underlined in the reality that indeed "In God We Trust." Yes, it has been a time for all of us to go back to basics and consider the foundation upon which we invest.

It is the words of David that offer us guidance on that path laid before us of "This is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21). He simply put it this way in Psalm 37:3: "Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness." If you wanted to abbreviate it and put it on a coin, you might just say, "In God We Trust." Better still—etch it in your heart. ❖



Robin Webber

How to Contact Us

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

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

BENELUX countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands
BRITISH ISLES: P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1140, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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by Robin Webber

“In God We Trust”

Like many Americans, almost all of my life I have carried coins in my pocket. These small pieces of metal make a statement about trust. No, it's not trust in a bank or in what else lies in our pockets! For our readers who may not know or have forgotten, the statement engraved on American coins is just four simple words with profound ramifications, “In God We Trust.”

Of course, the economic crisis is affecting nations around the world, not just the United States. Perhaps more than ever, at least in my lifetime, we are being dynamically challenged to turn our attention from what lies in our pockets to what lies in our hearts regarding the source of our ultimate provisions.

Long ago, the firebrand of the American Revolution, Thomas Paine, spoke of the times that he lived in as “the times that try men's souls.” While Paine was talking about 1775, his words are still true today!

Time to talk!

Many of us see our financial retirement portfolios evaporating. Others are experiencing a job loss or a cutback in hours. Those on fixed incomes are trying to stretch their pennies yet further, but there may be nothing left to stretch or squeeze. These are amazing times in which we live! It is time to talk! And frankly there is nothing better to talk about than God's promises of a stable mooring in unsettled times.

Long ago, God offered certain promises to a peo-

ple if they would honor Him and place Him first in their minds and hearts.

He told the newly established nation of Israel, “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country” (Deuteronomy 28:1-3).

The people of Israel were granted the privilege of collectively living out “In God We Trust.” And God did bless ancient Israel! But the people of Israel do not have a monopoly on God's attention. God honors all individuals, families and nations who honor Him. It is noteworthy that God states the blessings would “overtake you,” indicating when God wants to bless you, there is no way of running away from His blessings.

A tale of two cities

Now, fast-forward to our time. The United States has been a “land of milk and honey.” But now, why this dramatic turn of events? What is it within the American personality that has brought us to this financial mess? The answer lies in understanding the conflicting pulls within the American psyche symbolized by “a tale of two cities.” No! Not London

(See “**TRUST,**” page 14)