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# Should America Play Ball With Iran?

*We were told in a major cover article recently published by Newsweek, a popular American newsmagazine, that "they may not want the bomb... Iran isn't a dictatorship...[and] Iran may be ready to deal." Are these points basically true? Should the United States negotiate with the present leadership of this wayward nation—regardless of its radical conduct in office?*

by John Ross Schroeder

**W**as the latest Iranian election really rigged or merely an unfortunate minority outburst of dissatisfaction? The consensus of most impartial observers continues to be that, even if an honest count would have given President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad a slight winning margin, the claimed landslide result is a discredited fiction.

According to *New Statesman* magazine (June 22, 2009), opinion polls showing a strong opponent leading the incumbent Iranian president on the eve of the election suddenly morphed into an overwhelming victory for President Ahmadinejad. The *New Statesman* article went on to reveal nine other credible reasons why the wide margin of victory was most likely a gross falsification of what really happened.

#### Iran a pseudodemocracy

One able Iranian commentator observed: "Since its inception in 1979, the Islamic republic has organized 31 elections at different levels. All have been carefully scripted, with candidates pre-approved by the regime and no independent



Reuters/Damir Sagolj

*Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's claim to victory in the recent presidential election in Iran has ignited weeks of protests.*

mechanism for oversight" (Amir Taheri, "Iran's Dictator Gives Up Pretence of Democracy," *The Sunday Times*, June 21, 2009).

As far as this insightful writer is concerned, "On Friday, June 19, the Islamic republic died in Iran." He went on to describe two Irans. "One

(See "IRAN," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

# Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

## Dealing With World 2.0

**W**orld 2.0 is upon us. Web 2.0 is a metaphor for the technological world of social media and smart phones. Two recent events last month have led me to consider our society is now World 2.0.

I was watching news coverage the day pop star Michael Jackson died. I was struck by something as the cameras panned across the crowd of people gathered outside the Los Angeles hospital where he died. The camera was on the Fox News reporter, but I noticed that every bystander you could see in the picture was on a cell phone texting or talking—most seemed to be texting. What was occurring was everyone was reporting the event. Everyone was a reporter!

The other situation involved the mass street demonstrations in Tehran, Iran, following their recent presidential elections. The people protesting in Iran have employed the Web 2.0 tools of Twitter, YouTube and Facebook to upload videos, pictures and descriptions of the protests. Cell phones and computers are the keys to this information flow. Major cable news sources then use this material on television.

That is the reality of our socially connected, wired world today. Anyone with a smart phone and connection can transmit text, pictures and voice instantly from the palm of his or her hand. Information is instantly posted on Twitter, Facebook and other online media. News organizations often rely on these sources for information on breaking news stories.

Last January when the US Airways jetliner landed in the Hudson River in New York, the first pictures were from a guy with a phone posting to Twitter. Amazing!

A point to learn from this is the fact that information abounds and is transmitted, shared and absorbed instantly by a variety of means. Nothing is secret, and information cannot be controlled. Iran is learning that you cannot control a citizenry aroused over an election. Iran has tried to crack down on the Internet but with little success.

China continues to try to crack down on and censor the Internet within its borders. They do this with some success, but people find ways to circumvent the walls and get information in and out. The lesson for a nation or organization is that in today's world you cannot fully censor and control the flow of information. Technology is moving too fast and the means to disseminate information is easy, accessible and inexpensive.

Technology is a force multiplier in today's geopolitics. No country, no organization, can expect to compete and grow without proactively harnessing the social power of Web 2.0. To fail in this is to fall behind and risk permanent underclass status.

It is far better to learn key lessons about human freedom, dignity and love than to try to censor, control and ignore. History shows the persistent, inexorable march of human freedom. No human government can stop the arrival of the day when God grants spiritual freedom to all humanity.

All this puts a greater responsibility on the individual, on you and me, to make sure our words and communications are responsible, true and gracious. We should let God's Spirit motivate us to have sound and encouraging communication that builds relationships. The words of Colossians 4:6 sum it all up: "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“IRAN” (Continued from page 1)

is prepared to support [Ayatollah] Khamenei’s bid to transform the republic into an emirate in the service of the Islamic cause. Then there is a second Iran—one that wishes to cease being a cause and yearns to be an ordinary nation... The fight over Iran’s future is only beginning.”

One thing is for sure. The so-called results of this election have brought many thousands, if not millions, into the city streets to protest Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s reelection. Severe repression, already resulting in at least 17 deaths and many injured persons, will probably crush this popular protest for the time being and perhaps force it underground. But it won’t disappear.

Meanwhile this cruel regime, still claiming landslide support, promises to be even more vehemently forceful than ever in its threats against the state of Israel, Britain and the United States.

### Britain to blame?

The head man in Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, employed the usual dictatorial methods in justifying the reelection of President Ahmadinejad. “He tried to deflect blame on Iran’s international ‘enemies,’ notably Britain, which he described as ‘the most vicious of all’” (“People Power in Iran Can Carry the Day,” *The Sunday Times*, June 21, 2009, emphasis added throughout).

There are reasons, whether justified or not, for this historic antipathy against Britain. In 1941 (during World War II) the United Kingdom invaded Iran and exiled the reigning Reza Shah, seriously suspected of pro-German attitudes. His son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was installed in office. Then in 1953 the British assisted in removing Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. Iran also deeply disliked the strong British defense of Iranian author Salman Rushdie, sentenced to death in absentia by a *fatwah* for writing what was considered blasphemy in his novel *Satanic Verses*.

These historical events serve as background to the current situation.



Reuters/Caren Firouz

*A demonstrator shows a picture of former presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi during a rally in support of Mousavi near Azadi Monument in western Tehran on June 15.*

On June 21, 2009, the BBC’s chief correspondent was asked to leave the country, allegedly for distorting the Iranian protest movement.

Britain has expelled two Iranian diplomats in response to the expulsion of two British diplomats from Iran. And according to the June 24 lead editorial in *The Times*, “Iran’s belief in Britain as an arch conspirator has small historical warrant and is an absurd depiction of modern international relations.”

### Presidential tirades against Israel and the West

President Ahmadinejad has acquired a reputation for rambling tirades against the West, particularly the state of Israel. Consider his comment on the Jewish Holocaust: “They have invented a myth that Jews were massacred and place this above God, religions and the prophets” (“The Wit and Wisdom of President Ahmadinejad,” *New Statesman*, June 18, 2009).

His observations about Israel and Zionism include: “The Imam

[Khomeini] said that this regime occupying Jerusalem *must vanish from the page of time*” (ibid.). This promotes nothing less than another horrendous Holocaust. As one astute *Newsweek* reader wrote: “Ahmadinejad has said again and again that he will wipe Israel off the face of the map. Should Israel not take him seriously?” (Letters, June 8, 2009).

Then during a speech at the racism conference held in Geneva, the Iranian president branded Israel the “*most cruel and repressive racist regime*” (Chip Cummings and Charles Forelle, “Ahmadinejad Calls Israel ‘Racist,’” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 21, 2009). He has adroitly managed to inject this spiritual venom into many of his supporters. Just prior to the recent election Joe Klein reported for *Time* magazine, “About 20,000 supporters of the President were inside the building [in central Tehran], being entertained by a series of TV stars, athletes and religious singers... Inside a TV host led the crowd in chanting ‘Death to

Israel.' 'Squeeze your teeth and yell from the bottom of your heart,' he implored" ("Ten Days in Tehran," June 29, 2009).

But Israel is not the only state to come under the Iranian president's verbal fire. In an echo of his previous Holocaust denial, "Mr. Ahmadinejad, in his rambling speech Monday, castigated the U.S. and Europe for acting after World War II to make 'an entire nation homeless under the pretext of Jewish suffering'" ("Ahmadinejad Calls Israel 'Racist' in U.N. Rant," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 21, 2009). He apparently was referring to the Palestinians in the context of the founding of the nation of Israel in 1948, an event that created the first Jewish national homeland in some 2,000 years.

### What's behind the rhetoric?

Part of the basic problem may simply consist of pining away for a lost heritage of yesteryear. Recall that the late Saddam Hussein dreamed of

becoming another Saladin (A.D. 1138-1193, a Kurdish Muslim who became sultan of both Egypt and Syria)—partially resulting in Hussein's failed attempt to annex Kuwait. Iran's leaders may be bitten by a similar bug.

Anciently Iran was known as Persia—once a sophisticated, powerful and influential civilization with conquerors and potentates like Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes.

Robert Kagan, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, writes in *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*: "As Ray Takeyh observes, Iran believes that by 'virtue of size and historical achievements,' it has 'the right to emerge as the local hegemon' in the Middle East and Persian Gulf..."

"As more than one Iranian leader has made clear, Iran defines and ennobles itself by its willingness to stand up to the United States, the predominant and overbearing superpower, which also happens to

be [from their viewpoint] the Great Satan. These passions and ambitions long preceded the Bush administration, as did Iran's conviction that only as a nuclear weapons state could it fend off pressures from the American superpower and its allies" (2008, p. 47).

President Ahmadinejad, and others like him, would like nothing more than to restore the former glory and influence of Persia.

Apparently many in the country speak of themselves not as Iranians, but as Persians. According to the 11th edition of Andrew Boyd's *An Atlas of World Affairs*, "In Iran's population of 70 million, not much more than half are Farsi-speaking Persians" (2007, p. 146).

Iran obviously wants to exercise complete and total control over the Persian Gulf waters and widen its political, military and economic influence throughout the Middle East. It may see Israel as a threat to its national ambitions of becoming the new regional superpower.

However, obtaining nuclear weapons would constitute a master step toward realizing Iranian national ambitions in the Middle East.

### Iran's aggressive quest for nuclear weapons

James Forsyth, in *The Spectator* magazine, reminds us not to lose sight of "the race to stop Iran from

(See "IRAN," page 13)

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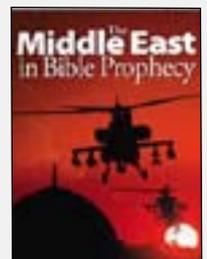
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### Recommended Reading

To better understand the roots of the conflict between Islam and the West, request a free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. This fully illustrated booklet takes you on an eye-opening journey through history and the Bible to grasp the roots of this conflict, and where it will lead.



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# The Significance of Egypt in Prophecy

*President Barack Obama's visit to Cairo returned the spotlight on Egypt. Egypt is mentioned with ominous overtones in much of the Bible, but prophecies show much brighter symbolism for the future!*

by Fred Nance

**U**.S. President Barack Obama recently visited Egypt as the first stop on his tour of the Middle East. He delivered a speech at Cairo University in which he characterized the peace process as seeking “a new beginning between the United States and Muslims” (“Egyptians Positive on Obama Speech,” BBC News, June 4, 2009).

Part of the reason for selecting Egypt as the location for this historic speech is because it is a major Muslim power and the most populous country in the Arab world.

“Obama directly enlisted a religion [Islam] to build global peace and to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, end nuclear proliferation and stop terrorism” (Feisal Abdul Rauf, “Obama’s Challenge to the Muslim World,” *The Washington Post*, June 5, 2009).

President Obama sees Islam as central to resolving peace in the world. In the speech “he declared that the United States is not at war with Islam and outlined a plan for how the conflict can be resolved. Perhaps most important, he put religion at the core of the peacemaking process” (“Obama’s Challenge to Both America and Islam,” *Lansing State Journal*, June 8, 2009).

Religion is at the heart and core of eventual peace in the world. The president was correct in stating that. However, will it happen according to his outline? According to Bible prophecy, peace will come and Egypt will be one of the symbols of that peace. Why Egypt? What is so significant about that nation as far as the Bible is concerned?

Egypt is one of the oldest centers of civilization on the face of the earth, with a history dwarfing most other societies anywhere on earth. Its pyramids, sphinxes and rich architectural wonders are major tourist attractions that span centuries of time.

But more importantly, the Bible shows that Egypt represents something that God not only dealt with in the past but will deal with in the future—false religion!

## **Egypt, a spiritual symbol**

In Revelation 11 we read about two witnesses who prophesy in Jerusalem against a power that will come against it. This power, elsewhere called the Beast, “will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months” (Revelation 11:2).

This Beast (a super economic-military power) will eventually have the two witnesses killed and their dead bodies will be left “in the street of the great city [Jerusalem] which *spiritually* is called Sodom and *Egypt*, where also our Lord was crucified” (verse 8, emphasis added throughout).

Why is Jerusalem to be spiritually symbolized as not only Sodom (known for its wickedness) but also Egypt? Egypt symbolizes false religion that the God of the Bible had to punish. Earlier in verse 6 the two witnesses are shown to strike the earth with plagues reminiscent of the plagues God brought on Egypt.

## **“Against the gods of Egypt”**

Most Bible students are familiar with the 10 plagues that God brought on ancient Egypt to deliver the children of Israel from slavery under a cruel pharaoh. In each one of the plagues a devastating disaster occurred, but the pharaoh of Egypt would not let Israel go. The last plague involved the death of the firstborn of Egypt, and finally the pharaoh relented and released Israel.

In a summary statement God said in Exodus 12:12 that this plague and even all of the plagues were directed “against all the gods of Egypt.” *Jamieson, Fausset*

*The Bible shows that Egypt represents something that God not only dealt with in the past but will deal with in the future—false religion!*



*President Barack Obama is given a tour of the Great Pyramid of Giza by the secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Dr. Zahi Hawass (left), while in Cairo, Egypt, June 4.*

and *Brown Bible Commentary* says: “The whole system of Egyptian idolatry, with its disgusting details of the intrigues and incest of gods and goddesses, was a foul debasing mass of superstition.”

The Egyptian system of worship was based on sun worship with a whole host of other gods built around it. This pagan worship was disgusting to God, and He took action against it.

What was not explained in the book of Exodus is that the children of Israel had become engaged in the idolatry of those gods. Ezekiel 20 explains that God was angry with Israel for their pagan idolatry and that He brought them out by means of the plagues so that He did not have to punish them in the sight of the Egyptians.

Egyptian idolatry and its system of false gods did not end with the 10 plagues. Actually Osiris and Isis, the most prominent of their gods, were borrowed by the Greek and Roman empires. They simply changed their

names and adopted them into their pantheon of gods.

This system of false worship with its fascination and focus on the sun as an object of veneration has its imprints even in modern-day Christianity, which took root in ancient Rome, where a fascination with the civilizations and religions of the East flourished. (To understand more, read or request our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built* at [www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org).)

It is because of this false system of religion that God had to judge and bring plagues on the Egyptians.

In the future another religious system that is described in Revelation as “Babylon” will be judged by God with plagues and is prophesied to fall, paving the way for peace and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

### **A new symbol for Egypt**

But while Egypt has symbolized false religion throughout the ages, a change is coming according to

another Bible prophecy. Egypt will become a symbol of worship toward the true God of the Bible.

Isaiah 19 describes the judgment of the “idols” of Egypt in the first part of the chapter, but in verses 19 and 20 it talks about an altar and a pillar that “will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt.” Egypt will be known at that time for its worship of the God of the Bible (verse 21).

The prophecy in Isaiah 19 concludes with a wonderful description of peace and harmony by the uniting together of three ancient enemies: Egypt, Assyria and Israel.

That future world of peace is symbolized in this section of Scripture as a “highway” of universal goodwill and understanding, but in actuality it is a highway of worship to God.

“In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians” (verse 23).

*The Bible Reader’s Companion* says that the word *highway* “indicates the close relationship between once hostile nations forged by a shared commitment to the God of the Jews.”

Verses 24-25 further describe that shared commitment to God: “In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, ‘Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.’”

It is significant that the president of the United States chose this particular country, Egypt—the very nation that *will be a symbol of peace* and harmony that eventually will be in the world in the Kingdom of God—to deliver a speech calling for eventual peace between nations.

*The Bible Reader’s Companion* summarizes the beauty of that future time by saying: “When God can say of Egypt and Assyria as well as of Israel, ‘my people’ (v. 25), the world will have peace and blessing at last.” ❖

# America's Hope for Recovery: Real or Merely an Illusion?

*Has America dodged the bullet? Has the economy turned around? Will government intervention save the day? Will the country soon wake up from its financial nightmare and find that everything has returned to normal?*

by Cecil E. Maranville

Seemingly without warning, the American economic juggernaut stumbled and unraveled with frightening speed last year. Because of its size, its malady could not help but infect the global economy. Fear and uncertainty assaulted the heretofore supremely confident American facade.

Without doubt the crisis greatly influenced the U.S. electorate, helping to sweep Barack Obama and his "message of hope" into the White House. Now, nearly six months into the new administration, it's time to evaluate that hope.

Do Americans have reason to expect that their prosperity will soon return to the level long-enjoyed by the world's only superpower?

There may indeed be a reason to hope—but the basis for genuine hope is not in a president, congressperson, judge or business person. Nor is it in government intervention, whatever the mix of spending, reduced benefits or increased taxes.

*All hope based solely on people or government action is going to disappoint.*

Before America can recover, it must relearn the basis for its previous phenomenal success. Is it cleverness, ingenuity, a willingness to work hard? Such claims lack humility and sound judgment.

Until America remembers the basis for its achievements, it has no guarantee of returning to them.

## A sign of hope

In April of this year, Somali pirates took hostage the captain of the U.S.-flagged cargo ship *Maersk Alabama*. After a successful rescue operation, a crew member observed: "In America now, things are down. It's not the best of

times. Hopefully everybody in America can latch onto this maybe and use it as a *sign of hope* to show what being American is about."

There is some truth to his words! The brief flash of America's supreme military prowess brought some sunshine to a country inundated with dismal news. But whatever hope came from this dramatic rescue did not last long.

The news cycle quickly returned to discussions of the viability of America's automobile giants and its financial institutions, punctuated with perpetual reporting on the Dow Jones Industrial Average.

And the hope is left hanging, without a certain end.

Because of the times, the swearing in of President Obama was billed as a time of great hope, which was reflected in the prayers offered during his inauguration ceremony. One of those prayers repeated the pattern of King Solomon's prayer of dedication at the inauguration of the temple. The prayer repeatedly called on God to forgive certain actions or attitudes.

News coverage of the inauguration focused on who said the prayers but not on the words spoken, which was a loss. For the words reflected Western thinking today. Here is what was said:

"When we focus on ourselves, when we fight each other, when we forget You, *forgive us*. When we presume that our greatness and our prosperity is ours alone, *forgive us*. When we fail to treat our fellow human beings and all the earth with the respect that they deserve, *forgive us*" (emphasis added throughout).

Do you notice anything missing from that prayer? We'll come back to this later in the article.

*Until America realizes the source of its hope and until its citizens begin to submit themselves to the laws of the Creator, no rescue plan, no matter how brilliantly conceived, is going to bring the nation back to its former greatness.*



*The rescue of Maersk Alabama Capt. Richard Phillips (right), pictured here with U.S. Navy Lt. Comdr. Fowler, created a sense of hope in Americans; but it was unfortunately short-lived.*

Soon after the rescue of the captain of the *Maersk Alabama*, thousands of Christians assembled to observe two biblical festivals, the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. Perhaps more commonly associated with the Jewish faith, these festivals were nonetheless part of the faith practiced by Jesus Christ, His apostles and the New Testament Church of God.

What do these festivals have to do with hope in America? Everything.

### **God, the source of American greatness**

Many Americans today believe that the Creator God is the source of their country's wealth and power and that without His benefits America would be nothing. They are correct! Unless or until America remembers this and takes appropriate action, its future is extremely uncertain!

The Bible shows that God gave ancient Israel the festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread so

that they would remember how their nation came into existence. Most of our readers are familiar with this history. God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt through a series of spectacular miracles.

When establishing the festivals for perpetual observance, God explained that the children of each generation would naturally inquire about the reason for doing so. And He instructed parents to teach their children about the remarkable birth of their nation and how He was the source of their greatness (see Exodus 13:14, 16).

God had a specific purpose in mind for requiring these observances. "That they [the Israelite generations springing from the nation of the Exodus] *may set their hope in God*" (Psalm 78:7).

Properly observed, these festivals would remind Israel annually of the basis of their strength. God had made them what they were.

The psalmist does not merely recite the history of Israel's begin-

ning. He also related the end of its unique relationship with its Creator and founder. Not only did God make Israel; He also broke it.

The relationship God had with His people reached a breaking point, after which God withdrew His favor.

The historical record in Psalm 78 shows: "When God heard this, He was furious, and greatly abhorred Israel, so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent He had placed among men, and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand. He also gave His people over to the sword, and was furious with His inheritance" (verses 59-62).

### **The breaking point**

What happened that caused God to change so dramatically? What was the breaking point? The answer has everything to do with America at the present time.

Israel's sin wasn't merely forgetting an important anniversary or neglecting to appreciate God for what He had done. The repeated annual exercise of keeping Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread was designed to affect the behavior of Israel's people. Or in the psalmist's inspired words: "So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering his glorious miracles and *obeying his commands*" (Psalm 78:7, New Living Translation).

Israel enjoyed wealth, prosperity, political stability and military strength. The more successful its people were, the less inclined they were to subject themselves to the law God had given to them. God's definition of morality was separate in their thinking from politics, from finance, from military campaigns, from all their ethical choices.

It wasn't that God temperamentally dismissed them for human weaknesses or understandable imperfections. Read the history and you will see that He was remarkably restrained and patient. Yet He did reach a breaking point, a point after which He never restored the

country to its previous strength.

The cycle repeated itself with Judah, which also strayed from obeying God's laws. As before, God was patient, giving the nation time to turn its behavior around, until He had no choice.

America needs to rehearse the biblical history, because it shows how God thinks. More importantly, the founding peoples of America are the descendants of the Israelites God rescued from Egypt! (See our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.) America should still be observing the Passover and Unleavened Bread festivals—and heeding the message they memorialize.

God does not forever tolerate behavior that disregards His laws. He does not perpetually enrich, shelter, protect and otherwise bless a nation that disregards its special relationship with Him. God does not delight in the “politically correct” attitude that all gods are the same and that all faiths are the same. Such an attitude is merely another way of denying Him, just like Israel of old pursued the idols of the pagans.

### The critical missing perspective

Now, let's go back to the inauguration prayer. Did you notice what was missing from it?

The prayer it is patterned after is found in 2 Chronicles 6, where King Solomon begged God to forgive Israel for mistakes. But there is more to the original prayer.

“Hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive... If Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and return and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication before You in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to them and their fathers. When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their

sin because You afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants” (verses 21-27).

Do you see the understanding that was missing from the presidential inauguration prayer? God would forgive *when people came to under-*



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*“So each generation can set its hope anew on God, remembering his glorious miracles and obeying his commands” (Psalm 78:7, New Living Translation).*

*stand, admit and turn away from their failure to obey God's law.*

Astonishingly, God answered King Solomon in a dream, something done only a few times in all of recorded history. God promised “...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

The phrase “seek my face...then I will hear from heaven” employs symbolism about eye contact showing favor. These phrases reveal that God isn't forever automatically bestowing

favor on people—that whether He hears their prayers depends on the relationship that the people have with Him.

To “humble themselves” and “turn from their wicked ways” is the classic definition of repentance. One has to admit and turn *from* sinful behavior as well as *toward* righteous behavior. This requires a person to research, study and investigate the concepts of sin and righteousness, applying them personally.

“Heal their land” implies that the entire nation suffers as a result of the collective behavior of its citizenry—that the country is afflicted and in need of a cure.

Until America realizes the source of its hope and until its citizens begin to submit themselves to the laws of the Creator, no rescue plan, no matter how brilliantly conceived, is going to bring the nation back to its former greatness.

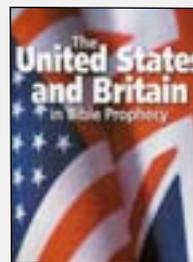
Is God about to remove His favor as He did with America's ancestors? The nation should be weighing that distinct possibility. Be assured that America hasn't yet begun to see troubles in comparison to what life would be like without the Creator's special blessing.

The good news in all of this is that God's characteristic mercy remains and that when America eventually repents, it will find His forgiveness. ❖

### Recommended Reading

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

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



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# Europe and the Church, Part 10

## Napoleon's Dream of European Conquest

*More books have been written on Napoleon than almost any other world leader. His period of glory is still remembered in his capital city of Paris, where the Arc de Triomphe commemorates the First Empire and Les Invalides is his final resting place. But Napoleon's dream of European unity failed as did those of others before him.*

by Melvin Rhodes

*With Rome and Charlemagne as inspiration, Napoleon set about restoring the unity of Europe and beyond.*

**A**t the height of his power, he had 70 million subjects across the continent of Europe. “Not since the ancient Caesars had one man held so much power” (*Napoleon*, PBS).

He was the emperor of France, but “not a drop of French blood flowed through his veins” (*The Book of Knowledge*, Vol. V, *The Rise and Fall of Napoleon*, 1955, p. 318). His wife, the empress, wasn't French either. But 25 years after he died in exile thousands of miles away from France, the French wanted his remains returned to Paris where he was finally laid to rest in a grand mausoleum, Les Invalides.

Two centuries after his reign, Napoleon Bonaparte is remembered as one of the most significant men in history. More books have been written about him than almost any other historical figure.

Born in August 1769 on the Mediterranean island of Corsica, Napoleon as a young man was very anti-French. His home island had been conquered by France only one year before his birth, and he held nothing but contempt for France and its people.

However, his father was employed in French government service and adopted French manners and ways. Consequently, Napoleon was given a free military education in France. He was commissioned second lieutenant of artillery in 1785, just four years before the start of the French Revolution.

On the outbreak of the revolution in July 1789, Napoleon returned to his native Corsica to attempt to organize revolution there. “Coming into conflict with the monarchist faction on the island, he was forced

to escape to France, with the rest of his family, in 1793” (ibid).

Napoleon came to prominence when he defended the republican government against a serious royalist uprising in Paris in October 1795. The government rewarded him by appointing him commander of the French army in Italy against the Austrians and their allies.

Two days before his departure for Italy he married Josephine, widow of a French general who had been executed during the terror that followed the revolution. Josephine originally came from the French Caribbean island of Martinique.

### Military genius

Italy brought out Napoleon's great military genius and stirred a deep ambition in him. In 1796 he defeated the Sardinians five times in 11 days, forcing a peace on them. He followed this with battles against the Austrians. “He defeated them at Lodi on May 10th, and his bravery was shown when he forced his way across the bridge at Lodi—an exploit that won from his troops the affectionate nickname of ‘Little Corporal’” (ibid.).

Following a number of victories over the Austrians, the Habsburgs sued for peace when Napoleon advanced to within 80 miles of the Austrian capital, Vienna.

Next, Bonaparte persuaded the French government to let him invade Egypt, thereby striking a devastating blow against France's traditional enemy, Great Britain, by opening a route to India.

Having taken control of Alexandria, Napoleon then fought the Battle of the

Pyramids near Cairo, defeating the elite forces of the Ottoman Empire. The British hit back by sinking the French fleet, and Napoleon was stranded in Egypt, cut off from reinforcements.

After further conflict in Palestine and Egypt, bad news from France reached him, and he secretly left, evading British frigates, and landed in France on Oct. 9, 1799. It wasn't until 1802 that the last French troops in Egypt were defeated by British forces.

Napoleon's short period in Egypt left a lasting legacy throughout the Middle East, where many educated people still choose to speak French and embrace French culture. He also reorganized the legal and administrative systems, a prelude to what he would do later in France itself.

Meanwhile Austria, Russia and England had formed an alliance against France, inflicting a number of serious defeats on French forces. By the time Napoleon arrived, coalition forces had suffered some setbacks.

The main problem confronting him was instability in France itself. On Nov. 9 he joined a plot that overthrew the discredited government and replaced it with a government called the Consulate. Napoleon was the first of three consuls who held the real power. In 1802 he became first consul for life.

"He had now grasped political power and become master of France. His old ambition was realized; but already new ones were forming. He had failed to build up an eastern empire, but now aspired to restore the western one of Charlemagne" (ibid., p. 319).

### Church-state connection

With Rome and Charlemagne as his inspiration, Napoleon set about restoring the unity of Europe and beyond. He rapidly annexed Piedmont, Parma and the island of Elba and planned the partition of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire and the foundation of a colonial empire that was to include parts of America, India, Egypt and Australia. He entered into a concordat with the Roman Catholic Church,



Wikimedia Commons

*Empress Josephine kneels before Napoleon during his coronation at Notre Dame as memorialized by French painter Jacques-Louis David. During this ceremony, Napoleon famously grabbed the crown from the pope and placed it on his own head.*

reestablishing relations that had been broken at the time of the revolution. The concordat gave the French leader the power to nominate bishops.

Once again, the church of Rome was involved in the politics of Europe. The prophecy of Revelation 17:9 was once again proving true with "the woman" (the church) sitting on one of the "seven mountains" (seven great empires) that have been revivals of the Roman Empire.

Justinian was the first revival in the sixth century. Charlemagne was the second, crowned by the pope in 800. Otto the Great and the Holy Roman Empire in the 10th century were the third, and Charles V in the 16th made four. Napoleon was the fifth revival, a thousand years after his role model Charlemagne, showing a continuation of the desire to fulfill the dream of European unity.

On Dec. 2, 1804, following in Charlemagne's footsteps, Napoleon was crowned by the pope. The cor-

onation took place in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Napoleon famously grabbed the crown from the pope and placed it on his own head, either from impatience or to make a point that the state was now over the papacy, reversing the respective roles of the Middle Ages.

### At war again

The year before Napoleon's coronation, Great Britain declared war again, ending a one-year peace. Napoleon spent the years 1804 and 1805 planning an invasion of the British Isles that never took place. After suffering a serious naval defeat by the Royal Navy under Admiral Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, Napoleon knew that he could never again think of invading England. His future conquests would be confined to the continent of Europe.

Several months before Trafalgar, the British, Russians and Austrians had formed an alliance against Napoleon.

The French emperor did not wait for them to attack but marched his armies across France into Germany, rapidly conquering territory. He forced one Austrian army to surrender at Ulm, driving the Russians to the east.

In December 1805 he routed the bigger Austrian-Russian forces at Austerlitz. This was one of his greatest victories, and Austria made peace with Napoleon before the month was out.

After the Battle of Austerlitz, the British Prime Minister William Pitt exclaimed: “Roll up that map [of Europe]; it will not be wanted these ten years!” (ibid., p. 322).

“And for almost that period Napoleon changed the map at his will. His stepson Eugene was made viceroy of Italy. His brother Louis received the kingdom of Holland, and another, Joseph, became king first of Naples and then of Spain. General Murat, who had married Napoleon’s sister, succeeded to the vacant throne of Naples. The shadowy Holy Roman Empire, an anachronism for many centuries, was dissolved in 1806” (ibid., p. 322).

A new alliance, formed in August 1806 between Britain, Prussia and Russia, led fairly quickly to the defeat of the Prussians and Napoleon’s victorious entry into Berlin. Only Britain and Russia remained beyond his control. It wasn’t until July 1809 that Napoleon was able to defeat the Russians.

## 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*.



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Czar Alexander I sought peace with Napoleon. When they met, his first words to the French leader were: “Sir, I hate the English as much as you do!” Napoleon’s reply was: “Then we have made peace!” He took no territory from the czar, but did insist that he join the continental trade blockade of Great Britain.

“At one time or another every state of continental Europe, except Turkey and Portugal, was forced into this commercial system. But all in vain” (ibid.).

At the end of the year, having defeated Austria yet again and entered Vienna, Napoleon focused on his desire for an heir to ensure stability in France and the continuity of his empire. He divorced Josephine, who had been unable to bear him an heir, and married the Archduchess Marie Louise of Austria, who gave him a son on March 20, 1811. The son was given the title “king of Rome.”

“Paris was the glittering capital, and Rome the second city” (ibid.).

There had been no greater empire since the days of Rome—but it was not to last.

## Napoleon’s big mistakes

After repeated military successes, Napoleon made two major military blunders during this period as emperor.

Seeing himself as a liberator, Napoleon invaded Spain, but instead aroused nationalist patriotic feelings that led to vicious guerrilla war. When the British came to the aid of the Spanish, the six-year Peninsular War followed (1808-1814). “Napoleon lost interest in this war, and left it to his marshals. For the rest of his career it drained away men and materials, and little by little the French forces were pushed back beyond the Pyrenees” (ibid.).

The year 1812 marked the beginning of the end for Napoleon. Relations with Russia had deteriorated due to popular clamor for the czar to end the blockade against Great Britain. On June 22, Napoleon led an army of 610,000 men into Russia. Only 95,000 returned. Most of those who died were killed by the Russian winter.

Napoleon was unable to force the retreating Russians into a major battle. When he arrived on the outskirts of Moscow, the Russians set fire to the city, reducing 90 percent of it to ashes. One month later, on Oct. 19, his disastrous retreat from Moscow began. Three days later, the French “suffered a sharp defeat at Malo Yaroslavetz. Panic set in and the retreat soon became a disorderly flight, in which Napoleon lost his army. The crossing of the River Beresina was especially disastrous” (ibid.).

Napoleon’s great military career was largely over. Although he had a few more minor victories, he also suffered great defeats as the various nations of Europe regrouped and formed an effective alliance against him. “Russians, Prussians, Austrians and Swedes closed on Napoleon, and in the four-day ‘Battle of the Nations’ at Leipzig (October 16-19, 1813) he was decisively defeated. He withdrew his remaining forces to France” (ibid.).

On the first day of the new year, allied forces entered France. Battles ensued all over the country. Allied forces entered Paris on March 31 and Napoleon was forced to abdicate 11 days later. He was allowed to retain the title emperor, reigning over the small island of Elba. The French restored the Bourbon monarchy, which remained largely unpopular until its final overthrow in 1830.

Napoleon wasn’t finished, though. Many Frenchmen wanted his return. In March 1815 he slipped quietly away from Elba and landed in France. An army rallied to his support and for “One Hundred Days” he enjoyed the return of his former glory. He was finally defeated in Belgium at the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815. Exiled to the British island colony of St. Helena, 1,200 miles off the west coast of Africa, Napoleon died six years later.

Napoleon’s attempt at reviving the Roman Empire was not nearly as long-lasting as some of the other revivals. There would be a century of “Pax Britannica” before any further attempt would be made to unify Europe. ❖

“IRAN” (Continued from page 4)  
getting the bomb.” He tells us that this is really what counts. It outweighs what’s now taking place in Iran. “The immediate decision facing President Obama is *what to do about Iran’s fast-moving nuclear programme*” (June 20, 2009).

Later in his article Mr. Forsyth states: “The West faces the question of whether it should do business with him [President Ahmadinejad].” Should the United States even negotiate with a country with Iran’s track record? American President George W. Bush labeled this nation as one of the three constituting the “Axis of Evil.” Ideally, any nation should never compromise with evil in any form!

Yet the sad truth is that Washington’s viable options are very few and narrow. The much-applied sanctions to rogue states don’t seem to have helped much, especially when other nations have proven more than willing to cut deals in exchange for Iranian oil. America has apparently already jettisoned the military option (as well as twisting Israel’s arm to do the same) and nothing much seems to remain except diplomacy—with Iran mastering stalling tactics to continue its nuclear program without interruption.

Franco Frattini, Italy’s foreign minister, was quoted in *Newsweek’s* closing column “The Last Word” as saying, “In a conversation with [Richard] Holbrooke and Hillary Clinton, we decided that I should try to involve Iran at the highest political level below their president” (“Solidarity With America,” June 8, 2009). In the end Mr. Frattini apparently did not even visit Tehran, perhaps mainly because “there is an informal agreement that until a final solution on the nuclear dossier is found, no political contacts can be made with

the Iranian authorities except by [EU foreign minister] Javier Solana.”

### Where do we go from here?

So what future really lies ahead in the diplomatic realm? A *Times* (London) editorial stated that “Mr.

fist” (“Barack Obama Strikes Out as Tehran Tightens Its ‘Iron Fist,’” *The Times*, June 24, 2009).

*Time* magazine columnist Joe Klein in his “Ten Days in Tehran” wrote, “The massive protests have shaken Iran’s rulers. But that won’t make them any easier to deal with” (June 29, 2009). President Ahmadinejad was once asked about his unusual energy in traveling to all of Iran’s provinces. His reply: “My heart is powered by nuclear fuel” (ibid.).

So where does the United States and the Western world go from here? Two booklets will help us understand. The first is *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. Why does the news pouring forth out of this troubled region of the world so often dominate our Western headlines? Why has this area of world geography been a source of conflict, violence and bloodshed for so long? Does Bible prophecy reveal the major events that will happen here in the future? For answers, request or download your free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* at [www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org).

The second booklet is *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. It will tell you why events don’t seem to go as well as they used to for America. It explains the national legacy of these two countries both in history and prophecy. It also tells where they are headed in this unsteady and uncertain world.

You may also wish to consult a past issue of the *Good News* magazine containing the feature article “Is Iran the New Mideast Superpower?” by Melvin Rhodes (January/February 2009). It can give you the necessary biblical background to better understand the prophetic implications of this current article.

Remember that there is some very good news if we look beyond the bad. To learn more, request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Ultimately everything is going to be set right! ❖



Reuters/Dario Pignatelli

*Iranian university exchange students protest outside Iran’s embassy to Italy in Rome. Outrage over the election results reached fever pitch around the world.*

Ahadinejad is not the sort of man to show magnanimity or statesmanship in victory: *a more likely reaction is to redouble the provocations abroad, to spurn the US open hand and to offer further threats to Israel in the expectation of a Netanyahu reaction* (“Tehran Spring,” June 15, 2009).

In response to the postelection violence and following the lead of other Western leaders, “President Obama condemned Iran’s ‘iron

**“INDESCRIBABLE”** (Continued from page 16)  
*to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 1975, p. 203).

With such cultural conditioning, is it any wonder that early gentile Christians may have thought that if they were alive at the return of Christ they would “have it made” and would receive God’s gift of immortal life? Naturally, they likely also would have been saddened in regards to those who had already died, considering them to be beyond hope.

### **Paul paints a new picture for them**

And thus, Paul begins to paint a picture of what God gave him to see as he stood on the threshold of eternity and peeked in. He introduces this sequential prophetic tapestry by sharing, “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Here Paul validates the sorrow of separation that comes with death, but at the same time hints that all is not lost and gone forever as the etchings in the nearby tombs proclaimed.

Why? “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (verse 14).

Paul simply states that what occurred to Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, by breaking death’s hold will likewise, because of Him and through Him, become the experience of all those favored by God. Yes, even the dead! This was mind-boggling to the Greeks, but even more it was heartwarming.

The apostle carefully and aptly applies the term “sleep” to describe the state of death. Death, like sleep, is not permanent, as there is an awakening. When we rise from that nocturnal rest, there is no sense of time having passed. When we experience our next waking moment, we do not have memories of the duration of the slumber. (For more information on this, read or request our free booklet *What Happens After Death?* at [www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org).)

Paul goes on to say, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep” (verse 15).

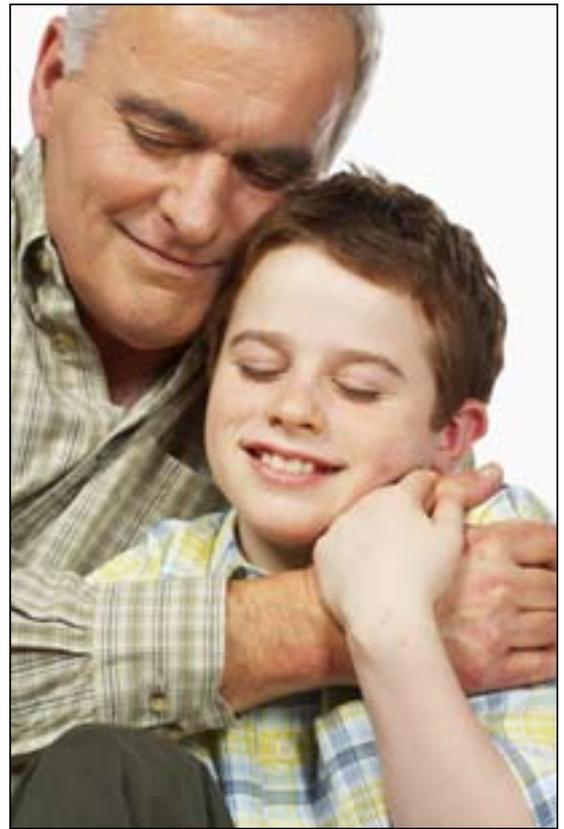
Paul states his credentials in making such a prophetic diagnosis. Basically, he has none. This picture of the future does not belong to him or the figment of his imagination, but “by the word the Lord.” Such incredibly good news comes from only one source—the source of all things.

And what is incredible is that those who died in hope go first. Imagine the smile on those Thessalonian faces. Maybe you are smiling right now thinking of a deceased loved one. Yes, in God’s order, they actually precede those living with hope.

### **The Lord Himself will descend**

Now that we have the order, when do the fireworks of immortality commence? Paul continues to describe in colorful flow how “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (verse 16).

He uses the known heraldry of antiquity to describe the entrance of a conquering king. Paul builds upon Jesus’ own words from the Olivet Prophecy when He stated, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven...and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:29-30).



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*The best news Paul describes regarding the return of Jesus Christ is that God’s children will “always be with the Lord” and will never again face the loss and separation from loved ones so prevalent in this age.*

Nobody alive at that time is going to miss this. While Christ is likened to the morning star, He is not one of those “shooting stars” at night that you miss if you blink. Jesus said that His second coming could be likened to a lightning storm filling the entire canvas of darkened sky as it flashes from east to west (Matthew 24:27).

Here Paul gives us insight that the answers are not down here below but come from above, as he describes how “the Lord Himself” descends with a shout. Is the shout from Him, or is it the voice of the archangel? Either way, the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* describes it as a “war shout” as the Captain of our salvation enters earth’s atmo-

sphere to subdue Satan and his earthly pawns known as the Beast and False Prophet.

But beyond the war cry, there is a secondary meaning for the Greek word *keleuo* and why the One who describes Himself as “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25) uses it. It is He who proclaims: “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades [the grave] and of Death” (Revelation 1:17-18). The second defining use for *keleuo* is a “summons” or notice to appear.

### Come forth!

Again, why such a “loud voice” heralding Christ’s return? One could draw a parallel to the loud voice that Jesus raised up to God the Father as He stood before the spot where Lazarus lay dead and buried with hopeless family and neighbors all around.

John 11:43 describes how our Savior “cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’” Imagine a prophetic moment in the future as countless “Lazaruses” come forth in response to a magnified heavenly voice that will penetrate into every cell of the living plus reach right down into the graves. It is literally “the voice that can wake the dead.” It is “the call” that Job and all of us, dead or alive, await.

It is no wonder that the return of Christ, who lived, suffered, died and was resurrected for us, would be ushered in with such a great utterance, with angelic voices heralding the triumphal entrance as “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).

### Talk about a family reunion!

Paul concludes his efforts to describe the indescribable by stating, “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” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Talk about a family reunion! Can you imagine that moment when the

forces of the Kingdom of heaven intertwine with the newly immortal members of the divine family? This unique moment may be the pivotal prophetic impact point of all that God has revealed. Imagine as Christ on behalf of His Father welcomes all who have lived and died in Him!

It is this moment of indescribable bonding—not the rise or fall of kingdoms or the emergence of the Beast figure or man of perdition—that grabs the whole creation’s attention. For as Paul says elsewhere, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:18-19).

The best news Paul describes regarding this indescribable “impact” moment is that God’s children will “always be with the Lord” and will never again face the loss and separation from loved ones so prevalent in this age.

### Comfort with these words

Paul did a pretty good job of conveying God’s vision. He almost makes you feel like you’re already there. Could he have described everything to us better and given just a few more details? Of course, but he didn’t. God has eternity to sketch in the rest of the story for us. God’s perfection is always better than our best estimates of what He might perform.

Even so, when it is all said and done, it is not the details of this prophetic narrative that are most important. Rather, it is the foundational principle that for those “in Christ,” whether in life or death, there is nothing that can break our union with Him.

And that is why the words of Isaiah 30:21, “This is the way, walk in it,” resonate with Paul’s last comment in this narrative: “Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). ❖



Robin Webber

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by Robin Webber

## Describing the Indescribable

**E**ver tried describing a sunset over the ocean to someone who wasn't on the sandy shore sharing the tapestry of light unfolding before you?

How do you describe the grandeur and immensity of green forests with millions of trees looming upwards toward gray granite peaks framed with thunderclouds?

How do you describe the sights and sounds of birth to someone who isn't present during that miraculous moment of new life?

Does this sound like a lesson in futility? Sure! But we have all tried. And we do our best because we desire to share that moment in time.

Well, we are not alone. God inspired the apostle Paul to "describe the indescribable" regarding an event that has not even occurred yet. Now try that! But it's as if God wants us to be able to stand on the shore, be on the mountain peak or be in the room at the big moment to gain a sense of a truly stupendous event to take place in the future.

It is almost like He is placing us in position and saying, "I want you to stand right here and take it all in; and by the way, you, too, will be inserted in that big event. So get the picture, but be ready to rise up!"

What am I talking about?

Almost 2,000 years ago, the apostle Paul shared a colorful prophecy with new Christians in the city of Thessalonica. What he shared is often mentioned at funerals and memorial services as words of hopeful encouragement. But these words are also bold declarations of prophetic understanding.

Prophecy (from the Greek *propheteia*) is not only about "forth-telling" what God has done or is accomplishing, but has a dual application in "foretelling" what He chooses yet to perform as a part of His perfect will. In essence, this word expresses God's sovereignty over what has been, is and is yet to be. All are simply one seamless world to Him.

### **If a man dies, shall he live again?**

This prophetic illustration is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The apostle Paul's inspired words would have resonated with and brought hope to the new Christians of Hellenistic background who had little understanding of the resurrection.

In contrast, the Jewish Christians of the first century had a pattern of understanding going back more than 1,500 years to the time when Job uttered, "If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands" (Job 14:14-15).

But the gentiles of Thessalonica had no grasp of the true God's purpose. As William Barclay, the noted commentator, states, "The pagan world despaired in death with grim resignation and bleak hopelessness." He quotes Theocritus, a Greek poet of the third century B.C., as saying, "There is hope for those who are alive, but those who have died are without hope."

And then Barclay soberly describes epitaphs on Greek tombs with etchings bemoaning, "I was not; I became; I am not; I care not" (*The Letters*

(See "INDESCRIBABLE," page 14)