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# Could a Greek Tragedy Bring Down the Euro?

*In the last few weeks the euro has declined in value as fears over Greece's debt problems fueled international speculation. Could Greece's problems lead to the demise of the common European currency?*

by Melvin Rhodes

**F**orty years ago, international currency speculation was largely confined to third world countries that kept the official value of their own currencies high, leading to a black market trade in money in poorer parts of the world.

Today, the buying and selling of paper money is the biggest legal business conducted in major financial capitals around the world. The change was due to the adoption of a floating currency system in the wake of the collapse of the sterling area (countries who used the British pound as their currency or pegged their own to the pound) and growing public debt in the United States.

What this means is that currency speculation has become big business, resulting in rising volatility in the markets. In the first half of February, this seriously affected the eurozone, the 16 nations that use the 10-year-old common currency, the euro. Speculation triggered by a fiscal crisis in Greece forced the value of the currency down.

"Yet the idiosyncrasies of the eurozone should not distract us from the general nature of the fiscal crisis that is now afflicting most western economies. Call it the fractal geometry of debt: the problem is essentially the same from Iceland to Ireland to Britain to the US. It



Reuters/Stringer Belgium

*Greece's finance minister, George Papaconstantinou, attends a conference at the EU Council in Brussels Feb. 15, 2010. A fiscal crisis in Greece forced the value of the euro to drop.*

just comes in widely differing sizes" (Niall Ferguson, "A Greek Crisis Is Coming to America," *Financial Times*, Feb. 10, 2010).

While Harvard historian Niall Ferguson correctly highlights the fact that Greece's problems will spread throughout the Western (See "GREEK," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

# Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

## The Morning Star of Prophecy

**F**or 47 years I have been a student of Bible prophecy. There are times when one sees a flash of light that clearly defines the prophetic landscape. I wonder if this is such a time.

For nearly two years a financial crisis has redefined the United States and Europe. A mortgage bubble burst and exposed deep problems among top banks and financial institutions. Wall Street nearly collapsed in September 2008. Government bailouts prevented complete collapse but resulted in hundreds of billions of dollars of additional debt. The U.S. debt load is spiraling upward and threatens to destroy America's once preeminent role of world superpower. Unless the increased debt is stopped, America is headed toward economic serfdom. Creditor nations will dictate its future.

Europe is seeing its own challenges. Iceland has defaulted on its debt. Greece could be next unless someone, like Germany, steps in to prop up its economy. Other EU member states, Italy, Spain, Ireland and Portugal, could follow. The EU appears to be in a crisis that will force changes to its current configuration. Germany, Europe's strongest nation, is in a key position to expand its historic influence. Melvin Rhodes covers this in more detail in the cover article for this issue.

Since age 12 I have been aware that a German-led Europe would one day play a key role in end-time prophecy. Maintaining an alert awareness of this has admittedly been a challenge. Youth, marriage and family commitments, as well as keeping up with a demanding career, tug and pull on one's focus. But this idea has never left my mind.

So as I have watched this current financial crisis unfold, I have realized we may have a front-row seat to events long foretold in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The role of the English-speaking nations, led by Great Britain and the United States, is in decline. This was prophesied. A European-centered colossus is rising that will play a pivotal role in events leading to the return of Jesus Christ. This, too, is prophesied.

When astute observers of world politics begin to sound these same themes with an eye to history, it makes you stand up and take notice. What I heard as a child, and what I study and write about today, is coming to pass. It makes me wonder just how close we are to the culmination of these prophecies.

Peter, writing about prophecy, may have had this in mind. "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19). The closer we come to the time, the clearer we will see and understand certain prophecies—as a "light that shines in a dark place."

Watching and understanding such prophecies is a challenge. I find it a paradox that in our globally connected, social Web world, we can know what happens in virtually any part of the world, yet we are not able to understand what it all means and what it tells us about our future. We can know anything globally, yet we place our focus on what is local. Technology connects us, but it does not by itself give us understanding. For that, we must turn to the Bible.

As events continue to fulfill end-time prophecy, it is important we keep our eyes focused on the One who is guiding and directing all events. Jesus Christ, the true Morning Star (Revelation 22:16), will give us understanding of what it all means.



—Darris McNeely

Darris McNeely

**“GREEK”** (Continued from page 1)

world, eventually even including the United States, others are pointing to the fact that Germany is key to resolving the Greek tragedy.

Students of Bible prophecy have long known that “ten kings” (political leaders) will form a resurrected Roman Empire prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind and they will give their power and authority to the beast” (Revelation 17:12-13).

While the European Union has been of great significance in uniting European countries, the 27-member EU cannot be the same as the final “ten” that revive the power of ancient Rome. The Greek financial crisis could be of great significance in moving Europe forward to its final destination, at exactly the same time that the English-speaking nations see their power reduced by their own fiscal crisis.

### **Greek crisis result of success**

“Simply put, Europe faces a financial meltdown,” wrote Marko Papić and Peter Zeihan (“Germany’s Choice,” Stratfor, Feb. 8, 2010, [www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100208\\_germanys\\_choice](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100208_germanys_choice)).

“The crisis is rooted in Europe’s greatest success: the Maastricht Treaty and the monetary union the treaty spawned epitomized by the euro. Everyone participating in the euro won by merging their currencies. Germany received full, direct and currency-risk-free access to the markets of all its euro partners... [Germany’s] efficiency has permitted its exports to increase steadily both as a share of total European consumption and as a share of European exports to the wider world. Conversely, the eurozone’s smaller and/or poorer members gained access to Germany’s low interest rates and high credit rating. And the last bit is what spawned the current problem.”

Some of the poorer European countries have long had problems



Reuters/Wes Herman

*German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Greek Prime Minister George Papandreu and French President Nicolas Sarkozy talk after an informal summit of EU leaders in Brussels Feb. 11, 2010. Germany is the key to solving Greece’s current financial problem, either by refusing to help and perhaps forcing Greece and other economically weak countries out of the eurozone or by bailing them out, which would give Berlin even greater clout over the whole of Europe.*

balancing their budgets. Under rules laid down by the European Central Bank (ECB), they were not permitted to overspend by more than 3 percent a year. In fact, they could not even join the euro until they complied with that requirement.

It turns out Greece faked its finances, gaining entry into the eurozone through deceit. Other countries like Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Italy did well for a long time, but their finances have been badly affected by the worldwide recession. The five countries (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain) are even referred to as the PIIGS, which only adds to the negativity currently surrounding these nations.

Twenty years ago, all of these countries could have worked their way through their own fiscal dilem-

mas by letting their currencies slide in value, but they no longer have that option now that they are part of a currency union controlled by the German-dominated ECB.

The capital of the EU is Brussels, but Germany is the richest member of both the eurozone and the European Union. The country is the key to solving the current problem, either by refusing to help and perhaps forcing the five out of the euro zone or by bailing them out, which would give Berlin even greater clout over the whole of Europe.

The Stratfor report continues: “There is no doubt Germany could afford such a bailout, as the Greek economy is only one-tenth of the size of Germany’s. But the days of no-strings-attached financial assistance from Germany are over. If Germany

is going to do this, there will no longer be anything 'implied' or 'assumed' about German control of the European Central Bank and the eurozone. The control will become reality, and that control will have consequences.

"For all intents and purposes, Germany will run the fiscal policies of peripheral member states that have proved they are not up to the task of doing so on their own. To accept anything less intrusive would end with Germany becoming responsible for bailing out everyone. After all, who wouldn't want a condition-free bailout paid for by Germany?"

"And since a euro-wide bailout is beyond Germany's means, this scenario would end with Germany leading the EU hat-in-hand to the International Monetary Fund for an American/Chinese-funded assistance package. It is possible that the Germans could be gentle and risk such abject humiliation, but it is not likely.

"Taking a firmer tack would allow Germany to achieve [its goal] via the pocketbook... But this policy has its own costs. The eurozone as a whole needs to borrow around 2.2 trillion euros in 2010, with Greece needing 53 billion euros simply to make it through the year. Not far behind Greece is Italy, which needs 393 billion euros, Belgium with needs of 89

billion euros and France with needs of yet another 454 billion euros.

"As such, the premium on Germany is to act—if it is going to act—fast. It needs to get Greece and most likely Portugal wrapped up before crisis of confidence spreads to the really serious countries, where even mighty Germany's resources would be overwhelmed.

"That is the cost of making Europe 'work.' It is also the cost to Germany of leadership that doesn't come at the end of a gun. So if Germany wants its leadership to mean something outside of Western Europe, it will be forced to pay for that leadership—deeply, repeatedly and very, very soon. But unlike in years past, this time Berlin will want to hold the reins."

### Will Berlin once again dominate Europe?

It's ironic that, after two attempts in the last century to dominate Europe by force, Germany is increasingly dominating the continent economically. The current crisis gives Berlin an opportunity to emerge as the clear leader of the new united Europe and shows a clear continuity from the first half of the 20th century.

Another Stratfor analysis pointed out that in Germany "factions with-

in the CDU [Christian Democratic Union, the dominant party of the ruling coalition] are becoming cognizant of the opportunity the Greek imbroglio presents. Even though most German politicians would refuse to acknowledge it, Mitteleuropa (albeit in a demilitarized sense) must be on everyone's mind these days in Berlin.

"Mitteleuropa was an early 20th century idea that looked to carve out a political and economic sphere of influence for Germany within Central Europe, one that...would be able to counter the then Russian Empire to the east and the British Empire to the west. It was later perverted by Nazi Germany in World War II to include depopulating Jewish and most Slav and Roma presence in the proposed geographical area. However, in its pre-World War I original edition, it 'merely' sought a 'sphere of influence,' not unlike what the Monroe Doctrine sets up for the United States in Latin America.

"Fast-forward to 2010 and you have most of the EU expectantly gazing at Berlin, hoping that it saves Europe from its current crisis" ("Germany and Iran: Reconciling History," Stratfor, Feb. 11, 2010).

Chillingly and perhaps prophetically in light of Revelation 17:13, Stratfor concludes with these words: "The most potent analogy here may be that of the Roman Republic. The

(See "GREEK," page 9)



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# Islamic Culture in Europe: Main Street or Side Street?

*Controversies over minarets and burkas highlight larger questions about the clash of cultures and whether Europe's religious heritage should be defended.*

by Paul Kieffer

**W**hen I drive from Bonn to Cologne here in Germany, I often travel on the west side of the Rhine River on the autobahn that links the two cities. About halfway between them, I always notice a minaret that is clearly visible from the road.

It is hard to miss, since it belongs to an Islamic mosque located just off the autobahn in a section of town that appears to be zoned for light commercial usage. The mosque's minarets stand in stark contrast to the other small commercial businesses in the vicinity and a nearby discotheque.

The location of this one mosque halfway between Bonn and Cologne reflects the situation of Islam in many parts of Western Europe. Islam, as a "minority" religion, is present but not prominent. And that situation has been largely acceptable to the native Western Europeans.

## **Cologne's controversial central mosque**

However, things are changing. It comes as no surprise that the growing Muslim population in Germany (approximately 4 million Muslims, about 5 percent of Germany's population) desires more appropriate representation for its religion. The number of mosques has increased in recent years, and construction of a central mosque in Cologne for the Muslim community conveys the impression that Muslims want their religion visible on main street, not just on side streets.

The new central mosque in Cologne has Germans asking the question: "How big should Muslim mosques be?" Among those who have asked the question is Edmund Stoiber, who as governor of Bavaria wanted to ensure that Christian cathedrals would be higher—and therefore more visible—than mosques. His argument is that Christian Germans still make up a majority of the population, and the country's main culture is influenced most by Christianity.

The central mosque in Cologne was the subject of intense debate for several years. The Cologne city board of directors approved construction plans for the mosque in August 2008. Cologne's mayor, Fritz Schramma, a member of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), supports the project but many of his own party members have strong reservations. They see the proposed mosque as a show of force from the Muslim side.

When completed, the Cologne mosque will have a prayer room large enough to accommodate 1,200 worshippers. The slim minarets will be 55 meters (180 feet) high with the dome over the prayer room at a height of 35 meters (115 feet). The height of the minarets was a subject of considerable discussion, since some wondered whether they would "compete" with Cologne's famous Cathedral some 4.5 kilometers distant. However, the cathedral is 157 meters (515 feet) high and will continue to dominate the Cologne skyline.

Public reaction to the planned mosque has been mixed. The dome will look like a globe, using transparent glass to make it possible to see into the mosque. The prestigious German weekly *Die Zeit* interpreted this as a symbol of Islam's openness toward the world.

However, Islam critic Necla Kelek, whose personal roots are an orthodox Muslim family in Turkey, interprets the architecture differently. According to her, "The globe is a symbol of conquest, and people can see the dome and the minarets as a Muslim demand to get world domination" (<http://tinyurl.com/neclakelek>).

Some consider the Cologne mosque to be more than a desire to move to main street. They view the building's size as evidence that Muslims really don't want to be integrated into German society. According to Necla Kelek, the mosque will sow "the seeds for a parallel society. We have already seen that particularly large mosques develop

*Public discussion, debate and referendums on minarets, burkas and the size of Muslim mosques reflect a growing perception in much of Western Europe that Islamic influence will compete with Europe's traditional religious heritage, which is Christian. What role will religion play in Europe's future?*



*The proposed construction of a mosque with a high dome and minarets was subject to much debate in Cologne when local authorities approved the plan in August 2008. Here, protesters from the far-right group Pro-Cologne carry signs and flags during a demonstration on May 8, 2009. Some consider the mosque's size to be evidence of a general refusal of Muslims to integrate into German society.*

into their own cities, own Medinas” (ibid.)

Well-known atheist Ralph Giordano agrees. In comments made to German TV station WDR, Giordano said: “The [approval of the] building permit is an anti-integration decision. Just the mosque’s size shows that Muslims are demanding power.”

Although the Catholic and Lutheran churches officially support the building of mosques in Germany, the Cologne mosque has raised questions about reciprocal tolerance. Cologne’s cardinal Joachim Meisner wants Muslims in Germany to start fighting for Christian rights in Muslim countries in return for the mosques they are allowed to build in Germany.

Augsburg’s bishop Walter Mixa chided local authorities for issuing building permits for mosques as large as the one in Cologne. “In countries which are mainly pervaded by Muslim culture, Christians really have no rights. Therefore we should not allow

mosques with pompous minarets in Germany. In a Christian society it is sufficient if the Muslims have a place where they can hold prayers,” bishop Mixa said.

### **A minaret-free Switzerland**

Germany isn’t the only country in Europe where Islamic mosques are a source of intense discussion. In a national referendum at the end of November, Swiss voters approved an addition to their constitution that will prohibit the construction of mosques with minarets in Switzerland.

After a two-year campaign to gather the required 100,000 signatures, the referendum was placed on the ballot by the conservative Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP). Analysts were surprised not only by the clear result, with 57 percent in favor of the measure, but also by voter turnout, which was 10 percent higher than average for national referendums in Switzerland.

Swiss analysts were surprised by the outcome of the referendum. Opinion polls prior to the ballot had indicated that the initiative would be defeated easily. All established political parties had encouraged voters to reject the proposal.

The Swiss government did the same, asking Swiss citizens to consider the possible negative effect that approving the petition would have on Switzerland’s relations with Muslim countries. Swiss Minister of Justice Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, who resigned from the SVP in the summer of 2008, appealed to voters to remember human rights and religious freedom.

Representatives of several parties described the outcome of the referendum as a “political expression” of disapproval toward an Islam viewed by many Swiss as being militant. That was exactly the point made by the SVP, as represented by Ulrich Schlüer, one of the organizers of the signature drive. He called minarets an Islamic “political symbol of a claim to power,” a similar description as the one applied to the new Cologne mosque in Germany.

The referendum reflects deep-rooted fear over the potential future influence of Islam in a country that currently has only four mosques with minarets, although about 5 percent of the Swiss population is Islamic in its religious orientation.

As was to be expected, the reaction of the Islamic community in Germany to the Swiss referendum was negative. The focal point of criticism was the perception that limitations are being placed on religious freedom.

However, the central committee for former Muslims in Germany took a different view. “The ‘no’ to minarets is really a signal against Islamism, Islamic sharia law and the mandatory head covering for women. The minaret is just a symbol for justified apprehension concerning political Islam,” according to central committee chairman Mina Ahadi. He praised Swiss citizens intervening and making their opposition known decisively.

### **A burka-free France?**

Just two weeks after the referendum in Switzerland, delegates of France’s

governing Union Pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) party voiced support for banning the traditional full-body burka worn in public by women from some Muslim areas of the world. This burka leaves only a small slit in front of the eyes for vision but otherwise totally covers the body.

“The reality is that no one in France wants this custom to spread in our country,” UMP party leader Jean-François Copé told the daily *Le Figaro*. According to Copé, not only French citizens but representatives of the Islamic community view the burka as incompatible with the values of the French republic.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy did not comment on Copé’s remarks, but it was Sarkozy himself who called for a ban on the burka last June in an address to the French parliament—the first time in 150 years that a French president addressed the country’s legislature.

“It [the burka] will not be welcome on French soil,” Sarkozy told the parliamentarians. “We cannot accept, in our country, women imprisoned behind a mesh, cut off from society, deprived of all identity. That is not the French republic’s idea of women’s dignity.”

Following Sarkozy’s address in June, a multiparty parliamentary commission was established to make a recommendation on the issue. In January the commission “recommended adopting a ban on wearing the full veil in ‘public places’ including hospitals, schools and on mass transit. Under the proposal, women appearing in government offices wearing a burqa could be denied visa and immigration services,” *Deutsche Welle* reported Jan. 26.

### **Should Europe’s religious heritage be defended?**

Public discussion, debate and referendums on the size of Muslim mosques, minarets and burkas were not an issue years ago when guest workers were needed for a booming postwar economy and the number of Muslims in Western Europe was relatively small. Today, however, population growth in Western Europe’s Muslim community is much higher than the traditional ethnic population. If negotiations on



Reuters/Jean-Paul Pelissier

*Women wearing burkas walk past fashion stores on the street in Marseille. Delegates of France’s governing UMP party voiced support for banning the traditional full-body burka in public places such as hospitals, schools and mass transit.*

membership are completed successfully, Turkey’s potential entry into the European Union would see the Muslim portion of total EU population jump from about 5 percent today to over 20 percent.

Whether justified or not, the minaret referendum in Switzerland reflects a growing perception in much of Western Europe that Islamic influence will compete with Europe’s traditional religious heritage, which is Christian.

Without ever referring to Islam, it comes as no surprise that Pope Benedict XVI has reminded Europeans repeatedly that they should not forget their religious heritage.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi is taking the pope’s admonitions seriously following a verdict rendered at the beginning of November in Strasbourg by a European Court of Human Rights. The court banned the display of crucifixes in Italian classrooms, justifying its decision on the potential that crucifixes on walls in Italian schools might cause distress for children who were not Christian.

The court ruling overturned two Italian laws, dating back to the 1920s

when Fascists were in power in Italy, that required schools to display crucifixes in classrooms.

Prime Minister Berlusconi described the Strasbourg ruling as a silly attempt to deny Europe’s Christian roots, adding that “this is not acceptable for us Italians.” The conservative politician enjoys considerable support from the country’s Roman Catholic majority.

Referring to the many churches in his country, Berlusconi declared that “you only have to walk 200 meters forwards, backwards, to the right or to the left and you find a symbol of Christianity. This is one of those decisions that often make us doubt Europe’s good sense.” He declared that his government plans to appeal the ruling.

In a rare moment of unity among Italian politicians, the court ruling was criticized in Italy across ideological boundaries. Only some groups on the far left and atheists voiced support for the Strasbourg decision. The Vatican’s response was one of “shock and sadness,” causing Vatican official Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone to remark that “Europe in the third millennium is leaving us only Halloween pumpkins

while depriving us of our most beloved symbols.”

The court decision came only two weeks after Pope Benedict’s latest admonition for Europeans not to forget their continent’s Christian roots.

Like her neighbors to the north and west, Italy is involved in a debate on how to deal with a growing population of non-Christian immigrants, mostly Muslims. The Strasbourg court ruling could become another battle cry for the government’s policy drive to crack down on new arrivals.

Mara Bizzotto, a European parliamentarian for Berlusconi’s anti-immigrant coalition partner, the Northern League, asked why the European court had taken action against a Christian symbol but did not comment on Muslim religious symbols such as “veils, burkas and niqabs [facial veils].”

The lawsuit against the crucifixes was brought by an Italian citizen who complained that her children had to attend a public school in northern Italy that had crucifixes in every room, thereby denying her the right to give them a secular education.

In 2003 a Muslim parent, Adel Smith, the head of the small Union of Italian Muslims, succeeded in getting a court order to have crosses removed from the school his children attended. But the order was later reversed after a nationwide protest.

### **Traditional religion to ride high again in Europe**

Bible prophecy indicates that the growing concern over Islamic reach in Europe will be superseded in the future by a resurgence of traditional religious influence, greatly magnified in the period preceding the return of Jesus Christ. The apostle John predicted this coming

influence in symbolic language in the book of Revelation. He describes the rise of two beasts, one of which represents a counterfeit religious system.

The first beast will be a geopolitical power, an end-time revival of the Roman Empire, described in Revelation 13:1 as “a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.”. This first “beast” receives “his power, his throne, and great authority” from the dragon, who is Satan the devil (verse 2).

From the heritage of earlier empires, an end-time revival of the Roman Empire will arise, a powerful alliance of 10 “kings” or rulers that will exist shortly before Christ returns.

In the same chapter John describes another beast: “Then I saw *another beast*, coming out of the earth. He had two horns *like a lamb*, but he *spoke like a dragon*. He exercised *all the authority* of the first beast *on his behalf*, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed” (Revelation 13:11-12, New International Version, emphasis added throughout).

Who is this second beast? He is a tool of Satan who uses his position and authority to influence humankind to worship the first beast, which is described not only in Revelation 13, but also elsewhere in Revelation and Daniel. This second beast tries to appear to represent Christ—a lamb—but in reality his words reflect satanic thought—the dragon.

How will he persuade the masses to accept such arrogance? He will be a skillful deceiver directly manipulated and empowered by Satan. “He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on

the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (verse 15).

John later describes the powerful religious leader as “the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his [the Beast’s] behalf” (Revelation 19:20, NIV).

The False Prophet is evidently the satanically led leader of a false religious system represented by the immoral woman riding the Beast in Revelation 17. It will be the same religious system that dominated Europe in earlier centuries. Its influence will have diminished more recently, prior to a final revival of the Roman Empire in Europe. The immoral woman rides the Beast, reflecting her influence over the direction that final revival will take.

The apostle Paul also foretold the coming of a powerful deceiver: “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10).

Tragically, most people will be hoodwinked into believing him.

These future events will surprise a world unaware of what the Bible has to say about the time leading up to the prophesied return of Jesus Christ. However, you don’t have to remain uninformed. We recommend our booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*, both available on our Web site or by mail free of charge upon request. ❖

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“GREEK” (Continued from page 4)

Roman Senate had provisions by which, in times of emergency (such as when Hannibal threatened at the gates), it could bestow dictatorial powers on an individual. The EU may be nearing such a choice, albeit with the EU in the position of the Roman Senate and Germany playing the role of Caesar. The offer may be too tempting for Germany to ignore. The question is: Will Germany’s past continue to torture Berlin and prevent it from assuming its natural sphere of influence?”

Germany seems set, and soon, to take a greater leadership role in the European Union, an EU that could push some of its poorer members on the periphery into a secondary role, while a solid core of countries around Germany (10?) move forward to form “an ever closer union,” one of the stated aims of the Treaty of Rome.

### Meanwhile, the United States cannot gloat

In the realm of geopolitics, Bible prophecy focuses on the Middle East, the rise of a German-led Europe and the decline of the modern Israelites (especially the English-speaking powers of the United States and Great Britain). While the Greek fiscal crisis looks likely to boost German power, the wider financial crisis seems set to continue to bring down the power of the two English-speaking nations.

“For the world’s biggest economy, the US, the day of reckoning still seems reassuringly remote. The worse things get in the eurozone, the more the US dollar rallies as nervous investors park their cash in the ‘safe haven’ of American government debt. This effect may persist for some months, just as the dollar and Treasuries rallied in the depths of the banking panic in late 2008.

“Yet even a casual look at the fiscal position of the federal government (not to mention the states) makes a nonsense of the phrase ‘safe haven.’ US government debt is a safe haven the way Pearl Harbor was a safe haven in 1941.



*Angela Merkel, chancellor and leader of the Christian Democratic Union party, speaks during a news conference after a meeting of party leaders on this year’s strategy in Berlin Jan. 15, 2010. Germany seems set, and soon, to take a greater leadership role in the European Union.*

“The International Monetary Fund recently published estimates of the fiscal adjustments developed economies would need to make to restore fiscal stability over the decade ahead. Worst were Japan and the UK (a fiscal tightening of 13 per cent of GDP). Then came Ireland, Spain and Greece (9 per cent). And in sixth place? Step forward America, which would need to tighten fiscal policy by 8.8 per cent of GDP to satisfy the IMF.

“Last week Moody’s Investors Service warned that the triple A credit rating of the US should not be taken for granted. That warning recalls Larry Summers’ killer question (posed before he returned to government): ‘How long can the world’s biggest borrower remain the world’s biggest power?’

“On reflection, it is appropriate that the fiscal crisis of the west has begun in Greece, the birthplace of western civilization. Soon it will cross the channel to Britain. But the key question is when that crisis will reach the last bastion of western power, on the other side of the Atlantic” (“A Greek Crisis Is Coming to America”).

One week after Niall Ferguson’s article, a report on the *Financial Times*’ front page showed that the Greek crisis may already be reaching U.S. shores. “Foreign demand for US Treasury securities fell by a record amount in December as China purged some of its holdings of government debt. China sold \$34.2 [billion] in US Treasury securities during the month, the US Treasury said on Tuesday, leaving Japan as the biggest holder of US government debt with \$768.8 [billion]” (Alan Rappeport, “Foreign Demand Falls for Treasuries,” Feb. 16, 2010).

Clearly, China is afraid the United States may not be able to honor its debts, just as Greece and others can’t honor theirs.

The economic crisis among Western nations is pushing events toward fulfillment of key Bible prophecies leading to the end of this present age. Jesus Christ’s warning to “watch” for the appearance of an end-time superpower combination of church and state should take on greater clarity in light of these events. These are not random geopolitical events. The puzzle of end-time prophecy is coming into focus one piece at a time. ❖

# Coming Food Crises Threaten Mankind

According to Newsweek, "None of the factors that drove the global food crises in 2008 have gone away" (Dec. 7, 2009). And The Economist stated that "1 billion people will go to bed hungry" (Nov. 21, 2009). But hold on to your hats. The Bible clearly tells us that present conditions are slated to get a lot worse before they get better.

by John Ross Schroeder

*"One of the toughest things for people to do is to anticipate sudden change... People are blindfolded by events such as today's economic crisis. For most of us, the idea that civilization itself could disintegrate probably seems preposterous."*

**F**oreign Affairs recently published an article titled "The New Population Bomb" by Jack Goldstone (January-February 2010). Late last year *The Economist* ran a cover piece titled "How to Feed the World: Business as Usual Will Not Do It" (Nov. 21, 2009). An article in *Scientific American* asked the question: "Could Food Shortages Bring Down Civilization?" by Lester Brown (May 2009).

In spite of all these news reports, though, most Western peoples remain sadly unaware of current trends. They are even less aware of tragic future occurrences slated to plague our planet. Many people are currently living in a fool's paradise. The Church of God today is desperately seeking to warn the world of future conditions that lie just over the horizon by whatever means it can through various branches of the media—whether in printed form, on TV or through the Internet.

## Conditions we should be confronting

The *Scientific American* article covers three key concepts on the food crises:

"Food scarcity and the resulting higher food prices are pushing poor countries into chaos.

"Such 'failed states' can export disease, terrorism, illicit drugs, weapons and refugees.

"Water shortages, soil losses and rising temperatures...are placing severe limits on food production."

Author Lester Brown founded the Worldwatch Institute in 1974 and the Earth Policy Institute in 2001. His most recently published book carries the title *Mobilizing to Save Civilization*. He ana-

lyzes some of the major problems facing Western civilization.

In his *Scientific American* article he writes: "One of the toughest things for people to do is to anticipate sudden change... People are blindfolded by events such as today's economic crisis. For most of us, the idea that civilization itself could disintegrate probably seems preposterous..."

"We are so inured to a long list of highly unlikely catastrophes that we are virtually programmed to dismiss them all with a wave of the hand... For many years I have studied global agriculture, population, environmental and economic trends and their interactions.

"The combined effects of those trends and the political tensions they generate point to the breakdown of governments and societies... Our continuing failure to deal with...[factors] that are undermining the world food economy—most important falling water tables, eroding soils and rising temperatures—forces me to conclude that *such a collapse is possible*" (emphasis added throughout).

## Specific symptoms of future troubles

Lester Brown goes on to point out: "In six of the past nine years world food production has fallen short of consumption, forcing a steady drawdown in stocks." Half of the world's population, including the United States, China and India, have falling water tables.

China is a case in point. "As water tables have fallen and irrigation wells have gone dry, China's wheat crop, the world's largest, has declined by 8 percent since it peaked at 123 million tons in 1997. In that same period China's rice

production dropped 4 percent. *The world's most populous nation may soon be importing massive quantities of grain.*"

Also the erosion of topsoil continues to afflict a third of global cropland.

Enter the geopolitical dimension. "We have entered a new era in geopolitics. In the 20th century the main threat to international security was superpower conflict; today it is failing states" (ibid.).

Such nations spread diseases, offer sanctuary to pirates and terrorists (recall Somalia), aid and abet the sales of weapons and drugs, are a breeding ground for political extremism, and generate scores of refugees that enter the developed world, often Western countries.

### **Failed states, developed nations and hunger**

The successful functioning of a well-ordered global civilization depends on healthy nations sufficiently able to control the threat of the possible spread of infectious diseases, effectively manage monetary systems and wield enough collective power to inhibit the spread of international terrorism.

If enough nations disintegrate, global civilization itself may be severely threatened. Hunger is already rising in 70 of the world's developing countries. But what many of our readers may find surprising is the "proportion of Americans who received emergency food assistance in 2009, up 46% in four years" (*Time*, Feb. 15, 2010)—now one in eight Americans. Many in the United States face poverty amidst plenty.

Britain's Robin McKie, science editor of *The Observer*, reported that with the country's population set to grow from 60 million to 75 million, we face multiple threats to our ability to feed everyone ("Why Britain Faces a Bleak Future of Food Shortages," Dec. 13, 2009).

### **A complex global problem with a long history**

Indeed multiple, complex difficulties permeate the global food prob-



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*Multiple, complex difficulties permeate the global food problem. What these amount to is an artificially created, wasteful and unnecessary food shortage—at a time when oil supplies are plentiful due to the world economic slowdown.*

lem. For instance, Western nations waste food resources at unconscionable levels. Some people exist on the food thrown away by supermarkets on a daily basis. These are not paying customers.

Food price increases and food security are other serious concerns. Also a serious shortage of cheap energy sources diverts food stuffs into producing biofuels like ethanol, reducing our edible resources for humans and farm animals. This has been a dominant factor in rising food costs during the last two years, especially in the United States. Vast acreage that used to produce corn for human and animal consumption has been turned over to producing expensive, inefficient biofuels.

Essentially we are pouring food into our gas tanks. Corn taken out of the food chain has created shortages in feeding not only people, but also livestock and poultry—causing across-the-board increases in the prices of nearly everything we eat: beef, poultry, eggs, milk, cheese,

sweets (from corn syrup), vegetables, rice and wheat products. What this amounts to is an artificially created, wasteful and unnecessary food shortage—at a time when oil supplies are plentiful due to the world economic slowdown.

Of course, periodic famines and severe food shortages have periodically plagued humankind throughout our history. It looked like the cross-over between food supplies and world population would come upon us in the last half of the 20th century. However, the "green revolution" virtually doubled cereal production in developing nations, putting off the evil day.

The question for us today remains: Will science come to our rescue in the nick of time yet again? *Newsweek* reported: "At a U.N. food-security conference in Rome two weeks ago, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on rich nations to up R&D spending in agriculture to encourage the development of new kinds of high-yield crops, artificial phosphates [a compound essential in mak-



*Jesus Christ's return will usher in a brand-new era. Instead of food crises and famine, world agriculture will be characterized by pure water and fertile top soil, raising far more than enough food for humanity.*

ing fertilizers now in short supply], and other farm innovations” (Rana Foroohar, “Dwindling Phosphate Supply Affects Food Crisis,” Dec. 7, 2009).

But only the Bible can provide the ultimate solution to food crises and famines. Only God can come to humanity's rescue.

### **The Bible and future famines**

The blessings and cursings chapters of the Bible, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, will find their ultimate fulfillment during the time of the end just before Jesus Christ returns to rule the earth. Leviticus 26:23-24, 26 along with Deuteronomy 28:15-18 summarize the tragic events yet ahead of us, including terrible famines. Read these graphic passages and request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Famine was also the third signpost that Jesus Christ mentioned in the Olivet prophecy: “And there will be famines” (Matthew 24:7). It is but one of the signs of Christ's return to earth (Matthew 24:3). Christ was primarily speaking of a future series of events (of which famine is only one) in connection with His imminent return to this suffering planet.

Revelation 6 reveals four mysterious horsemen who have come to be known as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Comparing these with the events Christ mentioned in Matthew 24:4-7 helps us understand the meaning of these horsemen, including the black horse of famine.

It is beyond the scope of this article to explain this important prophecy in detail. But our readers may download our free reprint article “The Horsemen of Revelation” at [www.ucg.org/reprints](http://www.ucg.org/reprints). A fifth super-important horseman is also explained in this reprint.

Luke records both the bad news and the good news on this subject. The Olivet Prophecy emphasizes the bad news—“*the days of vengeance*, that all things which are written [in the Old Testament] may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22). The context here is of those prophecies that precede Christ's second coming (verses 25-27).

Luke is also the author of the book of Acts, the only formal history in the New Testament. In it he quotes the apostle Peter highlighting the other side of the prophetic coin—the good news. Peter urges his hearers to “repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be

blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive *until the times of restoration of all things*, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21).

This New Testament prophecy highlights the many millennial prophecies of peace and freedom from want detailed in the Hebrew Bible. They occur *after* the second coming of Christ. We conclude this article by emphasizing the positive solution to world food crises and famines that God promises in His Bible.

### **The plowman to overtake the reaper**

Jesus Christ repeatedly said that He would return to planet earth. It will be a rescue mission to save humanity from itself (see Matthew 24:21-22). Revelation also states that Christ will rule on earth for 1,000 years with His spirit-transformed saints (Revelation 20:4-6), ushering in an era of universal peace, prosperity and happiness—unimaginable to the vast majority of men and women in the world now.

Instead of food crises and famine, world agriculture will be characterized by pure water and fertile top soil, raising far more food than necessary for human survival. Ever-expanding human populations will not exhaust the abundant food supplies. Even the deserts will become fertile and blossom like a rose (Isaiah 35:1-2, 6-7).

Hunger and famine will become a fading memory. “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it” (Amos 9:13).

This poetic millennial picture aptly depicts a new age of abundance and prosperity. No wonder Christ asks us to pray: “Thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10, King James Version). ❖



# A Page on the World

Reviews of books that count, endure and light the path ahead

## Churchill

*Paul Johnson, author of A History of the American People and Modern Times, offers this telling biography of one of the most dynamic figures of the 20th century (2009, ISBN-13: 978-0670021055).*

Reviewed by Darris McNeely

**Y**ou would think that everything that could be written about Winston Churchill has been written. But in fact, the Churchill “industry” keeps pumping out new books each year. One of the latest is among the best.

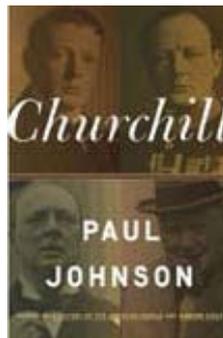
British historian Paul Johnson has written a small, 168-page volume packed with essential analysis of this remarkable man that will benefit all our readers. Why? Because Johnson focuses on incidents that teach us critical life lessons we all encounter. This book reminds us why we read stories of great men and their deeds. We need inspiration, motivation and encouragement that we, too, can pass through this life, making a difference and leaving a legacy. Johnson’s short book reminds us why Churchill’s story will live on.

One chapter alone, “The Lessons of Failure,” is worth the read. In 1915, during World War I, Churchill devised and implemented an ill-fated attack in the Dardanelles, Turkey. The plan was to open a new front and turn the tide of the war, thus shortening the conflict. It failed miserably, with loss of life in the hundreds of thousands. Among the Commonwealth nations, Australia and New Zealand suffered extraordinary loss of life. Though later exonerated, Churchill bore the brunt of blame for the failure.

How he bounced back from this and other personal defeats is well told by Paul Johnson. I will leave you to read it for yourself. But let me summarize the author’s lessons from Churchill’s life. They form a wonderful primer on leading a successful life. He offers five lessons.

1. Always aim high. As a child, Churchill was ignored by his parents and given very little encouragement. He was raised by a beloved nanny before being sent off to boarding school. He craved his parents’ attention but received little from them during his formative years. Nevertheless, he was not crippled by resentment or anger. Instead he continued to set out to achieve. He also revered his parents, especially Randolph, his father. He wrote and spoke of them throughout his life with the highest regard. This emotional factor alone likely supported him on the path to the greatness he achieved.

2. There is no substitute for hard work. Working 16-hour days, he turned out multiple millions of words in



books, articles, directives and speeches. I don’t know whether any other man of letters wrote as much as Churchill. He taught himself painting and built walls and ponds at his country home, Chartwell. He traveled, observed and governed. This last job is probably the hardest of all. Governing is no easy task at any level. Yet Churchill did it under stress, against opposition, and he did it well.

3. Stay focused. Churchill never allowed mistakes, disasters—personal or national—accidents, illnesses, unpopularity or criticism to derail him. Johnson writes, “His whole career was an exercise in how courage can be displayed, reinforced, guarded, and doled out carefully, heightened and concentrated, conveyed to others. Those uncertain of their courage can look to Churchill for reassurance and inspiration” (p. 164).

4. Let go of hate. He wasted an extraordinarily small amount of his time and emotional energy on the meannesses of life: recrimination, shifting the blame onto others, malice, revenge seeking, dirty tricks, spreading rumors, harboring grudges or waging vendettas. I have read several Churchill biographies and watched many documentary dramas on his life. The stories that illustrate this truth are remarkable. He was not a saint, but the man had a remarkable ability to move on past a storm of conflict and seek reconciliation—even with the Germans.

5. The absence of hatred leaves plenty of room for joy. He lived an abundant life. A happy event brought him pleasure. He delighted in surprising people and sharing good things with them. He kept the gates of his country home open so that neighbors could come and walk the gardens. He told many jokes, and he was the butt of more. Yet he had the rare ability to laugh at himself. Johnson writes, “Joy was a frequent visitor to Churchill’s psyche, banishing boredom, despair, discomfort, and pain.”

I recommend this book because, more than any other biography I have read about this great man, it lifts and encourages me. It is a true story of a remarkable man who lived a large life among some of the most tumultuous events of human history. In doing so, he maintained his humanity. His is a good life to study. ❖

**“WORTHY”** (Continued from page 16)

below. The piercing brilliance of light into a dark world has a shattering effect on the psyche of man.

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

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

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

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

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

### The moment arrives

The stage is now set. It’s time to position ourselves for the “Kodak moment.” The God of all history, beyond any beginning or end, is about to roll out His plan; but its

details are tightly bound by those divinely imposed seals. So close, yet so far! What lies within that can offer any glimmer of hope to the age-old inquiry of the saints: “How long, O Lord?”

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

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

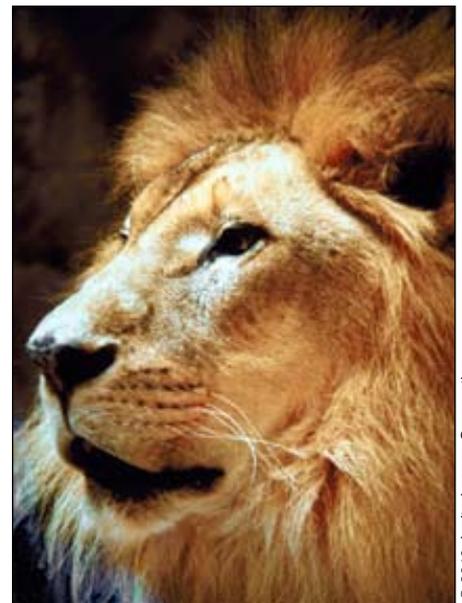
Isn’t this the same God who had promised in the words of Amos, “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants” (Amos 3:7)? But the supernatural revelation comes to a standstill! No one is stepping forward.

### “Stop weeping!”

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

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

But why? We are now about to witness the emergence of Jesus Christ on center stage. It is He who steps forward and by merit can open the seals. The heavenly herald proclaims in verse 5, “See, the Lion



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

of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals” (New International Version).

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

Christ continues even in heaven to portray His sacrifice for all of God’s children. It is real. It is tangible. He is forever our sacrifice! It is a title and visual concept that God never wants us to move too far from in our thoughts. Thus the term *lamb* is mentioned 29 times in the book of Revelation.



*Christ is forever our sacrifice! It is real. It is tangible. Lamb is a title and visual concept that God never wants us to move too far from in our thoughts.*

### Both Lion and Lamb

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

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

As Christ steps forward to claim His privilege to share and execute

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

### “Come up here”

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

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

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

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

*This article first appeared in the July 2008 issue of World News and Prophecy.*



Robin Webber

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Along with [www.WNPonline.org](http://www.WNPonline.org), the United Church of God’s home page [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org) gives you access to *The Good News*, booklets and links to our international Web sites : [www.ucg.ca](http://www.ucg.ca) (Canada), [www.ucg.org.au](http://www.ucg.org.au) (Australia), [www.labuonanotizia.org](http://www.labuonanotizia.org) (Italy), [www.goodnews.org.uk](http://www.goodnews.org.uk) (British Isles), [www.ucg.org.ph](http://www.ucg.org.ph) (Philippines), [www.ucgeastafrica.org](http://www.ucgeastafrica.org) (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) and [www.ucg-rsa.org](http://www.ucg-rsa.org) (Southern Africa).



by Robin Webber

## “Who Is Worthy?”

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

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

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

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

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

### The door to heaven opens

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

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

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

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

### Drama about to occur!

The God of heaven introduces Himself as a conveyer of light and power in contrast to the darkened world

(See “**WORTHY,**” page 14)