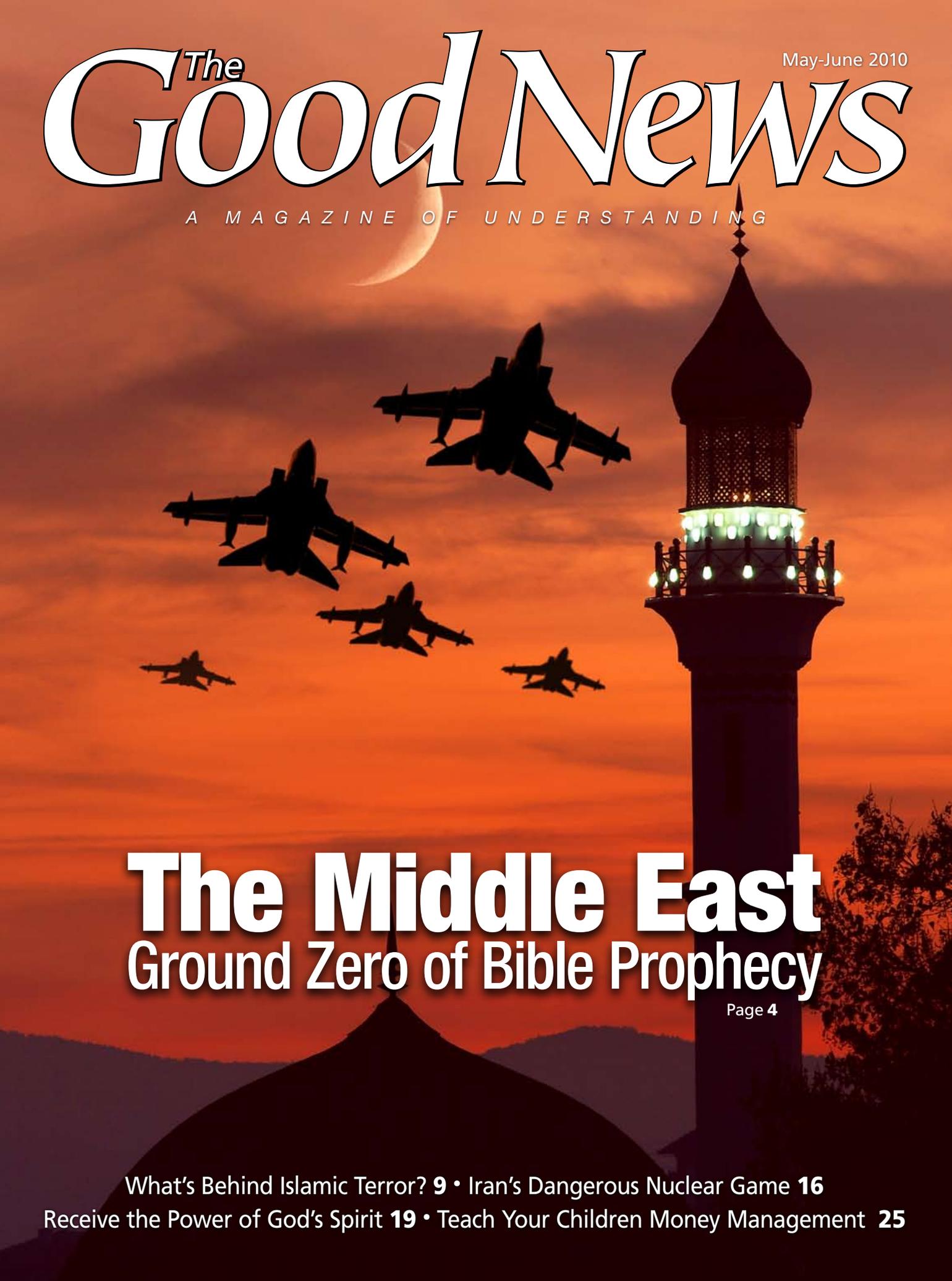


The Good News

May-June 2010

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



The Middle East

Ground Zero of Bible Prophecy

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The Purpose of Prophecy



What is the purpose of Bible prophecy? Most people don't really understand the answer. They want to know *who's* going to do *what*, and *when* and *where* it's going to happen.

But they could be missing the point. Those aspects are important, and the Bible contains chapter after chapter of details addressing them. But people focusing on these details can miss out on the most important aspect of Bible prophecy—the *why*. *Why* do people do the things they do? And *why* does our Creator do the things He does?

The overall purpose of Bible prophecy is *to encourage us to change our lives* and help us see where the things we do ultimately lead. Ironically, we find this lesson clearly spelled out in a prophecy that *didn't* come to pass!

God gave the prophet Jonah a message: “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has

Ironically, we find this lesson clearly spelled out in a prophecy that didn't come to pass!

come up before Me” (Jonah 1:2, emphasis added throughout).

After a detour in which God showed the reluctant prophet the seriousness of His instructions by having him transported against his will in the belly of a great fish, Jonah delivered God's message: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4).

If ever a city deserved punishment, it was Nineveh, capital of a powerful empire legendary for its cruelty. Both the Bible and many ancient records document the empire's lust for blood, plunder and slaves.

But something remarkable happened. “The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth [as a sign of mourning]. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.

“Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: ‘. . . Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. *Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish!*’” (verses 5-9, New International Version).

God was clearly serious. He sent His prophet on a mission, even performing a miracle to see that Jonah carried out that mission. He decreed that this evil city would be destroyed. But “when God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, *he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened*” (verse 10, NIV; compare Jeremiah 18:7-8).

This is the real purpose of prophecy. God wants us to see where our sins are leading so that we may turn from those sins! His message is heartfelt: “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, *but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die . . . ?*” (Ezekiel 33:11).

God warned the ancient nations of Israel and Judah repeatedly. That is the consistent, pleading message found in the biblical prophets. It is also the message of this magazine. Yes, we want to help you understand the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecy. But far more important, we want you to “*seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near*” (Isaiah 55:6).

As you see events long foretold in the Bible begin falling into place, how will Bible prophecy affect your life? Don't lose sight of the *why* behind those messages!

—Scott Ashley, Managing editor

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The Middle East: Ground Zero of Bible Prophecy

by Melvin Rhodes

Only a century ago the Middle East was a relatively peaceful and tranquil area. Today it's the most volatile region of the world, with the possibility of war breaking out at any minute. You need to understand why this change happened, where Bible prophecy indicates things are headed and what it means for you!

It's hard to believe, but a century ago the Middle East was, as historian and Middle East specialist David Fromkin described it in his best seller *A Peace to End All Peace*, “a relatively tranquil domain in which history, like everything else, moved slowly” (1989, p. 25).

At that time, few in the West “knew or cared what went on in the languid empires of the Ottoman Sultan or the Persian Shah . . . The passions that now drive troops and terrorists to kill and be killed—and that compel global attention—had not yet been aroused” (ibid.).

A look at the map helps you understand why. “The political landscape of the Middle East looked different from that of today. Israel, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia did not exist then” (ibid.). All these lands were ruled as a part of the Ottoman (or Turkish) Empire. Jerusalem itself had been a part of the empire since 1517.

But everything was about to change.

Turning point for the Middle East

The turning point was World War I. The

events that followed the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand spiraled into the greatest conflict mankind had ever known. The British, French and Russians were allied against the Central European powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Ottoman Empire soon allied itself with the latter—and suffered their fate. All three empires collapsed in the aftermath of war.

For centuries the Ottomans had dominated the entire Middle East and North Africa. The empire had been in decline throughout the 19th century and had already seen vast areas of its territory become independent. But a far greater splintering was to come with the Paris peace conference of 1919-20.

It was this peace conference that created the modern Middle East—and led to virtually all the conflicts in the region over the last nine decades. Ultimately, it will lead to the final conflagration that precedes the return of the Messiah.

After World War I, often referred to as “the war to end all wars,” the Paris peace conference was aptly referred to by Field

Marshal Archibald Wavell, a British officer who served in Palestine, as “a peace to end peace.” That’s exactly what it achieved—transforming a languid and relatively tranquil domain into the most dangerous neighborhood in the world. The Middle East remains, by far, the greatest threat to world peace.

What is remarkable is that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its dismemberment *was destined more than 24 centuries before it took place*. It had to happen for specific Bible prophecies to be fulfilled, for Scripture shows that prior to Christ’s second coming, an independent Jewish nation would exist once again in the Holy Land—one that would be a source of great consternation and contention to other nations.

No Jewish nation for 2,000 years

More than 2,500 years ago the Jewish prophet Daniel lived in Babylon, a powerful empire that had conquered the Jewish nation early in the sixth century B.C. The captivity of the Jews was to last 70 years. Daniel lived through the entire period of Babylonian rule and survived to see Babylon itself conquered by the empire of Persia in 539 B.C.

God revealed a great deal to Daniel. These revelations contained the prophetic plan for the gentile (non-Israelite) nations that would dominate the Middle East and also His prophetic plan for the Jewish people. The book of Daniel was even written in two languages—Aramaic, the language of

Babylon's rulers (for the prophecies relating to the gentiles), and Hebrew, the language of the Jews.

The prophecies revealed that after the Babylonian Empire would come the Persian Empire, to be followed in turn by the Greco-Macedonian Empire more than two centuries later, which would in turn eventually be succeeded by the Roman Empire.

In Daniel 11 we find an amazingly accurate and detailed prophecy of the fate that was to befall the Jewish people in the aftermath of the death of Alexander the Great. His vast empire, acquired during a short life span, was divided up between four of his generals. Bible prophecy focuses on two of them and their successors.

Ptolemy took control of what is now Egypt, while Seleucus took possession of everything north and east of what is today Israel. These two monarchs and their descendants are referred to throughout the chapter as the "king of the South" and the "king of the North" respectively. A great deal of attention is given to them as their continuing conflict constantly affected the Jewish people who were literally caught in the middle.

The prophecy's details have a clear, step-

by-step correspondence in history until verse 32, which was fulfilled in the middle of the second century B.C. In verse 40 we see references once again to the king of the South and the king of the North "at the time of the end."

Why such a long gap of some 2,000 years? It's easier to follow when we understand Jewish history. The second part of verse 32 through verse 39 contains a prophecy about the exploits of the early Church set against the backdrop of the Roman Empire. But then there's nothing until "the time of the end."

That's because *there was no Jewish nation from A.D. 135 until 1948!* This prophecy is about the Jews and how they were to be affected by their two powerful neighbors, the kings of the South and the North, geographic locations in relation to Jerusalem, the Jewish capital.

But in the end time, once again the Jewish people are to be affected by these two powers, one to the south of Jerusalem and one to the north. However, these are not the descendants of Ptolemy and Seleucus. Much changed in that 2,000-year gap. The Ptolemaic dynasty died out with the last Ptolemy, Cleopatra VII, who was replaced by a long period of

Roman rule. The Seleucid kingdom had been swallowed up by Rome even earlier.

Prophecies of Jews and Jerusalem at the end time

Other prophecies also clearly show that a revived Jewish nation would exist at the time of the end.

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah prophesied of the time when Jesus Christ returns to earth, an event still clearly in the future. Notice his words:

"Behold, the day of the LORD is coming . . . For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem . . . Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east" (Zechariah 14:1-4). Again, this is a prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled.

In chapter 12 Zechariah makes more specific references to Judah and Jerusalem: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege *against Judah and Jerusalem*" (verse 2, emphasis added throughout).

Note the reference here to both *Judah* and *Jerusalem*. In Bible history and prophecy, *Judah* is usually the name applied to the people commonly known as the Jews. They get their name from—and are descended from—Judah, one of the 12 sons of the biblical patriarch Jacob.

The Jewish nation today calls itself *Israel*,

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its dismemberment was destined more than 24 centuries before it took place.



but it does not comprise all the nations of Israel.

The Bible records that after the death of King Solomon, 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel rebelled against Solomon's successor and formed a separate nation, the kingdom of Israel. Two tribes, Judah and the much smaller tribe of Benjamin, remained loyal to the heirs of King David and formed the kingdom of Judah. Their descendants include the peoples who populate Israel today.

Interestingly, the first reference to "Jews" in the Bible (2 Kings 16:5-6, King James Version) describes Israel and the Jews being at war with each other!

Both kingdoms eventually fell, and their people were taken away into captivity. Israel was invaded and destroyed by the Assyrian Empire in the eighth century B.C. Its people were exiled and eventually lost to history, becoming known as "the lost 10 tribes" of Israel. (To learn more, download or request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

The kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians in the sixth century B.C., and although some of the Jewish people returned over the next century and a half to reestablish themselves in the Holy Land, most were scattered throughout the Middle East and, ultimately, much of the Western world. Of course, this return to the Holy Land *had* to take place for the prophecies specifying the time and location of the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to be fulfilled.

Jesus also pointed to Jerusalem as the very center of Bible prophecy at the time of the end. "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near," He said in Luke 21:20, part of His longest recorded prophecy.

For a long time this seemed unlikely to many because Jerusalem was mostly at peace for its four centuries under the Ottoman Empire prior to World War I. It lies within an area dismissed only a century ago as "a relatively tranquil domain." Yet it is now the most volatile region of the world, with Jerusalem itself a city of global contention just as Zechariah said it would be:

"And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it" (Zechariah 12:3).

Clearly, this will be a time of divine intervention in human affairs: "It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" (verse 9).



Jesus Christ pointed to Jerusalem as the very center of Bible prophecy at the time of the end.

New Testament prophetic focus is the Middle East

Other New Testament passages also show Jerusalem and the Middle East at the center of Bible prophecy. We have already seen the reference to Jerusalem in Luke 21:20.

Many people have heard of Armageddon, which has entered our language as shorthand for the final colossal battle at Christ's return. Revelation 16:16 says, "And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon." This name is the Greek form of the Hebrew words *har Megiddo*, meaning "hill of Megiddo." Megiddo was a strategically crucial fortress city in northern Israel in ancient times.

But a closer reading of this passage shows that Megiddo is only the *gathering place* for great armies. Megiddo lies at the western end of a large plain, known as the Valley of Esdraelon (or of Jezreel), that stretches 20 miles eastward. It will likely serve as a staging area, with the actual battle, as Zechariah 14 shows, taking place 55 miles to the south outside Jerusalem.

When Jesus told His disciples to watch Jerusalem, He also said that "Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). Revelation 11:2 shows that the gentiles "will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months," the last 42 months of human misrule on the earth. Obviously something major

must happen to end the current Israeli control over the city and turn it over to non-Jews.

During this period of time, the same chapter foretells that God's two witnesses will prophesy to the world from the city of Jerusalem (verses 3-10). Verse 9 shows that when they are killed, "those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half-days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves." The world will be aware of their message, a final prophetic announcement about the imminent return of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God and of the need to repent.

The purpose and point of prophecy

The primary purpose of prophecy is to *encourage people to repent*—to warn

them of the consequences of continuing to disobey and defy their Creator and to urge them to turn to Him.

This was a vital part of Jesus' mission: "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15). *The gospel* is the good news of the coming Kingdom of God and how we may be a part of it.

Each year, most of the world focuses on an event that took place in the Middle East more than 2,000 years ago, celebrating but missing the point—the all-important deeper meaning. The event was the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah promised to mankind. While celebrating His birth (on the wrong day and in the wrong way), they ignore the message He brought and the incredible role He is destined to play.

Isaiah 9:6 opens with two famous prophetic clauses: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given . . ." What's described here was, of course, fulfilled two millennia ago with the birth of Jesus. But notice the words that follow:

"And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no

Insurmountable Challenges Plague the Middle East Today

While the Arab-Jewish conflict remains the greatest threat to peace in the Middle East, other grave conflicts that torment this region have their origins in ancient history.

The division between the Sunni and Shiite branches of Islam goes back to shortly after the death of the prophet Muhammad in A.D. 632 and centers



Shiite women entering a mosque in Qom, Iran.

on who were to be his rightful successors. While they are at times at peace, centuries of dislike and distrust between the two sometimes breaks out into violence, as the world has witnessed in recent years in Iraq.

About 85 percent of Muslims are Sunni, but some countries in the Middle East are predominantly Shiite, notably Iran, Yemen, Azerbaijan and Bahrain. Iraq is also about 60 percent Shiite, but was ruled by a Sunni for decades—Ahmad Al-Bakr and then Saddam Hussein. The U.S.-led invasion of the country has led to Shiites playing a more significant role and could mean

a close relationship between Iraq and Iran in the future.

Iran has been under the rule of Islamic fundamentalists since 1979 and is now trying to acquire nuclear weapons, which would drastically alter the balance of power in the region. Not only does Israel feel threatened by this development, but so do the countries adhering to Sunni Islam, notably Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey.

Iran's influence extends far beyond its borders, into Iraq and other countries. In Lebanon, the infamous Shiite terrorist organization Hezbollah is supported by Iran. The Iranians also support the radical Hamas movement, which rules the Palestinians in Gaza



Student demonstrators in Tehran during the 1979 revolution.

and also has considerable support among those in the West Bank. Many Western nations, including the United States, Canada and the European Union, have declared Hamas a terrorist organization.



Displaced Sudanese women collect wood for cooking.

Radical Islam first gained world attention in modern times in the 1979 Iranian revolution that overthrew the pro-Western shah of Iran. Iran became a theocratic republic under the domination of the ayatollahs, the religious leaders. Iran's influence has spread far and wide, even into Sunni Islam.

Al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization responsible for the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, is of radical Sunni origin. It operates to the east of Iran in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The former rulers of Afghanistan, the Taliban, gave

refuge to al-Qaeda before, during and after the attacks of 9/11, but were defeated during the U.S.-led invasion of the country later the same year. Still, the Taliban continues to fight against coalition forces in the country.

At the same time, there are various other regional conflicts. Egypt's southern neighbor Sudan has had an ongoing civil war for most of the years since independence from Britain in 1956. Somalia has spent the last two decades in an ungovernable state. Yemen suffers from intertribal conflict. And Lebanon's various factions often flare up.

In addition to these ongoing conflicts that could explode and become far worse at any time, many Islamic nations in the region suffer under cruel and despotic dictatorships that lack the support of their own people. This has



A smuggling tunnel from Egypt into Gaza.

enabled radical Muslims to gain influence as they work among the common people and provide them with needs their governments don't. So there's an ever-present danger of radical Islam spreading and gaining power in different countries.

It is difficult to find a country in the region that is truly stable other than Israel, which is constantly threatened by external conflict. Israel is so small it has to win every single war it fights—for if it loses one, it may cease to exist!

We should also note that Turkey, the country with the closest ties to the West after Israel (and formerly a good friend of the Jewish state), seems to be changing course and turning away from the West. A member of NATO since 1952, Turkey has been seeking membership in the European Union for more than 20 years, having first applied for acceptance on April 14, 1987. Although there is considerable support from some European countries to Turkey's membership, there is also a lot of opposition, notably from Germany.

On top of the divisive rejection from Europe, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives voted March 5 to proclaim Turkey's suppression of Armenians in 1915 an act of genocide rather than an act of war, as the Turks claim. This will undoubtedly have a negative effect on U.S.-Turkish relations. Turkey for some months has been pursuing



Armenian refugees seek relief in Syria, 1915.

closer relations with other Islamic nations at the expense of the United States, the European Union and Israel. This is likely to continue.

The entire Middle East region, culturally and religiously extending into North Africa and South

Asia, continues to be very volatile, with no sign of this abating.

While the biblically prophesied end-time "king of the South" could arise as a result of tumult in the region, the Arab-Israeli conflict is a separate issue, one which has caused a number of wars since the birth of Israel in 1948. It remains the world's most dangerous unresolved issue in the world's most dangerous region.

end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (verses 6-7).

You don’t have to look any farther than the Middle East to see *why* the Messiah must return. The most volatile area of the world will not know peace until Jesus Christ reveals Himself and puts an end to *false religious teaching*.

The plague of false religion

The disciples asked Christ: “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). In answer, the first thing He warned about was false religion. “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (verses 4-5, King James Version).

In Revelation, a book about end-time events, we see in chapter 6 a vision of four horsemen representing major trends that will devastate humanity.

It begins with a rider on a white horse who goes out “conquering and to conquer” (verse 2), which corresponds in sequence to Jesus’ warning about religious deception—and the correspondence continues through the other horsemen. False religion leads to war, which in turn leads to famine, followed by pestilence or disease epidemics (verses 1-8; compare Matthew 24:1-8).

False religion will not end until Jesus Christ returns and forcibly sets the record straight about the counterfeit ideologies and faiths that have deceived the human race for centuries. Behind these false religions and philosophies is an evil spirit being who is known as Satan or the devil, of whom the Bible says “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19).

Three major faiths have a common origin in the Middle East, all sharing an interest in the Holy Land, especially Jerusalem, which is at the heart of Bible prophecy. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all claim a common ancestor in Abraham. Yet there are significant differences between all three, which have led to centuries of conflict and unending bloodshed.

The sad reality is that *all three world religions are wrong!* None follow in the true faith of Abraham. True Christianity, the Christianity that Jesus preached and which the early disciples and apostles believed and followed, does—but it has only a small number of followers today.



False religion will not end until Jesus Christ returns and forcibly sets the record straight about counterfeit ideologies and faiths.

Without knowing it, most professing Christians practice a false form of Christianity, a blend of pagan beliefs mingled with some biblical teachings. As Revelation 12:9 says, Satan “*deceives the whole world*”—not just a corner of it here and there, but *all of it*.

The apostle Paul adds that “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” He has his own false apostles and false ministers who in reality are “deceitful workers,” likely unaware that they are, in fact, helping spread Satan’s lies, fraudulent counterfeits of God’s true religion (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

These false religious systems have left a legacy of fear and hatred in the Middle East that will not easily go away.

Ancient family rivalry

Abraham is deeply revered in all three faiths. It was in the time of Abraham that the primary cause of the greatest conflict took place, when Abraham fathered Ishmael by his wife’s handmaid, Hagar. Later, his wife conceived and bore Isaac. Ishmael’s descendants include a large part of the Arab

peoples, while Isaac through his son Jacob is the ancestor of the Israelites. The sibling rivalry of these two boys has continued down through the centuries in their descendants, exacerbated by religious differences.

A prophecy regarding Ishmael foretold: “He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility towards all his brothers” (Genesis 16:12, New International Version). This has certainly been fulfilled (and continues to be on a daily basis) in Ishmael’s offspring.

A longer form of an old Egyptian Arab proverb states: “I against my brother. My brother and I against our cousin. My brother, my cousin and I against the neighbors. All of us against the stranger.” The last clause is sometimes given as “my cousin and I against the world.”

Events headed just where God said

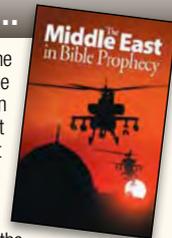
It’s amazing how much the Middle East has changed in the last century, since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following World War I. But the pages of your Bible show that this was all prophesied thousands of years ago. Clearly we can see God’s hand in these developments (Daniel 2:21).

Prophecy continually points us to our Creator and reminds us that ultimately everything is in His hands. It makes us realize God’s constant presence in the affairs of this world. It also reminds us that events are on track for the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom, which will be ruled from Jerusalem.

Seeing God’s hand at work in history and as events play out before our eyes, we should need no further reminder of the need for our own personal relationship with Him through repentance, faith and submission to His divine will as revealed in His Word! **GN**

To Learn More...

What factors in history led to the ancient animosities that continue to plague the Holy Land down to our day? Did you realize that many of them were spelled out in the pages of your Bible? You need to understand the surprising and little-understood truths about the conflict in the Middle East and how it will finally be resolved. Be sure to download or request your free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* today!



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What's Behind Islamic Terror?

by Becky Sweat

The world is horrified by regular bloody terrorist attacks in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Such attacks have also been carried out in Western nations such as the United States, Britain and Spain. What's behind this blood-soaked trend, and where is it leading?

Nearly nine years after the Sept. 11 attacks, it's painfully obvious that the threat of Islamic terrorism isn't going away. Just this past year, there were 12 known terrorist incidents and plots in the United States.

In December 2009, 23-year-old Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempted to blow up himself and everyone else on board a transatlantic airliner as it prepared to land in Detroit.

In November, U.S. Army Major Nidal Malik Hasan gunned down 33, killing 13, in his one-man attack on fellow soldiers at Fort Hood in Texas.

Before that, in September, Najibullah Zazi, a 24-year-old Afghan-born American and an al-Qaeda recruit, was arrested just days before he apparently planned to carry out a "martyrdom operation" to blow up New York City subway trains.

Last May, four Muslim Americans were caught planning to bomb two Bronx synagogues and shoot down airliners.

Increasing radicalization, increasing threat

These are just some of the plots to launch attacks on American soil in 2009. From December 2001 to December 2008, 20 other terror plots were uncovered in the United States. Except for the Fort Hood massacre, all of these were averted.

But despite the good record of apprehending terrorists, counterterrorism specialists are still very concerned. They see an accelerated radicalization among American Muslims, which they believe is leading to an increase in terrorist incidents in the United States. That's amid regular rumblings from al-Qaeda's leadership threatening to attack the American homeland, U.S. interests around the world and other Western nations.

"The terrorism threat eased up for a couple of years after 9/11, and then the last couple years it has gotten much worse," says



In spite of their theological differences and conflicting political strategies, both Hezbollah and al-Qaeda are intent on destroying the West.

Daniel Byman, a former intelligence officer and the director of the Center for Peace and Security Studies at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Like many terrorism experts, Byman is concerned about the growing number of American Muslims becoming involved in terrorist activity. Almost all of the domestic

plots since December 2001 were carried out by people who were born or lived in the United States. Many of them were affiliated with al-Qaeda and trained at one of their terror camps in Pakistan or Yemen.

Byman also believes that, while most all of the planned attacks over the last nine years were foiled, al-Qaeda is proving to be "a very resilient, unwavering, persistent and determined enemy—rising to every challenge the West throws at them."

A case in point is Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the al-Qaeda operative who tried to blow up the plane to Detroit in December. He may have failed in the end, but he did manage to evade nearly every security hurdle the United States put in place after the 9/11 attacks—which shows al-Qaeda is always testing the aviation system to see what works and what doesn't.

While Osama bin Laden and other terrorist leaders hide out in the Pakistani tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, regional al-Qaeda groups have been forming, primarily in weak and failing states, which can be safe havens for terrorists.

Presently al-Qaeda has regional operations in Yemen, Somalia, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Intelligence officials are concerned al-Qaeda-linked extremists are now migrating to the vast Saharan territories of Mali, Mauritania and Niger—remote areas without any real state control, which will allow them to build new havens where they can gather recruits and train.

"When the Taliban was in power and protecting Bin Laden in Afghanistan, things were pretty clear cut. The U.S. knew who to attack and where they were," observes Emilio Viano, a terrorism expert and a professor at American University in Washington, D.C. "Al-Qaeda is a much more serious threat today because they're not just in one central location anymore. They're on the loose, and they're very difficult to identify and find."

The changing face of terrorism

In one sense, terrorism—planned and organized violence against civilians to generate fear and panic in society—is not a new phenomenon. Throughout history, rebels, revolutionaries and rogue governments have

used terror tactics to push political or societal change. However, the Islamic terrorism we're seeing now is considerably different from what was seen throughout history, or even compared to the Middle Eastern terrorism that emerged in the 1960s and '70s.

Middle Eastern terrorism got its start with movements like the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). These groups used small-scale bombings, assassinations, airline hijackings, hostage taking and embassy takeovers to call attention to their cause.

They had definite political goals (the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and the elimination of Israel), just like others did in modern history, such as the Irish rebels, Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, Basque separatists in northern Spain and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.

During the 1980s and '90s, Middle Eastern terrorism started changing. By the time of al-Qaeda's attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, it had morphed into something the world had never seen before.

"Militant Islam replaced secular Palestinian nationalists as the ideology of terror," explains political violence and terrorism expert Mark Ensalaco of the University of Dayton. "Jihad against apostates and infidels replaced the liberation of Palestine as the cause. Militant Islam was sworn to the destruction of the State of Israel, but now destruction of apostate Arab regimes and expulsion of Americans from Muslim lands became new strategic objectives of terror.

"Militant Islam proclaimed the murder of Americans, who had rarely been targeted by Palestinian terrorists, to be a religious duty. Terror became far more lethal with the advent of mass casualty suicide attacks" (*Middle Eastern Terrorism: From Black September to September 11*, 2008, p. 6).

"The terrorist groups we are now facing are much more interested in conducting mass casualty attacks than the groups in the 1970s," says terrorism expert Brian Nichiporuk, a political scientist with the Rand Corporation, a nonprofit think tank based in Santa Monica, California. "In their attacks they obviously want to kill—and kill a lot more people, as opposed to just targeting specific people for assassinations, or holding a few key people hostage until their demands are met."

Suicide bombings were unheard of before the Iranian-backed terror group Hezbollah introduced them in the early 1980s, he states.

Mass terror as a political tool

Adds Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, director of the Center for Terrorism Research at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in Washington, D.C.: "The assumption through the 1970s, '80s and '90s was that terrorist groups would not carry out mass casualty attacks because terrorism was about fear. That is, these groups wanted to accomplish a fundamentally political objective, and part of what they needed to do was to win people over to the 'justness' of their cause.

"If they were to kill too many people, then they would end up losing the public. What happened on 9/11 and the evidence that al-Qaeda has searched out weapons of mass destruction puts that assumption to rest."

One other distinction worth clarifying is that "while the Palestinian terror groups back in the 1970s and '80s were primarily politically motivated and held left-wing ideologies such as Marxism and nationalism, some, like the PLO and PFLP, had a bit of religious ideology mixed in with their goals," Gartenstein-Ross notes.

Similarly, while the Islamic extremists today operate under a "religious" banner, there are still political aspects to their objectives. Their ultimate goal is to establish a worldwide caliphate (Islamic empire) and to unite all Muslims.

To do this, in al-Qaeda's view, they must drive Westerners and non-Muslims out of all Muslim nations, especially Saudi Arabia (as it is the birthplace of Islam and home to Islam's two holiest shrines), destroy Israel and overthrow governments it deems to be "non-Islamic" or democratic. Even Muslim governments must be destroyed, from al-Qaeda's perspective, if they have become "too Western."

The last objective, in particular, requires a lot of "political maneuvering" on the part of the Islamic extremists. Nichiporuk says what the radicals try to do is "create mass unrest and mayhem in the pro-Western Muslim countries that exist—places like Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Jordan—and see if they can create an uprising against the government where they can bring it down, gain control, and impose a fundamentalist Islamic regime."

Origins of modern Islamic terrorism

Exactly what happened during the last two decades of the 20th century to bring about the change from Palestinian nationalism to militant Islam? Several factors were at play. But all extremist movement threads ultimately lead back to the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

In *Middle Eastern Terrorism: From Black September to September 11*, Mark Ensalaco writes: "The Iranian revolution gave the struggle against oppression a religious intensity that surpassed anything secular Palestinian or pan-Arab nationalism could ever generate. Although Iranians are Persian not Arab, and Shi'a [Shiite] not Sunni, the potency of the Ayatollah's message was tremendous: Because Muslims had strayed from the one true path, Muslims chafed under the yoke of Western imperialism.

"Muslim holy places in Jerusalem were desecrated by Zionism; Muslim states were mired in political corruption; only the revival of Islam could lead to the restoration of the Muslim land, including Palestine, to the Dar al-Islam, the abode of Islam. Islam demanded more than the liberation of Palestine, it demanded the establishment of Islamic governments faithful to the Qur'an [or Koran] and the Sharia, or Islamic law, throughout the Muslim world.

"And for this Muslims must be prepared to sacrifice themselves in jihad, holy war. Islamist thought was far more radical than the pan-Arab nationalism that competed with it for decades" (p. 123).

The Ayatollah Khomeini's oratory alone was enough to get many Muslims fired up—Shiite and Sunni alike. Adding fuel to the fire were America's early run-ins with Iran's new government and Hezbollah, the Lebanese-based terrorist organization Iran helped establish in 1982 and continues to support.

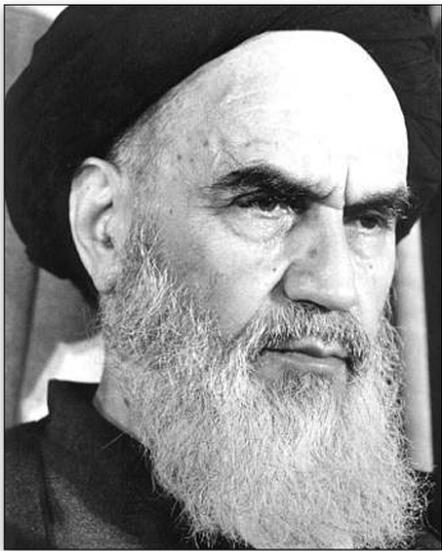
Three events in particular made the United States look weak in the eyes of the Islamic radicals: the United States' failed attempt at rescuing American hostages in Iran in 1979, U.S. withdrawal from Lebanon in 1983 after Hezbollah's devastating attack on Marine barracks, and the U.S. military pullout of Somalia in 1993-94 without completing the mission.

In his 2009 book *Inside the Revolution*, Middle East specialist Joel Rosenberg explained that these defeats "emboldened the extremists," gave them "fodder for their propaganda" and "allowed them credibility to bring more young Radicals into the cause" (p. 9).

The birth of al-Qaeda

One such radical was a wealthy Saudi national by the name of Osama bin Laden. Throughout the 10-year war in Afghanistan against Soviet occupation, Bin Laden recruited, trained and financed the thousands of foreign *mujahadeen*, or holy warriors.

Bin Laden wanted these fighters to con-



The Iranian revolution gave the struggle against oppression a religious intensity that surpassed anything secular Palestinian or pan-Arab nationalism could ever generate.

continue the “holy war” beyond Afghanistan, so in September 1988 he formed al-Qaeda (“the Base”). By 1990, just a year after the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from Afghanistan, al-Qaeda had established cells, recruiters and fund-raising operations in 50 countries and by 1993 had trained more than 6,000 Arabs to export jihad throughout the world.

The Soviet withdrawal quickly accelerated al-Qaeda’s growth: “In nine years, more than fifteen thousand Soviet soldiers and airmen were killed in Afghanistan, and another thirty thousand or so were injured. Hundreds of Soviet jets and helicopters were shot down. And all the while bin Laden passionately argued that the mujahadeen’s victories against the Soviet infidels were proof that Allah was on their side” (Rosenberg, p. 112).

In the last decade, not only has the al-Qaeda franchise spread throughout the Middle East and around the world, but so has its jihadist ideology. That ideology, says

Michael O’Hanlon, director of research and senior fellow in foreign policy at the Brookings Institution, “is really what’s driving this rise in violence. We haven’t seen such a violent ideology mixed with religion in a long time.”

And truly, it’s a lot easier for violent ideology to spread these days. Today, Gartenstein-Ross observes, “the Internet is one of the main ways al-Qaeda is able to broadcast its ideology and remain so potent. A couple decades ago, that wasn’t a factor, so it was more difficult for ideas to spread and networks to form.”

Terrorist groups use e-mail, chat rooms, e-groups, Web sites, blogs, forums, virtual message boards and resources like Facebook, Twitter, Paltalk and YouTube to communicate with fellow jihadists, make contact with like-minded individuals and promote their jihadist ideology. Usually they do so with little risk of identification by authorities.

Finally, one other factor that has facilitated the growth of terrorism has been the changing structure of world power. “The U.S. is losing its preeminence in the world, economically and consequently also politically,” declares Viano.

He continues: “The U.S. has increasingly less financial resources to be able to devote to fighting terrorism, and the extremist groups know that. And really, the U.S. is a lot less popular than it used to be, and there are fewer nations that will cooperate with it in fighting international terrorism. A lot of terrorist groups may even figure they’ll actually gain some favor with the home audiences if they attack America, which wouldn’t have been the case 30 years ago. It’s all made the U.S. an easier target for terrorism.”

What the West is really up against

Of the 50-plus terrorist organizations in the world today, the two that are the biggest threat to the West are al-Qaeda and Hezbollah. Many of the others are relatively small movements and are focused on political issues in their region. But both al-Qaeda and Hezbollah see themselves in a holy war against the United States, Israel and the entire Western world.

Ever since the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda has become synonymous with terror in the United States. “They’re the ones who have demonstrated the willingness to use mass casualty attacks and stop at nothing to achieve their objectives,” says Nichiporuk.

In 1998 Bin Laden made his organiza-

tion’s objectives very clear when he issued his infamous *fatwa* (religious ruling) urging fellow Muslims to “kill Americans and their allies, civilians and military.” In the summer of 2002, Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, a Kuwait-born spokesman for al-Qaeda, posted the following statement on the Internet: “Al Qaeda has the right to kill four million Americans . . . and injure and cripple hundreds of thousands.”

Experts break up the al-Qaeda threat into three distinct entities. The first is the core organization that carried out the 9/11 attacks, comprising Bin Laden and his small circle of close, trusted associates.

The second layer of the network is composed of al-Qaeda’s affiliate groups across the globe—regional franchises that have recently formed or extremist groups that have taken on the “al-Qaeda” label. There are cells in at least 100 countries that operate in conjunction with the various regional organizations. Also included in this second layer are terror organizations that maintain their independence for various reasons, but still espouse al-Qaeda’s jihadist ideology and cooperate with the core group.

The third layer of the network is what was mentioned in the introduction—the so-called “homegrown” terrorism. Gartenstein-Ross defines it as “terrorism that is carried out by people who are born, raised and/or radicalized within a Western milieu.”

The threat of homegrown terrorism

Gartenstein-Ross says homegrown terrorists “are very valuable to al-Qaeda, since they are Westerners (from America or Europe), fit in with Western society better than Middle Easterners do, have the right travel documents, have the command of the English language or the relevant European language, and know how to not raise suspicions.”

Typically, homegrown extremists are indoctrinated inside the United States (or another Western nation), with help from extremist Web sites or jihadist clerics. Then many, but not all, travel to an al-Qaeda training camp in the Middle East or Pakistan for terror training and logistical support. Some are then assigned to go on a suicide assignment. This is how Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab almost blew up the airliner bound for Detroit last December.

Counterterrorism officials believe the accelerated radicalization among American Muslims has been driven by a wave of English-language online propaganda and

the spread of radical ideology in American mosques. There are a growing number of mosques in the United States, totaling 1,200 today, reported Joel Rosenberg in *Inside the Revolution* (p. 141). Between 50 and 80 percent are believed to be under control of extremists or dominated by their theology.

Rosenberg also quotes findings from a 2007 study by the Pew Research Center on the attitudes of Muslims in America. The study found that 5 percent of them had a “favorable” view of al-Qaeda. “Moreover, nearly three in 10 (27 percent) said they either didn’t know or refused to answer the question about their view of al-Qaeda. Out of 2,350,000 Muslims, this means there are at least 117,500 Muslims inside the U.S. who like what Osama bin Laden and his colleagues are doing and have a favorable view of their terrorist network.”

Further, “if those who refused to answer the question were disguising their own support for al-Qaeda, there could be another 600,000 or more Radical Muslims or Radical-leaning Muslims or sympathizers inside the country” (p. 144). Clearly, America has a large “pool” for potential homegrown terrorists.

Hezbollah, another major threat

That’s the al-Qaeda side of the equation (extremist Sunnis). The Shiite side is Hezbollah. Founded in part in response to the Israeli occupation of Lebanon and supported by Iran, many counterterrorism officials, like Nichiporuk, believe Hezbollah is “primarily a problem for Israel” and would probably only attack American interests if the United States got into a conflict with Iran.

Still, he acknowledges that “Hezbollah is a very dangerous, very capable terrorist organization” with a worldwide network of cells throughout Europe, Africa, South America and North America.

Others, like Joel Rosenberg, believe Hezbollah is not only dangerous but all too ready to attack the U.S. homeland. In *Inside the Revolution*, he cites a long list of statements by Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, threatening to destroy America and Israel. He also lists Hezbollah’s many attacks against U.S. interests in the 1980s and 1990s.

The fact that Iran is close to having a nuclear bomb and is directly tied to Hezbollah adds to the severity of the situation. “Yet, inexplicably,” Rosenberg writes, “despite Hezbollah’s history of killing Americans, Israelis, and Iraqis—and their clear plans to kill many more—the U.S. has done precious little to crush Hezbollah as it has sought to crush al-Qaeda. Nor has it done much to

bring Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah or his forces to justice. This has served to embolden Nasrallah, who is convinced that Allah is with him” (p. 95).

Some people speculate about whether Hezbollah and al-Qaeda might ever pull off a U.S. attack together. In spite of their theological differences and conflicting political strategies, both are intent on destroying the West, and there has been some cooperation between the two organizations in the past. For instance, in the early 1990s, Hezbollah trained al-Qaeda operatives in truck bombing techniques. Unquestionably, though, they are both highly formidable threats on their own.

The WMD threat

The ultimate concern, of course, is that extremists would obtain a weapon of mass destruction (WMD)—in particular, a nuclear bomb. In a December 2008 report titled *World at Risk*, the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism concluded that “unless the world community acts decisively and with great urgency, it is more likely than not that a weapon of mass destruction will be used in a terrorist attack somewhere in the world by 2013.”

Former CIA Director George Tenet stated in his 2007 book *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* that he is convinced al-Qaeda is trying to obtain nuclear capabilities: “They understand that bombings by cars, trucks, trains, and planes will get them some headlines, to be sure. But if they manage to set off a mushroom cloud, they will make history. Such an event would place al-Qa’ida on a par with the superpowers and make good bin Laden’s threat to destroy our economy and bring death into every American household” (p. 279).

Al-Qaeda’s nuclear intentions have been well documented. In 1998 Osama bin Laden said he felt a “religious duty” to acquire nuclear weapons. In 2003 al-Qaeda sought

and received a *fatwa* from a radical Saudi cleric authorizing the use of nuclear weapons against American civilians. Since the early 1990s, al-Qaeda has been trying to buy or steal the nuclear material needed to assemble a bomb and to recruit nuclear scientists to help the group with its aims. It’s becoming more doable all the time.

Just how doable? Harvard University’s Matthew Bunn, an expert on nuclear theft and terrorism, explains: “At sites in dozens of countries around the world, the security measures in place for plutonium or highly enriched uranium (HEU)—the essential ingredients of nuclear weapons—are dangerously inadequate, amounting in some cases to no more than a night watchman and a chain-link fence . . .

“If a technically sophisticated terrorist group could get the HEU or plutonium they need, they might well be able to make at least a crude nuclear bomb. Making one does not take a Manhattan project: more than 90 percent of that 1940s-era effort was devoted to making the nuclear material, not making the bomb; and that was before the basic principles of nuclear bombs were widely known, as they are today” (“Reducing the Greatest Risks of Nuclear Theft and Terrorism,” *Daedalus*, Oct. 1, 2009).

Sooner or later, terrorists may well succeed in their bomb-making efforts. Or they may simply acquire one already assembled.

National Review reported the consensus of some of the world’s leading terrorism experts at a December 2009 Heritage Foundation meeting: “If Iran, the world’s leading sponsor of terrorism, is not prevented from acquiring nukes, the result will be a nuclear proliferation ‘cascade.’ Before long, so many countries would have so many nuclear devices that the chances of terrorist groups getting their hands on at least a few would increase exponentially” (Clifford May, “Apocalypse When?” Nov. 26, 2009).

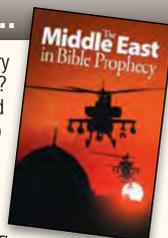
In January Gen. James Jones, White House national security adviser, told a *USA Today* reporter that his “biggest nightmare scenario” was “the acquisition of a weapon of mass destruction by a terrorist organization. The difference between a nation-state doing so and a rogue group of a terrorist organization is that nation-states can be controlled. They know if they’re going to use one what’s going to happen. But terrorist groups will have no such limitation” (What’s the Next U.S. Terror Threat?” Jan. 25, 2009).

What’s the answer?

If you are familiar with Bible prophecy,

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you may not be shocked by all this. The Bible foretells a time of unparalleled fear and terror in the days leading up to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ told His disciples that before His second coming “there will be *great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again*” (Matthew 24:21, New International Version, emphasis added throughout). He spoke of “wars and rumors of wars” and peoples and nations rising up against each other (verses 6-7).

There’s also a prophetic reference to terrorism in the Bible, specifically for America and other English-speaking peoples.

Regular readers of this magazine understand that the lineage of Americans and other English-speaking peoples can be traced back to the Old Testament nation of Israel. In Leviticus 26:16-17, God tells the Israelites that “sudden terror” and military defeat will be the result of their sin, with Americans and those of other Israelite nations “flee[ing] even when no one is pursuing you” (NIV).

That’s not to say terrorism is an out-of-control problem at present. It isn’t. The United States has spent billions on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, on intelligence and surveillance operations, and in beefing up airport and port security—all to combat terror threats. U.S. efforts have been successful. Al-Qaeda’s core has had to go into hiding, hindering the group’s operations. Dozens of attacks on the U.S. homeland since 9/11 have been prevented. But there is only so much human governments can do.

“Terrorism is a problem we can only manage. We can try to reduce both the frequency of it and the consequences of it, but we’re not going to be able to eradicate it,” O’Hanlon says. The threat of new and more serious attacks is always looming, he says, and realistically it’s not possible to prevent 100 percent of the plots. Terrorism is bound to get worse before Jesus Christ returns.

The good news, though, is that when Jesus Christ does return, terrorism at last will become a thing of the past. God’s new government will not only control it, but address the root causes and truly stop it.

Of that time we’re told: “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid” (Micah 4:3-4). God speed that day! **GN**



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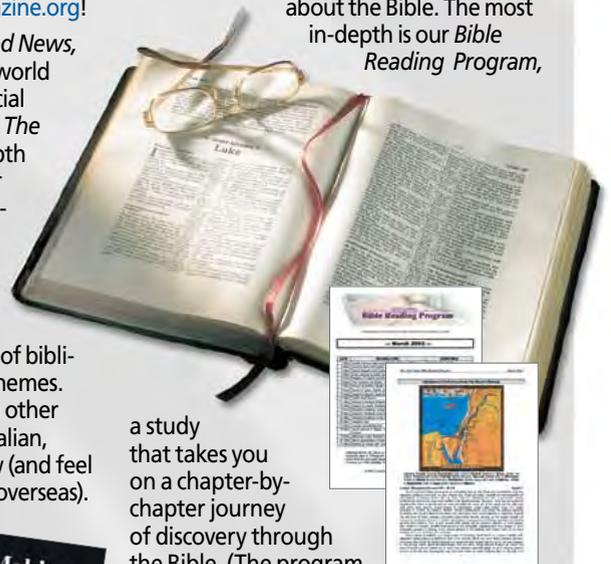


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While you’re there, be sure to take a look at our sister publications, *Virtual Christian Magazine* (available only on the Internet at www.VCMagazine.org) and *World News and Prophecy*. You’ll find them filled with helpful, eye-opening articles much like those you enjoy in *The Good News*.



Our sister Web site, www.ucg.org, is packed with an astounding amount of information about the Bible. The most in-depth is our *Bible Reading Program*,



a study that takes you on a chapter-by-chapter journey of discovery through the Bible. (The program currently covers the Old Testament.)

Other helpful resources include frequently asked Bible questions and insightful daily video commentaries. We also post new sermons, *Beyond Today* TV programs and additional commentaries each week.



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America, Britain and Israel: The tragic breakdown of a great relationship

It was first Britain that was used to help fulfill biblical prophecy by strongly supporting the future state of Israel through the famous Balfour Declaration of 1917.

Then, just after World War II, U.S. President Harry Truman picked up the baton and made possible the reestablishment of a Jewish state after almost 2,000 long years in exile when he recognized the Israeli provisional government on May 14, 1948. American support for Israel has continued virtually unabated ever since.

Side by side, the United States and Britain fought two world wars during the 20th century. The Roosevelt-Churchill special relationship continued with the Reagan-Thatcher alliance and more recently the Bush-Blair partnership. Yet this remarkable triangular relationship has been severely threatened by events over the past several months and more.

Israel's enemies are now rejoicing. *The Economist* stated: "Palestinians have gleefully watched two of Israel's main allies rebuking it. They have rejoiced, too, as the peacemaking Quartet (the United States, the European Union, Russia and the UN) roundly condemned Israel's building plans in East Jerusalem" ("A Wall of Suspicion," March 17, 2010).

We conveniently forget "that the US had previously expressly agreed with Israel that it would continue building in east Jerusalem while stopping building in the West Bank, an agreement for which it was warmly praised by Hillary Clinton" (Melanie Phillips, "Why Truth Beats Diplomacy," *The Jewish Chronicle*, March 19, 2010).

We now see regular headlines such as "The Ties That Bind America to Israel Are Beginning to Fray and Break" (*The Observer*, March 21, 2010). That "wall of suspicion" between the United States and Israel appears to be rapidly forming. The recent White House meeting between President Barak Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ended in diplomatic rancor.

Britain's relationship with Israel has also suffered in recent months. Many of Israel's top leaders cannot now

enter Britain without fear of arrest. Wrote journalist David Blair: "One of the highest priorities of the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem is to persuade Britain to amend the law that allows our courts to order the arrest of much of their political leadership . . . Israeli diplomats are convinced that the real reason lies in a campaign to rob their country of legitimacy in the eyes of British public opinion" ("Shunning Israel Will Not Turn It Into a Moderate Nation, Thirsting for Peace," *The Tablet*, March 6, 2010, emphasis added throughout).

Earlier in his article he had incisively written: "*Many Israelis fear that a global campaign is steadily robbing their country of legitimacy. This is a gradual but insidious process*" (ibid.).

A recent *Sunday Telegraph* report reveals that "a charity praised last week by [British Prime Minister] Gordon Brown and the Prince of Wales [Prince Charles] has channelled hundreds of thousands of pounds to groups linked to Hamas, the banned terrorist organisation, according to security sources" (Andrew Gilligan, "Hamas Link of Charity Praised by Brown," March 28, 2010).

Meanwhile, a *Jewish Chronicle* article notes that "Britain has become a hub for Hamas activities in Europe, including virulently anti-semitic propaganda" ("Britain Now Nerve Centre for Hamas Support," Feb. 26, 2010).

This triangular breakdown threatens the very existence of Israel as a nation. As *The Sunday Telegraph* put it, "Today Israel faces an Israel-hating Islamist coalition of Iran, Hizbollah and Hamas, which may soon have nuclear weapons—but does so without any certainty about American goodwill and protection" ("America and Israel: The End of a Special Relationship," March 28, 2010).

But it gets worse. The long relationships America and Britain have had with Israel aren't the only ones faltering. Perhaps of even greater concern is the rather sudden decline of the special relationship the United States and Britain have had with each other.

Wrote Tim Shipman, deputy political editor of the *Vernon, The Observer Magazine*, March 7, 2010).

The writer goes on to explain that some therapists tell us marital betrayal "might be exactly what your relationship needs." We also see famous sports and entertainment figures blaming sex addiction for their serial affairs. Too many today follow their poor example by cheating on their own spouses.

The Bible says emphatically, "You shall not commit adultery." It also says, "Flee fornication," as the patriarch Joseph possessed the character to do (Genesis 39:6-13). Amazingly, this great man knew about God's commandments well before the time of Moses. To learn more about what God has to say on the matter and the blessing He intended faithful marriage to be, request or download our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. (Source: *The Observer Magazine* [London].)

British Daily Mail: "Britain no longer has a 'special relationship' with the United States, senior MPs [members of parliament] declared yesterday. The Foreign Affairs Select Committee said the phrase, coined by Sir Winston Churchill, should be ditched because Britain's influence in Washington had declined" ("Our Special Relationship With U.S. Is Dead, Say MPs," March 29, 2010).

Earlier, regarding a speech by President Barak Obama at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in New York, in which he outlined plans for Afghanistan, a *Daily Mail* reporter observed: "There wasn't a single mention of America's main ally in the region, Britain. Never mind that we have 10,000 troops on active service there" ("Does Obama Have It in for Britain?" Dec. 9, 2009).

In a British *Spectator* article titled "A Special Form of Disrespect," veteran journalist Con Coughlin observed, "It says much about Britain's rapidly disappearing 'special relationship' with America that when I happened to mention to some of our senior military officers that I was visiting Washington, they begged me to find out what the Obama administration was thinking about Afghanistan" (Nov. 21, 2009).

Most people don't have knowledge of the biblical, historical and ethnic roots undergirding this previously treasured special relationship. These nations' common origins reach back into the book of Genesis to the patriarch Joseph, whose two sons Ephraim and Manasseh were prophesied to be a great nation and a company of nations. This whole fascinating story appears in our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Another important aspect here is the fact that the present state of Israel owes its ethnic roots to Joseph's brother Judah. Both brothers are numbered among the 12 tribes of Israel. A somewhat obscure scriptural prophecy highlights the tragic breakdown of this triangular relationship. Speaking figuratively, "Manasseh [the United States] shall devour Ephraim [Britain] and Ephraim Manasseh: Together they shall be against Judah [the modern state of Israel]" (Isaiah 9:21).

The context places the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy in a time of devastation and ensuing captivity, when all of these peoples will be fighting for their own survival. Nevertheless, the breaking of the bonds that we see going on today between these longtime allies may well be sowing the seeds of the bitter infighting to come when conditions grow dire.

In any case, the present fracturing of these bonds weakens all three nations and massively erodes global stability. If these three key democratic countries continue down their troubled road to nowhere, the whole world will soon find itself in deep trouble indeed.

To fully grasp the purpose and meaning of this whole prophetic scenario, request or download our free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Sunday Times, The Sunday Telegraph, The Observer, The Tablet, Daily Mail, The Economist, The Spectator, The Jewish Chronicle* [all London], The Truman Library.)

Media trashes fidelity

What we see published about unfaithfulness today should alarm us. One magazine cover asked, "Is Anyone Faithful Anymore?" The drophead on the cover read, "The Death of Monogamy—and Why That's No Bad Thing." The title inside is "Yours, Unfaithfully."

The article itself indicated that the average person may not transgress to the literal extent of famous celebrities, "but we are probably less monogamous than we used to be, aren't we?" It goes on to state: "We're perhaps having extended flirtations; serious and not-so-serious dalliances; special, ostensibly platonic lunch dates with people we see more regularly than we'd like our partners to know. We are, at the very least, testing the borders of fidelity" (Polly

Stubborn problems afflict America

On the surface, March was a very good month for the ambitions of President Barack Obama. First the health-care legislation he called for passed the U.S. Congress, and shortly afterwards a deal to reduce nuclear arsenals was concluded with Russia.

But will cuts in military spending even begin to pay for the enormous costs of his health-care legislation? Will America ultimately have to trim its defenses much more to deal with its incredibly high national debt? Is Washington still on a slippery slope when it comes to lowering its debt level to a reasonable amount?

Bronwen Maddox, chief foreign commentator for *The Times* of London, summed up the American debt conundrum: "To cut a budget deficit that reached a record of \$1.4 trillion in 2009, defence is an obvious target. The share of costs going to military personnel is rising—and that will squeeze the amount free for new equipment. It inevitably undermines any willingness even to contemplate new wars" ("America Counts the Cost of Going to War," *The Times*, March 29, 2010).

As if to underline a determination to pull back on American military power, on April 6 President Obama announced a dramatic change in U.S. policy, allowing U.S. nuclear retaliation only if America were attacked with nuclear weapons. His new policy forbids U.S. forces from using nuclear weapons to retaliate against non nuclear countries even if the country were to be hit with biological or chemical weapons or crippling cyber-attack. At the same time he announced that America would not develop any new nuclear weapons.

On another front, an international report strongly indicates that American educational standards are

slipping. Said *New York Times* correspondent Sam Dillon: "One of the world's foremost experts on comparing national systems has told members of the U.S. Congress that many other countries are surpassing the United States in educational attainment, including Canada, where he said 15-year-old students were, on average, more than one school year ahead of American 15-year olds" ("Many Countries Pass US on Education, Global Experts Say," *International Herald Tribune*, March 11, 2010).

The enormous educational advantage the United States had over other nations after World War II has evaporated with time. Andreas Schleicher, a senior education officer at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), stated, "Among OECD countries, only New Zealand, Spain, Turkey and Mexico now have lower high school completion rates than the U.S." (ibid.).

Foreign policy is another area of serious concern. Jay Solomon and Peter Spiegel focused on some of America's diplomatic difficulties in a *Wall Street Journal* article written from Moscow. They pointed out that "leaders from Brasilia to Beijing sling arrows at the Obama administration . . ."

They also stated that "a string of public rebukes of U.S. foreign policy in recent weeks, from Jerusalem to Red Square, is highlighting how the global goodwill U.S. President Barack Obama enjoyed on taking office last year has often failed to translate into foreign-policy wins . . ."

"White House diplomatic initiatives aimed at wooing adversaries such as Iran, Syria, and North Korea into renouncing their weapons systems and support of terrorism are also showing little signs of progress" ("Nations Decline to Follow U.S.'s Lead," March 22, 2010). (Sources: *The Times* [London], *The Wall Street Journal*, *International Herald Tribune*.)

EUObserver.com, March 26, 2010).

Andor also said that others argue against work-free Sundays, especially such a mandate being regulated by Brussels, the de facto capital of the European Union (EU). Your Bible foretells a time when a powerful alliance between church and state will transform Europe and ruthlessly suppress those who refuse to follow its dictates (Revelation 13). We know from tragic episodes such as the Inquisition and the Crusades how dangerous church power backed by the state can be to those with different religious beliefs—including those who worship on the biblical seventh-day Sabbath rather than Sunday.

Could this be an early step in a process through which the state will impose its religious requirements on others? To learn more, download or request your free copies of *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Source: EUObserver.com.)

Christianity's debt to Israel and the Jews

Remember that the Jewish people preserved the Old Testament for us. The apostle Paul asked: "What advantage then has the Jew . . .? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2). Jesus Christ Himself said that "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

The book of Acts shows us that the first Christian Church was Jewish. Christianity can only be truly understood, undergirded and supported by the Hebrew Bible (see 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). One third of the New Testament is composed of direct quotes, paraphrases and allusions to the Old Testament Scriptures.

Why, then, do we see this growing global anti-Semitism and a persistent quest to rob the state of Israel of its legitimacy? It is totally unconscionable and can only come from one source (see Revelation 12:9), which must be actively resisted in a godly manner. The Christian world has a serious obligation to oppose hostility toward the Jewish people. God is watching!

Can Gaza stay quiet?

Arab militants in the Gaza Strip, located on Israel's southwestern border, have again been striking at the Jewish state, spurring Israeli retaliation.

This poses a threat to the position of Gaza's Hamas rulers, so they indicated on April 2 that "they were trying to keep attacks on Israel in check, in an apparent attempt to keep a recent spate of violence from spiraling into open conflict" (Rizek Abdel Jawad, "Hamas Tries to Keep Attacks on Israel in Check," Associated Press, April 2, 2010).

Both Israel and the Hamas governments would benefit by maintaining the peace. Israel's southern communities would benefit since they live so close to the border where terrorists have lobbed their rockets. The Hamas government would benefit since 80 percent of the population relies on United Nations food handouts to survive.

Israel holds Hamas accountable for maintaining peace in the Gaza Strip. Yet will they really be able to keep cool many hot-headed extremists who ache for an all-out war with Israel—especially when they are extremists themselves? (Source: Associated Press.)

Will Europe go to work-free Sundays?

A third of euro-deputies have signed an appeal urging the European Commission to include work-free Sundays into an upcoming review of EU rules on working time, with the responsible commissioner pledging to 'take into account' these views in his proposals due this autumn.

"Currently, it is up to member states to define Sunday as their weekly resting day, and in doing so, by taking into consideration cultural, ethnic and religious diversity," EU employment commissioner Laszlo Andor told MEPs [members of the European Parliament] during a conference organized by the parliament's centre-right group in support of work-free Sundays" (Valentina Pop, "Commission Pressed to Protect Work-Free Sundays,"

How Can You Make Sense of the News?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the *World News and Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening site offers you a perspective so badly needed in our chaotic and confused world—the perspective of God's Word, the Bible. Visit us at www.WNPonline.org today!



The Story Behind the Headlines: Iran's Dangerous Nuclear Game

by Scott Ashley

Most Westerners are dangerously unaware of the crucial background behind Iran's ever-growing nuclear program. Such ignorance could prove not only perilous, but fatal.

Iran's nuclear program is constantly in the news. Headlines I've seen recently include: "Iran Suspected of Planning More Nuclear Sites," "Iran, United States: No Hope of a Dialogue," "CIA: Iran Moving Closer to Nuclear Weapon" and "A Nuclear Iran: How Far Will the World Go?"

A big part of the problem is that UN Security Council members Russia and China, following the old Middle Eastern proverb "The enemy of my enemy is my friend," have long prevented meaningful economic sanctions that could slow or halt Iran's nuclear progress. China needs Iranian oil too much to risk alienating Iran, and Russia has a ready market in Iran for massive arms sales, so don't look for the situation to change soon.

Why is Iran playing such a high-stakes game? Why is a nation that sits atop a sea of oil—enough to meet its needs for at least several centuries—pursuing an enormously expensive nuclear program that virtually no one, including many Iranians themselves, believes the country needs? Is Iran's nuclear program strictly peaceful, as it has repeatedly stated, or is something more ominous at work?

Iran's threat to the region

Israel in particular is deeply concerned about Iranian intentions, and rightly so. In December 2001 Iran's former president Hashemi Rafsanjani stated that the Jewish state of Israel could be entirely wiped out by



just one well-placed nuclear bomb, while an Israeli nuclear response would cause only relatively minor harm to the Islamic community of nations, not destroy them.

"Rafsanjani thus spelled out a macabre cost-benefit analysis," observed Matthias Kuntzel in *The New Republic*. "It might not be possible to destroy Israel without suffering retaliation. But, for Islam, the level of damage Israel could inflict is bearable—only 100,000 or so additional martyrs for Islam" ("A Child of the Revolution Takes Over: Ahmadinejad's Demons," April 24, 2006).

This was the thinking of a "moderate" Iranian president, who added that "it is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality"!

Since assuming office in August 2005, current Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has made repeated threats to eliminate the Jewish state. Notice a few:

"Israel must be wiped off the map" (2005).

"The basic problem in the Islamic world is the existence of the Zionist regime [Israel], and the Islamic world and the region must mobilize to remove this problem" (2006).

"The United States and the Zionist regime of Israel will soon come to the end of their lives" (2007).

"The world powers established this filthy bacteria, the Zionist regime, which is lashing out at the nations in the region like a wild beast" (2008).

"This regime [Israel] will not last long . . . This regime has no future. Its life has come to an end" (2009).

And finally, "Israel is the most hated regime in the world . . . With Allah's grace, this regime will be annihilated, and Palestinians and other regional nations will be rid of its bad omen" (2010).

It took Adolf Hitler six years to kill 6 million Jews in Europe. If Ahmadinejad is successful in his quest for nuclear weapons, he could kill 6 million Jews in Israel in about six minutes.

Iran's threat to the Western world

Israel isn't the only country in the region endangered by Iran's nuclear program. The Arab states in the region, predominately oil-rich nations like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, are gravely concerned about Iranian intentions. They know that if Iran successfully acquires nuclear weapons, they will be subject to economic and military blackmail, with no one risking confrontation with a nuclear Iran to come to their aid.

Further, an Iran with nuclear arms—or even advanced conventional weapons—could quite easily choke off the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. About 40 percent of the world's oil flow (and 90 percent of Gulf oil exports) passes through this 21-mile-wide channel to feed the world's energy-dependent economies. Those economies would collapse if the flow of oil were to

It took Adolf Hitler six years to kill 6 million Jews in Europe. If Ahmadinejad is successful in his quest for nuclear weapons, he could kill 6 million Jews in Israel in about six minutes.

dry up due to an Iranian blockade (which Ahmadinejad has threatened).

Iran has also developed missiles with a range of more than 1,500 miles, capable of striking not only every U.S. military facility in the Middle East, but also putting much of Europe within range.

“Imagine a world without the United States”

Iranian religious leaders have regularly referred to Israel and Britain as “the *little Satans*” and America as “the *great Satan*.” This is not simply empty rhetoric. They view these three states in particular as the primary obstacles to spreading the Iranian revolution that began in 1979 with the overthrow of the pro-Western shah.

In his first year in office, in an October

Russia, building on years of buying submarines and other advanced weapons systems from Moscow.

“Iran also received a dozen cruise missiles with a three-thousand-kilometer range, each of which was capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Iran’s parliament voted to block international inspections of its nuclear facilities. And Ahmadinejad ‘placed the military firmly in control [over] his nation’s nuclear program, undercutting his government’s claim that the program is intended for civilian use’” (*Inside the Revolution*, 2009, pp. 168-169, emphasis added throughout).

A friend of mine who has visited Iran reports seeing a multistory building in the Iranian capital covered with a massive mural showing nuclear explosions going off all

Though some will deny this is what it says, the Koran lays this out quite plainly:

“*Fight against them until idolatry is no more and God’s religion reigns supreme*” (2:193, Dawood translation). “Idolatry,” as defined in Islam, is worship of any god other than Allah—and includes Christianity. According to the Koran, “God’s religion,” of course, is Islam and Islam alone.

“It is He [Allah] who has sent for His apostle [Muhammad] with guidance and the true faith, so that he may exalt it above all religions, much as the idolaters may dislike it” (61:9, Dawood translation). “Idolaters,” again, are those who worship any god other than Allah—including Christians.

Many believe that Islam is a peaceful religion. And it is true that many Muslims do live peacefully and advocate peace. However, the many current wars and areas of unrest where Muslims are fighting for control or to topple moderate Muslim governments—including Algeria, Kenya, Nigeria, Russia (Chechnya and the Caucasus region), China, Thailand, the Philippines, Israel and India (Kashmir)—weigh heavily against Islam being a religion of peace.

Inside the dangerous mind of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

Iran’s president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is one of the millions of Muslims referred to as “Twelvers.” The Twelvers, who constitute more than 90 percent of the population of Iran and 60 percent of the population of Iraq, are a dangerous outgrowth of Shia Islam. They are called such because they are followers of the 12th imam, or successor of Muhammad.

This 12th imam was born in A.D. 868 or 869 and disappeared a few years later, in 874. His followers believe that “he merely withdrew from public view when he was five and that he will sooner or later emerge . . . to liberate the world from evil” (Kuntzel).

Many Muslims believe this “Hidden Imam” to be the prophesied Mahdi—“divinely guided one”—a sort of Islamic messiah who will reemerge to establish Islam in its rightful place as the dominant, and eventually the *only*, religion over the entire world.

“Shias believe the Mahdi will return at the end of history—during a time of chaos, carnage, and confusion—to establish righteousness, justice, and peace. When he comes, they say, the Mahdi will bring Jesus with him. Jesus will be a Muslim and will serve as his deputy, not as King of kings and Lord of



2006 speech in Tehran largely ignored by the West, President Ahmadinejad stated his objectives for Iran under his rule. Israel, he said, must be “wiped off the map,” and he urged his hard-line Muslim audience to envision a world in which the United States no longer existed.

Mideast specialist Joel Rosenberg describes the speech and its background: “‘Is it possible for us to witness a world without America and Zionism?’ [Ahmadinejad] asked a gathering of leaders from Hamas and Islamic Jihad. ‘You had best know that this slogan and this goal are attainable, and surely can be achieved.’ He urged Muslims all over the world—Shias and Sunnis alike—to prepare for the day when ‘our holy hatred expands’ and ‘strikes like a wave’ . . .”

“It was not just talk. Ahmadinejad was simultaneously making a number of aggressive moves to build up Iran’s military and accelerate its bid to go nuclear. That fall Iran purchased \$1 billion worth of missiles from

over a large map of the United States. It’s not far from the former U.S. embassy, which after its 1979 takeover was turned into an anti-American museum.

What the West doesn’t know about Islamic theology

Few in the West understand the teachings of the Koran, Islam’s holy book, and the Hadiths, the sayings and actions of Islam’s founder Muhammad. This leads to a great deal of misunderstanding and incomprehension of the intentions of Islamic fundamentalists toward the rest of the world.

In Islamic theology, the world is divided into two spheres—*Dar al-Islam*, meaning “the abode of Islam,” and *Dar al-Harb*, meaning “the abode of war.” The latter refers to all non-Muslim lands, as they must eventually be conquered and absorbed into *Dar al-Islam*, through peaceful conversion if possible but by force if necessary, so the world will be united under Islamic rule.

lords as the Bible teaches, and he will force non-Muslims to choose between following the Mahdi or death" (Rosenberg, p. 175).

"But one thing that is fairly well agreed upon among devout 'Twelvers' is that the Mahdi will end apostasy and purify corruption within Islam. He is expected, therefore, to conquer the Arabian Peninsula, Jordan, Syria, and 'Palestine,' and then he and Jesus will kill between 60 and 80 percent of the world's population, specifically those who refuse to convert to Islam" (Rosenberg, p. 176).

These are the beliefs that drive Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Lest this sound so far-fetched as to be unbelievable, consider the opening words of his Sept. 29, 2009, address to the United Nations: "In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, praise be to Allah, the Lord of the universe, and peace and blessings be upon our master and prophet, Muhammad . . . O God, *hasten the arrival of Imam Mahdi and grant him good health and victory and make us his followers and those who attest to his rightfulness.*"

Another tenet of Islam is that, before going to war against non-Muslims, one must first invite them to convert to Islam and so avoid war. In his speech, Ahmadinejad carried out this obligation, urging the gathered world leaders to convert to Islam:

"We emphasize that *the only path to remain safe is to return to monotheism [Islam] and justice, and this is the greatest hope and opportunity in all ages and generations. Without belief in Allah and commitment to the cause of justice and fight against injustice and discrimination, the world structure cannot be put right.*"

President Ahmadinejad closed his speech by stating that "there will come a time when justice will prevail across the globe"—that time being "*under the rule of the Perfect Man, the last Divine source on earth, the Great Mahdi.*" He then called on the world to be at work "paving the way and preparing the conditions for building that bright future."

This was not the first time he has made such statements; his previous UN addresses included the same themes and components.

Hastening the end of Western civilization

Mideast specialist Rosenberg gives more background on the Iranian leader's apocalyptic beliefs: "Ahmadinejad and his close aides and advisors are driven by the deeply rooted belief that the Islamic messiah will appear soon and that by launching a war to annihilate Judeo-Christian civilization, they

Ahmadinejad boasts that he was given the presidency to provoke a "clash of civilisations" in which the Muslim world, led by Iran, takes on the "infidel" West, led by the United States, and defeats it.

can hasten that day . . .

"*Hasten* is a key word here. Ahmadinejad and his team do not believe they are supposed to be sitting around, twiddling their thumbs, *waiting* for the Mahdi. They believe they have been given specific tasks to speed up his arrival, and they are determined to accomplish those tasks, whatever the cost to themselves or their country . . .

"On August 29, [2007,] he said, 'The Iranian nation and the Islamic Revolution have a pivotal role in preparing the ground for the coming of the Hidden Imam. . . . We must rapidly develop Iran in order to create the [right] conditions for his coming . . . in order to precipitate this great event. . . .

"The responsibility that currently rests on Iran's [shoulders] is very heavy; it is the kind of mission [with which] the divine prophets [were entrusted]. It does not permit us to rest or slumber even for a moment'" (Rosenberg, pp. 181-182).

The respected Iranian-born journalist Amir Taheri states that President Ahmadinejad "boasts that the [Hidden] Imam gave him the presidency for a single task: provoking a 'clash of civilisations' in which the Muslim world, led by Iran, takes on the 'infidel' West, led by the United States, and defeats it" ("The Frightening Truth of Why Iran Wants a Bomb," *The Telegraph* [London], April 16, 2006).

Terror groups with nukes?

Iran has long been a supporter of terrorist movements. Among those it has funded and supported are Hezbollah in Lebanon; the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Syria; the Mahdi Army in Iraq; and Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Pales-

tine in Gaza and the West Bank. Iran's own Revolutionary Guard is classified as a terror group by a number of Western governments.

Considering Iran's long support of terror groups, Western intelligence services are greatly concerned that Iranian nukes could find their way into terrorist hands.

Terror groups wouldn't need long-range missiles to strike against a Western power with a nuclear attack. Nuclear devices could be smuggled across a border in a vehicle or hidden in a shipping container to be detonated in a port like New York, Boston, Los Angeles or New Orleans to take out a major city.

Far more devastating could be one or more medium-range missiles fired from a freighter off America's Atlantic, Pacific or Gulf coasts to detonate a nuclear warhead in the upper atmosphere, creating an electromagnetic pulse that would destroy every electronic device within hundreds of miles. This would effectively send much of the nation back to the 19th century within seconds, with accompanying massive loss of life from widespread starvation, disease epidemics and social breakdown.

The apostle Paul warned that "in the last days *perilous times* will come" (2 Timothy 3:1). Jesus Christ Himself stated that the time leading up to His return would be "*a time of great distress, such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again.*" He then added, "If that time of troubles were not cut short, *no living thing could survive*" (Matthew 24:21-22, Revised English Bible).

We indeed live in dangerous times. We'd better be sure to draw near to our Savior and Creator as never before, diligently guarding our spiritual condition and watching as Bible prophecy begins to unfold around us! **GN**

To Learn More...

How much do you understand of what Bible prophecy reveals about the end time? What does it tell us about events and conditions leading up to the return of Jesus Christ? Did you realize that conditions will be so dire that He must return to save us from ourselves? To understand much more, request or download your free copy of *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*



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How Can You Receive the Transforming Power of God's Spirit?

by Jerold Aust

After Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, His disciples waited in Jerusalem until Pentecost for the promise of the ages. It transformed them and became the down payment for eternal life. You can receive that Spirit of power, which can change your life, both now and forever!

Out of nowhere, the sound of a rushing, mighty wind filled the place where they were. The astonished group looked around, shocked and surprised. What was going on?

Before they could restore some form of equanimity, other supernatural signs appeared. Flickering tongues of what looked like fire appeared and descended on each of the gathered followers of Jesus Christ. Ordinary thoughts gave way to extraordinary exclamations of fear and bewilderment. What could these strange events mean?

Wind, fire and Spirit electrified the orderly gathering. The wind and fire were symbolic of the Holy Spirit, which brought a third miracle—the inspiration of Christ's disciples to proclaim the gospel fluently in languages they had not known so that all those listening heard the true gospel of Jesus Christ in their own language (Acts 2:1-6).

And these miracles, defying mere

physical explanation, were just the beginning of the greatest single miracle on earth—changing the selfish mind and heart of human beings to selfless service of all humankind, through God's Spirit of unlimited power.

Peter's inspired sermon

The amazed Jerusalem visitors asked what this all meant. Some even mocked, "They are full of new wine" (verse 13).

God then used Peter to explain how and why He gave His promised Spirit of power (verses 38-39). His inspired sermon has resonated throughout the world for the last 2,000 years. It remains stirring, meaningful and current today.

Peter, standing up with the other 11 apostles, gave the significance of what had just happened. He quoted the prophet Joel:

"Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by

the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

"And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved'" (Acts 2:14-21).

Peter showed those gathered for the Pentecost festival that what was happening was part of what had been prophesied by the prophet Joel, in particular the coming of the long-promised Holy Spirit, its functions and power (Joel 2:28-32).

God had promised that He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh and that the young men and women would prophesy and see visions. Older men would dream prophetic dreams (verse 28). Beyond this, and of even greater importance, God would provide human beings the opportunity to call on Him and be saved.

Then Peter turned their attention to the great meaning and significance of Jesus' death and resurrection, which provided humankind the miracle of God's Holy Spirit:

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as

God promised that He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh and would provide human beings the opportunity to call on Him and be saved.

How Your Subscription to *The Good News* Has Been Paid

The Good News is an international magazine dedicated to proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ and to revealing the biblical solutions to so many of the problems that plague humanity. It is sent free of charge to all who request it.

Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and our extended worldwide family of coworkers and donors who help share this message of hope with others.

We are grateful for the generous tithes and offerings of the members of

the Church and other supporters who voluntarily contribute to assist in this effort to proclaim the true gospel to all nations. While we do not solicit the general public for funds, we welcome contributions to help us share this message of truth and hope with others.

The United Church of God, in accordance with responsible financial stewardship, is audited annually by an independent accounting firm.



What Does God's Spirit Do for Us and in Us?

God's Spirit is both powerful and practical. It is powerful for it comes from God; it is a part of Him. God, through the One who became Jesus Christ, created the universe through His great Spirit of power (Hebrews 1:1-3). The Holy Spirit is God's divine Spirit of power (Acts 1:8).

God's Spirit is also practical. Through the Holy Spirit, human beings can live in a more productive and fruitful way.

So just what does the Holy Spirit do for us and in us?

- It is the medium by which God comes to dwell in us (Ephesians 2:22; Isaiah 57:15)
- It helps us grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).
- It gives love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).
- It gives us wisdom (James 1:5).
- It gives us God's peace, gentleness and willingness to yield to the needs of others, fills us with His mercy, helps us act godly toward others, teaches us to be impartial and helps us avoid hypocrisy (James 3:17).
- It helps us overcome our sinful nature (Romans 6:13).
- It helps us resist and overcome Satan (James 4:7).
- It is the "earnest" or down payment of eternal life residing in us (Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:5; 1 John 5:11).
- It makes us immediately recognizable to Christ (2 Timothy 2:19).
- It helps us in our weakness and helps us pray effectively (Romans 8:26).
- It helps us to love God above all and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40).
- It reassures us that we are the very children of God (1 John 3:2).
- It guarantees that one day we will be glorified children of God even as Christ is (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 1 John 3:2).

you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it . . .

"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear" (Acts 2:22-33).

Earlier, Jesus told His disciples that it was necessary for Him to die and ascend to God's heavenly throne so He could send them and all who repent and turn to God His Spirit of power (John 16:7; compare John 14:12-20).

Repent and be baptized

Peter's sermon, inspired by God's Holy Spirit, was so powerful that it resonated in the hearts and minds of many of those who heard it (compare Hebrews 4:12).

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'

"And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:37-41).

Remarkably, in one day about 3,000 people were baptized and then received the gift of God's Spirit! When God starts something new, He often does it with grandeur. God firmly laid the groundwork of His Church. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread [sharing meals], and in prayers. Then [godly] fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (verses 42-43).

Transformed and empowered by the Spirit

Transformed and empowered, this small group of believers took Christ's message to the world. They first lived and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in and

God will help us to use His Spirit of power wisely. The incredible end of our salvation means that we will become sons or daughters of God.

around Jerusalem. As time passed and persecution arose, they moved beyond the environs of Jerusalem and shared Christ's gospel throughout the Roman world, spreading into Greece and Italy (1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 1:7).

What made the difference with these people? Before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the apostles had cowered behind locked doors out of fear (John 20:19).

Suddenly, miraculously, they now went forward, boldly proclaiming the same message Jesus had given them—the good news of His death and resurrection and that it was through Him and only Him that human beings could enter the Kingdom of God. They had received the transforming power of God's Holy Spirit, which empowered them beyond ordinary human understanding (Philippians 4:7).

Jesus promised His immediate disciples, and those of us who would later become His disciples, the Holy Spirit, described in Greek as the *parakletos*—a word that means "Comforter" "Helper" or "Advocate": "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send [it] unto you" (John 16:7; American Standard Version).

God's Holy Spirit transforms us (Romans 12:2) and empowers us to represent God as ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). God the Father does this in stepwise progression:

First, by calling us to Him, God begins to remove our spiritual blindness and helps us begin to understand His truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

Second, God through His Spirit begins to work with us to lead us to repentance of our old sinful ways (Romans 2:4).

Third, He directs that we be baptized in water (Acts 2:38, 41).

Fourth, God gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands by one of His true ministers (Acts 8:14-17).

From this point on, we are transformed by God's Spirit of power, going on to perfection.

Baptism precedes the gift of God's Spirit

Water baptism represents our dying with Jesus Christ so we can be symbolically resurrected to a new life. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:3).

Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22). "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:8-9).

Why be baptized? Baptism symbolizes God washing away our sins so we can become a cleansed temple in which God can place His Holy Spirit.

"For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

"And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:13-15).

How should one be baptized? The Greek word *baptizo* means total immersion, not just a sprinkling of water. The full immer-

sion of a human being under water symbolizes both the total burial of the old self in a watery grave as well as total cleansing of sins. It is the only way Christ sanctions water baptism.

Baptism, then, is vitally important to our salvation. For when we're baptized, we are justified—made "just" or innocent—before God through Jesus' shed blood (Romans 5:9). We are also reconciled (verse 10) to God the Father so we then can have direct access to Him (Romans 8:15; Hebrews 4:16).

God will help us to use His Spirit of power wisely; He will complete the work He begins in us (Philippians 1:6). The incredible end of our salvation means that we become sons or daughters of God, younger siblings of Christ Jesus (Hebrews 2:11).

You can receive God's Spirit of power!

At times God has overlooked the evil ways of humanity. But no more. "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Repentance is a good thing. It is the golden path to all good things of God, which we cannot receive without a transformational change in our lives (Romans 12:1-3). If you have thought about living God's way but haven't yet taken that first step, now is the time to turn to God and repent and then, believing the gospel message, seek to be baptized. Baptism opens the doors to God's own power to help you walk in His ways through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

After you rise out of the water, a true minister of Jesus Christ who follows the biblical pattern will lay his hands on you and God will give to you the gift of His Holy Spirit. At that very moment, you will become a begotten son or daughter of Almighty God. God, through Christ, will encourage you, teach you and support you through His Spirit—the Comforter and Helper.

God wants to make you into one of His sons or daughters, immortal and divine. That is why you draw the breath of life, why you live on this earth. Your salvation for all eternity begins with water baptism and continues with the gift of God's Spirit of power.

Now is the time to act. May God help you to respond to His divine calling (John 6:65). You can receive the very same Spirit of power that Jesus Christ's followers received on that Feast of Pentecost! **GN**



Who's behind *The Good News* magazine? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *The Good News* free to all who request it. Simply put, *The Good News* is provided by *people*—people from all walks of life, from all over the world.

But those people have a common goal: **to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to observe what Christ commanded** (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought—the wonderful *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that have long plagued humankind. Through the pages of *The Good News*, various booklets (also free) and our *Beyond Today* TV program, we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten our very survival.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God's purpose and plan for us as taught by Jesus Christ.

The United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services in your area, contact us at the appropriate address on page 2. Visitors are always welcome.

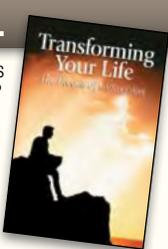


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What is the Holy Spirit? How does it work in the life of a Christian? How can we receive and utilize its power? Many are confused or fail to understand what the Bible really teaches. You need to know the truth! Download or request your free copy of *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* today!



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Boise ch. 12, Sun 9:30 a.m.

Illinois
Peoria ch. 19, Sun 10 a.m.

Indiana
Indianapolis ch. 23, Sun 10:30 a.m.

Missouri
Springfield ch. 27, Sun 10 a.m.

Ohio
Cincinnati ch. 64, Sun 10 a.m.

CABLE TV

Alaska
Anchorage ch. 18, Fri 4 p.m.

Arizona
Prescott ch. 13, Sun 5 p.m.; Sat 3:30 p.m.
Prescott Valley ch. 13, Sun 9 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Tucson ch. 72, 120, Sun 9:30 a.m.
ch. 73, 98, Sat 9:30 a.m.

Arkansas
Fayetteville ch. 18, Sun 10 a.m.; Wed 6 p.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

California
Alameda ch. 28, Tue 10 p.m.
Anaheim (west) ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Clayton ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Concord ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Costa Mesa ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Cypress ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Danville ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Eureka ch. 12, Fri 8 p.m.
Fountain Valley ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Fremont ch. 29, Tue 10 p.m.
Garden Grove ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Hayward ch. 28, Tue 10 p.m.
Huntington Beach ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Lafayette ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Livermore ch. 26, Fri 5 p.m.
Los Alamitos ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Marin County ch. 26, Wed 7 p.m.; Thu 1 p.m.
Martinez ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Midway City ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Modesto ch. 26, Fri 6 p.m.
Monrovia ch. 16, 98, Tue, Thu and Sat 4:30 p.m.
ch. 71, Tue 9:30 p.m.
Novato ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Orange ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Orinda ch. 56, Sun 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Pasadena ch. 26, Sun 9:30 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Wed 6 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.
Petaluma ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
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Sacramento ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.
San Diego ch. 29, Sun 9:30 a.m.
San Francisco ch. 15a, Sun 10:30 a.m.
Santa Clara ch. 15a, Wed 4:30 p.m.
Santa Rosa ch. 30, Sun 11 a.m.; Mon 4:30 a.m.; Wed 9 p.m.; Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 6 a.m.; Sat 7:30 p.m.

Stanton ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Walnut Creek ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Westminster ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.

Georgia
Cornelia ch. 4, Sun 6:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.

Hawaii
Hilo ch. 53, Sun 10 a.m.; Thu 7:30 p.m.

Idaho
Boise ch. 11, Wed 7:30 p.m.

Illinois
Arlington Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Bartlett ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Brookport ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Buffalo Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.

Chicago ch. 36, times vary
Des Plaines ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Elk Grove Village ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Glenview ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Golf ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Hanover Park ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Hoffman Estates ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Lincolnwood ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Metropolis ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Morton Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Naperville ch. 17, Sun 10 a.m.
Niles ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Normal ch. 20, Sun 9 p.m.
Northbrook ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Palatine ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Romeoville ch. 6, Sun 9 a.m.
Schaumburg ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Skokie ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Springfield ch. 4, Wed 12 a.m., 8 a.m. & 5 p.m.
Streamwood ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Wilmette ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.

Indiana
Bloomington ch. 3, Sun 9:30 p.m.
Evansville ch. 7, Mon 5:30 p.m.; Tue 6:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne ch. 57, Sun 9:30 a.m.
Valparaiso ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.

Iowa
Des Moines ch. 17, Sun 11:30 a.m.

Kentucky
Owensboro ch. 72, Sun 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Paducah ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.

Massachusetts
Boston ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
Cambridge ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
East Longmeadow ch. 5, Sun 11:30 a.m.
Fall River ch. 95, Wed 2 p.m.
Greenfield ch. 17, Tue 6:30 a.m.; Sun 6 p.m.
Palmer ch. 12, Tue 11 p.m.
Worcester ch. 13, Thu 10 a.m.

Michigan
Ann Arbor ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.
Cadillac ch. 2, 97, 992, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Charlevoix ch. 2, 97, 992, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Cheboygan ch. 2, 97, 992, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Grand Haven ch. 22, Mon 4 p.m.
Grand Rapids ch. 25, Tue or Wed 11 a.m.
Kalamazoo ch. 95, Sun 9 & 9:30 a.m.
Mackinaw City ch. 2, 97, 992, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Manistee ch. 2, 97, 992, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Michigan City ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.; Thu 7 p.m.
Midland ch. 99, Tue 5:30 p.m.
Mt. Pleasant ch. 3, times vary
Petoskey ch. 2, 97, 992, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Redford ch. 12, Mon 6 p.m.
Traverse City ch. 2, 97, 992, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Ypsilanti ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.

Minnesota
Albert Lea ch. 13, Sun 10:30 a.m.
Austin ch. 13, Sun 10 a.m.
Blaine ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Bloomington ch. 16, Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.
Brooklyn Center ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Brooklyn Park ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Centerville ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Cirle Pines ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Crystal ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.

Eden Prairie ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Edina ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Golden Valley ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Ham Lake ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Hopkins ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Lexington ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Lino Lakes ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Litchfield ch. 10, Sun 2 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 12:15 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wed 3 a.m., 8:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Maple Grove ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Minnetonka ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
New Hope ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
New Ulm ch. 72, Sun 5 p.m.; Thu 10 a.m.; Fri 7 p.m.
Osseo ch. 14, Thu 9 a.m.
Plymouth ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Richfield ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Robbinsdale ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Rochester ch. 10, Sun 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.
St. Charles ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.
Spring Lake Park ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Wabasha ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.
Winona ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.

Missouri
Cape Girardeau ch. 5, daily 5 & 9 p.m.
Jackson ch. 5, daily 5 & 9 p.m.
Jefferson City ch. 3, Wed 6 p.m.
Poplar Bluff ch. 54, Tue 4 p.m.
Springfield ch. 26, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Wed 7 p.m.

Montana
Helena ch. 11, Sun 3 p.m.
Missoula ch. 7, Sun 11 a.m.

New Mexico
Santa Fe ch. 16, Sun 10 a.m.; Mon 6:30 p.m.

New York
Binghamton ch. 4, Thu 5:30 p.m.
Bronx ch. 70, Mon 3 p.m.
Brooklyn ch. 56, 69, Sun 10 a.m.
Canandaigua ch. 12, Sun 2 p.m.
Long Island ch. 20, Mon 10 p.m.
New York ch. 57, Sun 7 a.m.
Oneonta ch. 23, Mon 6 p.m.; Wed 9 p.m.
Queens ch. 35, Tue 8 p.m.; Thu 3 p.m.
ch. 56, Thu 3 p.m.; Sat 12:30 p.m.
ch. 20, Sat 8:30 p.m.

North Carolina
Charlotte ch. 21, Sat 1 p.m.
Durham ch. 18, Wed 7:30 a.m.
Hickory ch. 10, Sun 11 a.m.
Raleigh ch. 22, Tue 6:30 p.m.

North Dakota
Bismarck ch. 12, Sun 2:30 p.m.
Fargo ch. 12, Tue 10:30 a.m.

Ohio
Athens ch. 23, Sun 7 p.m.; Wed 7 p.m.
Brunswick ch. 21, Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 12:30, 4:30 & 8:30 a.m.; 2:30, 6:30 & 9:30 p.m.
ch. 4, Sun 11:30 a.m. & 8:30 p.m.; Mon 5 p.m.
ch. 8, Sun 2:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 a.m.; Wed 11 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.
Dayton ch. 12, Tue 11 a.m.; Sat 3 p.m.
Defiance ch. 5, Sun 12 noon; Thu 6 p.m.
Fairborn ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Greenville ch. 3, Thu 8 p.m.
Huber Heights ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 12, Sun & Sat 9 a.m.
Springfield ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.

Urbana ch. 1, daily 6 a.m., 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Vandalia ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Wash. Court House ch. 3, Wed 2 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.
Xenia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.

Oregon
Eugene ch. 29, Tue 2 p.m.
McMinnville ch. 11, Sun 5:30 p.m.; Wed 8 p.m.
Medford ch. 15, 95, Sun 5 p.m.
Monmouth ch. 17, Sun 11 a.m.
Portland ch. 22, Fri 4:30 p.m.
ch. 22a, 33, Sun 7:30 p.m.
ch. 23, Mon 6:30 p.m.
ch. 23, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Fri 2 p.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh ch. 21, Wed 2 p.m.

Rhode Island
Entire state ch. 14, Fri 10:30 a.m.

Texas
Austin ch. 11, Mon 8:30 p.m.
Del Rio ch. 19, Sun 9 a.m.; Wed 5 p.m.
El Paso ch. 15, Mon, Fri, Sat 1 p.m.
Fort Worth ch. 28, Tue 5:30 p.m.; Thu 1 p.m.
Longview ch. 26, Tue 2 p.m.; Sat 9 p.m.
San Antonio ch. 20, Mon 10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Virginia
Charlottesville/Albemarle County ch. 13, 14, Mon 5:30 p.m.; Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 4:30 p.m.
ch. 71, 74, Sun 10 a.m.

Washington
Bainbridge Island ch. 12, Sun 9:30 a.m., 6:30 p.m., 11 p.m.; Sun-Sat 1 a.m.; Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat 5 a.m.; Tue & Thu 5:30 a.m.
ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.
Everett ch. 13, Sun & Tue 8:30 p.m.
Kennewick ch. 22, 29, Sun 9 a.m.; Thu 10:30 p.m.
Olympia ch. 14, Sat 5:30 p.m.
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Vancouver ch. 14, Sat 5:30 p.m.

West Virginia
Morgantown ch. 3, Mon, Wed & Fri 6:30 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.

Wisconsin
Beloit ch. 12, Thu 6:30 p.m.
Eau Claire ch. 96, Sun 2 p.m.
Kenosha ch. 14, Sun & Mon 7:30 p.m.
Madison ch. 4, Sun 12:30 p.m.
Milwaukee ch. 96, Mon 2 p.m.; Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 2 p.m.
ch. 19, Sun & Sat 1 p.m.
Omro ch. 96, 984, 984-1, Mon 5 & 9:30 p.m.; Tue 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.
Stevens Point ch. 14, times vary
West Allis ch. 14, times vary

CANADA

Nationwide
Vision TV, Sun 7 p.m. (PST)
Star Choice Digital ch. 399, Sun 10:30 a.m. (EST)

Alberta
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sun 8:30 a.m.

British Columbia
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sun 7:30 a.m.

Manitoba
The Christian Channel MTS ch. 21, Sun 9:30 a.m.

New Brunswick
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 11:30 a.m.

Newfoundland and Labrador
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 12 noon

Northwest Territory
The Christian Channel Northwestel ch. 226, Sun 8:30 a.m.

Ontario
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 10:30 a.m.
The Christian Channel Cogeco ch. 186, Sun 10:30 a.m.

Saskatchewan
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Rest for the Spiritual Seeker

by **Beyond Today** host Gary Petty

Are you a spiritual seeker? Do you thirst for spiritual fulfillment? Does attending church seem irrelevant to the complexity of daily life? Somehow, the old stories of Jesus talking to Pharisees—and you're not sure what a Pharisee is—just aren't important when it comes to paying bills or dealing with a broken marriage. Are you wondering if life even has spiritual meaning?



There's an ancient legend about a magic pebble, called the touchstone, which could turn any metal into gold. This pebble was said to lie on the shores of the Black Sea among tens of thousands of other pebbles, all looking alike. The only way you could tell the touchstone from other pebbles was that it was warm to the touch. Normal pebbles would feel cool.

One man discovered a book that told of the touchstone. He sold everything and traveled to the shores of the Black Sea. He knew if he started sorting through pebbles there was no way to know if he was picking up the same pebbles. So, he picked up a pebble, felt its coolness, and threw it into the sea.

All day long he picked up pebbles and threw them into the sea. Day after day, week after week, he searched for the magic touchstone that would change his life. Weeks turned into months, months into years.

One day he picked up a stone that felt warm. It was the touchstone, but by habit

and without thinking, he threw it into the sea. Numbed by his daily routine, his search had become meaningless. What he wanted was within his grasp. But without even realizing, he threw it away.

Could you be like this tragic man? Has the daily grind of life, anxiety and the inundation of countless religious ideas left you lost and seeking for spiritual meaning? Is spiritual truth and meaning within your grasp, but you just don't recognize it?

It begins with your attitude

If traditional Christianity hasn't helped you find the answers to quench your spiritual thirst, maybe it's because you haven't been taught the real teachings of Jesus Christ. You may have learned some Bible stories—but not what they truly mean for your life.

The answers to your spiritual longing are contained in the life and teachings of Christ. If you are a seeker, are you willing to take

the challenge that maybe what you think about Jesus Christ isn't the real story?

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is the starting point in understanding His teachings. He begins the sermon with what are often called the beatitudes. The beatitudes concern fundamental attitudes or approaches to life that help us experience happiness. One of the beatitudes is "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Hungering and thirsting are a description of intense need and longing!

When my son was a teenager, we were hiking in the desert of Big Bend National Park in Texas. The trail brought us to the camp store. It was so hot that the campgrounds were empty of campers. We stumbled into the store where, for a handful of quarters, we were able to take a shower, the first we'd had in a number of days, and get something cold to drink—which was quite refreshing compared to the tepid canteen water we'd been drinking.

I'll never forget the absolute giddiness we experienced sitting on the porch, freshly washed and having our thirst quenched, eating cold, sweet ice cream.

This was physical thirst. But have you ever experienced such thirst in a spiritual sense, as if you are lost in a desert? Are you longing for a spiritual cleansing and a generous drink of spiritual water?

Jesus said that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness "shall be filled." Notice that He wasn't talking about those who thirst for a mystical spiritual feeling. He said that those who thirst for *righteousness* will find spiritual fulfillment.

What does Jesus mean by righteousness?

Righteousness is a right relationship with God. Only through God's grace, or favor, does anyone have the right to come into His presence. When God initiates a relationship with you, it's because of His love and mercy.

Still, you have to hear His spiritual call and agree to the relationship. You can't just wait until you have a serious need for help and then knock on God's door, demanding an audience.

How are you to respond to God's invitation to enter into a relationship with Him?

Hundreds of people came to Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, who was preaching that people needed to repent and be baptized. This wasn't a new concept at that time. Their religious customs involved washing and immersion rituals that symbolized the human need to have their bad deeds—their sins—washed away.

Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized. John initially refused, saying that he needed to be baptized by Christ, not the other way around. John understood that Jesus didn't need to repent or be washed of sins, as He alone among humanity never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Christ responded that He must be baptized to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Jesus was modeling righteousness in action.

Jesus showed His followers that righteousness involves baptism. For the rest of us who have sinned, baptism is to accompany repentance—turning back to God. Repentance is change—changing the way you think and act. It means choosing to revolutionize the purpose for your life—to transform your direction and behavior—so that you are living the way God created you to live.

Not long after Jesus' death, Peter, one of the men Christ selected to carry on His work, explained to a large crowd who Jesus was and the reason for His crucifixion. The people who heard Peter became acutely aware of their spiritual thirst and asked, “What shall we do?”

Peter replied, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

As you become acutely aware of your spiritual thirst and realize that Jesus Christ is the Messenger who can lead you to God, you will essentially ask the same question: “What shall I do?”

The first steps to spiritual fulfillment

Here's what you must do if you want your spiritual thirst to be quenched!

First, you must recognize your need to *repent*. If you acutely feel the need to change your life and you accept that the change requires your choices and actions, you have taken the first step.

Repentance is more than just feeling sorry for what you have done wrong. Repentance involves a *commitment to change your behavior*—your past behavior having been against the way God created life to be lived. It means turning around

and going the other way—*God's way*.

Genuine repentance also means recognizing that you are made in the image of God and that you are a battered, corrupted image of the Creator. You need God's forgiveness. You must acknowledge your wrong decisions and actions that have separated you from God and are destroying you spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

This is part of God's plan for your salvation! Jesus Christ is the Son of God who left His heavenly home, came to earth as a human being, was brutally murdered and died a horrible death as a substitute for your sins so that you can enter into the presence of the righteous Creator! God your Father and Jesus Christ your Savior chose that awesome sacrifice as a way of demonstrating to you Their love and righteousness in action. Now, God expects a *response* from you!

This basic truth lies at the core of your spiritual longing. It's why you need to get on your knees and ask God to help you repent and to forgive you of your sins. Israel's King David captured this deep longing for a relationship with God in Psalm 42, where he wrote: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (verses 1-2).

Do you experience this spiritual thirst? It springs from your need for God's forgiveness and restoration into a relationship with Him. Repentance is the first step to fulfilling that thirst.

The second action you need to take is *baptism*. Baptism means immersion. The early followers of Jesus followed the practice of total immersion in water to symbolize God's washing away of their sins. By following Christ's example of baptism, you accept God's forgiveness of your wrong decisions and actions through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ.

What is the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Remember also that Peter said, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive *the gift of the Holy Spirit*.”

To develop a lifelong relationship with God, you need a new way of thinking, a change of heart, a new motivation. The reason you are a spiritual seeker, experiencing spiritual thirst, is because you are *spiritually incomplete*. God must heal your mind from spiritual and emotional damage and give you power you don't naturally possess. Only then can you begin to fulfill your original purpose

as a child of God!

If you, as a spiritual seeker, were to make a list of what you're really looking for in your life, what would it look like? Would it look something like this? I want a life of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

This is a biblical list of the “fruit of the spirit” written by the apostle Paul (Galatians 5:22-23). This list of spiritual fruit is what God wants to produce in your life. You can't achieve this spiritual mind-set on your own power. You need God's divine help!

It's important to understand, however, that receiving God's Spirit does not mean your spiritual thirst is wholly quenched immediately. The steps of repentance, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit are only the beginning of the road to eternal life. Your spiritual journey is a lifelong process of God recreating your mind, your actions and your emotions so that you are molded into what you were originally intended to become—a child of God with His character and eternal life!

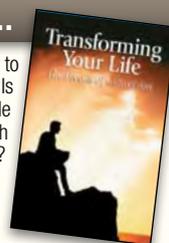
True Christianity is more than a mere set of beliefs or simply professing Christ. It is about having been lost and dying in a desert and someone giving you life-giving water. Do you want to drink living waters? You should kneel before your Creator and ask Him in prayer to quench your spiritual thirst. Also ask Him to forgive you of your sins and to open your mind to real repentance.

Christianity has plenty of believers. But what Jesus wants are *committed disciples*. He wants people who are willing to be right with God and live by His code of righteousness.

You are designed to have a personal relationship with your Creator. Take time out from the daily grind and seeking pleasure, and you will recognize the spiritual thirst within you. Remember that Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, *for they shall be filled!*” **GN**

To Learn More...

What do we really have to do to build a relationship with God? Is anything at all required? Will He accept us just as we are, with nothing necessary on our part? What exactly does the Bible say? You need to learn the answers! Download or request your free copy of *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.



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Five Steps to Teach Your Children Money Management

by Becky Sweat

How well do your children understand and manage money? Do they understand basic concepts such as saving, budgeting, borrowing and debt? Use these helpful tips to teach them!

My son Danny is 16 now, but I still vividly remember a particular shopping trip with him when he was 7. We were in the electronics aisle at a discount department store. I had my back to him for a few moments while I tried to figure out which camera battery I needed. When I turned around, I saw Danny plopping a 12-inch television into our shopping cart.

"I'm going to buy this," he announced.

"We don't have the money for that," I quickly replied, and then picked up the TV to put it back on the shelf.

Immediately Danny hollered, "But Mommy, I have the money!" Then he opened his billfold to show me his wad of handmade \$1, \$5 and \$10 bills.

Earlier that day, Danny, who has always been quite an artist, had used some of the currency in my wallet as models to meticulously draw copies of the bills on white construction paper. He then colored his bills with green and black pencils and cut them out. They looked surprisingly like the real thing.

I had assumed he was going to use his homemade currency to play "store" with his younger brother. But on this shopping trip, I realized that was not the case at all. Danny thought the way you "made" money was literally by drawing your own.

Time for a talk about money

The whole thing really took me by surprise. I would have never thought Danny had those kinds of misconceptions about money. It made me realize it was time to have some talks with him about money—how it's earned, how to use it wisely, and why it's important to be good stewards of what God has given us.

What about you? Do you talk to your kids—teens and younger children alike—about money matters?

We're told in Deuteronomy 6:6-7: "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (New American Standard Bible).

The Bible has a lot to say regarding how we should be using our money. It follows, then, that we should be passing these financial principles on to our children and teaching them at least the basics of personal money management.

The current worldwide economic downturn adds even more urgency to doing so. "Kids know we're facing tough times, but they don't always understand how we got there," states Karen Varcoe, Ph.D., consumer economics specialist with the University of California Cooperative Extension. She believes the vast majority of parents are not talking with their children about money management. Instead, kids are getting their "lesson" in personal finances by simply watching their parents.

Dr. Varcoe continues: "What they're seeing is most everything being purchased with a credit card or check. They don't see cash very often. This can give them the false impression that the family has an endless supply of money. And indeed, when we use credit cards instead of cash, we generally spend more than we should."

This kind of overspending not only sets the wrong example for kids, she says, but was certainly one of the root causes of the present global economic crisis. It's also the reason so many people found themselves in dire financial predicaments this past year when the U.S. economy nose-dived.

"You need to be telling your kids how to save money and spend it wisely, and why it's important to not misuse credit, so that their future financial stability isn't in

serious risk, as is the case with so many people today," she urges.

This teaching can begin as early as age 3 or 4, or whenever your child begins asking about money. Your lessons will be very basic for preschoolers, perhaps just explaining that you have to work hard for your money and that it doesn't "grow on trees." As your children grow and mature, you can gradually get into more in-depth instruction.

What if your kids are teens and you've never talked with them about money management before? "It's never too late to have these kinds of conversations," Dr. Varcoe says, "but the sooner you do, the better."

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

1



Provide children an income to manage.

Children cannot learn money management unless they first have some money of their own to manage. You could provide that through some kind of allowance or through payment for certain tasks. "If your children are spending your money, they're not going to think twice about spending it. But if they're spending *their own* money, they're going to make much better purchasing decisions," says Erica Sandberg, a San Francisco-based family money management consultant.

She suggests you provide this income at fixed and regular intervals, such as on a weekly or biweekly basis. Make it a large enough amount that your children can afford a couple of inexpensive items at the dollar store, but not so much that they're able to buy a new video game without saving up for it.

How old should your child be for you to start providing such regular income? While

preschoolers can start to be educated about what money is, children are not developmentally ready to learn how to manage it until they reach age 6 or 7, according to money coach Janet Bodnar, author of *Raising Money Smart Kids* (2005).

She believes that is the best age to institute a small income. “Not only are children more mature, but they’re also learning about money in school,” she says. “So they’ll know that a \$1 bill equals four quarters, and that their \$3 allowance will buy a small tub of popcorn, for example.”

To prevent children from developing an “entitlement mentality,” parents can make allowances conditional—meaning kids get their allowances only if they have made their beds daily, kept their room clean or done other routine chores. Many parents, however, take the approach that children should do routine chores without pay as part of their responsibilities as family members.

Either way, you may also want to give your children opportunities to earn an allowance or additional money by doing household tasks other than their regular chores—such as raking leaves, shoveling snow, washing the car, weeding the garden, cleaning out the basement, washing windows, etc.

This will teach your children to link having money with work. In addition to helping instill a valuable work ethic, chances are they’re then going to be more careful about how they spend that money because they know how hard they worked to receive it.

2



Show them how to budget.

Once your children have a regular income, you can begin to teach them to live on a budget. Ideally, set aside some time when you can sit down with your kids and have a focused discussion about budgeting without any interruptions.

Start by explaining that a budget is a plan for how you are going to use your money. Help your kids understand that budgeting is not just sound advice from secular financial advisers, but that the Bible actually points to the necessity of budgeting. You could turn to Proverbs 16:9; 21:5; 24:3-4; 27:23-24 and Luke 14:28-30 for some good overview scriptures.

Talk with your children about why it’s important to live within your means, tithe and save a regular portion of your income. Discuss the downside of overspending, borrowing and getting into debt.

Read Leviticus 27:30 and Malachi 3:8-10 to your children to show them that God expects us to tithe (see the Q&A on page 29). Use Proverbs 21:20 and 30:24-25 as a starting point for talking about why we need to save some of our income. Read Proverbs 22:7, 26-27 when discussing the problems of getting into debt. When you go over these verses with your children, explain what they mean in everyday terms and how we can apply these principles in our lives today.

If you have a budget yourself (and hopefully you do!), show it to your kids, whether it’s on your computer or in a ledger book. Help them see what you have in terms of monthly income, what bills need to be paid each month and what will be left over for discretionary spending. This will give your children a more concrete understanding of what it means to budget.

After you’ve explained some of the basics about budgeting, help them devise their own budgets. First, come up with a figure for how much income they normally have each month through allowances or earned money from household or part-time jobs. Then, help them figure out what percentages of their income should go to various categories—tithes, charitable donations and gifts, spending money, short-term savings, long-term or college savings, etc.

Other than tithes, the percentages for the other budgetary categories are variable. Savings should definitely be a high priority though. Shirley Anderson-Porisch, a financial adviser with the University of Minnesota Extension, encourages kids to save at least 50 percent of their money. That could be divided up between short- and long-term savings.

“When children save their money, they learn the discipline of self-control and delayed gratification—vital lessons in today’s economic climate,” she says.

If you have young children, what works well is to give them a jar for each of their budgetary categories. That is a system that Eva Miller has adopted for her 8- and 10-year-old children. When they receive money, they distribute it into each of the jars, according to the designated percentages.

“Once they put money in their tithe or college savings jars, that’s where the money stays—until it reaches \$20 and then the

tithes will go to our church, and the college money will be deposited into their savings accounts at the bank,” she said. “They also have jars for short-term savings, and they’ll use that to save up for things like a new game, and ‘fun money,’ which is what they use for everyday expenses like buying a candy bar at the grocery store.”

If you have preteens or teens, you can set up their budgets on the computer or get them their own ledger book. Have them record their expenditures each month, and keep a running total of how much they’ve spent in each budgetary category. This will help them see on an ongoing basis if they are spending too much.

3



Use everyday opportunities to teach your kids about money.

Life brings countless opportunities to teach our children about money. Consider, for example, the story mentioned at the start of this article. That situation was the perfect way to begin a discussion with my son about money. While we were still at the store that day, I took Danny aside and spent a few minutes explaining to him how my husband and I obtained our money and that we didn’t have an unlimited supply. (I also explained what it meant to *counterfeit* money!)

You will probably have your own “teachable moments” that you can turn into money-management lessons. If your child notices you paying your restaurant bill with a credit card, that is the ideal time to explain how credit cards work—that it’s in effect a loan that must be paid back within a month to avoid interest charges. Preferably you already have the money to set aside as repayment so that it’s just a matter of shifting funds and not borrowing what you don’t have.

When your credit card statement arrives in the mail, show it to your kids. Let them see how interest is computed and compiled, and explain why it’s important to not rack up credit card balances that can’t be paid off immediately, so as not to waste money paying interest.

If your children are with you when you withdraw money from an ATM or write a

check at a store, that's an opportunity to explain how checking accounts work. If your children are with you on trips to the supermarket, talk about your purchases as you shop and what makes something a "good buy."

If you're watching television with your kids and a commercial makes an outrageous claim, use this moment to talk about how to evaluate advertising. If you get "too-good-to-be-true" offers in the mail, that's the time to talk with your children about scams and that "you don't get something for nothing."

These kinds of teachable moments are effective, because they are real-life examples. Your children can see for themselves how a financial principle you are trying to teach them can be applied in everyday life. That makes your lesson seem much more pertinent.

4



Learn to say "No" to your child's "wants."

Children are usually quite adept at pleading with their parents for toys, electronic gadgets, designer clothes or other nonessential items. When they do, it's not always easy to tell them no. Most parents don't want to be the bad guy, nor do they want to deprive their kids of things others have. Still, Sandberg says, "You shouldn't cave into your kids' every whim—even if you can afford to buy them what they want, but especially if you can't."

Learning that you don't get to fulfill all your wants is an important life lesson. "Children need to experience some disappointments, because that's part of life," says Michael Gutter, Ph.D., family financial management specialist at the University of Florida. He suggests you explain to your child that there are things you would like to buy, too, but can't afford. "That way he knows he's not singled out; he's not the only one not getting what he wants."

Even if you can afford to buy these kinds of items for your children, you should still be very selective about how many of their requests you grant. "If you overindulge your children, they're not going to know what it's like to have to work hard and save up for things they want," Sandberg says.

The fact that your children are watching your example makes these steps even more vital. They're learning lifelong money habits from you.

One way to respond to pleas for nonessential purchases is to tell your child he or she cannot have the item now, but could request to have it as a gift for some special occasion. Or, if you have teens or preteens who are old enough to pay for a lot of their "wants" themselves, you can encourage them to either save money from their allowance or do extra household chores to earn the money.

If it's a matter of your teen wanting to spend more for a "need" than you think is reasonable—e.g., he wants the \$100 skateboard shoes when you've only budgeted for a \$50 pair of sneakers—you could tell him you're willing to pay the amount you had earmarked in your budget, but require him to come up with the difference. "This will help curb feelings of entitlement," Dr. Gutter says, "and make your teen personally responsible for achieving his desires."

5



Watch your own example.

It was mentioned at the outset, but it's worth repeating: Your children learn a lot about money just by observing you. They watch what you do at the supermarket, department store, bank, mall, etc., and tend to mimic your financial attitudes, values and behavior. Depending on what you're doing, they could be learning some very good lessons or some that are not so good.

Luke 6:40 declares, "Everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher" (NASB). If you shop to entertain yourself or make a lot of impulse purchases,

your children are probably going to see that as normal behavior and do the same. On the other hand, if you always go to the grocery store with a shopping list or only make major purchases after you've saved up for them, your kids are likely to adopt those practices.

You need to model good monetary habits. "If you set the wrong example, any talks you've had with your children about money management will fall on deaf ears," says Anderson-Porisch. Your children aren't going to be careful with their money if you're careless with yours—even if you tell them to do otherwise.

That's not to say that talking with your children about personal finances isn't important. As has been stated throughout this article, it most certainly is. Your children need instruction and guidance from you about how to budget, save and shop wisely. But it's *your example*—your showing them that you're carefully managing your own money—that helps them see that these steps are more than just an academic exercise and that they *really do* matter.

Clearly, you may need to change some of your own spending habits so that you are modeling the right behavior. But with today's economy as uncertain as it is, that's something you should be doing anyway. Now is the time to cut out unnecessary purchases, pay off credit card debt and build up your savings—for the sake of your family's financial well-being.

The fact that your children are watching your example makes these steps even more vital. They are learning lifelong money habits from you—both in terms of what you say *and* do. They're looking to you to show them how they should manage their own household finances someday. It's up to us, as parents, to make sure our children are developing *good* money habits. **GN**

To Learn More...

In our uncertain times when many people struggle with debt, we could all use sound guidance on our finances. Who wouldn't like time-tested advice on handling money—especially when it's free? We've prepared an important booklet, *Managing Your Finances*, to help you better handle your household finances and budget. Download or request your free copy today!



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www.GNmagazine.org/booklets

“Easter or Passover: Which Is Christian?”

I would like to congratulate you on another informative and factual edition of *The Good News*, and in particular your article “Easter or Passover: Which Is Christian?” I have often heard my son speak of various issues where the true meaning of God has been distorted for modern convenience. I would occasionally dismiss this as the younger generation being full of naive views and ideas. How wrong I was. As we continually learn throughout life we need to “sort the chaff from the wheat” and discover the true meaning of God. The latest crime around the world is identity theft. It has actually been around a lot longer than most realize. Keep up the good work.

G.W., Queensland, Australia

To learn more about our Creator, request or download our free booklet Who Is God?

“Shocked by the Bible: Changed by the Truth”

In your “Shocked by the Bible” interview, I don’t think the challenge of the Bible is a shock due to the fact that we depend on the translation of words by the people who translated from the original languages. We all know that we have to give allowances for language differences and who did the translating. The main point is to preserve the essence of the core values. All over the world ever since the beginning of time, most people have believed there is a Supreme Being.

S.L., Knoxville, Tennessee

Of and by itself, belief in a Supreme Being is simply not enough. “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble” (James 2:19). This same book also says, “But be doers of the word [of God], and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). The apostle Paul emphasized “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), including the Old Testament law and prophets (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Acts 24:14). To learn more about the Bible, readers may wish to download or request our free booklets Is the Bible True? and How to Understand the Bible.

“Are America’s Superpower Days Numbered?”

I have been receiving your magazine for some time now, and I wish to congratulate all those involved for publishing such an informative and thought-provoking magazine. Irrespective of one’s personal views and beliefs, I can’t help but be impressed by the standard of your coverage on various global issues and topics, providing much food for thought.

I have found such topics as “Are America’s Superpower Days Numbered?” “America’s Economic Meltdown” and various previous reports on Darwinism most concise, informative and easy to understand. Many thanks to all *The Good News* team, and I wish the publication continued success in the future.

C.I., Brisbane, Australia

How can a country that has murdered multiple numbers of its unborn since 1973, that has forbidden Jesus and God to be taught about while it emphasizes Eastern cults and alternative lifestyles, that has gotten so deeply in debt

that it can never get out, and that leans so severely towards governmental control and socialism, continue to be blessed by God?

W.S., Hale, Missouri

The Good News

I am writing to thank you for sending me *The Good News* and the booklets. Thank you for opening my eyes. I would just glance at the Bible and maybe read a little. But now I am taking your *Bible Study Course*. And you know the Bible tells of things that happened long ago, things that are happening today in our time and things that are going to happen in the future. The Bible was written long ago, and yet it is right up to date. Please accept my donation.

L.P., Sawyer, Minnesota

I am writing again to express how much I enjoy the magazine. Sometimes I can get more out of your booklets than the Bible. There are so many words in the Bible that I cannot understand, but your magazine helps a lot. Here is a small donation.

L.M.K., Worthville, Kentucky

We never intend our booklets to replace the Bible in any way, but to be aids and guides so our readers can begin to understand its message, meaning and purpose. The Holy Scriptures constitute God’s Word to man.

The Ten Commandments

I am so inspired by the booklet *The Ten Commandments*. I had never seen or heard the Ten Commandments taught as God’s love letter to man. Kindly send me the booklets *Transforming Your Life* and *Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest*. I look forward to reading them. Thank you for touching my life.

J.C., Dumont, New Jersey

The secret rapture

In the January-February 2010 *Good News* I read in the “Letters From Our Readers” about the rapture: “The Secret Rapture: Fact or Fiction?” I am very concerned about this subject, having heard of it on the Christian TV channels with such statements as “Jesus is coming soon, and we are going to be caught away.” So I would very much like to receive your free reprint article about the rapture, hoping it will make me feel more secure. The rapture is a false view of the true biblical account of the second coming of Christ.

M.M., Switzerland

The title of that free reprint article is “Have You Been Misled by the Rapture Theory?” Interested readers can download this and other reprint articles at www.GNmagazine.org/reprints.

Reader now residing in Afghanistan

I started reading *The Good News* about three or four years ago when I was at the lowest point in my life. I was in complete darkness and was walking down a road of destruction and despair. *The Good News* was like a light which the Lord had shone down on me. It helped when I didn’t think I had any hope, significance or purpose in the world—no fulfillment in my life. It transformed me into a new person and lifted me to great heights, where I can walk tall and feel whole.

I would like to build a relationship with God by following His commandments, observing the annual Holy Days and festivals and being born again. I have sent you some donations and will continue to do so each month, as this is the least I can do for what I have learned from your booklets and articles. I live in the Lake District [of England] but am currently working in the Middle East. I would like to start attending church services when I return home.

Reader, Kabul, Afghanistan

Letters from Australia

I am writing to you to tell you how much I appreciate *The Good News* you send to me. I still have the first copy you ever sent so many years ago and every other one you’ve sent since then. I treasure them so much and I keep referring back to them as they bring me so much love and happiness.

Austins Ferry, Tasmania

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I really enjoy *The Good News* magazine. It gives a good understanding of the Bible and highlights information not given in mainstream Christian faiths. I highly recommend this magazine to all.

- K.T., Good News magazine Facebook fan



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Q: Is tithing part of New Testament teaching?

A.F., Feltham, England

A: As recorded in Matthew 23:23, Jesus Christ clearly upheld the practice of tithing: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin [types of herbs], and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. *These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone*" (Matthew 23:23, emphasis added throughout). Jesus Himself clearly upheld the Old Testament scriptures (Matthew 5:17-19; Luke 16:17).

In this event, only days before His death, Jesus plainly confirmed that tithing should indeed be practiced, along with sincere adherence to the "weightier" spiritual matters of the law the scribes and Pharisees were obviously neglecting. In the Old Testament, God had instructed the Israelites to support the tribe of Levi for its service to God at the temple and throughout the land by giving to the Levites God's tithe—a tithe being a tenth of one's increase.

They, in turn, tithed to Aaron's family, the priesthood. This support provided the means for Israel to worship God and be taught according to His will. With the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, the Levitical priesthood was no longer able to function in the capacity laid out in the law of Moses. And the responsibility for teaching God's message had been given by God to the New Testament Church.

The supporters of the gospel message gave monetary and other types of aid to Jesus, to His disciples and later to other laborers in the Church to support them in doing the work Christ had given His true followers to accomplish. Examples of such giving, and principles relating to it, are found in New Testament passages such as Luke 8:3, Luke 10:7-8, 2 Corinthians 11:7-9 and Philippians 4:14-18.

Hebrews 7 does describe a change in *administration* of the law. The New Testament Church—the *spiritual* temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:19-22)—is more important than the physical temple. In early New Testament times, money was given to the leaders of the Church as Christ's representatives (see Acts 4:35-37).

When we explore the New Testament and the experiences of the early Church, we should carefully consider the fact that the emergence of the Church did not herald a radical departure from the religious practices of the nation of Israel.

Not until several decades after the founding of the New Testament Church does the book of Hebrews clarify the impact the new spiritual administration of Christ had on the Church and the existing priesthood. Most of the laws relating to Israel were *not annulled*, but they were sometimes

applied differently, especially after the destruction of the temple.

For decades, because of its practices, the Church was regarded by outsiders as merely another sect of the Jews, but one that believed in the divinity of Jesus Christ. The opportunity for salvation was soon extended beyond the physical nation of Israel and offered to others—those who would be called into the Church from all nations (Matthew 21:43; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

The Church is the spiritual nation of Israel and is even called "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). This new spiritual nation would provide the obedience God desired, through a converted heart.

No sharp break in the application of laws and principles from the Old Testament is found in history or Scripture during this time. The New Testament had not yet been written, but the Church was "*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

Not long before His martyrdom, the apostle Peter reminded Church members of the priceless value of the Hebrew Scriptures, today called the Old Testament: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21). He further explained that his purpose in writing them was "*that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets*, and of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior" (2 Peter 3:2).

The apostle Paul was in full agreement with Peter's approach to the Old Testament (see Acts 24:14; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17). Paul also wrote that the teachings and specific examples from the Old Testament were written for the benefit of the New Testament Church (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

In a prophecy with the time setting of Christ's second coming, God admonishes us to "remember the Law of Moses, My servant" (Malachi 4:4). It was God Himself who gave His law to Israel through Moses. That law (and the proper application of its principles) has continuing relevance for mankind today. (To understand the true relationship between God's law and New Testament teaching, request or download our free book *The New Covenant: Does It Abolish God's Law?*)

Supporting the work of God's Church is very important today. Not only is it proclaiming the biblical message of hope that Jesus Christ will bring world peace in His coming Kingdom, but it is also preparing those who will assist Him in bringing righteousness to the earth. For a more in-depth explanation, download or request our free booklet *What Does the Bible Teach About Tithing?*

I have had a copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* for many years now. I have read it and reread it and have lent it to friends. Alas, it is now quite battered and worn. I use it as a source of reference quite often. I can't understand why the information offered in this booklet is completely overlooked by other religions. I have been a churchgoer all my life and have never heard anything even relating to this subject being taught or preached. Thank you for giving me access to this booklet.

Brisbane, Queensland

We would be glad to mail you another copy.

Thank you for sending me a copy of *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* I have many evolutionist friends who for many years have been trying to force their beliefs on me. I have shown them this booklet, and I think it is good for them to read something distributed by a Christian church that is based not just on Scripture, but also on scientific evidence.

I would like to sincerely thank your organisation for distributing your literature as I now have a firm knowledge of God and the Bible. You have helped me build my bridge to get to the Lord, and you have no idea how grateful I am.

Sydney, New South Wales

I have recently read your booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* after my friend gave it to me. She is an air hostess and found it amongst the rubbish when she was cleaning out the place. I was deeply touched by what you wrote and believe it was God's intervention that led me to read your booklet.

Attwood, Victoria

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by Jeremy Lallier

Countering Media Influence

The pressure to conform is relentless. Everything seems to be against those who want to live in obedience to God. How can we resist?

The mission was complete. The 12 men had returned from their undercover surveillance of enemy territory, and their last remaining task was straightforward. After almost six weeks of spying out a foreign country, they now stood before their fellow countrymen, who were all eager for this long-anticipated report. “It’s impossible,” 10 of the men said. “The land is good, but its people are too strong and its cities too well defended. They could crush us like grasshoppers—we don’t stand a chance.”

The people were swayed. They abandoned their invasion plans and elected to return to the cruel enslavement from which they had escaped. When two of the spies spoke in favor of invading the land, the people responded with violent shouts, calling for their immediate execution.

Ancient media

While far from a modern-day newscast or YouTube video, the 12 spies sent to spy out the land of Canaan (see Numbers 13) were a vital part of ancient Israel’s media. We may think of television sets and Internet sites when we hear the word, but “media” is

nothing more than the collection of ways we receive information. Today we look to CNN, FOX News and the like for that information; ancient Israel had spies, foreign emissaries and prophets.

The story of the 12 spies is a prime example of the influence the media can have on us. God had called the Israelites out of their enslavement under harsh taskmasters in Egypt, led them faithfully to the very doorstep of the Promised Land and then told them to go up and take it. But Israel’s media, in the form of 10 skeptical spies, convinced them that what they had set out to do (with the help of an all-powerful God who had paved their way with incomparable miracles) was not possible.

And they accepted the false report. This was despite having seen with their own eyes the capabilities of their God: Egypt devastated by 10 terrible plagues, a pillar of cloud and fire to lead them, the sea parted to make a road of escape and a great army drowned, the miraculous provision of food and water in the middle of an inhospitable desert, and a mountain ablaze with tempest and fire as the booming voice of God proclaimed His Ten Commandments. Despite all this, they believed 10 frightened men

who told them, “We can’t do it.”

What should we learn from this? It’s rather easy now to criticize the Israelites for their foolishness, but what about you and me? God called us out of slavery to sin (Romans 6:16-18), is leading us faithfully to the very doorstep of His promised Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12) and is telling us to go up and take it (Matthew 6:33; 25:34). But our media, in the form of music and movies and books and news and even educators, so often tells us that there’s a better way than the one God instructs us to follow.

Few people will come right out and say those exact words, but the message remains. We see premarital and extramarital sex glorified. We see lying, cheating and even stealing condoned. We are encouraged to experiment and determine our own personal definitions of right and wrong. “If it feels good, do it!” may have been the rallying cry of the ’70s, but it’s not difficult to see that the concept has survived unscathed through four decades of moral and philosophical wanderings apart from God.

As God’s people and seekers of His Kingdom, what should we be doing about all the garbage in today’s media?

Out with the bad

Instead of trying to stone Joshua and Caleb (the two spies who remained faithful to God), the congregation of Israel should have instead been furious at the 10 spies who dissuaded them from taking the land.

Instead of crying and complaining (Numbers 14:1-3), Israel should have told the 10, “How dare you tell us to forfeit what God has promised us? How dare you stand there and tell us that anything is too great for God?” They should never have listened to those who contradicted God; they should have thrown them out of their midst and their minds.

We face the same choice Israel faced. Ungodly media bombards us from every angle, trumpeting sin and abominations before God. That assessment may sound harsh, but we cannot afford to see the transgression of God’s law as anything less. If we choose to let these things into our lives, if we choose to even tolerate them, they will begin the slow but inevitable process of corrupting our views and poisoning our thoughts.

If we truly wish to enter God’s Kingdom, we have only one choice when confronted with various media intent on contradicting God’s way—throw them out! It could be a TV show or movie that casts adultery in an acceptable light; it could be a song promoting irresponsible drinking; it could be a foul-mouthed comedian or radio host. Whatever it is, if it goes against the teachings of God, we must not allow it to have a place in our lives.

This is what Jesus meant when He told us, “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna [a

reference to final destruction]. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna” (Matthew 5:29-30, New American Bible).

God is serious about sin. If we willingly allow anything into our lives that could cause us to sin, we jeopardize our salvation. We must instead cut those things out of our lives and throw them away.

In with the good

Removing the bad influences in our lives is a start, but it’s not enough. (Doing that alone creates a void—and the nature of a void is to fill itself with whatever happens to be nearby.) We must fill in the newfound space with positive influences, in keeping with the principle set forward in Ephesians 4:28 and Romans 12:21 to replace evil conduct with good.

This doesn’t mean we have to spend all our spare time listening to sermons. We just have to be careful in choosing what we let into our minds. And remember, “positive” and “uplifting” doesn’t mean it has to be boring, though Satan would like us to think so. If you’re willing to look for them, there are media choices out there that have remained largely untainted by our adversary.

In the end, resisting negative influences comes down to just one verse: “Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don’t ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise” (Philippians 4:8, Contemporary English Version).

So as you stand at the threshold of the promised Kingdom, what will you be thinking on and giving a place to in your life? **GN**

The “Is It Worth It?” Media Test

Ask yourself this:

- What does this media choice promote? Is it in line with God’s way? If yes, keep going.
- Is my conscience bothered by this media choice—do I think it might be wrong? (compare Acts 24:16; Romans 14:23). If no, keep going.
- Would I be embarrassed to watch/listen to/read this if God were in the room with me? (Because, well—He is.) If no, keep going.
- Does this media choice pass the Philippians 4:8 test? If yes, keep going.

If you’ve made it all the way through this filter, then whatever media choice you are considering should be fine.

If you had to stop at any of the previous questions, then you need to ask yourself if that particular form of media is something you really want to have in your life—and take an honest look at why. We can’t afford to give Satan a foothold in our lives, even in the area of seemingly harmless entertainment.



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If you like reading our articles for teens and young adults in *The Good News*, be sure to take a look at our companion magazine, *Vertical Thought*, at www.VerticalThought.org.

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What Does Bible Prophecy Tell Us About The Time of the End?

For thousands of years people have been fascinated with predictions of the end of the world. If we look into the inspired writings of the biblical prophets and apostles, we find many prophecies that refer to the time of the end. Should we take them seriously? Are world conditions such that these prophecies could be fulfilled in our day?

Jesus Christ Himself talked of a future time so horrendous that no human lives would be spared "unless those days were shortened" (Matthew 24:22). Did He have our time in mind?

Many biblical warnings leave us in no doubt that increasingly cataclysmic events will occur before God's direct intervention in human affairs. These terrifying prophecies will see their fulfillment at some future time. The crucial question is *when*.

The eye-opening booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* examines exactly what Jesus, His apostles and the biblical prophets really said about the intriguing days they referred to as the time of the end. You need this vital information!

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