

# The Good News

September-October 2012

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

## What Is the Kingdom of God?

The Kingdom of God: A Vision for Your Life 11 • God's Blueprint for Peace on Earth 20  
Whom Would Jesus Choose to Be a World Leader? 24 • Please Heal My Broken Heart 38

BEYOND  
TODAY  
UNDERSTANDING YOUR FUTURE

From *Beyond Today* television:  
"Is Your Life in Sync With God?" page 36



## There's a New World Coming!

**W**hy is our world plagued with so many problems? If God exists and is really in charge, why doesn't He put an end to all these evils?

These crucial questions have perplexed people for centuries. Some, seeing so much suffering, conclude that God doesn't exist. Paradoxically, some look at the same troubled world, yet they're convinced that the Kingdom of God spoken of in the Bible exists now on earth in the form of one or more church organizations, or in the collective worldwide efforts of Bible believers, or in the hearts of men.

Thus the theme of this issue—what exactly is the Kingdom of God? What does the Bible really teach about this critical subject? And how can we become a part of it?

Few realize the real answer as to why our world suffers from so many intractable problems. Yet the answer is simple: In terms of human society this isn't *God's* world, it's *Satan's*.

This evil being is called "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians

**Few realize why our world suffers from so many intractable problems. Yet the answer is simple: In terms of human society this isn't *God's* world, it's *Satan's*.**

4:4). He "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). Jesus Christ calls him "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30; 16:11). John tells us that "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). (To learn more, download or request our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

So no, this world is not the Kingdom of God. Jesus Himself said Christians are to pray that the Kingdom will *come* (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). It is to be our foremost goal (Matthew 6:33). Flesh and blood cannot inherit it (1 Corinthians 15:50).

So what is this Kingdom, and when does it come? At Christ's return to the earth, the announcement will be made that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15, English Standard Version).

Many Bible passages reveal that this will be a literal Kingdom established on earth. Jesus told His 12 disciples that when He reigns on His throne in that Kingdom, they would reign with Him, "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 1:28). Daniel 7:14 is a prophecy that in this everlasting Kingdom given to Jesus Christ, "all peoples, nations, and languages [will] serve Him."

What will this Kingdom be like? Again, many prophecies tell us. Great miracles of healing will occur—the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk and the mute will speak (Isaiah 35:5-6). The world's desert areas will be transformed, made lush with streams and flowers (verses 1-2, 6-7). Agricultural areas will be astoundingly productive (Amos 9:13). Peace will break out across the globe, and people will no longer learn war (Isaiah 2:4).

All this is but a taste of the future. Yes, a new world is coming. It won't be a world of merely human leaders, human government and human ideas about what works best. It will be a glorious world in which Jesus Christ will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And the truly good news is that He wants you to have a part in it! "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom," He tells us (Luke 12:32).

Learn more about that invitation in this issue. Are you willing to take Him up on His offer?

—Scott Ashley, *Managing editor*



# The Good News

September-October 2012 Volume 17, Number 5 Circulation: 370,000

The Good News (ISSN: 1086-9514) is published bimonthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150. © 2012 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals Postage paid at Milford, Ohio 45150, and at additional mailing offices. Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Donations to help share *The Good News* and our other free publications with others are gratefully accepted and are tax-deductible in the United States and Canada. Those who choose to voluntarily support this work are welcomed as coworkers in this effort to proclaim the true gospel to all nations.

*Publisher:* United Church of God, an International Association

*Council of Elders:* Gary Antion, Carmelo Anastasi, Scott Ashley, Bob Berendt, Bill Bradford, John Elliott, Darris McNeely, Mark Mickelson, Melvin Rhodes (chairman), Mario Seiglie, Don Ward, Robin Webber  
*Church president:* Dennis Luker *Media operation manager:* Peter Eddington *Managing editor:* Scott Ashley  
*Senior writers:* Jerold Aust, Melvin Rhodes, Tom Robinson, John Ross Schroeder  
*Art director:* Shaun Venish *Circulation manager:* John LaBissoniere

To request a free subscription, visit our website at [www.GNmagazine.org](http://www.GNmagazine.org) or contact the office nearest you from the list below. *The Good News* is sent free 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 others. **Personal contact:** The United Church of God has congregations and ministers throughout the United States and many other countries. To contact a minister or to find locations and times of services, contact our office nearest you or visit our website at [www.ucg.org/churches](http://www.ucg.org/churches).

**Unsolicited materials:** Due to staffing limitations, unsolicited materials sent to *The Good News* will not be critiqued or returned. By their submission authors agree that submitted materials become the property of the United Church of God, an International Association, to use as it sees fit. This agreement is controlled by California law.

### NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

**United States:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027  
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: [www.GNmagazine.org](http://www.GNmagazine.org) E-mail: [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)  
**Canada:** United Church of God—Canada, Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada  
Phone: (905) 614-1234, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 614-1749 Website: [www.ucg.ca](http://www.ucg.ca)  
**Caribbean islands:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027  
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: [www.GNmagazine.org](http://www.GNmagazine.org) E-mail: [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)  
**Spanish-speaking areas:** Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.  
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: [www.ucg.org/espanol](http://www.ucg.org/espanol) E-mail: [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)

### EUROPE

**Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg):** P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, Netherlands  
**British Isles:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts, WD19 6FZ, England  
Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 020-8386-1999 Website: [www.goodnews.org.uk](http://www.goodnews.org.uk)  
**Eastern Europe and Baltic states:** Head Sõnumid, Pk. 62, 50002 Tartu Postkontor, Estonia  
**France:** Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France  
**Germany:** Vereinte Kirche Gottes/Gute Nachrichten, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany  
Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637  
**Italy:** La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy  
Phone and Fax: (+39) 035 4523573 Website: [www.labuonanotizia.org](http://www.labuonanotizia.org) E-mail: [info@labuonanotizia.org](mailto:info@labuonanotizia.org)  
**Scandinavia:** Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 3535, 111 74 Stockholm, Sweden  
Phone: +44 20 8386-8467 E-mail: [sverige@ucg.org](mailto:sverige@ucg.org)

### AFRICA

**Cameroon:** United Church of God Cameroon, BP 10322 Béssengue, Douala, Cameroon  
**East Africa—Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda:** United Church of God—East Africa  
P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200, Kenya E-mail: [kenya@ucg.org](mailto:kenya@ucg.org) Website: [www.ucgeastafrica.org](http://www.ucgeastafrica.org)  
**Ghana:** P.O. Box AF 75, Adenta, Accra, Ghana E-mail: [ghana@ucg.org](mailto:ghana@ucg.org)  
**Malawi:** P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi Phone: 01 660 851 E-mail: [malawi@ucg.org](mailto:malawi@ucg.org)  
**Nigeria:** United Church of God—Nigeria, P.O. Box 2265 Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria  
Phone: 8033233193 Website: [www.ucgnigeria.org](http://www.ucgnigeria.org) E-mail: [nigeria@ucg.org](mailto:nigeria@ucg.org)  
**South Africa:** United Church of God—Southern Africa, P.O. Box 36290, Menlo Park, 0102, Pretoria, South Africa. Phone: +27 12 751 4204 Fax: +27 (0)86 572 7437 Website: [www.south-africa.ucg.org](http://www.south-africa.ucg.org)  
E-mail: [UnitedChurchofGod.SA@gmail.com](mailto:UnitedChurchofGod.SA@gmail.com)  
**Zambia:** P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia Phone: (02) 226076 E-mail: [zambia@ucg.org](mailto:zambia@ucg.org)  
**Zimbabwe:** P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe Phone: 0773 240 041 E-mail: [zimbabwe@ucg.org](mailto:zimbabwe@ucg.org)

### PACIFIC REGION

**Australia and all other South Pacific regions not listed:** United Church of God—Australia  
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia Phone: 07 55 202 111 Free call: 1800 356 202  
Fax: 07 55 202 122 Website: [www.ucg.org.au](http://www.ucg.org.au) E-mail: [info@ucg.org.au](mailto:info@ucg.org.au)  
**New Zealand:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1140, New Zealand  
Phone: Toll-free 0508-463-763 Website: [www.ucg.org.nz](http://www.ucg.org.nz) E-mail: [info@ucg.org.nz](mailto:info@ucg.org.nz)  
**Tonga:** United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 518, Nukufalofa, Tonga

### ASIA

**All except Philippines and Singapore:** United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)  
**Philippines:** P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines Phone and fax: +63 82 224-4444  
Cell/text: +63 918-904-4444 Website: [www.ucg.org.ph](http://www.ucg.org.ph) E-mail: [info@ucg.org.ph](mailto:info@ucg.org.ph)  
**Singapore:** United Church of God, GPO Box 535, Lordvale, Qld. 4001, Australia  
Website: [www.ucg-singapore.org](http://www.ucg-singapore.org) E-mail: [info@ucg.org.au](mailto:info@ucg.org.au)

### ALL AREAS AND NATIONS NOT LISTED

United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.  
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Website: [www.GNmagazine.org](http://www.GNmagazine.org) E-mail: [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org)  
Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 40026236.  
Canada return address: *The Good News*, 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 3B7.  
Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to  
*The Good News*, Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

# Table of Contents



## Cover Feature

### What Is the Kingdom of God?

Some think it's heaven. Others say it's here on earth. Some think it's a feeling of brotherhood among Christian believers or the Church itself. Others deem it wholly apocalyptic. What is this Kingdom of which Jesus Christ spoke so often? . . . **4**

### How Can You Be Part of the Kingdom of God?

The mystery of our existence has puzzled humanity for centuries, but the answer lies before us in the Bible. . . **8**

### The Kingdom of God: A Vision for Your Life

Do you have a vision that guides your life? If so, what is it? . . . **11**

### The Divine Secret

An insightful book documents little-understood truths that few are aware of but that we all need to know. . . **14**

### Your Down Payment on Divinity

Two billion Christians desire to live forever, but do they really know how it will come about? . . . **16**

### The Bible's Holy Days: God's Blueprint for Peace on Earth

God promises true peace will come. But how? A series of biblical festivals show how He will bring permanent peace to the entire world. . . . . **20**

### Whom Would Jesus Christ Choose to Be a World Leader?

Considering the current sad state of affairs in the nation and the world, whom would Jesus Christ choose for high office? . . . . . **24**

### Is the Stage Being Set for the Fulfillment of Daniel 11?

Recent events appear to be setting the stage for the fulfillment of this pivotal prophecy set "at the time of the end." . . . . . **28**

### America's National Debt: Growing With No End in Sight

U.S. debt is exploding. What's behind this, and where is it leading? . . . . **31**

### Is Your Life in Sync With God?

Does your life feel out of sync? There is a time management program that can help you get control! . . . . . **36**

### "Father, Please Heal My Broken Heart"

Emotional pain can be far worse than physical wounds. What's the right ointment for wounded hearts? . . . **38**

### Just Say the Word

A Roman centurion was an outstanding example of faith from whom there's much for us to learn. . . . . **40**

## Regular Features

<b>God, Science and the Bible</b>	News from the world of science about God and the Bible. . . . .	<b>23</b>
<b>Current Events and Trends</b>	An overview of conditions around the world. . . . .	<b>34</b>
<b>Beyond Today</b>	Television log. . . . .	<b>37</b>
<b>Mini-Study</b>	A Real King Who Will Rescue Humanity. . . . .	<b>42</b>
<b>Letters From Our Readers</b>	Readers of The Good News share their thoughts . . . . .	<b>44</b>
<b>Questions and Answers</b>	Answers to your questions about the Bible and Christian living. . . . .	<b>45</b>
<b>Youth Focus From Vertical Thought</b>	Hey, Dad, Remember Me? . . . . .	<b>46</b>

# What Is the Kingdom of God?



Some think it's heaven. Others say it's here on earth. Some think it's a feeling of brotherhood among Christian believers or the Church itself. Others deem it wholly apocalyptic. What is this Kingdom of which Jesus Christ spoke so often? *by Tom Robinson*

It's remarkable that among the 2 billion people in the world identified as Christian, few give much if any thought to the concept of the Kingdom of God—and that fewer still have even a remote clue as to what it actually is. Remarkable because according to the founder of the Christian faith, Jesus Christ, it's supposed to be priority number one for every Christian. As He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

Jesus spoke of the Kingdom in one

instructive parable after another, explaining that nothing is of greater worth and importance (see Matthew 13:44-45). This Kingdom was the subject of the gospel—or good news—that Jesus preached (Mark 1:14-15).

In His outline on how to pray, He taught that we should express this fervent desire to God: "Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10, emphasis added throughout).

So just what is the Kingdom of God—and where is it? Does it exist now? Or is it

yet future? And why is it so important?

## Heaven or end-time hope?

One source of confusion lies in the term "kingdom of heaven," as found repeatedly in the Gospel of Matthew. Some have taken this as a reference to going to heaven at death—a common yet erroneous misunderstanding (send for or download our free booklet *What Happens After Death?*)

Parallel passages in Mark and Luke use the phrase "kingdom of God." So the terms are synonymous. Matthew was writing mainly to a Jewish audience, among whom it was common to avoid directly saying God's name out of reverence. Thus Matthew substituted the phrase "kingdom of heaven" instead of "kingdom of God"—heaven simply being where God is.



# Exploring God's Word

The biblical prophets referred to the kingship of God as well as His rule over both heaven and earth—and to His eventual reign over all nations of the earth. Many Jews of the first century were, as Joseph of Arimathea, “waiting for the kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43)—that is, expecting it to come in the future.

Many Jews were then looking for a military overthrow of their Roman rulers and the establishment of an independent Israelite kingdom restored under a Messiah sent by God. As they viewed Bible prophecy, this earthly kingdom would subdue all enemies at the end of the present age and reign

## Jesus Christ spoke of the Kingdom of God as a real government to come in a future age—although He also made clear that it was more than that.

supreme in a glorious age to come. To some this was synonymous with the time of divine judgment and the resurrection of the dead.

### Inner acceptance and the Church?

However, some began to focus on the Kingdom in a more personal sense, rabbinic interpretation eventually taking it to mean accepting God as one's King. This and certain statements of Jesus, such as one often translated “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21), has led many to conclude that Jesus' use of the phrase “Kingdom of God” principally refers to inner acceptance of and personal submission to God as Sovereign today.

This notion has further led many to view the Church—the collective body of true Christian believers—as the Kingdom. From this point of view, the Kingdom of God has already come. And as more and more become part of the Church and accept the rule of God in their lives, so the thinking goes, the Kingdom of God is advanced on the earth.

Many have gone further in proclaiming it the Church's responsibility to take over the present world and set up biblical government throughout it as the Kingdom of God. Some have even advocated military conquest, while others envision takeover through the political process. These ideas are antithetical to Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom.

Yet we should realize that, as we will examine more clearly, Jesus did speak of the Kingdom of God as a real government to come in a future age—although He also made clear that it was more than that.

### Definition and the King of all creation

In seeking to define the Kingdom of God, it makes sense to start with the definition of the word *kingdom*. The term refers either to the reign or rule of a monarch or to the sphere of his rule—the realm.

In both cases, there are four elements: 1) the ruler himself; 2) the realm over which the monarch rules; 3) subjects within

the realm; and 4) a system of laws and government under which the kingdom is administered. So the terminology “Kingdom of God” must refer essentially to the governance or government of God.

By this definition, the Kingdom exists now, as the Creator God is sovereign over all creation, with all subject to Him by law. “The LORD reigns,” the Psalms proclaim (93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). However, Scripture also looks forward to a time when God's rule is universally accepted, which is not the case today.

### The present ruler of this world

Prior to man's creation, a great rebellion against God by a third of the angelic host took place under the leadership of an archangel now known as Satan, a name that means Adversary (compare Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). Satan was cast down to the earth along with His cohorts, now known as demons (see Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:4). And they now hold sway over the earth.

Our first human parents chose to give in to Satan's temptation in the Garden of Eden to sin against God (Genesis 3). From that time on, human civilization has been under the *misrule* of Satan and his demons.

Scripture tells us that Satan deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9) and spiritually “broadcasts” his wrong moods and

attitudes to a receptive humanity (see Ephesians 2:2). Jesus called him “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and acknowledged that he has a “kingdom” (see Matthew 12:26; Luke 11:18). The apostle Paul later called him “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Thus, the present world is effectively *the kingdom of Satan*. Yet God has allowed this so that people will learn the lessons about choosing the wrong way to live and what it means to be cut off from Him.

God maintains ultimate rule over His creation (see Psalm 29:10; 89:9; Job 38:8, 11). And at times He intervenes to ultimately direct the course of nations according to His prophesied plan (see Daniel 2:20-21; 4:17, 32, 34-37). But most of what happens in individual and national affairs—and especially within the human heart, which is “desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9)—is due to the powerful influence of the devil.

### God the King of Israel

From the time of Moses until the establishment of the monarchy under King Saul, God Himself ruled the people through a system of judges and priests. The judge and prophet Samuel described that time to the Israelites as a period “when the LORD your God was your king” (1 Samuel 12:12). So the nation of Israel was in a certain sense the Kingdom of God on earth at that time.

But the hearts of the people were still greatly influenced by the king of this world, Satan the devil. And they rejected God's direct rulership in favor of a human monarch like other nations around them (1 Samuel 8:7).

Still, the human king was to represent God and even “sat on the throne of the LORD” (1 Chronicles 29:23). Yet most of the Israelite kings were wicked rulers—and even the more righteous ones failed to fully obey and properly represent God.

A great part of the lesson of ancient Israel and its monarchy was that even if a nation has God's laws and actual presence among it and its leaders, this is not remotely sufficient to lead people into the utopia mankind longs for. Miraculous change must take place in the human heart. And the enemy of God and man must be removed from the picture.

Rest assured, that day is coming. God's



plan all along was to establish His Kingdom over all nations—but with a changed heart of the leadership and people to set a righteous example for the rest of the world.

## The Messiah or Christ to reign on David's throne

Many prophecies foretold a future King, of the line of Israel's King David, known as the Messiah or Christ who would lead and govern the world.

As Isaiah the prophet wrote: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; 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 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*" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Likewise, the archangel Gabriel announced to Mary just prior to Jesus' conception: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. *And He will reign over the house of Jacob [Israel] forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end*" (Luke 1:32-33).

This is clearly speaking of a real throne, a real dynasty, a real kingdom—the Israelite Kingdom of God becoming the ruling Kingdom over the entire world.

When the Roman governor Pontius Pilate asked Jesus during His trial if He were a king, Jesus responded: "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world" (John 18:37). Jesus was not speaking of some sentimental symbolic leading of people. As many passages proclaim, He was referring to a complete overhaul of the world order by extending His rule over all nations!

## Human kingdoms will cease with God's Kingdom

In ancient times, Israel often fell under domination by gentile kingdoms under the rule of Satan. Yet prophecy foretold that a succession of great gentile empires would be followed by another kingdom from God.

As recorded in Daniel 2, God gave the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar a vivid dream of a great humanlike image composed of a succession of metals from head to toe. It was struck at the bottom by a stone, which smashed the image to dust and grew into a great mountain filling the whole earth (verses 31-36).

The different parts represented a succession of four great kingdoms through history. The first was specified to be Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian kingdom, while the others would follow in order—the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greco-Macedonian Empire and then the Roman Empire. The latter would continue on in some form to the end of the age, experiencing a resurgence then under a group of 10 kings. The same succession is presented under a vision Daniel had of four beasts in Daniel 7.

What should be clear is that these prophecies are speaking of literal, earthly kingdoms. Then a fifth kingdom appears. We see it in Daniel 2 in the stone growing to fill the earth. Note the interpretation God gives: "And in the days of these kings [the 10 making up the final revival

world rushing headlong toward destruction!

## The transformed world of the age to come

The reign of the world's present king, Satan, will then be over. He will be banished for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3), a period often called the Millennium (this simply being the word for a 1,000-year period).

Many prophecies speak of the awesome transformation the world will experience when Satan has been removed and Jesus Christ is at last the world's ruling King.

Jerusalem will be the planet's capital—then called "The Throne of the LORD" (Jeremiah 3:17). God's law and Word will go out from there to the rest of the nations, as people seek to be taught by God (Isaiah 2:2-3). They will no longer be at war, for all will learn to live in peace with one another (verse 4).



of the Roman Empire] *the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people [as the former ones were]; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever*" (verse 44).

This fifth kingdom that increases to fill the earth is the Kingdom of God—and it is a very real kingdom that will take the place of former earthly kingdoms. This is confirmed in Daniel 7, which shows the dominions of the previous kingdoms taken away and given to "One like the Son of Man [the Messiah] . . . *To Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed*" (verses 13-14).

This is speaking of Jesus the Messiah coming from heaven to take over the world. This is wonderful good news—the only hope for a

Even the nature of animals will be changed so that there will be no hurting or destroying throughout this future godly realm (Isaiah 11:6-9). This also represents human beings dwelling peacefully together—as it is a result of the earth being "full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (verse 9).

Barren wastelands and deserts will be transformed to become like Eden (Isaiah 35:1-2, 7; 51:3). And agriculture will become immensely productive (Amos 9:13). People will be healed—both physically and spiritually. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will leap, the mute will speak (Isaiah 35:5-6).

Some see all of this as merely figurative of a better world under the spread of the Christian faith. But that is denying the plain sense of many passages. There may be some figurative or spiritualized applications of some of these passages, but that's with the understanding that their main thrust is quite literal.

## Christ's followers to reign with Him

It is also incredible to learn that the Messiah will share His rule over the earth with His followers from this age—who at His return are either resurrected or transformed to be given immortality (1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

As the prophecy of Daniel 7 states of the fifth kingdom following the four gentile empires of this age: “Then *the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints* [people set apart] *of the Most High*. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (verse 27).

The book of Revelation further shows that the saints, Christ's followers from this age, will reign with Him in the age to come

coming to rule all nations in a wonderful age to come. We see it in the changed level of existence we must experience to reign forever with God in His divine family and in the perpetual increase of God's government and peace throughout time and eternity.

All of these elements are important to understand. Some Christian believers focus only on future aspects of God's Kingdom, so that any thought of its present reality is ignored or denied. Usually, though, the problem is just the opposite. People focus on present rule, claiming the Kingdom is here now, and give little thought to the future coming of the Kingdom—maybe not even knowing anything about it. Yet the future aspect is the principal conception in the Bible.

What Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God is primarily the reign of God becom-

## Many prophecies speak of the awesome transformation the world will experience when Satan has been removed and Jesus Christ is at last the world's ruling King.

as kings and priests (20:4, 6) and that “they shall reign on the earth” (5:10, ESV)—again, not in heaven.

Jesus Himself spoke of this future reward to His disciples, stating, “I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers *will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matthew 19:28, New Living Translation).

And note this parallel description: “I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30).

This passage is very instructive, for it identifies the Kingdom of God with an actual government to be set up in the future—and being “in” the Kingdom with that time. Clearly, the reference to the Kingdom here did not merely mean accepting the reign of God in one's heart at present (see also Luke 22:16, 18; 19:11-27; 21:31—and be sure to read the Questions and Answers on page 45).

### A vital message that matters deeply

The Kingdom of God is a central and unifying theme of all Scripture. We see it in God's role as King over all creation and as the King of Israel. We see it in His rule in our personal lives now and later in Christ

ing established over all people to lead all nations into God's ways and future divine glory too.

This is the way Jesus' apostles still understood His message even after His post-resurrection appearances and instruction. As He was about to ascend into heaven, their last question to Him was, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

This is how they understood His Kingdom message, and He did not contradict their conception—He only told them that it wasn't for them to know the timing, which was in the Father's authority (verse 7).

So why is a future conception of the Kingdom so important? Why should we care? The fact is, our lives must be guided by a goal—a vision of the future. Without a guiding vision or revelation from God, we will spiral away from God and ultimately perish (Proverbs 29:18).

As Paul said, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). And we will have no motivation to strive to follow Him (compare verses 30-34). The truth is, all we do is for the future God will bring, or it is all for nothing.

Yet understanding the present sense of the Kingdom of God is also vital. For to attain to the foretold future, we must connect with and submit to the rule of the Kingdom today.

## Accepting the Kingdom now

We cannot enter the Kingdom now (again, see the Questions and Answers on page 45), but we can receive it in the sense of accepting it and humbly submitting to it. And we must—otherwise we will *not* enter it in the future. Note what Jesus said: “Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it” (Mark 10:15). We must receive it—accept it—right now to enter it later. And we must do so with childlike trust and humility.

Right now we can have the laws of the Kingdom written in our hearts, and we can have the King of the Kingdom live in our hearts to help us obey those laws (Hebrews 8:10; Galatians 2:20).

We can live the future today—the future age breaking into our lives now, just as it did when Christ came teaching and performing miracles 2,000 years ago. The Bible describes those who are converted with God's Holy Spirit as those who “have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:5).

As we pray to God daily, “Your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10), we are effectively cheering on its establishment over all nations. But we are also asking that its rule begin with us right here and now. For if we truly desire the future God proclaims, we will begin living by its terms today.

Continuing, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we recognize that God's Kingdom now rules in heaven, where the angels carry out His will in perfect obedience. And we ask that this be so on earth as well—among all, of course, but starting with *us*.

And finally, seeking first God's Kingdom (Matthew 6:33) means to make all that it stands for our very reason for being. And indeed, it truly is the reason we exist! **GN**

### Learn More

The Kingdom of God was at the heart and core of Jesus Christ's teaching. It's a theme found throughout Scripture. It's to be the goal of every Christian. But how much do you know about it? And how can you be a part of it? To learn more, request or download your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *What Is Your Destiny?* today!

Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)

# How Can You Be Part of the Kingdom of God?

The mystery of our existence has puzzled humanity for some 6,000 years. We are curious beings—acutely aware of our good green earth and its marvelous material mechanisms. But why is this uniquely inhabited planet here at all? We probe the universe for answers when they are deftly hidden right here before us in the Bible. *by John Ross Schroeder*

Scientists and would-be scientists write books searching for a “theory of everything”—some unifying framework that would explain and tie together all the loose ends of our existence. Science desperately wants to discover an all-encompassing theory that would solve the many great problems that seriously threaten human survival.

For centuries many have dreamed of humankind eventually bringing about a universal utopia on earth. But the opposite has happened.

Movies have been made that make fun of the meaning of life. Yet philosophers, scientists and theologians continue to diligently look for it.

It's rational to contemplate: Were we intelligently designed and put here to achieve a great plan and purpose? Or was it a great cosmic accident? Logically, life must have meaning and purpose. We should further ask, then, what is that purpose? Does one particular phrase made

up of just four words sum it all up?

## The pearl of great price

Mainstream Christianity speaks continually about Jesus Christ. Yet it never seems to emphasize what He really said. Christ constantly spoke of *the Kingdom of God* to His followers. In parables He compared this spiritual Kingdom to earthly, material things so they could begin to grasp its vital meaning and significance.

Jesus stated, “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found *one pearl of great price*, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45-46, emphasis added throughout).

Jesus' clear point is that the Kingdom of God is so precious that it becomes worth sacrificing everything else to actually enter it. The previous parable makes the same point: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and for joy over it goes and sells all

that he has and buys that field” (verse 44).

This Kingdom of which Jesus spoke embraces the solution to all our human problems and dilemmas. It answers everything! This Kingdom should be the primary goal of all mankind—the central focus of all our necessary subordinate goals.

However, a supremely clever but perverted spirit being has sidetracked humanity into believing all kinds of other philosophies and religions, teaching a witches' brew of false gospels of every type (see Revelation 12:9; Ephesians 2:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Even many if not most churches have lost the plot!

## Can people really enter the Kingdom?

Jesus Christ spoke of the prophets and patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob being in the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:28-29). Matthew in his parallel account uses the term “kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11-12), employing “heaven” as a synonym for God since he was writing to a Jewish audience who avoided using the name of God. The terms Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven are thus synonymous.

Just before His suffering and subsequent death by crucifixion, Christ said to His original apostles: “But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom,

and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:28-30).

Jesus is clearly talking about a literal kingdom, with literal people whom the apostles would “judge”—lead, guide, train and teach!

But the Kingdom will encompass many more than just the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets and the New Testament apostles. The apostle Paul, facing the end of his life, wrote to his beloved friend Timothy the evangelist that “there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord [Jesus Christ], the righteous Judge, will give to me in that Day, and not to me only *but also to all who have loved His appearing*” (2 Timothy 4:8).

These biblical passages show us that people can definitely enter the Kingdom of God. All true Christians will participate

last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead [in Christ] will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (verses 51-53).

In a similar account in 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul corroborates these awesome truths. “For this we say to you *by the word of the Lord . . .*” he writes. The truths that follow in this passage are not his personal ideas, but rather teaching obtained directly from Jesus Christ.

Continuing, he says: “We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep [in death—with no consciousness at present]. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven . . . with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then

stained by sin. As long as we remain in this rebellious attitude of defiance and disobedience, we are unfit for the Kingdom of God. As a first step to embracing the road to eternal life, we must understand what has already gone awry in our lives.

Sin stands in the way of God’s great plan and purpose for human life—directly in opposition to our eternal salvation as potential sons and daughters in the everlasting Kingdom of God. Sin remains such a stubborn, implacable, deep-rooted enemy that only the death of God’s Son could cancel and blot out its horrendous consequences.

The Bible usually depicts death as the natural consequence of our sins. Disobedience to God’s law of love brings divine punishment (Romans 6:23). So Jesus Christ, completely and totally without sin, died the death which our sins so richly deserved (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)—giving us the awesome opportunity of obtaining forgiveness and full reconciliation with God the Father.

“Sin is the transgression of the law,” we are told in 1 John 3:4 (King James Version). A more modern translation puts it this way: “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness” (New International Version). Both translations are correct. The apostle James states the same thing: “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, *you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors*” (James 2:8-9).

We can fail to love both God and our neighbor by what we do as well as what we *don’t* do. To neglect to do what you know is right can be as serious in its consequences as a deliberately conceived, lawless act with malice aforethought. “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

The apostle Paul views sin as a grim and dreadful activity. He regards unrepentant men and women as being “slaves to sin” (Romans 6:17, 20), “sold under sin” (Romans 7:14) and even being taken into captivity by it (verse 23). So we are sinners by nature as well as by choice (Jeremiah 17:9). And yet the sin of human beings can be completely and totally erased through the work of a loving Mediator.

Jesus clearly said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth [crucified], will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32). But the fact still remains that divine forgiveness can only occur in the lives of *those who really repent*.

## The Kingdom of God embraces the solution to all our human problems and dilemmas. It answers everything! This Kingdom should be the primary goal of all mankind—the central focus of all our necessary subordinate goals.

in and have their part in it!

### The clear boundaries of the Kingdom

The Bible’s “resurrection chapter,” 1 Corinthians 15, contains a rich repository of many critical biblical truths. Verse 50 in particular focuses on our present humanity and mortality. This human, flesh-and-blood physical existence was never intended to be an end in itself; it serves only as a training ground for the Kingdom.

Notice what the apostle Paul wrote here: “Now this I say, brethren, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*; nor does corruption [decay] inherit incorruption.” Our human bodies age and run down over time. We simply cannot exist permanently in the material flesh. In fact all physical matter, however long it takes, remains in a process of change toward disintegration and decay.

So, then, how can we enter and become a part of the spiritual Kingdom of God? How does God make it possible for flesh-and-blood, mortal human beings to enter that Kingdom?

Paul outlines the solution in the next few passages of 1 Corinthians 15: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [in the grave], *but we shall all be changed*—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the

we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (verses 15-17).

However, we will not be able to meet Christ this way while still existing as human flesh. “For our [Christian] citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, *who will transform our lowly [fleshly, perishable] body* that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21). Jesus is God along with the Father! They know how to accomplish the transformation. We don’t!

Jesus Christ will do for us what we simply cannot perform for ourselves. But there remains something we can and must do in intimate partnership with God and Christ: “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). We have to embark on a series of necessary spiritual steps to overcome the obstacles in our way.

### Sin stands ominously in our path

Whether we realize it or not, our mind and thinking are hostile to God and His law of love (Romans 8:7). We have all been

## Transforming our lives

Our first step on the road to ultimate salvation is genuine and heartfelt repentance. The apostle Peter said, "Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

Jesus Christ continually stressed the importance of repentance. He stated, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Christ plainly taught that our highest priority in life should be to enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). But repentance is the first in a series of basic steps leading to redemption and salvation. God the Father responds to the repentant sinner with total forgiveness, applying the sacrifice of His Son to the humbled and repentant individual (1 John 1:7-9).

When is the best time to repent? *Now!* Ominous clouds of global turmoil and tragedy darken the horizon. Paul stated even during his day, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, *but now commands all men everywhere to repent*" (Acts 17:30).

And what does Jesus demand of those who hear the message of the Kingdom of God? "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 [in the person of Christ]. Repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15).

Everlasting life in the family of God is available to only those who repent of their sins. No exceptions are possible, because "all have sinned and fall[en] short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Repentance is not an ethereal concept which no one can fully grasp. In its most basic sense, it means to *change*. We are to change our minds, change our way of thinking, change our behavior, change our priorities, change our lives.

We are to demonstrate in our lives a changed way of living. This change away from our previous lifestyle will prove the genuineness of our repentance. "Let him who stole steal no longer," for instance (Ephesians 4:28). We should produce "fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8)—positive changes in our lives that clearly demonstrate that we indeed now put God first in our lives. Professing to know God, but showing no change in our lives, doesn't cut it (Titus 1:16 ; 1 John 2:3-6).

Like King David of Israel, we must ask God to create a "clean heart" and a right spirit and attitude within us (Psalm 51:10).

Repentance produces a humbled and submissive heart, one that seeks and even begs for God's mercy (Luke 18:13). Then we are ready to take the next fundamental step, asking a true minister of God for baptism for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38).

## Baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit

When the apostle Paul was miraculously struck down and called by God, what did the man to whom God directed him, Ananias, instruct him to do? "Why are you waiting? *Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16).

Paul had clearly repented and was now willing to do whatever Christ asked of him. His deeply felt regret for his previous life of persecuting Christians emerges several times in his writings. His heartfelt goal was

## Everlasting life in the family of God is available to only those who repent of their sins. No exceptions are possible.

to put it fully behind him and press forward toward the Kingdom of God (Philippians 3:11-14). Later in life Paul never forgot that his old sins had been completely cleansed, washed away and totally forgiven. He had become fully fit for the family of God, enduring as a Christian to the very end.

Many biblical passages tell us that water baptism is a necessary step to obtaining salvation. The symbolism is very clear. Figuratively, our sins are washed away to lie at the bottom of a watery grave—and we should leave them there. This immersion in water pictures the death and burial of our old selves—the former man or woman of sin (Romans 6:2-6). We arise out of the water to begin a new life—ordered by God's great spiritual law, the Ten Commandments.

Jesus commanded His ministers to baptize repentant sinners (Matthew 28:19; John 4:1-3). In fact, Jesus set us all a right example by asking John the Baptist to personally baptize Him even though He had never sinned and had no need of repentance (Matthew 3:13-15; compare 1 Peter 2:21-22). Christ submitted to water baptism in order to fulfill all righteousness.

But this is not all. Scriptural example shows that, after baptism, the next step in the salvation process involves the laying on of hands by one or more of God's true ministers so that the repentant person may receive God's Holy Spirit. In the brief list of basic Christian doctrines in Hebrews 6:1-2, the laying on of hands is mentioned along with

repentance, baptism and faith toward God.

The basic formula is plainly articulated in Acts 2:38 when Peter delivered His sermon on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins, *and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

## A life of spiritual growth commences

This completes our brief study about how to enter the Kingdom of God. After an encouraging and joyous beginning, we are to grow in the Christian faith. Among the last words the apostle Peter wrote were that we are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). This is a lifelong process requiring dedication and commitment on our part.

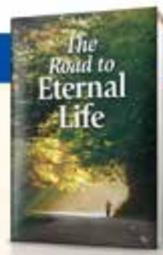
We must also patiently endure the trials and tests that will inevitably follow, trusting in God for deliverance (Acts 14:22; Psalm 34:19). "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19, KJV).

Jesus Himself said in the lengthy prophecy of end-time events He gave to His disciples on the Mount of Olives shortly before His death, "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). In context, the very next verse speaks of preaching the "gospel of the kingdom."

Finally, we need to recall an earlier admonition, also from the lips of Jesus Christ, in Luke 12:31-32: "But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things [our material needs] shall be added to you. Do not fear little flock, *for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" **GN**

## Learn More

The Kingdom of God and how we may enter it is a huge and important subject, with only the basics covered in this article. Scripture has much more to say, so we recommend that you request or download our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life, Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion, The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *What Is Your Destiny?*



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)



# The Kingdom of God:

## A Vision for Your Life

Do you have a vision that guides your life? If so, what is it? What vision does God have for you, and how can you make that vision your own? *by Dennis Luker*

**W**hat keeps you going? When you get up in the morning, what motivates and energizes you to tackle tough problems and keep moving forward?

Speaking some of the most comforting and powerful words ever voiced, Jesus Christ encouraged His disciples, “Do not fear, little flock, for *it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom*” (Luke 12:32, emphasis added throughout).

What is this Kingdom and what does it mean for us? What does it mean to you?

The Kingdom of God is nothing short of the centerpiece of the Bible. We receive grace and salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ so we can be a part of this everlasting Kingdom.

Prophets and apostles alike eloquently speak time and again about the establishment of the Kingdom of God—resulting in the literal spiritual transformation of Christians into the family of God as immortal sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18)—as God’s main focus and purpose.

The Kingdom is one that, as Daniel prophesied, “shall never be destroyed” and that “shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

In stark contrast to the trials of this world, we see beyond today a prophesied time of unprecedented wonder, peace and plenty (Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:1-2, 5-7). For those of us awaiting and anticipating this Kingdom, it represents a mighty vision.

Again, what does this vision mean for you?

### **An unexpected change of plans**

As a young man in college more than half a century ago, these words didn’t mean much for me at all. I’d read them, but being biblically naive, I didn’t understand them.

But I was to find that God had His own plan for me, just as He has a plan for you. You may find elements of what God did for me in what He is doing for you. Here’s a bit about how He led me to attaining a vision of His Kingdom.

Almost 60 years ago while in high school in Michigan, I found that I was good at math and liked it, and my coach told me

that I was also good in football as a full-back. To my pleasant surprise, I applied for and was accepted into the University of Delaware’s engineering program and was able to attend on a full football scholarship.

As I traveled there I had no thoughts at all about a future career in serving Jesus Christ as a minister. I wanted to be a mechanical engineer. Preaching and teaching the truth of God to people around the world was one of the furthest things from my mind.

After I arrived at the university, having little knowledge of biblical teachings and no understanding of the Kingdom of God, I soon became interested in and enrolled in the U.S. Army’s Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program on campus. As the years progressed I learned much about engineering principles, and I also was promoted to the rank of captain in the university’s ROTC program.

In my senior year everything seemed to be coming together in great fashion. A senior U.S. Army officer approached me and offered me what I thought was a great opportunity. The 1950s was the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the officer told me that he and others had been impressed with my ROTC service.



He told me that if I enlisted after graduation, the U.S. Army would immediately give me a full commission as a second lieutenant, and I would be fast-tracked on an Army career. At the time that sounded really good to me.

But God had other plans for me, just as He has plans for you.

During my last football game that season, I unexpectedly suffered a serious knee injury. Orthopedic surgery and rehabilitation in the 1950s were far behind where they are now, and I was going to be hobbling around for quite a while. What came later was more devastating.

When I went for my Army physical, fully expecting to be inducted as a commissioned officer, the Army doctor, after looking at x-rays of my knee injury, pronounced me physically unfit to serve. I was classified "4F," which meant I was barred from active military service.

### Change of scenery leads to a life-changing experience

Deeply discouraged, I had no idea the door that God was planning to open on the other side of the continent.

After graduating with my degree in mechanical engineering, I received several job offers. I didn't know how to properly evaluate the positions, but God did. The doors opened for me to take a high-paying position at an aerospace engineering firm clear on the other side of the United States in Southern California. I still had no idea that an engineering career wasn't what God had in mind for me.

Shortly after I took the job, I asked one of my new colleagues at the Los Angeles engineering firm where he went to church. He seemed like a decent person, and I thought that going to church would be a good way to meet new friends.

He invited me to a Bible study in nearby Pasadena, which I attended with him. The content of the Bible study was quite different from anything I had heard previously. Plus, there were many young people at this Bible study, many more than I had typically seen at any church.

Learning that this church had a college associated with it, I decided it would be a good thing to attend the college to learn more about God and the Bible, which in retrospect is what God clearly wanted me to do.

During the next three years I met my wife, now of nearly 50 years. And far from becoming an engineer, I was ordained into the ministry of Jesus Christ. I've since

pastored many churches and served in administrative positions around the world, including as far away as Australia. Currently, I am privileged to serve as president of the United Church of God, which publishes this magazine you are reading.

Since God's calling and intervention in my life more than 50 years ago, the biblical vision of Christ's return and the Kingdom of God being established here on earth is what keeps me going.

### A guiding and sustaining vision

This vision can motivate you as well.

As regular *Good News* readers know, the plan of God for you and for all humanity is revealed in the annual biblical festivals. (If you haven't yet read it, request or download our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.)

Perhaps you haven't thought of it in this way, but God's annual festivals represent a *personal prophecy* for you and for all of humanity. The first three—Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost—have

them annually, they help us build and sustain a vision of what is to come—the return of Jesus Christ to this planet, the binding of Satan to remove his evil influence and the establishment of the glorious Kingdom of God on earth. And all of this will be capped off by the opportunity for salvation for all people who yield to become heirs in God's family.

This vision, this hope, fills us with incredible joy and gratitude. It sustains us day by day. It sustains those in the United Church of God and our other coworkers who support and make possible this magazine, our *Beyond Today* TV program, our



## In the parable of the pearl of great price, Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a merchant who sold everything he had to acquire it. It was that important!

already been fulfilled in major respects in history and the personal lives of believers.

Giving His life as the incredible holy sacrifice that blotted out our sins and reconciled us to God, Jesus Christ became our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). The symbolism of the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures our active daily duty in overcoming and striving to avoid sin (verses 6-8).

The day of Pentecost was fulfilled in part with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), which enables and motivates us to keep God's holy law (Romans 7:12) and thus overcome habitual sin (Matthew 19:17) through forgiveness by grace, repentance and the subsequent development of holy righteous character (1 Peter 1:15-16) by producing good spiritual fruit (Matthew 7:16-20) through good deeds and works (James 2:26).

The events symbolized by the remaining four biblical festivals represent a profound vision of the future for us. By celebrating

dozens of free booklets, our *Bible Study Course* lessons and guides, and more.

### The Kingdom of God—a central theme of the Bible

Reflecting the biblical statement that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9), no one has ever painted a physical picture, drawn an illustration or come up with any kind of video special effects that can come close to capturing the magnificence of God's Kingdom.

To try and convey this, the many biblical parables and teachings about the Kingdom use metaphors and similes—for example, the Kingdom is *like* a treasure, it is *like* a mustard seed, it is *as* sowing seed. But even these traditional ways of explaining complex spiritual teachings—commonly used by rabbis in ancient Judea—fall short of fully describing the Kingdom of God and what it means for you.

Even Jesus remarked: “How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it?” (Mark 4:30, New Living Translation).

### Seek the pearl of great price

When God Himself opens our minds to what the words of the Bible actually say and mean, we can begin to grasp the dramatic scope of this great future! Once again using a metaphor—a figure of speech—to explain a complex thought, Jesus compared the Kingdom to a merchant who specialized in seeking pearls of splendid quality (Matthew 13:45-46). To be able to do this, the person had to have a considerable net worth—he (or she) was wealthy.

One day, Jesus said, the merchant came across *the* pearl. This pearl was so fabulous that it transcended anything the merchant had previously seen. But the cost was high. Yet it was so outstanding, so exemplary, that it was worth it.

What happened? The merchant sold *everything* he had to acquire it (verse 46). It was that important and it required that degree of sacrifice.

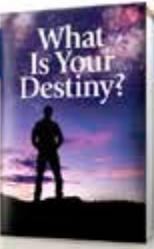
To understand our great future and pursue it with the same passion as the business professional described above, Jesus tells us not to worry about physical things. He tells us: “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about your body, what you will put on . . . For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things” (Luke 12:22, 30).

What then are we to be concerned about? Jesus commands us: “Seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

### Making God’s goal *your* goal

Our main purpose therefore mirrors that of God’s: Strengthened by the Holy Spirit

**Learn More**



God has an amazing and awe-inspiring purpose for you. But do you understand what it is? Do you grasp why you are here, why you were born? The awesome truth is right there for you in the pages of your Bible! Request or download your free copy of *What Is Your Destiny?* today!

Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)

through prayer and the study of God’s Word, we are to be constantly preparing ourselves—overcoming with God’s help our defects of character, growing daily in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, striving to obey all God’s commandments, yielding and developing spiritual love toward one another, focused on becoming holy even as God is holy—all in anticipation of receiving the gift of eternal life and entering the Kingdom of God!

What does this mean for you? It is indeed good news that God’s plan is intensely focused on “bringing many sons to glory” (Hebrews 2:10). I personally learned and experienced this when my hopes to become an Army officer dissolved. In retrospect it is clear that military service was not God’s will for me, nor was a long career as a mechanical engineer, which is what I was trained to do.

What have I learned? That unless we humbly yield ourselves to God’s will in our lives, we can tragically miss this great vision.

Before the Kingdom of God is established throughout the earth, Jesus Himself emphasizes that the good news—the gospel—of this Kingdom and what it means will be proclaimed, declared and preached to the entire planet (Matthew 24:14). We in the United Church of God have dedicated ourselves, our lives, to doing our part in meeting this objective as God so guides and enables us.

Jesus has told faithful followers, “I have set before you an open door” to preach this gospel (Revelation 3:8), and as God empowers us we will walk through that door. The fact that you are reading this magazine at this very moment is evidence of our commitment.

Concerning the Kingdom of God, we know from the Bible that the Father “desires *all* men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). We read further in God’s unbreakable Word that “*all* nations” will keep the Feast of Tabernacles during the age of the coming Kingdom of God (Zechariah 14:16). Jesus Himself kept the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7), which pictures the coming Kingdom of God, setting us all an example.

We urge you to capture your personal vision of the coming Kingdom of God and partner with God in overcoming sin and growing in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). And above all, never forget Jesus’ commandment in Matthew 6:33—“seek *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness!” **GN**



**W**ho’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, as enabled by God.

And 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.

**For additional information, visit our website:**

[www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org)

# The Divine Secret

A Good News interview with author Joe Kovacs by Jerold Aust

**B**est-selling author and award-winning journalist Joe Kovacs, executive news editor at WND, has recently written a new book, *The Divine Secret: The Awesome and Untold Truth About Your Phenomenal Destiny*. This insightful new book documents little-understood truths from the Bible that few are aware of but that everyone needs to know.

*The Divine Secret*, published July 17, 2012, is a sequel to his 2008 best seller, *Shocked by the Bible: The Most Astonishing Facts You've Never Been Told* (see our previous interview with him in the March/April 2010 issue of *The Good News*).

**The Good News: Can you give us a brief rundown on your professional work—what you do beyond writing your helpful books?**

**JK:** I'm a news reporter by trade and have been in the news industry since age 19 when I started in radio. I was in radio for about 10 years and made the jump to television and ran some television stations for five years.

Then I moved to Europe as the editor for the *Budapest Business Journal* and am now back in America as executive editor for WND.com (formerly WorldNetDaily), the leading Internet news site. So I'm a news junkie, basically. I just find, write and report news.

**GN: It's clear from your work on the WND website that you're very good at what you do.**

**JK:** We're just trying to do the job that the rest of the media is failing to do in order to inform Americans on the news that they want to know. I think that what I have written in my book *The Divine Secret* is the biggest story of all time. And I'm not trying to scoop anybody that has this information out there, but people have not been paying attention to what this huge news is.

**GN: I agree. Your new book is *The Divine Secret: The Awesome and Untold Truth About Your Phenomenal Destiny*. We'll get to that in a moment, but would you give us a brief update on the details of your first book *Shocked by the Bible* and how it was received—how some appreciate it and perhaps some who didn't, and why?**

**JK:** *Shocked by the Bible* was my first book ever, and I never thought I was ever

going to be an author. But I wrote *Shocked by the Bible* because I got fed up with hearing untruths about the Bible in the media, whether it was television or the radio, or just in general discourse in life.

People misquote the Bible, and they think it contains things that are simply not there. This reached a critical point with me, where I said that somebody has got to put an end to this. Let's just get the facts on the table and clear everything up.

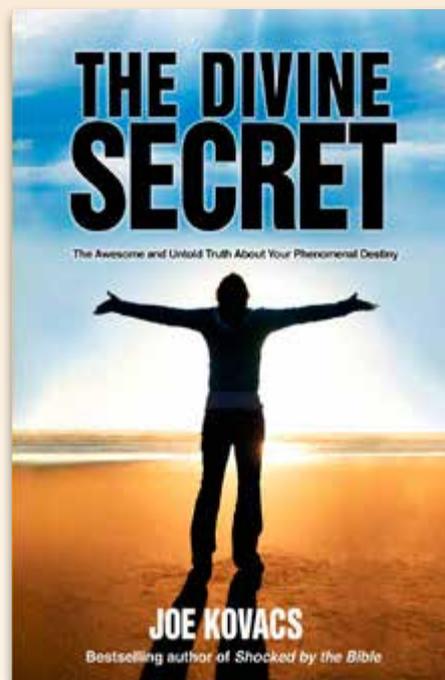
The book rocketed to number one on Amazon.com even before it was officially released in 2008, and I was stunned by that myself. The book is still available, and people can go to [shockedbythebible.com](http://shockedbythebible.com) if they would like their own personalized copy.

When the book first came out, I think that many Christians thought wrongly, for some reason, that I was putting down the Bible and putting down Christianity. That is not the case at all. I'm a Bible-believing Christian, and I want people to read the Bible. And all they have to do is crack open their own Bibles and read the words on the page and they'll be shocked, like I was shocked, by what is actually there.

**GN: I really appreciate that, having with others written about what's in the Bible for a number of decades. But you write in such a way that people out here in the nonreligious world can read your book—and even those in the religious world—and not see you as connected in some way with a particular religious group. In that sense, you are unique.**

**JK:** Many people have actually told me exactly that—that it's because I am not connected to any official group or church and that I'm just a guy, an American, a Christian, and I write news for a living and I just want to help educate people to the truth.

The truth is in the Bible, and it's all revealed there—every part of the Bible is



true. So I'm just using my God-given talent. I don't claim any talents on my own. It's all a gift from the Creator of the universe. I'm trying to help people understand that billions of people on this earth have a fantastic future coming to them if they just wake up out of their slumber and read the Bible and find out what it is.

**GN: People have their own worldviews, see things from their own perspective, and they're protective about that. So it's difficult to make an inroad into their lives, as you're doing here. It's vitally important what you're doing.**

**So let's get into your new book now. Considering the success of your first book *Shocked by the Bible*, I wonder what motivated you to come up with this sequel, *The Divine Secret*. What's the bridge between the two books? Did the idea come from the first book, something you researched there, or did it just come to you unexpectedly?**

**JK:** After the first book, *Shocked by the Bible*, I realized that people had a huge interest in one subject that I briefly touched on in the first book—and that focuses on our incredible destiny. It seems like everyone wants to know what's in store for them in the future, and there are so many unanswered questions such as the meaning of life, what lies ahead in the future, and what in the

world is God actually doing with people?

I thought, the Bible's told them the answers. And it provides solid answers, answers they most likely have never heard—and answers much better than “Oh, God only knows,” or “I guess we'll find out after we're dead.” It's very good news, by the way—it's the greatest news you could possibly imagine.

**GN: That's a good way you put it. I liked in particular something in your book, where you not only show a scripture or a number of scriptures supporting your point, but you go into that verse itself and either highlight it or capitalize it—and you make come alive that aspect of the verse that you're showing is really what you find in the Word of God when you study it. You bring that out for the reader to see.**

**JK:** When I read other people's books about God or the Bible or religious matters, I tend to be bored by them—not because of the writer's writing style, but they don't put the Bible verses in their writings. They will just refer to the verses, like Genesis 1:1.

But if you're not a Bible expert, you're not going to know what's in it. So I actually copy and paste the whole Bible verse. You don't even have to have a Bible to read *The Divine Secret* or *Shocked by the Bible*. I want people to see the words on the page, the words they've never seen before—or maybe they have seen them but they just haven't had a light bulb go off in their head and say, “Oh, this really says this.”

For example, the Bible doesn't say there are three wise men coming to the manger. It doesn't say there were wise men coming to the manger to see Jesus the night when He was born. There was an unspecified number who showed up some time later, but they didn't show up when Jesus was born. So I want people to see the words on the page.

A unique highlight of *The Divine Secret*, my new book, is that I put all personal comments from God in red letters, even from the Old Testament. Now I know many people have red-letter New Testament versions of the Bible where the words of Jesus are shown in red letters, but now you can see the words of God in red from the Old Testament as well. So every time God is speaking personally, like “Let us make man in our image,” those words show up in red in *The Divine Secret*.

**GN: That's unique! I've never seen that before.**

**JK:** I think it's a fantastic feature that will help to wake people up and make them

realize that the God of the Old Testament is actually the One who became Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and it really stands out on the page and it gets your attention to see things that you may have glossed over before.

**GN: Let's get into your own thinking—how you came to this. In the table of contents, you have only three chapters, but they cover 180 pages of narrative. Give us a short overview of why you chose the structure you did.**

**JK:** Well, the book is titled *The Divine Secret*, and I thought about how to present this in an easy format, and I started off in chapter one saying that the Bible declares that it has a secret.

**“I'm trying to help people understand that billions of people on this earth have a fantastic future coming to them if they just wake up . . . and read the Bible and find out what it is.”**



Joe Kovacs

You see so many times statements in it about “God's secret,” “God's secret wisdom,” “a mysterious plan,” “a wonderful secret,” “the secret of the Good News” and “the mystery of the kingdom of God.” So the Bible has what it calls “a secret.”

Colossians 1:26 says that this is the secret that has been hidden from everyone since the beginning of time. So right off the bat I established the fact that the Bible does have its secrets.

The rest of the chapter—I don't make you wait until the end of the book to find what the divine secret is. (I knew that it would really irk some people to wait to find out

what it is.) So by the end of chapter one, I do show what the divine secret is—so people wouldn't get too antsy before they get to the end of the book.

I tell them what the divine secret is, and it has to do with our ultimate destination. And the remaining chapters, two and three, have to do with what the meaning of the secret is as it applies to our lives and the coming Kingdom of God, and how the world and the universe will be structured as Jesus Christ and God the Father come from heaven to dwell here on earth.

**GN: I just noticed that you go from the secret itself, what it is, and then you go to how we can apply it personally,**

**and finally how it applies to the world at large, which kind of gets us out of our selfish way of thinking.**

**JK:** People in this world, in our temporary existence, we are not eternal but instead mortal creations of God, who are in training. People want to know how things benefit them. That's why self-help books are so popular. Everybody wants to know how they can improve their health, or cook better, or make more money.

It's always the books about self-help that are the best sellers. And *The Divine Secret*, considering the subject, is one of the best self-help books ever. But you realize that you need God's help to help you. You can't just do it on your own. When you allow God into your life, you will have success—and it's success beyond your wildest dreams. If people knew what was coming, if they knew their destination, then they would get their act together.

**GN: There's so much more we could cover. Thank you for this interview about your new book *The Divine Secret*. We wish you the best success on your unique treatment of God's divine secret for the benefit of all humanity.**

A longer audio interview, from which this is excerpted, can be heard at [www.GNmagazine.org/DivineSecret](http://www.GNmagazine.org/DivineSecret). Interested readers can learn more or order the book at [www.thedivinesecret.com](http://www.thedivinesecret.com).

# Your Down Payment on Divinity

Two billion Christians desire to live forever, but do they really know how it will come about? God's divine secret includes a down payment on divinity, now no longer a secret. *by Jerold Aust*



“Walt Disney, Ted Williams, Austin Powers—at a glance they don’t seem to have much in common,” opens a July 27, 2011, ABC News report by Bob Woodruff. “But the three are perhaps the most famous names to be associated with cryogenic freezing.”

The report continues with some background: “The idea to cryopreserve humans sprang from the pages of science fiction in the 1960s, when Robert Ettinger, inspired by a sci-fi story he read, founded the Cryonics Institute in Clinton Township, Mich[igan].

“Inside the institute, over 100 people float inside giant bottles filled with nitrogen at temperatures colder than negative 130 degrees Celsius, hoping one day in the future some doctor will revive them.

“My father’s intention was that he and his family and friends get a chance to live longer and to take advantage of the promise of future technology,” David Ettinger told ABC News.”

If you knew a way that could guarantee life everlasting, would you pursue it—beyond cold storage?

In fact, there is a way to live forever, and it’s guaranteed by a down payment on divinity.

## What is a down payment?

Have you ever purchased something on a layaway plan, where you made a down payment on the full purchase price, to be fully transacted at a later date? This can serve as a metaphor for God’s fulfilling of the promise to us of eternal life in His Kingdom. He gives us the down payment on divinity today, with the rest of what is promised to come at a later date.

Remember this: God promises a down payment on divinity, your future divine life, and it’s available to you now, *right now*, with your cooperation and investment. Yet God’s down payment on divinity comes with certain conditions.

Jesus Christ has already gone through this process as a forerunner, perfectly fulfilling certain conditions (Hebrews 5:8-9). He was both the Son of Man and the Son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus died, as all human beings do, but then He lived again, raised to divine life, which God intends to bestow on all humanity (1 Timothy 2:4; John 3:16-17).

Still, many people wonder whether they will live again.

## When I die, will I live again?

The patriarch Job asked and answered

this question: “If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till *my change* comes [resurrection from the dead]. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands”—that is, the person God has finished preparing for the future life (Job 14:14-15, emphasis added throughout).

From Genesis to Revelation, the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead is the only path to eternal life. Two billion professing Christians either don’t understand or won’t admit to the resurrection from the dead, preferring instead the manmade and unbiblical doctrine of going consciously to heaven or hell at death. (For the truth on this matter, request or download our free booklet *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?*)

The apostle Paul’s instruction on the resurrection is logical and indisputable (see 1 Corinthians 15).

Job understood God’s ultimate purpose for human life. He intends to change human beings into *divine* beings. God wants children in His family, billions of them. This is why humankind was created.

The resurrection from the dead is the culminating miracle of God in people’s lives, changing them from human beings to divine beings like Himself! Many Christians have this hope, to some degree, but they don’t understand that this requires a transformation to God’s way of life in the here and now (Romans 12:2).

## Divinity depends on Jesus’ resurrection

At the end of His human life, Jesus taught His disciples that He would be leaving them—He would die and be raised from the dead. They were saddened by this. As Jesus said: “But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’” But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send [it] to you” (John 16:5-7). This Holy Spirit would be a promised down payment on divinity.

Christ’s disciples did not understand God’s spiritual operation of how He would transform ordinary, fleshly, selfish people into

extraordinary and unselfish people so that one day they could become immortal, selfless, eternal sons of God. Jesus said that they wouldn't understand then what He was doing but that they soon would (John 16:12-14).

There is a logical, stepwise progression to how this all comes about that's faithfully laid out in Scripture.

Jesus, who was sinless, had to bear the penalty for all of the sins of humanity in His terrible suffering and death (John 3:16-17; Romans 5:8-10; Galatians 3:13). God the Father then had to resurrect Him to His throne, from where They through Their Spirit would transform human beings into the spiritually directed, begotten sons and daughters of God (Galatians 2:20; 1 Peter 4:12-13; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:18).

God's promise of a divine life for you is seamlessly connected with Jesus' death and resurrection. Earlier, in John 16:7, Jesus reassured His disciples that if He didn't go away, the Holy Spirit wouldn't be sent to them.

In verse 13 He encouraged them with what God's Spirit would provide: "However, when [it], the Spirit of truth, has come, [it] will guide you into all truth; for [it] will not speak on [its] own authority, but whatever [it] hears [it] will speak; and [it] will tell you things to come" (To learn the truth about the nature of Holy Spirit and how it operates, be sure to request or download our free booklet *Is God a Trinity?*).

Most who profess to be Christians realize they need Jesus' shed blood to cover their sins. But they don't realize that there are conditions to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the down payment on divinity, and that the resurrection is the transition from physical death to divine life.

Further, they miss the vital understanding that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is essential for the resurrection of other human beings to follow. The apostle Paul, writing under divine inspiration, is adamant on this issue. If Jesus Christ was not resurrected, there could be no resurrection to immortality of others who've died (carefully compare 1 Corinthians 15:13-18 and Hebrews 6:17-20).

### From dirt to divinity

Adam, the first human being, was made from ordinary dirt (Genesis 2:7). Though God created Adam and Eve exactly as He planned and said it was very good (Genesis 1:31) the choices that invited Satan's influence changed the relationship between God and man. King David viewed himself in Psalm 22:6 as "a worm" and tells us in

Psalm 39:5 (King James Version) that "every man at his best state is altogether vanity"—transitory, unsatisfactory and empty.

God made Adam from dirt, the first step for God making man in His image—physically (Genesis 1:26). As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:47-49: "The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man [Jesus Christ—by whom spiritual life would come to humanity] is the Lord from heaven.

"As was the man of dust [a flesh-and-blood human being], so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man [a life-giving spirit being (verse 45)], so also are those who are heavenly [that is, those who are transformed to be like Christ]. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the



## Human beings are made from dirt to one day be changed to divinity!

image of the heavenly Man" (1 Corinthians 15:47-49). Human beings are made from dirt to one day be changed to divinity!

If we know this fact of truth, we human beings will walk humbly in this life, acknowledging our physical weakness while looking to God for His strength, which comes through His Holy Spirit. This Jesus did while human: "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). God says that humility precedes honor (Proverbs 18:12)—as this lowly and weak human life precedes our promised powerful and glorious divine life.

### Conditions to divinity

It's fairly common for those with large estates to set in place certain conditions to be met for one's heirs to receive their inheritance. Similarly, God has promised to give human beings divine eternal life as an inheritance, but not without conditions.

Sadly, most Christians have been taught that God demands nothing of them except to verbally receive Jesus as their Savior. Some religious teachers argue that it's presumptuous of human beings to think they can obey their way to salvation since attempting to do so usurps Christ's unique redemptive action.

Jesus, however, taught explicitly, "If you want to enter into life, *keep the commandments*" (Matthew 19:17). This does not *earn* salvation, but it is a *condition* for salvation (which requires God's help and His forgiveness through Christ where we fall short). Jesus further said that those who keep and teach God's laws are reckoned as great (Matthew 5:19), as they demonstrate to God that they believe His way of life is far superior to the way of this world (Proverbs 14:12).

The whole history of mankind proves that human beings are unable to properly conduct themselves to secure peace and prosperity. "O LORD, I know the way of man [how he should live] is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

If human beings set conditions for their heirs to receive their inheritance, why is it thought strange that Almighty God could and would require of His people certain conditions to receive divine, eternal life?

God does indeed require certain things of His heirs, for our good, so we can receive the gift of eternal life. Let's briefly explore five conditions God sets for us to receive His down payment on divinity.

### First, God calls and we must heed

Jesus said that we cannot come to Him unless the Father calls us. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

He repeats this truth a little later: "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (verse 65).

But God is generous and He does call many. Nothing happens to begin the process of our salvation until God the Father calls us. God's calling is *His* prerogative, not ours. Our duty is to *respond* to His calling.



God may be calling *you* right now, and you are responsible to *answer* His call.

## Second, we must change

In stepwise progression, *change* comes next. The book of Hebrews refers to this part as “repentance from dead works” (Hebrews 6:1).

After the apostle Peter’s convicting sermon to those gathered in Jerusalem observing the feast of Pentecost—ending with “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36)—they asked him what they should do. Notice what happened:

“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” (verses 37-39).

The first step in their salvation was to *repent*, or change from their way of doing things, from their worldview, to *God’s* worldview and way of doing things. The process of salvation can go no further if we don’t begin to repent of our past way of thinking, speaking and acting.

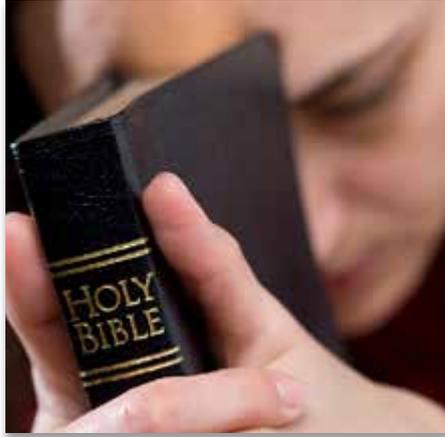
Repenting from our past sins must be done first, but it is also an ongoing process that we must carry through with the rest of our lifetime as we strive to leave our past life of sin and become more like Jesus Christ in every aspect of our lives.

## Third, we must have faith toward God

After “repentance from dead works,” Hebrews 6:1 next lists “faith toward God.” Notice that as we turn *away from* dead works—our past sinful life and way of doing things—we move forward with faith *toward* God. Human beings become disciples of Jesus Christ as they repent of

their old habits of sin while turning to honor God in believing faith.

Faith is exercised in what you know, not what you don’t know. That is to say, we are able to have faith in God—trust in Him—through coming to know Him.



## As we turn away from dead works—our past sinful life and way of doing things—we move forward with faith toward God.

And it takes God’s help to overcome our human tendency to doubt. One hope-filled man asked Jesus to heal his child. “Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’” (Mark 9:23-24).

The book of Hebrews further shows just how vital faith is in our relationship with God: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Believing faith brings us to the point of asking what we should do next. Peter said that to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, we should repent and be baptized.

## Fourth, we must be buried in water baptism

Water baptism, then, is the next big step

(Hebrews 6:2) that leads to receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, the down payment on divinity. The word *baptism* comes from a Greek word meaning *total immersion*, not merely having water sprinkled or poured on one’s head.

The meaning of water baptism becomes clear in what the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans. Baptism symbolizes our old self of sin *dying and being buried* with Christ when He died and was buried bearing the penalty of our sins: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4).

Baptism, which is total immersion in water, further represents the all-cleansing

shed blood of Jesus Christ being applied to us to wash away our sins (see 1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9:14). Even the specially chosen apostle Paul was instructed to be baptized and have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16).

At this point, coming out of the watery grave, we are viewed by God as a new person (Romans 6:4-8), ready to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the down payment on divinity.

## Fifth, we must have the laying on of hands

Ministers of Jesus Christ are commissioned by Christ to lay hands on a newly baptized person. The laying on of hands shows that God gives His Spirit to those who voluntarily humble themselves and work within the order and framework God has established for His people. He puts His Holy Spirit in the mind of a now-cleansed person.

Continuing in Hebrews 6, it lists as

## 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.



the next step in the salvation process the “laying on of hands” (verse 2). Laying on of hands was used in the Old Testament (Genesis 48:14; Deuteronomy 34:9), and it continues through Christ’s ministry in His Church (Acts 19:6). This action sets people apart before God.

This is the point at which God gives to His followers the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-19), the down payment on divinity.

God’s love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), and this love entails obedience to God’s commandments (1 John 5:3). As we yield to God’s Spirit, we become more and more like God in our character.

Through the promises of God we experience today, particularly the power we receive as “partakers of the Holy Spirit” (Hebrews 6:4), we may become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Yet this is but a small foretaste of what is yet to come.

### Down payment on divinity

God’s Word clearly shows that the gift of the Holy Spirit also figures as the down payment on divinity, or eternal life.

Paul writes of Christ in Ephesians 1: “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, [which] is the *guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession*, to the praise of His glory” (verses 13-14, emphasis added).

The original word in the Greek here translated “guarantee” is actually of Hebrew origin. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* explains that it means: “Earnest money, a pledge, something which stands for part of the price and paid beforehand to confirm the transaction. Used in the [New Testament] only in a figurative sense and spoken of the Holy Spirit which God has given to believers in this present life to assure them of their future and eternal inheritance” (Spiros Zodhiates, 1993, p. 257).

The New American Standard Bible translates the word as “pledge,” while the New International Version renders it “deposit.” The Holman Christian Standard Bible translates it as “down payment.”

The gift of the Holy Spirit to human beings who dedicate themselves to God and Christ is the down payment or deposit for the full reward yet to come. This refers to the divine existence and exalted status Christ will give us at His second coming.

As Paul writes in Romans 8:23 (New Century Version): “Not only the world, but we also have been waiting with pain inside us. We have the Spirit as the first part of God’s promise. So we are waiting for God to finish making us his own children, which means our bodies will be made free.”

Then we will at last be raised to divinity: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

### Jesus Christ leads the way to divinity

All Christians must follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. He perfectly obeyed God’s laws and, having done so, became our Savior (1 Peter 4:12-13). Christ inspired Peter to confirm God’s conditions to receiving the Holy Spirit:

“And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so also is the Holy Spirit [which] God has given to those who obey Him*” (Acts 5:32). The Bible is clear—Christian disciples must have God’s Spirit in order to be given a divine body and existence (Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:5; 1 John 3:2-3; Hebrews 6:4-6). If we do not have God’s Spirit in us, Paul writes, we are “not His” (Romans 8:9).

God allowed Jesus to suffer to enable all human beings to become divine sons of God: “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, *in bringing many sons to glory*, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

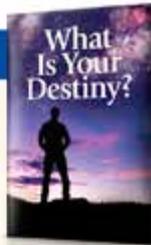
Today, 2 billion Christians desire to live forever, but most don’t meet the godly conditions that lead to the gift of the Holy Spirit and ultimately life eternal. God’s divine secret includes a down payment on divinity—now no longer a secret to you. What will you do to claim your glorious future? **GN**

### Learn More

Why were you born? Why do you exist? Does God have a plan and purpose for you? You need to understand, because nothing could be more important for you and your future! Download or request your free copy of *What Is Your Destiny?* today!

Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)



# BEYOND TODAY

## Understanding Your Future



### We live in a world focused on the now, but what hope do we have for the future?

How will our actions today affect our tomorrow? The *Beyond Today* TV program looks beyond the now and focuses on the hope of the gospel of God’s soon-coming Kingdom. Each program will help you grasp the gospel’s relevance to your life today and how it will determine your tomorrow.



Join us as we explore a variety of thought-provoking topics, showing how the Bible is an always-relevant, always-revealing guide to every aspect of life.

Learn the surprising truth about important biblical topics. Get honest answers to challenging biblical questions. Discover how to apply time-tested biblical principles—principles that will help you understand and cope with the many problems we all have to face.

View or download programs online at [www.BeyondToday.tv](http://www.BeyondToday.tv) or see the complete worldwide TV log on page 37.

[www.BeyondToday.tv](http://www.BeyondToday.tv)

# The Bible's Holy Days: Gods' Blueprint for

# Peace on Earth

History proves mankind doesn't know true peace. Yet God promises it will come. How? A series of biblical festivals shows how He will bring permanent peace to the entire world. *by Jerold Aust*

**W**hen a mighty angel announced the birth of Jesus Christ to shepherds watching over their flocks, a multitude of angels joined in praise to God and expressing God's desire for peace among human beings: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2:14).

This far-reaching angelic proclamation provides an incredible promise of permanent peace on planet earth. But how will it come about?

The sad reality of this world is that the history of humankind is a chronicle of wars. Some researchers have concluded that in all of recorded human history, the world has experienced only about 30 years of "peace" when no war was being waged. But as the famous 17th-century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza insightfully observed, peace is not just the absence of war. At such times, dissatisfaction and hatreds still afflict people, leading to more conflict.

Your Bible, in James 4:1-2, reveals where human conflicts begin: "What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it

the whole army of evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous for what others have, and you can't possess it, so you fight and quarrel to take it away from them" (Holman Christian Standard Bible).

But this is only part of the story. In addition to the greed, jealousy and selfishness inevitably leading to conflict between human beings, an invisible interloper constantly incites human warfare. Jesus Christ described this evil being, Satan the devil, as "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).

This influence and the selfish, carnal hearts of human beings is why Jesus Christ foretold that humanity would continue to experience increasing wars and rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6-7).

Today the world is still beset by war, in Afghanistan and Syria for instance, and rumors of coming war, as with North Korea and Iran. And matters will get far worse, culminating in the time when humanity will come to the very brink of extermination. In Jesus' words, "Unless that time of calamity is shortened [cut short from run-

ning its course], not a single person will survive . . ." (Matthew 24:22, New Living Translation).

Thankfully, there's good news on the horizon! That time *will* be cut short (same verse). And God has ultimately promised permanent peace for all humanity, never to be withdrawn or contested, through Christ Jesus.

The way His eternal peace will be brought to earth remains hidden from much of the world, though it is revealed throughout Scripture and in four little-understood biblical festivals—the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the final Eighth Day, sometimes called the Last Great Day.

These four festivals are sometimes referred to collectively as the Feast of Tabernacles season—the last of three harvest seasons, falling in the autumn of the year in the northern hemisphere (which includes the Holy Land). God's eternal peace is guaranteed through Christ in the symbolic meanings of these festivals, which embody God's coming peace on earth and good will toward men.

## Trumpets announces peace

This festival season begins with the Feast of Trumpets, which proclaims the return of Christ to at last establish His reign over the entire earth.

God used the sound of a blown trumpet to signal His Feast of Trumpets: “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month [of the Hebrew calendar, overlapping September and October on our modern calendars], on the first day of the month, you shall have a Sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation’” (Leviticus 23:24).

This loud noise was used to herald imminent war (Amos 3:6). Older American movie “westerns” often depicted 19th-century U.S. cavalry soldiers charging their enemies to the sound of a bugle. This blaring sound is a rousing call to arms.

The intervention of Christ in world affairs will begin not with peace but with terrible calamity and war. Revelation 8–9 and 11 presents the blowing of seven trumpets during the Day of the Lord, in which disasters and war will come on a scale never before seen.

With the last trumpet will come a wonderful announcement: “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever’” (Revelation 11:15, English Standard Version).

It will also be proclaimed then in praising God: “The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints”



The Feast of Trumpets thus begins the orderly and speedy countdown to God’s permanent peace.

### Atonement secures peace

People on earth will need a great display of power and judgment from Jesus Christ to cease from the destructive course they are on. And this will happen as Christ wages righteous war against the massed armies surrounding Jerusalem, dispatching them like grapes in a winepress (Zechariah 14:1-3; Revelation 14:14-20; 19:11-21).

Yet stopping humankind from going to war is not enough. God must also stop the unseen source of human wars operating behind the scenes—Satan the devil, the adversary or enemy of humankind (1 Peter 5:8). The Day of Atonement pictures Christ incarcerating Satan and the demons

human beings and angels (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). Satan also knows that angels were created to be ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:13-14).

Envious and hateful of God, Satan as the destroyer opposes God, attempting to thwart His plan to make human beings divine (compare Isaiah 14:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:49; Hebrews 2:10; 1 John 3:2; Jude 6).

God gave detailed instructions for the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 and 23:27-32. In Israel’s physical tabernacle and temple worship system it involved two goats to symbolically bear sins in judgment—one sacrificed in representation of Christ’s sacrifice and the other driven into an uninhabited wilderness in representation of the devil being at last banished.

The word *atonement* can be broken down as *at-one-ment*. Jesus’ last prayer to the Father was all about human beings becoming *at one* with God the Father and Christ Jesus (John 17:21-23), both in this life and the next. This will be accomplished for the world at large after Christ’s return—when people at last accept Him as Savior, receiving His atoning sacrifice, and when Satan and his demons are locked away.

As commanded in Leviticus, the observance of this Holy Day requires a total fast, going without food or drink, for 24 hours.

Fasting is effectively a gift from God—a method that enables human beings to humbly draw closer to Him and, in the right frame of mind, seek His intervention in breaking the influence of Satan over us. Jesus’ disciples asked Him why they couldn’t remove demonic influence from someone on a particular occasion. He answered, “This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21).

Fasting in this sense and the Day of Atonement look forward to the judgment of Satan and the demons—as it relates to their incarceration for 1,000 years and as a foreshadowing of their final judgment and removal after the 1,000-year period, immediately before the White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:10).

The prophet Isaiah shows how Christ’s permanent peace follows immediately after Satan’s incarceration on earth: “‘How the oppressor has ceased . . . !’ The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked . . . He who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he who ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted and no one hinders. The whole earth is [now] at rest and quiet” (Isaiah 14:4-7).

## The way God’s eternal peace will be brought to earth remains hidden from much of the world, though it’s revealed in four little-understood biblical festivals.

(verse 18). Indeed, it is at the last trumpet that the servants of God from this age will be resurrected and changed into immortal beings, crowned then to reign under Christ over the world (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 5:10; 20:4, 6).

It is because of the reign of Jesus Christ and His saints that peace will be able to come to the earth. Moreover, the last trumpet further announces Christ coming in righteous warfare against those who oppose Him. And unlike past wars, this one will lead to the snuffing out of human warfare and the threat of human annihilation.

for 1,000 years, a time known as the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3).

Satan, the great deceiver of mankind from whom emanates the perverted thinking that leads to conflict and violence, the interloper who palms himself off as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), is behind all human wars.

Satan knows the ultimate rewards God intends for human beings, and he hates us because of that. He knows God promises us the gift of eternal life, to be made divine, as God’s very sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:18; Hebrews 2:10), and to judge both



The Day of Atonement prophetically marks the time when Jesus Christ begins to establish His glorious and permanent peace throughout the earth, with absolutely no opposition from evil spirits.

## Tabernacles is peace

The Feast of Tabernacles, which follows a few days later, depicts and reflects the unprecedented peace and unparalleled prosperity humanity will one day experience.

God codified this great feast of peace, as He did all His annual festivals, in Leviticus 23 (see verses 33-43). The Feast of Tabernacles lasts for seven days, a number in the Bible that relates to completion and perfection. Christ will for 1,000 years teach and transform human beings, lovingly judging them and leading them to perfection or maturity so they can receive God's gift of eternal life (Hebrews 8:10-12).

The pervasiveness of God's peace will rapidly promote unparalleled prosperity, as spelled out in scriptures like the following:

- "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [His global realm], for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).
- "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).
- "The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" (Isaiah 35:1).
- "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it" (Amos 9:13).
- "So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden'" (Ezekiel 36:35).
- "And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16).

Here the Feast of Tabernacles is as the Feast of Peace—all humanity coming to keep this great feast specifically depicting God's coming peace on earth.

The fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles will fulfill God's promise to mankind heralded by the angels at Jesus' birth:

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to men."

At the end of this glorious time, Satan will be released for a brief period to deceive the nations anew—and, sadly, he will succeed in leading a great multitude into mounting a final battle against Christ and His saints. But this, the final attempt at war, will be short-lived as God swiftly sends fire to consume those involved in the assault. Satan and his demons will be taken out of the picture for good (Revelation 20:7-10), and peace will be restored.

## The Eighth Day continues peace

The glorious peaceful setting of the Millennium won't end with this satanic rebellion. There's one more annual festival that projects even greater news beyond what the Feast of Tabernacles represents!

God has planned a much greater harvest

## You too can enjoy and exhibit God's peace on earth by learning about and keeping all of God's holy festivals.

of human beings beyond the Millennium, referred to in your Bible as the time of "the rest of the dead" (a *second* resurrection following the *first* resurrection of the saints at Christ's return) as well as the White Throne Judgment (see Revelation 20:4-6; 11-13). It correlates with a festival immediately following the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles called simply the Eighth Day.

According to Leviticus 23, we are to observe "the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD . . . *On the eighth day* you shall have a holy convocation . . . It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it . . . You shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and *on the eighth day* a sabbath-rest" (verses 34, 36, 39).

This Eighth Day, a separate festival from the Feast of Tabernacles, symbolizes the ultimate gathering in of the greatest harvest of human lives, including all who have ever lived and died from the time of Adam to Christ's return.

God reveals aspects of the fulfillment of this Holy Day in Ezekiel 37:1-14, describing ancient Israel's resurrection to physical existence, and Revelation 20:11-13, which shows that they, along with those resurrected of all nations, will be judged from God's Word. At long last, these vast numbers of people who never understood God's

truth will have the opportunity to learn it and make the choice as to whether or not to follow Christ and be saved.

Jesus Christ's 1,000-year reign and His White Throne Judgment reign are equally set in great beauty, peace and prosperity. The setting is the same, yet the people are different—now including all the others who have ever lived.

As all learn to follow God's ways and, for those who remain faithful, are ultimately transformed into Christ's divine likeness, this wonderful day to come continues God's peace on earth, His will toward mankind.

## God's will is to share His peace

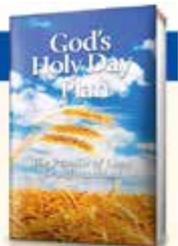
God is all about peace. He is the "God of peace" (Romans 15:33; Philippians 4:9). Jesus Christ is the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). He told His disciples, "Peace

I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). And God offers His peace still today: "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

You too can enjoy and exhibit God's peace on earth by learning about and keeping all of God's holy festivals, including the festivals that portray the wonderful and exciting world that is coming. Why not join us in observing the Feast of Tabernacles? His Feast of Peace portrays the promise of the ages—the promise of a world at peace. **GN**

## Learn More

Most people are unaware of God's Holy Days and festivals found in the Bible, yet Scripture shows that Jesus Christ, the apostles and the early Church celebrated them. Astonishingly, as touched on in this article, they reveal God's plan for bringing salvation to all humanity! You need to learn about these biblical festivals and what they mean for you. Request or download your free copy of *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind* today!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)

# GOD, Science & the Bible

## Higgs Boson: Evidence for Universe's Fine-Tuning

It made big news when, on July 4, 2012, scientists of the European nuclear research organization CERN announced with a 99.99 percent certainty that they had found the elusive Higgs boson, the last particle needed to confirm the theory of the Standard Model of particle physics.

"The discovery," says *The Economist* magazine, "puts the finishing flourish on the Standard Model, the best explanation to date for how the universe works—except in the domain of gravity, which is governed by the general theory of relativity" ("The Higgs Boson: Gotcha!" July 7, 2012, p. 71).

Of the 17 particles the theory predicted, 16 had been found. But it took decades and billions of dollars invested in the Large Hadron Collider, a 17-mile circular tunnel on the border of Switzerland and France, to finally pin down this last particle—the Higgs boson.

What is also remarkable is the precision of the calculations behind the discovery. The constants of the universe, the very laws governing physics as we know it, can be stated in mathematical equations to the point where the approximate location and mass of the Higgs boson were found. Yet elation has given way to a reluctant admission—and thoughts of throwing out what's been found.

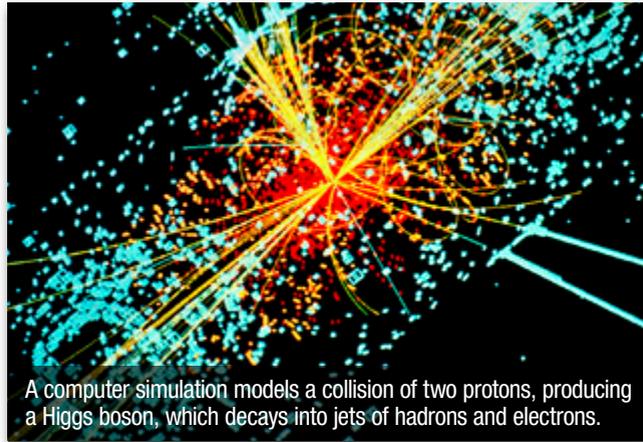
As *The Economist* explains: "One problem [with the Higgs discovery] is that, as it stands, the [Standard] model requires its 20 or so constants to be exactly what they are to an *uncomfortable 32 decimal places*. Insert different values and the upshot is nonsensical predictions, like phenomena occurring with a likelihood of more than 100%" (p. 72, emphasis added throughout).

It is mindboggling to contemplate this incredible degree of required cosmic fine-tuning. Why would scientists be "uncomfortable" with it? Because it logically leads to the best explanation of the facts—that an ultra-intelligent Mind engineered and orchestrated all of it!

In fact, most scientists today are evolutionists who won't allow the subject of God to enter the conversation. As Harvard biologist Richard Lewontin once admitted: "'We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a *commitment to materialism* [rejection of the existence of anything divine or supernatural]."

"It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material

explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori [pre-sumptive] adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, *that materialism is an absolute,*



A computer simulation models a collision of two protons, producing a Higgs boson, which decays into jets of hadrons and electrons.

for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door" ("Billions and Billions of Demons," *The New York Review*, Jan. 9, 1997, p. 31).

Consequently, they have to come up with scenarios for which there is zero evidence, such as the multiverse theory. This bizarre idea envisions some type of cosmic factory spitting out a practically infinite number of randomly tuned universes to justify ours as one that just happens to have all the right properties—a universe with its governing constants calibrated to 32 decimal places! Does that sound reasonable or scientific? Of course not. It is clinging to *blind faith against a Creator*.

Notice how scientists are reacting to the "uncomfortable" implications of the Higgs discovery in terms of the universe's fine tuning. *The Economist* states: "Nature *could*, of course, turn out to be this fastidious. But physicists have learned to take the *need* for such fine-tuning, as the precision fiddling is known in the argot [special vocabulary], as a *sign* that something important is *missing* from their picture of the world. One way to look *beyond* the Standard Model is to *question* the Higgs's status as an elementary particle" (p. 72).

Yes, despite finding what they've long been looking for to verify the Standard Model, the proposal is made to pitch the Higgs boson and the Model. Why? Because, as with other findings of cosmic fine tuning, *random chance is shown to be an impossible explanation*—unacceptably allowing a "Divine Foot in the door."

As with other false religionists, modern scientists suppress the truth and deny reality. The Bible

describes them this way:

"For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and

divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made.

"As a result, people are without excuse. For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools . . ." (Romans 1:18-22, Holman Christian Standard Bible).

Thankfully, a few scientists have courageously faced the facts. For example, Robin Collins speaks openly about the fine-tuning of the earth this way:

"I like to use the analogy of astronauts landing on Mars and finding an enclosed

biosphere, sort of like the domed structure that was built in Arizona a few years ago. At the control panel they find that all the dials for its environment are set just right for life. The oxygen ratio is perfect; the temperature is seventy degrees; the humidity is fifty percent; there's a system for replenishing the air; there are systems for producing food, generating energy, and disposing of wastes.

"Each dial has a huge range of possible settings, and you can see if you were to adjust one or more of them just a little bit, the environment would go out of whack and life would be impossible" (quoted by Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, 2004, p. 130).

Everything is just right for us to live comfortably on this planet, and the cosmic laws operating around us are also precisely set to make our lives physically possible.

This is clear evidence of the marvelous Designer who has set the whole system up with its amazingly finely-tuned physical laws—the Higgs boson appearing to be one of the needed particles to understand this carefully constructed cosmic jigsaw puzzle of physical properties.

All of this should be cause for great humility. As the young man Elihu challenged the patriarch Job in Job 37:16, "Do you know how the clouds are balanced, those wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?"

God has designed the great balance we see everywhere at every level. Let us all, in the words of verse 14, "stand still and consider the wondrous works of God."

—Mario Seiglie



## Whom Would Jesus Christ Choose to Be a **World Leader?**



America faces enormous challenges as it counts down the days to another presidential election. Considering the current national state of affairs, whom would Jesus Christ choose for high office? *by Rod Hall*

**T**he United States is entering the final weeks of a hotly contested presidential election. The outcome will likely have a major impact on the direction of the country and America's position in the world.

Before making a major decision many professing Christians like to ask themselves, "What would Jesus do?" In this case, we might phrase it, "Whom would Jesus choose to run the government?"

The American political landscape has changed substantially since the republic's first president, George Washington, was unanimously elected in 1792. Presidential campaigns have evolved into a series of fiercely fought and often contentious contests.

Every four years, from caucuses and primaries to conventions and ballots, candidates take to the streets, airwaves and Internet to make their case. Both Democrats and Republicans are spending millions of

dollars in what is likely to become the most expensive campaign in history.

They offer two competing and vastly different visions of America. Pollsters are showing a tight race where the leading issue has become how to fix the struggling economy.

### Deep divisions in the nation

Today's political environment is characterized by stubborn partisanship and ongoing polarization that has drawn constant criticism from voters and pundits alike. With little to say that is positive, both parties are seeking votes with largely negative campaigns that tout the high stakes involved.

Republicans are courting their base and counting on voters that are not too keen on Mitt Romney to be galvanized by a sharp anti-President Obama message. Meanwhile, Democrats hope that the pro-Obama voters of 2012 who have become somewhat disen-

chanted can be kept in the fold by the prospect of a Republican president and Congress.

According to the latest polls, about half of voters approve of President Obama's performance, meaning half also disapprove. The growing political divide in the country has sparked increased turnouts in the last two presidential elections and may do the same this time around.

Some expect the number who will vote in the Nov. 6 election to exceed the 131 million people who voted four years ago, the highest since 1968. That amounted to just under 57 percent of the adult population.

One thing that seems certain in this election is that many voters won't necessarily be voting *for* a particular candidate, but instead will be voting *against* the one they dislike most.

### Governance by gridlock

The United States constitution—the longest-surviving written charter of government—came into operation in 1789 as the supreme law of the land and guides American society in law and political culture. America's Founding Fathers purposely framed the constitution to set up a divided government so as to prevent any one person or branch of government from gaining too much power.

The first three articles of the constitution establish the three branches of government—the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. One could argue that it was set up to be deliberately inefficient so as to prevent the majority from being able to trample the rights of the minority.

So perhaps it's natural that the vast majority of Americans feel the legislative branch (Congress) has degenerated into a cumbersome and inefficient pattern of gridlock. Recent polls place congressional job approval at only 10 percent, with 83 percent disapproving. With more negative advertising on the way in the closing weeks of campaigning, approval ratings will likely drop even further.

And the sad reality is that no matter how

hard the Founding Fathers tried to create a system of governance that was foolproof, it doesn't solve the underlying problem—which is that imperfect and fallible human beings are running it.

### Whom would Jesus pick to put in power?

In light of the growing divide within the nation and its government, the person elected to office will face the daunting tasks of trying to bring more unity and economic growth. So what method would Jesus use in evaluating the best candidate for the job of government leader?

He has definite points of view regarding the issues facing governments. His perspective is based on the laws God established as the framework for how mankind must live to lead happy, productive and balanced lives. Christ would support only potential leaders or platforms if and when they were aligned with those laws.

A big problem now facing us is that polit-

advocating that we vote for a candidate supporting such.

Instead, Jesus Christ's focus would be the same as it was nearly 2,000 years ago. He would do His Father's work of calling and training a group of followers to help build His *future* righteous government. And He would be actively proclaiming the gospel—the good news—that *His* government, His *coming Kingdom*, is the *only real hope* for good governance and true peace on earth.

### God's perspective on nations and leadership

We can take comfort in knowing that God does at times choose national leaders even in this age. The prophet Daniel witnessed this firsthand. He said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons [the eras and events of history]; He removes kings and raises up kings [including presidents, prime ministers, dictators, etc.]; He gives wisdom

how they obeyed His instructions (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).

Sometimes God *removes* leaders for various reasons. A good example can be found when He caused calamity to befall King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and drove him out of office because of his arrogance and lack of respect for God's authority over him (Daniel 4:8-33).

Also, the types of people God chooses may sometimes surprise you. The dream that depicted Nebuchadnezzar's downfall was given "in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men" (Daniel 4:17).

At other times God may simply allow people to get whom they want and then live with the consequences, such as those spelled out in 1 Samuel 8:7-20. And sometimes He may just let time and chance play out (Ecclesiastes 9:11). God also ensures

His prophetic Word is fulfilled by raising up specific leaders as needed to guide a country or people in the direction He has prophesied.

For example, over the last 200 years God placed in power many of the right leaders at the right time in Britain and America to bring the blessings promised to Joseph and his modern descendants through his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48; 49:22-26).

He also backed their leadership by providing many of the national bless-

ings that were prophesied. (To learn more details of how this occurred, download or request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Sadly, He also promises to permit the kind of leadership that will bring the punishment decreed on these nations for drifting away from Him and His teachings.

### A coming new world order

The good news is that the United States and the entire world will soon experience leadership unlike anything we have ever seen—for Jesus Christ Himself will return to earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16). He will not need to be voted into office to exercise His



The U.S. Capitol, the White House and the Supreme Court building represent the three branches of the U.S. government.

## No matter how hard the Founding Fathers tried to create a system of governance that was foolproof, it doesn't solve the underlying problem—which is that imperfect human beings are running it.

ical platforms are often a complicated array of different agendas and strategies that often do not align with godly principles. In fact, there is *no* political party, party platform or candidate that has an agenda fully compatible with all biblical teaching.

This means Jesus Christ would not belong to *any* particular political party. He cannot be pigeonholed as a liberal, moderate or conservative—or as a Republican, Democrat or Independent—as defined by today's political world.

While He might from time to time support specific issues, policies and practices, it would only be *if they were aligned with God's will*. But He would not be an activist pushing any humanly devised agenda or

to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding" (Daniel 2:20-21).

God's perspective is so much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). And He has a master plan that He is working out here below that we may not fully understand (1 Corinthians 13:12).

God considers many factors when choosing leaders. He looks at the broad sweep of history, His prophetic timetable and His specific plans for peoples and nations.

At times specific leaders are put in place for them to move a government or society in a particular direction. This was often done when God provided specific judges and kings for ancient Israel. He then blessed or cursed the leaders and people according to



leadership abilities and form a new government. The Kingdom of God will come to earth not *because of human efforts but in spite of human efforts to stop it* (Revelation 17:14).

Jesus has promised to return to save us from the corruption of human leadership, which will produce a terrifying time in which, if He did not return to intervene, the human race would be faced with extinction (Matthew 24:21-22).

The message from both history and the Bible is clear—we human beings *are incapable of rightly governing ourselves*. We

need a perfect ruler—specifically Jesus Christ to show us how to establish the world's first truly great society.

When Christ establishes *His* new world order, it will dramatically surpass the most optimistic visions loudly proclaimed by politicians throughout the tiresome ebb and flow of history. And unlike their failed promises, all Christ's promises and Bible prophecies regarding His Kingdom will be completely enacted under His caring hand.

Notice this vision of life on earth under His government as described in Micah 4:1-4: "Now it shall come to pass in the latter

days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

"He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall

## Would Americans Choose Jesus Christ as President?

If Jesus Christ were running for president, would the American people elect Him to the highest office in the land? What kind of leader would He be? What platform and constitution would He adopt?

Jesus Christ's leadership skills are world-renowned, and He remains one of the most respected leaders of all time. He is the ultimate model of right leadership.

He is uncompromising but compassionate, diligent but patient, knowledgeable but understanding, fervent but sympathetic, persevering but persuadable, determined but easily entreated, persuasive but not dictatorial, hospitable but not invasive, and self-controlled but not self-righteous.

He is the perfect leader with perfect integrity, compassion and love for all mankind (John 3:16). He clothes Himself with perfect ethics, virtue, truthfulness and moral righteousness. He treats others the way any of us would want to be treated, with equal fairness, compassion and concern for all (Luke 6:31). He cares for the plight of the widows, elderly and disadvantaged (James 1:27).

His willingness to sacrifice Himself for the betterment of those under His rule was dramatically established when He voluntarily followed through with His and His Father's plan to offer up His own life for the sins of all mankind (Hebrews 7:26-28; Revelation 13:8; Hebrews 12:2).

He resolutely confirmed His unwavering loyalty to God, His government and His master plan while being cross examined by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate just before He was sentenced to a brutal scourging and painful death. "My kingdom is not of this world," He told Pilate. "If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight . . . but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36).

With these kinds of leadership skills and a platform based on biblical principles, He would boldly move society in a new, more righteous and godly direction (Matthew 5:17-19).

### Christ's platform and constitution

If Jesus Christ's leadership abilities did propel Him into office, He would permanently change the intent and nature of government by drafting a new constitution.

It would be designed to fulfill the ultimate purpose God has in mind for every man and woman—spiritual transformation in preparation of becoming the governing leaders in His future Kingdom.

This underlying theme would become the guiding force behind all social, educational and institutional policies and procedures. As the new constitution was enacted, governance would dramatically change in several important ways.

Today's political environment of stubborn partisanship and polarization would evaporate into attitudes of respect and cooperation (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Titus 3:1-2). Political discourse would become civil (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Policy initiatives and procedures would be streamlined to make them faster to adopt and implement (1 Corinthians 14:33). Decisions would be made for the benefit of the people, not for political expediency, furthering one's chances for reelection or advancing special interest groups' agendas (John 3:16-17). Abuse of power would not be tolerated (Matthew 20:25-26).



### Vote for Christ?

What a contrast to political leadership today! Having Jesus Christ as the perfect leader with a constitution designed to implement the perfect system of government may sound too good to be true. But could it ever happen in America?

Sadly, when you examine the electoral process and the priorities of the American people in selecting their president, you find them standing in stark contrast to the platform Jesus would advocate.

Today many voters demand that an electable leader be in agreement with them on a whole range of issues. They want sexual freedom between consenting adults, freedom to abort unwanted children, freedom to have easy access to divorce, total freedom of speech including taking God's name in vain, freedom to choose their own religion or no religion at all, and freedom to select various forms of entertainment that are often drenched with violence and sex—like many of our movies, music, books, television programs and Internet sites.

However, Jesus Christ would support the interests of the electorate only if those interests were aligned with biblical laws and principles and were in the best interests of all concerned.

He would never compromise His values with political maneuvers or false promises in order to get into office. He proved this when He turned down Satan's offer to become ruler of the world in exchange for just one compromise (Matthew 4:8-10).

When you add it all up, it is obvious that Americans in general would reject Christ's platform and constitution and would not tolerate having Him in the White House.

Even some professing Christians would take offense at policies based on the Ten Commandments since they think God's grace somehow does away with the need to obey them. Certainly people of other faiths, or those with no faith, would take exception.

While Jesus Christ would be unacceptable to them, it's ironic that most Americans would accept an atheist as president, as a recent Gallup poll revealed.

# If You Like *The Good News*, You'll Love Our Website!

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; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken."

As His way of life spreads around the globe, a happy society will emerge, with peace, love and joy blossoming like a rose. Human development and opportunities will flourish (Isaiah 9:6-7).

And at long last, the underlying problem of every human government will be changed—selfish, self-serving human beings will be transformed as more and more are able to answer the question "What would Jesus do?" (see Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 31:34).

## Is God electing you?

While Jesus Christ will usher in His government soon, He may be calling *you* to be elected—chosen—right now. This election is not by the people or political delegates and is far more important than being elected president of the United States.

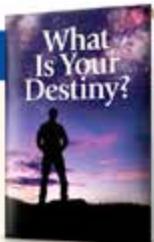
The apostle Peter explains, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure . . . for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10-11).

You can be elected by God now to one of the most important and crucial positions in the land—the position of a Christian. True Christians, explained the apostle Paul, are "ambassadors for Christ"—His representatives on earth here and now, representing His Kingdom and way of life.

In addition, those who are His true servants prepare themselves to be the kind of rulers He will be. As He promises in Revelation 3:21, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." This is the awesome future He wants to share with you! **GN**

## Learn More

Many people believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth. But few understand *why* He will return and what He will do once He is here. Just what does this have to do with *you* and all those who faithfully serve Him? You need to know! Be sure to download or request your free copy of the booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* to understand!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

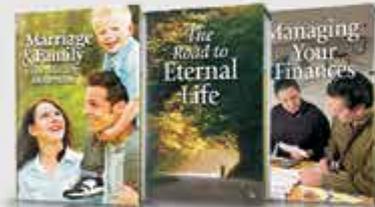
[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)



You won't believe all the great things you'll discover at *The Good News* website at [www.GNmagazine.org](http://www.GNmagazine.org)!

You'll find past issues of *The Good News*, each packed with articles about world trends and events, family and social issues, prophecy in the news and *The Good News'* eye-opening, in-depth perspective of the Bible. Discover articles about creation and evolution, profiles of biblical personalities, proofs of the Bible and much, much more!

Explore our large library of booklets covering a wide variety of biblical, family and social issues and themes. Take a look at our publications in other languages—Spanish, German, Italian,

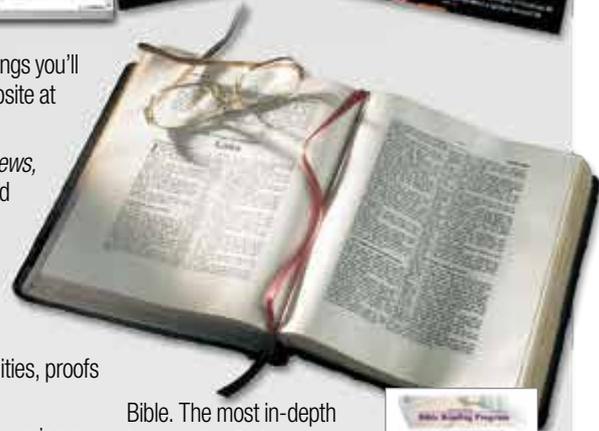


French and Dutch, to name a few (and feel free to share them with a friend overseas).

Use our search tool so you can find material on any subject you want—marriage, family, biblical teachings, current events, prophecy, you name it. Feel free to download all these to your own computer so you can study them in depth, or request your own printed copies to be mailed right to your home!

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](http://www.VCMagazine.org)) and *Vertical Thought*. You'll find them filled with helpful, eye-opening articles much like those you enjoy in *The Good News*.

Our sister website, [www.ucg.org](http://www.ucg.org), is packed with an astounding amount of information about the



Bible. The most in-depth is our online Bible commentary, a study that takes you on a chapter-by-chapter journey of discovery through the Bible with supplementary reading and graphic aids such as charts and maps to open up your understanding of the Scriptures as never before.

You'll also find answers to frequently asked Bible questions, helpful study guides on dozens of biblical topics, and so much more!

You can also listen to or download sermons, presentations and TV programs done by many of *The Good News* writers. We hope you'll visit us today to discover what you've been missing!



visit [www.GNmagazine.org](http://www.GNmagazine.org) today!



## Behind the Headlines

# Is the Stage Being Set for the Fulfillment of Daniel 11?

Daniel 11 contains a long and detailed prophecy, largely fulfilled between the time of Alexander the Great and Jesus Christ. But part of the prophecy remains to be fulfilled “at the time of the end.” Recent events appear to be setting the stage for the fulfillment of this pivotal prophecy. *by Melvin Rhodes*

**A** remarkable prophecy in the book of Daniel is now, due to recent events, closer to fulfillment.

Daniel was a young Jewish noble who was exiled to Babylon during one of his country’s invasions by the forces of King Nebuchadnezzar. Taken captive from his home around 605 B.C., Daniel remained in Babylon until its fall in 539 B.C., living on into the conquering Medo-Persian Empire.

God revealed a great deal to Daniel about forthcoming events, right down through the ages to the second coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

In chapters 2 and 7 of his book we read prophecies about four great successive empires of the ancient world beginning with his time—Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.

In chapter 9 we see the “70 weeks” prophecy that foretold exactly when Jesus Christ would begin His ministry in A.D. 27.

In chapter 11 we read a detailed prophecy that begins with Persian rulers and then moves on to Alexander the Great, one of the most significant figures in ancient history. Daniel died about 200 years before Alexander appeared on the world scene, and when Alexander arrived in Jerusalem, the priests showed him the book of Daniel and its statements about a Greek ruler who would conquer the Persians, and he saw himself as the person intended (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 11, chap. 8).

When Alexander died, his empire, as foretold, was in time divided into four parts, each ruled by one of his generals. Two are

of great biblical significance—the Ptolemaic Empire, ruled from Alexandria in Egypt to the south of Jerusalem, and the Seleucid Empire, ruled from Antioch to the north.

The leaders of these two dynasties are called the king of the North and the king of the South, respectively, in Daniel’s prophecy. The conflicts and intrigues that took place between them in the 150 years following the death of Alexander were fulfilled exactly as prophesied in Daniel 11 (which you can read about in our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*).

Then suddenly the prophecy shifts in relating details of the middle of the second century B.C.—then giving statements of dual application, bringing events forward to the time of the New Testament Church and the Roman Empire. After a few verses, the prophecy jumps forward to the modern era. Verse 40 begins with the words, “At the time of the end . . .”

Why this jump of 2,000 years? And how are recent developments bringing us closer to what was foretold?

### Prophecy revolves around the people of Israel

Remember the prophecy was about the kings of the North and of the South—that is, north and south of Jerusalem, the center of Bible prophecy. The future God revealed to Daniel was essentially about his own people, the Jews—and of how these two powers would affect them, culminating in the “abomination of desolation,” the desecration of the temple committed by Antiochus Epiphanes (the king of the

North) in about 167 B.C.

A century later the territory of the king of the North was conquered by the Roman Empire. Later, both the Jews and the lands of the Ptolemies were also subjugated by Rome.

The Jews revolted against the Romans and were crushed in A.D. 70, with Jerusalem razed and the temple destroyed. They revolted again in 132-135 and were again defeated. This time, the Romans banned the Jews from setting foot in Jerusalem anymore. The Jews, cut off from their holy city and destroyed temple, were then dispersed throughout the known world.

It wasn’t until the 20th century that the prophecy at the end of Daniel 11 could be fulfilled.

### The reshaping of the Middle East

Toward the end of the 19th century, Jewish zealots known as Zionists envisioned the restoration of the Jewish nation in their ancestral homeland. In 1917, during World War I, Great Britain, then the world’s most powerful nation, promised the Jews a homeland. Following World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, the British were given a mandate to rule Palestine under authority of the League of Nations, predecessor of the United Nations.

At the end of World War II, faced with a number of conflicts, the British informed the UN that they were pulling out of Palestine. A UN vote resulted in the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel in May 1948.

This monumental event meant that many biblical prophecies relating to the time of the end and the coming of the Messiah could now be fulfilled. Bible prophecy is clear—there had to be a Jewish nation in the years leading up to Christ’s return.

The birth of the Jewish state was not the only significant development in the Middle East that followed the two world wars. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire resulted in profound change to the political

map of the region, with the establishment of 22 independent Arab nations.

The establishment of the nation of Israel resulted immediately in attempts by neighboring countries to destroy it. Frustrated at the failure of five Arab armies to throttle the nation of Israel at its birth, Egyptian army officers blamed their king, Farouk, and overthrew him in a coup in 1952.

Farouk wasn't the only pro-Western king overthrown. Iraq and Libya saw the

end of the Ottoman Empire in 1924.

## Dreams of a restored caliphate

The word *caliph* means “successor”—that is, a successor of Muhammad, who founded the Islamic religion in the A.D. 620s. The word *caliphate* means “dominion of a caliph” and refers to the first system of government established in Islam after the death of Muhammad. The caliphate encompassed much of the Middle East and was

would unite Sunni Muslims from Spain, right across North Africa through the Middle East to Indonesia, the world's most populous Islamic country. Al-Qaeda is just one of many Islamic groups that want to see the caliphate restored.

Again, although Western media and governments have been enthusiastic about the collapse of the great Arab dictators in recent months, the fact is that democratic elections invariably result in victories for the Islamists.

At present, the media is again enthusiastic about the potential fall of a dictator, Syria's Bashar al-Assad—overlooking the fact that his fall will likely mean an Islamic government will take over. While Assad belongs to the minority Alawites, an offshoot of Shia Islam, the majority Sunnis would gain control, helping bring the revived caliphate even closer.

We should remember that, in February 1958, under Arab nationalist leaders, Egypt and Syria united to form the United Arab Republic. It ended in September 1961 following a military coup in Syria.

Bible prophecy shows there will be another king of the South at the time of the end. An Islamic caliphate, uniting hundreds of millions of Sunni Muslims, would certainly fulfill this prophecy. This has become more likely with the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

Many Muslims also believe in the imminent arrival of a figure they call *al-Mahdi*, an Islamic messiah who will help establish Islam as the supreme and dominant religion of the world. The followers of *al-Mahdi* believe it's their duty to initiate a period of chaos leading to conflict between Islam and the West, out of which Islam will rise to dominate the world.

Either figure—*al-Mahdi* or the leader of an Islamic caliphate (or perhaps they could be one and the same)—seems to be a likely candidate to be the end-time king of the South foretold by the prophet Daniel so many centuries ago.

## “At the time of the end”

Daniel 11:40 begins the last phase of Daniel's prophecy and is set “at the time of the end.” This refers to the time immediately prior to Jesus Christ's second coming.

“At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind . . .”

Who is the king of the North mentioned here?



## Bible prophecy shows there will be another king of the South at the time of the end. An Islamic caliphate, uniting hundreds of millions of Muslims, has become more likely with the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

overthrow of their own kings. Radical Arab nationalist dictators took over in all three countries and elsewhere in the region. But the Arab nationalist dictators failed to deliver. After decades of misrule they left their people backward, behind the rest of the world, and in many cases even worse off than before—all while hated Israel thrived in comparison. The long-entrenched Arab dictators lost all credibility.

Enter the “Arab Spring” of 2011. Violent revolutions overthrew dictators across the region. Western media gushed about the rise of democracy in the Middle East.

But Western-style democracy was not to be. Democratic elections in country after country have resulted in Islamic fundamentalists gaining power. These religious zealots are anti-Western and anti-Israel. They also want to see the restoration of the Islamic caliphate, which continued from the death of Muhammad in A.D. 632 until the

united by its common Islamic beliefs within the Muslim *ummah* (community of Muslim believers).

In other words, it was a theocratic state that united all Muslims under one leader.

Four great dynasties were to rule the caliphate—the Umayyad, Abbasid and Fatimid dynasties followed by the Ottoman dynasty, which ended less than a century ago. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire has led to a sorely divided Islamic world.

Nostalgia for unity helps drive those who want to restore the caliphate. The city of Cairo, Egypt's capital, was founded by the Fatimid dynasty in the 10th century, when most of North Africa and parts of the Middle East were under one caliphate (A.D. 909-1171).

There has been no caliphate since the declaration of a secular Turkish Republic in 1924.

This has not deterred Islamic fundamentalists who want a revived caliphate that



To understand, we need to go back in history and see what happened to the Seleucid dynasty and its successors that were the ancient kings of the North.

In 63 B.C. the territories of the Seleucids were taken over by the Roman Empire, conquered by the Roman military leader Pompey. It thus became part of the Roman Empire for many centuries. The revived king of the North, soon to be upon us, will be from a successor to the Roman Empire. Lest you think that odd, read on.

In Daniel 2 and 7 we read of a succession of major powers prophesied to succeed the Babylonian Empire in which Daniel served in exile.

In Daniel 7:5 we read of the Persian Empire symbolized by a bear, and in verse 6 we read of the Greek empire of Alexander the Great pictured by a leopard, symbolic of the speed with which Alexander's army conquered much of the ancient world. Finally, in verses 7-8, we read of the Roman Empire, which would not conquer the Jews until five centuries after God's revelations to Daniel.

Verse 8 says this empire would have "ten horns," revivals of the empire down through history. At the end of the verse we see a religious element introduced: "Another horn, a little one, coming up among them . . . And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words." A horn in Bible prophecy is symbolic of rule and dominion.

History shows us that out of the Roman Empire came the ruling power of the Roman Catholic Church. Whereas the empire itself was described as a "beast" (verse 7; Revelation 13:1-4), the church is described as "the image of the beast" (Revelation 13:15). History shows that the church simply took over the former administrative governance structure and regions of the empire after the fall of Rome in A.D. 476.

Since the fall of the Roman Empire more than 15 centuries ago, there have been a number of attempts to resurrect it. Justinian, Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles V, Napoleon, and Hitler along with Mussolini all tried to unite Europe as a revived Roman Empire. All succeeded to varying degrees for a time.

Bible prophecy shows we will see yet another attempt, which will also be short-lived.

"The ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour [a short time] as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their

power and authority to the beast. They will make war with the Lamb [Jesus Christ] . . ." (Revelation 17:12-14).

The last few words clearly show that this joining together of 10 "kings"—leaders of nations or groups of nations who give their sovereignty to a single individual also called "the Beast"—is yet future, lasting from the time immediately prior to Christ's return to just after.

### Big changes afoot in Europe

Considering today's headlines, most people assume Europe is falling apart. Is that so?

Well, yes and no.

The European currency, the euro, has been in serious trouble for some time, though it has maintained a value of approximately \$1.25 at the time of writing. That the currency sustains a value in excess of the American dollar shows there is considerable demand for it.

Europe's currency crisis has highlighted the need for closer European integration, the realization being that only a single central government can solve the problems confronting the European Union.

To this end, "Ten EU foreign ministers participating in a 'study group for the future of Europe' aim to exert pressure to transform the EU into a federation along the lines of the US. Together they have prepared what the front-page headline in *Die Presse* describes as a 'Plan for transformation into a European state'" (Presseurop, "Ten Countries for a United States of Europe," June 20, 2012).

The ten countries are Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain.

Another European news source hinted at pressure being applied from Berlin. German-Foreign-Policy.com reported in a June 25, 2012, article titled "All or Nothing": "Just days before the opening of the EU crisis summit at the end of the week, the German government is increasing its pressure on the crisis ridden Euro countries to surrender their national sovereignty. The German finance minister rudely rejected Italy's demands to receive the badly needed help, without having to concede its sovereignty. Germany recently turned down similar Spanish efforts.

"The measures are part of a comprehensive program to consolidate German hegemony over the continent, under the motto of converting the 'European integration' into a state-like Euro zone structure, based on the right of interference in national budgets of

the economically weaker countries.

"Around the globe, the protest against Berlin's austerity dictate is growing, because the German government's power plays are driving not only European crisis countries into impoverishment but are also threatening to critically damage the global economy."

When this union comes together under one central authority, the world will see the fulfillment of biblical prophecy—a revived Roman Empire and end-time king of the North.

And coming together at approximately the same time we will see the revived king of the South, a united Muslim power, possibly dominated by Egypt.

Then, as Daniel 11:40 states, "the king of the south will attack him" (or "push at him"—translations vary). The "him" is the king of the North. And the reaction of the king of the North is swift and decisive: "And the King of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen and with many ships"—a major military force, in other words.

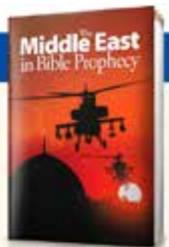
There is also a religious dimension. The caliphate, if restored, will be Islamic. And the king of the North will be allied with a revived and rejuvenated Roman Church.

It's worthy of note that most of the 10 nations mentioned above whose foreign ministers are pushing to form a single federal state have large Catholic majorities. We should also remember that the Church of Rome has been instrumental in past centuries in uniting Europe to confront a strong Islamic foe.

The events we are seeing now, in Europe as well as the Middle East and Africa, are leading up to the fulfillment of biblical prophecies recorded for us up to 2,600 years ago. Will we—will you—pay heed? **GN**

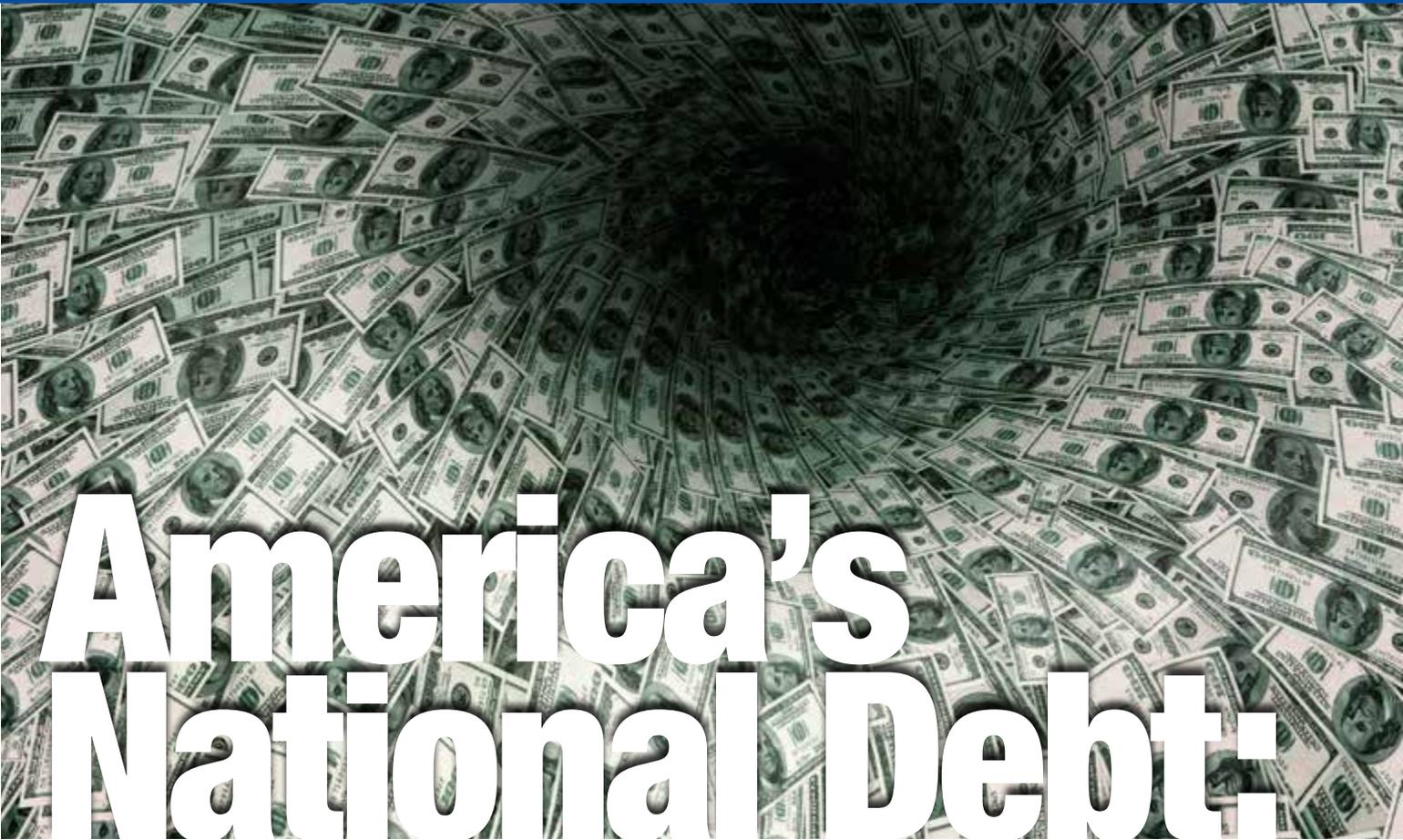
### Learn More

Never before has it been more important to understand what's taking place in the world around us. Momentous changes are reshaping the world before our eyes. What does it mean, and how does it fit in Bible prophecy? You need to know! Download or request our free booklets *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, both free for the asking from our office nearest you.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)



# America's National Debt: Growing With No End in Sight

In the last few months and years the United States has racked up some impressive records, but none of them are good. Its debt is exploding at unprecedented rates. What's behind the problem, and where is it leading? *by Mike Kelley*

**A**merica's fixation with the slug-fest between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney and the looming presidential election obscures a huge but little-noticed milestone. Well before Election Day, the debt of the United States will surpass the U.S. economy's entire national output, or gross domestic product (GDP).

You read that right. America's national debt, at \$15.79 trillion at mid-year, has surpassed the *entire* output of the sluggish U.S. economy. And it's still growing fast.

This has happened only once before in U.S. history. In the all-out effort to defeat Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in World War II, the United States racked up a national debt that exceeded the nation's yearly output. But that debt was quickly repaid following the war, as millions of

U.S. soldiers returned home and found jobs in an economy that quickly turned from a war footing to domestic consumption. With a booming economy, the debt stabilized and fell rapidly as a percentage of GDP until, by 1973, the debt had shrunk to 26 percent of GDP.

But that's not happening today. Instead, expenditures for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, interest on the national debt and other aspects of federal spending keep growing with no end in sight. An increasingly polarized Congress, embroiled in election-year politics, seems powerless to make the policy changes needed to stop the hemorrhage of red ink.

## **An unprecedented debt binge**

Most Americans seem unaware of just how fast the debt has grown. In 1950,

five years after the end of World War II, the national debt was only \$260 billion. The debt grew to \$5.7 trillion or about 40 percent of GDP by 2000, fueled by the Vietnam War in the 1970s, major defense spending increases in the 1980s and rising numbers of Americans retiring and drawing Social Security and Medicare.

Since 2000, however, the debt growth rate has exploded, the result of massive expenditures in response to the September 2001 terrorist attacks and huge deficit spending to stimulate the U.S. economy beginning in 2008. From fiscal 2003 through 2007, the debt grew by roughly \$500 billion a year, but debt exploded beginning in fiscal 2008 as deficits ballooned, averaging almost \$1.5 trillion from fiscal 2008 through 2011.

Consider this: *The growth in the debt of nearly \$6 trillion in the past four years roughly equals all the debt accumulated from the creation of the United States in 1776 to 2000!*

In light of these facts, it's hard to believe that in 2001 the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) forecast a total elimination of



the federal debt by 2006 and a \$2.3 billion surplus by 2011!

Since fiscal 2010, the government has borrowed nearly 40 cents of every dollar it spends. A family spending at this reckless rate would soon go into bankruptcy, but Congress and the president skirt the impending crisis by merely issuing more debt and raising the debt ceiling.

More than a year has passed since Congress passed the Budget Control Act in an effort to get out ahead of the debt debacle. The mandated severe cuts in overall spending amounted to \$1.7 trillion over the next decade, but this would barely make a dent in the \$16 trillion debt. Congress, however, has returned to congressional deadlock over the debt crisis, and even the president's own fiscal reform plans show the debt continuing to rise for decades.

The fiscal crisis of last summer combined with the failure of Congress and the president to come to terms over the debt prompted Standard and Poor's, the major international credit rating agency, to downgrade the credit rating of the United States from AAA to AA+. It was the first downgrade since the AAA rating had been issued in 1917, and many observers predict the rating could fall to AA within two years if something isn't done to rein in the explosive growth of the U.S. debt.

Most of that debt is held by other nations, with China, at \$1.15 trillion, the largest single holder. Many Chinese are nervous about the huge amount of debt owed them, and last year's downgrades have only added to their feelings that it might not be wise to continue investing in U.S. government securities.

### Is this what Americans really want?

What has led to this state of affairs? As is most often the case, complex problems often have several causes. Most economists and observers, however, point to the growing welfare state status as the single largest factor contributing to the rapid growth of U.S. national debt.

Today, half of all American households open their mailboxes each month and pull out a check from a supposedly rich uncle—Uncle Sam. Retiring baby boomers and rapid increases in the elderly population have swelled recipients of Social Security and Medicare, while a recent spike in the U.S. poverty rate has boosted Medicaid expenditures.

Nearly 1 in 7 Americans receives food stamps. That program, begun in the 1960s to fight poverty in the eastern part of the

United States and the country's inner cities, now feeds more than 47 million Americans, which is greater than the combined populations of Florida, Texas, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. The food stamp program has grown 70 percent just since 2007. Meanwhile, 8.7 million Americans—more than the population of New York City—are receiving federal disability payments, a 17

baby boomers—various studies show the trust fund to be headed for insolvency as early as 2018.

### Looming crisis in unfunded liabilities

America is learning the meaning of the term “unfunded liability” as it applies to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. The Congressional Budget Office estimates

current obligations under these three programs at about \$45.8 trillion, with \$7.7 trillion allotted to Social Security and the rest to Medicare and Medicaid.

Certainly federal policy makers are aware of the looming crisis. On June 17, 2008, CBO director Peter Orszag gave this assessment in his statement to the U.S. Senate Finance Committee: “Future growth in spending per beneficiary for Medicare and Medicaid—the federal



**Instead of leaving a national legacy of prosperity, we may well leave a legacy of higher taxes and reduced economic growth as our children and grandchildren struggle to pay the interest on the massive national debt bill we have created.**

percent increase in the last 3½ years.

Growth rates of the “Big Three” social programs—Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid—are projected to continue to increase. Each year, more of the 76 million baby boomers retire and join the ranks of Social Security recipients. Americans of the “greatest generation” who are still living are in their upper 80s and older, when the need for medical services is the greatest. And a sluggish economy will keep joblessness and poverty high, ensuring that millions will continue to receive Medicaid health-care and unemployment benefits.

Most baby boomers enter retirement blithely confident that their check will arrive each month. But they fail to consider that \$2.7 trillion of the nearly \$16 trillion debt represents money borrowed from the Social Security Trust Fund to cover other government expenditures. That contributes to another problem that worries millions of

government's major health care programs—will be the most important determinant of long-term trends in federal spending. Changing those programs in ways that reduce the growth of costs—which will be difficult, in part because of the complexity of health policy choices—is ultimately the nation's central long-term challenge in setting federal fiscal policy” (“The Long-Term Budget Outlook and Options for Slowing the Growth of Health Care Costs.”)

A bland but true assessment of a major looming crisis.

If present trends continue, the end of this decade will see a federal budget in which the vast majority of federal tax revenue will be eaten up by interest on the debt and payouts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Little would be left for vital national defense and hundreds of other areas of the federal government.

All this debt portends slower U.S. eco-

conomic growth. A recent study by economists Carmen Reinhart of the Peterson Institute for International Economics and Kenneth Rogoff of Harvard University calculated that *countries with public debt above 90 percent of GDP grow by an average of 1.3 percentage points per year slower than less indebted countries*. The drag of debt will likely cause slower economic growth to an already sluggish economy, making it more difficult for the economy to “grow out” of serious fiscal problems.

In a decision that shocked millions of Americans, the U.S. Supreme Court in late June 2012 narrowly upheld the Obama Administration’s health-care reform act. This legislation, whose centerpiece is the mandate that all Americans must have health insurance by 2014 or pay a penalty, will expand the power of government in the lives of Americans and impose a new “tax” that will only spur the growth of the national debt.

And already some states are balking at the hundreds of millions of dollars in increased spending that will be added to stretched state budgets to cover expansion of Medicaid costs called for in the president’s health-care act.

Is this what Americans really want? A growing chorus of voices sees these facts and wonders how America can remain the world power it has been for much of the past century. They look abroad and notice the growing economic and political strength of China, India, Brazil, and other rapidly growing economic powerhouses. The 20th century was America’s century, but the 21st century will see the United States eclipsed by some other power.

### Change to national character

A number of observers of American life have noted a change to the country’s national character in recent years. Many have commented on how millions of Americans increasingly look to government to solve all financial, medical and even emotional problems. Increasingly, Americans are happy to see government play an ever-larger role in daily life, and see no problem with the nation taking on increasing debt to meet real or perceived needs.

Of course, that debt must eventually be repaid. The nearly \$16 trillion federal debt, which will surpass \$20 trillion within five years at present growth rates, presents a huge burden to children and grandchildren not yet even born.

For generations, Americans have looked

forward to working productively through their lives, then at death transferring most of that wealth to their children. It’s a principle set forth in your Bible. Proverbs 13:22 says, “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children.”

Of course, you can’t leave an inheritance unless you’ve accumulated something. But, sadly, more and more Americans today die penniless or even in debt, with nothing to show for a lifetime of work.

It’s likely that America’s national legacy of debt will lower living standards for future generations by reducing the stock of capital available for future investment, a concern being voiced by a growing legion of economists.

Economists such as MIT professor and Nobel Laureate Robert Solow are worried that saddling future generations with massive debt payments will reduce savings and investments needed to fund new factories and infrastructure investments. The result? Slower economic growth, fewer jobs and lower living standards for generations to come. Edward Mantell of Pace University in New York states it simply: “Instead of transferring our wealth to them, we are transferring their wealth to us.”

But it seems that people are unable to see beyond their own immediate needs and wants, perfectly content to allow children and grandchildren to bear the costs of profligate spending today. Instead of leaving a national legacy of prosperity, we may well leave a legacy of higher taxes and reduced economic growth as they struggle to pay the interest on the massive national debt bill we have created.

### Does your Bible say anything about debt?

Your Bible, believe it or not, has something to say about America’s economic condition. It would be worth your time to study Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, known as the “blessings and curses” chapters.

One very critical verse, Deuteronomy 28:44, is especially revealing. Referring to foreigners, it says, “He shall lend to you, and you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.” For about a quarter century after World War II, America was the world’s greatest creditor nation. But the situation has completely reversed over the last 30 years as the United States has become the greatest debtor nation in human history.

We should ask ourselves: Does Deuteronomy 28:44 seem to read exactly like America’s situation today?

Notice also Proverbs 22:7: “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.” A popular current restatement of the Golden Rule is expressed as “he who has the gold makes the rules.” As of mid-2010, some 52 percent of U.S. foreign debt was held by foreign nations or foreign citizens. Rival or hostile nations such as China, Iran, Russia, Venezuela and Libya own in aggregate more than \$2 trillion of our debt, a fact unknown to the average American today.

Just as many Americans find it so easy to swipe a credit card, Washington finds it so easy to issue government notes and bonds to cover more government spending. It all seems so simple, so painless—at least until the bill becomes due. And just as breaking the credit card habit is so painful to many individuals, so is breaking a borrowing habit painful for a nation.

Today, we see the United States operating under a curse, a curse foretold in your own Bible.

As a nation, by collective choices over the past 50 years, the United States has created a debt unlike anything else in human history. Your Bible reveals that this massive debt is a major factor that will ultimately lead to the demise of America as a free nation.

But there truly is good news. A new economic world order is on its way—not that of the evil end-time system foretold in Scripture, but one beyond that in a new age that will soon dawn. It will be like nothing you have imagined. You can read about it in other articles in this issue. And although America’s debt has grown so huge that it will likely cripple the nation’s future, you can ensure your place in the exciting, prosperous world to come. We hope and pray you’ll take the necessary steps in that direction! **GN**

### Learn More



Why are a number of minor nations mentioned by name in Bible prophecy, but significant powers like the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia left out? The answer is simple—they are indeed there, but most people don’t understand how they’re identified. To learn the amazing truth about the true identity of the United States, Britain and other English-speaking powers, request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.

Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)



# Current Events & Trends

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

## Dust-bowl America returning?

Already nearly 40 percent of the continental United States suffers from severe drought. Yet more corn was planted this year than in perhaps 70 years—in hopes of a record harvest. Instead the crops of the corn-belt states of the American Midwest wilt badly from record temperatures combined with bone-dry weather. Factor in unusually low grain stockpiles, and among the effects America is now buying corn from Brazil.

*The Christian Science Monitor* reports: “The hottest July on record in the Lower 48 and scant rainfall have created the widest US drought since 1956, wiping out much of the corn and soybean crops, which are used globally and domestically for food, feed, and ethanol production. In the US, which is the world’s top exporter of corn, more than half the crop is now considered in ‘poor’ condition. The Agriculture Department on Friday [Aug. 10] slashed yield estimates by 12 percent, from 146 bushels per acre to 123 bushels per acre.

“American farmers had planted the largest corn



July 2012: Corn withers away in Colorado.

crop ever this year, in response to high commodity prices and high global demand. The US was supposed to be ‘swimming’ in corn this fall. Instead, the harvest will be a ‘train wreck,’ Kelly Wiesbrock, a fund manager for Harvest Capital Strategies, tells the Reuters news service” (Patrik Jonsson, “Alarms Sound Over World Food Supply as Drought Wilts US Corn Belt,” Aug. 10, 2012).

Food prices are soaring to record levels. The price of corn has risen over 40 percent in just a short while.

Up to 75 percent of U.S. processed food contains corn. And unless significant rainfall materializes soon, the wheat and soybean crop is sure to suffer as well. If that weren’t bad enough, federal laws mandate that about 40 percent of the U.S. corn crop be converted into ethanol to be mixed with gasoline for automobile fuel.

Bad weather of whatever kind brings back the debate of whether the culprit happens to be climate change or merely an act of nature. Many do not even consider the God dimension. Those who really believe in the existence of a personal God know that He ultimately controls the weather and can use it for blessing or judgment. Our Creator can punish national immorality or warn of worse to come by sending drought on the land (Leviticus 26:19-20; Deuteronomy 28:24; 2 Chronicles 6:26-31; Haggai 1:5-11).

Our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* not only summarizes the prophetic legacy of American success as a nation, pinning down its historic ethnic origins, but also shows how God will severely punish the nation if it continues headlong on its downward, decadent path. (Sources: *The Christian Science Monitor, Financial Times, Time, USA Today.*)

## Probabilities and prophecy: Is Europe heading for a crash?

From a human standpoint, accurately forecasting geopolitics often proves to be a risky venture. Particularly in today’s age of the Internet and globalization, many varying forces pull nations and world leaders in contradictory directions—not to mention the generally unrealized influence of the unseen spirit world (Ephesians 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Historian and political commentator Walter Laqueur states in *World Affairs*: “However, if there are no certainties in world politics, *there remain probabilities that can be ignored only at great peril.* In the case of the troubled European Union and the darkening Arab Spring, it is highly probable that, from the beginning, the optimism of even expert journalists, academics, and diplomats was misplaced, and that the odds against European progress toward a united and prosperous continent, and Arab progress toward liberty, peace, and democracy, were very heavy indeed” (“The Perils of Wishful Thinking: On Europe and the Middle East,” March/April 2012, emphasis added throughout)

British author, editor and journalist Max Hastings would agree. His *Daily Mail* article of June 19, 2012, was titled: “*Europe’s on the Brink of Probably the Gravest and Most Frightening Tumult of Our Lifetime.*”

He speaks frankly of *probabilities*: “Greece, like Italy, espouses a historic culture of corruption and tax-evasion that may enable those countries to muddle along in splendid isolation, but disqualifies them as partners in an economic union with Northern

Europe . . . Greece cannot and will not fulfill its financial obligations. Its new Government’s only hope is that promises of future good behaviour persuade the Germans to pick up Greece’s bills, keeping the game going for another round.”

Hastings does not mince his words: “The truth is that the weaker brethren of the EU have got to go, for their own sake and everybody else’s. *There is absolutely no happy scenario at the end of the crisis—only a choice between variations of calamity.* If the eurozone survives at all, it can only be as a German economic empire in which the subject peoples will sooner or later find colonial status intolerable.”

In his concluding remarks, this veteran journalist boldly calls the European Union “a fantasy economic and political structure which is now collapsing about our ears.”

Of course, Hastings may be mistaken. One can easily locate article titles like “Why It’s Worth Keeping the European Dream Alive” (*Financial Times*, Nov. 1, 2011) and “Weber [i.e., former German central banker Axel Weber] Sees Euro Zone Surviving Crisis” (*The Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2012). Nonetheless, the eurozone countries remain on the horns of a serious dilemma.

The Associated Press reported on Aug. 2, 2012: “The European Central Bank is preparing to unleash its financial might and buy government bonds to help drive down borrowing costs in debt-ridden countries like Spain and Italy, caught in the grip of what president Mario Draghi called a ‘worsening crisis.’ Draghi urged leaders of the 17 countries that use the euro to use their bailout fund to take the same action, sending a clear message: Europe’s financial crisis requires more forceful remedies than leaders have so far been able to muster.”

Your Bible reveals Europe’s cultural differences

today as it stumbles forward to form a final revival of the ancient Roman Empire. In interpreting a dream vision of future empires, the prophet Daniel explained:

“Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay” (Daniel 2:41-43).

Fundamentally, the social and cultural problems of the European Union are predictable, leading to financial difficulties for a time. And Bible prophecy concurs that transforming European diversities into any kind of cohesiveness will be a struggle. Yet it also shows that a measure of unification will eventually be imposed, but not until a strong leader comes to the fore.

Should there be an economic disaster in Europe, we should clearly recall that Adolf Hitler was only able to come to power in 1933 primarily because of unprecedented runaway inflation and economic hardship in Germany.

Bible prophecy deals in certainties, not probabilities. Whatever the causal circumstances, a world superpower headed by an end-time charismatic dictator will surely arise in Central Europe, its tentacles reaching all around the globe (Daniel 2; 7; Revelation 13; 17-18). To understand much more, request or download our free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (Sources: Associated Press, *Daily Mail, Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal, World Affairs.*)

## Revisiting the Arab Spring

Several months ago historian and political commentator Walter Laqueur voiced his concerns in *World Affairs* about the unexpected end results of the much-heralded Arab Spring. He pointed out:

“Demonstrations in Tunisia and then in Egypt’s Tahrir Square in late January 2011 brought a large influx of correspondents from the US and Europe. The tone of their coverage generally reflected [the British poet] Wordsworth’s famous naive euphoria at the advent of the French Revolution [in 1789]: ‘Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive / But to be young was very heaven’” (“The Perils of Wishful Thinking: On Europe and the Middle East,” March/April 2012). That revolution devolved into violence, chaos and terror.

Fast forward to century 21: “At long last, the hated [Arab] dictatorships had been overthrown and the road was open to freedom and democracy” (ibid.).

Responding, Laqueur went on to say: “Summer came and then autumn, *the Arab Spring turned into an Islamist winter*, and the reports and comments [of correspondents] became more muted . . . The partisans of Arab Spring failed to consider that under Mubarak [in Egypt] the position of women and minorities had been better than under the new regime that would probably succeed him.” Egypt now has an Islamist president.

Laqueur continued, “Women and minorities [such as persecuted Christian groups, e.g., the Egyptian Copts] have been the main losers in recent events—not only in Egypt but in other Middle Eastern countries, even those with fairly strong secular traditions,

such as Tunisia and Morocco.”

Articles in the left-of-center *New Statesman* as well as the more conservative *Sunday Times* of London warned that Islamic influences had endangered the prospect of democracy taking hold in the Middle East.

Earlier, author John Bradley spoke of zealots “who wish to create Islamic states and impose Islamic law [sharia]” (*After the Arab Spring: How Islamists*

### “The Middle East will be at the center of events that in the near future will lead to the end of this age of human misrule . . .”

*Hijacked the Middle East Revolts*, 2012, p. 1).

But why should we even be concerned about these regional events? As we noted in the March/April 2011 edition of this magazine: “The writers of *The Good News* have long urged our readers to closely watch events in the Middle East. And with good reason, for the Middle East will be at the center of events that in the near future will lead to the end of this age of human misrule and the establishment of the soon-coming reign of Jesus Christ. But it will not be pretty! From the Middle East will flow events that will create chaos and turmoil on a scale unparalleled in human history” (“What’s Behind the Turmoil in Egypt?” p. 20).

To know more about this region’s ancient antagonisms and where current events there will eventually lead, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: John Bradley, *The Good News*, *World Affairs*.)

## Is there life beyond earth?

Human beings are fascinated by the possibility of life on other planets, perhaps in other galaxies and within other solar systems. Ironically, we don’t have to look out into space to see whether life exists beyond the earth. We have only to look into the pages of the Bible, a source too often ignored or even avoided.

In early August, America’s space agency NASA achieved spectacular success in landing Curiosity, an automobile-sized roving laboratory, on the surface of Mars after an 8½-month voyage through space and a supersonic plummet through the Martian atmosphere.

It landed within Gale Crater near the equator, which, as the Associated Press reported, “scientists think is a place where water once flowed—a good starting point to learn whether microbes could exist there” (Aug. 4, 2012).

The report continued: “*Life as we know it requires three ingredients: Water, energy and carbon.* The missing piece so far is finding carbon. One of Curiosity’s main tasks is to drive to the mountain, chisel rocks and dig into soil in search of the elusive element.”

Of course, this is referring to physical life. The Bible reveals that there is indeed life beyond this earth that does not need these ingredients—*spirit* life. God the Father and Jesus Christ live beyond this earth in heaven, as do many angels.

As to whether something like microbes exist in space or on other planets, the Bible does not tell us. Were we ever to find such a thing, it still would not support theories of life from lifelessness and evolution. As all physical life, it would still require a Creator.

Yet there is certainly no indication in Scripture that human or other intelligent physical life exists beyond this earth’s boundaries. Remarkably, however, the Bible shows that one day human beings will be made immortal and will inherit the entire universe (Revelation 21:7). God gives to humanity the opportunity on this earth to learn to govern our lives today so we can live forever with Him tomorrow.

## Is extremism on the rise in Europe?

Frederick Forsyth is a popular British novelist with a nonfiction weekly column in the *Daily Express*. Here’s one particularly important title: “Extremism Is on the Rise Once More” (April 20, 2012).

In the column’s text he stated: “But the extremists are coming back. Those who have read their history cannot avoid the recall of the [German] Weimar Republic circa 1930. At the core of it all is the despair. Communists and fascists love despair which is now the eurozone’s only growth industry. But in Brussels and Berlin the dance goes on, the waltz of the blind . . . In my view the [European] dream is crashing and will not now be saved.”

Max Hastings adds his voice in the *Daily Mail*: “The economic stresses afflicting southern Europe may give way to social upheavals of which past Greek riots are a mere taster” (“Europe’s on the



Far-right Golden Dawn Party members, Greece.

Brink of Probably the Gravest and Most Frightening Tumult of Our Lifetime,” June 19, 2012).

This seems to be an increasingly held opinion. Consider an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* with this opening sentence: “Nationalism—even extreme nationalism—is on the rise again in Europe” (“A Womb That’s Fertile Still,” June 25, 2012).

The drophead stating, “Extremists gain political

strength as centrist parties fumble the crisis,” the article goes on to point out, “What unites and motivates all of these [right-wing] parties is the conviction that the interests of the European Union increasingly run counter to the interests of its member states . . .” (Sources: *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *The Wall Street Journal*.)

## 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 one reason we produce the *Beyond Today* daily TV commentaries—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening program offers you a perspective so badly needed in our confused world—the perspective of God’s Word. Visit us at [ucg.org/beyond-today/daily!](http://ucg.org/beyond-today/daily!)



# Is Your Life in Sync With God?

Is your life so filled with trying to get to the next place, complete the next task, fulfill the next activity that you feel stressed? Does your life feel out of sync? There is a time management program that can help you get control of the stress! *by Beyond Today host Gary Petty*

**T**ime. It's the substance of life. It's what you and I spend every second of every minute of every day. Once you spend it, it's gone forever.

We measure time by the motion of the earth circling the sun, the moon circling the earth and the earth spinning on its axis. Years, months, even seconds are measured by tracking the movement of heavenly bodies; day and night by the sun rising and setting.

You and I spend our lives limited by these measurements of time. There are always demands on our time—our jobs, getting the kids to soccer practice, trying to keep up with friends and relatives, doctor appointments and fixing the leaking faucet. Rushing through these activities we spend the substance of life—every week—seven days, 168 hours, 10,080 minutes, 604,800 seconds.

We search for rhythms in daily, weekly, monthly, even yearly rituals and seasons. These cycles supply a feeling of reassurance that time has meaning. Many people gather on Sunday morning for an hour of worship in a desire to include God in their weekly 604,800 seconds. Often, after church services everyone rushes home to catch the pre-game show, or get in an afternoon of pleasure seeking, or expend effort on a project around the house.

The week does not measure a particular heavenly event in the way the year and month do. It represents seven rotations of the earth—and not just any seven but a particular cycle of seven. Yet this cycle of seven days might seem arbitrary. So where did it originate?

The ancient Egyptians had a ten-day week while the oldest Roman calendar observed an eight-day week. Yet one ancient people has observed a seven-day calendar for thousands of years. The seven-day calendar, which begins on the first day of the



week with the day we call Sunday and ends with the seventh day of the week, Saturday, wasn't developed out of any scientific study. Rather, it came from the decree of God the Creator.

According to Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God set in order the sky and earth as we know them in six days. Then, "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:3).

Before the existence of the physical universe, there was no time as we measure it today. Time, as an aspect of the physical universe, is a special creation of God. And He also established cycles of marking time. He created the seventh day of every week for a special, vital purpose.

## The weekly reset

You can spend your entire life rushed and hurried and out of sync with time. Or you can understand that God established the seven-day week, with the seventh-day Sabbath, as a way for you to be in sync with His time-

keeping and in sync with Him.

Many who regard themselves as Christians claim to observe the Ten Commandments. The truth, however, is that most of them don't. The Fourth Commandment is ignored, shunned, even degraded. It states: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God . . ." (Exodus 20:8-10).

The first step in effective time management is to get in sync with your Creator. This is why the seventh-day Sabbath is relevant for Christians today.

The Sabbath isn't an hour of worship followed by watching a football game, cleaning the garage or catching up on a work project. In fact, the Sabbath isn't even on Sunday, which is the *first* day of the week. Both in the Genesis account and in the Ten Commandments, the Creator of time states that He set aside the entire *seventh* day each week—Friday sunset to Saturday sunset—as a time of rest and focus on Him.

## The Sabbath is important

Here are three reasons the Sabbath is important for Christians.

The first is found in understanding that the seventh day is a memorial of creation and that observing the Sabbath day recognizes the Creator. The Fourth Commandment states, "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (verse 11). The Sabbath was created by God at the very beginning of human history.

Are you struggling with an unfulfilled desire to experience God's presence in your life? Maybe part of the problem is how you spend your time. Observing the Sabbath can bring you into sync with the Creator of time.

The first reaction of many people, even Christians, is that observing an entire day in spiritual and physical rest would be restricting. But the opposite is true! Observing the Sabbath changes your priorities and will actually "expand" your time by helping you

understand what is *really* important.

The reality is that if we aren't careful, we'll waste much of our time on the unimportant and the meaningless. The Sabbath is a weekly opportunity to refocus our thoughts and actions from what is mundane and temporary toward what is eternal and everlasting.

A second reason the Sabbath is important for Christians is that it provides regular and lengthy opportunity for spiritual worship around which our other responsibilities are to be ordered. The Creator of the universe, the maker of time, has set aside one day a week as personal time between you and Him.

In Leviticus 23:1-4, God lists the seventh-day Sabbath as one of *His* (not Israel's, as most people assume) "feasts." The Hebrew word translated "feasts" means "appointed times"—times for meeting with Him. The Sabbath is your weekly personal appointment with God! How you spend this day will affect how you spend all other days.

What is really important in your life? You can determine what is important to people by how they spend their time. Some time management gurus promote micromanaging each hour of every day to increase efficiency. And adopting this management style *can* sometimes increase efficiency. But it has also driven many people to a nervous breakdown.

A healthier approach to time management is to organize blocks of time dedicated to work, family and worship. This is the frame-

work used by God when He told mankind "six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:9).

By planning your weekly priorities for Sunday through Friday you can get control of the non-stop whirlwind and begin to balance your activities. In your weekly plan you should schedule daily blocks of time for work, family meals, exercise, household chores, personal Bible study, prayer and recreation. This weekly schedule supplies a goal at its completion—the Sabbath.

This brings us to a third reason the Sabbath is important to Christians: It provides a day of physical, emotional and spiritual rest and rejuvenation. No matter how hectic the week, its end waits with the promise of physical, emotional and spiritual renewal.

As the Sabbath approaches it's time to forget the work problems and mortgage payments. It's time to experience your peaceful appointment with God. Physical, emotional and spiritual rest are basic human needs. To ignore these needs is to sow the seeds of illness, broken relationships and spiritual lethargy.

Imagine a day devoted to rest—no business calls, no painting the house, no shopping. Imagine a day with extra time for prayer and worship, with time to share with your family with no deadlines or pressing appointments. Imagine a day when you can shut out the noise, the violence, the preoccupation with

making money and experience *peace*.

### Do it now!

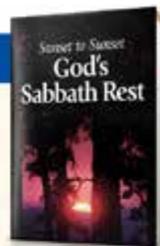
You might be saying, "I'd like to do that someday, but right now my life is out of control." If you don't have the time to get in sync with God now, *when will you* have the time?

No matter what responsibilities you have, or what chaos may be happening in your life, there is no better time than *right now* to begin to get in sync as God intended.

Are you in sync with God? Is your life so hectic that you don't have time to experience spiritual rest with your Creator? Instead of cramming every day with exhausting activity, it's time to start enjoying the day God set aside for you to rest and renew your relationship with Him. It's time to begin observing God's seventh-day Sabbath! **GN**

## Learn More

The Bible says a great deal about the Sabbath day. Learn what the Bible reveals about this important day—a day so important that He included it among the Ten Commandments. Download or request your free copy of *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* today!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)

## Beyond Today TV Log

For the most current airing times, or to download or view programs online, visit [www.BeyondToday.tv](http://www.BeyondToday.tv)

### UNITED STATES

#### NATIONWIDE CABLE TV

**WGN America** Sun 8:30 a.m. EST, 7:30 a.m. CST, 6:30 a.m. MST, 5:30 a.m. PST

**Word Network** Sun 1:30 a.m. EST, 12:30 a.m. CST, Sat 11:30 p.m. MST, 10:30 p.m. PST, Thu 12:30 a.m. EST, Wed 11:30 p.m. CST, 10:30 p.m. MST, 9:30 p.m. PST

View on various cable channels (check local listings) and on ch. 373 (satellite) DirecTV.

The Word Network also reaches numerous other countries—please visit [www.BeyondToday.tv](http://www.BeyondToday.tv) for a partial list.

#### CABLE AND BROADCAST TV

(Consult your local TV/cable guide for a channel in your area.)

**Alaska**  
Anchorage ch. 18, Tue 9 p.m.

**California**  
San Diego (north) ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.

**Colorado**  
Colorado Springs TV51, Sun 9 a.m.  
Denver TV53, Sun 9 a.m.

**Hawaii**  
Honolulu TV14, Sun 5 a.m.

**Indiana**  
Indianapolis TV40, Sun 11 a.m.  
South Bend TV46, Sun 11 a.m.

**Louisiana**  
New Orleans TV20, 10 a.m.

**Minnesota**  
Brooklyn Park ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.  
New Ulm ch. 3, 14, Sun 10:30 a.m.; Thu 9 a.m.; Fri 8 p.m.  
ch. 14, Sun 10:30 a.m.; Thu 9 a.m.; Fri 8 p.m.

**New York**  
Binghamton ch. 4, Thu 5:30 p.m.

**North Carolina**  
Durham ch. 18, Wed 7:30 a.m.

**Ohio**  
Columbus TV8, 39.5, Sat 11 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.  
Delaware TV39.5, Sat 11 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.  
Kenton TV39.5, Sat 11 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.  
Marion TV39.5, Sat 11 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.

**Oklahoma**  
Tulsa TV47, Sun 10 a.m.

**Oregon**  
Eugene ch. 29, Tue 2 p.m.  
Medford ch. 15, 95, Sun 5 p.m.  
Portland ch. 22a, 33, Sun 7:30 p.m.

**Texas**  
El Paso ch. 15, Mon, Fri, Sat 1 p.m.

**Wisconsin**  
Kenosha ch. 14, Sun & Mon 7:30 p.m.  
Milwaukee ch. 96, Mon 2 p.m.; Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 2 p.m.  
West Allis ch. 14, times vary

### NORTH AMERICA

**JadooTV** Sat 11 p.m., Sun 11 a.m. (EST). Also on Roku.  
**MelaTV** Sat 11 p.m., Sun 11 a.m. (EST). Also on Roku.  
**World Harvest TV** Sun 11 a.m. EST, 10 a.m. CST, 9 a.m. MST,

8 a.m. PST

View on various cable channels (check local listings), on DirecTV ch. 367 (satellite) and AT&T U-Verse ch. 578.

### CANADA

#### NATIONWIDE CABLE TV

**Vision TV** Sun 10:30 p.m. EST, 9:30 p.m. CST, 8:30 p.m. MST, 7:30 p.m. PST, 11:30 p.m. AST, midnight N-L  
**Grace TV** Sun 10:30 a.m. EST, 9:30 a.m. CST, 8:30 a.m. MST, 7:30 a.m. PST, 11:30 a.m. AST, noon N-L

See local listing for the channel in your area.

### AUSTRALIA

**Ch. 4ME**—Digital 74 Metro, Digital 64 Regional  
Sun 6:30 a.m. (NSW, VIC, ACT)  
Sun 6:00 a.m. (SA)  
Sun 6:30 a.m. (QLD)  
Sun 4:30 a.m. (WA)

### UNITED KINGDOM

**IPTV** Sun 4 a.m. & 4 p.m. Also available on Roku.  
**MelaTV** Sun 4 a.m. & 4 p.m. Also available on Roku.

### INDIA

**IPTV** Sun 8:30 a.m., 8:30 p.m. Also available on Roku.

### MIDDLE EAST

**Middle East TV** Sun 1 p.m. GMT+2  
View on Amos 3 satellite (check listings at metv.org/programming/find-us-on-tv.cfm).

### AFRICA, ASIA, EUROPE AND OCEANIA

**Family Entertainment TV** Sun 8 a.m. GMT+2  
View on PAS-10 satellite (check listings at fetv.tv/satellite-coverage.cfm)

# “Father, Please Heal My Broken Heart!”

The emotional pain inflicted on us by others can be far worse than the physical wounds we experience. What is the right ointment for wounded hearts? *by Janet Treadway*

**H**ow can you mend this broken man?  
How can a loser ever win?  
Please help me mend my broken heart,  
And let me live again.”

These lyrics from a popular song of the 70s, “How Can You Mend a Broken Heart?” by the Bee Gees, can certainly make us reflect on our own broken hearts.

Do you have a broken heart now, or have you had your heart broken in the past? Many of us have known what it means to have a huge gaping hole in our hearts left by someone or some set of circumstances. We wondered whether this hole could ever be filled or if we’d be left with that empty hollow in our hearts forever.

There can be many reasons why we are left with a broken heart—the death of a loved one, divorce, loss of a job, loss of status, loss of health, betrayal by a friend, loss of a child and, yes, loss of your childhood. Any of these can leave us a broken man or woman.

Along with enormous blessings in my own life, I’ve also experienced great sorrow. The greatest sorrow of all was the loss of my childhood and never knowing what a loving father is like.

I never heard my father say, “I love you” or “I’m proud of you.” I never experienced what it’s like to feel secure, with a strong father in my life protecting me and keeping me safe. This reality has left a hole in my heart—an emptiness that I once felt could never be filled.

## Hope for healing the heartache

Even though we have these holes in our hearts, I am here to tell you that there is hope for you and me and all the broken-

hearted. There is hope for those who sorrow, because we have access to a Healer who will mend our broken hearts. As Psalm 147:3 tells us, God “heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” He wants to heal us of *all* of our wounds!

What is a wound? If you’ve ever had an injury or a deep cut, you know how painful it is and how it hurts to be touched. Often sorrow and loss are like deep wounds. They can be so painful that it seems nothing or no one can make the pain go away. Sometimes our heart is so broken that we can’t even express the words, and nothing seems to help.

Like a deep wound, a broken heart will not heal overnight. As some medicines burn when we apply them to a skin wound, so can the words of a well-meaning friend burn when he or she says the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Who wants to pour rubbing alcohol on an open wound? When we injure ourselves, we search the stores to find an ointment that will not burn but will provide relief. It’s the same way with our broken heart. We need the right ointment to bring about healing.

So what’s the right ointment for hurting hearts? How do we begin to heal? How can the gaping hole in our hearts begin to close? Here are some steps that can help.

**Recognize the pain and understand it is okay to hurt.** Sometimes we seek to cover the pain by ignoring it or through other means like the use of alcohol or drugs, which will cause us to become infected and will reverse the healing process. Like a deep skin wound, we must apply the right ointment so we can begin to heal, or else it can become infected and get worse. We cannot ignore our pain and think it will go away.

Understand that it is okay to hurt. We

try to push the hurt away, but we can’t. The hurt isn’t outside of us—it’s inside. So, in our attempt to push the hurt away, we actually push the hurt deeper inside. We then can spend the rest of our lives running from this suppressed hurt.

By suffering through our hurts, we are a part of the human race—millions of people are going through similar pains. It’s during this time that we need a lot of love, encouragement and hope restored. We realize how frail we are and see our great need for God.

Times like these are when we should reflect on the purpose and meaning of life. They’re the greatest opportunity to help us draw close to God. They also provide an opportunity to learn empathy toward others who are going through the same things. You can’t do all of these things if you try to ignore the pain.

**Seek the Healer.** Seek God as your Healer! Just as you tell a doctor your symptoms, tell God how much you’ve been wounded and need His healing touch. He will hear the cries of the broken.

God the Father wants to reach down, take your hand and walk you through your pain. It may take weeks. It may take months. For many of us it will take years, perhaps even a lifetime, to close the wounds of our hearts completely. God will spend as much time and as many years as necessary to help you through it.

He wants to gently apply the daily salve or ointment of His Holy Spirit to your heart until it is healed. I know this because He has done it with me. When I’m down, He lifts me up in many different ways. He’s there for me to cry on His shoulder, so to speak, and then sends His encouraging Spirit to get me back up and going again.

Ancient Israel’s King David said in Psalm 56:8, “You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book?” God was so aware of David that He even figuratively collected his tears. In the same way God is involved with us and

aware of our pain, our joys, our failures, our accomplishments.

When Judah’s King Hezekiah was stricken with sickness and facing death, he poured out his heart to God. God heard him and saw his tears. Moved with compassion, God sent a message to Hezekiah by the prophet Isaiah: “Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you’” (2 Kings 20:5).

God saw Hezekiah’s tears. Understand that God can be closer to us when the pain

encouragement, because He is very near to you. God can work with a heart that has a hole in it, because the need is so great for it to be filled.

**Reach out to others.** As God has reached out to us, so we should be instruments of God to reach out and help others who are in pain. The apostle Paul praised God as “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).



Ask God to use you to encourage others through their pain. By your own pain you will be able to understand and help in a far greater way. Jesus Christ our Savior was tested in every way just as we are and understands all that you go through (Hebrews 4:15). He reached out to us by giving

from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor” (NIV).

This will not come to pass in full until Christ returns to earth to establish His Kingdom here, but in the meantime we should make it our mission to follow this example and be instruments of healing by taking the time to care for those who are in pain and hurting. By reaching out to others, our own pain will begin to disappear; the holes in our hearts will begin to close.

### Healing takes time

It takes time to heal. In my life I still have a hole in my heart after many years, but it’s much smaller now because of God. Every time I feel His presence, every time I see His intervention in my life, every time I reach out to someone else, every time He grants me blessings, the hole in my heart gets smaller and is being replaced with His own heart.

When our Heavenly Father eventually comes to this earth, the hole in our hearts and in mankind’s hearts will be filled and mended. There will be no more tears, no more pain, no more sorrow (Revelation 21:4)—and no more holes to fill in an empty heart. For all our hearts will be filled with God’s Spirit.

As Psalm 126:5 promises, “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.” God will heal all broken hearts. We will no longer feel sad for what we lacked in this physical life because God will fill our hearts and make us complete! **GN**

## Ask God to use you to encourage others through their pain. By your own pain you will be able to understand and help in a far greater way.

is great than at any other times in our lives.

Returning to David, he was a man who faced many trials and heartaches. And he wrote in Psalm 34:18, “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (New International Version). Ask and receive God’s love and

His life so that we would be healed.

Isaiah 61:1-3 discusses Jesus Christ’s mission: “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release

## Now Read *The Good News* on Your iPad!

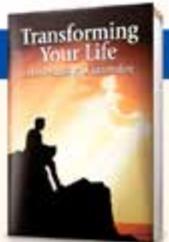


### Attention iPad owners!

You can now read *The Good News* magazine on your iPad! A digital version of *The Good News* can now be downloaded from the iPad App Store. This new app is available in the Newsstand category of the store. Download yours today!

## Learn More

We’ve all made our share of mistakes. Sometimes we’ve brought heartache on ourselves, and sometimes heartache comes on us through no fault of our own. But there is a way to heal the hurt and build a positive, forward-looking life. Request or download our free booklet *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion* to discover how, with God’s help, you can change your life in powerful and dramatic ways!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)



# Just Say the Word

Jesus held up a Roman centurion as an outstanding example of faith. And there's much for us to learn in this encounter between two leaders of men. *by Robin Webber*

**A**s he looked through the doorway and beheld his paralyzed servant, the master knew what lay before him. He had seen it many times before. It came in many shades, but there was no mistaking death's impending presence. Such a foe was no stranger to the man, for he was a Roman centurion.

Centurions were officers of the world's premier fighting force. They were not political appointees, but proven veterans with years of honorable service. Their command was over 100 men—a “century”—the integral building block of a Roman legion of 6,000 men. They were the glue that held their units together.

Polybius, a second-century B.C. Greek commentator on Roman society, wrote, “They must not be so much venturesome

brought by courier or the bark of a tribune's voice, but by an inner call to step forward into previously uncharted territory.

Each step about to be taken was unthinkable in contemporary society. It would take strength and honor predicated on humility. Perhaps you and I, right now, may be standing at a similar doorway in life that demands answers to seemingly unsolvable situations, and perhaps we remain stymied because all the old answers just aren't working. Let's step forward with the centurion as he responds to a greater ruler's calling to “*Follow Me.*”

## A dramatic role reversal

Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 offer the details of this encounter of mutual respect between two men from totally

**The centurion's earnest plea to this Jewish Teacher might well cause irreparable harm to his career, but he was willing to sacrifice his future if it meant his servant would be healed.**

seekers after danger as men who can command, stand in action, and reliable, they ought not to be over-anxious to rush into the fight, but when hard pressed, they must be ready to hold their ground, and die at their posts.”

Roman centurions always led from the front with strength and honor emblazoned in their actions. They took and gave orders without question. Many died in battle, more so than other officers, because they were groomed to be the pillars from which others drew support.

But now for the man at the door, there were no immediate solutions for this race against death. This centurion who had served for years in the imperial forces of Caesar was about to undertake the most important mission of his life. His was not a written order

different worlds. Matthew's account says, “When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.’”

The driving force behind the centurion's quest was his love for his servant, “who was dear to Him” (Luke 7:2). It was rare in Roman society that a master would have such concern. Slaves and bondservants were considered living tools. What separated them from any other beasts of burden or tools, the thinking basically went, was that they could talk.

Ancient philosophers like Aristotle had warned against master and servant having close relationships. Yet here the centurion threw pride out the window because he dared to care.

Scripture does not convey that he requested a secret rendezvous in some remote spot, but rather openly sought the assistance of nearby Jewish elders to speak on his behalf (verse 3). After all, he was a centurion whose core values were strength and honor.

He had no doubt *earned* his status, but now he was requesting something not based on human merit. In a reversal of roles, he would appeal as a member of the conquering power to one among a conquered people—for he had heard about this Man of Nazareth and how death itself had surrendered to His command and touch.

## Crossing a bridge of no return

Likewise Jesus, the Jew, crossed over a deep and wide ditch of humanly designed discrimination under the guise of religiosity. He confidently responded to the request, “I will come and heal him” (Matthew 8:7).

Understand this: In that day, it was considered ceremonially unlawful for a Jew to enter the house of a gentile (non-Jew). Anyone who did so would be labeled “unclean” because most Jews considered all gentiles unclean, to be avoided.

And yet, this same man whom the religious people of that day would have broad-brushed as unclean was also known to have been kind to the villagers and had given funds toward building a synagogue (Luke 7:5).

Thus, both men have not simply met in the middle of a proverbial bridge. Rather, they have crossed over a bridge of no return. There was no turning back for either, as both defied the social norms of the day for the benefit of a suffering servant.

While Christ was making His way toward the centurion's house (which was apparently nearby, for archaeologists have discovered the remains of a Roman military base just east of the town of Capernaum), the centurion, not desiring to impose himself or put the Jewish Teacher in a difficult position, sent additional intermediaries with this message:

“Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my



Roman centurions always led from the front. They took and gave orders without question.

in Israel!” (verse 10).

Jesus took the courageous faith-filled actions of one man who had the love, humility and faith to step out of his comfort zone to challenge the rigid comfort zone of those who should have known better. Sound familiar?

He then told the centurion, “Go your way, and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.” The centurion’s servant “was healed that same hour” (Matthew 8:13).

Jesus’ concluding remarks of “Go your way, and as you have believed, so let it be done for you” speaks volumes down to our day. His reach into our lives and for our well-being, whatever and wherever that might be, is not trapped in a particular time or geographic location. He was truly God in the flesh in His earthly ministry, and He remains God the Son in His heavenly ministry to each of us. Simply put: God sees things as if they already are! (see Romans 4:17).

His concluding remarks to the centurion offer us a lesson in how to respond to His call to “*Follow Me*” by understanding that often God has *already* answered our prayers and we have only to get off our knees and get out and meet God’s solutions in faithful anticipation!

### Still leading from the front

What allowed this Roman soldier to be held up as an example of living faith by Jesus Christ? And what can we learn from him, considering we have been offered the incredible life-altering invitation to “*Follow Me*”? What is it that keeps us from responding to God the Father and Jesus Christ with “Just say the word!” as this centurion did?

Let’s answer that right now. The centurion’s example shows how he thrust through three barriers that thwart us from truly following Christ. Those three barriers are the same for us as they were for him 2,000 years ago. They are:

- 1) Fear of shattering the man-made status quo of “That’s the way things have always been.”
- 2) Personal pride bedeviled by thoughts of “What will people think? I might lose everything!”
- 3) Believing only what we see in the moment.

So where lies the way forward? The centurion marched forward to the scriptural principle that “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). Further, he put into practice what the Man from Galilee would later say—“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down his

life for his friends” (John 15:13). Note that *love* is the permeating theme of this biblical encounter that unlocks all the other qualities that come forward.

Even so, the centurion was in a struggle unlike any he’d faced in his military career. It was his humility founded in love that allowed God’s promise to be his—“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

As modern-day spiritual centurions, we too have to be willing to inwardly “die at our post” before God steps in and grants us His victory that trumps all of our stalled human solutions.

Still, it’s a humanly scary step. But remember what Christ tells us in John 12:25-26: “Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who despise their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. All those who want to be my disciples must come and follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And if they follow me, the Father will honor them” (NLT).

Ultimately strength and honor belong to God to grant to us in times of need. Indeed, the circumstances of life demand hearts with eyes that see beyond the moment and hold their ground by remembering God’s encouragement that “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

It’s time for you and me to be modern-day spiritual centurions as the Captain of our salvation leads from the front (Hebrews 2:10) and says “*Follow Me*.” In so doing, always remember that Christ never promised it would be *easy*, but it would be *worth it*.

The time is right and the moment ripe—as you emerge from your personal door of despair like that centurion of old—to come before the same Lord he did and faithfully proclaim, “Just say the word.” *GN*

roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it” (verses 6-8).

It’s here that the centurion’s love for another was followed by the footstep of humility. Humility is the death of pride.

His earnest plea to this Jewish Teacher might well cause irreparable harm to his career as a Roman officer, but he was willing to sacrifice his career and future if it meant his servant would be healed.

### Marching down the walk of faith

The centurion’s next words reflect a march down a different kind of path called the walk of faith. “But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed,” the centurion said (Matthew 8:8). The New Living Translation offers this rendering: “Just say the word . . .” I like that—short, simple, direct!

The centurion knew what it meant to carry out a battlefield order and in a sense responded: “I have reported for duty. I asked. I got my answer. Mission accomplished.” He stated his belief up front that the victory was already won.

The Roman soldier’s humility and faithfulness brought delighted astonishment from Jesus Christ: “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even

### Learn More

What does it mean to have faith? And what *is* faith, really? The Bible tells us that we are to *live* by faith, but what does that mean? How did the many figures of the Bible live by faith? Discover the answers in our free booklet *You Can Have Living Faith*. Request or download your free copy today!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our website.

[www.GNmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.GNmagazine.org/booklets)

# A Real King Who Will Rescue Humanity

**W**hy does it seem that our governments are helpless in the face of widespread problems—or can actually become the cause of even more problems? Corruption plagues governments around the globe. And conflicts between governments seem to spiral out of control as our world becomes a more and more dangerous place.

The statistics, and the human stories behind them, are horrifying. Tyrants and other political leaders of every stripe have cheated, robbed, starved, repressed, jailed, tortured, raped and murdered their own citizens.

For example, some estimates claim North Korea's late dictator Kim Jong Il was responsible for the deaths of 4 million or more of his own people, an incredible statistic considering that under his rule his nation's population was only about 23 million. While he required his malnourished people to watch the public executions of people caught stealing food or trying to flee the country, he himself continued to spend extravagantly on his own lavish lifestyle.

Sadly, we can find many more stories like this today, as there have been throughout history. Think of Suharto, estimated to have embezzled \$15 to \$35 billion during his rule of Indonesia, and Josef Stalin, who killed thousands inside the Soviet Union in his purges and starved millions more with the worst human-engineered famine in history.

Before them were countless others—from Nimrod to Nebuchadnezzar to Nero to Napoleon—with power and the corruption that seems to inevitably follow.

But Jesus Christ promised a solution to all these problems of human leadership and human governments! He is coming back to earth and promises a perfect form of government that will truly serve the needs of everyone! In this mini-study we'll explore this wonderful news from the Bible of a real King who will return to rescue all of humanity!

## ◆ Jesus Christ is commonly known as our Savior. What other important roles and titles was He prophesied to have?

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; 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 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” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32-33).

“Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?’ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Your own

nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’ Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice’” (John 18:33-37).

Jesus came the first time to give His life to become our Savior. But as He said (and the Old Testament prophets and the angels proclaimed), He was born to be a King. His second coming will highlight this role, as His government and peace will increase forever (Isaiah 9:7).

The “throne of David” had messianic overtones (Jeremiah 23:5-6; compare Isaiah 11:1, 10 and Daniel 7:14). It symbolized ruling over not just one nation, but God's Kingdom, which will expand to include all nations.

When Christ said in John 18:36 that His Kingdom was not of this world (Greek *kosmos*), He meant it was not of this order of things, this society. He was not saying it was not of this planet. *Kosmos* can also mean “the whole mass of men alienated from God” and “world affairs, the aggregate of things earthly” (*Thayer's Greek Definitions*).

## ◆ What will the world be like just before Christ's return?

“For many will come in My name . . . and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:5-8, 21-22).

The religious deception, war, famine and disease epidemics mentioned in verses 5-8 parallel and help explain the four horsemen of the Apocalypse described in Revelation 6:1-8. (You can learn more about these in our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.)

Verses 21-22 go on to describe an unprecedented time of trouble called the Great Tribulation. Verse 22 also identifies it as a time when humanity will have the capacity to wipe itself off the face of the earth, something that was not possible before the invention of nuclear weapons. As the dangers in our world increase, we can see that we are rapidly approaching this terrifying time. (See our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* for much more detail on this subject.)

## ◆ What is the good news that Jesus and the New Testament Church preached?

“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).

“Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1-2).

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

“Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all



**Jesus Christ promised a solution to all the problems of human leadership and human governments! He is coming back to earth and promises a perfect government that will truly serve the needs of everyone!**

confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:30-31).

The word *gospel* is derived from an Old English word meaning “good news.” Jesus Christ, His original disciples, the apostle Paul and others among the first-century Church of God sent out to preach all preached the same good news—that Christ would come back and set up God’s government, the Kingdom of God! This will not only prevent human annihilation, but will begin a time of peace and prosperity that will spread around the whole earth.

◆ **How will Christ’s return be heralded?**

“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever’” (Revelation 11:15, English Standard Version).

The rule of all nations will be transferred from the incompetent hands of man to the perfect hands of the One through whom God created us, Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14; Ephesians 3:9). Christ will bear the glorious title “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 19:16).

◆ **What will the King of Kings do when He returns?**

“Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations

[that oppose His coming], 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. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south . . .

“And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—‘The LORD is one,’ and His name one [or, the LORD alone and His name alone—as the focus of worship and obedience] . . . And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:3-4, 9, 16).

After defeating the deceived armies of the earth who will make a futile attempt to stop His return, Jesus Christ will take over as “King over all the earth” (verse 9). Then will begin the massive effort to teach the way of peace to all nations and to repair the war-torn world. (We’ll discuss this more in future studies.)

◆ **How is Jesus Christ’s approach to leadership completely different from what this world has known?**

“But Jesus called them [His disciples] to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many’” (Matthew 20:25-28).

Jesus’ motivation and methods of leadership are never selfish. In fact, He gave everything—even His life! Everything He does is for the eternal benefit of those He serves. We will see more about how Christ is training His people to serve others in a future study.

In this lesson we have seen that Jesus Christ will come back as a real King to set up the Kingdom of God! In coming studies we’ll explore more about this central focus of the Bible and the only real hope for mankind—the good news of the Kingdom of God. The reality revealed in the Scriptures is both a dream come true—and beyond our wildest dreams!

**Apply what you’ve learned now**

In discussing the times of trouble leading up to His return, Jesus told His followers, “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36). The context shows there are two areas we are to watch and pray about—the conditions in the world and our personal spiritual condition.

As you watch world news today, jot down items that show the seriousness of our times and take them to God in prayer. Christ taught us to pray “Your kingdom come” (Luke 11:2). And pray also for God’s help to make spiritual changes in your life. Make a commitment to watch and pray about these two areas every day. **GN**

**Learn more about the Kingdom of God**

Scripture contains many more relevant passages about the Kingdom that Jesus Christ will establish on earth at His return. Be sure to read the article “What Is the Kingdom of God?” beginning on page 4 and download or request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom* for a more detailed study of this crucial topic!



## “What Makes a True Leader?”

Your July/August 2012 *Good News* issue regarding a crisis in leadership couldn't be more timely. Every time this country faced a crisis, a leader always appeared on the horizon. Three examples are George Washington during the Revolutionary War [of Independence, 1776-1783], Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War [1861-1865] and Franklin Roosevelt with the Great Depression and World War II.

I frankly don't see any viable leadership right now. The qualities I'd like to see in our leaders can be summed up in these three qualities: the wisdom of King Solomon, the patience of Job and the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Is there such a person on the near horizon? Time is running out!

G.J.B., Hamtramck, Michigan

## “What Are Ahmadinejad's Aims?”

I have just finished reading for the sixth time, “What Are Ahmadinejad's Aims?” I want to thank you most sincerely for this article. I am a Christian with a passion for the Word of God. Obviously, I am greatly concerned about the eye-opening revelation in your article.

S. F., Accra, Ghana

Just a few comments on the latest *Good News*. It would seem that while there is the good word of God's message throughout the publication, there is also much bad news. I agree that the Western nations have acted foolhardily toward the Iran problem, having allowed many Muslims into their countries, who have set up their own religious centers. If Iran should make the call to all true Muslims to carry out the threat as you have outlined, then there is a considerable number already in place to cause great harm.

Of course, should the Iranians deliver nuclear warheads, they would also kill Muslims. But they would not worry about them as they would then be glorified in the Islamic view of heaven. You offer a sound, comprehensive and well-researched view of Iran, which we do not read in the Western papers or other media. The gravest problem you mention is the electromagnetic pulse (EMP), as so much of our daily activities are involved with computers.

K.M., New Zealand

## The Good News

It was about two years ago that I picked up a copy of *The Good News* to read while at the doctor's office. Your cover story was about the Middle East, a subject that has interested me for years. I have to admit that I took the magazine home so I could read it in its entirety. Since then I have read dozens of your publications and have joined the local United Church of God congregation—where I feel totally welcome and have made many friends. I sincerely believe that your publications and my Bible have begun to open my eyes to the real truth about God, Jesus and why I am here.

B.P., Saskatchewan, Canada

*“Why I am here” is the subject of several articles in this issue. We hope all readers will read them carefully. Nothing could be more important!*

First I would like to thank you immensely for the wonderful, interesting and inspiring magazine that I receive from you. I have been a *Good News* subscriber for about five years. This magazine satisfies my spiritual hunger, and I have been strengthened and renewed. The booklets I have also received from you have helped me to understand the Bible more and more.

A.G., Eritrea, Africa

I am very interested in becoming a subscriber to your magazine *The Good News*. My cousin, who lives 30 miles away, saves the magazines for me and I in turn pass them on to friends and family. So they're always in circulation. My problem is them asking for the next issue. So if it is possible, send my own issue promptly. I thank you beforehand.

R.T.D., Pharr, Texas

*We are pleased to add you to our subscription list. We would also add friends and family, but all must request the magazine for themselves.*

## Bible Study Course

I would like to complete the *Bible Study Course*, as I find it very informative, encouraging and such a delight. I also thank you for the enlightening, encouraging and uplifting articles and booklets. They have really lifted me up. The work I have been doing can be very discouraging. But I've found all of this reading material is a wonderful light for me. I only wish I'd known about you a long time ago.

M.M., Winchester, England

I would like to enroll in your *Bible Study Course*. I am so eager to learn more about God and His Word. Thank you for making your literature available for free. I hope to receive the study course soon.

Reader from Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

## Helping readers to cope

I am writing to thank you for the booklets. I was going to commit suicide but started reading *Is the Bible True?* I would love to receive more of your booklets and to subscribe to your magazine *The Good News* too. I would also like to enroll in your *Bible Study Course*. Do you study from the New International Version or the King James Version?

Reader from North Carolina

*You may wish to request What Is Your Destiny? in particular. Our publications normally quote from the New King James Version, but we do employ various other versions on occasion when they make the meaning clearer. Request or download our free booklet How to Understand the Bible. It explains differences in Bible versions in more detail.*

I pray that this letter finds you in excellent health and joyful spirits. I've been prone to melancholy and anxiety neurosis most of my adult life. I hope you will send me the free reprint “The Bible's Keys to Mental Health” and the booklet *Making Life Work*. Your magazines and booklets are an invaluable blessing to me and I'm truly grateful. A “brain attack” in 2001 damaged my faculty of memory, so I kept rereading all the materials I've kept.

Reader from Northern Ireland

I have just finished reading your publication *The Good News*. Could you please add me to your mailing list? I would also like to comment on a “Current Events and Trends” item in the March/April 2012 *Good News* issue titled “Sexual Abuse, Rape Widespread in America.” I am putting these thoughts to you from personal experience. I was sexually abused repeatedly as a child.

Reader from USA

*As to subscription and booklet requests, we are glad to honor them. And concerning the abuse, we are deeply saddened to hear about it and pray for your well-being. To the above reader and any others so affected, we offer our free 18-page reprint “Dealing With Abuse.” It deals with this sensitive subject from a Christian, biblical point of view.*

## Spreading the true gospel

Thank you for sending me your magazine for the past year and a half. I have no way of knowing who sent in my name, but I am very happy that they did. I really look forward to every issue. I especially like reading how current events

## Visit The Good News on Facebook

Are you on Facebook? If so, visit our *Good News* magazine page. See what other readers are saying. Find links to interesting articles and Web commentaries. Become a *Good News* magazine Facebook fan!

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



[www.facebook.com/GoodNewsMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/GoodNewsMagazine)



# Questions & Answers

**Q: I've read from your articles that Jesus Christ will return to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Yet certain verses, like Luke 17:21 and Colossians 1:13, seem to indicate that believers are in the Kingdom now. Could you explain what these verses mean?**

*Reader on the Internet*

How should we understand Jesus Christ's statement in Luke 17:21 often translated "The kingdom of God is within you"? Many take it to mean that the Kingdom is something set up in men's hearts. Yet we should realize that Jesus was speaking here to Pharisees who were opposed to Him (verse 20). So was God's rule truly in their hearts? The words "within you" are better translated "in your midst" or "among you" or "here with you," as other Bible versions variously render this.

The Kingdom was among them because *Jesus* was among them—the very King of all creation and future King of Israel and all nations was right there in their midst bringing a foretaste of the instructions and miracle-working power of the Kingdom yet to come.

This also explains Jesus' statement in Matthew 12:28: "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Casting out demons was a hallmark of the future Kingdom of God—when Satan and His demons will be banished. Yet Jesus was not restricted from intervening to a certain degree when He came—nor is He now. Through Christ's ministry and work, there was a breaking through of the age to come into the present age, as some have described it—and that breaking through can still be experienced by God's people today.

In fact, though Jesus' use of the term "Kingdom of God" was usually meant in an end-time sense, there are some instances where it's shown to exist in a preliminary form today—compared to a mustard seed that starts out tiny but grows to become a huge plant or as a little yeast that ends up permeating and leavening a whole batch of bread dough (Matthew 13:31-33).

Of course, those who will be crowned with rule over the world in the future age are those who are submitted to the reign of God during this age—though they may seem small and insignificant now. And they can be looked on in a sense as the Kingdom of God in embryonic form (compare Romans 8:22-23).

It is not accurate, however, to regard Christ's followers of this age as having "entered" the Kingdom so as to be "in" the Kingdom now.

As the apostle Paul told those who were already Christian believers, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). They had not entered yet. And the apostle Peter made it even clearer, telling Church members to remain faithful so that "an entrance will be [in the future] supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord

and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).

In fact, entering the Kingdom is synonymous with *inheriting* the Kingdom. It is "*when* the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him," that "the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, *inherit the kingdom* prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (verses 31, 33).

Paul makes it abundantly clear that Christians do not enter or inherit the Kingdom of God at this time, stating, "I tell you this, brothers: *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15:50, English Standard Version). As long as we are human, we cannot inherit the Kingdom. We must be changed from fleshly, mortal bodies into immortal spirit beings.

It's important to understand that entering the Kingdom of God requires a changed level of existence. We must be raised into divine glory to be like God our Father and Jesus Christ so as to rule under Them in Their Kingdom. (See our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* to better understand this subject.)

Another passage often used to argue that Christians are in the Kingdom today is Colossians 1:13, which states that God "has delivered us from the power [or dominion] of darkness and conveyed [or transferred] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." This verse is speaking of an authority transfer from the rule of Satan to the rule of God.

Many assume the use of the word "into" here means that we are now "in" God's Kingdom. But the Greek word rendered "into" does not have to mean we have been placed *within* the Kingdom. Some versions translate it simply as "to"—as we've gone from one authority over to another. We were subject to Satan's rule and are now subject to the rule of God's Kingdom.

Of course, the Kingdom of God exists today in that God is the Ruler of the universe. And He will personally rule over those who submit to Him today. However, that does not put them *in* the Kingdom now—it puts them *under* its rule, just as the nations of the earth during the Millennium will not be in the Kingdom in the full sense but will be under its rule.

Yes, there is a sense in which we are able to experience the Kingdom today. We live in submission to it now. Its King even lives within us to lead us out of darkness—bringing the power of the future age into our lives in the present. But we are yet in territory occupied by the enemy—not just the world but even our own flesh. We wait for a kingdom that is not yet here—the Kingdom that Jesus will bring with Him at His return, when He will completely transform us and will set about to transform the world at large.

For a more thorough explanation of the Kingdom of God, be sure to read "What Is the Kingdom of God?" beginning on page 4 and the related articles in this issue.

relate to the Bible, though some of them are so scary. Enclosed is a donation.

*A.I.F., Rice Lake, Wisconsin*

Kindly accept this token of appreciation. I pray that God will bless, provide and make a way, so that I can really do as I desire concerning the spreading of His work and the gospel.

*A.O., Milton Keynes, England*

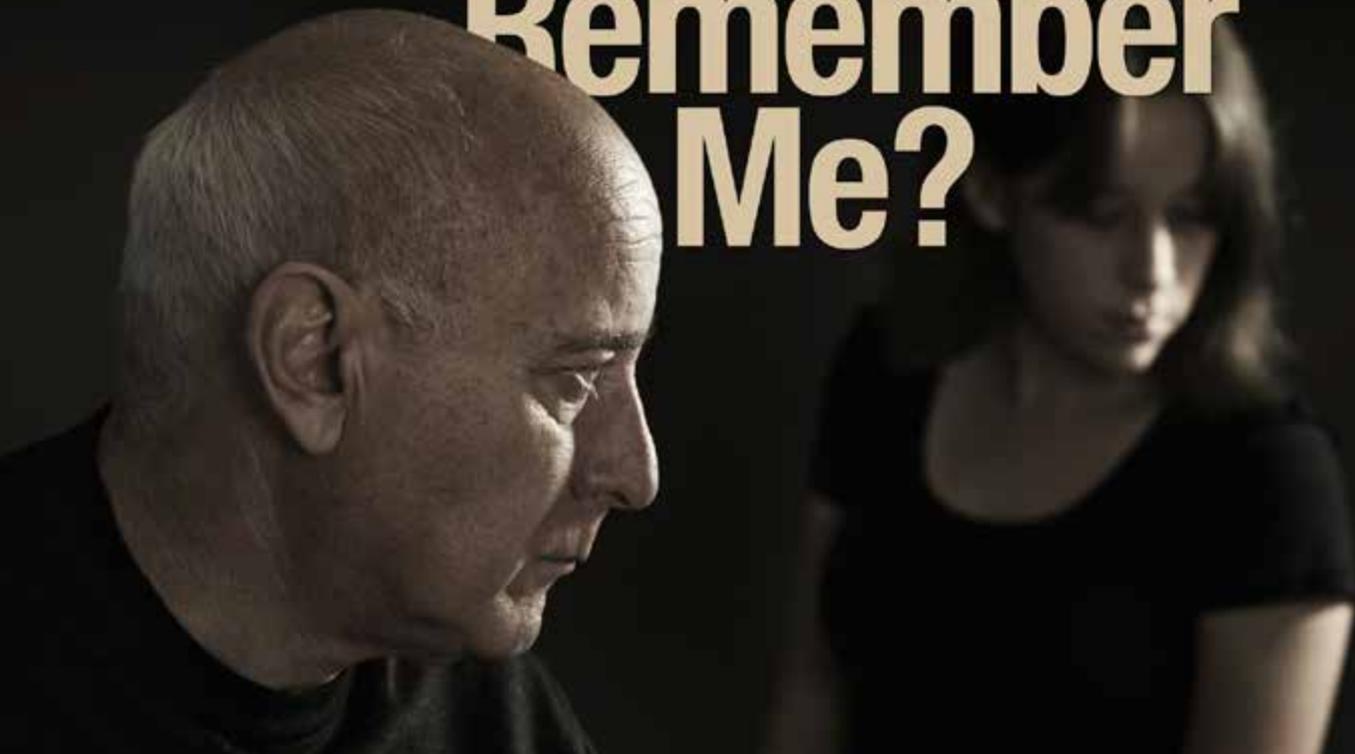
I am so glad that I finally found out that you are a Church that recognizes all of the Bible, including the seventh-day Sabbath. You never mention any of that on your [*Beyond Today*] TV show, which I look at every Sunday (wishing it were on Saturday). Enclosed is a check to help with keeping your program on the air.

*C.W.W., Upper Montclair, New Jersey*

*The article "Is Your Life in Sync With God?" beginning on page 36, about the seventh-day Sabbath, is taken from a recent Beyond Today TV program. We deeply appreciate the generous contributions from our readers who want to help us in sharing this message. The Bible mandates this approach: "Freely you have received, freely give." Although it costs a great deal of money to spread God's truth around the world, the gospel is much too precious to put a price on it.*

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to *The Good News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A., or e-mail [gninfo@ucg.org](mailto:gninfo@ucg.org) (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).

# Hey, Dad, Remember Me?



That question burned deeply in the young woman’s heart. And she didn’t feel her prayers to a Father in heaven would connect. What can a person in this predicament do? *by Scott Hoefker*

**T**he young mother sat in my office, tears slowly sliding down her face, her eyes swollen with years of frustration. I asked her, “What is one question you would like to ask your father?” Her sad reply spoke volumes: “Hey, Dad, remember me?”

She tearfully explained that she and her father were never close, that he was distant at best. From time to time he made his presence known by raising his voice or asking for something around the house pertaining to *his* needs. But as this young woman related, “He may have spoken only five sentences to me personally in my years of growing up.”

Family relationship statistics are alarming today, as more and more people talk about how the absence of their fathers in their lives has left a gaping hole they now seek to fill. Other relationships are impacted, including the most important one—that with God. The young mother explained her primary reason for counseling in these words: “How do I pray to my Father in

heaven? I’ve never really talked to my physical father growing up. I can’t connect.”

If you’ve suffered from such a communication barrier, that relational challenge is a very difficult chasm to cross. Being disconnected from your human father—for whatever reasons—makes it harder to connect with God your Father in prayer. Yet Jesus taught His disciples, “In this manner, therefore, pray, ‘Our Father in heaven . . .’” (Matthew 6:9). And God says that He is “a father of the fatherless” (Psalm 68:5). So if you’ve had a strained relationship or non-existent one with your physical father, here are some thoughts to help you truly connect with your spiritual Father.

• **Talk to God the Father as to your friend.**

We all have friends. We know what it’s like to sit and just talk, sharing our deepest thoughts, ideas and desires. One of the great gifts God has given human beings is the ability to communicate.

Go to Him in prayer and begin: “God, it’s hard to talk to you as to a father since

I’ve never really talked to my physical father before, but I want to be your friend. I know many times in your Word you mention being our Friend. You said that Abraham was your friend (Isaiah 41:8). So could we please just talk?”

Start gradually. Good friends build relationships through communication.

• **Keep in mind that your Father in heaven knows and plans for your needs.**

The fact that the Almighty and Eternal God is aware of and will take care of your personal needs (Matthew 6:28-33) is pretty cool! Make a list and go over those things you need with your spiritual Father. Discuss your plans with Him—and what you need to fulfill those plans.

Good fathers love to plan for the future with their children. And remember this encouraging directive: “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7). God the Father loves you and wants you to succeed in life now and beyond.

• **Realize that your spiritual Father deeply wants to communicate with you.**

Never mind that you may have not been able to talk meaningfully with your physi-

cal father when it comes to approaching God. Your Heavenly Father *wants* to hear from you—and to talk with you. Pray often to Him—He’s always there, available to listen. And listen for *Him*—not an audible voice but communication that is spiritually perceived.

Open your Bible and begin to read, for God communicates with us through His written Word. And He helps us to understand through His Spirit. Through His Word and Spirit, God speaks to a person’s heart and mind with a sense of moral righteousness and fairness. He’ll instill certain ideas and thoughts in your mind. And when He’s done, you’ll usually know what to do.

Since God your Father has unlimited ways to lead you to answers, He may use other forms of communication. For example, He may lead you to wise, godly people for an answer. Or He may arrange circumstances so that His answer becomes obvious.

God wants you to talk to Him and to trust Him. He will love you and teach you—and He’ll never leave you (Hebrews 13:5). Yes, if you’ve had an uncaring or absentee father, it may be hard for you to understand how someone who calls Himself “your Father” really desires to talk with you, but *He does!*

**• Read God’s Word to learn more about the Father you have not really known but always wanted to know!**

Many young adults desire to find out more about their parents, particularly their father. What was his family background? What was he like as a boy? Where did he live, and what did he do? You can do most of this with your Father in heaven—it’s in His Book!

The Bible is God’s instruction manual for all of us. Reading it may be difficult at first, but after a while it gets easier and soon becomes enjoyable as you learn more about God as your Father. Jesus Christ spoke often of His relationship with His Father, and He shared many personal aspects of that relationship. This is a good way to find out more about His Father, who is your Father also!

**• Consider how God has been involved in your life.**

Reflect about God’s past intervention in the circumstances of your life. Some of His actions may have been corrective to help you stop committing a particular sin.

Other times His actions were rewards for your obedience that pleased Him.

Think of the times He brought you out of difficult and hopeless situations. Think about when the most unexpected things happened in your life. Some pass these events off as blind luck or fate, but many see God’s handwriting all over them. Think of those times when your Heavenly Father was there for you. God our Father is very much more involved in our lives than we realize.

**• Look to the Son of our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ.**

The Father shares the same love and care for each person that Jesus showed for others during His human life on this earth. Who is God the Father? He is the One who is eagerly waiting to throw His arms around you, to comfort you, to embrace you and let you cry on His shoulder. He wants to tell you that you’re His son or daughter and that He’ll never leave you! And to say, “Don’t worry—in the end it’s going to be just fine!”

When Jesus opened the eyes of blind, He declared that God the Father is like Himself. Each time He fed the hungry or raised the dead He was telling the world that His Father is just like that too.

Jesus revealed who really did and does all those good things: “The Father who dwells in Me does the works” (John 14:10). When Jesus forgave those who killed Him He showed us that His Father also forgives because the Father is truly a God of love. As Jesus declared, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (verse 9).

**• Remember that God desires a relationship with you as His child.**

God our Father desires a family. He loves children. Although we may not have had a strong and healthy relationship with our father before, realize that now is a great time to begin one with God our Father. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1). The wonderful truth is that we are never too old to start that relationship.

“Hey, Dad, remember me?” Yes, our Father in heaven does remember you. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:30). And God looks forward to getting to know you even better and building a relationship that will last for eternity! Reach out to Him now because He is reaching out to you. **GN**



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](http://www.VerticalThought.org).

This magazine is specially written for our younger *Good News* audience. Each issue is packed with helpful insight and eye-opening articles guiding today’s young people in getting the most out of life—both now and in the future.

You’ll uncover lots of fascinating facts, meet many interesting people, discover what’s really going on behind the scenes in our world, learn answers to your questions and find practical, down-to-earth guidance on all kinds of subjects.

**Visit [VerticalThought.org](http://VerticalThought.org) today!**



# BEYOND TODAY

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FUTURE

Watch the **Beyond Today TV program** on **WGN America!**

## Sunday mornings

8:30 a.m. Eastern

7:30 a.m. Central

6:30 a.m. Mountain

5:30 a.m. Pacific



The Good News magazine and Beyond Today television are sponsoring Bible seminars around the world!

# KINGDOM of GOD

Sept.  
8 or 15

## BIBLE SEMINARS



**Y**ou're warmly invited to attend **NEW SESSIONS** of the *Kingdom of God Bible Seminars* in a city near you! • Learn why Jesus Christ's message holds the key to human survival!  
• Find the keys to developing a deeper, more meaningful relationship with your Creator!



Go online now to reserve your free spot for **new sessions** of the *Kingdom of God Bible Seminars* @ [kogbibleseminars.org](http://kogbibleseminars.org)

See the list of participating cities with times and locations. If you do not have online access at home,



**Sept. 8 or 15, 2012 • [kogbibleseminars.org](http://kogbibleseminars.org)**