

# *The* Good News

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A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

## Turmoil

What's Behind the Unrest  
Sweeping the Middle East?

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A man in a dark jacket and jeans stands on the turret of a tank in a desert landscape. He is holding a rifle. The tank has the number '20152313' painted on its side. The background shows a desert with some industrial structures in the distance under a cloudy sky.

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**A**re we on the verge of a fundamental transformation of the Middle East? Time will tell, but the forced ouster of the leaders of Egypt and Tunisia, civil war in Libya, and a growing tide of unrest sweeping across other nations tell us that the region's long era of dictatorial strongmen may be reaching its end. If so, the big question is: *What will replace it?*

As America and its allies learned when they toppled Iraq's Saddam Hussein in 2003, it's not easy to predict the outcome when a despot is forced from power—particularly in a nation long divided along religious, cultural and tribal lines and with no tradition of Western-style democracy. Eight years later, we're still sorting out the mess.

And as we saw when elections were held in the Palestinian Authority-controlled Gaza Strip in 2006, sometimes the election winners are far from stalwarts of freedom and democracy. The winner in that case, Hamas, is classified as a terrorist organization by most Western nations

## The Middle East's long era of strongmen may be reaching its end. If so, what will replace it?

and has repeatedly fired missiles and mortars into neighboring Israel.

What might we see if or when democratic elections follow the removal of some of these long-entrenched autocrats?

In Egypt, the group poised to gain the most is the Muslim Brotherhood. Long suppressed by Egyptian leaders who considered it a threat to the nation's stability, this organization has ties to various Mideast terrorist groups, including Hamas. The former head of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service has even bluntly called it a terrorist organization. Ayman al-Zawahiri (Osama bin Laden's right-hand man) and 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed were members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Of course, this could spell deep trouble for the whole Middle East, but particularly Israel. Muslim Brotherhood spokesmen have already renounced the three-decades-old Egypt-Israel peace treaty, and Mohamed ElBaradei, a leading contender for the office of president of Egypt, has said he would declare war against Israel if it again attacks Gaza in response to missile and mortar fire.

Meanwhile, in Libya, we've learned that some of the same fighters trying to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi had previously traveled to Iraq to wage *jihād* against American and coalition forces there. This means NATO forces are in the curious position of providing air and naval support for some of the same jihadists who were trying to kill them in Iraq!

And as might be expected, we don't need to look far to see Iranian fingerprints on some of the current troubles. Not content with actively stirring up trouble in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, Iran recently produced an official video apparently intended to foment unrest throughout the Muslim Middle East. Titled "The Coming Is Upon Us," the video makes the case that the appearance of an Islamic messiah expected by many Muslims is now at hand. It states that recent developments in the Middle East were foretold long ago by various Muslim authorities and are signs that Islamic rule over the whole world is near.

Among other things, it contends that Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will conquer Jerusalem—which is certainly in line with the Iranian president's long history of threats to exterminate the Jewish state. It closes with the words, "Victory is near, good tidings to the believers."

These events remind us that the Middle East is ground zero of Bible prophecy. This issue focuses on prophecies of this region at the time of the end and how today's headlines may be showing how events are shaping up for those events to be fulfilled. How closely will you be paying attention?

—Scott Ashley, Managing editor

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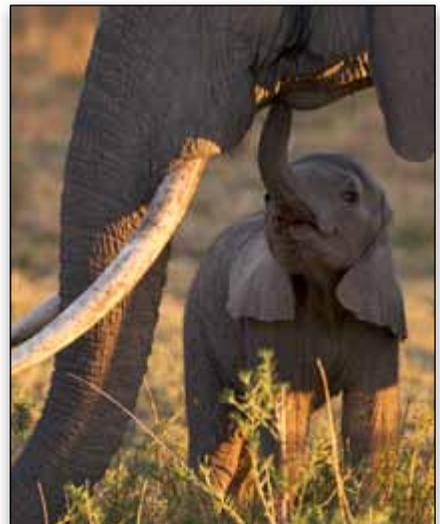
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# Turmoil

## What's Behind the Unrest Sweeping the Middle East?

by Melvin Rhodes

Riots and demonstrations have left governments trembling across North Africa and the Middle East. Is democracy about to triumph in the region, or could we see a very different outcome, one indicated by Bible prophecy?

A century ago, writes historian David Fromkin in his landmark book *A Peace to End All Peace*, “Few Europeans . . . knew or cared what went on in the languid empires of the Ottoman Sultan or the Persian Shah” (1989, p. 25).

It’s hard to believe now, but a hundred years ago there was little interest in the Middle East or North Africa. Few “knew or cared what went on” there.

But in the last century everything has changed.

Oil is one reason. This is where most of the world’s oil reserves are, so Western countries have gotten themselves involved in the area to guarantee their petroleum supplies.

Another reason is Israel. Before 1948 there had been no Jewish state in the Middle East for almost 2,000 years. All across

North Africa and throughout the Middle East, Islam has been the dominant religion for 14 centuries, with scattered Christian and Jewish minorities here and there. The sudden birth of an independent Jewish country brought with it the hostility of hundreds of millions of Arabs across the region and has led to a number of conflicts since.

Without a doubt, the establishment of Israel raised the temperature in the area.

### “War to end all wars” gives way to “Peace to end all peace”

World War I was a third cause of today’s complex Middle East. Before 1914 the region was ruled by “the Ottoman Sultan or the Persian Shah,” as Fromkin put it, but after World War I this vast region was divided into 22 Arab nations, which are hostile to Iran (Persia) as well as Israel—and a number even

have serious hostility toward each other!

The inspiration for Fromkin’s book title comes from World War I being described as “the war to end all wars.” After the peace treaties were signed, Field Marshal Earl Wavell, an officer who served under the victorious British General Edmund Allenby in the Middle East, commented prophetically, “After ‘the war to end war’ they seem to have been pretty successful in Paris at making a ‘Peace to end Peace.’” Almost a century later, the region continues to be the world’s main source of war, following centuries of relative peace under the Ottomans.

### Desire to reestablish caliphate

A further reason should be added—the desire of Osama bin Laden and others to restore the Islamic caliphate that once covered the entire region and beyond. The caliphate—an Islamic empire ruled by a *caliph*, or spiritual successor to Muhammad—has not existed for almost a century since it was abolished in the aftermath of Turkey’s defeat in World War I.

## The Bible is very clear on the final outcome of the turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa. It gives us a prophetic outline to which we should pay close attention.



Protesters in Benghazi, Libya, demand regime change.

In the minds of the Islamic extremists like Bin Laden, there will be no peace until the caliphate is restored. Their hope is that the current turmoil is leading in that direction. Their dream is of an *ummah*, a united Islamic community under one caliph, living under *sharia* (Islamic law)—encompassing at first all lands that are and have been Muslim, stretching from Spain to Indonesia, and eventually the entire world.

Although Bible prophecy is very clear on the final outcome of the turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa, it does not give a great deal of detail about events between now and then. It does, however, give us an outline to which we should pay close attention.

And clearly, the Middle East is at the center of Bible prophecy.

### Coming turmoil centering on the Middle East

When the disciples asked Jesus Christ about the events that would lead to His second coming, He replied, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:20).

Jerusalem has been fought over more than any other single city in the world. In the last century it has been at the center of regional warfare on four separate occasions (1917, 1948, 1967 and 1973), with relatively minor skirmishes even more frequent. The Temple Mount in the heart of Old Jerusalem is the most disputed piece of real estate in the world, sacred to Jews as the site of the temples built by Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod the Great and to Muslims as the location from which Muhammad is thought to have ascended to heaven.

Old Testament prophecies show that the Jews (the biblical tribe of Judah) would be settled again in the Holy Land prior to Christ’s return. And Judah figures prominently in end-time events: “Behold, the day of the LORD is coming . . . For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem . . . Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations . . . And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east . . . Judah also will fight at Jerusalem” (Zechariah 14:1-4, 14).

Clearly this prophecy is set in the future.

The city is also central to the Christian faith as the site of Jesus Christ’s death, burial and resurrection and many other events from His life and ministry. Nations beyond the Middle East have historically had vested interests in the area.

Interestingly, at this present time, hundreds of millions of Christians expect the second coming of the Messiah in their lifetimes, while many Jews expect His first coming, and hundreds of millions of Muslims are expecting *their* messianic figure, the Mahdi or “Guided One,” to come. This of course adds to the Mideast cauldron and further complicates matters.

### Demonstrations, riots rock the Middle East

Added to all these are the many recent upheavals in the region.

These were enabled in large part by a problem that’s widespread in the region—financial distress leaving many, especially the young, feeling disenfranchised. Demonstrations and riots across the region have been triggered by organizers exploiting growing unemployment among the young and rising food prices.

Of course, the Middle East isn’t the only area with this problem. Similar demonstrations and riots have been incited across Europe as austerity measures are being introduced; and demonstrations in some U.S. cities against government cutbacks fall into the same category. Millions of people everywhere feel poor and disadvantaged and are fighting for the basic human needs of food, jobs and housing.

A feeling of despair led Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia to set himself alight on Dec. 17, 2010, triggering demonstrations and riots. Exactly four weeks later, Tunisia’s president fled to Saudi Arabia after almost 24 years in power, ending one of North Africa’s many dictatorships. All Bouazizi wanted to do was provide for his family, but petty officials kept demanding bribes from him to continue his business, a situation all too common across the world.

With Tunisia as a catalyst, unrest spread to Egypt, leading to the same result—the collapse of a dictatorship that had lasted more than 30 years. The unrest rapidly spread to other countries across the region—nations that quickly either announced reforms or chose heavy-handed crackdowns in an attempt to remain in power.

Demonstrations across the Middle East were uniformly stirred up over high unemployment, rising food prices, a lack of basic freedoms, generally poor living conditions and a sense of hopelessness.

In the West, hopes arose for the spread of democracy and freedom, and that this would be another year of liberating revolutions, just as 1989 was across the communist world, leading to freer societies.

Many in North Africa and the Middle East also wanted democracy, but not necessarily Western-style democracy. Democracy is associated with affluence, which is positive. But what about equal rights for women and for all religions? That’s not likely to happen anywhere in the Arab world!

### Sobering realities behind events in Egypt

Writing in *The Wall Street Journal* on

March 29, 2011, Mideast expert and former editor of *The Jerusalem Post* Bret Stephens wrote the following in an article titled “Egypt—the Hangover”: “The West seems to be convinced that the revolution was led by secular democratic forces,’ says (my Egyptian friend) Mahmoud. ‘Now that myth is shattered. Which means that either the old order’—by which he means the military regime—‘stays in power, or we’re headed for Islamist dominance.’

“Egypt’s Copts, some 15% of the population and the largest non-Muslim group anywhere in the Middle East, have good reasons to be worried. Though the protesters at Tahrir made a show of interfaith solidarity, the sense of fellowship is quickly returning to the poisonous pre-Tahrir norm. Earlier this month a Coptic church south of Cairo was burned to the ground, apparently on account of an objectionable Coptic-Muslim romance. The episode would seem almost farcical if it weren’t so commonplace in Egypt, and if it didn’t so often have fatal results.

“The threat to the Coptic community is also a reminder that beyond the Muslim Brotherhood there are Egypt’s still more extreme Salafis [Islamic originalists, so to speak]. ‘The issue is not that they have gotten stronger since the revolution,’ Mahmoud explains. ‘It is that they are getting bolder. There is no counterbalance to their street dominance in certain poor neighborhoods. They’re not scared of the government. They’re not scared of being prosecuted.’

“Ahmed, another friend of Mahmoud, stops by to say hello. A graphic designer, Ahmed got a coveted job at an ad agency two days before the protests began in Tahrir, was laid off just a few days later, and remains unemployed today. Though it’s now generally forgotten, the past seven years were economically good for Egypt thanks to the liberalizing program of former Prime Minister Ahmed Nafiz—a classic case, in hindsight, of revolutions being the product of rising expectations.

“But now that’s in the past. Foreign investors are wary of Egypt, as are tourists, and the military junta currently ruling the state has embarked on a witch hunt against people who belonged to the ‘businessmen’s cabinet’ that gave Egypt its fleeting years of growth but now serve as convenient bogeymen for a military eager to affirm its populist bona fides [with a populace favoring Islamic fundamentalism].

“Later I return to the hotel to listen to U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates and

Ambassador Margaret Scobey deliver upbeat assessments about developments in the country. Who are you going to believe: Secular Egyptians themselves or the crew who, just a few weeks ago, was saying the Mubarak regime was in no danger of collapse?”

Certainly, the current turmoil could lead to the triumph of Islamic extremists, which would give the United States more enemies like Iran. But there the similarity to Iran ends. Iran is overwhelmingly Shia Islam, while Arab countries are mostly Sunni Islam, and historically the two have rarely gotten along. About 85 percent of Muslims are Sunnis. Shiites are a minority and have felt persecuted for almost 14 centuries. A clash between the two would be a major conflict, disrupting oil supplies and making the world a much more dangerous place.

### U.S. intervention constrained

Also writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, Robert Kaplan, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, wrote in his March 26, 2011, article titled “The Middle East Crisis Has Just Begun”: “The United States may be a democracy, but it is also a status quo power, whose position in the world depends on the world staying as it is. In the Middle East, the status quo is unsustainable because populations are no longer afraid of their rulers.

“Every country is now in play. Even in Syria, with its grisly security services, widespread demonstrations have been reported and protesters killed. There will be no way to appease the region’s rival sects, ethnicities and other interest groups except through some form of democratic representation, but anarchic quasi-democracy will satisfy no one. Other groups will emerge, and they may be distinctly illiberal.

“Whatever happens in Libya, it is not necessarily a bellwether for the Middle East. The Iranian green movement [calling for democratic reform in Iran] knows that Western air forces and navies are not about to bomb Iran in the event of a popular uprising, so it is unclear what lesson we are providing to the region. Because outside of Iran, and with the arguable exceptions of Syria and Libya itself, there is no short-term benefit for the U.S. in democratic revolts in the region. In fact, they could be quite destructive to our interests, even as they prove to be unstoppable.”

While Western media is focused primarily on Libya’s growing conflict and Western imposition of a no-fly zone, we should

**While Western media is focused primarily on Libya’s growing conflict and Western imposition of a no-fly zone, we should remember that other conflicts have not gone away.**

remember that other conflicts have not gone away. As Robert Kaplan puts it:

“Our most important national-security resource is the time that our top policy maker can devote to a problem, so it is crucial to avoid distractions. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the fragility of Pakistan, Iran’s rush to nuclear power, a possible Israeli military response—these are all major challenges that have not gone away. This is to say nothing of rising Chinese naval power and Beijing’s ongoing attempt to Finlandize much of East Asia.

“We should not kid ourselves. In foreign policy, all moral questions are really questions of power. We intervened twice in the Balkans in the 1990s only because Yugoslav dictator Slobodan Milosevic had no nuclear weapons and could not retaliate against us, unlike the Russians, whose destruction of Chechnya prompted no thought of intervention on our part (nor did ethnic cleansing elsewhere in the Caucasus, because it was in Russia’s sphere of influence).

“At present, helping the embattled Libyan rebels does not affect our interests, so we stand up for human rights there. But helping Bahrain’s embattled Shia, or Yemen’s anti-regime protesters, would undermine key allies, so we do nothing as demonstrators are killed in the streets” (ibid).

The simple fact is that *America cannot be consistent in supporting democracy in the Middle East and maintain its dominance of the region.*

Support for democratic movements could easily backfire and lead to anti-Western governments coming to power, including Islamic extremists. If the United States is to maintain its superpower status in the world, it must continue to dominate the



## Turmoil Rocks the Middle East

- Revolutions, armed revolt or war
- Major protests and unrest
- Significant levels of protests

**1. Morocco:** Protests bring political concessions, constitutional reforms.

**2. Algeria:** Protests bring lifting of 19-year state of emergency.

**3. Tunisia:** Protests lead to ouster of president and prime minister and dissolution of ruling party.

**4. Libya:** Protests and armed revolt lead to civil war and NATO intervention for rebel forces.

**5. Egypt:** Attacks, protests lead to ouster of president and prime minister, dissolution of parliament and state security force, assumption of power by armed forces, promises of new elections.

**6. Sudan:** President announces he will not seek another term in 2015.

**7. Lebanon:** Protests, clashes with riot police.

**8. Syria:** Demonstrations bring bloodshed, resignation of cabinet, release of political prisoners.

**9. Jordan:** Demonstrations,

protests lead to dismissal of prime minister and cabinet.

**10. Iraq:** In state of war or turmoil since 2003. Protests, attacks lead to resignations of governors; prime minister promises to not seek another term in office after 2014.

**11. Saudi Arabia:** Government responds to demonstrations with force, offers economic concessions.

**12. Yemen:** Riots, protests bring resignations of members of ruling party, president offers to conditionally leave office.

**13. Oman:** Protests lead to

dismissal of several ministers, economic and government concessions.

**14. Bahrain:** Demonstrations lead to economic concessions, release of political prisoners, dismissal of ministers, military intervention by Saudi Arabia.

**15. Kuwait:** Protests, clashes with riot police bring resignation of government.

**16. Iran:** Protests met with force and arrest and threatened execution of opposition leaders.

**17. Afghanistan:** In state of war since 2003.

Middle East, the major source of the world's energy supply, as well as a strategically located region at the crossroads of three continents—Europe, Asia and Africa. A great deal is at stake for the Western world in the region.

### Daniel's prophecy of conflict between two empires

Bible prophecy shows that two new major powers will soon be players in the Middle East. New, that is, in the modern world. But they are reborn or resurrected powers from the past in the same sense that Israel is.

Following two Jewish revolts that were crushed by the Romans in A.D. 70 and A.D. 135, the Jews were dispersed throughout the world until the birth of a new Jewish nation-state in 1948. God revealed to the biblical prophet Daniel events that would befall the Jewish people in the centuries ahead.

Daniel was a captive in Babylon during the time of King Nebuchadnezzar and his successors on the Babylonian throne. He survived the fall of Babylon in October 539 B.C. and lived into the time of the Persian con-

quest under Cyrus the Great, when Babylon was put under the rule of Darius the Mede.

Daniel 11 contains a most astounding prophecy, so detailed it can only have been revealed by God. In the time of Darius the Mede (verse 1), Daniel prophesied about the coming conflict between Persia and Greece, revealing that "a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion"—a prophecy about Alexander the Great, who was to live two centuries after these words were written.

"And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven"—a reference to the fact that Alexander's death in 323 B.C. at age 32 led to the division of his empire among four of his generals.

Two of these generals are of particular importance biblically.

One was Seleucus who took possession of vast territories to the east of Antioch, north of Jerusalem. The empire, established in 312 B.C., stretched across to India and Afghanistan and included all of what had been Persia and most of Babylon. Seleucus

and his successors are referred to in the chapter as the king of the North. Their empire was to last until the Romans conquered it nearly 250 years later, making it a province in 63 B.C.

To the south of Jerusalem was the dynasty of another of Alexander's generals, Ptolemy. This dynasty lasted three centuries, until the death of the famous Queen Cleopatra in 30 B.C., after which her empire was annexed by Rome. This empire is referred to as the king of the South.

Whenever the kings of the North and South went to war, they at times trampled on the Jews who were caught in the middle. Details of the constant conflict between these rulers and their impact on the Holy Land are the substance of chapter 11, encompassing more than 150 years from the time of Alexander until the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple in Jerusalem in about 168 B.C.

At this point the prophecy ceases to relate the interaction between the two dynasties and the Jews. However, that's not the end of the king of the North or the king of the South.

### Biblical end-time prophecies that must come to pass

In verse 40 we see them both back again, now “at the time of the end,” when “the king of the South shall attack him”—the king of the North.

Why suddenly “at the time of the end,” a term used to describe end-time events that lead into the Second Coming of the Messiah, are these two kings mentioned again?

One reason is because of the restoration of a Jewish nation in the Middle East. For almost 2,000 years there was no Jewish nation there to be impacted by any events, and the whole prophecy was about the Jews and how they would be affected by these powers. Now that the Jewish state (officially called *Israel* but actually made up of descendants of the ancient Israelite kingdom of Judah, which was distinct from the kingdom of Israel) is back, events in the Middle East are once again relevant to the Jews.

But another reason is that there will once again be major powers to the north and the south of Jerusalem that will come into conflict, a major conflagration that will affect the Jewish people.

The ancient king of the South ruled from Egypt. Out of 22 Arab countries, Egypt is the most populous and has long been the most influential. When King Farouk was overthrown by the military in 1952, the young revolutionaries who came to power influenced similar revolutions throughout the Arab world.

Similarly, the revolution this year (influenced by events in Tunisia) has inspired demonstrations, riots and the fall of governments elsewhere in the Middle East. The latest nation to be convulsed by riots and demonstrations is Syria, which was in a national union with Egypt during the 1960s.

As Bret Stephens explained, the most likely outcome of the current crisis in Egypt is either a victory on the part of Islamic fundamentalists or the continuation of military rule. As the military has been in charge for almost 60 years and has failed to deliver, it seems quite possible that Islamic extremists will eventually triumph, headed by either the Muslim Brotherhood or the Salafis. This also could spread throughout the region.

### Could we see a new caliphate?

One possible outcome of events in Egypt and other Arab nations is a partial caliphate of the kind that Osama bin Laden and others envision. It would not stretch from Spain to Indonesia, but it could certainly include many of the countries of North

## If the turmoil in the region spreads to Saudi Arabia, the world's major oil producer, the end could be a region very hostile to the West—with devastating results.

Africa and the Middle East.

Bin Laden himself is a Wahhabi, a member of an extremist and violent sect centered in Saudi Arabia. If the turmoil in the region spreads to Saudi Arabia, the world's major oil producer, the end could be a region very hostile to the West—with devastating results.

It would also likely lead to conflict between Sunnis and Shiites, a conflict that is already taking place in Bahrain, where a Sunni monarch rules over a majority Shia nation. Bahrain is also the site of a major U.S. military base, so the United States is not likely to side with those demanding democracy, as it would be against U.S. interests for the majority to come to power.

To fulfill biblical prophecy, a possible scenario in today's climate is that a powerful “king of the South” will unite various nations of Sunni Islam against a revived “king of the North.”

### What about the king of the North?

The king of the North in the ancient world was conquered and his territory absorbed by the Romans in the first century B.C.—thus Rome now became, prophetically speaking, the king of the North. The Bible shows that a revival of the Roman Empire will be the next superpower to appear on the world scene, supplanting the United States. (To learn more, request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.)

Centered in Europe, this “Beast” power will be a union of 10 “kings” or leaders (Revelation 17:12). “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast” (verses 12-13).

When the king of the South attacks the king of the North, “the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships” (Daniel 11:40).

It is quite possible that current developments in North Africa and the Middle East may help drive the rise of the final European superpower foretold here. Current events show the urgent need for a stronger Europe, particularly now that the United States is badly overcommitted, financially overstretched and weary of further commitments.

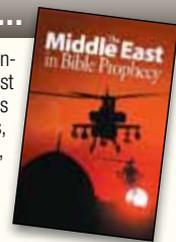
What is happening now may well be a foretaste of events foretold in the last few verses of Daniel 11. Right now, some European nations are involved in NATO's no-fly zone and naval arms blockade against the Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi, who has been provoking them for the best part of 40 years (see “Gaddafi's Violent Past Catching Up in Libya,” beginning on page 12).

Britain and France are cooperating against Libya. The United States, already fighting in two major conflicts in the region, is reluctantly providing the largest share of military assets to the NATO effort. Tellingly, Germany is staying out of it. The most powerful European nation seems to be set on a go-it-alone foreign policy. As Germany will almost certainly be one of the 10 nations forming the final Beast power, this is an interesting development in itself.

Whether or not the current turmoil brings us right into events foretold in Daniel 11, the prophesied events are sure to come in the not-too-distant future. We certainly need to keep our eyes focused on the Middle East and these developments! **GN**

### To Learn More...

To understand what's happening in today's Middle East, you must first understand the past. This region's ancient antagonisms, dating back to biblical times, have led to bitter disputes and war for thousands of years. You need to read our eye-opening booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* to get the full picture and to see where these trends appear to be heading. Request or download your free copy today!



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# Egypt in History and Prophecy

by Mario Seiglie

Egypt has recently been rocked by turmoil and unrest, with longtime ruler Hosni Mubarak forced from office. Could this be the beginning of a trend foretold in Bible prophecy? What else does Scripture reveal about Egypt in history and prophecy?



Since the beginning of 2011, an arc of crisis in Islamic countries has spread from Morocco in the west to Bahrain in the east.

Two long-time rulers have been ousted so far, in Tunisia (Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali) and in Egypt (Hosni Mubarak). Libya has been plunged effectively into civil war, with forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi attempting to quash the rebellion that seeks to oust him as well. Egypt, by far the most populous Arab nation in the Middle East with 83 million inhabitants, is now being led by a military council with presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled throughout 2011. With the radical Muslim Brotherhood as one of the most influential groups now on the scene, there is great concern that they will have considerable power in the next government.

As Joe Klein of *Time* magazine noted: “What happens in Libya stays in Libya,” a Middle Eastern diplomat told me. “What happens in Egypt affects the entire region.” . . . The revolution in Egypt isn’t over. It has barely begun. The military is in power, as it

has been, essentially, for the past 60 years. And a crisis is coming, a classic crisis of rising expectations: What happens three months from now when life hasn’t changed in any appreciable way for the hundreds of thousands of young people who took to the streets in Cairo? . . .

“Something must be done, and soon, lest Tahrir Square fill again, six months from now, with protesters who are far less peaceful—and their radicalism catch fire across the Middle East” (“Middle East Priority: A Regional Infrastructure Bank,” March 28, 2011).

What is happening in this troubled area, and how can it affect us?

Egypt is mentioned throughout the Bible, from the first book of Genesis to the last book of Revelation. It is destined to fulfill an important role in Bible prophecy. With recent events there, it’s a good time to pause and study Egypt in history and prophecy.

## National beginnings

In the Bible, the history of Egypt begins in Genesis 10, which lists the 70 families

descended from Noah’s sons. These would eventually develop into some 70 main nations around the globe.

William Albright, the famous archaeologist, commented about Genesis 10: “The tenth chapter of Genesis . . . stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in a genealogical framework . . . Many of the names of peoples and countries mentioned in this chapter have been discovered on the monuments for the first time . . . The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document” (*Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, 1955, pp. 70-71).

We read in Genesis 10:6 that “the sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan.” *Mizraim* is the biblical name for Egypt, and it was one of the earliest civilizations on earth. Egypt was a privileged place to live due to the Nile River that provided plenty of water. Its annual overflow also brought rich silt to fields along the Nile—normally producing an abundance of food in a region where drought was common.

The Nile River did for Egypt what the Tigris and Euphrates did for ancient Mesopotamia—it provided a steady flow of drinkable water, easy transportation and fertile soil. The area around the Nile is only 4 percent of the land of Egypt, but it is estimated that 99 percent of Egyptians live in this area.

Egypt is surrounded by deserts. The Libyan Desert to the west and the Sinai Peninsula to the east were like great walls that protected Egypt from invasions by land. The Egyptian people were known to be innovative, enterprising (witness the pyramids), and optimistic. Their ruler, or pharaoh, was eventually worshipped as divine.

Historians generally divide the early dynastic era of ancient Egyptian history into three main periods—the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms, spanning more than a millennium. And it was a millennium after the fall of the New Kingdom that the last official pharaoh was removed by the Romans, as we’ll see.

## Further biblical and later history

The book of Genesis faithfully describes the geographical reality of Egypt having a

reliable source of water while the land of Canaan was subject to periodic droughts. Thus, we read how Abraham, because of a drought, had to journey to Egypt for food and water (Genesis 12:10). Then the sons of Jacob did the same (Genesis 42:1-3). It was Joseph who, as the vizier or prime minister in Egypt, was able to provide food for his brothers and pave the way for the entire clan to move to Egypt. Their stay would last more than two centuries.

Exodus, the second book of the Bible, begins with the Israelites in Egypt and describes their oppression under Egyptian rule, their liberation under Moses and their departure to return to Canaan, the Promised Land. Yet God remembers the initial hospitality the Egyptians showed the Israelites and says, “You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land” (Deuteronomy 23:7).

Once Israel entered the Promised Land, the pharaohs still ordered occasional invasions there, since the Egyptians considered Canaan part of Egypt’s zone of influence.

More than four centuries later King Solomon married the pharaoh’s daughter and had considerable trade with Egypt (1 Kings 9:16).

Eventually, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar conquered the entire region around 600 B.C., including Israel and Egypt. Less than a century later, the Persians took over the control of Egypt, and then the Greeks, under Alexander the Great, subdued Egypt in 333 B.C. The Greek successors on Egypt’s throne, the Ptolemies, styled themselves as pharaohs—the last of these being the famous Cleopatra, who died in 30 B.C. when the Romans took over.

In the New Testament, Jesus’ adoptive father Joseph fled to Egypt to protect his family from the wrath of Herod the Great. Eventually, some of Christ’s disciples spread the gospel to Egypt, and churches were established there. Since Egypt was part of the Roman Empire, when the Emperor Constantine sided with the Roman Church in the A.D. 300s, the majority of Egyptians eventually became Christians.

The Roman Empire at this time became divided between East and West, with Egypt as part of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire until the 600s. The church in Egypt, known as Coptic after the native language, diverged from orthodox Catholic teaching in the 400s and became distinct. Then in 641, soon after the birth of Islam, the Arabs conquered Egypt and established Islamic rule, which is still the dominant religion today. (The Copts, who today make up about

10 percent of the population, are generally descendants of the ancient Egyptians and are mostly Christian.)

After its assimilation into the spreading Islamic world, Egypt came under the rule of various Muslim kingdoms, including the Turkish Ottoman Empire. With that empire’s fall in World War I, Egypt became a British protectorate but was granted independence in 1922, ruled then by a king.

Egypt had its last king in 1952 when King Farouk was overthrown by the mili-



tary under Gamal Abdel Nasser. Then came Anwar Sadat, who was assassinated in 1981, and Hosni Mubarak took over until the beginning of 2011. With Mubarak’s removal, Egypt’s political future is now uncertain—especially with radical Islamic groups waiting in the wings.

### What does Bible prophecy say about Egypt?

The Bible contains a number of notable prophecies about Egypt—some already fulfilled and others yet to be fulfilled in the future.

Egypt was a proud civilization, confident it was quite self-sufficient with its steady supply of food and water. It was a major power in the Middle East and occasionally cruelly subjugated many smaller nations.

One remarkable Bible prophecy foretold that the mighty and haughty pharaoh, considered divine by his people, would eventually be replaced by foreign rulers. We read in Ezekiel 30:13: “Thus says the LORD God, ‘I will also destroy the idols, and cause the images to cease from Noph [that is, Memphis, the northern Egyptian capital]. There shall no longer be princes from the land of Egypt; I will put fear in the land of Egypt.’”

This prophecy about “the princes from the land of Egypt” is generally understood as meaning that proud Egypt would not have any more native rulers over it, but rather foreigners. This is precisely what happened after the Babylonians conquered Egypt, as the pharaohs were reduced to being lackeys of the Babylonian kings.

*John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible* says about this scripture: “There shall no longer be princes from the land of Egypt . . . that is, a native of that country; or that should rule

over the whole of it, and in that grandeur the kings of Egypt had before; or, however, not dwell in Memphis, which was the seat of the kings of Egypt, but now should be so no more: when Egypt was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, it was under the Babylonians; and then under the Persians; and then under the Greeks; and afterwards under the Romans . . . so that it never recovered its former glory; and indeed, after Nectanebus was driven out of it by Ochus, king of Persia, it never after had a king.”

### Egypt’s role in the end times

Bible prophecy also describes Egypt as having a role in the end times, prior to the return of Christ. We read of a war between “the king of the South” (which includes Egypt) and “the king of the North.”

We read in Daniel 11:40-45: “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, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land [the land of Israel], and many countries shall be overthrown; but

these shall escape from his hand; Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon [these names designating the area of modern Jordan].

“He [again, the northern ruler] shall stretch out his hand against the countries, *and the land of Egypt shall not escape*. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver; and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow at his heels.

“But news from the east and the north



shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and [or in] the glorious holy mountain [that is, between the Dead and Mediterranean Seas in Jerusalem]; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.”

What we see here is that in the end time, Egypt, along with its bordering nations, will eventually be invaded by the “king of the North.” For much of this chapter the “king of the North” refers to the Greek Seleucid Empire that covered an area north of the land of Israel and fought with the “king of the South” (the ruler of Egypt and neighboring countries to the south of Israel) for the control of the entire region.

In the end time, we will again see a “king of the South” in approximately the same geographical area as before who will play an important role in provoking an invasion from the north. The prophecy also reveals that the “king of the North” will temporarily conquer these southern lands.

What we are witnessing now in the Middle East could eventually lead to a coalition of Arab and Muslim peoples with a “king of

the South” leading them. There will also be a “king of the North” heading a coalition of European states in a coming revival of the Roman Empire. (The ancient Seleucid kingdom was taken over by the Romans, whose empire has experienced a number of revivals in history—a final one being yet to come.)

It is enlightening to watch as warfare in Libya “provokes” a reaction from the European nations, among others, that have sent jets to bomb certain Libyan targets. So what we see is a pattern of events in the “South”

**Though previously filled with various periods of war, despotism, false religion and humiliation, the story of Egypt will finish on a positive and uplifting note.**

causing the “North” to intervene militarily, precisely the same biblical pattern described in Daniel 11! Yet the one described in Daniel is on a much larger scale.

We also clearly see by the context of Daniel 11-12 that these events will unfold shortly before the return of Christ, the resurrection of God’s people and the establishment of His Kingdom. That time could be alarmingly near!

### Good news for Egypt

God says that Egypt will be subjected to “the hand of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them” (Isaiah 19:4). Yet there is good news for Egypt in the end. God has not forsaken them or any other country. He is not a respecter of persons—or for that matter, of nations (Acts 10:34-35), and many will eventually learn His ways.

When Jesus Christ returns, we find the Bible saying Egypt will learn to observe God’s laws. At first this will take some disciplining.

Zechariah 14:17-19 tells us: “And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain;

they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.”

Yes, here is clear biblical evidence that the Feast of Tabernacles, one of God’s festivals revealed in Leviticus 23:33-36, will be kept worldwide when Jesus returns to the earth!

But notice how the story of Egypt ends on a very positive note: “In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt, for they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them.

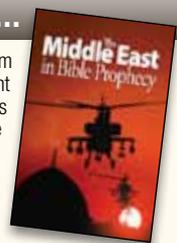
“Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day . . . And the LORD will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; they will return to the LORD, and He will be entreated by them and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria [a reference to the northern power], and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians.

“In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, ‘Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance’” (verses 19-25).

But until that time when peace will at long last finally dominate the Middle East, we need to keep our eyes open as this present turmoil unfolds in Egypt and among its neighbors, and watch to see how these events shape the region for the fulfillment of these biblical prophecies of the end time! **GN**

### To Learn More...

Why does the Middle East seem to always be such a flashpoint on the world scene? Why has this troubled region been the source of so much conflict and so many bloody wars? What’s behind the ancient antagonisms that frequently break out in violence and bloodshed? And where it will ultimately lead? You need to know! Discover the answers in our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. Request or download your free copy today!



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# Gaddafi's Violent Past Catching Up in Libya

On Sept. 1, 1969, Libya's King Idris was overthrown in a violent coup that brought a young revolutionary Colonel Muammar Gaddafi to power. For more than 40 years his revolutionary fervor has spread mayhem and discord.

publicity when large shipments of weapons were intercepted that Libya was trying to send to the Provisional Irish Republican Army, Libyan involvement in arming terrorist groups was far more widespread. Traces conducted on the weapons used in terrorist attacks by groups such as the Abu Nidal Organization frequently showed that the weapons had come from Libya."

Because of Libya's continued involvement in terrorist acts, there were frequent tensions with Western nations. In 1981 the United States shot down two Libyan fighter planes trying to enforce Libya's claim to international waters in the Gulf of Sidra. In 1986, U.S. forces sank two Libyan ships and attacked missile bases that had fired at American aircraft.

In retaliation a bomb tore through the side of a TWA flight in Europe, killing four; three days later another bomb blew up a disco in Berlin frequented by U.S. servicemen. Three were killed, including two American military personnel, and some 200 others injured. In retaliation, U.S. planes bombed Libya.

## Conflict with Britain and France

Gaddafi certainly gave Libya a higher profile than his predecessor. In 1983 a British policewoman was shot and killed by gunmen inside the London Libyan embassy in total violation of international laws that govern the conduct of embassies. A siege of 11 days followed until Britain allowed the Libyans to leave the country.

In 1988 I was in Ghana when I heard the news of the midair explosion that brought down Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. I remember the date well because my wife had flown home to Detroit to visit her mother, and friends started calling thinking she might have been on the flight. I'm thankful to say she was not, but 259 people were—all of whom were killed, in addition to 11 other people on the ground.

Investigators traced the bomb back to Libyan agents. Only recently did a prominent Libyan make it clear that the bomb would not have been authorized by anybody but Colonel Gaddafi.

It's interesting to note that the French government first suggested the no-fly zone that went into effect in late March. More than 20

It was early on a Monday morning. Our church office was on the lower floor of our home in the capital of the West African nation of Ghana. I will never forget the date—June 4, 1979.

As I descended the stairs heading toward the office, our office clerk came running out shouting: "A coup! A coup!"

We were about to experience a classic African coup, the violent overthrow of a government. We listened to the radio that was playing martial music, interspersed with occasional gunfire as the government-controlled (and only) radio station changed hands two or three times during the day—with junior officers of the air force attempting to overthrow the senior officers of the army who had enjoyed power for more than six years.

Two days of fighting followed, during which time it was too dangerous to go anywhere. For more than four days we had no electricity—which meant that all the meat in our freezer was ruined, food that had been difficult to find. Our water supply was intermittent, which was a far greater concern. We had two children at the time, one only weeks old.

Four days after the coup, a Friday, the headline in our local paper was simply: "NO FOOD." The new revolutionary government of young, idealistic socialists had introduced price controls on food items, leading to inevitable shortages. A few days after this a number of senior Ghanaians, including former heads of state, were taken to a local beach and summarily shot.

## Libyan fingerprints on events

It turned out later that this coup had been encouraged by Libya's revolutionary Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, who had himself come to power in a coup 10 years earlier. His youthful zeal inspired others to follow suit. Ghana was one of three countries where successful violent coups had a Libyan connection.

A few months later, I made a second visit to Liberia. The first time I traveled there, the ruling president was a descendant of the African-

American slaves who returned to Africa and founded the country in the early part of the 19th century. By my second visit, he and his government had been overthrown in a coup arguably more violent than Ghana's. Members of the old cabinet had been taken out to the beach, tied to stakes and executed.

Over two decades of violence and civil war was to follow before the country could start to rebuild. Again, Libya's hand was in the coup.

Similar events took place in Burkina Faso, Ghana's neighbor to the north, where Thomas Sankara came to power in 1983. To another young Marxist revolutionary with pan-Africanist ideals like those of Gaddafi, violence was the means to an end.

These three coups impacted me greatly. Exactly how many government overthrows throughout the region owed their origins to Libya's Gaddafi I cannot say, but these three assuredly did.

## Will Gaddafi again turn to terrorism?

Scripture tells us that "those who live by the sword shall perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). As I write this article, Libya's president is waging a fierce fight to keep his throne—and I do not use the term throne incorrectly. Although Gaddafi overthrew King Idris in 1969 and established a republic, he clearly wanted to start his own dynasty, planning on one of his sons taking over the reins when it's his time to go.

One thing is clear: If Gaddafi is not removed by the rebel forces on the ground—which would only be made possible by effective air raid strikes of the primarily Western coalition of forces that have come against him—he will seek to hit back against them with all the violent means at his disposal.

In the March 10, 2011, *Security Weekly* newsletter from Stratfor (Strategic Forecasting), Scott Stewart asked, "Will Libya again become the arsenal of terrorism?" He explained: "During the 1970s and 1980s, Libya served as the arsenal of terrorism. While this role may have received the most



years ago it was France that thwarted Libya's plans to overthrow the government of neighboring Chad, a former French colony. In retaliation, Libyan agents placed a bomb on a French plane taking off from Chad's capital in September 1989, killing all 170 on board.

Clearly, Libya under Gaddafi has made many enemies, so it's not surprising that Western governments, notably the French and the British, have a vested interest in seeing him removed from power and are doing what they can to help the rebels fighting against him. However, this is fraught with danger for the major Western powers.

In his Stratfor analysis, Scott Stewart expressed concern that the current turmoil in Libya could boost Islamic jihadists. "The conflict in Libya could provide jihadists in Libya more room to operate than they have enjoyed for many years," he wrote. "This operational freedom for the jihadists might have an impact not only in Libya but also in the broader region, and one way this impact could manifest itself is in the supply of arms."

"The looting of the arms depots in Libya is reminiscent of the looting in Iraq following the U.S. invasion in 2003. There are also reports that foreign governments are discussing providing arms to the Libyan rebels . . . While it is far from clear if any of those discussions are serious or whether any potential patron would ever follow through, past operations to arm rebels have had long-lasting repercussions in places like Afghanistan and Central America."

Clearly, the attempted overthrow of Gadda-

afi is not simply an example of an oppressed people seeking freedom by overthrowing a tyrant. While many may want a democratic system, there are others who don't, including Gaddafi loyalists and jihadists seeking to take advantage of the situation.

In a further analysis by Stewart titled "Libya's Terrorism Option" (March 23), he speculated about further acts of terrorism against the Western nations intervening militarily in Libya: "Certainly, Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi has no doubt that the U.S. and European military operations against the Libyan military targets are attacks against his regime. He has specifically warned France and the United Kingdom that they would come to regret the intervention . . ."

"Given Libya's past use of terrorist strikes to lash out when attacked by Western powers, Gadhafi's threats certainly raise the possibility that, desperate and hurting, he will once again return to terrorism as a means to seek retribution for the attacks against his regime. While threats of sanctions and retaliation have tempered Gadhafi's use of terrorism in recent years, his fear may evaporate if he comes to believe he has nothing to lose."

#### A coming clash between north and south

Those familiar with Bible prophecy must now ask if this could be a precursor to events prophesied in the last few verses of Daniel 11: "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, with chariots, horsemen, and with

many ships" (verse 40).

References to the kings of the North and South in chapter 11 of Daniel refer to two great empires of the ancient world that came about following the premature death of Alexander the Great. After his demise, his empire was divided up among four of his generals.

One was Ptolemy, who founded the Ptolemaic dynasty of ancient Egypt that ended three centuries later with the death of Queen Cleopatra. This kingdom was to the south of Jerusalem, hence the references to the "king of the South." The "king of the North" referred to leaders of the empire of the Greek general Seleucus and the Seleucid dynasty, the capital of which was Antioch. These two powers were often in conflict.

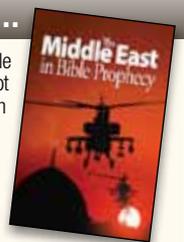
At the time of the end, once again there will be two major powers in conflict in the region—a revived Roman Empire to the north in the form of a new European-centered superpower and an alliance from the Islamic world to the south. The former will invade North Africa, including Egypt and Libya, areas of so much recent turmoil. (For more details, see "Egypt in History and Prophecy," beginning on page 9, and "The Origins and Future of Mideast Conflict Over Israel," beginning on page 20.)

Major terrorist attacks against Europe sponsored by Gaddafi or other terrorist-friendly regimes could certainly lead to events gaining momentum towards fulfillment of these prophecies. With turmoil in the Middle East affecting many nations, it seems more likely that the outcome of the current crisis is going to be the coming to power of Islamic jihadists across the region who may then seek to attack Europe, bringing on a great war between civilizations.

We must keep our eyes on the Middle East, the ground zero of Bible prophecy! **GN**

#### To Learn More...

Why does it seem that the Middle East is such a perpetual hotspot in the world? Why has it been the source of so much animosity and violence? Where will it ultimately lead? Discover the answers in our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. Request or download your free copy today!



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## The Arab awakening and Islamic fundamentalism

The unrest that began with Tunisia in December 2010 has spread to many other Middle Eastern countries. Other despotic rulers may well fall in addition to those already forced from power. But will we witness the emergence of secularist democracies supporting the West, as many hope? Or will the era of autocratic rulers in the Middle East morph into an Islamist confederation spanning the region?

Even though most of the recent revolts have had a secular appearance, a lead editorial in the April 2, 2011, issue of *The Economist* points out that “religion is a growing force in the Arab awakening” (“Islam and the Arab Revolutions”). Another article in the same issue stated, “Jihadists are both supporting and exploiting the Arab spring [as the uprisings have been dubbed]” (“A Golden Opportunity?”).

What the Western world fears may occur in the Middle East is already well under way in Pakistan. Yet another article in the April 2 *Economist* explores, as it describes it, “why Islam took a violent and intolerant turn in Pakistan” (“A Great Deal of Ruin in a Nation”). Will this happen in the Arab world as well?

*The Economist's* editorial also acknowledges that “Islam is bound to play a larger role in government in the Arab world than elsewhere. Most Muslims do not believe in the separation of religion and state . . . and have not lost their enthusiasm for religion, as many ‘Christian democrats’ in Europe have.”

One question we should all ask is: How will all these troubling events end up? Ultimately, that’s a question only the Bible can answer.

A sidebar in our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* warns of “A Rising Tide of Arab Nationalism.” Its concluding paragraph observes: “In this cauldron of nationalism, resentment toward the

West, *hatred of Israel and frustration among citizens with their own governments and leaders, an ancient force has re-emerged* to bring terrorism and grave concern to the heart of the West—*Islamic fundamentalism*” (pp. 44-45, emphasis added throughout). Pages 48 through 59 of this booklet highlight the fact that fundamentalist Islam will continue its resurgence.

An article in the March 14, 2011, issue of *The*



*Wall Street Journal* was aptly titled, “The New Mideast Will Still Mix Mosque and State” (Nader Hashemi, March 14, 2011). It warned that “after Benal [in Tunisia] and Mubarak [in Egypt], many Arabs and Muslims in the region identify secularism with tyranny.”

We need to realize that current events across the region could ultimately lead to the end-time fulfillment of Bible prophecies, such as those found in Daniel 11 and Psalm 83. Several articles in this issue of *The Good News* cover some of the crucial historical background and the vital prophetic framework. And more may be found in our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Economist* [London], *The Wall Street Journal*.)

Islamists, tribal leaders, Palestinians (who make up a good half [or much more] of Jordan’s people), disgruntled former security men and a middle class irritated by the royal family’s perceived extravagance” (Feb. 19, 2011). Also Egyptian troops are

**Israel has lost an ally with the overthrow of Egypt’s President Mubarak. Now it is fearful of further instability on its borders if more regimes are swept away.**

back in the Sinai Peninsula after an absence of three decades.

Anshel Pfeffer, who writes on international and military affairs for Israel’s daily newspaper *Ha’aretz* and serves as chief Israeli correspondent for London’s *Jewish Chronicle*, wrote in a special report for London’s international Catholic weekly *The Tablet*: “Israel has lost an ally with the overthrow of Egypt’s President Mubarak. Now it is fearful of

### The Arab uprising and Iran’s hostility toward Israel

In the wake of the uprisings in a number of Arab countries, the former head of Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), Sir Richard Dearlove, revealed some hard truths to an audience in Chatham House in London.

*The Jewish Chronicle's* political editor, Martin Bright, reported: “One of Britain’s top spies has described the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood [centered in Egypt] as ‘at heart a terrorist organisation’ and labelled Hamas and Hizbollah as *surrogates of the Iranian state*” (“Britain’s Former Spy Chief: MI6 Kept Secrets From Israel, Hamas Iran’s Puppet,” April 1, 2011, emphasis added throughout).

Dearlove personally said: “I, for one, have absolutely no illusions about what the Muslim Brotherhood is, or can be. It can be a social organisation. It can be a political organisation. *But it is at heart, in my view, a terrorist organisation.*”

Bright reports him as adding “that the Muslim Brotherhood was by far the most organised political movement in Egypt.” Dearlove spoke of both Hamas and Hezbollah in terms of their behavior toward Israel as “*Iranian surrogates.*”

Extreme Islamist elements, particularly in Iran, still want to eliminate the Jewish state. Some countries in this region still have not recognized Israel. We should not forget these hard facts. (Source: *The Jewish Chronicle* [London].)

further instability on its borders if more regimes, such as those in Syria and Jordan, are swept away in the so-called Arab spring” (April 1, 2011).

Iran remains a looming concern in this regard. Pfeffer speculated that Syrian President Bashar Assad’s difficulties “may be an opportunity for the fundamentalist regime of Tehran to deepen its hold across the region.”

Unrest in Jordan adds to the concern. One Israeli observer remarked, “God forbid that the king [Jordan’s Abdullah] falls anytime soon.” He continued, “Next year the Americans will pull out their last soldiers from Iraq, which is becoming increasingly Shia-dominated [like Iran], and Iran will have another corridor straight to Israel’s border” (ibid.).

In spite of its increased economic strength and success in the marketplace, Israel faces many actual and potential troubles not of its own making. (Sources: *The Economist*, *The Tablet* [both London].)

### The Arab revolution’s impact on Israel

The focus of much of the world’s media continues to be on the revolution sweeping through the Arab world. Yet the eventual impact on the state of Israel could be crucial to its future. Israeli leaders have voiced their worries about the outcome of the current unrest in the Arab world at large, emphasizing Egypt and Jordan, neighbors which both have formal peace treaties with Israel upholding the state’s security. Even more dangerous days for the Jewish state may be on the horizon.

The old fears of Arab encirclement have returned to trouble Israel’s leadership. An article about Israel in the February 19, 2011, issue of *The Economist* was aptly titled “Encircled by Enemies Again?”

The article stated: “Perhaps even more worrying for Israel is a rising fear that on its eastern flank the ruling monarchy in Jordan, the only Arab country bar[ring] Egypt that has a formal treaty with the Jewish state, is being shaken by an assortment of

## The “Ring of Fire” and the end of the age

No one knows the precise date of the end of the age, but Jesus Christ said there would be general indicators. Among the major events prophesied to precede Christ’s second coming is an increase in the frequency and intensity of earthquakes (Matthew 24:3-8), which would likely mean an increase for the related phenomenon of volcanic eruptions. Seismologists have charted a “Ring of Fire” on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.



accepted plate tectonics—wherein the planet’s outer rock layer resembles a cracked egg shell floating atop a sticky semifluid layer beneath. Geologists now know that the Ring of Fire is located along the edges of some of the earth’s major surface segments, or tectonic plates. Three recent devastating earthquakes occurred along the ring—in Chile in February 2010, in New Zealand in February 2011 and in Japan in March 2011. (It’s worth noting that these represent three quadrants of the ring—only the northeast quadrant, the west coast of North America, being left out of recent major activity thus far.)

Jesus revealed that not just earthquakes but “great earthquakes in various places” would herald His soon coming (Luke 21:11). And immediately before the time of His return there will be a mighty earthquake unlike anything experienced in all of human history (Revelation 16:18). The only safety at that time will be close proximity to God and Jesus Christ.

The Pacific Ring of Fire is an enormous arc stretching from New Zealand, across the eastern edge of Asia, along Alaska’s Aleutian Islands, then south along the western coastline of North and South America. The vast majority of the world’s volcanoes—including many that are underwater—are located along this Ring of Fire, giving it its name.

This gigantic ring of volcanoes and earthquake activity was noticed and described before scientists

## The continuing German conundrum

Prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the former chancellor of West Germany, Helmut Schmidt, observed that the idea of a unified state of 75 million Germans arising one day in the middle of Europe was a cause of concern for many of the nation’s European neighbors and partners.

Nevertheless, a unified Germany has been a reality since late 1989. And now a people that brought two major wars to the European continent during the 20th century find themselves forging ahead economically, while most neighboring nations are struggling financially.

As *Time* magazine reported, while Germany’s economy was in shambles 10 years ago, it’s now an export machine: “While the Spanish, Irish and other Europeans were gorging on debt, building too many houses and giving themselves fat pay raises, Germans were busy fixing their economy” (Michael Schuman, “How Germany Became the China of Europe,” March 7, 2011).

In November 2010, it was announced that German unemployment had dropped below 3 million for the first time since 1992. Clearly Europe’s industrial engine is roaring again. But will Berlin take the lead on the European continent? Is the Fatherland going

to take center stage in Europe?

The current leadership shows signs of reluctance. It sees Portugal, Ireland and Greece as posing painful economic problems for Germany and the European Union (EU). A March 12, 2011, *Economist* article asked the question: “Can Angela Merkel Hold Europe Together?”—meaning the EU. Germany remains somewhat uncomfortable with massive bailouts of the economically troubled member nations. Will Germany remain committed to the European dream through thick and thin?

Germany also remains conflicted about its military role. Last year the German military, long considered a postwar defensive and peacekeeping force, found itself actually fighting in Afghanistan. Still haunted by its Nazi past (Hitler’s regime ending 66 years ago in 1945), Berlin remains reluctant to exercise a full military role in Europe, even as a part of NATO. Germany did not join America, Britain and France in its Libyan missile and air strikes.

So what is Germany’s long-term destiny? Will Berlin eventually assume both military and political leadership of all Europe?

The Bible certainly indicates this will eventually happen. Who knows what kind of a leader may dominate Berlin in the future? To learn more, please see pages 41 through 43 of our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (Sources: *The Economist* [London], *Time*.)

## 2012: End of the world?

The end of the world will not come in 2012. The Bible makes this inarguably clear. Yet human beings from time immemorial have set dates for the end.

A *USA Today* article reports on some of the current hype: “With humanity coming up fast on 2012, publishers are helping readers gear up and count down to this mysterious—some even call it apocalyptic—date that ancient Mayan societies were anticipating thousands of years ago . . . Authors disagree about what humankind should expect on Dec. 21, 2012, when the Maya’s ‘Long Count’ calendar marks the end of a 5,126-year era” (Jeffrey MacDonald, “Does Maya Calendar Predict 2012 Apocalypse?” March 27, 2007).

Again, one who reads and believes God’s writings on the subject of the end of the age should be able to see that it’s impossible for the world to end in 2012.

For one thing, while the world’s system and this age of human misrule will come to an end when Jesus Christ returns, the natural realm and the human race will continue on—with Jesus and His glorified followers ruling the nations on earth for 1,000 years and more (Revelation 5, 20). After that, the earth and sky will be transformed into a new earth and heaven, which will persist forever (Revelation 21-22).

For another, the timing does not fit world conditions. Concerning the end of the world’s system, Jesus specified major catastrophic events that would precede His coming, all leading to a period called the Great Tribulation. But this period will commence a full 3½ years before Jesus returns. Since we’re not in that great conflagration yet, the world certainly won’t end in the next year and a half. And, of course, nowhere does the Bible speak of commissioning the ancient Mayans to predict the end of the age!

This does not mean there will be no calamitous events in 2012 or even before. For calamitous events are on the rise as the return of Christ draws closer. Yet when the world goes on at the end of 2012, many will no doubt be sorely disillusioned with any pronouncements of coming doom, Scripture included (2 Peter 2:3-4).

Don’t be fooled. No matter what happens or doesn’t happen in 2012, the end of the age will still be soon ahead. (Source: *USA Today*.)

## How Can You Make Sense of the News?

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



# Japan's Earthquake Disaster: A Foretaste of Worse to Come?

by Noel Honor



The world was shocked by the destructiveness of the recent earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan. The disaster proved that even a modern, technologically advanced nation is helpless against the forces of nature. What perspectives does the Bible offer on this disaster?

**O**n March 11, 2011, a monstrous 9.0-magnitude earthquake near the east coast of Japan's main island of Honshu rattled the entire country and brought much of the population to its knees.

In the more than a hundred years during which men have been measuring the strength of earthquakes, only three stronger quakes have been recorded. This one tied for the fourth-strongest on record.

This quake was the largest ever in Japan's history, unleashing the equivalent of 30,000 Hiroshima-sized nuclear bombs. It was so powerful that it shifted the earth on its axis by several inches, making it spin a little faster and thereby shortening the day by 1.8 millionths of a second. It moved the island nation about eight feet to the east.

Since the earthquake's epicenter was offshore, the early damage from the quake was moderate, relative to the size of the tremor. The tsunami that followed was

another matter. Within minutes a huge wall of water swept onto the land, crushing buildings, capsizing boats, destroying bridges and sweeping debris in its path. Cars were swept along like they were toys.

In addition to the loss of thousands of lives, half a million people were rendered homeless, forced to take refuge in temporary shelters. Many lost everything they had, except for the clothes on their backs and perhaps a few personal items.

In the days that followed, the havoc wreaked by the earthquake began to increase exponentially. Another threat to life arose—that of radiation sickness from the stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. With the breakdown of cooling systems due to the earthquake and tsunami, reactors were badly damaged. Officials labored frantically to avoid a disaster like that of 1986 in Chernobyl, Ukraine.

The quake's epicenter was approximately 150 miles from Japan's capital city of Tokyo.

The city and its surroundings are home to 39 million people, so any strong tremor there would be catastrophic—even one much smaller than the monstrous 9.0 shaker. So of course it's been calamitous. And that's despite some preparation, big earthquakes having struck the area in the past—in 1703, 1855 and 1923.

We should consider what's happened in the context of other recent and historic quakes—and what the Bible has to say about such natural calamities.

## Frequency of recent major quakes

The earthquake off the coast of Japan is the sixth major one worldwide in a year and two months. On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 earthquake struck the poverty-ridden nation of Haiti; the epicenter was approximately 16 miles west of the capital of Port-au-Prince.

Because the nation of Haiti is so poor and had few buildings designed to endure the stress of a convulsion of this magnitude, an estimated 316,000 died, 300,000 were injured and 1 million were made homeless, according to the Haitian government. An estimated 250,000 residences and 30,000 commercial structures collapsed or were severely damaged. This was the worst earthquake in the region

in more than 200 years.

On February 27, 2010, a devastating magnitude 8.8 earthquake struck Chile, one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded. Over 500 people were killed, and more than more than 1.5 million were displaced.



The earthquake triggered a tsunami, which devastated several coastal towns in south-central Chile and damaged the port at Talcahuano. Tsunami warnings were issued in 53 countries, and the wave caused minor damage in the San Diego area of California and in the Tohoku region of Japan, where damage to the fisheries industry was estimated at \$66.7 million.

Chileans were only just beginning to grapple with the devastation before them even as more than two dozen significant aftershocks struck the country. In Santiago, the capital, residents reported having been terrified as the city shook for about 90 seconds.

While this earthquake was far stronger than the 7.0-magnitude one that ravaged Haiti six weeks earlier, the damage and death toll in Chile was far less extensive, in part because of stricter building standards enabling structures to withstand damage in devastating earthquakes.

On January 2, 2011, another earthquake shook southern Chile, this one with a magnitude of 7.1. Tens of thousands fled the coastal areas for higher ground, fearing the quake might generate a major tsunami like

the one in 2010. Hundreds of tourists spending the New Year's holiday at resort cities cut their trips short and headed north, clogging highways.

On February 22, 2011, a 6.3-magnitude temblor struck New Zealand, leaving the city of Christchurch in ruins. This was the second major quake to strike the country in less than six months.

The earlier one of September 2010 was considerably stronger, but the Christchurch shaker did much more damage because it struck one of New Zealand's largest cities. Churches and tall buildings were toppled and more than 100 people were killed. In viewing the city, Prime Minister John Key said, "It is just a scene of utter devastation" and "We may well be witnessing New Zealand's darkest day."

### Earthquake threats to the United States

What is the danger that the United States will be jolted by a colossal quake? It is not only a danger; it is virtually guaranteed to happen eventually. The two densely populated areas that are most in danger are the midlands and the West Coast.

The New Madrid fault in the Midwest is not as infamous for the threat of major earthquake damage as other faults in the continental United States, but this area experienced major seismic activity in the years 1811-1812. Seven earthquakes in the magnitude range of 6.0 to 7.7 occurred in the period of Dec. 16, 1811, through Feb. 7, 1812. These quakes rank as some of the largest in America since its settlement by Europeans.

These quakes are not as well known as other major U.S. quakes, because the affected area was sparsely populated when the cataclysms occurred. According to the United States Geologic Survey, "The area of strong shaking associated with these shocks is two to three times as large as that of the 1964 Alaska earthquake and 10 times as large as that of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake."

The first main shock of these seven occurred on Dec. 16, 1811, and was

## Natural Disasters: A Biblical Perspective

Following are points we should keep in mind concerning the biblical perspective on tragedies, regardless of their scale or circumstances:

1. God has said in Bible prophecy that natural disasters would grow in frequency and intensity as the end of the age approaches—to shake people out of their complacency and lead them to seek Him (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:25-26; Revelation 6:12; 11:13; 16:18).

2. In His design for the world, God allows many events to run their course according to "time and chance" (Ecclesiastes 9:11), so that many tragedies are, for those affected, accidental and unforeseeable.

3. Those who die in accidents or natural disasters are not necessarily greater sinners than those who survive (Luke 13:1-5).

4. Personal tragedies or calamities are not necessarily the result of one's sins (John 9:2-3).

5. Natural disasters or accidents should humble us, helping us to see our dependence on God to sustain and deliver us (Revelation 16:8-11).

6. Natural disasters have sometimes been the direct judgment of God on a rebellious humanity (Genesis 6:6-7, 11-13, 17; 18:20; 19:24-25).

7. Some natural disasters are made worse by man's poor judgments (Proverbs 14:12) and age-long rejection of God and His laws, resulting in worsening environmental and climatic conditions.

8. God is a truly loving God who is working out a great plan for all humanity (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4; 1 Corinthians 15:22-24).

9. Converted Christians who die in natural disasters will be resurrected to immortality in the first resurrection at the return of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20:4-6).

10. Non-Christians who die in natural disasters, those who never had a genuine understanding of God or real opportunity for eternal salvation, will be raised in the second or general resurrection to live again in the flesh with their first real opportunity to learn God's way, repent and be saved (John 5:28-29; Matthew 12:41-42; Revelation 20:5).

11. The multitudes of humanity who are raised in the second or general resurrection will experience joyful and abundant life under the rule of the Kingdom of God (Ezekiel 37:12-14).

12. The sufferings experienced now in "this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4)—this era of man's self-rule under the influence of Satan the devil—are writing a lesson of experience about what it means to live in a world cut off from God and His ways.

13. We don't know all the reasons God brings or permits specific calamities or why particular people are made to suffer by them, but we should trust that in God's omniscience and ultimate wisdom He knows how to work out what is best for everyone in the end (Romans 8:28; 1 Timothy 2:4).

14. Jesus Christ will eventually return to usher in the rule of the Kingdom of God (Revelation 11:15; Daniel 7:14), under which natural disasters will no longer plague mankind.

15. When all humanity is at last glorified, there will be no more pain, suffering or sorrow (Revelation 21:4).

16. All the sufferings of this brief present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory we will ultimately experience for all eternity to come (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18). **GN**

—Tom Robinson

felt far away. "People were awakened by the shaking in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Charleston, South Carolina" (USGS).

During the quake that occurred on Feb. 7, 1812, the vibrations were so great that some areas of the ground sank as much as 16 feet. Resulting tidal waves from the Mississippi River created Reelfoot Lake in Tennessee. It is Tennessee's largest natural lake.

### West coast quakes

The most famous of mainland earthquakes in America is the 7.8-magnitude quake that struck San Francisco in 1906. This was due to seismic shifting on the San Andreas Fault, which runs roughly 810 miles through California to Baja California in northern Mexico.

Yuri Fialko, Professor of Geophysics at the University of California San Diego, completed a study in 2006 in which he demonstrated that the San Andreas Fault has been stressed to a level sufficient for the next "big one"—an earthquake of magnitude 7.0 or greater.

Fialko's data suggests that the fault is ready for the next big earthquake, but exactly when that might occur we're not able to tell. According to professor Fialko, "It could be tomorrow or it could be 10 years or more from now."

Then there's the Cascadia subduction zone, a 680-mile fault that runs 50 miles off the coast of the Pacific Northwest from Cape Mendocino in California to Vancouver Island in southern British Columbia. Geophysicists estimate that it's capable of generating an earthquake with a magnitude as high as 9.0. The last time this occurred was in 1700; the one before that is estimated to have occurred around 1500.

Scientists say a rupture along this fault would cause the sea floor to bounce 20 feet or more, setting off powerful waves close to shore. The resultant monstrous tsunami would inundate coastal communities in minutes. As with the San Andreas Fault, geophysicists do not know if such a disaster is imminent but agree that eventually it is inevitable.

### Earthquakes can affect the whole world

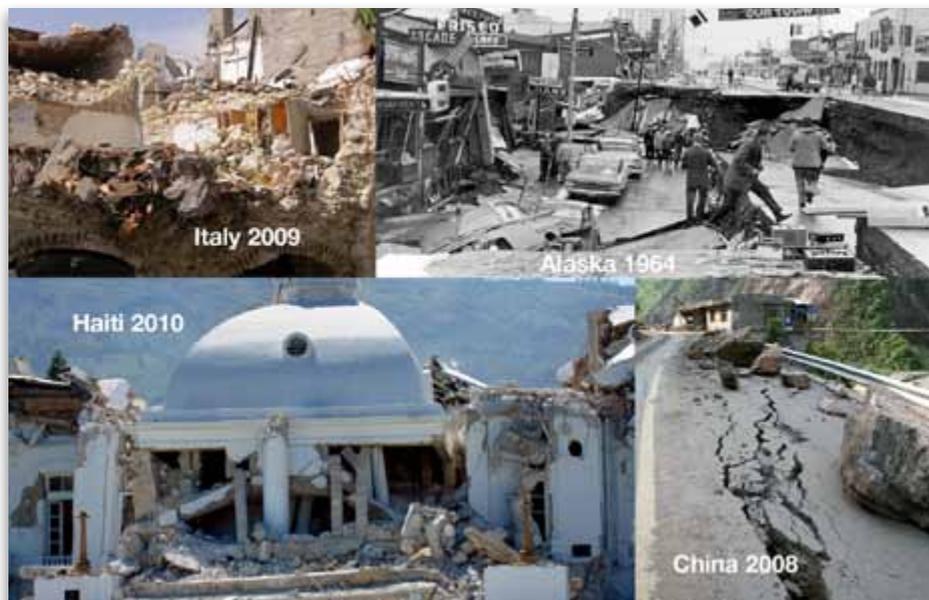
Every year thousands of earthquakes occur around the world, some strong enough to be felt by people. Most of them do no significant damage either to life or property. But some that have been recorded in the last 150 years have resulted in massive loss of life. An estimated 200,000 people were killed in an 8.5 quake in Kansu, China in 1920. In 1976, 255,000 people died from damage caused by an 8.0 quake centered near Tangshan, China. And the 2004 Indian

Ocean earthquake and tsunami left more than 230,000 people dead in 14 countries.

Earthquakes can cripple—at least temporarily—a nation's economy. Japan is the third-largest economy in the world. While the March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami will have a harmful short-term medium effect on their economy, some economists believe the catastrophe will have a negative impact short-term on the *world* economy.

Historically, earthquakes have at times wrought permanent damage to major

**When the ground begins to shake, buckle and roll violently, man's confidence can be shattered as he sees everything come crashing down.**



powers. In ancient Greece, the city-state of Sparta had the greatest military power during the classical era. "From the ninth to the fourth century BCE its armies were almost invincible . . . Sometime around 464 BCE a powerful earthquake devastated the city of Sparta with many fatalities. This event, while not immediately affecting Sparta's prominence, had a catalytic role in its eventual decline.

"The fatalities included not only Spartan soldiers but a great many women and children as well. Thus in the following years there were many fewer births among the Spartan soldier caste, leading to the weakening of Sparta's army. This earthquake foreshadowed Sparta's gradual deterioration and disappearance from the world stage" (Jelle Zeilinga de Boer and Donald Theodore Sanders, *Earthquakes in Human History*, 2005, pp. 45-46).

Thus, even the mighty can be laid low by the powerful shaking of the earth.

### God's involvement in earthquakes?

Is God's hand ever present in the occurrence of tragic earthquakes? This quandary

has often provided fodder for philosophers.

"A shocking event at mid-[18th] century supplied a brutal confirmation of disbelief. On the eve of All Saint's Day [Nov. 1] in 1755, while the faithful were in church, an earthquake shattered Lisbon. Fire and flood from the Tagus River completed its destruction. Tens of thousands perished.

"Instantly, [French historian and philosopher] Voltaire set to work on a long poem that drew the moral: how could a personal God endowed with power and justice ordain such a holocaust? For what conceivable reason kill worshipping men, women and children in a peculiarly horrible manner?"

"That they were worse sinners than the same number of Parisians or Londoners was a contemptible answer. There was no answer, except that the forces of nature acted independently of their creator" (Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence*, 2000, p. 378).

Because God is omnipotent, He has power over all the forces of nature to use earthquakes to punish individuals or nations, should He choose to do so. However, we should not conclude that in all cases He singles out people for chastisement through such

tragedies. Sometimes people die or suffer other losses through natural disasters because of time and chance (Ecclesiastes 9:11). They are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

There are exceptions, though. Sometimes God does speak through earth's turmoil, and there is surely no greater natural tumult that man can suffer than to have the very earth shake under his feet. A prolonged horrendous earthquake can turn the bravest human beings into a quivering, frightened mass of fearful flesh.

There is perhaps nothing we depend on more than having the steady, predictable solidity of the ground under our feet. When it begins to shake, buckle and roll violently, man's confidence can be reduced to zero as he sees everything he has made with his hands come crashing down around him. God's power is limitless. "He looks on the earth, and it trembles" (Psalm 104:32).

### God's past interventions

During past turbulent historical periods, God has moved the earth—sometimes to instill awe, fear and respect into the minds of people. Shortly after the time that God brought Israel out of Egypt through the Exodus, there were certain men—Korah, Dathan and Abiram—who dared question the divine authority that God had given Moses. They accused Moses of presumptuousness and self-exultation (Numbers 16:3). Furthermore, a majority of the people was sympathetic to Korah, the ringleader (verse 19).

Moses knew that God was working through him, so he assembled the three rebels and the cantankerous congregation and warned them that God would move the earth, create a crevice and cause it to swallow up those who dared reject God (verse 30). Right after Moses spoke, God caused the earth to gape open with a fissure that swallowed the rebellious leaders and their families (verses 31-32).

This historical example demonstrates that God *does* sometimes punish disobedient people with shaking and splitting of the earth as appropriate payment for sins.

### Earthquakes at the death and resurrection of Jesus

At times God has used an earthquake to send a different message. He spoke through an earthquake in the first century right after His Son was nailed to the cross.

When Jesus died, "the earth quaked, and the rocks were split" (Matthew 27:51). Perhaps the quake foreshadowed the coming judgment of God on those who had crucified

Jesus and also served as a divine sign that He truly was the Son of the Father.

It impressed the Roman soldiers who were guarding the site. "So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake . . . they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" (verse 54).

God also used an earthquake to roll the stone away from Christ's empty tomb—to show that He had gained victory over the grave (Matthew 28:1-6).

### The coming terror because of earthquakes

Biblical prophecy tells of future earthquakes far more powerful than any that human beings have yet experienced. The reason for these, in part, will be to instill awe and respect towards God in the hearts of all humanity at the end of the age and the return of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 29:1 issues a woe of warning to "Ariel," which is another name for Jerusalem. Included in the dire message is the notice: "You will be punished by the LORD of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise" (verse 6).

Shortly before His death, Jesus gave a solemn prophetic warning of terrifying and terrible events that would precede His return. He included among these the fact that "there will be *great earthquakes* in various places" (Luke 21:11, emphasis added throughout).

He also admonished all that there will be the turbulence of "*the sea and the waves roaring*" (verse 25). This may be a reference to future titanic tsunamis.

It will be more than just the area of Jerusalem that will be dealt deathly earthquakes at the time of the end. The greatest shakings of the planet since people have existed will make the entire earth tremble. The reaction of human beings will be nothing short of absolute panic: "They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to *shake the earth mightily*" (Isaiah 2:19).

There may be multiple quakes that follow that which Isaiah describes. But there will finally be one trembling and quaking of the earth that will be greater than all others.

The apostle John was given a preview of it through a vision in the book of Revelation. It will occur in conjunction with the final great battle, commonly (though erroneously) known as Armageddon, which pits the forces of Jesus Christ against those who dare rise up in rebellion against Him at His arrival.

It is part of the seventh bowl of God's

wrath that is to be poured out: "There was a great earthquake, *such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth . . .* Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Revelation 16:18-20).

Why will God speak through such horrifying calamities to the population of the planet? It is because man is in rebellion against Him. We have worshipped and are worshipping idols and other gods instead of the true God (Isaiah 2:7-8).

This monstrous quaking of the planet will cause men to cast away their idols of silver and gold (verse 20). Idol worship is not limited to adoration of graven images. Idol worship includes the love of money and all things that money can buy. It can include excessive, inordinate lust for anything, because covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). We need to heed the Bible's warnings and turn from our sins!

### What should you do?

In any given year, geophysicists record thousands of earthquakes; over 21,000 occurred in 2010. Most of these are small and do no damage. Large ones can do horrendous damage, and those that occur in the oceans can trigger disastrous tsunamis.

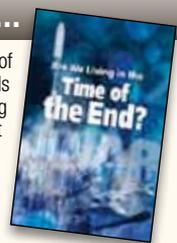
Men try to protect life and property against these powerful forces. They build seawalls to ward off the roiling ocean currents. Japan had constructed a 31-foot seawall near Fukushima on the island of Honshu. Yet even this could not stop the relentless wall of water.

No amount of planning, skills or constructing can stop a force that moves the planet, shaking the very ground on which we stand. Eventually the only deliverance is by turning to and placing ourselves in the hands of the only One who can truly save us—the all-powerful living God. **GN**

### To Learn More...

Earthquakes are only one of many things the Bible foretells in our future. What other coming events does it describe? What signs will mark the impending end of this age of man and the second coming of Jesus Christ? How does it all fit together in Bible prophecy?

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# The Origins and Future of the Mideast Conflict Over Israel

by **Beyond Today** host Gary Petty

Why is there so much unrest in the Middle East? Why do we see constant strife between the Israelis and their neighbors? The answers to these questions didn't begin with the formation of the state of Israel in 1948. The history of these conflicts goes back 4,000 years and is recorded in a place many people would never think to look—the Bible!

**M**any have long envisioned the Middle East as an exotic, far-away mixture of the ancient past and the modern world. This area of conflict between Arab and Jew is the land of the Bible, of Moses and Jesus, of prophets bringing messages of God's wrath and apostles proclaiming God's love.

The United States has been politically, economically and sometimes militarily involved in the Middle East for decades. It supported the United Nations' creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and U.S. dollars and military hardware helped Israel to win its wars with Arab neighbors.

America's roller-coaster relationship with Arab nations has run the gamut from alliance to hostility. In 1956 the United States was instrumental in putting pressure on Great Britain, France and Israel to withdraw from the Suez Canal after a military strike that seized the waterway from Egypt. It was a U.S.-led coalition that drove the Iraqis from Kuwait during the Gulf War of the early 1990s, and another that toppled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The horrifying attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, dramatically raised American consciousness of the age-old conflicts of the Middle East. Westerners are trying to understand the reasons for the hatred between Arab and Jew and why it spilled over into the Western world.

For students of biblical prophecy these



and similar events aren't a complete surprise. The Middle East is the focal point of biblical prophecy. Jerusalem is where Jesus the Messiah delivered the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and it is where He promises to return to set up that Kingdom.

Over the centuries, the land of Israel has been at the center of conflict between Arabs and the Israelites—and between foreign powers vying for control of the area. Let's consider the origins of this

conflict—and where it is headed.

## Ancient animosities rooted in the family of Abraham

The Bible contains a great deal of information concerning the roots of the bad blood between Israeli and Arab.

The Arab peoples comprise numerous clans and tribes. Many historians trace the peoples of the southern Arabian Peninsula to the biblical figure Joktan (Genesis 10:25-30), who was born five generations before the patriarch Abraham. Other Arab peoples are descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot, who fled Sodom—those of Moab and Ammon. But to really understand the history of the Arab peoples, we must study the life of Abraham.

We begin our search some 4,000 years ago in the city of Ur near the Euphrates River in the Fertile Crescent. It was in this crescent-shaped strip stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Egyptian Nile that the first great civilizations appeared.

In Ur the Creator appeared to a man named Abram who would become a central figure in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. God's relationship with Abram starts in Genesis 12:1-3: "Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation . . .'"

Genesis 16 contains the fascinating, but ultimately tragic, story of the attempt of Abram and his wife Sarai to bring about God's promise through human means. Since it was physically impossible for Sarai to bear children, she gave an Egyptian servant girl to Abram as a surrogate mother. The child of this union was named Ishmael. For 13 years Ishmael was probably told that he was the son of promise, the recipient of God's promises to Abram.



God appeared again to Abram as we read in Genesis 17:1-2: “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.’”

God renamed him Abraham and made an amazing promise to him—his descendants would be a special people for God’s purposes for generations. God previously told Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). The promise also included the land of Canaan (Genesis 17:8)—the geographically diverse strip of land running along the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea.

God reestablished His covenant with Abraham, but there was another promise that would come as a shock to this man to whom God had promised so much: “Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife . . . I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her’” (verses 15-16).

God’s statements seemed incredible. Not only had Sarai, now renamed Sarah, been barren all her life, but she was now well past normal childbearing age. What God was promising could only happen through divine intervention. Besides, Abraham already had a son, whom he loved dearly (verse 18).

### What about Ishmael?

Abraham had believed for many years that Ishmael was the son of promise, but the Sovereign Lord of history informed him that He had other plans. It was always God’s plan for the son of promise to come from Abraham and Sarah. The use of Hagar as a surrogate was of their devising, not God’s.

What an important lesson! How many times do we proceed with our own ideas of God’s will, while in reality He has totally different plans? Abraham and Sarah tried to fulfill God’s promise by human means on a human timetable. What happened next shaped the history of many generations.

God promised a son to Abraham through

his wife Sarah, but what about Ishmael? Abraham asked God if Ishmael could be the son of promise. God’s answer is recorded in Genesis 17:19-20:

“Then God said: ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.’”

As God promised, Sarah miraculously became pregnant and gave birth to Isaac. The hurt and resentment between the mothers of the two boys led to Sarah demanding that Ishmael and his mother Hagar be sent away into the wilderness—and Abraham acquiescing at God’s direction.

The young man—again, likely told since childhood that he was the son of promise—found himself an outcast from his father. This set the stage for generations of strife between him and Abraham’s new son, Isaac. Ishmael went on to become the father of many Arab tribes and nations. (Later, after Sarah’s death, Abraham married a woman named Keturah and had other children through her. Other people groups, including smaller Arab tribes like the Midianites, came through descendants of these later children, as described in Genesis 25:1-6.)

### A new generation of strife

The biblical story doesn’t end with Ishmael and Isaac. One generation later there was competition between the sons of Isaac—Jacob and Esau. Before their birth God explained that “the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). Genesis 25 goes on to record how the eldest, Esau, sold his birthright to his fraternal twin Jacob.

In Genesis 27 we find the oft-told story of how Jacob tricked his old and blind father Isaac into giving him the birthright blessing. It would be through Jacob’s lineage that God would fulfill His covenant with Abraham.

Esau’s hatred for what he perceived as a theft of his birthright drove him to plot

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<b>Virginia</b> Charlottesville/ Albemarle County	ch. 13, 14, Mon 5:30 p.m.; Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 4:30 p.m.
<b>Washington</b> Everett	ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.
<b>Wisconsin</b> Kenosha	ch. 14, Sun & Mon 7:30 p.m.
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Jacob's murder. Jacob fled for his life, living estranged from his family for many years.

The descendants of Jacob would become known as the Israelites. Esau, also known as Edom, became the father of the people the Bible calls the Edomites or Idumeans. The relationship between these two peoples has at times been peaceful and at other times bordered on genocide. Some of today's Arabs are evidently of Edomite descent—as are other people in the Middle East.

### Islam and the Crusades

By A.D. 610 the Arab peoples of the Middle East were divided into numerous tribes, all steeped in pagan practices of that part of the world. It was in that year, during the month of Ramadan, that Muhammad received the first in a series of what he proclaimed were divine revelations. These eventually became the basis of the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an or Koran.

The Koran contains alternative stories of such biblical notables as Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Job, Jonah, Saul, David, Solomon, Mary and Jesus. Muhammad claimed that Islam was a return to the religion of Abraham while Judaism and Christianity were corruptions of this true religion. In Islam's interpretation of God's plan, Ishmael takes on the role of the son of promise rather than Jacob.

The Koran presents radical differences from the Bible concerning God's interaction with mankind. These differences are most apparent in the Koran's explanation of the nature of Jesus Christ.

Christians believe that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, the Messiah foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures, who would come to save humanity. While some in Judaism may accept the first-century Jesus of Nazareth as a special rabbi, and Muslims accept Him as a prophet, Christians ascribe to Jesus the remarkable status of divinity in a personal relationship with the Father. To devout Muslims, this is polytheism and heresy.

While Jews believe that the Holy Land



Alexander the Great defeats the Persian army at the battle of Issus in this 4th-century-B.C. carving.

was promised to them through God's covenant with Abraham and Isaac, and Muslims believe that Allah promised it to them through Abraham and Ishmael, European Christians of the Middle Ages believed that the Holy Land belonged to them because of God's fulfillment of His promise to Abraham in the person of Jesus.

In 1095, Catholic Europe organized an army for a crusade to wrest Jerusalem from Muslim control. After terrible fighting, Jerusalem fell to the Crusaders in 1099. The Muslims continued to battle for the Holy Land and a second crusade was launched in 1147. Finally, in 1291 the Muslims drove the Europeans from the region. Further crusades failed to recapture the city.

One of the saddest incidents in history took place with the "Children's Crusade." Thousands of children from France and Germany began the difficult journey from Europe to take Jerusalem. Many died from disease and starvation; the rest were captured and sold as slaves.

The area around Jerusalem remained in Muslim hands until it came under British jurisdiction after the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. In 1948 the United Nations approved the forma-

tion of the modern state of Israel, and tens of thousands of Jewish refugees from the Nazi concentration camps rushed to their new home.

Many Arabs felt betrayed by Europe and the United States. Ever since then the Arab world and the West have experienced rocky relations—a situation not helped by a succession of wars in the Middle East.

### Mideast history written in advance

During the Babylonian captivity of the Jews in the sixth century B.C., God revealed a historical outline of prophecy to the Jewish prophet Daniel.

In Daniel 2 he recorded a vision concerning four great powers that would dominate the Holy Land—the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires. Later, God showed Daniel details concerning these empires. The first 14 verses of Daniel 8 chronicle Daniel's vision of a ram and a goat. Daniel wrote of a two-horned ram attacked by a male goat, arriving from the west, with a large horn between his eyes.

There have been many attempts to explain these passages. An important rule of Bible study is to *let the Bible interpret itself*. In

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this same chapter an angel appeared to Daniel and told him the meaning of the vision. Daniel wrote what the angel said in verses 19-22:

“Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be. The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.”

This incredible prophetic passage concerns events that occurred more than two centuries after the time of Daniel. The Babylonian Empire of Daniel’s day was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire. Centuries after Daniel received this vision, the Greeks, under Alexander the Great, would invade and conquer Persia.

The “large horn” of the male goat is this “first king” of the Greek Empire, Alexander the Great. At the height of his power Alexander suddenly died and his empire was divided among four of his generals, fulfilling the prophecies of Daniel 8.

But there’s more, as we see in the very long prophecy of Daniel 11. By this time Babylon had been conquered by the Persians, and Daniel now served under them. Daniel was once again visited by an angel from God who explained future events.

Notice Daniel 11:2-4: “And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

“And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.”

After Daniel’s time there would be numerous Persian kings, but these three would be prominent in the history of the empire. A fourth king would undertake a war with Greece. This was the famous Xerxes. The Persian Empire would prosper, but it would eventually fall to a Greek monarch whose kingdom would be divided into four parts. Again, the reference here, as in Daniel 8, is to Alexander the Great, whose empire was “broken up and divided”

among four of his generals.

It is important to understand that most biblical prophecy is in relationship to Jerusalem. Daniel 11:5-39 records prophecies concerning the “king of the South” and the “king of the North.”

History shows that these prophecies were fulfilled in the descendants of two of Alexander’s generals, the Ptolemies (who ruled from Egypt, south of Jerusalem, as the kings of the South) and the Seleucids (who ruled from Syria, north of Jerusalem, as the kings of the North). These two dynasties marched in numerous wars for control of the Middle East for a long time, with dominion over the land of Israel passing back and forth between them until the Maccabean resistance led the Jews to independence in the 160s B.C.

### The future of the Middle East

In Daniel 11:40 the prophecy skips ahead to the time just prior to Jesus Christ’s return. Here the players have shifted.

The northern Seleucid kingdom was ultimately absorbed into the Roman Empire—an empire that has been revived numerous times in the history of Europe, with one final revival remaining, according to other prophecies. Thus, the final king of the North will be head over a new European-centered superpower. Egypt was also absorbed by the Roman Empire but it later became part of a southern power bloc again with the Muslim conquests. So it appears that the final king of the South will be a leader from the Arab world.

Daniel records: “At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him [the northern ruler]; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land [the land of Israel], and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon [these designating the area of modern Jordan].

“He [the northern ruler] shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels. But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the

tents of his palace between the seas and [or in] the glorious holy mountain [Jerusalem, between the Dead and Mediterranean Seas]; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him” (verses 40-45).

So it appears that an Arab leader of the south will launch an attack against the European superpower of the north, triggering a European invasion and occupation of North Africa and other areas of the Middle East—with Jerusalem set up as the northern leader’s new headquarters.

When does this takeover of Egypt and much of the Arab world—as well as Israel—by the king of the North take place? In Revelation 11:1-2 the apostle John is inspired to write that at the time just before the return of the Messiah the “holy city,” Jerusalem, will be occupied by outside forces for 42 months or 3½ years.

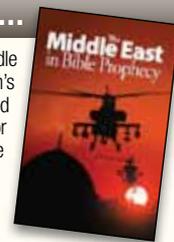
At the conclusion of those 3½ years, the stage is set for the greatest battle in human history. Armies of this prophesied king of the North and hordes from the East, mentioned elsewhere, gather in Israel for what is commonly called the battle of Armageddon, but which the Bible refers to as “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14).

We all need to remain alert. Some Islamic leaders claim that a successor of Muhammad will come and unite the Muslim world in preparation for God’s final judgment. Jews wait for the coming of the Messiah to restore their birthright. Many Christians await the return of Jesus as the Messiah to rule from Jerusalem. The irony is that many Muslims, Jews and Christians won’t recognize the Messiah when He does come to establish God’s Kingdom!

Watch events in the Middle East, for this is the focal point of biblical prophecy! **GN**

### To Learn More...

Today’s turmoil in the Middle East is nothing new. This region’s ancient antagonisms have led to conflict and bloodshed for thousands of years. This article gives an overview of the issues, but there’s much more to learn to understand this troubled area. You need to read our eye-opening booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* to get the full picture. Request or download your free copy today!



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# The Brink of Bankruptcy: Unfunded Liabilities Threaten the U.S. Economy

by Mike Kelley

We're used to hearing regular reports of U.S. government debt growing to staggering levels. But recent events are spotlighting another huge problem—the unfunded liabilities of state and local governments that spell future financial chaos.

In early April, Americans by the millions were gripped by the specter of a Federal government shutdown, with members of the Democratic and Republican political parties battling each other over spending priorities. While both sides agree on the need for spending cuts in the face of a projected \$1.4 trillion deficit for fiscal 2011, newly elected Republican representatives want a significant rollback of spending, but Democrats are somewhat more selective in the programs they would cut.

Hard on the heels of the looming Federal budget crisis, however, is the growing threat of *unfunded liabilities*, which threaten to swamp government *at all levels* in a deepening mire of fiscal impossibility. Promises made decades ago are coming back to haunt cash-strapped governments, leaving them scrambling to fund pension and medical liabilities that have mushroomed out of control in a population increasingly made up of retirees, older citizens and those needing medical care.

The problem has hit state and local governments especially hard. America watched in amazement during February and early March as thousands of Wisconsin teachers and other unionized state employees converged on the state capitol building in Madison to protest Governor Mark Walker's proposal to curtail the collective bargaining rights of state employees.

In scenes reminiscent of the civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s, thousands of Wisconsin school teachers and pro-union supporters marched, shouted slogans and

occupied the capitol building, refusing to move until a court order forced them out.

Though the immediate issue centered on collective bargaining rights, a larger issue deals with state government finances.



Wisconsin, which prides itself as the home of the American progressive movement, is nearly broke, with a deficit projected to top *\$3.6 billion* for the fiscal year ending June 2013. Walker, the Republican elected governor in last November's Republican sweep, promised drastic reforms aimed at returning the state to fiscal responsibility.

Shortly after taking office, he announced a bold plan to balance the state's budget by requiring that Wisconsin's teachers be responsible for a greater share of their

pension and health-care costs. The bill he introduced in the Wisconsin legislature also contained a provision to eliminate collective bargaining over benefits, which the teachers, as well as their supporters in the AFL-CIO union federation, saw as an attempt to break the union.

In sympathy with the teachers and government employee unions, Democratic legislators responded by leaving the state, preventing the needed quorum for a vote they knew they would lose. For three weeks the battle raged, only to reach a sort of climax on March 9 when Wisconsin Republicans found a legal loophole to pass the collective bargaining bill.

## Trillions in unfunded liabilities threaten governments' solvency

Wisconsin has become the poster child for the desperate fiscal plight of state and local governments. Walker's plan to plug the budget shortfall has ignited similar moves in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and other largely pro-union states, where desperate state legislatures are considering bills similar to the one passed in Wisconsin. As of mid-March, almost 9 out of 10 U.S. states were either experiencing or expected to experience major budget shortfalls.

The bottom line is that local government pensions are on a collision course with reality. A study published in late 2010 by a team of economists at Northwestern University and the University of Chicago warned that mounting pension liabilities "threatened the ability of state and local governments to operate."

Looking closely at data from 77 of the largest municipal defined-benefit pension plans, covering two million public employees and retirees, the study concluded that the estimated liability of all U.S. municipal retirement funds is \$574 billion. Of course, the amount of liability varies from city

to city. Every household in Chicago, for example, is on the hook for *nearly \$42,000* for its local pensions, while New York City households face the second-highest liability at nearly \$39,000.

The National League of Cities, in its most recent annual survey of fiscal condition, ranked the problem of unfunded liabilities at the top of the list of financial concerns, with mounting employee health-care costs and pension costs as the major concerns.

The problem is not confined to local governments: States are also facing hundreds of billions of dollars in unfunded liabilities. When local and state liabilities are added together, the figures are staggering. A 2010 study by the respected Pew Foundation put the figure for unfunded liabilities at *more than \$1 trillion* over the next decade, with other studies putting the figure much higher.

Even these figures pale when total U.S. liability is factored in. The total of all of America's debt, added to the monumental long-term commitments of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, amounts to, by some estimates, *more than \$50 trillion*—a staggering half million dollars for each American household! The mind simply boggles at such figures.

States and municipalities are waking up to the reality of the problem. In Philadelphia, which is about to run out of money from existing assets, Mayor Michael Nutter defined the city's defined benefit plan as "unsustainable" and announced plans to replace it with a defined contribution plan, which has no payout guarantees.

Small towns are also feeling the pinch. Prichard, Alabama, a small city on the outskirts of Mobile, ran out of money in 2009 in its municipal pension fund. In spite of a state law mandating the payments, Prichard simply stopped sending out monthly retirement checks to its 150 retirees. The move sent shock waves through the state, while desperate pensioners filed lawsuits to get their benefits.

### Harsh economic realities start to hit home

The growing problem of how to fund billions in pension, retirement and medical benefits has led to a national debate: Are pensions a right guaranteed to state and municipal employees?

Many state constitutions contain language supposedly guaranteeing state pension rights. In Illinois, the legislature recently passed a series of laws reforming

the state's pension system that will save hundreds millions over the next decade. But it may be "too little and too late," as many observers doubt this will solve Illinois' budget problems.

Across the country, state and local pension funds are being forced to face harsh economic realities. Recent years have seen swelling numbers of state and municipal employee retirements, while increasing lifespans are lengthening the time pensions must be paid. The rapid rise of U.S. medical costs, which have been increasing at twice the rate of inflation for more than a decade, only exacerbates the problem.

This has occurred while state and local government hiring has stagnated, reducing the number of new workers paying into the systems. And as the United States continues to wallow in economic stagnation, cash-strapped cities and states are forced to lay off thousands of employees who are paying into the retirement and health-care systems.

States and municipalities also are getting squeezed by low interest rates that reduce returns on invested pension funds. For years, most state and municipal fund managers managed to get 7 to 8 percent returns on invested pension funds—a realistic rate until recently.

For example, California's massive California Public Employees Retirement Systems (CalPERS) fund, the nation's largest at more than \$200 billion, achieved an annualized return of 7.75 percent for 20 years. But the past two years have seen this return drop dramatically. Though many fund managers are hoping for returns in the 6 to 7 percent range going forward, the economic turmoil of the past two years suggests that even this level of return may be overly optimistic.

It's interesting that many state constitutions mandate payment of pensions, but none of these state constitutions has figured out a way to create money! Unlike the Federal government, which has followed the underhanded policy of endless debt creation, states and cities must balance their budgets each year.

Some states, such as Illinois, have tackled the problem through tax increases on personal and corporate taxes. But wealthy citizens and their businesses are "voting with their feet" and simply leaving high-tax states. As one blogger puts it, "the laws of economics are far less yielding than the law of conspiracy-against-the-taxpayer."

California presents a case in point. If it

were a separate nation, California would have the world's eighth-largest economy. Yet, facing a staggering \$28 billion budget shortfall over the next 18 months, former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger declared a state of "economic emergency."

The California Public Policy Center's estimates of funding shortfalls for California's state and local retirees range from \$325 billion to nearly \$500 billion over the next decade. By contrast, state revenues have averaged \$94.5 billion per year over the past five years.

Currently, California's state and local governments employ more than 1.5 million workers, or nearly 5 percent of the state's population. Each of them is entitled to generous pension benefits under the state's defined-benefit plan—one of the most lavish in the nation. Its pension fund, estimated at more than \$200 billion, is one of the largest investment pools on Wall Street.

California, recognizing the approaching disaster, passed measures in 2009 and 2010 designed to roll back some of the past decade's increases in public-sector employee pensions and increase employee contributions to the pension funds. But these halfhearted attempts have failed to solve the basic problems, and California is facing, as the Public Policy Center puts it, "a financial implosion."

Late last year, California State Controller John Chiang pointed out the unsettling news that the state's unfunded liability grew by *\$8.1 trillion* during fiscal 2010, an amount nearly equal to 25 percent of the year's entire kindergarten-through-high-school education budget. Clearly, all California did was kick the fiscal can down the road.

Public employee pension plans are increasingly being likened to pyramid schemes, in which "contributions" withheld from those presently working are used to pay benefits to those currently retired or about to retire. The growing fear is that, like all pyramid schemes, those who come in last are the ones who end up losing. In state after state, pension plan "reforms" take the form of reduced pension benefits promised to newer public employees, who are often socked with higher benefits contributions.

### Generous benefits for public-sector employees

Economic and financial observers point to the juicier benefits packages that most government employees receive. A 2010 study by the American Legislative



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Exchange Council, the nation's largest, nonpartisan voluntary membership organization of state legislators, showed public-sector employees get benefit packages worth far more than those in the private sector.

The study revealed that government employee benefits packages are *69 percent greater* than those of private-sector employees and account for most of the roughly \$11 per hour more that public-sector employees receive.

These heftier benefits packages, of course, require larger contributions on the part of state and local governments. Figures recently released by the Federal government's Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that state and local government contributions to public employee retirement and health-care benefits totaled \$7.64 per hour versus only \$2.93 per hour in the private sector.

### A factor in national downfall

Observers of all political stripes agree that the problem of massive unfunded liabilities threatens the very economic survival of the nation. Many do not realize that history provides ample lessons of the dangers of national fiscal irresponsibility.

It has often been pointed out that fiscal breakdown was a major cause of the fall of ancient Rome. The 18th-century historian Edward Gibbon cited excessive taxation and spiraling government debt as one of the reasons for the collapse of the most powerful empire of ancient times. In his monumental work *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon cited demands by the Praetorian Guard for ever-increasing pay and benefits and mounting costs of hiring foreign mercenaries to defend the Empire as leading causes of Rome's fiscal downfall.

Your Bible reveals how ancient Israel went from prosperity to its downfall, also brought on by fiscal irresponsibility. Under King Solomon, Israel enjoyed unprecedented prosperity; money and tribute poured into the Kingdom from surrounding nations that the Israelites either conquered or had treaties with. "So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the [Euphrates] River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life" (1 Kings 4:21).

Yet Solomon sowed the seeds of the country's destruction through immorality and excessive taxation. Shortly after his

death, the kingdom split into two nations, Israel and Judah. Under a succession of mostly unrighteous kings that ruled after Solomon, Israel and Judah experienced further high taxation and even paid tribute to surrounding nations.

One of the acts of Jehoiakim, a puppet king who ruled over Judah more than three centuries later, was to tax the people heavily to pay tribute to the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho, who had taken control of Judah. "So Jehoiakim . . . taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from everyone according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Necho" (2 Kings 23:35).

Great kingdoms and empires of old never learned the lesson of fiscal responsibility, and it led to their downfall. Just a few short decades ago the United States was the world's greatest lending nation. Now it is the greatest debtor nation in history, with debt increasing at an astronomical rate.

God's warning to ancient Israel of the results of rejecting Him are striking: "The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. *He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.* Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, *until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you*" (Deuteronomy 28:43-45, emphasis added).

Ancient Israel and Judah both followed destructive paths, with the result that they were eventually overthrown, their people suffering enslavement to foreign powers. Will the United States suffer the same fate? **GN**

### To Learn More...

What does Bible prophecy reveal about the United States and other major English-speaking nations? Why does it seem that America is plagued with so many unrelenting problems on every side? Where will it lead, and does Bible prophecy offer any indication? You need to read our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Request or download your free copy today!



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## The King James Bible issue

The March/April edition of *The Good News* was particularly good reading, especially the articles about the history of our great Bible. I really enjoy the J.B. Phillips translation of the New Testament. I was given it as a youngster and I find the concept and the translation to be excellent.

A.K., Internet

As usual, the recent issue of *The Good News* was excellent, particularly the portion concerning the history of the Bible. I am, at age 81, a realist who stumbled across your publication several years ago, and I have been perusing it ever since. Your articles are well written and well researched.

J.D., Internet

## The Good News

I would like to thank each and every member of your team for all the work you do to carry the good news of the coming Kingdom of God to this messed-up world. All the information you make available without charge must be a tremendous task, and I for one want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I really don't know where I would be if it weren't for folks like you. Please accept this donation.

W.E.S., Westminster, South Carolina

Please find enclosed my gift, and I wish to thank all at *The Good News* magazine. I look forward eagerly to the interesting and inspiring items contained in its pages, particularly those on prophecy in these days of turmoil in the Middle East.

E.F., Derby, England

I am a Nigerian and an avid reader of your very informative and well-researched magazine. I came across *The Good News* through a friend of mine. The moment I started reading the articles I became hooked by the messages. I sometimes marvel at the quality of research and midnight candle-burning that must assuredly have gone into the production of each issue.

B.B.T., Nigeria

I am enclosing a small contribution for the magazine you send me. Although I disagree with several of your doctrines, I feel that we work with what we have when we have problems. I believe God does the same thing. So-called "Christianity" is being attacked presently. Your magazine helps people see why.

Mrs. P.L.F., Eugene, Oregon

I would like you to know how pleased I am with your publications *World News and Prophecy* and *The Good News*. In this world of turmoil and uncertainty, it is gratifying to be comforted and reassured that if we govern our lives as God has asked, we will be assured a more peaceful life now with an eventual place with Him.

M.J.W., Hagerman, Idaho

## Bible Study Course

I wish to take a minute to tell you how much I appreciate your help in teaching me how to read and enjoy my Bible. I am on lesson 8 and looking forward to lesson 9. I am 87 years old and I read a lot, especially the literature I receive from you. I also try to live by it. I find life much easier since I began my study and daily reading of my Bible.

E.W. Hacksneck, Virginia

Please continue my Bible study lessons. Joining a religious denomination or group should be more than running to an altar (as during a revival) and being baptized. People need to know what they believe, not just say "I believe," having no idea of what they believe or what their group believes.

A.M., Columbus, Ohio

*We recommend that you request our free booklets [The Church Jesus Built](#) and [Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion](#).*

## Beyond Today TV program

For the past few Sundays we've watched *Beyond Today* on Channel WGN

America and found it very different, informative and stimulating. I would be simply delighted to receive *The Good News* magazine from you.

E.A., Spanish Wells, Bahamas

We very much enjoy your *Beyond Today* television program and *The Good News* magazine. Thank you for presenting biblical truth in such a clear, practical manner—so that everyone who watches your show can easily comprehend the truth. May our Heavenly Father bless your staff and their families, and keep them safe in His care.

K.&C.G., Haven, Michigan

## Are We Living in the Time of the End?

I have just finished reading your free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* I feel that we are in the time of the end, and I want to prepare myself as much as I can for the coming of Christ. I have put Him on the back shelf for most of my years, but I need Him in my life now. I want to enroll in your *Bible Study Course* and also request a few more of your booklets.

L.S., Shenandoah, Iowa

## Letters from two retired veterans

I just had to write and say that I don't know who got *The Good News* started for me, but it is the best thing that ever happened to me. I served two tours in Vietnam. My mother prayed every day for me, and I know God answered her prayers as I came home safely. In one of *The Good News* magazines, someone mentioned that the Lord will never forsake us. So whatever is happening, I always ask for His protection.

R.S., Jefferson, South Dakota

I am a widow and a retired veteran. I accepted Christ in 1974 and for the first 25 years was content just to attend church and sometimes read my Bible and pray. Then something woke me up (probably the Holy Spirit), and I began to thirst for more knowledge and understanding. I have read many books and study aids, but your booklets are the best. I know you don't charge for these wonderful gems, but I also realize that you cannot make them available without cost. So although I would love to send you much more, I can only afford to send a certain amount at this time.

A.K., Tiffin, Ohio

## Teenage reader drawn to truth

As a teenager of 15 years, faith is something that is quite essential to my daily life. If the truth be told, it took me a long time to believe. So I want to thank you and tell you that your booklets are reaching the youth. My boyfriend and I don't live just for each other anymore. We live for Christ first. Your magazine helps us to see what we should do more clearly. I've been getting your magazines since I was 13, and my friends and I have formed fundraisers to ensure that you stay in business.

M.N.O., Memphis, Tennessee

## Relying on God

Where would I be without God? I am a single foster parent who looks after long-term, expelled school children. When it comes to needing strength or turning to someone for comfort, I turn to God. He is the only one who sees my tears and reassures me that every day is going to be all right. Without Him, I would be nothing. It's so heartening to see your magazine "plop" through my letterbox and to know others love the Lord. Please could you send me the dates that I should be celebrating the annual feasts of the Lord?

J.R., Penzance, Cornwall, England

*We've mailed our free booklet [God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind](#). Please see pages 28 and 29 for those dates.*

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).

# The Luangwa Elephants: A Lesson for All

by Rex Sexton

Depredations of the elephant herds of northern Zambia by poaching led to a breakdown of the social structure of these magnificent creatures. Their experience holds sad and sobering lessons for people as well.



A baby elephant seeks her mother's attention in Zambia's North Luangwa National Park in 2010.

**G**ift was an orphan. She was about five years old when she wandered into the camp of Mark and Delia Owens. She had no parents, no aunts or uncles, probably no siblings.

She had no family to teach her about life, how to survive or how to behave. By some miracle she had survived the slaughter that had taken her immediate and extended family from her.

From the late 1970s through the 1980s commercial poachers shot nearly 100,000—about 93 percent—of the elephants in North Luangwa National Park in northern Zambia. The majestic elephants were killed and sold for meat, skin and ivory. The government was powerless to stop the organized poachers.

## An unlikely pair of saviors

In 1986 Mark and Delia Owens arrived and established the North Luangwa Conservation Project (NLCP) with the goal of rehabilitating and conserving the 2,400-square-mile national park. The Owens had met and married as graduate students at the University of Georgia. They sold all they could, packed their backpacks and spent seven years living in tents in Botswana's Central Kalahari Desert studying black-maned lions and elusive brown hyenas in an area so remote that most animals had never seen a human being.

In Zambia, Mark and Delia received assistance from their own foundation and the Frankfurt Zoological Society. They helped curb poaching by assisting the local scouts with equipment, vehicles,

communications, a school and cash incentives. As a result of working with the couple, the North Luangwa game guards became the best in Zambia.

The NLCP identified 14 villages that were notorious for harboring commercial poachers. Mark and Delia worked in these villages to establish small sustainable businesses and other alternatives to poaching, which had been the primary source of income in the area.

There were no handouts. Rather, micro-loans provided business startup money, which had to be paid back. Villagers were also encouraged to grow cash crops and learn commercial farming. More than 2,000 families in the NLCP target area benefited from the community development and agricultural assistance programs.

The ultimate goal of the NLCP was to develop low-impact tourism in the park. This industry would protect the elephants and provide revenues for villagers who in earlier times had depended on poaching for their livelihood. When Mark and Delia arrived in North Luangwa in 1986, 1,000 elephants and many black rhinos were being poached every year. By 1994 the poaching had stopped and the herd could begin to rebuild.

The heavy poaching over nearly 15 years had taken its toll, as Mark and Delia learned in a study of the elephants that was to last 10 years.

## Shattering of the social structure

African elephants normally live in tight social groups or family units. Females are a part of the group for their entire lives. The unit is led by an older female, known as the matriarch, who may live to be above 60 years old.

Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and cousins normally feed together and play in the rivers. The older female elephants constantly teach the younger ones about maternal behavior. They express and reinforce bonding through touching and rubbing of body parts.

The animals show little aggression towards each other. Young males stay in the group until they are between 9 and 14 years of age, when they leave in search of a mate. Adult males are pretty much loners

or spend time with only a few other males.

The older females, especially the matriarch, hold the family together and teach the younger animals where to find water, food and protection, as well as how to thrive in the jungle and savanna. Elephants are among the most social and cooperative animals anywhere on earth.

The study of the Luangwa elephants quickly revealed that 38 percent of them were tuskless. Normally, barely 2 percent of African elephants are tuskless, but the poachers had altered the gene pool by targeting animals with tusks to sell for ivory.

Worse than missing tusks, the social structure of the animals had been transformed. Family units were smaller and younger. Before poaching, more than half of the elephants were over 20 years old; now only 6 percent were. Very few females in the best reproductive age group—20-45—remained alive.

The Owens realized that there were no wise old matriarchs leading the family units. Instead, they were led by females about age 15, and some groups were entirely made up of orphans. Young males with no family structure to guide them formed groups like city gangs—chasing non-receptive females and fighting among themselves. The park's elephants had been reduced to bands of roving teenagers.

### An orphan's sad story

Now back to "Gift"—the name given to the orphaned female elephant that walked into the Owens' camp during the study. She had no one to train her, protect her or teach her how to behave. She had taken up moving around with one of the adolescent male groups.

Normally she would not have been near male elephants until later—ovulation begins in African elephants between ages 11 and 14, and they normally don't have their first offspring until at least age 16. Gift was only five.

Three years later, the Owens were astounded to discover that Gift, now only 8, had a baby! She was only half the age she should have been to give birth. She had become a single mom, something unheard of in normal elephant herds.

Gift was part of a much larger problem. As a result of the poaching, a quarter of the elephant "groups" were now made up of only two—a young mother and a baby. These babies were to grow up without the love, protection, training and examples of older and wiser tutors.

Being young and an orphan, Gift was not a good mother. She rarely engaged in the touching and trunk reaching with her baby that bonds elephants. But Gift and her little one were not the only struggling mother and baby, as Gift was not alone in growing up without a family. Nearly half of the births during that time were to mothers younger than 14—well below the standard of an earlier time.

By the time Gift was 16, the normal age for first giving birth, she already had three offspring and was also a grandmother. How different her life would have been if she had been raised, nurtured, trained and loved by a normal family.

Only time will tell if the Luangwa elephants will ever rebuild and regain the family structure that provided stability for them for millennia. As a result of the work of Owens and the NLCP, the majestic animals are increasing in number and there is hope for the future.

### A lesson from the Luangwa elephants

The story of Mark and Delia Owens and their work with the Luangwa elephants, and their findings regarding them, may be found at their own websites, in the books *Cry of the Kalahari* and *The Eye of the Elephant*, and in *The Boiling Pot*, newsletter of the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Society of Zambia.

When Africans read of the incredible social changes brought about by the upheaval of the normal family life of these elephants, they often compare the symptoms to what is taking place today in Africa as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

I ran across a copy of *The Boiling Pot* while staying in a hostel in Livingstone, Zambia, several years ago. We had traveled to Botswana and Zambia to see our oldest daughter Hollie, a medical student then working in the largest hospital in Gaborone.

She related to us that there are very few people in that area between ages 25 and 60 who are still alive. All across Southern Africa, HIV/AIDS has taken a grim toll of the adult population and left entire villages empty and thousands of orphans to fend for themselves or be raised by relatives or orphanages.

Those of us in the United States can also identify, in a different way, with the fallout from destroyed family structure. Radical social changes have taken place in Western society since the 1960s. Our epidemic of unwed mothers and gangs of young men who engage in violent activity seem eerily

similar to the experience of the Luangwa elephants.

### Families are crucial for survival

Our Creator intended that family structure would provide the elephants with stability, safety, lifelong relationship bonds and the means to pass on to youngsters how to behave and act as adults. The same is true of the family structure God designed for mankind.

Jesus Christ directly affirmed that our Creator designed the family unit, being the author of marriage: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?" (Matthew 19:4-5).

He then went on to add, "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (verse 6). Sadly, there have been unrelenting assaults against the institution of marriage from many fronts over the past generation, in many cases tearing apart what God had instituted and joined together. Perhaps in some ways it's not that much different than poaching.

A few decades after Christ's affirmation of marriage, the apostle Paul added that the Fifth Commandment—"Honor your father and your mother"—is "the first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 6:2-3). And what is that promise? "That your days may be long, and that it may be well with you" (Deuteronomy 5:16). Is it well with you?

A positive, loving family is the greatest of blessings for adults and youngsters alike. It's true for elephants, and it's true for people. When that family environment is missing, what we experience is not unlike the sad story of the elephants of North Luangwa. **GN**

### To Learn More...

How can you experience the joy of a happy marriage and family? What biblical guidelines, principles and commands come into play to create those happy and healthy relationships? What are you missing? If you would like to discover more about how to experience the joy of a real family, download or request our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*.

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# A Modest Example: What Your Clothes Say About You!

What are some practical steps you can take to achieve an attractive but modest personal style?

by Amanda Stiver

*“Your dresses should be tight enough to show you’re a woman and loose enough to show you’re a lady.”*

This great quote is attributed to Edith Head, top costume designer for both Paramount and Universal movie studios during the 20th century. Hundreds of films benefited from her creativity. Her statement here describes a way of dressing that can be summarized as “classy” or “tasteful.” And it illustrates the fact that modesty is not a uniform or a one-size-fits-all proposition.

Modesty, in terms of decent attire, involves following guidelines. These allow us to wear clothes that express our personal style and taste but that still properly cover us, are gender appropriate and are respectful of those

who see us on a daily basis.

Let me pare this down into some effective exercises you and I can regularly use to achieve our own personal, modest style.

## 1. Ponder modesty

What are some of the elements of modesty? Modesty is a way of practicing outgoing love toward others. A woman who covers her body appropriately is showing regard for her male acquaintances by not tempting them to lust. Likewise, a man who wears clothes that fit well but are not too tight helps his female acquaintances avoid impurity of thought.

What is modest on one person may not be modest on another. A dress that falls below the knee for a short woman can for a taller woman be too short, and therefore immodest. Thus, modesty is also an ability to discern appropriateness of personal style.

Modesty can also depend on the situation. Stretchy exercise shorts and a sleeveless top, while appropriate for freedom of movement and temperature comfort in a fitness class, are inappropriate for church services. In the Bible the priests at the temple of God in Jerusalem had special clothes to wear as part of worship services. This and other factors have led to the conclusion that we should maintain a high standard of dress in worship services today. That typically means wearing the best semiformal clothes we have available.

We need to be mindful that how we dress and carry ourselves will be connected to the message we represent as members of the Church of God. If we dress immodestly but talk about purity, we are guilty of a double standard!

## 2. Dress like . . . a work of art?

The ultimate master artist of all

time is the Eternal Creator God. Under the direction of God the Father, Jesus Christ, long before He became human, made the entire physical universe and the spirit realm.

God shared some of His creative ability with us. Regarding the artisan Bezalel, who would construct the tabernacle of God in the wilderness, God stated, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works" (Exodus 31:3-4, emphasis added). While this was a special case, all of us have been given certain talents.

So how do we employ whatever measure of artistic gifts we have to the way we dress ourselves and to modesty?

If you sew, apply those skills to adapt clothes that need a bit more coverage here or there. If you don't, ask someone who does to help you. And try to learn more about how things are made. Buying well-made clothes that are not overly trendy is a wise investment.

### 3. A matter of inches, not feet: the mirror test

Finally, take a few minutes once you are dressed for the day to stand in front of the mirror. Don't get me wrong, I'm not encouraging vanity! The mirror is your best tool to see what others will see when they look at you. Are you modest? Will you be disrespecting others and yourself if you go outside this way? Do you represent yourself, and your God, well?

#### Ladies, a few things to check:

- Is your chest area covered? Be cautious about cleavage. If needed, adapt a garment with a small swatch of fabric to make it modest.

- Are you showing midriff? Are your shorts too short? Is your skirt lingering far above the knee? If so, choose something longer. Likewise, if you have a nice skirt that is long enough while standing but rides up too high when you sit down, then carry a scarf or some other draping item with you to place over your legs while you are seated.

- Cover your shoulders or wear sleeveless tops with a wider strap as a means of showing respect at church

services. Carry that scarf or a sweater with you for this purpose—besides, even on hot days overly air-conditioned buildings can be freezing!

- Check the fit of your sweaters, shirts, skirts, dresses and trousers—are they close fitting or skintight? Skintight clothes can be much too revealing. Stay in the middle range of fitted, semi-fitted and loose-fitted clothes.

- Do your clothes fit in general? If you have a bit of extra weight, don't try to squeeze into too small a size (see the point above). If you've lost weight, take the seams in so that you present yourself well.

#### For gentlemen:

- Men need to watch the fit of clothes also. Pants and shirts that are far too tight are not appropriate!

- Check for shorts that gape or are too short. And be sure to wear clothes appropriate to the setting.

- On the other end of the spectrum, are trousers too baggy and underwear visible? Does this present a proper image for a follower of Christ? Hitch them up!

#### For everyone:

- Do your clothes match? Are they clean? Torn? If so, take a few seconds to address the problem.

- Sit, stand, bend over, squat, turn, dance, walk and jump in front of the mirror. The coverage of clothes changes as you move. You may discover an angle that will gather the wrong kind of attention and needs to be fixed. Also, analyze how you walk and carry yourself. Are you smiling, standing up tall, and do you seem like someone who stands for God's way of life?

These may seem tedious and nit-picky, but we say a lot by the way we dress. It is possible to remain stylish and yet modest, and it's usually just a matter of a few inches of fabric rather than yards of coverage. Modest attire is one of the easiest ways of showing love for fellow human beings by helping them to obey God's commandments and keep their thoughts pure.

Take a stand for good taste, style and God's way of life—set a modest example! **GN**



# LEARN MORE

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.

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

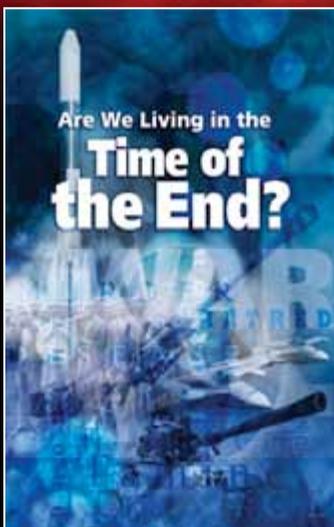
For thousands of years people have been fascinated with predictions of the end of the world. If we look into the inspired writings of the biblical prophets and apostles, we find many prophecies that refer to the time of the end. Should we take them seriously? Are world conditions such that these prophecies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

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

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

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

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