

*The*  
**Good News**

September-October 2002

A M A G A Z I N E O F U N D E R S T A N D I N G

# World Peace

## The Impossible Dream?

The Western World's Fight for Survival • Jesus Christ's Unfinished Business  
One Year After Sept. 11: What Have We Learned? • Ghouls, Ghosts and Goblins

## The Good News Beyond the Bad

**W**orld peace. For centuries, philosophers and poets have dared to dream the impossible dream, asking, “What if . . . ?” Yet peace on even a small scale has been so elusive and seemed so hopeless. Yet people have always hoped.

The world emerged from World War II resolved to ensure peace among nations. The United Nations was born with this goal firmly in mind, its charter stating: “We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind . . .”

But peace was not to be. Although another *world* war has not broken out, many wars have raged all around the globe since the signing of the UN Charter, just as they have throughout mankind’s bloodstained history.

Sadly, this is the way of our world. The young Nazi-holocaust victim Anne Frank expressed remarkably piercing insight when she wrote in her famous diary: “I don’t believe that the big men, the politicians and the capitalists alone are guilty of the war. Oh, no, the little man is just as keen. Otherwise the people of the world would have risen in revolt long ago! There is an urge and rage in people to destroy, to kill, to murder, and until all mankind, without exception, undergoes a great change, wars will be waged, everything that has been built up, cultivated and grown, will be destroyed and disfigured, after which mankind will have to begin all over again” (entry on May 3, 1944).

A year has passed since the monstrous evil of Sept. 11, 2001. Looking back, we still grieve for the thousands who lost loved ones on that horrible day. But, as Jesus said, the end is not yet. In spite of America’s war on terrorism, terrorism is not going away. War and suffering continue to rage. Troops are still dying in Afghanistan. Almost every day brings more news of shocking violence against civilians in the Middle East. And recently fears have mounted over the prospect of a nuclear conflagration between India and Pakistan—a terrifying possibility that still exists. Even in the relative safety of American neighborhoods, the vilest of predators stalk our children.

The bad news, as if all this weren’t bad enough already, is that things will grow much worse—not just a *little* worse, but *dreadful beyond our imagining*. Scripture indicates that the worst time in history still lies ahead of us, in the not-too-distant future. Bible prophecy tells us that titanic wars will rage. Great cities will fall. Mass destruction, famine and disease will consume populations. Whole nations will become slaves—all perhaps within your lifetime.

Knowing all this will happen and seeing it as our duty to proclaim this warning message, how could we name this magazine *The Good News*? Because our message is not ultimately one of doom and gloom—for beyond the darkness lies the dawn, the glorious dawn that mankind has longed for throughout the ages. Jesus Christ will come again, this time not as a little child in a manger or a persecuted preacher but as the mighty King of all nations (Revelation 19:11-16).

He will supernaturally destroy the military forces arrayed against Him, take over the reins of world government and enforce global peace. But even more important, He will, through His teachings and the pouring out of God’s Spirit, bring about the “great change” in men’s hearts that Anne Frank could only imagine. Indeed, the message of God’s Kingdom is what Jesus proclaimed at His first coming—His wonderful *gospel* or, in modern terms, His “good news.” The apostle Paul called it “the gospel of peace” (Romans 10:15; Ephesians 6:15).

In this issue of *The Good News* you can discover the marvelously *good news* of how world peace will finally come.

—Tom Robinson

# The Good News

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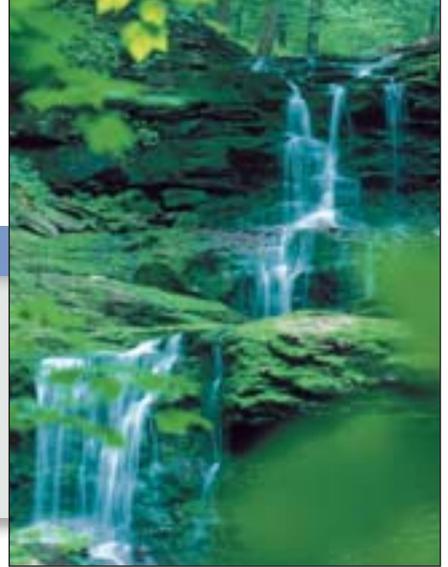
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# Table of Contents



Learn how the world will at last find real peace. 4

## Cover Feature

### World Peace: The Impossible Dream?

*In recent months the awful prospect of a nuclear India-Pakistan war, radioactive "dirty" bombs detonated by terrorists and potential all-out war in the Middle East reminds us that peace seems as far away as ever. For years men, women and children have longed for lasting peace on earth, yet it remains elusive. Is peace the impossible dream? . . . . . 4*

### Jesus Christ's Unfinished Business

*Many people understand that Jesus came to live a perfect life and offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin. But there is much more to His mission. He left earth with "unfinished business" He will attend to at His return. . . . . 8*



Reflecting on a tragic day: What does it mean? 12

### One Year After Sept. 11: What Have We Learned?

*A year ago the world was stunned by suicide hijackers' coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Do these and subsequent events play a role in the prophesied rise and fall of nations? . . . . 12*

### What the West Doesn't Realize: It's in a Fight for Survival

*Far from showing the isolated aspirations of a handful of religiously motivated madmen, Sept. 11 revealed that militant Islamic fundamentalism has set itself on a course of war against the West. But are we listening? . . . . 16*

### Ghouls, Ghosts and Goblins

*Halloween seems like harmless fun. But is it? Surprisingly, Halloween was originally an important religious holiday. So how did it come to be centered on trick-or-treating, witches, demons and the dead? . . . . . 18*

### The Prince of Peace

*One of Jesus Christ's titles is Prince of Peace, and Bible prophecy tells us that under His rule peace will increase with no end. What do this title and prophecy signify? What do they mean for the world and for you? . . . . . 20*

### God's Global Village

*"Global village" has become a popular term to describe a world interconnected by modern communications and travel. But the Bible describes a coming global village God will build on earth. What will it be like? . . . . . 22*



As an angry world shouts, is the West listening? 16

## Regular Features

<b>World News and Trends</b>	<i>An Overview of Conditions Around the World . . . . .</i>	<b>10</b>
<b>Profiles of Faith</b>	<i>Isaiah: A Prophet for Then and Now. . . . .</i>	<b>26</b>
<b>Letters From Our Readers</b>	<i>Readers of The Good News share their thoughts . . . . .</i>	<b>30</b>
<b>Questions and Answers</b>	<i>Brief answers to your questions about the Bible. . . . .</i>	<b>31</b>

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# World Peace: The Impossible Dream?

by Jerold Aust

**A** shocking headline on CNN's Web site on June 4 proclaimed: "Doomsday Clock Advances 5 Minutes."

The accompanying article stated that "doomsday drew closer Thursday and is now just nine minutes away, according to the keepers of the symbolic Doomsday Clock. [Because of] recent nuclear test explosions in India and Pakistan, the minute hand of the clock—a measure of how close humankind is to destroying itself—was advanced to 11:51 p.m., with midnight representing a worldwide nuclear holocaust."

How close the world came to nuclear

conflict between India and Pakistan we may never know. Nor, for that matter, is that particular danger past; it could easily heat up again and perhaps pass the point of no return.

The "wars and rumors of wars" that Jesus Christ foretold (Matthew 24:6) are here. But the peace He promised beyond them seems as elusive as ever.

Mankind has never known lasting world peace, yet peace for mankind is both planned for and guaranteed. But could the horrifying terrorist acts of Sept. 11, the senseless nail-studded suicide bombs that kill grandmothers and grandchildren alike, and the threat of nuclear war between

Pakistan and India help signal the coming of a true worldwide peace?

It sounds like an obvious contradiction, but it isn't. Ironically, the worse it gets on the world scene, the closer we are to lasting world peace (Luke 21:29-31). The signs of the times laid out in Jesus' Olivet prophecy (recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21) suggest we're dangerously close to a holocaust. But what does that have to do with lasting peace?

## Who defines peace?

What is peace? Obviously human beings don't have that good a grasp on what peace

is. Otherwise our history wouldn't be such an unbroken string of wars punctuated occasionally by a short-lived peace.

The Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) attempted to define peace. He came close when he wrote: "Peace is not an absence of war, it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice" (*Theological-Political Treatise*, 1670).

The truth is that there is more, much more, to the vitally important subject of peace.

Benjamin Franklin, in a letter dated Sept. 11, 1783, wrote: "There never was a good

our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh."

His words are true and sobering.

### History: a chronicle of wars

A survey of world history shows it is in essence a chronicle of wars. As George Childs Kohn put it: "War has a long and intriguing history and has been a prominent feature of human existence ever since the day when men—or women—decided to

settle their differences by use of force. *In many instances, the history of a people is the history of its wars*" (*Dictionary of Wars*, 1999, p. vii, emphasis added). Thomas Hardy, British novelist and poet, quipped that "war makes rattling good history; but peace is poor reading" (Robert Fitzhenry, *The Harper Book of Quotations*, 1993, p. 205).

The sheer number of wars down through history suggests there have been precious few years of peace. In a 1935 speech Gen. MacArthur stated: "In the last 3,400 years only 268—less than 1 in 13—have been free from wars. No wonder that Plato, the wisest of all men, once exclaimed, 'Only the dead have seen the end of war'! Where are Babylon, Persia, Carthage, Rome, and Byzantium? They all fell, never to rise again, annihilated at the hands of a more warlike and aggressive people: their cultures memories, their cities ruins."

### The first root cause of war

Why can't human beings bring about any

kind of lasting peace? To understand that, we must understand the ultimate cause of war.

The original cause of war and its perpetuation is an actual personage, a fallen angel Scripture describes as "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4). This chief demon, the devil, is also called *Satan*, a name that means "adversary." Indeed, the Bible directly calls him our enemy (1 Peter 5:8, New International Version).

Only when people grasp the crucial truth about this root cause of war will peace become possible.

We need to understand that Satan is *real*, not some mythological creation or symbol. As the enemy of mankind, his avowed purpose is to thwart God's plan for mankind—which is to expand His family through changed human beings made immortal in divine glory (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

Satan vainly hopes to disrupt God's plan through any means possible, including extinction of the human race. Satan knows God's design is for human beings to become a part of His family (Hebrews 2:11-13), as God's own children (John 1:12; Romans 8:14, 19; 1 John 3:1-2).

Since God won't allow Satan to directly destroy mankind (as in the example of Job—see Job 1:12), the devil hopes to accomplish his aim by influencing human beings to destroy themselves and each other. One of the most effective ways he spurs us to do that is through wars.

It is through Satan's murderous philosophy, influencing mankind's selfish, carnal nature (James 4:1-3), that all wars are fought. Massive wars erupting during a time of "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21) will devastate the earth and threaten mankind with extinction (verse 22). Initiated by Satan through gullible and evil men, these

## For years men, women and children have longed for peace on earth, yet it has never arrived. Is peace the impossible dream? Or is it not only possible but inevitable?

war or a bad peace." Rational human beings know that no war is good, especially if they've lived through one.

The constitution of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) says of peace: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed" (*Dictionary of Quotations*, 2000, p. 601). Although this reasoning makes sense, how can human minds predisposed to settling their differences by war for millennia forsake it and find a permanent peace?

In 1951 Gen. Douglas MacArthur delivered a historic address to a joint session of Congress. In his speech he focused on the solution to war: "I know war as few other men now living know it, and nothing to me is more revolting. Men, since the beginning of time, have sought peace. Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. We have had

## What Does the Bible Say About Armageddon?

The Bible mentions Armageddon only once, in Revelation 16:16: "And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon." The Greek word *Armageddon* comes from two Hebrew words: *Har Megiddo*, meaning "the hill of Megiddo."

The common (but misleading) notion is that Armageddon will be the last, climactic battle to be fought on earth between the powers of good and evil. However, this is not quite right in several crucial respects.

Armageddon—or more likely the large broad Valley of Jezreel, or Esdraelon, which Megiddo overlooks—will in fact be the *staging area* for the final great battle of this age, but not the site of the battle itself. That is set not at Megiddo but in the Valley of Jehoshaphat—commonly reckoned to be the Kidron Valley, immediately adjacent to Jerusalem (see Joel 3:2, 9-16).

Notwithstanding the popular concept of the Battle of Armageddon, the Bible makes no specific prediction for a war fought at Armageddon between two human armies precisely at Christ's return. However, the Bible *does* say that the armies of the East and West will be drawn to the infamous valley by lying demons (Revelation 16:14). From there they will march to Jerusalem. There they will fight the returning Jesus Christ (Revelation 14:14-20; 16:14; 19:11-21; Joel 3:12-14).



wars will kill literally billions of people (Revelation 9:15-18).

In spite of such unparalleled horror, destruction and suffering, Satan will fail in his attempt to exterminate humanity. This is where the good news comes in—how and why God guarantees mankind lasting peace.

### The second root cause

Human peace has always been short-lived—which of itself shows the great need for a different kind of peace. Human peace is short-lived because it comes from fallible human beings. The day that human beings figure this out is the day *God reveals it to us*. That's an important key to remember. Only God can reveal *true peace—His peace*—and the way we selfish, stumbling human beings can attain it (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). God's peace surpasses all human understanding (Philippians 4:7). Mankind will never understand, much less accomplish, godly peace on its own because only God has the key to everlasting peace—and only He can give it to human beings.

We like to view ourselves as reasonable, thinking beings. To a certain extent we may be. But we fail to grasp that our natural way

who does good, not even one.'

“‘Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.’ ‘The poison of vipers is on their lips.’ ‘Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.’ ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.’ ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes’” (NIV).

Simply put, human beings are motivated primarily by *selfishness*—our vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. The apostle James



## Jesus, the Prince of Peace, can and will individually grant us God's peace when we repent, when we turn from our own ways and wholeheartedly seek to obey God.

of thinking and behaving leads not to an ever more peaceful, fair and productive world but *to death*. As Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 tell us, “there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (NIV).

Romans 3:10-18, quoting other passages, bluntly sums up the human condition:

“‘There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one

understood and revealed the cause of fighting and war: “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” (James 4:1). Never forget what is behind human fighting: our innate selfishness and greed, spurred by Satan and his demons, who work day and night to influence human beings to destroy themselves and thwart God's plan for them.

Human nature and Satan's unseen influ-

ence go hand in glove in encouraging man to disobey the biblical laws that would bring us peace—if we would only adhere to them. The two together constitute an explosive combination that sets itself against God's way of life. This helps us understand why war has been so pervasive throughout history. So how can the situation be changed?

### Replacing human peace

Paul pointed out the great gulf between what we human beings can understand on our own and the understanding that comes through God's Spirit. Without God's Spirit the things of God are “foolishness” to the average person because the human mind is hostile toward God and His ways (1 Corinthians 2:11-14; Romans 8:7).

Without God's Spirit we know only the way of the world, the human way of doing things that is heavily influenced by *Satan's* way (1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9). Most of our ways of doing things come not from God but from Satan the devil, “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

Upon repentance of sin, and the exercising of faith, God gives us His Spirit—which is the only way to bring about a much-needed *change* in our nature. Without this change, man remains set in his wrong ways. Paul addressed the ordinary, natural human condition when he contrasted the way the members of the Ephesian church behaved after conversion with their earlier lives when they did what came naturally to them:

“You went along with the crowd and were just like all the others, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air, who is at work right now in the hearts of those who are against the Lord. All of us used to be just as they are, our lives expressing the evil within us, doing every wicked thing that our passions or our evil thoughts might lead us into” (Ephesians 2:2-3, *The Living Bible*).

## Peace in Nature—and Among All Peoples

When Jesus returns to earth as the promised Messiah, He will at last usher in the dream of ages, world peace. This will involve even the whole of nature, as the world will be transformed into an Edenic paradise (compare Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35).

Indeed, Isaiah 11:6-9 explains that the very nature of many animals will change: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

“The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain [God's Kingdom], for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

Isaiah repeats part of this amazing prophecy in Isaiah 65:25.

Fulfillment of this prophecy will require, it seems, a restructuring of the global ecosystem. But we should note that the animals mentioned here are also symbolic of nations, and their peacefully dwelling together represents an end of war among people.

The lamb, kid, calf, fatling, ox and cow often appear in Scripture to symbolize the generally peace-loving Israelite peoples. As for the great cats (leopard and lion) and the bear, Daniel 7 mentions them to symbolize great gentile empires.

These parallels are perhaps most clearly seen in Jeremiah 5:6, where the lion, wolf and leopard are widely understood to represent Israel's enemies. In God's millennial reign, God will change the wild nature of the “beasts” among men, as was figuratively portrayed by Nebuchadnezzar when God made him (the Babylonian lion; compare Daniel 2, 7) to eat grass with oxen (4:33).

Peace throughout the natural realm—and a unified human race. What a beautiful picture God has painted for us.

—Tom Robinson

Our first mother, Eve, was the first human being to be deceived by Satan, back in the Garden of Eden. After her deception she sinned and persuaded Adam to follow her in her transgression (Genesis 3:1-19; 2 Corinthians 11:3). Adam and Eve, however, were not the first to sin—Satan himself has that distinction (Ezekiel 28:12-19). Mankind thus followed after Satan and has followed him ever since. The prophet Jeremiah records that the human heart is deceitful, that only God can come to know the depths of one's heart through time and testing (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Until we understand this innate evil side of human nature, how we think and act without the spiritual understanding and strength that come through God's Spirit, we are doomed to repeat our cycles of endless fighting and war. Only by facing the truth about our human nature can we do something positive about it. And we can, with God's help, find the way to lasting, godly peace.

### The impossible dream becomes possible

What is godly peace, and how will it come? One key is found in Psalm 119:165: "Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble." The key to godly peace is *obeying God's laws*. Honor God's laws and you have peace. Ignore God's laws and you have the makings of war and other fighting.

Ultimately God will teach and lead all mankind to obey His laws. Such an incredible transformation may seem impossible. But with God the impossible becomes possible (see Matthew 19:26).

God's peace is guaranteed through the resurrected Jesus Christ. Jesus told His apostles it was "expedient" for Him to die, be resurrected and ascend to the Father, else the Father would not send the Holy Spirit to mankind through Him (John 16:7). But, through the power of Christ's resurrected life, God supplies us with the Spirit

(compare Philippians 3:10; 1:19). God's Spirit gives human beings the power to honor and obey His Ten Commandments (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Acts 5:32; John 14:16-21).

Jesus, just before His death, spoke of godly peace to His apostles, who would soon be terrified and fleeing for their lives: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you [peace]" (John 14:27). God's peace passes all human understanding (Philippians 4:7). Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), can and will individually grant us God's peace when we repent, when we turn from our own ways and wholeheartedly seek to obey God.

On the national and international level, the only way to permanent peace is through God's direct and powerful intervention in human affairs. This too is to be accomplished through the resurrected Christ, whom God raised from death to divine power and glory. God the Father promises to send His Son to earth again to put away all hatred, fighting and war (Matthew 24:36; Acts 3:18-20; Revelation 19:11-21).

### The dream comes true

At His return, Christ will first put away human fighting and war (Revelation 19). But it will take more than that dramatic intervention to rid mankind of that scourge. Shortly thereafter Christ will put away the ultimate source of fighting and war, Satan and the demons (Revelation 20:1-3). The Bible is clear on this point: God's will for mankind is His peace. He will make the impossible dream possible.

Godly peace is guaranteed for mankind, and no human being or evil spirit can stop it. Today we feel the increased pressure of unrest, terrorism and potential nuclear war. God shows that conditions will get far worse as we get closer to the end (Matthew 24:6-8).

Ironically, before the Great Tribulation, a type of unprecedented human peace will take hold temporarily, brought about by a confederation of nations centered in Europe. Although that seemingly remarkable peace will not last long (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3), many will hail it as a fulfillment of God's will for peace on earth.

Many will buy into this counterfeit peace because we human beings so desperately want and need peace. Remarkably, even the powerful political, military and religious bodies will view themselves as doing a good thing (Isaiah 10:7). In reality, it apparently will serve as a ploy for the peacekeeping armies surrounding Jerusalem to situate themselves to conquer and divide the city (Luke 21:20-24; Zechariah 14:2; Daniel 11:16). Yet the end is not yet, as these things

are a prelude to the Great Tribulation and Christ's return to earth.

When He does return soon afterward, Jesus will intervene to bring about the impossible dream: permanent peace on earth. "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4).

Another prophecy adds that God's peace will extend throughout the earthly creation: "'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,' says the LORD" (Isaiah 65:25).

Peace is not the impossible dream after all. Indeed, godly peace is *guaranteed* to cover the earth as the waters cover the oceans (Isaiah 11:9). What a glorious time that will be! **GN**



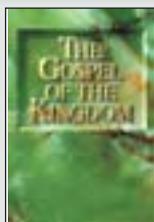
## Join Us for the Feast Jesus Kept!

Jesus of Nazareth never kept Christmas or Easter. But He did keep the Feast of Tabernacles, a biblical festival that celebrates His coming reign over the earth. In fact, when He returns, all nations—and individuals—will observe this festival (Zechariah 14:16-19). But you don't have to wait until then. You can observe it with us this year, Sept. 20 through 28, at any of these locations:

**Argentina; Australia** (Frederick Henry Bay, Tasmania; Merimbula, New South Wales; Noosa Heads, Queensland; Perth, Western Australia); **Barbados; Bolivia; British Isles; Cameroon; Canada** (Kelowna, British Columbia; Mont-Sainte-Anne, Quebec; Regina, Saskatchewan; St. John's, Newfoundland); **France; Germany; Guatemala; Italy; Jamaica; Kenya; Malawi; Mexico; New Zealand; Peru; Philippines** (Baguio City; Davao City; Iloilo City); **South Africa; Togo and Benin; Tonga; United States** (Bend, Oregon; Branson, Missouri; Corpus Christi, Texas; Escondido (near San Diego), California; Gatlinburg, Tennessee; Hagerstown, Maryland; Jekyll Island, Georgia; Keystone, Colorado; Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii; Panama City Beach, Florida; Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin); **Zimbabwe**. For more details, visit [www.ucg.org/feast](http://www.ucg.org/feast).

### Recommended Reading

To read a more complete picture of how peace will finally come to the world, be sure to request your free copies of the booklets *The Gospel of the Kingdom, You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. You'll learn much more about the remarkably good news of the future revealed in Bible prophecy. To better understand Satan's role in human affairs, request *Is There Really a Devil?*, also free for the asking.



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# Jesus Christ's Unfinished Business

Many understand that Jesus Christ came to live a perfect life and give Himself as a sacrifice for sin. But He left behind some “unfinished business,” which is why He must come to earth again.

by Tom Clark

It's difficult to imagine the emotions the apostles must have felt the day they watched the resurrected Jesus Christ ascend into the clouds (Acts 1:9). They had watched and waited their whole lives for the Messiah, expecting Him to liberate the Jewish people from the heavy hand of Rome. Instead, they had watched Him die.

But they had also seen Him in His resurrected form, and He spoke with them, taught them and encouraged them over the course of 40 days (verse 3). Now He had disap-

Nicodemus, but He frequently taught crowds of the general public, anyone who came to hear Him. “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35).

As we have already seen, after His death and resurrection Jesus repeatedly met with His disciples during the 40 days before His ascension to heaven, still teaching them more about the Kingdom of God and how

It is during this time of world war that Christ will return to take control of world events and stop humanity from destroying itself (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 16:14-16). This He will do quickly and decisively. No weapon or army will be able to overcome the supernatural power of the Creator. Jesus Christ, the very One who brought the universe into existence by His infinite power (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-2), will, at this time, intervene to snuff out this horrible war.

In short order the guns of this world's armies will fall silent, and bombs and missiles will cease to fall (Revelation 19:11-21). The massive military forces gathered for a momentous final battle will in moments cease to fight. With that taken care of, Jesus' world-transforming work will begin!

## You've likely heard that Jesus will return to earth. But have you ever asked why? What will He do after He returns? How will His return affect the world?

peared upward into the clouds. Two men, apparently angels, promised them He would return in the same manner He had left.

From that time to the present, Christianity has awaited Christ's second coming.

You've likely heard that Jesus will return to earth. But have you ever asked why? What will He do after He returns? How will His return affect the world? We need to understand the answers to these questions.

### Jesus' teaching role

When we look back at Christ's human life on earth nearly 2,000 years ago, perhaps the most important title we could ascribe to Him is that of Teacher. When the Pharisee Nicodemus came to see Jesus, he said, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God” (John 3:2). The word *rabbi* literally means “master”—the title of respect by which teachers were commonly addressed. Nicodemus recognized what Jesus' disciples already knew: He was a wonderfully gifted teacher.

The men who eventually became apostles in the Church Jesus founded were first called to be *disciples*—that is, students. Jesus called each of them from a trade or craft to learn to do something different. They spent 3½ years with the Master Teacher learning to become “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

The Bible records that Jesus spent considerable time and energy teaching. Not only did He instruct the disciples and occasional men in leadership positions such as

to take the message of the Kingdom to the rest of the world.

Christ is not yet finished with His role as Teacher. He left behind some important unfinished business and will return to earth—perhaps in the near future—to complete it.

### Today's war-torn world

One of the elements most lacking in our world is peace—peace between nations, peace between ethnic groups, peace within families. The words of the prophet Isaiah have never been truer: “The way of peace they have not known . . .” (Isaiah 59:8). Lasting peace seems an unreachable goal. Whether we try to gain it by force, alliances, diplomacy or ignoring a problem, peace is elusive—and around the world the body count continues to climb.

According to Christ's own words, the pattern of violence and suffering will only increase until the time of His return. “It [the end time] will be a time of great distress, such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again. If that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive . . .” (Matthew 24:21-22, Revised English Bible).

Jesus Himself foretold a time of violence so intense that, if left unchecked, the human race would eventually release the full horror and fury of its weapons of mass destruction, resulting in total destruction, the annihilation of life on the planet.

### Crucial missing knowledge

God told the prophet Hosea, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). The weight of human experience has proven beyond doubt that the knowledge of how we are to live has been missing. The history of mankind is scarred with hatred, conflict, betrayal and war. Christ will need to introduce to human beings the way to peace and harmony with each other.

It is this knowledge that Jesus, the Master Teacher, will bring to all mankind, and this knowledge will transform the world!

Isaiah wrote of this future world: “Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

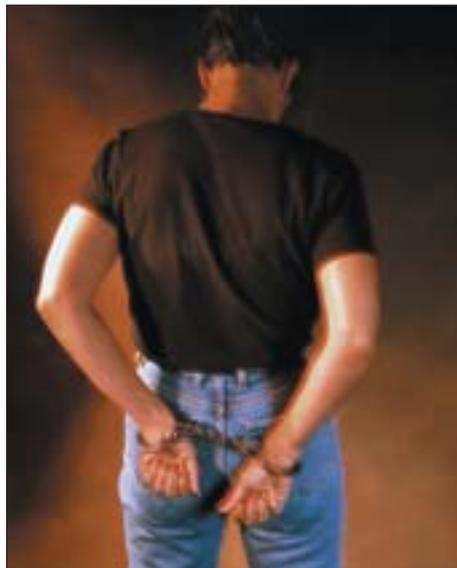
Men, women, boys and girls will realize, perhaps for the first time, their need to understand how to live in peace and harmony. They will realize that the source of that knowledge, the Teacher who can help them, is the now-returned Jesus Christ!

What will Jesus teach? Isaiah, we've seen, told us He would teach “the law” and “the word of the LORD.” But *what* law? The law Jesus will teach is none other than the law God gave Israel, the law He summarized in what we know as the Ten Commandments.

These commandments, which form the foundation for all the statutes and judgments God issued, show us how to express love for God and our fellow man. If we study and follow these laws, they will show us how to live and will guide us into peace and harmony.

### A world transformed

Just imagine how many family problems would be eliminated if no one committed adultery—or if parents and children treated each other with respect and dignity, rather



**A major part of Christ's mission will be to educate the entire world about God's standards and laws as found in the Bible. Only then will mankind be free of crime, violence and war.**

than with anger and dishonor. What if every husband and every wife responded with love and the deepest of respect to every family-relation problem, rather than with cruel words and abuse?

How would your life change if you no longer spent so much time, energy and financial resources trying to secure your home and possessions because no one coveted or tried to steal them?

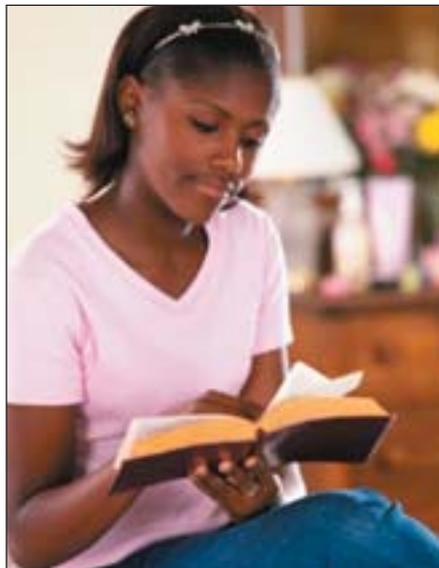
What if nations no longer had to worry about national security because no one tried to steal another nation's territory or resources? How much could be accomplished if the energy and resources poured into military buildups and intelligence gathering could be channeled into peaceful projects?

How many of history's wars rooted in a clash of religions would never have happened if everyone worshiped the same God—the one *true* God—with the same understanding and religious practices and learned to love others with the same care and concern with which they loved themselves?

Isaiah paints a picture of just such a world. After describing God's law going forth to all nations, he writes: "He [Jesus, the Messiah]

shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (verse 4).

Part of the job of a teacher is to correct wrong behavior. Some nations and their citizens will apparently need a little *more* correction than others. But soon *all* peoples everywhere will turn their weapons of death and destruction into useful implements for



agriculture and industry. Rather than destroying, these tools will be used to build.

### Utopian peace

When respect, honor and love are the standards for human conduct, the world will see an unprecedented time of peace and prosperity. No longer will a person's retirement account be wiped out by the greed of unscrupulous corporate officers. Never again will a widow's meager life savings be taken by a con artist. Rather, to a good old age men and women will enjoy the fruit of their labors and watch their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow up in peace and safety (Isaiah 65:20-23).

In this utopian world, God will even supernaturally change the nature of the animal kingdom to reflect the peace and harmony extant among men. "'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,' says the LORD" (verse 25).

Even the city of Jerusalem, which today is a center of violence and conflict, will enjoy

peace and security. "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing . . .'" (Zechariah 8:4-5).

The present-day conflict between Jews and Arabs will be but a distant and fading memory because all will live together with respect and dignity. No nation or league of nations on earth today can bring about this peace. It will take the power and wisdom of the returning Jesus Christ!

### Closer than ever

When Christ returns, we will have much work to do. Mankind will be on the brink of self-destruction, with no hope in sight. The Messiah will directly intervene to stop that titanic war and begin the work of reeducating the human beings He already gave His life to save.

The laws of God, recorded but ignored for centuries, will be widely taught as the law of the land; everyone will live by them. Ultimately "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). This is the incredible future Jesus will usher in.

We are closer than ever to these wonderful events. God's promises are certain, and this future is coming as surely as the sun rises and sets. Every day brings us closer.

It's difficult to imagine the emotions the apostles must have felt as they watched the resurrected Christ ascend into the clouds. But they knew He would return—and their faith was unwavering. They looked forward to a world without misery, a world led and taught by the same Master Teacher from whom they themselves had learned. The future does have a wonderful hope—God speed that glorious day! **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Would you like to learn more about the glorious future Jesus Christ will usher in at His return? Dozens of prophecies tell us how the world will be entirely transformed and all humanity taught a way of life that will bring peace, prosperity and productive, fulfilling lives. Be sure to request *The Gospel of the Kingdom* for a glimpse into this exciting new world!



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# World News and Trends

## An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder, Melvin Rhodes and Tom Robinson

### New Archbishop will begin his reign amid controversy

Recently Queen Elizabeth II, supreme governor of the Church of England, formally approved the nomination of Dr. Rowan Williams, 52, as the new archbishop of Canterbury and head of the Church of England after a meeting with Prime Minister Tony Blair. When he is enthroned (probably early next year) as the 104th archbishop, it will be at a time when secularism threatens the spirituality of Britain as never before. Public interest in mainstream Christianity has fallen to an all-time low.

Although Dr. Williams (currently archbishop of Wales) is said to "read Scripture seriously" and to be orthodox in his basic beliefs, some of his public statements seem to run contrary to Scripture. Fellow Church of England clergyman William Taylor, rector of St. Helens Bishopgate in London, takes public issue with him. He said of the newly appointed archbishop: "Some of his views in the area of gender and sexuality are in conflict with the Bible. He has labelled those who disagree with him as adopting an 'abstract fundamentalist' use of scripture and of

applying 'narrow and crude' criteria . . . My hope is he will make a clear statement to the effect that his previous statements were ill-advised."

According to the same newspaper article, Mr. Taylor's congregation "represents a strain of evangelical belief that has been openly critical of Dr. Williams's support for the gay clergy."

Christians around the world may find some of Dr. Williams' previous public declarations disturbing. Consider his lecture principally about homosexuality titled "The Body's Grace" (1989):

"The worst thing we can do with the notion of sexual fidelity . . . is to 'legalise' it in such a way that it stands quite apart from the ventures and dangers of growth and is simply a public bond, enforceable by religious sanctions . . . An absolute declaration that every sexual partnership must conform to the pattern of commitment or else have the nature of sin and nothing else is unreal and silly . . . If we are looking for a sexual ethic that can be seriously informed by our Bible, there is a good deal to steer us away

from assuming reproductive sex is a norm, however important and theologically significant it may be" (quoted in *The Guardian*).

The new archbishop faces several challenges within the Church of England itself. Two publicly acknowledged, practicing homosexual clergymen say they want to see a significant increase in the numbers of clergymen with similar beliefs and practices. But those in the conservative Anglo-Catholic wing of the Anglican Church makes statements such as "We may have to walk" when they hear serious talk of the possible proliferation of gay clergy and women priests. Also, the Church of England has almost lost £1 billion on ill-advised stock-market investments and may face a radical financial restructuring when Dr. Williams assumes office.

The words of *Times* columnist William Rees-Mogg ring in English ears: "Will this be the man to bring us to our knees?" (Sources: *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *The Guardian* [all London].)

### Solution to AIDS is not more cash

This June, the 14th annual international AIDS conference, in Barcelona, Spain, led to the usual calls for the United States and other wealthy nations to spend more to fight AIDS.

One area of concern is education—on how to avoid AIDS. It is clear that many people throughout the world are still unaware of how AIDS is transmitted. Ignorance is widespread.

On the BBC World Service's "Newshour," July 14, a doctor from the London Hospital for Tropical Diseases was asked about diarrhea, the world's foremost killer of children, which leads to gastrointestinal problems as well as diseases of the respiratory tract.

Explaining that diarrhea is mostly caused by polluted water and a general lack of hygiene, the doctor pointed out that educational programs have not worked. Even something as simple as washing one's hands after going to the toilet, a primary preventer of this problem, proves difficult to accomplish in most cultures. So why would spending millions more on AIDS education programs work?

It's difficult for anybody to fully understand another culture. However, definite cultural factors do contribute to the growing AIDS toll in Africa. These will not be overcome easily, if at all.

The best and most effective message is simple: Abstain from sex before marriage; be faithful within marriage. God put it differently in the Old Testament, but the meaning is the same: "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). Sex is for marriage only.

### Iraq yes, but don't overlook Iran

U.S. intentions concerning Iraq command the news media's attention, but Iran is never off America's mind for long. According to Randal Lurie, senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., future chroniclers "will emphasize the massive, well-organized, state subsidized terror that stemmed from and flourished in Iran. That country, history will record, was overtaken by a religion that incorporated itself into a so-called legitimate state for one strategic purpose: *The Islamization of the world as the endgame.*"

American strategists estimate that Iran will be able to develop a nuclear-tipped missile within two or three years. But even more worrying is the prospect that Iranian leadership may have no qualms about using weapons of mass destruction against countries and peoples they deem as infidels.

Mr. Lurie continued: "Iran is much stronger than Iraq, and its religious fanaticism cements its

mission to eliminate nonbelievers wherever they are. You can read nowadays open analysis by military pundits in the Iranian press debating whether two Hiroshima-size bombs could be more than



enough to destroy Israel, or whether one would be sufficient."

Indeed we live in a world where such frightening thinking is common. You need to know what the Bible says about the trends that characterize our dangerous age. Please request our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (Source: *The Los Angeles Times*.)

Some countries have already realized the need to emphasize this, particularly with young people, who need to be encouraged to wait until marriage before they have sex. A few billboards and regular ads on television and radio cost little and can easily be afforded by most governments, especially those that already control the media in their country. Any other message only confuses people and

encourages promiscuous behavior.

If the world embraced God's simple message, there would be no need for more AIDS conferences because the disease would die out within 20 years. Failure to follow God's command will lead only to increasing demands for cash as the situation worsens and Western countries are pressured for yet more help. (Source: BBC World Service.)



## Significant crime hike in England and Wales

A rash of newspaper articles in July reported that England and Wales top the Western world's crime tables. Even more worrying, more-accurate methods of counting crime are expected to reveal in the coming months that the true level of crime is as much as 40 percent higher than official figures have previously shown.

Crime is not just traumatic for its victims. It affects other aspects of everyday life. It is a political issue that threatens the reputations of government leaders if crime figures are not brought under control. Crime is a significant design-and-engineering issue, with high-tech consumer items, from the mobile phone to the family car, incorporating several layers of security as deterrents against theft.

Society struggles with the anything-goes attitude towards morality as it comes to terms with new statistics showing that one in 20 women in England and Wales say they have been raped at least once since age 16. Most of the victims say the attack was carried out by someone they knew, and most incidents went unreported. (Sources: *Independent on Sunday*, *Daily Mail* [both London].)

## The human role in creating famine

Although drought is officially blamed for the famine expected to take millions of lives across Southern Africa in the coming months, many Africans realize there is far more to it than that.

Former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda, in a BBC interview, blamed the famine on governmental corruption, a perennial African problem. He quite bluntly said that African leaders do not care about their own people. In spite of numerous warnings over recent months of impending famine, nobody did anything to prepare. Even now the former president, affectionately referred to as "K.K." by Zambians, warned that leaders would not distribute foreign aid unless they could see something in it for themselves.

An additional cause of the famine is the forcible seizure of land owned by white farmers whose ancestors settled the region in colonial times. Whatever wrongs may or may not have been committed during the colonial period, the fact remains that these farmers are highly productive, as are their American and European counterparts. Most indigenous African farmers remain subsistence farmers, which means they grow only enough food to feed themselves. The descendants of the original settlers are commercial farmers who grow vast amounts of food for sale, ensuring that the entire population has enough to eat

and leaving enough left over for export to pay for essential imports like oil.

The compulsory seizure of farmland has not been just an African problem. The communists took control of all private land in Russia after they came to power. Famine was the immediate result. Only this year have Russians finally been able to own land again. After 70 years of communism and a decade of postcommunist confusion, Russian agricultural production is nowhere near what it was in the last years of czarist Russia before World War I, in spite of the technological innovations that have boosted production elsewhere.

In America and other Western nations, family farms are going out of business at an alarming rate. They are not the victims of compulsory governmental seizures of land, but faulty economic policies that encourage big agribusinesses at the expense of family farms.

The Bible speaks of a time when families will once again be able to settle their land and farm without the fear of government stealing their land or introducing policies that make life more difficult. It will also be a time when there will be no more war, another major factor in declining agricultural production in Africa.

In Micah 4:3-4 we read of the coming Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ will rule: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid . . ." (Source: BBC.)

## Divorce not the solution to most unhappy couples' problems

Recent dramatic losses on Wall Street are having an effect in an unusual quarter, discouraging many from going ahead with divorce. Says a *Wall Street Journal* headline, "Matrimonial Lawyers Say Many Clients Can No Longer Afford to Get Divorced; There's Not Enough Money Left to Split" (*The Wall Street Journal*, July 24, "To Hold and No Longer Have: Stocks' Decline Roils Marriages").

More encouraging in the long term is a new study that shows that "splitting up doesn't increase happiness." A piece by syndicated columnist Mona Charen reported the results of a study by the Institute for American Values that showed that most unhappy couples do not become happier by going their separate ways.

"According to the survey conducted by a team of family researchers, unhappily married adults who divorced were no happier five years after the divorce than were equally unhappy marrieds who remained together. And two-thirds of unhappily married people who remained married reported that their marriages were happy five years later.

"Even among those who had rated their marriages as 'very unhappy,' nearly 80 percent said they were happily married five years later." The conclusion? Staying together and working through marital problems is the best way to go.

The study also included the surprising discovery that "unhappy spouses who divorced actually showed slightly more depressive symptoms five years later than those who didn't."

The study highlighted three ways in which couples can turn their marriages around.

"The first was endurance. Many couples do not so much solve their problems as transcend them. Moreover, these couples maintained a negative view of the effects of divorce. 'The grass is always greener,' explained one husband, 'but it's Astroturf.'

"Others were more aggressive. Those the researchers labeled the 'marital work-ethic' types [who] tackled their problems by arranging for more private time with one another, seeking counseling [from clergy or professionals], receiving help from in-laws or other relatives, or in some cases, threatening divorce or consulting a divorce lawyer.

"In the third category were the 'personal happiness seekers' who found other ways to improve their overall contentment even if they could not markedly improve their marital happiness."

Speaking of divorce, Jesus said, "what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6). He makes it clear that God never intended that people divorce: ". . . From the beginning it was not so" (verse 8). It's been only 30 years since no-fault-divorce laws became the norm in the Western world, with the resultant unhappiness that accompanies the breakdown of family life. This is not the way God intended things to be.

Couples should commit to working through their marital problems and not follow the ways of this world. Follow God's law, not man's loopholes. (Sources: *The Wall Street Journal*, *Lansing State Journal*.)

## International solution to Mideast conflict?

Pope John Paul II came out in August in favor of an international peacekeeping force to quell the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The pope said the international community must take "a more determined role on the ground." International mediation, he continued, was required to create "the conditions for a fruitful dialogue between the two sides." The Palestinians have long sought international protection, but the Israelis have rejected such proposals, saying that outside peacekeeping forces would not stop Palestinian attacks.

This comes on the heels of a proposal at the July meeting of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe that Jerusalem be put under the control of an international consortium. Italian parliamentarian Marcello Pacini put forward the resolution out of fears that the Israelis, under international pressure, may eventually cede control of Christian holy sites to Muslim authorities. Yasir Arafat has already claimed guardianship of both Muslim and Christian holy sites in Old Jerusalem. The Israeli observer delegation at the OSCE meeting convinced Mr. Pacini to withdraw the resolution because they saw it as "problematic for Israel."

Keep watching Jerusalem, which is destined to become the center of world conflict (Zechariah 12:1-3). Major involvement by Europe, the Vatican and the Muslim world are all prophesied for the Holy City. (Sources: BBC.com, CNSNews.com.)

# One Year After Sept. 11: What Have We Learned?

A year after suicide hijackers killed almost 3,000 men, women and children in attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, what have we learned?

by Melvin Rhodes

**N**early 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ “came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14). The word *gospel* means “good news,” the inspiration for the title of this magazine.

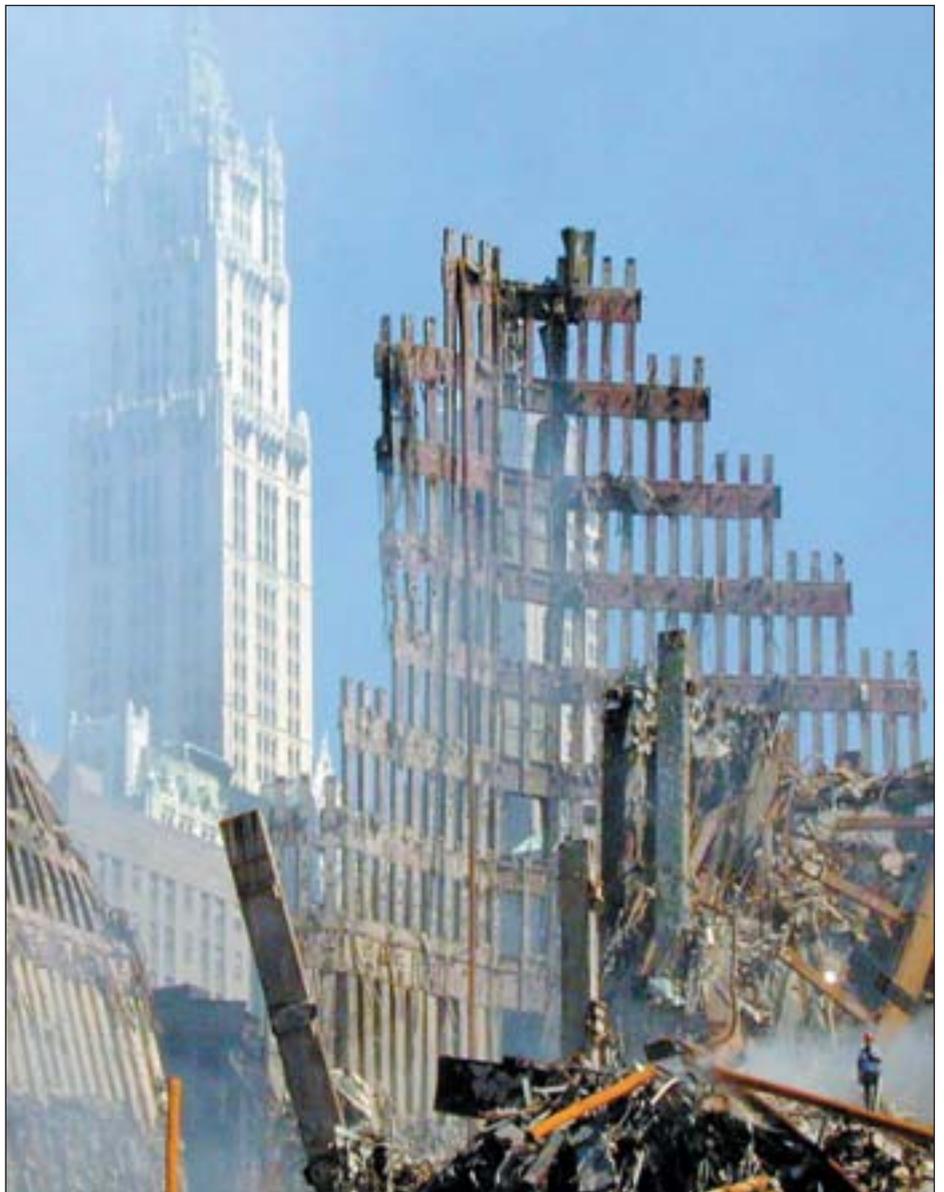
Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, born as a human baby yet preordained to become King over the whole earth. “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder . . . Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end . . . from that time forward, even forever” (Isaiah 9:6-7). At His return He will be “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16).

Anxious to know the time of His return to establish His Kingdom, the disciples asked Him: “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3).

Jesus then shared with His followers what came to be known as the Olivet prophecy. He first warned them against false religion and of “wars and rumors of wars,” assuring them that all these things must happen before He would return. “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,” He explained. “And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (verses 7-8).

He continued with additional dire warnings of the cataclysmic events that will precede His return. Interestingly, He showed that His second coming will be timed to save the human race from annihilation: “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (verses 21-22).

Without His second coming, humanity couldn’t hope to survive. With His return, a righteous, just and benevolent government will be formed with Himself at its head. Mankind will at last have peace and harmony, security and happiness. This is the *good news*,



the gospel message Jesus brought.

“But of that day and hour no one knows . . . Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (verses 36, 42). Clearly we are not intended to know exactly when Christ will return. We are, however, admonished to “watch,” to be spiritually alert and aware of what’s going on in the world around us. World conditions today

confirm the accuracy of ancient biblical prophecies that point to the imminence of Christ’s return and of the establishment of God’s Kingdom.

In the Old Testament book of Daniel we read that God “changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings” (Daniel 2:21). He determines the rise and fall of nations. He reveals a great deal to

His people, as the rest of the verse shows: "He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding."

### Prophesied rise and fall of nations

Daniel foretold the rise and fall of great empires, many of which have come to pass. In "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" given to the apostle John (Revelation 1:1), this disciple was shown events that would lead to the second coming of his Lord and Master.

## We are admonished to "watch," to be spiritually alert and aware of what's going on in the world around us.

A great false religious system was to dominate the world and would frequently ally itself with a despotic political system. Indeed, at the time of Christ's return this system would be in its final phase—a union of 10 leaders that "will make war with the Lamb" (Revelation 17:14).

Curiously, the United States of America is missing from the major world powers on the scene in events described in Bible prophecy at the very end time. Before the final political and religious entity just mentioned dominates the world, the United States must lose its position of preeminence. Some biblical scholars have understood this for some time, but none can know exactly how or when God will bring this about.

Sept. 11 was a significant turning point in world events. Terrorism against the West did not begin on that day; Western nations have increasingly suffered at the hands of terrorist movements for several decades. But, with the attacks on New York and Washington, terrorism entered a new dimension. Instead of dozens or even hundreds, now *thousands* of innocent civilians could be killed in a single coordinated attack—*within the borders of the United States*.

The world is never to be the same again.

How has the world changed since Sept. 11? Where are we in the prophesied events that center on the rise and fall of nations?

One year after the horrific events of that day, the world's perception of the United States has undergone a discernible change. To fully comprehend this shift in global thinking, we need to go back 60 years to another seismic shift that changed the perception about America's predecessor as global superpower, the British Empire.

### America's Singapore

Before World War II the British Empire was the dominant geopolitical power. In 1939 President Franklin Roosevelt reminded Britain's visiting King George VI that the

empire was America's first line of defense. By the end of World War II, six years later, the situation was reversed. Many factors contributed to this, but one of the most important was the fall of Singapore, Britain's vital naval base in the Far East. It fell to the invading Japanese Feb. 15, 1942.

Why was this so significant, and what lesson is there for the United States in the light of Sept. 11?

Historian J. Morris explains the change

in perception in a book on Britain's retreat from empire, *Farewell the Trumpets*: "The convictions of two centuries were knocked topsy-turvy by this event, and Asians were never to look upon Englishmen in quite the same way again" (1978, p. 453). Before this, the residents of Singapore had thought it "inconceivable . . . that British troops might actually be beaten by Asians" (p. 450).

Since Sept. 11 there has been a similar significant change in perception around the world toward the United States. In the eyes of many the United States, previously looked on as virtually invincible, was brought down—humiliated by peoples perceived as primitive or backward. The world will never look at the United States the same way again.

A Christian pastor in West Africa put it well when I recently visited his country. I had commented on the number of pictures of Osama bin Laden available for sale there. After telling me that he was a convert from Islam and that all in his family are still Muslims, he said: "Muslims feel that America is trying to take over the world. They see Osama bin Laden as the man who will stop them."

Even in West Africa, so far from the main areas of conflict, perceptions have changed since Sept. 11.

Of course, Bin Laden certainly has seen himself in that light. It has been said that he claims to have had a vision similar to the prophet Muhammad's almost 14 centuries ago. As with Muhammad, Bin Laden's vision revealed that he would bring about the defeat of the two greatest powers on earth. For Muhammad it was the Persian and Byzantine empires. For Bin Laden it's the Soviet Union and the United States.

Bin Laden's first dream came true in 1989 when he fought with the Afghan Mujahedin in driving the Soviets out of the country after a 10-year guerrilla war. The collapse of the U.S.S.R. followed within months. Emboldened by this and by America's defeat in Somalia in 1993, Islamic fundamentalists

## America: Uninformed and Unaware

America's biblical name, Manasseh, means "causing to forget" (for proof of America's national identity, send for our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*). When America broke away from Britain's "multitude of nations" to become the greatest single nation in human history, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Manasseh in Genesis 48:19, America turned its back on the Old World and concentrated on building up the great nation it later became. Separated by thousands of miles from the major theaters of war, the United States enjoyed the great advantage of being able to put the world's problems aside and focus on the home front. For most of its history America has been isolationist, not wanting to get involved in the affairs of the rest of the world.

However, this tendency to forget, to put the past and the rest of the world behind them, is a contributing factor to Americans being less informed about world affairs than many of the world's peoples.

In trying to understand the events of Sept. 11, BBC reporter George Alagiah contrasted the wholesome image Americans have of themselves at home with the nation's bad image abroad. "What is it that links a people so determinedly wholesome at home with what their leaders—both business and political—have done in their name in far-away places? The answer is ignorance. The vast majority of Americans are blissfully unaware of their image abroad" (*BBC Reports*, 2001, p. 43).

Emphasizing the point is a three-part series from the Gannett News Service that appeared in my local newspaper this summer. Its title? "America Becomes the Bad Guy." It observes: ". . . Ten months after the attacks, many countries view America more as a villain than a victim. Many analysts say anti-Americanism is higher now than at any time since the Vietnam War."

It continues: "European allies are fuming over America's decisions to abandon treaties on global warming, arms control and an international war crimes court as well as to protect American products with new tariffs on foreign goods. Anti-American feelings go much deeper in Arab countries, where the United States is viewed as blindly loyal to Israel . . . Surveys in Arab countries show that increasing numbers of people there believe that Israel, not Osama bin Laden, spearheaded the Sept. 11 attacks, even though his terrorist network has effectively claimed responsibility."

It's hard to believe that the most awful day in America's history has actually *increased* anti-Americanism around the world, but this appears to be the case.

Increasingly the world's preeminent power is resented by others who cannot get their way. As soon as other nations see a chink in the armor of a superpower, they are emboldened. Former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger said it this way: "Hege- monic empires almost automatically elicit universal resistance, which is why all such claimants have sooner or later exhausted themselves" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, January 2002, p. 38).

staged the attacks on New York and Washington. They committed themselves not to stop until they defeated what they consider “the Great Satan.” The demise of Osama bin Laden may only strengthen their resolve; Persia and Byzantium were defeated by Muhammad’s followers only after his death.

### What next for America?

If Sept. 11 was America’s Singapore, then America’s Suez is likely to follow.

Singapore was not the end of the British Empire, any more than Sept. 11 was the end of the United States. But both altered perceptions of the two English-speaking powers.

After Singapore fell, less-advanced peoples around the world realized that Britain could be defeated. It wasn’t long before the British Empire started to unravel. While the United States has no formal empire like Britain had, it does have an economic, cultural and military hegemony around the globe, and it is still perceived as the natural leader of the free world. However, since those opposed to it have been encouraged by the events of Sept. 11 and now see America as a nation that can be defeated, that perception is now less secure.

It was another 14 years before the British Empire finally collapsed. The cause was the loss of another strategic possession, the

Suez Canal.

The canal was owned and operated by Britain and France, with Britain the chief shareholder in the enterprise. But the overthrow of the Egyptian monarchy in 1952 brought to power a radical Arab nationalist military regime that later nationalized the canal.

The British and French, together with the Israelis, invaded Egypt in 1956 to claim back the canal and overthrow the dictatorship. Militarily they were victorious, but their actions displeased Washington; President Eisenhower was concerned this might open the doors to Soviet encroachment in that part of the world.

The president told the Allies to withdraw. Fearful of Britain’s increased international isolation, there was a substantial sale of sterling, the British currency, around the world. “In the normal way, Britain would have expected immediate help from the United States, a temporary loan or American co-operation in raising funds swiftly from the International Monetary Fund . . . Neither was available now” (Keith Kyle, *Suez*, 1991, p. 464).

Afraid of the economic consequences, Britain withdrew. The world now saw clearly that the British Empire was a spent force and that the British from now on would have to tow the line of the United States. Britain’s

African empire, in 1956 still larger geographically than the continental United States, dissolved in the ensuing decade.

### An empire on fragile ground

Could a similar setback befall the United States in our time?

It could, and it might not take 14 years.

The United States is committed to a change of regime in Iraq, in spite of opposition from most of its allies, with whom a rift is widening. Speculation abounds of an invasion of the Persian Gulf nation in the coming months.

America’s military forces are by far superior to Iraq’s, but what if things go wrong? The implications are profound. Iraq’s dictator, Saddam Hussein, faced with defeat, may attempt to destroy the oil wells around the Persian Gulf. While America depends on the region for 25 percent of its oil, Europeans depend on it for *most* of theirs.

And what if the invasion leads to the peoples of the Arab (or even greater Muslim) world turning against the United States, with popular uprisings leading to the overthrow of generally pro-American governments in such countries as Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Pakistan? Other nations have much at stake in the area. Moreover, in a fight with the United States, Hussein, knowing he has nothing to

## Sept. 11 Aftermath Highlights U.S. Strengths and Weaknesses

America’s response to the awful events of Sept. 11 has highlighted both the strengths and weaknesses of the nation. Ironically, some of its greatest strengths are also potentially great weaknesses.

Let’s consider a few examples.

### The economy: an Achilles’ heel

America’s economic system has been a great strength for most of its history. Except for a few hiccups—most notably the Great Depression of the 1930s—the free-enterprise system has served America well, making it the world’s most successful economy. But its very success and sophistication also make it vulnerable. The economy is built on many things, chief among them confidence.

Confidence was waning even before Sept. 11. The dot-com bubble had burst, and the stock market was wobbling even before George W. Bush entered the White House. The warning signs of impending trouble were already there.

All Sept. 11 did was accelerate America’s economic decline. Telecommunications meltdowns and corporate scandals added to U.S. woes, compounded by a general lack of confidence around the world. Even in the United States, opinion polls that had shown two thirds believing America was winning the war on terrorism back in January showed this was halved to one third by late June.

Uncertain about America’s future, by mid-July the euro had nearly overtaken the dollar in value, a significant psychological boost that showed increased confidence in Europe’s future even as the world doubted America’s.

### E pluribus unum

“Out of many, one,” the translation of the Latin motto on America’s seal and currency, has been a constant reminder of how a country that started out as a loose association of 13 former British colonies became the world’s most powerful nation, composed of peoples from every nation.

Here is another great strength that is suddenly an incurable weakness.

Much has been written about Sept. 11, but one fact is certain: America’s immigration policies contributed to the problem.

Before 1965 immigrants to the United States came primarily from Europe. Accepting immigrants from the Old World had given America its reputation as a melting pot, a tolerant nation able to successfully absorb peoples from different cultures. However, changes to the immigration laws in 1965 led to a massive influx of peoples from the so-called third world, making assimilation much more challenging.

Religious and cultural differences have meant that many of these people have not been absorbed. The melting pot today looks more like a salad plate, with different cultures living separately, rarely coming into direct contact with each other. Many feel left out and blame the United States for their ills. In such an environment, many Americans are in fact virulently anti-American. Some, perhaps a sizable number, are willing to resort to violence to change things.

### Religious tolerance can backfire

Freedom of religion is a complicating factor here. Again, once a great strength, this now has a negative side. Two centuries ago Americans were overwhelmingly Protestant Christians. Each denomination had its own interpretation of the Bible, but they all generally believed the Bible was the Word of God and that everyone should live by it. Separation of church and state meant the church was to be protected from state interference. “No establishment of religion” meant that no one church should have a special, privileged position as in England.

Today the freedoms cherished by our ancestors are being abused. A very different (and, as practiced by some, a highly intolerant) religion, Islam, was a major contributing factor to the events of Sept. 11. Taking advantage of America’s freedom of religion, radical religious leaders are free to recruit followers, some to be suicide bombers.

The result? Government leaders openly warn that it’s only a matter of time before another deadly wave of killers blows itself up in an effort to bring down the United States.

lose, would likely strike against Israel with missiles—as he did in the Gulf War, trying to rally the Muslim world to his cause.

Of course, it is also quite possible that America would experience great success in a war against Iraq—we just don't know. But what about the war against the next target? What about other potential conflicts with Iran, North Korea and communist China? The same questions would have to be asked all over again. Is the struggle the United States has entered into sustainable?

There is also the question of the U.S. economy. The costly war on terror has been fought so far without tax increases. This means a huge increase in the federal-budget deficit, traditionally paid for by the issuing of U.S. Treasury bonds, mostly bought by foreign nations such as Japan. But other countries are now *selling* dollars in favor of euros and are not likely to buy more U.S. bonds. Additionally, some are gravely concerned about the U.S. trade deficit, the highest of any country in history.

We are rapidly approaching the point where the rest of the world, including America's allies in Western Europe and Japan, could conceivably pull the plug on America—as President Eisenhower did on the British and French—should they feel it is in their own interests to do so. European and Asian nations hold more than enough dollars to devastate the U.S. economy should they ever decide to sell.

This would not require any action by governments. A major loss of confidence in the United States, as could be the case after a military setback, could lead to massive selling of dollars across the globe. With more than half the dollars in circulation held outside the United States, the country would not be able to do anything if other nations' central banks decided not to intervene.

### American withdrawal from the world

Of course, events may proceed differently but with the same end result.

In a long article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, "A New Grand Strategy," authors Benjamin Schwarz and Christopher Layne advocate a significant change in America's defense policies. "For more than fifty years American foreign policy has sought to prevent the emergence of other great powers—a strategy that has proved burdensome, futile, and increasingly risky. The United States will be more secure, and the world more stable, if America now chooses to pass the buck and allow other countries to take care of themselves" (January 2002, p. 36).

The authors advocate that America concentrate on defending the Americas while encouraging its allies to defend their own

regions. But this would mean the United States would eventually have military rivals that in turn could lead to more-threatening conflicts than even the war on terror.

Not discussed in the article is that a withdrawal from international commitments could become more likely in the event of further terror attacks like those of Sept. 11. The pressure would be on the government to concentrate on homeland security.

More attacks seem inevitable. Osama bin Laden may have been the inspiration for the previous attacks, but his terror organization works like a franchise, a loosely knit network that offers benefits to individual cells but

## The image of the United States around the world is one of a degenerate society that is elitist, spoiled and corrupt at the top, rife with crime and violence at the bottom and replete with illicit sex, drugs and emotional problems.

allows each to plan its own terror operations. The FBI estimates that more than 5,000 al-Qaeda terrorists operate in the United States.

### A turning point and warning

Again, Sept. 11 was a significant turning point for America. One unexpected consequence is that America is increasingly seen as the bad guy, which most Americans find bewildering.

Those who travel to other countries may understand this better as they see how others perceive America. The image of the United States around the world is one of a degenerate society that is elitist, spoiled and corrupt at the top, rife with crime and violence at the bottom and replete with illicit sex, drugs and emotional problems throughout. While not an accurate depiction of the average citizens of heartland America, this is the image people perceive from American movies and television programs. (Sadly, it is all too true in some parts of American society.)

On a recent visit to West Africa, I was impressed and saddened by a discussion on the radio. A friend of mine there contributes to a weekly two-hour radio program called *What Is Your Belief?* One of the issues discussed while I was there was the ruling by a U.S. federal appeals court that the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional because it mentions God.

The panel on this radio program understood that the court's ruling was another anti-God decision, like earlier bans on prayer in public schools and orders to remove plaques bearing the Ten Commandments.

The concern of the panelists, all brought up in the context of a world dominated by the

United States, was quite simple: "If America kicks God out of its schools, then God will kick America out of His way." In their minds, the implications for the United States and for the rest of the world are enormous.

It's a simple logic and not without considerable biblical truth in the reasoning.

In establishing the ancient nation of Israel, God gave the Israelites a choice. They could obey His laws and be blessed, or disobey and suffer the inevitable consequences. You can read about this choice in Deuteronomy 28. In verse 1 God said: "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His

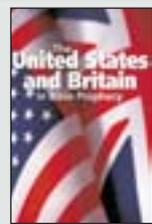
commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth."

But He also told them: "... If you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God . . . all these curses will come upon you and overtake you . . . The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth . . . You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God" (verses 15, 25, 62, emphasis added).

Sept. 11 should be seen, above all, as a warning—a call to national repentance before the United States of America, no longer aided by a Higher Power, goes the way of the Twin Towers, the British Empire and the Soviet Union. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Where can we turn for understanding in these confusing and dangerous times? How can we learn where world events are leading us? To better understand today's headlines and the trends discussed in this article, be sure to request our free booklets *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy, You Can Understand Bible Prophecy, The Book of Revelation Unveiled and Are We Living in the Time of the End?*



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# What the West Doesn't Realize: It's in a Fight for Survival

Islamic fundamentalism became front-page news after Sept. 11. There certainly had been plenty of warning, although nobody could have predicted the precise way in which terrorists would get the West's attention. Few would have listened anyway.

by Melvin Rhodes

**P**arviz Radji was the Iranian ambassador to London in the years leading up to the overthrow of the shah in January 1979, a few weeks before British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher came to office. Before that, Mrs. Thatcher was the leader of the opposition Conservative Party.

In his book *In the Service of the Peacock Throne*, Mr. Radji recounts a dinner with Mrs. Thatcher before a visit she was to make to Tehran, capital of Iran. The account from his diary entry of Wednesday, April 26, 1978, reads: "I try to impress Mrs. Thatcher with my analysis of the Iranian/Middle Eastern situation but I suspect that I somehow fail. There is, to be sure, 'perfect understanding,' to use the hackneyed diplomatic phrase, on such subjects as the dangers of world communist expansionism, the need for strong defenses, and a firm hand in dealing with terrorism. But on less clear-cut issues, such as *the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and its anti-Western bias*, I don't believe I retain her interest" (1983, p. 172, emphasis added).

As we see here, even some of the greatest leaders can make serious misjudgments. It's easy to understand why in this case. The post-Christian West no longer takes religion seriously, so it is difficult for Western leaders to comprehend the threat that could come to the West from non-Christian religions.

A few months after that dinner, America learned firsthand the threat of Islamic fundamentalism when Iranian students, followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini, whose supporters overthrew the shah, stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held embassy staffers as hostages for 444 days. For the next two decades Americans would look back and blame the drawn-out affair on the perceived weakness of their president.

Sadly, the West lost an opportunity

to prepare for a major assault by the forces of Islamic fundamentalism. Even more sadly, there still seems to be little understanding of the serious threat to the free world that Islamic fundamentalist terrorism poses. Sometimes the problem is simply a failure to connect the dots, to put two and two together.

## Increased challenges for allies

For months now there has been talk of forcibly replacing Saddam Hussein as president of Iraq. While talk of the ambitious military action this would require has continued, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has flared up with a new, even more deadly round of violence. Coincidence? Not when you consider that Saddam has offered to pay the families of Palestinian suicide bombers \$25,000, a lot of money to people who have spent decades in refugee camps with little prospect of an end to their misery.

As long as the heightened tensions continue in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it is more difficult for the United States to act against Saddam. To say that this is a victory for Saddam does not detract from the reality that he is a despotic tyrant who poses a major threat to the West. Try telling that to the Europeans, who are busily making money from trade ties to Iraq and other Mideast nations that sponsor terrorism.

Consider also Kashmir, the mountainous region of northern India. Attacks by Kashmir-based Islamic militants on Indian villages and military camps have brought Pakistan (whose sympathies lie with the militants) and India to the brink of another military conflict—one that this time could go nuclear. Any outbreak of hostilities between these two powers will automatically put a stop to any allied efforts to find Osama bin Laden, Mullah Omar and any leftover al-Qaeda diehards who might still roam the mountains of the Hindu Kush.

This will be another victory for the forces of militant Islamic fundamentalism.

A further victory for Islam became apparent during President Bush's visit to Europe several months ago. The deterioration in relations between Europe and America since Sept. 11 is extraordinary. The Bush administration, reacting to the biggest attack on the United States since Pearl Harbor, understandably has made the war on terror a top priority. But many Europeans have a different perspective. A few even think the United States deserved what happened on Sept. 11. Demonstrators accused the president of being a "cowboy," ready to aggressively attack poor and backward nations to pursue American interests.

It's difficult for Americans to understand this attitude. Earlier this year French nationals were killed in a terrorist attack on a bus in Pakistan and German tourists died in Tunisia in an attack on a synagogue. But perhaps the tendency toward appeasement goes back to the end of the colonial period, when Western Europeans began to sympathize with nationalist movements rebelling against the ruling Western powers.

Also part of the equation is Europeans' sense of guilt over their wealth in contrast to the relative poverty of some of their former colonies.

In reality, the Soviet Union was the greatest imperialist power of the latter half of the 20th century. Liberal (socialist) ideas swept across Europe in advance of the Soviet army. But reality has little to do with perception, particularly when many of the news media are dominated by left-leaning reporters with their own agenda. The Palestinians are usually portrayed as poor, oppressed, subject peoples, while the Israelis seem like the big, bad Western colonialists. In reality, Israel is a small country with a small population surrounded by hostile powers having vastly larger populations.

Just as Europe and America are drifting apart, Americans themselves are increasingly divided. Some in the United States realize terrorism poses perhaps the greatest threat to the American republic ever. Increasingly, others believe in business as

government will react when the terrorists in these cells “decide to simultaneously blow themselves up in shopping malls, apartment buildings, a mega church, a synagogue and several airports all on the same day, killing thousands of people?”

## The post-Christian West no longer takes religion seriously, so it is difficult for Western leaders to comprehend the threat from non-Christian religions.



usual, wanting to return to the party politics of personal self-aggrandizement and the pursuit of their own interests.

My own local newspaper in Michigan is back to long articles on the rights of gays and minorities, including Muslims. Perhaps it's simply a case of denial, a refusal deep down to contemplate the realities facing the United States. One American commentator described the United States as the only country that suffers from national ADD (attention-deficit disorder). Nine months after Sept. 11 a growing number of Americans just want to put it all behind them and forget about it.

### Fight for survival

Not so for conservative columnist Cal Thomas. In a May editorial titled “U.S. Is in Fight for Its Survival,” he wrote about Vice President Dick Cheney’s warning one week earlier that “another terror attack on the United States is ‘inevitable’” and the warning from the FBI director that it’s only a matter of time until suicide bombers attack America again.

Reminding readers that the Senate Intelligence Committee estimates that 100 al-Qaeda terrorist cells exist in the United States, Mr. Thomas asks how the U.S.

Continuing, Mr. Thomas writes: “An acquaintance of mine predicts ‘vigilanteism of a kind like we’ve never seen before’ following any new terrorist attacks.” In proposing solutions, he adds: “We must find new ways of keeping people out of America who come from regions of the world with a record of exporting death. That means no more ‘students’ from Middle Eastern countries and no more immigration until we can do a better job of profiling those who come here. If that means stationing troops along both borders, electric fences, high walls, guarding our ports and installing listening devices, so be it.”

In summation he adds: “Should another terrorist attack occur, we’d better be prepared to strike at home and abroad without warning, without hesitation and with the full force of American military, political and moral might.” The point is that, if America’s will to win falters, the advantage then shifts to the terrorists.

The ailing 82-year-old pope also sees the impending threat, though his concern is not focused on the United States. Visiting Azerbaijan the day before President Bush recently arrived in Europe, the pope again reached out to Islam in the hope of averting further religious conflict. With only 150

Catholics in the country, his visit was not to his own flock. It was political. The Catholic Church has all too often been at the center of the 1,400-year-old struggle between Islam and Christianity.

Others see the increasing threat too. First France and then the Netherlands were shocked at recent election results that saw big gains for the extreme-right political parties. They join Austria, Italy and Denmark, making five ancient European nations whose citizens show an increased fear of foreigners and, in particular since Sept. 11, Muslims.

It will be interesting to see who wins the next German election. Germany’s Social Democratic government may be replaced by conservatives led by the Bavarian Edmund Stoiber, whose mentor was Munich-born Franz Josef Strauss (1915-1988), once prominent in the West German government.

Russia also sees the threat from Islamic fundamentalists. The deaths of Russian veterans and children in a terrorist bomb blast on Victory Day, commemorating the end of World War II, visibly angered President Putin, who blamed Chechen rebels—Muslims supported by al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.

### Prophesied Mideast threat

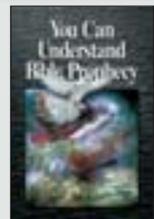
Bible prophecy is interesting in the light of these developments.

Daniel 11 gives us an overview of the Middle East in prophecy. Although most of the chapter was fulfilled more than 2,000 years ago in the centuries after Daniel’s death, the last few verses are yet to be fulfilled. With no Jewish nation in the Middle East from the time of the Romans until the restoration of a Jewish homeland in 1948,

*Continued on page 29*

## Recommended Reading

Where are these ominous trends taking us? To what will they ultimately lead? If you’d like to understand the biblical perspective behind today’s headlines, be sure to request your free copies of our booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*



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# Ghouls, Ghosts and Goblins

It seems like such harmless fun—children dressed as witches, skeletons or Darth Vader ringing the doorbell, enthusiastically announcing, “Trick or treat!” But is this preoccupation with the dead, witches and demons really harmless? And do you realize that Halloween was originally an important religious holiday—and still is in many parts of the world?

by Gary Petty

There’s the occasional prank that goes awry, or a sadist who puts razor blades in trick-or-treat candy, but for the most part the American celebration of Halloween seems like fun for everyone. Customs surrounding the holiday range from neighborhood haunted houses to employees at department stores and fast-food restaurants dressing up as witches, monsters and cartoon characters to bobbing for apples and masquerade parties. Variations of these celebrations are observed in Britain, France, Germany and many other nations.

However, some Christians express uneasiness with Halloween’s emphasis on witchcraft and demons. Should they? Is there something sinister about accepting, even celebrating, the dark side of horror?

Halloween derives its name from the Catholic celebration of All Hallows’ or All Saints’ Day on Nov. 1. The evening before, Oct. 31, was viewed as merely the “eve” of the same day. But Halloween’s origins are more ancient than those of All Saints’ Day.

## Ancient origins

Centuries before Jesus, the Celtic peoples of Western Europe celebrated Nov. 1 as the feast of Tamas, the Celtic new year and a sacred day in honor of the sun god, while they observed the previous evening as the festival of Samhain, the lord of the dead.

The ancient Celts believed that at death the souls of sinners were trapped in the bodies of animals. It was on this day that

Samhain judged the dead and could be persuaded to free some departed souls from their animal prisons.

In *Halloween: An American Holiday, An American History*, author Lesley Bannatyne gives this background:

“The festival of Samhain was the most sacred of all Celtic festivals. Its rituals helped link people with their ancestors and the past. The Celts believed that the dead rose on the eve of Samhain and that ancestral ghosts and demons were set free to roam the earth, harm-

ing of shorter winter days and frightening Druid ceremonies. To appease the sun god Bel (identical with the Canaanite Baal of the Bible), sacrifices, especially of horses and sometimes human beings, were offered in the Celtic festival of Tamas. During the evening before the Samhain festival, people would build bonfires in an attempt to help fuel the weakening sun and ward off evil spirits.

According to a historical investigation into the origins of popular holidays: “Most



The Romans outlawed the human sacrifices, but they brought with them the harvest festival of the goddess Pomona. The Romans and Celts mingled customs so that over time the dark veneration of the dead now included a more genial harvest theme.

crops and trouble homes. Since spirits were believed to hold the secrets of the afterlife and the future, the priests of the Celts, the Druids, believed that on the eve of Samhain predictions had more power and omens could be read with more clarity” (1998, p. 2).

People dressed up as ghastly ghouls and demons so that wandering spirits would avoid them and refrain from subjecting them to ghostly pranks. Food and drink were placed on doorsteps to placate spirits of lost loved ones.

Nov. 1 was also associated with the com-

of the activities of the Celtic feast, many of which have survived in modified form to this day, can be traced to the fact that it was a New Year’s festival. One important example was the fire rite, which occurred in many areas around the world on the night before the New Year. The old fires were allowed to go out and a new fire was kindled—usually a sacred fire, from which the fires of the village were relit . . . The fires were thought to rejuvenate the sun and to aid in banishing evil spirits. Often the fires were lit on the

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- What Happens After Death?
- Future Shock
- Who Determines Right From Wrong?

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hilltops. In fairly recent times the Halloween hilltops fires of the Scots were called Samhnagan, showing the lingering influence of the old god, Samhain" (*Celebrations: The Complete Book of American Holidays*, 1972, pp. 258-259).

When the Romans conquered much of the Celtic lands, they outlawed the human sacrifice associated with Samhain, but they also brought with them the harvest festival of the goddess Pomona, which coincided with Nov. 1. The Romans and Celts mingled customs so that over time the dark veneration of the dead now included a more genial harvest theme.

### Masquerading as Christian

Early Christians, following the Hebrew Scriptures and the teachings of Jesus, despised such pagan customs, which they recognized as demonic worship. The apostle Paul, writing to Christians who had come out of paganism and the rituals of sacrificing to idols, reminded them in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21: "... The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." (Paul's mention of the "cup" and "Lord's table" is a reference to the Passover service of the early Church.)

As Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, many church leaders began to see acceptance of pagan customs as a means to fill their assemblies with new converts. On May 13, 610, Pope Boniface IV dedicated a pagan Roman temple to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and declared a new holiday to honor Christian martyrs, All Saints' Day. The prayers to a myriad of gods and goddesses, demons and nymphs would be replaced with prayers to dead Christian saints. The pagan custom of worshiping the dead did not cease. It was merely dressed in a new garb.

In the eighth century Pope Gregory III moved All Saints' Day to Nov. 1. Of the decision, Ms. Bannatyne writes, "That the date coincided with Samhain was no accident: the Church was still trying to absorb pagan celebrations taking place at this time . . ."

She continues: "Villagers were also encouraged to masquerade on this day, not to frighten unwelcome spirits, but to honor Christian saints. On All Saints' Day, churches throughout Europe and the British Isles displayed relics of their patron saints. Poor churches could not afford genuine relics and instead had processions in which parishioners dressed as saints, angels and

devils. This religious masquerade resembled the pagan custom of parading ghosts to the town limits. It served the new church by giving an acceptable Christian basis to the custom of dressing up on Halloween.

"In addition, the Church tried to convince the people that the great bonfires they lit in homage to the sun would instead keep the devil away . . ." (pp. 9, 11).



Eventually a second celebration, All Souls' Day, was instituted on Nov. 2. In time these two holidays merged into the present observance on Nov. 1, which was also called All Hallows' Day. The name of All Hallows' Even (Evening) for the night of Oct. 31 eventually evolved into the name Hallowe'en, or Halloween.

### Reveling in the dark side

Perhaps the dark side of Halloween is best summed up in a story told in *Halloween and Other Festivals of Death and Life*, a collection of essays edited by Jack Santino, about a "Safe Halloween" party held in the city hall of Hazelton, Pennsylvania. Writer Bill Ellis states: "The core of Halloween remains on some level unchanged: the seasons still slip from life to death. Hence this holiday, more than any other, will continue to generate legend about the fear of death. And if the new customs reveal an intense generational conflict over who should own this holiday, the last word will always belong to the child:

"Are you a clown?" a reporter asked one child at the Hazelton City Hall's 'Safe Halloween' party.

"A killer clown," the eight year old replied" (1994, pp. 39-40).

The Old Testament relates the story of how God chose the descendants of Abraham to be His special people. Given laws to govern society and worship, they became a confederation of 12 tribes. Over the centuries they eventually divided into two nations—the northern kingdom known as Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

In the eighth century B.C., the Bible tells us, God allowed the northern kingdom of Israel to be destroyed by the Assyrians. In 2 Kings 17:16-18 God explains why He withdrew His protection: "So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God,

made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them

Pope Boniface IV declared a new holiday to honor Christian martyrs, **All Saints' Day**. The prayers to a myriad of gods and goddesses, demons and nymphs would be replaced with prayers to dead Christian saints.

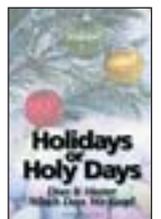
from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone."

The Creator refuses to be worshiped with idols or through mingling witchcraft and sorcery into true religion (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became flesh, was sacrificed for humanity's rebellion against God and was resurrected to eternal glory.

The New Testament book of Hebrews proclaims: "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood [that is, as human beings have lived human lives], He Himself [Jesus Christ] likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those *who through fear of death* were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15, emphasis added). Jesus came to free all who will worship God in truth from the slavery of demonic paganism, especially that associated with the fear of death.

Halloween has nothing in common with the true light God gives to human beings. Instead it has everything in common with the bondage of Satan, the fear of death and the darkness of evil. There is a better way—the truly biblical way of life—preached and practiced by Christ. Let's come out of the paganism and other errant ways of this world. **GN**

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# The Prince of Peace

One of Jesus Christ's titles is Prince of Peace. What does this title mean for the future of the world—and for you?

by Robert Dick

Jesus Christ will return to earth just as He promised. He will return not as the humble Son of Man, laying down His life in sacrifice for sin, but as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the *Prince of Peace*.

What is peace? Many of us have seen the bumper stickers pleading for world peace (and the occasional humorous ones asking what are “Whirled Peas”), but do we have a clue what true world peace looks like? The Bible describes what Christ will deliver to mankind as Prince of Peace and the unimaginable changes He will bring about in the world as we know it.

## Christ's coming kingdom

To understand the power behind Christ's title Prince of Peace, we must look into the prophecies of His two comings—first and second. Both are mentioned in the same prophecy of Isaiah: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given [that is, in His first coming]; and [in His second coming] the government will be upon His shoulder.

## Christ will bring peace to this strife-torn world, and under His wise rule the entire planet will come to understand peace in its fullest sense.

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, *Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6, emphasis added throughout).

Jesus was born in Bethlehem and by His early 30s had fulfilled the human part of His mission of becoming a sacrifice for mankind's sins through crucifixion. Just before His death, when He was brought before the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, Pilate asked pointedly if He were a king. Christ answered: “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37).

But Christ had just made plain the fact that “My kingdom is not of this world,” meaning not of this age (verse 36). Jesus wanted Pilate to know that, yes, He was a king, but His Kingdom would be established at a *later* time. At that future time, Christ

will return as Prince of Peace with all that His title encompasses.

## All-encompassing promise

Scripture promises that the peace Christ brings will in time cover the earth, beginning in Jerusalem and spreading to the farthest reaches of the globe. Isaiah wrote concerning Christ and His servants, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace . . .” (Isaiah 52:7). Christ first *announces* His intent. He will then *fulfill His promise*.

Zechariah prophesied: “He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth’” (Zechariah 9:10). Jesus will proclaim peace to every nation—but with the ability to *deliver* it, not just *speak of* it.

Isaiah describes Christ's rule this way: “Of the increase of His government *and peace* there will be no end . . .” (Isaiah 9:7). Can you imagine what that means? Christ will bring peace to this strife-torn world,

and under His wise rule the entire planet will come to understand peace in its fullest sense. Peace will increase *continuously* throughout His reign, ever growing as people learn to live God's way of life.

## Spears into pruning hooks

We live in a world that is generally satisfied to have even a mere semblance of peace. For the last 50 years we have lived in *relative* peace—at least in the sense that there have been no *world* wars.

But peace in the full sense of the word is foreign to us. The Bible suggests that mankind doesn't know how to find peace (Isaiah 59:7-8; Romans 3:17). The record of history validates this indictment.

In the last century alone we have fought two world wars and, since the Japanese surrender was signed on the U.S.S. *Missouri* to end World War II, countless smaller wars. Terrorism is a constant threat. Wars between

neighboring peoples lasting decades are a fact of life, with strife between Arabs and Jews, Indians and Pakistanis, and Irish Catholics and Protestants serving as testimony.

In stark contrast to the reality of our world, a statue stands outside the United Nations headquarters in New York City symbolizing man's dream of one day witnessing the end of war. The muscular bronze image holds his hammer aloft, forging a sword into a plow. For mankind this has been an unattainable dream. But for Christ, the Prince of Peace, it is a sure promise.

Ironically, the statue is nothing more than a sculptor's rendering of a prophecy describing what Christ will do when He returns: “He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation . . .” (Isaiah 2:4).

Christ will arbitrate between nations with an authority that the League of Nations, the United Nations and the World Court have never had. His position as King of Kings (Revelation 17:14; 19:16) will give Him the ability to institute peace where all human governments have failed.

## Neither shall they learn war anymore

Christ's first great achievement will be to bring an end to warfare as we know it. But that is just the beginning. Freedom from aggression takes more than a onetime destruction of military implements. Concluding the verse just quoted, Isaiah further prophesied, “. . . Neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Think of it. With the coming of Christ *all vestiges* of war will be removed—military colleges, training camps, military bases, weapons-manufacturing plants, stockpiles of munitions, and the list goes on. Men will not only stop warring, they will cease to be *trained* in the art of war.

The cessation of war and training for war will obviously be a giant step toward peace, a bigger step than man has ever been able to make on his own. But this too is only the beginning.

## Peace at home and abroad

If all wars ended today and all armies disbanded, would *you* have peace—*personally*? For most of us the answer would be no. When it comes to personal peace, most of us live in a numbed state. If it isn't intolerable it's okay. But that isn't peace.

I have fond memories of childhood—when I could leave my grandfather's farm for town without locking the house, garage or farm sheds. Since then I have traveled to parts of

the world of great scenic beauty—but where the citizens live in veritable prisons. In many countries people live behind barred windows, behind doors with multiple locks, in guarded compounds with watchdogs—but still are not assured of physical safety.

Most major cities have districts that are not safe after dark—and, in many of them, areas that are not safe even in daylight. What good is freedom from outside aggression when we live in fear within our own neighborhoods?

Through the prophet Zechariah, God speaks of cities during the time of Christ's Kingdom this way: "... The city [Jerusalem] shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets" (Zechariah 8:5). The intent of these words is to show the secure state of the area. It will be safe for children in a way that it isn't in many cities today. And Jerusalem will not be unusual in that regard.

Isaiah 32:18 expands the promise of prevailing peace: "My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." What a peaceful feeling it must be to fear no harm or loss from foreigner or neighbor!

#### But peace is more than this

"Peace" to the reader of Hebrew in the Old Testament or of Greek in the New Testament meant far more than freedom from aggression from without and crime from within one's country.

*Shalom*, the well-known Hebrew word for peace, is understood even by those who don't speak Hebrew as encompassing everything that contributes to complete contentment and tranquillity. Commentator William Barclay wrote regarding the Greek word for peace: "... In the New Testament sense 'peace' is not just the absence of trouble; it is everything that makes for our highest good" (*New Testament Words*, 1974, p. 148, emphasis added).

In a biblical sense peace means all that true peace could deliver to a human being—freedom from war, safety at home, sufficient prosperity to remove fear of want, and good health. Comparatively speaking, how much peace do you enjoy?

Are you at peace when you find yourself deeply in debt? How peaceful is life when you are unemployed? Do you see peace, or despair, in the faces of people who suffer from starvation? Have you ever considered that disease—"dis-ease"—literally means the absence of ease, of peace?

If you understand the Kingdom of God and the conditions directly and implicitly promised, you can understand that peace reaches far beyond the absence of harm inflicted by another human being.

A multitude of scriptures paint a picture of what life will be like when Christ returns, establishes His Kingdom and rules as Prince of Peace. A look at just a few of them will allow us to see that His peace will spread into every corner of human life.

Notice God's words in Ezekiel: "I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods" (Ezekiel 34:25).

God will literally change the nature

## Are you at peace when you find yourself deeply in debt? How peaceful is life when you are unemployed?

of animals so they will not pose a danger to mankind.

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

"The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6-9).

How wonderful it will be when this amazing prophecy comes to pass!

#### Freedom from want

Continuing from Ezekiel's earlier description: "I will make them and the places all around My hill [Jerusalem] a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessings. Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase" (Ezekiel 34:26-27).

Throughout time, one of the greatest robbers of peace has been want—not enough food, clothing or shelter to live without worry. Christ will provide relief from the cycle of drought and flooding that has left many parts of the world destitute countless times in man's history.

God showed the prophet Amos a level of prosperity that farmers and vineyard owners have rarely if ever seen: "'Behold the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the trader of grapes him who sows seed . . .'" (Amos 9:13).

Although we don't have space to delve into all that Christ will do in the realm of economics, suffice it to say He will provide

for individual ownership of property and the blessing of the work of a property owner's hands if the owner will provide the labor and effort (see Micah 4:4).

#### The greatest peace

Possibly the greatest peace of all will come from the instruction of Christ in how to live a righteous life. As the old saying goes: "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach a man to fish and he will eat for life."

Christ will teach the nations how to live

at peace and how to perpetuate peace. The model society He will establish in Jerusalem at His return will be so inspiring that representatives from around the world will come for instruction in how to enjoy the benefits of a godly life.

"Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:2).

Psalm 72:7 reveals the final outcome of Christ's teachings in the Kingdom of God: "In His days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more." Literally, peace will prevail until the moon no longer shines. What a fantastic picture!

Christ will one day soon return to earth. "And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end . . ."

What a profound message in the simple but infinitely meaningful title *Prince of Peace*. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

Does Jesus Christ fulfill other crucial roles in God's plan? If so, what are they? To learn more, be sure to request your free copy of *Who Is God?* To learn more about how Jesus will establish world peace and how His peace will transform the planet in the world tomorrow, be sure to read *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Both booklets are yours free for the asking.



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# God's Global Village: A Glimpse of a Better Tomorrow

“Global village” has become a popular term in recent years for our increasingly interconnected world. Unknown to most, God has plans for His own global village on earth. Join us for a quick preview!

by John Miller

It's been said that the world is changing so fast that even the future isn't what it used to be. Predicting the future with any degree of certainty has always been problematic, but the technological and social transformation we see around us makes the future even more unpredictable. Change happens so fast that the present is ever converging with the future in an overwhelming flood of images and sound bites.

Technological advancements race forward with ever-increasing speed, forcing change at every level of the socio-economic structure. Geographic and national boundaries fade and lose meaning. Communication has become a multifaceted digital array of blurps, bytes and images that can be simultaneously received by an almost limitless number of people anywhere in the world.

The middle class has a wealth of economic resources at its disposal through the reduction of real cost and easy access to credit. Consider air travel, for example. Technological advances and fierce competition have made air travel affordable for the masses (at least in the Western world). Exotic attractions in distant places are within reach.

## The world as a village

The accelerated speed at which people move and communicate with ever-decreasing cost has affected every aspect of our world—politically, socially, economically. It's a phenomenon commonly known as *globalization*—or, to quote thousands of sound bites, our world has become a global village.

Amazingly, this state of affairs was foretold millennia ago in the Bible. Notice these words recorded by the prophet Daniel: “But you, Daniel, shut up the words [of the amazing prophecies revealed to him], and seal the book until the time of the end; *many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase*” (Daniel 12:4).

These remarkable words ring ever truer with the passing of time. Few in any previous generation could have imagined the extent to which knowledge and our ability to travel to and fro would increase. This

prophecy is about our time, an era described in context as the time of the end.

End-time prophecies are often viewed with trepidation because they tell of cataclysmic events. But must that be so in this case? Are the words recorded in Scripture by Daniel inherently negative? What's wrong with the ability to travel or trade across international boundaries? What's wrong with knowledge increasing? Does not the same cherished source implore us in Proverbs 4:5 to “get wisdom!” and “get understanding!”?

Daniel's prophecy not only states what *will* be at the time of the end. It also evokes images of what *could have been*.

Let's consider for a moment the possibilities our new ability to travel to and fro offers our global village. Shouldn't the increased mobility of the masses foster cross-cultural understanding and an appreciation for the diversity in our village? Couldn't the same vehicles that transport people to faraway places be used to share the abundance of food from the affluent segment of our village with the impoverished side of town?

## What's wrong with our village?

With so many possibilities at our disposal, why do we find ourselves in a world beset with division, conflict and destructive behavior?

We see a complex problem, but it has a simple reason for it: The village *dynamics* have not changed. Simply put, we still *behave* the way we have always behaved. It's just that the neighborhood has gotten bigger—and, sadly, so have the problems.

We compete with our neighbors to be the best on the block, and we spawn trade and environmental disputes in the process. We alternatively become numb to or increasingly appalled at the incessant brawls in what we might call the “Jerusalem bar.” We worry that rogue nations will turn into rioting neighborhood bullies. We spend billions on security forces to prevent enemies from entering our neighborhood and wrecking our homes. Still we sleep uncomfortably

because of the gnawing suspicion that even the best security system will not prevent some foe from slipping through a dark alley to spread terror.

These problems are compounded by the real or perceived inequities in our global village of villas, ghettos and slums. The Western democracies own the majority of the world's wealth. From the perspective of the people in the rest of the world, our part of the global village is dotted with villas in which people reside in ease and pleasure, imbibing of abundance that the poor folks of the worldwide village will never achieve. The poverty-stricken people in the underdeveloped world would consider even many of our small apartments to be lavish villas. No wonder they believe there are major inequities.

## What does the future hold?

What's next? Knowledge will continue to increase, and problems will keep multiplying. The elite in the villas will grow increasingly isolated, the cultural ghettos more entrenched and the squatters in the slums increasingly bitter. One final riot will sweep terror and destruction through the village, and everything will go up in smoke. This unprecedented time of terror is described in the Bible as the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21).

But there is a happy ending: *God will build a new, peaceful village out of the ashes!*

The prophet Daniel was also given this intriguing picture, this good news. In vision God showed him a statue built of progressively less-valuable material, including feet and toes composed of iron mixed with clay, depicting an unlikely union of 10 nations. The statue is toppled by a stone falling from heaven that grows into a great mountain. The meaning? “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

Did you grasp that? Jesus Christ will come down to earth to save it from its inhabitants. He will save the day by establishing a globe-girdling kingdom—a unified global village—bringing peace and prosperity for mankind.

Daniel pronounced, “The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure” (verse 45).

### A change in village dynamics

and they shall be My people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

Notice that this change of heart immediately brings a change in behavior, and this change in behavior transforms the dynamics of the village. The prophets Isaiah and Micah describe this transformation as a time when nations will seek instruction from God, when weapons of war used for killing people will be recycled into

failed, often with catastrophic results.

But, in God’s global village, true unity will be achieved. At long last the whole world will truly become “one nation under God.” The great God will regather “the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and . . . make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again” (Ezekiel 37:21-22).

At long last the descendants of ancient Israel, scattered now among many nations, will be reunited. Or, stated better, they will be truly united for the first time. Finally they will accomplish the purpose God intended for them in the first place.

When God delivered the Israelites from Egypt and gave them His laws, He instructed them to “be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?” (Deuteronomy 4:6-8).

God delivered the Israelites from slavery and gave them His law because He wanted them to be a model nation for *others* to emulate. How miserably they failed; how sad the testimony of history.

Instead of becoming a model nation, they became a stumbling block to others and a disgrace to the God who saved them. God gave them the pearl of great price. He showed them the best way. Had they followed His instructions, the results would have motivated their neighbors to emulate their way of life. Imagine such a neighborhood! Sadly, this didn’t happen, and our village has lacked a truly godly example to follow on a national scale.

But in God’s global village, yet future, things will be different. Notice how the reunited Israelites will behave in contrast to their ancient forebears: “They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 37:23).

Micah records the wonderful results. All people will say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the



The global village of tomorrow will differ in many ways from what we know today. Scripture reveals that God will not **rehabilitate our present system**. Instead He will establish an **entirely new and perfect world** based on universal principles and laws.

The global village of tomorrow will differ in many ways from what we know today. What will it be like? Scripture reveals that God will not rehabilitate our present system. Instead He will establish an *entirely new* and perfect world based on universal principles and laws that will be accepted and applied with a different perspective.

God starts right at the heart of the matter. He knows that without a fundamental change in human nature no meaningful change will take place. The Bible describes the human heart as “more deceitful than all else and . . . desperately sick” (Jeremiah 17:9, New American Standard Bible).

This must change—and change it will! God will not attempt to medicate away the symptoms; He will replace the old and wicked heart with a new one: “Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them;

agricultural tools to grow crops to feed them (Isaiah 2:3-4; Micah 4:2-3).

Zechariah speaks of a time when all the world’s nations will go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles each year (Zechariah 14:16-18). Christ told His apostles He would give them thrones from which to rule the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). The testimony of the prophets, Christ and the apostles is consistent. A new world is indeed coming, a global village of peace, justice and prosperity for all.

The ancient prophet Ezekiel gives us considerable insight into the administrative and governmental structure of this new society, as we will see.

### One village, one government

Over the centuries both idealists and despots have recognized the merits of a single world government with a universal system of laws. It’s a lofty goal with immeasurable potential for both good and evil. Yet all human attempts at reaching this goal have

God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths” (Micah 4:2). What a testimony to the power of God’s way in action! So impressive are the results of following God’s way that the Israelites’ neighbors will want to emulate their lives, their actions. For once, keeping up with the Joneses will bring desirable results. The reason is simple: The Joneses are going the right way, and they will be delighted to see others share in their blessings.

Of course, positive results do not just happen. Unity can be achieved only with leadership and singularity of purpose. Christ will lead the way with an administration of tried-and-true servants who are committed to Him (Revelation 20:4). Their motivation will not be political, but to *serve*, guide, instruct and correct for the benefit of all. Think of how much more can be accomplished when the energy that is usually expended in political maneuvering, debate and self-serving is redirected to planning, managing and building a better village for all.

God’s global village will move forward with Jesus at the helm. He is called in the Bible the “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16). God will resurrect David, the shepherd boy who slew Goliath and later became the faithful king of Israel, to serve as king and prince under Christ forever:

“David My servant shall be king over

them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever” (Ezekiel 37:24-25; see also Jeremiah 30:9).

Christ-centered, divine leadership will provide unity and stability in this globe-encompassing village, where peace and justice for all will be the norm.

### Equitable ownership for all

The great disparity between the villas of the wealthy and the slums of the impoverished, which now spawn tension and terror in our village, will finally be resolved. In God’s global village there will be fair and just ownership for all.

God explains through Ezekiel how the village will be zoned. The focus begins with the village center, where Jesus Himself will reside. Ezekiel is instructed to “set apart a district for the LORD, a holy section of the land,” that is 25,000 cubits [seven to ten miles depending on the cubit measurement used] long and 10,000 cubits [about three to four miles] wide (Ezekiel 45:1). Inside this district is where the sanctuary of the temple will be, and it will also be home to the priests

who minister to the Lord (Ezekiel 45:1-4).

Adjacent to the district of the Lord is an area the same size that will belong to the Levites who serve in the temple (Ezekiel 45:5). On the side opposite, also bordering on the Lord’s district, is what we might call the village commons. This area is ceded to the public, assuring that all the villagers have access to the Lord at all times (Ezekiel 45:6).

God will give the leaders their portion with emphasis on a notable change: “My princes shall no more oppress My people, but they shall give the rest of the land to the house of Israel, according to their tribes” (Ezekiel 45:7-8).

Contrary to the elite of today and the nobility of old, those of the “ruling class” in God’s global village will not be allowed to take from the commoner to enrich themselves or their families: “Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people’s inheritance by evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his property” (Ezekiel 46:18).

How different from the village of today, where the rich and powerful at times oppress the poor and impoverished to expand their interests and feed their personal fortunes.

The beauty of Ezekiel’s prophecy is that it is not just a treatise on religion. Rather, it is a textbook of applied social science for

## The Center of God’s New Global Village

**E**zekiel 37 foretells another central factor of God’s global village that stands in stark contrast to today: “Moreover,” God says through Ezekiel, “I will make a covenant of peace with them . . . I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forever” (Ezekiel 37:26). When God’s sanctuary is set up on earth, worship, ethics and law will be established at the village center.

God’s temple, in which Christ, the King of Kings, dwells, will stand in the center of God’s global village—in Jerusalem. This will provide a seat for a civilization philosophically centered on the universal principles and laws of Almighty God. Worship of the King at the village center will provide a rallying point from which peace and stability will naturally flow outward: “For out of Zion shall go forth the law,” proclaims the prophet Isaiah, “and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

Tangible change will be enforced, and a climate of peace will result: “He [Jesus Christ] shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).

Contrast this to the village centers of today, where entertainment and commerce appealing to the senses are the focal point. While churches, temples and cathedrals may yet stand at village centers today as architectural monuments to the values of bygone years, they are no longer edifices where the villagers congregate. Movie theaters, sports arenas and shopping malls have long since replaced them as the main gathering places for the populace.

That will change in God’s global village. When Christ returns to earth, His temple will be the village center. The prophet Ezekiel describes in meticulous detail the

size, shape and function of this edifice in chapters 40-43.

But the overarching attraction is that Christ in His glory will dwell in the temple for the express purpose of living among the villagers: “Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever’” (Ezekiel 43:6-7).

This scripture poignantly describes the perfect balance Christ will strike between serving as divine Ruler to be obeyed and worshiped and His dwelling among His people

to lead a true community of fellowship. Ezekiel 44 states that the princes or leaders among the people will eat “bread before the LORD,” and the priests will enter the sanctuary to serve at Christ’s table (Ezekiel 44:3, 16).

Contrary to the priests of old and many religious leaders today, they will teach the villagers “the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths” (verses 23-24).

The focus is on Christ, not sensual pleasures. Moral standards are clearly delineated and equitably applied. The judges are upright and above reproach. The laws are universal and no one is above them.

In short, it is a completely different village from the one we live in today, because the dynamics have changed. No one—neither bully nor beast—shall “hurt or destroy” in God’s global village. Why? Because His village “shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

the village of tomorrow. From the priest and the Levite, from the prince to the commoner, all will be given a fair inheritance in the land. Ezekiel describes with painstaking detail how the land will be divided until everyone will have a fair portion (Ezekiel 47:13-23; 48:1-29).

In the end everyone will “sit under his vine and under his fig tree,” a simple way of saying that each will have an unencumbered home to call his own. “And no one,” the prophet Micah continues, “shall make them afraid”! (Micah 4:4). What a beautiful picture of a village *that works*.

The Scriptures have much more to say about God’s global village. Suffice it to say here, it is the antithesis of our present-day global village. Instead of conflict, violence and terror, there will be peace, compassion and love. Instead of cultural and ethnic ghettos engendering racism and hatred for others, there will be appreciation for the talents and abilities of others, all within a culture based on God’s values and standards.

This beautiful picture will be made possible by real and tangible change in village dynamics. The villagers will be given new hearts, new leadership and a new set of standards to live by. The reason all these positive dynamics come about is succinctly stated in the last four words of Ezekiel’s description of the village: “THE LORD IS THERE” (Ezekiel 48:35).

### Where do you fit?

Perhaps you’re thinking: That’s great! The future looks bright, and God’s global village is the solution. But what about today? What about now?

That’s a good question and one that has an encouraging answer. God has already started preparations for the village of tomorrow. The apostle Peter writes of a select group of people—those God is working with now—whom Peter refers to as a “chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (1 Peter 2:9).

Peter’s language—words such as royal priesthood, holy nation, special people—echoes that of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel in describing God’s global village. It also reminds us of the phraseology of Moses in Exodus 19:3-6. But Peter is writing to a New Testament Church audience, “who once were not a people but are now the people of God” (verse 10). This aptly describes the Church of God, both in apostolic times and today—a small but select people, from all nations and cultures of this world, who have joined efforts to “proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (verse 9).

As such, those in the Church have become a “holy nation”—God’s global village in the making—from a group of unlikely candidates. Collectively, they have a global focus that transcends political and national boundaries as they boldly proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God to today’s global village. Individually, all the members recognize that their calling and citizenship is in heaven and focus on their role as ambassadors for Christ and His coming Kingdom.

### What is it all about?

For what purpose? Peter explains: “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles” (verses 11-12). God calls members of this select group with the expectation that they model today the behavior that will be universal in His global village tomorrow. This brings new meaning to the term “sojourners and pilgrims” on this earth. They live in the village but don’t run with the crowd.

Peter warns that this won’t be easy and will elicit negative reactions from the other villagers. They will “speak against you as evildoers” (verse 12). However, the “good works which they observe” will ultimately cause them to “glorify God in the day of visitation,” when He establishes His village throughout the earth (1 Peter 2:12).

It is an amazing but truly sensible plan. God is preparing individuals from all around the world today to learn His village plan now. Then, when the words of Isaiah and Micah come to actual fulfillment, many nations shall come and say: “Come let us go up to the ‘village of the Lord,’ to the house of the God of Jacob—He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His paths.” The people who go up will find others in God’s global village who understand why and for what they have come.

Are you prepared to answer God’s call to this awesome responsibility? **GN**

### Recommended Reading

Would you like to learn more about God’s global village, the transformed world that Jesus Christ will build at His return? How can you be a part of it? What will it be like? What will be the principles that guide and govern it? To discover the answers, be sure to request your copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, free from any of our offices.



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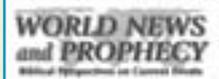
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# Isaiah

## *A Prophet for Then and Now*

by Jerold Aust

Isaiah was a prophet for the kingdom of Judah, ca. 740-700 B.C. Rabbinic tradition has it that Isaiah's father, Amoz (not the same as Amos the prophet), was a brother of King Amaziah. This would make Isaiah first cousin to King Uzziah and grandson to King Joash. If this is accurate, Isaiah would have been of royal blood, of the aristocratic class and possibly brought up in the palace. Some scholars believe that Isaiah had a close association with the temple because of his familiarity with priestly rites.

Isaiah is quoted in the New Testament more than any other prophet. He speaks of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, in a variety of ways—as *Branch, Stone, Light, Child* and *the King*. He foretells the destiny of Israel and the gentiles, focusing on Zion (Jerusalem) and the great King who will eventually reign from there.

So much has been written about Isaiah and his 66-chapter prophecy that it is hard to know where to begin. In its introduction to Isaiah, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (1986) states:

"The Prophecy of Isaiah is the third longest, complete literary entity in the Bible, being exceeded in length only by Jeremiah and Psalms . . . Isaiah is at once familiar and neglected. Chapters like 6, 35, 40 and 53 are among the best-known parts of the [Old Testament] . . .

"There are however vast stretches of the book, especially in chapters 13-34, that are virtually unknown to most Christians. Ignorance of any part of Scripture is to be deplored, but this is particularly so with a book that gives

such a manifold presentation of Christ. Moreover, a study of the book in its wholeness presents a view of him that is most majestic and moving, one in which the virtually unknown contexts of the well-known passages shed a flood of light on those passages themselves.

"The [New Testament] writers recognized Isaiah's special importance, quoting from and alluding to it frequently. Many of its verses and phrases have passed into common use in literature. For example, there are seventy quotations from Isaiah in the *Penguin Dictionary of Quotations* . . . ; and Handel used much of Isaiah's language in the *Messiah*."

Scholars tend to focus on Isaiah's preoccupation with God's messianic salvation of Israel. This is not to say that Isaiah glossed over the sins of his fellow countrymen. Isaiah consistently addressed the hedonism of Judah and the nation's lukewarm attitude toward the true God. This is why God allowed Assyria to invade and threaten Judah—to get her attention so she would turn back to her only protector and savior, Almighty God.

We are not given much of Isaiah's early life, but his prophecies tell us much about his character and service to God, his country and mankind. To better understand Isaiah, let's explore two major events: the way God spared Jerusalem from Sennacherib during the reign of King Hezekiah and Isaiah's encouraging testimonies about the coming Messiah, Jesus.

### **An Assyrian army threatens**

In 701 B.C., when Isaiah was an elderly man, the Assyrian military juggernaut was stopped before the walls of Jerusalem.

Sennacherib of Assyria had come into Judah, destroyed 46 walled cities and taken away 200,000 captives. Assyrian annals record how Sennacherib boasted of shutting up Hezekiah in Jerusalem "like a caged bird." However, those records curiously omit any mention of Sennacherib actually *capturing* Jerusalem, unlike the many other cities listed. The reason for this interesting omission is fascinating to consider.

King Sennacherib was not as powerful a king as his father, Sargon II, had been. "He inherited a vast empire from his father, with abundant opportunities for its further extension. He had, however, not inherited his father's boldness or daring, or his resources. All the powers of his mind were employed in holding together that which he had received. It is indeed doubtful whether he left his empire as strong as he had received it" ("Sennacherib," *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 1988, p. 1156).

Although he wasn't the warrior his usurper father had been, Sennacherib inherited the arrogance and ruthlessness of previous Assyrian kings. With this attitude he ravaged the Judean countryside, conquered Lachish, the last protectorate of Jerusalem on the road to Egypt, and approached the city of Jerusalem to lay her waste. At once Isaiah's record shows the remarkable dialogue of that critical time and his humble and bold attitude toward God in the process.

Isaiah 36-37 address the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem (also recorded in 2 Kings 18-19 and 2 Chronicles 32). Although King Hezekiah was one of the great kings of Judah, there is no question that God used Isaiah to help Hezekiah and Judah. This great prophet of God certainly well

represents what it means to demonstrate faith in action.

### Jerusalem on the brink

In 701 B.C. Sennacherib surrounded Jerusalem and sent three officers to demand the city's surrender. The field commander spoke arrogantly:

"Tell Hezekiah, 'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours? You say you have strategy and military strength—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me? Look now, you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. And if you say to me, 'We are depending on the LORD our God'—isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before this altar'?"

"Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses—if you can put riders on them! How then can you repulse one officer of the least of my master's officials, even though you are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this land without the LORD? The LORD himself told me to march against this country and destroy it!" (Isaiah 36:4-10, New International Version).

### Hezekiah seeks help

The field commander's insolent words were designed to instill fear among Jerusalem's inhabitants. But they were not budging. They would wait on their king, who had given them strict instructions not to reply to the Assyrian's threats. When Hezekiah's representatives heard those threats, they went directly to him.

"When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD. He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. They told him, 'This is what Hezekiah says: This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them. It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard. Therefore pray for the remnant that still survives'" (Isaiah 37:1-4, NIV).



*That night God sent an angel to kill 185,000 in the Assyrian camp. When the survivors awoke, they were shocked to find so many of their fellow soldiers dead.*

To his credit, King Hezekiah immediately humbled himself and turned to God for help in this time of trouble, a lesson for us. He then sought Isaiah's help.

After Isaiah heard Hezekiah's words, his response was quick and sure: "Tell your master, 'This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard—those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Listen! I am going to put a spirit in him so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword'" (verses 6-7, NIV). This is faith in action; Isaiah made bold pronouncements based on his faith in God's reply to him.

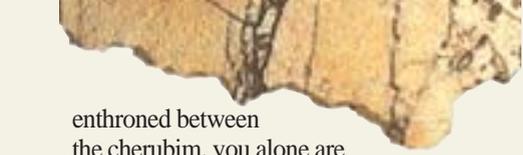
Meanwhile, the Assyrian commander heard that King Sennacherib, having subdued Lachish, was warring against Libnah. Assuming that the king of Ethiopia (apparently the Egyptian Pharaoh Tirhakah, who was from Ethiopia) was advancing to make war on him, Sennacherib saw the need

to immediately destroy Jerusalem and Hezekiah before confronting another foe.

Sennacherib continued his brazen arrogance, sending messengers to tell Hezekiah: "Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says, 'Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria.' Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my forefathers deliver them—the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph and the people of Eden who were in Tel Assar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, or of Hena or Ivvah?" (Isaiah 37:10-13, NIV).

The list of kingdoms vanquished by the Assyrians was indeed long and discouraging. When Hezekiah received Sennacherib's letter, he went to the temple of God and spread the arrogant missive before God and prayed these words:

"O LORD Almighty, God of Israel,



enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God. It is true, O LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God” (verses 16-20, NIV).

### God responds through Isaiah

Shortly thereafter, Isaiah received God’s answer to Jerusalem and Hezekiah’s terrible plight and had it delivered to Hezekiah:

“This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word the LORD has spoken against him: ‘The Virgin Daughter of Zion despises and mocks you. The Daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee. Who is it you have insulted and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel!

“By your messengers you have heaped insults on the Lord. And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, the choicest of its pines. I have reached its remotest heights, the finest of its forests. I have dug wells in foreign lands and drunk the water there. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt.’”

“Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone. Their people, drained of power, are dismayed and put to shame. They are like plants in the field, like tender green shoots, like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up. But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me. Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came” (Isaiah 37:21-29, NIV).

God meant business. No king, no matter how powerful, could successfully challenge the absolute supremacy of his Creator.

Promising that Jerusalem and its inhabitants would survive, God

continued His decree against arrogant Sennacherib: “Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: ‘He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city’” (Isaiah 37:33-34, NIV).

### God’s dramatic intervention

It’s hard to imagine that anyone could have grasped what God had in mind next. That night He sent an angel to kill 185,000 in the Assyrian camp. When the survivors awoke in the morning, they were shocked to find so many of their fellow soldiers dead. Sennacherib was so stunned that he instantly gave orders to break camp and head back to Assyria on the very road he had traveled to waste Jerusalem. Jerusalem was spared. The Assyrian army had been crushed without a single arrow fired. Yes, he had surrounded Hezekiah “like a caged bird,” but his contempt for God and His servants proved his undoing.

Although historical records show that Sennacherib ruled Assyria for another 20 years, he never returned to Jerusalem. In the end his own sons assassinated him as he worshiped in his pagan temple. “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh. Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place” (Isaiah 37:37-38).

### Isaiah’s story: God will be glorified in Israel

The story of Isaiah goes beyond his personal example in difficult times. It is also a story of the future, the story of God’s mercy on a restored Israel and Judah in a transformed world.

In chapters 2-4 Isaiah offers a glimpse of the coming age. He contrasts that glorious time with God’s judgment on the wicked. A futuristic Isaiah was boldly optimistic; his optimism grew from God’s guarantee that mankind was destined to enjoy a glorious future.

Isaiah 9 shows the sublime vision of the virgin birth of the King of Kings, who would redeem humanity and save Israel. Ironically, Isaiah gave this prophecy at the time of Israel’s being taken into captivity by Assyria.

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Again, Isaiah’s inspiration focused on the end result of God’s salvation: In the end, God’s chosen people win.

Isaiah speaks of the Messiah’s reign in chapter 32 and of a transformed world in chapter 35. Zion’s redemption and restoration are treated triumphantly in chapters 51-52. These themes are explored in greater detail in other articles in this issue of *The Good News*.

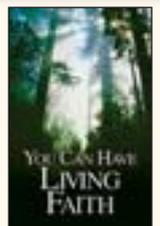
Isaiah’s description in chapter 53 of Christ Jesus as God’s servant, a man of sorrows, is perhaps one of the best-loved chapters in the Bible. The vivid detail shows the Savior suffering for us. From the language used, one might picture Isaiah standing at Jesus’ feet as He died. Isaiah treats Jesus’ death as if it had already happened, though some seven centuries would pass before the Savior’s death at Calvary.

Fittingly, the futuristic Isaiah closes his book by mentioning the glory of a new heavens and new earth in chapters 65-66. Jesus Christ, as the Revelator of Revelation, reemphasizes the ultimate new heavens and new earth in Revelation 21-22. “The Bible reaches its final climax in a magnificent vision of the new heavens and the new earth, which is an expansion of Isaiah 66. Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them” (*Halley’s Bible Handbook*, 2000, p. 390-391; compare Revelation 21:3).

Isaiah was a hopeful, faithful and loving prophet of God. Much of his message is as relevant as it was in the late eighth century B.C. Isaiah remains a prophet for our time, too. If we will heed his admonitions, repent of our ungodly ways and turn to God, then the promises he recorded for the entire world in the future can be yours and mine today. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

What is faith? How can you build a loving, trusting personal relationship with God like the faithful men and women recorded in the Bible? To learn how you can develop such a relationship with your Creator, be sure to request your free copy of the booklet *You Can Have Living Faith*.



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# Fight for Survival

Continued from page 17

this chapter reflects a long time gap. Suddenly in verse 40 we read: "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 . . ."

A power to the south of Jerusalem is prophesied to attack ("push at," KJV) a power to the north of Jerusalem. Remember that directions are relative. The king of the south in ancient times was Egypt under the Ptolemaic dynasty; the king of the north was Syria under the Seleucids. These two powers often fought over Jerusalem and its environs, as did the later Roman Empire. Their repeated invasions followed the Middle East's ancient invasion routes from the south and the north.

Could the modern king of the south be associated with resurgent Islam? For two centuries the Western colonial powers dominated the Middle East. Since World War II the West has been progressively pushed out of the area as first Arab nationalism and then Islamic fundamentalism took over. The biggest single turning point was the rebirth of the Jewish homeland in May 1948. Immediately five Arab armies surrounded Israel and tried to crush the half million Jews who were the controlling occupants of the new nation. They failed. But their failure has not stopped attempts to destroy the Jewish state.

The humiliation of the Arab armies led to revolutions in some Arab nations. In 1952 King Farouk of Egypt was overthrown. Six years later the king of Iraq and most of his family were murdered in a bloody military coup that led in time to Saddam Hussein's coming to power. Many attempts were made on the life of the late King Hussein of Jordan.

The British were pushed out of Aden and withdrew from the Gulf states; the French lost Algeria. King Idris of Libya was overthrown in 1969 by the fanatical nationalist Muammar Gadhafi. Ten years later Islamic fundamentalism overthrew the non-Arab shah of Iran. One after the other, pro-Western governments were replaced by more-radical regimes, either Arab nationalist or Islamic fundamentalist.

Now we see the two coming together. Though Saddam Hussein is an Arab nationalist, he was never seen as a religious man—until now. Since Sept. 11 he has been increasingly portrayed at prayer on Iraqi television and billboards and is lavishly spending millions of dollars to build the biggest mosque in the world. He offers total

support to the Palestinians in their struggle with Israel, as does Osama bin Laden.

The distinction between nationalists and fundamentalists is increasingly blurred.

At the same time, cooperation between al-Qaeda leaders and the leaders of the Islamic nations is on the rise as peoples throughout the Islamic world are increasingly incensed at what is seen as Israeli aggression (with U.S. support) against the Palestinians.

Why now? Satellite television is a major reason. Until four years ago there was no Arabic-language satellite TV station. Now there is. Now Muslims across the region can see Palestinians suffering 18 hours a day broadcast from Abu Dhabi. Naturally, there is no film of Israelis suffering from suicide bombings and other attacks.

American newscaster Ted Koppel,

**The West is still asleep to the crisis that is building daily. Almost all the wars that dominate our news have a commonality that can be summed up in one word: Islam.**

monitoring the al-Jazeera television network shortly after the September terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, was shocked at how anti-American all callers into a four-hour phone-in program were. Graphically illustrated was a simple logic: "Israel is trying to kill the Palestinians. Israel must die. America supports Israel. America must die."

Whether he is dead or alive, Osama bin Laden's perceived victories against the Soviets in Afghanistan in 1989 and against the United States in September 2001 have inspired Muslims across the world to push against the West.

This attitude had been building for some time. J.T. Caruso, assistant director of the FBI's counterterrorism division, told a congressional committee on Dec. 18 that "al-Qaida had supported 'Islamic fighters' in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Chechnya and the Philippines" (Neil Clark, "Colonial Wars," *The Spectator* (UK), April 13, p. 24). And, yes, your memory is working correctly—the United States was on the same side as al-Qaeda, helping it, in fact, in the first three of those five conflicts.

The future appears troubling. Islamic fundamentalism is obviously on the rise. Ironically, if the United States removes Saddam from power, the most likely eventual replacement for his regime will be an Islamic-fundamentalist government—though that could perhaps be forestalled for a while.

The same is true across the Islamic world. Pakistan is particularly vulnerable in this area. Islamic, or *sharia*, law is already

in force in the country, as it also is in distant northern Nigeria, where Christian meeting places have been burned to the ground with worshipers inside them. The Sudanese civil war continues with the ruling northern Muslims persecuting southern Christians and even taking them as slaves. Indonesia, too, has seen Muslims attack Christians.

## Perception lags behind reality

Connecting the dots, we see that Islamic forces across the globe are increasingly cooperating, working together to defeat their common enemy, the West. Those jubilant crowds on the streets of the Islamic world within minutes of the successful terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 were not atypical. What we see here is the beginning of another *world war*, in the sense that the conflict

is international, with outbreaks of violence occurring on four continents.

Meanwhile, the West has scarcely moved on since that Iranian ambassador's dinner with Mrs. Thatcher in 1978. Western governments still maintain that the threat is not Islam in general but a few militants in particular. Immigration policies remain largely unchanged, allowing the internal threat to worsen with every arriving plane. Hollywood still churns out entertainment garbage that only feeds the universal hatred of Western values. Little if anything is done anywhere to reduce dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

George Orwell, author of the classic works *1984* and *Animal Farm*, is acknowledged as one of the great writers of the 20th century. Orwell involved himself in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) on the side of the leftist republicans against the fascists aided by Nazi Germany and Italy's Mussolini. Vainly trying to warn the dominant Western power of the time, Great Britain, Orwell wrote an essay called "While England Sleeps," warning of the impending threat from fascism. Meanwhile, Britain's prime minister was negotiating with Hitler and promising "peace in our time."

The West is still asleep to the crisis that is building daily. Today almost all the wars that dominate our nightly news have a certain commonality that can be summed up in one word: Islam. Events are moving inexorably closer to the emergence of a final king of the south.

We may be seeing the prophesied biblical scenario coming to pass before our eyes. **GN**



# Letters From Our Readers

## Marriage and sex

I hate to burst your bubble, but I read your last issue about marriage and decided to inform you how it is in the real world. Men these days do not want a traditional marriage relationship. Ninety-nine percent of young men state they would not tolerate “a lazy woman who stays at home and does not earn her keep by having a job outside the home.”

My husband works on a job, and 99 percent of all the young men under 35 or so feel this way. In fact, many men who work with my husband have advised him to divorce me on these grounds alone. Space limits me from all the derogatory comments my husband’s coworkers have hurled at me because I choose to be a homemaker—and these guys do not even know me personally.

*S.G., Lexington, Alabama*

I agree with you that unwanted sex is a waste of time. I tried marriages, but they failed. The sex was good, but it couldn’t hold the marriages together. I didn’t have a man to support me long-term financially. The only reason I stay in a business relationship is I am tired of being disappointed with men using me for sex and dumping me afterwards. I agree with your teaching young people the truth, but it’s hard to find a lifelong mate on the first try. Now we are really finding out what is happening in our country, and it isn’t pretty.

*S.M., Fort Wayne, Indiana*

The latest *Good News* is a marvelous, inspired creation! But there is one comment I would like to make. I was divorced from the man who introduced me to God’s truth in 1995. Every time I read of the devastating impact of divorce on children, part of me cries out that the impact of living with an uncaring, impersonal, negative and critical father can be far more damaging than living apart from him as a single parent dedicated to providing a positive, interactive relationship with the children.

God hates divorce, but don’t you think part of that is that He hates the personal sins that are so destructive to the family? The reality for myself and many others is that divorce was the recognition that the increasing damage the marriage relationship was causing demanded action that could enable some healing for myself and my children. Divorce is wrong, but often the

destruction prior to the divorce is far worse.

*S.A., Adena, Ohio*

*Such responses to our articles about marriage and sex show how difficult matters can become when a society largely jettisons God’s way of life. Sadly, sometimes even when sincere people commit to practicing the biblical principles a loving God has put in place for a happy marriage, our often uncaring and brutal society produces marriage partners who knowingly or unknowingly undermine the happiness that should come to those who follow God’s instructions.*

## “Should You Believe All the News You Hear?”

This is in response to your article “Should You Believe All the News You Hear?” in the May-June issue. Thank you for your brave article. For me, “thought police,” “media bias” and “filthy movies” sound like something that the free world has long battled, communism. I never believed that it died when the Berlin Wall came down. It just mutated into a new sophisticated, sugar-coated form, and the authors are the same: leftist intellectuals. Now it’s called “diversity,” “political correctness,” “tolerance” and “freedom of art and sex”—and all the while it is dividing and conquering us.

*Dr. R.W.D., Medford, Oregon*

## “You Are Gods”

Your article “You Are Gods” [July-August 2002] stands out as being the clearest explanation yet for the thrilling truth of the human race. The scriptures you quoted are familiar to me, but the way you put them together etched it in my mind as even deeper proof. Thanks for being used by God! I thought you ought to know what an outstanding job of writing up that subject you did, and on only two pages.

*S.M., Internet*

I have been receiving your *Good News* magazine and would like to stop receiving it. I was very disappointed in your article “You Are Gods.”

*M.C.R., Beloit, Ohio*

*It’s human to make snap decisions when faced with new information. We have all done it at times. But we urge you to follow the*

*example of the Bereans, who in Acts 17:11 are commended because they “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” If there is an article with which you or any of our readers profoundly disagree, why not obtain more information before choosing to stop the subscription? Much more scriptural information supporting the points made in the article is available in our comprehensive booklet Who Is God?, mentioned in the following letter.*

I just finished reading your excellent booklet *Who Is God?* I found it inspirational and helpful. I find your publications help me understand some of the deeper things of the Word of God that are often overlooked. I’m thankful that a friend introduced me to your work, and I do enjoy reading *The Good News*.

*T.D., Spokane, Washington*

## Young and interested

Even though I’m 13 years old, I have read every piece of material that you’ve sent me. Without your work and staff I wouldn’t know all the information I do. The way I found out about your free program was in the grocery store looking at the order forms for other magazines, and I ran across yours.

*M.C., Spring Hope, North Carolina*

## A new coworker

My wife and I have found your magazine *The Good News* to be some of the most enlightening material available. I personally consider it a lifesaver. It brings the Bible to life. The reason I am writing is that we have decided to make your organization a part of our weekly tithe, and I would like you to send an address that would be the best one to send our donation to every week. Please keep up the good work.

*D.S., Minooka, Illinois*

*We appreciate your interest and commitment in helping us provide these free publications to others. In the United States, tax-deductible donations may be sent to the address below.*

*Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to The Good News, Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254, U.S.A., or E-mail [ginfo@ucg.org](mailto:ginfo@ucg.org) (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).*



# Questions & Answers

**Q: I found your article “Sex Before Marriage: What’s the Big Deal?” [July-August 2002] extremely disheartening. I think you portray sex very negatively. I completely understand that your religion does not believe that sex before marriage is what God intended. However, I think what God intended to give people is free choice. That powerful aspect of humanity is what gives people the right to choose what they believe is best for them.**

**Furthermore, I don’t like the way you twist the Bible around. It was written many years ago, and who are we to bring these ancient words into the 21st century? I think that people can get a lot out of the Bible, but it is not right to put your translation into it. I think that if your religion does not believe in sex before marriage you should learn to write about sexuality in a way that might not scare people. You write about it as though it were a disease that someone might catch. I think this is a horrible message. If you were not required to be celibate, would you have sex outside of marriage? I believe the answer would be yes, simply because you are human.**

**L.G., Internet**

A: You are quite right to state that humanity does indeed have freedom of choice and that individuals have the option “to choose what they believe is best for them.” God created men and women in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27), conferring on them the gift of choice. In one sense the whole Bible is the story of the choices humanity has made and how those choices have most often turned out badly.

The question is: On what information or knowledge should we base our choices? Should it be the opinions of our peers, the media, some popular author, or what?

We consider it our duty to unambiguously point out what God says in Scripture about the choices people make, the consequences of those choices and which options He mandates. God calls actions that violate His law “sin” (1 John 3:4). Ultimately, the transgression of God’s law (committing sin) results in the death penalty (Romans 6:23).

The Creator inspired King Solomon to write: “There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is *the way to death*” (Proverbs 14:12, NRSV; compare 16:25).

Elsewhere in the Bible the prophet Hosea laments that people in effect destroy themselves when they reject the revealed knowledge of God (Hosea 4:1-6).

Without God’s revealed spiritual knowledge, men, women, boys and girls cannot make informed choices. Our Creator says He doesn’t change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8) and that His law stands forever (Matthew 5:17-19). Breaking God’s laws brings with it *automatic* penalties. In the case of illicit sex, the penalties are not just the physical consequences of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies but the mental and psychological traumas that often materialize only when a relationship has ended. A factor as well is the huge societal problems such as broken homes, fatherless children, abortions, poverty and welfare that result from sin. These consequences were spelled out in the article to which you refer.

Many people fundamentally misunderstand the purpose of God’s laws. He does not withhold from us what is truly good for us (James 1:17); He simply doesn’t want us to suffer the consequences that result from breaking His timeless, living laws.

Notice that God’s purpose in giving the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:6-21) is “that *you may live* and that *it may be well with you*, and that *you may prolong your days . . .*” (verse 33). Our world is awash with human beings who have transgressed God’s law and suffer the inevitable, unwanted effects in their troubled lives (to better understand the consequences of sin, please request our free booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*).

Jesus Christ came to counter the disastrous effects of sin. He said: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). He came to “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21) and show us a right way of living.

This isn’t twisting Scripture or personal mistranslation. Why not check out all the passages on this subject in several Bible translations and see for yourself? As our free booklets *Is the Bible True?* and *How to Understand the Bible* explain, the Bible’s words are as much for the 21st century as any other. When it comes to matters of our physical and mental health and well-being, the Bible has proven to be literally *millennia ahead* of its time in medical advice shown to be soundly

based in science (look for more details in a soon-coming issue of *The Good News*).

In the *Good News* issue to which you refer, our intentions were to present sexuality—when handled in the way God intended—as the gift from God that it is. We titled the brief article on page 5 of that issue “Sex Is Intended for Pleasure.” After all, God devoted a whole book of the Bible, the Song of Solomon, to the subject. In the early chapters of Genesis, God pronounced everything He had created—including sex—“very good.” The only thing that He said was “not good” was Adam’s state of loneliness before Eve’s creation. As we noted a number of times, God commanded the first man and his wife to be fruitful and multiply—to have sexual relations.

But God has decreed that we reserve sexual intimacy for marriage. There is no legitimate reason or need for anyone to have sexual relations outside of marriage.

Ultimately what you choose to do is between you and God. What He requires of those of us behind *The Good News* is that we publish and explain the nature of His spiritual law and the results of keeping or rejecting it. What you do with that knowledge remains your free choice.

That said, we sincerely hope all our readers choose to study God’s Word to understand His will, begin to make right choices in all aspects of their lives and repent of any wrong choices they may have made.

God says: “Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7).

Sexual sins are no different from any others in the sense that God mercifully forgives those who genuinely repent and turn from them. Our Creator will restore joy and abundance to our lives as we begin to make right choices. God gives us the ultimate choice between life and death. But He doesn’t leave it at that. He tells us, “Choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

To begin on the right spiritual path of making sound biblical decisions, please request our free booklets *The Ten Commandments*, *Making Life Work* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

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



**F**or 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 the predictions could be fulfilled in our day?

Jesus Christ Himself talked of a future time so horrendous that no human beings

would be spared “unless those days were shortened” (Matthew 24:22). Did He have our time in mind?

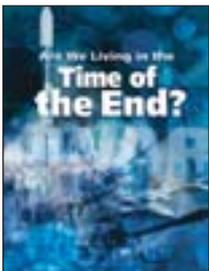
Many prophecies leave us in no doubt that

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*.

This eye-opening booklet examines exactly what Jesus Christ, His apostles and the prophets of old really said about the intriguing days they refer to as the time of the end.

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