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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

2011 AND BEYOND

Putting the Pieces Together



THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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ARTICLES

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■ **VALLEY CITY:** Hillside view of Huaraz, Peru.

PHOTO: THE REAL TRUTH

Peru and Mexico: Shared Heritage, Shared Challenges

While both countries have been defined by geography, political upheaval, even disasters—their ultimate futures are bright.

Page 8

FEATURES

Personal from David C. Pack 1
World News Desk 24

FRONT COVER: Protests in Egypt's Tahrir Square, Japan's March 11 earthquake and tsunami, failed doomsday prophecies, the 10th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, and severe famine in Somalia were just a few newsworthy events in 2011.

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2011 and Beyond *Putting the Pieces Together*

The Real Truth looks back on the past year to better understand what lies ahead.

Page 4

The Human Mind—What None Can Discover!

Man's mind contains a dimension that cannot be understood through scientific methods.

Page 11

Iran's Nuclear Showdown

Time to find a peaceful solution for tensions between Iran and Israel seems to be running out. The past foreshadows a future answer to this conflict.

Page 12

Minute-to-minute Living

Many feel trapped in the stress-filled, nonstop rat race called the modern world. Is there more to life than just living in the "here and now"?

Page 16

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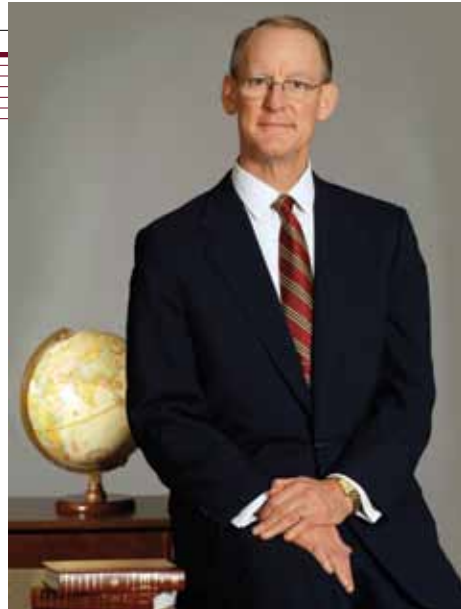
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



The True Gospel— Revealed!

IN A WORLD of nonstop crises, uncertainty, fear—and ever-worsening *bad news!*—people long for good news. I do have good news—in fact, the very best news you could ever hear! No one is telling you about it, nor could you discover it on your own.

The truth of the gospel—God’s astonishing *purpose* for man—has been withheld from the world. It explains *why* you were born. The *real* gospel involves INCREDIBLE knowledge that will leave you dumbfounded! This amazing understanding has been revealed—along with the cover-up to suppress it!

Billions are now deceived. Previous billions have been. Even you have been lied to. A complete seduction has taken place, and all the world’s religions have played a part in it. Knowledge of your *incredible future*—your AWESOME POTENTIAL—has been kept from you!

Many wonder and worry about the unknown—and what their future holds. Others fear they do not even *have* a future. Still others fear that *civilization* has no future. You need never again be in doubt about *your* future—or of mankind’s.

If only humanity knew what God has in store for it! Yet a deliberate suppression of the truth has withheld

this knowledge from all but a few. You can be an exception—one of the few who is *not* deceived!

Widespread Deception

The world has believed a *false* gospel for 2,000 years. It has generally supposed that Jesus Christ *is* the gospel rather than the Messenger *of* it. The message—the centerpiece—of the gospel is *not* Christ. By focusing on Him—the Messenger—religious deceivers have been able to successfully suppress and cover up the message He brought!

The vital knowledge of how man could have solved his problems and understood God’s Supreme Purpose has been withheld from the world, keeping it in darkness. Man does not know *what* he is or his *reason* for being. He does not know the way to abundance, peace, happiness and all the good things of life. The gospel would have shown mankind the solution to its most insoluble problems.

And yet, except for the apostle John, all the original apostles were *martyred* for teaching the truth of God’s incredible purpose. Jesus was *crucified* because people did not want to hear His message!

A correct understanding of the true gospel reveals crucial knowledge. It contains a dimension that cannot be discovered by scientific inquiry. Again, every supposed “great religion” of the world has helped suppress it. Their

theologians neither comprehend nor are willing to teach it.

Both Jesus Christ and the apostles preached the gospel! Jesus commanded in Mark 1:15, “Repent you, and believe the gospel.” But exactly what *is* it that we—YOU—are supposed to believe? Just what *is* the true gospel? Do you know? Are you certain? Be careful of assumptions. For instance, did Jesus teach the same gospel that Paul preached to the Gentiles? And what does the word “gospel” mean?

The vast majority of professing Christians do not know the vital—*all-important*—answers to these most basic questions, and many others related to the true gospel of the Bible!

Jesus, at His First Coming, came as a first-century *newscaster*, bringing advance *good news* of staggering events to occur just beyond the horizon, and all the *bad news* occurring throughout today’s world. This climactic news involves *you*—and eventually every human being on Earth.

Six new books on religion are published every day in America! And there are over 2,000 separate religions in America! Yet there has never been more confusion and disagreement about the answers to humanity’s problems! Troubles, woes, evils and human difficulties of every kind are multiplying. World peace is more elusive than ever. Why?

Why is there so much knowledge available to mankind, yet so much ignorance of the truth of the answers to life’s BIG questions?

All of this has everything to do with the gospel!

Revelation 12:9 reveals this: “Satan...deceives the whole world.” This is a staggering statement! Do you believe it? If this verse is true, then it would certainly apply to the truth of a matter so crucial as the meaning and correct understanding of the gospel message Jesus brought!

Many False Gospels

Almost everyone believes that the gospel is about the *Person* of Jesus Christ. Certainly, Christ plays an extremely important and central role to Christianity, but He is *not* the gospel. The Bible shows that Jesus is preached in conjunction *with* the gospel. Again, His role is enormous. But He is *not* the gospel.

Some proclaim a “gospel of salvation,” others a “gospel of grace.” Still others believe a “gospel of miracles” or a “social gospel.” Yet others think of the “gospel of foods” or of “healing” or of “faith” or of “tongues.” And there are some who merely think of “gospel music” when they hear this word. These manmade ideas all ignore the truth of the Bible!

Here is more of Mark’s account: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the *kingdom of God*” (1:14). *This* is the gospel Jesus preached. It was in this very same context that He said, “Repent you, and *believe the gospel*” (vs. 15). Which gospel?...of the “kingdom of God.”

Verse 1 in Mark 1 refers to this message, when it states, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” The gospel of Jesus Christ was about the KINGDOM OF GOD—not something else! One must believe *that* gospel—not a humanly devised counterfeit or substitute.

Strong Warning

This subject is so important that God inspired the apostle Paul to warn the Galatians then and us now: “I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel*: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. [Understand. The gospel—Christ’s message—can be perverted!] But though we, or an angel from heaven,

preach any other gospel unto you than that which WE have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, *let him be accursed*” (1:6-9).

This is a blunt statement—and a strong warning to all who will heed! Tragically, almost all have *not* heeded.

A little later, in chapter 2, verse 5, Paul stressed his hope that the “*truth* of the gospel might continue with you.” So there is one *true* gospel—with all others *false*! I did not say that! GOD did, through Jesus and Paul.

Although some assert that Paul taught a different or additional gospel, it is plain that he never did. Ironically, God used Paul to *warn against* ever allowing such false teaching by pronouncing a *curse* on any man or angel who violates this command. Remember, “But though we [apostles]...preach any other gospel...let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

What a powerful scripture—and WARNING!

Paul explained that the apostles were entrusted by God to preserve the true gospel. Notice I Thessalonians 2:4: “But as we [apostles] were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which tries our hearts.”

This is a responsibility not to be taken lightly. *True* ministers must always teach what *God* commands—not what pleases men (including Bible “scholars”). So any claim that Paul taught a different or second gospel (usually thought to be *about Christ* or some separate idea about “peace” or “grace”) is impossible. Had he done this, he would literally have been pronouncing a curse on himself!

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 21



David C. Pack

Look for special video
broadcasts filmed in Israel!

www.worldtocome.org





2011 AND BEYOND

Putting the Pieces Together

The Real Truth looks back on the past year to better understand what lies ahead.

THE YEAR 2011 ended the way it began: troubling. As December 2010 turned to January, the world wondered if it would be taken on a wilder ride than the previous year.

It did not have to wait long to find out.

Unrest in the Arab world continued, with the deaths of more than 200 Tunisians. Floods in drought-stricken Australia submerged the country, killing 35. A Moscow airport bombing took the lives of 37 people. And Brazil had its worst mudslides and flooding since 1967, with more than 800 reported dead.

In North America, a United States democratic congresswoman was the target of a grocery store shooting, which ended with six deaths. As a result, a firestorm of political punditry pitted the left against the right, splitting the country even more, and setting it up for what would become a milestone year for divisive political rhetoric.

Soon after, demonstrators toppled Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak, sparking protests in Yemen, Syria and Libya. Unrest also spread to Bahrain, and then to the United States, where hundreds of state employees camped in and around Wisconsin's capital building to protest benefit cuts. To block the measures, several senators fled the state.

March brought worse problems, with the largest earthquake in Japan's history producing the ninth-deadliest tsunami ever, and spawning a nuclear crisis.

April's headlines about Brazil's worst school shooting, over 300 deaths from United States tornadoes, and the end of a bloody Ivory Coast standoff, added to the year's sobering tone.

Then came May, and talk of a prophesied doomsday. Thousands were frightened, with some committing suicide to escape the scenario. The slated day came and went.

(Another date for the "end of the world" was set up for October, but it *also* failed.) This refocused attention on the Mayan calendar's supposed December 2012 end-of-the-world date.

From there, the year continued spiraling downward as unemployment, economic woes, wars overseas, terrorism and natural disasters took their toll. One after another, tragic news reports demonstrated that mankind could barely address one crisis before another screamed for its attention.

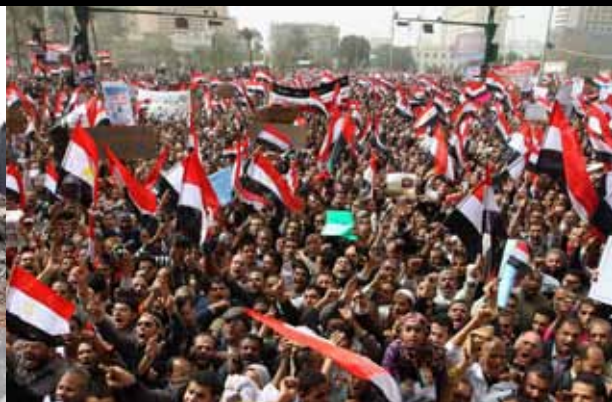
Meanwhile, science progressed with startling speed: the first human embryos were cloned, the aging process of mice was reversed, and biologists broke the code of HIV replication. In addition, astronomers unveiled a planetary system consisting of six planets 2,000 light-years from Earth.

But such advances seemed to make little difference. While scientists made headway on Parkinson's disease research, a mysterious kidney-failure illness in Central America killed thousands of manual laborers, and a deadly new strain of antibiotic-resistant bacteria was found.

The start of 2012 reinforced this. Swine and bird flu resurfaced, sparking panic among health officials about its potential spread, and scientists reported that the number of adults worldwide who suffer from chronic acid reflux disease skyrocketed.

Just as last year, it appears that while science can explore the vast universe, it is still unable to explain crises on this planet: terrorism still affects countries worldwide 10 years after the September 11 World Trade Center attacks (and the 2011 death of Osama bin Laden), Africa is still rocked by dis-

■ **YEAR IN REVIEW:** A White House visit by the Chinese president, Occupy protests in Oakland, California, and floods all occurred in 2011. PHOTOS: JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/ (LEFT); KIMIHIRO HOSHINO/AFP/ (MIDDLE); PATRICK HAMILTON/AFP/ (RIGHT) GETTY IMAGES



ease, global currency values are depreciating, Iraq continues to be in a fragile state since December's American pullout date, and the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran continues to threaten stability in the Middle East.

Such a paradox—with its discoveries, disagreements and disasters—is nothing short of puzzling.

Worst, Largest, Deadliest

Three words were at the forefront of 2011's weather reports: *worst*, *largest* and *deadliest*. Australia had the worst flooding in more than 100 years, incurring \$30 billion in damages. Christchurch, New Zealand's 6.3-magnitude earthquake was the city's worst in decades, killing 181. This was topped by Japan's 9.0-magnitude mega temblor—the largest in the nation's history and fourth largest in the world, which prompted a tsunami, leaving 16,000 people dead.

Likewise, the Philippines weathered its deadliest cyclone in three years, which killed more than 1,500 and drove 45,000 others from their homes. Turkey also suffered its worst earthquake in a decade—more than 600 died. Thailand had its worst flooding in half a century—two thirds of the country was underwater—causing over 500 deaths.

Mexico is also suffering its worst drought in more than six decades, as is Somalia. In a three-month period, extreme drought and related diseases claimed the lives of some 29,000 Somali children under age 5. The United Nations has referred to it as the “worst humanitarian disaster in the world.”

■ **COMPOUNDING TROUBLES:** Fears about the end of the world, earthquakes in New Zealand, Turkey and elsewhere, unrest in the Arab world and Europe, and American troops pulling out of Iraq were all distinguishing events of 2011.

PHOTOS: SPENCER PLATT/ (TOP LEFT); MARTIN HUNTER/ (TOP MIDDLE); KHALED DESOUKI/AFP/ (TOP RIGHT); DAN ISTITENE/ (BOTTOM LEFT); MUSTAFA OZER/AFP/ (BOTTOM MIDDLE); MARIO TAMA/ (BOTTOM RIGHT) GETTY IMAGES

The United States was not immune. The country experienced 14 weather disasters that each caused \$1 billion or more in damages, totaling \$52 billion. These included tornado outbreaks—with a record 626 deaths—the Southwest drought, the Mississippi River floods—which destroyed thousands of acres of crops—and unprecedented wildfires across Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona that consumed close to five million acres of land, with a total of more than eight million acres burned across the U.S.

One of the most significant weather events was Hurricane Irene, preceded a week earlier by an abnormal Virginia earthquake. The storm affected 65 million people in 11 East Coast states, resulting in at least 45 deaths and an estimated \$15 billion total in losses. It inundated large swaths of Vermont and in some cases destroyed sections of its infrastructure.

A lead scientist at The Nature Conservancy told *CBS News* that 2011 was a “perfect storm of events.”

“Things were a lot worse—three-to-four times worse in terms of big disasters than we’ve ever seen before...” he said.

Uncertainty Equals Unrest

When the global financial market collapsed in 2008, the world thought it would be out of the woods within a short time. Last year continued to prove otherwise. Despite trillion-dollar bailout efforts, especially in the U.S. and Europe, the international community had to push, pull, fight and scrape for even a glimmer of positive economic momentum. The world still remains on the brink of monetary meltdown, and analysts predict problems will only increase.

Both Brussels and Washington languished in indecision and infighting on how to secure their futures. One only has to look to the failure of the U.S. bipartisan “super-committee” to agree on budget cuts, and the fact that 2011 saw Congress sign the fewest bills into law in two decades.



U.S. indecision further diminished its global status. A visit by China's premier compelled Washington to pander to Beijing, which 47 percent of *Americans* now consider the world's leading economic power. Another blow to the country was Russia's expansion of its space program the same year America's 30-year program was forced to an end—as well as planned military cutbacks that could further weaken the ability of the U.S. to defend itself.

In Europe, politicians came up empty-handed after the fifth summit convened to solve the continent's euro crisis. It did, however, highlight the continent's on-again-off-again relationship with Britain, causing some to question if a divorce between the island nation and the EU could occur in the coming year.

Fed up with politics, the average citizen—many still jobless, debt-saddled and discontented—began taking matters into their own hands. Rioters rampaged through Athens, burned London, and shut down Oakland's harbor. Thousands "occupied" Wall Street, then cities across the world.

Most everyone wanted one thing: someone who could bring back their comfortable Western lifestyles, with minimal effort on their part. But as politicians, leaders and strategists attempted to cobble together solutions, they always seemed to come up short.

Violent Spring

The economic crunch did not just affect the Western world. Few imagined one Tunisian protester's self-immolation in 2010 would plant the seeds for the revolt that swept Arab nations throughout 2011. Longtime leaders fell like dominoes. Libyan ruler Moammar Gadhafi, who had ruled the country for 42 years, was the last to be deposed.

Revolutions brought chaotic violence. Unknown numbers were killed by snipers and many more injured. Rapes were common. Tanks patrolled cities, attacking civilians. Buildings were set ablaze. Reports described stonings, beatings, innumerable arrests, torture, hangings, beheadings and mass graves. In Syria, the carnage

continues. Bahrain is also considered unstable.

The Western world watched with high hopes for new democratic allies in the region. Yet at the outset of 2012, budding Arab Spring fruits are evidencing Islam-influenced governments. In Tunisia, an Islamic political party dominated elections. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood achieved the same. In Libya, the transitional government declared Sharia law will be the foundation for the post-Gadhafi era.

Some warn that a rise of such governments could provide grounds for the spreading of radical Islam in 2012.

"In all readings of Islam, especially the ones that now dominate in the Middle East, there is huge reverence for the first four caliphs who succeeded Muhammad as leaders of the emerging Muslim community," *The Economist* reported. "All subsequent Muslim empires had caliphs and the abolition of the last caliphate—by Turkey's new rulers in 1924—sent shock waves through the world of Islam."

From northwestern Africa's Morocco to eastern Iran, many fear the world is witnessing the rebirth of a multinational "Islamic caliphate."

Religion and Politics

The Arab Spring illustrates a growing trend: the prominence of religion in politics. *The Vancouver Sun* stated, "What has emerged in all the countries where there have been preliminary elections or other selections of transitional authorities is the knowledge that Islamist parties will dominate the charting of the future."

Yet this trend transcends Islam.

Pope Benedict XVI again called for Europe to return to its religious roots during a 2011 visit to Germany. *Der Spiegel* summarized a point from the pope's speech before parliament, in which he said, "European values such as human rights and equality stem from a belief in God and said 'to ignore this or to see it as part of our past would be an amputation of our culture as a whole.'"

Rome also stated that the question of control of the holy sites is vital for peace

between Israel and Palestine. *Agence France-Presse* quoted Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, head of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, who recommended the sites be "safeguarded" by a larger group of states under "a special, internationally-guaranteed statute."

In addition, the Vatican has also called for religious ethics to play a greater role in global economic affairs. From the Muslim Brotherhood to the Catholic church, religion appears to be increasingly intertwined with world politics.

Forecast for 2012

Given 2011's events, many agree the world is in for a rocky ride. Unending commentaries describe what could happen in 2012.

"If 2011 was the year when governments were overthrown in the streets, 2012 could be the year when politics plays out at the ballot box," *Foreign Policy* reported. "A third of the world's nations will be holding local, state, or national elections..." Votes will occur in a number of Arab Spring countries, as well as the U.S., China, Russia, France and Mexico, among others.

Consider a few more forecasts from *Reuters*:

"With elections and leadership changes in the most powerful countries, Europe in crisis, ferment in the Middle East and worsening economic hardship driving unrest and discontent everywhere, 2012 could be just as volatile as 2011 if not worse."

The media outlet further stated: "At worst, 2012 could still see a disorderly breakup bringing with it a chain of defaults, bank runs and civil unrest, not to mention a savage global economic shock worse than that of 2008."

One of the biggest concerns for 2012 is a rise in food prices. La Nina, the weather condition blamed for crippling drought in the Western hemisphere, is expected to persist until mid-year. Moreover, natural disasters have jumped since 1970, something that could also impact this year's harvest.

"There were 820 natural catastrophes in 2011, about average for the

past 10 years but significantly higher than the 30-year average of 630 events per year,” a separate *Reuters* article reported.

According to reinsurance giant Munich Re, natural disasters caused more than a third of a trillion dollars in damage.

“A sequence of devastating earthquakes and a large number of weather-related catastrophes made 2011 the costliest year ever in terms of natural catastrophe losses,” the firm stated in a release.

As of January 2012, floods in Brazil have severely affected 116 cities, an unprecedented out-of-season tornado occurred in North Carolina, and 2.6 million Mexicans remain without drinking water due to extreme drought.

Searching for Answers

Everyone wants to know the future. There is no end of fortune tellers, tarot-card readers, and numerologists who claim to know what will occur this year.

Others searching for answers rely on self-professed religionists claiming the world will end. Even though these so-called prophets cannot prove their theories, they generate fear with terms such as “Armageddon,” “end of the world,” and “end of days.”

This is a crucial part of the “2012 phenomenon.” Because most see world events becoming increasingly dire, some wrongly assume theories regarding that particular date explain the *why* behind what they see in daily headlines.

The disciples that lived during Jesus Christ’s time were equally curious about what they called the “end of the age.” The book of Matthew records, “And as He [Christ] sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world [age]?” (24:3).

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come

to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences [disease], and earthquakes, in diverse places” (vs. 4-7).

Christ made clear that there would be an “end of the world”—properly translated “age”—yet He said it would NOT involve Earth’s complete destruction.

Plain Understanding

The Bible was written “precept upon precept...line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isa. 28:10). Therefore, to understand the full picture of what Christ said—and why—one must put its pieces together.

Many who follow world news see each story as an isolated event. Even though journalists sometimes connect concepts (e.g., higher food prices result in riots), their explanations still lack a crucial component—*why* they happen!

The tag line of *The Real Truth* is “a magazine restoring plain understanding.” This means that not only does it explain facts, but it also details *causes* of world troubles—violence, famine, disease, political upheaval, religious confusion, economic turmoil, and increasing natural disasters.

Most do not realize that one-third of the Bible details future events—prophecy. Put together, all these scriptures reveal a great Plan for mankind. Just as a piece’s color and shape determines where it will fit in a jigsaw puzzle, individual world events interlock to create a greater picture.

Imagine working on a 1,000-piece puzzle *without* a picture of how it should look when finished. While the puzzle designer knows it contains a picture of a blue lake, green tree, and red rosebush, one would not know this until all the pieces were fitted together.

Without a visual guide, it would have to be assembled one section at a time. For example, green pieces could be matched first, then blue. Slowly, each section would lead to the next until the entire picture appeared.

Similarly, world events connect to form a broad canvas that illustrates

what will yet occur. Consider world events as many pieces of a giant puzzle that when assembled reveal a sobering picture!

Start with the United States. A faltering economy means fiscal cutbacks and layoffs, which often mean a reduced police force. Decreased law enforcement inevitably leads to *increasing* crime. A weak economy also means more poverty—with those affected resorting to desperate measures, including rioting. This can cause even more economic hardship as cities are forced to repair damage to already crumbling infrastructure.

Now consider this from a global perspective.

Economically struggling developed nations are unable to help others experiencing natural disasters that cause crop destruction and rising food prices. This leads to famine and disease. Food prices can also spark unrest, resulting in larger conflicts, the rise of power-hungry leaders, and even war—all of which Christ said would occur before His Return! Given this scenario, it is easy to see how countries will quickly collapse when prophesied conditions hit with full force.

Yet there is an underlying reason for 2012’s troubling picture—and it leads to the greatest message of hope the world has ever received.

In his book *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out*, David C. Pack states, “You can know the PLAIN TRUTH ANSWERS to all crucial questions about the future—in fact, you should! And they are all laid out right there on the pages of your Bible! Like so many pieces of a large puzzle that only make sense when fully assembled, each of these questions and others represent a part of a bigger picture, one that is shocking far beyond the imagination of those who think they know the meaning of Bible prophecy.”

Read *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked!* at www.rcg.org to see how the puzzle pieces will eventually fit together—and what the future holds! □



PERU AND MEXICO

Shared Heritage, Shared Challenges

While both countries have been defined by geography, political upheaval, even disasters—their ultimate futures are bright.

BY GREGORY E. KAIDANNEK WITH KEVIN D. DENEÉ

ARRIVING AT airports in Lima, Peru, and Mexico City, Mexico, is much like stepping into any other modern airport in an affluent Western nation. Check-in desks with well-dressed employees line glass terminals, chauffeurs hold welcome signs for businessmen, and friends and family greet one another with excitement, chatting nonstop about their trips. Even restaurants and stores are the same, with Starbucks, Dunkin’ Donuts, Subway and 24-hour high-end clothing shops common in countries considered to still be “developing.” Indeed, everything contained within each airport makes the term seem antiquated.

Yet the drives from both airports reveal another scenario: among the high-rise luxury apartments and the occasional Mercedes, many Peruvians and Mexicans

live in abject poverty, the kind not commonly experienced in the U.S. and Europe—where the impoverished scrounge for scraps to build makeshift huts, or are forced to make a living begging from passersby.

Although Mexico and Peru have poverty rates of 47.4 percent and 34.8 percent respectively, surrounding countries still consider them economically influential.

“At the beginning of Latin America’s postcolonial history, Mexico and Peru were roughly comparable,” Florencia Mallon writes in *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru*. “They had been the great centers of pre-Columbian indigenous civilizations and of Spanish imperial rule. They had the richest silver mines, the wealthiest colonial elites, and the largest indigenous populations in all of Spanish America.”

Even though Mexico and Peru have traveled varied paths since then, a visit to each nation provided an interesting vantage point for another *Real Truth* writer and me to

■ **SCENIC VIEWS:** Left, Peru's Cordillera Blanca mountains tower over the highland village of Callejon de Huaylas. Right, the pyramid of the sun, a pre-Columbian site, dominates the skyline in Teotihuacan, Mexico.

PHOTOS: THE REAL TRUTH



see that while each possesses its own characteristics, the nations are still tied together by several common threads.

Peru

Stepping into Peru's streets could only be described as sensory overload—listening to a confluence of people speaking a foreign language—seeing polluted, cramped quarters—smelling savory food from street vendors.

A drive through the nation's capital, Lima, and its business district, Miraflores, reveals a stunning acceleration of modernization and Western influence. Elaborate Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets dot the area, and easily visible high-rise buildings now gleam in place of antiquated one-story adobe brick homes.

According to *CIA World Factbook*, Peru is among the world's most rapidly developing nations. Almost the size of Alaska, the South American nation ranks 11th in annual GDP growth.

Lima has been a center of trade for 300 years and is a major Latin

American shipping port. Because the city's average elevation is 43 feet above sea level, the climate, which is affected by the ocean's currents, is comfortably temperate.

Streets teem with chugging taxis, overcrowded buses, and thousands of people. Drivers routinely come within an inch of a vehicle on all sides.

Smog hangs over these traffic jams. Tiny dirt particles fall from the dusty air and settle on vehicles. Bags of garbage are often seen strewn across areas of the city.

In Lima, which is home to about 25 percent of Peru's 30-million-strong population, it is common for Peruvians to buy pre-fabricated homes for about \$1,800 and place them wherever space is available. Many of these tiny houses end up stacked on top of one another. In fact, every home in Peru seems to have steel bars sticking out of its roof—a sign another level could be added by whomever needs a residence.

These cookie-cutter shacks are often built on unstable, sandy hills. This is dangerous given the country's vulnerability to earthquakes, which often cause landslides that easily topple such flimsy structures.

Just a few hours north of Lima's bustling metropolis, a road winds through what resembles the Sahara Desert. It then gives way to beautiful and tranquil coastal countryside vistas. The stark contrast continues as one travels toward the world's second-highest mountain range, the Andes, and heads to Huaraz, a small town situated high in its peaks.

While ascending, we learned the value of Peruvian genuineness and warmth. During a lunch break, a lady stopped us as we boarded our car to ask if we were going north. The translator accompanying us replied that we were. She then told us that approximately 100 kilometers north was a 48-hour farm laborer protest. Many travel books warn that during such demonstrations rocks will often be thrown at bystanders, especially foreigners. She recommended we stay in a hotel because it was not safe to pass through.

We had to continue on, however, and never saw the protests, but we were thankful for her help and the kindness she extended to complete strangers. Such concern was to become a distinguishing characteristic of the Peruvians we encountered throughout the visit.

Mexico

Mexico is the world's largest Spanish-speaking nation, with a population of 114 million. Its capital, Mexico City, is 7,350 feet above sea level and in the shadow of several active and dormant volcanoes. Approximately 21 million people—a fifth of the nation's entire populace—sprawl across its 571 square miles.

The city is situated on an ancient Aztec lake, which was filled in by Spanish explorers. It has now become a thriving city filled with Art Nouveau architectural marvels and perfectly spaced, rainbow-colored row houses that appear to form part of an oversized computer-generated image—instead of the comfortable homes they are.

Similar to Lima, Mexico's capital has all of the comforts of the Western world—and is even decades ahead of its South American cousin in terms of modernization.

“Mexico City's leading position with regard to other urban centres of the developing world can be attributed to its origins in a rich and diverse environment, its long history as a densely populated area, and the central role that its rulers have defined for it throughout the ages,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states.

As with any society, however, Mexico still struggles with various problems. Higher rates of joblessness have pushed some to advertise their skills as day laborers outside churches and on city streets. There have also been more than 35,000 deaths as a result of an ongoing countrywide drug war, and the nation is facing its worst period of drought in 70 years.

Ancient Similarities

Both countries' histories are permeated by polytheism—and its attendant practices.



■ **THOUGHT-PROVOKING SIGHTS:** Top, a wax statue of a Catholic priest stands inside the Spanish Inquisition Museum in Lima, Peru. Bottom, a fallen rock from 11-mile-away Mount Huascarán reminds visitors of 1970's mega-earthquake and avalanche disaster at Yungay Memorial Park.

PHOTOS: THE REAL TRUTH

Lima is home to an interesting ancient pyramid, Huaca Pucllana. The structure is believed to have been an important civil and religious center. It is estimated to be between 1,300 and 1,800 years old and was important to the ancient Wari culture. It was later inhabited by the Inca. Many times throughout the year, human sacrificial rituals were made at this site to appease their “gods” and make intercession for good fishing throughout the seasons.

Similarly, in Mexico, the ancient city of Teotihuacan was discovered in the late 19th century. The origins of it date as early as 164 BC. Civilization upon civilization of pre-Columbian peoples up to and including the Aztecs have inhabited the city.

Teotihuacan is marked by three main features, the “pyramid of the

sun” (whose base is slightly wider than that of the great pyramid of Egypt), the smaller “pyramid of the moon,” and *Miccoatli*, a word from the native language of Nahua, meaning “avenue of the dead.” As in Huaca Pucllana, residents would gather two times per year to sacrifice young males to the gods, hoping for successful spring and fall harvests.

Religious Roots

In either country, it is nearly impossible to ignore the influence—both past and present—of the Roman church. Large cathedrals, monasteries and religious structures form the nucleus around which most cities are built. These baroque-style buildings stand in stark contrast to modern 21st-century architectural designs.

Both capitals of the predominantly Catholic countries were used as regional headquarters for the infamous Spanish Inquisition, which took place from AD 1478 to AD 1834. These gruesome campaigns are memorialized in museums that display life-sized statues of almost every conceivable method of torture. Their intent is to give visitors a realistic sense of this time period.

Similar to ancient pagan sacrifices and rituals, the brutal and horrific killings during the Inquisition became a part of everyday life for both countries.

Natural Disasters

Some may recall images of rubble-filled towns and villages throughout Peru as a result of a massive 1970 Ancash earthquake. Pictures and videos of the devastated cities Chasma and Huaraz are still readily available on the Internet.

During our travels, we visited another town, Yungay, which was destroyed by the same earthquake. Due to a massive tremor in the region, this former town of a little over 25,000 inhabitants was completely swallowed by a debris flow. According to our tour guide, a wave of 80 million cubic meters of rock, gravel, mud, water and ice—about 200 feet high—crashed on Yungay, leaving it a desolate wasteland.

Only a few survived, including our guide, who was 17 at the time. As the earthquake began, his siblings and parents fled to the church. Since he had forgotten to bring his radio with him so that he could finish listening to the World Cup soccer match, he went back to retrieve it.

As he ran home to find the radio, a giant mudslide overcame the town. The wave of debris tore apart the church in which his family took shelter, killing them. His house, however, was spared.

The Peruvian Times stated that the earthquake lasted 45 seconds and “crumbled adobe homes, bridges, roads and schools across 83,000 square kilometers, an area larger than Belgium and the Netherlands combined.”

Please see **PERU AND MEXICO**, page 19

The Human Mind—What None Can Discover!

Man's mind contains a dimension that cannot be understood through scientific methods.

BY DAVID C. PACK

MODERN SCIENCE is continually bringing new knowledge to civilization. Each important scientific discovery—each new piece of knowledge—is received worldwide with excitement and acclaim.

Reflect on all that science has given to mankind at large. It has put men on the moon and created weapons of mass destruction. It has broken down the genetic codes of DNA and cloned numerous creatures. It has learned much about the immense size and nature of the universe—outer space—and discovered incredible things about the tiny sub-atomic particles in atoms—inner space. It has made numerous medical breakthroughs and accomplished amazing feats of engineering.

Most believe that, given time, scientific discoveries will solve most or all of mankind's problems. Yet science is limited in a vitally important way that involves you. There is a discovery it will never—and can never—make about the nature of the human mind!

This world's religions have missed it. Their theologians neither teach nor comprehend it. They have completely overlooked this critical component—this single vital key—that unlocks the enormous difference between men and animals. Only by understanding this revealed *key* can you learn your purpose for being!

Look at all the amazing works of nature—both on Earth and throughout the heavens. The kaleidoscope of

God's handiwork that can be seen by the human eye is staggering.

Consider the planets, stars and galaxies. Each is its own marvel. Then reflect on all of the species of plants found on Earth. There are millions, diverse in color, shape, size and beauty. The brilliance of their various designs and purposes is incredible! Now think of the one million different kinds of animals—and 12 million types of insects. They are as remarkable and fascinating as the world of plants, regarding their function, appearance and behavior.

While the creations described above are marvelous and amazing, none is more incredible than the human mind. None rival its complexity and nearly unlimited capabilities. It is the absolute pinnacle of all living organisms. Nothing else in God's Creation comes close. What else can plan, think or create to even a fraction of the same degree?

Just think about how many things the mind can design and produce: houses, telephones, trains, automobiles, planes, rockets, computers and other sophisticated devices that are practically limitless in complexity and usefulness. The only thing it cannot design and build is *itself*!

When King David said, "...for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa. 139:14), this is most true of your brain, and the *human mind*! The Creator sent along with it a detailed *Instruction Manual* containing vital information, explaining the nature, design and purpose of this greatest of all creations. He identifies the hidden key—the missing dimension!—to its right and proper use, opening the way to peace, happiness, abundance and prosperity.

Yet this Instruction Manual—the Bible—is almost universally ignored, misrepresented, misunderstood and rejected. As a result, the problems, troubles and evils of civilization mount with no solution in sight and conditions only growing worse.

Apply basic logic. Would God create His marvel of engineering—your mind—and send it without an Instruction Book explaining how to use it? Of course not!

Now take a step back. Most spend their entire lives worried about what *people* think and say. Few concern themselves with what **GOD** thinks or says. Be honest and examine *yourself*. Do you derive your opinions from people? Or do you regularly search and accept the plain Word of God as the guide for your life?

The following scripture explains why even the most brilliant minds are completely unable to learn certain understanding, unless it is *revealed* to them. Notice: "Jesus...said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have *hid these things from the wise and prudent*, and have revealed them unto *babes*" (Matt. 11:25).

The greatest thinkers of this world cannot fathom the things God has revealed in the Bible! They are hidden from them. But you can—if you are willing to examine God's Word for what He reveals about the mind. It will open your thinking to incredible *new* understanding about why you were born—and your awesome future and potential.

To understand more, read my booklet *What Science Will Never Discover About Your Mind* at www.rcg.org. □



IRAN'S NUCLEAR SHOWDOWN



Time to find a peaceful solution for tensions between Iran and Israel seems to be running out. The past foreshadows a future answer to this conflict.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER AND NESTOR A. TORO

IT HAS BEEN a war of words. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has often called for Israel to be “wiped off the map,” and Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei labeled the country a “cancerous tumor.” All the while, the nation insists its nuclear programs are for “peaceful purposes.”

In response, Israel has regularly warned the Western world of what a nuclear Iran means for the region. The nation’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, told *The Atlantic*, “Iran’s acquisition of nuclear weapons could spark a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. The Middle East is incendiary enough, but with a nuclear arms race it will become a tinderbox.” While Mr. Netanyahu feels economic sanctions against Iran may yet work, he cautioned that an element of “wide-eyed fanaticism” in Tehran makes it unpredictable.

Behind the barbed rhetoric, however, there are persistent rumors of action. A November 2011 report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated that Iran’s atomic experiments are “specific to nuclear weapons.” In addition, a spate of alleged bombings and cyberattacks at Iranian nuclear sites has led to speculation that these are covert actions by Israel (and potentially the United States). Whether either is true, Iran and Israel have characteristically denied the allegations.

With each inflammatory comment and threat of military response, both sides become more committed to the exchange. Iran cannot back down or it risks no longer being taken seriously in the region. And Israel cannot relent, or it may be seen as a sign of weakness, prompting acts of aggression from other nations.

Notch by notch, the two sides escalate, and a positive outcome—for any involved—drifts further from view.

Dire Straits

With Tehran’s continual refusal to halt its nuke program, a military strike against the Middle East nation has increasingly become a serious option for both Tel Aviv and Washington.

According to *The New York Times*, “Ehud Barak, the defense minister of Israel, said in late November that it was probably a question of nine months before Iran’s attempt to acquire nuclear weapons moved into a ‘zone of immunity’ where it could no longer be stopped.”

America takes a similar stance. The newspaper stated that Mr. Barak’s “counterpart in Washington, Leon E. Panetta, the secretary of defense, estimated that it was likely to be ‘about a year, perhaps a little less’ until Iran could have a nuclear weapon. Carefully imprecise, Mr. Panetta has said, ‘If we have to do it, we will deal with it’—without specifically explaining what ‘it’ is.”

For now, however, the West continues to apply pressure through economic means. The November 2011 IAEA report on Iran pushed European Union and Asia-Pacific officials to draw up plans for tougher sanctions

against Iranian central and commercial banking institutions.

Threatening its multibillion dollar oil industry seemed to hit Iran where it hurts, sparking a flurry of military posturing. *The Wall Street Journal* quoted Iran’s Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi’s response to the news: “If they impose sanctions on Iran’s oil exports, then even one drop of oil cannot flow from the Strait of Hormuz.”

Such a move could seriously disrupt the world oil supply. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, “Hormuz is the world’s most important oil chokepoint due to its daily oil flow of almost 17 million barrels in 2011...almost 20 percent of oil traded worldwide.” The strait is 21 miles wide at its narrowest point.

Tehran, however, did not stop with verbal threats. Iran announced the effective test of its first nuclear rod—a significant leap in nuclear capabilities. In addition, the nation successfully test-fired anti-radar missiles during 10 days of naval exercises near the strait.

This warning had little effect on the West. *The Wall Street Journal* reported, “As a military matter, [a threat to close Hormuz] is mostly bluster. If it struck first, Iran could sink a few ships and do some damage. But Iran is no military match for the U.S. and its allies in the Persian Gulf. The Pentagon and the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet both sent that message to Tehran... ‘Any disruption,’ the Bahrain-based U.S. fleet said in an email, ‘will not be tolerated.’”

American President Barack Obama, who has said that no option is “off the table” to stop Tehran’s nuclear program, signed a bill containing sanctions against the nation’s central bank. Although the law will not go into effect for six months, *BBC* stated that news of the legislation caused Iranian national currency, the rial, to lose about 12 percent of its value—a record low.

The U.S. reads Iran’s threats to shut down the strait and its plummeting currency value as signs that sanctions are working.

Yet Iranian leaders believe the West does not have the stomach for a spike

■ **WAR GAMES:** Top, an Iranian 120-mile-range ground-to-sea missile is launched on the last day of naval war games near the Strait of Hormuz (Jan. 2, 2012). Bottom, Iran’s Navy Commander Admiral Habibollah Sayari points at a map during a press conference in Tehran (Dec. 22, 2010).

PHOTOS: EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AFP/ (TOP); HAMED JAFARNEJAD/AFP/ (BOTTOM) GETTY IMAGES

in the cost of oil, a likely byproduct of increased sanctions. *CNN* reported, “Iran notes that Western economies are under stress and predicts they could not afford higher oil prices. Even the threat of disruption in oil supply would send energy prices spiraling sky high,

its nuclear programme to a series of deep underground bunkers, Iranian air defences have been strengthened to deal with any hostile air assault or pre-emptive missile strike.”

The Iranian Supreme National Security Council has determined that

means, including military,” a 2010 *Guardian* article stated. The newspaper also reported, “Leaders in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt referred to Iran as ‘evil’, an ‘existential threat’ and a power that ‘is going to take us to war’.”

To compete with other nuclear powers in the region, Saudi Arabia’s Prince Turki al-Faisal called on the Gulf Cooperation Council nations (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) to develop “a powerful regional bloc with a unified armed force and a unified defense industry” (*Arab News*). He urged them to “at least study seriously all available options, including acquiring WMDs, so that our future generations will not blame us for neglecting any courses of action that will keep looming dangers away from us.”

In addition, UN investigators in Syria recently discovered a suspicious facility that strongly indicates it is pursuing nuclear weapons.



■ **STANDOFF:** Left, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad addresses the General Assembly at the United Nations in New York City (Sept. 22, 2011). Right, Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, delivers an address to the same assembly the next day.

PHOTOS: SPENCER PLATT/ (LEFT); MARIO TAMA/ (RIGHT) GETTY IMAGES

and that would plunge the already struggling economies of the United States and Europe into deeper recession. Iran is hoping to change the conversation in Western capitals from how tightly to squeeze Iran to what could be the cost of doing so.”

In addition, some analysts feel Iran is poised to weather tougher economic pressure. *The Sydney Morning Herald* said, “Given the Iranian regime’s current annual oil income of \$US75 billion and trade diversification, more sanctions are unlikely to bring the regime to its knees. They can only make life more difficult for ordinary Iranians, just as was the case in Iraq under Saddam Hussein.”

Drums of War

Iran appears to have also prepared for an attack from Israel and the West. According to *The Irish Times*, the head of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Force (IRGC) stated the nation’s nuclear facilities are now “invulnerable” to air strikes.

The newspaper stated, “The IRGC claims that in addition to deploying

risk of a 2012 American/Israeli attack “is real and that the country’s forces need to prepare several contingencies for war,” according to *The Washington Times*. “It also was concluded that in case of war, the regime could be victorious, though the cost would be high, but it would emerge as the one and only champion of the Islamic cause in the world.”

Tel Aviv and Washington are also readying for military conflict. *Voice of America* wrote, “Israel and the United States are planning joint military exercises...with a focus on missile defense.”

“In December [2011], Israel staged military exercises in the Golan [Heights]. It also held emergency drills on how to respond to attacks by missiles and biological weapons.”

Complicating matters, worries of nuclear proliferation do not stop with Iran. Other Middle East countries seem to have also caught the “nuclear bug.”

Leaked U.S. diplomatic cables revealed that Jordan and Bahrain officials “openly called for Iran’s nuclear programme to be stopped by any

Vicious Cycle

At the core of the conflict sit Israel and Iran, and both must walk a fine line to avoid all-out war.

Israel wants to garner the Western world’s support before resorting to military action. But the nation can likely not ignore the threat of an Iranian attack for too long. Jewish history has taught the country that when someone says they want to “drive you into the sea,” you take it seriously.

The Economist called Israel’s anxiety over Iran “understandable.” “They fear a theocratic regime that embraces the Shia tradition of martyrdom may not be deterred by a nuclear balance of terror. For a country as small as Israel, even a small-scale nuclear attack could be an existential threat. Two of Netanyahu’s predecessors took action, against Iraq in 1981 and Syria in 2007, to prevent just such a threat; and it worked. The opportunity to attack Iran is now, before it is too late—or so the argument goes in many Israeli households.”

On the other hand, Iran desperately wants to be a regional leader,

a status it would secure with proven nuclear-weapon capabilities. To most quickly achieve this, it must avoid an attack from the West.

The situation stands on a razor's edge: each time Iran refuses to halt its uranium enrichment, Israel must more seriously consider the option of a pre-emptive attack. Internally, the Iranian regime can justify its nuke program as "self-defense" due to Israel being thought to have nuclear devices since the 1950s.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Daniel Yergin summarized what the standoff means for the region in his book *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World*: "An Iran with nuclear weapons would change the balance of power in the Gulf. It would be in a position, to borrow a phrase that Franklin Roosevelt had used prior to World War II, to 'overawe' its neighbors. It could assert itself as the dominant regional power. Iran could directly threaten to use the weapons in the region—or actually use them—although the latter would likely trigger a massive and devastating response. But such weapons would also provide it with a license to project its power and influence with what it might regard as impunity throughout the region—both directly and through its proxies [such as the terrorist group Hezbollah]."

"The alarm among the other Gulf countries, as well as in Israel, about Iran's objectives has been rising in direct proportion to Iran's progress toward nuclear weapons capability. They fear that Iran will become more and more aggressive in seeking to assert its dominion over the region and in trying to destabilize other regimes. As one Saudi put it, 'They want to dominate the region, and they express it strongly and clearly.'"

Historical Allies

Amid continuous brinkmanship and political posturing, one would think Israel and Iran have always been vehement enemies. Indeed, it is hard to imagine conditions that would allow Tehran and Tel Aviv to enjoy favorable relations.

Yet, in utter contrast to today, Israelis and Iranians were consistent allies until 1979. The experience of a

an escape route for Iraqi Jews fleeing to Israel after the 1948 war for Israeli independence. In fact, Iran was one of the first Muslim countries to establish diplomatic and trade relations with the state of Israel. Common Sunni Arab enemies made Persians and Jews close friends for the next three decades."

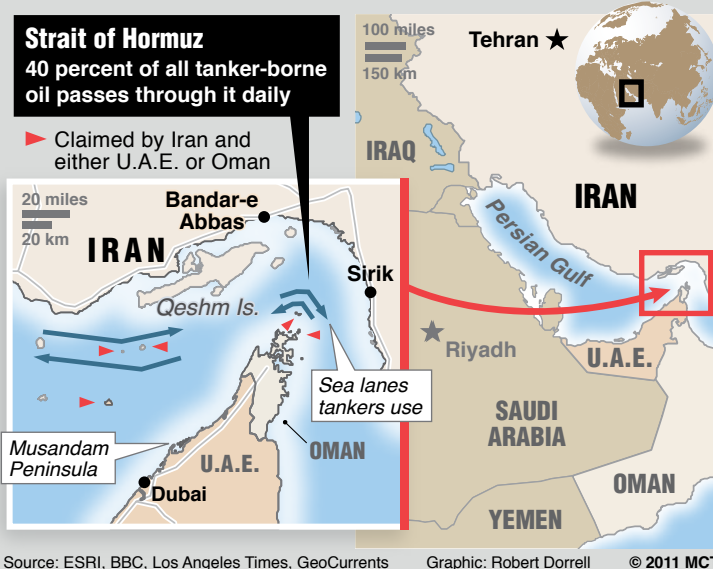
The example that shines above all others in regard to favorable relations between Iran (Persia) and Israel is the reign of King Cyrus over the Persian (or Achaemenid) Empire. Far from the typical ancient tyrant, historians regard him as a "man of peace," and also a "strong and righteous ruler."

Cyrus was able to bring together subjects of diverse cultures. According to *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, "The Achaemenids' role in universal history lies in their fashioning a model for centralized rule over various peoples...to the advantage and profit of all and their achievement of a unified Iranian nation for the first time."

In the book *Ancient Persian Warfare*, author Phyllis G. Jestice states, "Those he conquered, he treated well...so they would not think they had to fight to the death against him."

The ruler is highly esteemed in Iranian culture. The Iran Chamber Society describes him as "upright, a great leader of men, generous and benevolent."

King Cyrus even has a favorable report recorded in the Bible's Old Testament: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia...he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has the LORD God of heaven given me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? The LORD his



New York Times journalist provides an example of how different Iran is today: "As an American Jew visiting Iran, I apparently made an irresistible target. 'Zionist Israel,' an Iranian official instructed me, was the root of all problems in the Middle East; a Western 'colonial imposition' on Muslim lands that must be reversed. 'It's Iran's own fault,' I replied. 'If Cyrus the Great hadn't freed the Jews from Persian slavery 2,500 years ago and told them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple, there wouldn't be an Israel.' The official chuckled and changed the subject."

The article continued, "Before Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, ancient cultural bonds and common strategic interests between Persians and Jews made Iran and Israel close allies... If he knew his history, Ahmadinejad would recall that Iranian diplomats in Europe saved thousands of Jews from the Holocaust and that Iran served as



MINUTE-TO-

Many feel trapped in the stress-filled, nonstop rat race called the modern world. Is there more to life than just living in the “here and now”?

STOP! Before reading any further, turn off your cell-phone, computer, television, radio and MP3 player. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by phone calls, TV shows or music. Do not let instant messages or emails interrupt you or break your train of thought.

At this point, you are probably thinking, “You have got to be kidding!”

But consider. You possess a precious, highly valuable, yet often mismanaged, resource: time. And your time is important. Once it is gone, it is gone forever—you cannot afford to let it go to waste!

With modern communication devices turned off, you might feel as though you are disconnected from the outside world. Relax. The average person reads 250 words a minute; it should take you only about 10 minutes to read this article. Afterward, you can turn everything on and return to this adrenaline-driven civilization.

In the meantime, take advantage of the momentary break from society, and consider what you are really “missing.”

Welcome to the Rat Race

In the Western world, a typical day begins with a mad rush to get the family ready for the day. Breakfast time is far from a “family meal.” Often, each member is on his or her own, getting his cereal, toast or a quick snack—or even misses it altogether because he does not have time.

While breakfast is considered the most important meal of the day, an

BY RYAN P. DENEÉ

NDP Group market research survey revealed that 46 percent of people ages 18 to 34 skip it. Without this essential meal, productivity is severely limited.

Next is the challenge of commuting to work. The United States Census Bureau found that the average commute is 25 minutes per day in the U.S.—over 100 hours each year! This is longer than the 80 hours of vacation time that workers spend the entire year anticipating. With many drivers running behind, everyone is in a hurry to get to work on time. Tempers often get short, and road rage ensues.

Then there are the many hours spent at work meeting deadlines, writing emails and memos, making phone calls, etc.—though the pace seems to quicken, less seems to be accomplished. A research paper published by the Families and Work Institute titled “Overwork in America: When the Way We Work Becomes Too Much” concluded that one in three American employees are chronically overworked; 54 percent of American employees have felt overwhelmed at some time in the past month by how much work they had to complete; and 29 percent of employees spend a lot of time doing work that they consider a waste of time (and these employees are more likely to feel overworked).

The fast pace continues after the family returns home from school and work. This is no longer a definite time of the day, as mom or dad might be working overtime or a second job to make ends meet—leaving their chil-

dren unsupervised. There are extracurricular activities to which the children will need to be driven, such as football, baseball, soccer, ballet and gymnastics. Then there are television shows that “must” be watched and video games that “must” be played. Groceries need to be bought, and laundry needs to be done. Few families will be able to sit together uninterrupted during dinner, discussing the day’s issues and building family relationships.

Eventually, the day comes to an end, leaving many exhausted, stressed and worn out, wondering, “Where did the day go?” Sadly, it will only begin again as soon as the alarm clock sounds.

Effects of the Race

The modern world lives in a way that leaves no room for second thoughts, and no room to consider the many adverse effects on society. Lack of basic self-control is prevalent, as is the desire for instant gratification—especially among many of today’s youth.

In the United States and Britain, binge drinking among teenagers and young adults is a serious problem. For these wild partiers, a “good time” consists of overdrinking to the point where they wake up with a terrible hangover, not remembering what happened the night before. This trend has led drug manufacturers to develop a “cure” for the bad effects of their carelessness. *BBC News Magazine* reported that the tablet treatment Blowfish was created so those who did not want to “suffer a hangover” as a result of their irresponsibility could enjoy more “free time.”

MINUTE LIVING



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: DARNITRA D. JACKSON

In other words, rather than having to stop and consider the consequences, people can now lay aside good judgment and simply pop a pill the next morning to make the adverse symptoms disappear.

Impulsiveness can be demonstrated in other ways. During a popular afternoon television talk show, a conversation occurred that could have been mistaken for an excerpt from a morning shock radio show. The program featured two female guests talking explicitly about their sexual escapades. One of them compared sexual desire for a stranger to wanting

an éclair in a bakery. The other said she had four or five sexual “partners” she could “call anytime.” And this was on a daytime television program!

The promiscuity in society continues to intensify. Pornography composes 37 percent of total Internet content, with 8.5 percent of Internet searches being for pornography. Compare this to one in five—20 percent!—of all searches on *cellphones* being for pornography (*New Scientist*). Sex has become a commodity, available anywhere—everywhere—at any time!

Our society has drastically changed in other ways. Computers,

the Internet and cellphones help us to communicate quickly and more efficiently. But the misuse of email is eroding what was once common etiquette in business communications.

Instant messaging and texting have taken this further, actually changing languages. Consider this text message: “hi m8 u k?-sry i 4gt 2 call u lst nyt-y dnt we go c film 2moz.”

At a quick glance, it looks like a foreign language. Here is the translation: “Hi mate. Are you okay? I am sorry that I forgot to call you last night. Why don’t we go and see a movie tomorrow?” Even the transla-

tion has lost the formality and precision that was once used in communication. Gone are the days when writers carefully considered each word, because every word had meaning.

Technology has not only changed the way we communicate, but also the way spare time is spent. Rather than playing an invigorating game of soccer, many now turn to a virtual world for their social interaction. According to research by Optenet, a global IT security company, visits to websites related to online role-playing video games have grown 212 percent! Video gaming is so ingrained within youth culture that 97 percent of children play video games, and about a third of parents say they play video games as a way to spend time with their children.

Family life is under constant assault. On average, a father spends only five minutes with a child each day, and a mother just 20 minutes. Much more time is required to properly train children how to live and how to make right decisions. No wonder many parents lose touch with their children, and many families fall apart.

Television can also have adverse effects on the family. Consider these statistics, compiled by California State University.

- The television in a U.S. home is on about six hours, 47 minutes per day.

- The average American watches four hours of TV per day. (In other words, a 65-year old will have spent nine years “glued to the tube.”)

- U.S. children age 6 and under spend about four hours with screen media per day.

- Approximately 70 percent of daycare centers use the TV to occupy children.

- About 66 percent of Americans regularly watch television while eating dinner.

- Parents spend only 3.5 minutes per week in meaningful conversation with their children!

- An American youth spends 900 hours per year in school and 1,500 hours per year watching television.

- Approximately 54 percent of 4- to 6-year-olds state that they would rather watch TV than spend time with their fathers.

Ponder the last point. Over half of 4- to 6-year-olds chose television over who should be considered the most important man in their lives!

A Choice

There is evidence suggesting that early exposure to television can “rewire” a child’s developing brain patterns. An article in *The Wall Street Journal* related the experience of professional storyteller Odds Bodkin. In his experience performing for children, he observed that restlessness sets in after about seven minutes, as their inner clocks anticipate a “commercial break.” They appear to be conditioned by television to expect a commercial interruption every seven minutes.

In reading this article, you may have now reached that seven-minute mark when the attention span wanes and the mind craves a change. Perhaps you are beginning to feel that restlessness.

You have a choice: If you love minute-to-minute living—stop reading, turn everything back on, and rejoin the rat race. The modern world will support your choice.

On the other hand, if you choose to continue reading, you will *begin* to learn the CAUSE of the rat race in which we live.

Root Cause

We have seen the results of minute-to-minute living in facts and statistics. These consequences may not have been foreseen by society, but they were written about thousands of years ago by the prophet Daniel, who stated that in “the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (12:4).

This time was also described by the apostle Paul: “In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

without natural affection...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (II Tim. 3:1-4).

The effects of this modern age are related to a choice between two basic ways of life: one is the way of GIVE—caring, outgoing love and concern for your fellow man; the other is the way of GET—acquiring everything possible for the satisfaction of self. Our entire society is built on catering to our human nature—the way of GET.



Technology has not only changed the way we communicate, but also the way spare time is spent.

In our fast-paced world, many no longer take the time to ask the big questions of life: “Who am I?” “What am I?” “Why do I exist?” These are questions that we need to ask—and answer. The answers *are* available, if we look in the right place—the Word of God. Scripture reveals God’s Plan for mankind!

As you endure the adrenaline-fueled rat race we call civilization, realize that there is a reason for your existence—and it is worth spending that precious resource called *time* to discover it!

To learn more about God’s purpose for your life, read *Why Do You Exist?* and *The Awesome Potential of Man* available at www.rcg.org. □



PERU AND MEXICO

Continued from page 10

All that remains of this former town are four palm trees that once lined the main square, a mangled bus, disconnected segments of a Catholic church, and other miscellaneous debris.

A similar event occurred in Mexico on September 19, 1985. An 8.1-magnitude earthquake struck approximately 220 miles west of Mexico City. This devastating event caused rain-saturated hillsides to liquefy. Buildings in the nation's capital shook for over four minutes. Certain destroyed buildings have been left as a reminder of this terrible event, estimated to have taken the lives of up to 65,000 people and caused billions of dollars in damage.

While we visited the region, a smaller, yet serious, 6.5-magnitude earthquake struck 40 miles beneath the surface 103 miles to the southwest of Mexico's capital city. Cries of "terremoto!" (Spanish for "earthquake") arose as the tremor rocked the area, sending panicked people into the streets, screaming, crying and clutching one another.

In this case, little damage occurred and few lives were lost. But when a person becomes an eyewitness to such events, it is easier to empathize with those who must continue to live their lives in the shadow of awesome, unpredictable power.

Unbreakable Pattern?

The shared language and ethnicity of Peru and Mexico are just two obvious similarities between these nations. In addition, many of their citizens live in poverty and do not see much hope for a better future.

Yet this is just scratching the surface. There are much deeper ties that bind these two cultures together.

Throughout the centuries, their peoples revered natural phenomena as gods and sacrificed human beings to them in an effort to appease these deities, whom they believed were responsible for the weather. With the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, many converted to professing Christianity and began



■ **CROWDED CITIES:** Top, Mexico City is one of the world's largest metropolitan areas. Bottom left, a local man walks down an alley in Huaraz, Peru. Bottom right, a homeless woman sits on a sidewalk in downtown Mexico City.

PHOTOS: THE REAL TRUTH



placing images of what they thought Jesus Christ looked like on giant crosses inside massive churches.

But these religious expressions have been in vain. While there has been some progress, conditions stay the same overall—mothers still lose children to terrible diseases, drug wars continue, weather disasters occur, and both nations seem to suffer almost nonstop.

For many, this seems part of an unbreakable cycle. Truly, the Bible's

saying, "...there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecc. 1:9) rings true.

But there *is* hope! Future events detailed long ago reveal that these two nations *will* achieve the greatness to which they aspire—and their cycles of poverty and lawlessness will soon cease.

To learn about this coming time, read *Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!* available at www.rcg.org. □

SHOWDOWN*Continued from page 15*

God be with him, and let him go up” (II Chron. 36:22-23).

Under the rule of Cyrus, the Jews who were forcibly enslaved during the Babylonian Empire were allowed to return to Israel. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* stated, “In the Hebrew tradition embodied in 2 Chronicles 36:23 and Ezra 1:1-2 Cyrus is regarded with favor, and he has figured prominently in Jewish thought through the ages.”

Ancient Example

Cyrus the Great is one positive subject that most Iranians and Israelis can agree on. Persian descendants consider him an exceptional leader. And the Jews have him to thank for allowing them to return to Jerusalem—and helping to fund the building of the Second Temple.

Jewish historian Flavius Josephus wrote in the *Antiquities of the Jews* that Cyrus would “write to the rulers and governors that were in the neighborhood of their country of Judea, that they should contribute to them gold and silver for the building of the temple, and besides that, beasts for their sacrifices.”

Yet the historical record of King Cyrus does more than merely reveal an antiquated example of good Israeli-Iranian relations. It also typifies the only permanent solution for the Middle East.

The kingdom of Cyrus stretched from the western edge of modern-day India all the way to Turkey. He was “upright,” a “law-giver,” and a just ruler of the Persians, Assyrians, Jews and Babylonians.

Notice how the king was portrayed in the Old Testament book of Isaiah: “Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him...” (45:1).

Read the passage again. The God of the Bible calls Cyrus His “anointed.” The Hebrew term for this word is *mashiyach*. The other times this word is used, it refers to the Temple’s high priest or a king over Israel or Judea.

Beyond Cyrus, this term also applies to one additional Being: the Messiah. Thus, this ancient Persian king’s reign can be seen as a forerunner of the ultimate climactic fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy.

Notice the descriptions of Cyrus throughout the Old Testament:

■ The king was named God’s “shepherd” (Isa. 44:28).

■ He was charged to build a house for God (II Chron. 36:23).

■ “All the kingdoms of the earth” were given to him (vs. 23).

Despite these physical parallels to the returning Jesus Christ—who is also known as a Shepherd (I Pet. 5:4)—a Builder (Heb. 11:10)—and King over all nations (Rev. 19:16)—the importance of what King Cyrus’ reign signified is hidden from almost all of mankind.

Lasting Peace

In his booklet *What Is the Kingdom of God?* David C. Pack describes the future fulfillment of what Cyrus’ KINGDOM and GOVERNMENT exemplified in part: “Like a newscaster far ahead of his time, Christ came to make an announcement about a complete change in the way the world would one day be governed. With this change would come unprecedented world peace, happiness, harmony, universal health and prosperity.

“Everywhere He went, Christ spoke about the kingdom of God. It was the subject of most of His parables. When He commissioned His twelve apostles and sent them to preach, the instruction was to preach about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2). When He later sent out His seventy disciples (Luke 10:1), He also commanded them to preach the kingdom of God (vs. 9). Paul preached this same ‘kingdom of God’ message everywhere he went (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). The terms *kingdom* and *kingdom of God* are found scores of times throughout the New Testament. Yet, it is absolutely astonishing how nearly everyone has lost the knowledge and true meaning of what this kingdom is!”

The definitions of the English words “gospel” and “kingdom,” however, *clearly* explain what Christ meant. “Gospel” simply means “good news”—and “kingdom” is a form of “government.”

Mr. Pack continues, “In other words, Christ preached ‘the good news of the *government* of God.’ The coming of world peace, happiness, health and abundance *will* certainly be good news for a mankind that has not known it for 6,000 years.

“Christ’s disciples asked Him what the SIGN of His Coming and the end of the age would be (Matt. 24:3). He warned the disciples of deception from many who would come ‘in His Name,’ saying, ‘Christ was Christ’ (vs. 5). He meant that they would put an emphasis on the PERSON of Christ instead of the MESSAGE He brought. But, He also prophesied that ‘this gospel of the *kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and *then* shall the END come’ (vs. 14).”

Also in Matthew 24, Jesus accurately describes the conditions occurring today between Iran and Israel, and the threat of global nuclear war. Notice verses 6 and 7: “And you shall hear of *wars* and RUMORS of wars...For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...”

Verse 22 continues, “And *except those days should be shortened*, there should no flesh be saved [alive]...”

In other words, if Christ does not return, mankind will push itself to annihilation through global thermonuclear war!

Unlike the temporary reign of Cyrus, the coming SUPERGOVERNMENT ruled by Jesus Christ will bring lasting peace and prosperity throughout the world.

At that time, Christ “shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war any more*” (Isa. 2:4).

Only then will Iran and Israel finally—and FOREVER—be able to return to the friendly relations they once enjoyed. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

Did you know that Jesus was foretold to bring the gospel? In the Old Testament, Jesus was prophesied to come as a *messenger*. Notice Malachi 3:1: “Behold, I will send My messenger [in this case, John the Baptist], and he shall prepare the way before Me [Christ]; and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in...”

Christ was the “messenger” of the gospel—not the message itself.

Now compare the passage in Malachi with another: “The law and the prophets were until John [the Baptist—only Old Testament scriptures had been preached previously]: *since that time the kingdom of God* is preached, and every man [who chooses] presses into it” (Luke 16:16). Remember that in Mark, Jesus preached the “kingdom of God,” and called it *the gospel*.

The word *gospel* comes from the Old English term “god-spell” or *good news*. The word *kingdom* also derives from an Old English term, and simply means “government.” Therefore, it is accurate to say Christ preached “the good news of the government of God.” You can know the *who, what, where, when, why* and *how* of this good news, and how it relates to the Bible’s very greatest prophecy.

The kingdom of God is the dominant theme of not only the New Testament, but also of the whole Bible. Incredibly, most know little or nothing of it. This world’s ministers are oblivious to this gospel, and never preach about it. Therefore, virtually the whole world stands in complete ignorance of the single greatest truth in God’s Word!

All God’s Prophets Preached the Kingdom

The book of Acts contains an extraordinary statement from the apostle Peter. Let’s read it: “Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the

presence of the Lord. And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of *restitution* [or restoring] of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (3:19-21).

Notice that Peter refers to the coming of Christ (vs. 19) as “the presence of the Lord,” meaning He will be back on Earth. Verse 20 states that God “shall send Jesus Christ.” Verse 21 describes God’s kingdom as the “restitution of all things.” Peter stated that this “restitution” (Christ establishing His kingdom) is something “God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (vs. 21).

This is a stunning statement! But is it true?

Did God actually use *all* of His prophets to announce His kingdom? Bible scholars and religionists ignore this knowledge—and even reject it without examination.

Let’s review just a few examples. In fact, let’s start in the period before the Flood. The apostle Jude, Jesus’ brother, stated, “Enoch [Noah’s great-grandfather]...prophesied...saying, Behold, *the Lord comes* with ten thousands of His saints, to *execute judgment* upon all...” (vs. 14-15). These verses clearly refer to Christ coming to establish a world-ruling *government* under Himself and the saints.

The Bible calls Enoch a “preacher of righteousness” (II Pet. 2:5). Including Abel, there were *six other men* who previously held this role, with their lives spanning the entire period between Adam and the Flood.

All of them spoke the same message. Remember, Peter said, “...since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

Is there evidence the gospel was preached in the period *following* the Flood?

In Genesis 12:3, God said to Abraham, “...in you shall *all families* of the earth be blessed.” This verse is also referenced in Galatians 3:8, but is phrased a little differently: “...In you shall *all nations* be blessed.” This

verse also states that the gospel was “preached...unto Abraham.” This is fascinating understanding! Not only did Abraham have the gospel preached to him (probably by Melchizedek), but it is also preached in *Genesis*, through the writings of *Moses*! Ask: how could *all* nations be blessed unless Christ establishes His government *on Earth*—where the nations are?

Moses was the first man God raised up to lead ancient Israel. As both a prophet and judge, he preached the gospel to Israel in the wilderness.

Acts 3:24 references Samuel, also a prophet, as having preached the gospel. Notice: “Yes, and *all the prophets from Samuel* and those that follow after, *as many as have spoken*, have likewise foretold of these days.”

These are powerful statements that cannot be glossed over. This verse says, “All God’s prophets...as many as have spoken...foretold of these days”!

King David preached the kingdom of God! He recorded, “...for You [God] shall *judge* the people righteously, and *govern* the nations upon earth” (Psa. 67:4). This obviously refers to God’s coming *supergovernment*. Nations are on Earth, not in heaven!

Major and Minor Prophets

Notice what the prophet Isaiah wrote: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the *government* shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His *government* and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon *His kingdom*, to order it, and to establish it with *judgment* and with *justice* from henceforth even *forever*” (9:6-7).

This prophecy is so obvious it needs no explanation!

Now the prophet Jeremiah: “Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise unto David a Righteous Branch, and *a King shall reign* and prosper, and shall execute *judgment* and *justice* in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall

dwell safely [neither of these are happening now]: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:5-6).

These verses also need no explanation.

Ezekiel wrote this of Israel’s descendants alive today: “For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land” (36:24).

The next 10 verses describe a period of rebuilding and national prosperity that can only happen *after* Christ’s Return. They are unmistakably clear.

Did the prophet Daniel preach the kingdom of God? The Bible answers: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a *kingdom*, which shall never be destroyed: and the *kingdom* shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms [of men], and it shall stand forever” (2:44).

All the so-called minor prophets also recorded the gospel of the kingdom of God in one way or another.

God’s Servants Preached the Same Message

Remember, seeing the phrase “the gospel of the kingdom of God” is not the only proper way of describing this coming government!

Peter was right. “God *has* spoken by the mouth of *all* His holy prophets since the world began” until the “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21).

An important final point from this verse. It says, “*God has spoken...*” The gospel of the kingdom of God is a message *from God*. It should be clear that *God speaks* through whatever kind of servant He is using—prophet, patriarch, judge, deacon, preacher of righteousness, king, apostle or pastor!

His servants always spoke the *same message!*

The word *gospel* is found over 100 times in the Bible. Sometimes it is found alone, and sometimes “of the kingdom” follows it. Other times, it includes “of the kingdom of God,” or the equivalent phrase “of the kingdom of heaven.”

Note that it says “*of* heaven,” not “*in* heaven.” It is heaven’s kingdom, and there is a big difference between the two. Just as kingdom *of* God means God’s kingdom—not the kingdom *in* God—the same is true of the kingdom *of* heaven or *heaven’s kingdom*.

Grasp this crucial point!

Throughout the New Testament, the word “kingdom” is found 27 times, “kingdom of God” 75 times, and “kingdom of heaven” 34 times. All are clearly one and the same.

What Paul Preached

Paul preached the kingdom of God to the Gentiles. Yet, some believe he preached to them a “different” gospel—again, unaware that it was Paul who pronounced a curse on anyone who did this. However, he did not neglect the subject of Christ’s role in the salvation process.

First, Acts 19:8 establishes which gospel he preached: “And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the *kingdom of God*.” In many of his epistles, Paul taught the kingdom to Gentile congregations. His message was always the same. He continually preached, taught and referred to the *kingdom of God*.

He wrote, “I have gone preaching *the kingdom of God*...repentance toward God, AND *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 20:25, 21). He preached the same gospel to both Jew and Gentile.

Finally, let’s read this last recorded picture of Paul’s life: “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, AND *teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ...*” (28:30-31).

Luke, who was the writer of Acts, differentiates between preaching about the *kingdom of God* and preaching about *Jesus Christ!* While both are vitally important, they are clearly two *separate* subjects!

The deacon Philip also preached both in Acts: “But when they believed

Philip...concerning the kingdom of God, AND the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (8:12). Philip differentiated between the kingdom of God and Christ. Remember, the messenger is not the message.

Notice that these in Samaria were baptized only after “they believed” the right message—not some human idea about it. Also, Jesus’ name was taught as an all-important, but *additional*, understanding.

Jesus is *not* the gospel. However, He does stand directly *alongside* the true gospel and, as Head of God’s kingdom on Earth under the Father, *will* rule the entire earth—with the saints beside Him!—when He returns to establish it.

Do not lose sight of this!

The apostle Paul further distinguishes between the *gospel* and the *person* of Christ in this powerful warning: “For if he that comes preaches *another Jesus*, whom we have not preached...or *another gospel*, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him” (II Cor. 11:4). Paul wanted the Corinthians to reject false teachers and hold to what *he* had taught them. The point here is Paul distinguishes between the teaching of a *false Jesus* and that of a *false gospel*. These are—and always have been—separate errors.

Some get confused when reading I Corinthians 15:1-4, thinking Paul contradicts himself by stating that “the gospel...[is] how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day” (vs. 1, 3-4). Careful reading makes clear “the gospel” reference in verse 1 is not connected to Christ’s death for our sins and His burial, referenced in verses 3 and 4. When correctly understood, rather than saying Jesus is the gospel—which would contradict all other passages on the subject—this passage confirms the opposite, and supports all the scriptures we have covered!

Since Jesus preached “repent and believe the gospel,” it should now be

clear why. His role must always be preached alongside the kingdom of God. One cannot enter the kingdom unless he understands and accepts that “Christ died for our sins”—and that person has *repented* of his sins.

What evidence is there that other New Testament writers preached the same message? A great deal!

All the Apostles Preached This Same Gospel

The apostle Peter also preached the kingdom of God: “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the *everlasting kingdom* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 1:11). So did the apostle James: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the *kingdom* which He has promised to them that love Him?” (2:5).

Matthew’s account mentions the phrase “gospel of the kingdom” three times. Notice one: “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the *gospel of the kingdom*, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (9:35). In most of His parables, Jesus taught the basics of the kingdom of God. Matthew alone makes over 50 references to it.

Luke records what Jesus Christ commissioned His disciples to preach: “Then He called His twelve disciples together...And He sent them to preach the *kingdom of God*...” (9:1-2). Soon after, He sent 70 others to preach, and they also carried the message of the “kingdom of God” (10:1, 9).

Kingdom of God Must Still Be Preached Today

In the Matthew 24 and 25 Olivet Prophecy, Jesus was asked about those events that would be the signs of His Second Coming and of “the end of the world [age]” (24:3). He foretold certain trends and conditions that would occur first. In verse 14, He also stated,



What Do You Believe?

Jesus and the apostles preached the “gospel.” Do you know what it is? Was it the same gospel that Paul preached to the Gentiles? What does “gospel” mean anyway? Learn the answers from your Bible!



“And this *gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the *end* come.”

The true gospel was foretold to be preached until “the end come.” This means *someone* will be preaching it now—in our present age—because the end—close as it now is—has not *yet* come.

Only one Church is doing this!

Preaching the truth of the gospel to the world was restored by Herbert W. Armstrong beginning in 1934. God used this man to reach hundreds of millions with this message throughout a 52-year ministry that ended with his death in 1986. Mr. Armstrong taught me the true gospel and trained me to be able to take this same message to the world.

Make no mistake! Jesus Christ *will* soon return to Earth and establish His kingdom. It will reign over the *entire* earth—ALL nations—and the resurrected saints—those who have qualified to rule with Christ—shall share this reign with Him.

In just this brief Personal, you have learned more about the true gospel of the Bible than most will ever know.

Take time to read my vital booklet, *Which Is the True Gospel?* You will be left with no doubt. You may also wish to read my book *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity*. It explains much more about how professing Christianity has twisted and misrepresented the truth about Christ and His teachings. Both titles are available at www.rcg.org. □

POLITICS

Russia: Largest Protests in Two Decades



■ **ENRAGED:** Protesters carry the Russian Empire's black, yellow and white flag during a rally against the December 4 parliament elections in Moscow (Dec. 24, 2011).

PHOTO: NATALIA KOLESNIKOVA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Thousands of demonstrators, outraged about suspected electoral rigging during Russia's December 4 parliamentary elections and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's presidential bid, crowded the nation's capital, Moscow, to voice their discontent for the second time in two weeks.

During the largest Russian protests since the Soviet Union's fall 20 years ago, dissidents demanded Mr. Putin's resignation and an election rerun.

"...protesters shouted 'New Elections, New Elections,' and organizers say their densely packed mass on Sakharov Avenue reached 100,000 people, which would exceed the numbers who showed up to protest at a similar rally in Moscow two weeks [prior]," *Voice of America* reported.

Of the same demonstration, *The Associated Press* stated: "The various liberal, nationalist and leftist groups that took part appear united only by their desire to see 'Russia without Putin,' a popular chant."

Despite demonstrations and calls for Mr. Putin to step down by former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the prime minister is expected to win the country's March presidential election.

"Although his ratings have plummeted in Moscow and St. Petersburg, [Mr. Putin] remains extremely popular with ordinary Russians living in the provinces," *The Telegraph* stated. "Opinion polls show he would comfortably win a presidential election if it was held tomorrow, albeit in the second round."

Among his election proposals, *Reuters* reported that Mr. Putin "wants to bring ex-Soviet states into a 'Eurasian Union.'" He also said he may be willing to allow the registration of small opposition parties, something currently prohibited. In addition, he said he plans to support Dmitry Medvedev for premier, which protesters claim disregards the democratic process.

A win by Mr. Putin could result in his maintaining power until 2024.

"It's absolutely unacceptable that the man who's in power [already] for 12 years will be here for 12 years more!" one demonstrator told *NBC News*. He later stated, "We don't want another revolution, or bloodshed, but if Putin is going to win then there may be a 'Russian Spring'—not an Arab Spring but a Russian one." □

Deadly Kidney Disease Plagues Central Americans

Researchers are confounded by a kidney-failure disease striking Central American rural workers at alarming rates. According to *PRI's The World*, chronic kidney disease (CKD) has reached epidemic levels among males, and spread to at least six Pacific-coast countries in Central America.

In Nicaragua, the disease is making a serious impact on the country's male population.

"Targeting scores of men working on the fields, it has surpassed HIV and diabetes combined as the biggest killer of males in the embattled Central American country," a *Reuters* video report stated.

The *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists* said the disease is "the second leading cause of death for men" in El Salvador, while in Guanacaste, Costa Rica, "the regional hospital had to start a home dialysis program because it was overwhelmed with so many CKD victims that it began running out of beds to treat patients with other ailments."

A team of researchers from the Boston University School of Public Health [BUSPH] is investigating possible causes for the terminal-disease outbreak, including exposure to dangerous chemicals and hours of strenuous work in extreme heat.

"The disease has, essentially, been a death sentence once you get it," associate professor of epidemiology and BUSPH lead researcher Daniel Brooks stated in a Boston University release. "We don't often have public health epidemics [where] we really have no idea what the cause is. In this case, that is the situation."

PRI's The World also quoted Mr. Brooks: "Day after day of hard manual labor in hot conditions—without sufficient replacement of fluids—could lead to effects on the kidney that are not obvious at first but over time accumulate to the point that it enters into a diseased state...This has never been so far shown to cause chronic kidney

SOCIETY & LIFESTYLES

U.S. Domestic Violence Soars

At least one out of three women, and one in four men, have been the victim of sexual assault, physical violence, or stalking by a spouse or significant other, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study reported.

"On average, 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States...Over the course of a year, that equals more than 12 million women and men."

The research revealed that "more than 1 million women are raped in a year and over 6 million women and men are victims of stalking in a year."

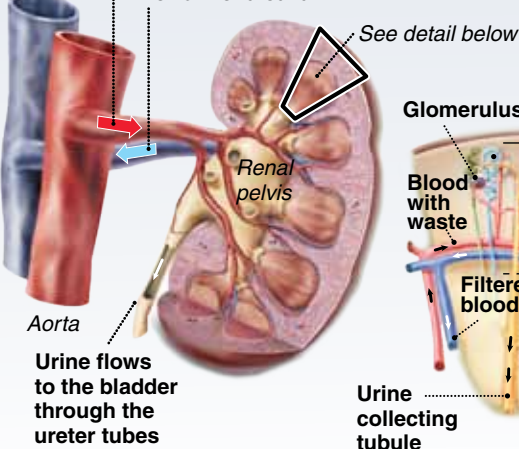
In addition, *CNN* reported that almost a quarter of women and "one in seven men said they had been subjected to 'severe physical violence' by an intimate partner—defined in the report as being hit with a fist or hard object, beaten or slammed against something." □

Vital Filters

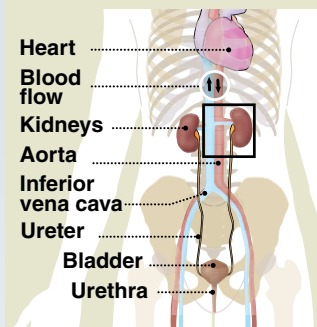
Researchers are confounded by a disease in Central America that is causing kidney failure among rural workers. The kidneys, two fist-sized organs located near the middle of the back, filter toxins and excess water from the blood.

Blood from the heart flows through the aorta to the kidney

Filtered blood flows back into the body through the inferior vena cava



Source: Eddie Thomas, Minneapolis Star Tribune
Graphic: National Institute of Health; Encyclopedia Britannica



How they clean

- After the body takes what it needs from food, wastes are sent to the blood
- The kidneys clean the blood by sending it through millions of little filters called nephrons
- Each nephron consists of a glomerulus, a knot of tiny blood vessels, which intertwines with tubules, or urine collecting tubes
- The glomerulus acts as a sieve to keep normal proteins and cells in the blood while sending excess water and waste into the tubules

disease, so we would be talking about a new mechanism that has not so far been described in the scientific literature." □

WHAT'S WRONG WITH VALENTINE'S DAY?

The Truth Behind St. Valentine's Day

St. Valentine's Day is the world's "holiest of days" since the Bible says that God is love (1 John 4:8). How then do we observe the celebration of His day? Do we follow His example - like Christmas - partaking of the candy and cards of any custom associated with His day?

What's there about the candy and cards of any custom associated with His day? The Bible says that God is love (1 John 4:8). How then do we observe the celebration of His day? Do we follow His example - like Christmas - partaking of the candy and cards of any custom associated with His day?

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God's HOLY DAYS or Pagan HOLIDAYS?



Does God want Christians to partake of candy, cards and other customs associated with this day? Learn the remarkable answers!

Visit www.rcg.org to find the truth behind Valentine's Day!