

MARCH 2012

THE

REALTRUTH.ORG

REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



HOLY BIBLE

MUST YOU
BELIEVE IN
JESUS CHRIST
TO BE SAVED?

THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. X | NO. 2 | MARCH 2012

ARTICLES

REALTRUTH.ORG



■ **WASTELAND:** Debris covers a large area near Sendai in Miyagi prefecture after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami (March 13, 2011).

PHOTO: MIKE CLARKE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Japan's Earthquake-Tsunami Disaster: One Year Later

Though some areas have begun to thrive again, the nation still has a long road to recovery.

Page 12

FEATURES

Personal from David C. Pack
World News Desk 1
24

FRONT COVER: Photo by Justin Skinner/Getty Images/iStockphoto.

Wanted: True Leadership

Amid deepening global problems, nations require strong leaders to weather the storm. Where can they be found?
Page 4

St. Patrick's Day: Religious Tribute or Empty Tradition?

Superstitions, hard drinking, and raucous behavior are hints of this holiday's true colors.
Page 7

How Should You Prepare for Difficult Times?

The "prepper" movement is growing across America, and includes many professing Christians. What does the Bible say about the survivalist mentality?
Page 10

The Sabbath—What Few Understand

Many believe that observing Saturday was meant only for the Jews or those of the Old Testament. Yet the Bible reveals that it carries far greater significance than what most believe.
Page 14

Must You Believe in Jesus Christ to Be Saved?

The idea that anyone can achieve salvation without hearing Jesus Christ's name is growing in popularity. What is the truth?
Page 15

PUBLISHER/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DAVID C. PACK

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

SENIOR EDITORS
WILLIAM H. BEHRER
KEVIN D. DENECE
GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

DAVID C. PACK
JEFFREY R. AMBROSE
SAMUEL C. BAXTER
WILLIAM H. BEHRER
ABDON V. BUENA
RYAN L. CASWELL
SCOTT A. CLARK
JEFFREY D. DAVIS
KEVIN D. DENECE
RYAN P. DENECE
JONATHAN A. DICEN
ROBERT R. FARRELL
BRIAN K. JACKSON
GREGORY E. KAIDANNEK
GABRIEL N. LISCHAK
H. CHRIS LOMAS
LARRY J. MCELROY
KENNETH M. OREL
JUSTIN T. PALM
JAMES F. PASTOR
JAMES RODRIGUEZ
BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER
MARK A. SHARPE
JACOB C. TOEWS
NESTOR A. TORO
JAMES F. TURCK
F. JACO VILJOEN
VIDAL N. WACHUKU

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

SAMUEL C. BAXTER
STACEY L. PALM

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

NESTOR A. TORO

ART/GRAPHICS

DARNITRA D. JACKSON
PAULA C. RONDEAU
EILEEN M. WILLARD

WEBSITE SERVICES

BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER
ANGELA K. BAXTER
JEFFREY D. DAVIS
JUSTIN M. FRAZIER

The Real Truth magazine is provided free of charge. This is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the members of The Restored Church of God, and by the offerings and donations of co-workers and donors. Contributions are gratefully welcomed and are tax-deductible in the U.S. and Canada. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support the Work of God in preaching and publishing the gospel to all nations are gladly welcomed as co-workers. Contributions should be sent to the address below.

The preparation and production of this magazine involved the work of editors, proofreaders, graphic artists, illustrators, writers, researchers and those who support the Work of God.

Copyright © 2012, The Restored Church of God. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved.

The Restored Church of God is not responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photos.

Scriptures are quoted from the King James (or Authorized) Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

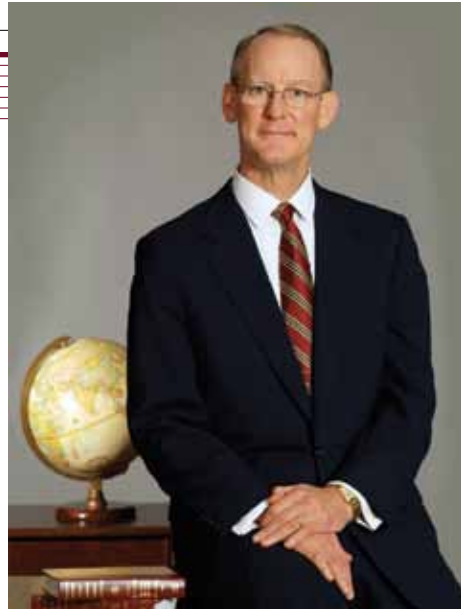
Contact *The Real Truth*:

P.O. Box 23295
Wadsworth, OH 44282

realtruth.org

PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Will Europe's Economy Collapse?

THE CONTINENT of Europe is in its worst crisis since WWII—one which threatens to destroy it. Think of headlines describing riots—violence—debt—entitlement cutbacks—banks—and bailouts! Long-established financial institutions are in trouble. Millions are unemployed, with little hope of a job. And millions of jobs are at risk. More and more lives are simply shattering. Extreme social unrest is brewing. Angry, frustrated people are taking to the streets in violent protests against their governments—some of which have already fallen. Others are faltering. Entire nations face bankruptcy. The existence of the European Union hangs in the balance.

Leaders are frantically searching for solutions, but to no avail. Europe is facing financial Armageddon. Will it survive? And how will the crisis ultimately affect the world? Europe WILL come together! The stage is rapidly being set, with economics the catalyst for what is coming. The Bible has *much* to say about where this is leading.

Unprecedented Financial Crisis

Everything that occurs on planet Earth is subject to a great unseen law—that of CAUSE and EFFECT. For every cause, there are one or more effects. Most people can see these effects—good or bad—but cannot trace them back to their *origin*—the *cause* that produced them. Europe is suffering from a host of effects—mostly BAD! There are *causes* behind these effects.

This Personal examines the *causes*—the *WHY*—of Europe's financial problems. Once you understand this, you can know where Europe is going—you can know how conditions, trends and events will end. Europe is on a *collision course* with PROPHECY! But some background is necessary.

The situation in Europe is nearly apocalyptic, and the stakes have *never* been higher. Many European nations simply cannot repay their debts, while at the same time their economies are slowing, and tax revenue is decreasing. Worse, it is harder and harder to borrow more money. With giant debt loads hanging over these countries, Europe is running out of options. Analysts now warn of impending bank failures. According to one executive at a major global bank, "If anyone thinks things are getting better then they simply don't understand how severe the problems are" (*Telegraph*).

First is the growing distrust between banks, which are withdrawing deposits from one another and placing them with the European Central Bank (ECB). In December 2011, deposits there were at an all-time high of 905 billion euros! And many banks are becoming dependent on funding from their own central banks—so-called taxpayer-funded “zombie banks.”

As of December 2011, there is also a mammoth 115 billion euro capital shortfall in the eurozone’s banking system. Banks have run out of proper forms of collateral needed to finance short-term loans, and are instead digging into their gold reserves—a last ditch emergency option. A collateral crunch lies ahead!

Europe’s financial system is so unstable that few experts any longer believe that the European Union has the funds to address the banks’ problems. Even if the bailout funds were raised to a *trillion* euros, some warn this would only help Italy and Spain—just two of 27 EU members. What happens when other countries need bailouts?

Europe’s banks are facing a crisis of immense proportions. A collapse of at least one major European bank is more than a possibility, it is *imminent*. When this happens, Europe’s financial sector will plunge into chaos, because its economies are already teetering on the edge.

Growth is stagnant—and some economies are shrinking. Again, countries are falling deeper into debt as tax revenue is insufficient and borrowing costs increase. Italy’s borrowing rate is at 5.4 percent. Greece’s, Ireland’s and Portugal’s are way over 7 percent—with Greece’s at over 20 percent!

Several countries have unemployment rates over 10 percent, with some over 20 percent. Others have over 20 percent unemployment rates just among youth. With jobs vanishing and others threatened, labor unions are on the march. In certain countries,

relations between governments, capital and labor are very bad and growing worse.

At Europe’s time of greatest need, its leaders hold summit after summit, with little decisive action resulting. Europeans are searching for a champion—a bold, confident, courageous leader with the vision to deliver them from their troubles. While little consensus has been made about proposed solutions, most agree on one thing: Europe faces its *darkest hour* since the second world war.

Spreading Economic Contagion

Consider just some European countries and their challenges, starting with Greece. As of early 2012, Greece’s debt stands at 340 billion euros—by far the largest debt in the history of this nation of only 11 million. This equals a staggering 31,000 euros for every Greek man, woman and child. In 2010, Greece received a 110-billion-euro bailout. Yet this was not enough. So a second bailout was agreed upon.

Investors still fear that even the latest bailout will not cover Greece’s debts, which seem to be a bottomless pit. If Greece runs completely out of money, French and German banks will be stuck with billions of euros in bad loans. These banks would then need a bailout by *their* governments! And America cannot help because its debt is today worse than Greece when size is factored in.

Investor confidence in Greece is so low its bonds are considered “junk.” This means the global financial community believes there is a high likelihood Greece will default. If so, the impact on Europe would be catastrophic!

Next is Ireland—which saw the collapse of its banking system after bad real estate investments. The government took over the country’s largest banks in an attempt to save them, and the International Monetary Fund and EU forced the nation to accept a bailout amounting to 85 billion euros.

This was followed by the Irish government passing the toughest budget in its history. Yet more Irish bailouts are almost certain.

Then comes Portugal. Its shrinking, uncompetitive economy has severely reduced government tax revenue. This forced its prime minister to resign. To get a 78-billion-euro bailout, the new government passed tough austerity measures. This led to mass protests. Citing Portugal’s worsening economy, Moody’s credit rating agency has downgraded its status at least five times since 2009. Like Ireland, more bailouts will almost certainly be needed.

But these countries are tiny compared to much larger Spain and Italy.

Too Big to Fail?

Spain’s once booming real estate market has collapsed. Its banks have been left with a load of bad debt. Many are in serious trouble, leading to a recession in which the unemployment rate has passed 20 percent. Almost 50 percent of young Spaniards are not working!

Disillusioned with the lack of prospects, many are emigrating abroad—particularly the skilled and educated—the ones the country can least afford to lose! Spain’s borrowing rate reached record highs, forcing its government to adopt austerity measures. Spain’s economic outlook has been downgraded four times since 2009.

The biggest concern is Italy—the fourth-largest economy in Europe, with the highest debt load. Coupled with this, its economy is stagnant. And it is being charged 5.4 percent to borrow money. This is an astronomical rate for such a large nation—the eighth-largest economy *in the world*. Germany only pays a quarter of 1 percent!

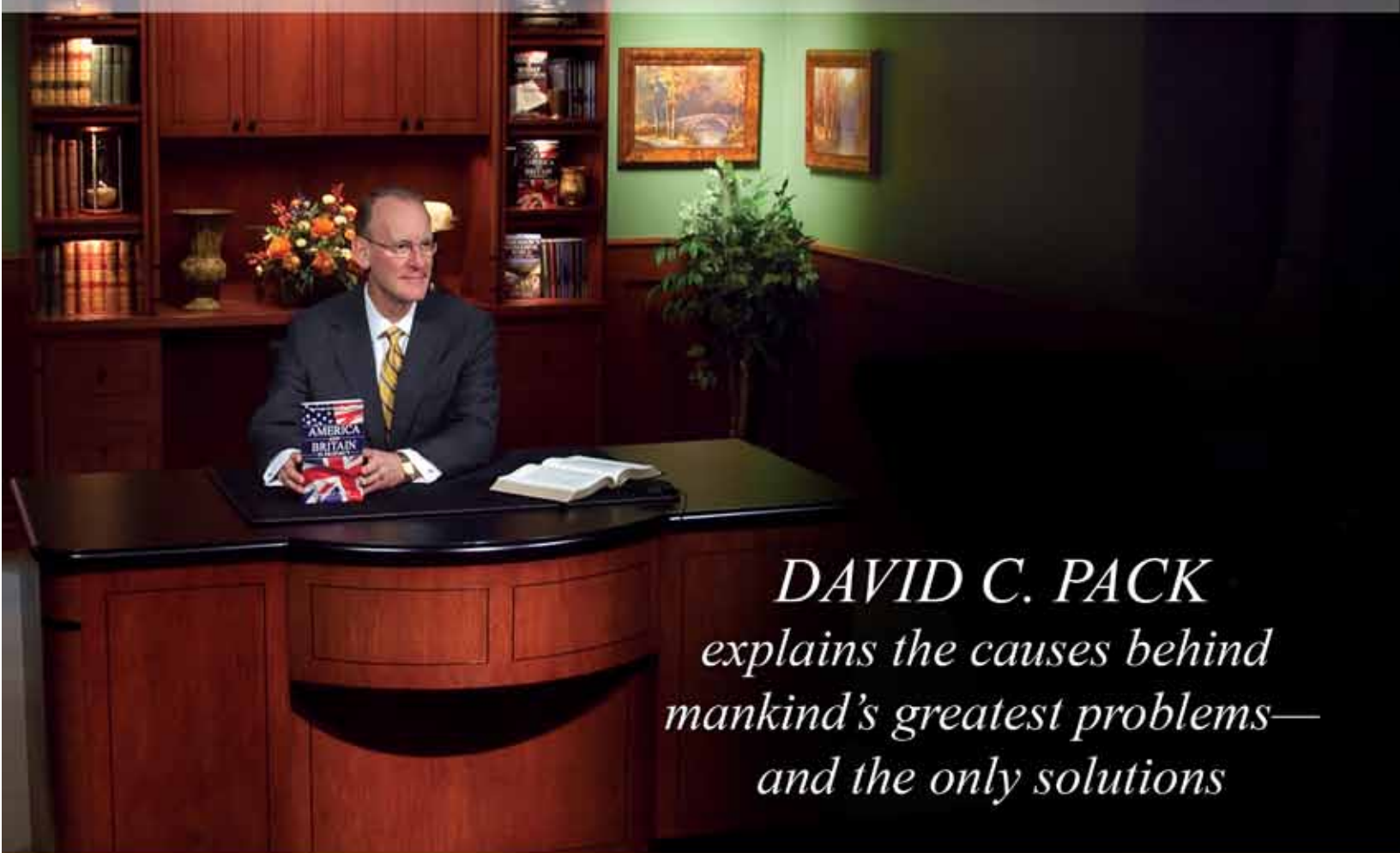
If trends continue, it is only a matter of time before Italy cannot pay its debts. If a bailout is required, no

*Please see **PERSONAL**, page 20*



THE WORLD TO COME

A Voice Cries Out—Answering Life's Greatest Questions!



DAVID C. PACK
explains the causes behind
mankind's greatest problems—
and the only solutions

WORLDTOCOME.ORG

Broadcasts Available Daily



Amid deepening global problems, nations require strong leaders to weather the storm. Where can they be found?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

WE NEED someone who can unite us. Someone we can trust. Someone charismatic. Someone with the resolve to tackle tough times. Someone who understands issues affecting ordinary people. An everyman and visionary—a great leader.

Similar thoughts are on Americans' minds as the economy continues to limp along and unemployment remains depressingly high. These and other concerns make each person feel that the candidate he or she supports in the 2012 presidential election is especially important.

Many are ready to back the incumbent president, and give him four more years to follow through on his vision for the nation. Others are scouring the political landscape for an alternative, with widely different opinions on who fits the bill. A career politician? A devoutly religious man? A former CEO? Someone else?

Yet the United States is not the only country holding national elections this year. Votes are occurring in Russia, China, Kenya, France, Greece, Libya, Venezuela and elsewhere. The leaders of both Mexico and South Korea have reached the end of their respective terms. Of the five permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council, only Britain is not selecting its top government position in 2012.

As in the U.S., these votes are crucial. France must tackle the euro crisis, of which Greece is at the center. Libya and Egypt must hold together their post-revolution governments. South Korea faces many unknowns

WANTED: TRUE LEADERSHIP

with Kim Jung Il's successor now leading North Korea. Mexico's bloody drug war shows no sign of abating.

Then there is the question of resultant violence. A national vote in Russia usually means riots, and Kenya's 2007 presidential election spawned machete-wielding mobs.

Public passions are running high the world over, however, fueled by the Arab Spring and "Occupy" trend. Riots may spread in unexpected places. What will the out-of-work, dissatisfied masses do if their favored candidate is not put in office?

These are powder-keg times, with the global mood rigged to explode. In moments of crisis and uncertainty, citizens seek strong presidents, premiers and governors. And with elections occurring across the planet, many are looking for men and women to solve such mounting problems.

It is clear the world desperately needs true leaders.

Election-year Politics

America ramping up to a presidential vote demonstrates the state of modern politics, and how they play against any ideal candidates vying for head of state.

Look at attack ads. Mudslinging, propagating half-truths, and *ad hominem* arguments are common. Add to these biased news outlets defending their chosen candidate, and digging up dirt on the opposition. If a person does not have any substantial skeletons in his closet, then he will be denigrated through whatever means necessary. This can be as petty as the way he combs his hair.

Super PACs add to this. This breed of "public action committee" operates independently of a specific candidate and can take in an unlimited amount of funding from individuals, unions and corporations. In other words, these committees decide the content of advertisement campaigns for a given person—without the involvement of the man or woman they are assisting.

Imagine the potential hatchet jobs and propaganda possibilities when a group can have *unlimited* funding!

Today, politics has essentially turned into a game of who you know, how much money you have, what the media thinks of you, and how good you look on TV.

Whenever a national vote looms, another "American pastime" reappears: election-year politics. This means that instead of focusing on problems at



■ **TALLYING NUMBERS:** Egyptian government leaders count ballots after voting for a new parliament speaker (Jan. 23, 2012).
PHOTO: KHALED ELFIQI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

hand, leaders in Washington will largely avoid controversial decisions until after November 6. Very little will be said or done unless it plays well with people or hurts the reputation of the other party. This political posturing also means a barrage of more promises than any politician could ever hope to keep.

Similar trends are occurring around the globe, in which attack ads, personal propaganda, and election-year politics also play a role—and all in a year when nations need swift governmental action to address their most crippling problems.

While many elected officials sincerely want to help their nations succeed, they are forced to "play the game" to remain in office. It seems the deck is stacked against any *effective* leaders rising to high office.

History's "Greats"

What citizens want from an ideal leader has generally been the same—no matter the time period or circumstances. He should recognize the problems of the people and promptly address them, make bold decisions when necessary,

and bring lasting peace, health and abundance to everyone under him.

To accomplish this, a leader must have characteristics such as vision, good judgment, and integrity, and selflessly put his country's needs before his own concerns.

Historians hold up some world leaders as examples of these qualities.

After the Revolutionary War, George Washington wanted to return to his estate in Virginia. Yet when he saw his country needed him to run for president, he did.

Winston Churchill—known as the "British bulldog"—gave inspirational speeches that helped his nation endure World War II, and stood up to one of the most destructive European dictators. Even as his health began to fade, he exerted great effort to continue actively participating in government.

Golda Meir, Israel's first prime minister, planned to move to the newly created country to live on a farm. Instead, she found herself working with surrounding national leaders to ensure Jewish people could have a homeland after they were almost destroyed by the Holocaust.

Some elected officials are seen as the personification of certain of these ideal qualities. For example, Abraham Lincoln is known as "Honest Abe."

Non-political leaders can also exemplify aspects of good character. In 1914, explorer Ernest Shackleton tried to cross Antarctica. His 27-man crew became stranded in the wintry wilderness for 20 months, yet because of his perseverance and drive, not one of them died.

While some successful men and women receive near-unanimous praise from their countrymen, the track records of others are markedly different. For example, while some label Julius Caesar the consummate politician, he murdered his rivals! Genghis Khan amassed a formidable kingdom and was incredibly adaptable on the battlefield, yet was notoriously cruel.

Even the best leaders had flaws, whether a fierce temper or tendency toward depression.

But one characteristic runs through the lives of all of these prominent figures: their time in power came to an end. Caesar's empire fell apart. Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Churchill was voted out of Parliament. And so on.

While some of these men and women did help their nations weather hard times, they could not ensure lasting peace and prosperity for their citizenry. At best, each could offer only a temporary period of abundance or respite from war.

Look at the entire history of those considered great leaders. The "great" ancient kingdoms—whether ruled by the pharaohs of Egypt, kings of Babylon, or Caesars of Rome—ended in utter collapse. The prominent nations of the 20th century—which have been helmed by many so-called "great" men—are now in decline, making way for rising new global superpowers. Attempts to use religion (Islam, Christianity, etc.) as a backbone of government have failed, and the same can be said for the efforts of atheists.

Given this track record, finding someone who perfectly upholds every trait of a true leader appears a pipe dream.

Only Solution

Here is the problem. Governments of men, invariably rely on *men* (and women) to rule them. Yet this means an administration's rule is always swayed by human nature.

Some feel human nature can be changed, and govern with the assumption that each man, woman and child is inherently good. Others feel mankind *cannot* change and govern with an iron fist, imposing tyrannical rule. Again, neither of these approaches has ever been ultimately successful.

What is missing?

Unknown to most, the Bible contains a complete map of human nature, and explains how and why political leaders continue to fail to initiate solu-

tions. Consider just one verse: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9).

Take this passage at face value. It is the only answer to why even "great" rulers ultimately fail. The human mind is deceitful *above all things*. Despite millennia of being unable to solve just one of its greatest problems—war, famine, disease, etc.—mankind continues to *deceive* itself, believing it will ultimately discover these solutions.

While the Bible reveals the *why* behind the failure of even "great" men, it also holds incredible GOOD NEWS of the only solution to mankind's woes.

Consider what is written in the Old Testament book of Isaiah: "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" (9:6).

The "Child" mentioned in this passage is Jesus Christ. Notice He has a *government*. The next verse states, "Of the increase of *His government* and *peace* there shall be no end...and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever" (vs. 7).

Peace has not been increasing since Christ's earthly ministry. In fact, the opposite has happened—*war* has increased! Therefore, this kingdom must yet be established in the future.

Part of how Christ will rule this coming supergovernment is detailed in verse 6. Most imagine Him as a helpless baby in a manger or weakling on a cross. Yet the meaning of the original Hebrew for the words of His described characteristics reveals the traits a truly great leader must have (all definitions taken from *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* and *Gesenius's Lexicon*).

■ **Wonderful:** "admirable" and "distinguished."

■ **Counselor:** "to advise, consult, give counsel, counsel, purpose, devise, plan." Under His rulership, mankind will receive perfect advice and solutions to its problems.

■ **Mighty God:** this has a similar meaning to the modern term "strong man."

■ **Prince of Peace:** this phrase connotes "welfare, peace," "safety," "health, prosperity," "quiet, tranquility, contentment," "friendship," as well as peace in "human relationships," "with God," and "from war." This is true peace!

Additional qualifications for Christ ruling Earth are found throughout the Bible. In gospel accounts, Jesus is seen to be an exceptional speaker, sometimes teaching crowds of thousands (Matt. 14:13-21). (He must have been effective because they refused to leave even when hungry.) In addition, He is shown to be a leader with integrity, good judgment, and vision—who selflessly puts others first. And as the account in Matthew 4 demonstrates, He is immune to bribery and corruption.

In short, He will be the perfect leader because He possesses perfect character! (Read Hebrews 5:8-9.)

With Christ's soon-coming SUPER-GOVERNMENT in place, people will again come from near and far to hear Him teach. At that time, "...many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths...And He 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. 2:3-4).

Only when all of man's failed attempts at governing himself are wiped away, and the ULTIMATE leader takes His throne over Earth, will peace and prosperity finally "break out" across the globe. These conditions will then continue "from henceforth even forever."

Man's long-running search for true leadership will finally be over.

To learn more, read *What Is the Kingdom of God?* and *Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!* at rcg.org/books. □

St. Patrick's Day

Religious Tribute or Empty Tradition?

Superstitions, hard drinking, and raucous behavior are hints of this holiday's true colors.

BY NESTOR A. TORO

THE HOLIDAY has become an emblem of spring and all things Irish. A day for millions to wear their "St. Patty's" attire and pinch those who neglect to wear green. City streets reverberate to the tunes of marching bands, and harp, fiddle and bagpipe sounds are matched with the aroma of freshly boiled corned beef (or traditional boiled bacon) and cabbage.

March 17 is a day of Irish folklore and the color green—mythical green leprechauns, green sham-

rocks, green fingernails, green rivers, green athletic jerseys, and green alcoholic drinks, among others.

For countless numbers of celebrants, it is a holiday in which religion and the pub meet halfway. Many begin the day with acts of devotion, only to end it with excessive booze. This type of widespread inebriation moved Michigan's government to pass a "super drunk" law in 2010. The date is even part of AAA motor club's "tow-to-go" program, a free and confidential ride home for drunken holiday drivers.

The historical inspiration for such a celebration: a fifth-century Briton largely attributed with Ireland's con-

version to Christianity. On the anniversary of his death, March 17, he is commemorated as the symbol of Ireland.

In *The Antiquities of Ireland*, author Edward Ledwich examined medieval accounts that promoted the myths surrounding the holiday: "St. Patrick while an infant, brought a new river from the earth, which cured the blind. He produced fire from ice. He raised his nurse from the dead. He expelled a devil from an heifer, and he changed water into honey. These were but the infant sports of this wonder-working Saint."

Obvious fables aside, most see nothing wrong in the festivities, national pride, and religious overtones



attached to this day. Yet the holiday's track record unmistakably shows its true intent.

Party Spirit

St. Patrick's Day was more violent than usual in 2011. For instance, an out-of-control Hoboken, New Jersey, celebration resulted in 34 arrests and reports of two sexual assaults, *Reuters* stated. As a result, the town's mayor declared "she would switch the traditional weekend parade to a weekday."

The article continued, "Scores of arrests and violence at parades in Albany, New York and Newport, Rhode Island are prompting police and city officials to rethink their approach as well. They said [2011's] parade violence is the worst they have seen to date."

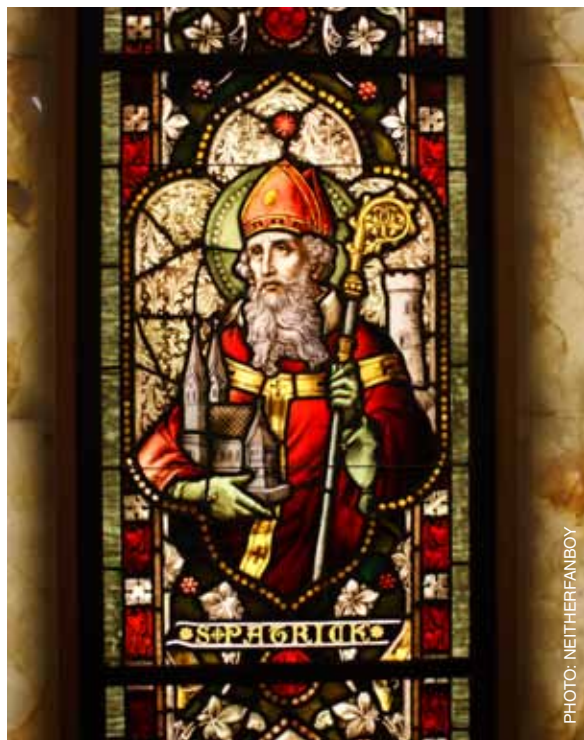
In Cleveland, "Fights broke out in Public Square around 3 p.m. and continued for over three hours...The majority of those arrested were teenagers," *NewsNet5* reported.

At Pennsylvania State University, a student-run St. Patrick's Day drinking marathon referred to as a "drunken free-for-all" has become more extreme. According to *The Patriot-News*, "In recent years, the event has led to a rash of vandalism, public drunkenness, medical emergencies and arrests. Community and student groups have attempted to tamp down the fallout of hundreds of drunken young people carousing through campus and borough streets. Even so, with some of those initiatives in place, last year was the worst year yet."

In Ireland, "Fifteen teenagers under the legal drinking age were arrested in just one area of south Dublin in a night of drunken St Patrick's Day celebrations," British newspaper *The Independent* reported. "The figures reflect a worrying rise in under-age drinking flagged by leading mental health experts..."

These are far from uplifting ways to honor a "saint."

On the contrary, St. Patrick's Day is brimming over with what the Bible condemns. Notice: "Now *the works of the flesh* are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery..."



“Not one of Patrick’s generally accepted writings claim any connection with the Roman church of his time.”

selfishness, dissension, *party spirit*, envy, *drunkenness*, *carousing*, and the like..." (Gal. 5:19-21, *Revised Standard Version*).

Patron of Ireland?

Patrick is known as Ireland's "Patron Saint." In his book, Mr. Ledwich explained how the "patronage" came about: "Let us next inquire how St.

Patrick came to be dubbed the Patron Saint of Ireland. The ninth century, famous for reviving and incorporating Pagan practices with the Christian ritual, observing that Rome had her... Mars, Athens her Minerva, Carthage her Juno, and every country and city a proper and peculiar deity, whose guardian care was its greatest protection and security, conceived it a very becoming employment for Christian Saints to assume the patronage of a Christian People, and to interest them the more in this new occupation, they brought their bones or reliques, wherever laid, and deposited them in the principal church of the metropolis. The superstition and illiteracy of the age were favourable to every clerical imposition" (*The Antiquities of Ireland*).

The author later stated, "It is an undoubted fact, that St. Patrick is not mentioned by any author or in any work of veracity in the 5th, 6th, 7th, or 8th centuries. In 858, we find his name and miracles in a fragment of Nennius: this fragment is composed of the wildest incoherences and exactly in the style of the incredible fictions of that age. It seems to have been compiled from an Irish Legend, as in some places it refers to it" (*ibid.*).

Not one of Patrick's generally accepted writings claim any connection with the Roman church of his time. William Dool Killen's *The Ecclesiastical History of Ireland* records, "He [Patrick] never mentions either Rome or the Pope, or hints that

he was in any way connected with the ecclesiastical capital of Italy. He recognises no other authority but that of the Word of God..."

The title "Patron Saint" refers to "a saint or angel designated (by individuals, groups, or the Church) as the heavenly protector of individuals, institutions, or specialized activities," according to the *New Catholic*

Encyclopedia. This implies Patrick is somewhere in heaven looking over, and protecting, Ireland.

Such an idea also conflicts with the Bible, a book, Mr. Killen explained, Patrick embraced as his *only* authority.

God's Word reveals that a person should rely on Him for protection—not any person—dead or alive.

Ecclesiastes states, "...the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten" (9:5).

This means only one thing: the real Patrick has been dead for a long time, and knows "not anything."

No matter how many millions today believe otherwise, the concept of a dead "Patron Saint" is contrary to what the Bible teaches. (For much more on this subject, read *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?* available at rcg.org/dtsgth.)

Silly Myths

Above all, St. Patrick's Day is about Irish superstitions and traditions. Here are some of the most popular:

■ **Leprechauns:** "In Irish folklore, fairy in the form of a tiny old man often with a cocked hat and leather apron. Solitary by nature, he is said to live in remote places and to make shoes and brogues. The sound of his hammering betrays his presence. He possesses a hidden crock of gold; if captured and threatened with bodily violence, he might, if his captor keeps his eyes on him, reveal its hiding place. But usually the captor is tricked into glancing away, and the fairy vanishes" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

God tells those who follow Him that such beliefs are worthless: "For the customs of the people are vain..." (Jer. 10:3). *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* defines "vain" as "unsatisfactory" or "emptiness."

■ **Shamrocks:** "According to St. Patrick's Day lore, Patrick used the three leaves of a shamrock to explain the holy trinity...Today, St. Patrick's Day revelers wear a shamrock out of tradition," *National Geographic* reported.

Colossians 2:8 warns against following manmade traditions: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (For more on this, read the book *The Trinity – Is God Three-In-One?* available at rcg.org/ttigitio.)

■ **Excessive drinking:** "Like many other forms of carnival, St. Patrick's Day is a feast day, a break from Lent in which adherents are allowed to temporarily abandon rigorous fasting by indulging in the forbidden. Since alcohol is often proscribed [forbidden] during Lent the copious consumption of alcohol is seen as an integral part of St. Patrick's day" (*Multiculturalism's Double-Bind*). (For a better understanding of this topic, read the article "The True Meaning of Lent" at rcg.org/ttmol.)

Scripture strictly forbids drunkenness: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

■ **Wearing green and pinching:** "According to some accounts, blue was the first color associated with St. Patrick's Day, but that started to change in the 17th century," *The Christian Science Monitor* stated. "Green is one of the colors in Ireland's tri-color flag, and it has been used in the flags of several Irish revolutionary groups throughout history. Ireland is the 'Emerald Isle,' so named for its lush green landscape. Green is also the color of spring, the shamrock, and the Chicago River, which the Midwestern city has dyed green on St. Patrick's Day for the past 40-odd years."

The article later explains that pinching is "...an entirely American tradition that probably started in the early 1700s. St. Patrick's revelers thought wearing green made one invisible to leprechauns, fairy creatures who would pinch anyone they could see (anyone not wearing green). People began pinching those who didn't wear green as a reminder that leprechauns would sneak up and pinch green-abstainers."

But the apostle Peter taught true followers of God, "Let the time that is

past suffice for doing what the [unbelievers] like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, *drunkenness*, revels, *carousing*, and lawless idolatry. They are surprised that you do not now join them in the same wild [licentiousness], and they abuse you" (I Pet. 4:3-4, RSV).

Also, I Timothy states, "Have nothing to do with godless and *silly myths*" (4:7, RSV).

God's Traditions

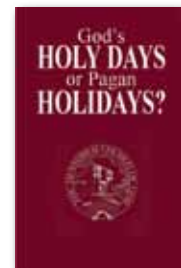
St. Patrick's Day customs, regardless of how harmless they may seem, are not from God. Jesus bluntly said what it meant for those who follow such customs: "...laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men...Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:8-9).

Recognize that, as with many other manmade holidays, St. Patrick's Day is filled with pagan customs. The shamrock, green paraphernalia, and a plethora of fantasies about Patrick, including his fictional function as "Patron Saint" in heaven, are simply empty traditions. Such manmade holidays were adopted as early church leaders began "laying aside the commandments of God" to "hold the tradition of men."

But to what *should* they be holding?

God commands that seven Feasts be kept throughout the year. He records in Leviticus 23 that these were to be observed *forever* (vs. 41). These were kept by Jesus Christ and the original apostles. Each Feast depicts a fascinating step in His Master Plan of salvation. When these God-ordained Holy Days are obscured, so is God's Plan for mankind.

To learn the vital importance of God's biblical feast days, and how different they are from manmade traditions, read the free booklet *God's Holy Days or Pagan Holidays?* at rcg.org/ghdoph. □



How Should You Prepare for **Difficult Times?**

The “prepper” movement is growing across America, and includes many professing Christians. What does the Bible say about the survivalist mentality?

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE



A MIDDLE-AGED entrepreneur from the American Midwest speaks with obvious satisfaction about the condominium he plans to move his family into within the next few years. Married with four children, he considers himself a family man and a dedicated member of a non-denominational Christian church.

While he does not yet have a firm move-in date, and he has not yet seen it in person, he enthusiastically describes the 1800-square-foot dwelling’s comfortable furnishings and amenities. It is in a multi-unit complex, to be filled with investors from across the country, and perhaps beyond—when the time comes.

His demeanor becomes more sober as he lists another set of not-so-typical features: concrete outer walls up to nine feet thick, a hydroponic indoor garden, blast-proof ultra-filtered air intakes, biometric security, redundant power and water sources, and a five-year food supply for each inhabitant.

Also, his condo will be underground—80 feet below the surface, housed in what was once an Army missile silo.

■ **FULLY STOCKED:** Two “economic survivalists” in Lawson, Missouri, prepare for turbulent times.

PHOTO: JILL TOYOSHIBA/KANSAS CITY STAR/MCT

This is a composite picture of those who call themselves “preppers”—men and women who believe civilization may soon come apart at the seams, and who are focused on “prep” (preparation) to survive the aftermath.

Troubling Times Spawn a Movement

Reuters reports that within this growing American subculture, “Some are driven by a fear of imminent societal collapse, others are worried about terrorism, and many have a vague concern that an escalating series of natural disasters is leading to some type of environmental cataclysm.”

The preppers are not alone in their concern. News headlines from around the world are so unsettling that some people are simply tuning out all news—burying their heads in the proverbial sand.

But others think, *What is going on? Why so much instability, upheaval, upset and bad news all at once?* With this environment as a backdrop, one recent survey showed that more than six in 10 Americans believe that a “major catastrophic event” will soon strike the nation (*USA Today*).

One of the leading figures of the prepper movement is James Wesley Rawles, who maintains a popular survivalist blog. In his book *How to Survive the End of the World as We Know It: Tactics, Techniques and Technologies for Uncertain Times*, he summarizes the thinking that drives preppers: “In the First World, less than 2 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture or fishing...The food on our tables often comes from hundreds if not thousands of miles away. Our heating and lighting are typically provided by power sources hundreds of miles away. For many people, even their tap water travels that far...The average American comes home from work each day to find that his refrigerator is well-stocked with food, his lights come on reliably...his toilet flushes, his paycheck has been automatically deposited to his bank, his garbage has been collected, his house is a comfortable seventy degrees...We’ve built a very Big Machine that up until now has worked remarkably well, with

just a few glitches. But that may not always be the case. As Napoleon found out the hard way, long chains of supply and communication are fragile and vulnerable.”

Reuters reported that Mr. Rawles said an upset in this order could lead to “a cascade of higher interest rates, margin calls, stock market collapses, bank runs, currency revaluations, mass street protests, and riots...The worst-case end result would be a Third World War, mass inflation, currency collapses, and long term power grid failures.”

Recognizing the fragility of modern commerce and society, many are motivated by fear to look for a way out of what they see as an inevitable breakdown.

Are Survival Shelters the Answer?

The prepper phenomenon sustains a cottage industry of blogs, books and supply companies. A new cable reality show even follows individuals within the movement. The program’s first episode gave the channel its largest Tuesday-night audience ever.

The survivalist movement has also fueled expansion in another industry: underground shelters.

Americans who lived through the Cold War era may remember “fallout shelters” found throughout the suburbs—rudimentary structures stocked with food and water and perhaps a few board games, usually built in basements or underground in backyards, designed to withstand the gamma rays that would contaminate the landscape after a nuclear blast. Families were prepared to spend weeks in them after an expected Soviet attack to avoid radioactive exposure.

These shelters’ modern counterparts are a far cry from those spare quarters. Some resemble underground luxury apartment buildings, featuring comforts such as gyms, spas and movie theaters. One company that sells space in such shelters claims that they are built to withstand virtually anything, “from a pole shift [this refers to the idea that Earth’s poles, and by extension its rotation, are shifting—a theory largely rejected

by scientists], to super volcano eruptions, solar flares, earthquakes, tsunamis, pandemics, asteroids, the anticipated [effects] of Planet X/Nibiru [a supposed additional planet in our solar system/a huge asteroid said to be on a collision course with Earth], and manmade threats including nuclear explosions, a reactor melt down, biological or chemical disasters, terrorism and widespread anarchy” (*terravivos.com*).

Setting aside questionable astronomy for a moment, this sales pitch sounds reasonable and reassuring. The shelters seem to provide impenetrable protection.

But there is more to consider. What happens when scores of strangers are thrown together under extreme circumstances? How will they coexist? Who will lead? Will there be voting? Or will it turn into a “might makes right” situation? Have the shelters’ marketers taken into account what human nature can give rise to when stuck in claustrophobic quarters for months, or even years?

What if the danger above ground outlasts the bunker’s supplies? Or what if the disasters that occur are far worse than anything seen before?

Many professing Christians signing up to live in these communal shelters assume that “Armageddon,” a term often misapplied to the events that precede the Return of Christ, will involve occurrences similar to those of the past.

But Scripture makes clear that *unprecedented* cataclysms are ahead. Read in your own Bible what is foretold to occur during that time: “And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and *every mountain and island were moved out of their places*” (Rev. 6:14). This is far beyond any typical localized earthquake—and beyond anything that a manmade bunker is built to withstand.

The rest of the passage records in advance the response from those who will have survived to that time, from wealthy heads of state to slaves: “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief

Please see PREPARE, page 19

Japan's Earthquake-Tsunami

Though some areas have begun to thrive again, the nation still has a long road to recovery.



■ **RAPID CLEANUP:** Left, a hard-hit area in Sendai, Miyagi prefecture, is pictured (March 14, 2011). Right, the same area is shown approximately one year later (Jan. 12, 2012).

PHOTO: TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ALMOST A YEAR after a 9.0-magnitude earthquake and resulting tsunami rocked Japan—killing more than 19,000 people—the nation still faces colossal challenges.

The temblor and massive wave, which according to the World Bank caused at least \$225 billion in economic damages, has continued to take a toll, both financially and emotionally. Massive amounts of debris from more than 125,000 destroyed buildings, broken levees, continued flooding due to excessive rain, and towns without power or water services have meant a slow recovery for the nation of more than 127 mil-

lion people. Many of the country's elderly, who once lived in coastal regions, now are forced to reside in temporary housing complexes.

A snapshot of what Japan is facing reveals the state of sections of the country one year later.

■ **Thousands potentially still missing:** "Somewhere under these unforgiving grey waters lie hundreds, perhaps thousands of bodies; the unfound, unclaimed dead of one of the country's worst ever disasters," *Agence France-Presse* stated. According to the media outlet, "One-in-six of the dead has never been found."

■ **Scattered debris:** Some towns are debating where to store millions of tons of rubble. And there is great concern about an island of debris in the

Pacific Ocean, which will likely hit the United States in about two years.

"From entire segments of wooden homes, furniture and appliances to cars and boats, the rubbish islands are creating growing concern due to environmental pollution as well as shipping hazards," *Telegraph* stated. "The possibility of human bodies being included in the debris is also high, bearing in mind the thousands of victims of the disaster who are still missing, believed to have been swept out to sea."

■ **Mass emigration:** "More than 38,000 residents left the [tsunami-hit] area between March and August [2011], the biggest exodus since 1969," *Reuters* stated.

A University of Tokyo professor told the news agency, "The government has mostly focused on building

mi Disaster: One Year Later



■ **DRASTIC CHANGE:** Left, a shot taken after the tsunami in Ofunato, Iwate prefecture, shows the destruction it caused (March 14, 2011). Right, the area is significantly transformed about a year after the tsunami struck (Jan. 15, 2012).

PHOTO: TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

seabanks, elevating land levels and other infrastructure development...But more attention is probably needed on supporting the livelihoods of people through direct assistance on employment and homes, or else people will leave.”

■ **Economic woes:** In 2011, the cost of rice was 10 to 15 percent higher than the previous year. Commodity prices are “sinking on the risk of another global slump, while a yen trading near postwar highs has cut the cost of imports,” *Bloomberg* stated.

The media outlet summarized a statement by the International Monetary Fund, which cautioned that “without more rapid economic growth, the nation faces the risk that its fiscal situation will deteriorate ‘precariously.’”

■ **Nuclear contamination:** Authorities maintain that it could take 20 or more years for residents affected by the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant meltdown to be able to move back into the homes they fled.

“[Tokyo Electric Power Co.] may have to pay 4.5 trillion yen...to compensate people who lost their homes and livelihoods because of radiation released from the Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear station,” *Bloomberg* reported in another article.

■ **More earthquakes:** A University of Nevada geophysicist said the Tohoku earthquake was “a grim reminder of the potential for another strong-motion mega-earthquake along the Pacific Northwest coast,” according to *Wharton Magazine*.

But there has been some progress.

In certain areas, debris has been removed and roads repaved. A reporter from Canadian news magazine *Maclean's* noted that when he last visited a hard-hit section of Japan, “the roads were strewn with muck or littered with boats, the buildings were decorated with the ropes and buoys of the oyster farms that once thrived here and the tsunami, which struck shortly after the massive earthquake of March 11, toppled buildings.

“All that’s gone now—the streets scrubbed, most of the debris carted away and sorted into metal or wood or plastic. What’s left isn’t much of a town.”

While the government hopes to clear the debris by 2014, as of late February, only five percent of rubble left by the tsunami has been cleared. □

The Sabbath—What Few Understand

Many believe that observing Saturday was meant only for the Jews or those of the Old Testament. Yet the Bible reveals that it carries far greater significance than what most believe.

BY DAVID C. PACK

THE SUBJECT of which day is the Christian Sabbath is one of the longest-running debates of any Bible teaching. Theologians and ministers of every background have offered their opinion about the “Saturday or Sunday” question. Most begin with the assumption that traditional, orthodox Christianity is the place to start the discussion. Yet few look to the Bible as the authority.

God’s Word is the only place to begin the study of the Sabbath, as well as of every other biblical doctrine. The “which day is holy” question arises at the very beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis. It speaks almost immediately about the Sabbath—the seventh day of the week. It is as though God wanted this issue clearly established in the minds of the Bible’s readers from the outset of their study of Scripture.

Right after the “Creation chapter” of Genesis 1, the Bible states, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the *seventh day* God ended His work which He had made; and He *rested* on the *seventh day* from all His work which He had made. And God *blessed* the *seventh day*, and *sanctified* it [which means to set apart for holy use]: because that in it He had *rested*

from all His work which God created and made” (2:1-3).

Much later, God gave the Ten Commandments to ancient Israel through Moses, with the fourth one declaring in Exodus, “Remember the sabbath day”—note that it says “remember” because the Sabbath had been created and established 2,500 years earlier at Creation, long before there were any Jews who are thought to be the only ones required to observe it—“to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: but the *seventh day* is the sabbath of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the *seventh day*: wherefore the LORD *blessed* the sabbath day, and *hallowed* it” (20:8-11).

This is not the first day, or ANY other day—and the command in Exodus is tied directly to the Creation account, the point in time when God first created and began to work with human beings.

Most people never ask *why* they believe what they believe or *why* they do what they do. In a world filled with popular customs and traditions, few try to determine the real *origin* of things. Most generally accept common religious practices without question, choosing to do what everyone else does because it is easy, natural and

comfortable—because there is a certain “safety in numbers.” The power of peer pressure alone makes most avoid hard questions, so that they can practice what is *acceptable*—and fashionable.

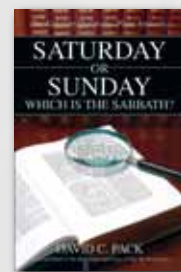
There are over two billion professing Christians on Earth. They attend over 2,000 different denominations and organizations in the United States alone. The result has been no end of confusion over differing beliefs and the resulting disagreement between them. However, almost all professing Christians are in agreement about Sunday observance, thinking it to be the biblically authorized “Lord’s Day” of the New Testament.

But if Christ established Sunday to *replace* the seventh-day Sabbath, why did He tell His disciples in Mark, “Therefore the Son of man is *Lord also of the sabbath*” (2:28). This was right after He had said in the previous verse, “The sabbath was made for man...” (vs. 27). Notice it was not “for the Jews only,” but “for MAN.”

This passage alone *towers* over the debate!

But surely billions cannot be wrong. Or can they? And what do leading theologians have to say about this subject?

To learn the answers, read my book *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?* available at rcg.org/sabbath. □



MUST YOU BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST TO BE SAVED?

The idea that anyone can achieve salvation without hearing Jesus Christ's name is growing in popularity. What is the truth?

BY JAMES F. TURCK

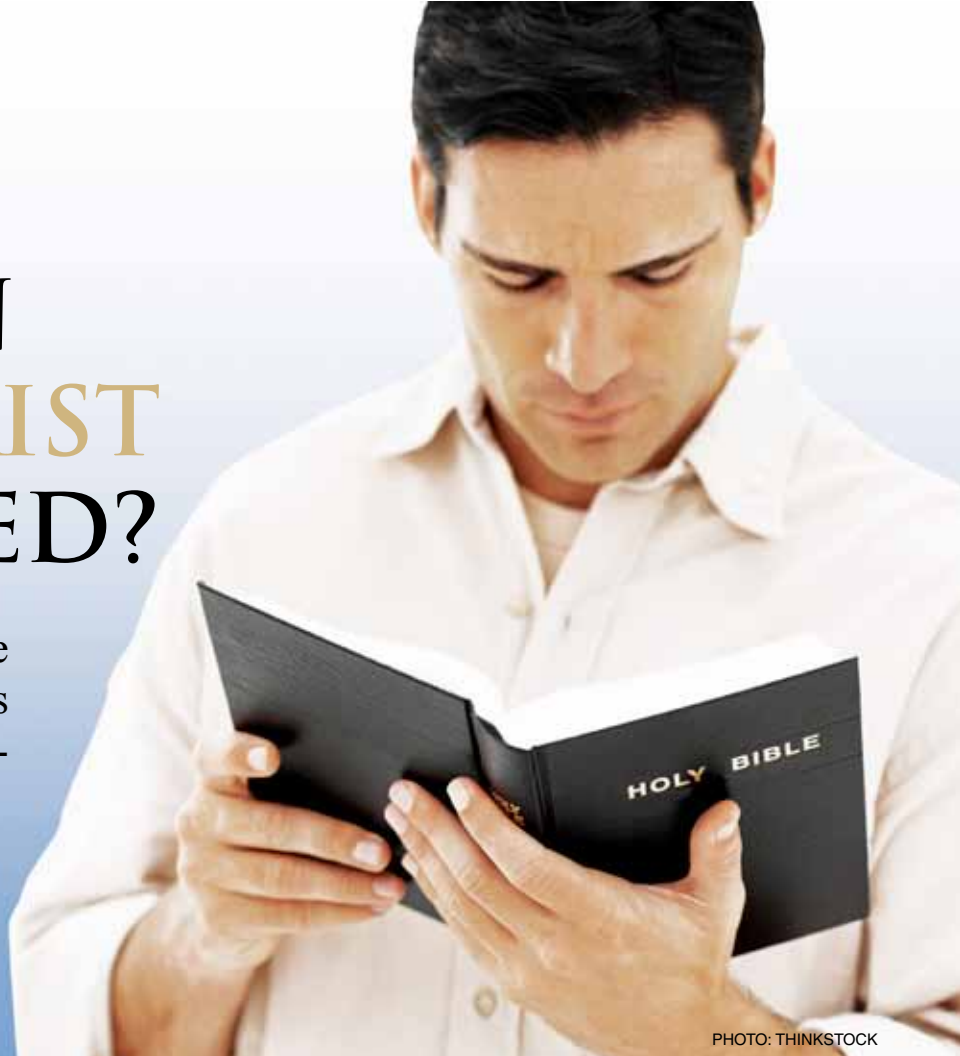


PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

THE MEDIA loves a controversy, especially when it appears to show hypocrisy in Christianity or biblical discrepancies. The attention given to Rob Bell's *Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* is no exception.

In it, Mr. Bell, a theological seminary graduate and church pastor, presents ideas that appear to challenge traditional Christianity. One belief that stirs ire is that people who have never heard Jesus Christ's name can be saved.

Following the book's publication, a war of words began regarding salvation, which many consider can be obtained only through belief in Christ. Those who espouse this idea claim that salvation through Him allows Christians to go to heaven instead of hell, a type of fiery underworld where unbelievers are supposedly tormented forever.

Both sides use Scripture to back their views. Those in the "anyone can be saved regardless of religious affiliation" camp look to verses such as I Timothy 2:4, which states that God "will have all men to be saved..." and II Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise...not willing that any should perish..."

On the other hand, those on the "must believe in Jesus to be saved" side point to passages such as John 14:6, which declares, "I [Christ] am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, *but by Me,*" and Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: *for there is none other name* [Jesus Christ] under heaven given among men, whereby we *must* be saved."

While many traditional Christians consider Mr. Bell's views radical, prominent ministers, televangelists and leaders of giant Christian denominations have made statements that *support* similar theories—long before his book was published!

In an interview for the religious-themed "Hour of Power" television program in 1997, a well-known preacher asked televangelist Billy Graham about Christianity.

"I think that everybody that loves Christ or knows Christ, *whether they're conscious of it or not,* they're members of the body of Christ..." Dr. Graham answered. "Whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the body of Christ because they've been called by God. *They may not even know the name of Jesus,* but they know in their hearts they need something that they don't have and *they turn to the only light they have and I think they're saved and they're going to be with us in heaven*" (emphasis added).

Pope Benedict XVI made a related statement in a speech, summarized by Catholic news agency *Zenit*: "Whoever seeks peace and the good of the community with a pure con-

science, and keeps alive the desire for the transcendent, will be saved *even if he lacks biblical faith*, says Benedict XVI” (emphasis added).

With so much confusion, how can someone searching for answers know what to believe?

Prove All Things

As one looks to mathematicians to expound on calculus or engineers to explain mechanical devices, a Christian must look to the Bible—God’s Instruction Manual for mankind—for information regarding salvation. This ancient text—and it alone—relates God’s mind on how salvation is attained.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, stated in I Thessalonians 5: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (vs. 21).

To understand any biblical teaching, it is necessary to put *all* verses about a particular subject together, as it states in Isaiah 28: “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (vs. 10). Only when all related passages are assembled can one have a full view of a topic.

has ever seen a Bible—let alone read a single scripture in it.

Think: What would be the point of Christianity now—and the Bible itself—if each person will eventually be saved because he was a “sincere” or “good” person? How would God measure one’s level of sincerity? Where would He draw the line?

Would God say: “You were almost sincere and good enough, even though you did not know it, but you did not quite make it. Eternal hellfire for you!” Or perhaps, “Oh, no! A country’s Communist government is blocking My Plan to save ‘all men.’ They will not allow My missionaries into the country to preach Jesus to their citizens, therefore, they will all burn in hell.”

Is God that powerless? Such a view makes Him into a weak being that is feverishly battling Satan, the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), to save as many souls as He can. If this is true, then God is losing!

There are also those who are indifferent, but do not know what is on the line. How could God hold them accountable for knowledge they *do not* have?

Additionally, if salvation is only available through Jesus Christ’s name

that certain scriptures seem to contradict themselves...

Making Sense of It All

The Bible states in I Corinthians 14:33 that “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace...” A few verses later in the chapter, it declares, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (vs. 40).

If such verses are in the Bible, would its Author really create such a contradictory plan of salvation? Could He really be called the author of peace if He knew that millions of people would be punished for all eternity for what they *never had the opportunity to understand*?

The Bible reveals there is a third aspect of the salvation debate that theologians and ministers of professing Christianity miss. It explains why mankind cannot reach a conclusion regarding this most important of questions, and details in a *logical manner* what one must really do to receive salvation.

The Actual Plan

As President and CEO of the universe, so to speak, God sets standards that keep His “company” running

“The reason you were born—and what occurs afterward—has everything to do with *how* one should conduct his life.”

Since the Bible is composed of “pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psa. 12:6), it is essential when examining salvation to read all verses about it, setting aside any ideas that are not provable within its pages.

Employing Logic

According to Dr. Graham and some other professing Christian leaders, a person can essentially “know” Christ, but *not know* that he knows Him. This is regardless of a person’s religious beliefs, practices or way of life, or if he

now, think of how many have lived and died in polytheistic nations, never having had even the opportunity to hear it. Are these consigned to eternal torment when they were never given a *chance* to believe in Him?

These scenarios make God into either a monster or bumbling fool, who either condemns people to eternal hellfire indiscriminately or is powerless to save the majority of mankind.

Yet while these hypothetical situations seem illogical when placed in context, each does not remove the fact

efficiently. If He did not have an established plan to advance the organization’s objectives or help it reach its goals—and instead had a disjointed one that caused huge losses—He would be unable to operate a successful company.

Before establishing the universe and creating mankind, God developed a clear plan for humanity, and then constructed a way to communicate it to them over thousands of years.

The Bible reveals that Plan! It expands what should be the aim of mankind, including receiving salva-

tion—eternal life. But to fully understand it, one must start at the beginning.

Genesis 1 records the re-creation or renewal of Earth. Verses 20-25 record that God formed sea creatures, birds, land animals, and every creeping thing according to its kind. Fish after the fish kind, birds after the bird kind, cattle after the cattle kind—everything that swims in the sea, flies in the air, or moves on Earth—all after their own kind.

In verses 26 and 27, man is made after the God kind: “And God said, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness... So God created man in *His own image*, in the *image of God* created He him; male and female created He them.”

Man is not the “highest form of animals”! He was not made after the animal kind—but after the *God* kind. He has God’s form and shape, which has crucial implications.

God then performed a marriage between the first two human beings and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply—to expand their human family. This human reproduction pictures—is a type of—God reproducing Himself through man. (For a full explanation of this topic, read *The Awesome Potential of Man* on rcg.org/tapom.)

The Hebrew word translated *God* in verse 26 is *elohim*. It is a uniplural term such as group, team, committee or family. All of these terms represent one entity, comprised of several persons.

Notice: “And God said, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness.” This verse reveals that there is more than one Being in the Godhead. In fact, there are two! (To understand why there are not three, as taught by most of professing Christianity, read *The Trinity – Is God Three-in-One?* at rcg.org/ttigitio.)

The Bible teaches that there is one God Family, composed of two Persons—the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. Yet Their ultimate purpose is to expand that family and add to it human beings. But why the need for a family?

The answer explains the reason humans were put on this Earth—why you were born!—an incredible truth that has been hidden by mainstream religion for almost 2,000 years.

Meaning of Life?

Few concern themselves with the meaning of their existence until faced with death. They simply float through life, moving from one event to the next, without any real understanding of why, out of the millions of planets in the solar system, they were born on this one, *why* they have the ability to experience childhood, acquire an education, work, get married, have a family of their own, and *why* they eventually die.

Yet asking this greatest of questions should be *central* to one’s thinking. The reason you were born—and what occurs afterward—has everything to do with *how* one should conduct his life.

Conversely, not asking such a question can lead to believing there is no greater purpose for one’s existence than to proverbially (or literally) eat, drink and be merry. If such were the case, a human life would have no more value than a goldfish won at a state fair, kept in a tank for several days, and then sent down a drain after its life expired. Each person who ever lived would simply become lost to history—having never had any more importance than to live for a mere few hours compared to the age of the rocks, trees and oceans around them.

Viewing life in such a way reduces everything to mere coincidence and random chance—without any hope of clear answers about the “afterlife” and what death really is.

Such empty thinking was never part of God’s Plan.

Missing Pieces

Before creating man, God developed a clear road map for him and the universe as a whole. The book of II Timothy states, “[God] has saved us, and called us with a holy calling... according to His own purpose and

grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*” (1:9).

The world has generally supposed that when Jesus Christ came to Earth in human form, a message about His Person and His First Coming itself *was* the gospel He announced. Few know that when Christ came to Earth, God’s purpose was for Him to bring a message about His soon-coming kingdom—a world-ruling SUPERGOVERNMENT to be established during Christ’s *Second Coming*. (For more about this topic, read *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity*, available at rcg.org/ttjc.)

This message, however, was not well received. Christ was actually killed for preaching it! His death qualified Him to become the Savior of the entire world. This made Him the first to qualify to rule in the Father’s kingdom. His sacrifice also made it possible for other human beings to do the same.

But why did He have to die this way?

Think of the account in the Garden of Eden in which God established the “tree of life” and the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9). These two trees represented opposing ways of life. While God told both of the first humans to only eat of the tree of life, He also gave them freewill to decide which tree to choose in order to help them learn right versus wrong.

Another being was also in the Garden—Satan the devil, a fallen angel whose mind had been corrupted by pride. He caused a third of the angels to turn against God. These angels, called demons, disqualified themselves from being part of God’s Plan and from helping human beings.

Through cunning and subtlety, Satan convinced Eve to eat fruit from the wrong tree. Eve then convinced her husband to eat what she had.

This was a grave mistake. Eating from the tree of life would have given them access to God’s Way—and provided knowledge of Him through the Holy Spirit (which helps build perfect character and provides sound mindedness). Eating from the other

tree led them down a path that has caused man to engage in wrong living ever since.

As a result of Adam and Eve's decision, God set in motion a plan to give man 6,000 years to live as he pleased, and to establish his own governmental systems.

Not surprisingly, it has not yielded positive results. Under Satan's influence—and cut off from God—man has committed sin, disobeying His commands.

But the Father is merciful. After the 6,000-year period is finished, He will teach man the right way to live by establishing His kingdom on Earth, to be ruled by Christ and His saints—human beings who have built character *in this life* by obeying Him and have been born into the God Family.

Yet this does not mean that those who do not know His Way now will be left out.

Christ had to qualify to rule in God's kingdom by living a sinless life, which included keeping all of God's Commandments and teaching others to do the same. Although He did not sin, His death paid the penalty for the sins of the world, which qualified Him to not only be part of God's kingdom, but also provide others a chance to have the same opportunity.

The Resurrection of Jesus was the first of many that will occur in the future. Through Him, others can and will receive the Holy Spirit and salvation—eternal life. Yet receiving salvation can only occur if a person repents of his sins and turns to God in obedience. While not everyone understands how to do this now, someday all *will* be taught the right way to live.

Yet this is only the foremost edge of God's Plan.

Even More!

Jesus Christ is the *first* of the firstfruits—the first in God's Plan to be resurrected. There are other firstfruits

to follow. These include those who qualified in this life to be resurrected to eternal life, the *first smaller* spiritual harvest of humanity to receive salvation. These will reign with Christ at

“This current age is not the only ‘day’ or time of salvation.”

His Second Coming and help educate all of humanity about God's Way so they can receive salvation.

This special period of 1,000 years is called the Millennium. During this time, all the negative influences that stop people from turning to God will be eliminated. Additionally, Satan will be bound so that he can no longer deceive nations.

But what about those who died never having been offered salvation—never having even heard the name of Jesus?

Revelation 20:12-13 explains: “And I [the apostle John, who recorded the book] saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books [the Bible] were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it...”

Unknown to most, there is a *Second Resurrection!*—a time when countless billions who died, but were neither offered salvation nor heard of Jesus Christ, will be brought back to physical life. All will be given 100 more years to live the right way (Isa. 65:20), which will qualify them to rule with Christ.

During this 100-year period, often referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11), billions will be offered eternal life for the first time. It will be their “day of salvation.” The Bible will be opened to their understanding, and they will

learn about God's Law. They will come to realize that they violated His Commandments and brought the death penalty (I John 3:4; Rom. 6:23) upon themselves.

But they will also learn about the true Jesus Christ—that they have a Savior who died and paid the penalty for their sins. They will be offered the choice to believe in Him—to accept His shed blood for payment of their sins. If they actively obey

God's commands during the 100-year judgment period, then they will be given the Holy Spirit and receive salvation.

Opportunity for All

The Father is a God of love and mercy (I John 4:8; Psa. 116:5). It is not His will that any should perish, but rather that all come to the knowledge of the truth, and that as many as are willing can be saved.

But belief in Jesus' name (Acts 4:12) and obedience to all of God's Laws is a must (Matt. 19:17).

With this understanding, the verses quoted at the beginning of the article do not contradict one another.

Truly, God “will have all men to be saved...” (I Tim. 2:4) and He “is not slack concerning His promise... not willing that any should perish...” (II Pet. 3:9). After everyone is taught about Christ—“the way, the truth, and the life”—and that “no man comes unto the Father, *but by Me*” (John 14:6), salvation will be available through “*none other name* [Jesus Christ] under heaven given among men, whereby we *must* be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Theologians, religionists and ministers that teach otherwise miss the point. This current age is not the *only* “day” or time of salvation. Through His real Plan, God will save the VAST majority of mankind, but *only* through the name of Jesus.

This wonderful plan of salvation will allow each in his own time to have an opportunity to receive the greatest gift of all—eternal life! □

PREPARE

Continued from page 11

captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, *Fall on us*, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (vs. 15-17).

Promise to Provide

Human beings have real physical needs, without which they cannot function or live for very long. These necessities have been abundant in the West, with many government agencies, safety net programs, and charities working to ensure their availability. But in a country that is nearly insolvent, as the owner of a survival supply store stated, "A lot more people have come to maybe not trust that the institutions that were there for us in the past to help protect us would be there in the future... These people, like I am, are interested in becoming more self-reliant and less dependent" (*WPTV*).

Christians among the prepper movement should consider what Jesus Christ said about these necessities. Did He exhort His followers to practice self-reliance, and to stockpile goods?

The answer: "Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?"

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take you thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles [unbelievers] seek:) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

"But seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:25-29, 31-34).

Christ's instructions do not prohibit foresight and planning. For example, having an emergency kit available in case of a power outage or severe weather is wise. The point is that His followers should not take *anxious* thought about physical things, since God provides these—to those who *obey* Him in all points. (See Psalm 37:25.)

True Security

Naturally, if and when most people see danger coming, they do their best to avoid it. This is described in the Bible as a "prudent" reaction: "A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Prov. 22:3; 27:12).

Yet have you considered that the same God who inspired that verse states that sometimes evil—better translated "trouble"—is sent directly by Him? "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things" (Isa. 45:7).

The Bible makes clear that an unparalleled time of trouble, known as the Great Tribulation, lies ahead for all mankind: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). This period will last for years, and will catch the whole world off-guard: "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:35).

God promises that those who are wholeheartedly faithful to Him will be protected. Notice: "Because you have kept the word of My patience, I also

will keep you from the hour of temptation [trial], which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

There *is* a real way of escape from what is coming—and it does not involve living in a missile silo, or any other human solution. God makes clear that He is the source of real protection.

King David, whose words are recorded in the Old Testament, understood this:

■ "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies" (Psa. 18:2-3).

■ "You shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day; nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you" (91:5-7).

■ "You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your word" (119:114).

The state of the world is bleak, and it will ultimately become even more grave, before the greatest good news of all time becomes reality.

If you want to be "kept" from the coming hour of trial, your focus should not be on physical survivalism. It is ultimately futile! Rather, get on the path to

real security by turning to and fully serving God—the only One who can provide protection from global calamity.

To learn more about what is coming—and what can be *your* future—read David C. Pack's *Promised Protection – Secret Rapture or Place of Safety?* and *America and Britain in Prophecy*. Both are available at rcg.org/protection. □



PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

country in Europe, or even its Central Bank, could afford it. The same with Spain.

Yet Italy and Spain are seen as too big to fail!

Other nations are suffering similar economic distress, with the contagion spreading across the continent. Huge pressure has been put on the euro, which is close to collapse as investors lose confidence.

When the euro was first established, its architects never imagined such a dire situation. What happened?

History of the Euro

Some review of the euro's history is helpful. It was established in 1992 in a treaty agreed upon in Maastricht, Netherlands. At that time, all but three member nations decided to join. In 1999, the euro was created. In 2002, coins and notes came into circulation. Over time, other nations joined the EU, and adopted the euro.

The system progressed relatively smoothly until 2008, when the global economic crisis hit. Europe's leaders implemented a 200 billion euro stimulus budget to boost growth. But the crisis lingered.

In 2009, the EU asked Ireland, Spain, France and Greece to reduce their large deficits. In late December 2010, Greece shocked the financial markets by admitting to debts of 300 billion euros. To put this into perspective, Greece's debt was 113 percent of GDP—nearly double the limit set by the EU!

The crisis spread to larger European economies in 2011 such as Spain and Italy, whose borrowing costs rose sharply. To calm investors, Spain passed a measure to limit future deficits. Italy passed an austerity plan with the goal of a balanced budget by 2013.

To further buffer the crisis, the EU established a 500-billion-euro bailout fund, called the European Financial Stability Facility, or EFSF. This financed

the Greek and Portuguese bailouts, but it was too small to bail out larger countries. And much of the fund is gone.

The EU as a whole forecasted growth of only 0.2 percent for the second half of 2011. But the private sector shrank for the first time in two years.

The situation is so grave that President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso stated, "We are today faced with the greatest challenge our union has known in all its history" (*BBC*).

Vicious Cycle

Some wonder: why cannot European governments simply print money

amount to be repaid at the bond's date of maturity. Like stocks, investors can trade bonds. If they do not like a country's prospects, they will sell that government's bonds, driving the price down. If investors have less confidence in a country, the country's borrowing rate increases. This is because investors see it as a riskier proposition.

But usually a country has some control over its currency. For example, it can print more money through a central bank to pay debt. This ability also gives the nation power to devalue its currency to increase the competitiveness of its economy. This puts individual countries largely in control of their destinies.

Let's see how this works. Take a country with large debt. Its government orders the central bank to print a lot of money to pay off its debt. This explodes the country's money supply and reduces the value of its currency. The principle of *supply and demand* is at work—the higher the supply, the lower the value, and vice versa.

Because investors do not like the country's level of debt, they *also* sell its currency—further worsening its value. This reduces the value of the country's exports, making them more competitive internationally. Its businesses can then sell more products and services—and make more money. This process kick-starts the economy, leading to businesses growing and generating jobs. The result is more income to tax and thus a higher government revenue stream. The government can start new projects, expand others, and pay its debt.

Having this control over its currency gives a government tremendous leverage in managing its finances. However, this is *not* the case with eurozone governments—nations which have adopted the euro. These do *not* have their own central banks. The eurozone only has the European Central Bank. Individual nations have fallen into what some European politicians call the "euro straightjacket."

Countries tied together under just *one bank* represents an enormous



■ **DISSATISFIED:** Public service employees attend a demonstration to protest against rampant unemployment and austerity measures in Valencia, Spain (Jan. 26, 2012).

PHOTO: JOSE JORDAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

to repay debt? Let's understand. Governments typically raise money by issuing bonds. These are essentially IOUs to interested investors whom the government promises to repay at a stated interest rate, with the main



■ **LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS:** Eurozone leaders meet regarding Greece's debt in Brussels, Belgium (Feb. 20, 2012).

PHOTO: GEORGES GOBET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

problem. Consider. If a eurozone country is in economic trouble, their bonds become less attractive to investors. This is because of the country's reduced ability to repay the bonds. Therefore investors sell them. This further lowers their value—and attractiveness—reducing the government's ability to raise money through selling bonds since investors buy fewer. Investors move their funds to nations with *stronger* economies. For example, investors dump Greek bonds to buy German bonds.

When the country's bonds become less desirable, it must raise the interest rate it pays investors to make them more attractive. Therefore, instead of being able to raise more money at low interest rates—and reduce debts—they must pay more money in interest—thus increasing their debts.

The cycle is vicious.

Shackled to the Euro

Struggling, debt-burdened countries are trapped inside the euro with no way to control their destinies. Money simply flows *within* the eurozone from strong economies to weak ones. Without the ability to manage the value of their currency or print more money, the eco-

nomic condition of debtor nations only grows worse.

This is where Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain, Italy and other debtor nations find themselves. During the boom years, these nations lived beyond their means, borrowing large sums of money. With their economies in recession, they are unable to borrow more at low rates. They are instead told: "Reduce borrowing, raise taxes, and cut spending!" But this is the very thing driving them into recession. In turn, this drives up unemployment, resulting in more benefits paid and fewer incomes to tax. Never mind the resulting civil unrest, riots and violence from angry peoples unwilling to lose entitlements—who are unwilling to control their *selfishness* and *laziness* in pursuit of ridiculously early retirement, as well as other government benefits they have long suckled upon. It is *blind greed* that demands the right to receive money that future generations could never repay!

In the end, the current policy is self-defeating. These countries are trapped in a death spiral that threatens to bring down Europe and even the very global economy. Today, the foundation of the world's financial markets is crumbling.

European leaders are desperately trying to save their system. In meeting after meeting—summit after summit!—they try to find a way out of the abyss.

Opinions Abound

Many opinions exist about how the crisis should be solved. One idea is to contain the problem by acting conservatively and not taking drastic actions, instead implementing *gradual* reforms. This would at best have a limited impact, and would also lead to continued uncertainty in financial markets. Further erosion of confidence would continue pushing up borrowing rates. Many countries would be unable to pay debts *or* borrow enough to survive. The recession would only spread—and deepen.

A second option is to allow certain countries to default, but then manage their return to financial health. If Greece, Portugal, Ireland or other smaller countries defaulted, a customized solution could be implemented to help each economy recover. But this approach is dangerous as investors would suffer catastrophic losses, leading to a banking crisis of unimaginable proportions. Are you following the *seriousness* here? People are searching for a clear, **STRONG HAND!**

A third possibility is to allow certain countries to voluntarily leave the euro—or *force* them out. The intention would be to let them take their problems with them—*out* of the eurozone. But their problems would remain, and would probably lead to currency devaluations and then collapse of their financial systems. This is because European economies have been *deliberately interwoven* to ensure reliance on one another, along with the strengthening of the union. There is no real mechanism to force—or let—countries out.

Some believe the EFSF should be increased for future bailouts of struggling countries. In fact, banks have already agreed to just write off half of Greece's debt. There will be more write-offs for other countries.

Others believe since overspending caused the problem, the solution lies in offending countries adopting dis-

ciplined financial habits. They do not want more lending. They favor tough conditions applied before increasing loans. Germany and France are adamant that all struggling EU members must get their financial houses in order.

Those who favor enforcing financial discipline also want *more* integration between nations. They want “*more* Europe,” not less. This enables greater monitoring.

All solutions are painful. None are easy.

Growing Fiscal Union

In a December 2011 crisis summit, a major push toward integration changed Europe forever. Most member states gave up much of their sovereignty. Tax and spending plans must now be approved by the EU before their own governments do. Offenders will be *automatically* penalized. This was a HUGE step toward fiscal union!

A “two-speed” Europe is in motion—with two categories of EU membership. One is countries sharing the euro—those *in* the eurozone. The other is those that have opted *out* of the euro. In December, EU members failed to fully agree on treaty changes, partly because Britain vetoed it. (All 27 members must agree on every change.)

Britain’s main concern was the proposed tax on financial transactions. Since London is the largest financial center in Europe, this tax would be a giant 50 billion euros every year. Banks and insurance companies would almost certainly leave London. Britain wanted an exemption. Germany and France objected. In the end, Britain’s veto alienated it from the EU. The change was made as an intergovernmental treaty involving the 17 eurozone members.

Now a closer look at Germany’s position—the largest, wealthiest and most powerful economy in Europe. It has contributed the most to the bailouts of Greece, Portugal and Italy. What the Germans think and do is crucial to Europe’s destiny. Europe pivots around Germany.

For some time, Germany has called for a new treaty—with teeth to control member spending. Disputes would be decided by the European Court of Justice. Germany does not view bailouts as the answer. They fear that unbridled printing of money by the ECB will bring inflation. Think Weimar Republic, and the hyperinflation of the 1920s.

Germany is also against creating eurobonds—where member debts are pooled and sold to investors. They do not want responsibility for other nations’ debts. The average German hates seeing his hard-earned money support nations he sees as spendthrift, lazy and unproductive.

As the wealthiest economy in Europe, what Germany says matters. Financially stressed economies, desperate for more funds and bailouts, are looking to Germany for direction. They wait with bated breath on Germany’s every word.

Poland’s foreign minister summarized Europe’s dependence on Germany in a Berlin speech: “I demand of Germany that, for your sake and for ours, you help [the eurozone] survive and prosper. You know full well that nobody else can do it. I will probably be the first Polish foreign minister in history to say so, but here it is: *I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity*” (BBC, emphasis added). Stunning words from a country that so recently suffered brutal German occupation!

One Source

As European leaders scramble to stabilize their union, Germany holds the cards. How will they be played? Will a cataclysmic financial collapse occur? If so, then what? Will Europe completely collapse—simply **IMPLODE!**—or will it survive, and even *thrive*? Everyone has opinions, but only **ONE SOURCE** provides real answers—the Bible!

God’s Word has accurately predicted the rise and fall of empires for millennia. For example, it predicted the rise of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires. It also foretold America and Britain’s great-

ness. What does the Bible reveal about Europe?

In Revelation 13, a mysterious Beast is described: “I [the apostle John] stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a Beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy” (vs. 1). This Beast is the Roman Empire, the most powerful empire the world has ever seen. This is why it is shown as a terrifying Beast, totally unlike anything before it.

Revelation 17 *also* speaks of a Beast. This one arises out of a bottomless pit, and is ridden by a woman. This is the Holy Roman Empire, which was the reconstitution of the ancient Roman Empire that fell in AD 476. The woman who rides it—called a whore—represents a great false church.

The revived Roman Empire was given the title “Holy Roman Empire” because it was guided by this powerful church. This “woman” church is described as committing fornication—political relations—with the kings of the earth (Rev. 17:2, 4). Ask: Which church has ambassadors to many nations around the world? Which church is synonymous with a nation-state?

The answer is obvious.

New Government

The Holy Roman Empire was prophesied to go through seven revivals. Six have come and gone. These were led by Justinian, Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles V and Napoleon, with the sixth revival culminating in Hitler and Mussolini. All six controlled Europe. One more revival is coming—in our time! Read my booklets *Who or What Is the Beast of Revelation?* and *Revelation Explained at Last!* A very detailed fuller picture of prophecy is carefully explained in my thorough book *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out*. You will want to read it!

A 10-nation economic, political and military combine will arise in Europe and **SHOCK** the world. Led by Germany,



■ **UNREST IN THE STREETS:** Demonstrators shout slogans while marching through downtown Lisbon, Portugal (Jan. 25, 2012).
 PHOTO: FRANCISCO LEONG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

and more powerful than America, Russia or China, it will control Europe and dominate all nations. At its helm will be two men: a mesmerizing false religious leader the Bible calls the “false prophet,” and a charismatic civil leader who represents the Beast. This final union of church and state will bind Europe as never before.

While many politicians strive to bind Europe through finance, most miss the historical pattern that religion has been the only glue capable of bringing diverse peoples together. A tiny few do see this pattern. One may ask: Are not most Europeans cynical and apathetic toward religion—or even atheist or agnostic?

And how would an economic collapse unify Europe?

The Beast and False Prophet are foretold to galvanize Europe through miracles. These will be *world-shaking*—and not of God, but rather brought by Satan. The Bible calls them “lying wonders” (II Thes. 2:9). Watch for them! The False Prophet will unify the masses behind religion, while the Beast will solve the economic crisis. Together, they will take Europe from despair to incredible prosperity (Rev. 13:13-14; 16:13-14; 19:20)!

This coming system is called Babylon the Great. Revelation describes its immense wealth: “The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and...wood, and...ivory, and...vessels of most precious wood, and of

brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men” (18:12-13). Describing a return to the Roman practice of slavery, it concludes speaking of her “fruits” and “dainty and goodly” things which the masses, as it states, “lusted after” (vs. 14).

From the ashes of Europe’s financial crisis, a superpower will arise. It will sit astride the entire world like a colossus, dominating global trade. Just before Christ returns, prophecy reveals Europe will become the center of the world!!!

Watch Europe. By God’s authority, I tell you these things WILL happen! □

WEATHER & ENVIRONMENT

UN Sees Food Shortage by 2030

The world will need to produce at least 50 percent more food, 45 percent more energy, and gain access to 30 percent more water to meet the demands of a growing population, United Nations research shows.

“Although the number of people living in absolute poverty has been reduced to 27 percent of world population from 46 percent in 1990 and the global economy has grown 75 percent since 1992, improved lifestyles and changing consumer habits have put natural resources under increasing strain,” *Reuters* reported.

The news outlet continued, “There are 20 million more undernourished people now than in 2000; 5.2 million hectares of forest are lost per year—an area the size of Costa Rica; 85 percent of all fish stocks are over-exploited or depleted; and carbon dioxide emissions have risen 38 percent between 1990 and 2009, which heightens the risk of sea level rise and more extreme weather.”

With the world population expected to top nine billion in 2030, authorities are scrambling to find ways to accommodate this number. □



■ **EXTREME POVERTY:** Above, a child refugee sits on the outskirts of the Dadaab refugee settlement in Kenya (July 20, 2011). Below, a militiaman watches as people wait for cooked food at a camp for Somalis displaced by drought and famine in Mogadishu, Somalia (Aug. 18, 2011).

PHOTOS: OLI SCARFF/ (ABOVE); JOHN MOORE/ (BELOW) GETTY IMAGES



■ **HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSION:** Left, British Prime Minister David Cameron (third from left) leads a meeting about the food crisis with representatives of Somalia and the United Nations in London (Feb. 23, 2012).

PHOTO: SANG TAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



MIDDLE EAST

Update: Israel-Iran Tensions

Concern over Iran-Israel relations continues to grow with both nations threatening preemptive attacks.

To protect Tehran's interests, top Iranian officials have hinted that they are ready to attack Israel using proxy groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. In addition, the *Telegraph* reported that there is "growing concern in Washington that Israel is preparing to launch unilateral military action against Iran's nuclear facilities within months. US and British officials, including William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, have taken the unusual step in recent weeks of publicly urging Israel to avoid the use of force and instead give American and EU sanctions against Iran's central bank and energy sector time to work."

United States officials are closely monitoring the situation.

"Iran's actions demonstrate why Iran has failed to convince the international community that its nuclear program is peaceful," *The Washington Post* quoted White House spokesman Tommy Vietor. "Unless Iran changes course, 'its isolation from the international community will only continue to grow.'"

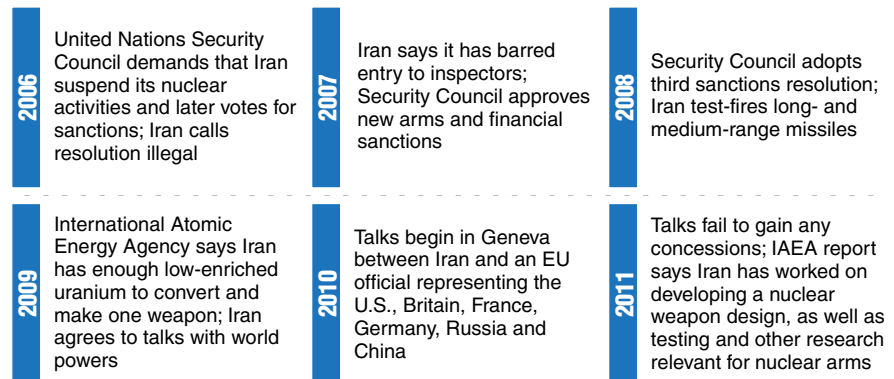
According to *MSNBC*, if the two countries were to go to war, the United States would inevitably be pulled into it.

"An Israeli pre-emptive attack on Iran's nuclear sites could draw the U.S.

power—warplanes, warships, special operations forces and possibly airborne infantry—with unpredictable outcomes in one of the world's most volatile regions."

Iran's Rising Nuclear Pressures

With international tension mounting, questions about Iran's capabilities and intentions remain.



Source: U.K. Foreign & Commonwealth Office, CIA World Factbook, International Atomic Energy Agency, Paul Brannan of the Institute for Science and International Security, ESRI, TeleAtlas, MCT

into a new Mideast conflict, a prospect dreaded by a war-weary Pentagon wary of new entanglements.

"That could mean pressing into service the top tier of American fire-

The media outlet cited Middle East specialist Karim Sadjadpour. "Israel can commence a war with Iran, but it may well take U.S. involvement to conclude it," he stated. □

SOCIETY & LIFESTYLES

Half of Young Mothers in U.S. Unmarried

Most American mothers below age 30 are not married, research group Child Trends revealed.

The organization stated that the increase in non-marital birth rates is "both a symbol of the transforming family and a hint of coming generational change."

"Liberal analysts argue that shrinking paychecks have thinned the ranks of marriageable men, while conservatives often say that the sexual revolution reduced the incentive to wed and that safety net programs discourage marriage," *The New York Times* reported.

While 59 percent of mothers of all ages in the study were married, the fig-

ures were radically different for those in their 20s, according to the study.

"In 2009 [the most recent data available], women in their twenties were responsible for the largest share of nonmarital births (62 percent) and had the highest nonmarital birth rates."

In addition, less than half of births outside of marriage during 2009 were firstborns.

"Even among teen women aged 15-19, almost one-quarter (24 percent) of nonmarital births were second- or higher-order," Child Trends reported.

The New York Times article highlighted the case of a 27-year old mother who "found herself pregnant" for

the second time by a new boyfriend who only worked part-time. She said her boyfriend did not want to wed.

Regarding marriage, she told the media outlet: "Most of my friends say it's just a piece of paper, and it doesn't work out anyway."

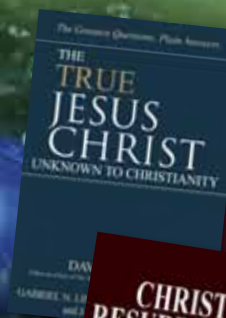
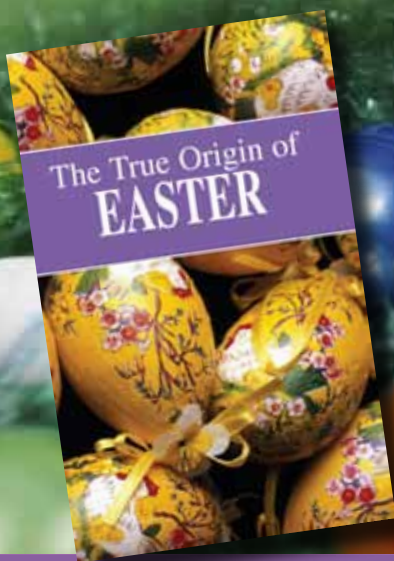
The Child Trends report showed that unwanted pregnancies have a negative impact on children.

"For example, children born to women who did not intend to get pregnant have been found to have lower birthweight, poorer mental and physical health, lower educational attainment, and more behavioral problems than do children whose births were intended." □

Have you ever wondered...

- Is celebrating Easter biblical?
- What is the origin of Lent?
- Where did the tradition of eggs and rabbits come from?
- When should the Lord's Supper be taken?
- On which days did Christ's crucifixion and Resurrection take place?
- Should Christians observe Sunday sunrise services?

Read these free books and booklets for answers!



Learn the truth today!

R C G . O R G / E A S T E R