

DECEMBER 2015

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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



ATOP THE TEMPLE MOUNT

How Will Its 3,000-year History of Conflict End?

Lessons from Ebola
Are We Ready for the Next Pandemic?

Human Mind vs. Animal Brain
Why So Different?

**Redefining
the Family**

Is Jesus a Myth?

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VOL. XIII | NO. 8 | DECEMBER 2015

A R T I C L E S

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Human Mind vs. Animal Brain

Why So Different?

Human beings possess a capability far beyond animals. Many ideas exist to explain the mind, but few understand the truth.

Page 22

FRONT COVER: Israeli riot police patrol Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, one of Islam's holiest sites, during scuffles with Palestinian stone throwers (Oct. 5, 2012).

PHOTO: AHMAD GHARABLI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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***Personal from the Editor-in-Chief
Solve Your Financial Worries!***
Page 1

***Atop the Temple Mount
How Will Its 3,000-year History of Conflict End?***
Renewed clashes between Jews and Muslims over Israel's Temple Mount are set to dramatically affect international relations. The past provides clues as to how this will happen.
Page 4

***Lessons from Ebola
Are We Ready for the Next Pandemic?***
Approximately one year after Ebola took the lives of over 11,000 people and infected approximately 29,000, health experts, scientists and concerned citizens are contemplating how prepared we are for the next large-scale outbreak.
Page 10

Redefining the Family
Modern society is in the midst of the greatest shift in history when it comes to family structure.
Page 15

***China Restructures Economy After Financial
Downturn***
Page 21

Is Jesus a Myth?
Skeptics claim the Jesus Christ of the Bible is pure fiction. Yet you can know for certain!
Page 25

World News Desk
Page 32

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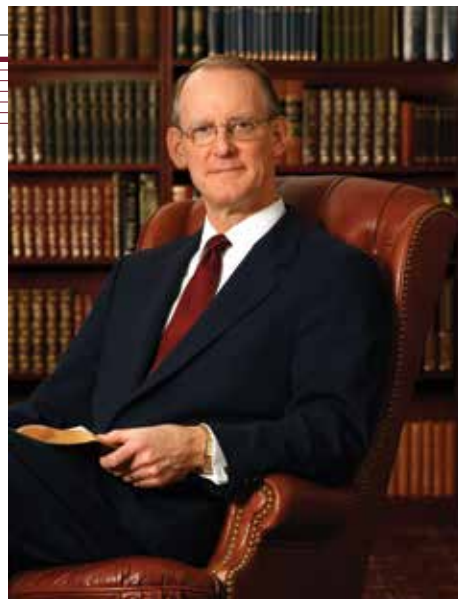
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Solve Your Financial Worries!

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS season is around the corner. Soon, everyone will be buying presents, preparing family dinners, and throwing corporate parties. Yet this will leave many to wake up in January with a financial hangover.

Americans are increasingly incapable of keeping up with credit card bills. An *Associated Press* analysis of financial data from major credit card companies showed double-digit percentage increases in bill payment delinquency. According to the Federal Reserve Bank, Americans owe \$920 billion in credit card debt.

Some say the expanded debt is partly the product of the deeply rooted American attitude that credit card debt is “no big deal.”

“The desires of consumers to want, want, want, spend, spend, spend—it’s the fabric of our nation,” Howard Dvorkin, founder of Consolidated Credit in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, told *AP*. “But you always have to pay the piper, and that can be a very painful process.”

Despite affluence in the Western World that is unparalleled in human history, personal bankruptcies

are soaring. *Why?* Consumer credit has never been so high. *Why?* Up to 200 million people in America are living just one paycheck from the street. *Why?* The U.S. national debt is measured in the trillions of dollars, requiring annual interest payments in the hundreds of billions! *Why?* Money woes are considered the second-leading cause of divorce. None of this need be.

Much of the national news is devoted to the roller-coaster ride of the “leading economic indicators”—and whether they are moving up or down. Unemployment, inflation, recession, interest rates, bull or bear markets, stocks, housing starts, auto sales, layoffs, hires, available energy, and fuel prices are all household words dominating the news.

What about you? If you are honest with yourself, you will admit that you spend a lot of time thinking and talking about MONEY. You probably wrestle with financial difficulties daily. Sometimes you feel that you are winning the battle, only to learn that you are either treading water or falling behind.

Many today find it almost impossible to “get ahead.” For most, the “money struggle” is constant, and the pressure can seem unbearable. Just the stress of these problems can drive away the happiness and peace that everyone seeks but few find.

Yet all of this is unnecessary if you have God's *key* to financial prosperity.

What You Earn is Not Your Own

Your house belongs to *you*, right? So does *your* car, doesn't it? You bought the clothes on your back with *your* money, didn't you? Haven't you heard yourself say, "*I* earned my money, it's *mine*"? Isn't it true that "what's yours is yours and what's mine is mine"? Not so fast!

Certainly we would all agree that before we have fully paid off the things that we have purchased, they are not truly ours. Banks and other lenders hold liens against houses, cars, boats and other expensive things that people buy on credit. Everyone understands this. But have you ever considered whether you *really* own everything that you *think* you do? Do you really have title to the things you own "free and clear"?

We must consider whether others could lay claim to what is "ours."

"Death and Taxes"

Most are familiar with the phrase, "Nothing is certain in life except death and taxes." Indeed, death is certain. Of course, everyone also recognizes that the government is entitled to a certain percentage of one's income. Few dispute this, though most seek to get around taxes in as many ways as possible. No one wants to give the government a penny more than "its fair share." Most feel that *less* than "its share" would be better.

Have you stopped to consider whether *God* instructs us to pay taxes? *He does!* These scriptures prove it. Paul wrote, "Let *every soul* be subject unto the higher powers...Wherefore you *must* needs be subject...for conscience sake. For for this cause pay you *tribute* [Greek: taxes or assessment] also... Render therefore to all their dues: *tribute* to whom *tribute is due*" (Rom. 13:1, 5-7).

Christ was asked if He felt that taxes should be paid—with the question actually directed to Him for the purpose of tempting Him into giving a wrong answer. Notice that those who questioned Him said, "Is it lawful to give

tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?"

Christ asked to be given a penny for the purpose of illustration. He then answered, "Render to Caesar *the things that are Caesar's*, and to God *the things that are God's*" (Mark 12:14-17). Christ taught that there are things that *belong to man's government* and things that *belong to God*.

We will momentarily address what belongs to God. However, what belongs to the government are *taxes!* In some countries this includes city, state and federal taxes. Woe to those caught not paying them! Interest, penalties and even prison can be the result for those

“...have you ever considered whether you *really* own everything that you *think* you do? Do you really have title to the things you own ‘free and clear’?”

guilty of tax evasion. In doing this, people have disobeyed not only the laws of the land, but also God's plain instruction.

So then, taxes *are* an undisputed fact of life for most people on Earth. The fact that you *earned* the money you have does not negate the fact that human governments have a prior right to take a certain percentage of it to ensure their own operation. No government can function without tax revenue.

This is one way that what is yours is *not* always entirely yours.

Who Really Owns Everything?

Despite the fact that governments can legally collect taxes for themselves from the taxpayers of a country, no

one would suggest that they own everything *else* that a taxpayer has. All that is left belongs to the taxpayer—or does it?

Now for a basic question. Look around you and ask yourself: Where do we get the things that we have? Where did they actually come from?

God says, "...for all the earth is *Mine*" (Ex. 19:5). Have you ever considered this? The Bible also states, "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is *the LORD's* your God, the earth also, with all that therein is" (Deut. 10:14) and "whatsoever is under the whole heaven is *Mine*" (Job 41:11).

In the Psalms, King David was inspired to write, "The earth is *the LORD's*, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (24:1). Paul recorded the same statement in I Corinthians 10:26.

God says, "For every beast of the forest is *Mine*, and the cattle upon a thousand hills...If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for *the world is Mine*, and the fullness thereof" (Psa. 50:10, 12). Finally, the prophet Haggai said, "The silver is *Mine*, and the gold is *Mine*, says the LORD of hosts" (2:8).

In a sense, God is saying that *all* money is His. (Remember, the value of money is generally attached in some way to gold and silver.) God *owns* absolutely *everything* there is to own. Human beings are "squatters" on His land and "renters" in homes that belong to Him. This is what these verses say! Make no mistake—what you think is yours is not! Everything that you *think* you own is actually owned by God. You are merely its temporary custodian.

People may manufacture products from natural resources, which come from the earth, but it is God who makes both the natural resources and the earth in which they are found. Men may own mining or timber rights, but it is ultimately God who owns the mine and created the timber, which grew because of the elements

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 30

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR FINANCES?



Despite unparalleled affluence in the Western world, three in four Americans live paycheck-to-paycheck. One-fourth have no emergency funds and one-third have no long-term savings. Personal bankruptcies are soaring, with millions drowning in a sea of high-interest credit card payments. Money woes are considered the second leading cause of divorce.

What about you? Do you often wonder where all your money is going? Do you wrestle with financial difficulties daily?

For most, the “money struggle” is constant and the pressure can seem unbearable. Just the stress of these problems can drive away the happiness and peace that everyone seeks—but few find.

Yet all of this is unnecessary *if* you have the keys to financial prosperity.

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You can turn the tide of debt, take charge of your finances—and find true economic success!





ATOP THE TEMPLE MOUNT

How Will Its 3,000-year History of Conflict End?

Renewed clashes between Jews and Muslims over Israel's Temple Mount are set to dramatically affect international relations. The past provides clues as to how this will happen.

AT THE SUMMIT of a sloping pathway, one emerges into an almost park-like atmosphere. Trees, fountains and gardens dot the area and visitors mill about the dominating gold structure known as the Dome of the Rock. To the Muslim, this is Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary—Islam's third holiest site. To the Jew, it is the Temple Mount—Judaism's most sacred ground.

■ **TENSE NEIGHBORS:** Top left, an Israeli policeman keeps watch as Palestinians pray at the Lion's Gate of Jerusalem's Old City (Oct. 2, 2015). Top right, Palestinian Muslims pray outside the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (Oct. 23, 2015). Bottom left, Israeli police stand guard as Palestinian Muslims pray on the streets of east Jerusalem (Oct. 16, 2015). Bottom middle, Hamas followers rally in Gaza City in support of Palestinians following clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police (Oct. 5, 2015). Bottom right, Palestinian protesters clash with Israeli security forces near Nablus, West Bank (Oct. 12, 2015).

PHOTOS: THOMAS COEX/ (TOP LEFT, BOTTOM LEFT); AHMAD GHARABLI/ (TOP RIGHT); MAHMUD HAMS/ (BOTTOM MIDDLE); JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/ (BOTTOM RIGHT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES

After 1,300 years of Muslim care, the area is distinctly Islamic: Light glints off the golden dome, complemented by mosaic-laden outer walls of summery greens, blues and yellows. At the top of the structure is an image of a full moon, which evokes the crescent moon symbol of Islam.

Despite the open spaces and well-maintained gardens, the location can hardly be described as peaceful. In fact, it is a battleground for Jews and Arabs. In September, beginning with Jewish Rosh Hashanah celebrations, Palestinian stone throwers met Israeli police in a show of aggression after Jewish radicals attempted to assert their right to pray there—something forbidden by Palestinian authorities and adhered to by most Israelis.

Since then, the conflict has spread throughout the region. An Israeli couple was shot dead in the West Bank in front of their four children, a Palestinian man stabbed two Israelis to death and was shot dead by police, four Israelis were wounded in Tel Aviv, and Palestinian clashes with Israeli police left over 14 Palestinians dead. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that a “wave of terror” was occurring, which led many to fear a third Palestinian intifada (resistance or uprising) was taking form.

Clashes atop the mount are nothing new. It is easily the most coveted archeological, religious, historical and cultural plot of ground in the world. Even more, it is the epicenter of conflict in the Mid-East.

Christianity and Judaism claim the site is Mount Moriah, where Abraham bound Isaac and the location of the First and Second Temples. Muslims say it is where the prophet Muhammad took his night journey to heaven on his horse to receive the mandate to pray five times per day. Christian heritage also connects to the mount, which carried the footprints of Jesus Christ and the apostles. In addition, it was a site of Catholic cathedrals during the Crusades.

BBC broadcast journalist Tim Franks put it this way: “If Jerusalem is the crucible of the Middle East

Conflict, then the Old City is the crucible of the crucible, and the [Temple Mount] is the crucible of the crucible of the crucible.”

Mr. Franks took two tours of the Western Wall Tunnel at the base of the mount, each with a different guide. One was a Palestinian man, the other a Jewish woman. With the Palestinian guide, he was told, “There is no proof of a temple here. None at all.”

When pushed, the man conceded that “maybe” the Second Temple once stood on the site, “but I don’t have archaeological evidence.”

The Jewish tour guide claimed the contrary: “Wherever we dig, we find history.”

Nevertheless, Muslim authorities have banned archaeologists from examining the Temple Mount, and its physical history remains buried.

For over 2,900 years, religions, cultures and nations have vied for the ground. Great empires vehemently fought to keep it. Israel, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and Turkey have all triumphantly stood at the summit.

The one constant atop the Temple Mount has been violence and war. Through the centuries, there have been

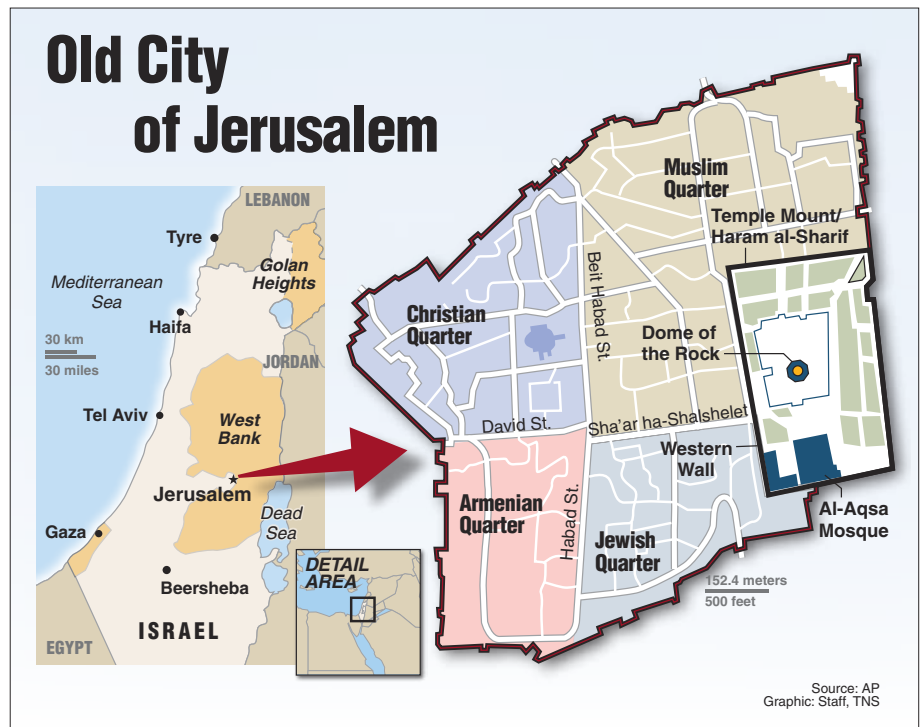
a few ceasefires and short periods of peace—usually fragile stalemates—but they have always given way to violence.

The rich history of the Temple Mount unlocks the source of the Mid-East conflict, identifies the major reoccurring players, and points to what is next for the site.

Modern Mount Violence

While Israel controls Jerusalem, a Muslim council, known as the Waqf, manages the mount—making the hill a flashpoint for violence. *Haaretz* summed up the conflict of interests between the two groups: “For a Muslim, the Al-Aqsa Mosque takes up the entire Mount, which Muslims call the Noble Sanctuary. The proof, say the Palestinians, is the Arabic name for the mosque. While the Israelis call the building Al-Aqsa, the Arabs call it Al-Qibli and note that it has no minaret. Al-Aqsa’s minarets are at the four corners of the complex and prove that the entire mount is a mosque—so all of it is holy.

“For this reason, many Palestinians believe it’s sacrilege whenever anyone from a different religion enters the



Temple Mount. So if you mention the status quo as a claim against this viewpoint, all it does is add to the tension.”

The term “status quo” has done little to quell Palestinian fears that Israel plans to allow Jews to pray there. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has assured that he intends to keep the status quo and warned that Israelis are liable for their own actions if they visit the mount. However, hard-pressed Jews continue to assert their right to access—even own—the mount.

This is represented by a historical back-and-forth battle for control.

■ In 1929, Arab-Israeli violence erupted, with Jews vying for control of the Western Wall (the only remaining part of the second Jewish Temple).

■ During the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel conquered the mount, with a colonel declaring over his army radio, “The Temple Mount is in our hands!” (Jewish Virtual Library).

■ In the 1980s, authorities uncovered a Jewish extremist plot to destroy the Dome of the Rock.

■ After the 2000 Camp David peace talks, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said the mount should be Palestinian controlled, but under the umbrella of Israeli sovereignty. In response, Palestinian officials publicly announced the Jewish Temple never stood on the mount and that there was no Jewish cultural link to the site.

These are oft-repeated sentiments. Al-Quds University stated on its website that “the Al-Aqsa compound cannot possibly be in the same place as the first or second temple,” adding that the First Temple was “a pre-monotheistic place where many gods were worshipped... dominated by Syro-Phoenician traits” to appeal “to pagan worshippers living in the area.”

Nathan Sharnansky, minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, summarized the Palestinian argument to *Haaretz* as, “You [Israelis] have no right to exist in this country, you have no connection to it, get out of here.”

His response to such claims is: “One doesn’t have to be religious in order to understand that relinquishing the Temple Mount is not only relinquishing

the past, it is primarily relinquishing the future. The future of all of us here.”

In short, Israelis claim this site as part of their historical heritage. But Palestinians say Jews have no place here. Thus, a shaky standoff forms—and continuous conflict.

Ancient Beginnings

The Temple Mount turf war reaches even further into the past. The land, which rises 2,428 feet above sea level between the Kidron and Tyropoeon valleys, has passed through the hands of great civilizations and empires.

Yet it all started with the biblical patriarch Abraham. The first recorded mention of Mount Moriah comes from the book of Genesis. After rescuing his nephew Lot from four Canaanite kings, Abraham met with King Melchizedek at the base of the mount.

Jewish scholar Doctor Benjamin Mazar placed the meeting between Abram and Melchizedek—known as “king of Salem”—in the En-Rogel valley (*The Illustrated History of the Jews*). Note that Salem was later renamed *Jerusalem*.

In his book *Moriah*, Andrew J. Gregg described the location of the valley: “From En-Rogel, the view of Mt. Moriah is grand, as it towers above the valley.”

After a meal, Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Gen. 14:19-20).

That night, the patriarch was blessed further: “The word of the LORD came to Abram...and He brought him forth *abroad*, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your seed be” (15:1-5).

The Hebrew word for *abroad* means “brought outside,” likely to the peak of Mount Moriah to look at the stars. Abraham then built an altar there and offered a sacrifice.

Later, the patriarch returned to the same spot after God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son. “And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood” (22:9).

God spared Isaac and blessed Abraham for his faithfulness.

Divided Family

Abraham’s ties to Moriah do not end there. He had two sons: first, Ishmael (by Hagar, a handmaid), then Isaac (by his wife, Sarah).

Though Abraham passed the birthright to Isaac instead of his firstborn, Ishmael was also blessed. His offspring became the Arab people. Ishmael’s 12 sons (Gen. 25:16) went on to form major Arab nations, not insignificant nomadic tribes as some believe. These peoples intermarried primarily with the Egyptians and were located southeast of Canaan, in the region of Arabia.

Isaac’s wife, Rebekah, had twins: Esau was the eldest and Jacob the younger. Esau lost the birthright—instead, it went to Jacob.

Esau married Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael (28:9). The house of Esau, also known as the Edomites and Amalekites, gave rise millennia later to the Ottoman Turks, as well as the Seljuk Turks, who conquered and held most of Asia Minor, and the Caucasian Osmanli Turks, who controlled the Holy Land from AD 1070 until they surrendered it to the British in 1917.

Both Ishmael and Esau remained bitter for losing the birthright blessing. The jilted brothers jealously despised the descendants of Jacob (whom God renamed *Israel*).

This ancient family feud lingers today in the ongoing hostility primarily between the Muslim Palestinians (some of the descendants of Esau and Ishmael) and the modern Jewish state, allied with Anglo-Saxon nations (all the offspring of Jacob/Israel). The United States and United Kingdom, along with its commonwealth countries, received Abraham’s birthright. (Read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabibp to learn more about the modern nations descended from ancient Israel.)

This backdrop frames the entire Mid-East conflict. And, like the skyline of the Old City of Jerusalem, the Temple Mount rises front and center in importance.

Israel Holds the Temple Mount

King David took Jerusalem about 1000 BC. The book of II Samuel reveals “the stronghold of Zion” is also “the city of David” (5:7). Zion is directly south of Mount Moriah.

Late in his life, David purchased the mount from Araunah the Jebusite for 600 shekels of gold. David constructed an altar there, which from that time was “the house of the LORD God” and “the altar of the burnt offering for Israel” (I Chron. 22:1). The aging king amassed the materials for the Temple, which his son Solomon completed. Notice: “Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite” (II Chron. 3:1).

The Temple was sided with immaculately cut white stone, which shone brightly in the sun. Twelve-foot walls surrounded the court and the porch at

the entrance was about 200 feet high at its peak—about the height of a modern 20-story building. Two pillars stood at the front, each about 52 feet high and each made of at least 30 tons of brass (I Kgs. 7).

During the golden days of King Solomon’s reign, Israel enjoyed peace.

But things changed. Under evil kings of Judah, Mount Moriah hosted numerous pagan deities: Tammuz, Molech and Ashtaroth.

For example, King Manasseh erected a wooden image to the sex goddess Ashtaroth and placed it on Mount Moriah. He built altars for the stars in the two courts of the Temple. He even sacrificed his son to Molech (II Kgs. 21:6).

Simultaneously, hostile nations began attacking Israel. The Temple was looted by an Egyptian pharaoh (II Chron. 12:9). Later, Judah’s King Ahaz stripped Temple gold to buy Assyria’s protection (II Kgs. 16:8).

David’s descendants did not hold the mount for the long haul.

Exile and Return

Enter the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar II seized the Temple Mount and burned Solomon’s Temple to the ground, looting the gold and silver and sacred vessels (II Kings 24:10-13).

The Persians defeated Babylon and took the Jews as slaves (II Chron. 36:20).

Persian King Cyrus sent the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1). Under the auspices of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews worked for 21 years to complete the Temple in 515 BC. This second structure was of lesser quality than the first.

After Alexander the Great died, his four generals grappled for control of Jerusalem. The Seleucid kingdom (started by one of Alexander’s generals) finally took Jerusalem around 200 BC.

Seleucid King Antiochus IV appointed his own high priest for the Temple, allowing him to more easily



■ **JUDAH’S FALL:** “The Burning of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar’s Army,” by Juan de la Corte (1630-1660), depicts the destruction of the kingdom of Judah’s capital by the Babylonian empire in 587 BC. Solomon’s Temple, which sat atop the Temple Mount at the time, was destroyed during the siege, and the city’s Jewish residents were taken captive.

PHOTO: FUNDACION BANCO SANTANDER/PUBLIC DOMAIN

Hellenize the Jewish religion. Using this “puppet” priest, Antiochus forced the Jews to worship idols and eat pork (*The Illustrated History of the Jews*). He also forbade circumcision, which he viewed as mutilation, erected a statue of Zeus on the mount, and sacrificed pigs upon the altar. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* correctly identifies the transformation “of the sacred Temple at Jerusalem into a heathen one” as one of the fulfillments of the “abomination that makes desolate” mentioned in Daniel 11:31.

The actions of Antiochus led to the successful Maccabean revolution. The Romans then took over the land in 63 BC, and held the city for the next 500 years.

Herod the Great, whose father was an Edomite (Esau) and mother was an Arab (Ishmael), received kingship of Judea from Rome in 40 BC. After some resistance, he convinced the Jews to allow him to renovate the Temple and bring it to perfection (he also built it as a memorial to himself). Herod enlarged the mount to the size it is today. Some foundation stones were 40 feet long and over 600 tons, or 1.2 million pounds!

This was the same Temple, which took 46 years to complete, that Jesus visited throughout His life.

After yet another Jewish rebellion, Titus of Rome laid siege to Jerusalem, encircling it with armies. Once taken, Titus burned the Temple in AD 70 (exactly 656 years after the destruction of Solomon’s). The event echoes Christ’s warning in Luke 21:20 for the years just ahead: “And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the *desolation* thereof is near.” Armies surrounding Jerusalem is another clue to the abomination of desolation.

Roman soldiers looted the structure, dismantling every stone to pry out the melted gold. Titus then carried his spoils to Rome, including the Menorah and other sacred vessels.

Roman General Hadrian in AD 136 built a temple to Jupiter, which was likely placed to the south of the mount, desecrating the site with a pagan statue

and placing a bronze image of himself in the courtyard.

Then between 330-640, the mount fell into disrepair and became a dump.

Muslim Conquest, Christian Crusades

By year 700, Muslims took Jerusalem and built a wooden Al-Aqsa Mosque on the foundation of Hadrian’s Temple to Jupiter. The Dome of the Rock was likely built on the remains of a Roman hexagonal entrance hall to the north.

Soon, Catholics controlled the mount. Christian Crusaders violently seized the Holy Land and, in the early 12th century, reconstructed an earthquake-damaged Al-Aqsa Mosque as the Temple Solomonic (headquarters of the fabled Knights Templar) and the Dome of the Rock, renamed the Temple Domini. Crusaders revamped both buildings and added altars, icons, new mosaics, and Christian inscriptions—crosses replaced all crescent moons (*Crusader Archaeology*).

Muslims recaptured their Haram al-Sharif in 1187 under the famed Saladin, reclaiming the two mosques on the mount. Islamic followers purged the Catholic icons and renovated the marble mosaics and inscriptions.

Islam saturated the region. The Islamic missionaries who most vigorously spread their religion through violence were those of the lineage of Esau, which included the Turks.

Even in the Holy Land, Islam’s incremental influence was accompanied by population shifts as explained by the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: “The spread of Islam introduced a very considerable Neo-Arabian infusion. Those from southern Arabia were known as the Yaman [a son of Esau] tribe, those from northern Arabia, the Kais (Qais). These two divisions absorbed the previous peasant population, and... nominally exist; down to the middle of the 19th century they were a fruitful source of quarrels and of bloodshed.”

Muslims controlled the mount and Jerusalem until 1917 when Britain took Jerusalem. This was the first time European visitors were allowed on the Temple Mount since 1187.

Even today, the ancient grudge match continues between the descendants of Abraham: The Palestinians and Israelis have daggers drawn in an uneasy stalemate atop the mount.

End of the War

Though Abraham’s descendants have had the spotlight, the likes of Babylon and Rome are also entangled in the drama on the Temple Mount.

The text of the Bible is much more than Hebrew literature or historical text—it also outlines how future events will unfold on today’s Noble Sanctuary.

For example, the actions of Antiochus IV and Titus were only *types* of a COMING desolation of the Temple Mount. Again, Jesus said, “When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, *stand in the holy place*, (whoso reads, let him understand)” (Matt. 24:15). This is preceded by “Jerusalem compassed with armies” (Luke 21:20).

Tied to these events—the final and ultimate fulfillment of “the abomination of desolation”—is a figure known as “the man of sin” sitting “in the temple of God” (II Thes. 2:3-4).

These and other prophecies *strongly* indicate that Israel will be forced to take control of the mount for a time. This is the only way both a “holy place” and “temple of God” can be present there. Such actions are sure to put tremendous strain on long-held alliances, including between the United States and Israel. (To learn more, watch *The World to Come™ with David C. Pack* broadcast “America and Israel—Full Rupture Foretold!” at worldtocome.org.)

When will all these events occur? The prophet Daniel places their fulfillment at the “time of the end” (Dan. 11:40). This is the time we live in today. And the system of the long-forgotten players—Rome and Babylon—will return with a starring role.

The board is set. The pieces are in motion. Who will stand victorious on the Temple Mount?

Read *The Mid-East in Bible Prophecy* at rcg.org/tmeibp to learn the STUNNING conclusion to 3,000 years of Temple Mount violence. □

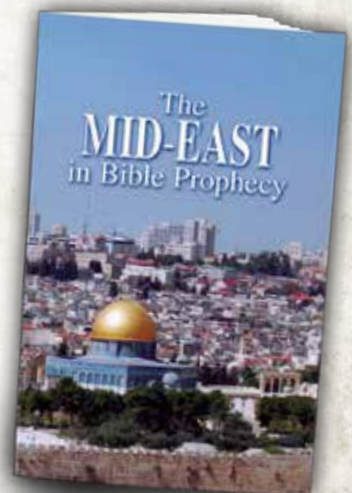


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LESSONS FROM EBOLA

Are We Ready for the Next Pandemic?

Approximately one year after Ebola took the lives of over 11,000 people and infected approximately 29,000, health experts, scientists and concerned citizens are contemplating how prepared we are for the next large-scale outbreak.

THE HAUNTING images of mass graves filled with nameless body bags, children hooked to IVs, family members wailing over deceased loved ones, and heartrending stories of orphaned children that flooded newspapers starting in March 2014 made it clear that humanity was facing a different kind of epidemic—with a mortality rate that at its highest killed 70 percent of its victims.

The Ebola strain, which was first contracted by an 18-month-old boy in Meliandou, Guinea, from supposed contact with bats, quickly spread throughout his family, killing all but his father.

The virus picked up speed as it traveled through neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone. Within just three months of it taking hold, it had killed 300 people and infected more than 500.

As summer turned to fall, countries including Nigeria, Senegal, Spain and Mali harbored cases and travelers from the United Kingdom to Hong Kong presented symptoms. A separate strain even began affecting those in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

For the first time, Ebola also reached the shores of the United States when a man, who traveled from Liberia with no symptoms, fell ill within days of entering the country. Doctors confirmed the patient's symptoms as Ebola, and isolated him. He died several days later.

Two healthcare workers who cared for him also contracted the disease, sparking panic among U.S. citizens. Local news stations featured how-to-handle-Ebola segments and even went so far as to interview veterinarians on whether pets could contract it.

Despite hand-wringing over the possible spread, less than 20 people were transported to the U.S. for treatment of Ebola or became infected with it. Out of those, only two died.

The outbreak, though, set the world on edge. Newspapers questioned if this could be the “big one” that many had anticipated. Country after country reported infections, and nations contemplated prohibiting travel to affected areas. It seemed only a matter of time before great numbers across the entire world contracted it.

Yet within a year, the epidemic seemingly stopped as suddenly as it came and most turned their attention back to their daily activities. The virus that had once splashed its name across every newspaper and magazine became more of a distant memory to all but those left to pick up the pieces.

Front Lines

Liberian native and trained neurosurgeon Dr. Jerry Brown understands the reality of Ebola's effects all too well. The year the epidemic hit, Dr. Brown accepted a position as Medical Director of the Eternal Love Winning Africa Hospital (ELWA) in the nation's capital of Monrovia.

On March 28, 2014, his hospital staff met for the first time to discuss the virus. At the time, it was only in Guinea—but Dr. Brown saw its potential to spread. He immediately began training personnel on infection prevention since it was the first time that Ebola had surfaced in West Africa.

“People never knew what disease they were dealing with,” he said during a speech and panel discussion on Ebola preparedness at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. “They had no knowledge of it.”

During the event, which was attended by *Real Truth* staff, Dr. Brown explained that he turned ELWA's small on-site chapel into the nation's first Ebola Treatment Unit (ETU). It could hold five people.

His preparation paid off. By the time the first case occurred in Liberia on March 30, he felt he was somewhat ready.

But he soon found himself struggling to find enough room to fit all the patients that came to the hospital starting on April 12.

As more arrived for treatment, Dr. Brown had to branch into a kitchen and laundry facility, where he set up 20 more beds for an ETU. Patients reached the hospital by any means possible—ambulance, taxi, motorcycle, or were brought in by a loved one, he recounted. Eventually, with increasing numbers contracting Ebola, he was able to acquire enough extension tents to set around the hospital with the capacity to hold 100.

Retaining and recruiting staff was difficult. Many were terrified of the disease and did not want to become casualties. Even contact tracers, who were hired to identify those who had come into contact with Ebola victims, were scared for their lives.

“They themselves were afraid of going into the communities for fear of the disease,” he said.

His clinic found itself reaching out to the public for monetary support. He went on the radio to ask citizens to help gather needed supplies.

While this yielded results, life on the ground turned chaotic. International aid came, but in some cases it was too little, too late. Ebola was running rampant, with seemingly no hope of stopping.

Bodies began to pile up. On August 6, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf declared a three-month state of emergency, which included market closings, curfews and restricting the

■ **EXTRA CARE:** A nurse's aide comforts an infant girl with Ebola symptoms in the high-risk area of the Doctors Without Borders Ebola treatment unit in Paynesville, Liberia (Jan. 26, 2015).

PHOTO: JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES

movement of patients and anyone who had contact with them. The government also mandated that anyone who died from Ebola be cremated. Tens of thousands of people were quarantined and even coastal areas were blocked off. The moves resulted in riots and widespread looting.

The disunity of international efforts did not help the process. Dr. Brown explained that various organizations and health teams from different countries rarely worked together, and instead each wanted to take sole credit for their efforts.

Because there was not a coordinated plan on how international aid would be distributed in the nation, some hospitals, including Dr. Brown's, did not have adequate supplies to combat the disease.

For example, he explained that the ETU next door "had a stockpile of IV fluids and anything they wanted. But when you came to our ETU, we had to look for foot covers. We couldn't find foot covers so we waited...and bought plastic bags and covered our feet in order to work."

The stigma of the disease and lack of knowledge about it caused further deaths. Those who had never heard of it thought Western health officials who donned protective suits were extract-

ing the organs of those who went to the ETU, Dr. Brown said. Therefore, family members hid decaying corpses in their homes or buried them before health officials could find them, which only worsened the epidemic.

"...instead of showing up for treatment, they chose to remain home," he said. "And that led to a rapid spread and increased mortality."

Dr. Brown said another struggle was that there was "an acute shortage of trained manpower to handle the crisis we had initially. In addition to that, a lot of our trained manpower who trained physicians who started the fight died. You know, the infectious disease doctor in Sierra Leone, he died. We lost two internists, the only two laboratory attendants we had in Liberia died as a result of the disease."

Even though Liberia had the highest number of healthcare workers infected by the end of the epidemic, due to his efforts to identify and contain Ebola, not one member of Dr. Brown's staff died from it.

Different From Before

While various strains of Ebola have surfaced in small towns across Central Africa since its initial discovery in 1976, the year 2014 was the first time it hit a heavily populated area.

"This was more urban-based in many ways than the other outbreaks that were in remote and rural areas," Dr. Robert Salata, a professor of medicine, epidemiology and international health at Case Western Reserve University, said during the panel discussion. He explained that in previous outbreaks, the disease was contained to smaller rural areas because those who contracted it died before they had a chance to spread it to surrounding regions.

John Dye, Viral Immunology Branch Chief of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, concurred that the epidemic was definitely unique.

"Ebola has been popping up all over Central Africa for decades and the difference with this outbreak is that, for instance, if you compare it to Uganda, we're talking about dozens of cases as opposed to tens of thousands," he said. "The difference is that Uganda had seen it before. And it had never been seen in West Africa, except one case in Cote d'Ivoire and it was believed to have actually migrated to Cote d'Ivoire from Central Africa..."

At first, he said, Ebola was hard to diagnose as "with the general symptoms...general malaise, you can't really put your finger on it. It was probably early diagnosed as Lassa virus would be my guess because the symptoms are so similar."

It was also the first time that those from outside Africa were infected, Mr. Dye said, which could provide clues in the future as to how the disease affects those not currently infected with any other kind of malady. At least 75 percent of survivors complain of backaches, arthritis, headaches, sleep apnea, and vision issues. Yet 95 percent of them become infected with malaria due to a weakened immune system after they contract Ebola, known as sequela, or a condition that surfaces as a consequence of a previous disease or infection, he said.

"It's very difficult because in Africa, you're constantly barraged by all kinds of pathogens," he said, later stating, "What's different about this outbreak is that Westerners have been



■ **LOOKING BACK:** Dr. Jerry Brown, who was featured on *Time* magazine's front cover in their "Person of the Year" tribute to Ebola fighters, explains how patients were cared for at his hospital in Monrovia, Liberia, during an Ebola preparedness lecture at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio (Oct. 22, 2015).

PHOTO: NICOLE M. QUIMBY/THE REAL TRUTH

infected and they have come back to industrialized nations where they are receiving top healthcare and yet you are now seeing sequela.”

According to Mr. Dye, Ebola survivors have “gold in their blood,” and studying them is key to combatting the virus.

Economic Impact

An often overlooked aspect of disease epidemics is the fiscal impact on developing countries such as Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia—which all have some of the highest poverty rates in the world.

“Their public health infrastructure was poor to begin with,” Craig Giesze, a senior operations officer for the World Bank Group in Dakar, Senegal, told the panel regarding Liberia. “Imagine what it is like now.”

Mr. Giesze said that the latest epidemic may have set some of the countries, including Liberia, “back 10 years in their economic development.”

“Even though they’ve made improvements and they have contained Ebola much more effectively than at the beginning, foreign investors...aren’t buying it,” he said. “And basically markets work because there is confidence. And as of right now, there is a gap in confidence...”

According to World Vision, due to a continuing civil war, around 70 percent of Sierra Leone’s six million citizens live below the poverty line. It has one of the highest rates of mortality in children under 5 and only half the population in urban areas has a safe water supply. Electricity is almost non-existent.

Likewise, Liberia is classified as a “low income country that relies heavily on foreign assistance,” according to *The World Factbook*. It was ranked as the fourth poorest country in the world by *Global Finance* magazine. Since 2003, it has also been rebuilding from a 14-year civil war.

Guinea struggles with its own problems. It was ranked as Earth’s ninth poorest country with half the population living below the poverty line.



■ **EQUIPPED TO FIGHT:** A healthcare worker cleans a colleague wearing personal protective equipment at an Ebola treatment center in Conakry, Guinea (Sept. 25, 2014).

PHOTO: CELLOU BINANI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“Food insecurity and malnutrition among children are widespread,” the International Fund for Agricultural Development reported.

Mr. Giesze said it will be difficult to prepare countries in such circumstances for future outbreaks, but he and other organizations are trying to dialogue more efficiently with coalitions such as the Economic Community of West African States and the African Development Bank.

“I think that if we just take a step back, though, we still have a long way to go because we know that just across the board, health infrastructure is still substandard in West Africa,” he said.

Zoonotic Base

While Ebola was contained, experts caution that we are not out of the woods yet. History as a guide shows that there is always *something* that surfaces. Disease in its many forms continues to run rampant, spurred on by new pathogens carried to humans. And it is often when it is least expected that a new strain or virus will appear out of a faraway forest or some other remote area.

“Nearly 75 percent of all new, emerging, or re-emerging diseases affecting humans at the beginning of the 21st century are zoonotic (i.e. originated in animals),” USAID report-

ed in a document titled “Emerging Pandemic Threats.” “Notable reminders of how vulnerable the increasingly interconnected world is to the global impact of new emergent diseases include HIV/AIDS, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, and the 2009 pandemic H1N1 influenza virus. The speed with which these diseases can emerge and spread presents serious public health, economic, and development concerns. It also underscores the need for the development of comprehensive disease detection and response capacities, particularly in ‘hot spot’ areas such as central Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and Latin America where a confluence of risk factors may contribute to disease emergence.”

Many of the worst diseases in history have been zoonotic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that over six of every 10 infectious diseases are spread from animals. Since 1940, it is estimated that over 300 new diseases have been identified.

In addition, “Three of the top ten causes of death, or sixteen percent of all deaths each year, are from infectious diseases,” according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “Most of these deaths are in

low- and middle-income countries and are attributable to preventable or treatable diseases such as diarrhea, lower respiratory infections, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. While significant advances have been made in interventions to prevent and treat most of these diseases, those interventions are often unavailable to the populations most in need.”

“Infectious diseases have been an ever-present threat to mankind,” the organization reported. “From the biblical plagues and the Plague of Athens in ancient times, to the Black Death of the Middle Ages, the 1918 ‘Spanish Flu’ pandemic, and more recently, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, infectious diseases have continued to emerge and reemerge in a manner that defies accurate predictions.”

Worst in History

One of the first and most deadly pandemics recorded was the Plague of Justinian, a bubonic plague that spread across the Eastern Roman Empire from AD 541 to 542. The disease, which was likely carried by rats on boats transporting grain from Egypt to Constantinople, was so devastating that it halted the empire’s military operations. The CDC estimates that it killed over 100 million people in and around the Mediterranean region.

Less than a millennium later, the bubonic plague outbreak—notoriously labeled the Black Plague—was brought from Asia to Europe via fleas living on black rats in merchant ships. The plague continued to reach further north in Europe and Russia until it phased out in 1353. By then, it had taken the lives of 75 million people, roughly wiping out one quarter of the world population at the time.

Massive pandemics continued to hit the world after the Industrial Revolution and advancement in medical understanding. The 19th century hosted three cholera outbreaks, with the second—occurring from 1829 to 1851—being the most deadly of any disease in the same century.

Since then, there have been eight cholera outbreaks. The World Health

Organization reports the disease still kills as many as 120,000 each year.

Another deadly pandemic occurred at the end of the first world war—Spanish influenza. Brought to the U.S. by troops returning from Europe in March 1918, within two years, the flu left over half a million Americans dead, countless orphans, vacant jobs, and closed businesses. The pandemic affected every nation on Earth, killing 50 to 100 million and infecting 500 million worldwide.

Various influenzas have also taken root in the last 50 or so years. The Asian flu of 1957 was believed to have been spread by wild ducks. While it was the least severe of the three influenza pandemics of the 20th century, it still killed two million. Unlike Spanish influenza, the quick development of a vaccine prevented the Asian flu from causing a much more massive death toll.

The Hong Kong flu of 1968-1969 caused between one and four million deaths worldwide. It reached the United States through soldiers returning to California from Vietnam.

More recently, the swine flu pandemic of 2009 scared the 21st-century world. It broke out in March of that year when H1N1, the same virus that caused the Spanish influenza in 1918, infected 60 percent of the town of La Gloria, Mexico.

From there, it spread throughout Mexico and the United States until the WHO’s director-general declared it a “public health emergency of international concern.” Only days after the warning, swine flu cases were confirmed in Canada, the United Kingdom, Israel, New Zealand, Continental Europe, East Asia, South America, and Africa.

After the pandemic was declared over on August 10, 2010, it was estimated that anywhere from 10 to 200 million had been infected. The WHO confirmed that 18,500 had died from the disease.

Several other diseases have not had pandemic outbreaks as has occurred with malaria, a mosquito-borne illness that kills one to three million per

year, but have the potential to be just as deadly. During the 20th century alone, the illness killed between 300 and 500 million people.

“Humanity is locked in a millennia-old battle to the death with diseases like these,” *The Guardian* reported. “We have fought them back with herculean effort. We developed penicillin and other antibiotics to treat bacteria like the ones thought responsible for the Black Death, and vaccines to fight viruses.

“But we are in an arms race. And while our ability to treat disease is better than ever before, the current outbreak of Ebola, and the first diagnosis of the virus outside of Africa, is reminding us that as our cities get bigger and international travel becomes easier, the risks involved in an outbreak grow ever higher.”

Pandemic Spread

While an epidemic hit Africa this time, next time, it could be somewhere else—and in another form.

Imagine, for example, that a contagious airborne disease suddenly surfaced, a nightmare scenario according to health experts.

“Even with modern medicine, we haven’t rid ourselves of pandemics; indeed, they have sprung up far more recently than 1918,” *The Guardian* reported. “HIV/Aids is the most recent truly devastating pandemic—and H5N1 avian flu was even more widespread, though less deadly.

“There are many nightmare scenarios, according to Robert G Webster, chair of the virology division at St Jude children’s research hospital. ‘Just imagine if the Ebola outbreak in West Africa was transmitted by aerosol. If flu was just as lethal. If H5N1 [avian flu] was as lethal in humans as it is in chickens—and studies have shown that it only takes about three mutations to make it highly lethal. It’s not out of the realms of possibility.’”

Ebola will most likely never become airborne, according to the CDC, as it can only be transmitted

*Please see **EBOLA**, page 29*



REDEFINING THE FAMILY

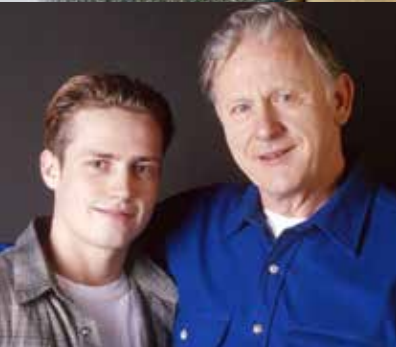
Modern society is in the midst of the greatest shift in history when it comes to family structure.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

“AN EXPLOSION of diversity.” This is how the non-profit Council on Contemporary Families described the morphing landscape of American families. Today, unmarried parents, same-sex couples with adopted children, and homes composed of serial divorcees are increasingly as common as the traditional nuclear family of a married father and mother with kids.

These changes have truly been explosive. A report from the council stated: “At the end of the 1950s, if you chose 100 children under age 15 to represent all children, 65 would have been living in a family with married parents, with the father employed and the mother out of the labor force. Only 18 would have had married parents who were both employed. As for other types of family arrangements, you would find only one child in every 350 living with a never-married mother!”

Fifty-plus years later, the world is a markedly different place.



The report continued: “Today, among 100 representative children, just 22 live in a married male-breadwinner family, compared to 23 living with a single mother (only half of whom have ever been married). Seven out of every 100 live with a parent who cohabits with an unmarried partner (a category too rare for the Census Bureau to consider counting in 1960) and six with either a single father or with grandparents but no parents.”

Now, dual-earner parents make up the biggest group at 34 percent, but the size of the other categories means it cannot be considered the “typical” American family.

According to *The New York Times*, these light-speed changes have stunned experts: “Researchers who study the structure and evolution of the American family express unsullied astonishment at how rapidly the family has changed in recent years, the transformations often exceeding or capsizing those same experts’ predictions of just a few journal articles ago.”

In the same piece, Andrew J. Cherlin, a professor of public policy at Johns Hopkins University, said: “This churning, this turnover in our intimate partnerships is creating complex families on a scale we’ve not seen before.”

He continued: “It’s a mistake to think this is the endpoint of enormous change. We are still very much in the midst of it.”

This is the greatest alteration in family structure in history, and it is also occurring in Britain, Western Europe, and across the globe. No matter a person’s opinion on these seismic changes—whether they are exciting signs of modern progress or that something vital is being lost—EVERYONE should examine the potential effects.

Does It Matter?

One of the greatest shifts over the past decades is the everyday definition of family itself. The word once immediately painted a mental picture of biological parents and two-plus children. Now, the meaning is much more complex, with an endless array of home-life situations—what the Council on



■ **CHANGING TRADITIONS:** By the middle of the 20th century, family life had changed drastically from just decades earlier. Top left, a family visits a park in the 1950s. Top middle left, a family picnics in Columbus, Ohio, circa 1950. Bottom left, a family in Paris, France, watches the first moon landing (July 21, 1969). Middle, an American family sits with their children circa 1905. Top right, Cadillac Square is filled with people in the 1950s in Detroit, Michigan. Bottom right, a family poses in front of their house near Springview, Nebraska (1900).

PHOTOS: THINKSTOCK (TOP LEFT); POSTD/LF, CC BY-SA 3.0 (TOP MIDDLE LEFT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM LEFT); GERTRUDE KASEBIER/PUBLIC DOMAIN (MIDDLE); STAFF/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (TOP RIGHT); SOLOMON D. BUTCHER/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (BOTTOM RIGHT)



Contemporary Families called “a veritable peacock’s tail of work-family arrangements.”

The repercussions of this shift cover every part of society.

For government officials, a move away from married biological parents raising their own children can be worrisome. A joint study from Princeton University and the Brookings Institute stated: “Research clearly demonstrates that children growing up with two continuously married parents are less likely than other children to experience a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and social problems, not only during childhood, but also in adulthood.”

Such positive effects—which include higher education, income, occupational status, and employment rates—are even more pronounced when children are raised by their biological fathers and mothers.

Going forward, researchers must attempt to pinpoint what advantages

birth parents have. And policymakers must devise ways to supplement what is lost in modern family relationships to mitigate the potential widespread socioeconomic effects in the shift away from traditional home-life arrangements.

Perhaps the groups most struggling to adapt to the new family landscape are professing Christians—a demographic that has long vocally opposed divorce and homosexuality while championing “traditional family values.”

After the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in June 2015, evangelical preacher Franklin Graham told a conservative radio host the ruling was another sign that the nation is “slipping every year further and further away from the God of the Bible, the foundation that our nation was built on.”

Pope Francis—who leads the largest denomination of professing Christians on Earth—has made protecting the sanctity of family and marriage one of his top priorities. The capstone of his



first-ever visit to America in October was a speech during the Festival of Families in Philadelphia. He exhorted the crowd by stating, “Let’s protect the family. Because it’s in the family that our future is at play.”

Yet professing Christians are not immune to current trends. Divorce rates for them match the statistical average for the nation (though they are lower for faithful churchgoers). And opinions about same-sex marriage are steadily drifting into line with the public at large.

A Pew Research Center study stated that United States Catholics are “experiencing life in all its modern complexity. According to the survey, one-in-four Catholics have gone through a divorce. One-in-ten have not only divorced but also remarried. One-in-ten are living with a romantic partner, sans wedding, and more than four-in-ten have done so at some point in their lives.”

Among U.S. Catholics, Pew found that 84 percent believe unmarried par-

ents living together is an acceptable way to raise children. Also, 87 percent feel the same about single parenting, 83 percent for divorced parents, and 66 percent for same-sex couples.

A main reason for this shift is societal pressures. Yet some experts see another reason for the change of ideals.

University of Iowa sociologist Kristy Nabhan-Warren told the *National Catholic Reporter* that Catholics do draw on their church’s moral teachings, but also look “deep into their consciences and are deciding what the moral, right thing to do is—even when that may seem to contradict teachings of the Church.”

Many professing Christians in general cannot see how a loving and merciful God would condemn cohabitating couples, divorcees and homosexuals. And many denominations have already changed their official stance to be more inclusive of lifestyles once considered utterly anathema.

“Traditional” Defined

Those who espouse traditional family values often look back to “simpler times” of the 1950s as the gold standard for home life.

Yet the worries in the mid-1900s were the same as today: increasing divorce, subverted gender roles, and waning religious influence. In fact, by this point in the 20th century, the West was *already* deep into redefining the traditional family.

The culprit? The Industrial Revolution.

A 1957 educational film from The McGraw-Hill Book Company described the shift: “Industrial expansion brought with it the growth of cities. And this too changed the traditional pattern of family life. Increasingly, families lived in apartments, not houses. This urban way of life brought with it greater individualism, more opportunities for self-

expression, but at the expense of the family and home ties.”

The film compared 1950s living arrangements with the typical family of the 1880s. At the earlier time, families lived the same way parents and their children did since the colonial period—and pretty much the same as most people have for the entirety of human history.

Most families in the 1880s were a tight-knit economic unit, with father, mother, children and perhaps grandparents all working together to run a farm and home. Dad worked the fields and tended to the herds, mom kept up the home but also gardened and ensured there was food year round by canning fruits and vegetables, curing meat, and so on. Boys learned the ropes of agriculture from their fathers and girls learned from mothers. Older daughters would often make clothes for the family. On Sunday, families did not work or play games. Rather, fathers would read the Bible to the family. The rest of the day was made up of visiting with nearby relatives.

Note the critical importance of each family member in this system. More than providing shelter, meals and emotional support—a home was an economic system. Remove any one part and success was put in jeopardy.

Industrialization utterly changed the roles of men and women. First, husbands became the sole breadwinners. Factories hired *individuals*, which greatly diminished the roles of women and even children. No longer was there the same united purpose, the urgency that all must work together to make a life.

Modern convenience further diminished the role of wives at home. McGraw-Hill said altering the status of women was “the greatest force of change in the traditional pattern of American family life.”

The film stated that the motivating factor for this was “the increasing employment of women outside the home: in factories, in commercial services, and in the professions. Industry offered her employment, at the same time providing her with merchandise

and services that undermined her traditional tasks. Today, most women work. Not in protest against masculine domination, but out of economic necessity. New inventions in communication and ways of travel had an important impact on the traditional family pattern.”

Throughout the 20th century, grocery stores, department stores, and modern appliances replaced vegetable gardens, handmade clothes, wood-burning stoves, cow milking, butter churning, and canning—not to mention jumping in to help the husband with any farming needs.

Rather than being a crucial partner in keeping the family afloat, many 1950s wives were virtually demoted to a housemaid and babysitter. It is little wonder they entered the workforce. Dual-earner households could then afford more modern conveniences and services, which further eroded the importance of stay-at-home mothers.

Obviously, there is nothing wrong with modern conveniences. Yet most do not realize these technological niceties disrupted a system that had remained virtually unchanged throughout millennia.

Historical Pattern

Recognize that the traditional family is not a purely religious or “Christian” construct. For most of history, marriage and family has stayed much the same: a man with one wife had children. They would work together to survive. Occasionally, homes would also include grandparents and sometimes servants. At times, multiple families (usually blood relatives) all lived together.

The notion of rampant polygamy (generally in the form of polygyny, a man with multiple wives) in ancient times is not supported by historical records. The greatest civilizations all tended to stick with the traditional family model.

Encyclopaedia Britannica stated that in ancient Egypt the ideal for households was the nuclear family and that they were overwhelmingly monogamous. Greece and Rome both had laws restricting marriage to one

wife. In Assyria, Babylonia, China and Aztec Mexico, traditional marriage and family were also the norm. Likely this was the case for most cultures.

In *Monogamy and Polygyny in Greece, Rome, and World History*, Stanford University professor Walter Scheidel supported this idea: “The notion of moderate polygyny is supported by the global anthropological record. We find that most societies condoned social and genetic polygamy...but also that most individual bonding and mating arrangements were monogamous.”

In other words, polygamy did happen, but not often.

Britannica adds to this idea by stating that polygamy “appears once to have been fairly common worldwide. Nowhere, however, have any of these been the exclusive form of marriage.”

Many cultures did allow for polygyny, and some even saw it as the goal, but most still stuck with the traditional nuclear family. One reason for this was a lack of resources. Having multiple wives was expensive as there were more people to feed and protect.

For this reason, polygamy was generally only seen among the wealthy and elite. Yet this practice *seems* to have been widespread because history only records the lives of leaders who could afford the “luxury” of multiple wives and concubines.

In addition, the model of the traditional family is seen over and over because *it works*. A father and mother with children is a time-tested, solid unit that can weather almost any hardship in life.

Of course, cultures throughout history had relationship issues. There was adultery, jealousy, divorce and every other problem that stems from human nature. But the core family structure was still favored.

Biblical Record

What about the Bible? The Book is often used to espouse the traditional family. From the get-go, it does just that.

After the creation of man, God immediately laid out ground rules.

He told human beings to, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). This can only occur through sexual reproduction. Chapter 2 puts parameters on this: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (vs. 24).

This is clearly describing a man marrying a woman and creating a family together. Jesus Christ validates this scripture in Matthew 19:4-5.

Yet there seems to be a problem. In Genesis, after stating the ground rules for human relationships, the Book then *immediately* appears to support polygamy and other non-traditional forms of family.

There is a lot of polygamy in its pages. Some of the greatest servants of God fell into this practice including Abraham, Jacob and David.

So did these actions negate or further explain the Creator’s command for marriage and family?

Just because God did not vaporize these men with lightning from heaven does not mean He *condoned* having sex and children with many women.

What many fail to realize is that biblical accounts contain lessons of both good *and* bad examples. The faithful Bible reader must look at the context and clear commands of God stated elsewhere to glean the overall meaning. When polygamy is present, the fruits born from these dalliances are ALWAYS negative:

■ For Abraham, the rift between his two sons Isaac and Ishmael, born from different women, continues even to this day between the Arabs and the Jews.

■ Jacob (later renamed Israel) had his favorite son sold into slavery because of animosity between older half-brothers (Gen. 37).

■ After hatching a murder plot against a man and marrying his wife, Bathsheba, David was severely punished. God also admonished the king for having multiple wives and concubines. (Read II Samuel 12).

The Bible shows that these three men all later repented and ended their polygamist practices. To learn the crys-

tal-clear facts about this topic, read “The Truth About Polygamy” at rcg.org/ttap.

Other men, such as Esau and King Saul, did have a number of spouses, but they were ungodly and did not represent God’s Way.

There are also three Bible passages that *appear* at first to support polygamy. By reading the context and examining all the facts of a specific account, however, this notion can always be disproved.

Exodus 21:10 states, “If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.”

First know that the word “wife” is in italics in the *King James Version*, which means it was added by translators. The verses immediately preceding this one show clearly that this means if a man take another *handmaiden* as a servant.

Also, this is the only time the Hebrew word translated “duty of marriage” is used in the Bible. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* states it can mean either to dwell together *or* sexual cohabitation.

With the context being maidservants (not wives), this verse strongly indicates that the master of a house is forbidden from withholding food, clothing and *shelter* from the first maidservant—NOT withholding food, clothing and sexual relations. Another, but less likely, possibility is that the man was not to refuse to allow the girl to marry.

Deuteronomy 21:15-16 is another supposed proof text for polygamy: “*If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: then it shall be, when he makes his sons to inherit that which he has, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn.*”

This verse is speaking of two wives throughout the life of the man. The implication is that the first spouse would have already died. Even today, people will use the term “my second wife.” Everyone understands that this means

a second marriage has occurred after a divorce or death.

Then there is Deuteronomy 25:5. It states: “If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: *her husband’s brother shall* go in unto her, and *take her to him to wife*, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother unto her.”

The key to understanding this passage is the phrase “*If* brethren dwell together.” This means, *if* a brother is living with his sibling, *then* the rest of the command applies. If a brother is living with his sibling’s family, he would have been single. Again, careful reading of the context makes the meaning clear.

NOWHERE does the Bible condone polygamy or any other form of marriage and family besides what is laid out in Genesis!

Even Deeper Meaning

A quick recap: Throughout history, even civilizations apart from the God of the Bible have generally followed monogamous relationships and had traditional families. Cultures over the millennia could have messed with the model. They could have favored single parenthood, same-sex couples raising children, men with wives, women with many husbands. Yet examples of this are few and far between.

The simplest reason they did not deviate too far from God’s definition of family was that His Way works. In addition, until the Industrial Revolution, moving too far from the dad-mom-and-kids model was impractical at best, and impossible at worst.

Yet there is another vital piece of the traditional-family puzzle. It is a practice equally widespread: marriage.

“Some form of marriage has been found to exist in all human societies, past and present,” *Britannica* stated. “Its importance can be seen in the elaborate and complex laws and rituals surrounding it.”

Marriage is found in ALL human societies. Think of the chances of *every* culture stumbling upon this institution by themselves. It is universal because God created it.

Understanding God's true intentions for family and marriage deepens their importance. The short answer is that both show the Creator's awesome purpose for mankind.

Genesis 1:26 begins to reveal that purpose: "And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness..."

"Let *us* make," "*our* image," and "*our* likeness"—to whom is God speaking? Have you ever noticed this before?

Some believe that God is simply talking to Himself here—and that plural simply sounds better. Others think this is an example of "royal we" similar to how kings and queens will refer to themselves with plural pronouns in official communications. Still others think the Creator is talking to angels.

Again, one must look at the context and other supporting verses to fully understand what is being said in any Bible verse. The Hebrew word for God in verse 26 is *Elohim*. It is a plural word, which makes the plural pronouns make a lot more sense.

Elohim is also used in verse 1: "In the beginning *God* created the heaven and the earth." Why use a plural word to describe God? This question has sparked controversy among Bible scholars for centuries. Yet the answer is quite simple and found in John 1.

Starting in verse 1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word is the Spirit-being who became Jesus Christ. He was simultaneously *with* God and also *was* God.

Elohim is plural in the sense of a FAMILY. Even if parents somehow produced 1,000 children, they would still form just one family. Therefore, in Genesis 1:26, Christ is talking to someone else. This is the Father, who is the only other God-being Jesus ever mentioned. Matthew 5:48 and John 5:17 are two examples of this.

God—the Father and the Word (who later became Jesus Christ)—made man in their image and their likeness.

For what purpose? Again, John 1 holds the answer. Verse 12 states that we can "become the sons of God."

Jesus is known as the Son of God (John 20:31). Those who follow Christ

can also become sons in the God Family. DO NOT MAKE THIS COMPLICATED. Jesus is a Son—and true Christians can be sons, too!

Romans 8 makes this point clear: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they are the sons of God*... The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that *we are the children of God*: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and *joint-heirs with Christ*; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also *glorified together*. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with *the glory which shall be revealed in us*" (vs. 14, 16-18).

There is a lot in this passage! It shows that the children of God will be "joint-heirs with Christ" who will be "glorified together" with Him at a later time.

Verses 1-2 in I John 3 bolster this point: "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that *we should be called the sons of God*... Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and *it does not yet appear what we shall be*: but we know that, *when He shall appear, we shall be like Him*; for we shall see Him as He is."

What is Christ and the other sons of God joint-heirs of—what will they inherit when He appears?

Ephesians 5:5 clearly defines this "inheritance" as "the kingdom of Christ and of God."

Good News

During Christ's time on Earth, He constantly brought one message: that of the gospel of the kingdom (Mark 1:15). This ties perfectly into the fact that God is reproducing Himself and enlarging his Family.

The kingdom of God is a major theme throughout the entire Bible. It shows that Christ will return to Earth and rule with the saints (Dan. 7:18; Rev. 5:10). Ultimately, all of mankind will have a chance to become part of the God Family (I Tim. 2:4).

Let all of this sink in. It is AWESOME knowledge!

Yet what does it have to do with physical families?

God's Plan reveals why family is so important to the Father and Son. It is a *physical* representation of His purpose for mankind—reproducing Himself. Following the biblical formula for marriage and family helps us understand God's master plan.

Healthy relationships with physical fathers—or being a good dad to children—helps all to better grasp the relationship God the Father wants to have with mankind. Bonds between siblings show how Jesus wants to bond with those who follow Him. Rock-solid marriages between husbands and wives demonstrate how Christ loves the Church and how the Church should love Him back (Eph. 5).

Moving away from the biblical model of marriage and family hides the incredible potential for all mankind to become part of the God Family. Because of this, the Father and Christ do not want the family to be redefined in ANY way.

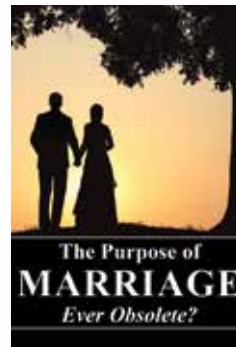
Does this mean those who have made mistakes—such as had children outside marriage or experienced divorce—have no hope for a proper relationship with God? No! He can work with anyone who will admit they are wrong, seek forgiveness and repentance, and desire to change.

The publisher of this magazine, The Restored Church of God, has many tools available at rcg.org to help build up familial relationships. A few include

Dating and Courtship – God's Way, You Can Build a Happy Marriage, Understanding Divorce and Remarriage, and Train Your Children God's Way.

Also, be sure to read *The Purpose of Marriage – Ever Obsolete?* It greatly expands on the concepts covered in this article.

Determine to stick to the Bible definition of marriage and family—and reap the incredible benefits! □



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China Restructures Economy After Financial Downturn

CHINA'S LEADERS, whose country suffered a stock market crash during the summer, are seeking to increase national consumer spending to stabilize its faltering economy. Prior to the crash, the economy had been based on savings, exporting goods, and manufacturing growth instead of providing goods and services to its own people.

Now that is expected to change.

President Xi Jinping has assumed the position as the economy's chief designer, a role typically filled by the prime minister. The head of state "has pledged sweeping market-oriented reforms to overhaul the Chinese economy for long-term growth," *The New York Times* reported, to make "the country's currency, the renminbi, a strong competitor to the dollar on world markets."

The president is working to create a more substantial middle class, which would increase internal spending. By removing ultra-wealthy monopolies and encouraging the migration of workers from rural to urban jobs, a rising middle class would increase the demand for goods and services.

"That involves redirecting hundreds of millions of people and trillions of dollars of capital," a *Reuters* opinion piece reported. "Nothing like it has ever been attempted."

The transition has not gone smoothly: "Profit at large Chinese industrials shrank 8.8 percent in August, compared with a year earlier," *Reuters* reported. "Rail freight contracted by 15 percent. The real estate investment that has underpinned global prices of commodities like copper and iron

shrank by 1 percent, compared with a decade-long average growth rate of 21 percent."

Financial observers are skeptical about the communist government's ability to shift its people's focus—which traditionally emphasizes social order, productivity and savings—toward mass consumerism. Currently, the majority of China's GDP is put toward savings and investment, and the nation spends only 36 percent of it. By comparison, America, which has a consumer-based economy, spends nearly 70 percent.

“The president is working to create a more substantial middle class, which would increase internal spending.”

Some economists consider these short-term growing pains. They point to America's transition from an industrial economy to a middle-class consumer economy after the Great Depression as an example of why China should continue moving forward. The nation's middle class is already larger than that of the United States, with 109 million Chinese citizens earning between \$50,000 and \$500,000. In addition, since 2000, Chinese wealth per adult has quadrupled.

Several nations, including the United Kingdom, are seeking to help China transform its economy.

Michael Hockx, director of the SOAS China Institute in London, said, "Chinese businesses are very eager to invest in other countries and some of the best export products that China has to offer are to do with infrastructure, high-speed trains, energy... and these are exactly the things that the UK needs."

The UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, said he intends to make China Britain's second-biggest export market by 2025. *BBC* reported: "Mr Osborne insists that this is a golden moment, where the interests of the UK and China align. China's maturing economy can absorb more of the services which are British export strengths.

"And UK infrastructure can soak up Chinese investment funds looking for a reliable return. Win-win for both sides, according to the chancellor."

Though investing in a communist regime is a questionable move according to some British economists, the UK struck over 30 billion pounds of trade and investment deals with China during President Xi's visit to England in October. This included an 18 billion pound investment in Britain's nuclear power plants.

"China has overtaken the United States as the world's leading trade power," Sir John Peace, Chairman of Standard Chartered Bank, which offers banking services worldwide, said in an editorial published in *The Telegraph*. "As a measure, 123 countries in the world have China as their leading trading partner, while the US can count only 64. Connecting China's less developed West to developed Europe as well as China's more affluent east to the fast-growing North Asia economic region presents exciting economic opportunities." □



PHOTO: NASA



HUMAN MIND VS. ANIMAL BRAIN

Why So Different?

Human beings possess a capability far beyond animals. Many ideas exist to explain the mind, but few understand the truth.

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

BOTH EVOLUTIONISTS and religionists agree there is “something” about mankind that differs from animals. Each offers explanations, certain the other side is wrong. How can you know which is correct?

What is the human mind? How does it relate to the brain? Why do we not see animals with minds? Most people do not understand the plain answers that have been available for thousands of years.

The argument can be summarized as the “mind-body problem.” It has been recognized that the physical characteristics of the human brain do not warrant the extreme creative and processing power that defines human ingenuity.

The answer is either physical or spiritual in nature—it can be explained no other way.

Unique to Humans

Consider just a few of the qualities man possesses that are unique among all living creatures. Many attributes

are so common and assumed that few give them much thought. Yet it should become clear how special human beings are.

Ask yourself: *Why does man have so many distinctive characteristics?*

■ **Self-consciousness:** Beyond a simple recognition of self (as seen in a few animals), man can step back and become a spectator, critic or admirer of the world around him. He is able to see his place in the greater picture and analyze what needs to be done to affect his role.

■ **Appreciation of beauty:** Man is able to appreciate all kinds of beauty. This can be as simple as a sunset, a work of art, or the intricate design of a flower.

For example, take someone to see New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, and he will likely feel emotionally moved by the seemingly limitless number of paintings and sculptures on display, dating back hundreds of years. Take a dog to the same museum, and it will be more excited about the trip and seeing the crowd of art lovers than anything else.

■ **Humor:** No other creature is able to appreciate, create and express humor. Not only does it require creativity, but humor also requires the ability to detach oneself from one's surroundings to see the odd, surreal or ironic.

■ **Awareness of death:** While animals have a survival instinct, man is able to consider that he will one day die. Aware that his days will not last forever, he has a deep respect of his mortality. In fact, nearly all cultures perform some form of funeral ritual. This is not found in the animal world.

■ **Understanding time:** Animals are only able to relate time to themselves. They have no ability of relating time to third parties. Humans can wonder, speculate and search the annals of history for lessons, and apply those lessons to goals far into the future.

■ **Connections between words:** While animals can understand simple words or tones, they do not comprehend syntax or communicate in complex sentences. Human beings have created hundreds of languages (and thousands of dialects), even though they are born without any way in which to communicate.

■ **Meaning of life:** The simple act of asking about life's meaning and purpose makes man unique. No animal contemplates its reason for living—nor would it be willing to live or die for specific values and ideals.

■ **Malleability:** Humanity is able to adapt to its surroundings. We wear clothes, build shelters, and modify

our environments to suit our needs. While animals build homes for themselves, they do not have the ability to live in an environment for which their bodies are not suited. Bring a polar bear to a tropical rainforest or an elephant to the South Pole and they will not survive for long.

■ **Lack of harmony with nature:** When left alone, nature reaches homeostasis—it balances itself. Only man has demonstrated he can disrupt that natural balance through means such as deforestation, changing the course of rivers, pollution, over mining for resources, etc.

■ **A sense of morality:** Animals always take the path of least resistance. They do not have a conscience or sense of right and wrong. On the other hand, mankind will go so far as to control his thoughts based on what he considers right or wrong.

■ **Character:** This is the ability to know right from wrong, and turn from the wrong and do what is right, even in the face of pressures and temptations. The desire to build character is only found in man.

■ **Free moral agency:** Unlike animals, man can deviate from his course of thinking and living however he sees fit. Animals react through instinct—programming.

■ **Capacity for wisdom:** Without the ability to place themselves in time, animals are unable to weigh situations with previous experiences. While animals can develop behavioral patterns based on positive or negative stimulation, they are completely unable to analyze actions before they are performed. This ability, known as wisdom, is unique to human beings.

■ **Desire for worship:** No matter what part of the world or his culture, man exhibits a desire to seek, follow and worship a higher power. Animals do not.

■ **Love:** While some animals form lifelong relationships for the purpose of reproduction, none exhibit a parallel with the human characteristics of love, in which a couple shares experiences, goals, dreams, hopes and aspirations.

The mind-body problem is a towering issue—one that dramatically separates us from the animal world. There must be a reason the human mind is different from the animal brain.

Evolutionary Answer?

The mind is one subject most evolutionists will not engage. Simply put, the physical differences between the human brain and that of animals are insufficient to explain the “horsepower” described above. Two aspects of the human brain demonstrate this point.

Human beings do not have the heaviest brains in overall weight, or even weight in proportion to their bodies.

Also, the nerve center of the human brain is only *slightly* more complex than that of animals.

No physiological explanation exists for man's mind! Biologists have no irrefutable evolutionary evidence. Psychologists are stupefied by the human brain. And evolutionists are left with only one answer: There is no scientific answer to the mind-body problem!

Immortal Soul

If the differences between animals and human beings cannot be explained by physical means, we *must* look for a spiritual explanation. Most professing Christians would quickly agree there must be a spiritual aspect to the human condition. They commonly argue that this non-physical component is an immortal soul. Those who support this approach try to use the Bible for proof.

Certainly, if man had an immortal soul, this would help explain the immeasurable capacity of his mind. But what does the Bible state?

The word “soul” appears in Scripture over 400 times, and for a variety of reasons. The first instance occurs during the description of man's creation. Notice Genesis 2: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and *man became a living soul*” (vs. 7).

The wording here is important. Note that man *became* a “living soul.” The Hebrew word from which “soul” was translated is *nephesh*, which means “a breathing creature.” This passage states that man became a living, breathing creature.

But was the soul that man received different from that of animals in that it was *immortal*?

Again, allow the Bible to speak for itself: “The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4, 20). If a soul dies, then it cannot be immortal! How can so many believe that man has an immortal soul when just two passages from God’s Word prove this to be absurd?

If the immortal soul does not come from Scripture, what is its origin? Even the briefest look at historical records makes this plain: “The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture... The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended” (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*).

Early Catholic writer Tertullian (AD 155-220) detailed where the immortal soul doctrine had its roots: “For some things are known even by nature: the immortality of the soul, for instance, is held by many...I may use, therefore, the opinion of a Plato, when he declares, ‘Every soul is immortal’” (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*).

If the mind-body problem cannot be solved by professing Christianity’s immortal soul doctrine, then what is the answer?

“Spirit in Man”

A biblical answer exists to the mind-body question, which has been missed by the masses. There is a spiritual component to man that elevates him above the physical.

Notice a passage in the Old Testament: “The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, says the LORD, which stretches forth the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and *forms the spirit of man within him*” (Zech. 12:1). This clearly states that God created a spirit inside each human being.

Proverbs 20:27 sheds some light on the purpose of this spirit: “The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.”

God uses the spirit in man as a way to interface with humanity. This is further expounded in the book of Job: “There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding” (32:8).

Putting these two passages together clarifies that God uses the “spirit in man” to impart understanding. Through this spirit, God is able to teach physical man a degree of spiritual knowledge.

Yet he is still spiritually incomplete—he needs *another* spirit.

Physical and Spiritual

Man is a physical being with a spiritual component. For centuries, mankind has experienced awesome progress and advancement, but—at the same time—continues to suffer ever-worsening and appalling evils, troubles and ills. This is because its problems are *spiritual* in nature.

Great leaders have recognized the link between humanity’s problems and the need for spiritual answers. General Douglas MacArthur, while attending the signing of Japan’s surrender on September 2, 1945, near the end of World War II, said, “Men since the beginning of time have sought peace...Military Alliances, Balances of Power, Leagues of Nations, all in turn failed leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological

and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advance in science, art, literature and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh” (*The Reports of General MacArthur*).

Over 60 years have passed since General MacArthur uttered these words, yet problems worsen. Man is desperate for spiritual knowledge—a solution to his problems.

Yet he must turn to God to learn how to resolve his deep-rooted problems. Again, man is spiritually incomplete: he needs another spirit: “For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God” (I Cor. 2:11).

God’s Spirit, when combined with our spirit, enables us to know “the things of God”—and to build holy, righteous character.

The spirit in man also records the events, experiences and lessons in the life of each person, and it returns to God when we die: “Then shall the dust [man] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7).

God then stores this vital ingredient of man until he is resurrected.

The human spirit allows man to reason, analyze and create. We are able to greatly exceed the capability of animals because of this special, unique, spiritual component. The eye-opening five-part *World to Come* broadcast series “Does God Exist?—Many *Absolute* Proofs!” presented by *Real Truth* Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack expounds on the animal kingdom and the purpose of its creation, which, without God involved, would not be possible. Be sure to watch it at worldtocome.org!

In addition, to learn more about humanity’s incredible future, including further proof of the mind of man and its capacity for understanding, read *The Awesome Potential of Man* at rcg.org/tapom. □

IS JESUS A MYTH?

Skeptics claim the Jesus Christ of the Bible is pure fiction.
Yet you can know for certain!

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

WEBSITES CLAIM that Jesus Christ is a myth. Books say His extraordinary encounters with people in the Holy Land are mere inventions. Documentaries assert His execution under the rule of the Roman government is false.

Their explanations for the true origin of arguably the most influential religious figure range from bizarre to just plain silly. One theory is that Jesus and His life are merely a personification of the symbols contained within the cross of the zodiac in astrology. His role as the “Son” and His travels with 12 disciples are believed to be a metaphor for the movement of the “sun” through the 12 constellations.

In short, the worship of Christ is just a continuation of mankind’s fascination with the stars.

Another claim is that Jesus is a composite of several real-life first-century figures. Supposedly the notable deeds of these individuals were combined and mythologized into the person of Jesus Christ. Related is the thought that He is a character cobbled together from “inauthentic and over-interpreted” sayings.

One particularly odd rationale is that Jesus, a man known to advocate peace, was a fabrication of the Roman government. Crafty officials invented Him

as a way to control their subjects with an alternative to the more threatening revolutionaries stirring up first-century Israel and posing a threat to Rome.

If any of these ideas were true, it would render numerous religious texts worthless and simultaneously shatter the hopes of billions of faithful followers. It is one thing to disagree with Jesus Christ’s teachings or to reject Christianity as a whole, but to dismiss Him as fantasy is another matter entirely.

Though their opinions about His role may differ, most followers of the world’s major religions—Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, among others—accept that a man known as Jesus walked the Earth during the first century. This is over three-quarters of the population alive today.

Most do not question the existence of a literal Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, books and other scholarly works maintaining He never lived are on the rise.

What is troubling is that proponents of the “Christ myth” sound so confident. Their bold assertions fill an increasing number of books and articles. They seem so sure of their conclusions that they can almost sound plausible.

These cunning arguments plant doubt in the minds of an increasingly unchurched generation and further dis-affect those fed up with the hypocrisy of mainstream religion. Even those *certain* of Jesus Christ’s literal existence can get hung up searching for ways to counter these claims.

The principal reasons people claim Jesus is imaginary stem from three major premises: (1) the charge that there is no secular or non-biblical proof of His actual existence; (2) claims that the Bible’s New Testament record has no legitimate historical value; and (3) criticisms that Jesus Christ’s profile borrows heavily from ancient paganism pre-dating Christianity.

Most recognize the claim that Jesus never existed for what it is—absurd. They have no need to be sold otherwise. However, going through the exercise of dismantling the supposedly “overwhelming evidence” can still be beneficial.

Doing so will not only increase your conviction that Jesus Christ actually existed as a man, but will also help you understand who He really was.

Historical Evidence

Advocates of the Christ myth say there are no sources outside the Bible that corroborate His existence. This is *patently* false.

The following are a few of the historical accounts recorded soon after Christ’s life.

■ **Tacitus:** As a Roman historian who lived from about AD 56-117, he mentioned the person of Jesus Christ and His execution by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate in his extensive record known as the *Annals*, which cover the history of the Roman Empire from AD 14-68.

■ **Suetonius:** Another Roman historian who lived from about AD 70-140, he referenced Jesus Christ in his AD 121 work titled *The Twelve Caesars*, a set of 12 biographies of Roman emperors considered a primary source of Roman history.

In a section on Emperor Claudius, he references Jews being expelled from Rome since they “constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus.” “Chrestus” is commonly seen as a reference to Christ.

Within the section on Emperor Nero, Suetonius further speaks of inflicting punishment on “Christians...given to a new and mischievous superstition.”

■ **Pliny the Younger:** A Roman governor of the Bithynian province who lived from AD 61-113, he wrote a letter around AD 112 to Roman Emperor Trajan about dealing with “Christians” in his province. He noted that this group met “on a certain fixed day” and sang a “hymn to Christ as to a god.” In addition, he explained their commitment “not to do wicked deeds, never commit fraud, theft, adultery, not to lie nor to deny a trust.” Pliny’s remedy for dealing with Christians refusing to worship Roman gods was execution.

■ **Flavius Josephus:** This well-known Roman-Jewish historian and scholar wrote *Antiquities of the Jews*, a 20-volume historiographical work on the Jewish people. Within it is written, “Jesus, a wise man...who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher...He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks.” The text continues “...Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease.”

Despite the controversy on the authenticity of these direct references to Jesus Christ, indirect mentions of His person in other sections such as a reference to “James the brother of Jesus” are less disputed.

In each case listed, it should be noted that the scope of the works of these individuals goes well beyond defending or refuting the existence of Jesus Christ. His literal presence was simply acknowledged as an accepted point of history.

While admitting that unbiased men did mention Christ in their writings, determined skeptics still argue that they were not actual *eyewitnesses* of His life, and therefore cannot be believed.

Think about what is being said, though. By this standard, any historical record, often a result of compiling oral and written records spanning many years, could be dismissed as untrustworthy because the person compiling it did not actually *see* the subjects mentioned.

Eventually, denials from skeptics of a literal Jesus become ridiculous, proving that even an established truth can be made doubtful if a person tries hard enough.

Also, everyone acknowledging the literal existence of Jesus cannot be branded “pro-Christian.” One would be hard-pressed to describe Muslims, Hindus or Jews as such. Muslims commonly recognize Jesus as an important prophet and Hindus acknowledge His teachings and effect on history.

The case for the Jews is even more powerful. They had a hand in His execution because He did not meet their standard as the coming Messiah. They have every incentive to deny the existence of a man named Jesus given the criticism they have received and their continued belief in a coming savior. Though they may not have seen Him as the “Son of God,” even they acknowledge He existed.

Overall, many religious alternatives to the Christian faith could easily dismiss Christianity as a serious religion by simply agreeing that the figure central to its belief system never lived—but they do not.

Book of History?

Bible critics are also wrong to believe the New Testament has no historical value. The New Testament records provable historical facts such as the construction of Herod’s temple, the wall and foundation of which can still be seen today.

There are also multiple references to Roman rule and the destruction of Jerusalem to name a few, which are all facts of history. Even Christ’s

human genealogy is listed in the gospels. Therefore, the book that details the birth, life and death of a literal man named Jesus cannot simply be written off as one giant fairy tale.

In addition, archaeologists of every stripe and flavor agree that the Bible contains quite a bit of factual information.

Millar Burrows, a professor who worked at Yale University stated in his book *What Mean These Stones?:* “On the whole...archeological [sic] work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record. More than one archeologist [sic] has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine.”

Later in the book, he wrote, “Archeology [sic] has in many cases refuted the views of modern critics.”

William F. Albright strengthens this case in his book *The Archaeology of Palestine:* “The excessive scepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth-and-nineteenth centuries, certain phases of which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history.”

Jonathan L. Reed observed in *The HarperCollins Visual Guide to the New Testament:* “The many archaeological discoveries relating to people, places, or titles mentioned in Acts do lend credence to its historicity at one level; many of the specific details in Acts are factual.”

Yet even more than simple historical facts, you CAN prove the Bible is God’s Word.

What sets Scripture apart from all other history books is prophecy, history written in advance. Events foretold hundreds of years before they actually occurred show that the Bible WAS divinely inspired.

In Isaiah 46:9-10, God challenges skeptics to place fulfilled prophecy next to the record of history. The booklet *Bible Authority – Can It Be Proven?*

will remove any doubt of this Book's validity. Read it or request a copy at rcg.org/bacibp.

Another Jesus

What about the supposed pagan roots of Christianity? A warning from the apostle Paul in II Corinthians begins to answer this question: "But I [Paul] fear, lest by any means, as the serpent [Satan] beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes preaches *another Jesus*, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit, which you have not received, or *another gospel*, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him" (11:3-4).

Did you catch that? This passage does not describe someone preaching against the true Jesus Christ. Instead, it describes a totally different being altogether. This "Jesus," empowered by a different spirit, and bringing a different gospel, was being received by true believers.

As shocking as it may sound, this *counterfeit* Jesus Christ deceives millions today—and he does have pagan roots!

Why would Satan bother to spread the idea of "another Jesus?" Why not promote another false god entirely unrelated to Jesus Christ?

As any con man will tell you, the most effective lies are those that contain elements of truth. What better way to deceive millions about the *true* Jesus Christ than to come up with an alternative bearing similarities to Him—even down to His very name! It is no accident that the devil is known as a master deceiver and the father of lies (John 8:44).

In fact, as Paul stated in II Corinthians 11, the devil has done this from the beginning. He deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden into eating fruit from "the tree of the knowledge of *good* and evil" (Gen. 2:17; 3:6). Recognize that this tree was said by God to have some "good" in it.

This false Jesus is a relative clone of many pagan gods in ancient societies such as Babylon and Egypt. It is this

Should You Believe It?



The Bible is the number one best-seller of all time. Is it mere superstition—the uninspired work of men? Or is it simply Hebrew and Greek literature—perhaps only useful as a history book?

The Bible purports to be the Word of God. Must its authority be accepted on faith? Can its divine authority be demonstrated?

Read *Bible Authority... Can It Be Proven?* at rcg.org/bacibp for the answers!



character described in the "Christ myth" theories. Millions throughout history have been deceived by this *phony* Jesus.

Christianity and Mythology explains the heathen connection: "...the conception of a Saviour-God was quite normal in the ancient pagan world...a conception of salvation underlies the notion of such Gods as Osiris, Attis, and Adonis..."

Why are there so many stories similar to Jesus' death and resurrection? The short answer is that instead of paganism influencing Christianity as many claim, it is actually the other way around. God's plan for mankind long pre-dated paganism. God's promise of a savior, for instance, was first revealed in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15). Further prophecies foretold Christ's coming: Genesis 12:3, 49:10; Numbers 24:17; Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; and Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, 11:1-5.

All similar pagan stories rip-off what God said He would do!

Perhaps the most popular examples of the worship of the FALSE Christ is the

observance of Christmas and Easter. Both of these holidays are deeply rooted in paganism.

Christmas is a combination of several pagan symbols and principles. It has no actual Christian connection outside of the partial truths from the birth account of the child Jesus (think "knowledge of good and evil") later attached to it. The supposed December 25 birth, for instance, is a continuation of the Roman observance of Saturnalia, which involved worshipping a sun god. The Christmas tree is a holdover from a Babylonian idol to which people bowed down.

Easter observance began anciently as a tribute to the "goddess of spring" or "queen of heaven" for the arrival of the spring season. The name Easter came from the Germanic goddess of fertility Austron. She bears an obvious resemblance to the ancient figures of Ishtar, Ashtoreth and Astarte.

The concepts of a "mother and savior" and a "savior-god," prevalent in ancient cultures, were combined with

facts about the true Jesus Christ's torture and death and eventual resurrection to form the modern observance of Easter.

This explains why both Christmas and Easter celebrations are so inconsistent with the worship of God in Scripture. Christmas trees and mistletoe? Santa Claus and reindeer? Easter eggs and bunny rabbits? Sunrise services and hot-cross buns? These "Christianized" symbols are all absent from the Bible, but found in pagan observances.

To expose the pagan roots of Christmas and Easter is not new. Countless numbers of people have heard this before and more discover it every year. Some deny or choose to ignore this connection in an effort to continue keeping these days. But many openly admit their true origins. They justify keeping them by claiming they are "not actually worshipping false gods" but "worshipping Jesus Christ" instead.

The God of the Bible speaks against this practice: "...This people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit *in vain do they worship Me*, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...*Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition*" (Mark 7:6-7, 9).

God never commanded the observance of these days—in fact He rejected it! Tragically, people think they are honoring the God of the Bible with these celebrations, but their worship is in vain.

All Christian practices and beliefs with pagan roots describe *another* Jesus. Such facts give anti-religious skeptics fodder to poke holes in supposed Christianity.

How could this happen?

It is clear evidence of the incredible power of Satan, who the Bible says "deceives the **WHOLE** world" (Rev. 12:9). The devil is such an effective counterfeiter of truth that he has successfully deceived millions into unwittingly worshipping false gods!

True Savior

In II Corinthians, Paul reveals the reason the devil is bent on keeping mankind away from the true Jesus: "In

whom the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of them which believe not, *lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (4:4).

The devil's goal is to keep people ignorant of a major reason Jesus Christ came to Earth as a human being—to announce the *gospel* or good news of the coming kingdom of God. Christ was a messenger of the wonderful opportunity for mankind to inherit eternal life!

Related to His gospel message is the fact that the true Jesus Christ, who is God (John 1:1), allowed Himself to be killed, thus becoming the perfect sacrifice required to redeem a sinful mankind cut off from God the Father. His shed blood was the payment required to deliver man from the death penalty due to sin (Rom. 6:23).

If Jesus Christ never existed and is simply a made-up idea, mankind could have no relationship with God!

Satan also does not want mankind to realize that the true Jesus Christ is the God or "LORD" of the Old Testament. Scripture reveals that it was Jesus Christ, in His pre-human form, who delivered Moses and the Israelites from Egypt (I Cor. 10:4). It was also Christ who interacted with Moses in the burning bush and Adam in the Garden of Eden.

Most professing Christians believe it was God the Father who filled this role. This is not true. The God of the first 39 books of the Bible was the same Jesus Christ who died for our sins as human beings. This understanding ties the entire Bible together and flies in the face of those quick to write the Old Testament off as "done away."

Recognizing the true Jesus Christ is also the only way to acknowledge the one Church that He said He would build and that would never be destroyed (Matt. 16:18). Finding and being part of this Church is how it becomes possible to realize the tremendous opportunities available in God's Plan.

Are you beginning to see why Satan is determined to keep mankind separated from the true Jesus Christ preached in the Bible? It is his

most effective weapon in preventing man from realizing all the wonderful things God has put in place for human beings.

Inherent within Paul's warning to the Corinthians about worshipping the wrong Jesus is the fact that there must be a way to tell the difference. As confusing as it may be to wade through the vast amount of information on the subject, there *is* a path to learning and understanding the true Jesus Christ.

There is a vast difference between the popular Jesus Christ known to most and the *true* Jesus Christ who walked Earth. The true Jesus Christ was not a weakling with long hair who taught people that God's Law was done away. Instead, He was a powerful figure, known for His ruggedness and masculinity, who taught that God requires obedience to His Commandments.

Perhaps the most vital difference between the two Jesus figures is that people believe they are saved by the false one's blood. This is **NOT** what the Bible teaches. God's Word clearly states man is "saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10), while he is "reconciled to God" and "*justified* by His blood" (vs. 9).

The false Jesus is a myth—an utter fabrication! Yet the true, *living* Jesus Christ reveals the abundant life (John 10:10) for all those who follow His teachings.

This only begins to demonstrate the contrast between the two. Much more than you may realize is at stake for not following the correct one.

Determine to know the truth! Order Mr. David Pack's thorough book titled, *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity* at rcg.org/ttjc. The only book of its kind, it lays out in detail the life of Christ.

After reading this book you will be able to recognize the true Jesus Christ among the counterfeits. You will also have a better understanding of His purpose for coming to Earth and how belief in Him can lead to a lifetime of happiness and a sense of purpose.

The true Jesus Christ is unknown to almost all—but He can be known to **YOU!** □

EBOLA

Continued from page 14

by direct contact with bodily fluids. However, another type of hemorrhagic fever or a particularly virulent strain of influenza could.

Influenza is at the top of the list of concern due to its airborne capacity, even in countries with the capability to fight it. In the United States, vaccines must be created *a year in advance*, so it is necessary for health officials to *guess* the viruses that could become problems and create vaccines based on those, which is often not effective. During the 2014-2015 flu season, for example, the vaccine was only 20 percent effective against circulating flu strains.

“Experts must pick which viruses to include in the vaccine many months in advance in order for vaccine to be produced and delivered on time,” the CDC stated on their website. “And flu viruses change constantly (called drift); they can change from one season to the next or they can even change within the course of one flu season. Because of these factors, there is always the possibility of a less than optimal match between circulating viruses and the viruses in the vaccine.”

If there was a sudden flu pandemic, however, the CDC said in a handout that seasonal flu shots would be worthless.

“Because the pandemic flu virus will be new to people, many people could get very sick or could die. Seasonal flu shots do not protect people from pandemic flu.”

The organization acknowledged that such a pandemic could be imminent: “Public health experts say it’s not a matter of IF a flu pandemic will happen, but WHEN. We cannot predict when the next flu pandemic will happen.”

In other countries, such as India, which is home to over 1.25 billion people, a disease such as cholera, malaria or dengue fever, is of greater concern. The nation has repeatedly



■ **RAMPANT DISEASE:** Dengue patients share a bed in a hospital ward in New Delhi, India (Sept. 16, 2015). The Indian capital is reeling from the worst outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease in five years.

PHOTO: PRAKASH SINGH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

suffered the greatest proportion of deaths in each worldwide pandemic. For instance, the Spanish influenza killed 17 million Indians, representing at least 17 percent of the worldwide total and five percent of the country’s population at the time.

Concerns that this could happen again have reemerged. Earlier in the year, an outbreak of a strand of malaria resistant to artemisinin, the antibiotic that has prevented the illness from killing millions of people since its development, emerged in Southeast Asia and crept within 15 miles of India’s border. It is believed that if the disease, which takes the lives of over 580,000 people a year worldwide, entered the nation, little could be done to control the spread.

Nearly six million new cases of dengue fever occur each year in India—the largest number of cases in the world.

“This is due, in part, to India’s large population,” Doctor Donald Shepard explained in a *Deutsche Welle* article. “In incidence rates per population, parts of Southeast Asia and South America are highest.”

“However, due to growing urban populations and travel in India, the country’s incidence rates are substantial. Without additional control measures, numbers of cases are likely to continue to increase.”

The greatest concern is the fact that India consumes the most antibiotics of any country, causing the highest number of cases of drug-resistant diseases.

Economist Jim O’Neill, who is chairman of the *Review on Antimicrobial Resistance*, said that by 2050, India could see two million more deaths per year due to superbugs. Also, drug-resistant infections could spread from there, causing an estimated 10 million more deaths worldwide per year and a greater chance of pandemics.

“Current antibiotics are becoming increasingly ineffective, not only at fighting common illnesses like pneumonia and urinary tract infections, but also at treating a range of infections, such as tuberculosis and malaria, which now risk again becoming incurable,” he wrote in an article for *Project Syndicate*.

Repeated in History

So far, it appears that man has been holding back the floodgates of disease. But it is not all his doing. Many of the severest outbreaks of the past simply ran their course. Preventative measures do help end epidemics, but they often simply die out on their own.

Even with modern medicine, man does not yet possess the resources to deal with such large-scale epidemics. This was witnessed during the 2009 swine flu pandemic and later Ebola outbreak.

Following the swine flu outbreak, Dr. Harvey Fineberg wrote in an assessment of the pandemic's handling: "Pandemics can be fearsome teachers. No matter what one believes about the response to the 2009 pandemic by WHO and other authorities, all must be grateful that relatively few people died. Influenza viruses are notoriously unpredictable. We were lucky this time but, as the report concludes, the world is ill-prepared for a severe pandemic or for any similarly global, sustained and threatening public-health emergency."

In addition, the report stated that "the influenza pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in global, national and local public-health capacities, limitations of scientific knowledge, difficulties in decision-making under conditions of uncertainty, complexities

in international cooperation and challenges in communication among experts, policy-makers and the public."

Two years later, a statement by WHO about how it will strive to better itself in the next crisis used the same wording: "The Ebola outbreak that started in December 2013 became a public health, humanitarian and socioeconomic crisis with a devastating impact on families, communities and affected countries. It also served as a reminder that the world, including WHO, *is ill-prepared for a large and sustained disease outbreak*" (emphasis added).

This illustrates a point: while man can devise vaccines, medicines

and methods of social distancing and tracking, he can never totally eradicate illness with these tactics or his own preparation—which means future pandemics are coming—even to Western nations, which may be more difficult to stop. Globalization ensures that coming outbreaks will spread more quickly and not die out easily.

"...this was a devastating epidemic," Dr. Salata told the audience at the conclusion of the Ebola preparedness panel. "This will occur again... It may be elsewhere. And we'll see epidemics of other infections and so therefore we have to be more global in our thinking about disease and how that can reach our borders as well." □

Why Worsening Disease?

Read the free booklet *The Pale Horse – "There Shall Be Pestilences..."* at rcg.org/ews-p to learn the answer!

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

found in the soil of the Earth—which He created and owns!

Any time He wishes, God can take back all that is His. After all, *it is His!* This includes your income. While you may have "earned it," God owns it.

"Things that Are God's"

We have seen Christ said that, in addition to taxes belonging to Caesar, there are also "things that are God's"—or things that *belong to God*. What are

these things? We have read that God owns everything. And Christ said, "Render...to God the things that *are God's*." Render means *give*. Since the heavens and the Earth (or the land on which we live) cannot be "rendered" back to God by human beings, to what is this referring?

We have proven that our entire income (salary, wages, interest earned, investments, bonuses, commissions and any other kind of financial increase) actually belongs to God.

What of a farmer and the produce from his field? What is the process whereby things grow? The farmer

does his part—tilling, planting, fertilizing, watering, etc.—but so does God in that He sends rain and sunshine and provides the very soil in which the fruit, vegetables or grains take root and grow.

Who did most of the work? In truth, the farmer did little more than a fraction of the work while God did the greater part. As a matter of fact, the farmer is far more dependent on God's effort than God is on the farmer's. Without God's contributions, the farmer would produce nothing and, in fact, *would not even be alive* because no one would be able to produce the

food necessary for all human beings to survive.

Think of it this way. You formed a partnership with God—whether you knew it or not—the day you took a chosen profession, job or vocation. You are using materials that belong to God in order to invest, sell, distribute or produce goods or services whereby you can earn a living—you *have become a partner with God!* There is no other way to view or understand this. Admit to yourself that, without God’s role and help in earning a living, it would be impossible to produce anything! God knows this and has chosen to make a special arrangement with you. His Word describes it.

God lays prior claim to the first 10 percent of everything that people earn as income. This is called the *tithe*, and it means “*tenth*.” You may be familiar with the term. To tithe, or to be a tithepayer, means the same as to “tenth” or to be a “tenthpayer.”

The word *tithe* is actually an old English word. The *King James Version* of the Bible was translated over 400 years ago—in 1611. At that time, the word was commonly used to mean *tenth*. People have long understood that to tithe is to pay a tenth of one’s income. We will thoroughly explore to whom this tenth was paid in the Old Testament, and to whom it is paid today.

There are small and large points within God’s Law. Some commands carry more weight than others. When speaking of some lesser points within God’s Law, Christ said in Matthew 5:19 that, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of *these least commandments*, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Let us now examine an important verse about tithing. Christ said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For *you pay tithe* of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the *weightier* matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: *these* [the weightier matters] *ought you to have done*, and

not to leave the other [tithing conscientiously] *undone*” (Matt. 23:23). God also inspired Luke to record the same account—and to repeat the same command (11:42).

Love, mercy and faith are indeed weighty matters within the overall Law of God. Christ acknowledges this. However, He also explains that tithing should not be something that people “leave undone.” The argument is often raised that tithing is not important—that it is *least* among God’s laws. This verse does not actually say that it is “least” among God’s commands. Matthew 5:19 merely means that, *if it were*, it is still required to be kept today by all who value the commands of God!

Any who are learning the truth of God’s tithing laws must pay His tithe—once it is clear where His chosen representatives are working! We will learn that tithing is the manner in which He finances the Work His true servants perform. Only after God’s tithe has been paid does God give the rest of one’s income back to the tithepayer. God’s generosity and love for those who are His children is why He gives nine-tenths of what He owns to the one faithful in tithe-paying. In other words, we are not giving God *one-tenth* of what is *ours*. God is giving us *nine-tenths* of what is *His!*

We should now examine several scriptures about tithing. People who dismiss this practice as a valid command often attempt to make the truth of tithing into a highly technical subject. Tithing is not a technical subject. It is not difficult to understand. It does require some careful examination of a relatively *few* scriptures. Doing this will make clear that tithing has always been, is now, and always will be the means whereby God finances His Work and His Church.

Tithe is God’s

Some theologians and Bible critics attempt to create confusion by say-

ing that tithes in the Old Testament belonged only to the Levitical priesthood of ancient Israel. Is this true? Does the Bible say this? We must ask, is there a place, anywhere in Scripture, where God plainly says that *tithes belong to Him?* There is!

God states in Leviticus 27:30, 32: “*All the tithe* of the land...is the LORD’S: it is *holy unto the LORD*... And concerning *the tithe* of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.” These verses are direct. They are plain. Tithes belong to God alone. *He* may choose to give them to His servants, but it is completely within *His* discretion what *He* does with them.

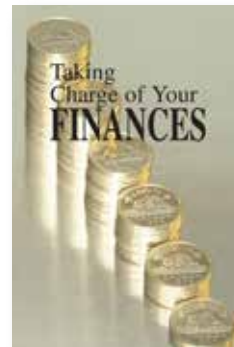
These same “higher critics” often attempt to use Numbers 18:21 and 24 to prove that the tithe belonged to the *Levites*. Carelessly reading these scriptures causes them to be misunderstood by those who will not accept their plain meaning. This passage says, “*I have given* the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve...But the tithes of the children of Israel...*I have given* to the Levites to inherit...”

Carefully consider these verses. Did *Israel* give their tithes to the Levites? No! *God* gave His tithe, which was merely supplied by the Israelites, to the Levites. He twice said, “*I have given.*”

The tithes were God’s, not Israel’s, to give to whom *He* chose. Reading verse 20 makes this more plain.

There is much more to learn about God’s financial principles. You may wish to read *Taking Charge of Your Finances*, which can be found at rcg.org/tcoyf. It provides additional proof and detail regarding tithing.

In addition, by applying the principles found in this important booklet, you can turn the tide of debt, take charge of your finances—and find true economic success! □



Order a Free Copy!
rcg.org/tcoyf



■ **CANADA'S CHOICE:** Canadian Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau speaks at a victory rally in Ottawa after winning the election for prime minister (Oct. 20, 2015).
PHOTO: NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

New Political Face

Canada's new prime minister, Liberal party leader Justin Trudeau, who ousted the Conservative party from its nearly 10-year rule after a sweeping victory in its federal elections, has begun to take the nation in a new direction. Followers expect major reforms from the leader who is the second-youngest to be elected to the office. These include building the controversial Keystone XL pipeline between Canada and Texas, reparations for crimes to indigenous tribes, a climate change policy for all Canadian provinces, legalizing marijuana, and tax hikes for the wealthy to fund tax breaks for the middle class. □

Weakening Defenses

Earth's magnetic field has been slowly diminishing, according to data collected from the European Space Agency. Scientists predict that a weaker magnetosphere could increase radiation exposure from the sun, putting humans at greater risk of cancer. □



Food Disposal

Grocery stores in America dispose of 26 percent of their total produce due to it being visually unattractive or "oddly shaped," according to *Natural Society*. More groups are urging the U.S. to follow France's example where grocers who waste produce are fined \$85,000. □



Text Neck

The number of teenagers and children as young as seven with abnormal spine curvature and hunchback tendencies has increased. Chiropractors attribute this to the as many as three hours a day they bend over a smartphone or tablet. Experts also believe that excessive screen time leads to a sedentary lifestyle, which also inhibits proper bone development. □



Education Crisis

The United Kingdom's educational system is facing a 10 percent reduction in the number of new teachers, which could cause fewer subjects to be taught and result in larger classes and less qualified staff, a government advisor in Britain warned. Oxford University Professor John Howson wrote in *The Guardian*: "The worst problems are likely to be in subjects such as physics, design and technology, geography, business studies and even English... Without drastic action, more headteachers will be forced to employ staff not qualified in their subjects...or simply remove subjects from the curriculum." □



Biodiversity Threat

Nearly half of the species that live in the Atlantic Ocean and 93 percent of those in the Mediterranean Sea face future endangerment due to declining sea life populations, an assessment from the European Commission revealed. Reasons cited include over 200 cases of illegal fishing, accidental fish kills, urban and agricultural development on the coast, overfishing and pollution. □

Carcinogenic Meat

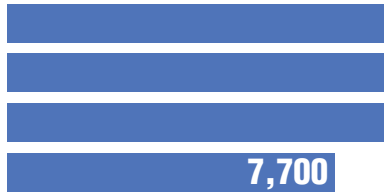
The World Health Organization announced that processed meats, which include any type of meat that is salted, cured or smoked to enhance its flavor or preserve it, such as bacon and salami, are linked to colon cancer. The organization's findings revealed that eating 50 grams of processed meat each day results in an 18 percent increase in a person's risk of developing cancer. □

Nuclear Weapons

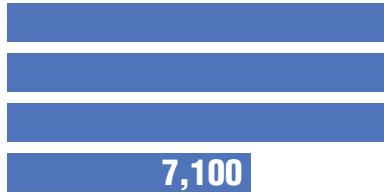
Thirty years after the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was extended indefinitely, disarmament remains a distant goal.

Approximate arsenals by country:

Russia



United States



France



China



United Kingdom



Pakistan



India



Israel



North Korea



Graphic: Tribune News Service
Source: Arms Control Association



■ **GETTING THE SHOT:** A woman dangerously poses for a photograph atop a steep point of the Grand Canyon (Sept. 25, 2015).

PHOTO: STACEY L. PALM/THE REAL TRUTH

Ten-year Drought

Ethiopia is enduring its worst drought in over a decade as its agricultural land, which yields crops that account for 40 percent of the nation's GDP, received only one rainfall per month during its rainy season. The government has indicated that 8.2 million people are in need of immediate food assistance. This number could rise to 15 million by 2016. □



Deadly Photography

The number of people killed while taking "selfies" surpassed the number killed by shark attacks in 2015. Most of these deaths were the result of falling from high places such as rooftops, stairs and cliffs. Other incidents include animal attacks while attempting to pose with wild animals, electrocution on the roofs of trains or high-voltage towers, or getting hit by a moving vehicle while stopped on a street or train tracks.

The increase in taking photos of oneself in perilous spots has been prompted by the desire by some to outdo one another by posting the most daring photos on social media. □



■ **EFFECTS OF WAR:** A group of Yemeni children hold posters in Arabic, one of which states "education defeats aggression," as they gather in front of the United Nations office in Sanaa, Yemen, during a protest against military operations that have disrupted schooling in their nation (Oct. 27, 2015).

PHOTO: MOHAMMED HUWAIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Plight of Mideast Youth

Forty percent of students in Middle East conflict areas such as Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Yemen and Libya have dropped out of school, according to UNICEF. The agency's regional chief expects the rate to increase to 50 percent as conflicts worsen, leaving as many as 17 million school-age children without a proper education.

This fact could also deepen current humanitarian crises as it is "helping drive the increasingly desperate attempts by Middle Eastern asylum seekers to reach Europe" and making children "more vulnerable to recruitment by militant groups," *The Associated Press* reported. □

Who Produces This Magazine?

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