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REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



Hope for
2021?

THE
REAL TRUTH[™]
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A R T I C L E S

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■ Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden and vice presidential nominee Kamala Harris greet supporters outside the Chase Center in Wilmington, Delaware, at the conclusion of the Democratic National Convention (Aug. 20, 2020).

PHOTO:OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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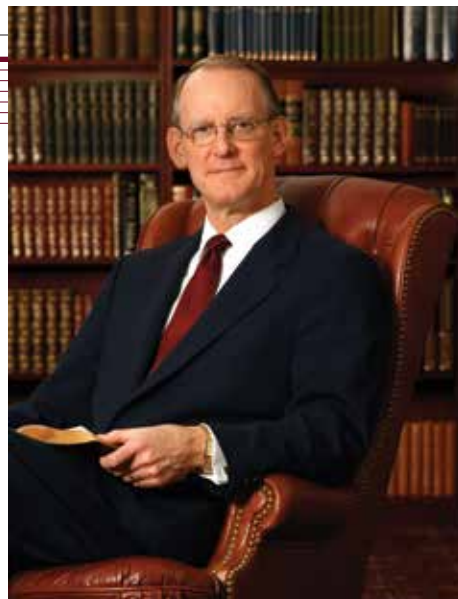
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Looking for Hope

EVERYONE THE world over is *yearning* for an end to all the compounding problems this year has brought. Truly, "...the **WHOLE CREATION groans and travails** in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22). Mankind has not only been suffering through a global crisis but also the planet—air, land and water—has come to be a mess.

The beginning of II Timothy 3 may as well describe what we see out our windows, on the internet, and on television. Here the apostle Paul described our time as "perilous"—meaning *difficult, dangerous* and through the idea of *reducing the strength*.

Surely that time is here full force—so much so that it must be near its **END!**

A Year Like No Other

The year 2020 has been like no other I have experienced in my over 72 years of life. Not long ago, America's top infectious disease expert said, "If you want to get to pre-coronavirus, that might not *ever* happen." So far, this has been true in ways few could have imagined. The *whole* world turned upside down in just months.

Society has radically changed—with many familiar institutions bordering on absolute destruction.

The stress of living in a world that is dangerous in *every* community—from the tiniest, remote villages to the world's largest cities—is taking a powerful toll on human minds. Modern life in a "social distancing world" resembles a science fiction movie.

No crisis since World War II has captured virtually every headline of every major news source like COVID-19 did last year.

In March, the United Nations chief stated, "We are facing a global health crisis unlike any in the 75-year history of the United Nations—one that is killing people, spreading human suffering, and upending people's lives. But this is much more than a health crisis. It is a human crisis. The coronavirus disease is attacking societies at their core."

"The U.N. chief warned that the pandemic will 'bring a recession that probably has no parallel in the recent past,' adding that the crisis will also likely contribute to 'enhanced instability, enhanced unrest, and enhanced conflict'" (*National Review*).

Only the Great Depression over 80 years ago compares. U.S. unemployment spiked to levels never seen in modern times. Fifty-four million people across America are currently food insecure. Think. Over one in seven people need assistance to fight hunger in the world's richest nation. Astounding! What about the *rest* of the world?

Before the coronavirus, 135 million people faced critical levels of hunger. Now with crop failures, government

lockdowns, loss of tourism and economic recession, another 130 million “could be pushed to the brink of starvation,” according to the World Food Program.

Pushing the limits of their already strenuous food resources, African countries were threatened by two waves of voracious locusts—with some hordes a staggering *20 times* the size of those plaguing the Middle East and Africa the first time earlier in the year. Just in Ethiopia, locusts ate half a million acres of cropland and one million people are in need of food aid.

The executive director of the WFP said: “I must warn you that if we don’t prepare and act now—to secure access, avoid funding shortfalls and disruptions to trade—we could be facing multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months. The truth is, we do not have time on our side...” (CNN).

Again, it is the *aftermath* of these types of events coupled with the virus that leaves forward thinkers with grave concerns.

A World on Fire

There are times when crises build over weeks or months before peaking and disrupting the world. Such was the case with COVID-19. There are other times when *sudden* and *dramatic* events transform life seemingly in an instant. This happened May 25 when a Minneapolis police officer killed a man who had moments before resisted arrest, setting in motion unprecedented riots and unrest, eventually across the world.

Not since the civil rights era have tensions been so palpable. The infamous “eight minutes and forty-six seconds” changed everything.

Statues and historical monuments with any connection to slavery were torn down across the nation. Black Lives Matter protests swept the streets. Violence targeting whites perceived to be unsympathetic to the cause was widespread. Businesses were looted, vandalized and some altogether destroyed.

These protests will likely cost between \$1-2 billion—one of the most expensive civil disorder events in the nation’s history, far surpassing the \$775 million cost of the 1992 Los Angeles riots. In Portland alone, downtown businesses saw over \$23 million in property damage.

A microcosm of what occurred across the nation: In Minneapolis/St. Paul, almost 1,500 businesses were heavily damaged after months of rioting. Nearly 150 buildings were set on fire and some were completely destroyed. Many small businesses were underinsured. Even the cost of demolishing these businesses is more than insurance will cover.

The world—and particularly the U.S.—has over and over been described as being “on fire.” You have seen the headlines. This is *precisely* how Isaiah put it. Speaking of the modern nations of Israel—the Anglo-Saxon English-speaking nations of the West—he recorded, “... your cities are *burned with fire* [the Hebrew is *on fire*]: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers” (1:7).

A great many more cities burned with fire beyond those ignited by rioters. From Southern California to Washington state and as far east as Colorado, some of the worst wildfires to ever strike America came in 2020. Over 52,000 separate fires destroyed about 9.5 million acres.

In September, a resident of San Francisco commented, “I woke up at 7 a.m. and thought my alarm was wrong because it was so dark. I didn’t smell smoke but had a feeling the fires were affecting the atmosphere. I pulled back my curtains to see the sky was dark orange and it felt so apocalyptic. I’ve lived in the Bay Area my whole life and never seen anything like it” (NBC News).

Portland, Oregon, residents reported ash from the smoke to be so thick it looked like snow! At a point, nearly 100,000 evacuated in the state, and the governor called the fires “a once-in-a-generation event.”

Compounding Problems

Just before Isaiah described cities on fire, he also explained, “Your country is desolate...” The word desolate means *devastated* in the sense of *astonishment*. This prophecy, too, is playing out before our eyes.

The streets of many cities across the world were largely empty because national leaders forbade people to travel, leave their homes, go to church, work, gyms, restaurants, malls—or even walk or exercise outside in some places. Coyotes, foxes, rats, dogs and feral cats roamed the vacant streets of cities, forming an astonishing futurescape that looked like it belonged in a post-apocalyptic world.

Do not lose sight of the fact that all of what I am writing about happened in the SAME YEAR!

Think of the explosion that rocked Beirut, Lebanon, in August. Shocking video footage—of the blast itself and of peoples’ reactions throughout the city—dominated news coverage. In a matter of seconds, lives were forever changed.

Now think of the record-breaking 2020 hurricane season that had 30 named storms—the most in a single season in 170 YEARS of record keeping. Just September had 10 storms, which is the highest number for any one month on record.

A derecho—also known as a land hurricane—struck the U.S. Midwest in August racing through 770 miles with winds up to 140 mph (equivalent to a Category 4 hurricane). It caused \$7.5 billion in damage in a single day—the costliest severe thunderstorm in decades.

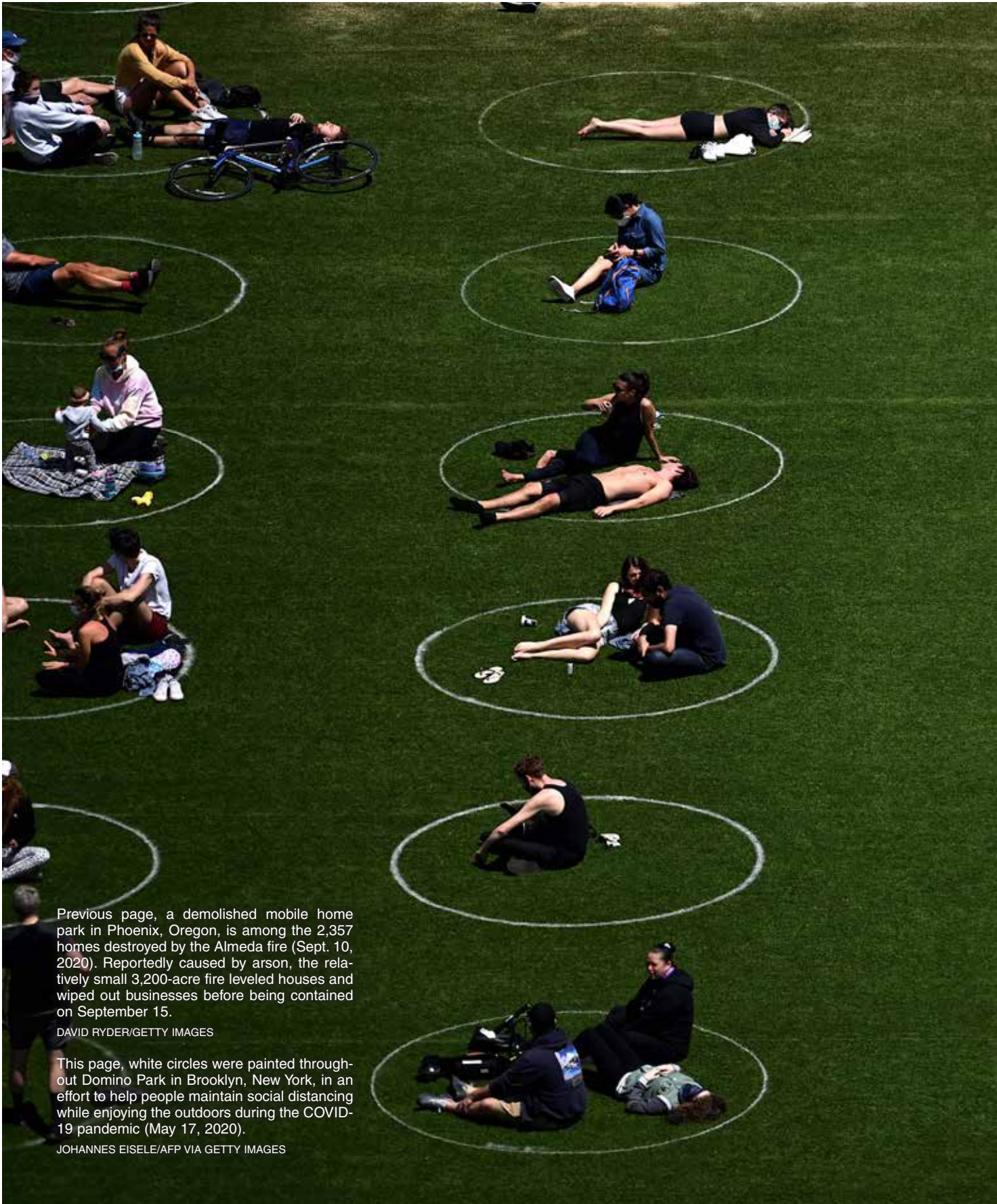
By all accounts, the world has never experienced a year like 2020. Throughout history there have been many “bad” years, but none that had so many compounding global problems. As you read this special year-in-review edition of *The Real Truth*, reflect on the events of this unique year that have caused all people to *yearn* for change in a way never seen before—and learn of the wonderful hope we can all have for it to END! □

An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood that has been completely destroyed. The houses are reduced to piles of rubble and charred remains. A paved street runs through the center of the area, and two people are walking on it. The overall scene is one of devastation and loss.

2020

A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

SPECIAL ISSUE



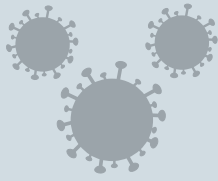
Previous page, a demolished mobile home park in Phoenix, Oregon, is among the 2,357 homes destroyed by the Almeda fire (Sept. 10, 2020). Reportedly caused by arson, the relatively small 3,200-acre fire leveled houses and wiped out businesses before being contained on September 15.

DAVID RYDER/GETTY IMAGES

This page, white circles were painted throughout Domino Park in Brooklyn, New York, in an effort to help people maintain social distancing while enjoying the outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic (May 17, 2020).

JOHANNES EISELE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES





COVID-19 MADE US CONSIDER

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

EVEN QUEEN Elizabeth would concede that 2020 surpassed 1992 as the *annus horribilis* of our time. The “horrible year” finally and mercifully came to an end.

Coronavirus hung over all 12 months like a foreboding storm cloud. The very first day of the year spelled trouble.

On January 1, 2020, as the world welcomed a new decade, Chinese authorities shut down a seafood market in Wuhan after 27 people linked to the site experienced what was then called a new “viral pneumonia.” Before then most had never even heard of the Chinese city of 11 million. Early lab tests identified the infection as a *new* coronavirus. Most coronaviruses, which affect the nose, sinuses or upper throat, are not dangerous.

This novel—or new—coronavirus spread like traditional versions only with deadlier consequences. SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19 as it became known was unlike anything the world had seen before.

By January 20 the zoonotic disease spread to three countries, which left experts horrified by the prospects of it becoming a global pandemic. They were right. By March and April, countries around the world began to impose travel bans, lockdowns and social-distancing regulations to slow the spread of the virus.

After only a few months it was obvious that COVID-19 was our generational crisis. It became the lens through which all humanity’s existing problems were viewed.

People of all income levels were affected by the virus, but the poor were hit hardest. Pre-pandemic, Americans were spending on average \$163 per week on groceries. After the virus hit, it jumped to \$190. According to a September Pew Research survey, one-in-four American adults have had trouble paying their bills since the coronavirus outbreak, while nearly half of lower income adults faced this same issue. This same survey revealed that half of the adults who said they were laid off because of the virus remained unemployed.

Sales of life insurance, which have been dwindling for years with just over half of American adults reporting having a policy, increased up to 30 percent for some companies. Google search traffic for “life insurance” jumped 50 percent between March and May. While the vast majority of those who contract the virus recover, people were nevertheless coming to grips with their mortality as the death toll in America topped 300,000 and more than 1.6 million worldwide in December.

Panic buying remained an issue most of the year, with demand for items such as tissues, toilet paper, canned food and cleaning goods straining the supply chain. Retailers found it hard to keep up.

Throughout the year, people either personally battled the illness, lost loved ones, or at the very least found themselves or their children confined to their homes. Gone were the normal days of work, school, entertainment and interacting.

Gone were the traditional classroom scenes as school-age students held classes virtually through video applications. Gone were extended family gatherings as social restrictions and curfews kept millions separate for the July 4 holiday, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Even the nation of Israel shut down during its holy day season.

Traditional sports did not escape. The 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics were postponed and many national league sports venues filled their otherwise empty seats with cardboard cutouts of fans.

COVID-19 managed to disrupt our lives and our routines in every way.

Early on, *The Real Truth* analyzed the impact of the virus on our lives in the article “COVID-19: The New Normal?”

“People were forced to think through all aspects of their lives: ‘Am I doing all I can to avoid contracting or spreading the virus?’ ‘Am I prepared for a shutdown that will keep me in my house for an indefinite amount of time?’ ‘How can I carry on my lifestyle and maintain relationships without leaving my residence?’”

During hard times, the article asserted, people tend to look outside themselves for help with their problems. The Bible encourages this reflection: “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also has set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him” (Ecc. 7:14).

As the pandemic worsened, some even asked whether it was a sign from God. “Doctors and scientists are stumped. Social distancing and other steps taken to prevent the spread of the disease have made life as we know it next to impossible. The public finds itself unable to overcome this modern plague by self-reliance or throwing resources at the problem” (“COVID-19: A Divine Message?”). When trying to discern what God was trying to tell us, we concluded that there were sev-

eral messages to “be attributed to the pandemic depending on a person’s viewpoint or circumstances.”

In the *Real Truth* article “Coronavirus: Anatomy of a Global Outbreak,” this hope was evident when we explained that Jesus told His disciples exactly what would occur and what to look for leading up to His Return to Earth. “Included in the ‘signs’ or indications of the end was *increased* ‘pestilences’ or plagues and disease epidemics” (Matt. 24:3, 7).

“The key is that there would be an *upsurge* in disease. This is obvious because disease is an age-old problem. Its proliferation, though, is an indication of what the Bible refers to as the ‘end of the age.’”

All that we experienced in 2020 with the coronavirus would certainly qualify as an upsurge in disease.

We explained in our article “Keeping It Together – Four Biblical Ways to Maintain COVID-Era Relationships” that no matter when the pandemic ends there are valuable lessons we have learned and must maintain, including the reminder that a friend “loves at all times” and a brother was “born for adversity” (Prov. 17:17). Scripture lays out specific ways to ensure we increase the strength of our bonds with loved ones despite not being able to come together as normal.

In our April article “Many Americans Forced to Do Something New: Sacrifice,” we elaborated on the fact that, for many in our modern age, this is the first time they have

ever experienced sacrifice at the level of what occurred in 2020.

“When times were good, we forgot this. We became complacent and failed to appreciate what we have. Lean times, on the other hand, should splash ice-cold water on our collective consciousness. It should force us to ask: ‘Why have we been so clearly blessed in ways the rest of the world can only dream?’”

Similarly, *The Associated Press* aptly summarized 2020 and the introspection it brought out in all of us: “The coronavirus pandemic has brought tectonic change to almost every part of life—how we live, where we live, where we work, what we do for work, what it means to be a kid, what family means, what is important. There was a months-long moment where the world was on pause, causing many to dig into existential questions: What is my purpose? Where do I belong?”

As you meditate on the COVID-19 pandemic, also allow your mind to revisit the countless other events that made the last year a “day of adversity” in which we should “consider.” Ask yourself big questions: What does this all mean? Where is the world headed?

Thankfully, God gives us these answers throughout the Bible. We will outline much of this understanding in this issue of *The Real Truth*. Yet you can find it all laid out in exquisite detail on our website rcg.org.

You owe it to yourself to find the answers! □



Relatives stand apart from cemetery workers as they mourn the loss of Neide Rodrigues, 71, who died of COVID-19 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (May 8, 2020). According to the Brazilian Health Ministry in December, over 181,000 have died due to the coronavirus.

BUDA MENDES/GETTY IMAGES



A COVID-19 patient is taken to the Mediterranean seaside with intensive health care staff outside the Hospital del Mar in Barcelona, Spain (June 3, 2020). The coronavirus pandemic forced many health workers into things “we’ve never seen or done before,” one nurse in the infectious diseases intensive care unit at Willis-Knighton Medical Center recounted to *Shreveport Times*.

“As a nurse you always expect the time will come you have to zip up a body bag,” said Jarred Sepulvado, who earned his nursing degree two-and-a-half years ago. But “I never considered it becoming a weekly or a daily thing.”

The emotional toll was only drowned by the overwhelming pace of work for medical staff. Despite “ebbs and flows of the pandemic that have given frontline workers brief relief,” the news agency reported, “during most shifts Sepulvado never gets to sit or get a drink of water. ‘We have so much going on. The work starts instantly when you arrive.’”

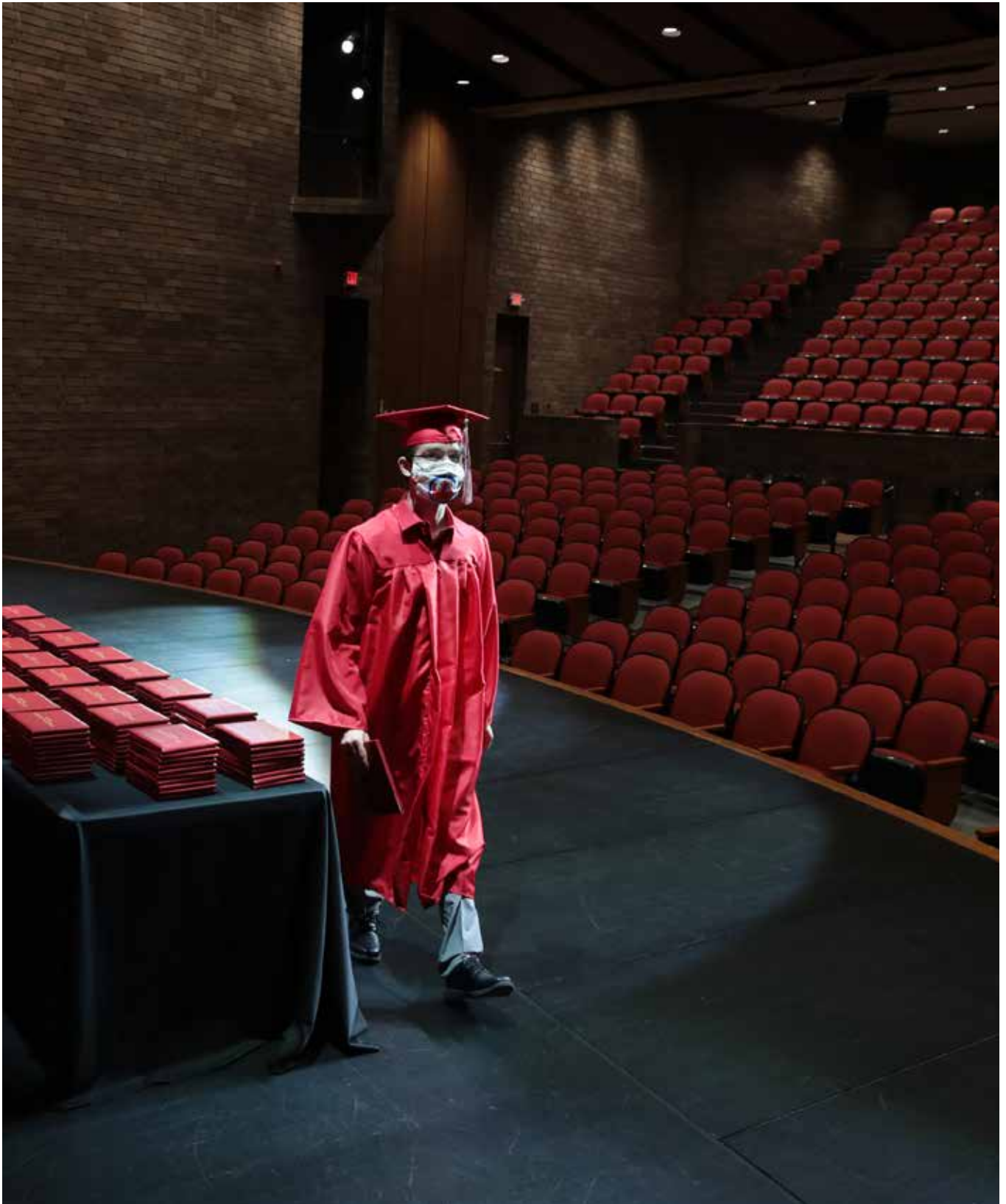
DAVID RAMOS/GETTY IMAGES



Top, people opposed to the continual COVID-19 restrictions march with a police escort in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia (Dec. 13, 2020). Bottom, as France announced strict home-confinement rules in a bid to combat the coronavirus spread, hundreds flocked to the stores to stock up on food and household products. Toilet paper was quickly cleared out in stores throughout the country, including this supermarket in Pfastatt, eastern France (March 16, 2020).

DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS VIA AP (TOP); SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM)





A high school student picks up his diploma in a near-empty auditorium during a live-streamed graduation ceremony at Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School in Bradley, Illinois (May 6, 2020). Dubbed the “corona class of 2020” and Generation Z “Zoomers” for having completed much of their schooling through the video app Zoom, youth graduating into the workforce face years of reduced pay and limited job prospects amid the economic storm brought on by the pandemic.

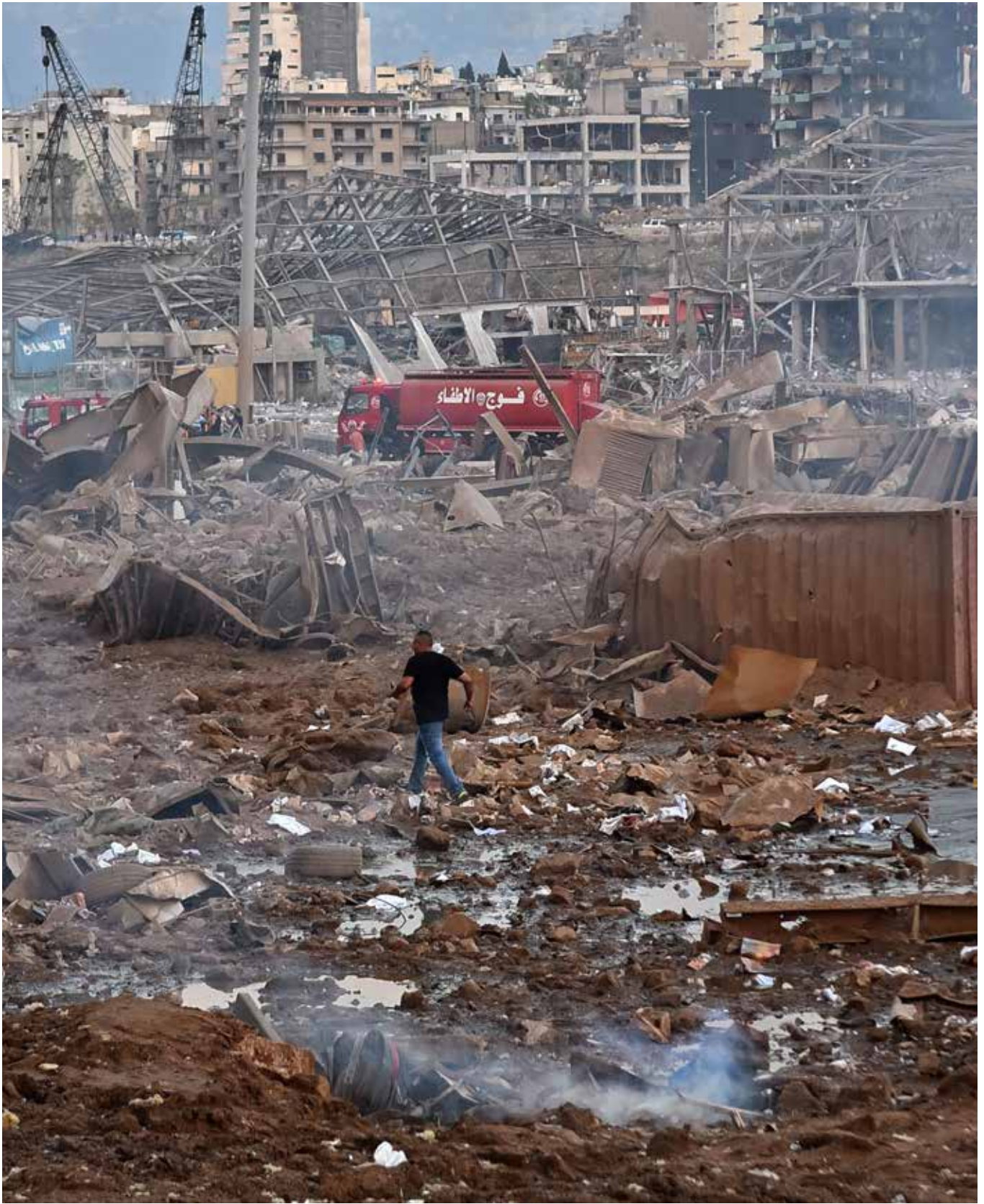
SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES



Top, a doctor in the intensive care unit of United Memorial Medical Center comforts a patient separated from his family during Thanksgiving as he battles a coronavirus infection in Houston, Texas (Nov. 26, 2020). Bottom, police officers wearing protective suits take a resident suspected of having COVID-19 from his home to an isolation facility in Manila, Philippines (April 15, 2020).

GO NAKAMURA/ (TOP); EZRA ACAYAN/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES





A massive explosion of ammonium nitrate stored at the port city of Beirut rocked the Lebanese capital, devastating buildings and causing over 200 deaths, 6,500 injuries and leaving around 300,000 people homeless. Twisted metal frames of buildings and crumpled cargo containers are among the rubble pictured near the port (Aug. 4, 2020).

STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



WHY CAN'T WE FIND PEACE?

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY

WATERLOO. GETTYSBURG. Stalingrad. Midway. All were considered some of history's "greatest" battles on account of how they changed the course of events in their times.

Yet of all the great battles of history, the greatest one has not yet had a turning point—mankind's war against war itself.

"It has been said that all nations are either preparing for war, at war or recovering from war," our booklet *How World Peace Will Come!* states. "It has also been noted that history has recorded over 14,600 wars. And this figure was derived in the mid-1960s."

Still, with the arrival of 2020, it seemed humanity gained a solid foothold in at least one crucial battle. "A Third World War—which so many had feared—has been avoided," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres remarked during a commemoration for the world peacekeeping organization's 75th anniversary. Though "it took two world wars, millions of deaths and the horrors of the Holocaust for world leaders to commit to international cooperation and the rule of law," the UN chief said, the world has held its longest period in modern history without a military confrontation between the most powerful nations.

The UN was born out of World War II's devastation to prevent conflict. But the gleaming report was dampened by another reality: The number of wars occurring across the world is actually increasing.

Mr. Guterres noted that the number of countries involved in "violent conflicts" was the highest in 30 years, and that the number of people killed in conflicts has risen tenfold since 2005.

Ultimately, the course of events in 2020 did not break mankind's trend of unending wars—they fulfilled it.

Year of Bloodshed

A skirmish-turned-war between Armenia and Azerbaijan that broke out in September left thousands dead in a matter of weeks. Each side fought over the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region—which lies within Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces for more than a quarter-century. Both sides accused each other of escalating hostilities, adding fuel to already simmering tensions between the ex-Soviet nations even after the conflict officially

ended with a Russian-brokered peace deal that made Azerbaijan the clear winner.

As part of the deal, "The parties are exchanging prisoners and war dead, Armenian forces are to withdraw even from territory not lost in the fighting, and Russian peacekeepers have arrived to protect a corridor between Armenia proper and Nagorno-Karabakh for at least five years," the Council on Foreign Relations reported.

But for "Armenia, coming to grips with defeat will mean an intense and emotional political struggle," it stated. The "overriding theme of Armenia's domestic debate" will be "about fixing blame for military defeat, vilifying those who negotiated the November 9 agreement (the foreign minister has already resigned), and rebuilding Nagorno-Karabakh's defenses. Even if the government survives, it will have little incentive to talk to Azerbaijan."

Meanwhile, the "leverage that once obliged Azerbaijan to take negotiations seriously has suddenly disappeared." As a result, violence is likely to erupt again.

"Nagorno-Karabakh was for decades one of the Russian periphery's so-called frozen conflicts. After its brief and unexpected unfreezing, it is almost certain to become one again" (ibid.).

The war in the South Caucasus and its shaky aftermath modeled many of 2020's battles around the globe, with two sides settling a dispute through bloodshed, only for it to breed more tension.

China and India had their deadliest clash in 58 years fighting over disputed territory in the Himalayas.

Ethiopia fell into civil war as its northern region of Tigray held regional elections in defiance of the national government. Government forces invaded the rebellious region's capital, cutting off communication and triggering a humanitarian crisis for potentially hundreds of thousands who could not access aid.

These new conflicts clouded public attention from ongoing armed conflicts in Yemen, Syria, Libya, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, the Ivory Coast, and Afghanistan, which, despite a U.S.-Taliban peace agreement requiring a "significant and nationwide" reduction in violence, has remained the deadliest ongoing conflict in the world.

Further, many smaller situations of instability threatened to launch entire states into armed conflict: a coup

in Mali, protests in Peru that took down two presidents in a week, millions in Venezuela starving as its two governments remained at odds after elections, a potentially disastrous no-deal Brexit looming as negotiations with the EU returned fruitless, Hong Kong's pro-democracy lawmakers resigning en masse, and Lebanon's entire government resigning amid widespread discontent over the ruling elite's handling of conditions that led to the devastating explosion in Beirut, killing at least 200 and injuring thousands.

In addition to armed conflicts, Mr. Guterres noted "geopolitical tensions are escalating, nuclear weapons remain on hair-trigger alert."

At times, the threat of a major war between larger powers seemed to reach the brink. The Persian Gulf was once again a hotspot after the U.S. drone strike that killed Iran's top military commander, Qasem Soleimani. U.S.-China relations were also shaky, with threats passed between the nations over Taiwan and both closing one another's consulates in the summer. And Russian President Vladimir Putin unveiled the first hypersonic missile, which could reportedly fly 27 times faster than the speed of sound and left the U.S. military pondering defense strategies.

Think again of the UN chief's words on the state of global conflict. Despite unprecedented efforts—international collaboration, aversion of total war, and active presence of peacekeepers in hotspots—conflicts and threats of all-out war are increasing.

Never Ending?

"While men have created many amazing technological inventions, they cannot 'create' peace," our booklet on peace states. "Scientists have unleashed the power of the atom but are powerless to 'unleash' peace upon Earth. Astronomers have discovered much about the size, majesty and precision of the universe, but they cannot 'discover' the way to peace. They can find galaxies far away throughout the universe, but they cannot 'find' peace here on Earth."

This is not for lack of genuine effort.

Put together, nations spend trillions on defense budgets, with the U.S. alone estimated to spend \$934 billion from October 1, 2020, to September 30, 2021. Nations see beefed up military budgets and an arsenal of nuclear weapons as a method of averting conflict.

Meanwhile, diplomats use political clout to pursue deals. The historic agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, with U.S. President Trump's oversight, in August was intended to bring "full normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates," according to a joint statement. A White

House official said the Abraham Accords, as it was called, would help create more "peace agreements" in the region.

No matter what mankind tries, nothing ends the tide of killing. Why?

The answer lies in the words of the Bible. Though it may at first seem disheartening, it is a crucial first step to understanding how the world can finally win the war against war.

Continue reading from our booklet that explains why peace is elusive: "As part of an extensive prophecy about world conditions in our time, the prophet Isaiah answers this question: 'The WAY of peace *they know not*; and there is *no judgment* in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goes there *shall not know peace*' (59:8). The solutions of men always lead to more wars, ruin, misery, death and destruction. The apostle Paul wrote, quoting Isaiah, 'And the way of peace have they NOT KNOWN' (Rom. 3:17)."

Without God's guidance and education, people simply cannot prevent war from happening! The complicated conflicts of 2020 further prove man has not been able to learn the way to peace.

Of course, no one purposely seeks violence. Though there is a fascination with the *idea* of war—look at the popular war films that gross hundreds of millions of dollars—no sane person wants to be subjected to war's terrible effects.

God, the author of the Bible, knows this. Contrary to the popular notion that His Word is a collection of gruesome accounts of sword battles and violent divine judgment upon unsuspecting flesh, one of the central themes of the Bible is peace—world peace.

This is why God tells man directly that it does not know the "way of peace"—it is because HE ALONE DOES!

After He was born on Earth, Jesus Christ was prophesied to "give light to them that sit in darkness... to guide our feet into the *way of peace*" (Luke 1:79).

Isaiah 9 adds He would be called "The Prince of Peace" (vs. 6) and that of "the increase of His government and *peace* there shall be no end..." (vs. 7).

This is the GOOD NEWS the Bible contains for all nations, especially those consistently rocked by insoluble wars and civil strife.

But in order to grasp the message, governments need to look to God as the sole author of peace. Without this change of thinking, the cycle of war is doomed to repeat.

Read about how lasting accord will come to a war-weary world. *How World Peace Will Come!* is available on our website: rcg.org. □

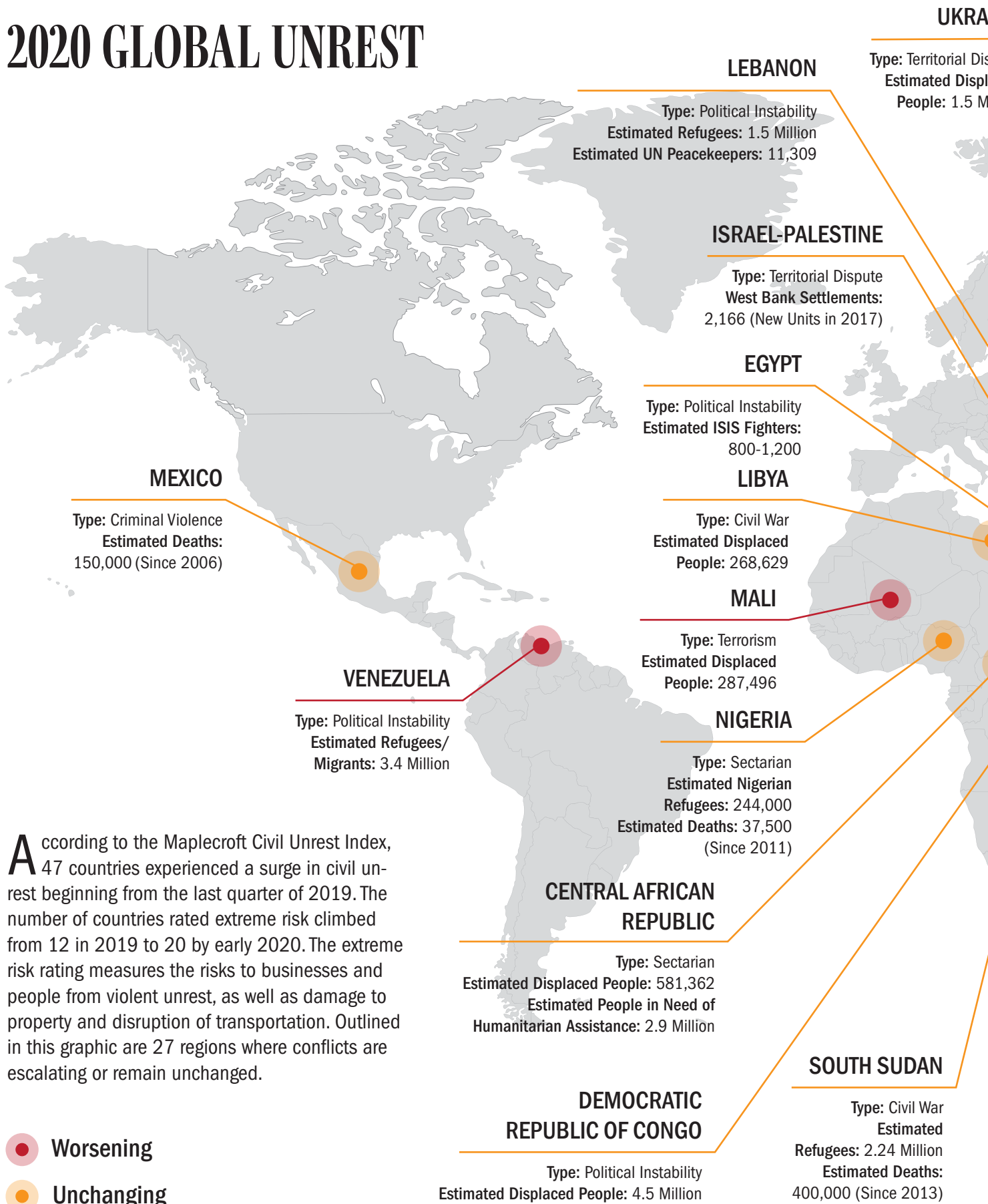


Top, police personnel arrest activists of the Bharatiya Janata Party during an anti-China protest in Siliguri, India, following a border skirmish with China that left at least 20 Indian soldiers dead (June 17, 2020). Bottom, refugees who fled Ethiopia's Tigray conflict arrive by bus at the entrance of a refugee camp in Sudan's eastern Gedaref state (Dec. 11, 2020). The political party of the Tigray region, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, was accused in November of stealing equipment from a military base in the region, leading long-simmering tensions to escalate into full armed conflict with Ethiopia's federal government. "Hundreds of civilians have died, while tens of thousands have sought refuge in Sudan from airstrikes, as the conflict threatens to further destabilize the strategic Horn of Africa region," *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

ERIC BARADAT/ (TOP); YASUYOSHI CHIBA/ (BOTTOM); AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



2020 GLOBAL UNREST



According to the Maplecroft Civil Unrest Index, 47 countries experienced a surge in civil unrest beginning from the last quarter of 2019. The number of countries rated extreme risk climbed from 12 in 2019 to 20 by early 2020. The extreme risk rating measures the risks to businesses and people from violent unrest, as well as damage to property and disruption of transportation. Outlined in this graphic are 27 regions where conflicts are escalating or remain unchanged.

- Worsening
- Unchanging

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TURKEY-KURDS

Type: Territorial Dispute
Years Since Insurgency Began: 35

SYRIA

Type: Civil War
Estimated Refugees: 5.6 Million

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN

Type: Territorial Dispute
Disputed Area: 1,700 Square Miles
Year Dispute Began: 1988

AFGHANISTAN

Type: Civil War
Civilian Casualties: 100,000 (Since 2010)

NORTH KOREA

Type: Interstate
Estimated Nuclear Weapons: 20-30
U.S. Troops in South Korea: 26,540

INDIA-PAKISTAN

Type: Interstate
Disputed Territories: 3
Disputed Territory: 118,930 Square Miles

EAST CHINA SEA

Type: Territorial Dispute
Estimated Barrels of Oil Reserves: 200 Million
Disputed Maritime Boundaries: 81,000 Square Miles

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Type: Territorial Dispute
Trade Passing Through: \$3.3 Trillion (2016)

IRAQ

Type: Civil War
Estimated Coalition Airstrikes: 31,406

PAKISTAN

Type: Terrorism
Estimated People Killed by U.S. Drones: 2,366-3,700

MYANMAR

Type: Sectarian
Estimated Refugees in Bangladesh: 712,700
Estimated Burmese Rohingya Population: 1.3 Million

YEMEN

Type: Civil War
Estimated Deaths: 100,000 (Since 2015)

IRAN-UNITED STATES

Type: Interstate
Oil Barrels Passing Through Strait of Hormuz: 21 Million (Per Day in 2018)

ETHIOPIA

Type: Political Instability
Estimated Refugees: 50,000

SOMALIA

Type: Terrorism
Estimated al-Shabab Fighters: 7,000-9,000

Source: Council on Foreign Relations
Graphic: Sarah O. Vidal



WHAT HAPPENED TO AMERICA?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

REMEMBER WHEN Donald Trump was impeached? That historic event happened on December 18, 2019, but it might as well be the year 1719. It is ancient history in terms of divisive events plaguing the U.S. throughout 2020.

Of course, the Democratic-led House of Representatives filing two articles of impeachment against the nation's president—abuse of power and obstruction of Congress—initiated a trial in the Senate.

The Republican-led Senate acquitted the president of these charges on February 5, a move that further pushed U.S. citizens apart. At that time, 47.6 percent of Americans supported removing Mr. Trump from office, *FiveThirtyEight* reported. That total was an overwhelming 84.3 percent of Democrats and a mere 9 percent of Republicans. Independents made up the rest.

Such stark disagreement stained the entire year.

George Floyd's death at the hands of the police moved the discord from halls of power to streets across the nation. Recall how you felt when Minneapolis was set ablaze. Then Washington, D.C. Then New York...

At the time, *The Real Truth* wrote about the difficulties of reporting on the subject of race in the article "Why Can't America Find Justice and Peace?"

"Racial tension is perhaps the thorniest issue in the United States," we said at the time, "yet some facts are undeniable.

"Clearly inequality exists. One example: Despite black Americans making up just 12 percent of the nation in 2017—they make up 33 percent of the prison population, Pew Research found in 2017. Conversely, whites make up 64 percent of the U.S.—and a mere 30 percent of inmates. From this and many other statistics, the protesters have a point. Something is wrong here.

"Yet it is also wrong to pelt police officers with frozen water bottles and fiery insults. As is breaking into ATMs and looting iPhones from an Apple Store.

"Herein lies a conundrum. If you say one potentially critical thing about violent protesters, you can find yourself inadvertently branded a racist—even if you agree there are systemic problems in the U.S. Same is true when empathizing with the police, many of whom are merely doing their jobs."

As the tension ratcheted ever upward, many Americans stopped listening to each other at all.

The New York Times documented this change. In September 2019, a group of 526 Republicans, Democrats and independents were brought together in Dallas from every walk of life. They were voters who were "feeling pretty good about the state of American democracy. They believed their differences weren't so vast. They believed they could talk to one another. They thought compromise might even come of it."

For several days, they discussed climate change, the economy and immigration. They left "feeling hopeful that American politics writ large could resemble something so civil."

Yet, the paper noted, "That was before the impeachment, the pandemic, the civil unrest and the recession. Before protesters clashed in Portland, Ore., and Kenosha, Wis., and before angry voters rallied against mask mandates and lockdowns."

In follow-up interviews a year later, many of these optimistic voters sounded despondent.

"It's really unfortunate, outside of that bubble that we had in Dallas, seeing this untamed beast that is the real world," a 24-year-old Republican from Providence, Rhode Island, told the *Times*. "It just isn't civil, it isn't constructive, and it's really not conducive to us moving forward as a country as united."

Similarly, a 74-year-old Democrat from Albuquerque, New Mexico, "worried that Americans now seldom work together across different viewpoints, or prize a range of viewpoints at all."

Realize this was all stated *before* the presidential election. Imagine the sentiments now...

Before digging into the election results, think of the other contentious events throughout the year: There was the death of liberal Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who was replaced by conservative Amy Coney Barrett. There was the debate of whether Confederate statues are history or hatred. There was a newly approved coronavirus vaccine—about half of U.S. adults are unsure if they want to get vaccinated against the coronavirus or say they will not at all, an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll found.

Now, here we are in the post-election hellscape. The divisive results of the 2020 vote have eclipsed the subjects of race, health and climate. Both those on the left and right see this as a battle for the soul of the nation.

Before the votes were cast, our article “America’s Choice?” stated: “Politicians and journalists are right to say that we live at a unique time in history. The COVID-19 pandemic even comes with the euphemistic tagline ‘these unprecedented times.’ So...conditions are ripe for post-election clashes as never seen before. The internet has given rise to a post-truth era with many living in ideological echo chambers—where incorrect beliefs are never questioned and instead root in deeper over time. This trend can be found among conservatives and liberals alike.”

A couple of months later and these words cannot be any truer. A Northeastern, Harvard, Northwestern, and Rutgers poll found that 40 percent of Republicans believe Mr. Trump won a second term, with another 23 percent unsure of the victor. Many GOP lawmakers and attorneys general back the president’s claims of widespread fraud—and see the Democrats as stealing the election. The Democrats shoot back accusing the Republicans of eroding trust in the electoral system and even of attempting a coup.

A columnist for *Time* magazine wrote in September that, for the last few years, he has “been watching the increase in partisan enmity in the U.S. with growing alarm. Multiple social, cultural and religious factors are converging to create a particularly toxic political stew. America is being pulled apart. This phenomenon is geographic, ideological and spiritual.”

He continued: “It is clear that partisan Americans dislike each other a great deal. We live separately, snarling at each other across a growing divide. The result is a politics of fear and rage, where policy differences often take a back seat to the list of grievances that red possesses against blue and blue against red.

“Nothing I’m outlining here is new. Commentators have called our dysfunctional politics a form of ‘cold civil war,’ and the assumption is that one side or the other will win, dominate the opposition and rule a united country.

“Over the past decade, I’ve heard committed partisans say out loud that they would be ‘happy’ to be rid of states like California. I’ve heard (and read) men fantasizing and theorizing about a second Civil War. Right-wing insurrectionist groups have even formed for the purpose of fomenting civil strife. Look at the smoke drifting from U.S. cities from coast to coast. Watch far-right and far-left protesters square off in street battles. There is a crackling tension in the air.”

That palpable tension brings to mind the words of Abraham Lincoln, who quoted Jesus Christ: “A house divided against itself cannot stand” (Matt. 12:25).

Lincoln was speaking at a Republican state convention in 1858 as the nation was hurtling toward civil war.

He continued: “I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free.

“I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided.”

“It will become all one thing or all the other.”

Of course, the Civil War came a few short years later. Some 750,000 men lost their lives before the Union was restored.

As Americans drift further apart in their beliefs and convictions, more and more talk has begun about a Civil War II. Throughout 2020, news outlets on every part of the political spectrum have asked this question. A few headlines:

■ “A Bleak ‘What If:’ Is The US Headed Towards A Second Civil War?” (*WBUR*)

■ “Disunited states: Could a second Civil War—and an end to the union—really happen?” (*Salon*)

■ “The Origins of Our Second Civil War” (*National Review*)

■ “This model forecast the US’s current unrest a decade ago. It now says ‘civil war’” (*ABC News*)

■ “Is the U.S. Already in a New Civil War?” (*Vice News*)

Again, think of Christ’s words: “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

Christ did not lie. The U.S. will not stand much longer without healing its divisions. The problem, however, is that Americans cannot seem to agree on anything. The moral, ethical and religious beliefs held by both sides keep them back from considering the other side. Each side thinks it is firmly in the right.

Another Bible passage is instructive here: “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). The obvious answer is no!

Yet realize God is speaking in this verse to the nations of Israel. America would do well to apply what is written here. The nation cannot walk together unless it looks to what God has to say on every subject.

In this process, *everyone* would need to set aside their currently held beliefs and listen to the plain words of the Bible. Everyone would need to believe what God says in Isaiah 55: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (vs. 8-9).

Getting everyone in the U.S. on the same page can seem impossible. Yet it is not. The Bible has much more to say to this nation. It is quite explicit! Read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at reg.org/aabibp to learn what God truly wants for “the land of the free.” □



President Donald Trump and newly sworn-in U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett look on during a ceremonial swearing-in on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, D.C. (Oct. 26, 2020).

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES



Joe Biden and Kamala Harris deliver remarks in Wilmington, Delaware, after news organizations reported them the victors of the presidential election (Nov. 7, 2020).

ANDREW HARNIK/POOL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



A protest against racism and police brutality takes place at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., marking the 57th anniversary and location of Martin Luther King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech (Aug. 28, 2020).

ERIC BARADAT/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



A protester carries a U.S. flag upside down next to a burning building in Minneapolis, Minnesota (May 28, 2020). Violent protests over the death of George Floyd, a black man who died in police custody, broke out in Minneapolis for a third straight night.

AP/JULIO CORTEZ



Top, supporters of President Donald Trump and anti-Trump demonstrators argue at the Michigan state capitol in Lansing (Nov. 8, 2020). Bottom, Democratic lawmakers, including Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, Senator Kamala Harris, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, kneel in silence in remembrance of George Floyd, a black man killed in police custody, in Washington, D.C. (June 8, 2020). Lawmakers introduced new legislation to reduce excessive use of force by police across the country and make it easier to identify, track and prosecute police misconduct following nationwide demonstrations demanding an overhaul of law enforcement.

JOHN MOORE/ (TOP); CHIP SOMODEVILLA/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES





U.S. President Donald Trump holds up a newspaper that displays the headline "Acquitted," declaring the end of his impeachment trial (Feb. 6, 2020).

NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



DISASTER UPON DISASTER

BY GARRICK R. OXLEY

CORONAVIRUS SLAMMING WORLD ECONOMIES. More bloody conflicts. Governments in peril. With all society had to contend with in 2020, it seemed things could not have gotten worse...

But they did, as record-setting weather and costly environmental disasters hit an unsuspecting world, compounding the misery of the pandemic. The devastation left in their wake becomes yet another reason 2020 was a uniquely difficult year.

One man, whose home on the small Colombian island of Providencia was damaged by Hurricane Iota, searched for hope in the face of this adversity. “We’ll fight and get ahead because this is a new beginning,” he told *The Associated Press*. “More than asking God why, we have to be grateful we’re alive.”

Although it is valuable to appreciate life during difficult times, “asking God why” is important. When tragedy strikes, it is natural to wonder how God could allow it or what greater purpose might be at work. Very few understand that the Bible speaks specifically of the natural disasters in today’s headlines.

In Luke 21, Jesus Christ told His disciples that at the end, “earthquakes shall be in diverse places” (vs. 11). The Greek word translated *earthquakes* carries a broader meaning: “commotion, gale (of the air) and earthquake (of the ground).” In Mark 13:8, He added that there would also be *troubles*. This word is also illuminating. It means “disturbance, that is, (of water) roiling, or (of a mob) sedition.”

The year’s uptick in severe weather is a prophetic condition foretold in Scripture. And Mark 13:8 shows it would accompany other societal problems like *mob sedition*! What could sum up 2020 more perfectly?

If the coronavirus was the only challenge that hit the world, it would still have been a year like no other. But with the addition of other complex problems, such as worsening division—global unrest—and unprecedented natural disasters—the impact was even more devastating.

Surely, these developments should get our attention. If a year like this does not cause mankind to stop, consider what is happening and “ask God why,” what else would it take?

Look at just one component of the year’s bad weather. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season set multiple records while producing an unprecedented 30 named storms. There were so many that the list of 21 conventional names was exhausted and the Greek alphabet was used for only the second time in history!

Giovanni Bassu, the regional representative for Central America for the UN refugee agency, told *Reuters*, “one storm after another is a very sad metaphor for the much broader phenomenon,” referring to the seemingly endless array of downturns striking the world population in 2020.

Also, recall the event that headlined the start of the year: Australia’s worst-ever bush fires that killed at least 33 people, burned more than 46 million acres of bush, forest and parks, and wiped out over 3 billion animals. Known locally as the “Black Summer,” the unusually intense fires directly or indirectly affected nearly 80 percent of Australians.

Conditions did not fare much better during summer in the northern hemisphere, where the Western U.S. was hit with an intense fire season that blanketed the sky above New York City with haze and brought smoke particles as far as the United Kingdom. As many as 3,000 died from the effects of smoke inhalation from the pollution of these fires.

Meanwhile, India, nations in the Mideast and northeastern Africa suffered triple disasters of the virus, a heat wave, and the worst locust invasion in decades.

Also think of the Taal volcano eruption in the Philippines, which displaced nearly 25,000 people—destruction in the American Midwest from a derecho windstorm, which left over 800,000 without electricity—numerous wildfires on the West Coast, which scorched millions of acres—Brazil rainforest blazes, nearly “100,000 fires in the first 10 months of 2020” according to *phys.org*—and a 7.0-magnitude earthquake in Turkey, in which 17 people died and 709 were injured.

With such widespread suffering, all mankind can seem to do is look to the passing of time for relief. By all accounts, however, the future for weather does not look so hopeful.

At least for the short-term... □



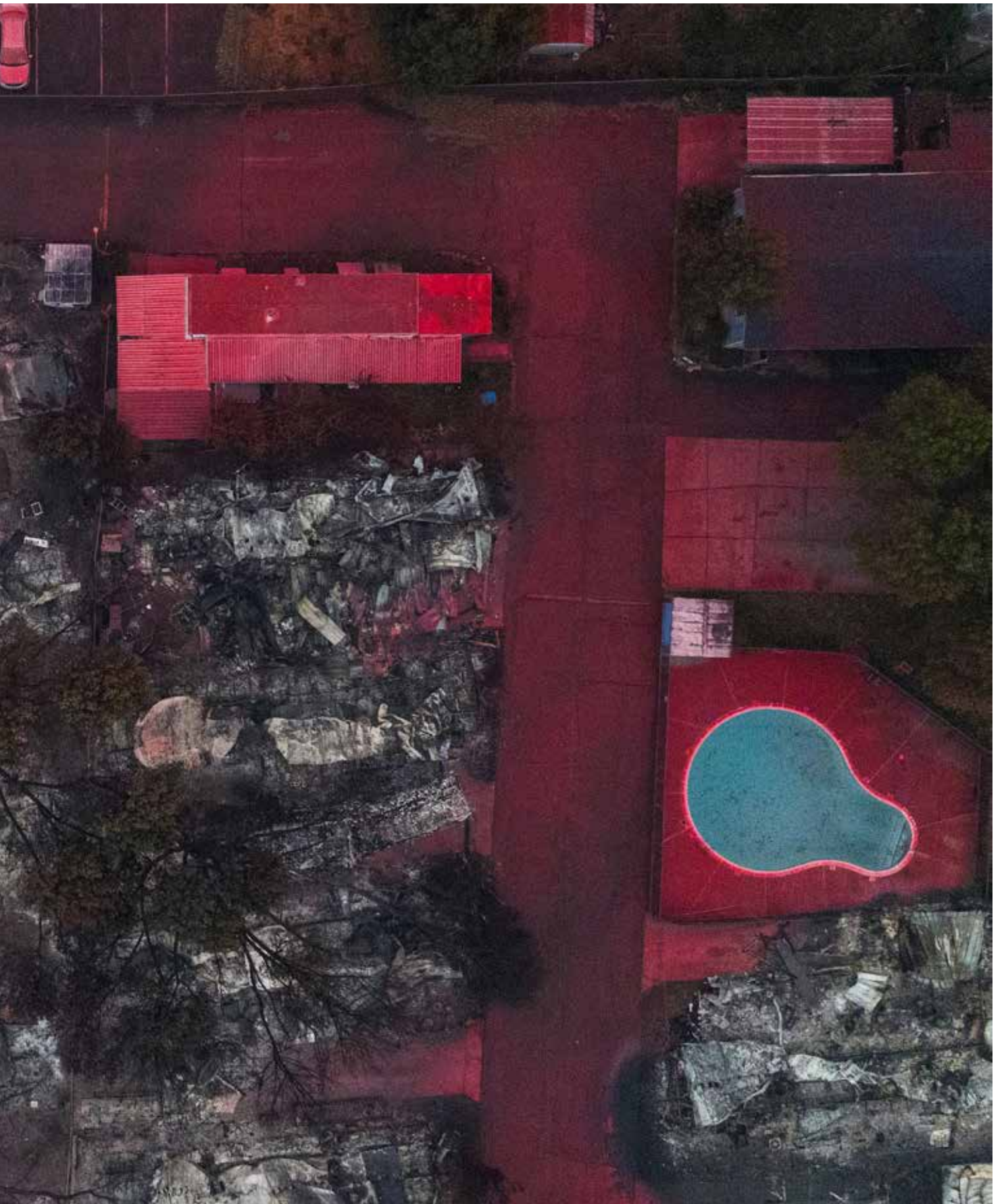
Resident Osvaldo Ramirez walks away from his burned vehicle during the Glass fire in St. Helena, California (Sept. 27, 2020). Mr. Ramirez said that \$8,000 in cash along with his family's papers that were located in a safe inside the vehicle were burned in a wildfire that had a "dangerous rate of spread."

JOSH EDELSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Residences burned by the Almeda fire in Talent, Oregon, are covered by red fire retardant (Sept. 13, 2020).

REUTERS/ADREES LATIF





Top, a man attempts to chase away a swarm of desert locusts in Samburu County, Kenya (May 21, 2020). Trillions of locusts swarmed across parts of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia in May following an earlier infestation in February, devastating rangeland upon which livestock are dependent. Bottom, the San Francisco Bay Bridge and city skyline are obscured by orange smoke and haze from recording-breaking wildfires (Sept. 9, 2020).

FREDRIK LERNERYD/GETTY IMAGES (TOP); BRITTANY HOSEA-SMALL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM)





Top, a young person carries bananas as he wades near men sitting on a flooded street in El Progreso, Honduras, after the passage of Hurricane Iota (Nov. 18, 2020). Bottom, this aerial image from a drone shows damaged grain bins in Luther, Iowa, a day after a powerful storm battered the U.S. Midwest (Aug. 11, 2020). Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds provided estimates that 10 million acres, nearly one-third of the state's land used for crops, were damaged after the derecho swept through.

STR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES (TOP); DANIEL ACKER/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM)



HOPE FOR 2021?

BACK IN JULY, *The Associated Press* published the article “Wait ’til next year: Giving up on 2020, looking toward 2021.” The title perfectly summarized the hopes of many.

In the piece, *AP* wrote: “Now it’s all about 2021—the year when everything, and maybe nothing, happens.” There was already pessimism bleeding into thoughts about the future. But there was still hope.

With 2020 finally coming to a close, *hope*—with cautious optimism—continues to rise for the new year.

The article continued: “But why do we even say things like ‘2020 is canceled’ and ‘New year, new me’? Experts who study human behavior say the human desire to pin failures, hopes and dreams on a period of time like a calendar year has primitive roots connected to our attachment to routine.

“‘Because we missed our spring [in 2020], summer isn’t really summer because it only comes after a complete spring,’ says Stuart Patterson, chairperson of the Shimer Great Books School at North Central College. ‘The only opportunity to reset is next spring. Everything else we’re doing this year is going to be drained of significance because they don’t have the proper sequence.’

“It’s like when Hamlet declares that ‘time is out of joint,’ Mr. Patterson says.

“How do we measure a year—a question about the passage of time that has a whole song devoted to it in the Broadway musical ‘Rent’? With seasons, milestones, rituals, events. So when a year is stripped of all of those moments, people feel lost and put hope in the future to manage expectations, psychologists and social scientists say.”

Truly, many have felt lost in 2020. And understandably so.

“Every calendar year brings a cycle of hope,” *AP* continued. “January is when we’ll finally commit to our diet, quit smoking, become the person we always wanted to be. We believe in the power of change and promise ourselves: ‘This is our year,’ as one reveler proclaimed just after the ball dropped in Times Square.

“Some people admit defeat by January’s end, while other ambitions continue for a few more months. In April, many start focusing on summer. By November,

most have thrown in the towel, vowing that the upcoming year is actually their year.

“But that hope never fully dies out. It just gets recalibrated and refocused on a new target and soars again. ‘Hope,’ the poet Emily Dickinson wrote, ‘is the thing with feathers.’”

So, as we peer into 2021, what hope is there on the horizon?

Vaccine Victory?

The first and greatest hope most see for the new year is the coronavirus vaccine that was announced in November.

“The news lifted spirits around the world, not to mention stockmarkets,” *The Economist* reported. “The end of the pandemic seemed in sight; scientific insight and industrial know-how had, in a bravura display of their power, provided an exit strategy.

“Deliverance, when it arrives, will come in a small glass vial.”

In another article, the magazine tried to quantify this hope using statistics: “The early data from a final-stage trial unveiled...by Pfizer and BioNTech, two pharma companies, suggests that vaccination cuts your chances of suffering symptoms by more than 90%. That is almost as good as for measles and better than the flu jab, with an efficacy of just 40-60%. Suddenly, in a dark winter, there is hope.”

With that news, late-2020 editorials said the U.S. had plenty to look forward to in the new year: “Why the U.S. Economy Will Take Off in 2021,” *The Wall Street Journal* reported. “‘Help is on the way’: How the U.S. will turn the tide of the pandemic in 2021,” read the title of an *NBC News* article. “After year of closures, restaurants look toward a better 2021,” *NPR* reported.

The Economist, however, was quick to point out that we should not set our hopes too high.

“Yet despite the good news, two big questions stand out, about the characteristics of the vaccine and how fast it can be distributed. These are early results, based on 94 symptomatic cases of covid-19 from among the 44,000 volunteers. Further answers must wait until the trial has gathered more data. It is, therefore, not clear whether the vaccine stops severe cases or mild ones, or whether it

protects the elderly, whose immune systems are weaker. Nor is it known whether inoculated people can still cause potentially fatal infections in those yet to receive jabs. And it is too soon to be sure how long the beneficial effects will last.”

“While the world waits for data, it will have to grapple with distribution. Vaccine will be in short supply for most of next year.”

Political Positivity?

While many in the world say “new year, new me,” many in the U.S. are thinking “new president, new nation.” After a contentious election and, arguably, the most politically charged year ever, Americans are ready for the rhetoric to die down.

Joe Biden shared this sentiment after the Electoral College voted to make him president-elect: “Now it is time to turn the page as we’ve done throughout our history,” he said. “To unite. To heal.”

Mr. Biden said that was the only way the country could overcome the worst health crisis in more than a century, saying that in the face of the pandemic, “we need to work together, give each other a chance and lower the temperature.”

Every Democrat, Republican and American in between wants an end to national division and true solutions to its problems.

Yet true healing is going to take more than words.

For argument’s sake, let’s look at the official election results as they stand. These numbers can begin to show how much work it will take to bring widespread unity.

Mr. Trump garnered 46.9 percent of votes to Mr. Biden’s 51.4 percent. The outgoing president received the second-highest number of votes ever in a presidential election after his opponent. This was despite four-plus years of being excoriated, castigated and maligned at every turn by the vast majority of news outlets. (Of course, he has always bluntly pushed back with his signature style.) In addition, he was relentlessly hounded during the Russia investigation. He was the third president in U.S. history to be *impeached*. Despite all of this, he was less than six points shy of securing the popular vote.

For many Trump supporters, the relentless attacks on the president were taken personally. Many of them voted for Donald Trump in two elections and do not want to be belittled for it.

The only way unity will come is both sides reaching *far over* the aisle and viewing the other side as human beings with valid points of view.

Even if these inroads are made, the path to healing will be long and arduous.

A Year to Look Forward to

Of course, COVID-19 and American politics are not the only problems on the globe. And even when the world is not in the middle of a pandemic, there are still the countless, seemingly insoluble problems plaguing mankind.

As everyone pins their hopes on the year 2021, the sad record of history shows their optimism will be dashed.

Yet there *is* a year on which we should all pin our hopes. It is one that few understand. In fact, it involves a CENTRAL theme of the Bible.

Notice what Jesus Christ said was one of His main purposes in coming to Earth: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, TO PREACH THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD” (Luke 4:18-19).

Have you ever heard anyone mention this “acceptable year”? It has everything to do with the gospel, which is about the Kingdom of God.

Jesus preached this acceptable year at His first coming. Yet He has not returned to bring everything stated to pass. Christ was quoting a prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-4.

When God’s Kingdom is set up—current world conditions cry out that this will be soon!—the brokenhearted will be healed, captives will be delivered, and health problems will be eradicated.

While Daniel 7:27 shows this will be an “everlasting kingdom,” it will start with an ACCEPTABLE YEAR. The original Greek word translated “acceptable” means propitious and delightful. We could all use such a year right now!

As we see the worsening problems vexing mankind today, Jesus Christ said we should cling to hope. His disciples asked Him what world conditions would look like before His Return.

Here is His response: “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in diverse places, and famines, and pestilences...” (Luke 21:10-11).

This all describes the crises occurring around us now. Warfare, natural disasters, disease pandemics, hunger...

Yet we are not supposed to sink into hopelessness when this all occurs. Instead, it is a clear sign that God’s Kingdom will be here soon.

Heed Christ’s words: “And when these things begin to come to pass”—all the terrible world conditions of today!—“then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws nigh” (Luke 21:28). □



“WE SHALL BEAT OUR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES”

These words, which mark a special sculpture on the grounds of the United Nations headquarters in New York City, come from the biblical book of Isaiah. Yet even more than a lofty ideal or nice-sounding idea, this Bible verse will come to pass—and soon. Read *How World Peace Will Come!* to learn exactly how this will occur.

Visit rcg.org/hwpwc to order your free booklet!

