

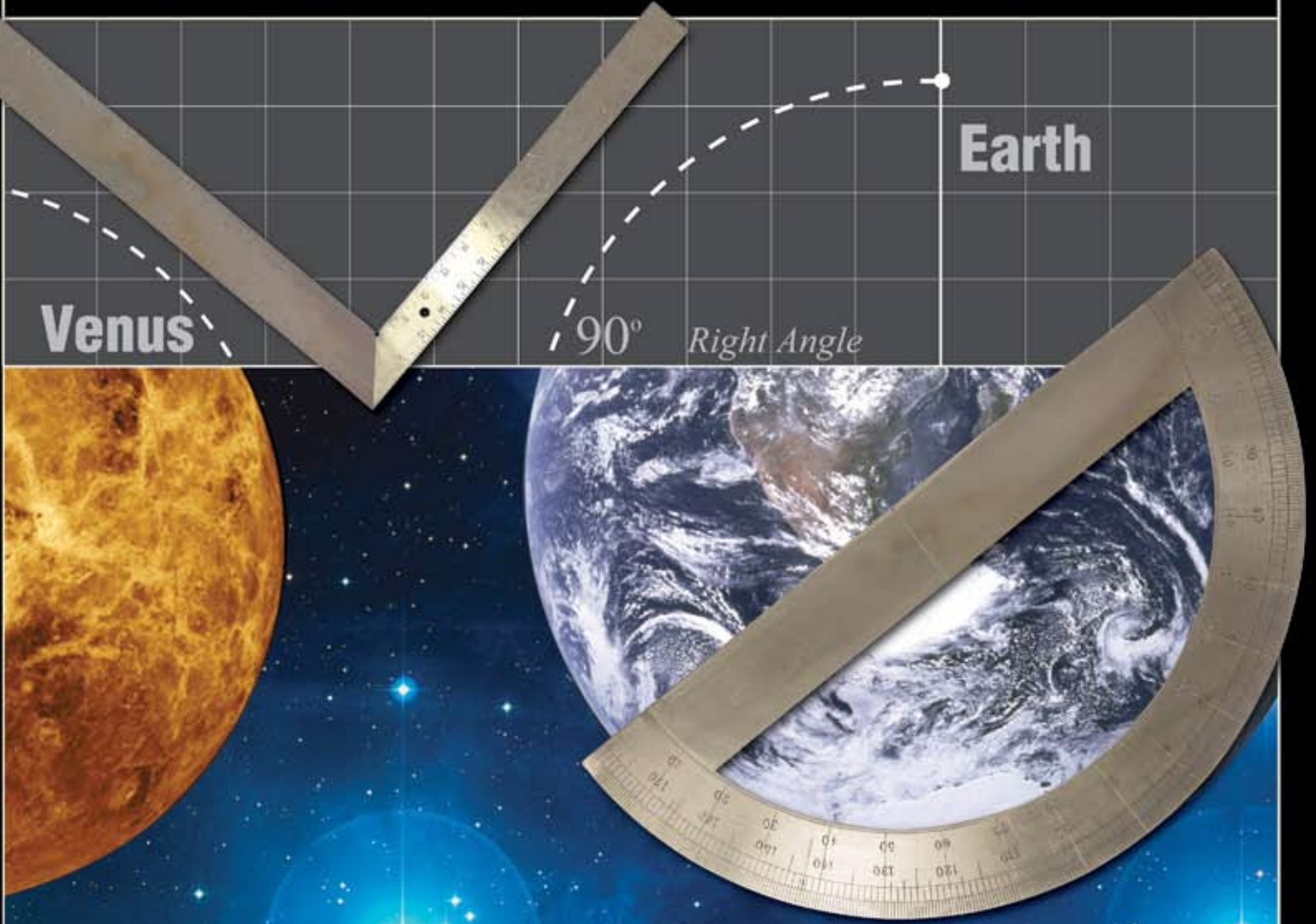
MARCH-APRIL 2007

THE

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



DESIGNED FOR

DISCOVERY

THE
REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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A R T I C L E S

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ABOUT OUR COVER: Our planet is in a unique location in the galaxy, making the universe easy to explore.
PHOTO: NASA

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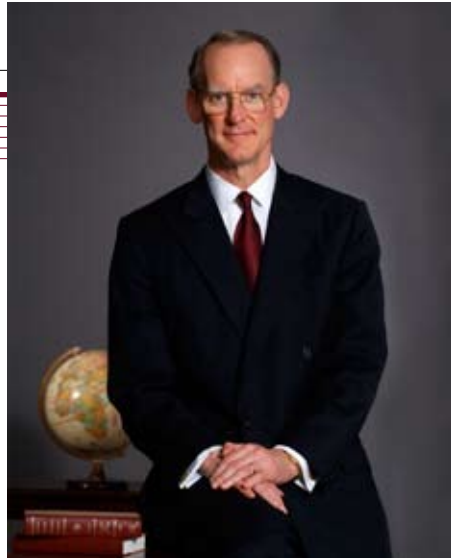
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Easter – Its Ancient Origins

EASTER IS A worldwide tradition involving many customs that people believe to be Christian.

What is the origin of Lent and sunrise services? How did rabbits, eggs and hot cross buns become associated with Christ's Resurrection? Is Easter mentioned in the Bible? Did the apostles and early Church keep it? The answers will shock you!

Most people follow along as they have been taught, assuming that what they believe and do is right. They take their beliefs for granted. Most do not take time to *prove* why they do the things that they do.

Why do you believe what you believe? Where did you get your beliefs? Is the source of your religious beliefs the Bible—or some other authority? If you say the Bible, are you sure?

What about Easter? Since hundreds of millions keep it, supposedly in honor of Jesus Christ's Resurrection, then certainly the Bible must have much to say about it. Surely there are numerous verses mentioning rabbits, eggs and egg hunts, baskets of candy, hot cross buns, Lent, Good Friday and sunrise services—not to mention Easter itself.

Easter requires close scrutiny and this article examines it carefully.

Bible Authority for Easter?

The Bible is the source for all things Christian. Does it mention *Easter*? Yes.

Notice Acts 12:1. King Herod began to persecute the Church, culminating in the brutal death of the apostle

James by sword. This pleased the Jews so much that the apostle Peter was also taken prisoner by Herod. The plan was to later deliver him to the Jews. Verse 3 says, "Then were the *days of unleavened bread*." The New Testament Church was observing these feast days described in Leviticus 23. Now read verse 4 of Acts 12: "And when he [Herod] had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions [sixteen] of soldiers to keep him; intending after *Easter* to bring him forth to the people."

Is this Bible authority for Easter?

This passage is *not* talking about Easter. How do we know? The word translated *Easter* is the Greek word *pascha* (derived from the Hebrew word *pesach*; there is no original Greek word for *Passover*), and it has only one meaning. It *always* means *Passover*—it can *never* mean *Easter*! For this reason, we find a *Hebrew* word used in the Greek New Testament. Once again, this Hebrew word can *only* refer to *Passover*. And other translations, including the Revised Standard Version, correctly render this word *Passover*.

Instead of endorsing Easter, this verse really proves that the Church was still observing the supposedly Jewish *Passover* ten years *after* the death of Christ!

Now let's go to the *other* scriptures authorizing Easter. This presents a problem. *There are NONE!* There are absolutely *no* verses, anywhere in the Bible, that authorize or endorse the keeping of Easter celebration! The Bible says nothing about Lent, eggs and egg hunts, baskets of candy, etc., although it does mention hot cross

buns and sunrise services as abominations, which God condemns. We will examine them and learn why.

The mistranslation of Acts 12:4 is a not-so-subtle attempt to insert a pagan festival into Scripture for the purpose of authorizing it.

When Easter Came to America

Easter has long been known to be a pagan festival! America's founders knew this! A children's book about the holiday, *Easter Parade: Welcome Sweet Spring Time!*, by Steve Englehart, p. 4, states, "When the Puritans came to North America, they regarded the celebration of Easter—and the celebration of Christmas—with suspicion. They knew that pagans had celebrated the return of spring long before Christians celebrated Easter...for the first two hundred years of European life in North America, only a few states, mostly in the South, paid much attention to Easter." Not until after the Civil War did Americans begin celebrating this holiday: "Easter first became an American tradition in the 1870s" (p. 5).

Remarkable! The original 13 colonies of America began as a "Christian" nation, with the cry of "No king but King Jesus!" The nation did not observe Easter within an entire century of its founding. What happened to change this?

Where Did Easter Come From?

Does the following sound familiar?—Spring is in the air! Flowers and bunnies decorate the home. Father helps the children paint beautiful designs on eggs dyed in various colors. These eggs, which will later be hidden and searched for, are placed into lovely, seasonal baskets. The wonderful aroma of the hot cross buns mother is baking in the oven waft through the house. Forty days of abstaining from special foods will finally end the next day. The whole family picks out their Sunday best to wear to the next

morning's sunrise worship service to celebrate the savior's resurrection and the renewal of life. Everyone looks forward to a succulent ham with all the trimmings. It will be a thrilling day. After all, it is one of the most important religious holidays of the year.

Easter, right? No! This is a description of an ancient Babylonian family—*2,000 years before Christ*—honoring the resurrection of their god, Tammuz, who was brought back from the underworld by his mother/wife, Ishtar (after whom the festival was named). As Ishtar was actually pronounced "Easter" in most Semitic dialects, it could be said that the event portrayed here is, in a sense, Easter. Of course, the occasion could easily have been a Phrygian family honoring Attis and Cybele, or perhaps a Phoenician family worshipping Adonis and Astarte. Also fitting the description well would be a heretic Israelite family honoring the Canaanite Baal and Ashtoreth. Or this depiction could just as easily represent any number of other immoral, pagan fertility celebrations of death and resurrection—including the modern Easter celebration as it has come to us through the Anglo-Saxon fertility rites of the goddess Eostre or Ostara. These are all the same festivals, separated only by time and culture.

If Easter is not found in the Bible, then where did it come from? The vast majority of ecclesiastical and secular historians agree that the name of Easter and the traditions surrounding it are deeply rooted in pagan religion.

Now notice the following powerful quotes that demonstrate more about the *true* origin of how the modern Easter celebration got its name:

"Since Bede the Venerable (*De ratione temporum* 1:5) the origin of the term for the feast of Christ's Resurrection has been popularly considered to be from the

Anglo-Saxon Eastre, a goddess of spring...the Old High German plural for dawn, *eostarun*; whence has come the German *Ostern*, and our English Easter" (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, Vol. 5, p. 6).

"The fact that vernal festivals were general among pagan peoples no doubt had much to do with the form assumed by the Eastern festival in the Christian churches. The English term Easter is of *pagan origin*" (Albert Henry Newman, D.D., LL.D., *A Manual of Church History*, p. 299).

"On this greatest of Christian festivals, several survivals occur of ancient heathen ceremonies. To begin with, the name itself is not Christian but *pagan*. Ostara was the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of Spring" (Ethel L. Urline, *Festival, Holy Days, and Saints Days*, p. 73).

"Easter—the name Easter comes to us from Ostera or Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, for whom a spring festival was held annually, as it is from this *pagan festival* that some of our Easter customs have come" (Hazeltine, p. 53).

"In Babylonia...the goddess of spring was called Ishtar. She was identified with the planet Venus, which, because...[it] rises before the Sun...or sets after it...appears to love the light [this means Venus loves the sun-god]...In Phoenecia, she became Astarte; in Greece, Eostre [related to the Greek word *Eos*: "dawn"], and in Germany, Ostara [this comes from the German word *Ost*: "east," which is the direction of dawn]" (Englehart, p. 4).

As we have seen, many names are interchangeable for the more well-known *Easter*. Pagans typically used many different names for the same god or goddess. Nimrod, the Bible figure who built the city of Babylon (Gen. 10:8), is an example. He was worshipped as Saturn, Vulcan, Kronos, Baal, Tammuz,

Please see PERSONAL, page 19



VENEZUELA
President: Hugo Chavez
Population: 25.7 million
GDP: \$147.9 billion

MCT

VENEZUELA'S

Shift to the Left

VENEZUELAN President Hugo Chavez's fiery rhetoric shows he intends to more aggressively advance radical, anti-U.S. socialism throughout South America. His threats against the United States and close alignment with its adversaries are raising concerns in Washington.

Following a landslide re-election to a second six-year term as Venezuela's president, Mr. Chavez wasted no time announcing his intentions to nationalize key industries and use his nation's petroleum wealth to advance a radical socialist revolution that he hopes will spread throughout South America.

Called by some the "Karl Marx of the Caribbean," Mr. Chavez, 52, broke with tradition by draping a presidential sash over his left shoulder instead of his right as a symbolic gesture of his socialist credentials. "Those of you who want to know what type of socialism I have planned for Venezuela should read Marx and Lenin," he said, referring to the founders of communism. Venezuelan legislators in Congress in turn chanted, "Long live socialism!"

Venezuela's National Assembly later unanimously gave Mr. Chavez sweeping powers to legislate by presi-

dential decree for 18 months, a move critics said propels Venezuela toward a dictatorship by handing Mr. Chavez unchecked power. Wearing red, hundreds of his cheering supporters waved signs declaring "Socialism is democracy."

The *Associated Press* reported that Mr. Chavez has said he will nationalize Venezuela's largest telecommunications company and the nation's electricity sector, slap new taxes on the rich and impose greater state control over the country's oil and natural gas industries. He is also pushing for eliminating term limits and extending his presidency beyond 2013.

"Since Chavez took office in 1999, his government has seized company assets, farmlands and private buildings for cooperative ventures and imposed state control through joint ventures in the oil sector, raising the taxes and royalties foreign partners pay. His wealth redistribution efforts have made him widely popular among Venezuela's poor and working classes. But critics say Chavez, who now effectively controls all branches of government in Venezuela, is worsening persistent economic problems by ill-considered fiscal and monetary policies, and by

creating too much uncertainty about the future” (AP).

The *Associated Press* also reported that Mr. Chavez has increased his popularity by using a bonanza in oil profits to set up state-funded cooperatives and fund social programs, from subsidized grocery stores to free universities. Political opponents have accused Mr. Chavez of seeking to transform Venezuela into a Soviet-style centralized economy. While he has said he plans to implement a “21st century socialism,” critics counter it is becoming a totalitarian state led by a leader obsessed with power. Mr. Chavez has accentuated comparisons with Fidel Castro by creating a single party to steer his socialist revolution.

Political analyst Gloria Cuenca said Hugo Chavez’s threat to nationalize companies was a glimpse of the next six years. “It seems he has decided to stoke the fire to deepen his revolution, which from my point of view aims to look a lot like Castro’s Cuba.” Mr. Chavez insists he needs more power to save Venezuela from exploitation and even attack by capitalist countries, particularly the United States.

Awash With Petroleum Wealth

A founding member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its only non-Muslim member, Venezuela possesses South America’s largest petroleum reserves and is the world’s eighth largest oil exporter. Venezuela is the fourth largest oil exporter to the United States, which remains the top buyer of Venezuelan oil. The U.S. provides Mr. Chavez with billions of dollars for social programs aimed at helping Venezuela’s poor as well as aid for countries around the region (AP).

Mr. Chavez’s government has used Venezuela’s wealth to buy foreign political influence and loyalties in the Caribbean, Central America and South America, and to purchase weapons from Russia, China, Spain, Brazil and Iran for billions of dollars. It is estimated that Venezuela has spent up to \$25 billion in foreign aid throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Mr.

Chavez has also signed energy deals with France, India and China to lessen Venezuela’s economic dependence on America.

Venezuela is among the top countries in total proven oil reserves. It supplies 11-15% of U.S. imports of crude oil—1.5 million barrels a day—and wholly owns five refineries in the United States. Consequently, Venezuela is a key player in the future energy security of the U.S. and the world!

The global oil market remains tight and may be more susceptible to short-term supply disruptions and higher, more volatile prices. Recently, tension between Venezuela and the United States has caused concern about the stability of Venezuelan oil supplies. On several occasions, Mr. Chavez has threatened to stop exporting oil to the United States or to close Venezuela’s U.S.-based refineries (*U.S. Government Accountability Office*).

Venezuela’s economy has grown 10% in each of the past three years on the back of rising oil prices. The Chavez administration has benefited from oil prices that averaged more than \$60 a barrel in 2006, compared with approximately \$15 a barrel when he first won office in 1998.

High oil prices made the country’s economy the fastest-growing in South America in 2006, but near-record spending by the government also resulted in the region’s highest inflation rate.

Richard W. Rahn, director general of the Center for Global Economic Growth, warns that Mr. Chavez is steering Venezuela toward an almost inevitable economic collapse. In a commentary that appeared in the *Washington Times*, Mr. Rahn wrote, “What has not been reported is the full extent of the corruption in Venezuela and how this ultimately will destroy the economy. Venezuela has had a rapidly growing economy in the last few years, due to high oil prices, but the house of cards is about to collapse.”

In 2006, Mr. Chavez raised royalties on oil companies and forced

some into joint ventures with the government. After he announced moves to nationalize Venezuela’s communications and petroleum industries, the Venezuelan stock market plunged 20%. The country’s currency lost 17% of its value and was exchanged at nearly twice the official rate, disturbing financial markets and frightening foreign investors. The drop in the price of oil to an 18-month low then worsened declines in the country’s stocks and bonds.

Leftism Spreads in Latin America

If U.S. leaders took comfort believing conditions would improve throughout Latin America following Fidel Castro’s death, Mr. Chavez has done his best to dispel such wishful thinking by tightening his grip on Venezuela. With the 80-year-old communist ruler ailing, Mr. Chavez’s speech at his own inauguration in Venezuela was viewed as a claim to leadership of Latin American socialism.

Mr. Castro has been a thorn in the side of the United States since he seized control of Cuba in a 1959 communist coup and imposed socialism by nationalizing major industries.

Mr. Chavez has accused U.S. President George W. Bush of plotting to assassinate him, has made crude comments about Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and has bashed the United States on the *al-Jazeera* television network. Mr. Bush responded to Mr. Chavez’s calls to nationalize major industries by expressing concern for the Venezuelan people and for how democratic institutions were being undermined. The Bush administration stressed that any U.S. firms affected must be compensated.

In recent months, anti-U.S. developments have accelerated throughout Latin America. Like their counterparts in Venezuela, voters in Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua all have elected outspoken leftist presidents who defiantly oppose U.S. policies:

Evo Morales: Entering his first year in office as president of Bolivia, South America’s poorest country, Mr. Morales and his Movement to

Socialism won the election, vowing to return to the indigenous population the natural resources, land and political power, which he and his party claimed was in the hands of only a few wealthy families.

Last May, Mr. Morales nationalized Bolivia's oil and gas industry by using the military and deriding foreign investors. Bolivia holds South America's second largest gas reserves. This year he intends to nationalize the country's mining industry and seize large tracts of private property and give it to impoverished peasants.

Rafael Correa: At his inauguration earlier this year, Ecuador's new president vowed to put the nation's poor ahead of foreign debt payments. Mr. Correa rejected a free-trade pact with the United States and announced he would not renew U.S. use of an air base when a treaty expires in 2009. He also proposed that Latin American countries create a "Bank of the South" independent of international finance organizations.

Daniel Ortega: On January 1, the former Marxist Sandinista revolutionary who battled a U.S.-backed Contra insurgency in the 1980s returned to Nicaragua's presidency after 16 years. An enthusiastic crowd of 300,000 attended his inauguration. Mr. Chavez has offered to help Mr. Ortega rebuild Nicaragua's collapsing economy.

At his installation ceremony, Mr. Ortega wore the white and blue of Nicaragua's flag in his sash, while Mr. Chavez donned the red and black colors of the Sandinistas.

Consorting With Iran

An especially disturbing development for America has been the strengthening of ties between Latin America's leftist leaders and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's controversial president—men who share hostility toward what they view as U.S. imperialism.

Mr. Ahmadinejad visited Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela earlier this year, starting his four-day trip with an official visit with Mr. Chavez, who has thrown his support behind Iran's nuclear program. It was Mr. Ahmadinejad's

second visit to Venezuela in four months. Mr. Chavez has made numerous trips to the Islamic republic. Both presidents vowed to spend billions of dollars financing projects to thwart U.S. influence in Latin America and Africa.

Both Venezuela and Iran are OPEC members. Messrs. Chavez and Ahmadinejad said they agreed to support an oil production cut by the cartel to halt a recent 15% tumble in crude prices. Iran is the world's fourth largest oil exporter. Mr. Chavez presented Iran's president with a Persian translation of a book about Simon Bolivar, the 19th century Venezuelan liberator of South America. In turn, Mr. Chavez was given a book about Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the father of the 1979 Iranian revolution.

Supporting a proposal made by Iran, Mr. Chavez has called on OPEC to sell oil denominated in euros rather than dollars. Banco Central de Venezuela has slashed the percentage of its \$35.9 billion in reserves invested in dollars and gold to 80% from 95% a year ago. The country also has boosted its euro holdings to 15% from less than 5% a year ago.

When he met with his Iranian counterpart in Caracas, Mr. Chavez quoted Bolivian President Morales who declared, "Death to American imperialism." When this was translated into Persian as "Death to America," a catch phrase of Iranian demonstrations, Iranian delegates broke into applause. Mr. Ahmadinejad is rumored to be negotiating to buy Venezuelan uranium as an unmonitored supply for Tehran's nuclear program.

Robert Spencer, a leading expert on Islam, said he is deeply concerned about the increasingly cozy relationship between two dictators in opposite hemispheres. Mr. Spencer, director of popular website Jihad Watch, said he believes the two men pose a serious threat to the United States.

He also said Mr. Chavez, a socialist, and Mr. Ahmadinejad, a jihadist, share a similar vision of establishing

Please see **VENEZUELA**, page 9

THE RISING LEFT

The guidance and support of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez have helped the political left make a resurgence in Latin America.

BOLIVIA



President:
Evo Morales

Population:
9 million

GDP:
\$10.22 billion

Mr. Morales is doing what few politicians do—making good on campaign promises. He has already nationalized Bolivia's huge natural gas reserves, and is working on transferring land from the rich to the poor.

ECUADOR



President:
Rafael Correa

Population:
13.5 million

GDP:
\$32.57 billion

Educated as an economist, Mr. Correa previously served as the country's finance minister. On U.S.-Ecuadorian relations, he pledged to shut down the U.S. military base in Manta, where 400 U.S. soldiers are stationed.

NICARAGUA



President:
Daniel Ortega

Population:
5.6 million

GDP:
\$4.82 billion

For much of his life, Mr. Ortega has been an important leader in the Sandinista National Liberation Front. He became a member of the ruling multipartisan junta and was later elected president, serving from 1985 to 1990. Mr. Ortega's policies became more moderate during his time in opposition, and he gradually reduced much of his former Marxist rhetoric.

SOURCE: Tribune reporting, CIA World Factbook, MCT

SOCIETY'S SPREADING CANCER



The Twisted, Perverse and
BIZARRRE

PART III

In the final installment of this three-part series, we further examine real-life accounts of strange, perverse behavior, explaining where it is leading—and how it will be brought to an end!

Warning: This article examines some of the more bizarre crimes being committed, some of which can only be briefly described due to graphic content. Once again, readers are cautioned—the following material is shocking.

BY KEVIN D. DENEK AND JUSTIN T. PALM

IN OCTOBER 2006, a 19-year-old from Alabama was charged with raping his mother. The accused admitted to the crime, which was evidently committed in retaliation against his brother.

“It’s totally sick is what it is,” said Sgt. Jamie Smith of the Albertville Police Department. Sgt. Smith continued, “It’s hard to wrap your mind around...Shocked, shocked would be...a better way to describe it. That somebody would dip to the lows to do something of this nature. It’s just pretty much a shock to the conscience of the general public” (*WSFA*).

Another grisly crime took place late that year in New Orleans: A man who killed himself left a suicide note confessing he killed his girlfriend. Police found her dismembered body scattered around their shared apartment, located above a voodoo shop in the French Quarter. Reportedly, the man’s girlfriend had been planning to leave him.

In November 2006, a man from Britain faced a possible life sentence for sexually abusing his seven-week-old daughter, subsequently battering

her to death. He is accused of killing his baby by throwing her headfirst into the wooden arm of a sofa, in an attempt to keep her quiet. According to the police report, she had been abused from the time she left the hospital until her death weeks later. The suspect, fascinated with horror films, had written poems about his desire to kill.

Weird, vile crimes are on the rise, sometimes involving bizarre fetishes unheard of until recently. A central Ohio man told police he likes to drink boys’ urine, and that he has been doing it for more than 40 years. He also confessed that while it makes him sick, it is an almost “spiritual experience.” He reportedly added, “I like it because it makes me closer to them—like I’m drinking their youth” (*Local6*).

The lead detective said, “Listening to him describe it, it’s like listening to a crack or cocaine addict. He’s addicted to children’s urine.”

How does people’s behavior in our supposedly advanced, educated and civilized society devolve to the degree that such disgusting acts are committed against other human beings?

Grave Robbing

In Wisconsin, after suspicious activity at a cemetery was reported, officers

found an abandoned vehicle parked nearby. Later in the evening, an officer saw a young man walking toward the vehicle, dressed in black and sweating. Questioned by the officer, the man admitted his friends had asked him to help dig up a woman’s body to have intercourse with it. The three diggers had only managed to reach the top of the grave’s vault.

The grave was that of a 20-year-old woman who had been killed in a motorcycle accident a few weeks prior. The Grant County Sheriff said the suspects did not know her, but they had seen her photograph in an obituary.

The young men face more than five years in jail and a \$17,500 fine.

The sheriff stated, “In different schools that teach you about bizarre behavior, necrophilia is one of those things that you hear about, but never think you’ll have to deal with” (*AP*).

Another ghastly instance of this type of crime took place in South Carolina, in which a 23-year-old man tried to exhume the body of a 12-year-old girl after seeing her picture in an obituary. He told investigators that he wanted to “take her home and have fun” (*AP*). Thankfully, he never found the girl’s grave.

According to the defense attorney, two mental evaluations discovered a “chemical imbalance” in his brain causing him to desire sexual relations with corpses and children. The court, however, did not accept this. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Animal Cruelty

Animal cruelty is also making headlines more frequently. An Australian man was jailed for 16 months in November 2006 for mutilating and killing 17 rabbits and a guinea pig. After purchasing the animals, he tortured them to death and dumped their corpses in and around his office building. He successfully appealed the charges on the grounds of mental illness.

In another instance of animal cruelty, a Great Falls, Montana rancher found one of his healthy young cows lying dead in the field—yet the cow had not died an ordinary death. The

■ **ROBBING GRAVES, ANIMAL CRUELTY AND CULTS:** Grave robbing (upper left) is among the most sick, perverse new trends. A pit bull (upper right) is seized during a raid in Pontiac, Michigan. Police are hoping to end cruelty to animals by arresting those involved in dog fighting in the Detroit area. A vampire cult leader (lower left) listens to testimony during his appeal hearing at the Lake County Courthouse in Florida in 1999. A young woman (lower right) involved in the case breaks down after she pleads guilty to being a principal to first-degree murder.

PHOTOS: MCT

rancher said that the “cow’s [private parts] were cut out with stunning precision. The left side of her face was carved off, the exposed bones stripped as clean as if they’d been boiled” (*Great Falls Tribune*).

Since the 1970s, many Montana ranchers have found dozens of their cattle carved up in similar fashion.

More recently, two teenage brothers in Atlanta, Georgia, broke into a community center, captured a three-month-old puppy, duct-taped its snout and paws, and cooked the animal alive in an onsite oven. They also destroyed computers and vandalized the building. Later, the brothers brought neighborhood children to see the dead animal and threatened to kill them if they reported it.

The brothers both pleaded guilty to animal cruelty and are awaiting sentencing.

Why such perverse cruelty?

Bizarre Cult

Consider just one example of bizarre religious beliefs, found within different forms of every religion in the world.

In late October 2006, police arrested members of a bizarre cult in Zimbabwe, of which seven children were severely malnourished. The cult members had been known to defy lawful orders. They had been starving themselves while living in the wilderness, claiming to be awaiting the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

As the riot squad approached, the cult members reportedly knelt down, prayed and sang. “They warned the police and the army that their reign was over and would be destroyed by God” (*The Herald*).

Why?

The scope of this series has a reasonable and natural limit. Far worse strange behavior could be reported, but what has been explained should paint a clear picture. We have examined bizarre appearances, disturbing media productions and influences, sexual perversions of the worst kind, and vile, unimaginable crimes.

We have also taken a glimpse into

the sewer of society and seen that the bizarre behavior found there is rapidly spreading and growing worse.

Today a virtual circus—or more specifically, a freak show—of odd behavior is paraded for all to see.

Questions naturally arise: Why has man fallen into such perverse and bizarre conduct? What causes these desires? What is the SOLUTION?

The Source

Some of the examples in parts two and three of this series were said to involve mental illnesses. Naturally, man often tries to find reasons as to why these odd behaviors occur. While mental illnesses are real, should every perverse act be justified as an illness? If yes, then how can anyone be held accountable?

These desires and actions must come from somewhere. Whether or not people will admit it, these are fueled by *human nature*.

To understand human nature, you must understand *who* is behind it, influencing how men think and live. The facts—the answers—are stunning. When you fully grasp the source of human nature, you will better understand why human behavior is degenerating. (For more on this topic, read our booklet *Did God Create HUMAN NATURE?*)

Rejecting the Teacher

Seemingly, society has come to view virtually any opinion and practice as acceptable. It has been said that in today’s relaxed, “go-with-the-flow” world, the only thing people do not tolerate is intolerance. There are no effective boundaries in place today to prevent the kinds of degeneration discussed in this series.

For 6,000 years, man has decided to ignore the Author of the only *effective* boundaries. Mankind has ignored its Creator; the fruits are evident. For any society to function and thrive, there must be STANDARDS.

Consider a child. For the sake of his safety, he is told not to touch the stove, else he might be burned. If the child does not listen, he will learn firsthand

why he received this instruction. For every effect there is a cause—the laws of nature, which God has created, cannot be disregarded.

Not only has mankind *ignored* its Parent, it has CUT ITSELF OFF, unable to hear the “safety rules and guidelines.”

Abominations

But what are the consequences of this no-boundary lifestyle? Is it just the possible sentence a person receives *if* he gets caught?

The Holy Bible speaks about abominations, that is, things that are disgusting. Truly what we have learned in this report is *disgusting!* (Some appearance choices raised early in this series would not necessarily fall into this classification.)

Does the Bible, the most popular book of all time, have anything to say about bizarre behavior?

After stating the many sexual perversions that other nations were committing, God told the ancient Israelites, “*Defile not* you yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations *are defiled* which I cast out before you: and the *land is defiled*: therefore I do *visit the iniquity* thereof upon it, and the *land itself vomits out her inhabitants*. You shall therefore *keep My statutes* and *My judgments*, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourns among you: (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled)” (Lev. 18:24-27).

God continued, warning of severe consequences if the people turned to strange conduct: “That the land *spue* [vomit] *not you out* also, when you defile it, as it *spued out the nations* that were before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these *abominations*, even the souls that commit them *shall be cut off* from among their people. Therefore shall you keep My ordinance, that you commit not any one of these *abominable customs*, which were committed before you, and that you *defile not yourselves* therein: I am the LORD your God” (vs. 28-30).

Also notice Deuteronomy 32:16: “They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with *abominations* provoked they Him to anger.”

To whom is God speaking? Was it only the ancient Israelites? Do these passages still apply today? Will the all-powerful Creator, who authored the Bible, keep His promise and remove people from the land they were given if they continue committing abominations—perverse actions?

Many, especially in the West, would claim this has no application today. But are they correct?

The Solution!

This degenerate world is rotting, dying from every form of spiritual cancer—and the deviant behavior of human beings demonstrates this. The “unfruit-

ful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11) are spreading. And man’s choices throughout the ages have produced weird, perverse people. Hosea 5:7 states, “They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten *strange children*.”

Bizarre behavior is a result of bizarre thoughts—unsound thinking. But those who are led by God’s Holy Spirit are empowered to lead a balanced life, different from the rest of the world. Notice II Timothy: “For God has not given us the Spirit of *fear*; but of POWER, and of LOVE, and of a SOUND MIND” (1:7).

Only a few people truly live God’s way of life, a way of soundness—common sense—the opposite of the behavior we have studied in this series. Those who live in accordance with

God’s Law will also be protected from some of the worst conduct, and utterly bizarre and vile behavior, soon to come on this earth.

The cause of the world’s twisted thinking and behavior is a result of mankind being cut off from God (Isa. 59:2-3).

However, a day is coming soon when God will offer His Spirit to all human beings, resulting in worldwide peace and prosperity.

But *you* need not wait until then to take action. While billions of people have ignored God, “doing their own thing,” you can decide to go the other way. God is offering His Holy Spirit to a few now.

To learn more about this process of receiving God’s Spirit, read our booklet *What is true CONVERSION?* □

VENEZUELA

Continued from page 5

“a perfect kingdom on earth, and that perfect kingdom would be something that would be instituted and maintained by the sword, by force.” The Tehran-Caracas alliance cuts off any chance for the United States to achieve oil independence from the Islamic world, Mr. Spencer said. “The danger, of course, is very great.”

U.S. Opposed by Friend and Foe

The sharp differences between the United States, Venezuela and Iran were underscored at the United Nations in September 2006, when Mr. Chavez said the U.S. was “the greatest threat” to the world and likened President Bush to “the devil.” It marked the first time in UN history that a U.S. president was verbally and personally attacked in the General Assembly. “The devil came here yesterday, and it smells of sulfur still today,” Mr. Chavez said, referring to Mr. Bush.

The day after Mr. Ahmadinejad defiantly told the General Assembly that Iran is determined to pursue nuclear technology, Mr. Chavez told reporters he, too, would like to explore nuclear energy. This development raises the

prospect of a socialist, anti-U.S. nation possessing nuclear weapons in the Western Hemisphere, reviving memories of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

“Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez is rapidly becoming the new Fidel Castro, but with petro-dollars, at the UN,” a *CBS News* foreign affairs analyst said. “His anti-Bush comments are making him increasingly popular with member states.”

Following his inflammatory address to the UN, Mr. Chavez was roundly applauded by diplomats from throughout the world—a scene many in the West found as troubling as Mr. Chavez’s comments.

Gerver Torres, a former Venezuelan government minister, said Mr. Chavez’s “main motivation now is to do everything he possibly can to negatively affect the United States, Bush in particular. He is trying to bring together all the enemies of the United States. He believes the United States is the devil.”

Why is it that the tide seems to be turning against the U.S. on virtually every front? America’s allies and enemies alike are waxing more powerful as the United States wanes in power

and influence. When one understands that the United States can trace its heritage back to ancient Israel, international developments can be understood.

The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel symbolically equated Jerusalem with the House of Israel in his prophecies for the end-time (Ezek. 4:1, 3; 5:4-5). He predicted national sins would leave modern Israel exposed and vulnerable. “Surely, therefore, I will gather all your lovers [allies] with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated; I will gather them from all around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness” (Ezek. 16:37 – NKJV).

The presence of anti-Americanism in Venezuela and Latin America is a symptom of a global crisis that will soon engulf the entire world in the most horrific time in history. The American and British peoples will suffer dreadful setbacks, but ultimately will be liberated after the worst punishment ever to afflict nations, and will be restored to greatness for the benefit of all mankind!

To learn more about the startling result of where these events are leading, read our book *AMERICA AND BRITAIN IN PROPHECY*. □



DESIGNED FOR DISCOVERY

WHY THE EARTH IS UNIQUE

The earth is seemingly filled with inferences of design. Recent discoveries reveal some of these unique and inspiring markers.

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

MANY MILLIONS view the earth as just another planet in a vast universe. They see it as neither unique nor special in any way.

But decades of research are changing this view. If we peer through the lens of science, something remarkable can be shown about our planet. The more we discover, the more we realize that hundreds of conditions are needed for the rich abundance of plant, animal and human life on earth, which have not been found elsewhere in the known universe.

There are so many indicators *on earth* pointing to an Intelligent Designer that it becomes impossible to believe they appeared by blind chance. Reading with an open mind, the honest reader will be left with little doubt as to the inspiring origin of our world and the evidence left behind for humanity to discover. In fact, much of what has been set in place for mankind was designed so that only an advanced, technologically-driven society could uncover it.

As you read this article, you will see the fingerprints—the handprints—of something. You will be left to ask, “Are these the fingerprints of dumb, blind luck, or the fingerprints of an engineer who left markers—clues—careful design?”

Also ask: “Could our life-bearing

planet be nothing more than coincidence?”

Ancient Geological Compass

One of the fascinating treasures waiting for millions of years to be uncovered is an ancient global positioning system found in rocks containing magnetic elements, such as iron. These rocks are located everywhere, but are particularly concentrated where iron-filled molten lava spews from within the earth. When superheated in a volcano or within crevices on the ocean floor, rock becomes as fluid as maple syrup. In this state, the iron element aligns with earth’s magnetic field.

While most are familiar with a standard compass, few realize that the planet generates a magnetic field in *three* dimensions. When lava cools, its magnetic alignment “locks” into place. (Only super-heating to a near liquid state would cause its position to change once again.)

Like a global positioning system using three satellites to pinpoint a location, these rocks can be used to pinpoint the location where they hardened. This opens a fascinating window into earth’s early history. As continents shift, molten rock bubbles up from deep within the planet’s crust. When this liquid rock comes in contact with water or air, it cools and solidifies. As the continents con-

tinue to drift, hardened rock moves with them. By measuring its magnetic field, scientists can determine its exact original location.

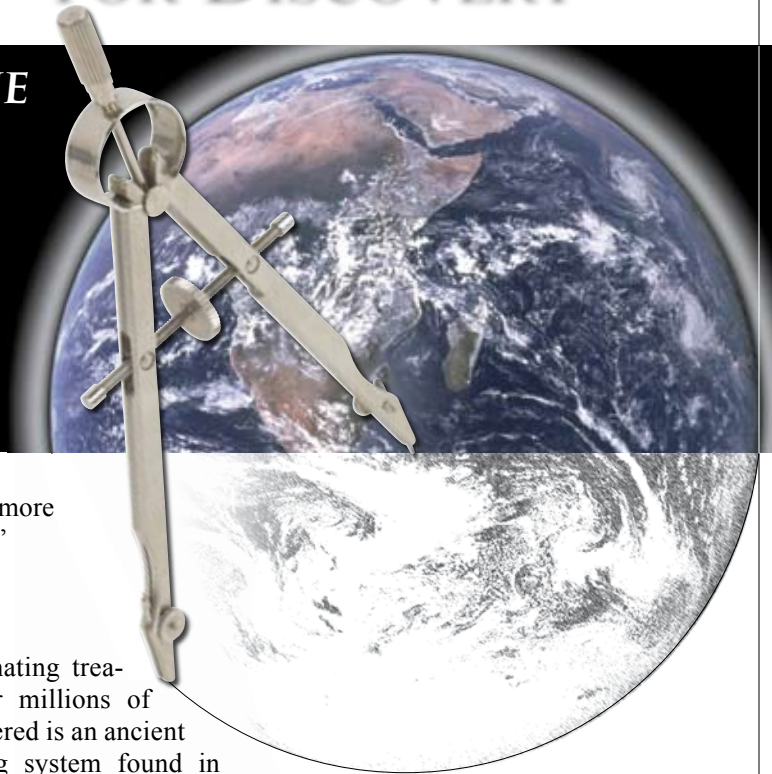
Collecting specimens from around the world has allowed scientists to determine that continents currently drift at a rate of about one centimeter per year.

If hundreds of measurements are compared from around the globe, a road map of how our planet transformed begins to appear. A picture of the earth from millions of years ago reveals only one large continent, referred to as Pangaea.

There is no evolutionary reason for the appearance of this ancient positioning system. Could it have just been chance?

This magnetic map is missing the important element of time. There is no direct way to measure how fast the continents shifted or if they maintained a constant motion over millions of years.

To develop a timeline of our world, another recent discovery is required.



Icy Encyclopedias

Without a clear timeline, scientists have no verifiable way to compare discoveries in various parts of the world. We have a picture of how the early planet looked, but no way to know the rate at which it developed.

Recall learning about tree rings in grade school. Counting them reveals the age of the tree. Their thickness would indicate the growth in a particular season, and indicate the total amount of rainfall that had occurred. We have come to learn that much more can be read from these natural data recorders. While fascinating in their own right, trees are usually only centuries old. Much of that time has already been recorded by man.

What was learned with tree rings has now been applied to many kinds of geological “layering,” and perhaps

most interesting are the layers found in polar ice. In arctic regions, a fascinating phenomenon occurs: Snow, sediment, gases, etc., form easily-identifiable layers. With each year, another layer is formed, and “snapshots” are stored. Hundreds, even thousands, of years are documented in these icy data recorders. The longest ice core retrieved is a 2.25 mile sample allowing scientists to peer 420,000 years into the past.

By taking long core samples, each year can be read in a manner similar to tree rings. However, the information stored in the ice cores is much more detailed. Not only can temperature and snow depth be determined, atmospheric gases can be measured. Since gases are generally uniform worldwide, much can be learned about what constituted the early earth’s environment—and when. Major earthquakes, volcanoes, climate changes, shifts in the earth’s magnet-

ic field and even events occurring in space can be read from these wonderfully designed ice core “books.”

But why would this information even exist? How could an accident “create” something as precise as sediment layers, which are so crucial to understanding the ancient earth? One could argue that this phenomenon happened by chance. However, again, could mere accident—luck—form data recorders so detailed and precise that, until recently, it was out of the reach of mankind’s ingenuity to unlock them?

Couple these icy “encyclopedias” with the detailed ancient compass already explained, and the mountain of evidence for a Creator continues to grow.

Life and Technology

One fascinating aspect of the above mentioned discoveries is that they

A LUCKY SIZE?

Another interesting “coincidence” is earth’s perfect size and mass, crucial to a planet’s ability to develop an atmosphere and sustain life.

If one were to create a duplicate of earth, but shrink its size, some amazing changes would take place. Most important, a smaller planet would generate a weaker magnetic field. Our existing magnetic field creates a kind of “force field” around our planet, protecting us from direct interaction with the sun’s solar wind—which could blow away our atmosphere and with it the ability to sustain life.

Also, the unfiltered energy of the sun would permeate all those living in such a hostile world. This alone would mean deterioration and eventual destruction of life.

Even a slight reduction in the size of the planet would mean a gradual sweeping away of our atmosphere, disrupting the delicate mixture needed for life.

Conversely, a *larger* earth would carry with it an entirely different set of problems. Instead of the atmosphere being swept away by a solar wind, the planet would have a much greater magnetic and gravitational field. The fine balance of gasses in our atmosphere would be disrupted, resulting in an atmosphere “thick” with carbon dioxide and methane.

Studying the Magnetic Field

Special satellites study solar activity including sun storms and how energy, stored in the sun’s magnetic field, is released into the sun’s outer atmosphere (corona).

Sun



MCT

A. When especially strong solar flares occur on the sun’s surface, powerful radiation of ionized gas (solar wind) moves into space.

The sun constantly pumps energy and particles out into space; particularly strong releases are called sun storms.

B. Earth’s magnetic field shields against the potent solar wind, except from the poles, where it is visible as auroras (northern and southern lights).

Solar winds may disrupt:

- Electric power systems
- Satellites
- Telecommunications
- Navigation

Solar winds increase radiation, which poses a threat to:

- Astronauts
- Flight personnel

Source: NASA

This would in turn increase the size of our atmosphere and make Earth resemble the gaseous giants Jupiter or Saturn.

Gravity also increases in intensity as the mass of a planet grows. Even an earth twice its current size would be devastating to life. Such a change would correspond to a 3½ times increase in gravity.

No matter which direction the mass of our planet was shifted, the effect would be a barren wasteland—not the lush world brimming with life we enjoy today! □

require an advanced species to understand them. The earth is perfectly designed for advanced life. When scientists analyze the possibility of life on other planets, they use a series of parameters to determine if a planet can sustain life. Further, the more of these attributes a planet possesses the more likely it can contain both *simple* life (bacteria and proteins) and *complex* life (plants and animals).

Even beyond this is another “level” seldom addressed: technological life—that is, a species advanced enough to develop technology, and in turn discover the markers placed by a Creator.

Our planet was perfectly suited for the arrival of mankind. It may come as no surprise that many of the factors needed to sustain complex life are *exactly the same factors* needed for advanced technology. It is no mere coincidence that conditions facilitating technology are the same as those necessary to support a special life-form capable of harnessing it.

Michael Denton, a famous biochemist, states the following about the precise balance of oxygen in our atmosphere and its link to technology: “Another fascinating coincidence is that only atmospheres with between ten and twenty percent oxygen can support oxidative metabolism in a higher organism, and it is *only within this range* that fire—and hence metallurgy [working with metals] and technology—is possible” (*Nature’s Destiny*).

Not only is our planet perfectly designed to develop technology capable of advancing society, those resources are conveniently placed within our reach.



The Placement of Power

Another so-called “coincidence” is the location of the resources required to power society. This was the case with the first sustainable power source: fire, primarily derived from trees.

The ability to heat homes provided for a purpose greater than pure survival. Man was free to study and research. Time was spent testing and analyzing the world around him. And before he exhausted this resource, research efforts led to our next power source, coal. This gave way to petroleum, which paved the way to the Industrial Revolution and the massive resources needed to fuel it.

As society was on the verge of using up each source of power, it discovered something even better. Each resource was replaced just in time before it was completely exhausted.

However, if one were to change even small aspects of our planet’s environment (varying gravity or the levels of gases in the atmosphere) the first power source—trees—would never have existed, or would have been depleted long before we discovered the next sustainable source.

With most of the planet covered in water, it *should* be unlikely that each successive resource was within reach. Sustainable power sources almost always need the crushing weight of a landmass to form. Even in modern mining operations, it has been proven time and again that the minerals and materials we need are in locations that make them relatively easy to extract.

Are you beginning to question the striking coincidences that keep appearing?

All Blind Luck?

The complex order of our planet and the ability to learn about it are not things one can dismiss as pure chance. As you have seen, the potential for each discovery was placed before us. In many cases, the knowledge of one allowed understanding of another. And with each discovery, it seems everything mankind needed was right at its fingertips.



■ **ICE CAP:** In this satellite composite image, Antarctica is covered by the Antarctic ice sheet. Around 90% of the fresh water on the earth’s surface is held in this ice sheet.

PHOTO: NASA

It is almost as if humanity has gradually been taught what it needs to know, each successive step at a time. It is only now that technology has allowed us to look back at Creation and discover what has been there all along.

Thousands of years ago, the ancient Bible writer Job was told to look for the fingerprints of a Creator in everything around him: “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach you; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell you: *Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach you:* and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto you. Who knows not in all these that the hand of the LORD has wrought this?” (Job 12:7-9).

It has not been until recent decades that man has been able to so fully “speak to the earth” and allow it to teach him. With scientific advancement, the precision and beauty of Creation becomes more apparent.

This has been done for a reason: The great Creator does not want any who are willing to objectively weigh the facts to come to any other conclusion. The apostle Paul reiterates this in the book of Romans: “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood by the things that are made,* even His eternal power and Godhead” (1:20).

Putting the evidence together, it becomes easy to “understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Heb. 11:3). His fingerprints are found in countless places—for those willing to look. □

Who is JESUS CHRIST?

His ministry aroused incredible interest in His time and throughout the centuries—and that fascination continues today. Yet disagreement abounds: What did Jesus look like? What was His life's purpose? Why did He need to die? Has He always existed? Was He the prophesied Messiah—the Christ? Did He abolish the Ten Commandments? Was the gospel He preached about Himself—or something else? This series will examine these questions and more, and will shed the correct light upon the most influential figure in the history of mankind. Prepare to be surprised—if not shocked!

PART II

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

BEGINNING MORE THAN 2,000 years ago, the birth, life and death of Jesus Christ took place. Few dispute the facts, or disagree that this Man forever changed the course of history and civilization.

Countless thousands of books, stories, novels, television programs and films have been written and produced about Him—and countless thousands of churches have been erected in His name.

Not many individuals, except for the rare world leader, inventor or religious figure, are talked about or remembered on even a small scale within several years after dying, let alone on a wide scale *thousands* of years later.

But after 2,000 years, Jesus Christ is commonly known in one way or another throughout the various cultures of the world, whether professing to be Christian or of another religion, or is an atheist. Many have nothing but positive comments about Jesus, regardless of their beliefs about who He was and what He taught. Of course, His name can also stir up great controversy.

The religious leaders alive during the life of Jesus—the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees—spoke nothing but evil of Him. They rejected nearly all His teachings—and marked Him as a heretic. Speaking with previously unheard of authority (Mark 1:22), Jesus' piercing words incited fierce indignation from the "spiritual elite." He was viewed as a threat to their positions and social status. What He taught the masses was drastically different from their dogma and traditions. If the citizenry followed Jesus,

who would these authorities lead—who would look up to them?

At the end of Jesus' three-and-a-half-year ministry, the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees called for His death. Unable to legally execute Him themselves, they turned Jesus over to the Roman government, under false charges, to be crucified—one of the most horrific ways to die ever conceived by man. Two thousand years later, Jesus is as renowned as ever.

Exactly who was the Man named Jesus Christ? Theories and ideas abound, but few seem to truly understand. Why?

Before examining Jesus' life and what He taught, we must first gain an understanding of what He did and did not look like, and what manner of death He died. We must be sure starting out that an incorrect picture of Jesus is not in our minds.

Blending in With the Crowd

When the name Jesus is uttered, what comes to mind? More than likely, a weak, long-haired, sickly-looking, effeminate man wearing a flowing white robe. This is the common portrayal of Jesus found in paintings across the world—yet these started appearing hundreds of years after His death.

While common as daylight, this depiction is simply not historically accurate on a number of fronts. It should be noted that the New Testament does not explicitly describe what Jesus looked like, and no eyewitness drawings of Him have ever been found. That said, Jesus Christ was Jewish, and as such would have looked like any other Jewish man of His time. This means He would have had short hair.

In a 2004 *Reuters* article, physi-

cal anthropologist Joe Zias, who has studied hundreds of skeletons found in Jerusalem, stated, “Jesus didn’t have long hair. Jewish men back in antiquity did not have long hair.”

If Jesus did have long hair, contrary to the accepted style of the time, He would have stood out in a crowd like a sore thumb. Yet on multiple occasions, Jesus managed to slip away amongst the masses and hide from His enemies, who wholeheartedly sought to kill Him (Luke 4:30; John 8:59; 10:39). This would have been most difficult to do if He had been the only man with long hair. Jesus was able to flee because He was an ordinary-looking Jewish man, not a long-haired “exception to the rule.”

Consider the account of Judas’ betrayal of Jesus in the book of Mark: “And he [Judas] that betrayed Him had given them a token [sign], saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely [securely]. And as soon as he was come, he went straightway to Him, and said, Master, Master; and kissed Him. And they laid their hands on Him, and took Him” (14:44-46).

If Jesus had long hair, would it have been necessary for Judas to use a special sign—a kiss—to betray Jesus to His enemies? Of course not. The scribes, chief priests and legionnaires would have easily spotted a singular long-haired person—a kiss would not have been required.

Though not in an obvious way, a particularly strong indication of Jesus’ hair length is given in the Bible, in I Corinthians 11:14. The apostle Paul states, “Does not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have *long hair*, it is a *shame* unto him?” The Greek word for “shame” means *disgrace, dishonor, reproach, vile*. These are strong words! No doubt, Paul and some of the people to whom he was writing would have seen Jesus face-to-face, or at least heard descriptions of His appearance, including His hair length.



We might ask: Would an individual who proclaimed to be an apostle of Jesus Christ make such a statement about hair length if Jesus had long hair? This would seem quite foolish for Paul to do. It would have been a blatant contradiction, and would have probably incited anger or at least bewilderment from those in the Corinth congregation.

Further confirming the fact Jesus did not have long hair is a wall painting that was erected after Jerusalem was captured in AD 70 to celebrate Rome’s victory. It pictures Jewish men with *short hair* being taken into captivity.

An article in the December 2002 issue of *Popular Mechanics*, titled “The Real Face of Jesus,” also challenged the commonly-held view of Jesus’ appearance. The article opens: “From the time Christian children settle into Sunday school classrooms, an image of Jesus Christ is etched into their minds. In North America he is most often depicted as being taller than his disciples, lean, with long, flowing, light brown hair, fair skin and light-colored eyes.

“Familiar though this image may be, it is inherently flawed. A person with these features and physical bearing would have looked very different from everyone else in the region where

Jesus lived and ministered.”

The article continues: “Using methods similar to those police have developed to solve crimes, British scientists, assisted by Israeli archeologists, have recreated what they believe is the most accurate image of the most famous face in history.”

Using modern technology, this team recreated a face that appears nothing like traditional artist renderings.

Until about the age of 30, Jesus was a carpenter. The building trade of that time involved strenuous, back-breaking labor. Those who worked in this field were required to move and lift heavy stone (carpenters were also stonemasons at that time)

and lumber without power tools or mechanical digging equipment of any kind. Week after week, Jesus cut down trees, hauled lumber and giant rocks, and constructed buildings.

Due to working in such an environment, Jesus would have been a rugged, physically fit, masculine-looking man. And He would have worn durable, practical clothing, which would have helped Jesus to blend in with the crowd, indistinguishable from the common “blue-collar” fisherman with whom He associated. This was another reason He needed to be identified with a kiss when arrested. Also, since Jesus spent most of His time under the Mediterranean sun, His skin would have been tanned—not pale and even chalky as Christendom portrays.

The above article also stated, “From analysis of skeletal remains, archeologists had firmly established that the average build of a Semite male at the time of Jesus was 5 ft. 1 in., with an average weight of about 110 pounds. Since Jesus worked outdoors as a carpenter until he was about 30 years old, it is reasonable to assume he was more muscular and physically fit than westernized portraits suggest.”

A Shocking Description

Another common image of Jesus is that of Him hanging from a cross with

a trickle of blood oozing from the crown of thorns piercing His head, and a bit of blood running from the wounds in His hands and feet. All of Jesus' skin is intact in these renditions. Some even show a "sacred heart" with a crack running through the center, depicting Him as having died of a "broken heart." This portrayal is particularly venerated during the Easter season.

While most are aware that Jesus was beaten and then crucified, few comprehend the horrific mutilation that occurred to His body both before and during His crucifixion. Jesus' body was so beaten and battered that He was virtually unrecognizable to the people of His day.

To help clear your mind of the typical picture of a barely-scarred Jesus hanging from a cross, a detailed examination of His execution must be described. While various forms of crucifixion were used, we will describe one possible method.

Before being crucified, Jesus is forced to undergo a severe scourging. To begin the horrible ordeal, He is stripped of His clothing and His hands are bound to a post above His head. A Roman legionnaire steps forward with a flagellum—a short whip with jagged pieces of bone, glass and metal tied into nine strips of leather. This is commonly referred to as a cat-o'-nine-tails.

The heavy whip is brought down without mercy, over and over again, across Jesus' shoulders, back and legs. At first, the flagellum cuts through the skin only. But as the blows continue, they cut deeper into the flesh, causing blood to ooze from the capillaries and veins. Blood then begins to spurt from smaller arteries in the underlying muscles.

The flagellum begins to produce large, deep bruises, which are then ripped open by succeeding blows. In time, the skin of Jesus' back is hanging in long ribbons, like spaghetti. The entire area is an unrecognizable bloody mass of torn flesh.

The severe beating is halted when the Roman centurion in charge has determined that Jesus is near death.

Though the Jews had a law that prohibited more than 39 lashes, there is speculation that the Romans would not have made any attempt to obey the statute.

At this point, Jesus is close to being in shock. One can only imagine the agonizing pain pulsing through His nerves. He is then untied from the post and allowed to fall to the ground—soaked in His own blood. The soldier performing the beating notices a great irony in a "simple, unsophisticated Jew" claiming to be a king. A robe is thrown across Jesus' shoulders, and a stick is placed in His hand, like a scepter. To complete the mockery, flexible branches covered with long thorns are formed into a crown, which is pressed firmly into Jesus' scalp. Since the scalp is one of the most vascular areas of the body, profuse bleeding begins almost immediately.

The soldiers proceed to mock Jesus and strike Him across the face. They then take His "scepter" and strike Him on the head—the thorns are driven deeper. At last, the soldiers grow weary of their vicious attack and tear off Jesus' robe. This causes agonizing pain, similar to carelessly removing a surgical bandage, due to His robe having bonded to the clots of blood and serum in His wounds. Significant bleeding takes place once again, as though He were being whipped with the flagellum.

Ironically, in respect of Jewish custom, the Roman soldiers return Jesus' garments, and then make Him carry a long wooden beam along His back. The condemned "criminal," along with the Roman soldiers, begins His slow journey to the site of the crucifixion, Golgotha. Jesus struggles to walk erect, but considering the immense weight of the wooden beam and the state of near shock produced by incredible blood loss, He constantly falls. The weight is too much to bear. The beam gouges into the shredded skin and muscles of the shoulders. Jesus tries to rise, but the endurance of His muscles has been exceeded.

Wanting to hasten the crucifixion, the centurion-in-charge selects an onlooker—Simon of Cyrene (Matt. 27:32)—to

carry the beam. Jesus follows behind Simon, perhaps slightly relieved, but still bleeding and in near-shock.

Finally, after a 650-yard journey, they arrive at Golgotha.

Simon is ordered to place the beam on the ground, where a worn-out Jesus is thrown down with His shoulders against the wood. Then the legionnaire drives heavy square wrought iron spikes through His hands, then deep into the wood. These were not the thin, smooth nails found at the neighborhood hardware store.

The legionnaires then raise the stake to which Christ is attached. At this point, Jesus' body weight is held up by His spike-driven hands. Then His left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, both feet fully extended, toes down. A square spike pierces through the arch of each foot, leaving His knees flexed. As Jesus' weight continues to sag downward, with more weight on His hands and feet, unbearable, fiery pain shoots along His fingers and up His arms. To add to the suffering, a soldier thrusts a spear into Jesus' side, penetrating internal organs—blood spills to the ground; Jesus is dead.

To say the least, this is quite a different image from the "classic" barely-bruised, almost physically immaculate Jesus hanging from a cross. Jesus Christ suffered a horrific death, and what was left of Him defies imagination—His body was mutilated beyond recognition. He endured hours of unimaginable, excruciating pain.

Yet, Jesus' death had a purpose. Was it foretold centuries beforehand? And is it possible that Jesus could have existed for all previous eternity? Judaism says no to both—Catholicism and Protestantism say yes to both—and certain groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses say yes to the former and no to the latter. Even among these opinions, however, there is much disagreement.

In Part Three of this series, appearing in the May issue of *The REAL TRUTH*, we will examine whether Jesus was the prophesied Messiah and whether He has always existed. □



WHY WE ANALYZE NEWS, TRENDS, PROBLEMS AND CONDITIONS FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

PHOTOS: MCT

THE RISING TIDE of illegal immigration. The volatile Middle East. The nuclear aspirations of rogue nations. Deteriorating standards in education. Incurable diseases, and potential pandemics. Escalating crime. Drug abuse. Child abuse. Government corruption and abuse of power. Sex-slave trafficking. The growing threat of terrorism. Widespread polarization within government and among the citizenry.

The world is filled with problems.

Politicians *within* nations jockey for position, tearing down even supposed colleagues to achieve the highest seat of power. “Diplomats” *among* nations promise, cajole and compromise to maintain the status quo on the world stage—and intimidate and threaten to gain the upper hand.

Anti-Americanism is becoming more blatant, and a widening rift between Britain and the United States is becoming more pronounced. The war in Iraq has evolved into a bottomless pit from which escape is fleeting. Iran remains adamant in developing nuclear technology, while North Korea has expressed willingness for dialogue...at least for now.

In the West, the growing gap between rich and poor is causing the middle class to shrink. While America has more millionaires than ever, middle and working class citizens struggle to stay afloat in a rising sea of debt.

Meanwhile, a cacophony of competing opinions and solutions abound, with opposing sides presenting convincing arguments. But who is right, and how can you know?

Which Experts Should You Believe?

Take global warming, for example, a controversial subject upon which

scientists disagree. The scientific community that today warns against global warming also warned in the 1970s that another ice age was on its way.

Yet glaciers are retreating. Arctic sea ice is disappearing during summer months. Permafrost (permanently frozen soil) in Canada, Alaska and Siberia is thawing at an alarming rate. Sea levels are rising. Hurricanes and tropical storms are increasing in number and intensity. Few experts dispute that signs exist identifying that the earth is growing warmer.

But what is the CAUSE? Is humanity at fault? Is it merely that the earth is progressing through a natural cycle of cooling down and warming up, as others assert? Or are both responsible to some degree?

Now let’s consider abortion. Even its mere mention stirs vehement feelings from both sides of the ideological aisle. Thirty-four years have passed since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on *Roe v. Wade*—yet debate continues,

with no end in sight: Does life begin at birth or conception? Is it a fetus or an unborn child? Is abortion a matter of personal choice, or is it murder? Can there even be agreement on *any* of these things?

Even the names of the opposing sides of the issue are not agreed upon. Is one side called pro-choice or pro-abortion? Is the other side pro-life or anti-abortion?

Some think abortion should be on demand, at any stage of pregnancy, and that even if underage children are involved, parents need not be notified. Others, who see abortion as murder, pure and simple, rationalize that executing abortion specialists is acceptable, believing the ends justify the means.

Along a sliver of middle ground are those who are personally opposed to abortion, yet feel it should remain legal. Even here disagreement abounds:

“It depends on *when* you abort—at what stage of the pregnancy.”

“It depends on *why* you abort—was the pregnancy due to incest? Rape? Will it endanger the life of the mother?” A January 2006 *CBS News* poll found that 33% of Americans said abortions should be permitted only in cases of these three situations.

Yet a recent *CNN* poll shows that 64% of adults nationwide would oppose measures to repeal *Roe v. Wade*.

And then there is the theory of evolution versus traditional creationism.

The creationist who believes the earth and mankind were created 6,000 years ago must face a towering question: How can Adam, the first man, have been created six millennia ago when dinosaurs predated him by millions of years?

The evolutionist who believes the universe came into existence on its own and that life evolved also faces a towering question: How did *something*—either organic or inorganic—come from *nothing*?

Again, where is any agreement? More important, is any on the horizon?

Third World Conditions

Again, planet earth is filled with problems, and these are most apparent in developing nations.

Communist North Korea is tumbling toward disaster as millions there are starving. Society has degenerated so far that reports are coming from the Chinese-North Korean border of *human meat* being illegally sold in North Korean markets!

In regions throughout Africa, people exist in the depths of abject poverty. Many have *never* eaten fresh, green leafy vegetables—not by choice, but due to lack of supply. Some people eat meals every other day just to survive.

The Lord’s Resistance Army is wreaking havoc in Northern Uganda. In Sudan’s Darfur region, the rising death toll and the growing number of the displaced and destitute is a harsh, undeniable reality—yet amazingly, no single leader is being held responsible.

Zimbabwe is experiencing its own level of economic chaos and extreme poverty, with inflation at 1,100% and a loaf of bread selling for \$895 (Zimbabwean dollars)!

And South Africa—having been freed from the decades-long injustice of apartheid—is now hostage to heinous acts of crime, earning the title “Rape Capital of the World.” How long will it take for this First World nation to disintegrate into another Third World nightmare?

Across the continent the rate of AIDS and HIV infections is escalating. Traditional Christianity has long tried to step in to “save souls” in Africa, but ultimately offers only empty promises and false hope.

For instance, a religious publishing organization recently announced it would raise funds to collect and ship four million Bibles to the millions of HIV-infected Southern Africans. According to a press release, “Today more than 35 percent of the South African population is infected with the HIV virus. Every day, thousands upon thousands die as a result of this deadly disease. And many more victims are

going to their graves without the hope found in Jesus Christ.”

The organization’s president said, “This is a great tragedy. The Southern African church is completely committed to soul-winning. Yet God’s people there lack the basic tool they need to accomplish this goal: Bibles.”

While supplying people with God’s Word is commendable, Jesus Christ said, “No man can come to Me, except the Father, which has sent Me *draw* him” (John 6:44) and “No man can come unto Me, except it were *given* unto him of My Father” (vs. 65).

Traditional Christianity is ignorant of the understanding that God is NOT trying to save all humanity *now*. While the Creator has a Master Plan of Salvation for every human being—past, present and future—He is NOT *at this time* trying to “win souls for the kingdom” among the masses. Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus preached the gospel—literally “good news”—of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). That kingdom is a soon-coming government that will establish universal peace and prosperity for all around the world (Isa. 9:6-7). God is calling only *a few* at this time to qualify for ruling and teaching positions in His government. But the vast majority of mankind *will* be called later.

This foundational understanding is plainly taught in the Bible—yet is not taught from the world’s pulpits or in its Sunday school classrooms.

Troubles Permeate the West

While the countries of the Third World are a study in ongoing misery and pain, the nations of the West are not immune to serious troubles and ills.

The United States, the superpower that was once a confident world leader, is slowly succumbing to the increasing backlash of anti-Americanism. Meanwhile, a united Europe is lining up to take America’s place as world leader. Yet Russia and China have their eyes on the same mantle. Bible prophecy reveals that a Eurasian power will arise and become a counterweight to European interests.

On the national scene, ghettos spread like cancer, decimating neigh-

borhoods and destroying young lives. Theft, robbery, murder, drug abuse, drug trafficking, illegitimate births and third-generation welfare households are a way of life.

People blame the prison system for failing to rehabilitate young prisoners. People blame a conspiracy of the government and corporations, which presumably allow illegal substances to be brought into certain neighborhoods. People blame the police for not arriving at crime scenes fast enough—and for being abusive to criminals who resist arrest. People blame hardworking immigrants who legally come to America and open small businesses in pursuit of a better future. And people blame the schools for not properly educating their children.

Yet few blame themselves for committing the crimes that sent them to prison in the first place, or hold themselves responsible for rehabilitating their own lives. Few find fault in themselves for trafficking poisons that destroy families and ruin lives. Fewer still learn from the example of immigrants and start their own businesses. Even fewer spend the time to diligently teach their children—reading to them from the day they are born and helping them with their homework night after night instead of treating school as a babysitter.

Our modern age is a study in extremes. An intelligent, goal-driven woman can aspire to be an astronaut—earning engineering degrees, joining the U.S. Navy and logging over 1,500 hours of flight in more than 30 different aircraft, achieving the rank of captain, submitting herself to intense astronaut training and being given the opportunity to journey into space—only later to be arrested for allegedly attempting to kidnap a female competitor in a strange love triangle. This real-life news account stands as an example of how people can be successful with physical endeavors, yet fail at managing their thoughts, emotions, desires and conduct. Few, it seems, know how to manage their lives.

One in six people on earth access the Internet, a marvelous tool for shar-

ing ideas, research, communication, operating businesses and other worthwhile pursuits. Yet users are only a web address away from every perversity this degenerating world has to offer.

Illicit conduct once done in secret is now made public for one billion (and rising) Internet users to see. A contestant on the television program *American Idol* learned this firsthand when her nude photos, presumably taken in “private,” were posted to the “web” and splashed across the television screen via cable news. And then there was a former head of the ACLU in Virginia. Federal authorities arrested him for possessing a home video library of child pornography, which showed little girls being violently assaulted.

The Bible foretold thousands of years in advance that certain key nations—the U.S., Britain, Canada and others linked together by an ancient past and prophetic future—would degenerate into cesspools of immorality covered by religious and moral hypocrisy. However, as Ezekiel 8 shows, the mask of hypocrisy is being pulled off, showing the world that the West’s moral high ground has turned to quicksand.

In the various lifestyles of “civilization,” keeping one’s virginity is considered antiquated. “Hooking up”—which can range from kissing to intercourse and everything in between—has become the norm. A generation of young people is now more likely to have sex with strangers than hold hands with a loved one while taking a walk!

Fewer couples are getting married. The two-parent nuclear family has become a minority. In the wake of widespread divorce (at least 50% of all U.S. marriages end this way), families headed by unwed couples, and same-sex households adopting children, many ask, “What defines a family?”

Professing Christianity claims to know the answer—claims to speak for God—but is utterly void of biblical understanding. There is a PURPOSE for marriage, a REASON for God confining sex to the marriage bed. Science cannot reveal it. Man’s religions do not have the answers.

Unique Analysis

The REAL TRUTH (realtruth.org) is unlike any other magazine. It analyzes world news, trends, problems and conditions from a biblical perspective, because all the troubles and ills plaguing humanity—the CAUSES that have produced horrific symptoms—are *spiritual* in nature.

Here’s one example. All wars, acts of terrorism and violent crimes have one common denominator, explained in the book of James.

Notice: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, *that you may consume it upon your lusts*” (4:1-3). As simple as it might seem, every act of violence, from a one-on-one skirmish to a full-scale war, is motivated by this carnal desire.

Even mainstream Christianity is confused about the depths of human nature, missing what the Bible actually reveals. The apostle Paul states, “the carnal mind is enmity [hostile] against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

The news media can report trends in the U.S. and Britain, news of the rising violence in the Middle East, deteriorating conditions in Africa, and events occurring in Europe, Russia and Asia. News media pundits can offer convincing, yet conflicting, opinions.

But *The REAL TRUTH* explains *why* the family unit is being torn apart, and *what* this means—*why* the disagreeing Arab nations seemingly only agree when it comes to opposing the state of Israel—*why* “road maps” for peace and other humanly-devised plans go awry—*why* science cannot answer life’s greatest questions, such as WHY WERE YOU BORN—and *how* humanity has been deceived by religion. This publication answers these and many other fundamental questions—and how man’s problems will ultimately be solved.

All from a biblical point of view. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

Molech and others, but he was always the same god—the fire or sun god universally worshipped in nearly every ancient culture. (Read our booklet *The True Origin of CHRISTMAS* to learn more about this holiday and Nimrod's part in it.)

The goddess Easter was no different. She was *one* goddess with *many* names—the goddess of fertility, worshipped in spring when all life was being renewed.

The widely-known historian Will Durant, in his famous and respected work *Story of Civilization*, pp. 235, 244-245, writes, "Ishtar [Astarte to the Greeks, Ashtoreth to the Jews], interests us not only as analogue of the Egyptian Isis and prototype of the Grecian Aphrodite and the Roman Venus, but as the formal beneficiary of one of the strangest of Babylonian customs...known to us chiefly from a famous page in Herodotus: Every native woman is obliged, once in her life, to sit in the temple of Venus [Easter], and have intercourse with some stranger." Is it any wonder that the Bible speaks of the religious system that has descended from that ancient city as, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (Rev. 17:5)?

We must now look closer at the origin of *other customs* associated with the modern Easter celebration.

The Origin of Lent

According to Johannes Cassianus, who wrote in the fifth century, "Howbeit you should know, that as long as the primitive church retained its perfection unbroken, this observance of Lent did not exist" (*First Conference Abbot Theonas*, chapter 30). There is neither biblical nor historical record of Christ, the apostles or the early Church participating in the Lenten season.

Since there is *no* instruction to observe Lent in the Bible, where

did it come from? A forty-day abstinence period was anciently observed in honor of the pagan gods Osiris, Adonis and Tammuz (John Landseer, *Sabaeen Researches*, pp. 111, 112). Alexander Hislops, *The Two Babylons*, pp. 104-105, says this of the origin of Lent: "The forty days abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshippers of the Babylonian goddess. Such a Lent of forty days, in the spring of the year, is still observed by the Yezidis or Pagan Devil-worshippers of Koordistan, who have inherited it from their early masters, the Babylonians. Such a *Lent* of forty days was held in spring by the Pagan Mexicans...Such a Lent of forty days was observed in Egypt..."

Lent came from paganism, not from the Bible! (To learn more about the Lenten season, read our article "The True Meaning of LENT.")

Eggs, Egg Hunts and Easter

Eggs have always been associated with the Easter celebration. Nearly every culture in the modern world has a long tradition of coloring eggs in beautiful and different ways. I once examined a traveling display of many kinds of beautifully decorated egg designs that represented the styles and traditions of virtually every country of modern Europe.

Notice the following: "The origin of the Easter egg is based on the fertility lore of the Indo-European races...The egg to them was a *symbol of spring*...In Christian times the egg had bestowed upon it a religious interpretation, becoming a symbol of the rock tomb out of which Christ emerged to the new life of His resurrection" (Francis X. Weiser, *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs*, p. 233). This is a direct example of exactly how pagan symbols and customs are "Christianized," i.e., Christian-sounding names are superimposed over pagan customs. This is done to deceive—as well as make people feel better about why they are following a custom that is not in the Bible.

Notice: "Around the Christian observance of Easter...folk customs have collected, many of which have been handed down from the ancient ceremonial...symbolism of European and Middle Eastern *pagan spring* festivals...for example, *eggs*...have been very prominent as symbols of *new life* and resurrection" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1991 ed., Vol. 4, p. 333).

Finally, the following comes from *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, James Bonwick, pp. 211-212: "Eggs were hung up in the Egyptian temples. Bunsen calls attention to the mundane egg, the emblem of generative life, proceeding from the mouth of the great god of Egypt. The mystic egg of Babylon, hatching the Venus Ishtar, fell from heaven to the Euphrates. Dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt, as they are still in China and Europe. Easter, or spring, was the season of birth, terrestrial and celestial."

What could be more plain in showing the true origin of the "Easter egg"? An "Easter" egg is just an egg that pertains to Easter. God never authorized Passover eggs or Days of Unleavened Bread eggs, but there have been Easter eggs for thousands of years!

It naturally progressed that the egg, representing spring and fertility, would be merged into an already pagan springtime festival. Connecting this symbol to Christ's Resurrection in the spring required much creativity and human reasoning. However, even highly creative *human reasoning* has never been able to successfully connect the next Easter symbol to anything Christian, because there is not a single word about it anywhere in the New Testament!

Read our booklet *The True Origin of EASTER* to learn what this is. □



SUGGESTED READING:

What is the origin of Lent and Easter sunrise services? How did rabbits, eggs and hot cross buns become associated with Christ's Resurrection? Is Easter mentioned in the Bible? Did the apostles and early Church keep it? The answers will shock you!

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Homeless Killed for “Sport”

A disturbing trend is becoming increasingly prevalent in the United States. Teenagers are beating the homeless “for fun”—sometimes fatally.

CNN explained these attacks: “Criminologists call these wilding sprees ‘sport killing’—largely middle-class teens, with no criminal records, assaulting the homeless with bats, golf clubs, paintball guns.”

According to a report issued by the National Coalition for the Homeless, there were 120 attacks on homeless people, resulting in 20 murders in 2006. This is the highest number of attacks against the homeless in eight

years. Of these, 79 were committed by those under the age of 24.

This violent fad is affecting most areas of the country. In 2006, six of these attacks occurred in Florida and three in Michigan.

In the same report, the coalition states, “Many of these hate crimes and/or violent acts go unpublicized and/or unreported, thereby making it difficult to assess the true magnitude of the problem.”

But who or what is to blame for this spreading violence?

One attacker told the police that killing a homeless man was like playing a violent video game. Others were

spurred on by videos they had seen of similar crimes. Still others were pressured by their peers or were influenced by a mob mentality.

Referring to these senseless crimes, Michael Stoops, executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, said, “For some teens this passes as amusement” (*CNN*).

What has happened to the conscience that once stopped youths from committing such crimes? In the minds of the perpetrators, the attacks seem to be the same as skipping stones across a pond, or playing basketball—a sad commentary of the cheapening of human life in a once-great nation. □

SOCIETY & LIFESTYLES

UK Marriages in Decline

Marriages declined nearly 10% in the United Kingdom during 2005, according to a report released by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The number of marriages in 2005 was 283,730, the lowest since 1896. This drop follows three years of increases. The long-term picture, however, is that of decline.

What *is* rising is the age at which people in the UK are deciding to marry: 36.2 years for men and 33.6 years for women.

The report also mentioned a decline in civil marriages to 65%. These still hold the majority over religious marriages.

Perhaps most stunning is that only 60% of all marriages are the first for both partners, a dramatic difference from 1940, when 91% of all marriages were the first for both.

Part of the blame appears to be on a change in the law designed to discourage “sham marriages” between citizens of the UK and foreigners, simply to enable them to become permanent citizens. The ONS reports, “This is one of many factors that may have

contributed to the drop in the number of marriages in 2005.”

These trends in the prevalence and strength of marriage in the UK are mirrored in the United States. The age when Americans are choosing to marry for the first time is rising also—27 for males and 26 for females in 2005.

Cohabitation is on the rise in both the UK and the United States, and is one factor in the decline of marriage. In the U.S., in 2005 there were 4.85 million unmarried adult couples living together. In 1960, there was just under a half million. If and when a couple decides to get married, more than half of them have lived together prior to the ceremony.

People who cohabit commonly believe that by living together before marriage they can “test the waters” of marriage to “see if it will work.” Cohabitation is becoming a replacement for dating, but in much more intimate quarters. The thinking follows that if living together turns out to be a bad idea, the couple can simply break up and avoid a bad marriage.

The National Marriage Institute said this about the effects of cohabiting: “The longer you live together with a partner, the more likely it is that the low-commitment ethic of cohabitation will take hold, the opposite of what is required for a successful marriage.”

Marriage is becoming less important in the minds of many. Is it outdated? With more adults choosing to simply live together rather than get married, will this have any long-term effects on these countries?

Looking back through history, the strength of civilizations relied heavily on strong marriages and family units. The Healthy Marriage Initiative, funded by the U.S. Government, stated, “Marriage is a sacred institution, and its protection is essential to the continued strength of society.”

If the status of marriage continues to diminish in these countries—increasingly becoming just another step in a relationship, akin to the first date or meeting parents, and the importance of building strong families is ignored—will we continue to see these Western nations diminish as well? □

World Stock Markets Follow China's Lead

February 27, 2007, was the worst day in trading since 9/11. The Dow Jones took a 400-point plunge, closing with losses equaling approximately \$632 billion.

Elsewhere, Asian and European countries reported falls at an average of 3%. China was the hardest hit—with its market dropping 9%—and was a main cause of worldwide stock market instability.

In the Chinese markets, rising consumer prices and rumors of a 20% capital gains tax on Chinese stock investments caused fears among Shanghai investors, which spread around the globe.

Stock markets have been rising to all-time highs over recent months, leading many analysts to say the market was moving too high too fast.

This is usually followed by a gradual “correction” in which quick gains even out to more realistic returns.

Ed Peters, chief investment officer at PanAgora Asset Management,

said this about the event: “Corrections usually happen because of a catalyst, and this may be it. The move in China was a surprise, and when a major market has a shock it ripples through the rest of the market. With all the trade that goes on with China, there tends to be a knee-jerk reaction with that kind of drop” (AP).

Others blamed part of America’s stock market dive on a terrorist attack on a U.S. air base in Afghanistan during a visit by Vice President Richard Cheney.

Another reason for the heavy blow to the American Stock Exchange was the Dow’s computer system becoming overwhelmed with orders, causing it to be sluggish. When the problem was identified, the Dow was switched to a backup system. The point totals quickly caught up and a 178-point drop was registered within one minute.

China’s government refuted the rumor of increased taxes, and by February 28, Wall Street recovered slightly from the heavy blow of

the previous day. The Dow Jones recovered 10% of its loss the next day of trading. A day after panicking investors around the world, China’s market recovered almost a third of its losses.

Regardless of whether the world’s stock markets rebound quickly from this fall, this event reveals China’s growing importance to the global economy. Instability in China can spell trouble for investors around the world.

The United States’ fragile economy is becoming more uncertain and is increasingly linked to other countries’ economies—especially China, which owns much of America’s debt.

In the past, when America caught a chill, the rest of the world caught pneumonia. How long will it be before “when China catches a chill...” becomes the new catchphrase?

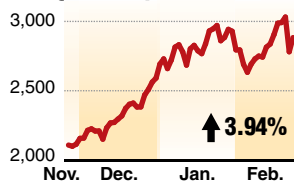
When China experiences economic setbacks in the future, how will the rest of the world fare? □

Market Woes Across the World

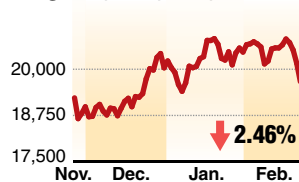
The charts below illustrate the financial shock wave that affected markets in Asia, Europe and the U.S.

In Asia

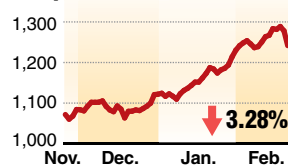
Shanghai Composite Index



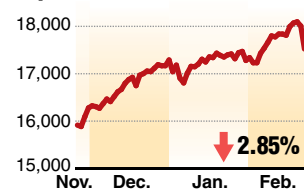
Hong Kong Hang Seng



Malaysia Kuala Lumpur Composite Index

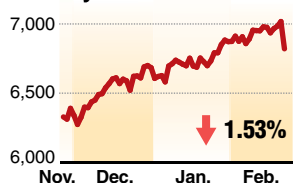


Japan Nikkei

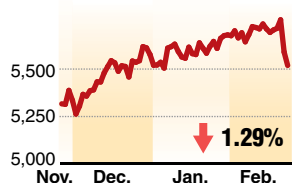


In Europe, U.S.

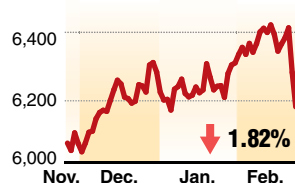
Germany DAX



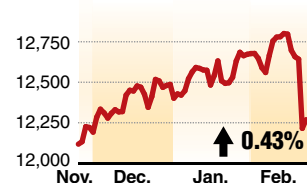
France CAC



UK FTSE 100



U.S. Dow



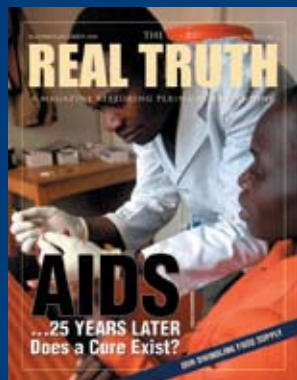
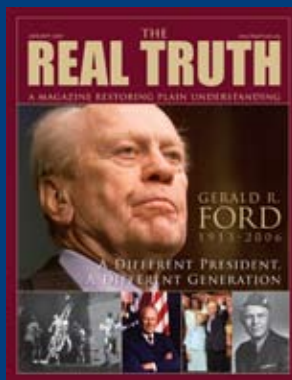
MCT



WHAT ARE THE “FOUR HORSEMEN”?

The prophetic meaning of the “four horsemen” of Revelation has been shrouded in mystery for centuries. Yet the key to understanding them was revealed by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24, in which He foretold the world conditions of our modern age. Now you can understand what the “horsemen” represent—and what lies ahead.

Have you missed out on previous issues?



Read them online at your convenience!