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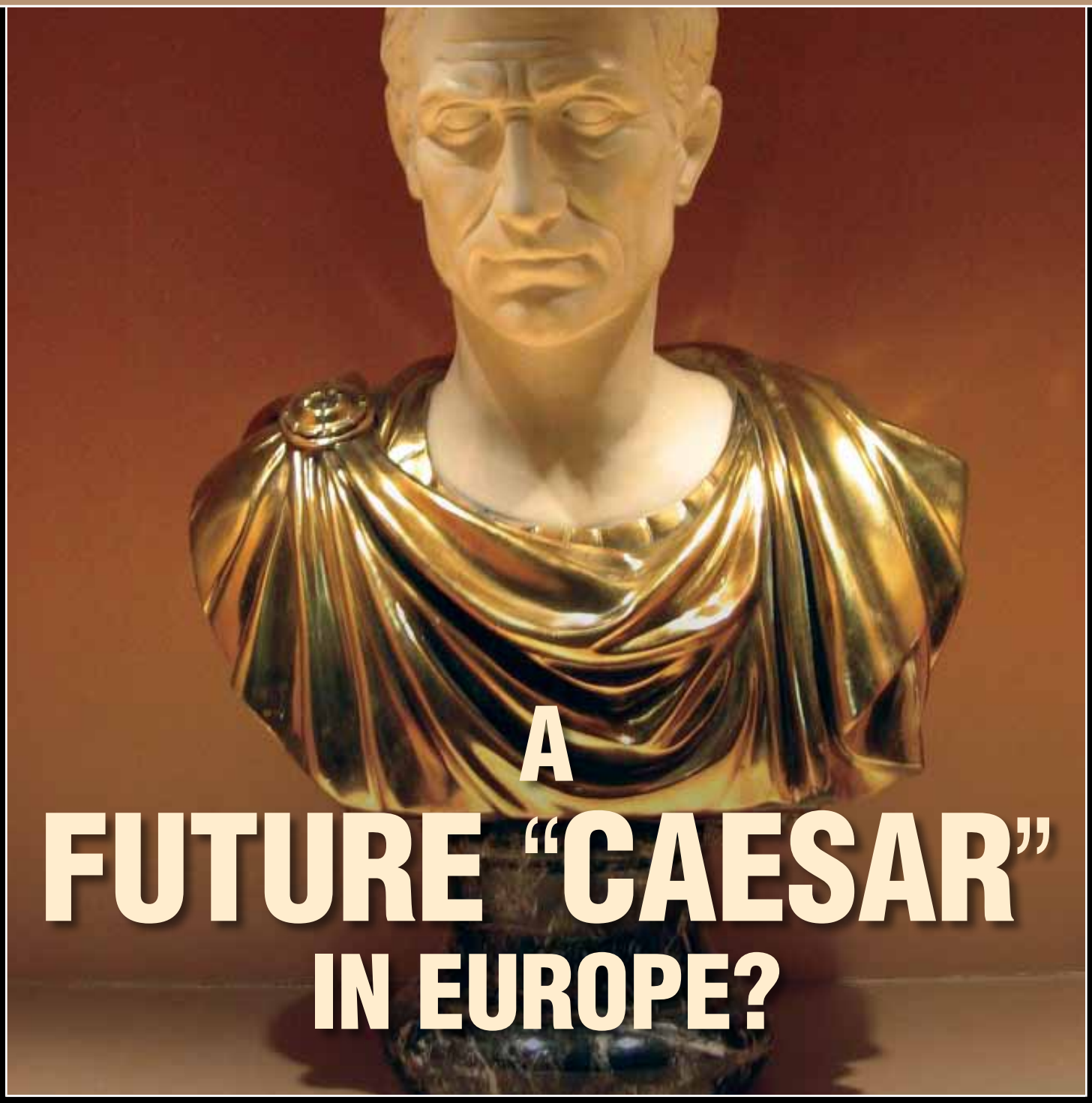
REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



A FUTURE "CAESAR" IN EUROPE?

THE
REAL TRUTH
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ARTICLES

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Atop the Temple Mount
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PHOTO: STOCK XCHANGE

FEATURES

■ **FRONT COVER:** A bust of Julius Caesar, who set the path for the rise of Rome's first emperor.

PHOTO: IIRRAA

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PERSONAL FROM

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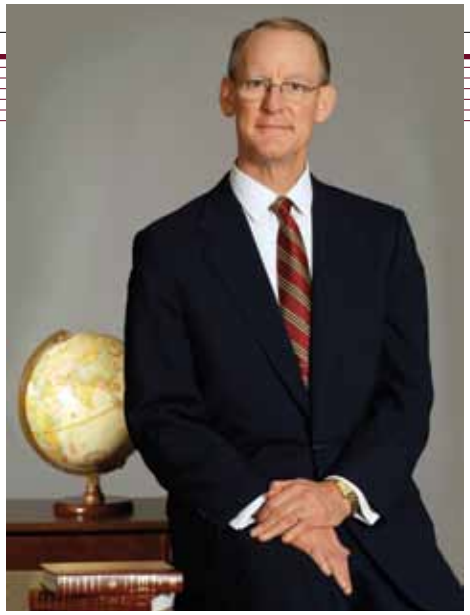

Are You Being Called?

MOST BELIEVE that God is trying to save the world now! This thinking goes something like this: God and the devil are at war over the fate of mankind. This is seen as a desperate struggle between good and evil—God and Satan.

Let's put this another way: Is today the only opportunity for all human beings to choose or to reject Christianity? Must all people, as it is often put, "decide now to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior?" Is this what *the Bible teaches*? The answer is an emphatic *no*! If it were YES, then God is failing miserably in His battle with the devil for control over the fate of all men. In other words, God is "calling" all of mankind, but most are NOT ANSWERING!

Consider! In 1920, when my father was born, there were well under 2 billion people on Earth. There are now over 6.8 billion—and a half million more every day. Approximately 2.2 billion, or one-third, believe—to one degree or another—in the name of Jesus Christ. This represents a total that includes every conceivable brand of the over 2,000 *different forms* of professing Christianity. Approximately another one-third of mankind has *heard* of Jesus but has not accepted Him and does not *claim* to follow Him. Finally, the last third of all people on Earth know nothing about Jesus Christ. Many in India, Africa, Japan, China and parts of South America and Southeast Asia have never even heard of Him. Are they condemned to be lost, having never had an opportunity to understand what they missed or why—having no opportunity to be "called"?

When speaking of Jesus' name, the Bible plainly says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is *none other name under heaven* given among men, whereby we must be *saved*" (Acts 4:12). Further, Romans 10:13 states that men must call on *this name* to be saved.

Understand! It is obvious that all who have not yielded to the God of the Bible and not accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior are certainly *not* saved! Countless billions have died in this condition. Most have assumed the only other option for these is that they were lost to salvation, and that God long ago planned this for the vast majority who have ever lived.

If the war to win souls is as most supposed Christian ministers depict it, then the devil is much stronger, and much more effective, in his effort than God. This is the only other possibility—unless there is a third category containing the vast majority of people. But it must be a category that has not been recognized. There is such a category!—God is simply not calling the masses of humanity today.

But He *is* calling a select few!

Called and Chosen of God

The Bible plainly speaks of those who have been called by God. Let's read several places. Here is what was written to the Thessalonians: "Faithful is He [God] that *calls* you" (I Thes. 5:24). As a warning to the Galatian congregation, who were losing sight of the true gospel,

Paul wrote: "I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that *called* you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel" (Gal. 1:6), and he later added, "This persuasion comes not of Him that *calls* you" (5:7-8). To the Corinthians it says, "For you see your *calling* brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are *called*" (I Cor. 1:26).

Jesus Himself spoke on many occasions about the Christian calling. You may be familiar with this, "For many are *called*, but few are chosen," found in both Matthew 22:14 and 20:16. Later, adding meaning to the second part of this phrase, He explained this to His disciples: "You have not chosen Me but I have *chosen* you" (John 15:16), and then, "But I have *chosen* you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (vs. 19).

When placed together, these passages explain that God is calling a few people—actually a *very* few—out of the world for His Supreme Purpose. Those who respond to His calling are then "chosen," having gone on to repentance, baptism and conversion.

What About You?

After reading some of the literature from The Restored Church of God (the publisher of this magazine), many come to recognize that they have been brought in contact with extraordinary understanding. They find themselves learning things they have never heard before. They notice the Bible makes sense—that it is not as hard to understand as they had previously thought. Then, feeling a growing need to *act* on what they are learning, many wonder, "Am *I* being called by God?"

Sometimes this question takes the form of "Am I undergoing 'conversion'?" or "Should I get baptized?" or even "Have I come in contact with God's true Church?" At best, most are unsure of how to *answer* these basic questions, and many have absolutely no idea whatsoever how to even properly *address* them.

This "Personal" will make plain, from God's Word, how to know if God is calling you. It will be kept simple, virtually impossible to misunderstand. After all, this question is one of the most important you will ever face. Properly understanding its answer is of PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE to your life!

I first began learning God's truth when I was 17 years old. Before God called me, I had not known a single one of the true doctrines of the Bible. The calling process for me began when I heard the voice of a man named Herbert W. Armstrong, being broadcast from Pasadena, California. This was 1966, and it was immediately evident to me that I was hearing things from this man that I had NEVER heard before—and with plain scriptural PROOFS to back them up. I remember being astonished at how clear the Bible became—and how much fun it was to study. Prior to this—throughout the time I attended the well-known, respected denomination of my youth—I had always found the Bible boring and hard to understand.

People of all ages and backgrounds puzzle over just what a "calling" is. Many reduce it to little more than a particular *feeling* that comes over them, which they attribute to God. Millions in the world feel "called"—in some cases to the "church," in other cases to the "ministry," or "missionary work," in still other cases to work with children, and in yet others to serve in the medical profession or even in the military. Ignorant of what God says, so many people are left to rely on mere *feelings*, assuming that their lives—and the paths they choose—are divinely inspired. They attribute this thought-to-be "inspiration" to being "called of God." Sadly, most never learn that these supposed "callings" have nothing to do with following the true God of the Bible—and how HE calls people.

A true calling from God is far more than a kind of *abstract feeling* that human reasoning concludes is from God!

Defining a True Calling

In John's gospel account, Jesus stated, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me *draw* him" (John 6:44). Nineteen verses later, He repeated to His audience, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were *given* unto him of My Father" (vs. 65). Notice the next verse, "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."

Many who heard Jesus simply could not understand that God has to "draw" people and that a calling is something "given" to them. While many today appear to understand they must in some fashion be called, they do not seek to understand—from the Bible—how to know for certain that it is God who is calling—drawing—giving to—them whatever it is they are to receive.

Let's consider a few scriptures that make plain what it is Christians are "given" when they are called. We must clear up all possible confusion.

Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Why speak you unto them [the multitudes who heard Him] in parables?" (Matt. 13:10). His answer summarizes how, and with what, God calls: "He answered and said unto them, Because it is *given* unto you to *know the mysteries of the kingdom* of heaven [or the kingdom of God], but to them it is *not given*" (vs. 11). The next several verses amplify what He meant, explaining how many in the world can hear the truths of God (the "mysteries of the kingdom") but not grasp them. Since the overwhelming majority of mankind are not being drawn by the power of God's Spirit,

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

■ **A SHOW OF FORCE:** This undated picture, released from the Korean *Central News Agency*, shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Il (bottom, center) posing with servicemen of the Large Combined Unit 324, while inspecting the commanding department of the unit.
PHOTO: STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

NORTH KOREA

Demanding World Attention

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

THE LEADERSHIP of many Western nations that attempt to navigate the choppy waters of 21st-century international diplomacy routinely sets forth measured, fairly neutral statements in response to another country's actions.

Against this backdrop, a recent (June 24, 2009) statement from North Korea's *Central News Agency* seemed like a throwback to another era: "If the U.S. imperialists start another war, the army and people of Korea will...wipe out the aggressors on the globe once and for all."

This stunning assertion came just days after Japanese intelligence sources reported that North Korea would soon fire a missile toward Hawaii, possibly on July 4, America's Independence Day. U.S. President Barack Obama, in a *CBS News* interview, responded that his administration and Armed Forces would be "prepared for any contingencies." A Pentagon spokesman called the threat "silliness" (*Fox News*).

The next day, marking the 59th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, Pyongyang's rhetoric continued. This time, it threatened a "fire shower of nuclear retaliation" for any attack. State news sources were filled—more than usual—with venom against the U.S. for its military action in 1950, and with charges that Washington is seeking another opportunity to show aggression toward North Korea.

What has led to this exchange?

Frozen in Time

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), as North Korea calls

itself, is one of the planet's most unusual countries. Westerners find a visit there to be a surreal experience.

One of a handful of remaining Communist nations, it practices arguably the purest form of this ideology found anywhere. It is considered Earth's most isolated country, sometimes uncharitably labeled the "Hermit Kingdom." The government has complete control over television, radio and the press. Average citizens live without Internet access, other than rare public terminals connected to a state-filtered network. Cellphones have been banned for years.

State-provided housing features built-in, pre-tuned radios that pipe in daily pro-government messages. Residents cannot turn the radio off or adjust its volume.

Cities feature large monuments commemorating the Korean Revolution or extolling Kim Il-sung, who led the nation from 1948 until his death in 1994 (he is still considered to hold the title of Great Leader, the "Eternal President of the Republic"). The skyline of Pyongyang, the nation's capital, is overshadowed by the unfinished, 105-story Ryugyong Hotel, on which construction was halted in 1992. The giant structure is often digitally erased from official photos.

Later this year, at a massive stadium in the capital (reported capacity 150,000), one of the grandest manmade spectacles on planet Earth is scheduled to take place: the Arirang Mass Games. Over 100,000 participants will take part in a seamlessly choreographed mix of gymnastics, dance, performance and graphic arts, and music. Previous Mass Games marked anniversaries of important events, or birthdays of leaders past and present.

Life in modern North Korea still reverberates with flashbacks to the Korean War. This pivotal confrontation involved the United States, China and North and South Korea, with the Soviet Union backing the North. The "police action" resulted in millions of casualties. In Pyongyang's view, the war has never ended. North Korea's former president Syngman Rhee never signed the United Nations-supervised armistice that split the Korean Peninsula into two regions, with a demilitarized zone between them. Reunification of the peninsula is a central goal of the North's regime.

Tens of thousands of American troops are still stationed near the border, charged to protect South Korea from its neighbor. Since the end of the war, generations of North Korean children have learned to fear and loath America. One propaganda poster features a drawing of a grinning American soldier holding a Korean infant over a well, while the child's struggling father is restrained by another soldier in the background. A starkly painted slogan across the bottom reads, "Do not forget the U.S. imperialist wolves!"

National Pride…Painful Realities

North Korea also holds a unique worldview. The philosophy of *juche*, meaning "self-sufficiency," defines its approach; another creed, *songun* ("military first"), makes national priorities clear.

The government paints a very optimistic picture of the nation, as would be expected. Its official website describes a society that seems to approach utopia:

"The…gap between the rich and the poor is an acute social problem of worldwide concern…socialist Korea in the East is free from the so-called social problem—the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

"In this country there is neither a man who has a villa or a deluxe house worth millions of dollars, nor a man who makes enormous profits with means of production at his disposal. All of its people live evenly, without a remarkable distinction in their life, for all means of production belong to public ownership…

"Employment is vital to people's life. In Korea the state pays great attention to this issue…manifested by the absence of even a single unemployed man in this country.

"The state also takes responsibility for the provision of shelter, an indispensable factor in man's existence and activity. It allocates colossal amounts of state fund to the building of dwelling houses, which are provided to not only white- and blue-collar workers but cooperative farmers free of charge.

A Second Nuclear Test

After claiming it carried out a powerful underground nuclear test, North Korea received threats of deeper isolation and harsher sanctions from the international community. North Korea's nuclear history:

1986 Starts operation of 5-megawatt nuclear reactor at Yongbyon

1993 Says it will quit Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, but later suspends withdrawal

1994 Signs agreement with U.S. to shut down Yongbyon reactor for help building two reactors for electricity

2002

Jan. 29 President Bush labels N. Korea, Iran, Iraq an "axis of evil"

Oct. 4 Washington says N. Korea admitted having uranium enrichment program

Nov. 21 U.S. says it is suspending construction of the two new reactors

2003

Jan. 11 Withdraws from Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty

Aug. 27 Joins first round of six-nation nuclear talks in Beijing

2005 Admits to nuclear weapons

2006 Conducts underground nuclear test blast

2007

Feb. 13 Agrees to take initial steps to disarmament if Washington helps free $25 million in frozen accounts

July 14 Yongbyon reactor shut down

Oct. 3 Agrees to declare nuclear programs, disable facilities at Yongbyon by Dec. 31

Nov. 5 Begins disabling Yongbyon reactor under U.S. watch

2008

May 8 Gives U.S. nearly 19,000 pages of records on Yongbyon reactor

May 16 U.S. announces giving 500,000 tons of food aid to N. Korea as humanitarian gesture

June 26 N. Korea releases account of nuclear activities to China six months late

Oct 11 U.S. says it will take North Korea off state sponsors of terrorism list, following verbal agreement on dismantlement

2009

April 5 N. Korea Launches a multistage rocket

April 13 UN security council adopts a declaration condemning the launch

April 14 Foreign ministry says the country will quit six-party nuclear talks, and re-start Yongbyon; orders UN inspectors to leave

April 29 Threatens to conduct nuclear test and also test an intercontinental ballistic missile unless the UN apologises for imposing sanctions

May 25 N. Korea Claims it has successfully conducted an underground nuclear test

Source: AP, Reuters

"Korea is the 'country of education' where all people learn to their heart's content. A dense and well-regulated network of educational institutions enables its people to get access to all levels of education, ranging from preschool education (at kindergarten) through primary and secondary education to tertiary education, at the expense of the state…

"The Koreans get enormous benefits from the state in the matter of food. The state buys cereals from cooperative farmers at a high price and supplies them to all the people at a low price. Also noteworthy in Korea is its universal medical care system that has long been in force. People enjoy medical check-up, experimental test, medical treatment, operation, hospitalization and medication free of charge.

"Korea is the first country in the world that abolished taxation. It is commonplace in any country that the burden of tax…grows heavier along [with] rising prices, whenever there occurs an economic crisis. But Koreans have been unfamiliar with the word 'tax' since 35 years ago. All of them are enjoying benefit from such social policies as recuperation and relaxation systems, a paid leave system, and social insurance and security systems.

"In socialist Korea the people are free from worries about food, clothing, housing, medical treatment, children's education and tax, all living an equal life; they are masters of the state, and politics for people is administered. Such a dreamlike reality is attributable to the fact that the Juche idea, which regards man, the masses of the people, as the most valuable, is the guiding ideology of this country.

"Socialist Korea is advancing vigorously, without the slightest vacillation in the face of any trials and hardships of history, making great strides in its endeavors to build a great, prosperous and powerful country by means of the single-hearted unity of all its people and with the backing of their full support and trust."

Such ardent nationalism notwithstanding, compared to its liberal, free-trade oriented counterpart on the other side of the 38th parallel, North Korea's economy is in ruins. Its estimated per capita gross domestic product in 2008 was $1,700 USD. Compare this to $26,000 USD in the South, a figure approaching par with New Zealand, thanks to global exports of electronics and automobiles (*CIA World Factbook*).

■ **STREET DEMONSTRATION:** South Korean conservative activists burn a North Korean flag during a protest against North Korea's nuclear tests in Seoul (June 3, 2009).

PHOTO: PHILIPPE LOPEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Massive flooding in the mid-1990s led to a famine believed to have taken millions of lives—up to 10 percent of the population. Due to a chronic inability of farmers to meet the staple food demands of nearly 24 million residents, North Koreans are still in grave peril: "Today, most North Koreans live on less than 1700 calories a day. This puts the population at severe risk of malnutrition and infection and perilously close to starvation in some areas. A North Korean child can expect to be up to 7 inches shorter than his South Korean counterpart and 20 pounds lighter by adulthood" (*The American*).

Perhaps the most troubling of Pyongyang's recent decisions is to begin pulling back from accepting international food aid from the United States and other donors. Defectors maintain that, in keeping with the *songun* dictate, much of the food previously shipped to the country was diverted to the military.

Suspicion and Saber-Rattling

U.S.-Korean tensions have been simmering for the better part of a decade. In 2002, then-President George W. Bush described North Korea as part of the "Axis of Evil," along with Iran and Iraq. (He later softened Washington's position by removing the nation from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, a step Japan opposed.)

October 2006 saw the nation provoke worldwide outrage with its first nuclear test, which violated the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty it had signed years before. A second underground test took place on May 25, 2009 (America's Memorial Day), followed by a number of offshore missile tests. Two days later, the *Central News Agency* reiterated that it was not bound by the 1953 armistice that set its southern boundary.

Why now? Kim Jong Il, son of Kim Il-sung, holds the DPRK's highest office, the chairman of the National Defense Commission. Known to the people as the Dear Leader, he reportedly suffered a stroke last year, prompting pundits across the globe to speculate about a successor. It may be that the most recent posturing and shows of military prowess are intended to

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European Union Parliamentary Elections

Disinterest and Disenfranchisement Lead to the Success of Fringe Parties

BY KEVIN D. DENEE

In June 2009, Europeans went to the polls to vote for members of the European Union Parliament. In what is considered the largest transnational vote in history, the trend was clear: Mainstream parties took a substantial hit. Voters either did not show up at polling stations or they cast ballots for candidates outside their party. Election turnout was a record low. In 10 countries, right-wing parties made significant gains.

The trend's result is obvious: Europeans are not afraid to shift alliances. What happened and why are important to understand.

The Election Results

Though the center-right continued its control of the European Parliament, many countries saw the rise of fringe right-wing parties.

■ **United Kingdom:** The Labour Party, which currently leads the nation through Prime Minister Gordon Brown, suffered a significant blow. Recent controversies and scandals about inappropriate spending by government officials were partly to blame for the shift in Britain. The public has been outraged by what appears to be the status quo among politicians—and reflected its discontent in national elections.

Additionally, the British National Party (BNP) won two seats in the EU Parliament. While its leader claims his party speaks openly of immigration, it is widely reported that the BNP is racist. The *BBC* reported on the election results and the reactions of the leaders of the mainstream parties, "Labour's Harriet Harman described the result as 'terrible' while Tory leader David Cameron said he was 'sickened'… Ms Harman said: 'I think it's a terrible thing that we've now got representing Britain in the European Parliament…a racist party, a party that doesn't believe black people should even be allowed to join [it].'"

But the BNP's two-seat win was not the only change from the norm in Britain. The *EUobserver* reported, "The

■ **MAKING HISTORY:** Voters cast ballots at a polling station in Umbrete, southwestern Spain, during the European parliamentary election (June 7, 2009).

PHOTO: CRISTINA QUICLER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

European elections in Britain saw the UK Independence Party (UKIP), advocating withdrawal from the EU, scoring its best result ever and coming second to only the opposition Conservatives, while the ruling Labour party slipped to the third place."

"UKIP had been expecting to do well in the election but the extent of its win was surprising, as it came second with 16.5 percent and obtained 13 seats, one more than in the last parliament."

■ **Netherlands:** Dutch citizens went to the polls and gave four seats to the Party of Freedom, led by Geert Wilders. This right-wing party, which is considered anti-Islam and anti-immigration, with its leader having been banned from entering the UK, won a significant 17 percent of the vote.

■ **Hungary:** The nation also saw a noteworthy shift to the right. While the country's left-leaning minority government took a blow, the main opposition gained ground. In addition, the far-right party Jobbik won three seats. The *EUobserver* reported, "'The far right growth is a really bad sign, and this is clearly linked to the economic crash,' [said] Gerry Gable, the editor of *Searchlight*, a long-standing anti-fascist monthly magazine out of the UK…"

Calling it a particularly worrisome trend, Mr. Gable went on to say, "Hungary too returned three MEPs from the Movement for the Better Hungary, or Jobbik, on some 15 percent of the vote. The group is the founder of the Hungarian Guard, a paramilitary outfit whose uniforms recall the Nazi youth organisations from Europe's darkest days" (ibid.).

Leaders and analysts alike were alarmed that an "extremist party," which is affiliated with a group reminiscent of wartime fascism, saw significant election gains.

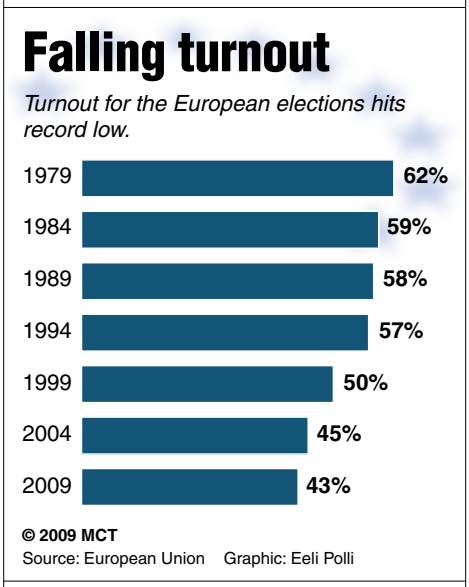
■ **Germany:** The left-of-center Social Democrat Party (SPD) experienced a substantial setback. "The worst result for the SPD in 60 years set a trend across Europe, with disappointing results for centre-left parties in government and in opposition alike. Only in Greece and Malta could socialist oppositions really claim success. 'This is disappointing,' said Franz Müntefering, the head of the SPD. 'The result for us is significantly worse than we expected'" (*The Times*, London).

Far-right politicians in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy and Romania also gained seats.

In the end, the center-left took a blow, the center-right maintained its leading status, and the far-right—the anti-immigration and "eurosceptic" parties—increased ground in the European Parliament.

EU Legislative Body

The European Parliament consists of 736 MEPs (members of the Parliament).



The European Union, consisting of 27 member-nations, has a population of 491,582,852 (July 2008 estimate, *CIA World Factbook*). In other words, the MEPs elected now represent almost a half billion people.

The Parliament, on its website, states, "The work of the European Parliament is important because in many policy areas, decisions on new European laws are made jointly by Parliament and the Council of Ministers, which represents Member States.

"Parliament plays an active role in drafting legislation which has an impact on the daily lives of its citizens: For example, on environmental protection, consumer rights, equal opportunities, transport, and the free movement of workers, capital, services and goods. Parliament also has joint power with the Council over the annual budget of the European Union."

As the European Union continues to develop and grow in influence on the world stage, EU citizens and spectators abroad are left to wonder, "If such voting trends continue, what impact will this have on the laws that the Parliament enacts?"

Low Turnout—Lack of interest

As mentioned, this was the lowest election turnout in the Parliament's 30-year history. Even with some countries having mandatory voting, the overall turnout was only 43 percent. It is startling to see how low the voting attendance was in certain nations. One is left to wonder whether the citizens in such countries feel any connection to what is occurring in Brussels.

The *EUobserver* detailed the numbers: "Other countries where a majority of people voted included Italy (66.5%), Denmark (59.5%), Cyprus (59.4%), Greece (52.6%), and Latvia (52.6%).

"By contrast, only 19.6 of Slovaks voted on Saturday. In the country's first EU election in 2004, it registered the lowest ever score in the bloc's history at 17 percent.

"Lithuania came second with 20.9 percent—a dramatic drop compared to its first election in 2004, when almost half of Lithuanians voted (48.4%).

"Some 24.5 percent voted in Poland and 28.2 percent in the Czech Republic and in Slovenia.

"The bloc's newest members, Bulgaria and Romania, showed opposing trends, with Bulgarians demonstrating more voting enthusiasm (37.5% – up from 29% in the country's first elections in 2007) than their northern neighbours (27.4% – down from 29.5% in 2007)."

Prior to the election, EU officials realized a need to increase the turnout. Campaigns were set up across Europe to do this, but to no avail.

As the numbers continue to fall every five years, one conclusion can be surmised. Europeans are slowly losing interest in the parliamentary system that is fundamental to the governance of their group of nations.

The same *EUobserver* article continues: "For Socialist leader Martin Schulz, the low turnout shows that 'the vote doesn't have much to do with European policy.'

"'There's a trend towards the renationalisation of Europe,' Mr Schulz said, adding that the issue could eventually raise the question of the legitimacy of the elections."

"For his part, European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso called on national politicians to introduce…a more European angle to their politics."

In short, Europe continues to struggle with its identity. And Europeans themselves appear to be less engaged in the politics of this transnational institution.

But let's ask: If such disinterest continues, who else will be voted into power? What other fringe groups will advance in future elections?

Also, will the anti-EU factions in some nations continue to grow, causing some to leave the European Union altogether?

Disillusion and Disenchantment

The ultimate question is this: Why did so many hundreds of thousands vote for parties and leaders on the fringe of society?

One reason is fear. The leader of Britain's Labour Party, Harriet Harman, stated, "The British National Party have played on people's fears... and we'll have to work to tackle the fear that lead to people to vote BNP" (*BBC*).

Dealing with the effects of near-open immigration across Europe, many fear for their country's future. Various mainstream parties seem incapable or unwilling to address problems regarding immigration and other social issues, so citizens—out of fear—vote for someone else who is willing to confront controversial subjects.

But fear is not the only reason—nor is it the largest. A more substantial factor must be considered.

Again, speaking of the BNP's gain in the UK, the *BBC* reported, "Communities Secretary John Denham said that although 'an element' of those who voted for the BNP would have been racists, most would have cast their ballots for the party because they felt *ignored* and *excluded*" (emphasis ours).

Understand this point. The indicators reveal that many voted for right-wing fringe parties *not* because they followed all the beliefs of the political organizations, but that they were tired of the mainstream politics-as-usual.

An article in *The Globe and Mail*, "Disenchanted Europeans flee to the fringes," perhaps sums it up best: "It's hard to imagine Frank Verhoef as the new face of European political extremism. The polite and articulate 20-year-old university student lives happily among the cafés and brothels of multicultural downtown Amsterdam and has views that don't generally clash with the middle-of-the-road liberalism of his parents and girlfriend.

"Yet last week, worried about his job prospects and the future of his country in a sagging European economy, Mr. Verhoef joined hundreds of thousands of Dutch voters in casting a ballot for Geert Wilders, a fringe politician who believes the Koran should be banned, immigration ended and Muslim believers treated as neo-Nazis. By most standards, his party is on the ultra-right-wing fringe; he was banned this year from entering Britain on hate-speech laws.

"This weekend, Europe's mainstream parties are struggling to deal with the nightmare that is Mr. Verhoef's vote. Like millions of other new far-right voters, he is not an extremist. But his disenchantment with mainstream European politics, observers say, is part of a continent-wide trend that could push conventional politics in a more insular, angry direction in order to prevent people like him from escaping to the fringes – and it could provide a big pool of taxpayer financing for single-issue campaigns around isolationist or xenophobic issues."

"To some observers, this week's results bore a chilling resemblance to elections during the economic downturn of the 1930s, when people in many countries were drawn to extremist parties, including fascists in Germany, Austria and Italy, pulling the continent into genocide and war."

The article continues by explaining that Mr. Verhoef wanted to send a message to the mainstream parties: "This kind of voting—as an expression of anger or frustration with the established parties of the moderate left and right—has sent the mainstream parties of many countries into paroxysms of fear."

One must ask: What if everyone thought this way? And, what if an increasing number of people voted for politicians similar to Mr. Verhoef?

The implications would be immense.

What Next?

The June 2009 EU Parliamentary Elections have left a mark on history. Glimpses of the behavior of European voters were clearly noted.

Will Europeans continue to be disinterested in EU politics—if so, for how long? Will the power of indifference continue to cause fringe politicians to gain power in the continent? Will it cause some countries to lose interest in the EU and secede?

Also, there are now a record number of right-wing individuals in the EU Parliament. When times get worse in the years ahead and the proverbial finger is pointed at mainstream parties, will more "flee to the fringes" and make known their anger and frustration?

Out of protest, will Europeans punish mainstream governments?

Will fear cause Europe's citizens to vote for someone who takes a strong stance on controversial subjects?

Will people overlook certain other beliefs of that individual?

Where will this pattern ultimately lead?

Time will tell! □

PHOTO: THE REAL TRUTH

ATOP THE TEMPLE MOUNT

How Will Its 3,000-Year History of Violence End?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

AT THE SUMMIT of a sloping pathway, with the Western Wall to the right, one emerges in an almost park-like atmosphere. Well-kept trees sway in the breeze, fountains and gardens decorate the area and visitors mill about under the dominating gold structure known as the Dome of the Rock. The al-Aqsa Mosque resides south.

To the Muslim, this is Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary—Islam's third holiest site. To the Jew, it is the Temple Mount—Judaism's most sacred ground.

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

Although the mount, which dominates the Old City of Jerusalem's skyline, is a virtual must-see for tourists, it is clearly an Islamic-controlled space. Visitors must adhere to the instructions of the guards. No shorts allowed; no women wearing immodest clothing.

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

The Temple Mount is arguably the most coveted archeological, religious, historical and cultural plot of ground in the world. Even more, it is the epicenter of conflict in the Mid-East. *BBC* broadcast journalist Tim Franks put it this way: "If Jerusalem is the crucible of the Middle East Conflict, then the Old City

is the crucible of the crucible, and the [Temple Mount] is the crucible of the crucible of the crucible."

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

When pushed, the Palestinian conceded that "maybe" the Second Temple once stood on the site, "but I don't have archaeological evidence."

The Jewish tour guide claimed the contrary, "Wherever we dig, we find history."

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

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

Seemingly from the moment craftsmen put the finishing touches on Solomon's Temple, circa 957 B.C., a black cloud of religious tension settled over the mount; a few decades of peace spiraling into violence, jealousy, and family feuds. And then into child sacrifice, sex worship and mysticism—all this before the Jews first lost the mount.

Atop the Temple Mount, the one constant has been violence and war. Through the centuries, there have been a few "cease-fires" and short periods of peace—usually fragile stalemates—but they have always given way to violence.

The rich history of the Temple Mount unlocks the source of the Mid-East conflict, identifies the major reoccurring players and, more importantly, shows how it will be solved—and soon!

Modern Mount Violence

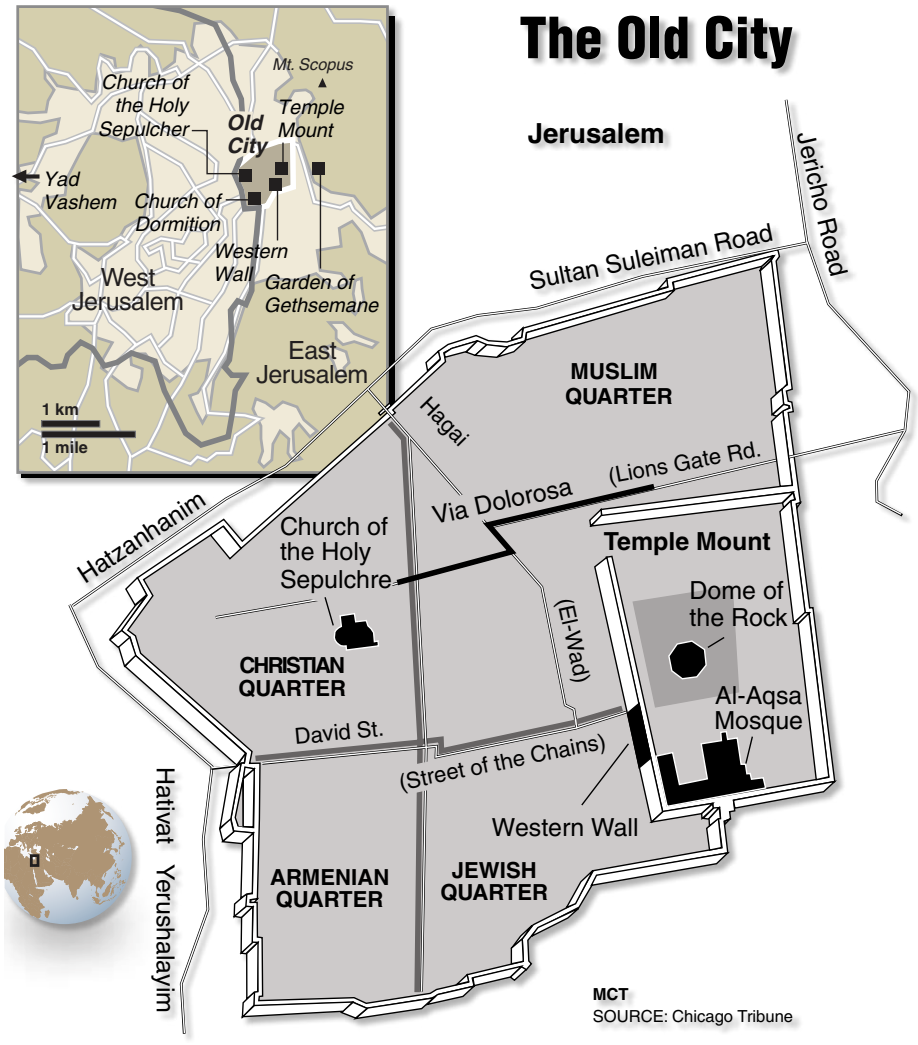
Today, Israel controls the city, but a Muslim council, known as the Waqf, manages the mount—making the hill a flashpoint for violence. The Israeli government knows if it ever tampered (actual or imagined) with the Islamic site, Muslims would strike back, and with unchecked vengeance.

- In 1929, Arab-Israeli violence erupted, with Jews vying for control of the Western Wall (the only remaining part of the second Jewish Temple).
- During the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel conquered the mount, with a colonel declaring over his army radio, "The Temple Mount is in our hands."
- In the 1980s, authorities uncovered a Jewish extremist plot to destroy the Dome of the Rock.
- After the 2000 Camp David peace talks, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said the mount should be Palestinian controlled, but under the umbrella of Israeli sovereignty. In response, Palestinian officials publicly announced the Jewish Temple never stood on the mount and that there was no Jewish cultural link to the site.

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

Nathan Sharnansky, minister for Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, summarized the Palestinian argument as, "You [Israelites] have no right to exist in this country, you have no connection to it, get out of here." He responds to this with, "One doesn't have to be religious in order to understand that relinquishing the Temple Mount is not only relinquishing the past, it is primarily relinquishing the future. The future of all of us here" (*Harretz*).

In short, the Israelis claim this site



as part of their historical heritage. But Palestinians say Jews have no place here. Thus, a shaky standoff forms.

Ancient Beginnings

The Temple Mount turf war is not new. The land, which rises 2,428 feet above sea level between the Kidron and Tyropoeon valleys, has passed through the hands of great civilizations and empires.

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

Jewish scholar Doctor Benjamin Mazar places the meeting between Abram and Melchizedek "king of Salem" (later renamed Jeru*salem*) "in the En-Rogel valley" (*The Illustrated History of the Jews*).

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

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

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

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

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

God spared Isaac and blessed Abraham for his faithfulness.

A Divided Family

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

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

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

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

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

This ancient family feud lingers today in the ongoing hostility between the Muslim Palestinians (the descendants of Esau and Ishmael) and the offspring of his brother Israel (the modern Jewish state, allied with the Anglo-Saxon peoples). These Western nations received Abraham's birthright—the United States and United Kingdom, along with its commonwealth countries.

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

Israel Holds the Temple Mount

King David took Jerusalem about 1000 B.C. The book of II Samuel 5:7 reveals "the stronghold of Zion" is also "the City of David." Zion is directly south of Mount Moriah.

Late in his life, David purchased the mount from Araunah the Jebusite for 600 shekels of gold. David constructed an altar there, which from that time was "the house of the LORD God" and "the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (I Chron. 22:1). The aging king amassed the materials for the Temple, which his son Solomon completed.

The Temple was sided with immaculately cut white stone, which shone brightly in the sun. Twelve-foot walls surrounded the court and the porch at the entrance was about 200 feet high at its peak—about the height of a modern 20-story building. Two pillars stood at the front, each about 52 feet high and each made of at least 30 tons of brass.

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

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

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

Simultaneously, hostile nations began attacking Israel. The Temple was looted by an Egyptian pharaoh. Later, Judah's King Ahaz stripped Temple gold to buy Assyria's protection.

David's descendants did not hold the mount for very long.

Exile and Return

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

The Persians defeated Babylon and took the Jewish slaves.

Persian King Cyrus sent the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1). Under the auspices of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah,

*Please see **TEMPLE MOUNT**, page 16*

A Future "CAESAR" in Europe?

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: PAULA C. RONDEAU

Will the sudden and meteoric rise of a future European strongman mirror the rise to power of Rome's first emperor?

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

"THERE'S SOMETHING wrong with the world!"—"Things aren't the way they used to be!"—"When I was a child, life was simpler, happier." How many times have we heard these or similar statements?

Untold numbers sense that something is "off" with mankind and its societies. Consider the troubles playing out on the world stage.

Ever since the United States ended World War II by raining the first atomic bombs upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nations—including rogue governments—have scrambled to start their own nuclear programs.

Iran, whose leaders in past times have called America "the great Satan" and threatened to wipe the Israeli regime "off the map," insists that its pursuit of nuclear energy is peaceful.

North Korea has acquired nuclear weapons, and regularly "reminds" the international community of this through testing. Its government stated it will consider it an act of war if North Korean ships are searched for illegal weapons, as the United Nations and the U.S. proposed.

Islamic Pakistan, along with neighboring rival India, has long possessed nuclear armaments. As Taliban forces battle against Pakistani troops, the rest of the world wonders what would happen if religious extremists seized control of Pakistan's nuclear missiles. Would the Hollywood images of a future apocalypse—an end-of-the-world nightmare in which mankind erases itself from existence—become reality?

Elsewhere, Israel—having long enjoyed a close and unquestioned relationship with the U.S.—now feels pressure from Washington to bend even further to satisfy Palestinian demands. For the first time ever, only six percent of Jewish Israelis consider the views of the U.S. President's administration pro-Israel, according to a *Jerusalem Post*-sponsored Smith Research poll.

In the midst of global economic uncertainty, Russia states it may push

for a "new world currency" to replace international reliance on the ever-declining American dollar.

And on America's home front, long-time auto giant General Motors—whose financial health once served as an economic barometer for the state of the nation—filed for bankruptcy protection, eliminating jobs and dealerships. What does this mean for the American people?

Stroll through U.S. malls and shopping centers; where are the debt-laden, "I want it now!" crowds of five, three or even two years ago? Walk by neighborhood mom-and-pop stores of candy shops, delis, barbers, tailors, etc.; which ones have *not* gone out of business?

A dying newspaper industry—the rising rates of home foreclosures, bankruptcies and unemployment—the emergence of tent cities—"enlightened" societies redefining marriage and family—all while secularism and religious extremism abound.

As world events worsen and intensify, students of prophecy turn to mystic writings of ancient civilizations—they listen to psychics and obscure religionists babble about the future—they seek meaning in pseudo-religious best-selling novels—finally, some blow the dust off their Bibles, turn to Daniel, Revelation, Matthew 24 and other passages, and wonder, "Is this the time of the end?"

One third of Scripture is prophecy. Think of it as news told in advance. Ultimately, God's Word foretells the greatest good news: the establishing of a perfect, just and merciful supergovernment—the kingdom of God (Isa. 9:6-7).

But before humanity will experience the unprecedented universal peace and prosperity that only the government of God can usher in, the Bible also speaks of dark times ahead: 130-pound hail stones bombarding the earth—massive armies gathering for the final "war to end all wars"—government-sanctioned religious persecution—famine, pandemics, earthquakes, mass religious confusion and deception—and the appearance of a political strongman.

These prophetic "last days" foretell of a charismatic, Caesar-like, political world leader—whom God's Word refers to as "the beast"—suddenly rising to power, forcing his "mark" upon the masses, and leading humanity to the brink of destruction.

History offers a clue as to how this prophetic tyrant will rise to world dominance.

A Blueprint for Dictatorship

The ancient city of Rome emerged as a formidable power under the rule of successive kings. But the citizens grew tired of the brutal, totalitarian reigns of monarchies. Not wanting to live under the chaotic bureaucracy of pure democracy, as practiced among Greek city-states, the Romans chose to be governed by a republic.

In times of emergency, the Roman Senate appointed dictators to limited terms, enabling them to bypass bureaucratic red tape in administering government affairs. A man elected to the office of dictator had to be careful not to be seen as trying to accumulate or hold on to power, else he would be accused of trying to make himself king—a charge that would surely end in his execution.

However, in 82 B.C., Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix (138-79 B.C.) marched on the city and made himself the first permanent dictator. Ironically, he did this to restore the republic, whose influence diminished during Rome's first full-scale civil war. Sulla strengthened the Roman Republic through constitutional reforms, enlarged the senate and increased its legislative powers. He placed severe restrictions on running for political positions so that ambitious men could not build a base of power and ultimately make themselves king.

As dictator, Sulla also initiated a terror campaign to purge Rome of its enemies—real or imagined—anyone who might pose a threat to the republic once it was restored. He kept an official list of enemies, and made it a capital crime to harbor anyone listed. The dictator rewarded citizens for killing, capturing or turning in those marked for execution, which resulted in the deaths of some 9,000 men, women and children (most of whom had been wrongly accused).

Listed among Sulla's enemies was Gaius Julius Caesar of the Julii. As patricians, the Julii were members of Rome's original aristocracy. Caesar was married to a daughter of Lucius Cornelius Cinna, and was a nephew (by marriage) of Gaius Marius—two of Sulla's most dreaded foes. Years earlier, Marius allied with Cinna and had Sulla officially exiled as soon as the military commander and his army left Rome on a war campaign. Marius instituted a bloodbath against pro-Sulla supporters, and repealed laws that Sulla had put in place. Both men had died before Sulla's march on Rome.

Julius Caesar's family connections to Marius and Cinna marked him for official execution. While he hid from house to house, his relatives, who happened to be Sulla supporters, begged the aging dictator to spare Caesar's life. Sulla reluctantly relented, but warned that, in the ambitious young Julius, "you will find many a Marius."

Satisfied that he had done enough to restore the republic and prevent men from seizing too much power in the future, Sulla shocked everyone when he voluntarily retired from office. He died soon after.

Caesar, Pompey and others took note of how Sulla had made himself answerable to no one. While Sulla had considered it a noble act to voluntarily give up absolute power, Caesar and his peers thought it foolish. Instead of admiring him for restoring the Roman Republic, some saw Sulla's power grab as a blueprint for the future, and asked, "If he could do it, why not me?"

Too Far, Too Fast, Too Soon

Julius Caesar grew to be known by friend and foe alike for being ambitious, bold, savvy and unpredictable. Despite his patrician family background, the commoners embraced him for his tendency to defy convention. Regarding self-confidence and shrewdness, Caesar was a master of self-promotion, participating in triumphs (military parades highlighting a general's

victory in a war campaign), writing public accounts of his successes, and exaggerating the size of the "hordes" he claimed to have defeated.

When captured by pirates in the early years of his career, Caesar lived aboard their ship as though he was not their prisoner. Upon learning the asking price of his ransom, he had them increase it. Exercising and participating in games aboard ship, Caesar calmly commented that when the ransom was paid, he would raise a fleet, hunt them down and crucify them. The pirates laughed—but when the ransom was paid and they released him, Caesar raised a naval force, captured his captors, and had them crucified (though he did show "mercy" by slitting their throats beforehand). All this while only a private citizen.

When his beloved aunt Julia died, Caesar boldly spoke at her funeral and did not shy away from also lauding her deceased husband, Marius—a socially dangerous move in a society accustomed to praising Sulla only, not his enemies (for fear of deadly consequences).

Those who know only the briefest historical background of Julius Caesar are at least aware that the famous Roman leader commanded successful military campaigns. Most victories were due to his ingenuity, resolve and boldness; others to time and chance. Caesar also gained a reputation for often granting mercy to the defeated, an uncommon trait in the ancient world.

Yet Caesar had proven himself a formidable politician, as both a lawmaker and administrator. In addition to studying oratory and being a writer, he rose up the rungs of Rome's political ladder and gained a reputation for making practical legislative decisions and governing with a stern, but understanding, hand. He came to be respected for his decision-making, fair dealings, and extending mercy (though this was usually to project a favorable image among the masses).

For instance, when Caesar moved to Spain to establish his career, he settled disputes between Spanish debtors and their Roman creditors. He brokered a deal that limited the percentage of wages creditors could collect—at the same time, making sure not to anger the lenders (to whom Caesar knew he would look to financially advance his political career). He limited garnishments to 66 percent, enough to satisfy creditors while not rendering the borrowers homeless.

At an age much younger than previous candidates (normally an elderly statesman at his career's end), Caesar successfully ran for *Pontifex Maximus*—high priest of Rome—an important, lifetime political position that presented opportunities to generate income. He was not above using bribes to win.

In his later years, Caesar became dictator of Rome and pushed controversial legislation too far, too fast, too soon, undoing legislation Sulla had enacted. Making enemies in the senate, a conspiracy developed, which led to Caesar's assassination in the Senate House at Rome on March 15, 44 B.C.—known today as "the Ides of March."

"If Caesar had not been murdered in 44 BC, he might have lived on for 15 or 20 years," the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states. "His physical constitution was unusually tough, though in his last years he had several epileptic seizures. What would he have done with this time? The answer can only be guessed from what he did do in the few months available. He found time in the year 46 BC to reform the Roman calendar. In 45 BC he enacted a law laying down a standard pattern for the constitutions of the municipia, which were by this time the units of local self-government in most of the territory inhabited by Roman citizens. In 59 BC Caesar had already resurrected the city of Capua, which the republican Roman regime more than 150 years earlier had deprived of its juridical corporate personality; he now resurrected the other two great cities, Carthage and Corinth, that his predecessors had destroyed. This was only a part of what he did to resettle his discharged soldiers and the urban proletariat of Rome. He was also generous in granting Roman citizenship to aliens. (He had given it to all of Cisalpine Gaul, north of the Po, in 49 BC.) He increased the size of the Senate and made its personnel more representative of the whole Roman citizenry.

"At his death, Caesar was on the point of starting out on a new military campaign to avenge and retrieve Crassus' disastrous defeat in 53 BC by the Parthians. Would Caesar have succeeded in recapturing for the Greco-Roman world the extinct Seleucid monarchy's lost dominions east of the Euphrates, particularly Babylonia? The fate of Crassus' army had shown that the terrain in northern Mesopotamia favoured Parthian cavalry against Roman infantry. Would Caesar's military genius have outweighed this handicap? And would Rome's hitherto inexhaustible reservoir of military manpower have sufficed for this additional call upon it? Only guesses are possible, for Caesar's assassination condemned the Romans to another 13 years of civil war, and Rome would never again possess sufficient manpower to conquer and hold Babylonia."

Enter Augustus Caesar

Born Sept. 23, 63 B.C., Gaius Octavius (known as Octavian) was the nephew of Julius Caesar, who took special interest in guiding the course of his future. Octavian, at age 12, delivered a funeral speech for his grandmother Julia (Caesar's beloved aunt), became a member of the board of priests (*pontifices*), and later accompanied the dictator on his triumphal procession. Caesar, through his will, legally adopted Octavian as his son, making the young man his chief personal heir. In January 42 B.C., the state officially recognized Caesar as one of Rome's deities—which, in the eyes of the people, meant that Octavian was the son of a god.

Octavian (whose adopted name was Gaius Julius Caesar) earned the people's favor by continuing the public games Caesar had instituted, and gained a sizable share of allegiance

among the soldiers who had followed the late dictator into war.

While still in his youth, Octavian became a Roman senator (senators such as famous orator Cicero mistakenly believed they could manipulate him under their control, in hopes of restoring the republic). After achieving victory over Marc Antony's forces, Octavian's soldiers compelled the senate to grant him a consulship. "Under the name of Gaius Julius Caesar he next secured official recognition as Caesar's adoptive son" (ibid.).

Octavian suffered from sudden bouts of illness throughout his life, and lacked the military genius of his adopted father. Despite this, Octavian was just as ambitious as Caesar had been—and just as politically shrewd. He allied himself with his former schoolmate and close friend, Marcus Agrippa, a more than capable field commander who was the strategic mind behind the victorious battles Octavian attained.

Octavian studied the decisions that had brought Caesar success—and also learned from his mistakes, accumulating and consolidating autocratic power, all while maintaining that his political maneuverings were an effort to restore the Roman Republic.

In 27 B.C., Octavian decreed that he was transferring power back to the Roman Senate and the people, declaring he had restored the republic. Confident that he had retained enough power and authority behind the scenes, Octavian publicly offered to resign from all his offices and relinquish control of his provinces. He knew the senators would say no—which they did.

The senate, as did the general public, enjoyed the relative peace, production and security—*Pax Romana* ("Roman Peace")—that came under one-man rule. Octavian instituted public works, such as a network of roads used to connect the cities, provinces and client-states, further trade, and maintain order in the expanding empire. He set up a permanent bodyguard (the Praetorians) and a fire brigade with police duties, which later led to establishing a regular police force. He created a military treasury for retirement monies, which kept soldiers, both active and retired, from becoming disgruntled. He organized a fleet to enforce Roman interests in the Mediterranean Sea, held an empire-wide census, and reduced the size of the senate while enlarging its powers (so that it would benefit his reign).

Declining his offer to step down, the Roman Senate granted Octavian the position of *princeps* ("first among equals" or "first citizen") and granted him control over Spain, Gaul and Syria—three strategic provinces where most of Rome's legions just happened to be stationed.

Essentially, Octavian had pulled a "bait and switch"—publicly appearing to relinquish dominance, while in reality tightening his grip on the reins of power, such as influencing the senate to appoint certain men as proconsul over provinces he did not govern.

Among other titles and offices the senate bestowed upon him, Octavian received the title *Augustus*, meaning "renowned," "majestic," "venerable," "worthy of honor." In effect, Augustus Caesar, in his quest to gain absolute control, became Rome's first emperor—yet never referred to himself or allowed others to call him by that title. Instead, he was called "first citizen," and also received the title *pater patriae*: "father of the country."

(Does the use of the word "Caesar" seem shocking to you today? Consider. Governments appoint energy czars, drug czars, etc. Do people realize that, in effect, they are calling them "caesars"? Down through the centuries, strongmen used various forms of what became the imperial title "Caesar"—Kaiser in German, Czar in Russian—to designate themselves as emperor.)

When Augustus died (Aug. 19, A.D. 14), Roman citizens middle-aged and younger had never experienced life under a strong republic or a period when a "First Citizen" was not solely in charge. The populace, having grown accustomed to decades of relative peace, security and flourishing trade markets, saw no need to restore a republican form of government. Augustus had years previously carefully groomed his stepson Tiberius to take his place. The republic was dead; for the next nearly 500 years, the Roman Empire was here to stay.

The Roman Senate officially recognized Augustus Caesar as a god. History remembers the first Roman emperor as a great administrator, a man of culture, an author of numerous writings (all lost), a master of propaganda and the game of political chess—and a cruel despot who was more than willing to execute political ruthlessness when he felt it necessary.

A Future Caesar?

Prophecy describes the final strongman as a charismatic leader, known for his mastery of "flatteries" (Dan. 11:21, 32-34). As a grandmaster of diplomacy akin to the political genius of the Caesars of old, this future autocrat will pull off an orchestrated "confederacy" that will shock the world (Psa. 83:3-8; Obadiah 7). Even the participants will be amazed by the devastating aftermath of their plan.

A great, influential—and suddenly miraculous (II Thes. 2:8-9)—false religious system will endorse him (Rev. 17:12-13). (Recall that Julius Caesar was both dictator and high priest of Rome.)

Ten European rulers, each leading a nation or group of nations (Rev. 17:12), will hand over executive power to this future figure (vs. 13, 17)—just as the Roman Senate did to Augustus. Thus, a modern-day "Caesar" will head a great economic-political-religious-military empire. Those who desire to bask in the unprecedented economic prosperity that this new Caesar will bring (Rev. 18:10-19) must first take his "mark." Notice: "And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:16-17).

As for this man's identity, time will reveal it. Until then, Jesus Christ instructs, "Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass" (Luke 21:36). □

TEMPLE MOUNT

Continued from page 11

the Jews worked for 21 years to complete the Temple in 515 B.C. This second structure was of lesser quality than the first.

After the life of Alexander the Great, his four generals grappled for control of Jerusalem. The Seleucid kingdom (started by one of Alexander's generals) finally took Jerusalem around 200 B.C.

Seleucid King Antiochus IV appointed his own high priest for the Temple, allowing him to more easily Hellenize the Jewish religion. Using this "puppet" priest, Antiochus forced the Jews to worship idols and eat pork (*The Illustrated History of the Jews*). He also forbade circumcision, which he viewed as mutilation, and erected a statue of Zeus on the mount, sacrificing pigs upon the altar. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* correctly identifies the transformation "of the sacred Temple at Jerusalem into a heathen one" as one of the fulfillments of the "abomination that makes desolate" mentioned in Daniel 11:31.

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

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

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

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

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

Roman General Hadrian in A.D. 136 built a temple to Jupiter, which was likely placed to the south of the mount, desecrating the site with a pagan statue and placing a bronze image of himself in the courtyard.

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

Muslim Conquest, Christian Crusades

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

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

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

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

Even in the Holy Land, Islam's incremental influence was accompanied by population shifts: "The spread of Islam introduced a very considerable Neo-Arabian infusion. Those from southern Arabia were known as the Yaman [a son of Esau] tribe, those from northern Arabia, the Kais (Qais). These two divisions absorbed the previous peasant population, and still nominally exist [as of 1910]; down to the middle of the 19th century they were a fruitful source of quarrels and of bloodshed" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed.).

Until 1917, Muslims controlled the mount and Jerusalem, when Britain took Jerusalem, and the first European visitors were allowed on the Temple Mount since 1187.

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

The End of the War

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

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

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

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

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

Read *The Mid-East in Bible Prophecy* to learn the *stunning* conclusion to 3,000 years of Temple Mount violence. □

The Wrath of Political Correctness

What happens when a society defines its own "righteousness"?

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK AND BRUCE A. RITTER

WITH EACH passing year, society changes its values—and many previously accepted terms are relegated to being labeled socially unacceptable. The wrong term, the unintended misuse of a phrase, could mean a person's reputation is trashed, a promising career ruined.

In their rush to right society's wrongs, "enlightened" minds stumble around in darkness searching for answers. Their solution: political correctness. The result: the systematic destruction of traditional values, replacing these with something entirely different.

Yesteryear's "shacking up" is today's "happily living together." A criminal is now deemed "behaviorally challenged." Someone who is obese is said to be a person with an "enlarged physical condition caused by a completely natural, genetically induced hormone imbalance." The "war on terror" has become the "global contingency plan." A "disabled" person is now "differently abled" or "physically challenged." The list could go on.

To be politically correct is to avoid expressions or actions that can be perceived to exclude or insult the socially disadvantaged or those who may be discriminated against. It includes off-color remarks about race, ethnicity, social class, mental capacity, etc. On the surface, this concept appears to be noble. Who can argue against avoiding criticizing others or poking fun at those less privileged?

Yet political correctness paves the path for a society's eventual collapse.

Feeling the Wrath

While political correctness (or PC) might seek to promote equality and tolerance, it invariably leads to *inequality* and *intolerance*. Many who subscribe to this way of thinking seek to advance a particular ideology, and the best avenue to accomplish their mission is to lampoon and venomously attack those who do not agree until they relent. Oftentimes, money and power are at the root of their agenda, not equality, justice—or RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Here are but a few examples of PC thinking in action:

■ **Environment:** The worldwide consensus is that global warming (or "global climate change") is a matter of fact, and man is the cause—case closed. Non-scientists who disagree are ridiculed as naïve and unlearned, caught in a past mode of thinking. The scientific community ostracizes colleagues who fail to embrace global warming, practically labeling them heretics.

A worldwide movement has been mobilized to combat global warming. Legislators deal with this supposed menace of epic proportions by enacting laws—carrying with them huge economic implications that will affect every level of society. All this despite many reputable scientists coming forward asserting that manmade global warming may be pure fiction.

Those who oppose the efforts of "acceptable thinking" face the wrath of political correctness.

■ **Race:** Several months ago, when citizens of the United States peacefully assembled to hold "Tea Parties" to protest Washington politicians and their mismanagement of the economy, some Hollywood celebrities of the liberal elite charged racism. News outlets that condoned the protestors' actions were labeled similarly. The cause for the racism charge? The demonstrators were supposedly "upset because America elected a black president."

Most news organizations speak nothing but praise for President Barack Obama, unlike past occupants of the Oval Office. But those that criticize his political decisions are often cast as "racist."

Yet recall when past presidents were in office: The mainstream media aired nonstop attacks from opposing parties and blasted each administration's every move. Previously, it was politically *correct* to hurl insults at—and sneeringly belittle—men who held the highest office in the land, and the most powerful in the world.

A desire to protect America's southern border brings an automat-

ic accusation of racism. Although bigoted fringe thinking may exist among a few, is it really fair to make such charges against those who desire nothing more than to prevent a future 9/11 attack—and save thousands of lives?

People who immigrate to and work in the United States illegally were once called "illegal immigrants," an apt description, since they immigrated into the country *illegally*—as opposed to a legal immigrant. Yet journalists must now use the term "undocumented workers"—else they face the wrath of the politically correct establishment and possible claims of racism.

■ **Health:** Television commercials promote the "need" for parents to fulfill their parental duty and vaccinate little girls before cervical cancer threatens their lives and well-being. Naturally, viewers wonder, "What is cervical cancer? Why do most people get it?" These questions, of course, largely go unanswered.

The reason? While several factors can contribute to cervical cancer, multiple sex partners increase the risk of HPV, a sexually transmitted disease that can lead to the deadly illness. Yet how many commercials, talk show hosts or prominent medical professionals warn teenage girls to abstain from sex in the first place? How many promote refraining from extramarital relations? To do so would bring PC scrutiny.

Rather than condemning sexual escapades, many embrace the idea—or simply shrug it off with, "Who are we to judge?" or "Kids will be kids."

■ **Science:** The vast majority in today's culture vehemently maintain that evolution is scientific fact. To disagree is to reject science and "common sense."

Yet even a cursory investigation reveals that evolution is NOT a proven scientific fact—it is nothing more than a THEORY that appeals to intellectual vanity.

After all, evolution equals no creation—and no creation means no Creator—which means no obligation to live according to His rules. No need to obey anyone other than the self! Everyone has free reign to live as he sees fit. In other words, ethical, moral and spiritual ANARCHY! Every man decides for himself right from wrong, good from evil.

This is a scary proposition, considering that "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

With considerable evidence supporting the falsehood of the theory, dissension exists within the scientific community as to the truth of evolution.

Yet those who reject evolution can anticipate an angry response from those of the PC mindset.

The View That Counts

Political correctness—and the fury that results from violating it—is yet another sign of a society that has lost its way. Hundreds of years of religious persecution (its own form of "political correctness" to the deadly extreme, e.g., the Inquisition) helped lay the course for secular society to leave the "old paths" (Jer. 6:16) of tradition for "something new." Mankind repeatedly rejects the principle of "there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecc. 1:9). By refusing to learn the lesson of just this one verse, a cycle of suffering needlessly continues.

The mantra of political correctness is man's attempt to define the rules of society's conduct and thinking. It is the *creation* attempting to "know better" than its CREATOR. In effect, this way of thinking is a form of SELF-righteousness—human beings deciding for themselves right and wrong, rather than accepting the perfect guidance of a loving God.

As a result of humanity's ingrained tendency to reject the "old paths," and each generation's changing values (to prove how "enlightened" they have become), men call "evil good, and good evil," and put "darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isa. 5:20).

Of such people, God states, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (vs. 21).

True righteousness is keeping the Commandments of God (Psa. 119:172), which traditional Christianity says are "done away"—a burden. "All you need is the love of God in your heart," religionists claim.

But God's Word says, "For this is the love of God, that we *keep His commandments*: and His commandments are *not* grievous" (I John 5:3), and "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). True love—expressing self*less*, outgoing concern for others—is to obey God, to keep His Commandments (Rom. 13:8, 10).

Political correctness fails to take into account *God's* point of view on any matter—the only view that counts!

Only TRUE righteousness will exalt a nation (Prov. 14:34)—not political correctness. And only the Creator and Lawgiver can define righteousness. Anything that violates His laws and principles, no matter one's personal intentions, sincerity or well-meaning, is sin: "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). Righteousness in *God's* sight defines the ultimate correctness.

The prophet Isaiah sheds light on the state of mankind today: "The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goes therein shall not know peace. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither does justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night" (Isa. 59:8-10).

Political correctness is humanity's attempt to right past wrongs, to bring equality to unjust circumstances—yet the result is more injustice, more wrongs—and more wrath. This is because man, on his own accord, is incapable of lasting solutions.

The sad record of history shows that humanity will only learn this the hard way.

This need not be you! □

PROFILE

PHOTO: MCT

LUIZ INÁCIO LULA DA SILVA

PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL

Amid a storm of criticism, "Lula" has brought Brazil back to life.

BY H. CHRIS LOMAS

AFTER THREE attempts, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva achieved victory in the 2002 election and assumed office as the 35th president of the Federative Republic of Brazil on Jan. 1, 2003. For the first time in 40 years, Brazil—the largest economy in Latin America, and the 10th largest in the world—was led by a member of a leftist party from the working class. President da Silva (popularly known by his moniker "Lula") was re-elected in October 2006 for a second four-year term.

Mr. da Silva was one of the founders of the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) in 1980, which is based on ideologies developed in the military dictatorship of the 70s. His election to the presidency was at first seen as the final nail in the coffin of the ailing Brazilian economy due to his move to bring a previously isolated Brazil into the world economic scene.

But after seven years in office, President da Silva has managed to turn around the Brazilian economy. The nation is among the most rapidly growing economies in the world, known as BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China), which is expected to dwarf today's richest Western economic systems by 2050.

Life Story

World leaders did not readily accept President da Silva as he assumed office. Illiterate until age 10, he quit school after the fourth grade. From age 12, he spent most days working in the street, shining shoes and selling peanuts. At 14, he took a job in a copper-processing factory as a lathe operator. Five years later, while working as a press operator in an automobile parts factory, he lost his finger in a work-related accident. The incident sparked Mr. da Silva's interest in workers' rights, leading him to become part of the Workers' Union.

With Brazil's dictatorship government of that era restricting union activities, Mr. da Silva's political views pushed to the left, and he began to focus on changing the traditional social order to create an equal distribution of wealth and privileges to the poor.

In 1978, he was elected president of the Steelworkers Union in Sao Paulo, Brazil's most industrialized city, which houses the automotive manufacturing facilities of Ford, Mercedes Benz, Toyota and Volkswagen.

Social Outreach

As president of Brazil, Mr. da Silva began a process of reaching out to expand national ties with the rest of the world, a feat rarely done by previous leaders. He visited 75 countries and opened 33 embassies, including 14 in Africa. President da Silva sought to unite developing economies in the wake of the global financial crisis.

Within his country, Mr. da Silva maintains a rigid schedule of giving attention to the poorest areas of Brazilian society and creating employment through public works programs. Kenneth Maxwell, director of the Brazil Studies Program at Harvard University's David Rockefeller Center of Latin American Studies, said of President da Silva, "His charisma and his ability to mobilize the poor have been remarkable" (*Reuters*).

Coming from humble roots has given the president the ability to sympathize with the poorest of the poor, giving him an edge over his opponents and keeping the support of the majority.

At the top of the president's social agenda is to eradi-

cate hunger, which has received international praise for its progress—yet critics at home have derisively labeled it a "food for votes" program.

Under Mr. da Silva's presidency, Brazil has secured a better investment credit rating in its longest economical growth in 30 years. Under his guidance, 20 million people have been lifted out of poverty.

Praise and Criticism

In dealing with other nations, the Brazilian president has practiced a "hands on," down-to-earth approach. Mr. da Silva sees himself as an arbitrator for his nation and is directly involved, as opposed to being a spectator. He has gained the respect of several world leaders, including former U.S. President George W. Bush and President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela. According to *The New York Times*, U.S. President Barack Obama referred to Lula as "My man," even though Brazil sides with other developing countries against the United States in economic trade summits.

Mr. da Silva's pragmatic approach to his presidency and the upward swing in the national economy have resulted in him being accepted more widely among the Brazilian people. Though the country is in a recession, most believe that the economy will recover before Lula's term in office expires. During his presidency, unemployment has dropped and per capita earnings have increased substantially. The relaxing of taxes on cars and major domestic appliances has also helped put more money back in consumers' pockets, thus alleviating social burdens.

President da Silva weathered many scandals involving key advisors. The Workers' Party, which has positioned itself as a tower of strength, has suffered scandals involving the bribing of candidates. In addition, the president lacks support for privatizing large areas within the Amazon to be deforested for cattle ranching to aid in meeting the local population's needs.

Leader of the largest Roman Catholic nation in the world, Mr. da Silva has garnered support for the government's decision to pay for sex-change operations. At the conference, Minister José Gomes Temporão said that the move was in line with the government's homosexual policies. "It is one more step towards the consolidation of that policy," he stated, "in which Brazil is a world leader" (*DPA*).

The Future?

Overall, President da Silva's term in office has proved beneficial for Brazil. *Newsweek* named him as the 18th most important person in the world, and he is the only Latin American featured in the magazine's list of the top 50 most influential leaders.

With Mr. da Silva's presidency ending in January 2011, Brazilians will need to seek a leader to take his place. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva ushered in a new era of leadership, despite scandals, charges of corruption, and bizarre sexual legislation, yet has generally improved conditions for tens of millions of the Brazilian people.

On May 23, 2009, leaders of South American governments signed an agreement of the Union of South American Nations in a move to mirror the European Union's style of government. Brazil's president referred to the treaty as the "fulfillment of a dream."

One may wonder if it will truly aid Brazil's future. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

they have not been given the ability to comprehend God's Word.

How does this apply to you? The answer directly explains how to know if God is calling you: in the simplest terms, a calling is understanding the truths of God when you see, read or hear them.

The Restored Church of God covers vital knowledge, and across a host of topics. Perhaps you have read much of it. Ask yourself: "Do I understand Bible teachings and truths when I hear them? Do the scriptures about the gospel of the kingdom of God—the plan of salvation and the purpose of human existence—climactic, soon-coming prophesied events—God's warning message to His people—His Law, including the Sabbath command—the annual Holy Days—tithing—proper baptism—the one true Church—and many other teachings make sense to me?"

When you read or hear these things or others in our magazines, books, booklets, articles and *The World to Come* broadcasts, do they have meaning to you? Are you grasping them? Are they *plain* to your understanding? Do you see them as SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE others do not have? Do you feel tempted to pinch yourself in disbelief that you could be shown things of which the masses have no idea?

If the answers to these questions are "yes," then God *is* calling—"drawing"—you! The mysteries of the kingdom of God *are* being given to YOU!

Responsible for Knowledge Given

Babies are born knowing nothing. They do not know even the basics of right and

wrong. They have to be taught virtually *everything*. Similarly, the world does not know the things of God—*spiritual* right from *spiritual* wrong. But with the knowledge of these things comes the responsibility to act on them.

Two Bible passages demonstrate that God holds people accountable for what they understand. Notice James 4:17: "Therefore to him that *knows to do good*, and does it not, to him it is sin," and Hebrews 10:26, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the *knowledge of the truth*, there remains no more sacrifice for sins."

Let's understand. Each time you learn more of God's truth (what is "good"), and it makes sense to you—you at least generally understand it—you are being *given* extraordinary spiritual *knowledge* for which God holds you accountable.

This is part of the calling process—and is actually central to it. Further, it makes understanding how God calls one much more serious than most have believed. Recognize that God will only call each human being *once*. Therefore, you are responsible NOW for the knowledge you are being given. If one does *not* act on what he is learning, God will take that understanding away, and such a person is in a grave spiritual condition. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the *doers* of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13) and, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that *do* His commandments" (Psa. 111:10).

The Greatest Freedom

God's truth is most exciting to understand. It is the path to all the wonderful, good things in life—things God wants you to have. It is also the path to the greatest *freedom* that there is! Jesus told certain Jews professing to believe on Him: "If you continue in My word [the truth—see John 17:17], then are you My disciples indeed; and you shall KNOW THE TRUTH, and THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE" (John 8:31-32). You must be willing to "continue" in your studies of God's Word, learning ever more of His truth, which Christ explains will "set you free" from a world cut off from God and held captive by Satan. Even *this* understanding is precious knowledge.

Your associates in the world probably understand none of these things. Neither do your relatives. Without God's calling, they have *no possible way* of enjoying *now* what is being offered to YOU—*IF* you are understanding AND acting upon God's truth.

It is also vital that you make certain in your mind the things you are learning. You should find yourself wanting to PROVE the doctrines of God. Paul also told the Thessalonians to "PROVE all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thes. 5:21). If you know God is calling you, take time to *prove* that He exists. Then prove that the Bible is truly His inspired Word for mankind.

Finally, *prove* the identity of God's Church. Remove all doubt, leaving no room for confusion. There are many counterfeit churches—many spiritual "look-a-likes" in the world. Do not be fooled by any of them. Jesus promised, "I will build MY Church" (Matt. 16:18). Determine to know for certain if you have come in contact with it.

At the same time you are proving these things, pray fervently about what you are learning. When you are unclear on a matter, remember that Christ taught, "ASK, and it shall be given you; SEEK, and you shall find; KNOCK, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7).

John 14:17 explains how those coming toward conversion begin to find that they can see clearly the things of God. Notice what Jesus said when speaking to His disciples about the Holy Spirit they were soon to receive: "Even the *Spirit of truth*; [which] the world cannot receive, because it sees [it] not, neither knows [it]: but you know [it]; for [it] dwells WITH you, and shall be IN you." The pronouns are corrected in this passage because the Holy Spirit is *not* a person, the supposed third member of a trinity, an unbiblical idea nowhere taught in the Bible.

At this point, the disciples were much like many today—perhaps like you, too. They were seeing many spiritual truths in part, but did not yet *fully* grasp the enormous importance of learning God's Plan and way of life. Through the Holy Spirit working WITH them, God was revealing certain things they would only understand in a greater way once it was IN them, beginning at conversion.

Ultimately, to fully understand *all* the things of God—ALL the mysteries of the kingdom of God—one must be begotten of the Holy Spirit. This occurs when it enters directly into the mind! Lacking baptism and the vital receiving of God's Spirit, it is completely impossible for *anyone* to *truly* understand even a *single* biblical truth!

God's Master Plan

Before discussing how this happens, let's look at the big picture.

There is a great reason God is only calling a few now.

The core of God's Plan encompasses 7,000 years. Few have understood this. Many *have* correctly understood at least some of the verses describing Jesus Christ's 1,000-year reign on Earth, which will begin at the time of His *Return* to Earth in great power and glory to rule with the saints. And while most know little more than this, they know NOTHING of the fact that God has allotted 6,000 years, or six millennial days of a *seven-day week*, to man's rule, prior to the seventh 1,000-year "day." The sixth "day" is about to draw to a close. Satan is soon to be bound (take time to read Revelation 20:2).

However, he has *not yet* been bound. When Christ, having overcome sin, qualified to replace him (Matt. 4:1-11) as the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4), He assured that Satan will soon no longer be present to deceive and confuse mankind (Rev. 12:9). But, once again, we must understand that Satan has not YET been bound, and he seeks to do everything possible—within the power he possesses—to thwart God's Plan. He has certainly deceived his ministers into believing that God has failed terribly in His Plan to save the vast majority of a mankind that He is not yet even calling to salvation. But it is only by God's permission that

Satan holds sway over this "present evil world" (Gal. 1:4).

God is not losing any supposed wrestling match over which He would clearly have complete control. He knows *exactly* what He is doing, and the beauty of His Plan *can* be known.

Be assured that no true God would ever choose to condemn the vast majority who have ever lived without giving them a *full opportunity* for salvation. Such a God would not be worth following. He would be an unjust *monster* whose primary purpose is the business of *condemnation*!

We must understand! The Bible says, "But, beloved, *be not ignorant* of this one thing, that *one day* is with the Lord *as a thousand years*, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8). Of course, most people *are* "ignorant" of not just this "one thing," but almost everything the Bible teaches.

This is a fascinating verse.

Man has been given six days, or 6,000 years, to try his own ways, governments, religions, value systems, philosophies and forms of education. Under Satan's sway, he has practiced sin—DISOBEDIENCE to God's commands—for nearly 6,000 years. Man has then tried to treat all the ill *effects* instead of treating the *cause* of having broken God's laws. This includes the invention of many religions that merely teach the hollow IDEAS OF MEN in place of the wonderful TRUTHS OF GOD.

God is allowing man to learn bitter lessons. The vast majority, who have never known the precious truth of God, are having to learn that their own ways do not work! Just before humanity is about to erase itself from the earth, through a combination of weapons of mass destruction and the irreversible pollution of a planet that has limits to how much it can withstand, Jesus Christ will intervene and save mankind from itself!

Now continue with II Peter 3, verse 9: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise...but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance." Did you notice that God wants to save *everyone*? Now read this: "[God] will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4). This scripture is plain. God is not, and never has been, in the "mass condemnation" business.

But He is calling and training a *tiny* SELECT *few* who will rule with Christ at His Return, and the setting up of His glorious world-ruling kingdom.

Remember. Satan has proliferated many forms of false religion all over the earth. He counterfeits the truth in endless ways, and God's calling process is no exception. He is a MASTER DECEIVER and the fruits of his efforts lie everywhere.

Your Path to Conversion

Your Bible states, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God THEY are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14), and, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (vs. 9). These two passages reveal just what a Christian is—one who has and is led by the Holy Spirit of God. This Spirit is received upon repentance and baptism (read Acts 2:38).

If the truth is becoming clear—really PLAIN—to you, set the goal of repentance, baptism, and the receiving of God's Holy Spirit—the moment TRUE CONVERSION begins!

While you are preparing for conversion, focus on examining all the wrong habits and attitudes that you can. There are certain *physical* changes you can make before baptism. Understand. Conversion is entirely about *changing*, *growing*, *overcoming*—and *developing* the *character of God*. This involves getting into the habit of regular *prayer*, *Bible study*, *meditation* and even periodic *fasting*, going without food and water.

Be sure to take time to study all of our books, booklets and articles dealing with *faith*, *conversion*, *baptism*, your *human potential*, and the proofs of *God's existence*, His *Word* and His *Church*.

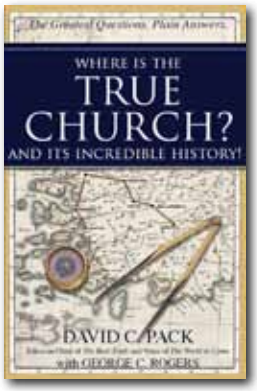
Be sure to read *Where Is the True Church? – And Its Incredible History!* And also read *The Awesome Potential of Man*. Much—actually *everything*—is at *stake* for you if God is calling you *now*.

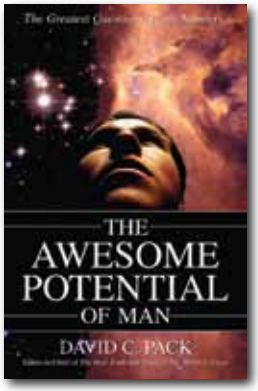
Take each step carefully. Follow the timing that is right for you. But do not unnecessarily delay, merely because you have not asked fervently or often enough for the "gift" of repentance (see II Timothy 2:25 and Acts 11:18). Be careful that you do not follow the pattern of the world, falling into waiting for a magical FEELING that "*now* is the time."

The Bible teaches that "*repentance* is toward *God*" and that "*faith* is toward... *Jesus Christ*" (Acts 20:21). Conversion is a personal private matter between the Father and Christ, and each individual. The apostle Peter wrote, "Make your calling and election sure" (II Pet. 1:10). If God *is truly calling you*, make certain of your calling. It is most precious!

This is the only way to approach the marvelous gift you are being given! □

To learn more, read *Where Is the True Church? – And Its Incredible History!* and *The Awesome Potential of Man.*





AMERICAS

Honduran Military Coup Sparks Violence in the Streets

In a dawn raid, soldiers arrested Honduran President Manuel Zelaya at his home and exiled him, via military plane, to neighboring Costa Rica. National lawmakers appointed Roberto Micheletti, head of Congress, to serve as acting president.

In response, approximately 2,000 pro-government protesters, some with shovels and metal poles, burned tires in front of the presidential palace and in the streets of Tegucigalpa, the nation's capital, demanding the return of their president. Fear of a coup days earlier had already shut down most downtown companies.

Mr. Zelaya—a former businessman who was elected in 2006 as a conservative, but turned to leftist policies during his first term in office—urged citizens to peacefully resist. "I am the victim of a kidnapping by Honduran soldiers," he told Venezuelan state television. "I was deceived by the military elite" (*AFP*).

The overthrow was the first successful military coup in Central America since the Cold War.

Although constitutional law mandates that his non-renewable term end in January 2010, 56-year-old Zelaya angered the army, courts and Congress by pushing for an unofficial public vote to rewrite the constitution and extend the four-year limit so he can legally seek the presidency when his term expires.

But military leaders refused to distribute ballot boxes for the vote, prompting Mr. Zelaya to fire military chief Gen. Romeo Vásquez and Defense Minister Edmundo Orellana Mercado. As the president set up voting stations, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled the referendum illegal, ordering Mr. Zelaya to reinstate the fired military chief. When the Honduran leader did not comply, the court instructed the army to remove the now-exiled president.

■ **PUBLIC OUTRAGE:** Protesters supporting ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya throw stones at soldiers and policemen during clashes near the presidential palace in Tegucigalpa (June 29, 2009).

PHOTO: JOSE CABEZAS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The overthrow brought immediate responses from the international community.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, Mr. Zelaya's ally, called it a coup d'état, asserting that the United States must have played a role. Speaking on state television, Mr. Chávez accused Honduran troops of detaining and beating Venezuelan and Cuban ambassadors. If his nation's ambassador dies, he warned, or troops enter the Venezuelan embassy, his military will respond. Stating that Venezuela's armed forces are on alert, he said he will do everything necessary to put down the coup (*Reuters*).

President Chávez also promised to remove any successor sworn in as Honduras' next president.

U.S. President Barack Obama called the coup "not legal" and expressed that he was "deeply concerned" over Mr. Zelaya's removal, saying in a White House-issued statement, "I call on all political and social actors in Honduras to respect democratic norms, the rule of law and the tenets of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Any existing tensions and disputes must be resolved peacefully through dialogue free from any outside interference."

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed "his strong support for the country's democratic institutions" and condemned President Zelaya's arrest.

Ecuador, Brazil, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua and the European Union have also refused to recognize the new government, and called for Manuel Zelaya's return to office. □

MIDEAST

Iran: Worst Civil Unrest Since 1979 Islamic Revolution

Iranian demonstrators battled tear gas and live bullets as police attempted to crack down on protests against the high court's decision to certify President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad the election winner over reformist presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi, following a vote recount.

The government reported at least 17 deaths as a result of the post-election violence. But outside media outlets, which the Iranian government banned from covering protests, stated that fatalities may exceed 150. According to the London *Times*, more than 2,000 people were arrested and hundreds are missing.

The results of the June 12 election, in which incumbent President Ahmadinejad won a second four-year term, angered citizens and fanned widespread accusations of fraud, which triggered a partial recount. After reviewing the results, the Guardian Council, composed of six senior clerics appointed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and six Islamic jurists, announced Mr. Ahmadinejad's official victory.

In a statement to lawmakers on state-run *Press TV*, Mr. Khamenei said that the Islamic nation and its people "will never give in to coercive demands with regards to Iran's presidential elections" (*CNN*).

After this announcement, the government unleashed riot police and the volunteer Basij militia. Riding on motorcycles, the Basij used pipes, axes, daggers, pepper spray and guns to disperse large crowds. Casualties included Neda Agha Soltan, who died immediately after she was fatally shot below the neck. Her death became a rallying cry among protesters.

Police scattered the demonstrators, who fled home for fear of their lives, but defiantly continued to shout from their rooftops at night: "Allahu Akbar (God is Greatest)."

In response to the taunts, the Basij stormed houses, destroying belongings and terrorizing residents.

On the website of his newspaper, *Kalamah*, opposition candidate Mr. Mousavi complained that the government also wants to silence him.

Iranian authorities have attempted to blame the West for fomenting election discord. Government officials accused eight Iranian employees at the British Embassy in Tehran of "playing a 'significant role' in opposition protests" (London *Times*).

But the West denies meddling in Iran's affairs. In a public statement, U.S. President Barack Obama said the accusations "are patently false" and "an obvious attempt to distract people from what is truly taking place within Iran's borders." □

■ **STREET VIOLENCE:** Supporters of Iran's defeated presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi set burning barricades in the streets as they protest during a demonstration in Tehran, Iran (June 20, 2009).

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

SOCIETY & LIFESTYLES

Study: Bad Driving Sparks Road Rage

Lead-footed, reckless drivers, as well as discourteous motorists who text on cellphones or eat behind the wheel, can provoke others to road rage, according to research sponsored by AutoVantage, a roadside-assistance service.

Of the cities surveyed, New York, Dallas/Fort Worth and Detroit were the worst rated for road rage.

The study (conducted from Jan. 8 to March 24) examined data from 2,518 drivers in 25 metropolitan areas across the United States. Participants experienced rush hour traffic for at least 10 minutes, three times a week.

The number one answer for the cause of road rage was inconsiderate driving.

According to 2008 research from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 80 percent of Americans thought aggressive drivers were a "serious" or "extremely serious" road safety problem.

In 2009, however, an AAA Foundation survey found that "nearly half of drivers reported exceeding the speed limit by 15 mph on major highways in the past 30 days, and 15 percent even admitted exceeding the speed limit by 15 mph on neighborhood streets."

The foundation discovered that aggressive driving is involved in up to 56 percent of deadly vehicle crashes.

In the AutoVantage research, drivers admitted lashing out in the following ways at least once a month: Responding to aggressive driving, motorists…

- honked their horn at the offending driver (43 percent)
- cursed at the other motorist (36 percent)
- waved their fist or arms (13 percent)
- made an obscene gesture (10 percent)
- called the police to report the driver (7 percent)
- slammed into the car in front of them (1 percent)

"If you find yourself driving slowly in the passing lane, tailgating or doing other things to teach the other driver a lesson, you are also part of the problem," AAA Foundation President and CEO Peter Kissinger said in a public statement. "An aggressive driving act by one driver can trigger a disproportionate and potentially violent reaction from another driver." □

NORTH KOREA

Continued from page 5

counter the perception that Mr. Kim's failing health will translate to faltering morale or weakness in the nation as a whole. (Mr. Kim's son is expected to succeed him, extending 60 years of family rule.)

Another Thorn in America's Side

What would prompt a nation with a yearly military budget of perhaps $5 to 7 billion USD to threaten the U.S., which spent $623 billion on defense in 2008—more than all other countries on Earth combined?

Strategists and specialists on North Korea speculate as to what the nation will do next. However, those who understand biblical prophecy would not be surprised that Pyongyang, along with other governments, is engaged in saber-rattling toward the United States and other Western powers.

Jesus Christ foretold that the time leading to "the end of the world"—more accurately, the end of the *age* (Matt. 24:3)—would be characterized by, among other things, "wars and *rumors of wars*" (vs. 6; Mark 13:7). These most recent threats have done much to prompt rumors of war.

America, dealing with the worst economic downturn in a century and waging war on two fronts, faces many huge issues. The last thing Washington needs is to expend time and energy responding to a bellicose regime 7,000 miles away.

With the Cold War threat of large-scale communist expansion fading into distant memory, in many respects, North Korea seems irrelevant. However, with every provocative act, Pyongyang seems to shout, "We are still relevant!"

The notion of nuclear weapons in the hands of an angry nation requires Washington to stay engaged, further stretching its problem-solving resources. Any flare-up of hostilities between North and South has the potential to heighten tension between the U.S. and its allies and those with a warmer relationship with Pyongyang.

North Korea cannot be ignored.

Is there a way for a nation to achieve peace and be rid of threats from other powers? Historically, there has been. God promised the nation of Israel (not the modern state, but the historical confederation of 12 tribes) that He would prevent other nations even from coveting their land (Ex. 34:24). The New Testament confirms that "lusts"—coveting what belongs to another—is the ROOT CAUSE of war (Jms. 4:1-3). One of the benefits God extended to this nation, during times that its people were generally following Him and His laws, was "rest from all their enemies" (Deut. 25:19; Josh. 23:1; II Sam. 7:1, 11; I Chron. 22:9).

But as the great nations of the West drift further from any semblance of biblical standards of conduct, they can expect no rest from adversaries far and near.

To learn more about what will unfold on the world stage, read David C. Pack's book *America and Britain in Prophecy*. □

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