

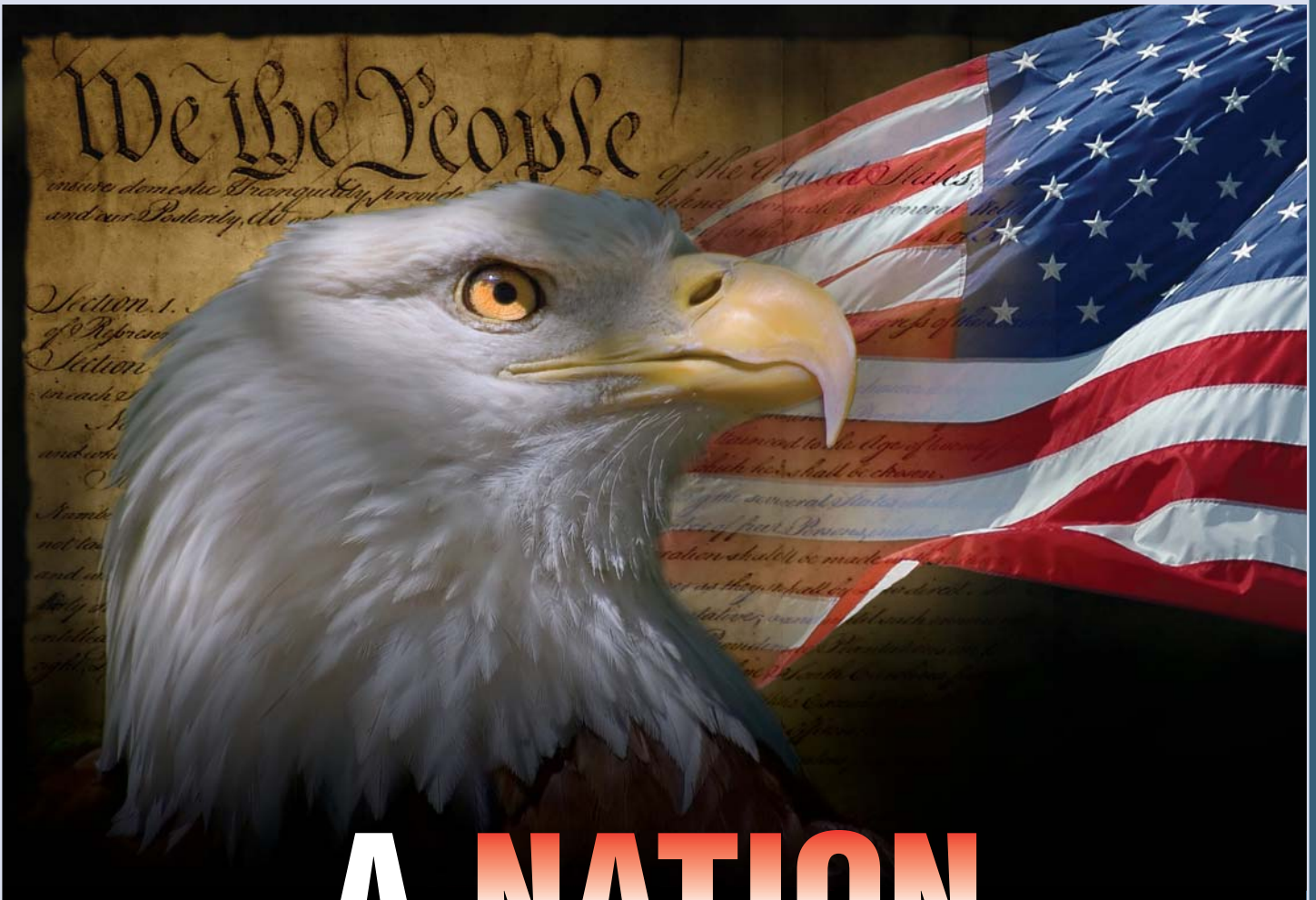
MAY 2010

THE

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



A NATION of Division

Where Is America Headed?

THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. VIII | NO. 4 | MAY 2010

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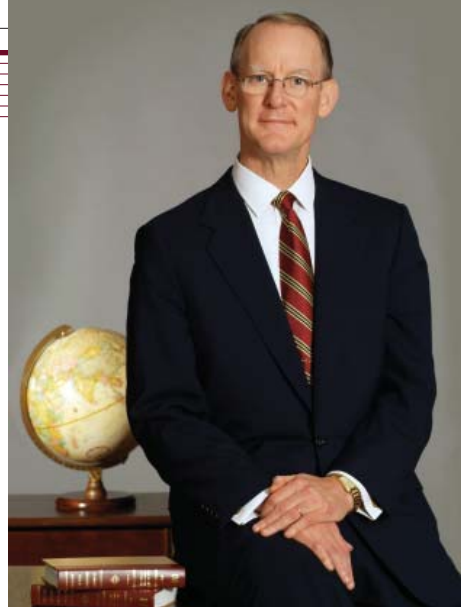
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Do Christians Vote and Participate in Politics?

THIS WORLD is in deep trouble. *How* did it come to be as it is? *Why* so much poverty, disease, hunger, pollution, ignorance and confusion? *Why* can the governments of men not get along, avoid war—and find peace and agreement? *Why* such constant instability, scandal and division among leaders everywhere? *Why* so much favoritism, antagonism between parties, ethics violations, political arm-twisting and lobbying, infighting, poor judgment, corruption, bribery, misrepresentation—and outright lying—in virtually all national governments? *Why* are there seemingly endless revolutions and military coups? **WHY** no shortage of demagogues, dictators and revolutionaries, always promising to make things better, yet invariably bringing worse problems and conditions?

Millions believe voting and participation in government are their civic and patriotic duties. This is the *democratic* way. But is it God's Way? Christ's gospel is about *government*. If He were here today, would He vote? Would His servants participate in politics? Would they vote? Does His Church practice

voting internally—to decide doctrine, spend money or select ministers and leaders?

This Personal reveals the Bible teaching on voting and participation in politics. Prepare to be very surprised!

Like a broadcaster ahead of His time, everywhere Jesus went, He announced the kingdom of God—a message entirely about a coming, divine *world government* that would smash and replace *all* governments of men.

But you have probably supposed that the governments of modern nations generally reflect God's Way. This is almost everyone's assumption. Yet, while God does, in fact, establish and remove nations—and leaders—this is not His world! This is why the Bible foretells the arrival of a **SUPERGOVERNMENT** to replace the confused, competing, inefficient and ineffective governments of men that are so powerless to solve *any* of the world's biggest problems.

Look at the governments of this world. Generally, there are three types—monarchies, dictatorships and democracies. Monarchies involve nobility—royalty—where bloodline is the key to succession of power. When a king or queen dies, a prince or princess ascends the throne. This cycle can last for centuries. History records that monarchies are almost always replaced, either violently or peacefully, with the king or queen often allowed to retain minimal power.

Dictatorships and totalitarian governments are usually created through violence—by coup or revolution. They are often short-lived, with something similar replacing them.

Democracies and republics are collaborative or representative. Leaders are elected, and represent “the will of the people.” This involves a voting or balloting process to select one candidate in preference to others. This form is generally considered the best of men’s governments. Yet the great 20th-century British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, called democracy “the *worst* form of government *except [for] all the other[s]...*” This is a startling admission from an insider.

But, as bad as democracies may be, they are far better than any other form of government—when it is in the hands of men. Democracy at least attempts to ensure more individual “freedoms” than other kinds of humanly devised government.

In the end, however, *none* of man’s governments work either very well or for very *long*.

Consider. God is today revealing His truth to people who are citizens of many nations on Earth, and *most* of these are privileged to enjoy the freedoms of a democracy. They probably once participated in local, state or national elections.

This question arises: Should the new Christian continue to vote and participate in the politics of his country?

A Christian is one who follows—who copies—Jesus Christ. (Read I Peter 2:21 and Philippians 2:5.) Again, would Jesus participate in the politics of men? What does the Bible teach about voting to select leaders—either in national governments or in men’s churches? And what about the Church that Jesus built?

Recognize that Christ understands the *origin* of the governments

of this world and who leads them. So must you.

Where did the governments of men come from? Who is behind them—who *guides* them? What is the source of the strife and competition in today’s world? Is this God’s world—reflecting His Way, and His direction and guidance?

Most religionists and churchmen blindly assume it is. Thus, they conclude that if, as they usually put it, “All Christians work together, in love and unity, to make this world and its governments a safer and better place for everyone—or for democracy and freedom, as some emphasize—we can bring peace, happiness and prosperity to all.” Many naively believe that if they can “fix the world”—or even just improve it—they can usher in God’s kingdom on Earth. Also, and even more naive, is that many believe they can influence governments to become more godly.

This is fantasy—a completely wrong view, and it is not what God expects—or wants. Nowhere did Jesus say, “Go into the world and strive to make it a better place by becoming *part* of it.” He said, “Go you into all the world, and *preach the gospel*” (Mark 16:15)—about His coming government—and “all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). And the Bible also commands, “Come out from among them [the world], and be you separate” (II Cor. 6:17), and further, speaking of society’s Babylonish ways, “Come *out* of her, My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4).

World punishment lies just ahead for those who carelessly reject God’s plain Word.

This world is a condemned building. Built on a *wrong foundation* from the beginning, its weak underpinnings have eroded to the point of collapse under its own weight. It will soon be demolished,

scraped away and replaced by a vastly better world and government—one *infinitely* better than the best parts of men’s governments *put together!*

Christ did not come to fix or make *this* world better. He announced a future, better world, made possible because of His government! His true followers are preparing themselves to participate in *that* government.

Blind, deceived men think they can bring about the kingdom of God through human effort. They see certain evil forces at work and feel compelled to “do something about it.” They assume Jesus would be an “activist” striving to “make the world a better place.” Be honest! Haven’t you heard this, and probably *many* times? Haven’t you heard preachers urge people to “get involved” or “take a stand”—or some similar thing—to help improve national or even world problems?

Again we ask: Is *this* God’s world? Does HE want Christians to “make the world into a better place”? These are crucial questions.

The Great Deceiver

The Bible speaks of Satan who “deceives the *whole* world” (Rev. 12:9). It says, “the *whole* world.” This is a staggering statement—but there it is in your Bible!

How is it *possible* that the devil can deceive almost *7 billion people*? Does he work primarily through human agents—or influence in other ways? More crucial questions. This verse concludes, “He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:9). It says, “*his* angels.” These fallen angels, subordinate to Satan, play their own role.

For now, let’s focus on one aspect of the enormous understanding within this passage.

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Europe's Greek Crisis

A Sign of Things to Come?

Greece's fiscal turmoil forced unprecedented European intervention.
Where will this ultimately lead?

BY KEVIN D. DENEE



SEA OF PEOPLE: Demonstrators gather in Athens during a 24-hour general strike to protest the government's austerity plan to address the country's debt crisis (March 11, 2010).

PHOTO: ARIS MESSINIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

AS ONE OF the most traded currencies, the euro is a reserve currency second only to the U.S. dollar, with more banknotes in circulation than any other.

Yet in recent years the European Union and much of the rest of the world have faced financial turmoil. For the Continent, the Great Recession is reported to be the biggest economic contraction since the 1930s.

European Council President Herman Van Rompuy had strong words for the EU, warning in January 2010 that Europe's economic "long-term outlook is not bright."

The Irish Times reported that "... Mr Van Rompuy said the union will have to double its average growth rate to 2 per cent 'if we want to keep up with the rest of the world, and with our self-image'... Addressing a meeting of Germany's Christian Social Union party, he also said a new 10-year economic strategy for the EU will have to include measures that would *bind* governments to their policy commitments" (emphasis added).

With stronger member-nations demanding fiscal responsibility for poor-performing countries at the risk of expulsion, what stands in the way of Europe keeping up with the rest of the world as an economic powerhouse?

Recent developments reveal the answer.

Greece on the Brink

The early months of 2010 spelled economic disaster for Greece. Following

the Mediterranean nation's admission of financial distress, public outrage resulted in repeated strikes in Athens and Thessaloniki.

More than 20,000 demonstrators walked off their jobs for a one-day general strike in protest of a plan to save some \$6.7 billion through wage freezes or cuts for government workers, increased taxes, raising the retirement age from 61 to 63 by 2015, and higher gasoline prices.

The New York Times reported that the Greek government was "under intense pressure to plug a budget deficit estimated at 12.7 percent of gross domestic product and to avert the first national default among the 16 countries that use the euro."

The latest EU member to announce a major financial crisis, Greece needed about \$73 billion to combat its bloated budget deficit and had asked for financial assistance from other countries. Due to concerns that the nation may default, ratings agency Standard & Poor's downgraded its debt to "junk" level, making it a much riskier place to invest. This, in turn, raised fears that it would not meet conditions required to access the funds it needs to make looming debt repayments should the bailout loans be granted.

The news lowered the value of the euro and brought into question the sustainability of a united European currency. "Most euro zone countries oppose going to the International Monetary Fund for reasons of political prestige and to avoid any admission that EU budget discipline rules have failed," *Reuters* reported. The EU prohibits countries such as Germany and France from putting together a strictly financial bailout package.

According to *BBC News*, while visiting French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou "pledged to 'take any necessary measures' to reduce Greece's deficit."

"The uncertainty has recently buffeted the euro and the problems have extended to Spain and Portugal, which are also struggling with their deficits. The possibility of Greece or one of the

other stricken countries being unable to pay its debts—and either needing an EU bailout or having to abandon the euro—has been called the biggest threat yet to the single currency" (ibid.).

Expelling Eurozone Countries?

In March 2010, addressing the German parliament, Chancellor Angela Merkel said European Union rules should be amended to expel countries that exceed the debt limit established for member-states.

"In the future, we need an entry in the [Lisbon] Treaty that would make it possible, as a last resort, to exclude a country from the eurozone if the conditions are not fulfilled again and again over the long term," the German chancellor said. "Otherwise co-operation is impossible" (*EUobserver*).

BBC News reported, "For the German chancellor...what is important is defending the stability of the currency, not solidarity, not a belief that the eurozone would inevitably expand. It might not. It might even contract. The German leader wants a treaty change to allow for expulsions."

The EU's Stability and Growth Pact sets debt and deficit limits at 3 percent of gross domestic product. Yet some European nations are well beyond this requirement. For example, Greece's 2010 financial deficit was as high as 15 percent—five times higher than EU regulations permit.

Countries routinely miss the fiscal goals set out by the Stability and Growth Pact, an agreement the European Union adopted in 1997. According to the European Commission, however, of 14 EU member-states assessed, only four—Bulgaria, Estonia, Sweden and Finland—kept their general government deficits below 3 percent of GDP in 2009.

"Ms. Merkel is demanding new measures to beef up the euro-zone's rules for disciplining a wayward member, a move that some see as a step toward tighter economic integration in the group," *The Wall Street Journal* reported. "Others read the push as a signal that Germany is merely seeking greater control over other govern-

ments' fiscal policy, while refusing to deepen its own commitment to the common European cause."

Another factor to consider in this crisis is that the public's opinion matters, especially in countries such as Germany and Greece. As mentioned, protests, some violent, occurred when the Greek government tried to correct its fiscal instability. On the other hand, many hundreds of miles away, a poll revealed that a majority of Germans did not support bailing out the Mediterranean country.

With Greece and other nations still on the brink of financial insolvency, what will boil over first—the anger of the residents of the country at risk or the resentment from citizens of lender nations?

Outside Help

If Greece had defaulted, it would have been a great blow to the euro. The powers-that-be understood this and produced a rescue package in late March 2010 intended to avoid the imminent collapse.

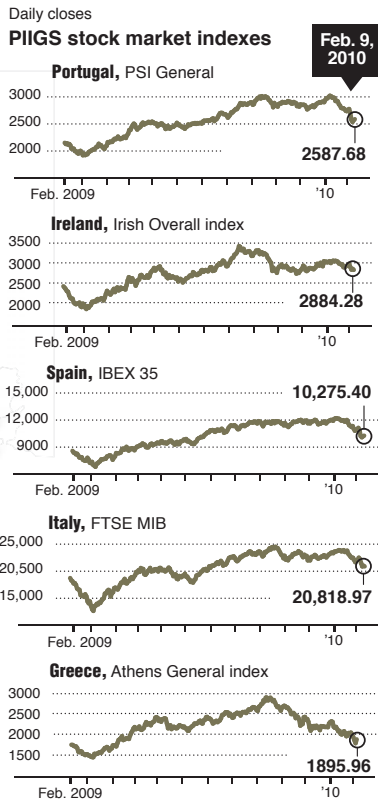
Early in the discussion, there was talk that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should step in and assist Greece. But many disliked this solution because such a bailout was seen to be a sign of weakness, and highlighted Europe's inability to solve its own problems.

Ultimately, the IMF was included in the final proposal. *Agence France-Presse* reported, "The deal, inked by heavyweights Germany and France, ended weeks of EU bickering and opened a new chapter in eurozone history—allowing the Washington-based International Monetary Fund, to have a say in euro affairs for the first time in the euro's 11-year existence."

Paris-based BNP Paribas, one of the largest banking groups in the world, told *AFP*, "The agreement involving the IMF may be good news for Greece in the near term but bad news for EMU (economic and monetary union) in the medium term... The inability of European authorities to find a European solution to a problem that concerns 2.5 percent of EMU

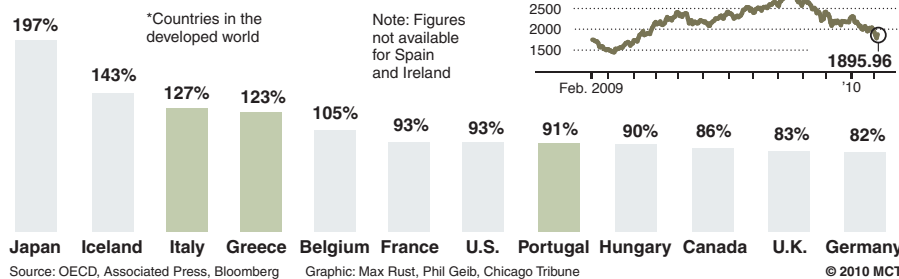
Keeping an eye on the PIIGS

Recent stock market declines in PIIGS countries—Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain—could potentially weaken global markets.



Most indebted countries*

Estimated national debt as percentage of GDP, 2010



GDP (gross domestic product) can weaken the euro area.”

Surely, some European power players are not pleased that the EU looked for outside assistance. Will the Continent learn from this, taking a stronger approach the next time a nation nears financial collapse?

Not Just a Greek Problem

Greece is not the only European country that faces fiscal trouble. With the EU confronting its biggest recession since the 1930s, economies across Europe are shrinking: Spain is down 3.6 percent in 2009, Portugal 2.7 percent and Ireland 7.5 percent—not to mention other nations’ shaky growth outlooks for 2010 and future years.

Spain recently lost its AAA rating, and unemployment in the nation is at 19 percent, with 4 million people out of work. Although the nation recently enjoyed a huge economic boom, finan-

cial analysts now claim Spain may experience a “lost decade.”

Portugal is attempting to make fiscal adjustments by freezing government salaries, reducing social benefits and delaying public investment to combat its own financial woes.

In past fiscal crises, a country could temporarily devalue its currency to bring increased foreign capital. With the euro, however, other countries and economies are at stake. In such situations, countries need growth. But it is near impossible for a nation to provide stimulus to another country when it is trying to reduce spending!

Competition is another factor. Europe has to compete with Asia, which has lower labor costs and countries that rely less on each other’s mutual economic success.

Since the eurozone is locked into one market, where different types of workers compete with each other, it can

be difficult for “efficient” countries—such as Germany—as lower-performing member-states can pull down the union’s overall competitive ability.

During the Greek crisis, *AFP* reported that EU leaders pointed fingers across national lines: “French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde got the ball rolling...when she questioned German economic policy, suggesting its hefty trade surplus was a burden for eurozone partners.

“German Economy Minister Rainer Bruederle hit back on Tuesday.

““For countries, which in the past have lived off entitlements and neglected their competitiveness, to point their finger at others is politically...understandable, but still unfair,” he told the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* daily.”

In brief, Germans or other EU citizens, at some point may feel it is no longer in their best interest to help those who have “lived off entitlements and neglected their competitiveness”—especially when that sense of entitlement and lack of competition could bring down others in the EU.

Future Actions

A paper produced by *Stratfor*, a resource of geopolitical intelligence, brought the following chilling comments regarding Germany’s response to the Greek situation: “What made us look at this in a new light was an interview with German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schauble on March 13 in which he essentially said that if Greece, or any other eurozone member, could not right their finances, they should be ejected from the eurozone... Germany now appears prepared not just to contemplate, but to *publicly* contemplate, the re-engineering of Europe for its own interests. It may not do it, or it may not do it now, but it has now been said, and that will change Germany’s relationship to Europe” (emphasis added).

“The paradigm that created the European Union—that Germany would be harnessed and contained—is shifting. Germany now has not

Please see **GREEK CRISIS**, page 8



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A Nation Opposing Itself

Where Is America Headed?

The United States is becoming bitterly divided, begging the question:
Where is the country going?

BY ROBERT R. FARRELL

THESE ARE tumultuous times in America. The winds of change are blowing. The passage of the hotly contested healthcare reform bill in March 2010 is just the latest in a series of events that have led the country into uncharted waters.

During the past three years, there has been intervention by the federal government at a level not previously seen in the nation's history. From 2007 to 2009, government intervention in the form of bank bailouts was deemed necessary to correct the subprime mortgage crisis brought on by overinflated rates. This was followed by an auto industry bailout, and then a government overhaul of the healthcare system, which constitutes one-sixth of the United States economy.

These measures have caused discontent over the state of the country. After passing the healthcare bill, only 35 percent of U.S. voters believed that the country was headed in the right direction, according to a Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey.

Supporters of the changes argue they are long overdue, believing that wealth must be redistributed throughout America for poverty to be adequately addressed.

"Inequalities [are] a problem and it has been exacerbated over the last say 20 or 30 years," former democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean said during a *CNBC* morning show interview. He later stated, "I think when it gets out of whack as it did in the 20s and it has now, you need to do some redistribution."

David Leonhardt, a columnist for the *The New York Times* further explained, "In the broadest sense, insurance is

meant to spread the costs of an individual's misfortune—illness, death, fire, flood—across society. Since the late 1970s, though, the share of Americans with health insurance has shrunk. As a result, the gap between the economic well-being of the sick and the healthy has been growing, at virtually every level of the income distribution.

“The health reform bill will reverse that trend. By 2019, 95 percent of people are projected to be covered, up from 85 percent today (and about 90 percent in the late 1970s). Even affluent families ineligible for subsidies will benefit if they lose their insurance, by being able to buy a plan that can no longer charge more for pre-existing conditions. In effect, healthy families will be picking up most of the bill—and their insurance will be somewhat more expensive than it otherwise would have been.”

But the opposition party is not convinced.

“We are about 24 hours from Armageddon,” Republican House minority leader, John Boehner of Ohio, said before the vote. “This health care bill will ruin our country.”

Politics aside, a question looms over the debate: With all of this division, where is America headed?

Healthcare Reform

Before addressing this question, it is crucial to understand the fierce debate over healthcare reform. In a nation of 300 million citizens, over 45 million—approximately one-in-six—do not have health insurance. Additionally, according to an *American Journal of Medicine* study published in 2009, 60 percent of all bankruptcies in the United States in 2007 resulted from medical problems.

“For 92 percent of the medically bankrupt, high medical bills directly contributed to their bankruptcy. Many families with continuous coverage found themselves under-insured, responsible for thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket costs.” On average, medically bankrupt families owed \$17,943 for uncovered medical costs.

Proponents of the system welcome government intervention, maintaining that millions of Americans cannot afford adequate healthcare.

“It is with great humility and with great pride that we tonight will make history for our country and progress for the American people,” Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said to members of the House of Representatives in support of healthcare reform. “Just think—we will be joining those who established Social Security, Medicare, and now tonight health care for all Americans.

“In doing so, we will honor the vows of our founders, who in the Declaration of Independence said that we are ‘endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’ This legislation will lead to healthier lives, more liberty to pursue hopes and dreams and happiness for the American people.”

Meanwhile, opponents of government-controlled healthcare believe the industry should remain largely in the hands of private corporations. They say doing so would enable it to

operate more cost-efficiently and would prevent the government from potentially incurring trillions of dollars of costs it could not afford, especially given the already enormous national debt and budget deficits.

“Most Americans out there aren’t celebrating today,” U.S. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said to the Senate after the healthcare bill passed 219 to 212, with no Republican support. “They’re dumfounded by the fact that Congress just passed this 2,685-page monstrosity against their wishes, on the backs of their children and grandchildren, who they know will have to pick up the tab.”

“The fact is, this bill spends \$2.6 trillion at a time of near double digit inflation while putting the real problem off for another day. It kicks the can down the road.”

After the vote, Republicans vowed to repeal it if they win the Congressional majority in the 2010 elections.

In an editorial in the *National Review* following the healthcare vote, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney wrote that the “health-care bill is unhealthy for America. It raises taxes, slashes the more private side of Medicare, installs price controls, and puts a new federal bureaucracy in charge of health care. It will create a new entitlement even as the ones we already have are bankrupt. For these reasons and more, the act should be repealed. That campaign begins today.” At least 39 states have prepared legislation to allow its citizens to “opt-out” of paying for healthcare. At the same time, the government and its supporters are pressing ahead with its implementation.

What will this division do to the nation?

Disappearance of Bipartisanship

America’s government has long valued a spirit of bipartisanship. Members of its two main parties, Democrats and Republicans, would regularly set aside their political differences and work together on projects deemed to be in the national interest.

But the spirit of bipartisanship is rapidly dying. On almost every matter, there is bitter division between Democrats and Republicans—with each holding their ground—quickly becoming implacable foes. In this poisoned atmosphere, long-time members of the House of the Representatives and the Senate as well as political analysts are concerned about the unprecedented lack of cooperation.

“In terms of partisan conflict, we’ve never really seen anything like this and it’s really shocking for a country that by and large has hung its hat on moderation—compromise between conservatives and liberals,” Marc Hetherington, a professor of political science at Vanderbilt University said in an interview with *Macleans*. “If you take a look at data in terms of the divisions between Republicans and Democrats specifically, you’d have to go back to Reconstruction in the 20 or 30 years after the Civil War.”

This accusative spirit is infecting the country. During the healthcare debate, opponents of the measure repeatedly accused the government of possessing and executing an agenda that does not take into account the interests of the

nation. This prompted the government to respond that it is actually the *opposition* that is forcing its own political ideology.

More and more, Congress seems to be firmly split down party lines on every issue.

Freedom-loving People

From the country's formative years, when Americans fought for independence from Britain, they have treasured the values of initiative, innovation, self-reliance, risk-taking and hard work. Government was necessary largely to protect its citizens and ensure that law and order prevailed. Many believed, and still do, that its involvement in the economy—and in the lives of citizens—should be minimal.

“Two-thirds of Americans are ‘dissatisfied’ or downright ‘angry’ about the way the federal government is working, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll. On average, the public estimates that 53 cents of every tax dollar they send to Washington is ‘wasted’” (*The Washington Post*).

The article continued, “Overall, two-thirds of all those polled are dissatisfied with or angry about the way the government works, the highest number to say so in periodic polling since March 1996. Eight in 10 conservative Republicans hold negative views about the way government works, but by contrast, 59 percent of liberal Democrats said they were

‘enthusiastic’ or ‘satisfied’ about the role government was playing” (ibid.).

Americans cannot seem to agree on anything, whether it is morality, history, culture, politics or how to address national issues. Other contentious arguments are raging over immigration reform, “cap and trade,” energy policy, student loans, abortion and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Whatever policy the government implements, the opposition fights—and whatever the opposition proposes, the government opposes.

A House Divided

In the current contentious environment, both sides often comment about God. National leaders regularly speak about their “faith” and frequently throw in a “God bless America” at the end of speeches. At the same time, the contents of their talks are usually laced with venomous comments about the opposition party.

Additionally, a large section of the voting population will demand that America must recapture its Judeo-Christian roots. But the citizenry is divided. The opposing camp wants nothing to do with religion, thinking that through human reasoning, we can survive our troubles and prosper.

Neither side, however, will honestly look to what God warns is always the end result of outright division: “And if a kingdom be *divided* against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be *divided* against itself, that house CANNOT STAND” (Mark 3:24-25).

Similarly, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

The answer is a resounding NO. A nation of division, backbiting, infighting and vehement partisanship cannot stand!

Rarer still is the person who asks what side God would take in polarized America. However surprising, God is neither right-wing nor left-wing, nor is He interested in taking political sides. What God is interested in is obedience to His laws. In this, America is failing. Adultery, fornication, lying, cheating, stealing, murder, violence and strife are epidemic throughout the country—among conservatives and liberals alike.

“Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a *reproach* to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

Realize. Every problem in America stems directly from disobedience to divine Law!

Yet to the obedient nation God promises peace and abundance. “If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit...And I will give you peace” (Lev. 26:3-4, 6).

A nation in harmony with God's Law will be at peace. Without it, a country cannot stand.

For a clearer picture of where America is headed, read David C. Pack's book *America and Britain in Prophecy*. □

GREEK CRISIS

Continued from page 5

only found its voice, it is beginning to express, and hold to, its own national interest. A political consensus has emerged in Germany against bailing out Greece. Moreover, a political consensus has emerged in Germany that the rules of the eurozone are Germany's to refashion. As the European Union's anchor member, Germany has a very good point.

But this was not the ‘union’ the rest of Europe signed up for—it is the Mitteleuropa that the rest of Europe will remember well” (ibid.).

Shifts are occurring in Europe! This latest crisis has revealed that national interests come first. The Greek crisis also revealed that other countries will only tolerate financial irresponsibility for so long.

But what about the next crisis? What will happen if things get worse?

World trends coupled with Bible prophecy reveal that Europe has a

fascinating and dramatic future. The Continent *will* keep up with the rest of the world, allaying Mr. Van Rompuy's concern that Europe's “long-term outlook is not bright.”

The profile of the united states of Europe will certainly shift, with some countries coming and going. What is certain is that Europe will continue to grow in world prominence.

Keep watching.

To learn more about Europe's past, present and future, read “Out of the Ashes – The Rise of Europe.” □



The Human Problem

Would the Planet Be Better Off Without Us?

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

IN A 2004 Hollywood thriller about the catastrophic effects of a climate gone haywire, the heroes face tidal waves, sudden deep freezes and other threats due to manmade weather upsets. Eventually, the worst is over and humanity prepares to rebuild, triumphant as usual.

The closing scene features two astronauts in the International Space Station looking down at an Earth that is icebound from the North Pole nearly to the Tropic of Cancer. Millions or billions have evidently perished, but the planet now has a pristine atmosphere with no visible pollution. Earth has healed itself. One of the astronauts comments on how beautiful this picture is.

The film, which grossed half a billion dollars worldwide despite being discredited by some for scientific inaccuracy, ends with what amounts to a harsh criticism of how mankind affects the earth.

But is a half-emptied planet with better air quality heartwarming?

More recently, a popular television series has theorized what the planet would be like “after people.” It depicts nature reclaiming cities, presumably after humans are extinct. Buildings decay and collapse, while meadows, wetlands and forests reappear.

This raises the uncomfortable question: Are *we* the problem? Would an Earth without human beings be a better place?

Sobering Track Record

Those who take a long look at mankind’s treatment of the planet have reason to be discouraged.

Widespread use of coal as fuel began to affect air quality in the early second millennium AD. With the Industrial Revolution, the environment in Europe’s largest cities began to deteriorate rapidly. At its worst, smog (smoke mixed with fog) choked

the urban areas, sometimes killing scores or even hundreds of residents at a time.

By the mid-1800s, London and other factory-dense cities in Britain were nicknamed the Big Smoke. Ash would literally rain from the sky, soiling clothing and layering the landscape in grime. At the same time, mass dumping of human waste into the River Thames led to the phenomenon called “the Big Stink,” with London enveloped in a near-intolerable stench.

Fast-forward to the modern world. In any populated area, the signs of human impact are now unavoidable.

Heavy use of nitrogen- and phosphorus-based fertilizers along the Mississippi River has created a “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico—an area in which the water’s oxygen levels are too low to support a body of water’s normal flora and fauna. This zone’s size is estimated to be up to 7,000 square miles, larger than the state of Connecticut. Other dead zones are found on the Oregon coast, Lake Erie, Chesapeake Bay and the Baltic and Black Seas in Europe.

The waters of Puget Sound, next to coffee-fueled Seattle, are literally

caffeinated, as wastewater treatment plants cannot remove all of this stimulant. In similar fashion, female hormones, a byproduct of birth control pill use, now contaminate rivers and streams, sometimes leading to infertility in male fish.

Due to Midwest pollution snaking its way up to Maine and out to the Atlantic, causing acid rain, some lakes in New York’s storied Adirondack State Park are no longer able to support fish populations. While this is a relatively small number of the region’s abundant lakes, this is a reminder that man’s activity can touch even the most seemingly remote and pristine places—from a distance.

Further north, the stunning blue-green waters of Lake Louise in Canada’s Banff National Park, a renowned symbol of the nation’s natural beauty, are now shadowed by “unsafe to drink” signs.

Not even the deep ocean is safe. The Eastern Garbage Patch, considered the world’s largest “landfill,” is a floating collection of marine debris, including plastics and chemical waste, swirling in the North Pacific. It is estimated to be the size of Texas.

Environmental Disasters

The impact of such gradual, long-term damage seems minor in comparison to single events that have redefined man’s ability to scar the planet.

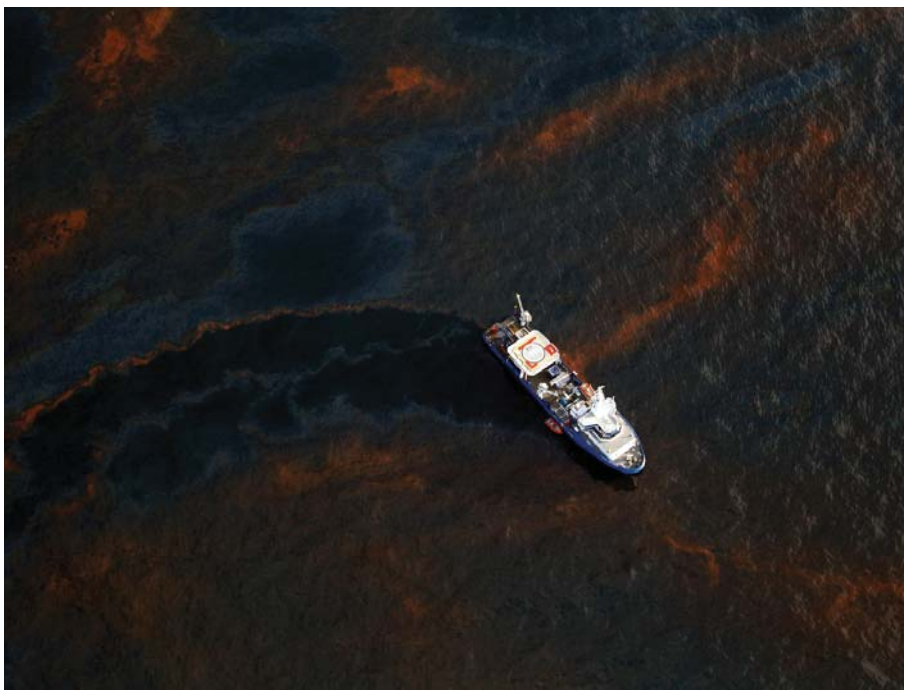
Prince William Sound, Alaska, 1989: The oil spill caused by an Exxon oil tanker, the Valdez, off the coast of Alaska was one of the watershed moments for the environmentalist cause. News footage of live and dead birds covered in dark brown crude oil shocked America. The Valdez leaked nearly 11 million gallons of oil, about a fifth of the ship’s petroleum payload. Over 1,100 miles of coastline were affected by a slick that spread over 11,000 square miles. The cleanup lasted for years, requiring thousands of workers.

Chernobyl, Ukraine, 1986: When a reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear plant exploded, it sent xenon, iodine, cesium and other radioactive materials into the air and eventually the groundwater in Ukraine as well as Russia and Belarus. Thirty workers died in the immediate aftermath of the accident, but its effects still linger today. Thyroid cancer among children in the region is common, and a high percentage of babies are born with partial or missing limbs.

Bhopal, India, 1984: In history’s worst environmental disaster, a chemical plant leaked massive amounts of methyl isocyanate into the air, killing 20,000 in the short term and leaving behind long-term health effects for local Indians. “Blind, lame, limbs twisted or missing, deafmute, brain-damaged, with hare-lips, cleft palates, webbed fingers, cerebral palsy, tumors where should be eyes, these are Bhopal’s children. The living children. The still-born often cannot be recognized as human” (*The Bhopal Medical Appeal*).

One Bhopal resident recalled the scene as noxious fumes filled the air.

“It felt like somebody had filled our bodies up with red chilies, our eyes tears coming out, noses were watering, we had froth in our mouths. The coughing was so bad that people were writhing in pain. Some people just got up and ran in whatever they were



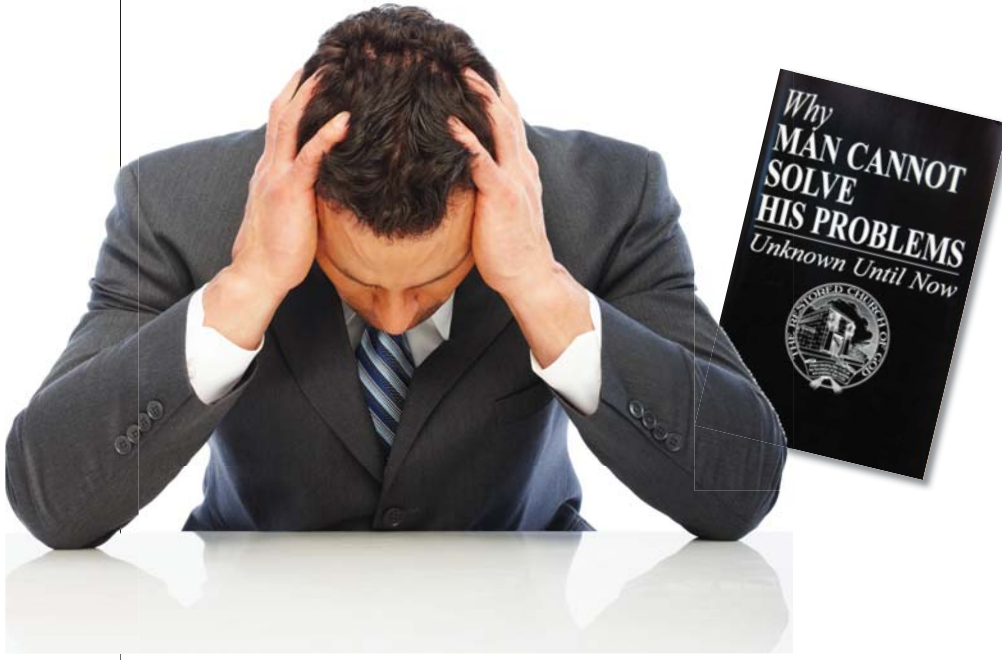
■ **BURN OFF:** A boat makes its way through crude oil that has leaked from the Deepwater Horizon wellhead in the Gulf of Mexico near New Orleans, Louisiana (April 28, 2010).

PHOTO: CHRIS GRAYTHEN/GETTY IMAGES

Have You Had Enough?

Human suffering, violence, war, unhappiness

Learn why man cannot solve his problems
www.thercg.org/books/uun.html



wearing or even if they were wearing nothing at all. Somebody was running this way and somebody was running that way, some people were just running in their underclothes. People were only concerned as to how they would save their lives so they just ran.

“Those who fell were not picked up by anybody, they just kept falling, and were trampled on by other people. People climbed and scrambled over each other to save their lives—even cows were running and trying to save their lives and crushing people as they ran.’ In those apocalyptic moments no one knew what was happening. People simply started dying in the most hideous ways...The force of the human torrent wrenched children’s hands from their parents’ grasp. Families were whirled apart” (ibid.).

“To dress it and to keep it”

According to the Bible, the Creator of man intended that he exercise steward-

ship over the planet He had renewed. “And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15).

Has humanity “kept” the earth?

The case can be made that prosperous nations such as the United States, Canada and some European states have made progress.

London eventually passed legislation to limit air pollution, after a number of mass fatalities. The Environmental Protection Agency was established by the United States government in 1970 to clean up existing problems and regulate industry to prevent excessive pollution. University researchers have been able to revive some dead lakes in northern New York by adding “antacid” solutions.

Yet governments have searched in vain for the proper *balance* between necessary *use* of the earth and *abuse* of its resources, generally falling into one

of the two extreme positions of nature worship or rapacious greed.

Meanwhile, debate among citizens rages: “We are not doing enough to save the earth!”—“No! *Too much* money is being spent on environmental causes!”—“But we are ruining the planet!”—“Taxpayers’ money should not be spent on things like crosswalks for salamanders!”

Hope for the Future

Beyond the politics of the issue is the ultimate question. Is human extinction in our future? Will Hollywood’s fantasies become reality?

Can we know?

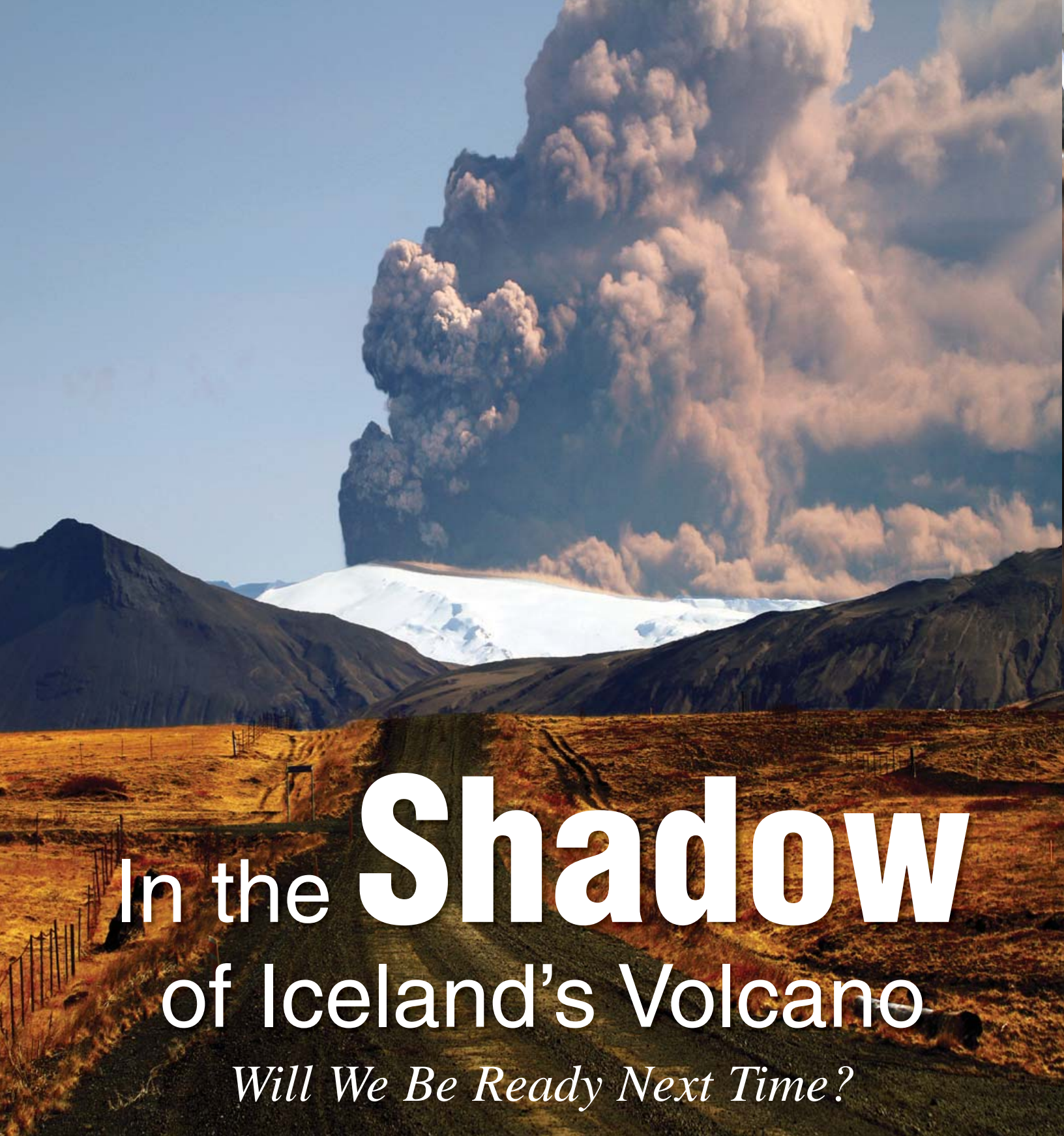
Looking at present conditions too closely, for too long, can provoke gloom. There is no doubt that humanity does possess destructive—ultimately *self-destructive*—tendencies. Its capacity for creativity and progress comes with a strong negative undertow.

With even the most well-meaning plans, shortsighted thinking can lead to unforeseen consequences, whether of harvesting trees or building a combustion engine to power an automobile.

The heart of the problem is that mankind, as a whole, does not truly acknowledge an authority greater than itself. While many profess to follow a “Higher Power,” the vast majority will not change their lives in order to submit to that Power. As a result, humanity has no guidance, and is forced to learn many painful lessons the hard way—by trial and error.

For those who believe and understand the Bible—assumed by many, but proven by few, to be the Word of God—there is hope for the future. Despite stockpiles of weapons and the threat of “mutually assured destruction,” God will not allow humankind to be erased! But prophecy makes plain that the worst of times are ahead of us, followed by the very best of times.

If you would like to learn about an alternative to the hard path of trial and error—found in the Bible—read our booklet *Bible Authority... Can It Be Proven?* □



In the **Shadow** of Iceland's Volcano

Will We Be Ready Next Time?

With planes back in the air after the volcanic-ash-cloud flight ban, many in Europe are left awed by the mysterious power of nature. But can scientists discover a way to predict and prevent the next devastating eruption?



■ **MENACING MAMMOTH:** Opposite page, the Eyjafjallajökull volcano shoots a massive ash cloud over Iceland after erupting on April 14, 2010. Left, passengers queue inside the Roissy Charles de Gaulle Airport outside Paris (April 16, 2010). Top right, passengers rest on cots inside John F. Kennedy International Airport following flight disruptions (April 20, 2010). Bottom left, two stranded French passengers hug inside the same airport (April 20, 2010). Bottom right, passengers line up outside the Air France ticket sales office in Paris after their flights were cancelled (April 19, 2010). PHOTOS: SVERRIR THOR (OPPOSITE PAGE), THOMAS COEX/AFP/ (LEFT), MARIO TAMA/ (TOP RIGHT), PATRICK KOVARIK/AFP/ (BOTTOM LEFT), MARIO TAMA/ (BOTTOM RIGHT) GETTY IMAGES

THE RELATIVELY minor eruption of Iceland’s 200-year-dormant Eyjafjallajökull volcano was all it took to bring the entire European continent and various parts of the world to a standstill.

The volcano, which pushed house-sized ice chunks into fields, flooded farmland, covered homes with ash, and turned the sky pitch black during daylight hours, generated an ash cloud that covered most of Europe.

Given the threat of ash particles clogging plane engines, more than 20 European governments declared their countries no-fly zones for almost six days—double the length of the post-September 11 closures—causing unprecedented aviation disruptions for more than 1 million passengers.

“We are so used to this idea of knowing exactly what’s going on and being in control of stuff,” one stranded passenger told *The Telegraph*. “We are

used to the idea of getting on a plane and going anywhere [we] want at the drop of a hat.”

Although annoyed, many travelers tried to make the best of the situation, passing the extra hours catching up on work or reading.

But when scientists speculated the eruption could last for up to two years, people grew anxious to return home.

As days passed and economic losses added up to more than \$3 billion, Europe’s “minor volcano” began to turn into a major problem. The Continent braced for the worst.

Yet six surreal days later, the winds changed, the clouds cleared, and airports sputtered back to life, halls once again filling with more than a million homebound vacationers. It appeared that everything was back to business as usual.

Scientists, though, remain skeptical. “It’s normal for eruptions to start energetically and then to become quieter

with time, at which point lava flows are effused,” Open University Professor Dr. Dave McGarvie told *The Daily Mail*. “But—and it’s a big but—eruptions like this can have a number of cycles, and so we could see another cycle start with a renewal of explosive activity at any time.”

In an era where the global economy depends on aircraft crisscrossing the planet to meet the demands of an ever-growing, interconnected society, the situation demonstrates humanity’s inability to fight the tremendous power of nature.

A Continent Grounded

For almost a week, natural forces seemed to hold European skies hostage. The continent was forced to admit it was defenseless against the volcano.

British airspace closed for the first time since World War II. London’s Heathrow Airport, the world’s busiest international transportation hub, shut

down. Close to 100,000 canceled flights worldwide left thousands of irritated passengers on standby for days.

Beleaguered airlines, facing \$200-million-daily losses, struggled to accommodate tired passengers, who complained they could not afford another night's hotel stay after their week-long vacations left them broke.

Frustrated with wasting time rescheduling flights, other travelers resorted to alternative methods, converting bus stations into refugee camps and turning train depots into hostels, with more than 50,000 extra riders cramming into railway cars.

Denmark's prime minister, stranded in New York City, was forced to run his nation via email on a wireless device, while other leaders, including the German Prime Minister and Commander of the United States and NATO forces in Afghanistan, took day-long car rides to attend briefings. Even fighter jets were unable to take to the skies, after a senior diplomat reported that several NATO F-16s sustained engine damage from the ash—leaving Europe indefensible militarily as there exist “no available systems for airborne detection of volcanic ash, and aircraft weather radar cannot detect volcanic ash because the particle size is too small,” according to NASA.

As the better part of Europe was virtually dragged into the pre-Wright brothers days of ships, trains and automobiles, British naval vessels, cruiseliners and ferries trekked across the English Channel to repatriate thousands of stranded Britons from northern Spain.

Travel delays not only affected those in Europe, but other parts of the world suffered logistical and economic consequences.

Up to 1,000 travelers—some of which had not bathed for five days—used 36 showers on trailers trucked into New York City's airport (renamed “Camp Kennedy”) tried to get rest on cots set up in front of duty-free stores and food courts. City officials said the erupting volcano could cost the city \$250 million in tourism revenue given that approximately 12,000 European

When volcanoes erupt

Major hazards of volcanic eruptions, which can endanger people and property for hundreds of miles:

Ash fall

- Ash clouds can extend over large area; falling ash can collapse buildings, damage crops, electronics and machinery



- Fluorine in ash particles can poison grazing animals



Landslides

- Triggered when eruptions, rainfall or earthquakes cause rocks, snow or ice to break free; changes area's terrain



Lahars or mudflows

- Can rip up trees, houses, boulders; bury everything in path with mud; one of the deadliest hazards



Lava flows

- Molten rock; destroys everything in its path
- High-speed avalanches of very hot ash (pyroclastic flows) tend to follow valleys; can burn everything in path

Ash clouds

- Columns rise and expand rapidly, forming ash clouds
- Serious hazard to planes



Tephra or rock fragments

- Fragments of volcanic ash (glass, minerals and rock less than 0.1 in. [2.5 mm] across) rise, forming an eruption column
- Large rock fragments (bombs) usually fall within 2 mi. (3.2 km) of volcano

Volcanic gases

- Most are steam; sulfur dioxide can react with water vapor to cause acid rain, which harms vegetation
- Carbon dioxide trapped in low areas can kill people, animals

© 2010 MCT
Source: U.S. Geological Survey
Graphic: Pat Carr, Lee Hulteng

travelers who spend an estimated \$3 million a day—half of the city's tourist revenue—were unable to fly.

Exotic fish rotted in their crates as fishermen were unable to export to international consumers. The price of oil dropped due to decreased demand for jet fuel. FedEx and UPS, with hubs in Germany and France, all but stopped airmail operations.

The Globe and Mail reported that the situation caused international turmoil.

“In Britain, the biggest supermarket chains said some fresh foods will go missing from shelves as imports from Africa and Asia can't make it in. European flower shops everywhere may soon have scant offerings because hundreds of tonnes of Kenyan flowers destined for the export market lie rotting. And logistics companies warned that the freight logjam could hurt manufacturers that rely on steady air cargo deliveries.”

“Even airlines based far from the ash face a financial knock-on effect,” a *CNN* report stated. “Thai Airways, based in Bangkok, estimates the cloud is costing the airline \$3 million a day and has stranded 6,000 of its passengers.” United Arab Emirates reported similar losses, after canceling more than 30 flights and booking about 3,500 hotel rooms for stranded passengers.

Airline executives estimate that without government intervention, dozens of airlines could be bankrupt by month’s end, putting further financial pressure on already-fragile economies attempting to eke back from the Great Recession’s effects.

More than \$3 billion lost worldwide—all because of a volcano that even the most-advanced technology is powerless to stop.

Caught Off Guard

Europe, and the world, can only adapt to the newly realized volcanic threat, with limited options.

But placing more sensors on a mountain and having a thorough evacuation plan will not save residents. Nothing can assuage a volcanic eruption or its subsequent effects.

Even aviation experts admit that no technology exists to even accurately detect the ash, let alone successfully fly through it. Is this really a problem that humanity coupled with modern science could ever hope to solve?

Consider. Man can place 400 travelers in an airplane and hurtle them 500 miles per hour across the globe. He can send space probes to Saturn and observe the massive hexagonal storm at its north pole. He can create supercomputers able to process 100 million calculations per second.

Yet many things remain a near mystery. Scientists still do not understand lightning. Any honest television documentary on the subject will always issue the disclaimer, “While the exact reason for the production of lightning is unknown, one theory is...”

The same is true of volcanic eruptions or earthquakes. Try as they might, geologists—even with technological gadgetry of increasing

sophistication—simply cannot understand the inner workings of the earth’s seismic activity.

Science does reveal that Iceland’s volcano can blow at any time and cover Europe again. Worse, Katla, Eyjafjallajökull’s sister mountain—a significantly more powerful volcano—almost always erupts in conjunction with its neighbor. But no one is able to make any pinpoint predictions for the next eruption.

It seems the best anyone can do is brace for the worst.

What About Next Time?

Look back on the chaos of those six days. A little bit of volcanic ash halted a powerful continent, unraveled society’s interdependent web of globalization, and robbed the already-taxed international economy of billions of dollars.

The result of something modern man could not control.

Throughout history, civilizations defied what they did not understand. In Greece, Zeus was thought to throw lightning bolts. Aztec tribes believed human sacrifice could feed and appease their many agricultural gods.

Today is not much different. Governments, businesses and citizens must rely solely on science to aid them as the volcano threat looms. Yet scientists have no way of knowing what will happen in the future!

Humanity fails to comprehend there is a greater power behind Earth’s weather patterns and tectonic activity, as demonstrated throughout history and recorded in the Bible—God’s Word.

While often dismissed as ancient Hebrew literature, this Text reveals what science fails to grasp—the crucial role, both past and future, of earthquakes and the volcanic eruptions often triggered by them.

The Bible shows that God has consistently used seismic activity to show His presence, His deliverance, His wrath and His power.

Yet God will also use volcanoes and earthquakes in the *future* to announce coming events.

In Matthew 24, Jesus told His disciples of the signs that would precede

the end of age. In verse 7, He stated, “and there shall be...*earthquakes, in diverse places.*”

This means earthquakes will take place in various places—scattered throughout the world—and increase in frequency as humanity’s attempts to rule itself reach a climax.

Had earthquakes been as prolific throughout history as they are today, then they would not indicate that the end of the age was near. Yet many scientists acknowledge they are much more common now than at any other time in history—and have the ability to impact more lives.

“Relative to the 20-year period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, the Earth has been more active over the past 15 or so years,” Stephen S. Gao, Missouri University of Science and Technology geophysicist, told *MSNBC*. “We still do not know the reason for this yet.”

Another proof this age is drawing to a close was evidenced once planes took to the sky after the flight ban was lifted. The book of Daniel states in “the time of the end” that “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Dan. 12:4).

Since the dawn of air travel, man has increasingly been able to “run to and fro.” Knowledge in every field of study is rapidly increasing. Ask anyone who grew up during the Great Depression and they will tell you the world is a drastically different place!

Despite incredible advancement, man is unable to reverse the outcome of any natural event.

Without the revealed knowledge or intervention from a Higher Power, the forces of nature, such as the volcano that held Europe and the rest of the world hostage, will continue to rule over him.

The recent Iceland volcano event and its crippling effects were just a foretaste of what is to come. Much larger volcanoes and earthquakes are soon to shake the earth!

To learn more about how this will impact your life, read our special report *Earthquakes and Volcanoes in Prophecy*. □

Volcanoes and Earthquakes Are Increasing—But Why?



■ **COMBING THROUGH DEBRIS:** Chinese soldiers help clean up the rubble caused by the devastating earthquake in Jiegu, Yushu county, in China's northwestern province of Qinghai (April 19, 2010).

PHOTO: LIU JIN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

ON THE MORNING OF April 14, a 6.9-magnitude earthquake struck the Western Chinese province of Qinghai near Tibet, killing more than 2,000 and injuring over 12,000.

Buildings collapsed or were damaged, leaving many trapped. Mud and wood homes, schools, temples and large buildings crumbled. Downed power lines, strong winds, freezing

temperatures, landslides and collapsed bridges leading to the nearest airport hindered rescuers, who were forced to dig through the rubble by hand until aid arrived.

The Asian nation has been an area of seismic activity. On May 12, 2008 in the Sichuan province in southwestern China, an 8.0-magnitude earthquake killed more than 87,000 people. In August 2009, a 6.2-magnitude quake in the same province triggered landslides and collapsed homes.

Then there were the Haiti and Chile quakes and the Iceland volcano, with nearly every other day bringing another disaster-related headline.

Why Is This Happening?

Although earthquakes and volcanoes have claimed millions of lives in the past 500 years, the danger is now greater than ever since the population has dramatically increased during the last two centuries, and some of the world's most earthquake-prone regions have become the most densely populated.

Currently, a worldwide network of seismographs detects about one million small earthquakes annually. In addition, the U.S. Geological Survey predicts about 18 major earthquakes (7.0-7.9-magnitude) and one great earthquake (8.0 or higher) every year.

But soon more powerful earthquakes will shake the earth, awakening giant volcanoes that will affect the security and stability of the whole world! These powerful events will not just alter the face of single mountains, but that of the whole earth!

The Bible foretells that this single greatest period of earthquake and volcanic activity in history lies just ahead. God will use earthquakes, volcanoes and even tsunamis to reveal His presence, His deliverance, His wrath and His power. He will also use them to announce Christ's Return, to accompany prophetic events, and to reshape the earth's surface.

To learn much more about this subject, watch *The World to Come* program "Earthquakes and Volcanoes in Prophecy!" at www.realtruth.org. □



Rio de Janeiro Hope for This Violent City?

As the international spotlight shines on Brazil—a nation experiencing sizeable economic growth—Rio’s worsening gang violence, drug trafficking and expanding slums threaten to tarnish the nation’s progress.

BY SCOTT A. CLARK

BRAZIL’S SECOND-LARGEST city, Rio de Janeiro, will host the upcoming 2014 FIFA World Cup soccer tournament and 2016 Olympic Games, two of the world’s most popular sporting events. As a result, the news media has focused on the nation’s rising poverty and crime rates.

Violence is an everyday occurrence for law enforcement officials and the more than 11 million residents in and around the *favelas*, Rio’s slum areas, which are overrun by heavily armed drug gangs. More than 6,000 people are killed each year, a rate comparable to a war zone.

“The international community has raised serious concerns regarding security in Brazil both prior to and immediately following its winning bid to host the summer Olympic Games in 2016. But the International Olympic Committee (IOC) remains confident that there is ample time for Brazil to tackle its massive crime problems,” an article published by the Council of Hemispheric Affairs stated.

The article continued, “However, if the country hopes to host a successful World Cup in 2014, the timetable obviously must be expedited.”

In the background of every gunfight, police killing and drug deal gone wrong, sits the massive “Christ the Redeemer” statue on a mountain peak just outside the city.

The predominately Catholic nation yearns for peace for Rio de Janeiro.

City officials desire a successful World Cup and Olympic Games. And many citizens hope for the fulfillment of the words of Christ in John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

But Rio remains plagued with violence. And as the iconic statue silently watches crime-ridden scenes play out daily, there seems to be no answer.

As the clock ticks down to the start of these two international events, will the city be able to bring order to its streets?

Snapshot of the Problem

August 21, 2009—the United States Overseas Security Advisory Council rates Rio de Janeiro’s criminal threat level as “critical.” The council warns, “Violent crimes such as murder, rape, kidnapping, carjacking, armed assault, and burglary are a normal part of everyday life” in the city.

■ **RIO SKYLINE:** The 125-foot “Christ the Redeemer” statue overlooks the city from Corcovado hill, just west of the city center and Guanabara Bay, one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

October 17, 2009—14 people die, eight are injured in rival gang warfare. Gun-battles move into non-gang territory. Three police officers die.

February 27, 2010—machine-gun-wielding youth stop traffic at a Rio de Janeiro intersection. Others in their gang ride through on motorcycles, also armed. Teenagers brazenly smoke crack in the open. This is reality at one of North Rio de Janeiro's many street corners—one of which is dubbed the "Corner of Fear" (*The Times*).

These examples of criminal activity paint the picture of a city inundated with violence. Yet many Brazilians are optimistic that Rio can achieve a peaceful, post-Olympic future.

"We told the International Olympic Committee this is not easy and they know that," Rio Governor Sergio Cabral said. "We don't want just to be ready for special days—for that we can put 40,000 police on the streets, I told them we want to get to 2016 and have a peaceful Rio de Janeiro before, during and after the Games" (*Time*).

City's Approach

The current strategy for the local police is to invade the most notorious gang-controlled slums before the 2014 World Cup. Unlike past raids where the police invade, engage and retreat in urban war-like battles, the new approach is to establish a continuous visual presence in 40 of the favelas.

Rocinha is one of Rio's biggest and most troublesome slums, which

crime experts say "could be a huge and bloody battle that could define the city's efforts to squeeze out gangs that have plagued the city for three decades" (*The New York Times*).

This new campaign is an expansion of a police "pacification program" that began in late 2008. The program has met with some setbacks and police have been embarrassed by some particularly violent confrontations.

Shortly after Rio won the Olympic bid, gang members shot down a police helicopter with heavy-caliber weapons, killing two officers. The incident occurred during a violent weekend between rival drug gangs in which 12 people were killed. The body of one young adult was found stuffed in a grocery cart on a busy street.

Despite increased police involvement, the violence is worsening. Can the nation hope to contain the problem?

Real Problem

Scenes of raw human nature, similar to those in Rio de Janeiro, have played out in many great cities of the world, both past and present.

But what most do not realize is that these troubles are not merely drug problems or gang-related—their causes run much deeper, and involve the nature of man.

While many turn to religion and long for the peace promised by the words of Jesus, their hearts are *still* troubled and they are *still* afraid. Although they look to what the sup-

posed statue of Christ represents, they completely miss that the core of the problem in Rio lies within the book He inspired, the Bible.

The New Testament book of James reveals the true reason for Rio's violence: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts" (Jms. 4:1-3).

Rio's violence comes from lust!—a *spiritual* problem ingrained in the nature of man. Manmade *physical* solutions will not—and cannot—stop spiritual problems because they do not address the root cause.

Although the city's situation may seem hopeless, soon the living Jesus Christ will return and a world-ruling "government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, THE PRINCE OF PEACE" (Isa. 9:6).

No longer will citizens have to live in fear, forced to trust in the misguided, though often sincere, solutions of man.

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand *forever*" (Dan. 2:44).

The ushering in of God's kingdom will bring the problems facing Rio de Janeiro and other cities around the world to a screeching halt. A city that has long been a breeding ground for gang-related violence, and an epicenter of drug trade, will soon be transformed into a stable and peaceful area of the globe.

Real change will be enacted, but not by the efforts of man. God's government—and nothing else—will bring this to pass.

For more information, read *Did God Create Human Nature?* and *How World Peace Will Come!* □

■ **ARMED TO THE TEETH:** Military police search for drug traffickers at the Rocinha favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (April 13, 2004).

PHOTO: VANDERLEI ALMEIDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Is 2012 the End?

Millions realize the world is swamped with ever more and greater problems—many proving to be insoluble. Is there hope for mankind *beyond* 2012?

BY DAVID C. PACK

LIKE THE Y2K panic of 2000, 2012 hysteria is all over the Internet—in hundreds of books—and in a \$200 million movie, filled with the usual sensational Hollywood graphics.

No one predicts exactly what will happen in 2012, but according to some, it will be big!—earth-shattering!—and civilization-ending! There are concerns that the entire Earth will be flooded, or burned up by solar flares. The North and South poles may suddenly reverse, wreaking untold havoc on electrical systems. Catastrophic earthquakes may rock the planet, destroying all buildings and opening huge holes in the earth's crust. Chaos will reign. Mankind will come to the *brink* of annihilation.

This end date is supposedly either December 21st or 23rd, 2012. Doomsday authors point to December 21, the winter solstice. But the Mayan calendar, on which this end-of-days theory is based, ends December 23.

What is the origin of these dates—and the truth about 2012?

Mayan Myth

Much of the fantastic stories and hype come from various archaeological and astronomical speculation, as well as mythology and numerological interpretation. In reality, predictions of impending doom and destruction are nowhere to be found in Mayan accounts or in the Mayan Long Count calendar itself. This calendar tracks “Great Cycles” of time, and is one of at least three calendars that the ancient Mayans used. It

is important to note that one particular calendar indicates that December 23, 2012, is the end of the current cycle of time, which began August 13, 3114 BC on the Gregorian calendar. The Mayan calendars state *nothing* of the world coming to an end, or of any cataclysmic events occurring. It states that only the *current* time cycle will end.

To the modern Mayans, including those who study the ancient calendar, 2012 is actually inconsequential. If you traveled to a present-day Mayan community and asked about 2012 and the end of civilization, you would see looks of bewilderment. Modern Mayan sources explain that this calendar was never intended to suggest the world would end in 2012, or any other time.

Still, wild ideas about 2012 abound. The frenzy is worldwide and picking up steam. Will the world come to a violent end on December 21, 2012 as so many believe? Does the Bible in any way validate 2012 as the end of all things?

Disprovable Date

For Christians, the 2012 question begins with what Jesus said about His now-near Return to Earth to establish His world-ruling kingdom: “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.” Christ says that no man knows the time of His Return. This passage, and other similar ones, rule out December 2012 or ANY specific date that people might suggest for Christ’s Return, or even for the end of all things.

Yet this passage does not stop prophecy experts from speaking of the “end of the world,” believing that Earth itself will supposedly be destroyed. This idea stems from a misunderstanding of

Matthew 24:3, in which Christ’s disciples asked Him for signs of the “end of the world.” The Greek word translated *world* means “age.” The disciples were asking when the period of man’s rule would end—and the kingdom of God would be established. They well understood the many Old Testament prophecies that speak of the Messiah setting up the kingdom of God on Earth.

But Matthew 24 does reveal there will be a time of worldwide distress before Christ returns, and that if He did not return, no one would survive. The human race would become extinct *IF* Christ did not return—yet He promises that He will! For those who believe God, this is further proof that 2012 could not possibly end human existence.

The good news is that soon after Christ’s Return and the establishment of the kingdom of God on Earth, all of the suffering you see so often today will disappear. War will be a thing of the past. So will terrorism. Crime will vanish. Children will play safely everywhere. Drugs and alcohol will no longer enslave people. Poverty will be gone. So will illiteracy. Mass healings will occur. A pure language will be used to re-educate the population. Earth’s polluted environment will finally be restored. Air will be clean. Pure drinking water will be abundant. Even the nature of animals will be changed. Joy will literally break out worldwide!

The year 2012 is NOT the end! Do not fear this date. All the hysteria is for nothing! God promises that human beings will never be wiped out.

For more proof about the myth of this supposed end-time date, watch *The World to Come* broadcast “Is 2012 the End?” □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

If Satan has deceived the entire world, how can it be God's world? Since the whole world is deceived—and the apostle John also recorded that “the whole world lies in wickedness” (I John 5:19)—modern civilization cannot be of God. It is in fact cut off from Him. Read Isaiah 59:1-2 and Jeremiah 5:25.

Now, if you do *not* accept Revelation 12:9 as revealed knowledge from God, any hope of personally breaking free of this deception is lost! If you *do*, think for a moment! Worldwide deception would certainly include influence upon, and control over, the human governments of ALL nations.

The “god of this world”

The Bible references the “god of this world”—and it is *not* the God of heaven. Let's read, “The *god of this world* has *blinded* the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel...should shine unto them” (II Cor. 4:4).

Only one being wants to “blind” the world to the truth of the gospel—Satan the devil. Understand. The true gospel is about the kingdom of God. Our booklet *Which Is the True Gospel?* explains how Christ will return, bind and replace the devil, and establish God's kingdom. It is not strange then that Satan wants to hide understanding of this marvelous truth—when he will have been banished from his position of influence.

Three times, Jesus refers to Satan as “the *prince of this world*” (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). These passages reveal that this “prince” will soon be

judged. John 12:31 parallels the world's judgment with Satan's judgment. Why? Because this is HIS world!

But let's make this crystal clear.

Many know something of Jesus' confrontation with the devil while fasting for 40 days. The devil repeatedly *tempted* Him through twisting scripture (one of his favorite devices). At one point, “the devil took Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said unto Him, All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me” (Matt. 4:8-9).

This offer is more unusual than meets the eye! Why? Notice Jesus rebuked Satan, quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, and answered, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve” (Matt. 4:10). Yet, at no point did Jesus correct the devil, with, “These kingdoms are NOT yours to give” or “Who do you think you are, offering Me what is already God's?” Why? Because He knew the governments—the kingdoms—of Earth ARE the devil's. Christ knew they belonged to him—they WERE Satan's to give. Therefore, He rejected the terms for receiving these kingdoms from the one who *did* have authority to offer them.

How many preachers are explaining this? The answer? NONE!

Also understand this! This account describes what is called the *temptation* of Christ. Obviously, what the devil offered was designed to *tempt* Him. If both Christ and Satan knew the kingdoms of this world were not the devil's to give, *then where was the temptation?* Surely the devil would have known what Christ knew. Of course, Christ,

who was God on Earth, would have known who had power to offer those kingdoms. The temptation would carry no weight if men's nations and governments were not the devil's to offer—if they already belonged to Jesus.

So there is absolutely no doubt of this, let's read Luke's parallel account. A key phrase there should hit like a sledgehammer. Satan said, “All this power will I give You, and the glory of them: for [it] is delivered unto me; and to WHOMSOEVER I WILL GIVE IT” (Luke 4:6). Do you see? It was completely within the scope of the devil's authority to offer or withhold the kingdoms of this world. God had temporarily “delivered” them to him—to his control!—and they are still his.

This world's nations and governments—all of them!—are *still* under the control of the “god of this world”—the “prince of this world”!

Again, have you ever heard this? Yet, this is the plain truth from your Bible, and it has a direct bearing on *why* the world is overwhelmed with problems. This world, with its ways and systems, led by the devil, has much to do with whether a true Christian votes in men's elections or seeks office in any of his governments.

Satan's Kingdom—Organized and Unified

While the devil holds sway over all governments and nations, is his own government—led by him and his demons—unified? Is Satan's government divided? Allow Jesus to answer.

Jesus and His disciples often cast out demons. I have done this on numerous occasions, and these can be intense, dramatic encounters. They are not pleas-

Do Christians Vote and Participate in Politics?

The *World to Come* broadcast series on this topic is available at www.realtruth.org.



ant to witness—and those who do are shocked by what they see. It becomes obvious that great power is present—both in the angry, departing demon and in the greater power of God necessary to cast one out.

Jesus' accusers saw clear evidence that He was backed by real power! However, some accused Him of using the devil's power to cast out what would be his own demons. Jesus' response?: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then HIS kingdom stand?" (Matt. 12:25-26). Jesus was saying that Satan would never cast out demons! He would be dividing his own kingdom. Get this! The devil has a kingdom. Since it *does* stand, it is not divided! And it transcends the entire world!

I repeat! Satan governs all kingdoms of the world, through his power and influence, in a unified fashion, aided by hundreds of millions of demons. (See Revelation 5:11 and 12:4.)

A fascinating point arises from the apostle Paul, who explains how individual Christians wrestle "against principalities, against powers, against the RULERS of the darkness of this world, against [wicked spirits—the correct translation] in high places" (Eph. 6:12). It becomes obvious that these high places are within the principalities and governments of men!

Now for an incredible account that illustrates and explains the terms "rulers" and "high places." An actual spirit war, lasting three weeks, is described in Daniel 10! Michael, an archangel, fought with one called the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" (Dan. 10:13), and referred to another upcoming battle with an arch-demon called the "prince of Grecia" (Dan. 10:20). Archangels—or any angels—do not need 21 days to defeat puny, little, physical men. The "princes" that Michael was battling were powerful fallen spirits that ruled nations within Satan's governmental structure.

I repeat, this is not God's world! It should now be clear the devil governs a vast realm of fallen spirits. Together, they deceive, confuse and exert far-reaching influence over all the governments and activities on Earth, including the many religions of men. Get this! These governments cannot be fixed or improved. They must be removed!—by God!

But understand. True Christians *never* disobey—or resist—civil authority—unless that authority directly instructs them to disobey the higher authority of God. (Read Acts 5:29.) Christians never participate in protests or demonstrations, even non-violent ones, never mind violent ones—or participate in any form of war, which is of course always much more violent. Not ever! Here is just one thing Jesus said about this, speaking to Pilate while on trial: "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom *not from hence* [meaning, from here—this world]" (John 18:36). But understand. Participating in the governments of men and obeying or submitting to them are entirely different matters. Christians do not confuse the two! They yield to—as a very *model* of obedience—men's governments at every level. Romans 13:1-7, among other scriptures, make unmistakably clear what God expects. Our article *Should Christians Submit to Government Authority?* explains much more.

Again, God's people are readying themselves to take part in Christ's coming government. Get this! The ultimate destiny of true Christians is to become kings and priests, ruling with Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God—on Earth! God's people represent a foreign government, because "Our [citizenship—the Greek is *politeuma*, from which comes the word *politics*] is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20).

Every Christian does have an important diplomatic job here and now, however. Think for a moment. Ambassadorships are critical appointments, only conferred on those who

can properly represent the ideals, laws, people, culture, policies, political ideologies and interests of the country where the ambassador holds citizenship. They must also possess good judgment. If an ambassador fails to uphold all these standards, he can disqualify himself from representing his country—and be recalled from his post!

The apostle Peter referred to the true Church as a "holy nation" (I Pet. 2:9). The Church is the true Christian's country of origin. As ambassadors for God's future government, Christians must exemplify *His Way—His "nation."* They are to represent the peace, order, love and abundant joy inherent in the spiritual government to which they owe their true allegiance.

Jesus told His disciples they were "light[s] of the world" (Matt. 5:14). He explained that real Christians have been "set on a hill" for all to see (Matt. 5:14). All observers should notice the Christian's conduct is radically different from all others.

Consider. People *categorize* those with whom they come in contact. If you meet someone from a foreign country, you automatically fit the person into the image you have of that country—whether or not you have been there. We assign people to "slots" in our minds. For instance, Britain, Russia, France and China all bring to mind different images.

If someone drives a Cadillac, it means a certain thing to most people. A Volkswagen means something else. Businessmen dress a certain way. Doctors, police, bricklayers and athletes connote different mental images. Just the way a person carries himself can convey that he is cocky, refined, shy, confident or relaxed. Of course, people are categorized according to their religion, color, manners, friends, sports they like, books they read, jokes they tell, entertainment they prefer—or even the kind of dog they own. Here is the point: One's political preference also tells its own tale to observers.

Here is what this means to a Christian ambassador: Since people analyze one's every word and action,

his example must unmistakably identify *what* he is and *who* he represents!

God intended that ancient Israel be a sterling example in obedience to Him, and that all the surrounding nations would not be able to help noticing how they too were intended by God to live. (Carefully read Deuteronomy 4:4-8.)

Tragically, this never happened. Israel utterly failed their commission! In fact, so miserably that, in the New Testament, Paul used Israel's example to show Christ's followers how NOT to conduct themselves. (Read I Corinthians 10:6.)

Part two of the companion *World to Come* video broadcast on this subject covers many biblical proofs that Christians do not vote or participate in politics. But here is one proof now, and it comes from II Corinthians 5:20. Paul wrote, "Now then we are *ambassadors* for Christ." The reference to ambassadors is not to the ministry or apostles alone.

I attended *Ambassador College* in Pasadena, Calif. Students were taught what it meant to be an Ambassador. I knew I was in training to reflect this office, possibly on behalf of the Church as a minister. High standards were set—touching all facets of student life. But "Ambassador College" could as easily have been called "Representative College," because I was training to become Christ's representative. Here is why this name would have worked.

The Greek word for "ambassador"—*presbeuo*—is interesting. While it means *ambassador*, the words *president*—and *Presbyterian*—derive from this word. Its most literal meaning is "representative." In America, we have the House of Representatives, with 435 members. Adding 100 Senators forms a Congress of 535 *representatives* who are elected to carry out the will of America's citizens. All democratic governments work similarly.

The leader of a country often carries the title of *president*, as in America. This is because he is the highest elected representative of the people. A country's top office could as easily carry the title of *representative*. And the American House of Representatives could as eas-

ily be the *House of Presidents*. These words are interchangeable. Presidents are representatives and representatives are presidents, but men distinguish between them by using two words with the same meaning!

Both mean *ambassador*.

Ambassadors for Another Government

It is the same with Christians, who are ambassadors—or representatives—of Jesus Christ, who serve in foreign lands. This carries implications.

Any nation's representative knows that, as ambassador to, for instance, Mexico, India or Lebanon, or any other country, he cannot participate in the politics of that country. He is a citizen of a different nation. He participates in the politics of *that* nation—the one he *represents*. He also cannot fight for the country to which he is *sent*. If he does either of these—under any circumstances—he loses his citizenship at home. In fact, he would be considered a traitor.

Now—here is what everyone should understand, but most do not. Ambassadors of Christ do not push or in any way involve themselves in the social, political or cultural agendas of their host country. They represent God's laws, ways, values, truths, government and goals. Christians—true ones—are ambassadors for another, different government! *This* is a big part of what it means to be the light of the world—and what it means to be an ambassador for Christ in a world growing darker by the day!

A sidenote. All ambassadors have "diplomatic immunity." This is understood the world over. One reason the practice developed was because diplomats could be arrested and tried on trumped-up charges. This meant no one would accept appointments to countries where the government *is* corrupt, and functions on bribes, favors, nepotism and rampant injustice. All Christians *do* enjoy obvious benefits as citizens in the country of their birth. They have certain immunities and privileges in the country to which God "assigns" them as ambassadors—while still representing their true government, foreign to where they live.

As ambassadors of God's kingdom, God's people cannot participate in man's systems of government—at all. Their citizenship is derived—and held by—a different authority—HEAVEN!

Almost all churches, wishing to be inclusive, and afraid to appear intolerant of others in different churches with different beliefs, ignore—or simply do not know—that Jesus Christ built *one Church*. And He said so in Matthew 16:18. As His ambassadors, *this Church* does *His Work* of announcing the true gospel around the world and warning great nations of impending national punishment for terrible sins. It also holds to and declares all of the many truths of the Bible, including about voting and participation in worldly politics. And that Church exists and functions under God's government—where leaders are appointed from the top down, not hired by a board of deacons below who hold power over their jobs.

Participating in the governments of Satan's world, through voting, military service or activism in social causes, is far more serious to God than most realize. It is disloyalty to God's government and His total authority over a Christian's life.

At the center of the gospel of the kingdom of God is a message about God's hierarchical government. The followers of Jesus Christ practice this leadership structure now. Any church that participates in the democratic politics of this world or that elects its leaders and makes other decisions by voting cannot be *a house built by God!* As the Psalms say, those weary builders are toiling in vain (Psa. 127:1).

The interested reader will also want to read our booklets *Should Christians Vote?*, *War, Killing and the Military* and *What Is the Kingdom of God?* These three booklets are truly eye-opening. They present plain, clear biblical truths that no one else talks about.

Again, Part Two in the companion *World to Come* broadcast brings many more biblical reasons that Christians do not vote. You have only begun to understand what God teaches. □

ASIA

China Upgrades Nuclear Arsenal

■ **MILITARY MIGHT:** Chinese J-10 fighter jets pass an Air Force officer on the tarmac at the Yangcun Air Force base of the People's Liberation Army Air Force in Tianjin, southeast of Beijing (April 13, 2010).

PHOTO: FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

After marked increases in military spending, China announced that it must possess second-strike capability—which would enable it to defend itself against a nuclear attack—and said it is in the process of upgrading and expanding its nuclear forces with increasingly sophisticated weaponry.

In an article in China's main military newspaper, *Liberation Army Daily*, retired People's Liberation Army General, Xu Guangyu, who researches for the state-run China Arms Control and Disarmament Association, wrote that China must have a modern force that is "real, reliable, effective, and keeps up with the times" (*Reuters*).

It was one of a few instances in which China has spelled out its nuclear strategy.

"Like all the nuclear weapons states, China is secretive about its arsenal, developed from a first atomic test explosion in 1964. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has estimated that by 2009 China possessed 186 deployed strategic nuclear warheads" (*ibid.*).

As major world powers collectively attempt to contain nuclear proliferation, China is revamping its arsenal of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. The eastern country is moving away from easily monitored, silo-based, liquid-fueled rockets and opting for

highly mobile, solid-fuel-powered rockets that are easier to launch and difficult to track. Among its upgrades are anti-satellite and nuclear-tipped cruise missiles that arm the nation's new generation Jin-class nuclear ballistic submarines.

Mr. Xu said the upgraded missile system "is able, should a foe launch an initial nuclear strike, to really possess, and to convince the other side that it faces, an intolerable second-strike nuclear capability, thereby deterring an enemy from using nuclear weapons against us.

"It must make them grasp, without the least ambiguity, that we possess a deterrent," he wrote (*ibid.*). □

MIDDLE EAST



Middle East Conflict Brewing

■ **CLOSE WATCH:** A Spanish peacekeeper serving with the United Nations interim force (UNIFIL) stands in the southern Lebanese town of Marjayoun opposite Israeli troops standing guard on the other side of the border between Lebanon and Israel (January 25, 2010).

PHOTO: ALI DIA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



■ **CIRCLE OF TRUST:** President Barack Obama (top center) hosts 46 visiting leaders at the start of the plenary session of the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C. (April 13, 2010).

PHOTO: PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

During Jordanian King Abdullah’s visit to Washington, D.C. to attend United States President Barack Obama’s nuclear summit, the *National Post* reported that the Mid-East leader affirmed that conflict between Israel and Hezbollah is “imminent.”

His comments came as tensions in the Middle East continue to escalate due to Syria’s alleged sale of Scud missiles to Hezbollah, an Islamist political and paramilitary organization based in Lebanon.

“Israel estimates Hezbollah’s arsenal at some 40,000 rockets, a significant rise from the group’s 14,000 rockets in 2006, when a 34-day conflict killed 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and more than 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers,” *Agence France-Presse* reported.

Conflict between Hezbollah and Israel could put Lebanon at risk.

The Syrian Foreign Minister has denied the claims, and criticized Israel for using the accusations to raise tensions in the Middle East, yet he indicated his country would join a war between Israel and Hezbollah.

“The Syrian leader, Bashar al-Assad, has balanced overtures to Washington with reassurances his alliances with Hezbollah and Iran remain strong,” *National Post* reported.

While the Lebanese government had no comment on the matter, Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah accused the U.S. of taking sides with the Israelis.

“This American interference that has completely adopted the Israeli position, is condemned and rejected by Lebanon. This U.S. position presents a threat to Lebanon. These American pressures and Israeli intimidation will not affect our choices and our commitment to defend our country by all means” (ibid.). □

HEALTH ISSUES

Deadly Fungus Spreads into U.S.

A rare strain of a potentially deadly airborne fungus is spreading into the northwestern United States from British Columbia, Canada, for the first time, according to a study in the *Public Library of Science Pathogens* journal.

Research revealed that since 1999, there have been 270 confirmed cases of the *Cryptococcus-gatti* strain in the U.S. and Canada, resulting in 40 fatalities. These include 50 cases in Washington state and Oregon since 2004, as well as numerous animal deaths.

The fungus is spread via airborne particles, but cannot yet be spread from person to person.

“These spores are really, really small, and they can be carried in the air,” Dr. Julie Harris, a fungal specialist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told *National Public Radio*. “And so hypothetically anyone can inhale them.”

Native to tropical and subtropical regions, the fungal strain is worrisome to researchers because no one seems to understand how or why it surfaced in the temperate region of the Northwest.

“The disease was almost exclusively seen in tropical and subtropical areas of the world,” Dr. Harris said. “The hot spots were most Australia

and Papua New Guinea, along with Egypt and parts of South America.”

Edmond Byrnes, a graduate student at Duke University and co-author of the fungal study told *National Geographic* he was concerned about the implications of the virus, and the potential impact it could have.

“The alarming thing is that it’s occurring in this region, it’s affecting healthy people, and geographically it’s been expanding,” he said. □

AUSTRALIA

Record Locust Plagues Swarm Australia

The largest locust infestation in 40 years is sweeping across Australia’s croplands and pastures like a hailstorm—devastating tens of thousands of acres and costing farmers millions of dollars.

The quick-breeding locusts, which multiply after periods of severe drought followed by intense rains, have stripped clean crops, pastures, orchards, gardens and sports fields from Queensland (northeast Australia) to Melbourne and Adelaide. In some cases, the insects can destroy an entire area in a single day.

“You’ve got to see it to believe it,” an owner of one of Australia’s largest carrot producers told *The Age*. “One centre pivot [plantation] got destroyed completely. We had about 25 million carrots in there. That gives you an idea of how many locusts there are.”

Some swarms cover areas as large as 186 square miles. The highly mobile insects can travel over 300 miles a day in search of food. According to the Australian Plague Locust Commission (APLC), a swarm of 0.4 miles can contain over 50 mil-

lion locusts with the ability to devour 11 tons of forage in a 24-hour period.

Experts do not believe the infestation will end with the season. “Come the middle of September through to October across that entire inland area... we expect there to be some very large infestations again,” APLC head Chris Adriaansen told *AFP*.

This explosion of spring locust hatchlings has farmers and the agricultural industry bracing for disaster. Millions of locusts have already migrated into Victoria and destroyed canola, carrot and oat crops—and they do not evidence signs of stopping.

“This is...potentially one of the worst seasons—because we had that rain around Christmas time and the floods out in the Channel Country,” Graham Hartwick, an officer with government agency Biosecurity Queensland, told *ABC News Australia*. “Mostly when they breed up in the Channel Country they go south into New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. However, there is the risk that they can come into the cropping areas in the east and that is what we are concerned about at this stage.” □

ENVIRONMENT

Ocean Covered in Extensive Garbage Patches

Thousands of square miles of the Atlantic Ocean are littered with countless pieces of floating garbage, oceanographers revealed. Scientists observed the patch in the second-largest ocean more than a decade after the discovery of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

The United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s marine debris program confirmed that these patches develop due to ocean currents that swirl rubble into a never-ending cycle, threatening the lives of as many as 100,000 marine mammals annually.

This discovery is a major point of concern for U.S. government officials.

“That plastic has the potential to impact our resources and impact our economy,” Lisa DiPinto, acting director of the debris program, told *The Associated Press*.

The discoverer of the Pacific patch, Charles Moore, told the *The Canadian Press*, “Humanity’s plastic footprint is probably more dangerous than its carbon footprint.”

Nearly 80 percent of all aquatic trash comes from land and is channeled through rivers to the ocean. □

THE WORLD TO COME

with DAVID C. PACK



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Four New Broadcasts
Coming Soon!

An illustration of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. From left to right: a warrior on a brown horse holding a sword, a conqueror on a white horse holding a bow, a pale, skeletal figure on a black horse, and a figure on a grey horse. The background is a dark, starry space with a blue and white horizon line at the bottom.

THE
FOUR HORSEMEN
OF THE APOCALYPSE