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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



IS AMERICA BACK ON TOP?



THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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ARTICLES

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Manage Every Moment

Time is a gift. In order to have an abundant, successful life, you must wisely use this limited resource.
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Photo: (Top) Olivier Douliery/Abaca Press/MCT;
(Bottom) JEWEL SAMAD/AFP/Getty Images

The Death of Osama bin Laden *Is America Back on Top?*

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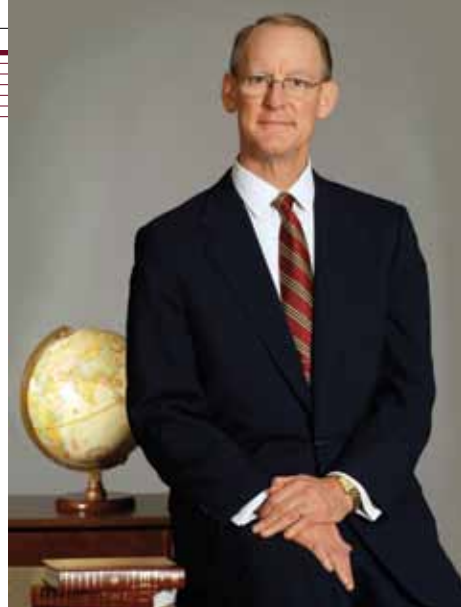
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Pack



The Middle East in Prophecy— What History Reveals!

THE MIDDLE EAST has for thousands of years been filled with unrest and violence. Governments inside and outside the region have attempted to bring peace, but have always failed. Conditions are seen to be rapidly growing *much* worse.

In-depth coverage of history is necessary to understand the reason for such instability. History presents a pattern for the future, demonstrating the Bible's authority—and proving God foretold events *before* they came to pass. Follow carefully with an open Bible. You will be astonished at what you learn!

Daniel 11 is the single longest unbroken prophecy in the Bible. We will learn how God has brought to pass many specific events He foretold would occur in this picture of the future written in advance.

(For background on the early parts of the Daniel 11 prophecy, read my Personal, “The Middle East in Prophecy—Today’s Unrest!”)

Many of the intricate separate prophecies contained in Daniel 11 have already been fulfilled *exactly* as God foretold, and have taken their place in history. They are now facts that can be examined—and are powerful PROOFS that a Supreme Being foretold them and then *brought them to pass!* The evidence presented serves to make plain the certainty of Bible prophecy—leaving those who disregard future prophecies without excuse!

Understand that the very authority of the Bible is at stake in this series of prophecies. If they stand true—PROVEN by the facts of history!—then a Divine Author recorded them, and all other Bible prophecies carry the same authority. If the prophecy failed, then the Bible is a book of men and can be thrown away as not worth the paper it is written on.

This prophecy culminates with tremendous events to occur in *our time!* These events will impact all nations—and yet they have been *sealed*, closed until this age! So said the prophet Daniel in chapter 12.

Also recognize that Daniel was inspired to record these prophecies hundreds of years *before* the events took place. He lived in the sixth century BC.

Understand that men inserted all chapter and verse divisions of the Bible. While these can be helpful, they can also inadvertently break up longer stories, thoughts or, as in this case, prophecies. The true meaning and scope of the subject matter can be obscured or completely lost from view due to these divisions.

God placed special emphasis in Daniel 10:1 on how the prophecy is “true.” Grasp this! Since the prophecy ends with events yet to happen—in *our time*—also grasp this!—we must study events already fulfilled to appreciate those in the prophecy not yet fulfilled, but that will be because of the prophecy’s historic accuracy. Movies, plays and books cannot be understood by entering them in the middle or near the end. This means we start at the beginning.

Two Prophesied Great Kings

Verse 2 begins covering persons and events that immediately lose the average Bible reader who would have no clue what they mean. But you can understand. History is our constant guide. Read verses 2 and 3: “Behold, there shall stand up yet *three kings* in Persia; and *the fourth* shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall *stir up* all against the realm of Grecia. And *a mighty king* shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.”

Who are these four kings—where the fourth is greater than the first three? And who is the “mighty king”? Daniel was speaking of kings Cambyses, Smerdis and Darius of Persia as the first three, with Xerxes being historically the greatest and richest of the four. History shows it was Xerxes who did “stir up” war with Greece.

We must now briefly understand verses in Daniel 8. Alexander the Great’s father, King Philip of Macedonia, created a master plan to conquer and defeat the Persian Empire with a Greek army. But Philip died before he could execute his plan. His son invaded Persia in his stead, and Alexander’s army fought the Persian army at the famous Battle of Issus in 333 BC. (Daniel 8:2, 5-6 describe it.)

Two years later, in 331 BC, in a *second* battle with Darius called the Battle of Arbela, Alexander completely defeated the Persian Empire. Having already conquered Egypt shortly before, he followed this battle with the destruction of everything from the Middle East to India. This happened *precisely* as prophesied!

Now verse 4: “And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the *four winds* of heaven; and not

to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be *plucked up*, even for others beside those.”

What does this mean? What are the “four winds,” and how was Alexander’s kingdom plucked up?

Numerous historical authorities acknowledge that Alexander died suddenly, at age 32, when, as stated by the famous historian George Rawlinson in *A Manual of Ancient History* (which we will quote often), Alexander was “Cut off unexpectedly in the vigour of early manhood, he left no inheritor, either of his power or of his projects” (p. 237). Alexander’s kingdom did break into four kingdoms, because he had no son to replace him. Prophecy was fulfilled just as God foretold!

Alexander’s four generals obviously represent the “four winds of heaven”—or directions to which his kingdom was divided: General Lysimachus ruled Asia Minor, Cassander ruled Greece and Macedonia, Seleucus ruled Syria, Babylonia and all regions east to India and Ptolemy ruled Egypt, Judea and part of Syria. These are all established facts of history.

From this point, the prophecy tracks two of these four kings, or divisions of territory. The Syrian kingdom represents the “king of the north.” The Egyptian kingdom represents the “king of the south,” because Egypt is generally south of Jerusalem. (Jerusalem is the central focus of all prophecy and, therefore, directions are always established in relation to this city.) These two kingdoms often fought back and forth across Palestine—the Holy Land and Jerusalem—with possession of this area constantly shifting, depending on the outcome of the last battle.

Ptolemy I, named Soter, established *Egypt* as a much greater, more *dominant* power than when Alexander was alive. Seleucus also became very strong. By 312 BC, he

had established an equally powerful kingdom in *Syria*. These two kingdoms became and represent, respectively, the “king of the south” and the “king of the north,” mentioned throughout the prophecy. Realize that the kings of the north and the south shift in location much later in the prophecy. Verse 5 states, “The *king of the south* shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.”

Amazing Fulfillment of Verse Six

Verse 6 is a very specific and truly remarkable prophecy. Let’s examine various phrases within it: “In the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king’s daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement [most Bible margins say “rights,” meaning *marriage union* or *rights*, in this case]: but she shall not retain the *power of the arm*; neither shall he stand, nor his arm; but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and *he that begat her*, and he that strengthened her in these times.”

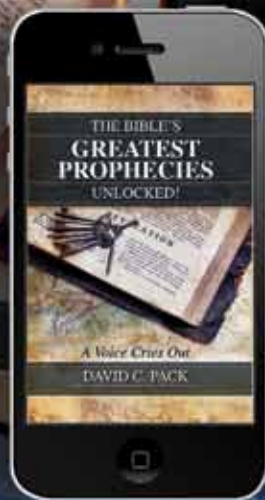
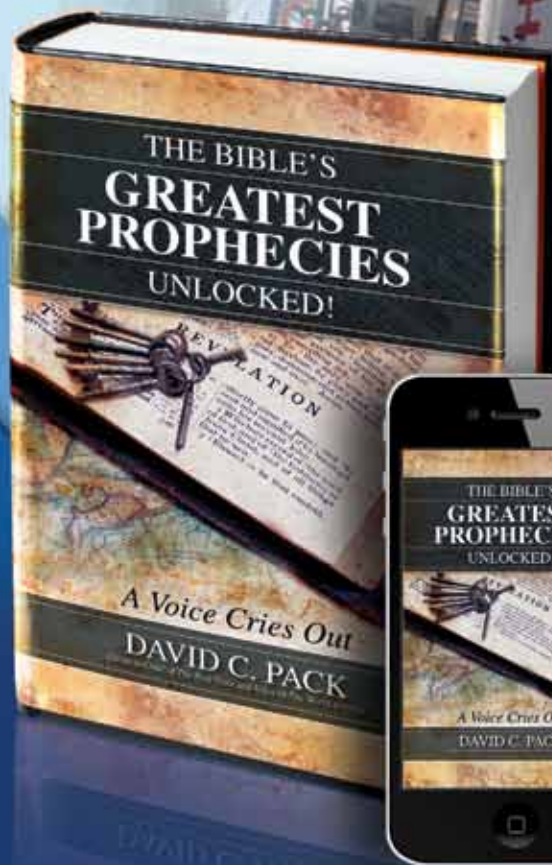
What could all of this refer to?

Fifty years later, Antiochus II (called Theos) was the king of the north, ruling at Syria. His wife, Laodice, carried great influence in the kingdom. But Theos divorced her and married Berenice, the daughter of the king of the south. Berenice was to lose the “power of her arm.” Her husband, the king of the north, was foretold to not “stand,” and she and her father (“he that begat her”) were both also prophesied to be “given up.” These three did come to a bad end.

An amazingly detailed, precisely fulfilled prophecy ensues from verse 6. Rawlinson states that “Her [Laodice’s] influence... engage[d] him in a war with Ptolemy

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 25

You Can Know...



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THE DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN

Is America Back on Top?



News of Osama bin Laden’s death brought a gamut of positive reactions from American citizens: elation, quiet relief, emotional closure, boisterous celebration—and for a brief moment, national pride.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

THE NEWS FELT SURREAL: “Tonight, I can report to the American people and to the world that the United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden,” President Barack Obama announced during a late-night televised statement on May 1, 2011.

For many who lost family and friends on September 11, 2001, or the resultant “War on Terror,” the news brought closure.

Mr. Obama stated that “Americans understand the costs of

war. Yet as a country, we will never tolerate our security being threatened, nor stand idly by when our people have been killed. We will be relentless in defense of our citizens and our friends and allies. We will be true to the values that make us who we are. And on nights like this one, we can say to those families who have lost loved ones to al Qaeda’s terror: Justice has been done.”

It seemed the nation could now press forward.

The president continued, “The cause of securing our country is not complete. But tonight, we are once again reminded that America can do whatever we set our mind to. That is the story of our history, whether it’s the pursuit of prosperity for

■ **REACTIONS:** Top left, top right and bottom left, people gather at the White House as United States President Barack Obama announces the death of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden during a late evening statement to the press in Washington, D.C. (May 1, 2011). Bottom middle, Osama bin Laden, shown in this January 1998 file photo, in Afghanistan, was killed by U.S. forces in Pakistan (May 1, 2011). Bottom right, revelers celebrate at ground zero in the early morning hours in New York City (May 2, 2011).

PHOTO: (TOP LEFT, TOP RIGHT AND BOTTOM LEFT) OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT; (BOTTOM MIDDLE) BALKIS PRESS/ABACA PRESS/MCT; (BOTTOM RIGHT) HOWARD SCHNAPP/NEWSDAY/MCT

our people, or the struggle for equality for all our citizens; our commitment to stand up for our values abroad, and our sacrifices to make the world a safer place.”

Above all, the news brought the country together.

“Let us remember that we can do these things not just because of wealth or power, but because of who we are: one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,” he said at the conclusion of his speech.

After nearly 10 years, it seemed America could breathe a sigh of relief. It had been a long 3,159 days, but now Osama bin Laden lay dead.

The celebrations following the announcement offered a glimpse of what America was before the 9/11 terror attacks—a proud nation, sure of its place in the world. And despite a gnawing feeling the euphoria would fade, just for a moment, the nation appeared to put aside its leaden troubles and dare to think, “Is America back on top?”

Solidarity

For the first time in nearly a decade, the U.S. public near-unanimously demonstrated American pride.

“Crowds gathered at the Lower Manhattan site where the World Trade Center towers were destroyed by terrorist-hijacked airplanes on Sept. 11, 2001, in an attack at the nerve center of the nation’s financial institutions and networks,” *USA Today* reported.

In Washington, people gathered in front of the president’s home “chanted ‘USA, USA,’ and waved American flags as one man climbed a light pole to place a flag directly in front of the presidential residence. Students, Marines, young Capitol Hill staffers and Washington office workers mingled, hugged, chanted and danced together” (ibid.).

President Obama later remarked at a White House dinner, “You know, I think we experienced the same sense of unity that prevailed on 9/11. We were reminded again that there is a pride in what this nation stands for, and what we can achieve, that runs far deeper than party, far deeper than politics.”

In some of the most telling celebrations after bin Laden was pronounced dead, crowds spontaneously burst into song: *God bless America, land that I love. Stand beside her; and guide her through the night with a light from above. From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans, white with foam. God bless America, my home sweet home.*

For just a moment, all troubles seemed to fade away for the nation, and America was reminded of its historical resilience. No matter the troubles that had beset its people, it had always faced them head on.

For two centuries, the United States, along with Britain, has had the greatest army, been the world leader in agriculture, manufacturing, production, technology and trade, and held crucial strategic sea gates and defensive strongholds throughout the world. The nation has repeatedly been given challenges—the Civil War, World War I and World War II, the Great Depression—and has almost always emerged victorious.

God certainly has blessed America.

With the death of bin Laden, the nation once again experienced old-style American patriotism—for just a moment. It had a sense of working toward a “greater good.” A sense of “justice.” A seemingly God-ordained sense of purpose.

Yet as the immediate elation at bin Laden’s death fades, the country’s current problems have come back into full view: \$14 trillion federal debt, rampant unemployment, \$4-per-gallon gas prices, two wars abroad, bickering politicians, bloated government budgets.

With this crashing reality, can the U.S. tap into that real “American” resilience *permanently*—and pull itself out of its current problems?

Flawed Logic

America sincerely wants God’s blessings. Politicians say it. Preachers preach it. People sing it.

Yet think of how this statement is used: Osama bin Laden was shot in the head, and the nation asks God to bless it? In addition, four other people died in the raid that killed the al-Qaida

mastermind, and still America asks God to “stand beside her” and “guide her.” Does this make any sense?

Because of his terrorist tactics and history of violence, people naturally assume God wanted bin Laden dead. But there is no need to guess what He desires. Putting together a number of related passages in the Bible, which are God’s words, reveals His thinking on this matter.

“Rejoice not when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles: lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him” (Prov. 24:17-18).

This is plain: “Rejoice *not* when your enemy falls.”

Thousands died because of the actions of Osama bin Laden, but should the U.S. have sought revenge? Romans answers: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord.”

God says revenge is His alone to administer. In effect, if a person takes revenge into his own hands, he is *stealing* something God has defined as His.

In light of these verses, how can America expect God’s blessings?

Look at Jeremiah 17:5: “Thus says the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm [strength], and whose heart departs from the LORD.” Any person (or country) that trusts in himself for protection is under a curse—the diametric opposite of a blessing. These are strong words—but they are God’s words!

If God is not blessing America now, how did it receive such abundant blessings throughout its history?

Founding Fathers

Most look to the founding fathers as the source of this nation’s greatness, citing the unique political ideology set down in the Constitution as the backbone of the country’s success. Others believe the nation was founded on strong Judeo-Christian roots, and this strong faith in God has guided the nation to preeminence.

The answer does in fact come from the lives of the fathers of the American people—but not in the way most think.

Abraham, the father of the descendants of the ancient nation of Israel, was given a promise from God for his obedience: “That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your seed shall possess the gate [sea gates] of his enemies; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice” (Gen. 22:17-18).

The same promise was passed to Abraham’s son Isaac and later to Jacob: “Therefore God give you of the dew of heaven, and the [fertile places] of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine” (Gen. 27:28).

Jacob was later renamed Israel, and the promise was expounded on by God: “...be fruitful and multiply; a *nation* and a *company of nations* shall be of you” (Gen. 35:11).

Who fits this description? Certainly not the tiny slave nation of ancient Israel or the modern state of Israel on the Mediterranean! When these specific details align, only two countries emerge: America (a nation) and the United Kingdom (a company of nations).

Because of the obedience of these true “founding fathers,” America has enjoyed abundance during its meteoric rise to prominence.

Make this clear in your mind. The United States descends from the nation of Israel. While most assume Israel is synonymous with those of Jewish descent, these people actually come from Judah alone, just one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Abraham’s “birthright blessings” were eventually passed on to Joseph’s sons, who became the tribes of *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* (Gen. 48).

God has fulfilled His promise to Abraham. America (Manasseh) and Britain (Ephraim) have both risen to be the two greatest nations of all time. But these blessings are now waning: Britain’s empire is shattered, and America no longer remains unchallenged on the world stage.

Scattered Nation

Americans still desire to retain the blessings—the high standard of living, the abundance of food, the unmatched economic might—they have so long enjoyed. God’s blessings, however, require the same action today as in Abraham’s time: OBEEDIENCE.

This has been God’s desire for Israel since day one. Notice: “For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you’” (Jer. 7:22-23, Revised Standard Version).

Simply put, God states, “Obey, and you will be blessed.”

The next verse continues, “But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward” (vs. 24).

God has been working with the peoples of Israel for thousands of years. He knows their tendency to flag in obedience. Thus, He states, “From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to *this day*, I have *persistently* sent all My servants the prophets to them, day after day” (vs. 25, RSV).

Despite these constant reminders, “they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers” (Jer. 7:26).

The example of ancient Israel is meant to be a lesson for their modern-day descendants.

What are the consequences for persistent disobedience? National captivity. God warns repeatedly of this punishment:

■ “And the LORD shall *scatter you among the nations*, and you shall be left few in number *among the heathen*, whither the LORD shall lead you” (Deut. 4:27).

■ “And the LORD shall *scatter you among all people*, from the one end of the earth even unto the other...” (Deut. 28:64).

■ “I will *scatter* them also among the heathen...” (Jer. 9:16).

“Therefore will I *cast you out of this land* into a land that you know not, neither you nor your fathers...” (Jer. 16:13).

■ “...and I will *scatter* into all winds them that are in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, says the LORD” (Jer. 49:32).

■ “And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall *scatter* them among the nations, and *disperse* them in the countries” (Ezek. 12:15).

■ “...I would *scatter* them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries” (Ezek. 20:23).

This is where the modern identity of Israelite nations is key to understanding much of the Old Testament. It is also where the identity of these nations can be a hard pill to swallow. These verses are not directed at the people of Jeremiah’s time, nor Ezekiel’s—they refer to the modern-day nations descended from Israel.

While Jeremiah was in the land of Israel when he wrote the book named after him, the prophet Ezekiel could not be speaking of impending captivity on ancient Israel. When Ezekiel was written, Israel was *already in captivity*. This means one thing: Ezekiel recorded an impending captivity to fall on modern Israelitish nations, including America and Britain.

Throughout the Old Testament, God speaks directly to these *modern* nations, pleading with them to return to obedience so He may continue blessing them.

Do not lightly dismiss national enslavement as an impossibility. Ancient Israel also ignored similar warnings, only to be captured and nearly disappear from history.

Neither Do They Blush

Return to Jeremiah 7. The chapter details America’s national character—its national *sins*—that block it from receiving blessings.

Read verses 9-10. God says, “Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom you know not; and come and stand

before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?"

The Revised Standard version makes this verse plain: while leading lives brimming with sin, the *modern* people of Israel "then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations" (vs. 10).

In other words: "What I do in my personal life does not matter—God should bless me *anyway*."

America thinks it deserves blessings. This is why its citizens cavalierly sing "God Bless America," and why politicians often end speeches with the same words. The U.S. *feels* it is righteous. Most pastors believe the same, stating that America was founded on good "Christian values."

Ask: Can God bless a nation where divorce is standard, sex before marriage is accepted, and theft is often understandable?

Does God approve of a nation with cities rife with murder? "With 10 homicides this week, Baltimore had more murders than days in the week for the first time this year," *Baltimore City Paper* reported. "As of Monday, April 25, there are 12 more murders than at the same time in 2010."

Does this behavior deserve blessings?

"Increasingly, consumers are pumping gas and driving off without paying, stealing from other motorists and ripping off large quantities from municipalities and businesses," *USA Today* stated. "Gasoline thefts cost convenience store operators, which sell about 80% of the fuel sold in the USA, more than \$90 million in 2009."

Should God bless the 44 percent of adults, according to Pew Research Center data, who have cohabited at some point? What about if the politically correct word "cohabitate" were replaced with the phrase: "living together to make it easier to fornicate"?

All this without a hint of shame. Americans live debauched lives and unabashedly *expect* God to bless them.

Notice: "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, says the LORD" (Jer. 6:15).

"For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them EVERY ONE is given to *covetousness*" (6:13).

Think of the endless malls, grocery superstores and restaurants with everything a person can imagine. Then think of everything available on the Internet—all with the click of a computer mouse. Americans think they deserve to "have it all."

Most will dismiss the notion that *everyone*—including themselves—are given to covetousness. People do not naturally like to think they are wrong. Due to human nature, individuals love to point out the flaws of others, but loathe examining their own lives.

Chapter 6 continues, "...and from the prophet even unto the priest EVERY ONE deals falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (vs. 13-14).

God is blunt. Mainstream Christian churches will not teach *national* punishment for NATIONAL sins. They likely even scoff at the thought, instead declaring America will continue to live peaceably.

Consider. The words of these prophetic warnings have been in the Bible on your coffee table. They have been on bookshelves across America, and in the hands of preachers for hundreds of years. Yet hardly anyone has heard these words—even though God has repeatedly warned that slavery will come as punishment!

Why? People do not want to receive God's instruction: "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised [closed off], and they cannot hear: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it" (Jer. 6:10).

Without the nation turning to God, disobedient America (along with its brother nations) WILL go into captivity.

Seek the Old Paths

America seeks continued blessing. And God seeks what He always has since the beginning of mankind: "Thus says the LORD, Stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16).

The most common response to God's plea has always been the same, "But they said, We will not walk therein" (vs. 16).

Yet to the individual God declares: "Seek you the LORD while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near" (Isa. 55:6).

Such a person must admit he is wrong and diligently follow God's instruction. Verse 7 continues: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Just as God makes clear the consequences for disobedience, He expounds the blessings for those who follow His instructions, as detailed in Leviticus 26: "If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them" (vs. 3), then...

■ "I will give you rain in due season" (vs. 4).

■ "I will give PEACE in the land... and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land" (vs. 6).

■ "I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you" (vs. 9).

If America would walk in God's statutes and keep His commands and DO them, He would "bless America"—He would "stand beside her"—He would "guide her through the night with a light from above."

With continued national OBEDIENCE, America could boldly sing: "God bless America, my home sweet home"—and God would answer.

(To learn about the future of the U.S.—both short- and long-term—read David C. Pack's book *America and Britain in Prophecy*.) □

THE STORY BEHIND THE NEWS

What the Media Misses



PHOTO: ALEXANDRE FERNANDES/GETTY IMAGES/HEMERA/THINKSTOCK

Amid politicking, name-calling and fulfilling personal agendas, most news organizations miss what is really important.

BY NESTOR A. TORO

ARRIVING HOME, you pick up the newspaper and turn on the television just in time to hear the first story of the evening news: “Government agrees on largest spending cuts in history.”

A newscaster begins, “After intense negotiations, officials agreed to an unprecedented 68 percent of proposed cuts...”

“Impressive,” you think. But looking down, you notice a newspaper headline reads, “Proposed cuts tackle only 0.4 percent of deficit.”

Same event—two sources—different bias. Puzzled, you wonder, *Aren't news reports supposed to be objective?*

Ignoring the television, you read below the fold of the newspaper: “Massive earthquake, tsunami strike.” Other headlines spell trouble for the rest of the world: “Volcano spews lava—thousands flee.” “Landslide destroys millions of acres.” “New antibiotic-resistant virus discovered, hundreds feared dead.” “Violent protests spreading.” The last story, which is paired with images of carnage, makes you grimace.

Hour after hour, syndicates continually feed stories of events that seem disconnected. Live reports come from anywhere, at any time, and from anyone.

Media outlets frequently explain problems in certain countries, while seemingly neglecting others. For example, even though there is ongoing civil unrest in the Congo, one might instead hear updates on the American president’s dog or see footage of a bear in a tree. Striving to keep up with it all, you cannot help but ask, *Is anyone telling the full story?*

The 24-hour, seven-day-a-week news culture allows people living across the world to see events as they happen. Revolutions, natural disasters, wars, reports of re-emerging diseases, famine and violence are just a click away.

Being able to see terrible events occurring worldwide can lead one to question: *Where is it all headed?* End-

time doomsayers quickly affirm they know, often spouting terms *Apocalypse* and *Armageddon* to describe humanity-ending events. Others claim global climate change—causing food and water shortages, rising sea levels, and severe ecosystem disruptions—could lead to Earth’s annihilation. Some even believe the “blue planet” faces a dire future, perhaps billions of years from now, when the sun runs out of fuel, explodes and destroys all life.

At the other end of the spectrum are those who view environmental-disaster theories as fear-mongering designed to dismantle the capitalist system and force people to turn to a global world order.

Back and forth it goes. One man’s expert is another man’s fool; one man’s slant is another man’s truth. Finger-pointing, name-calling, accusations of economic greed, and political bias seem without end. Once-respected news programs have become fight shows, with each commentator jockeying to make his position heard.

Watching it all can make it almost impossible to trust that journalists, many of whom have their own agendas, could be reporting in a balanced way. But as always, they do deliver, and news reports of nuclear meltdowns, financial hardships, and health crises pour in, with the mainstay questions of who, what and when answered. Then what is missing?

The why!

As with everything in life, there is a cause for every effect—even in the news. While a “why” is sometimes discussed, it is through an individual’s or organization’s particular viewpoint. Editorial judgment is generally determined by company executives concerned about the bottom line—profit. These must walk a fine line between operating as money-making corporations and unbiased news organizations.

For media outlets to continue reporting news, they must generate income. Even if a news source wishes to remain unbiased, it still has to comply with advertisers and public preferences.

The book *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media* explains, “The media business operates with a pair of avowed purposes—to provide a public service and to make money. As a result, mixed messages are typical.”

This is part of what hides the real story behind the news.

Varied Angles

Although helpful in understanding individual events, personal reports and editorial commentaries bring a particular angle. Yet opinions are not just limited to “opinion-editorial” pieces. They often affect basic news gathering.

Reporters are paid to inform the public. They make judgments based on human knowledge and experience. They are tasked to pass along important information and events, to publicize crises around the world, and analyze world events.

When approaching a topic, any writer will view it through *his* eyes. His thoughts and emotions automatically bring bias. But maintaining objectivity is most journalists’ goal.

Yet there are some who specifically try to sway the public to suit their own purposes or present their own agendas. Consider the following headline: “New AIDS-like disease appears in China.” After clicking on a link, a viewer sees a promo, “State dismisses disease as phobia, but patients are dying.”

Another source carries a different headline: “Health officials say AIDS-like disease is actually phobia,” with the article stating, “A senior health official has dismissed media reports that thousands of people on the mainland have a mysterious infectious condition that has been dubbed ‘negative AIDS.’”

Two different sources, two ways of portraying the same story.

Which is right? Without investing many hours into research, it is almost impossible to know.

Then there is the method of burying significant, less-convenient facts. By adding these later in the text, a reader may be led to believe this information

is less important—if he bothers, or has time to read the full story.

This also happens in broadcast journalism, where lighter, upbeat stories are selected in favor of harder-hitting investigative pieces. This often casts light away from a particular news story or detracts from one that is not in the company’s best interest.

The practice of “selling fear” is also effective. Since media outlets rely on website traffic, subscriptions or television viewership, whatever attracts more people—what the public wants—is most important.

Take the nuclear situation in Japan. A devastating earthquake and tsunami caused thousands of deaths and breakdowns at a nuclear power plant, which caused radiation levels in the area to rise.

As a result, surrounding countries became concerned that the same radiation could reach their shores. One Internet story about radiation in Washington, D.C.’s milk was published next to pictures of Japan so that the reader would draw an association between the two. It was not until the reader clicked on the link for the article that he learned that radiation levels were nowhere near hazardous.

While not all journalists use these methods intentionally, a slant can be detrimental to the public’s perception of what is really occurring in the world. It can either make people feel unnecessarily alarmed or overly comfortable in their own lives. It can also cause them to tune out world events altogether, instead living with a half-hearted awareness of things taking place around them.

Such subtle practices have been around for a very long time, and are linked to how news reports miss the central story behind today’s world events.

First Slanted Statement

Politics, philosophy and religion are the main driving forces behind bias. Personal ideologies run deep and drive each person’s course in life. And they are divisive. Recall the old adage, “Don’t discuss politics or religion.”

People will often adamantly hold to their beliefs—doing all they can to prove their side is right—even among family and friends.

One of the most divisive topics is the Bible. Many seemingly venerate it, and habitually accept anything they are taught about it by someone they trust. Others view the concept of God's Word as implausible, and believe it should be regarded as antiquated Hebrew literature. Still others believe some of the text is true, while certain passages are mere allegory.

Yet it is the Bible that describes an early example of a slanted statement used to influence a person's actions. In the Garden of Eden, God instructed Adam and Eve: "...of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall *not* eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall *surely* die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

The account continues, "Now the serpent was more *subtle* than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman... has God said, *You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*" (Gen. 3:1).

Notice the deceitful handling of God's command by Satan, who appeared as a serpent. Turning the statement into a question, he sparked curiosity for the fruit, and doubt toward God. His enticing question led the woman to believe there was more to God's instruction than she initially thought.

Satan continued his biased slant, "You shall *not* surely die: for God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-5).

Swayed by his reasoning, both Adam and Eve ate the fruit.

Note that Adam and Eve were given "knowledge of good *and* evil." From that point forward, man decided for himself what is good and evil, what is right and wrong.

The Bible indicates that this same bias continues today, with the devil being the main influence for mankind's culture, societies and lifestyles.

Ephesians 2:2 describes Satan as "the prince of the power of the *air*, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience."

Similar to a radio station that broadcasts biased news 24 hours a day, man's thoughts are continually influenced by this "power of the air."

News in Advance

To most, the story of Adam and Eve is merely an interesting fable or myth, from which one can perhaps glean lessons. Many Christians insist this event occurred, but disagree among themselves what implications flow from it.

So which is it? Is the story in the Garden of Eden fact or fiction?

The text of the Bible itself answers this age-old question. Realize that one third of the Bible is prophecy, which is news written *in advance*. God claims authorship over the entire Bible, and tells the skeptic to prove His Word by using these prophecies.

The book of Isaiah states, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (46:9-10).

In other words, God says certain events will happen, then He works to bring them to pass. This is summarized in the next verse: "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa. 46:11).

Has the Bible accurately foretold future events?

In the book of Mark, Jesus prophesied about the physical, ancient Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. "And as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said unto Him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, See you these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mark 13:1-2).

This occurred exactly as He foretold, during the Roman invasion of Jerusalem in AD 70. To this day, a

Muslim mosque stands atop the Temple Mount. (While it is not the purpose of this article to explain them all, other astounding prophecies fulfilled to the letter are detailed in the booklet *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?*)

Many events that were foretold are now in the past, meaning they **PROVE** the accuracy of God's Word. But about 90 percent of prophecies are yet to occur—future events. This makes the Bible the only lens through which world events can be accurately viewed, and the only unbiased and truthful news source.

After Jesus prophesied the destruction of the Temple, He delivered what is known as the Olivet Prophecy—a private message to His disciples regarding the end of the age: "And as He sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:3-4).

Compare His answer to some of the headlines in today's newspapers: "And when you shall hear of *wars* and *rumors of wars...nation shall rise against nation*, and *kingdom against kingdom*: and there shall be *earthquakes in diverse places*, and there shall be *famines and troubles*: these *are* the beginnings of sorrows" (Mark 13:7-8).

Is it only coincidence that this passage describes what is happening in the world today? Consider some recent stories: "Lebanon-Israel tensions rise over offshore oil and gas" (*Time*); "Last 10 years deadliest on record for aid workers" (*CNN*); "In Ivory Coast, when conflict starts women become targets" (*Guardian*); "Conflict and poverty: The economics of violence" (*The Economist*); "Scores of earthquakes reported on California-Nevada border" (*The Los Angeles Times*); "Food price hikes could push millions to poverty" (*CNNMoney*); "Studies highlight challenge of controlling resistant bacteria in hospi-

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Manage Every Moment

Time is a gift. In order to have an abundant, successful life, you must wisely use this limited resource.

BY F. JACO VILJOEN



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RUNNING LATE IN the morning. An hour of gridlock traffic. A stressful day at work. *Another* hour of gridlock traffic. Head to the gym. Grocery shopping. The car needs an oil change. Household chores—dishes, laundry, cleaning. Bills to pay. Prepare for tomorrow. Pass out from exhaustion.

This routine plays out for millions, who conclude there are simply not enough hours in the day. After another 24 hours, they are again left fatigued, thinking, *Where did my time go?*

The constant crush of a hectic daily schedule can leave people craving a sense of balance—in an off-kilter, haphazard and BUSY world.

During this entire time, your body generally stays within a 98.6-degree

range. When resting, your heart beats regularly. This is called homeostasis, which *Stedman's Medical Dictionary* defines as the “state of equilibrium (balance between opposing pressures) in the body with respect to various functions.”

In contrast to the body, many people feel their lives are always “out of whack.” They long to keep a balanced routine and have time to relax. They long for homeostasis.

Yet there seem to be too many things to pursue, with each one demanding time. This ultimately throws people off balance.

In his book, *Time Management: Proven Techniques for Making the Most of Your Valuable Time*, Marshall J. Cook listed the side effects of a fast-paced lifestyle, which he calls “Speed Sickness”: “nervousness,” “depression,” “fatigue,” “unwillingness and even inability to stop working,” and “inability to relax even when you do stop working.”

Mr. Cook said that if you keep driving in the “fast lane,” your immune system will deteriorate, which could result in chronic heart disease and other ailments. Many who live this way also succumb to drug and alcohol dependency.

How does one find equilibrium? The answer is simple. There are a series of principles that—when applied—will help you MULTIPLY your time. Following these will bring balance to your life.

Manage What You Have

Each person has the same number of minutes per day. To manage every moment of your life, you must first learn to effectively use the time you have. There are a few common areas that drain your time. Finding and fixing these problems will reveal that you have more room in your schedule than you think.

■ **Disorganization:** Live by the saying, “There is a place for everything, and everything in its place.” Every item in your work and living space should have a “home.” This way, when you need something, you will know exactly where it is, and will not waste time searching for it. When finished with an item, immediately return it to its proper place.

■ **Time thieves:** Do not give in to the “just quickly” phenomenon. While busy with an important task, one might say, “I am *just quickly* going to call my friend,” or “*just quickly* going to check

my email.” Such interruptions break your focus, and will likely cause a task to be unnecessarily dragged out.

In the book *Time Management: 24 Techniques to Make Each Minute Count at Work*, Marc Mancini wrote, “We each have a personal perspective of time... Most people have a poorly defined sense of how they spend their time.” Pay attention to where your time goes. Cut out any unprofitable activities.

■ **Poor work habits:** United States businesses lose approximately \$544 billion each year due to employees wasting time during working hours.

“By establishing proper and organized systems, you can reduce the amount of time you waste, and thus reduce the amount of stress in your life—not only at work, but home as well.”

Internet surfing accounted for the biggest chunk, with workers unnecessarily spending almost two hours per day on the Web.

Do not let this define you. By establishing proper and organized systems, you can reduce the amount of time you waste, and thus reduce the amount of stress in your life—not only at work, but home as well. Work out specific routines for daily tasks, even write out checklists. Each time a task is repeated, you will perform it faster and more effectively than before.

With your life less cluttered and mandatory tasks completed more quickly, you will realize there is more time available each day—raising the question of how to use it. Spend it with

family? Pursue favorite hobbies? Have more down time?

To truly get the most out of the time you have, there must be a driving purpose to your actions.

Clear Goal

Think again about the principle of homeostasis. The physiological functions of your body are naturally balanced as a result of certain scientific laws. For instance, each person has only 24 hours in a day. About eight of those hours are used for sleep. Roughly an hour goes into eating meals. With household chores, exercise, and all other activities, those 24 hours are quickly used up. Trying to “burn the candle at both ends” will run down your immune system, leading to frequent colds or chronic illness. Each person must acknowledge these natural limitations.

Similarly, you must keep your life within certain limits. But who sets these standards? Many philosophers and thinkers have spent their entire lives trying to figure out the purpose of human existence—how time should be spent.

Yet just one book of wisdom would have helped them realize that their own conclusions about “the purpose of life” are useless. In fact, they would have had to read just *one phrase* in the millennia-old book: “...I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

The Bible reveals that man does not know how to “direct his steps”! Only through the wisdom of God, and the boundaries He sets for human life, can one find purpose in life—and even make up for lost time.

Don't Spend—Invest!

The Bible is God's Instruction Manual for mankind. Its pages detail how to live effectively and bring balance

Please see **MANAGE**, page 24

Were Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection on Friday and Sunday?

The Bible makes absolutely plain the fulfillment of these crucial prophecies.

BY DAVID C. PACK

THE GOOD FRIDAY-EASTER Sunday tradition is among the most popular in the Christian world. Did Jesus Christ rise from the grave on Sunday morning? Had He been there for three days and three nights? He said this was the *only sign* He was the Messiah! Does this fit with the tradition of a Friday crucifixion near sunset and a Sunday sunrise resurrection? Much more is at stake here than meets the eye.

Since no one saw Jesus rise, we must examine the only available authority on this miraculous event—the Bible! The apostle Paul wrote, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21).

While most accept popular traditions without proof, including everything Easter, *true* followers of Jesus want to know what HE says.

What *proof* did Christ offer that He was the Messiah? The Pharisees challenged Him on this point and He answered: “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a *sign*; and there shall no *sign* be given to it, but the *sign* of the prophet Jonah: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be *three days and three nights* in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:39-40).

This is plain. Could Jesus then be in the grave less than three days and three nights—three complete 24-hour periods? Can 72 hours fit between late-day Friday and early Sunday morning? Why do so few question this *only sign* Jesus said He would give that He was the Messiah? Could He have been wrong on this single proof and still have been the Messiah?

Consider what is at stake in Jesus’ statement. If He failed His *only sign*, then He is not our Savior and *nothing* He said can be trusted. In effect, if His prophecy did not come to pass as He foretold—exactly!—then He *must* be considered a false prophet—a *fraud* who should be ignored—meaning mankind has no savior!

Do not confuse the Resurrection itself with the question of *how long Jesus would be in the grave* before rising.

This length of time was the test of His sign—not the actual Resurrection.

Get this!

While it is embarrassing to watch so-called “Bible experts” try to explain away Jesus’ obvious meaning, they really have no choice. Think! If His sign remains intact, the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition would be exposed as groundless—and therefore *false*!

Many Bible commentaries leave one nearly breathless in astonishment in how they assert that three days and three nights, in the Greek language, can mean *three periods of time*—day or night. Friday *night*, Saturday *day* and Saturday *night* are supposedly these three “periods.”

At least some are honest enough to acknowledge the Friday-Sunday tradition is, in fact, only *half* the length of time—36 hours—Jesus said He would be in the grave.

Can we know for *certain* or must we speculate on the definition of a day or the meaning of a night? Does the Bible leave this open to interpretation—with one man’s opinion as good as another?

The book of Jonah records, “And Jonah was in the belly of the fish *three days and three nights*” (Jon. 1:17). Most scholars acknowledge that this Hebrew phrase *must* mean a 72-hour period. In short, there is no room for any “approximations of time” theories in the Hebrew.

Jesus said His time in the grave would be “as Jonah” (Matt. 12:40). “As” means comparison. In other words, just like Jonah was in the fish for three *entire* days, Jesus was to be in the grave for three *entire* days. This comparison prohibits “negotiating” the meaning of the Greek—as many do—since the Hebrew phrase can only mean three full days!

Let’s ask. Did Jesus understand the length of a “day” or the length of a “night”? Of course He did! Notice His question: “Are there not *12 hours in the day*?” (John 11:9).

To learn much more, you will want to watch my *World to Come* broadcast “Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection—Not Friday, Not Sunday!” After watching it, you will have to admit that a popular tradition—the *fiction* of a Friday Crucifixion and Sunday Resurrection—has crashed in a heap! □



JAPAN

LIVING WITH DISASTERS

What can the world learn from the nation's ability to accept natural disasters as a normal part of life?



JAPAN THOUGHT it was prepared. It had conducted drills and planned evacuation routes. Its people knew what to do when facing calamity.

So when the Tohoku-Pacific Ocean earthquake hit at 2:46 p.m. on March 11, it was at first considered just another temblor. Internet videos show residents appearing to shrug off the shaking, continuing to calmly walk through airports, talk on cellphones, window shop, work at their desks, attend meetings, or drum on computers.

Yet as the shaking continued, they became more concerned. Computers spun off desks. Mantelpieces tipped over. Electricity shut off, leaving employees in the dark. Workers who were initially filmed nervously laughing about the quake's first movements slowly stopped smiling. People realized it might be the "big one" they had anticipated for years.

Panic soon set in. Skyscrapers swayed violently, knocking down residents. Store items flew off shelves.

Water pipes burst, causing flooding. Fires ignited across Tokyo. Sections of the ground ripped open, squeezing water to the surface and causing mini-geysers in grassy park knolls. Roads split in half, forming huge chasms. Even whole buildings crashed to the ground.

By minute five, most people had run to an area where they felt safe—ducking beneath desks, bracing in doorways, or sprinting into nearby streets. As workers stumbled out of buildings, it was apparent this was no ordinary quake.

The largest mega-temblor in the nation's history and fourth-largest in recorded history, the 9.0-magnitude earthquake occurred off the northeastern coast of Honshu, on mainland Japan. It shifted the nation nearly 10 feet, dropping parts of its coast by more than a yard.

"You could tell this was different instantly from other little tremors we've had before," an American bystander told *CNN*. "It just picked up in intensity."

Surrounded by debris, injuries, buildings on fire, aftershocks, fear and

death, many thought the worst was over. Little did they know the ordeal had just begun.

Wall of Water

The powerful earthquake and ensuing aftershocks meant one thing: a tsunami was most likely barreling toward Japan's coastline.

Roughly 62 miles northeast out to sea, a massive wave was already forming. Close to the epicenter, sailors felt a sharp lift in the water. Not long afterward, shockwaves estimated at 3.7 miles per second began moving inland.

People reacted with a mixture of horror and disbelief. As throngs of citizens toting belongings scrambled to higher ground, shouts of "The tsunami is coming!" could be heard.

A *National Geographic* compilation of amateur videos showed people fleeing. "This is the end," one man who saw the waves approaching wailed. Another despairingly said, "Everything is coming to an end."

Sirens sounded warnings, but for those not already on high ground, it was too late. The waves raced toward Japan's coastline, sending 10 billion tons of water—three-story tall waves—barreling onto the seashore.

Over the thunderous rushing water, some in high-rise buildings cried out to those below, desperately trying to warn them, but to no avail. Others worried about their belongings: "Stop

■ **DISASTER UPON DISASTER:** Opposite page, local residents look at a tsunami-hit area covered with mud and debris in Sendai, Miyagi prefecture (March 14, 2011). Left, women dig their tablewares from a muddy field in Kesenuma city, Miyagi prefecture (March 20, 2011). Middle, a woman looking for her missing family members stands in a field at Kesenuma city, Miyagi prefecture (April 10, 2011). Right, a man walks with his bicycle on a bridge 10 days after the massive tsunami struck Ishinomaki, Miyagi prefecture (March 21, 2011).

PHOTOS: (OPPOSITE PAGE) TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; (LEFT) JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; (MIDDLE) STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; (RIGHT) TORU YAMANAKA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

water,” one man commented. “Please don’t take my car.”

Miyagi prefecture was engulfed by coal-black water. Vehicles on nearby highways were swiped by raging waves. Caravans of floating vans crashed into town landmarks and the rampaging current splintered thousands of homes. Huge clouds of smoke and dust blanketed the area.

In a matter of seconds, the wall of debris mowed over farmland, sweeping away vehicles, trains, homes, people, animals and boats as far as six miles inland. Towns and cities were obliterated. Large commercial boats, pushed deep inland, were shoved between broken wooden buildings and crushed metal. Thousands were taken to unmarked watery graves, often in cars unable to outrun the barrage.

Miyako city, which has 33-foot sea walls, warning sirens, and routinely conducts tsunami drills, was completely destroyed. The force of the tsunami easily breached its coastal defenses. Several structures, including an oil refinery outside Tokyo, were set ablaze, creating islands of fire atop the inundated terrain.

Tsunami waves also struck the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which had three reactors in operation. Each one experienced hydrogen explosions: one blast injured 11 workers and another reportedly breached the inner containment vessel—causing a dangerous situation for surrounding areas. As a result, government officials imposed an 18-mile radius no-fly zone around the plant and ordered all residents within approximately 20 miles of the area to evacuate—another consequence of the growing disaster.

Ripple Effects

As the tsunami receded, people watched with horror as family members, friends, houses, factories, pets and belongings were dragged to sea. Devastated onlookers stood over broken cities, powerless to stop the outgoing waves.

“It’s over,” one survivor on the *National Geographic* compilation

video said. “Everything is gone.” Another said, “I give up.”

In certain areas, the water did not recede, leaving people stranded on small debris islands, or waving homemade white flags from building windows in hope of aerial rescue. Where they could, bewildered townspeople combed through snow and mud, hoping to find loved ones.

Those sifting through wreckage had to contend with the fear of additional tsunamis. During the week following the historic earthquake, the country experienced more than 500 aftershocks, several stronger than 7.0-magnitude. But with buildings in some towns completely destroyed, people had no place to hide.

As of this writing, more than 14,785 people have been confirmed dead, and 10,271 have been reported missing.

The tragedy has also brought economic calamity.

“The Tohoku quake, tsunami, and still unfolding nuclear crisis are clearly having a traumatic effect on Japan, the worst crisis Japan has suffered since World War II,” Bill Witherell, chief global economist for consulting firm Cumberland Advisors, wrote. He said Tokyo’s stock exchange “Nikkei 225 dropped 1.7% in the 14 minutes the market remained open after the quake...”

Insurance companies have been overwhelmed with claims.

“Losses in the \$30 to \$50 billion range would make the Japanese earthquake the second-most expensive event in the history of the global insurance industry,” *CBC News* stated.

The auto industry has been particularly hard-hit, with vehicle exports falling 27.8 percent due to power shortages and interrupted deliveries. Financial analysts predict it could take months before exports return to normal production levels.



■ **DEVASTATION:** Top left, a car remains stuck under the roof of a warehouse after it was pushed there by the recent tsunami, at the port of Miyako, Iwate prefecture (March 27, 2011). Bottom left, a destroyed single engine airplane leans against a tree at Sendai Airport in Natori, Miyagi prefecture (March 29, 2011). Right, houses moved by the tsunami block a street in Ofunato, Iwate prefecture (March 14, 2011).

PHOTOS: (TOP LEFT) ROSLAN RAHMAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; (BOTTOM LEFT) YASUYOSHI CHIBA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; (RIGHT) TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

On top of this, health authorities are concerned about a spike in the pneumonia rate of senior citizens, which is now five times higher than pre-quake levels. The majority of those who lost their homes were over 60 years old, and the stress of living in close quarters in makeshift shelters is causing their health to deteriorate.

In addition, fear of uncertainty has caused a jump in the suicide rate, as reported by *The Los Angeles Times*.

“In the coming months, as those displaced by the quake and tsunami seek to move on with their lives, the true gravity of the disaster will slowly sink in for many, say government officials, aid organizations and mental health workers.

“Some who have lost homes, family and friends probably will ask: ‘What do I have to live for?’”

According to the *LA Times*, “the nation experienced a rise in suicides after the 1995 Kobe earthquake that killed more than 6,400 people.”

Behind the Destruction

Natural disasters such as Japan’s earthquake and tsunami tend to yield introspection and religious speculation. Many question God’s involvement, or assume He is directly responsible for what is occurring, although they do not agree on the reason.

A poll published in *USA Today* revealed that “a majority (56 percent) of Americans believe God is in control of the earth, but the idea of God employing Mother Nature to dispense judgment (38 percent of all Americans) or God punishing entire nations for the sins of a few (29 percent) has less support.” In other words, while most believe God fully controls natural disasters, few believe He uses them to express His will.

On the other hand, “The poll found that most racial and ethnic minority Christians (61%) believe natural disasters are God’s way of testing our faith—an idea that resonates with African-Americans’ history of surviving through slavery and racial discrimination.”

Which group is right?

While multiple opinions exist, there *is* one source that reveals the truth about disasters and the reason for their increase—the Bible.

In the book of Jeremiah, God uses His prophet to foretell calamities to come: “Disaster follows hard on disaster, the whole land is laid waste” (Jer. 4:20, RSV). The Hebrew word for “the whole land” in this passage refers to *countries* or the *whole earth*.

Natural disasters are increasingly slamming into nations, swiftly building upon each other in ways humanly devised governments are unable to manage. Think of Haiti’s massive earthquake followed by a widespread cholera outbreak. Think of the almost 200 deadly tornadoes that swept through six American states in a 24-hour period. Think of the volcano-tsunami devastation in Indonesia, which displaced 300,000 people.

In reality, the earthquake in Japan was only one disaster with many effects. The temblor produced a tsunami that destroyed buildings and homes, and left people unable to work. People’s inability to work leads to less capital for the country’s economy. A weaker economy forces employers to lay off workers. Less money leads to poverty and homelessness. Poverty leads to disease. Disease can lead to death. On and on it goes.

Yet God says such destruction will happen globally—to all countries on Earth! Imagine country after country experiencing what Japan did. Picture less-developed, cash-strapped nations brimming with civil unrest, disease and hunger facing such tragedies—but without Japan’s grace.

Across the country, Japan’s disaster-prepared people showed strength of character by helping others, and standing patiently in line for water, food and supplies. No looting. No violence.

Perhaps a Japanese proverb best sums up the people’s attitude: “After the rain, earth hardens.” This means that after a storm, things will often stand more solidly than they did before. It also means, “adversity builds character.”

Few Japanese survivors carry the kind of “me-first” attitude evidenced

in many other countries of the world, including all Western nations—especially in times of disaster. Consider the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the United States and protests resulting from austerity measures in Europe.

While Japan has been fairly successful, imagine it having to cope with another disaster of the same proportion in a *different* country while helping its own people recover. It would be impossible. No human government—or governments—would ever be able to deal with such crises all at once!

Yet God says the multiple disasters that crippled Japan—an earthquake, tsunami, ongoing nuclear crisis, economic troubles, health threats—are just a foretaste of far worse catastrophes to come.

As devastating as Japan’s earthquake and tsunami were, these will pale in comparison to other foretold disasters. The Bible prophesies five specific mega-earthquakes. One is shown in Revelation 16:18: “...and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”

This quake will be the most powerful to occur since Creation, drastically changing Earth’s topography: “And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (vs. 20). It will become so bad that people will “begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us” (Luke 23:30). Conditions will be so terrible that people will wish to die.

This prompts the question: why would God, the Creator, want such horror to occur?

Forgetful People

Look at modern society. It has gravitated toward trusting in material protection. It has become so complacent in its preparedness that it no longer feels it needs God to survive.

Yet God the Father, a loving parent and Creator of all life, understands man needs Him (Jer. 10:23). To help His creation, God provides an Instruction Manual showing how

mankind should live. This Instruction Manual, the Bible, reveals a previously established set of rules that guide man on how to interact with others. It also provides real-life written examples to teach him valuable lessons.

One of these examples is found in Genesis. After a global flood destroyed almost all life, the descendants of the survivors began to build a high tower to protect themselves: “And they said...let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4). The ancient Hebrew term translated “scattered abroad” means: “to dash in pieces.” The people were afraid another flood would come, which led them to take such measures.

Although the people may have been well-intentioned, they missed the point. God expected them to rely on *Him* for protection. God realized that if people trusted only in themselves, it would spell destruction for them—and all generations to follow. Therefore, He confused the language of those building the tower so they could not continue: “And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (11:6).

Changing the language of the builders should have served as a wake-up call. They should have realized they were weak human beings who needed God’s help. They should have turned to Him, cried out to Him, repented and served Him as it says in II Chronicles: “If My people... shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14).

But they did not.

Part of Life?

History shows that mankind’s natural reaction of relying on human ingenuity, and developing stronger physical

protection from disasters does not work. Just as tsunami walls were not enough to save tens of thousands in Japan, humanity’s *physical* protective measures will eventually fail.

While you may have become conditioned to accept that disasters are a natural part of life—mere time and chance events—there is a place you can turn to seek protection. You do not have to see an earthquake or tsunami as simply “another disaster.”

“In Japan, they have a civilization of earthquake preparedness,” Pedro Silva, an engineer at George Washington University told *National Public Radio*. “...even at the kindergarten level, they receive earthquake briefings continuously. It’s really in their culture.”

Japan, a more developed and technologically advanced country, builds structures fortified with high-quality materials and enforces strict building codes. Trains are programmed to stop at the slightest shaking to prevent derailment. Tokyo’s Tsunami Warning Center measures seismic earthquake waves, which allows it to project where ensuing aftershocks or tsunamis might occur. Warning sirens and concrete protective seawalls are in almost all towns. Children even carry fireproof hoods in their schoolbags in case of emergency.

Disasters are an integral part of life.

Yet because the nation believes it is humanly prepared for an earthquake, after feeling initial tremors, many of its people did not immediately act, but rather viewed it as “just another earthquake.” It was not until the earth continued rocking violently for *six whole minutes*, and people were almost literally shaken out of buildings, that many fled to the streets.

Where to Turn

In the same way, civilization as a whole is just beginning to experience the kind of troubles foretold long ago in the Bible: “the beginning of sorrows” (Matt. 24:8). These are a type of small foreshocks designed to warn

about what is coming. But as with an earthquake, soon the world will be shaken to its core. How many disasters must occur before human beings wake up?

To most, these prophesied tragedies seem cruel. Yet God is a loving parent who wants to raise His children—those He created—correctly. He wants to see them become happy and prosperous. Yet He realizes that man cannot find his own way to peace without first turning to Him and learning from Him.

As with any rebellious teenager, man thinks he knows better than God, and does not believe he needs God’s help. Therefore, God realizes He must first allow His children to learn lessons themselves by allowing certain events to occur for a short time. These will help people worldwide appreciate the coming best news for the world—Christ’s Return—when true world peace will finally be established and all people who have ever lived will have an opportunity to live as He intended. (Read *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!*)

But by turning to God now—and following His Commandments and statutes before this time comes—you can ultimately be protected from the trouble that lies ahead. Notice: “The God of my Rock; in Him will I trust: He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my *high tower*, and my *refuge*, my *savior*; You save me from violence” (II Sam. 22:3).

The age of the ways of man—humanity’s time of self-rule, of people deciding for themselves how to live, how to behave, and how to treat their neighbors—is drawing to a close. Soon mankind will receive punishment for disobeying God.

This does not mean that you need to fear this time. Unlike the people of ancient times who trusted in a physical tower, you can turn to God, the only true spiritual “high tower,” “refuge” and “savior” for humanity.

Only by trusting and obeying Him can you fully prepare for what is coming—and be protected. □



SHOULD YOU WEAR A “CHRISTIAN” CROSS?

Millions wear or have a cross, yet few are aware of its ancient roots.

BY JAMES F. TURCK

A DRAMATIC VOICE emanates from the television: “The cross is revered throughout Christianity as a symbol of faith in Jesus. We are pleased to present this beautifully detailed 24-karat gold cross with matching gold chain. It will bring you great joy while you proudly wear it as a symbol of your faith. Let it inspire you in your Christian walk. Place your order now by

calling the number shown on the screen, and we will rush you your very own cross for three easy payments of \$39.95. Quantities are limited, so do not delay!”

Stirred to action by the presenter’s words and images of a sparkling golden cross, a TV viewer picks up the phone and dials the number. Like millions of others, he wants to wear this display of his religion. He wants others to know he is “Christian.”

The cross is venerated and admired across the wide spectrum of traditional Christian churches. It is a cornerstone symbol—supposedly representing the message of Jesus Christ and how He died for the sins of humanity.

Worn around the neck, placed on the dashboard of a car, hung from a wall, neatly lined in cemetery rows, placed on top of church steeples, or found along highways either alone or with two slightly smaller crosses on each side, this icon is made of varied materials and found in different shapes, forms and places.

Most display the simple cross—an upright stake with an intersecting crossbeam located about a third of the way down from the top. Some have two crossbeams; others have an oval shaped circle on top. Still another type, called a crucifix, has an image of “Jesus” affixed to it. The shapes, sizes and configurations are seemingly endless, with “something for everyone.”

While the King James Version of the Bible speaks of the “cross of Christ” (Gal. 6:12), does this mean a Christian should use this symbol as a physical manifestation of his faith?

Since Jesus warned His followers against blindly following the traditions of men (Mark 7:6-7), you must not make assumptions. Do not just accept or assume that the cross is biblical—demand PROOF!

Constant Reminder?

Symbols carry significance and meaning. Often, they are used to invoke feelings or thoughts in the mind of the viewer. Some bring remembrance of events, places or people: national flags, war memorials, monuments to famous persons, or grave markers.

The image of a cross is no different. Yet few people consider what meaning this symbol has for God. Many questions flow from this: Does God want you to wear a cross and display it where you live?

Does God want to see this instrument of cruelty hanging from Christians’ necks, on the wall of their homes, or placed on the dashboard of their cars? Does He want to look upon a symbol that reminds Him of when He had to completely turn from His Son? (Read Matthew 27:46, II Corinthians 5:21, and Isaiah 53:6; 59:2.) And would you wear a constant reminder of how your child was put to death? Think about this!

Consider further. If Christ were put to death with a .38 Special handgun, would you wear this around your neck? If Jesus were put to death in an electric chair, would you place a miniature one on your dashboard as a sign of faith? What if by lethal injection? Would you have its representa-

tion prominently placed on the wall of your home?

Why venerate—give honor to—an instrument used in Christ’s death? Are you certain God desires this?

Before Christ

The cross was not widely used in mainstream Christianity until the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine—about 270 years *after* Christ established His Church on Pentecost AD 31. None of the apostles or first-century Christians used it or accepted it as a “Christian” symbol.

The Classic Encyclopedia, based on the famous 11th edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, states: “From its simplicity of form, the cross has been used both as a religious symbol and as an ornament, from the dawn of man’s civilization. Various objects, dating from periods long anterior to the Christian era, have been found, marked with crosses of different designs, in almost every part of the old world. India, Syria, Persia and Egypt have all yielded numberless examples, while numerous instances, dating from the later Stone Age to Christian times, have been found in nearly every part of Europe. The use of the cross as a religious symbol in pre-Christian times, and among non-Christian peoples, may probably be regarded as almost universal, and in very many cases it was connected with some form of nature worship.”

According to *Babylon Mystery Religion* by Ralph Woodrow, “Ages ago in Italy, before the people knew anything of the arts of civilization, they believed in the cross as a religious symbol. It was regarded as a protector and was placed upon tombs.” This symbol is still placed on graves today!

The book continues, “In 46 B.C. [Before Christ], Roman coins show Jupiter holding a long scepter *terminating in a cross*. The Vestal Virgins of pagan Rome wore the cross suspended from their necklaces, as the nuns of the Roman Catholic church do now.”

According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, the shape of the cross “had its

origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as the symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt.

“By the middle of the third century A.D. the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system, pagans were received into the churches...and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence, the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ.”

Who was this Tammuz? Anciently, he has been known by many names: Baal, Molech, Osiris. The Bible identifies him as Nimrod: “He was a mighty hunter before [in place of] the LORD” (Gen. 10:9).

The famous Jewish historian, Josephus, records in *Antiquities of the Jews* important evidence of Nimrod’s role in the post-Flood world. Notice: “He also gradually changed the government into tyranny...He [Nimrod] also said he would be revenged on God, if He should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach...Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God.”

Ezekiel 8:13-14 records a picture of the women of Israel “weeping for Tammuz.” This Tammuz (the god of fire) of the Babylonian mystery religion is none other than Nimrod. The etymology of the word Tammuz bears examination: *tam* means “to make perfect” and *muz* “fire.” In other words, to make perfect through burning in fire!

Ancient Israel fell into worshipping Tammuz. Again, he was also known as Baal or Molech: “And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to *pass through the fire* unto Molech; which I commanded them not, *neither came it into My mind*, that they should do this abomination...” (Jer. 32:35).

These practices were so terrible that God says they never entered His mind—they were unimaginable to Him!

If a symbol was first used for a pagan god—one tied to child sacrifices—should you still wear it around your neck?

Also notice what the *Davis Dictionary of the Bible* states about the origin of the cross: “The pre-Christian cross of one form or another was in use as a sacred symbol among the Chaldeans, the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, and many other...nations. The Spaniards in the 16th century found it also among the Indians of Mexico and Peru. But its symbolic teaching was quite different from that which we now associate the cross.”

How was its meaning different? It was used as a symbol of fertility. “Various figures of crosses are found everywhere on Egyptian monuments and tombs, and are considered by many authorities as symbolical either of the phallus [a representation of the male sex organ] or of coition...In Egyptian tombs the *crux ansata* [cross with a circle or handle on top] is found side by side with the phallus” (*A Short History of Sex-Worship*).

Clearly, the cross symbol in its various forms has pagan origins—and meanings—outside of Christianity. Origins that long predate the birth of Jesus Christ—and the Church He founded. It was “Christianized” and brought into mainstream Christianity.

What Did It Look Like?

What did the instrument of Jesus Christ’s suffering look like? What was its shape? There are differing opinions.

Professing Christianity has traditionally taught that Christ died on a two-beamed cross—His feet nailed together, with arms outstretched. The gospel accounts do say that Christ was nailed to a cross. Yet closer examination is warranted.

The word “cross” is translated from the Greek word *stauros*. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* states that this word “denotes primarily, ‘an upright pale or

stake.’ On such [criminals] were nailed for execution. Both the noun and the verb *stauroo*, ‘to fasten to a stake or pale,’ are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a two beamed cross.”

Interestingly, other scriptures record that Christ was nailed to a “tree” (I Pet. 2:24; Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29). The Greek word used in these verses, *xulon*, means “timber, stick, club, tree or other wooden article or substance.”

Anciently, Roman soldiers would crucify people using wooden structures of *various* shapes. Sometimes they used upright stakes or poles. Other times they used wooden crosses by attaching beams either at or just below the top.

The Bible does not specify the exact shape of the “*stauros*” or “*xulon*” on which Christ was crucified. But in light of the historical meanings of “*stauros*” and “*xulon*,” it was likely on a stake or upright pole, *not* on a two-beamed cross.

Do not, however, put too much emphasis on the *shape* of the cross. If God thought it were important for us to know *exactly* which, He would have clearly recorded it, leaving us without doubt.

The shape is not important—but Christ’s sacrifice is!

Wrong Focus

Established Christianity often has its adherents focus on a Jesus Christ who is either pictured as a helpless baby in a manger or a long-haired, effeminate weakling hanging dead on a cross.

Yet the Bible reveals that Christ now looks completely different. Inspired by God, the apostle John described Jesus’ present appearance: “His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in [its] strength” (Rev. 1:14-16).

God would not have inspired this description unless He wanted us to know Christ’s glorified appearance. Instead of focusing on how He may have looked in the past, we should think about Christ’s appearance in terms of how He looks *today*—as a soon-coming KING who will rule all nations!

This is a very different picture from the one invoked by traditional Christianity!—which has its emphasis on “feelings,” “emotions” and “physical” things. The Bible calls this approach a false “form of godliness” (II Tim. 3:5). This is especially true of a cross.

People own crosses and other religious items to “feel religious.” But the Second Commandment clearly prohibits *any* rendering of Christ’s or the Father’s appearance or any other religious image: “You shall not make unto yourself any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them...” (Ex. 20:4-5).

Crosses are made—“graven”—by man’s hand. They are of “the earth beneath.” Supposed pictures or images of Jesus Christ or God the Father (who are in heaven above) are also rendered by the hands of men. Both are used as objects of worship—they are adored and venerated.

Any picture, image or statue of Jesus Christ or God is in *clear violation* of the Second Commandment, and this includes all crosses and crucifixes. All such icons become the object of worship, which breaks the First Commandment as well: “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3).

Ancient Israel constantly fell into worshipping physical objects, such as the golden calf in Exodus 32. It is no different today.

Physically minded human beings desire physical representations of God, as well as physical symbols to which they can attach meaning. They find it

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NEWS

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tals” (*Businessweek*); “Rape victims in Congo call for justice” (*Voice of America*); “Jobless claims unexpectedly rise last week” (*Reuters*); “Study ties suicide rate in workforce to economy” (*The New York Times*).

While skeptics claim there has always been bad news, the Bible allows you to understand what time Christ was referencing. For proof we have entered end times—and exactly what that means—read the booklet *Are These the Last Days?*

The Real Story

Several scriptures bear out that a time of unsurpassed troubles will soon collide with an unsuspecting world, but many prominent prophecy-watchers have obscured the meaning of these events. Their off-the-wall predictions have painted any who believe biblical prophecy as a doomsayer or sun-downer—or simply a “crackpot.”

These self-styled prophetic gurus talk endlessly about the Book of Revelation—how massive hailstones will smash into houses, how the anti-christ will rise and violently take over the world, how the moon will turn blood red, how all life in the ocean will cease...and on and on. In their viewpoint, Bible prophecy is largely bad news. If the scenarios they forecast

were true, why would anyone want to believe in the future events they predict, in which almost everyone is doomed to hellfire except a small few?

No one wants to hear constant tragic reports. They would rather scour the world for inspirational stories and humorous events. In fact, people are built to long for positive news—a silver lining—a happy ending. Notice: “As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country” (Prov. 25:25).

In the face of terrible calamities, media organizations often attempt to divert the public’s attention toward some shred of good news. After the recent Japanese earthquake and tsunami—when entire towns were swept into the ocean, thousands were dead, and strong aftershocks continued—news organizations focused heavily on a single dog that refused to leave the side of another dog. While this tugged at the heartstrings, it and similar stories crowded out reports of what was really happening.

As the world grows darker, mankind will latch onto *anything* that brings even a hint of hope. But by highlighting superficial things, it will be unable to solve or forget its problems.

In addition, ignoring the march of terrible prophesied events and their meaning HIDES this good news from the masses. While Bible prophecy foretells the worst time to ever befall

mankind, it also reveals that this time is followed by the most incredible period in history.

The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the accounts of the human life of Jesus. In many translations, the text begins with the words, “The gospel according to...” While men have assigned various meanings to this word, the etymology of “gospel” reveals it refers to *good news*.

Notice how Jesus began His earthly ministry: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel”—GOOD NEWS—“of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14).

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance defines the word *preaching* in this verse as “to herald (as a public crier),” “proclaim,” and “publish.” The term “kingdom” simply means government.

This verse reveals that a primary role of Jesus Christ was that of newscaster—bringing the good news of an event to occur 2,000 years later. Just as many newspaper mastheads contain the word “herald,” Christ also “published” these prophetic news reports in the Bible.

Many people miss the point here. Note that Jesus *brought* the good news—He was *not* the news itself, as so many erroneously teach.

Instead, Christ said that He would usher in a global supergovernment able to solve mankind’s greatest problems.



■ **TWISTERS:** Left, airport employees walk past debris at Lambert International Airport in St. Louis, Missouri, after a tornado caused extensive damage to the area (April 22, 2011). Below, volunteers help sort through what was once the office of a home after it was flattened by a tornado in Raleigh, North Carolina (April 17, 2011).

PHOTOS: (LEFT) WHITNEY CURTIS/GETTY IMAGES; (BELOW) SARA D. DAVIS/GETTY IMAGES



This message is outlined in the book of Isaiah: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the GOVERNMENT shall be upon His shoulder...Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His KINGDOM, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever” (9:6-7).

Since falling for the devil’s slanted sales pitch in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been plagued with the sickness of deception, which has resulted in death, wars, diseases, and all troubles you see in the news. Contrarily, God’s coming kingdom will achieve world peace: “And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa. 2:4).

Yet many will not believe. Clouded with bias against the Bible, or angered that God’s Word contradicts cherished religious beliefs, they will miss the good news ultimately heralded by today’s terrible reports.

Necessary Tool

So then, is today’s news simply useless? Certainly not! Daily news reports are an essential tool. Although they contain slant and bias, news sources provide the means to *watch* prophetic trends. At least nine times throughout the Olivet Prophecy found in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus instructs His disciples to WATCH. (Read Luke 21:36).

Watching refers to closely following world events in the light of Bible prophecy. Jesus Christ explains the consequences of *not watching* in



■ **RISING WATER:** Severe storms caused the Ohio River to overflow its banks, flooding a casino in Metropolis, Illinois, and forcing at least a dozen families to abandon their homes (April 27, 2011).

PHOTO: WHITNEY CURTIS/GETTY IMAGES

Revelation: “If therefore you shall not *watch*, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you” (3:3).

Life as you know it is about to undergo a dramatic, 180-degree change. Examine news through the lens of Bible prophecy. Apply what you learn through *The Real Truth* magazine and you will notice that world events take on a new perspective. You may even find yourself asking, “How does the media miss this?”

Soon, however, no one will be able to ignore the meaning of cataclysmic events. As the world grows dimmer, contrived “hopeful” news will be much more difficult to find. Prophecy will continue to signal what is to come: the very worst news, setting the stage for the BEST NEWS of all time.

This is what the media—and the public at large—misses.

Without correct Bible understanding, world events can only be seen as isolated events. One of the most powerful earthquakes recorded is just another example of “Mother Nature’s fury.” Protests over austerity measures are just another “symptom” of

the global financial crisis. National alliances between historical enemies are just two countries learning to “get along.”

This need not be your viewpoint. Tie the events together and see them for what they are. Diligent Bible students who do this “have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star [Christ] arise in your hearts” (II Pet. 1:19).

With the world growing darker, be careful that the constant rush of tragic news does not fatigue or numb you. Remain vigilant: “Therefore let us not *sleep*, as do others; but let us *watch* and be sober” (I Thes. 5:6).

Pay attention to world events—and their deeper significance—and keep in sight the *good news* of the coming world SUPERGOVERNMENT poised to solve all of mankind’s problems.

To learn more about the incredible good news of the kingdom of God, read David C. Pack’s book *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* □

MANAGE

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to your life. Some of its wisdom is simple, as with this rhetorical question from Jesus: “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” (John 11:9)—meaning, a person is only given a certain amount of time each day to work, and the rest must be left for tomorrow. The Bible also lays a framework of how to most effectively *invest* your time—rather than merely *spend* it. That framework is God’s Law.

When many hear the words “God’s Law,” they immediately think of a seemingly oppressive list of “thou shalt nots”—meaning you *miss out* on living life.

Not so! Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it *more abundantly*” (John 10:10).

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 expands on this ABUNDANT life: “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and

a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.”

The next six verses state there is a time to “kill,” “heal,” “break down,” “build up,” “weep,” “laugh,” “mourn,” “dance,” “embrace,” “refrain from embracing,” “get,” “lose,” “keep silence,” “speak,” “love,” “hate,” “war” and “peace.”

This passage describes a FULL life! Yet many misunderstand it, instead believing it means they can do whatever they please with their time.

The end of Ecclesiastes reveals the true meaning for “a time to every purpose under heaven.” Notice: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole *duty* of man” (12:13).

The King James translators added the word “duty,” which is why it is italicized in the original text. Removing the word increases the verse’s meaning: “Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is *the whole man*.”

You are allowed *every* wide and varied “purpose under heaven”—as

long as it is within the realm of God’s Law.

Living a Commandment-keeping life will bring balance—and PURPOSE—to even the busiest schedule. God exhorts each person, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, *redeeming the time...*” (Eph. 5:15-16). The Greek word for “redeeming” means to “buy off” and “recover from the power of another.”

In addition, by living within the realm of God’s Law, “your days shall be *multiplied*, and the years of your life shall be *increased*” (Prov. 9:10-11).

To get the most out of life, invest your time into living God’s Way. Doing so will bring about a BALANCED, “abundant life,” where your days can be “multiplied” and you can “recover” previously wasted time.

For a fuller understanding of God’s Law, and how each principle will bring balance to your life, read *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?* □

CROSS

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hard (in fact impossible) to worship a God they cannot see. Yet Hebrews 11, verses 1 and 6, states that we must believe God exists even though we cannot see Him.

God is composed of spirit. He does not consist of anything made by human hands, of wood, stone, gold, silver, ivory or otherwise. God seeks those who will worship Him in *spirit* and *truth* (John 4:23-24)—not with physical objects.

See the cross symbol for what it is—pagan! Its meanings and symbolism do not honor God or Jesus Christ. The Bible clearly teaches that God’s people must not practice or tolerate *any* pagan ways, customs, traditions or practices (Deut. 7:1-6; Jer. 10:1-5; Rev. 18:1-4).

The Right Focus

How then should a person honor Jesus Christ? What kind of worship

does He approve? Allow God’s Word to answer: “For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an *example*, that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him [God] that judges righteously” (I Pet. 2:21-23).

Worshipping God in “spirit and truth” means following the example set for us by Jesus Christ. It means patterning your life after Him. Your focus should be on how He lived—in complete submission to the Father—faithfully obeying all of the Commandments, including the Second Commandment.

He said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Also, “If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15:10).

Simply put, love for—worship of—God can only truly be expressed by *active* Commandment-keeping. Our faith must be accompanied by actions (Jms. 2:20). Jesus Christ never wore or had a cross, and neither should His followers. True Christianity is a way of life you LIVE—the exact same way Jesus Christ lived while on Earth—it is not demonstrated by any religious symbol.

While you can be “justified by His blood” (Rom. 5:9), forgiven of past sins by His death, the next verse clarifies that you are “saved by His *life*” (vs. 10).

Rather than focusing primarily on Christ’s death, which is the central purpose for displaying the cross, you should emulate His life! If you will allow, He will live that very same Commandment-keeping life in you.

For a thorough examination of the life of Jesus, as well as how He kept the Commandments, read *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity*. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

Philadelphus [king of the south], B.C. 260, which is terminated, B.C. 252, by a marriage between Antiochus and Berenice, Ptolemy's daughter... On the death of Philadelphus ["he that begat her"], B.C. 247, Antiochus repudiates Berenice and takes back his former wife Laodice, who... doubtful of his constancy, murders him to secure the throne for her son Seleucus [II], B.C. 246."

Rawlinson later states that Berenice "had been put to death by Laodice..." (p. 222).

Control of the Holy Land Shifts Repeatedly

Before reading verse 7, realize that control of the Holy Land shifts repeatedly. Also realize we are only giving the barest thumbnail of what history reveals. This is because our purpose is to show that God inspired these prophecies, not to teach an in-depth history lesson—as could be done. Also realize that God would have to make known *from history* the meaning of these verses so we could know that He is the Bible's Author. Now verse 7: "But out of a branch of *her roots* [Berenice's parents] shall one [this is her brother who took the throne in his father's stead as the king of the south] stand up in his estate [the margin says "in his place or office"], which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail."

Rawlinson brings the names, "Ptolemy Euergetes [the III—eldest son of Philadelphus, and therefore Berenice's brother—a branch of her roots] invades Syria, B.C. 245, to avenge the murder of his sister, Berenice... In the war which follows, he carries everything before him."

Now verses 8 and 9: "And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue *more years* than the king of the north. So the king of the

south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land." This speaks of the southern king carrying silver and gold vessels, with captives, back to Egypt—"his own land"—after a successful invasion of the north.

In fact, Ptolemy III did conquer Syria, the Port of Antioch (capital of the kingdom) and Seleucia. He took a vast amount of spoils, including 2,500 idolatrous vessels and molten images that, in 526 BC, the northern king, Cambyses, had taken from Egypt.

The passage also states that King Ptolemy III would rule longer ("more years") than the northern king, Seleucus II. Seleucus died in 226 BC, and Ptolemy III reigned *four years longer*, until 222 BC.

At Seleucus' death, his kingdom was ruled successively by his two sons. Seleucus III reigned just three years (226 to 223 BC), while his brother, Antiochus III, also called "the Great," reigned for over 36 years (223 to 187 BC). Each established great armies to fight Egypt, recover their port city of Seleucia, and avenge the previous defeats of their father.

It took 27 years for Antiochus to recapture Seleucia and conquer Syria and the area from Judea to Gaza. Verses 10 and 11 state, "But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall *assemble* a multitude of *great forces*: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return and be stirred up ["stirred up again," margin], even to his fortress. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler [anger], and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand."

Ptolemy IV fulfilled verse 11 exactly. After gathering an army of 75,000, he did "move with [anger]" against Antiochus the Great.

Now verse 12: "And when he has taken away the multitude, his heart shall be *lifted up*; and he shall cast down [kill] many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it." Ptolemy IV fulfilled verse 12 because he did kill "many ten thousands." However,

he retreated too soon to Egypt, having made too hasty a peace with Antiochus, and wasted the substance he had gained, hence the phrase, "But he shall not be strengthened by it"—that is, his victory over Antiochus in 217 BC.

Twelve years later (205 BC), Ptolemy Philopator, king of Egypt, died. His baby son, Ptolemy Epiphanes, was given the throne. Thus, Egypt became vulnerable to attack. Antiochus in the north took advantage of this vulnerability "after certain years" by defeating Egypt. Verse 13 explains, "For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches."

Soon after, Antiochus formed an alliance with a later Philip of Macedonia to attack Egypt and retrieve Phoenicia and southern Syria from Egypt. This is a clear fulfillment of verse 14. Let's read it: "In those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of your people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall."

The famous Jewish historian Josephus states that a large number of Jews joined Antiochus in this campaign. This is what the end of verse 14 is describing. (Again, read each verse from your Bible as these historical events are outlined before you.) Many believe this prophecy simply cannot be understood. This is because *they* cannot understand it. These never seem to ask the obvious: Why would God record a long detailed prophecy—or any *other* prophecy—and not want it understood? The answer is He would not.

The Prophecy Continues

Next, Antiochus laid siege all the way from Egypt to Sidon, eventually seizing control of Judea in 198 BC, at the Battle of Mount Panium. Notice the reference to the Holy Land (Judea) as "the glorious land" in verses 15 and 16: "So the king of the north [Antiochus] shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither

his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. But he that comes against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the *glorious land* [again, Judea], which by his hand shall be consumed.” In each case so far, history records events occurred exactly as God foretold.

Now verse 17: “He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.”

At this time (198 BC), Antiochus arranged to have his daughter, Cleopatra (not the famous Egyptian queen of 31 BC) marry the now little boy king, Ptolemy Epiphanes. But this plan to control and possess Egypt through deceit failed, because Cleopatra deceived her father, Antiochus, and did not help him take control of Egypt.

This caused Antiochus to focus on defeating and taking control of the coasts of Asia Minor, including the islands around it (197-196 BC). However, in the Battle of Magnesia

(190 BC), Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus, the Roman general, defeated him and destroyed his army. This is recorded in verse 18: “After this shall he turn his face unto the isles [the coasts of Asia Minor], and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf [one of his generals] shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him.”

Verse 19 records what came next: “Then he shall turn his face toward the *fort* [fortresses] of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.” Antiochus, after redirecting his concerns toward his own fortresses, was killed in 187 BC while plundering Oriental temples in Elymais in an attempt to pay war reparations to the Romans.

Verse 20: “Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within [a] few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.”

A man named Heliodorus, the “raiser of taxes,” was sent by Seleucus IV Philopator to raise money throughout Judea. However, Heliodorus poisoned

Seleucus, who consequently reigned only 11 years (a “few days”)—187 to 176 BC.

Antiochus IV or Epiphanes, Seleucus the IV’s younger brother, won control of the kingdom by flattery and deceit. Verse 21 states, “In his estate shall stand up a vile person [Antiochus Epiphanes], to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by *flatteries*.” This man was an extremely “vile,” contemptible person and his aid, Eumenes, *did* come to assist him. Rawlinson states, “Antiochus [Epiphanes], assisted by Eumenes, drives out Heliodorus, and obtains the throne, B.C. 176. He astonishes his subjects by an affectation of Roman manners...[and] good-natured profuseness [flatteries].”

The Role of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)

We now begin looking more closely at the extraordinary role of Antiochus Epiphanes. He becomes an important type of something that will happen at the *very* end of the age. We can now read verse 22: “With the arms of a flood shall they be overflown



The Mid-East in Prophecy

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from before him, and shall be broken; yes, also the prince of the covenant.” This verse pictures an effort by Antiochus Epiphanes to remove the Jewish High Priest (“prince of the covenant”). Antiochus’ purpose was to install someone who would be loyal to him. Some misunderstand the term “prince of the covenant” as a reference to Christ. It is not. In the context, it clearly refers to the Jewish High Priest. Consider. For this to be Jesus Christ, all the previous verses must have an entirely different meaning.

The next three verses are an insight into Antiochus’ character and manner. Verse 23 first: “After the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.” Antiochus started with a small group of supporters, yet through flattery and deceit he slipped into greater power and secured large numbers of followers.

Verses 24 and part of 25: “He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers’ fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yes, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a *great army*; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with [also] a very great and mighty army...”

Although Antiochus’ ancestors granted favor to the Jews, he swept into Lower Egypt and Galilee, thereby alienating the Jews. Let’s read again from Rawlinson: “The Jews... were driven to desperation by the mad project of this self-willed monarch” and, “Threatened with war by the ministers of Ptolemy Philometor [the then southern king], who claim Coele-Syria and Palestine as the dowry of Cleopatra, the late queen-mother, Antiochus marches against Egypt” (p. 225).

This is 171 BC, when his nephew (Ptolemy Philometor) attacked him with a “great army.” However, Ptolemy’s officers betrayed him to

Antiochus and he lost the battle. This is recorded at the end of verse 25: “But he [Ptolemy Philometor, the king of the south] shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him.”

In 174 BC, Antiochus had joined his young nephew Ptolemy at a feast. Antiochus feigned support for Ptolemy against his brother, Euergetes II, in a case of mutual deceit. Read verses 26 and 27: “Yes, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain. And both these kings’ hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table [at the feast]; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.”

The Abomination of Desolation

Now we read verse 28 for what happens next: “Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.”

This describes Antiochus deciding to attack and slaughter as many Jews as possible. Upon returning from Egypt in 168 BC, with “great riches,” he sacked the Temple at Jerusalem and took from it the golden vessels—all as part of his planned genocide of the Jews!

Now verse 29: “At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.” History records that Antiochus did turn back toward Egypt, this time without similar success, because Ptolemy Philometor had secured assistance from Rome.

Verse 30 adds, “For the ships of Chittim shall come against him [Antiochus]: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.”

The Roman commander, Popilius, brought his fleet of ships to attack Antiochus. Popilius secured surren-

der on his own terms, which included leaving Egypt after returning the island of Cyprus to Egypt. This caused Antiochus to again vent his anger against the Jews as he was returning to Antioch. This “indignation against the holy covenant” offered favor to any Jews who would *renounce* their beliefs and practices.

What follows is fascinating, and begins a powerful parallel for our day. Follow closely.

First, the crucial verse 31: “And arms shall stand on his part [again, Antiochus’ part], and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the *daily sacrifice*, and they shall place the *abomination that makes desolate*.” Note this.

Antiochus dispatched troops to Palestine one year later, in 167 BC, with terrible results for all who fell in his path. He destroyed the Temple and its sanctuary—doing away with the daily sacrifice (described in Daniel 8:11-24), while setting up an image of Zeus, Jupiter Olympus—the *abomination of desolation*—directly on the Temple altar!

Some try to portray this as having been fulfilled when the Dome of the Rock was built on the Temple site over eight centuries later, in the 600s AD. Again understand. For this to be true, all the verses that have been explained to this point would require some other equally plausible explanation to work with the precision we have seen every step of the way thus far. This would also apply to all verses that follow Daniel 11:31. Were this so, no one has ever seen that other “plausible” explanation. Why? Because there is no other way to understand the facts of history.

My booklet *The Mid-East in Bible Prophecy* completes the incredible Daniel 11 prophecy—but goes much further and ties in the New Testament period, including Christ and the apostles within the prophecy, all the way to World War II and what the Bible calls the “time of the end.” It also covers the modern king of the north and modern king of the south. Be sure to read it! □

WEATHER & ENVIRONMENT

U.S. Tornado Deaths Exceed 300

■ **DESTRUCTIVE PATH:** In the aftermath of a severe tornado, debris from destroyed homes is strewn across lawns in Tuscaloosa, Alabama (April 28, 2011).

PHOTO: JESSICA MCGOWAN/GETTY IMAGES

The National Weather Service recorded that at least 178 tornadoes ravaged the Midwest and Southeast United States in two days (April 27-28), making it the largest number recorded during a single tornado outbreak in United States history. The storms fragmented homes, buildings and facilities, knocked down thousands of trees, destroyed power and telephone lines, and obliterated businesses as they swept the region.

CNN reported: "With the official state death toll now at 337, the...tornado outbreak is the second-deadliest single day for tornadoes since record-keeping began, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said."

"In Tuscaloosa, news footage showed paramedics lifting a child out of a flattened home, with many neighbouring buildings reduced to rubble" *The Associated Press* stated. "A hospital said its emergency room had admit-

ted about 100 people, but had treated 400."

Following the storms, up to one million residents were without electric power in that state alone.

"People think of Oklahoma as tornado alley, but the Southeast has a history of more powerful tornadoes that stay on the ground longer," FEMA Director Craig Fugate said in *The Wall Street Journal*.

In St. Louis, Missouri, security cameras captured powerful winds of what is thought to be the worst tornado to hit the city since 1967. The security video footage, aired by the *BBC*, shows travelers and airport security running for their lives as the storm pokes giant holes through the terminal's roof.

Along with an estimated 600 violent twisters that slammed the South in April, some regions were also hit by 12 hours of nonstop rain and flash flooding. □

Wheat Rust Epidemic Shrinks Grain Production

A new wheat rust strain is killing up to 40 percent of farm fields in several bread-basket regions, including North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Scientists say the plant disease, which has been obsolete for decades, has now mutated into more aggressive fungicide-resistant forms.

"Yellow or stripe rust has been in the [Middle East] region for many years but was contained by using certain resistant crops," *Voice of America* reported. "Last year, however, a new, virulent strain emerged."

"The potential wheat rust epidemic illustrates the fragility of today's food security situation for many countries," Hans Braun, the director of the wheat project at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, said during a conference sponsored by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA). "Crop diseases are emerging more frequently and spreading much faster."

According to an ICARDA statement, "In most of the countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia and the Caucuses, where wheat can contribute more than 40% of people's food calories and 20% of the protein, the epidemics cause economic hardship for farmers and their families."

Experts fear the epidemic will also affect the United States and Canada.

"The last major outbreak of wheat stem rust in the United States was in the 1950s, when it destroyed 40% of the spring wheat crop," *USA Today* reported. □

EUROPE

Europe: Far-right Political Groups Gaining Momentum

The political right in northern Europe is increasingly attracting large numbers of followers, posing a challenge for leftist parties in upcoming national elections.

“Far right parties have been gaining ground in several European countries since the 1990s, their successes ascribed to disenchantment with the perceived failures of leftwing governments, growing concern over immigration and the tightening of the European Union,” the *Guardian* reported.

Numerous peoples in predominantly left-leaning nations, such as Denmark, Sweden and Finland, are evidencing changing political mindsets.

“In an arc of countries spreading north-east from the Netherlands, populist parties are cutting a swathe through politics, appealing to elector-

ates with various blends of nationalism, Euroscepticism (and euro-scepticism) and outright xenophobia,” *The Economist* stated.

“The country to watch is Finland, where the True Finns have emerged from obscurity to have a shot at joining government after an election on April 17th” (ibid.).

The influence of a number of these groups is not new. For example, the right-wing British National Party has had representation at the European Parliament since 2009, and the right-leaning Danish People’s Party leader, as *The Economist* noted, “...is often voted Denmark’s most powerful woman, ahead of the queen.”

In addition to fiscal conservatism, a common sentiment among these parties seems to be anti-Islamic policy.

“The [Netherlands’ Freedom Party] still plays the Muslim card—anti-Islamism, Mr Wilders says, remains his ‘passion’—but it is seeking to broaden its hand with other themes, ranging from the eccentric (expelling ‘imported’ animal species such as Highland cows) to the worrying (‘scum camps’ for repeat offenders)” (ibid.).

Regarding the trend in Germany, the *Guardian* stated, “The far right in post-war Germany has manifested itself largely as a neo-Nazi youth protest movement, with plenty of unpleasant rallies by disaffected and racist youths from both the east and west of the country.”

Other nations experiencing similar political changes include Austria, Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland. □

AUSTRALIA & SOUTH PACIFIC

More Than Two Million Australians in Poverty

At least 2.2 million Australians live in poverty, according to findings by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS). Over 105,000 of this number are currently homeless.

“We know the cost of essential items and services like food, rent, energy, health, education, clothing and transport costs continue to go up,” ACOSS CEO Dr. Cassandra Goldie said. “In fact since 2000, the cost of living in Australia, as evidenced by the CPI has risen by 34% with energy expenses in particular doubling in the past decade and expected to double again in the next 5 years. And ACOSS believes this is understating it...”

Emergency assistance requests skyrocketed for the 745 charity organizations involved in the survey, and more than 372 reported that they were unable to provide for all those requiring help.




■ **GROWING POVERTY:** Derelict apartments used to accommodate impoverished Aborigines line the streets of the indigenous community known as “The Block” in Sydney, Australia (Jan. 15, 2010).

PHOTO: TORSTEN BLACKWOOD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“We are particularly concerned about people facing long term unemployment, as they fall deeper into poverty and risk of homelessness,” Dr. Goldie said. “The number of people becoming unemployed long term continues to rise, despite the fact

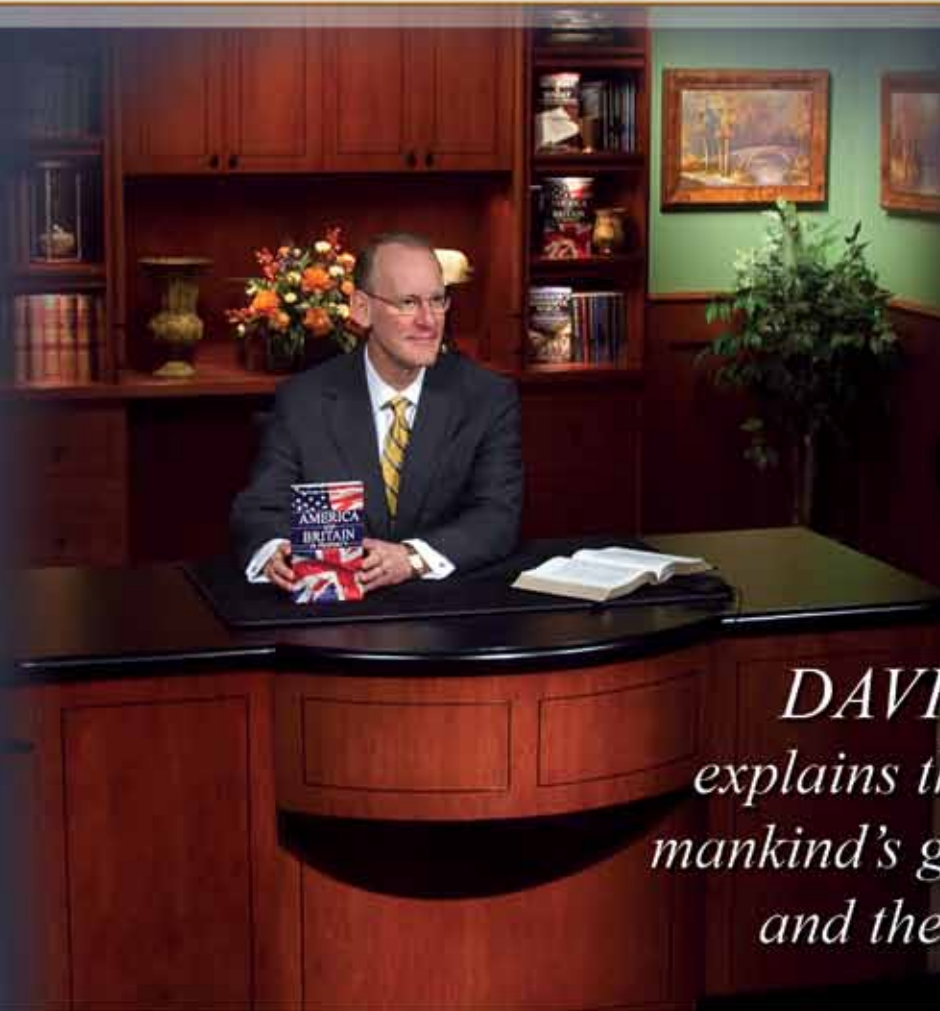
that Australia’s unemployment rate is down to 5.0%.”

ACOSS is worried that the effects from recent floods that swept across Australia, which took place after the survey period, will worsen the situation. □



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