

APRIL 2012

THE

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# REALTRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



## THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA

*Also Inside:  
Why Extreme Weather  
Is Increasing!*

# THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: DARNITRA D. JACKSON

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PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

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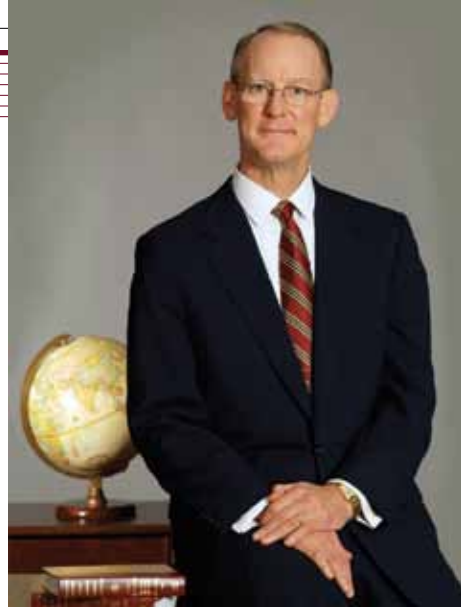
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## PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



# Why Extreme Weather Is Increasing! – Part One

**W**HAT IS *WRONG* with the weather? People the world over are recognizing that *extreme weather* is becoming normal. Today's storms are more intense and more frequent—and more widespread. Nature is **EXPLODING** with violent weather—droughts, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, storms and wildfires—all of which are causing increasing death tolls and financial loss. Disastrous weather worldwide has caused many to ask: What is happening? *Why* so much bad weather? What, if anything, is behind these events? Are they acts of God, cycles of nature, or mistakes of man? What does the Bible say?

This Personal reveals shocking answers!

The last 20 years have produced many more severe weather events than any other period since record-keeping began in 1880. Seemingly every week, reports around the world announce the “hottest summer ever” or the “worst flood ever,” or the “worst fires ever.” Experts blame climate change—or global warming—but more and more are unsure of the causes behind this increase in catastrophic weather events.

### Wild Weather

2011 saw a devastating earthquake and tsunami strike Japan, along with many other natural disasters around the world. Consider just the summer and fall of that year in the United States—an unprecedented 5.8-magnitude earthquake near Washington, D.C.—a swarm of 800 tornadoes across the Midwest that killed hundreds—a historic drought in Texas—wildfires across Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas—the enormous Mississippi River flood, and another on the Missouri River, with others on California rivers—a giant October snowstorm in the Northeast. The list is nearly endless. And 2012 is shaping up to be much worse!

While weather disasters have always occurred, try to remember when so many have happened in such rapid succession. One source declares: “Unprecedented extreme weather and climate events’ look likely in coming decades as a result of a changing climate. . . The IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] report’s projection for the next century: Worse heat waves worldwide are ‘very likely,’ ‘Medium confidence’ exists that droughts will worsen across southern North America, the Mediterranean and elsewhere, and ‘High confidence’ exists that economic losses from weather disasters are increasing. . . [In 2011], there [were] 14 billion-dollar U.S.



■ **SUBMERGED:** A suburban area in New South Wales, Australia, is inundated following heavy rainstorms (March 2012).

PHOTO: ANDREW MEARES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

weather disasters...shattering the previous record of 9 set in 2008.”

Normally, the U.S. sees three to four of these events per year!

The report continues, “Tornadoes, hurricanes and floods in these 14 disasters killed more than 600 people...” (*USA Today*).

Meteorologists have noticed something strange is occurring: “No question about it: [2011 was] a wild weather year...in the United States, with record rains, droughts, wildfires and tornadoes” (*Reuters*).

Across America, abnormally devastating weather—deadlier storms, multi-state flooding, excessive drought, and harder-to-control wildfires—is wreaking havoc on the economy and lives of millions of people. Those who survive must pick up the pieces of shattered lives—homes destroyed or ruined—businesses destroyed—livelihoods gone—loved ones dying, with some never found. In an instant, people can lose everything, including their lives! But the damage is *far more* than just death and destruction of property. *Entire economies* can be affected—cities can be erased!

### Disasters Increasing

In other parts of the world, unstable weather comes with the Pacific pat-

tern called El Nino, which brings wet weather that saturates the ground and results in flooding in some places and droughts in others.

Consider: “A strong El Nino plays havoc with weather from Indonesia to the Atlantic, but in different ways. Indonesia gets unusually dry weather, and...fires in parts of Indonesia have been frequent...Peru, on the west coast of South America, tends to get what California gets—flooding rains” (*National Public Radio*).

Also note this about ecological changes: “Climate change and other factors are causing a massive ‘migration’ of tree species across much of the western United States and Canada, according to researchers. While insect attack, disease and fire are contributing to the new arboreal landscape, climate change is causing species that have been established for centuries or millennia to lose their competitive edge, according to the lead author of the study [conducted by the researchers]. The study suggests that many species once able to survive and thrive are being muscled out by opportunistic newcomers. The co-author says that while ecosystems are always changing at very slow rates, the distribution of tree species is now being altered so

quickly, due to recent climate change, that humans can notice it” (*The Plain Dealer*).

*Why* such violent weather?

Although natural disasters have caused erratic weather patterns throughout history, the exact reason these occur still puzzles scientists. Storm-chasers do not know why some thunderstorms form tornadoes while others do not. Forecasters cannot predict where flash flooding will occur. Only the disaster after it happens tells them. Nor can meteorologists explain why one day will be cloudier than another.

Most want to know *what is coming*—what the future holds. They look to meteorologists for forecasts, seismologists for when the next big earthquake might occur, and economists to predict financial storms that could hit them. People want to know where their lives are headed—and look to psychics, seers and prophets who have no answers. Some look to Bible prophecy to attach meaning to events, but fare no better. Here is why: most mangle verses, inserting their own ideas, rather than believing what the Bible *actually* says.

Due to the errors of so-called prophecy experts, the future remains hazy to most—as does the meaning behind worsening natural disasters. Yet, by allowing the Bible to interpret itself, you can understand what is happening.

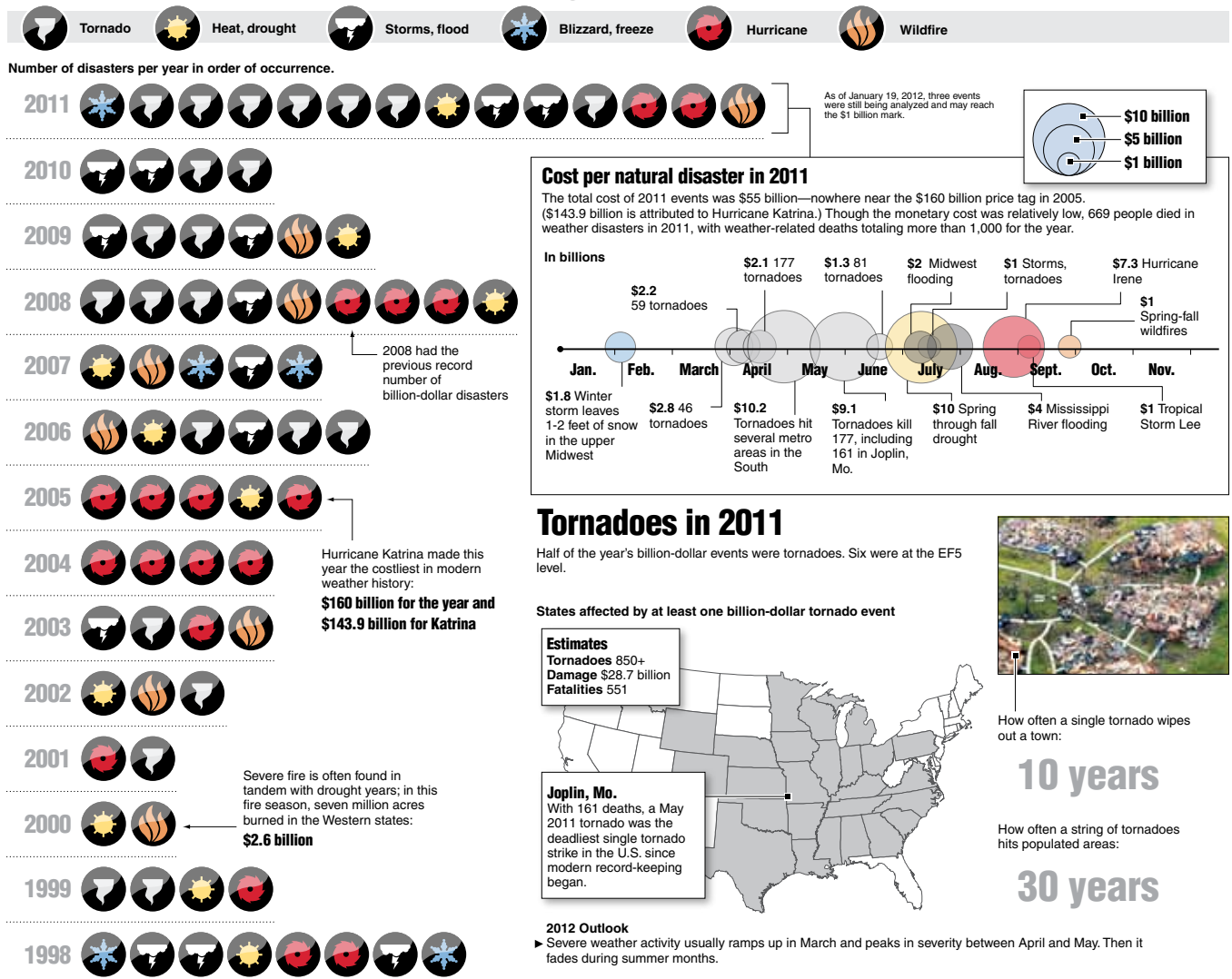
Before looking at God’s Word, let’s examine the many weather problems plaguing the world today.

### Hurricanes

First we look at hurricanes. In recent years, these storms have become more forceful and more frequent. Most Atlantic hurricanes begin as thunderstorms off the west coast of Africa, and travel over warm tropical water, gaining strength, as easterly trade winds send them toward Central and North America. Hurricanes build through three phases: (1) tropical depression—winds from 23-38 mph, (2) tropical storm—wind speed 39-73 mph, and (3) hurricane—above 73 mph. These steps can take days or only a few hours. The worst hurricanes can have winds above 155 mph.

# Weather Disasters in the United States Spike in 2011

## Disasters with at least \$1 billion in damage



Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Climatic Data Center, National Hurricane Center, news reports, MCT Photo Service  
 Graphic: Kate Nieland, Chicago Tribune

Hurricanes, which range from categories 1 to 5, can cause heavy rain damage, inland flooding, storm surges, tornadoes and sustained high winds. At a hurricane's landfall, up to 12 inches of rain is common, often far inland. This causes severe flooding and property damage, as well as death and destruction.

Storm surges are among the most devastating effects of a hurricane. This is a wall of water pushed at the front of the storm. Nine out of 10 hurricane-related deaths are caused by water surges or flooding.

In 1992, Hurricane Andrew killed 26 people and caused almost \$27 billion in damage! In November 1998, Hurricane Mitch was one of the strongest late-season hurricanes ever. Weakening just before hitting the mainland, it still unleashed an estimated 75 inches of rain. The flooding devastated Honduras and surrounding countries. The death toll was estimated at 11,000—the single greatest loss of life in the Western hemisphere in the last 200 years!

Next is the devastation that Hurricane Katrina caused in New Orleans. The fifth deadliest hurricane

in U.S. history, nearly 2,000 died in America's costliest natural disaster ever.

Hurricane Irene hit the American east coast in August 2011. This storm left utter devastation throughout New England. Notice: "It never became the big-city nightmare forecasters and public officials had warned about, but it caused the worst flooding in a century in Vermont" (*USA Today*).

The storm's disaster zone was 1,100-miles long and consisted of endless trees downed, washed-out roads, and scattered debris. Irene affected

more than 65 million people in 11 states, and hammered several major metropolitan areas, resulting in at least 40 deaths, millions of evacuees, 9,000 canceled flights, about six million homes and businesses without power, and approximately \$7 billion in overall losses.

Many cities were completely isolated. In North Carolina's Outer Banks, "A highway linking the islands was broken in five places. A new inlet, an estimated 200 feet wide, cleaved northern Hatteras Island" (*The Charlotte Observer*). Approximately 2,500 residents were trapped.

Irene exposed the weakness of America's crumbling roads, antiquated sewer systems, and outdated power grids. As disasters and ruin pile up, America's infrastructure will only worsen—as will the country's ability to pay for such disasters. For instance, the federal government had to "temporarily suspend...payments to rebuild roads,

schools and other structures destroyed during spring tornadoes in Joplin, Mo. and southern states in order to pay for damage caused by Hurricane Irene" (*The Washington Post*).

All this from just a single Category 1 hurricane!

### Violent Storms

Now consider the unprecedented storm that hit Alaska in late 2011. With winds recorded at nearly 90 miles per hour, it had the force of a Category 3 hurricane, and was *double* the size of Texas, or as big as the *entire state of Alaska*. The storm itself was moving 60 mph, and brought a 10-foot storm surge, the largest ever recorded in Alaska. Widespread flooding the size of Colorado on Alaska's west coast, coupled with heavy snow and beach erosion, led the National Weather Service to describe the storm as "one of the worst on record."

"This [was] an extremely dangerous and life threatening storm of an epic magnitude rarely experienced."

The sheer size and power of this one storm is hard to fathom. It was reported that it took "an unusual path through the Bering Sea" (*CBS*). Meteorologists had no explanation for why this storm occurred as it did.

These are just a few of the deadly storms that have hit the U.S. in recent years. Studies have demonstrated a trend: they are getting worse!

Again, *WHY* are these weather events happening? What is *wrong*? Are they caused by humanity, a product of natural weather cycles, or is there some *unseen force* at work? More and more are asking these questions, but experts have *no answers!*

Central and North America are not the only areas of the world that have killer hurricanes. Historically, immense typhoons have devastated

China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and areas along the Bay of Bengal. Hundreds of thousands have been killed!

Here is what Jesus Christ said would come just before His Return: "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in [various] places, and there shall be famines and troubles..." (Mark 13:8).

The Greek word translated "troubles" means "disturbance, that is, (of water) roiling, or (of a mob) sedition: trouble" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*). This word brings to mind a range of problems, some severe, that would come from floods, tremendous cyclones, and other destructive storms—all forms of "roiling water." Mark's gospel indicates these things will all grow *much* worse. And mob violence and sedition may be directly tied to more of them.

### Floods

Next are floods—among the few natural disasters that can happen almost anywhere. There are two main types: *ordinary* and *flash*. Ordinary floods are categorized three ways: coastal, due to storms and high tides—river, due to rivers exceeding their banks—and urban, where lack of ground prohibits absorption of water. Think city sprawl, roads and parking lots.

Frozen ground, widespread heavy rain, saturated soil, ice floes clogging waterways, reservoirs, rivers and streams at maximum capacity, and deforestation can all cause flooding. If deep snow melts too quickly, because of abnormally high temperatures, and/or is mixed with rain and snow, under which the soil is frozen, the snow can sometimes cause major flooding. In 2010-2011, a harsh winter and a late spring caused this very thing due to record snowpack in the Western U.S.

Little or no rain for an extended period can leave the ground harder than normal. This will cause the rain from a sudden downpour to run off, instead of being absorbed. On the

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 20

■ **RUILED INFRASTRUCTURE:** Boys cross a destroyed bridge at Kapay River, one of the three rivers that overflowed during Typhoon Washi, in Iligan City, southern Philippines (Dec. 26, 2011). PHOTO: NOEL CELIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



A hand holding a blue eraser is shown in the foreground, erasing the top portion of the United States Capitol dome from a photograph. The background shows the full dome and the American flag. The text 'A WORLD WITHOUT THE UNITED STATES' is overlaid in large, bold, white letters.

# A WORLD WITHOUT THE UNITED STATES

## *Who Would Fill the Void?*

America's influence on all nations has been unprecedented, and its disappearance would cause dramatic changes across the globe.

BY JUSTIN T. PALM

IMAGINE A WORLD with no United States. No cheeseburgers. No ice-cream sundaes. No McDonald's. No Ferris wheels. No iPhones or iPads. No Hollywood, pop music, or blue jeans.

These small contributions are nothing compared to the influence the nation has had on a global scale.

"For almost three centuries, the world has been undergirded by the presence of a large liberal hegemon—first Britain, then the United States," news commentator Fareed Zakaria wrote in his book *The Post-American World*. "These two superpowers helped create and maintain an open world economy, protecting trade routes and sea lanes, acting as lend-

ers of last resort, holding the reserve currency, investing abroad, and keeping their own markets open. They also tipped the military balance against the great aggressors of their ages, from Napoleon's France, to Germany, to the Soviet Union."

He adds, "...the United States has been the creator and sustainer of the current order of open trade and democratic government—an order that has been benign and beneficial for the vast majority of humankind."

While America has been a global leader and sustainer of the free world during the past century, many believe the nation's role as lone superpower is coming to an end.

Examining current trends reveals a United States in decline. It is experiencing a weakening in its foreign influence, an overextension of its military, and the worst economic downturn in decades, including a sharp devaluation of its currency.

In its place, countries such as China, India and Brazil are emerging, as are Russia, South Africa, and Kenya, among others.

According to Mr. Zakaria, such power shifts are inevitable: "There have been three tectonic power shifts over the last five hundred years...The first was the rise of the Western world, a process that began in the fifteenth century and accelerated dramatically in the late eighteenth century...The second shift, which took place in the closing years of the nineteenth century, was the rise of the United States. Soon after it industrialized, the United States became the most powerful nation since imperial Rome, and the only one that was stronger than any likely combination of other nations. For most of the last century, the United States has dominated global economics, politics, science, and culture. For the last twenty years, that dominance has been unrivaled, a phenomenon unprecedented in modern history.

"We are now living through the third great power shift of the modern era. It could be called 'the rise of the rest.' Over the past few decades, countries all over the world have been

experiencing rates of economic growth that were once unthinkable."

Those who want to see America "back on top" believe a world led by the waning superpower will be better off in the long run. They consider representative democracy the best form of government, and capitalism more effective than other economic systems.

This begs the question: what impact has America had on the world—and what effect would its disappearance have on civilization?

### **Unparalleled Influence**

Author Robert Kagan, who describes the current world order as the "American world order," wrote about the subject in his book *The World America Made*.

"The most important features of today's world—the great spread of democracy, the prosperity, the prolonged great-power peace—have depended directly and indirectly on power and influence exercised by the United States."

Of course, this is not to say the nation is perfect. It has made mistakes. Obviously, since the beginning of time, every country has.

In terms of benevolence, however, few countries in history have exercised the generosity and desire to protect the freedoms of others as has the U.S. Relative peace among the most powerful nations has largely been maintained for decades.

Economically, America's impact on the world has also been unprecedented. Through manufacturing, aid programs, exports, free trade, and more, America has shared its prosperity like no nation before it. For instance, after World War II, the United States enacted the Marshall Plan, sending billions of dollars in aid to rebuild Europe and East Asia.

"For four centuries prior to 1950, global gross domestic product (GDP) rose by less than 1 percent a year," Mr. Kagan writes. "Since 1950 it has risen by an average of 4 percent a year, and billions of people have been lifted out of poverty."

He states later in the book, "During the period of American hegemony, the global economy produced the greatest and most prolonged era of prosperity in history. Between 1950 and 2000, annual GDP growth for the entire world was 3.9 percent, as compared with 1.6 percent between 1820 and 1950 and an estimated 0.3 percent between 1500 and 1820. This increasing prosperity was also much more widely distributed around the world than in the past."

Language has been another export from America (and Britain) that has dramatically influenced the world. Notice this from a statement by the British Council: "English has official or special status in at least seventy five countries with a total population of over two billion...one out of four of the world's population speak English to some level of competence; demand from the other three-quarters is increasing."

Besides wealth and language, democracy has been another major export of the United States. While also far from perfect, this system has generally promoted peace and freedom wherever it has been instituted.

Mr. Kagan wrote that since the birth of the nation in the late 1700s until the close of the 1800s, no more than five countries around the world could ever have been considered democratic. With America's growing influence on global politics, this number increased to around 20 to 30 by 1950. At the time, this was about 40 percent of the global population. Incredibly, looking at the time period from the late 1970s until the early 1990s, more than half the world's population was living under a democratic government, with 120 democracies around the world.

### **Maintaining Peace**

Another way America has exercised its influence on the world is through peace-keeping. The second world war thrust the United States into a prominent place on the world stage, and forced it to take a stand as a "global sheriff."

Since the close of World War II, a third world war has so far been





PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

“The previous 60 years of relative peace on a worldwide scale has had almost everything to do with the role America has played as world policeman.”

averted largely because of America’s efforts. Think of the closest thing to it—the Cold War between the U.S. and Russia. Nothing happened. Large numbers were not killed. No mass troop transports took place. Allies of either nation were not dragged into a long, violent conflict. No peace treaties needed to be signed, no land re-staked due to battles. A disastrous worldwide war was avoided.

The previous 60 years of relative peace on a worldwide scale has had almost everything to do with the role America has played as world policeman.

“The power of the United States has been the biggest factor in the preservation of great-power peace,” Mr. Kagan writes.

“Contrary to what one often hears, multipolar systems have historically been neither particularly stable nor particularly peaceful. War among the great powers was a common, if not

constant, occurrence in the long periods of multipolarity in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the latter culminating in the series of destructive Europe-wide wars following the French Revolution and ending with Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo in 1815...”

“The great powers today act in a restrained fashion not because they are inherently restrained but because their ambitions are checked by a still-dominant United States.”

Although sometimes begrudgingly, U.S. military power and foreign policy has acted as the glue that has kept the current world order from splintering into chaos. American might has kept other countries with a history of aggression in check, specifically Russia and China.

Throughout the millennia of man’s existence, the “American era” could be viewed as a *golden era* for peace and abundance around the world. A single

nation has never brought so much prosperity and freedom to all.

### **Promise Made Long Ago**

Historians clearly recognize *what* happened regarding the United States’ ascension to such great heights, but cannot provide a full explanation of *why*. Credit is given to capitalism or the character and work ethic of the American people. Others believe it is the nation’s form of government or its Constitution that brought it greatness.

Yet the full story of America’s meteoric rise to international dominance lies in its origin and the peoples from which it descended.

Long ago, a promise was made to the ancient patriarch Abraham. Due to faithful obedience, God stated He would bless him and his descendants: “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get you out of your country...unto a

*Please see AMERICA, page 23*



# THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA

## Part I

Twenty years after the Soviet Union's fall, Russia remains burdened with problems. Its history, however, provides a clue to what is ahead for the nation.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

**T**HE IMAGES OF November 9, 1989, were immediately seared into the world's collective memory. On that day, all eyes were on Germany—specifically the Berlin Wall. The graffiti-laden structure was overwhelmed with curious onlookers from the western portion of the city.

Westerners climbed on top of the wall and conversed with eastern border guards—an unthinkable act just weeks earlier. Armed with sledgehammers, citizens vented decades of pent-up emotions by taking swings at the concrete barrier. Travel bans were lifted and thousands of East Berliners poured across the border and into the welcoming arms of their counterparts on the other side.

The wall came down; the Iron Curtain began to lift.

In the following years, as the USSR dissolved, the Cold War threat vanished, and the decades-long Soviet reign was over—a new era appeared on the horizon. The United States and Europe hoped Russia and its former satellite states would, as the East Berliners basking in newfound freedoms, sprint from communism to the warm embrace of Western-style democracy.

Fast-forward 20 years after the USSR collapsed. Things have not gone as the West envisioned. Russia has failed to blossom into a carbon-copy of European governing models, let alone model itself after the United States. Persistent problems wear on the nation. While the country has a rapidly growing middle class, they are still largely politically irrelevant.

*The New York Times* reported on a World Bank study of Russia: “A number of factors are weakening the Russian economy... The aging population, unproductive workers, and business executives who are reluctant to invest over the long term, fearful of risk in general but with specific concerns about Russia.”

The state once again is under the rule of Vladimir Putin, whose leadership style has been labeled authoritarian. He was elected for a third presidential term in early March 2012, and may remain in office for up to 12 more years.

To the West, Russia's return to such a governing style raises concerns. Yet for many of its citizens, Mr. Putin's decisive actions brought stability after the rampant political chaos, weak economy, high inflation, hunger, war and crime of the 1990s.

*The Economist* wrote that the West failed to take into account the country's “ruined economy, depleted and exhausted human capital and the mental and moral dent made by 70 years of Soviet rule. Nobody knew what kind of country would succeed the Soviet Union, or what being Russian really meant.”

Russia has long befuddled Western powers. Discussing the nation during World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill stated, “I cannot forecast to you the



action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma..." (The Churchill Society).

Being misunderstood has been a historical problem for the former Soviet republic. In pre-USSR days, Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, brother-in-law of Russian Emperor Nicholas II, said, "I have never met anyone who understood Russians" (*From Nyet to Da: Understanding the New Russia*).

Outsiders tend to paint the northern Eurasian nation with a broad brush, and in doing so, miss what it really means to be Russian. Today, many in the West view the country simplistically as still overcoming the effects of a failed communist state—including holding onto Soviet-style authoritarian control.

Other countries, where certain democratic freedoms are guaranteed, assume the only logical way to solve the nation's problems is for it to make a clean break from its past.

For Russia, however, this is no easy task.

### Change in the Air?

Parliament elections held in December 2011 seemed to herald a shift in Russia's public mood. After the vote, thousands of demonstrators, outraged about suspected electoral rigging and at Vladimir Putin's bid for president, crowded Moscow to voice their discontentment. Similar events also occurred in the weeks prior.

Protesters at these gatherings, which were the largest demonstrations since the Soviet Union's fall 20 years prior, cried "New Elections, New Elections" and "Russia without Putin."

A main point of dissatisfaction was Vladimir Putin's return as president. He held the position from 1999 to 2008, after which he backed Dmitry Medvedev as his successor, and Mr. Putin then became the prime minister. Due to changes in the Russian Constitution and Mr. Putin's recent re-election, it is possible that he could retain his position in the Kremlin until 2024. Mr. Medvedev may then again switch to prime minister (a position that is appointed in Russia).

"It's absolutely unacceptable that the man who's in power [already] for 12 years will be here for 12 years more!" one demonstrator told *NBC News*. He later stated, "We don't want another revolution, or bloodshed, but if Putin is going to win then there may be a 'Russian Spring'—not an Arab Spring but a Russian one."

Western media latched on to such comments as hope of significant change for the nation.

The *Telegraph* quoted Sergei Mironov, who ran against Mr. Putin in the recent presidential election: "Whoever wins the presidency, if he does not immediately begin deep political and social reforms including a clearer articulation of our foreign policy objectives, my prediction is that Russia will [be] shaken by a kind of Arab Spring within two years."

An "anti-corruption crusader" told the *International Herald Tribune*, "We have something to say to Mr. Putin... Change is coming. Let democracy spring from the city of Yaroslavl."

In reality, however, these comments come from the vocal *minority*. Mr. Putin remains popular with most of Russia. A February opinion poll showed that before his official election, he held at least 50 percent of the vote.

The *European Voice* stated that "most participants hold few illusions about the efficacy of their protest. They want to express to Russia's rulers the extent of their frustration and determination. They may not expect regime change, but they expect at least some minimal reforms."

Western media think they can easily understand what protesters are saying and paint their plight as similar to that of Arab Spring revolutions across the Middle East. Yet when most journalists try to comprehend why the *majority* of the nation voted in favor of Vladimir Putin, the Russian mindset remains "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma..."

### Political Theater

The Russian Federation currently has many pressing problems. It has the second-highest death rate in the world,

after South Africa. Due to a declining number of births, the workforce is rapidly aging. Russian news agency *RIA Novosti* cited a report by sociologists who had created an index of overall well-being for nations around the world. While the global average score was 57 out of 100, Russia was 37—a number on par with North Korea.

During his presidential run for a third term in March 2012, Vladimir Putin proffered ways to tackle these issues.

A *Time* magazine editorial summarized his proposals: "He promised to double the wages of doctors, [police-men] and college professors, triple stipends for many students, and boost the program of 'maternal capital' that pays mothers to have more children. (This last provision was to help solve Russia's demographic crisis, which has seen the population drop by 5 million people since the fall of the Soviet Union.) Putin also promised to 'completely re-arm' the military at a projected cost of \$777 billion over the next decade and to build new housing for veterans."

The only way to fund these efforts is a dramatic increase in oil production. Critics of this approach warn that Russia needs to diversify its exports instead of putting all its eggs in the energy basket.

While Mr. Putin handpicked Mr. Medvedev for the presidency in 2008, his protege did break with his counterpart on certain important issues—including the nation's economic future. He stated in a 2009 essay published by *Russia Today*, "Should we continue sticking to the primitive economy based on natural resources, to the deep-rooted corruption, to an outdated habit to rely only on the state, on foreign countries, on any kind of a cure-all, on anyone but on ourselves? Does Russia, overloaded with such burdens, have a future?"

Mr. Medvedev stated that a "technological revolution, strong civil society, efficient parliament and reformed judicial system are the key components for a prosperous, powerful and free Russia..."



While Messrs. Putin and Medvedev belong to the same political party, their tactics are markedly different. Yet their goal always seems to be the same—a proposition that resonates well with the vast majority of Russians. The nation wants what it always has: an *idealized* state that plays a powerful and prominent role on the world stage.

### National Idealism

Idealism has long been deeply ingrained in the Russian national psyche. American historian Albert Jeremiah Beveridge noted this characteristic in his 1904 book *The Russian Advance*: “No matter how casual his observation, every traveller through Russia will run across evidences of Russian idealism. On the other hand, men who have given their lives to the study of this curious people declare that the Russian is, first of all, an idealist.”

Beveridge especially saw this idealism in the nation’s literary works from Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Turgenieff, and Maxim Gorky, which all contain the “characteristic of ideality in spite of their realism.”

In the end, he concluded that Russians believe it is their duty to preserve “order, form, and authority in civil affairs” and then “to restore to the confused, hopeless, struggling peoples of the earth those forms of social order and political authority which the [Russian] thinks are, after all, the foundation-stones of civilization.”

Put another way, Russians want to export/expand the Russian empire in order to spread their ideals.

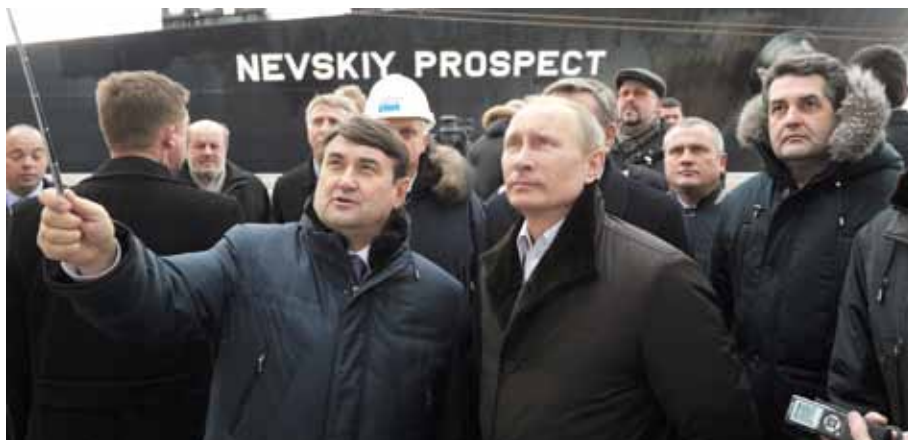
The same mindset persists today. In his 2001 book *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* Henry Kissinger wrote, “Both Russia and the United States have historically asserted a global vocation for their societies. But while America’s idealism derives from the concept of liberty, Russia’s developed from a sense of shared suffering and common submission to authority. Everyone is eligible to share in America’s values; Russia’s have been reserved for the Russian nation, excluding even the subject nationalities of the empire. American idealism tempts isolationism; Russian

idealism has prompted expansionism and nationalism.”

Mr. Kissinger quoted what Mr. Putin wrote the day before taking on the responsibilities of Russia’s presidency in early 2000: “It will not happen, if it ever happens at all, that Russia will become the second edition of, say, the United States or Great Britain...For Russians, a strong state is not an anomaly, which should be got rid of. Quite the contrary, they

a united nation backing one ruler, Russia has repeatedly expelled and repelled military advances from the Mongols, France, Poland and Germany. The nation took on the armies of Napoleon Bonaparte *and* Adolf Hitler. It continues to maintain a firm stance on certain global issues, even when opposed, and has vehemently defended its borders.

French Historian Francois Guizot famously remarked, “When nations



■ **EYE ON ENERGY:** Russia’s President-elect Vladimir Putin (right) listens to Russian Transport Minister Igor Levitin (left) while visiting an oil terminal in St. Petersburg, Russia (March 23, 2012).

PHOTO: ALEXEI NIKOLSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

see it as a guarantor of order and the initiator and the main driving force of any change.”

In *Letters from Russia*, French traveler Astolphe, marquis de Custine, wrote that a person could journey the entire country and “return home without having surveyed anything but a series of facades.” Custine believed that *on the surface* Russia appeared to be much like any European nation. Yet he felt that whenever he looked past these outward shows, he invariably found something entirely different, something uniquely *Russian*.

A similar statement could be applied to any period in Russia’s history. At its heart, the nation does not change—whether under Czarist rule, the Soviets, or a sort of authoritarian democracy today. Its people are ready to sacrifice and suffer inconvenience for “the greater good.”

This formula has time and again bred success for the country. As

have existed for a long and glorious time, they cannot break with their past, whatever they do...they remain fundamentally in character and destiny such as their history has formed them. Even powerful revolutions cannot abolish national traditions...therefore it is most important, not only for the sake of intellectual curiosity, but also for the good management of international relations, to know and understand these traditions” (*The Mind of Modern Russia*).

Russia’s unchanging ideals and ability to stand on its own have everything to do with where the modern nation is headed. Unknown to most, the country’s history reveals more about its future than meets the eye. Perhaps surprisingly, the picture it paints is bright—and inspiring—for those who fully examine it.

To understand more, do not miss part two of this series in next month’s *Real Truth*. □

# Right Dating in a World Gone Wrong!

One needs only to look at the astonishing array of ill effects in millions of relationships to realize that the dating and courtship practiced today is terribly off track.

BY DAVID C. PACK

**T**HE WORLD is littered with broken families, unhappy marriages, single-parent homes, a pandemic of every form of sexual immorality, resultant STDs, astonishing ignorance, and widespread misery. Have you ever asked *why*? Why has mankind never been able to solve these huge problems? Why do they only grow worse with the passing of time?

The answer is that for every cause, there is a resulting effect, and for every effect, there is a traceable, root cause!

Some examples: If you routinely overeat, you will become sick, overweight—or both! If you drink too much alcohol, you will become intoxicated. This could lead to other bad effects, such as a next-day headache, being arrested, or a fatal auto accident. Also, if you break society's laws, you could end up in prison, which would hurt your family, career and your entire future.

In this fashion, the law of cause and effect directly impacts your life—and the life of everyone on Earth. The ways that this happens are endless.

But how do cause and effect apply to dating and courtship?

Dating, and the courtship that may ensue, are the precursors to the ultimate relationship—marriage. The effect—a successful or failed marriage—is what results from either *right* or *wrong* forms of dating and courtship.

But why have wrong forms of dating and courtship occurred? Because

laws and principles of God are being routinely broken by billions of people.

God's way of life—including the principles of right dating, courtship and engagement—is also based on the law of cause and effect. The Bible contains hundreds of laws and principles, each carrying the power of cause and effect for those who keep—or break—them!

When God's laws and principles are obeyed, they bring countless blessings, benefits and good things into the lives of those who obey them. But mankind has routinely rejected—and even lampooned—the Book that reveals the cause of all its problems, evils and ills—the Bible.

If dating and courtship were practiced correctly today, they would form the foundation of a beautiful relationship between a husband and wife as God ordained it. The two would spend a lifetime together enjoying much happiness and joy. This relationship would include expanding the family to children who would experience more productive and abundant lives, because their home and family would provide a strong, positive environment, capable of nurturing them to adulthood and into their own successful marriages with children. Parents would teach children all they would need to know, and the process would continue through successive generations.

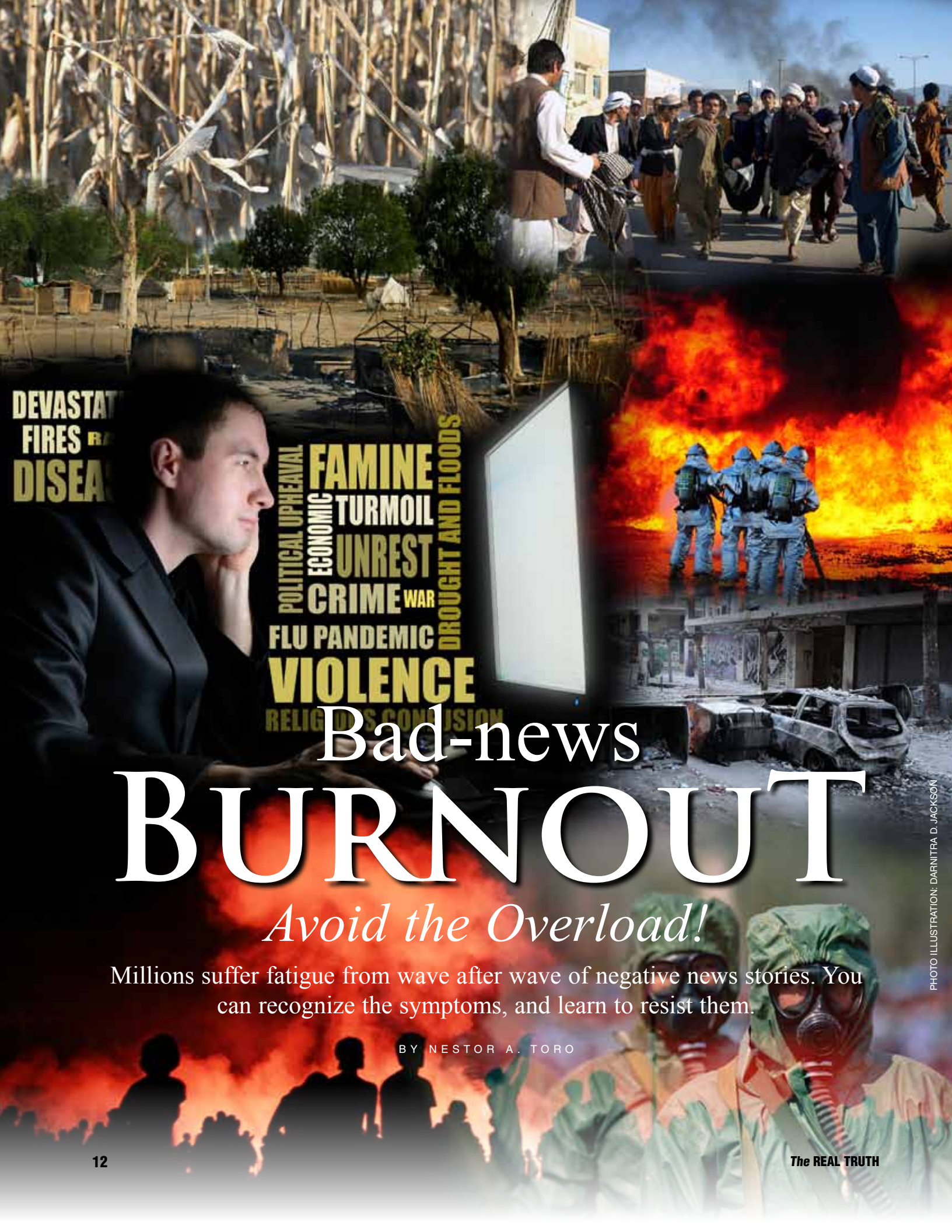
Does this sound like a fairy tale? Today it does! This is because modern society is shot full of wrong education, misinformation, hollow opinions, pop psychology, ignorance, bad advice—or no advice—all of which virtually block young people from any hope for true happiness in marriage.

Indeed, dating has radically changed from just a few years ago—and the concept of courtship has become all but extinct. Dating truly *has* become a *lost art*—but you can learn it! You cannot imagine the benefits—to you and others—that will come with the proper form of dating. It is meant to be an opportunity not only for fun, recreation and exercise, but also to learn about people, to develop social graces and etiquette, and to develop yours and others' personalities, among other purposes.

Most of what you have learned and been conditioned to believe about dating is *not* correct! It is founded on wrong feelings of lust and selfishness! Accept this as fact!—and realize that looking to the all-powerful Creator for the correct way is the only path to long-term happiness!

To learn more, read my book, which is unlike any you will ever read on the subject, *Dating and Courtship – God's Way* at [rcg.org/aadac](http://rcg.org/aadac). It explains the difference between love and lust, the importance of emotional maturity, when people should begin to date, group dating, how to recognize compatible personalities, what to look for in people, courtship, engagement—and much, much more.

Be willing to shed society's influence over you. Admit that you may need to *unlearn* almost *everything* you have absorbed, and replace it with sound biblical principles that yield success. Once armed with this new set of values, you can firmly rely on God to bless you with the best possible mate. □



DEVASTATING  
FIRES  
DISEASE

POLITICAL UPHEAVAL  
ECONOMIC  
CRIME  
FLU PANDEMIC  
VIOLENCE  
RELIGIOUS CONVISSION

FAMINE  
TURMOIL  
UNREST  
WAR

DROUGHT AND FLOODS

# Bad-news BURNOUT

*Avoid the Overload!*

Millions suffer fatigue from wave after wave of negative news stories. You can recognize the symptoms, and learn to resist them.

BY NESTOR A. TORO

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: DARNITRA D. JACKSON

**I**N A heartfelt appeal, UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake pleaded with the rest of the world: “I have read in the last few days a number of articles noting a decrease of interest in the Horn of Africa in the press and in the publics. This must not happen. We cannot let a kind of disaster fatigue set in...”

He warned of a looming “human catastrophe.”

“The statistics can be mind-numbing, but remember that the data is sons and daughters. The statistics are little boys and little girls, every one of them...”

While referring to a severe drought and famine crisis, which continues to threaten upward of 390,000 African children, Mr. Lake’s address on the UN World Humanitarian Day in 2011 is applicable to almost every negative news event today.

There seems to be no end to headlines about American tornado swarms, Syrian protests, Iran’s and Israel’s exchanged threats, West Africa’s drought, Mexico’s drug war, terrorist attacks, Europe’s economic crisis, antibiotic-resistant superbugs, political scandals, and the 2012 end-of-the-world frenzy. The list could go on and on.

With so much occurring, it can be easy for apathy or a false sense of security to set in—especially if one lives in an affluent nation.

Even during the current global economic crisis, many still enjoy relatively worry-free lives almost completely shielded from depressing news.

Others swamped with busyness may think they have no time to keep up with current events and assume that everything is just the “same old, same old.” This mindset tends to lead to tuning out bad news altogether.

Day in and day out, newspapers, television anchors, Internet sites, and radio talk-show hosts all seem to deliver an endless stream of bad news. And in the age of smartphones and

wireless Web access, news alerts can find you anywhere and everywhere. The cacophony can be mind-numbing. It can leave you struggling to continue caring about the latest earthquake disaster, the young boys forced to be child soldiers in central Africa, the impoverished families in your city.

This is bad-news overload. And while it may seem impossible to stay abreast, there is a way to make sense of the madness.

### **Disaster Fatigue**

First, realize that you are not alone. Mounting calamities have a way of shocking people’s ability to process them, resulting in what is called disaster fatigue.

“Experts say people may also go into denial and believe these tragedies will never happen to them, or they will channel their shock and horror into action and donate money, volunteer or help the cause in some other way,” *ABC News* reported.

But disaster-relief efforts are definitely feeling the effects of a society suffering from bad-news burnout. In 2008, the year in which the ongoing economic recession showed its true face, charity organizations were hit hard, and donations plummeted.

“The numbers are almost too large to fathom, so many stop trying,” *The Associated Press* stated. “As bodies pile up in disaster after global disaster, even the most sympathetic souls can turn away. Charities know this as ‘donor fatigue,’ but it might be more accurately described as disaster fatigue—the sense that these events are never-ending, uncontrollable and overwhelming.”

Prolonged disaster fatigue eventually turns into overfamiliarity with bad news. Since every single negative news story does not automatically result in a crisis, anxiety often progresses into disinterest.

To illustrate this, consider the struggle of the United States National Weather Service in finding ways to ensure people take dangerous weather warnings seriously. According to *The Associated Press*, “...three out of

every four times the National Weather Service issues a formal tornado warning, there isn’t one. The result is a ‘cry wolf’ phenomenon that’s dulled the effectiveness of tornado warnings, and one the weather service hopes to solve with what amounts to a scare tactic.

“In a test...five weather service offices in Kansas and Missouri will use words such as ‘mass devastation,’ ‘unsurvivable’ and ‘catastrophic’ in a new kind of warning that’s based on the severity of a storm’s expected impact. The goal is to more effectively communicate the dangers of an approaching storm so people understand the risks they’re about to face.”

### **Tuned-out Audience**

Lacking basic understanding of world events, many others—especially young people—are vulnerable to another symptom of bad-news overload: obliviousness.

For decades, David T. Z. Mindich has seen this dangerous trend. In his book, *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don’t Follow the News*, he stated, “Older Americans are still reading newspapers and have been doing it all their lives. But the generational shift is severe: While more than 70 percent of older Americans read a newspaper every day, a habit they picked up in their youth, less than 20 percent of young Americans do so now...It used to be that most 25-year-olds, and certainly 35-year-olds, followed the news. But for the past few decades, most have not. Eighty percent of young people don’t read the newspaper today, and there is no evidence that they will read 20 years from now, either. It would be less troubling if the 80 percent of young people who do not read newspapers every day watched TV news or logged on to news Web sites. Most don’t.”

Mr. Mindich highlights a sobering result: “While young Americans in past decades knew as much as their elders on a range of topics, this is no longer the case.”

The experience of a writer for *The Australian* proves Mr. Mindich’s worst fears might be a new reality: “The



anniversary of the Christchurch earthquake reminded me that 48 hours after the disaster last year I asked my 17-year-old daughter, if she had any thoughts for her fellow Anzacs.

“She looked at me unknowingly.

“‘Are you aware,’ I said, ‘that your Kiwi brothers and sisters in the city of Christchurch have experienced a very serious earthquake which has devastated much of the city, and killed quite a number of its citizens?’ She continued to look at me quizzically.

“At this point I got angry. Not so much at her, but at the media life she leads. No newspapers, no evening news, no current affairs, no non-music radio, no...nothing that would provide a clue to any events that one would think should be of general interest.”

Not sure about his daughter’s ability to come out of her clueless state, the writer diagnoses, “She is a monomedia consumer. Facebook seemingly provides her with all she needs to know.”

### Why Bother?

As bad news continues to increase, how do you feel? Do you feel fatigued—or tune out altogether?

Even if you have resolved to diligently stay informed with every subsequent event, you likely have still felt overwhelmed. “There is also a sense of head spin, of being unable to digest one tragedy before another happens,” *Mail & Guardian Online* stated.

The article added that this has become worse in the age of Twitter: “Stories are superseded so fast that you never get time for that half-knowledge to turn into full knowledge before the next thing happens. The effect is a news twilight, where you cannot even be sure

what has been confirmed and what has not.”

Then there is the one story that gains steam and overpowers all others—sometimes for good reason, but often for no real reason at all—and is featured on seemingly every news website, magazine, newspaper and talk show on the planet. One can become frustrated having to sidestep it to find *real* news—all while it continues to mindlessly distract others. You may begin to feel as if you have been stricken with a sort of “News Attention Deficit Disorder.”

The barrage can leave you asking, “If no one can fix such problems, *why* even bother to keep up?” This may cause you to become apathetic and feel disengaged from the world altogether.

Shortly after Japan’s tragic earthquake and tsunami in 2011, *ABC News* stated: “Because of the multitude of world crises that have happened in a short period, people [may] also become desensitized to these events.”

### Finding Meaning

There has always been devastating news: the September 11 attacks, atrocities during World War I and II, the Great Depression, the Great Potato Famine, the Bubonic Plague, and the Crusades, among others. Recent Dead Sea core data even suggests evidence of ancient devastating natural disasters comparable to modern mega-earthquakes.

“Looking farther back, one of the seismically active eras revealed by the core samples appears to have been about 4,000 years ago,” a researcher told *National Geographic News*. “‘If you believe the biblical chronology, this is roughly [the time of] Sodom and

Gomorrah,’ he said. During this period, according to the Book of Genesis, God ‘rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed all.’”

Even the Bible accurately documents that for millennia, mankind has been unable to stop the tide of bad news.

Jesus Christ spoke of such a period of history in the book of Matthew: “...you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars...For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse [various] places” (24:6-7).

Christ’s description of this most tumultuous period of history came after His disciples asked Him what the world would look like at the end of the age (vs. 3). It is a time of war (think Afghanistan and Iraq)—rumors of wars (think Israel and Iran)—famine (think of the starving families in the Horn of Africa)—disease (think of constantly morphing antibiotic-resistant superbugs). In addition, think of all of the earthquakes across the globe—Haiti, Japan, Chile and so on.

This time described in Matthew 24 is occurring now. The Bible accurately describes the events happening today! (For more on this topic read *Are These the Last Days?* at [rcg.org/atlld](http://rcg.org/atlld).)

Yet Jesus’ answer did not stop with a simple description of bad news. A few verses later, He stated: “And this *gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations...” (vs. 14).

While the terms found in this verse have been a source of heated debate among religionists, all you have to do is take this verse at face value. The word





■ **WORSENING CONDITIONS:** Left, a child, who suffers from severe malnutrition, lies on a hospital bed in Diapaga, Burkina Faso (March 19, 2012). Middle, commuters in Tokyo wear surgical masks to protect themselves from an influenza outbreak in Tokyo, Japan (Feb. 13, 2012). Right, an Afghan National Army soldier holds a rocket-propelled grenade launcher while keeping watch at the nation's defense ministry in Kabul (March 28, 2012).

PHOTOS: RAPHAEL DE BENGU/AFP/ (LEFT); ADAM PRETTY/ (MIDDLE); SHAH MARAI/AFP/ (RIGHT) GETTY IMAGES

*gospel* means “good news” and the word *kingdom* can mean “government.”

Notice the *Young’s Literal Translation* version of this verse: “... and this *good news* of the *reign* shall be proclaimed in all the world, for a testimony to all the nations...”

*Merriam-Webster Dictionary* brings further clarity to the terms *reign* and *kingdom*:

■ **Reign:** “royal authority: sovereignty...the dominion, sway, or influence of one resembling a monarch...”

■ **Kingdom:** “a politically organized community or major territorial unit having a monarchical form of government headed by a king or queen... often capitalized...the eternal kingship of God...the realm in which God’s will is fulfilled.”

A related prophecy in the book of Isaiah states: “...and the *government* shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (9:6).

This is referring to Jesus Christ. He will reign on Earth over the coming kingdom. The next verse in Isaiah highlights that there will be no end to “His government and peace” and that His kingdom will be established “with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever” (vs. 7).

While the Bible foretells the tumultuous period occurring today, more important, it describes the BEST NEWS of all time: a soon-coming *perfect* government headed by God!

### Stay Awake!

When properly understood, the good news found in the Bible reveals that

the awful news happening today is not made up of senseless events. Still, the world is turning darker with each report of worsening news.

This can be likened to your body’s natural process of falling asleep. When the sun sets, your pineal gland begins to release a sleep-inducing hormone called melatonin into your bloodstream, which makes you feel less alert and go into “sleep mode.” This hormone, however, is inhibited in the presence of bright light. Its effect naturally goes away in the morning, or if you keep the lights on at night.

In the same manner, as the world continues to experience bad news—it gets darker in a sense—it will naturally be “lulled” to sleep. Most will not discern what is taking place around them. Instead, they will become drowsy with disaster fatigue.

Do not allow yourself to succumb to the tendency to tune out, stop listening, or forget what is occurring around you.

You *can* stop the media madness—and avoid bad-news burnout!

First, start by educating yourself about the very best good news *beyond* the negative news occurring today. (Read *What Is the Kingdom of God?* at [rcg.org/witkog](http://rcg.org/witkog) to learn more.)

Second, the Bible has much to say on news events happening today. Knowing *why* world events are occurring will give *meaning* to global trends and conditions.

David C. Pack, the foremost authority on biblical prophecy, wrote in *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out*, “With all nations of Earth increasingly overwhelmed by a complicated and wors-

ening array of difficulties confronting and challenging them, the greatest thinkers are being employed to find answers—SOLUTIONS! The problem? There are *no* solutions to any of the world’s *biggest problems* anywhere on the horizon, but rather only new ideas that never seem to work!

“Of course, many are unmoved—not concerned—about the tumultuous events surrounding them, trusting that things will work out in the end ‘because they always do.’ Also believing things will eventually ‘turn out all right,’ others close their eyes, choosing to pursue pleasure and the accumulation of material goods at an even more frantic pace. But for the short term, things will *not* turn out all right. World conditions are and will become far more serious than any imagine.

“Almighty God will soon have to intervene and save humanity from itself. But before this occurs, world trouble will greatly increase—intensifying to staggering proportions. This will be followed by unexpected and cataclysmic events that will shake the whole world, affecting the life of *every* human being on Earth! Events are building to a final *culmination*—a tremendous CLIMAX! Nothing that has occurred over the past 6,000 years even remotely compares to what is yet to come upon this world! Civilization, as we know it, will change forever.”

For a fuller understanding of soon-coming Bible prophecies—and what you should be watching—read *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out* at [rcg.org/tbgpu](http://rcg.org/tbgpu).

You **CAN** defeat bad-news burnout! □

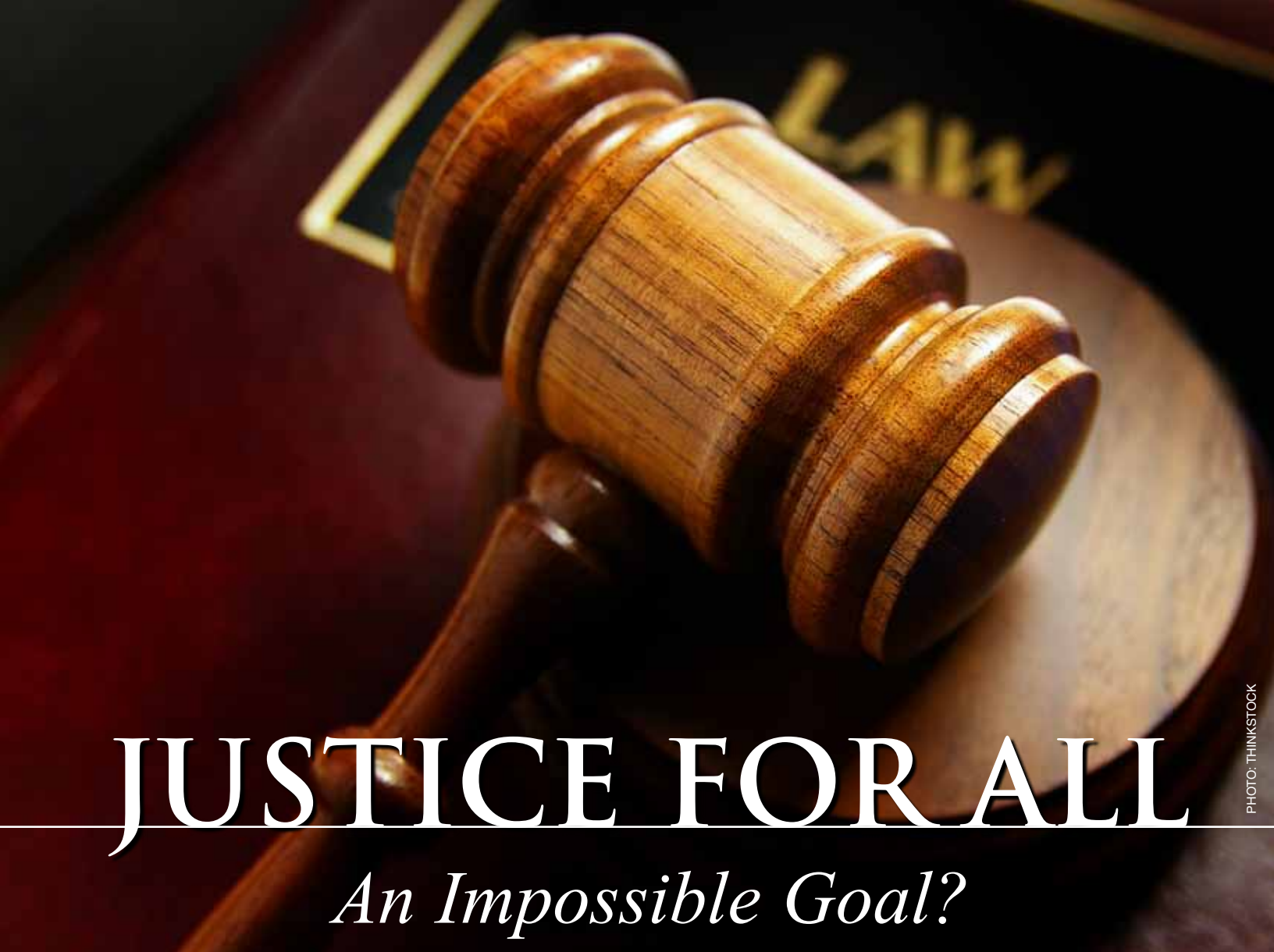


PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

# JUSTICE FOR ALL

## *An Impossible Goal?*

Legal systems worldwide, which should maintain order and deliver justice, are riddled with loopholes and corruption. What has gone wrong?

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

**M**ANKIND HAS placed its hope for evenhanded justice in various courts and legal systems. The institutions in each country have different methods, laws and penalties. Are any of these superior to the rest?

In America, the flash of cameras surrounding high-profile cases is commonplace. Defendants range from movie stars to serial killers, with every news organization and

media outlet searching for the latest facts, suppositions and rumors. Even cases involving brutal, violent crimes are reduced to a soap opera. Throughout such ordeals, one often hears the media speaking of “seeking justice.”

But is justice ever found?

Then there are the cases that may not garner instant media attention, such as certain perceived social injustices or instances of judges “legislating from the bench.” Other cases might involve dramatically divergent sentences for

the same crime. Justice is sought, but double standards are found.

Often the rich are able to afford good counsel—and get an acquittal—while the poor do not receive the same quality of representation. Is this just?

What about clear open-and-shut cases involving those who commit horrible crimes? For example, there may be a case in which a serial killer is caught red-handed. There is no doubt of his guilt, and he may even receive life in prison. Do these sentences actually completely deter others from committing similar crimes? If so, why do they happen so often?

In these examples, much attention is given to the legal process and the people involved. Do the media, judges and decades of appeals establish fair, evenhanded justice? They do not—they only leave more unanswered questions.

Then there is the Middle East. Some of these countries institute punishments such as severing hands for theft or stoning women for adultery. Are these systems more effective?

People, cities and countries across the world seek to establish justice, but do any actually apply it? Are any of these systems more fair—more just?

Some opine that the American system is the most advanced, yet corruption abounds at every level. Looking into the cause of the problems in the court systems around the world, one is left without solutions.

Yet there *is* a solution that the vast majority overlooks.

### Spiking Crime Rate

Even the briefest look at the crime wave sweeping the world gives insight into the effects of modern laws and justice.

For instance, youth crime is spiraling out of control. The daily news often reports about juvenile involvement in elaborate and complex crimes.

Murder has also reached astronomical levels. With very little respite, the number of killings worldwide increases each year.

The growth of violent murders is the most shocking. School shootings, serial snipers, and other rampages are signs that criminals are not deterred from committing murder and other violent acts.

The solution thus far has been to hire additional police officers, who must enforce new and increasingly complicated laws. In most cases, this has been difficult given the struggling economy.

For instance, New York City has 61,000 officers. Considering that the average yearly salary is about \$50,000, law enforcement *alone* costs New York City approximately \$3 billion! In essence, they have thrown money at the problem, instead of addressing its CAUSE.

Consider the following: according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's most current statistics, a violent crime occurs every 25.3 seconds, with one murder every 35.6 minutes, a forcible

rape every 6.2 minutes, one robbery every 1.4 minutes, and an aggravated assault every 40.5 seconds. And this is *just* in the United States!

This brief overview should demonstrate that something is wrong—and that the laws, penalties and court systems are not able to curb the tsunami of crime crushing the world.

### Today's Courtrooms

After a perpetrator is caught, he eventually faces charges in a court of law. This judicial process *should* enact justice—but justice is sometimes the furthest thing from the minds of those involved. The original purpose of a court case was to present all evidence pertinent to the crime, including physical evidence, witness statements, criminal history, etc., so that a fair verdict could be rendered by either judge or jury. The objective was not to wrongly convict an innocent party, or to acquit one who is guilty. The law was always intended to be fairly applied, so that all parties could receive justice.

This is not often the picture today. Exorbitant amounts of money are spent on the “science” of a courtroom. A wide range of studies have been done on the “art” of jury selection. Millions of dollars can be spent on padding the jury before a trial begins. Certain personality types, races, educational backgrounds, and many other factors help either a prosecutor or defendant gain an advantage.

And then there are the consultants for the defense. Even in cases in which guilt is obvious, the defendant is coached on how to dress, sit and address the jury, and what facial expression to show—all to sway the jury to acquit. Legal battles have been fought over whether jurors will rule fairly if the defendant wears an orange jumper or enters the courtroom in shackles. Often, the outcome is in favor of the perpetrator.

Additionally, consider how evidence is handled. Depending on its nature, how it is collected, and other factors, certain evidence might not be allowed into the courtroom. Seemingly minuscule technicalities can cause a

guilty party to be acquitted because incriminating evidence is never brought before a jury.

The same can be said of past criminal records. A defendant's lawyer will often fervently argue to have past crimes hidden, under the guise of preventing jury bias.

In these pre-trial motions, the jockeying back and forth is nearly a court case in itself. These motions ensure that evidence and records—the *facts*—are hidden from an unsuspecting jury.

Along with padded juries and dishonesty from witnesses and legal counsel, these motions produce circus sideshows regularly depicted on television (often to the tune of huge ratings, as news outlets feed the drama-thirsty Western culture).

Ultimately, only one person is charged to maintain order: the judge!

### Choosing Judges

The purpose of a judge is to keep the procedures running smoothly. Acting as a court “referee,” he must balance between pursuing the truth and recognizing tricks used by legal counsel. He attempts to keep things fair. As has been demonstrated, though, the courtroom is far from fair, even before proceedings begin. Nevertheless, this is the duty to which he has been assigned.

This means a judge has a very difficult task: he must ensure that unfair evidence is not brought forward, and that lawyers—many of whom are becoming ever better at exploiting legal loopholes—do not mislead the jury. As you can imagine, this assigns a substantial amount of power to judges.

In the United States, when justices are affirmed into their roles, they swear to uphold the law, following the Constitution and previous rulings when deciding a matter. It is thought that the rulings of previous cases, combined with established laws, mean that a greater number of judges are ultimately involved in the decision-making process.

Judges, however, have increasingly begun to rule based on their *ideology*,

not on the Constitution, evidence or existing precedents.

Judges—more so than Congress or the president—have the power to change the cultural fabric of society. And since Supreme Court justices are on the bench for life, a man or woman chosen for this position has nearly unchecked power.

This is why the selection of judges is becoming increasingly political and vicious. Republicans want one who will further their agenda; the same is true of Democrats. Recall the retirements of Supreme Court Justices David Souter and John Paul Stevens in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Their resignations opened the way for new appointees—and provoked a war of words each time!

Both sides feel that they know the solution to society's problems. They assume that if "their man" is put in a Supreme Court seat, many of the ills plaguing America will be corrected. But judges are not supposed to further *any* agenda. Their job is to interpret the law, based on existing rulings.

Judges are supposed to be the benign overseers of the legal system. Yet fighting, bickering, legislating and, in some cases, scandals have caused many people to view the whole system with suspicion, distrust and doubt.

The system is broken! One cannot undo years of unjust and unfair rulings. One cannot fix a system in which every aspect, from the judges at the top, to the lawyers at its base, is viewed with mistrust. It does not deter criminals—and rarely delivers justice to victims.

### **Only America?**

Is this a localized problem? Are courts in other countries more effective than the American system?

Several years ago, Dutch law (as applied in Aruba) received extensive media attention during the case of a missing girl. Because of the nature of the case, the press spent much time comparing the Dutch legal system to that of the United States.

The root of these two systems is utterly different. Dutch law is called

"civil" law, which is based on Roman laws. The American legal system (and that of most Western nations) is based on common law—the customs, traditions and history of that nation.

Some major differences between these systems emerge. For example, under Dutch law, jury trials are not used. Everything is brought before a trained judge. There are obvious

In such a system, justice could never be swift, because either party can—and likely will—ask for a repeat. Unlike the American system, the retrial basically starts from scratch, as if the original court case did not happen. Under American law, the prosecutor cannot retry a person who has been acquitted. This is not the case under Dutch law.

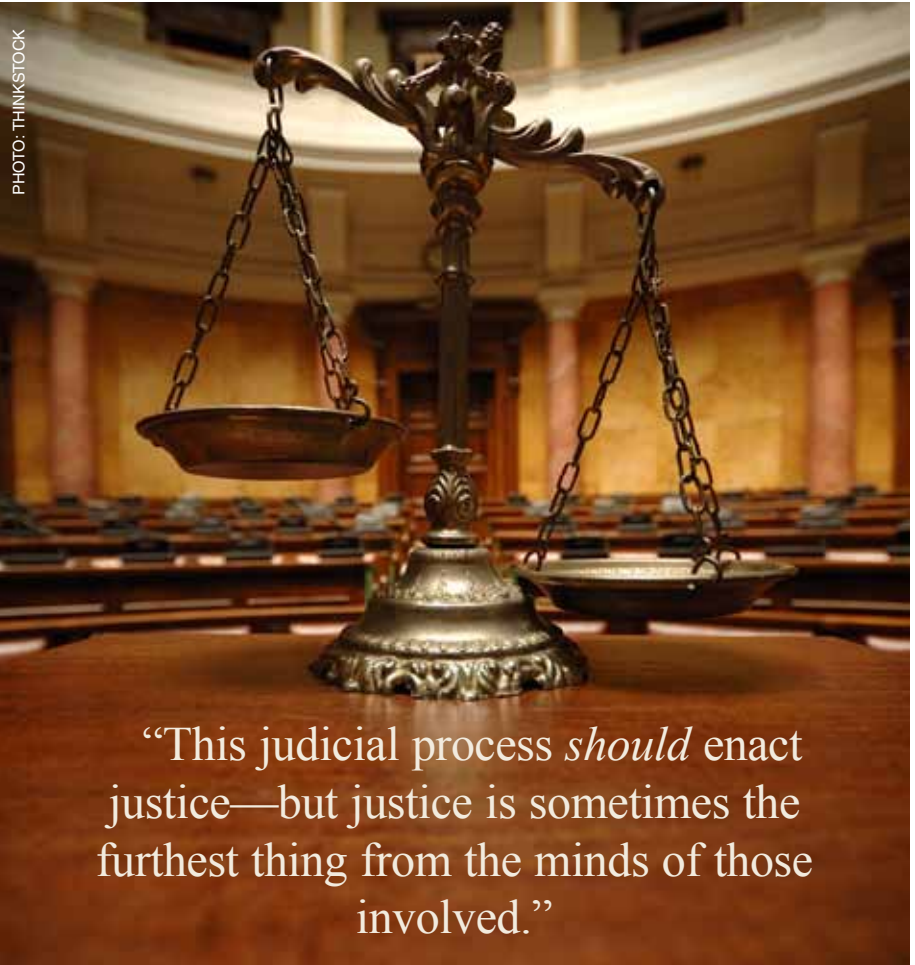


PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

*“This judicial process should enact justice—but justice is sometimes the furthest thing from the minds of those involved.”*

advantages to this. As mentioned, in the U.S. legal system, much legal wrangling goes into selecting and swaying juries. On the other hand, a trained judge should be able to see through the tactics of smooth lawyers.

This also means, however, that a corrupt judge would have the only say in a particular case. To protect against this, the prosecution or defense can ask for a retrial. The matter is then sent to a three-judge panel, and the entire process is repeated. Of course, most any defendant who is found guilty would request this.

Another interesting difference between the two systems is that, under Dutch law, one cannot negotiate a plea bargain. Those familiar with American law will recognize that defendants sometimes plead guilty in exchange for a lesser sentence. For instance, a murder charge could be reduced to manslaughter—even though murder was actually committed. To the families involved, the injustice is obvious.

When a defendant is charged with murder under the Dutch system, the prosecutor must prove the charge. The drawback is that the entire process

takes much more time. Also, evidence, investigations and court proceedings are more guarded. This slower, more secretive approach differs greatly from the U.S. system. As explained by a Dutch Ambassador, “The legal system...differs from the U.S. system but it is as effective.”

Yet the U.S. system is *not* effective!

### **Dramatic Inconsistency**

There are many examples of injustice in the legal system today. Each show-cases unique faults, flaws and repercussions. The previous examples show that the justice system is simply incapable of rendering a fair ruling—that media attention, corrupt lawyers and judges, and a system clogged with frivolous cases mean that delays, retrials and injustice are rampant.

You may recall some of the extremely high-profile cases that have been featured in the mass media. Famous athletes, media moguls, corporate executives, and politicians have been the center of investigations—some leading to very serious charges.

Everyone should be treated equally in court. And this should include sentencing. At times, a guilty party is made “an example,” especially in high-profile trials. The law *should* be applied in a fair manner, but arbitrary moral standards are often applied to verdicts instead. Some criminals are given two, three or even five life sentences. One reason is to placate society, making it feel comfortable with the fiction that the individual will be imprisoned for hundreds of years! This is ridiculous. One life sentence should literally mean *for life*.

Human feelings, media pressure, and cunning lawyers mean that similar crimes rarely receive the same penalty—withholding justice from both the accuser and accused!

### **Why No Solutions?**

Most would agree that dramatic reforms need to be instituted in legal systems around the world—that something *must* be done to correct the problems.

Again, even after a conviction, there may be a long series of appeals.

Notice what King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote about slow justice: “Because sentence against an evil work is *not executed speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully *set in them to do evil*” (Ecc. 8:11). The long, drawn-out legal process actually *causes* crime to be committed. No matter how harsh the punishments, if they take years to enact, criminals will not be deterred!

This explains why severe deterrents—such as the death penalty—do not seem to work. Time passes, and people forget. This results in criminals dismissing the punishment. And, in the case of the death penalty, most criminals know they can spend their entire lives in jail without worry of actually being executed.

Why can humanity not see the problems and ills described? Why does it seem unable to grasp their cause?

Notice: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is *not in himself*: it is not in man...to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Could it really be that simple? Under inspiration of the God who created the universe, the prophet Jeremiah reveals that man is simply unable “to direct his steps”—and therefore unable to govern, direct and rule nations.

But one may ask, “How did this come to be?”

Two quotes from the New Testament fully explain the cause *and* the effect. First, the cause: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who *hold the truth in unrighteousness*; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, *they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*” (Rom. 1:18-21).

Mankind can know that God exists. There is ample proof—if it

wanted to see it. (Read *Does God Exist?* at [rcg.org/dge](http://rcg.org/dge) for solid proof on this topic.)

But admitting that there is a God would mean OBEYING HIM. And human nature fights this at every turn.

The result? Man has declared that he does not need his Creator—that he can “figure things out” for himself.

Notice God’s view on this: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became *fools*...Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the *lusts of their own hearts*...And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a *reprobate mind*, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness...covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, *murder*...deceit... *inventors of evil things*...without understanding, covenantbreakers” (Rom. 1:22, 24, 28-31).

### **Change Is Coming**

These passages may make the situation seem hopeless. But there *is* a solution! We have seen that, through a series of scriptures and a look at injustice today, mankind is not capable of *self*-rule. But he *was* designed to be ruled, and to learn *how* to rule.

Men’s governments understand that judges must learn to rule and judge. The same is true in God’s government.

The Bible explains that Jesus Christ will soon return to Earth. When this happens, He is going to set up a new government, administered by leaders whom He has trained.

Read the book *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* at [rcg.org/tww](http://rcg.org/tww) to find out how true justice will be established worldwide.

After completing this training program, the leaders in this coming government will fairly execute laws and judge equitably around the world. They will see into people’s hearts, and always determine the *best* solution!

In the end, the confusion that exists today will cease, and every person will receive fair, righteous justice. □

## PERSONAL

Continued from page 4

other hand, if an area has experienced *more* than normal rain, the ground is already saturated. It cannot hold more water, which must find the lowest point.

Flash floods come suddenly—with little or no warning. A heavy rain, or an accident caused by a dam burst or sudden release of water held by an ice jam, can result in severe flash floods. These can be so powerful they can move huge boulders, uproot large trees, destroy bridges and buildings, and create new river channels. Mudslides can follow.

Major floods occur in many parts of the world. In 2010, flooding left a full seventh of Pakistan underwater. In late 2011, floods from monsoon rains affected 9.5 million people and killed over 500 in Thailand. One-third of the *entire country* was underwater! Five times in the last half of the 20th century there were catastrophic floods involving the Yangtze River in China.

In the spring of 2011, the Mississippi River—America's largest—flooded, turning millions of acres in the American South into swamp. Most of this land had been used to grow food.

The impact on America's economy and harvest was staggering: "Nearly 3 million acres of farm land in 3 southern U.S. states [were] submerged by flood waters from the raging Mississippi River and its smaller tributaries, adding to troubles in seeding this year's crops in the world's top grain exporter...the loss comes at a time when grains have soared due to dwindling supplies, weather woes in other exporting nations and increased consumption" (*Reuters*).

Much of Memphis, Tennessee, was underwater.

"In Natchez, Mississippi, the river surpassed its record...exceeding 58

feet..." (*CNN*). Above Natchez, to avoid an even worse catastrophe, officials had to blow a two-mile-wide hole in a levee to redirect water and relieve pressure. Prior to this emergency measure, river levels "stood at a record-breaking 61.72 feet" (*The Christian Science Monitor*).

The blast "allowed water to flow into the Birds Point-New Madrid

It is estimated another 1,000 touch down, but are never documented because they go unseen. The Fujita-Pearson tornado scale rates tornadoes from F0 to F6.

Recent years have seen a big increase in tornado-related deaths. A twister can literally cut a swath through a suburban neighborhood and destroy everything in its path. Yet homes nearby can be virtually untouched.

In the spring of 2011, an F5 *multi-vortex* tornado (one having several funnels within a main one), far worse than anyone imagined, with 200 mph winds, flattened most of Joplin, Missouri. More than 150 people died. Thousands of trees were leveled, cellphone towers were blown over, and cars were tossed like toys. Roofs were gone where houses survived. Entire neighborhoods were unrecognizable. In minutes, 8,000 homes and businesses were damaged. Joplin was almost wiped out.

Pause to think about the tremendous devastation in just this one town, as well as the human side to what happened. Reporters at the scene fought back tears, and were unable to continue due

to the gravity of the destruction. Lives were ruined. Parents lost children—children lost parents and grandparents. Just think of the pain and misery of those left behind.

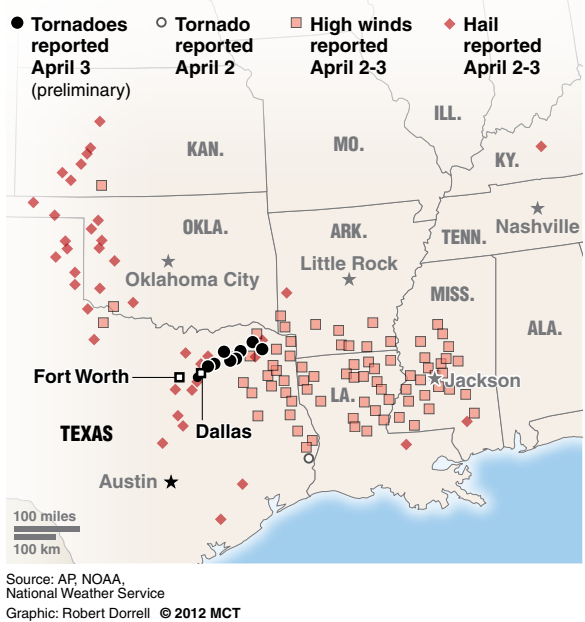
Then think of the rebuilding process that must occur—the time, energy and money spent. A *whole city* can be set back decades in a few short minutes—or *seconds*—when natural disasters strike!

Again, *why* are these things happening? Experts just do not know!

But Joplin was not the only town almost completely wiped out by tornadoes in 2011. The Missouri F5—which caused the most tornado-related deaths in a *single day* in America's history—was just one of many across the country during one of the deadliest tornado outbreaks ever. In May, an estimated 370 tornadoes struck the Midwest,

## Tornadoes Rake Dallas Area

Severe weather spawned multiple tornadoes across the Dallas-Fort Worth area in April 2012 and caused significant damage.



Floodway in Missouri, with the water traveling at 4.1 million gallons per second to create a 200-square-mile lake" (*ibid.*).

Also, "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opened 44 more gates to the Bonnet Carre Spillway in Norco, La., diverting floodwater into Lake Pontchartrain. The spillway was opened...for the first time since 1973" (*The Los Angeles Times*).

The economic loss of just this flood was *billions* of dollars. This was an astonishing disaster!

### Tornadoes

Then there are tornadoes. Since more occur in the United States than in any other country, it is labeled the "Tornado Capital of the World." The National Weather Service documents about 1,000 touching down each year.

while April experienced a record 800! One that ravaged Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was also among the most powerful ever in the U.S.

While meteorologists can explain the physical conditions necessary for inclement weather, they cannot pinpoint the exact reason such weather occurs. For instance, they are able to recognize the principle behind the tornado but not *why* it does or does not occur.

A University of Pennsylvania physics professor said, “If a draft of air from [a] storm comes along close to the ground and then moves upwards (called an ‘up-draft’), it will pull the spinning air upwards...Now comes the part that we don’t understand quite as well. So far the spinning air is still *really really* wide. It then gets pulled in really tight so that it makes a tornado in the same way as a figure skater pulls in his [or] her arms...to spin faster. Scientists aren’t exactly sure why this reduction in width happens sometimes but not at other times, but, when it does, wind speeds can go from the 30-40 mph winds of a regular storm to over 300 mi/hour.”

A grasp of basic physics, coupled with advanced monitoring of changes in wind direction, can give scientists a clear picture of when conditions are ripe for a tornado. While such information can be helpful in better appreciating the nature and composition of such violent wind rotations, experts cannot guarantee their path or—in Joplin’s case—predict if one will become a multi-vortex tornado. It is only by watching video reports and hearing testimonies of those involved after the fact that details can be analyzed.

### Wildfires

Next are wildfires. In 2000, the United States saw 123,000 fires, which consumed 8.4 million acres. At the time,

this was the most active fire season in history. During the 2001 fire season, there were another 89,000 fires across the U.S. In July 2002, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico saw the worst forest fires in their history!

Notice these quotes: “Nature rules... firefighters can only watch in helpless amazement as miles of evergreen forest erupt in a furious orange blaze... bearing down on suburbs southwest of Denver” (*Akron Beacon Journal*). Named the Hayman Fire, it destroyed 618 structures and 137,000 acres of forestland. Approximately 40,000 people were warned or evacuated.

Notice this: “A fire is a chemical reaction that requires fuel, heat

ate hurricane-force winds of 120 mph. This propels the fire up the steepest mountain slopes...The steeper the slope, the faster a fire will move and the hotter it will burn” (ibid.). Nothing can get away!

After a wildfire ends, there is potential for mass erosion due to the absence of vegetation. The soil is exposed to rain and is washed away, causing more problems—mudslides and ash buildup can plug small streams and rivers, resulting in flooding. Such debris can even change their course—and sewer systems can back up, causing health problems.

In May 2011, Arizona’s Wallow Fire—the state’s largest ever—raged over 538,000 acres. Believed to have been sparked by an uncontrolled campfire—carelessness—it forced thousands to evacuate, destroyed hundreds of homes, and left \$109 million in damages. The fires also engulfed more than 15,000 acres of New Mexico.

In addition, human error has been a factor. Of 1,494 wildfires that occurred in 2011, 950 were caused by people!

The National Weather Service warned of wildfire-linked flood danger: “The largest wildfire in state history...burned over 500,000 acres of the white mountains [of Arizona]...numerous locations will be vulnerable to flash floods and debris flows... some area streams and rivers are likely to see flows beyond anything seen in decades if typical or above average rains occur...”

The collective amount of national burned acreage—proportional in size to the state of Connecticut—surpassed 2010: “In Florida, the Everglades has seen 115 fires...three times the norm...At 4.2 million acres, the first half of 2011 is way ahead of the 2.9 million acres for the same period in 2006, which turned out to be the worst year on record



■ **PATH OF DESTRUCTION:** Homes lie in ruins after a tornado pummeled Kennedale, Texas (April 3, 2012).

PHOTO: KHAMPHA BOUAPHANH/FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM/MCT

and oxygen...In a wildfire, combustion releases hot gases and particles that rise in a column into the atmosphere—30,000 feet in the case of the Hayman fire. The fire creates its own wind as fresh air rushes in to replace the rising air. A large fire can gener-



■ **COUNTER MEASURES:** Dry grass is in flames after firefighters start a controlled burn in an attempt to contain the massive-scale Wallow Fire near Eagar, Arizona (June 9, 2011).

PHOTO: KKEVORK DJANSEZIAN/GETTY IMAGES

at nearly 10 million acres burned” (MSNBC).

In Texas, drought resulted in the worst wildfire season in its history. And meteorologists say this could worsen in 2012.

A climatologist stated, “It’s still bad. They are still having fires...I don’t think Texas is out of the woods. And looking at the forecast, it doesn’t look like it is getting any rosier” (Michael Brewer, climatologist with the National Climatic Data Center).

Also notice: “The devastating Texas wildfire season reache[d] the one-year mark...and there appears to be no end in sight as officials brace for large blazes that could ignite anywhere across the drought-stricken state...In [2011]...wildfires statewide...destroyed nearly 4 million acres and more than 2,900 homes...September 2010 to 2011 was the driest 12 months on record in the state, and weather experts say the historic dry spell will grip Texas well into 2012” (The Associated Press). Vast acreage of crops was destroyed. Extremely fast-moving fires even jumped highways, forcing traffic to be redirected.

### Foretold in God’s Word

The Bible speaks of how God will use “heat,” in various forms, to get the world’s attention. Notice: “The LORD shall smite you with...*blasting* [those are hot winds that bring scorching heat], and with mildew [paleness and rot from too much rain]; and they shall pursue you until you perish. And your heaven that is over your head shall be *brass* [or hard, meaning no rain], and the earth that is under you shall be *iron* [rock hard because of drought, heat and misuse of soil]” (Deut. 28:22-23).

Two more forms of natural disasters are also worth mentioning. Earthquakes and volcanoes have also become *regular* in the news. There is a reason. The Bible foretells that the *greatest* period of earthquake activity in history is upon us, and it will grow worse. In fact, these disasters will soon affect the security and stability of the whole world—including *your life*.

Recall that Jesus also warned about increased earthquakes before His Return. Notice: “There shall be earthquakes in [various] places...” (Mark

13:8). This says earthquakes would be scattered here and there—but must also mean that they would increase in both frequency and intensity as His Second Coming drew near. Luke’s gospel account says these will be “*great earthquakes*” (21:11).

Soon will come more powerful earthquakes! They will awaken giant volcanoes. These will be the largest eruptions of all time, and they will affect the weather. (To learn much more about these coming earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, watch my *World to Come* broadcast “Earthquakes and Volcanoes in Prophecy!” at [worldto-come.org/558794](http://worldto-come.org/558794).)

We have examined specific accounts of extreme weather, as well as *how* they occur. But what has so far been covered is just the tip of the iceberg. There is *much* more to understand. Few are aware that God’s Word talks about the weather, but also that the all-powerful Creator God reveals much more about what will occur in the years just ahead.

To learn more, do not miss part two of my Personal in next month’s issue of *The Real Truth*. □



## AMERICA

Continued from page 7

land that I will show you: and I will make of you a great nation, *and I will bless you*, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless you, and curse him that curses you: and in you shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3).

Notice how this promise was passed on to Abraham’s son Isaac: “And the LORD appeared unto him [Isaac], and said...I will be with you, and will *bless you*; for unto you, and unto your seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham your father; and I will make your seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto your seed all these countries; and *in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*; because that Abraham obeyed My voice...” (Gen. 26:2-5).

Jacob, Isaac’s son, also qualified to inherit the promises made to Abraham: “And God appeared unto Jacob...and *blessed him*. And God said unto him... your name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be your name...I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; *a nation and a company of nations* shall be of you, and kings shall come out of your loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to you I will give it, and to your seed after you will I give the land” (Gen. 35:9-12).

This promise had *two* aspects—one regarding *rulership*, a dynasty, and the other a *birthright*, consisting of physical blessings. After being passed to Jacob, the birthright was conferred on his son, Joseph (read I Chronicles 5:2) and his two children, Ephraim and Manasseh. When fully understood, this promise originally made to Abraham was fulfilled in the descendants of Ephraim—Great Britain—and Manasseh—the United States. (For more about these prophecies, along with historical facts and PROOF, read David C. Pack’s book *America and Britain in Prophecy* at [rcg.org/aabibp](http://rcg.org/aabibp).)

Return to Mr. Zakaria’s quote: “These two superpowers [America and Great Britain] helped create and maintain an open world economy, protecting trade routes and sea lanes, acting as lenders of last resort, holding the reserve currency, investing abroad, and keeping their own markets open. They also tipped the military balance against the great aggressors of their ages, from Napoleon’s France, to Germany, to the Soviet Union.”

Just one example of this is the dominance America has exercised over the world’s sea gates. In 1948, United States Navy Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz wrote, “Sir Walter Raleigh declared in the early 17th century that ‘whoever commands the sea, commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself’...The United States possesses today control of the sea more absolute than was possessed by the British. Our interest in this control is not riches and power as such. It is first the assurance of our national security, and, second, the creation and perpetuation of that balance and stability among nations which will insure to each the right of self-determination...Our present control of the sea is so absolute that it is sometimes taken for granted” (The Navy Department Library).

Unknown to almost all, GOD is the Source of America’s unprecedented wealth, influence and power. The soaring prosperity America has been given was due to one man’s faith centuries ago—not American exceptionalism, chance, fate, hard work, or capitalism. It was GOD who lifted America above other nations, making it great. This is the little understood truth of WHY America rose to greater heights than any other nation in the history of the world.

Yet this same God also foretold what would occur if America did not obey Him with the faithfulness Abraham exhibited.

### Prophesied Decline

Leviticus 26 reveals the blessings God would pour out on His people if they

obeyed His commands: “If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And you shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword” (vs. 3-7). This passage so obviously came to pass in America and Britain during the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham.

Due to widespread national disobedience, however, God is now *removing* these blessings from America. The latter part of Leviticus 26 (along with Deuteronomy 28:15-68) outlines the consequences of disobedience to God.

Since the nation has rejected its Creator, and not recognized Him as the Source of its abundance, the United States is in decline. This is not due to the natural course of events all great nations or empires experience. It is *God’s* doing, and it is inevitable. It can only be stopped through national repentance, which history and prophecy show is unlikely. (To learn how *individuals* can escape what is coming, read *Promised Protection – Secret Rapture or Place of Safety?* at [rcg.org/gpp](http://rcg.org/gpp).)

This descent has been underway for some time. For instance, militarily, America has not decisively won a war since World War II.

God warned Israel He would “break the pride of your power” (Lev. 26:19) if they disobeyed Him.

In Mr. Kagan’s book, he confirms America’s diminishing will to use force: “When the United States had 1 million troops deployed overseas in 1953, the total American population was only 160 million. Today, when there are half a million troops deployed overseas, the American pop-

ulation is 313 million. The country is twice as large, with half as many troops deployed as fifty years ago.”

American forces across the world are becoming overextended and exhausted. A *Washington Times* article “Troops Stressed to Breaking Point” reported, “...an exhaustive study of nearly 500,000 soldiers, reservists and veterans...notes that as many as 236,000 suffered from PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] since the beginning of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

“For military analysts, the reason is the nightmarish experience of sustained combat: Soldiers have been fighting the longest war in U.S. history, with frequent stressful deployments and compressed rest time back home.”

Economically, America has become a debtor instead of a lender. It has become service oriented instead of production-and-manufacturing oriented. Mr. Kagan writes, “America’s share of the world’s GDP, nearly 50 percent after World War II, fell to roughly 25 percent by the early 1970s, where it has remained ever since.”

### Filling the Void

Clearly, the decline of the United States is fast becoming a simple fact of history. Ask: if America were to slip into obscurity, what would the world look like?

The United States has long been a country that has prided itself on its “free press” and “free speech.” If it were to disappear, different forms of “freedom” would take its place.

Notice just one example of China’s approach to the Internet: “Two Chinese political websites said...they had been ordered by authorities to shut for a month for criticising state leaders, the latest move in a broad government crackdown on the Internet... China launched a sweeping Internet crackdown...highlighting official unease ahead of a leadership transition later this year...China, which has the world’s largest online population with over half a billion users, has long blocked content it deems politically sensitive as part of a vast censorship

system known as the Great Firewall” (*Agence France-Presse*).

Mr. Kagan provides a more sobering example: “The fact that China is trying to use its growing naval power not to open but to close international waters offers a glimpse into a future where the U.S. Navy is no longer dominant.”

Next, a world without America would lead to a huge increase in global poverty. Recall from earlier, “...in you shall *all* families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3), and “...in your seed shall *all* the nations of the earth be blessed” (26:4).

America has typically given the largest amounts of foreign aid. This has been a way through which it has been able to act as a type of blessing to other nations. The disappearance of America would mean that already struggling nations would be on their own. The seemingly unending reservoir of Western funds distributed around the globe would dry up.

A world without America would also be a dangerous one for democracies. Think of the common slogan used to describe the role of the United States, “Making the World Safe for Democracy.” No U.S. means there would be no great power reinforcing, sustaining and protecting democratic governments across the world. Non-democratic, totalitarian forms of government would fill the power vacuum.

A report by *The Economist* titled “Democracy Index 2011 – Democracy Under Stress” shows this transition has already begun: “Global backsliding in democracy has been evident for some time and strengthened in the wake of the 2008-09 global economic crisis. Between 2006 and 2008 there was stagnation; between 2008 and 2010 there was regression across the world. In 2011 the decline was concentrated in Europe...There has been a decline in democracy across the world in recent years. The decades-long global trend in democratisation has come to a halt in what [has been] called a ‘democratic recession’.

“The dominant pattern globally over the past five years has been back-

sliding on previously attained progress in democratisation.”

Finally, and most important, return to the idea of America acting as a world policeman. What becomes of a city with no police? Thieves, murderers and criminals freely roam neighborhoods. Lawlessness abounds, and the consequences for wrongdoing disappear.

A world without America holding back aggressive nations is the same. Rogue regimes can act with impunity. In fact, with the United States military severely overcommitted, other nations have already been pushing the limits. Communist North Korea recently announced plans to test-fire a long-range missile. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad routinely rails against America and Israel in front of the United Nations General Assembly, all while evidence indicates his country is developing nuclear weapons. Washington’s solution? Economic sanctions.

A United States exit from the world scene could increase the likelihood that nations will attack each other. Its dwindling influence in foreign relations and diminished power of deterrence—which has prevented offensive attacks by the threat or power of retaliation—could eventually lead to World War III. Order could quickly be replaced by chaos, as occurred in the past when there was a shift in the balance of power.

As Mr. Kagan describes it, “We may discover then that the United States was essential to keeping the present world order together and that the alternative to American power was not peace and harmony but chaos and catastrophe—which is what existed before the American world order came into being.”

Bible prophecy reveals that all of the above conditions *are* coming. Both history and God’s Word prove that another nation—or company of nations—will fill the void left by America.

To learn more about how this will happen, and the good news that lies in the United States’ long-term future—and that of the whole world—read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at [rcg.org/aabibp](http://rcg.org/aabibp). □

## EUROPE

## German Meeting Troubles Eurozone Leaders



■ **STANDING TOGETHER:** European Foreign Ministers pose in front of Villa Borsig in Berlin. Pictured left to right are Radoslaw Sikorski (Poland), Jean Asselborn (Luxemburg), Didier Reynders (Belgium), Guido Westerwelle (Germany), Michael Spindelegger (Austria), Uri Rosenthal (Netherlands), Paulo Portas (Portugal), Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo (Spain), and Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy) (March 20, 2012).

PHOTO: ROBERT SCHLESINGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

An informal dinner gathering in Germany to discuss Europe's post-economic crisis future—in which only 10 of the European Union's 27

countries were invited—ignited criticism from Europe's leaders.

According to *Der Spiegel*, "... German news reports quoted sources

within the Foreign Ministry saying that they aimed to spearhead a forward-looking strategy 'at a time of diminishing enthusiasm' for the European project. They reportedly want the bloc to look beyond Europe's current crisis, and have suggested that the meeting...could pave the way for future discussion."

The countries invited were France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Portugal and Spain. Denmark and France, however, chose not to participate due to other obligations.

"A diplomat from Sweden, one of the non-invitees, told *Spiegel* magazine that the German foreign minister was not contributing to EU cooperation by leaving some countries out," *EUobserver* reported.

Officials in Ireland, another nation that was not invited, said the meeting was unwise.

"German officials say their invitation list is limited in the interests of a proper conversation...invitees reflect all geographical and historical experiences in the EU, they say," *The Irish Times* reported. "Further meetings of this group are likely, but membership is unlikely to be extended." □



■ **WIDESPREAD EPIDEMIC:** Pakistani patients infected with dengue fever share beds in a ward at a hospital in Lahore, Pakistan (Sept. 7, 2011).

PHOTO: ARIF ALI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## HEALTH ISSUES

## Dengue Fever Threatens Over 2.5 Billion People

More than one-third of the world's population—approximately 2.5 billion people—are at risk of contracting dengue fever, with over 50-100 million infections occurring per year, a World Health Organization study revealed.

"Before 1970, only nine countries had experienced severe dengue epidemics," the report stated. "The disease is now endemic in more than 100 countries in Africa, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, South-east Asia and the Western Pacific. South-east Asia and the Western Pacific regions are the most seriously affected."

The study further showed, "Not only is the number of cases increasing as the disease spreads to new areas, but explosive outbreaks are occurring. The threat of a possible outbreak of dengue fever now exists in Europe..." □

# What Happens When You Die?

- Is there an afterlife?
- Will you instantly go to “heaven” or “hell”?
- When do Christians receive salvation?
- Can you watch over loved ones after death?



Learn what the Bible says about your future!

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