

AUGUST 2015

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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



Britain and the EU *Headed for a Split?*

10 Years After Katrina
Lessons from Adversity

Looking for Rest
in a Restless World

Will the Antichrist Arise
from the Middle East?

Our Water Crisis
Reversing the Irreversible

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A R T I C L E S

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■ **FILTHY WATERWAY:** A Cambodian boy looks out over a canal filled with waste in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (March 4, 2015).

PHOTO: TANG CHHIN SOTHY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Our Water Crisis
Reversing the Irreversible
Water problems affect every continent. Solving it will take global change.
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FRONT COVER: British Prime Minister David Cameron speaks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel following his arrival to Meseberg, Germany, to discuss the European financial crisis (April 12, 2013).

PHOTO: SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

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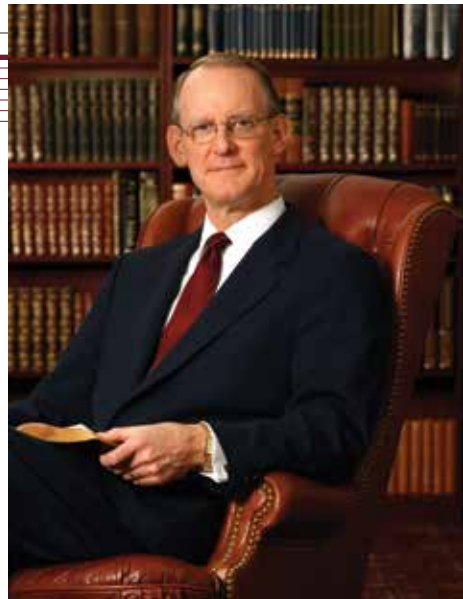
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
TIMOTHY C. WILLARD

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David C. Fack



How Was the Bible Canonized? (Part 1)

WHERE DID THE Bible come from? What is the background of its origin? Who authored it? Many wonder: Do we have the entire Bible? Some feel we cannot know.

Can the Bible's books be proven? Is God's Word complete without the Apocrypha or other writings? Does evidence exist that these belong in God's Word?

Many feel the Catholics assembled the Bible. Is this true? What role did the Jews play in compiling it?

You need to know if God wrote the Bible—or men did. For instance, it contains many commands that either do or do not have authority behind them. Also, one-third of it contains prophecies that will affect you—soon!

Many facts about the assembly and preservation of the Bible—called canonization—show God's guiding hand in the entire process. This subject, different and more technical than other Personals, will prove fascinating. Prepare yourself for plain answers to big questions, explaining the amazing story of how God preserved His Word!

Design and Layout of the Old Testament

The design and development of the Bible is a truly incredible story. God's Word as we know it today has been passed down through many centuries. Only

a thumbnail of what could be said, this article series explores the canonization—the binding and confirming—of the books God intended be preserved for all time as His Word.

Let's consider. Are you able to preserve important financial papers you need to keep? Can families preserve treasured photographs? Are companies able to keep records vital to their existence? Can the National Archives protect priceless documents and artifacts from America's history? Can courts preserve the record of proceedings? Is the Internet able to preserve virtually EVERYTHING? The answer in every case is, "Of course!"

If God can create the universe—and all life within it—surely He can preserve His Word. Yet most seem to think God is less capable than human beings of preserving what is vital to Him!

The word "Bible" conjures mystery in most people's minds. From the Greek *biblos*, it simply means "a sheet or scroll of writing" and "a book" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*).

The languages in which the Bible was originally written are primarily Hebrew for the Old Testament (with a few exceptions in certain books) and Greek in the New. If a person cannot read Hebrew or Greek, he must rely on a translated version. Of course, no translation is 100 percent accurate. There will be errors, based on the meaning

of certain words, phrases, idioms and each translators' preconceived ideas. But the words in original Greek and Hebrew are perfectly recorded. The Bible's Author declares, "Every word of God is pure" (Prov. 30:5) and that "the words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace...purified seven times" (Psa. 12:6). But how do we know this is still true *today*?

God gave the Jewish people a special commission. Speaking of Moses, the book of Acts states, "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the *lively oracles* to give unto us" (7:38).

Next, notice who exactly was commissioned to preserve the "lively oracles": "What advantage then has the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the *oracles of God*...what if some did not *believe*? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yes, let God be true, but every man a liar..." (Rom. 3:1-4).

God commissioned the Jews—their unbelief or not—to preserve His Word.

What are the oracles of God? These consist of the Scriptures and what is called God's sacred calendar, which includes the seven-day weekly cycle. Some mistakenly reject this calendar—sometimes called the Hebrew calendar—because they insist on looking solely to the Bible for guidance—not anything the Jews did. Yet it was *God*—not men—who entrusted the Jews to preserve the calendar *and* the Scriptures!—the *lively oracles*! So to find the source of the *true* Scriptures, we must look to the Jews, whose leaders were charged with preserving and protecting the Law, Prophets and Psalms—known as the Old Testament.

Can we be absolutely certain God preserved His Word for us today—nearly 2,000 years after the final canonization of the New Testament? Jesus answers: "Heaven and earth

shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Another statement by Jesus expands this: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (5:17-18).

The phrase "the law or the prophets" is a term for the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus did not come to destroy God's Word, or nullify His Law, but to fulfill them—here speaking of prophecies of His Coming and sacrifice for the world.

The following verse shows Jesus knew the Jews had the proper Scriptures, which foretold a specific fulfillment. The setting is the moment He is seized before crucifixion: "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?...But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled..." (26:54, 56).

First-century Christians knew where to find God's Word. Let's read: "The brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming there went *into the synagogue of the Jews*. These [the Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures daily*, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:10-11).

The evangelist Timothy, who was the son of a Jewish woman, had known the Scriptures from childhood. Notice: "From a child you have known the *holy scriptures*, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for *doctrine*, for *reproof*, for *correction*, for *instruction in righteousness*" (II Tim. 3:15-16).

Every synagogue possessed copies—exact replicas—of the texts in the Temple. The term "holy scriptures" meant "sacred scriptures." "Sacred" refers to the Holy Place of the Temple. "Holy scriptures" is

translated "Temple Scriptures" in *The Englishman's Bible*.

What about the New Testament? It was the Greeks who preserved the manuscripts from the apostolic era. More on this in part two of this series.

Think. Doubters are essentially accusing God of being incapable of preserving His Word. What about *you*? Do you accept the Scriptures as authentic—as preserved by the Jews? Did the Jews succeed, or was God's plan thwarted?

Dead Sea Scrolls Offer Proof

Three areas must be understood. Evidence in this series will come in this format: (1) Design and layout of the Old Testament (including canonization). (2) Design and layout of the New Testament (including canonization). (3) A brief study of the Apocrypha and other documents not canonized.

The Jews—just one of the 12 tribes of Israel—were entrusted to preserve the entire Old Testament text from generation to generation by meticulously copying it. They took this responsibility so seriously that, as copies were made, they counted every word and letter to make sure nothing was added or omitted. This is known as the "Masoretic Text."

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 proves the accuracy of today's Old Testament. The arid climate around the Dead Sea was perfect for preserving the scroll material, which includes complete books and portions of books written 2,000 years ago. One well-preserved scroll of Isaiah was written in "square letter" Hebrew, which dates it to the second century BC. This single document—by itself—ended all speculation that Isaiah was written after the time of Jesus—thus proving correct the prophecies of Jesus.

Most of the scrolls were written between the third and the first century BC, and most likely hidden just before the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. The discovery of the Dead

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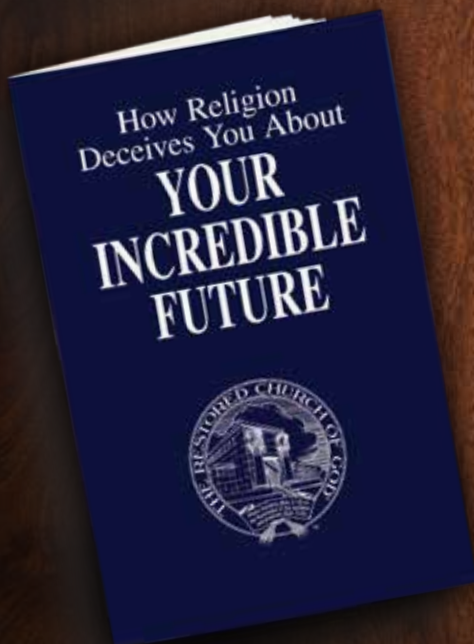


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Britain and the EU: Headed for a Split?

The pressure for the two to part ways has been building for years.
Current conditions in the power bloc may force the issue.

BY ANDREW J. HOLCOMBE AND STACEY L. PALM

ARE THE EUROPEAN UNION and Britain headed for divorce? Since their relationship started in 1973 with the United Kingdom's membership in the European Economic Community (EEC), the two have been like a couple who had differences from the start—yet they hoped love would cause their problems to disappear.

The relationship initially seemed like a good idea. Britain, a prosperous country just a one-hour flight from mainland Europe, could benefit from and help increase the political influence and economic prosperity of the entire continent.

What went wrong?

The relationship started out slow and rocky. Following World War II, Europe lay in ruins. Yet because England was digging out after German bombings, the island nation's involvement on the continent was limited. Aside from providing supplies to West Germany and West Berlin during the Berlin blockade, a desire to return to isolationism and retreat from imperialism defined this era for the British.

When offered to be part of the EEC, an organization formed in 1957 that was designed to connect its European members economically, the Brits refused to take part.

In 1963, when the UK had a change of heart and applied for membership, France was opposed. It was not until 10 years later that the nation finally joined the EEC—but with conditions. The country would have a certain level of autonomy others did not.

As with any hopeful newlyweds, however, each partner thought the other would change.

In 2002, when the UK refused to accept the euro as its national currency and stuck by the pound, Europeans thought Britons would eventually come to see its benefits and join its currency.

But they never did.

During the years, more cracks in the relationship began to show, with both sides bickering about ideology, never able to fully agree. Historically, the UK has been the only nation that has repeatedly moved against the EU to ensure protection of its own interests. Britain opted out of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty—allowing EU citizens to gain voting and immigration rights within member states. Four years later, the UK rebuffed the Schengen Agreement, which promotes open borders for those in the bloc.

Other member countries have not been afforded the same flexibility.

Frustration within the EU deepened in 2007 after Britain became the sole member state to veto the Lisbon Treaty, which moved the bloc closer to military and political integration.

While the EU has continually sought “ever closer union” between member states, Britain's rejection of this principle has caused dissatisfaction. France's Secretary of State for European Affairs Harlem Desir remarked, “One country alone cannot call into question the desire of the others to continue to advance together” (*The Guardian*).

Others have said likewise. In a press conference, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said that while he wants the UK to “remain an active and constructive part of the European Union,” and “not all and everything must be decided in Brussels and by Brussels,” nevertheless, “cherry-picking is not an option.”

The tiresome tit-for-tat disagreements and power struggles that have occurred between the two have culminated in the UK's 2017 in-out referendum, which will allow Britons to vote on whether the nation will continue as part of the EU. It is the first time British citizens will determine their nation's membership status by popular vote—and could serve as a final blow to the UK-EU relationship.

Tim Oliver, a Dahrendorf Fellow for Europe-North American relations at the London School of Economics IDEAS, a research center for the study of international affairs and diplomacy, speculated that a British exit could shift the center of power in the EU.

“Eastern Europe could gain over Western Europe, Germany's position

could be enhanced vis-a-vis other states including France, more protectionist minded states could gain from the loss of one of the strongest advocates of free-markets. Combined with a strengthening of the Eurozone, a Brexit [Britain's exit from the EU] could tip the EU towards even closer union. The alternative also needs to be considered: that a Brexit unleashes centrifugal forces that unravel the EU" (*E!Sharp*).

As with any struggling marriage, compromise will be required to ensure the partnership works better going forward. Reconciliation is also on the table, although it seems as though it may be more difficult given that both are set in their ways.

With the pending in-out referendum, each side is asking: "Is this partnership worth it anymore or would we be happier without one another? After decades of drifting apart, can—*should*—this relationship be saved?"

Opposing Views

In part, the EU was established to deter war from ever occurring on the continent again. The thought was that if all the nations' economies were intertwined, then peace would be maintained.

Slowly, though, the European Union began to morph into more of a political, military and social force. Greater regulations came into place. The union continued to drift from its original purpose as a primarily financial institution to encompass all aspects of its member countries' lives—from controlling fishing waters, to traveling between countries, to dealing with global climate change.

Unlike the rest of the European bloc, however, Britain has always viewed its involvement from a different perspective. The nation wants to ensure that its sovereignty is maintained and, time and again, it has refused to agree to the EU's terms.

This flexibility is afforded partly due to Britain's financial contributions to the union. Between 2008 and 2013, its contributions increased from 3 billion pounds (\$4.7 billion) to 11 billion pounds (\$17.2 billion) per year. This wealth is distributed to poorer countries in the bloc such as Poland and Greece.

The biggest source of contention comes down to finances. Britain wants to see red tape cut from EU trade rules so the bloc can gain more influence globally. It believes that the current system, which requires that billions of dollars be paid in membership fees, is inefficient due to various bureaucratic processes.

Because the nation is the EU's third-highest contributor of funds (with Germany and France being first and second, and Italy nearly tied with the UK), many Britons feel they deserve more control over the continent's spending.

Matthew Elliott, chief executive of Business for Britain Group, which is pushing for EU reforms, said: "Despite [Prime Minister] David Cameron securing a historic EU budget cut, the cost of the EU to UK taxpayers continues to spiral out of control.

"We cannot continue to write bigger and bigger cheques to remain a member of an unreformed and uncompetitive European Union. Business is struggling under mounds of EU red tape and the UK economy is threatened by yet another potential eurozone recession" (*Express*).

Even if new membership terms are agreed upon, their implementation would extend far beyond a 2017 deadline. Euroskeptic members of Britain's Parliament say the nation cannot vote based on promises that the EU might later deny it made.

"Political negotiation is done differently on different sides of the English Channel," *The Economist* reported. "In Westminster parties threaten, bluster and slap red lines on tables. 'Non-negotiables' are brandished. In the end somebody wins. In Brussels negotiation is a silkier business. Forms of words are found, disagreements are smoothed over or conveniently overlooked and compromises brokered. Each side leaves the room with something—or at least feels that way."

Aiming to preserve membership status while appeasing the needs of his people, Mr. Cameron has set out to procure a deal with the EU that would achieve several key goals for Britain:

- Exemption from the EU's commitment to an "ever closer union,"

which would give Britain the ability to opt-out of integrated European efforts

- More focus on economic growth by promoting greater trade in the EU with nations such as China

- Freedom from rules imposed on eurozone states

- The power to deny welfare benefits to migrants working in Britain for at least four years to curb immigrants from flooding across the UK's borders

Though Mr. Cameron has begun to negotiate these terms, some members of Britain's Parliament have stressed that the nation needs a stronger voice, including veto power over EU legislation and greater transparency of the EU's budget.

While it may seem these demands could be easily met, the EU feels it is being blackmailed into agreeing to terms it does not support. A complex governmental body directed from Brussels that works through seven major institutions overseeing 28 member states, the union does not have the luxury of simply making one member happy at the expense of all the others.

Yet over the years, this is exactly what the UK has expected.

"Some of the changes Mr. Cameron has proposed, especially restrictions on tax credits and other in-work benefits for new immigrants, might require changes to EU treaties," *The Economist* reported. "Almost no country wants treaty change in the next year or two—it would trigger plebiscites and would open the door to French and Italian demands for stronger social protections, thus making the EU even less Anglo-Saxon. Mr. Cameron might be able to secure concessions that could be inserted into the treaties later on. But Eastern European governments have already warned that freedom of movement is sacred—and removing tax credits from new immigrants could be interpreted as an attack on that freedom."

The thought of someone telling the EU what to do and then letting a particular country have sovereignty over its own government—and against the concept of greater unity—does not sit well.

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OUR WATER CRISIS

Reversing the Irreversible

Water problems affect every continent. Solving it will take global change.

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY AND SAMUEL C. BAXTER

IT'S DRY. At sunrise, a child in Madagascar begins a 30-minute trek to the nearest spring—all closer water sources have dried up due to deforestation. She scoops the water, which is yellowed with sediment, into a bucket. Later that day, she will have to make the journey again.

It's dirty. Dozens of barefoot Indian men, women and children gather in a mucky field, anxiously

waiting with empty water jugs and 20-foot tubes. Clamor erupts when the water trucks arrive. Teenagers climb up to the latch and stick pipes into the tank and women on the ground bicker over who gets first dibs. They fill as much as they can. The trucks may not show up again for days, even weeks. A mother complains that the water causes her children to vomit.

It's dusty. A nearly 60-year-old Kazakhstan woman looks beyond what

used to be a lake's shoreline to see a valley of dust stretching to the horizon. She recalls her childhood when she sold ice cream to vacationers there. Now, rusty fishing ships sit on the spot, which has become a playground instead of a source of food for the area. "The sea was our life and our wealth," she says. "We were once rich...but we are witnesses to its destruction."

■ **CHRONIC WATER SHORTAGES:** Women gather at a dried-up water source in Jamam, South Sudan (March 22, 2012).

PHOTO: HANNAH MCNEISH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

These stories, the first two reported by Water.org and the last from *BBC*, are just three examples of water problems worldwide. Across the globe, more than 1.2 billion experience water scarcity, meaning that an area lacks enough clean water to meet the demand of its population.

Water.org revealed the scope of the problem:

■ “Every minute a child dies of a water-related disease.”

■ “Women and children spend 140 million hours a day collecting water.”

■ “More people have a mobile phone than a toilet” (a lack of proper sanitation often pollutes drinking water).

■ “1 in 9 people lack access to safe water.”

The sad irony in all of this is that there should be plenty to go around. The United Nations estimated that if Earth’s available freshwater was evenly distributed among this planet’s approximately seven billion inhabitants, each person could be allotted 7.5 million gallons during his lifetime.

With that amount, each individual could consume 152 gallons per day (the UN Development Program estimates each American uses this much, the highest rate of individual water use in the world) for 136 years. And because water is a renewable resource, as long as it remains pure, it cycles through the environment perpetually without loss.

Despite this, nearly every nation struggles with H₂O issues—from South Africa to Brazil to China to California in the United States. Each year, the World Health Organization estimates that water pollution alone kills more than two million people.

We must admit this about our water crisis: it is largely manmade. And, if we are unable to adequately support seven billion people now, how can we expect to sustain an estimated 9.3 billion by 2050?

The number of people lacking water is set to increase in coming years. According to Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN and former chairman of WaterAid Sweden, two billion people will live in regions with absolute water scarcity by 2025.

In addition, two-thirds of the world population will live in water stress conditions, defined as lacking sufficient clean water for at least one month out of the year.

We need a solution—and fast. Examining the water crisis across the globe makes this abundantly clear.

Running Dry

Africa often first comes to mind at the mention of a lack of water. The entire continent endures unpredictable bouts with severe drought that affect those who rely on agriculture to feed themselves.

In 2011, the fertile lands of Ethiopia struggled with the worst drought in 60 years, which left at least 250,000 facing starvation. While droughts are naturally occurring phenomena in the country, proper handling of the water supply could have severely mitigated its effects. Yet these solutions would have cost many millions in infrastructure and education to enact, and the country could not afford to implement them.

This year, Zimbabwe has been hit. Lack of rain has left large portions of southern Africa dry, which has particularly affected impoverished areas. *Times Live*, a South African news outlet, reported, “The impact is looking particularly serious for Zimbabwe, where the economy has been struggling for five years to recover from a catastrophic recession that was marked by billion percent hyperinflation and widespread food shortages.

“The government and foreign relief agencies are still assessing needs but one official said up to 1.8 million people—more than a tenth of the population—may require food aid.

“The 2015 harvest is forecast at 950,000 tonnes of maize, the staple, far less than the 1.8 million tonnes Zimbabwe’s people need.”

Realize that this means aid dollars will be going to food rather than long-term solutions of proper water-management techniques.

Reuters reported an additional reason the dry spell hit so hard: “Although drought is blamed for this year’s crop failure, Zimbabwean farmers are reluc-

tant to grow small grains such as sorghum and millet, which are more resistant to drought but are not widely eaten in Zimbabwe...Farmers also lose up to 35 percent of harvested maize due to poor storage, according to the [World Food Program].”

An additional problem is the nation’s aging irrigation infrastructure. According to *AllAfrica*, the Zimbabwean government estimates that over the next 25 years, \$10 billion is needed to fix the problem. This is a huge bill for a nation with a gross domestic product of about \$13.7 billion.

Yet another disaster is developing on the edge of the Sahara Desert as Lake Chad, once among the largest lakes in Africa (larger than the size of Israel), has nearly dried up. It has been a lifeline for more than 68 million people in four surrounding countries: Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria.

The major reason it is drying up? Constant diversion of the lake’s waters by local farmers, communities and governments since the 1970s has prevented it from replenishing.

Locals are still squabbling over water rights. The UN summarized in a report: “The impact of the drying lake is causing tensions among communities around Lake Chad. There are repeated conflicts among nationals of different countries over control of the remaining water. Cameroonians and Nigerians in Darak village, for example, constantly fight over the water. Nigerians claim to be the first settlers in the village, while Cameroonians invoke nationalistic sentiments, since the village is within Cameroonian territory. Fishermen also want farmers and herdsman to cease diverting lake water to their farmlands and livestock.”

An additional reason Lake Chad is disappearing is deforestation in the region, which has contributed to a drier climate. As of 2015, Lake Chad has lost 95 percent of its surface area.

Deforestation is also causing drought in Madagascar. Over the past century, 80 percent of Madagascar’s forest cover has been wiped out. The country’s fragile economy depends on crop exports, therefore slash-and-burn techniques

have been used to clear trees from fields for rice or coffee plants. In addition, logging of rare, endangered hardwoods exclusive to the island, which can fetch \$3,000 per cubic meter on the international market, has contributed.

On the other side of the globe, the same problem is occurring in Brazil, which is suffering its worst drought in 80 years after decades of rainforests being cut.

“The cutting of trees, scientists say, is hindering the immense jungle’s ability to absorb carbon from the air—and to pull enough water through tree roots to supply gigantic ‘sky rivers’ that move more moisture than the Amazon river itself,” *The Associated Press* wrote. “More than two-thirds of the rain in southeastern Brazil, home to 40 percent of its population, comes from these sky rivers, studies estimate. When they dry up, drought follows, scientists believe.”

“The sky rivers are generated by the forest acting as a massive pump, according to research that has shown the jungle’s uniform humidity consistently lowers atmospheric pressure in the Amazon basin. That allows it to draw moist air currents from the Atlantic Ocean much farther inland than areas that don’t have forests. Those currents travel west across the continent until they hit the Andes mountains, where they pivot and carry rains south to Buenos Aires and east to Sao Paulo.

“The trees pump an estimated 20 billion metric tons of water into the

atmosphere every day—3 billion more than what the Amazon river, the world’s largest, discharges into the ocean.”

Slash-and-burn practices also loosen soil, which causes rivers to unpredictably change course and sediment to cloud water, making it unfit for human consumption.

Tapped Out

Lake Chad drying out is just one example of the results of unabated diversion of rivers for farming. Another instance, and perhaps the most poignant, is the Aral Sea in Kazakhstan, where the consequences have been devastating for local populations.

The Aral Sea was once the fourth-largest inland body of water in the world, behind the Caspian Sea, Lake Superior, and Lake Victoria. The sea’s fish provided food and a livelihood for people in the region.

Satellite images today reveal a brown basin with just a few tiny pockets of blue water remaining.

As is the case with deforestation, this is an entirely manmade crisis. It started in the 1950s, when the Soviet Union implemented a plan to irrigate dry steppes in this region to produce cash crops such as melons, rice and cotton, which it considered “white gold.” Exports on these crops were expected to bolster the wealth of the superpower.

Irrigation canals were constructed on the two large rivers supplying the Aral Sea—the Amu Darya and Syr

Darya. After the canals were built, neither of the rivers finished their course at the sea. Without water feeding into the sea, evaporation dried it out. As the depth of the water decreased, evaporation accelerated. In 1987, the sea split into two smaller bodies, the South Aral Sea and the North Aral Sea—which were both separated by the emerging seabed.

BBC detailed the compounding effects: “Grass dried up, and the small freshwater lakes that once existed near the sea’s edge disappeared.

“Herds of antelope that used to roam the area dwindled to nothing. The summers became blisteringly hot, the winters bitingly cold.

“And just getting around became tough. In the old days everyone went from one fishing village to the next by boat.

“Now they get about by car—but there are barely any roads. Instead, sturdy 4x4s bump and shake their way over tracks across the former sea bed.”

Problems bred more problems. As more of the seabed became exposed, wind kicked up dust. This caused massive dust storms to plague those who stayed behind.

With the dust storms came an onset of respiratory diseases. Child mortality rates increased significantly, and newborns came out of the womb without lungs, eyes, noses or even hearts.

Doctors and locals began to realize the dust storms filled their lungs with more than just dirt. Tests performed on the soil revealed that the dust was filled with chemical residue: nitrites and carcinogenic substances. Chemicals deposited in the soil during Soviet-era nuclear testing, as well as pesticides and fertilizers, had been brought to the surface and swept into the air.

Mothers even found that their infant babies were dying in their arms after breastfeeding—the contaminants having passed through mothers’ bodies, causing their milk to be toxic.

Winds spread the poisonous, salty dust for hundreds of miles, ultimately decreasing the crop yield in the cotton fields to which the waters were diverted in the first place.



■ **SLASH AND BURN:** Fire engulfs trees next to grazing land in the Amazon basin in Ze Doca, Brazil. Ranchers often set fires to clear shrubs and forest for grazing land (Nov. 22, 2014).

PHOTO: MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

Across the globe, many other bodies of water are receding due to over-irrigation, including Lake Chapala in Mexico, which has lost 25 percent of its surface area over the past 60 years, and Poyang Lake in China, which is the country's largest freshwater lake.

Wasted Waters

Poor sanitation is another major water woe, and nowhere is this more obvious than India. The nation's Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) estimated that 70 percent of India's sewage is untreated and is disposed of in its rivers and lakes. The board also found that 275 of India's 445 rivers are severely polluted.

For example, the Yamuna River is considered holy in the Hindu religion—yet it is filthy.

"There are many devotees...who regularly bathe in the Yamuna, and this cleanses all the contamination of the material world" states one of Hinduism's sacred texts, the Srimad Bhagavatam.

Believing it has spiritual-healing properties, people drink from it, bathe in it, wash their clothes in it, consume its fish, and cremate bodies on its shores. Yet the Yamuna has 15 drains along its bank that constantly pour untreated sewage into its waters.

Hindustan Times reported: "It's not just the Yamuna, whose water quality is as bad as sewage, but many rivers across the country are reeling under an unprecedented load of urban waste and industrial effluents, says a CPCB report."

The shortage of clean water is attributed mostly to India's population explosion over the past 30 years, when it doubled from 600 million to 1.2 billion. Thirty million water wells and pumps were constructed during that same period, sapping groundwater faster than it could be replenished.

Clean water is now so scarce that millions depend on tanker trucks with contents pulled from polluted bodies of water. All this in a nation with the ninth-largest economy in the world.

India's ultra-rapid growth has created a series of seemingly impossible

problems. How can cities jam-packed with people—the New Delhi metro area alone has 21.7 million—be retrofitted with sewage systems to stem the disease and pollution that come from it?

China is also in the midst of a battle against water pollution. Decades of unregulated industrialization and population explosions have filled rivers with pollutants. A rising number of cancer cases have occurred along the Huai River, which picks up pollution from cities in central China.

A survey by China's Ministry of Environmental Protection indicated that 60 percent of groundwater in the nation is polluted, while more than half of its freshwater lakes are polluted.

Wealthy Nations, Too

The water crisis is not just found in impoverished areas and developing nations. Even the United States has rampant H₂O issues. While the nation fares much better than other parts of the globe, its growing problems are the same as the rest of the world.

For example, the Rio Grande has been diverted to the point that it is running at 30 to 40 percent of its capacity. Reporters have facetiously labeled it "Rio Poco" (Spanish for tiny river).

The New York Times stated: "An untamed, flash-flooding home to sturgeon and eels a century ago, much of the Rio Grande today is little more than a magnificently engineered pipe—diverted, straightened, dammed, bled by canals, linked by tunnel to the Colorado River basin in the north, surrendering its last trickle in the south to a ditch that supplies farmers near El Paso."

Those who depend on its waters fight over how to divvy them. The media outlet continued, "The rules for sharing the Rio Grande are even more complex than its plumbing. Irrigation districts, governments and tribal authorities, among others, all have rights to water, and some have reservoirs devoted more or less exclusively to their use."

While squabbling over who gets what, very few focus on solving the

problem. Obviously, if a major river is reduced to a trickle, something we are doing is wrong!

The California drought has brought rampant water mismanagement to light. Farmers in the region who once made small fortunes on cash crops in Southern California, which is now in its fifth year of exceptional drought, are spending those fortunes to dig deeper wells and save their precious yield.

"Up until 15 years ago, it was easier for the Metropolitan Water District to pay farmers to leave their fields fallow during droughts so cities could use the water" *The Los Angeles Times* reported. "Not anymore. California's farmers have increasingly focused on lucrative almonds, walnuts and pistachios as other crops got cheaper after the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement. But almond trees need to be watered all the time and don't offer the flexibility of row crops where fields can be left fallow during dry years."

There is no law in California that dictates what and what not to plant, and whether one is allowed to plant if they cannot prove they have enough water to sustain their crop.

So the water table continues to drop, and the ground sinks with it. *The New York Times* reported: "The draining of the aquifers creates another hazard aboveground. As water is pulled from the spongy layers below, the ground above collapses, creating what is known as subsidence. Where subsidence is the worst, the land can sink as much as a foot each year."

Subsidence is not a new problem. Since the 1920s, the land has been sinking as groundwater is pumped to feed crops. Sinkholes stretching for miles—so large that one does not notice they are in one—developed. In the community of Mendota, the land sunk about 30 feet between 1925 and 1977.

The state suffered because of it. A report from The Center for Investigative Reporting noted: "The sinking, which peaked in the late 1960s, wreaked havoc on the state's rapidly expanding infra-

structure, damaging highways, bridges, and irrigation canals. One estimate by the California Water Foundation put the price tag at \$1.3 billion for just some of the repairs during that time.”

Despite this historical warning, pumping continues today.

“In a normal year, [Jay Famiglietti, senior water scientist at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory] says, 33 percent of California’s water comes from underground, but this year it is expected to approach 75 percent,” *The New York Times* reported. “Since 2011, he says, the state has lost eight trillion gallons from its overall water reserves, two-thirds of that from its underground aquifers.”

“We can’t keep doing this,” Mr. Famiglietti stated.

The San Joaquin Valley supplies most of California’s agricultural output. The state is the fifth largest supplier of food in the world (including 90 percent of the world’s almonds).

At current levels, agriculture consumes 80 percent of California’s water supply. Unless the state can find a way to keep up with H₂O demands, experts project that another 400,000 acres of farmland will be lost each year and consumers will face as much as a 15 percent price increase in food.

Another longstanding problem in the U.S. is water pollution. In 1972, Congress passed the Clean Water Act with the objective to make *all* waterways in America “fishable and swimmable” within 10 years. Approximately 40 years later, many bodies of water are still falling short of the standards.

A 2013 report from the Environmental Protection Agency showed there were high levels of bacteria, mercury, phosphorus, nitrogen or other pollutants in 44 percent of streams, 64 percent of lakes, and 30 percent of bays, and estuaries that were monitored—enough that these areas were deemed unsafe for fishing or swimming.

America also has its own version of Lake Chad. The Los Angeles Aqueduct, constructed in the 1920s,

caused many natural lakes and rivers that fed Owens Lake to divert their flows toward the city. In time, the lake dried up completely.

Today, because the lakebed is no longer covered with water, wind kicks up dust. It is the largest single source of dust pollution in the United States. The city paid over \$1.2 billion to reduce adverse health effects caused by windblown dust.

Other bodies of water are drying up because of irrigation. Lake Mead, which provides water to 22 million people, may dry up by 2021 if it is not allowed to replenish. In addition, the Great Lakes have dropped an average of 1.5 feet since 1999—the equivalent of 2.5 million gallons!

Aging infrastructure in the nation causes even more problems. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates \$335 billion will be needed in the next few decades to repair the U.S. tap water system, *The New York Times* reported.

The paper quoted Jeffrey K. Griffiths, a professor at Tufts University and a member of the EPA’s National Drinking Water Advisory Council: “We’re relying on water systems built by our great-grandparents, and no one wants to pay for the decades we’ve spent ignoring them.”

“There’s a lot of evidence that people are getting sick...But because everything is out of sight, no one really understands how bad things have become.”

Concerted Effort

Looking at the entire globe and the sheer extent of our water crisis, only a cohesive, worldwide effort could ever reverse it. And lots of time.

Yet the best attempts are mere rallying cries. The UN holds World Water Day each March 22 to raise awareness of the issue and adopt resolutions. November 19 is World Toilet Day, and the UN Water website explains the mission for the day is “to raise awareness of sanitation issues—including hygiene promotion, the provision of basic sanitation services,

and sewerage and wastewater treatment and reuse in the context of integrated water management—and make a case for sanitation for all.

“It intends to encourage UN Member States and relevant stakeholders, including civil society and non-governmental organizations, to promote behavioural change and the implementation of policies in order to increase access to sanitation among the poor...”

Note the wording throughout: “intends to raise awareness,” “encourage UN Member States,” “promote behavioural change.” Sadly, while the intent is genuine, none of these phrases include immediate action to tackle this global crisis.

And how can it? Every nation is too focused on the here-and-now problems to tackle the overall systemic issues of water mismanagement.

Nonprofits, such as Water.org and WaterAid, focus on raising awareness too, and also solicit donations to send aid workers to villages in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, El Salvador, and other drought-suffering nations to construct hand-operated pumps for local villages. Others go into areas and build community latrines or toilets.

Yet such efforts do not always pan out, and ultimately require governmental cooperation, according to non-profit organization The Water Project.

“Environmentalists suggest low-cost but immediate solutions for managing drying waters, such as digging ponds or underwater receptacles. These low-tech fixes already help farmers in China.”

Yet the organization stated that conservation efforts need to be a joint partnership between governmental agencies, land-owners, environmentalists and conservationists.

The organization further stated: “Outdated damming and gauges result in billions of gallons of lost water, but a quick fix for one local population might harm another downstream. One agency’s priorities could harm another’s. These facts highlight the

Please see **WATER**, page 24

WILL THE ANTICHRIST ARISE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST?

A growing theory among Evangelical Christians asserts that Iran, or another Muslim nation, will give rise to the nefarious end-time figures known as the Beast and False Prophet. Careful Bible students must put this idea to the test.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

THE MIDDLE EAST seems like fertile ground. In the Bible, a figure known as the Beast—some call him the Antichrist—is slated to appear just before Jesus Christ returns. This man will lead a great military-political combine backed by a religious authority known as the False Prophet.

In the book of Revelation, the two are said to deceive the world and persecute Jews and Christians alike—subjugating or executing those who do not fall in line.

A Beast arising from a hardline Islamic nation or group appears to make sense. Crowds across the region regularly chant, “Death to America,” and that they will “drive Israel into the sea.” The Islamic State beheaded Coptic Christians in Libya on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea—allowing the blood to flow into the water toward Europe, aka Christendom. Radical Muslim terrorists constantly vex the West.

Some prophecy watchers also point out that many Muslims are looking for

a prophetic figure, known as the Mahdi, who appears to mirror the Beast.

Islamic tradition points to the coming of an end-time Mahdi, who is a figure the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes as “a messianic deliverer who will fill Earth with justice and equity, restore true religion, and usher in a short golden age lasting seven, eight, or nine years before the end of the world.”

To many, this description matches closely with a prophecy found in Daniel 9: “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [seven prophetic years]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...” (vs. 27).

In the Islamic Antichrist theory, this verse refers to a Muslim figure who will confirm a seven-year covenant with the nation of Israel, which he will break three-and-a-half years into it. Proponents state that the Antichrist will reign for seven years during a period known as the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21).

With the Mahdi supposedly ruling about the same length, things seem to

fit. In addition, many believe both men will persecute Jews and Christians after breaking an Israeli peace agreement.

Such similarities between the Beast and Mahdi are a major pillar of the Islamic Antichrist theory. In addition, many Muslims believe that Jesus Christ will return at this time and assist the Mahdi by telling the world to follow Islam—a team that appears to mirror the Beast/False Prophet in the Bible.

A comprehensive list of shared characteristics can be found in the book *The Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth about the Real Nature of the Beast*. This longer list helps set the stage. (Note: Some of the “Bible” views contain inaccurate interpretations, which are addressed later in the article.)

Bible: “The Antichrist is an unparalleled political, military, and religious leader that will emerge in the last days.”

Islam: “The Mahdi is an unparalleled political, military, and religious leader that will emerge in the last days.”

Bible: “The False Prophet is a secondary prominent figure that will

emerge in the last days who will support the Antichrist.”

Islam: “The Muslim Jesus is a secondary prominent figure that will emerge in the last days to support the Mahdi.”

Bible: “The Antichrist and the False Prophet together will have a powerful army that will do great damage to the earth in an effort to subdue every nation and dominate the world.”

Islam: “The Mahdi and the Muslim Jesus will have a powerful army that will attempt to control every nation of the earth and dominate the world.”

Bible: “The Antichrist and the False Prophet institute new laws for the whole earth.”

Islam: “The Mahdi and the Muslim Jesus institute Islamic law all over the earth.”

Bible: “The Antichrist and the False Prophet will execute anyone who does not submit to their world religion.”

Islam: “Likewise, the Mahdi and the Muslim Jesus will execute anyone who does not submit to Islam.”

Bible: “The Antichrist and the False Prophet will attack to conquer and seize Jerusalem.”

Islam: “The Mahdi and the Muslim Jesus will attack to conquer and seize Jerusalem for Islam.”

Bible: “The False Prophet is said to do many miracles to deceive as many as possible into supporting the Antichrist.”

Islam: “The Mahdi himself is said to control the weather and the crops. His face is said to glow. We can also assume that since Jesus is viewed as having been empowered by Allah to work miracles when He was here on earth the first time, He will most likely be expected to continue to do so when He returns.”

The list in the book is *much* longer. The sheer volume of proposed similarities—and the use of both Islamic sources and Bible verses—can make this seem like an open-and-shut case.

Yet closer examination and proper interpretation of God’s Word reveals an utterly different picture. In addition, debunking this theory clears up many other common misunderstandings regarding the Antichrist.

Faulty Foundation

The first red flag for the similarities between the Mahdi and Beast comes when examining the Islamic sources for the Mahdi prophecies.

Read what *Britannica* further stated about the Mahdi teaching (emphasis added): “The Qur’an (Islamic sacred scriptures) *does not mention him*. Several canonical compilations of ḥadith (sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad) do include traditions concerning the mahdi, although *such traditions are notably absent from the two most-revered compilations*, those of al-Bukhari and Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjaj. Many orthodox Sunni theologians accordingly question Mahdist beliefs, but such beliefs form a necessary part of Shi‘i doctrine.”

The Koran (Qur’an)—Islam’s most sacred text—does not mention a Mahdi! Only less-revered secondary sources contain this doctrine. In addition, Sunni theologians question this teaching. Realize that Sunnis make up 87 to 90 percent of the world’s adherents to Islam.

Ask yourself: Why would a Christian wanting to follow God’s Word look to Islamic literature for confirmation of prophecy?

The only place to test the Islamic Antichrist theory is the Bible itself.

70 Weeks

A bedrock rule of Bible study is to always start with the simplest, clearest verses on any subject. When discussing the final Antichrist, however, many turn to and fixate on Daniel 9:26-27. It states: “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the con-

summation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Confused?

Do not feel bad if you are. This is not a “God is love” (I John 4:8) or “Seek you first the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33) type of verse. It is actually quite complicated and part of what is known as the 70 weeks prophecy (Dan. 9:24). To understand it, one has to delve into history, the biblical calendar, and God’s Word. There is even a little math involved.

Yet you *can* understand it. The article “What Is the ‘Seventy Weeks’ Prophecy?” found on rcg.org/witswp carefully explains this difficult passage. It is worth a read as it shows Daniel recorded the exact year when Christ’s ministry would occur. God fulfilled this prophecy to a tee—which provides more rock-solid proof of the Bible’s authority!

Daniel 9:26-27 is particularly complex, however, because it jumps from prophecies pertaining to the life of Jesus to events that would happen soon after He returned to heaven—then back to Christ’s ministry and ultimately to events that have not yet occurred.

For the purposes of this article, note that the phrase, “And *He* shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week *He* shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...” refers to Christ Himself. The earthly ministry of Jesus took place over three-and-one-half years (half of seven) and His crucifixion negated the need for daily sacrifices.

With this understanding, the idea of a seven-year reign of the Antichrist falls to pieces—as nowhere else in the Bible supports this notion. In addition, this means the idea of a Mahdi/Antichrist also suffers another blow.

Another commonly held prophecy idea that falls apart with this knowledge is the idea of a seven-year Tribulation. This period is clearly only two-and-a-half years, followed by a one-year Day of the Lord. Daniel 7:25 corroborates this by stating that the Beast will “speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of

the most High” for “a time and times and the dividing of time.”

Other Bible translations more simply state “time and times and the dividing of time” as three and a half years.

Basic Verses

To understand from where the political/military leader known as the Beast and religious leader known as the False Prophet will arise, you must understand some basic facts.

First note that a final Antichrist is never named as such in the Bible. The term antichrist is found only five times in God’s Word—all in the apostle John’s epistles.

For example, I John 2 states: “It is [a] last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there *many antichrists...*” (vs. 18).

Notice that there can be many antichrists—more than one. The word antichrist simply means someone or something that is against Christ. (Both the Beast and False Prophet are antichrists.) Also note that John stated that

antichrists could come from and work within Christian groups.

Real Truth Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack explained this in his booklet *The Antichrist – Who, What and When!* He stated: “Make no mistake. Antichrists have continued throughout the 2,000-year history of God’s Church—and into our time. In fact, the greatest number of them—and the worst ones—are at work today. And these deceivers operate in and around all of the groups and organizations of professing Christianity.”

Consider. If the Beast and False Prophet came from Islam, would you follow them? Would the majority of the world’s largest religion—professing Christianity—go along with this?

In fact, Jesus stated that in the last days Christians would be in danger of being deceived by antichrists: “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24).

How would this be possible if Islam was the “antichrist” religion?

Where to Look

Proponents of the Islamic Antichrist theory have an alternate interpretation for the metal man vision in Daniel 2—and the successive empires they represent (also represented by beasts in Daniel 7). They stick with the traditional view to a point: the gold head for Nebuchadnezzar’s Neo-Babylonian Empire, breast and arms of silver for the Medo-Persian Empire, belly and thighs of brass for the Greco-Macedonian Empire, and legs and feet of iron for...

This is where Islamic Antichrist proponents differ from the commonly held belief. The most natural fit here is that the iron represents the Roman Empire. Yet some who believe in a Middle Eastern Beast feel it describes the Islamic Caliphate.

But there is a problem with this. While the widespread common view is not always right, it *is* in this case. And there is conclusive proof to back it up.

In Daniel 7, the Roman beast pictured has 10 horns. A corresponding creature in Revelation 13 has 10 horns with 10 crowns. The Bible defines these: “And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings [governments] that shall arise” (Dan. 7:24).

The apostle John recorded even more in Revelation 13: “And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast” (vs. 3).

In summary, the Bible states that the Roman Empire would have 10 distinct “horns” (kingdoms) and that it would have a “deadly wound,” which would later be “healed.”

History backs up each of these details—to the year!

After Ancient Rome peaked and declined, it was overrun by a series of three Germanic tribes—the Vandals, Heruli and Ostrogoths in AD 476. This is when the “deadly wound” occurred and the Roman Empire appeared to be dead. These tribes represent the first three horns.

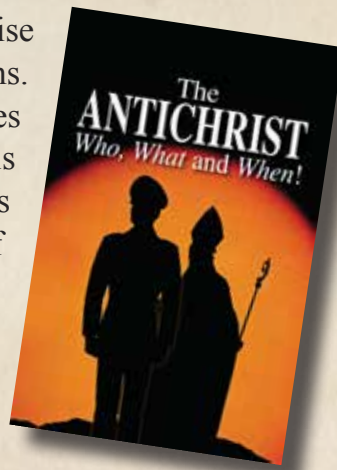
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Is the ANTICHRIST Alive Today?

The Bible teaches that a man called the antichrist will arise shortly before Jesus Christ returns. Is he on Earth now? What does the word “antichrist” mean? Is this just one person? How does God’s Word define the term “spirit of antichrist”?

You CAN know the answers!

Order the free booklet *The Antichrist – Who, What and When!* at rcg.org/tawww.





10 YEARS AFTER KATRINA

Lessons from Adversity

In the aftermath of the most destructive storm in U.S. history, people learned valuable lessons. Yet with as much progress as was made, did everyone miss the most important one of all?

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

KATRINA WAS LABELED “the worst storm to hit the worst possible location.” A full decade later, other descriptors such as *strongest*, *costliest* and *deadliest* still apply to the catastrophe. The record-breaking hurricane devastated a nation’s psyche along with historical communities and extensive infrastructure.

The tropical storm originally formed off the coast of the Bahamas on August 23, 2005. By the time it dissipated eight days later, the entire Gulf Coast was affected. Areas of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana were left completely destroyed. The damage totaled a staggering \$108 billion with a reported death toll of 1,836. Many more thousands were left injured and homeless.

Most disaster anniversaries are familiar. The focus turns to continuing recovery efforts, commemorating acts of bravery, and getting “where are they now” updates on key players involved during the tragedy’s most critical stages. The 10th anniversary of the super storm will no doubt feature these and other observances.

Reflecting on the havoc caused by Hurricane Katrina and the heart-felt response from people around the world can help bring closure to what were considered some of the worst days in the lives of many. Revisiting the destruction and suffering caused by the storm also brings the opportunity to engage in a quality central to the human experience—the chance to learn life-changing lessons.

George W. Bush, the president at the time, emphasized this to the country in the days following the storm: “This government will learn the lessons of Hurricane Katrina. We are going to review every action and make necessary changes so that we are better prepared for any challenge of nature, or act of evil men, that could threaten our people” (*whitehouse.gov*).

The leader of the free world clearly understood the importance of taking heed to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Hindsight, by its very nature, brings clarity. Looking back at our experiences exposes, with remarkable detail, the actions that led to either success or failure. The fact that an experience may be one of tragedy and suffering only serves to increase the significance of valuable lessons learned.

Did we learn anything from Hurricane Katrina? Absolutely. The storm exposed numerous flaws in dispatching weather warnings, coping with aging infrastructure, organizing disaster response, and intergovernmental communication. The country learned the hard way about the need to fix weaknesses in these and other important areas.

The complete devastation caused by the storm gave the extremely rare chance to begin whole communities from scratch. With a fresh start, developers could implement important principles of urban planning and economic development.

A shining example of this is the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. The destruction, and super funding that came as a result, allowed whole parts of the city to be completely rebuilt. Some say that overall conditions are better post-storm than prior. Incomes are up, schools are improved, and business is booming. In addition, most residents have returned, businesses old and new are open—even tourism is approaching pre-storm levels.

Ten years later, a rejuvenated region shows that many of the lessons learned through the tragedy have stuck. Citizens came together. Neighborhoods were rebuilt. Processes were updated. Out of the storm came tremendous progress and undeniable success.

Despite an encouraging track record of improvement, however, one lesson presented by the tragedy has proven more difficult to grasp.

“Perfect” Storm

Hurricane Katrina came at an extraordinary time for the United States. The country was only four years removed

from the tragedy of September 11, an event that considerably impacted the nation’s sense of invincibility. The terrorist act led to a complete overhaul of key areas of emergency preparedness and response. The storm was the first significant post-9/11 test.

America was not ready for what hit it. Yes, the terrorist attacks were devastating, but Katrina was another matter entirely.

The 115-130 mile-per-hour winds of the hurricane revealed the nation’s shortcomings. The aftermath of the storm became a living example of the well-known saying, “Adversity introduces a man to himself.”

Katrina certainly brought adversity.

More than a coordinated attack on isolated targets, the storm was an out-of-control behemoth, producing hurricane-force winds extending an astounding 103 miles from its center. The storm surge, a massive wall of water 27 feet high in some places, was equally devastating.

In the end, the damage caused by the hurricane extended far beyond any one building, city or even state. As reported at the time, the unusually large storm impacted a land area rivaling the size of Britain.

The storm left a trail of destruction along the Gulf Coast that affected thousands of businesses, residences and other properties. It was said that if the extraordinary amount of debris left behind from the storm were to be stacked into a space the size of a football field, the pile would reach more than 10-and-a-half miles high.

More than 300,000 homes were destroyed or left uninhabitable. Businesses remained closed for months or never reopened as insurance claims and government loan requests overwhelmed the system.

With no place to live or work, many were uprooted and forced to relocate to different parts of the country. An

■ **SHELTER:** Approximately 15,000 Hurricane Katrina evacuees crowd the floor of the Reliant Astrodome in Houston, Texas (Sept. 2, 2005).

PHOTO: DAVE EINSEL/GETTY IMAGES



■ **DOWNTOWN BEFORE AND AFTER:** A helicopter flies over the business district in New Orleans, Louisiana, eight days after Hurricane Katrina devastated the region (Sept. 6, 2005). The same area is pictured almost one year after Hurricane Katrina flooded the city (July 9, 2006).

PHOTOS: DAVE EINSEL/GETTY IMAGES



■ **RECOVERY:** Top left, the devastated Lower Ninth Ward is seen with the New Orleans skyline in the background (Aug. 25, 2006). Bottom left, new homes are constructed in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward (Aug. 24, 2010). Top middle, a man rides in a canoe through floodwaters in the Lower Ninth Ward (Aug. 31, 2005). Bottom middle, a woman walks with a dog in the same area nearly 10 years after Katrina (May 16, 2015). Top right, stranded victims of Hurricane Katrina rest inside the Superdome, which became a makeshift shelter (Sept. 2, 2005). Bottom right, the New Orleans Saints football team compete in a preseason game against the Houston Texans at the Superdome in New Orleans (Aug. 21, 2010).

PHOTOS: MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES



■ **RESIDENTIAL RECOVERY:** Left, New Orleans residents play basketball in front of storm-damaged public housing apartments. Before Katrina, the complex held about 1,000 families, but two years after the storm, the city's largest housing complex is more than 80 percent empty (June 7, 2007). Right, a resident stands outside a playground in the same location. The buildings and basketball court were torn down and replaced by two-story townhouses in an effort to revamp New Orleans' major housing projects following Katrina (May 17, 2015).

PHOTOS: MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

October 2005 to October 2006 Current Population Survey of Katrina victims by the Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that an estimated 1.5 million people aged 16 and older left their residences in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

Communications, electricity and sanitation systems were also destroyed. Even the ecology was adversely affected. The storm triggered at least 10 oil spills in the region, which combined spewed in excess of 7.4 million gallons of oil into Gulf Coast waterways.

It was only after the storm that adversity revealed America's shortcomings.

When the winds died down and storm clouds cleared, problems such as poverty, racial inequality, inadequate education, government partisanship, and failing infrastructure entered the national conversation—all at once.

Few could have imagined the horrific scene of women, children and the elderly suffering in the New Orleans Superdome. Or fathomed the anguish on the faces of those stranded on rooftops or wading through waist-deep water trying to find refuge.

Adding insult to injury were governmental problems. Local authorities fought with state authorities. State authorities fought with federal authorities. The Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA, an organization formed for the sole purpose of handling these types of events, was also in the bureaucratic mix.

The most powerful nation in the history of mankind could not seem

to get out of its own way. Hurricane Katrina revealed in graphic detail that 21st-century America still had many difficult lessons to learn.

What We Missed

The Gulf Coast region has bounced back over the last 10 years. Americans have once again proven to be a resilient people and this quality certainly manifested itself during the disaster recovery.

After staring into the face of adversity, coming together, and learning valuable lessons, all the area's problems have been resolved, right?

Of course not. Progress has been made at least on the surface, but the entire region—and the entire nation for that matter—is still mired in many of the same issues that were there prior to the storm.

■ **Poverty:** According to a 2012 Census Bureau report, the number of Americans living in poverty is 49.7 million—more than 16 percent of the population. Lack of income leads to inadequate housing, lack of food, substandard healthcare, substance abuse, and crime, to name a few consequences.

■ **Racial unrest:** Race relations are trending toward lows not seen in America since the 1960s. Altercations between police officials and minorities and violence against others based on race or ethnicity are on the rise. According to a *CBS News/New York Times* poll, 61 percent of Americans say race relations in the U.S. are bad.

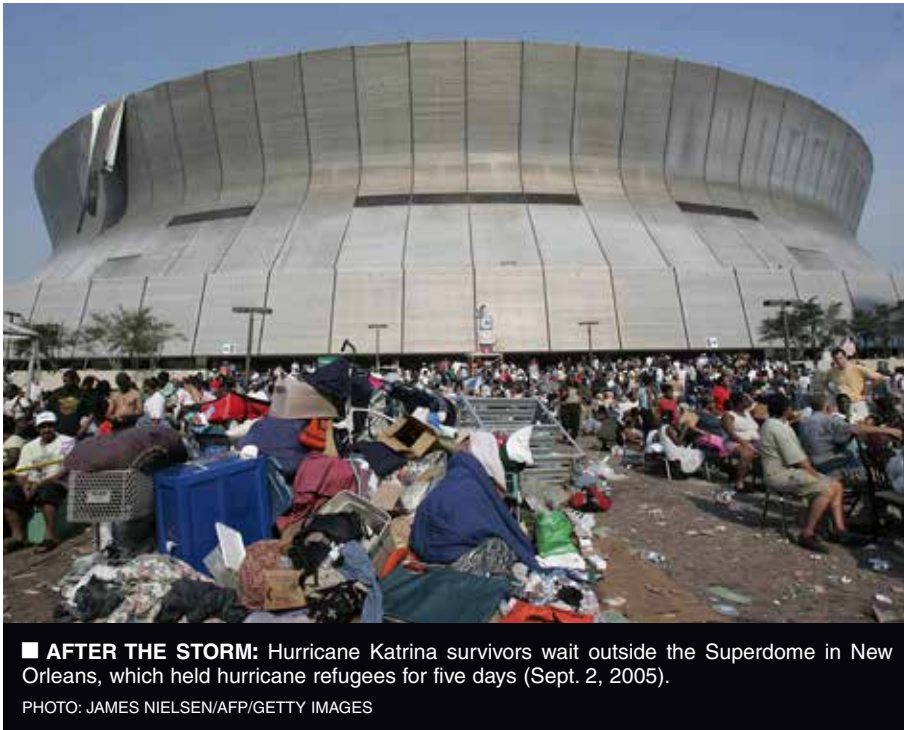
The percentage is up from 33 percent in April 2014.

■ **Poor education:** The U.S., once a world leader in education, ranks 39th in the world. Sixty-one percent of fourth graders scored “below proficient” on standardized testing, which means they are not reading at grade level.

In addition, only one in four students graduate from high school prepared in the four core subjects of English, reading, math and science. Teacher quality also suffers from lack of tenure—4 percent of new teachers resign after the first year, 33 percent after three years, and nearly 50 percent after five years.

■ **Hyper-partisanship:** America is a divided nation. The view that those on the “other side of the aisle” operate with good intentions, held as recently as the mid-1980s, is a thing of the past. The concept of partisanship has now been replaced by “hyper-partisanship.” This has led to intense disagreement, name-calling and even violence. Nearly every subject is seen through the lens of political affiliation and ideology, which makes it nearly impossible to get anything of substance accomplished.

■ **Failing infrastructure:** Infrastructure connects the country's businesses, communities and citizens. It also drives the economy and improves Americans' quality of life. The U.S., long known for having world-class infrastructure, now receives a grade of D+ on its infrastructure report card. An



■ **AFTER THE STORM:** Hurricane Katrina survivors wait outside the Superdome in New Orleans, which held hurricane refugees for five days (Sept. 2, 2005).

PHOTO: JAMES NIELSEN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

estimated \$3.6 trillion of investment is needed by 2020 to improve it merely to a grade of B.

The U.S. sees these problems and the suffering associated with them. Yet, while these instances of adversity do reveal the nation to itself, there is another step that it fails to take.

This additional step is the only way to solve these problems for good.

A Bible passage in Ecclesiastes shows what the nation misses: “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity *consider*: God also has set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him” (7:14).

In other words, enjoy the good times. But when adversity comes—and it will assuredly come—truly consider the path of your life.

Suffering kicks the learning mechanism into gear. When going through something difficult, we become innately focused on doing what is necessary to not only come out of the distress successfully, but also avoid it in the future.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word *consider* as to “think carefully about something.” Human beings benefit from periodically searching diligently for lessons and learning them.

Obviously, certain things were considered after Katrina—and positive changes were made. Yet the worst characteristics revealed in the aftermath of the storm remain.

One would think that the problems occurring in the world’s most prosperous nation would cause more people to “think carefully” about them. Yet most ignore them, assuming they are other people’s problems.

While some do dedicate their lives to addressing them, even their solutions do not get to the heart of their root causes.

Why Katrina?

Notice that Ecclesiastes explains that it is God who has set days of prosperity and adversity. In other words, God *intended* for mankind to not only have good times, but also bad times as well—times that inevitably lead to suffering.

It may be shocking to read that God intended suffering. It probably seems confusing that a Being who says He loves the world (John 3:16) allows bad things to happen.

However, with the understanding that suffering causes mankind to consider or “think carefully,” a foundation

is laid toward understanding the great purpose adversity serves. (For more on this fascinating subject, watch David C. Pack’s powerful *World to Come* video titled, “Why God Allows Human Suffering” at worldtocome.org. It will change you.)

Before elaborating on what element of suffering we are to carefully consider, it is important to clarify how God allowing hardship relates to the terrible events of Hurricane Katrina.

A popular belief at the time of the tragedy was that somehow God was punishing areas of the Gulf Coast for sinful behavior. This included the fact that the storm hit because God was displeased due to the sizeable gambling industry in parts of Mississippi and Alabama or the permissive behavior and promiscuity generally associated with New Orleans.

This is misguided thinking.

Yes, there are consequences for actions (Rom. 6:23), and Bible prophecy does speak about a coming great chastisement for wrong behavior. But to relegate what happened during Katrina purely to punishment for “those people down there” misses the point. It also challenges fundamental logic.

What about all other places in the world that engage in the same—if not worse—activity? Why has God not destroyed those areas with hurricanes? Also, if God was uniquely upset with the behavior in the Gulf Coast region, why has He allowed much of what was destroyed to be rebuilt so that the same improper behavior could continue? Biblical history shows that when God destroys an area for reasons of sin, He is able to ensure nothing is ever built there in the future. (An example is Sodom and Gomorrah, which to this day is not inhabited.)

The explanation as to exactly why certain people were killed in New Orleans and others spared can be known. The Bible speaks to “time and chance” (Ecc. 9:11), which means that some things simply happen without necessarily having a greater divine purpose—they are simply a part of life.

God's involvement in what occurred may simply be the trend of overall increased bad weather and other natural phenomena foretold to affect Earth—not just New Orleans—at the end of the age.

Instead of dismissing what happened on the Gulf Coast, we would be best served to reflect on what happened there as well as other tragedies throughout the world, no matter where we live.

Ask: What about the vast amount of people who died not only in this storm, but also in other deadly events? How do their deaths relate to learning lessons of adversity?

This is a larger question, however, it has partly been answered. Their deaths, and the despair and fear associated with them, should send a message to those who remain alive. We should carefully consider that life is temporary and fragile, and therefore should live it a certain way.

In other words, when considering, make sure it is *your own life* you are looking at—do not cast stones at others.

But what about those who died in Katrina? How does God expect them to learn lessons from adversity?

The answers to these questions can be found by answering a different question, “What happens when you die?”

You may be surprised to learn that the victims of Katrina *will* have a chance to apply the many lessons of adversity. (For more on this subject read the article “What Happens When You Die?” at realtruth.org. You will learn the answer to this question and much more.)

We have seen that God allows mankind to suffer. But what lesson does He intend for us to learn?

Greater Purpose

Dealing with seemingly unsolvable problems is not just a problem for America. If anything, the troubles the nation faces are a fraction of those seen in other parts of the world. The fact that most places look to the U.S. for relief from their problems makes this plain.

Adversity is commonplace across the world: war in the Middle East, ter-

rorist attacks in Europe, earthquakes and typhoons in East Asia, and famine in various nations of Africa. These are just a handful of the troubles mankind faces—troubles that have been around long before now and that go all the way back to the beginning of man's existence.

For thousands of years, human beings have suffered through starvation, disease, war, poverty, weather disasters, and ultimately death. While we know that God said such days of adversity would come, what exactly does He want us to consider?

In a world cut off from God (Isa. 59:2), suffering is a tool to first get our attention. Adversity shows us something is not right, that there is a deficiency in our lives. The magnitude and inevitability of many of these issues should help us realize that resolving them can only be accomplished by a power greater than ourselves.

But it does not stop there. Once we are focused, we are then prepared to learn the most valuable lesson of all—how to build godly character, meaning the same character God has.

A righteous God does not ask human beings to do what He is unwill-

ing to do. Even professing Christians know that Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh (John 1:1, 14), suffered throughout His relatively short life, which ended in horrific death.

But most overlook a key reason why.

Read the following from Hebrews 5:8-9: “Though He [Christ] were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him...”

Did you notice that? Christ learned obedience through suffering.

What powerful understanding! Not only do we see that suffering led to obedience, but equally astonishing, we see that God, who is a perfect Being, also suffers. Longsuffering, meaning to suffer long, is one of the fruits of God's Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and an additional proof of this.

Suffering should help us draw closer to God and strive to become more like Him. A person is not complete until they have come through days of adversity and the trials and tribulations they bring—all of which are a guaranteed part of life.



■ **REFURBISHED DOME:** The outside of the Mercedes-Benz Superdome, which was renovated after Katrina, is seen prior to Super Bowl XLVII in New Orleans, Louisiana (Jan. 31, 2013).

PHOTO: ROB CARR/GETTY IMAGES



■ **BOATS TO BUSES:** Left, two men paddle through water in front of the Lower Ninth Ward's Claiborne Bridge after Hurricane Katrina devastated the area (Aug. 31, 2005). Right, a school bus drops off a student in front of the Claiborne Bridge (May 12, 2015).

PHOTOS: MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES



■ **LOUISIANA 10 YEARS LATER:** Left, workers rebuild a levee that was breached by a Hurricane Katrina storm surge along the Industrial Canal in the Lower Ninth Ward (April 25, 2006). Right, new homes stand along the rebuilt Industrial Canal levee in the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans (May 16, 2015).

PHOTOS: MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

Until this lesson sinks in, mankind will always be forced to deal with problems on his own. In other words, they will remain unsolvable.

Worsening Times

Mankind's current adversity is only the beginning. As the population strays further away from God's Way, difficulties will increase.

The Bible describes the worst time in the entirety of human history as being just around the corner. It is referred to in various places as Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:5-7) and Satan's wrath (Rev. 12:12), but most know it as the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21).

The word tribulation means *pressure*. This time of great or intense pressure will initially come upon the modern nations descended from ancient Israel, before affecting the entire world.

Matthew 24 expands on the run-up to this time: "And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers [various] places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (vs. 6-8).

These conditions are happening all around us NOW!

The latest conflict between nations and peoples, the continued spread of hunger and disease, and the next volcano or hurricane, should all combine to help us consider even more the signs of the times.

Our reactions should be increased introspection about the fact that God wants people to obey Him and His spiritual Law. This adversity should

lead us to consider our ways and learn obedience.

We can now look at the coming suffering as having another purpose. Instead of simply seeing what is coming as retribution, we can look at the benefits that come with suffering. Learning these lessons effectively can help mankind draw closer to God and, even more remarkable, become like Him.

Understand God uses suffering as a tool to implement His magnificent Plan to produce sons (John 1:12; Rom. 8:14).

To learn more about this amazing Plan and the answers to many questions that have perplexed mankind for ages, order David C. Pack's free book *The Awesome Potential of Man* at rcg.org/tapom. This extraordinary piece of literature addresses many fundamental subjects and explains them in plain, easy-to-understand language. □

chased the thinnest laptop, a thinner one is available. You cannot imagine there will be bigger TV screens, but there always are. It is hard to comprehend smaller MP3 players, but there always are. There is an unsaid expectation of “What’s next?” And it can be said with confidence that there always is a “next,” a “latest.”

What would happen if the world did not have electricity for an entire day—or worse, a week? What if every electronic device stopped working?

Companies would cease to function. Transportation would grind to a halt. Grocery stores would be unable to stock their shelves. Our world as we know it would collapse. Chaos would ensue so quickly, it would be hard to fathom.

Consider your own circumstances. What part does technology play in your day-to-day living? Do you find yourself checking your email incessantly? Do you feel somewhat unsettled at the thought of your inbox filling up? Have you ever been in your home office or work office when your computer was turned off? Was the silence deafening—almost unnatural? Do you often find yourself surfing the Internet, or on your favorite chair surfing television channels? Could you turn off your cellphone for one day—or one hour—and go without the Internet at the same time?

These are questions that many around the world are beginning to ask themselves.

Plugged in

Technology has been mobilized to allow employees to become more efficient and effective in the workplace. To successfully compete, companies and employees must utilize every device available. In many ways, it is surprising what an employee can accomplish. Throughout the modern world, a man or woman walking to work will be talking on the phone to colleagues, checking email, and texting friends—all at the same time.

But work is not the only area that has been affected. Human beings have grown accustomed to always being connected.

“Twenty-five years ago, anyone who wanted to use the internet needed to have access to a computer,” a Pew Research Center Internet, Science and Tech study found. “Again, in 1990, 42% of U.S. adults said they used a computer at their workplace, at school, at home, or anywhere else, even if only occasionally.

“Now, eight in ten U.S. adults (81%) say they use laptop and desk-

“People are no longer left with their own thoughts. They are always moving on to the next thing, the next digital connection.”

top computers somewhere in their lives—at home, work, school, or someplace else.”

In addition, the study showed, “The rise of mobile device use represents the biggest shift in access over the past ten years: 68% of U.S. adults now say they access the internet on a cell phone, tablet, or other mobile device, at least occasionally.”

People are no longer left with their own thoughts. They are always moving on to the next thing, the next digital connection.

An article on *Business Insider* expanded on what is being lost by always being connected: “On the more obvious side, we spend less time watching TV, socializing offline, relaxing, and thinking. But leisure time online also comes at the expense of work, sleep, and education.

“Across all Americans, the time spent online for leisure, which

includes everything from social media to reading news, is relatively low, just 13 minutes. But that doesn’t count time spent on email, watching videos, and gaming, and includes the substantial share of people who don’t use computers for leisure or at all. When you look at just people who do use the Internet for leisure, it’s for more like 100 minutes a day.”

The article further stated: “Here are the estimates of what gets crowded out. Each additional minute of time spent online is correlated with 0.27 fewer minutes working; 0.28 fewer minutes spent on other leisure activities, mostly watching television; 0.12 fewer minutes sleeping; and 0.05 fewer minutes socializing offline.”

Additionally, children are being reared by electronics. Many simply go from one device to another—from the television to the computer to the iPad, and back again.

Numerous behavioral problems result from this constant connectivity. The end-result is that children are never taught to simply think. They always have something bombarding their senses. Their own thoughts are foreign to them. What will happen when these children become adults?

No Time to “Smell the Roses”

If you do something long enough, it eventually becomes a habit. For example, many office workers habitually check their email whenever they hear a message come through. When you are stuck in a habit, it is very hard to do something different.

The habit of always being connected slowly but surely engulfs every aspect of modern life.

Consider just the sense of quiet or solitude that is lost. There is no balance or moderation in life. No time to think—to stop and “smell the roses.” When people run from one thing to another, there is not time to assess situations, make wise decisions, enjoy moments in life with children, build friendships, etc.

Ironically, the very thing that people use to be more productive is actually causing them to be less

productive. Technology becomes a distraction, an interruption. There are no long periods of time for focusing on bigger decisions, problem solving, etc. Days become full of interruptions rather than productivity.

If human beings remain connected 24/7, life will pass them by. It will turn into one continual, nonstop blur—like the posters on the walls of subway stations being passed at full speed.

“Secular” Sabbaths

Some have come to realize the toll of this 21st-century lifestyle and have created movements to combat the always-plugged-in way of living. One is “Information environmentalism.” In effect, as the term implies, people should be concerned with their information environment and turn it off periodically to refresh their minds.

Another term that is used is a “secular Sabbath,” a day once per week when people disconnect their devices. No Internet, no computer, no phone, no television, etc. Those who have tried this realize that, at first, it is difficult. But in the end they benefit from it.

The term “secular Sabbath” comes from the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday), observed in Judaism and by some Christian groups. It is a day when labor is not performed. Similarly, many professing Christians consider Sunday as their Sabbath, but most do not keep it in the sense of not working, turning things off, etc.

A documentary filmmaker—who practices what she calls a “technology Shabbat” (the Jewish word for Sabbath) during which she and her family shut off all screens in their house for a full 24-hours from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday—created a short film for PBS on her experience. In the piece, she stated, “Now taking this one day off from technology every week, I feel so much more grounded and balanced... I feel like a better mother, wife and person. Every week, it’s like a valve of pressures releases from the bombardment of interesting facts, articles and tidbits I consume daily as I travel

on this info rocket of discovery, procrastination, productivity and then eventually overload.”

This quote summarizes the concept of a secular Sabbath well. It gives one the opportunity to stop and think. It provides a chance to be disconnected from a computer and get in tune with other aspects of one’s life.

Yet even shutting off all screens for 24 hours is not all that is needed to fully combat technology overload.

The Real Solution

Throughout time, human beings have ignored the Instruction Manual God gave His creation—the Holy Bible.

It is somewhat ironic to see human beings attempt to find solutions to their problems that result in something similar to what God explained thousands of years ago. After millennia of learning the hard way, human beings will occasionally stumble upon something that, if they were listening to the laws laid out in the Bible for them in the first place, they could have learned from and saved themselves much trouble.

When God created mankind, He also created the Sabbath: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the *seventh day* God ended His work which He had made; and He *rested* on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and *sanctified* it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made” (Gen. 2:1-3).

God, who created everything, certainly did not *need* to rest. Since He is all-powerful, He does not experience fatigue or weariness. Yet He rested on the seventh day to set an example of what humans beings are to do.

Most have heard of the Ten Commandments, but few know them—and even fewer practice them. Notice the fourth commandment: “Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: but the *seventh day is the sabbath* of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your

manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Ex. 20:9-11).

How many people actually keep the Sabbath as God designed it? Most Christians believe Sunday is the correct day, but do not know what it means to correctly keep the Sabbath. (For more about this, read our book *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?* at rcg.org/tsosw.)

The fourth commandment clearly states that you should not work on this day. By extension, this also applies to other regular weekly activities, such as grocery shopping, working around the home, etc. How many truly take a day off, as they should—as they are commanded? How many people disconnect from their weekly activities and reconnect with their Creator?

Think of how much just this practice could help mankind as a whole!

What most people do not understand is that human beings were designed to take one day off every seven days. You will get far more accomplished, and be a far more productive and happy human being if you work six days and keep the Sabbath, rather than working seven days a week. The high-paced lifestyle of today proves this!

Do you want to become a success? Do you want to become more productive? Prove that you should keep the Sabbath, and start doing so. You will find that you will be blessed as a result. The benefits will astound you!

To learn how to keep the Sabbath properly, read our articles “Why the Sabbath Command to Assemble?” (available at rcg.org/wtscta) and “How to Make the Sabbath a Delight” (rcg.org/htmtsad).

Take the step. Unplug yourself from society’s rat-race lifestyle and all your electronic devices, and keep the true Sabbath as it was meant to be kept. You will benefit beyond measure. □

WATER

Continued from page 10

need for shared information and cooperative effort.”

To actually stop the droughts in Brazil and Africa, millions of acres of trees would have to be replanted and given decades to grow. Lakes and reservoirs would have to be left alone to replenish. Populations would have to migrate by the millions to different

reported. “George Mason University economist Alex Tabarrok estimates that if farms used just 12.5 percent less water, California could increase the amount available for industrial and residential use by half.”

All of this is a tall order: change long-held behavioral patterns, pump trillions of dollars into infrastructure costs, coordinate global education programs in all languages, replant rainforests, move farmers...the list could go on.

The scripture is found in Zechariah: “His [Christ’s] feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley...and it shall be in that day, that living [Hebrew: alive, fresh] waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be” (14:4, 8).



■ **MYRIAD OF PROBLEMS:** Left, a lake is turned orange as a result of pollution from a nearby copper mine in Butte, Montana. Middle, a woman carries heavy jugs of water through a muddy pond where she filled plastic containers in Jamam, South Sudan (July 17, 2012). Right, uprooted almond trees lay on the ground before being shredded in Firebaugh, California. Almond farmer Barry Baker had to remove 20 percent of his almond trees because he did not have access to enough water to keep them alive (Feb. 25, 2014).

PHOTOS: THINKSTOCK (LEFT); BRONSTEIN/ (MIDDLE); JUSTIN SULLIVAN/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES

areas where water was readily available.

Citizens in nations such as India and Pakistan would need more than toilets built for them. They would have to become accustomed to using them. And once sanitation systems were in place, entire nations would need to be sure all of the sewage was treated and did not end up in rivers.

In order to continue in the agricultural business, some Californians would have to move: “Cheap agricultural water has led to the insanity of a desert like California becoming one of the world’s chief producers of water-intensive crops, such as rice and alfalfa,” the publication *The Week*

Ultimate Fix

The UN is no stranger to tall orders. Outside its Headquarters in New York is the statue of a man forging a sword into a plowshare. The idea is to promote and engender peace so that the world can focus its efforts on worthwhile pursuits.

Beating swords into plowshares is a reference to Bible passages found in the books of Isaiah and Micah. It is the hope of the UN that world peace will come to pass.

Yet faced with the seemingly insurmountable odds of the multifaceted, worsening global water crisis, the world can hope for another Bible passage to come to pass.

Ezekiel adds to this picture by stating that the waters of the Earth “shall be healed.”

Chapter 47 states: “And it shall come to pass, that everything that lives, which moves, wheresoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come there: for they shall be healed; and everything shall live where the river comes.”

Imagine. The entire globe with a clean slate in regard to water!

Religion aside, think what would happen in such a scenario. Given human nature, history would repeat itself. We have had pristine water

sources before, but have always fouled them up.

If the pictures in Zechariah and Ezekiel did come to pass, it would not be enough. Governments would have to band together to ensure everyone managed water correctly—otherwise, we would quickly find ourselves in another global crisis.

Most are unaware that the Bible actually contains many principles on water management that would have to be implemented and enforced if

In addition, ancient Israel was instructed to use running, “living” water to keep the Temple clean, which was especially important considering the number of animals slaughtered there daily.

But the Bible’s description of a time when “healing waters” encircle the globe is not just wishful thinking. A central theme of the Book is how this and similar events will occur—and how such pristine and prosperous conditions can continue.

The “Child” mentioned in this passage is Jesus Christ. Notice He has a government. The next verse states, “Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end...and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever” (vs. 7).

Peace has not been increasing since Christ’s earthly ministry. In fact, the opposite has happened—war has increased! Therefore, this kingdom must yet be established in the future.



■ **WATER CRISIS:** Left, a log yard near Oriximina, Brazil, allegedly contains illegally felled wood. Rampant deforestation has been linked to drought (Oct. 14, 2014). Right, devotees cross the polluted waters of the Ganges River, which they believe will wash away moral uncleanness, in Allahabad, India (April 14, 2013).

PHOTOS: RAPHAEL ALVES/ (LEFT); SANJAY KANOJIA/ (RIGHT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES

the world’s water supplies were to be maintained.

For example, Exodus 23:10-11 and Leviticus 25:2-7 contain the command for a land Sabbath every seven years. This means farm fields would lie fallow with no crops planted. Such a practice renews the soil, but also allows the water table to rejuvenate. This helps ensure wells never run dry.

Sanitary laws are also found in God’s Word. Deuteronomy contains ordinances to ensure human waste does not contaminate water. Chapter 23 contains the instruction to bury feces outside of a living space (Deut. 23:12-13), and similar laws were in place for animal carcasses and human corpses.

The answer is contained within the message Jesus Christ brought when He was on Earth: the gospel of the kingdom of God.

“Kingdom” is simply another term for government. Christ brought a message of the gospel of the *government* of God. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, the Bible describes this coming world-ruling SUPERGOVERNMENT led by Jesus Christ.

Consider what is written in Isaiah: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: 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).

When Jesus returns, the world’s troubles can finally be solved—for good. War will give way to peace, smog to clean air, disease to health, and polluted, misused H₂O to pristine water distributed to all.

The Bible brims with numerous scriptures detailing how this will come about—and SOON. For a fuller picture, read *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* at rcg.org/tww. It provides additional proof and detail from Scripture of how our global water woes—and all of mankind’s ills—will be permanently eradicated.

God’s coming kingdom is the ONLY SOLUTION to our water crisis! □

BRITAIN-EU

Continued from page 5

It runs contrary to everything the union has worked toward accomplishing for the past 50 years.

Of Mr. Cameron's plan, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven told *BBC*, "The fact that one country believes that one thing is wrong does not mean that we can change because every country might have its own priorities and that may just ruin the European Union."

Without Each Other

The questions could be asked: With such continuous disagreement, why have they not split from each other already? Would the two be better off on their own?

As with any divorce, it is not that simple. There are assets to divide, debts to pay, the future of the European family to consider, and how to move forward amicably.

The eurozone is structured so that if one member state prospers, all others benefit. Take, for example, the 2004 EU Enlargement, which added 10 new member states to the bloc. The move boosted national economies as well as opened up new trade opportunities for the original members.

On the contrary, when one nation falters, all feel it. This is happening with Greece's bankruptcy crisis, where the financial and economic ripple effects have been felt throughout Europe.

"The European Union remains the UK's most important export market—half of [Britain's] trade goes to the single market and around 3.5 million UK jobs are linked to UK exports to EU member states," *BBC* reported.

Over the years, their economies have grown increasingly more interdependent, which makes it more difficult for them to part.

"It's likely that Brexit... would lead to plummeting stock markets and an economic recession, with losses to GDP calculated by the Centre for Economic Performance at up to 9.5%—worse than the 2008 financial crisis," *The Guardian* stated.

Put into perspective, this would lower Britain's GDP by nearly \$255 billion.

Parallel to the plummeting economy, there are vast immigration implications for Britain and other EU members if Britain leaves. An *Economist* article title summed up the problem: "EU exit would turn two million Britons working within the bloc into illegal immigrants, Tory MP claims."

Without legal right to work within EU member states, all British citizens employed and living abroad would have to gain new citizenship or return home to Britain. So would members of the EU who now live in Britain.

If Britain were to leave the EU, it could also have a domino effect, triggering anti-EU discussions in France as well.

"A Brexit, if it actually happened, could hardly fail to encourage France's sovereigntists or the far right. Marine Le Pen is already demanding that France leave the euro, or that the Schengen free circulation area be suspended," *The Guardian* stated.

Last year, former President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy articulated the UK's overall importance to the EU in a lecture in Paris: "Without the United Kingdom, Europe would be wounded, even amputated—therefore everything should be done to avoid it.

"But it will survive. Without France, Europe—the European idea—would be dead" (*The Local*).

Not All Bad

On the other hand, there are positives if Britain exits. As the fifth-largest economy in the world, independence would allow the nation to thrive due to more open trade deals and an ability to access the single market, which is currently restricted. It would also be able to increase opportunities for investing outside of EU regulations. Some analysts predict that it could result in Britons saving approximately 1,000 pounds yearly in their budgets since certain membership fees and taxes would be removed.

The move would also give Britain a louder voice in world affairs. It would

not be represented alongside a power bloc, but would be better able to speak for itself in international bodies such as the World Trade Organization. Representatives would be able to stand up for the British people and their interests, instead of the collective interests of the continent.

"Returning power from the opaque institutions of the EU to the British Parliament—and to the devolved assemblies—would make politics meaningful again," *The Telegraph* stated. "Political debate would no longer be hampered by mega-lobbying, corridor trading and back-room crisis deals in Brussels, but would reflect the views and opinions of the British public. This is the single most important advantage of leaving an unreformed EU: people would be able to vote for a Government that reflects their values and beliefs. Britain's future would be in Britain's hands."

And there are positives for the EU too. Some argue that more worldwide attention would be placed on the continent as a whole instead of Britain and its actions. It would solve the "British question" and mean the removal of a partner that never seemed entirely invested in the relationship.

"The EU faces multiple problems and questions, not least surrounding the future of the Eurozone," Mr. Oliver wrote in an essay for *E!Sharp*. "Focusing on Britain runs the risk of creating expectations in Britain that it is the centre of attention. This would not only cause resentment elsewhere but create expectations in Britain that the rest of the EU will not be in a position to fulfil."

Foreign Policy explained how a Brexit could further the "ever closer union" ideal: "The moment the United Kingdom leaves the EU is also the moment it loses all influence on European economic policymaking. And London would still have to accept most of Brussels' regulations and standards if it wanted free access to a market of over 400 million well-off European consumers, who currently buy more than 50 percent of all British exports. By leaving, the United Kingdom would also miss out on the free movement of labor,

forfeiting the ability to attract many of Europe's best brains and the ability to take advantage of an influx of low-wage workers from central Europe."

In addition, some member nations dislike Britain's opposition to free movement of people and see the country as xenophobic. If Britain were to leave the EU, Europe would no longer have to seek reforms to appease only one member.

"The idea of cutting red tape and deepening the single market will certainly gain traction in Berlin, as will some restrictions on so-called 'welfare tourism,'" an article by the German Marshall Fund, a foreign policy think tank, stated. "But Berlin will not agree to weaken the free movement of people in the EU. There are also concerns that negotiating treaty amendments without a clear mandate could produce a result that cannot be ratified by all 28 member states. Despite its strong interests to see Britain remain in the European Union, Germany will not cross every line to accommodate Cameron's wishes."

According to the *BBC*, "Chancellor Angela Merkel has reportedly warned David Cameron she would rather see the UK leave the EU than compromise over the principle of free movement."

Spain feels similarly. *The Guardian* reported that the country "has no sympathy with the idea of distorting the fundamental principles, such as free movement of people, until they become unrecognisable..."

Each seems vested in holding their ground at the expense of the relationship.

MIDDLE EAST

Continued from page 13

In AD 554, Byzantine Emperor Justinian's army recaptured Italy and led his Imperial Restoration. The wound was healed at this time, and this was the *fourth* of the 10 horns.

The next four horns were Charlemagne's Frankish kingdom, Otto I's Holy Roman Empire,

What Went Wrong

On paper, the two working together in a marriage of convenience should have worked. Both Britain and the European Union want the best for Europe. Both desire economic prosperity and to see the region grow its international clout. Both want its people to have the best opportunities to succeed.

So what is the problem?

A clue can be found in a speech by Mr. Cameron to the British people in which he detailed the reasons for the UK in-out referendum.

"I know that the United Kingdom is sometimes seen as an argumentative and rather strong-minded member of the family of European nations," he said.

"And it's true that our geography has shaped our psychology.

"We have the character of an island nation—independent, forthright, passionate in defence of our sovereignty.

"We can no more change this British sensibility than we can drain the English Channel."

Mr. Cameron continued: "For all our connections to the rest of the world—of which we are rightly proud—we have always been a European power—and we always will be.

"From Caesar's legions to the Napoleonic Wars. From the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution to the defeat of Nazism. We have helped to write European history, and Europe has helped write ours.

"Over the years, Britain has made her own, unique contribution to Europe. We have provided a haven to those fleeing tyranny and persecution. And

in Europe's darkest hour, we helped keep the flame of liberty alight. Across the continent, in silent cemeteries, lie the hundreds of thousands of British servicemen who gave their lives for Europe's freedom.

"In more recent decades, we have played our part in tearing down the Iron Curtain and championing the entry into the EU of those countries that lost so many years to Communism. And contained in this history is the crucial point about Britain, our national character, our attitude to Europe."

Stop. Reread the previous phrase, "...contained in this history is the crucial point about Britain, our national character, our attitude to Europe."

It is exactly this character—this "attitude to Europe"—that stops Britain from being able to fully integrate with the other nations of the EU.

Yet there is a reason for this—and it has more to do with their national character than most grasp. This difference of opinion does not merely stem from their own ideologies, but from their historical roots, which have always ensured that a continued union would not be possible.

Intrigued?

The book *America and Britain in Prophecy* contains the reason the union between this particular nation and Europe is not destined to last—and what lies ahead for the ultimate future of both the continent and the island. You will be stunned by what you read.

Do not miss out on your opportunity to understand what many others have missed. Order your copy at rcg.org/aabibp now! □

Charles V's Hapsburg dynasty, and Napoleon's kingdom.

From AD 554 until Napoleon was forced to abdicate the throne in 1814, this system repeatedly united Europe for a period of 1,260 years.

After the deadly wound was healed, the Bible states that "power was given unto him [the Roman governmental system] to continue *forty and two months*" (Rev. 13:5).

What does 42 months have to do with 1,260 years? Mr. Pack

answered this in his booklet *Who or What Is the Beast of Revelation?*

He wrote: "Ezekiel 4:4-6 and Numbers 14:34 show that, in prophetic fulfillment, each day counts for a year. This is critical to understand in regard to many other prophecies. Without recognizing this principle, all of these Bible prophecies have remained closed—sealed—to those who sought to understand them. How does 'a day for a year' apply here?"

“Forty-two months is three and a half years. God’s sacred years contain 360 days. 360 days times 3 1/2 equals 1,260 days—or 1,260 years in prophecy.”

Do the math: AD 554 to 1814—from Justinian to Napoleon—is EXACTLY 1,260 years!

Another weaker resurrection of the Roman system (ninth horn) began when Giuseppe Garibaldi united Italy in 1870. This culminated with the Axis powers during WWII.

One final horn remains, which will occur when the Beast power arises. With history as a guide, this can take place in only one area: Europe, as part of a revived Holy Roman Empire.

Future of the Middle East

Some may ask, given its current prominent place in world news, what will be happening in Iran during this time? For the immediate future, it will likely continue to be an important part of world news. Prophecy does not indicate, however, that it will be a major player as the Beast and False Prophet take the world stage.

While the Bible does mention Iran, it is under its traditional name of Persia. Its alliances in the coming years will be much the same as they were in the past during the Medo-Persian Empire.

The Medes are the Russians, which are also tied to Gog, Magog, Tubal and Meshech. (These connections are thoroughly covered in the two-part article series “The Future of Russia” available at realtruth.org.)

Notice Ezekiel 38 mentions this power bloc, which includes Persia in verse 5. This united army, which will also likely include China, Japan and other Asian nations, actually goes to war *against* the Beast power. Revelation 16:12 refers to these nations as the “kings of the east.”

The last revival of the Holy Roman Empire is also known in the Bible as Babylon. God uses the Gog and Magog army to punish the empire of the Beast, who first hears about this alliance as “tidings out of the east and north” that “trouble him.”

After the Beast and False Prophet—and their army—are destroyed (Rev. 19:20), God uses Gog and Magog to punish the willing citizens of their empire. Jeremiah 50 describes a nation “out of the north” (vs. 3) that will come against Babylon to “make her land desolate.” Verse 9 calls this “an assembly of great nations from the north country.”

Even clearer, in Isaiah 13:17, God declares He “will stir up the Medes against” Babylon to destroy it.

Ultimately, the armies of Gog and Magog will be destroyed as is described in Ezekiel 38-39. This takes place *after* Christ has returned. Ezekiel 38:11 describes those in Israel as dwelling in “unwalled villages” where they “dwell safely.” This clearly is not a picture of today!

Other Middle Eastern nations *will* align with the Beast as indicated in Psalm 83, which lists a confederation of Muslim nations: “The tabernacles of Edom [Turkey], and the Ishmaelites [Saudi Arabia]; of Moab [southern Jordan], and the Hagarenes [Syria]; Gebal [Lebanon], and Ammon [northern Jordan], and Amalek [Edomites scattered throughout the Middle East]; the Philistines [Palestinian Arabs, including Gaza] with the inhabitants of Tyre [Lebanon]” (vs. 6-7).

These are said to align with Assur, or Assyria, whose descendants migrated to Europe and now reside in parts of Germany.

Still other Islam-majority nations will make up a power bloc known as the “king of the south,” which is mentioned in Daniel 11. This group of nations will be south of Jerusalem—the center of the compass for all directions in Bible prophecy.

Why the Beast?

Putting together the complex puzzle that is Bible prophecy is quite enjoyable. Finding details “here a little, and there a little” (Isa. 28:13) can be both exciting and rewarding. This is certainly the case when painting the picture of what the world will look like when the Beast power emerges.

Yet few stop to ask *why* a loving God would allow the Beast and

False Prophet to rise up, and then later bring divine punishment on the nations involved.

The answer to this question can be set up by addressing a final misconception brought about by the Islamic Antichrist idea. Proponents think that since the Bible is a Book centered on Israel and the immediate surrounding region, the final Beast will arise from there.

While the Bible centers on Israel, it does not just include the modern nation in the Middle East. The Jews living in the Holy Land today are primarily descended from the tribe of Judah. Many more descendants—known by some as the Lost Ten Tribes—are also spread across the entire globe, primarily in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and northwestern Europe. Regular readers of this magazine know that America and Britain line up with the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, respectively.

Throughout the Bible, God issues a special dire warning to the modern descendants of ancient Israel. He wants these nations, which He has *abundantly* blessed, to repent and follow His commands. *The Real Truth* and its publisher The Restored Church of God help proclaim this warning.

The major result of ignoring *clear* passages in the Bible? Brutal takeover by the Beast power.

God will use this system, which is soon to arise in Europe, as a tool (Isa. 10:5) to punish a disobedient people so that they wake up—and listen to their Creator.

Yet there is another reason for the Great Tribulation punishment—it should be a thundering message for the entire globe.

In Ezekiel 5:14, God declares He “will make you [the American and British peoples] waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about you, in the sight of all that pass by.”

Verse 15 explains why: “So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an INSTRUCTION and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about you, when I shall execute judgments in

you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the LORD have spoken it.”

When the Beast’s armies conquer modern-day descendants of ancient Israel, it should *instruct* the rest of the world. It should be obvious that the living God of the Bible is issuing a severe chastisement.

Those who refuse to heed this warning will be punished later with the Beast and still later with the Gog and Magog army.

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

Sea scrolls permits us to travel back 1,000 years earlier than the oldest previously known manuscripts. They provide PROOF the Old Testament, as we have it, is accurate and reliable.

I cautioned that some of this Personal would be technical. What follows is more technical—but also involves some interesting math!

Arrangement of the Books

The *King James Version* and virtually all other more modern translations list 39 books in the Old Testament. These *do* represent the entirety of the Old Testament. But the one problem with them is the order in which they are found.

Since these books constitute the official Hebrew canonized scriptures, Scripture is where we should look to establish the correct order. Notice what Jesus told His disciples after His Resurrection about verses that foretold His life and mission: “These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the *law of Moses*, and in the *prophets*, and in the *psalms*, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:44-45).

Jesus identified the Hebrew Scriptures as (1) the Law of Moses, (2) the Prophets, and (3) the Psalms. These are the three major divisions of the Old Testament. These are emphasized in contrast to such counterfeit documents

What you have read in this article is a lot to absorb. Bible prophecy is complex, but you can understand it!

Revelation 1 describes a pre-requisite to understanding it in crystal-clear detail—which is also the way to avoid terrible times of trouble soon to befall Earth. Verse 1 states that prophecy is written “to show unto” Christ’s “servants things which must shortly come to pass.” The first step is to ensure you fall into the category of a servant

as the Septuagint (covered later), written in Greek. However, accurate and valid copies of the Hebrew Old Testament translated into Greek did exist in the first century.

Keep in mind the correct arrangement of the Old Testament is different from the *King James Version* and other modern translations. This is because the Roman Catholic Church based its *Latin Vulgate* on the *Egyptian Septuagint Version*, written in Greek. These largely Samaritan religionists had *no commission* to preserve the Scriptures. They did not fear the God of Israel, and proceeded to group the Scriptures as they saw fit, arranging the Old Testament order according to subject, and ignoring the inspired order of the Law, Prophets and Psalms. But it was only the *order* that the Catholics changed, *not* the content and *not* the selection of books. The Catholics did not canonize the Bible! All claims that they did are FALSE!

Most Bible arrangements reflect the *rearrangement* of these non-Jewish counterfeits. The order of the 39 books is radically changed. But we shall learn their original placement and come to appreciate why that order was important.

Flavius Josephus, a historian during Jesus’ time, wrote regarding the number of books in the Hebrew Scriptures: “For we [the Jews] have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine” (*Against Apion, Book I, Section VIII*). (You

of God—someone who does what He commands.

To have a clearer view of all Bible prophecy, read Mr. Pack’s book *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out* available at rcg.org/tbgpu. The book will dispel any wrong prophetic ideas you may have acquired and makes plain what it takes to be considered a true servant of God.

These prophetic events will occur—and soon. The time for action is NOW! □

will see momentarily how they can be counted as 39.)

Many scholars associated with the Catholic movement also publicly acknowledged there were 22 books in the Hebrew Scriptures: Origen (AD 210), Athanasius (365), Cyril of Jerusalem (386), and Jerome (410).

Here then is the correct order of the Bible: The Law of Moses (five books): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. This order is unchanged. Changes appear in the Prophets and the Psalms, often called the Writings.

Now the original order of the Prophets. Note how books are divided and sub-divided:

The Former Prophets (two books): Joshua and Judges (combined into one); I-II Samuel and I-II Kings (all four combined into one).

The Latter Prophets (four books): Three major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel (one book each) and “The Twelve” (consisting of 12 prophetic books again combined into one): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Last come the Psalms, or Writings. These are divided into three parts: The Former Poetic Books (three books): Psalms, Proverbs and Job. The Megillot or Festival Books (five books): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. The Latter Restoration Books (three books): Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah (combined into one), I-II Chronicles (combined into one).

The original order is completely chronological. This will be better

appreciated later when we study canonization and other points of history.

Significance of the Numbers

Now let's understand the significance of the number 22.

Sextus Senensis, a Jewish scholar, AD 1520, is credited with this: "There are 22 [Hebrew] letters, in which ALL that can be said and written are comprehended, so there are 22 books in which are contained ALL there can be known and uttered of divine things" (*General Introduction to the Old Testament*).

With the significance of the 22 books (or scrolls) of the Hebrew Scriptures and the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, comes a type of alphabetical poem called an acrostic, which most likely paralleled the 22 books. An acrostic exists when 22 verses each begin with a word spelled with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each letter (beginning with the first) continues in order all through the alphabet in sequence. In other words, the first letter of the alphabet corresponds with the first letter of the first verse. Then the second letter of the alphabet corresponds with the first letter of the second verse, and so on. The parts of an acrostic can be single verses, sets of verses, or possibly chapters or even books.

An example of a complete acrostic is Psalm 119. Here, eight verses are grouped together into 22 sets of verses. The first letter of all eight of each set is the same letter of the alphabet. Thus the first eight verses begin with the first letter, the next eight all begin with the second letter of the alphabet, and so on. Not only is this poetic chapter a perfect and complete acrostic, the syllables of each verse had to perfectly match each other, because it was set to music.

Psalm 119 covers the subject of the Law of God being perfect and complete. Thus, a perfect and complete acrostic is used. Every single verse of this Psalm in the original Hebrew mentions God's Law, using terms such as law, precepts, judgments, statutes, commandments, etc. The eight verses per stanza or meter times the 22 letters

of the Hebrew alphabet equals 176 verses in Psalm 119.

Psalms 111 and 112 together also form a complete acrostic showing God will completely redeem His people. Each Psalm contains 10 verses, with the 10th verse of each containing two sections.

The way Bibles are divided into chapters and verses does not always properly coincide with the method or intent with which these were written. For instance, Proverbs 31:10-31 contains 22 verses forming another complete, perfect acrostic. These verses describe a complete and perfect woman. Another complete acrostic is in the book of Lamentations. This one emphasizes the complete destruction coming on all the tribes of modern Israel.

During Jesus' time, the Hebrew Scriptures consisted of 22 books. (We saw Josephus and others documented this.) As an aside, when one adds these 22 to the 27 of the New Testament, a total of 49 books results. To the Jews, the number 49 (seven times seven) represents absolute completion. Also, another way to count is, if each Old Testament prophet is counted individually—and the Psalms are counted as five books—because of their natural division—the Old Testament total is 43 books. Adding this to the New Testament total of 27 makes 70, which is 10 times God's number of completion or perfection.

By the second century, many Jews came to resent what they thought of as "their" Scriptures being combined with the New Testament to equal 49 books. So they adjusted the order of the Old Testament to increase the number to 24. They divided Joshua-Judges into two books and Samuel-Kings into two to get 24. While this change gave a different number, the books within divisions were never moved to other divisions.

Before and during this time, the Jews held disgust for the *Egyptian Septuagint Version*, which totally reshuffled the Prophets and Writings. Again, this is where the Catholics inherited their erroneous Old Testament

order and passed it on through the *King James Version* and most other versions available today.

Many Hebrew Bibles bear the label TANAK on the cover. This name derives from the three parts of the Hebrew Scriptures:

T—TORAH is the name given to the division on the Law of God—first 5 books.

N—NEBEE-EEM is the name for the Prophets.

K—KETHUVEEM is the Writings.

The initial letters of the three titles (TNK) form TANAK. Named for these three major divisions, this shows the Jews' acceptance of the true divisions, and not certain corrupted versions like the Septuagint.

History of Old Testament Canonization

Now for the history of the Old Testament canonization. Moses recorded and compiled all five books of the Law (called the Pentateuch) during Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. God obviously guided him to use pre-Flood documents and other sources to compile Genesis.

Genesis, Exodus and Leviticus were written during the first years in the wilderness. Numbers was written as the continuous record of the journey. Of course, at the outset, Moses never anticipated the journey would last 40 years. Deuteronomy was written during the very last months of the journey.

Just before his death, Moses presented to the priesthood of Israel the five books he had compiled and written. (Deuteronomy 31:9 tells us this.) These were stored in the sides of the Ark of the Covenant. Under authority of the high priest, scribes made copies of these scrolls.

Next, the book of Joshua/Judges was classified with the prophets primarily because it was written by Samuel, who was a prophet. But it was mostly historic, and laid the groundwork for Samuel/Kings and the Latter Prophets. It was Samuel who established the order of the prophets with help from what were called the "company of the prophets" (I Sam. 10:5, 10; 19:20). These men were throughout Israel.

Certain historical facts from Joshua were likely compiled from sources generated by Joshua and some of God's servants who came after him. Much of the detailed history of the early kings of Israel and Judah was probably recorded by the prophet Elijah, but later compiled and written by Isaiah for what became the books of Kings. After all, who would be more qualified to write about Elijah than Elijah? But all of this would have been done under God's careful guidance.

Elijah carried on with the schools of the prophets in Israel—there were three—that Samuel had inaugurated over 200 years earlier (II Kgs. 2:3, 5; 4:38). One purpose of these schools was to document historical events and transcribe early records to be compiled later into canonized manuscripts. Elisha and others with him contributed to the historic records after Elijah's time.

Obviously, the books of the major and minor prophets were written by the men to whom the books are attributed. These prophets wrote and sealed their own works, to be added to the Scriptures during subsequent times of canonization.

King David wrote and canonized much of the Psalms. He established the 24 (two-week) courses for the priests, and for the Levites and singers. He wrote two of the five books of Psalms. These two consisted of the first 72 chapters of Psalms, the official Psalms used for the Temple service by the singers.

Another contributor to the Psalms was Moses (author of Psalm 90 and a number of others in book four). More of David's Psalms appear in book five along with some of the Psalms of degrees written by Hezekiah.

David's son Solomon compiled and wrote the Proverbs. The one called Agur in chapter 30 and Lemuel in 31 both refer to Solomon.

The writing of Solomon late in his life reflected lessons from much bitter experience. This wise old monarch was offering sage advice from having grievously sinned against God.

He advised submission to God (Ecc. 12:13)—hardly the conduct of someone hostile and unrepentant as some assert.

Though Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon were recorded by Solomon, they, with other writings, were not canonized until the time of Ezra.

The Roles of Hezekiah, Isaiah and Jeremiah

During the time of King Hezekiah of Judah, and Isaiah (in his younger years), there was threat of attack and captivity by Assyria. It is probable that Hezekiah and Isaiah canonized certain books for the surviving remnants of Israel and Judah, who could then look for proper guidance if religious services were suspended by an Assyrian invasion and captivity.

At this time, Israel had just been taken into captivity. Later, some Jews were also captured by the Assyrians (II Kgs. 18:13). These were taken to Eastern Europe where many of their descendants still live to this day.

Each of the 15 of what are called Psalms of degrees (120-134) coincides with one of the 15 steps leading to the Temple. A Jewish tradition holds that the singers would advance one step daily with each of the Psalms of degrees at a designated time of the year in their worship. Of these Psalms, five were attributed to David, one to Solomon, and scholars attribute the other nine to Hezekiah, who also canonized much of the Psalms. Isaiah 38:9-21 is a long psalm by him. This very gifted king would have been well qualified to compose certain Psalms.

Hezekiah established a "tri-grammaton" symbol, which indicated that a book of the Scriptures was officially bound or confirmed—or canonized. This symbol sealed canonized books after his time.

Some more history. Later, during King Josiah's time, as with Hezekiah 85 years before, Judah was again

under threat of invasion and captivity. Josiah was assisted and advised by certain servants of God, including Jeremiah. This paralleled how Hezekiah worked with Isaiah. Also, Hezekiah and Josiah had both been preceded by very wicked fathers. Both men, when each ascended the throne, re-established the true worship of God in Judah and reopened and restored the Temple that had been closed and defiled by their fathers.

During Josiah's time, the threat came from Babylon. Much beloved of God for his righteous zeal (II Kgs. 23:25), Josiah sought God and peace was promised to Judah as long as he lived (II Chron. 34:27-28).

During this time, more Scripture was canonized mostly by Jeremiah. This probably involved most of the minor prophets.

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations to mourn Josiah's death in a battle. Even though the book is written in the shadow of imminent invasion by Babylon, it is also prophetic of what the modern descendants of Israel will suffer again. The book of Jeremiah was not completed until well after the fall of Jerusalem.

During Judah's captivity in Babylon, the prophet Daniel's position of authority allowed him to preserve several copies of the Scriptures. The various references that Daniel made to Scripture would have been authentic. (Read Daniel 9:2, 11.)

There is much more to know about the all-important development of the Word of God, including how and by whom the New Testament was assembled. But the storyline next turns to the crucial role of Ezra in God's canonization process.

Do not miss part two!

In the meantime, be sure to read our booklets *How We Got the Bible – Which Translations Are Best?* (available at rcg.org/hwgtb) and *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?* (rcg.org/bacibp). □



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One-fifth of U.S. Families Unemployed

In 16 million out of 80 million U.S. households, not a single family member was employed or in the labor force in 2014, according to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is slightly down from an all-time high of 20.2 percent in 2011.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the “main problem in the labor market is a broad-based lack of demand for workers—not, as is often claimed, available workers lacking the

skills needed for the sectors with job openings.”

“If today’s labor market woes were the result of skills shortages or mismatches, we would expect to see some sectors where there are more unemployed workers than job openings, and others where there are more job openings than unemployed workers,” the organization stated. “What we find, however, is that unemployed workers exceed jobs openings across the board.” □

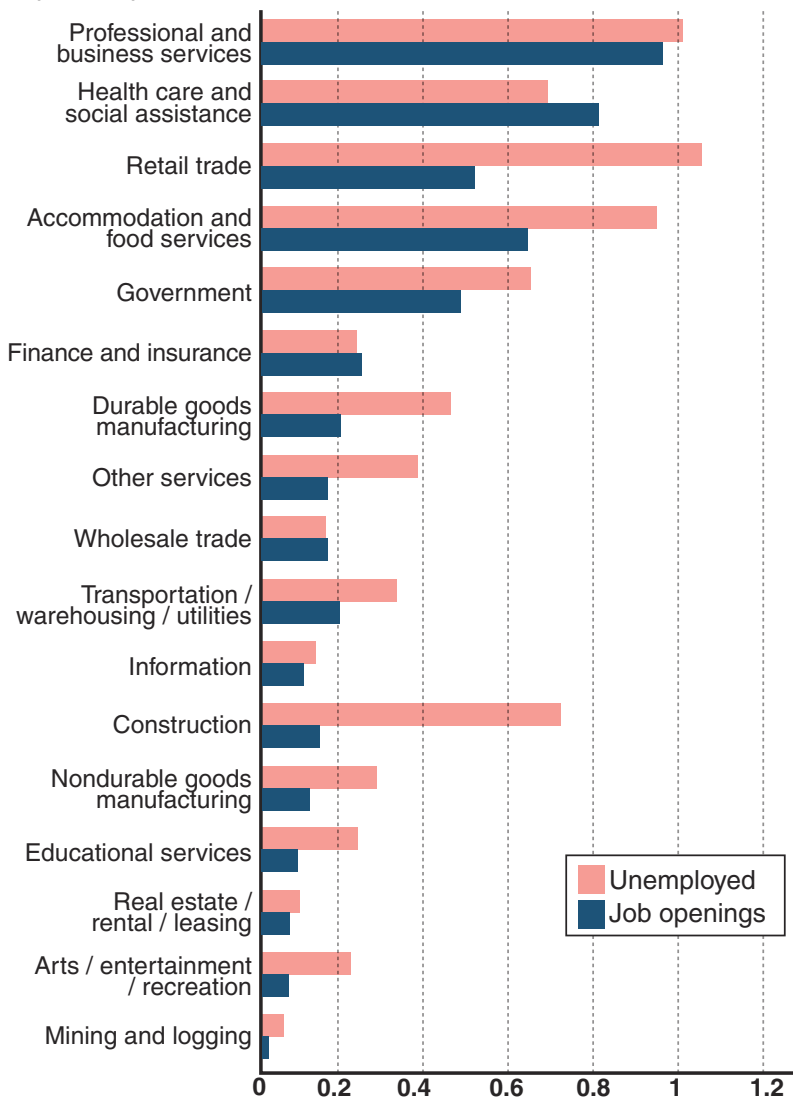


Return of Ebola

Agence France-Presse reported that one of the world’s top Ebola investigators is warning that in as few as 10 years, Ebola could strike with deadly force and spread throughout the entire world. □

Unemployed and Job Openings

By industry, in millions



*12 month averages, taken from April 2014 – March 2015

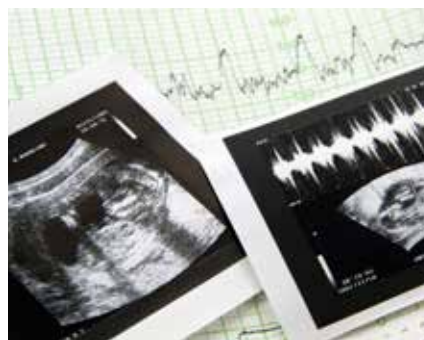
Source: Economic Policy Institute

Graphic: Tribune News Service



Juvenile Crime

Figures released from Britain’s largest police force reveal a 61 percent spike since 2013 in the number of violent crimes committed by children ages 7-17 against parents, according to *The Telegraph*. Most of the cases involved assault, harassment and robbery, while others included sexual assault and one count of murder. □



Toll of Abortion

The number of American abortions since the practice was legalized in the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court case has exceeded 51 million—more than the population of the United States in 1880 (Guttmacher Institute). □



New Dead Zones

Areas in the ocean with high levels of salt and low levels of oxygen have been discovered for the first time off the coast of Africa, a study published in the journal *Biogeosciences* reported. These zones, which do not support marine life and are blamed for mass fish die-offs in other areas around the world, have the potential to travel across the Atlantic Ocean in slow moving currents and cause problems elsewhere around the globe. □



Hyperinflation

The Zimbabwean government has mandated that the country's dollar be phased out. Since 2009 when officials stopped reporting inflation statistics, foreign currencies such as the United States dollar and the South African rand have been used instead. The current exchange rate is 35 quadrillion Zimbabwean dollars to one United States dollar. □



■ **UNDERAGE LABOR:** Pakistani children work 14-hour days at a brick kiln outside of Lahore, Pakistan. The operation employs thousands of young laborers (Dec. 5, 2013).

PHOTO: ARIF ALI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Child Labor

The International Labor Organization reported that nearly 170 million children ages 5 to 14 are forced to work full-time jobs—with half of them having dangerous jobs in areas such as mining and construction. Many children work to augment the income of financially struggling families. □



Elections in Turkey

Islamist President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's 13-year rule ended when Turkish voters elected Selahattin Demirtas, leader of the Peoples' Democratic Party, as the new president. □



Disease on the Move

Chikungunya, a virus that once only spread through mosquitoes in tropical areas, has been discovered to infect inhabitants of cooler climates, including in the United States. Though generally not fatal, the disease causes severe joint pain and fever symptoms, and has infected over three million people in the past 10 years. □



■ **NEW HOPE:** Soldiers march past a poster displaying President Muhammadu Buhari and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo at Eagles Square in Abuja, Nigeria (May 29, 2015).

PHOTO: PIUS UTOMI EKPEI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Anti-terrorist Coalition

Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin are combining military efforts under Nigeria's leadership to fight back against the terrorist group Boko Haram. The call for a military coalition came from Nigeria's newly elected president, Muhammadu Buhari, who stressed the need to end the extremist insurgency after his election in May 2015. □

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- Uses stunning evidence from science and the natural world to prove a Creator exists.
- Shows God's creative genius along with the impossibility of evolution.
- Presents what God's Word says about why so many remain blind to the truth of His existence.

Each broadcast in the series builds to a powerful climax. Be sure to watch all five parts!



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