

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2022

THE

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REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



What We Must Learn from History

**Today's Problems:
What Everyone Misses**

**What Is
Russia's Endgame?**

**Designed for
Discovery**

**Did God Keep
His Word?**

THE
REAL TRUTH[™]
A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. XX | NO. 1 | JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2022

A R T I C L E S

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Volunteers, mostly employees from the Mayfield Consumer Products factory, help salvage possessions from a destroyed home in the aftermath of tornadoes that tore through the region several days earlier, in Mayfield, Kentucky (Dec. 13, 2021).

AP/GERALD HERBERT

Why Does God Allow Natural Disasters?

In the wake of a deadly tornado outbreak in the United States, people are left wondering whether a higher power cares or even exists.
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FRONT COVER: A stone sculpture at Tonina, the site of a ruined Maya civilization, in the Mexican state of Chiapas.

CREDITS: All photos from Getty Images unless otherwise noted. Articles on pages 9-12 and 20 contain information from Reuters and The Associated Press.

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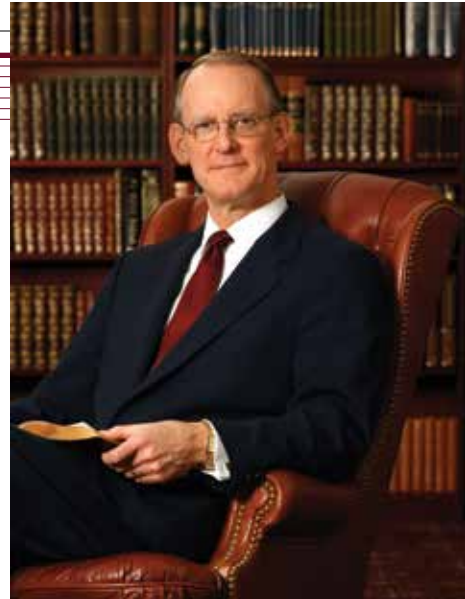
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Today's Problems: What Everyone Misses

THE WORLD IS now at the point you would expect it to be before the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God. Problems have grown worse, as if they were on a clock ticking toward Christ's Return. Every corner of the globe is experiencing turmoil, with no solution in sight. There are individual problems that are too much for man's governments to solve—let alone solve *so many*, and at the *same time!*

Think of society like an old car. At a point, it is constantly breaking down and cannot be repaired. All of its component parts are worn out. It either needs a complete overhaul—or to be scrapped and replaced altogether. God has a plan to replace the rotten, pagan foundations of this world with its many gods and set up what all mankind is longing for more than ever, knowingly or unknowingly.

Lead headlines worldwide make plain the world is on an irreversible course of destruction. But lesser-reported stories—hundreds or thousands per day—show just how broken the world truly is. A few moments of surfing the web paints the graphic picture in article titles alone. You can find an endless number more...

■ “A new breed of brazen takeover robbers hitting California luxury retailers, raising ire” (*Los Angeles Times*). Waves of masked thieves with hammers descended on high-end stores, looting everything of value and terrifying employees and customers.

■ “Afghanistan's economic meltdown following the Taliban's takeover 100 days ago is pushing destitute families to marry off young daughters—and even baby girls, campaigners say” (*Reuters*).

■ “Dollar Tree hikes prices 25%. Most items will cost \$1.25” (*CNN*). America's best known “dollar store” can no longer survive without dramatically increasing prices across the board, a testament to the dire state of the economy.

■ Thinking of the Olivet prophecy, “A swarm of more than 40 earthquakes in 24 hours is causing a buzz in the Northwest U.S.” (*CNN*). The article goes on to say, “The sheer number of magnitude 5.0 or greater quakes in the region triples the annual average (three 5.0+ quakes per year) since 1980, according to the USGS database.”

God says this to His people: “I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you...thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give



Left, police tape blocks access to the area where a shooting took place in Beverly Hills, California (Dec. 1, 2021). Right, a woman shops at the Dollar Tree store where \$1.25 price tags are posted on the shelves, in Alhambra, California (Dec. 10, 2021). Bottom, a worker wearing a protective suit takes a momentary break as people perform the last rites of patients who died of COVID-19 during a mass cremation held at a crematorium in New Delhi, India (May 1, 2021).

VALERIE MACON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES (LEFT); FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT); AN-INDITO MUKHERJEE/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM)



you an expected end. Then shall you call upon Me, and you shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And you shall seek Me, and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:10-13).

But instead of turning to God for help, mankind feebly attempts to solve problems that threaten its very existence. Major catastrophe looms at every turn. Here is a recent shocking example, as reported by *CBS News*, “NASA is launching a small probe... that will crash head-on into a small asteroid next fall at some 15,000 mph to test the feasibility of one day nudging a threatening body off course just enough to prevent a catastrophic impact on Earth...The 525-foot-wide target asteroid, known as Dimorphos, is actually a small moon orbiting a

half-mile-wide parent body named Didymos. Neither poses any threat to Earth, either before or after the DART encounter.” That mankind must now grapple with existential threats of this magnitude should be the ultimate wake-up call. But it is not! Now think of this maneuver and how deluded man still *trusts himself* to save himself.

Civilization on its own is *hopeless*, cut off from God in this present evil world (Gal. 1:4). It does not understand that only by seeking God will it ultimately survive—and thrive! Co-workers and subscribers may wish to request *What Is Your Reward in the Next Life?* (found at rcg.org/wiyrnl) to learn more. God’s Plan alone can focus humanity on the astounding life that the Creator wants for every per-

son! The booklet is free—online or in hardcopy form—made possible by the tithes and offerings of members, co-workers and donors who voluntarily aid and support this Work of God around the world.

Mankind’s Feeble Effort

Humanity *right now* believes it is invincible—that it can solve any problem—that it will always rise to new and greater heights. Continent after continent is witnessing the conditions Christ foretold would precede His arrival—and in BIG ways. Yet the leaders of this world—the only ones who have the power to make real progress—simply cannot find the answers. Proof of this came when leaders from scores of nations met at two

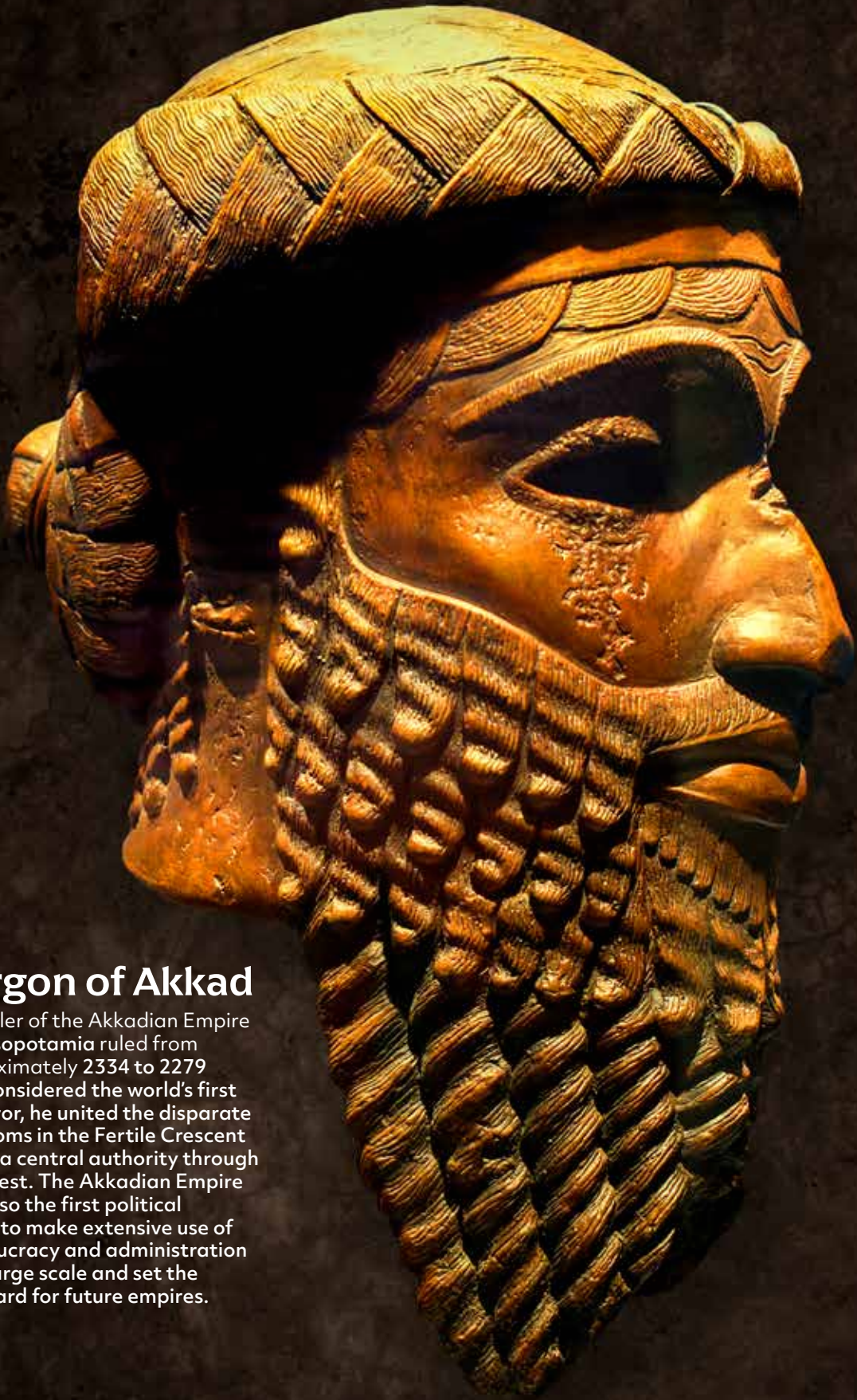
Please see **PERSONAL**, page 28

Answers to Life's Greatest Questions...



Millions believe God exists! Few have *proof*. Have you proven that God exists? Or do you hope—suspect—feel—believe—think—He does? Can His existence be *scientifically* proven? Can you *know* with certainty that an all-intelligent *Mind* created the universe and all life on Earth—including you? Must the answers be “accepted on faith”? Let’s squarely face these questions!

**Visit rcg.org to order
your free booklets!**



Sargon of Akkad

The ruler of the Akkadian Empire in Mesopotamia ruled from approximately 2334 to 2279 BC. Considered the world's first emperor, he united the disparate kingdoms in the Fertile Crescent under a central authority through conquest. The Akkadian Empire was also the first political entity to make extensive use of bureaucracy and administration on a large scale and set the standard for future empires.

What We Must Learn from HISTORY

Throughout millennia, civilizations have lived out an all-to-familiar pattern: incredible advancement followed by societal collapse. Can we break this vicious cycle?

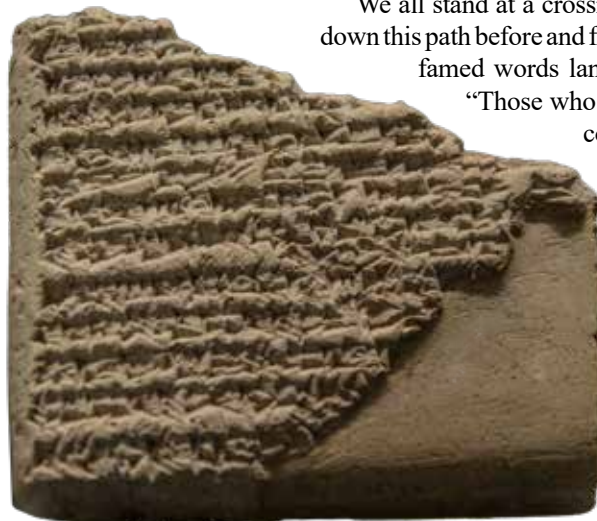
BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

SARGON OF AKKAD got there first. He is the man who many historians crown as the world's first great empire builder. Reigning from around 2334-2279 BC, the king subjugated all of southern Mesopotamia as well as Syria, Anatolia and Elam (part of modern Iran).

Yet that is pretty much all we know for sure about Sargon. Everything else is based on legends and guesswork. Part of this lack of information is because he lived so long ago, the other is that the Sumerian civilization collapsed into obscurity. The ruins of Sargon's capital city of Akkad have never been found.

The early civilization of Sumer had everything going for it. First, it was situated on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which the Bible defines as near the location of the Garden of Eden. This was the area known as the Fertile Crescent. These natural features led to incredible human advancements such as the first schools, government bureaucracy, massive architectural works, and irrigation techniques. There was also the first written language, cuneiform, and the oldest heroic tale, the Epic of Gilgamesh.

A cuneiform tablet depicting the birth of Sargon of Akkad, in the Louvre Museum in Paris, France.
CC BY SA 4.0



So what happened? Why did the Akkadian Empire fail? Why was Sumer lost to history?

In short, *human beings* happened. Many archaeologists point to aggressive irrigation tactics, leading to salinization of the soil, as a major cause for the fall of this empire. Look at the Mesopotamia region today, which was home to the Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian and Chaldean empires. Even thousands of years later, the area remains desolate!

This is just one cautionary tale of history in one region of the world. Yet the typical problems that plague mankind—war, famine, disease and environmental catastrophes—are no longer regional. Each of them now carries a *global* tone. This means global consequences.

Yet worldwide interconnectivity has a silver lining. For the first time, we can survey the entire planet and see where our practices are detrimental to humankind. In addition, we can comb the pages of history to learn from the trial and error of our ancestors.

We all stand at a crossroads. Civilizations have been down this path before and failed, with George Santayana's famed words landing with a resounding thud:

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

What can we learn from the templates of failure throughout history? What *must* we learn?

Societal Collapse

What is societal collapse? While there is no one definition, an article in the scholarly journal *Proceedings B* helps explain: “Virtually

every past civilization has eventually undergone collapse, a loss of socio-political-economic complexity usually accompanied by a dramatic decline in population size. Some, such as those of Egypt and China, have recovered from collapses at various stages; others, such as that of Easter Island or the Classic Maya, were apparently permanent.”

Societal collapses are almost always complicated, with not just one thing causing the demise. Most often, however, overexploitation of the environment is a leading cause—or the straw that ultimately breaks the civilization’s back.

The article said today’s most serious problems stem from weather upsets, the rapidly increasing extinction of animals and plants, land degradation, a pole-to-pole spread of toxic compounds, ocean acidification and dead zones, conditions that more easily mutate and spread disease, depletion of rare resources, and depletion of groundwater.

What a Gordian Knot of evils and ills! And each has to do with how humankind interacts with the environment. Often, this is where the debate enters on climate change and carbon dioxide emissions—but clearly the problems are much beyond that. Set that aside and think of ecological footprint rather than carbon footprint. The global community must examine these issues to avoid the fate of past failed societies.

The *Proceedings B* article continued: “The human predicament is driven by overpopulation, overconsumption of natural resources and the use of unnecessarily environmentally damaging technologies and socio-economic-political arrangements to service Homo sapiens’ aggregate consumption.”

That is a mouthful, but it just means we are consuming more than Earth can handle. To make today’s consumption sustainable, we would need half an additional Earth. If everyone alive today consumed as much as the average American, we would need FOUR TO FIVE more Earths.

Even if it is not hurtling toward complete collapse, society is heading toward at least a significant decline.

A *Motherboard* article examined the math in the article “MIT Predicted in 1972 That Society Will Collapse This Century. New Research Shows We’re on Schedule.”

After reviewing predictive models from the past decades, and comparing them to what has actually happened in the years since, researchers found the 1972 report *The Limits to Growth*. It has most closely aligned with what has occurred in the nearly 50 years since.

This new analysis examined 10 key variables: population, fertility rates, mortality rates, industrial output, food production, services, non-renewable resources, persistent pollution, human welfare, and ecological footprint. We are fully on track for a collapse by 2040.

Study author Gaya Herrington told *Motherboard* that collapse “does not mean that humanity will cease to exist,” but rather that “economic and industrial growth will stop, and then decline, which will hurt food production and standards of living.”

Despite this, Ms. Herrington clings to hope. While presenting at the World Economic Forum in 2020, she said: “Changing our societal priorities hardly needs to be a capitulation to grim necessity. Human activity can be regenerative and our productive capacities can be transformed. In fact, we are seeing examples of that happening right now. Expanding those efforts now creates a world full of opportunity that is also sustainable.”

“The necessary changes will not be easy and pose transition challenges but a sustainable and inclusive future is still possible,” said Ms. Herrington.

While change is still possible, the record of history is not on our side. Often, man can clearly see he needs to change and still fails to act.

Cautionary Tales

Whenever societal collapse is mentioned, Easter Island is often brought out as the classic example. It is *the* cautionary tale.

Today, Easter Island is a near-treeless, 63-square-mile patch of land in the Pacific Ocean, 2,200 miles west of Chile. It has a single defining char-

acteristic—its towering Moai figures. Most everyone can identify these iconic multi-ton statues cut from stone, with staring eyes and elongated features.

The Polynesian nation of Easter Island has become a metaphor for the crises facing mankind—a microcosm for the era of globalization.

The parallels ring with clarity for us today:

■ Easter Island is all by itself in the Pacific—Earth is a planet all by itself in space.

■ Polynesian settlers must have seen that they were tearing down the last tree—mankind can survey the world through the internet and satellite communication and see the destruction it is causing.

■ Both Easter Island and modern manmade catastrophes spark the same question: Why do we never stop ourselves?

Surprisingly, Easter Island was once a lushly forested subtropical paradise. It supported a prosperous and complex society of up to 30,000 people.

The climate was well suited for habitation; three long-dormant volcanoes left rich deposits of fertile soil across the terrain. Open grasslands covered the island in between Easter Palm forests, with trees that grew over 70 feet tall. The volcanic deposit at Rano Raraku to the southeast provided plentiful stores of rock for construction.

The tribes that migrated to the island formed a loose collective government that created a unique culture. Primarily farming and seafaring, these groups had a structured tribal society, with a leading chief and class of priests, along with farmers and tradesmen. The religious pantheon included hundreds of animalistic gods.

Chiefs raised the Moai, each weighing an average of 10 tons, to prove their status with the gods, and exercise power over their followers. The chiefs’ elite status allowed a ruling class to structure society and maintain order among tribes. Under them, vast projects were organized. Trading harvested resources from the small island encouraged construction on a broad scale. Large plantations produced food

surpluses, which aided population growth. Religious worship, fueled by even larger Moai and elaborate funeral services, united the tribes.

But it all came crashing down.

An August 1995 article in *Discover* magazine suggested that the environmental collapse of Easter Island happened “not with a bang but with a whimper.” After several generations, islanders slowly consumed most available resources.

Forests were clear-cut for canoes, ropes and firewood. Farms producing sweet potatoes, taro and sugarcane stripped soils of available nutrients. Bird, fish and porpoise populations dwindled to extinction by overhunting. Blind to the impact that a growing population had on the environment, inhabitants used up the island’s resources until there was nothing left.

A massive migration was impossible due to the great distance from the nearest landmass. The isolated island was unable to draw needed resources from elsewhere; it was forced to continue on its own. Populations, now too large for the island to support, soon began to die out. Easter Island descended into civil war as chiefs-turned-warlords vied for leftover resources.

Internal conflict and violence turned into anarchy, as the only way to survive was to steal food from opposing tribes. The wars hindered communication and made transportation between tribes almost impossible. The island was no longer unified—cooperation between peoples ceased. The greed of individuals nullified any attempt at an organized solution to the now catastrophic problems.

The islanders’ use of resources was unsustainable. Great amounts of forest were cut for materials to erect the gigantic Moai. While scientists today do not fully understand how these ancient peoples raised the monoliths, most agree that strong lumber and rope were necessary. This, coupled with unchecked growth, eventually led to a food shortage. The tribes sank into a starvation-fueled population decline.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jared Diamond, who wrote *Collapse: Why*

Societies Choose to Succeed or Fail defines the earmarks of collapse as a combination of five broad factors: (1) human environmental impact; (2) natural changes in climate; (3) hostile neighbor nations; (4) loss of allies; and (5) breakdown or shortsightedness of economic and social institutions.

Easter Island is just one example. Sumer was another example of collapse from great heights. As is Rome, which had a lethal cocktail of problems that caused its demise around AD 476.

The Romans followed the formula for collapse: (1) they pushed their soil to its limits, sparking famine and leading to disease pandemics such as the Black Death, smallpox and measles; (2) a climate shift caused too much rain, which routinely ruined crops; (3) a dwindling Roman army forced emperors to hire Germanic tribes to defend their borders; (4) a band of these mistreated mercenaries, the Visigoths, later conquered the weakened city; (5) even at its lowest point, the citizenry attended extravagant chariot races and gladiator battles.

The Dark Ages followed on the heels of Rome’s fall!

Time and again, the cycle repeats. Incredible advancement, terrible decline.

In his book *A Short History of Progress*, Ronald Wright demonstrated the truth of the anonymous quote, “Each time history repeats itself, the price goes up.”

He wrote, “The collapse of the first civilization on earth, the Sumerian, affected only half a million people. The fall of Rome affected tens of millions. If ours were to fail, it would, of course, bring catastrophe on billions.”

Collision Course?

In the television special “National Geographic: Collapse,” which was based on Dr. Diamond’s book, Harvard University social psychologist Daniel Gilbert stated, “What’s so curious about human beings is that we can look deeply into the future, foresee disaster, and still do nothing in the present to stop it. The majority of people on this planet, they’re overwhelmed with concerns about their immediate well being.”

Despite the track record of history, many scholars, thinkers and scientists cling to hope.

Dr. Diamond believes there are about a dozen major factors threatening modern man. All 12 of these must be solved. Even if 11 problems are addressed perfectly, the 12th would still bring utter disaster. Yet seeing certain positive changes across the globe, and having the record of history as a guide, he is cautiously optimistic about humanity’s future.

In *A Short History of Progress*, Ronald Wright said, “We are now at the stage when the Easter Islanders could still have halted the senseless cutting and carving, could have gathered the last trees’ seeds to plant out of reach of the rats. We have the tools and the means to share resources, clean up pollution, dispense basic health care and birth control, set economic limits in line with natural ones.”

Many look to science and technology to dig us out of this mess. Yet such solutions are always a double-edged sword. Look at the humble plow for farming. It has allowed an awesome advancement throughout centuries—but it is also often the cause of soil degradation and topsoil loss.

When we throw in bioengineering and complex technological achievements, these unintended side effects often balloon.

The 2011 documentary “Surviving Progress,” based on Mr. Wright’s book, featured cognitive psychologist Gary Marcus: “One of the challenges...that faces the human species is we are more and more in a position of acting like gods...This is [going to] be even more true with genetic technologies, we’re [going to] be able to manipulate other species, and eventually ourselves.”

Also in “Surviving Progress,” award-winning author and scholar Robert Wright stated that man must quickly develop the *moral* side to being a “god”: “If we don’t develop what you might call the moral perspective of God, then we’ll [mishandle] the engineering part of playing God, because the actual engineering solutions depend on seeing things from the point of view of other

people, ensuring that their lives don't get too bad, because if they do it'll come back to haunt us. So you know, kind of half of being God has just been handed to us and then the question is whether we'll master the other half of being God, the moral half."

He continued, "The bad news is that the enlightenment is...sometimes hard to come by because of human nature..."

Hope for the Future?

In the end, man must learn this stark lesson from history: human nature stands in the way of real peace, abundance and happiness. It blocks man from *true* moral understanding. It is the root cause of humanity's problems.

Many thinkers, scientists and leaders have concluded this, but feel powerless to modify how society thinks and acts.

Amazingly, efforts in fields such as synthetic biology show that man would rather attempt to change *nature itself* than address *his own* human nature!

In his 1860 Cooper Union Address, Abraham Lincoln stated, "Human action can be modified to some extent, but human nature cannot be changed."

The same is true today. During a lecture for non-profit group TED, British Prime Minister David Cameron stated, "Government is essentially today learning to go with the grain of human nature."

Yet most cannot concisely describe what this nature is.

Unknown to almost all, there is an instruction manual for mankind that succinctly defines human nature. The Bible plainly outlines man's true colors—helping make sense of the modern world. This is just one reason *The Real Truth* uses this Book as the lens through which to view current events.

The Bible begins to define the human condition almost immediately. The first chapter of Genesis reveals why "god-like" aspirations are deep-seated. Notice: "And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness..." (vs. 26).

The notion of mankind having a mastery over nature is also immediately addressed. Verse 26 continues, "...and let them have dominion over

the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

Genesis 2 describes the Garden of Eden and two symbolic trees: "the tree of life" and "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (vs. 9).

These trees represent two opposite ways of life, which can be summed up as give and get. The "tree of life" describes a life of genuine, outflowing concern for others. The tree of knowledge of good and evil symbolizes a way of experimenting to discern what is "good" and what is "evil."

In the account, Adam and Eve chose to eat from the tree of GET.

Look at human nature throughout history. Civilizations have regularly implemented seemingly "good" solutions (almost exclusively devised for personal gain), later to reap unintended "evil" consequences.

This way of get—human nature—can be summarized in four words: vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. All of today's problems stem from these four characteristics.

Yet does this mean mankind is doomed to fail?

Ultimate History Lesson

Throughout time, there has remained a sense that the purpose of mankind is much grander than the here and now. This is never so evident as when gazing at a star-filled sky on a clear night, away from city lights—or when viewing the Hubble Telescope's jaw-dropping images. Man looks to the universe for his future, whether to see planets he will one day explore or to understand the basic laws of science governing all things.

Consider. The light from those stars took billions of years to reach Earth. So, while peering into the distant past, we often contemplate our future.

In the Old Testament, Israel's King David captured this feeling in the book of Psalms: "When

I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him?" (8:3-4).

This question's answer is the single most exciting theme found within the Bible. It reveals a deeper, hopeful purpose for mankind.

The New Testament book of Hebrews quotes David and then begins to answer his question: "What is man, that You are mindful of him?...You [God] crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands: You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him" (2:6-8).

At first these verses may seem to contradict each other. God put "all things in subjection under" man, but "we see not yet all things put under him." Put another way, in the future, all things will be put under the rulership of man, but this has not yet happened.

The *Moffatt* translation of the Bible renders the Greek word for "all things" as "the universe." Man is to rule over the entire universe!

Yet to do so, he must first learn the way of GIVE, which can be done by building the character of God, as seen within the Bible and throughout Creation. Human nature must be overcome, and genuine outflowing concern *must* take its place.

Although man has moments of incredible ingenuity, human nature is holding him back. Imagine how much

more he could achieve if vanity, jealousy, lust and greed came to an end!

For many more details about mankind's incredible future and the grand purpose for human existence, read the enlightening and inspiring free book *The Awesome Potential of Man*.

Despite the bleak picture seen in headlines today, man is not doomed to fail—he is destined to succeed! □



Order a Free Copy!
rcg.org/tapom



Left, a man dusts off family photos from the rubble of a home destroyed by a tornado that tore through Mayfield, Kentucky (Dec. 13, 2021). Right, an employee of a candle factory hugs another person at the conclusion of a candlelight vigil (Dec. 14, 2021). Bottom, a framed photo of a resident lies among the debris of her destroyed home in the aftermath of tornadoes that tore through the region (Dec. 13, 2021).

AP/GERALD HERBERT



AS THE SUN set at 5 p.m. on December 10 in Paducah, Kentucky, National Weather Service staff were tracking a super-cell storm and ready to send tornado warnings across the state. Over 200 miles away in Mayfield, workers at a candle factory were clocking in for overtime shifts to keep up with Christmas demand and earn bonus pay.

Just 30 minutes later, employees heard the faint wail of sirens. Cellphones lit up with severe weather alerts. Following the company's emergency protocols, staff went into a hallway designated as a storm shelter.

WHY Does God Allow NATURAL DISASTERS?

In the wake of a deadly tornado outbreak in the United States, people are left wondering whether a higher power cares or even exists.



Top left, the view of tornado damage from a bedroom window in Mayfield, Kentucky (Dec. 12, 2021). Top right, the remains of a destroyed home in Dawson Springs, Kentucky (Dec. 12, 2021). Middle left, a displaced woman hugs a friend outside a shelter in Wingo, Kentucky (Dec. 12, 2021). Middle right, a man sits in a shelter in Wingo, Kentucky, after his home was destroyed (Dec. 12, 2021). Bottom left, a family photograph lies among debris in Bowling Green, Kentucky (Dec. 14, 2021). Bottom right, a man plays with his four month-old son inside a makeshift shelter in Wingo, Kentucky (Dec. 13, 2021).

REUTERS/CHENEY ORR (TOP LEFT); AP/MICHAEL CLUBB (TOP RIGHT); AP/ROBERT BUMSTED (MIDDLE LEFT/MIDDLE RIGHT); AP/JAMES KENNEY (BOTTOM LEFT); REUTERS/CHENEY ORR (BOTTOM RIGHT)





Several minutes went by with no storm in sight. Employees trickled back to work. Some, like Chelsea Logue, who arrived to start her shift as co-workers returned to the plant floor, did not think there was much to worry about.

“I thought it would be a rainstorm,” she said.

At 9 p.m., sirens sounded again. This time, alerts from the National Weather Service were dire, telling people in Mayfield to “shelter immediately!” as a spotted violent tornado barreled toward the area. Workers, including team-leader Autumn Kirks and her boyfriend, Lannis Joe Ward, who was a line leader at the plant, scrambled back to the hallway.

Twenty-seven minutes later, there was an eerie silence. Lights flickered, “then all of a sudden you hear just crumbling, and it’s like the whole world is just falling down around you,” Ms. Kirks said. The building collapsed as deafening winds thrashed concrete blocks and steel frames around.

Then it went silent.

Ms. Kirks saw sky and lightning where a wall had been, and her boyfriend—who was just 10 feet away when they ducked for cover—had vanished.

“I remember taking my eyes off of him for a second, and then he was gone,” she said.

Later, she got the terrible news. He had been killed in the storm.

Mr. Ward was one of 90 lives lost that night during an unprecedented powerful December outbreak of tornadoes that ripped through six U.S. states. The one that hit the Mayfield candle factory was the strongest and most devastating in Kentucky history, leaving a 165-mile trail of death and destruction, demolishing homes, leveling businesses and setting off a scramble to find survivors beneath the rubble.

The next morning revealed scenes of utter destruction across Mayfield. At the candle factory, layers of steel and cars 15 feet deep were on top of what used to be the roof. An aerial view of the plant showed concrete footprints decorated like confetti with twisted metal and shredded drywall and insulation. Rescuers had to crawl over the

dead to get to the living at a disaster scene that smelled of scented candles. Elsewhere, homes were flattened or missing roofs.

For many survivors like Wes Fowler, who rode out December’s storm in a tunnel under the church he pastors, there were no answers for the devastation. “My little girl asked me, ‘Why would God let this happen?’”

While Mr. Fowler said he believes God did allow the tornado to happen, he had no answer as to why the western Kentucky community where he was baptized, grew up and chose to raise his family was not spared from the storms.

“I had to look at my little 8-year-old girl, who looks to me for answers,” he said, “and I had to say... ‘I don’t know. I don’t know.’”

Each time a natural disaster brings untimely death and destruction, people ask: If God is all-powerful, why did He let it happen? And if the Almighty is *good*, why does He allow such awful tragedies? Or, as a *USA Today* piece following the Moore, Oklahoma, twister in 2013 put it, “How can a vicious tornado kill kids when God is good?”

These are all questions worthy of straightforward answers.

Searching for Meaning

Often, deadly catastrophes push survivors to stop believing in God altogether. In his 2020 book *Tornado God*, Peter Thuesen argued that disasters should make us question our concepts of a heavenly Being and His attributes.

According to an internet review prior to its release, the author asked, “if a god is directly responsible for both the existence and the path of a tornado, that god is acting according to something that in no way resembles the standard Christian conception of ‘right’ and ‘wrong.’ And if a god isn’t directing the tornado but merely watches while it kills the innocent, then is that god worthy of worship every Sunday? And if that god isn’t even watching, how is the situation of those faithful functionally any different than atheism?”

These questions are based on three foundations of Christian belief: God is all-knowing, all-powerful and all-good. Each time calamity takes lives indiscriminately, those pillars can seem to stand on sand. Believers have a hard time accepting that any person who sees what is happening and has the power to stop it does not.

Yet rejecting the existence of God is not the answer to why an omnipotent and omniscient being allows suffering. But, again, you should not accept “we cannot know” for an answer.

Some of the Bible’s authors explored similar lines of thinking. Ancient Israelite King Solomon, for instance, wrote Ecclesiastes while grappling with troubling observations.

In it, he wrote: “All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness” (7:15).

Through his reign, the king found that some of those who obeyed and trusted God were not any more successful than those who did not. Instead, “All things come alike to all” (9:2) and “time and chance happens to them all” (9:11).

Solomon simply had to conclude that “man also knows not his time: as the fishes are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them” (vs. 12).

This reality drove him to despair, told through the king’s refrain throughout the book, “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” We could suppose he was thinking: *Why would an all-knowing, all-powerful and loving God simply let people needlessly suffer and unexpectedly die?*

Yet Solomon did not leave this question unresolved.

The Crucial Lesson

Let’s go back to Ecclesiastes, to the most oft-quoted passage. Chapter 3 starts: “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven...” (vs. 1).

The following verses list the highs and lows of life. A time to be born, a

time to die. To plant and pluck. To kill and heal. Break down and build up. Weep and laugh. Mourn and dance. Get and lose. Love and hate.

These dichotomies are more than poetic drivel. They paint a picture of life—both good and bad—and show both are inevitable parts of our existence. Solomon made clear later in the book that *no one* is immune from experiencing both sides of the spectrum.

Notice in chapter 7: “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” (vs. 14).

In simple English, every person regardless of religious belief will experience good and bad. The person who is born will die. In the same way, the person who dances *will* mourn. He who laughs *will* weep. Getting is followed by losing.

Even more simply stated: Tragedy is INEVITABLE.

Each one of us—whether religious or not—cannot control when or whether suffering comes. But we can and should control how we react to it when it does. Solomon said in dark times we should *consider*.

What does that mean? Ecclesiastes 7:2 makes it clear beyond doubt: “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.”

Realize what you just read.

Instead of dismissing the death and destruction—or dismissing God’s existence—following tragedies such as the tornadoes in the Central U.S., we are best served to reflect on what happened there. Those 90 deaths, and the despair and fear associated with them, should send a message to those who remain alive. Our hearts should go out to the survivors. But we should also carefully consider that life is temporary and fragile, and therefore live it a certain way.

Ecclesiastes states anyone sobered by reality, who experience “sorrow” and “sadness of the countenance,” makes their “heart better” (vs. 3).

This does not mean God wants us to be perpetually unhappy, nor is life equal parts prosperity and adversity. The Bible speaks much more about how to make the most of your life.

But God has “appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27), giving each person a limited space of time to learn and experience from times of adversity. He wants us to make the most of life.

MAKE NO MISTAKE. God *does not* enjoy punishing people. He says in Ezekiel 18:32, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies.” The Bible says God Himself suffers through millennia of human misery. II Peter 3:9 states that the “Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” I Timothy 2:4 further states that God would “have *all* men to be saved.”

Ultimately, God wants to bring good to everyone who grows. Revelation shows a glimpse: “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (21:4).

Of course, this still leaves many unanswered questions. Why does God make human beings to suffer at all if He does not like it Himself? Why even allow pain if He plans to take it away in the end? How can you know for sure He really exists?

These are TOUGH questions. Yet the Bible itself states *everyone* should be pondering them as they endure the adversity life brings.

Those asking these questions owe it to themselves to find the answers. To help you, go to our literature library at rcg.org. You will notice many of the titles are questions: *Why Do You Exist? Does God Exist?* and *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*

While these titles represent the greatest questions afflicting mankind, the pages inside will guide you to the Bible’s plain answers. □

Designed for DISCOVERY

The Earth is filled with inferences of design.
Here is a look at some of these unique and inspiring markers.

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

MANY MILLIONS view Earth as just another planet in a vast universe. They see it as neither unique nor special in any way.

But decades of research are changing this view. If we peer through the lens of science, something remarkable can be shown about our planet. The more we dis-

cover, the more we realize that hundreds of conditions are needed for the rich abundance of plant, animal and human life on Earth, which have not been found elsewhere in the known universe.

There are so many indicators *on Earth* pointing to an Intelligent Designer that it becomes impossible to believe they appeared by blind chance. Reading with an open mind,

the honest reader will be left with little doubt as to the inspiring origin of our world and the evidence left behind for humanity to discover. In fact, much of what has been set in place for mankind was designed so that only an advanced, technology-driven society could uncover it.

As you read this article, you will see the fingerprints—the handprints—of something. You will be left to ask,



A Lucky Size?

Another interesting “coincidence” is Earth’s perfect size and mass, crucial to a planet’s ability to develop an atmosphere and sustain life.

If one were to create a duplicate of Earth, but shrink its size, some drastic changes would take place. Most important, a smaller planet would generate a weaker magnetic field. Our existing magnetic field creates a kind of “force field” around our planet, protecting us from direct interaction with the sun’s solar wind—which could blow away our atmosphere and with it the ability to sustain life.

Also, the unfiltered energy of the sun would permeate all those living in such a hostile world. This alone would mean deterioration and eventual destruction of life.

Even a slight reduction in the size of the planet would mean a gradual sweeping away of our at-

mosphere, disrupting the delicate mixture needed for life.

Conversely, a *larger* Earth would carry with it an entirely different set of problems. Instead of the atmosphere being swept away by a solar wind, the planet would have a much greater magnetic and gravitational field. The fine balance of gasses in our atmosphere would be disrupted, resulting in an atmosphere thick with carbon dioxide and methane. This would in turn increase the size of our atmosphere and make Earth resemble the gaseous giants Jupiter or Saturn.

Gravity also increases in intensity as the mass of a planet grows. An Earth twice its current size would increase gravity 3.5 times.

No matter which direction the mass of our planet is shifted, the effect would be a barren wasteland—not the lush world brimming with life we enjoy today! □

“Are these the fingerprints of dumb, blind luck, or the fingerprints of an engineer who left markers—clues—careful design?”

Also ask: “Could our life-bearing planet be nothing more than coincidence?”

Ancient Geological Compass

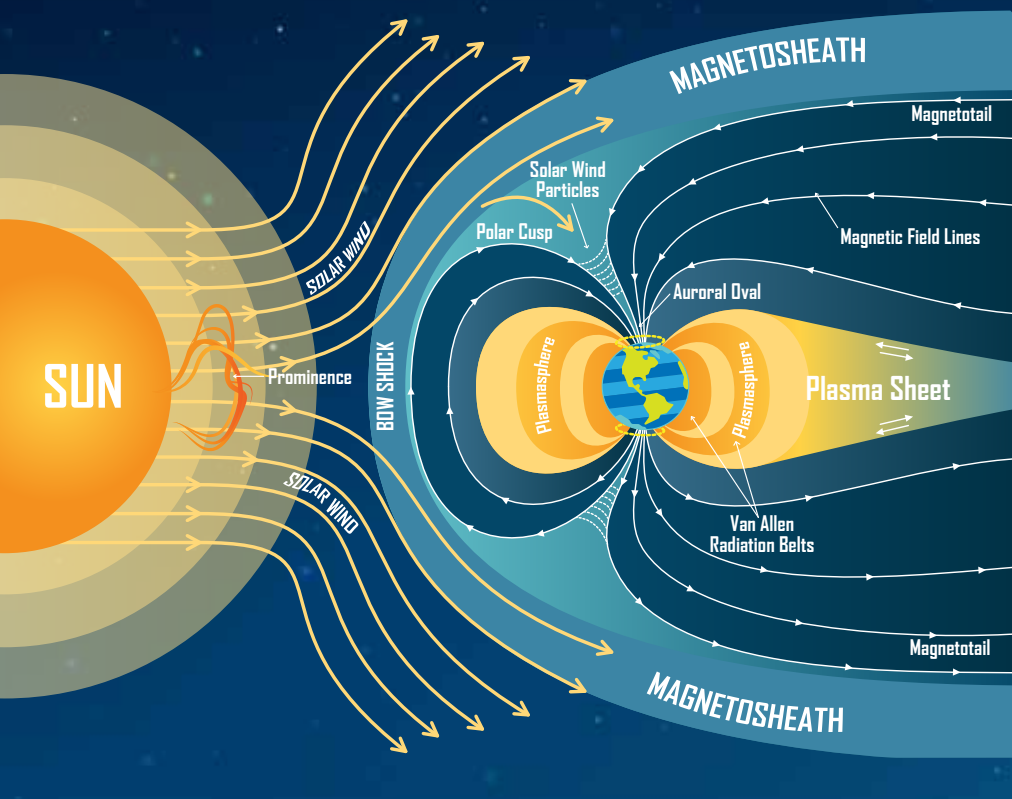
One of the fascinating treasures waiting for millions of years to be uncovered is an ancient global positioning system found in rocks containing magnetic elements, such as iron. These rocks are located everywhere, but are particularly concentrated where iron-filled molten lava spews from within the Earth. When superheated in a volcano or within crevices on the ocean floor, rock becomes as fluid as maple syrup. In this state, the iron element aligns with our planet’s magnetic field.

While most are familiar with a standard compass, few realize that the planet generates a magnetic field in *three* dimensions. When lava cools, its magnetic alignment “locks” into place. (Only superheating to a near liquid state would cause its position to change once again.)

Like a global positioning system using three satellites to pinpoint a location, these rocks can be used to pinpoint the location where they hardened. This opens a fascinating window into Earth’s early history. As continents shift, molten rock bubbles up from deep within the planet’s crust. When this liquid rock comes in contact with water or air, it cools and solidifies. As the continents continue to drift, hardened rock moves with them. By measuring its magnetic field, scientists can determine its exact original location.

Collecting specimens from around the world has allowed scientists to determine that continents currently drift at a rate of about one centimeter per year.

If hundreds of measurements are compared from around the globe, a road map of how our planet transformed begins to appear. A picture of the Earth from millions of years ago reveals only one large continent, referred to as Pangaea.



There is no evolutionary reason for the appearance of this ancient positioning system. Could it have just been chance?

This magnetic map is missing the important element of time. There is no direct way to measure how fast the continents shifted or if they maintained a constant motion over millions of years.

To develop a timeline of our world, another recent discovery is required.

Icy Encyclopedias

Without a clear timeline, scientists have no verifiable way to compare discoveries in various parts of the world. We have a picture of how the early planet looked, but no way to know the rate at which it developed.

Recall learning about tree rings in grade school. Counting them reveals the age of the tree. Their thickness indicate the growth in a particular season and the total amount of rainfall that had occurred. We have come to learn that much more can be read from these natural data recorders. While fascinating in their own right, trees are usually only centuries old. Much of that time has already been recorded by man.

What was learned with tree rings has now been applied to many kinds of geological “layering,” and perhaps most interesting are the layers found in polar ice. In arctic regions, a fascinating phenomenon occurs: Snow, sediment, gases, etc., form easily identifiable layers. With each year, another layer is formed, and “snapshots” are stored. Hundreds, even thousands, of years are documented in these icy data recorders. The longest ice core retrieved is a 2.25 mile sample allowing scientists to peer 420,000 years into the past.

By taking long core samples, each year can be read in a manner similar to tree rings. However, the information stored in the ice cores is much more detailed. Not only can temperature and snow depth be determined, atmospheric gases can be measured. Since gases are generally uniform worldwide, much can be learned about what

constituted the early Earth’s environment—and when. Major earthquakes, volcanoes, climate changes, shifts in Earth’s magnetic field and even events occurring in space can be read from these wonderfully designed ice core “books.”

“Major earthquakes, volcanoes, climate changes, shifts in Earth’s magnetic field and even events occurring in space can be read from these wonderfully designed ice core ‘books.’”

But why would this information even exist? How could an accident “create” something as precise as sediment layers, which are so crucial to understanding the ancient Earth? One could argue that this phenomenon happened by chance. However, again, could mere accident—luck—form data recorders so detailed and precise that, until recently, it was out of the reach of mankind’s ingenuity to unlock them?

Couple these icy “encyclopedias” with the detailed ancient compass already explained, and the mountain of evidence for a Creator continues to grow.

Life and Technology

One fascinating aspect of the above-mentioned discoveries is that they require an advanced species to understand them. The Earth is perfectly designed for advanced life. When scientists analyze the possibility of life on other planets, they use a series of parameters to determine if

a planet can sustain life. Further, the more of these attributes a planet possesses the more likely it can contain both *simple* life (bacteria and proteins) and *complex* life (plants and animals).

Even beyond this is another “level” seldom addressed: technological life—that is, a species advanced enough to develop technology, and in turn discover the markers placed by a Creator.

Our planet was perfectly suited for the arrival of mankind. It may come as no surprise that many of the factors needed to sustain complex life are *exactly the same factors* needed for advanced technology. It is no mere coincidence that conditions facilitating technology are the same as those necessary to support a special life-form capable of harnessing it.

Michael Denton, a famous biochemist, states the following about the precise balance of oxygen in our atmosphere and its link to technology: “Another fascinating coincidence is that only atmospheres with between ten and twenty percent oxygen can support oxidative metabolism in a higher organism, and it is *only within this range* that fire—and hence metallurgy [working with metals] and technology—is possible” (*Nature’s Destiny*).

Not only is our planet perfectly designed to develop technology capable of advancing society, those resources are conveniently placed within our reach.

The Placement of Power

Another so-called coincidence is the location of the resources required to power society. This was the case with the first sustainable power source: fire, primarily derived from trees.

The ability to heat homes provided for a purpose greater than pure survival. Man was free to study and research. Time was spent testing and analyzing the world around him. And before he exhausted this resource, research efforts led to our next power source, coal. This gave way to petroleum, which paved the way to the Industrial

Please see **DISCOVERY**, page 31



WHAT IS RUSSIA'S ENDGAME?

Understanding Russia's motives has always been impossible for the West. Yet history and the Bible reveals its national character—and exactly what its future holds.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER



ARMED WITH shovels and metal detectors, a group of young Russians dig in the flat-open plains outside the town of Rossoschka—about 30 miles from Volgograd, formerly known as Stalingrad. The children are assisting with a program to unearth and properly bury soldiers who lost their lives during World War II.

Nearly everywhere they sink shovels into dirt they find human skulls in rusted helmets, as well as rib cages, femurs and finger bones. Within a few hours, the small group has found the skeletal remains of about a dozen combatants from the Eastern Front—Russians and Germans alike.

A *History Channel* special detailed this scene. Just under the surface of the plains in this region lie thousands upon thousands of bodies that have remained there since 1943.

In the winter of that year, frozen corpses made a macabre blanket far and wide across the area, sometimes three bodies deep. Today, the bone fields echo what took place nearly 70 years ago.

A documentary based on the book *Aftermath: The Remnants of War* featured an interview with a Russian man who has made it his life's work to unearth the remains of the fallen and identify them. He described the scene around Stalingrad after the battle's conclusion: "You would not have been able to walk through this field. It was full of rotting, stinking corpses. Unburied. Why? Let me tell you. There simply weren't enough people. They were all cleaning up Stalingrad. Then these fields were full of mines that had to be removed. The crows had a feast here."

The Battle of Stalingrad reveals an important lesson about the Russians: never underestimate them.

After Hitler captured much of Europe in a matter of months, he smugly declared of the USSR, "We

have only to kick in the door, and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down" (*The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*).

Instead, Stalingrad became a major turning point in the war between Germany and Russia. The battle is sometimes touted as *the* catalyst event that began the downfall of the Third Reich. From that point forward during WWII, the Soviets slowly drove back Hitler's armies until they marched into Berlin in April 1945.

What the Germans found most unexpected—which serves as another lesson from this operation—was the fortitude of the Soviets. Frequently, Russians would fight to the last man, and the last bullet, in the face of overwhelming defeat.

Over and over, history's greatest military forces have failed to understand the Russians. The Vikings, Mongols and the army of Napoleon Bonaparte were all stymied by the Russian will to win.

Russia has always baffled Western powers. Discussing the nation during World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill stated, "I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma..."

Writing about the collapse of the USSR, *The Economist* said the West figured Russia "would embrace Western values and join the civilised world." Yet, the magazine continued, the U.S. and its allies failed to take into account "the country's ruined economy, depleted and exhausted human capital and the mental and moral dent made by 70 years of Soviet rule. Nobody knew what kind of country would succeed the Soviet Union, or what being Russian really meant."

Even today, Moscow's foreign policy decisions always seem to confuse the West. Think of Syria's civil war, where Russia backed President Bashar al-Assad while America and its allies supported various rebel groups. Russia is also quick to take Iran's side in geopolitical squabbles and is the odd man out in ongoing conflicts in eastern Ukraine.

Such actions lead to a question: What is Russia's end goal?

Those in Europe and the U.S. also have a hard time understanding the appeal of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Yet, at home, he has regularly maintained an 80-plus percent approval rating. It has been around 60 percent lately. He has led the nation for 18-plus years and has a path to remain in power until 2036.

No matter who is in charge of Russia, whether today's president of a controlled democracy, the iron fist of the Soviets, the czars, or warlords before them, the nation has remained virtually the same at its core.

Therefore, a key to understanding Russia's future is found in examples of its national character—both past and present.

National Idealism

Idealism has long been deeply ingrained in the Russian national psyche. Historian Albert Jeremiah Beveridge noted this characteristic in his 1903 book *The Russian Advance*: “No matter how casual his observation, every traveller through Russia will run across evidences of Russian idealism. On the other hand, men who have given their lives to the study of this curious people declare that the Russian is, first of all, an idealist.”

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

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

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

The same mindset persists today. In his 2001 book *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* Henry Kissinger wrote:

“Both Russia and the United States have historically asserted a global vocation for their societies. But while America's idealism derives from the concept of liberty, Russia's developed from a sense of shared suffering and common submission to authority. Everyone is eligible to share in America's values; Russia's have been reserved for the Russian nation, excluding even the subject nationalities of the empire. American idealism tempts isolationism; Russian idealism has prompted expansionism and nationalism.”

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

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

A similar statement could be applied to any period in Russia's history. At its heart, the nation does not change. Its people are ready to sacrifice and suffer inconvenience for “the greater good.”

This formula has time and again bred success for the country. As a united nation backing one ruler, Russia has repeatedly expelled and repelled military advances from formidable foes. It continues to maintain a firm stance on certain global issues, even when opposed, and has vehemently defended its borders.

Russian Warriors

When Hitler decided to redirect efforts on the Eastern Front to the

oil-rich Caucasus Mountain region, the Soviets held their own. This move essentially became a case study in Russian will.

The Nazi Wehrmacht pounded Stalingrad with 1,000 tons of artillery from the ground and bombs from the air. When this attack was in full swing, historian James Burns wrote that flames from the city were so bright “that a newspaper could be read at night forty miles away” (*Roosevelt: Soldier of Freedom*).

After four months of being ruthlessly pummeled, the Soviets seemed far from demoralized. They secretly amassed a *one million man* army designed to encircle the overstretched German and Romanian Axis forces in the region.

In November 1942, Red Army forces moved to secure a 100-mile perimeter around Stalingrad. Assisted by well-placed Soviet artillery and thousands of infantrymen and cavalry, the operation, codenamed Uranus, successfully shifted the tide of battle. On January 31, the Germans surrendered—marking the first major defeat of the Axis powers.

This would be the beginning of the end of perhaps the most brutally effective army the world had ever seen. No battle has surpassed the incredible carnage of Stalingrad. By some estimates, three million fought there, and only one million lived to tell about it.

Throughout their time on the Eastern Front, the Germans learned to have a healthy respect—and in some cases, fear—for Russian soldiers. In *The Greatest Battle: Stalin, Hitler, and the Desperate Struggle for Moscow That Changed the Course of World War II*, author Andrew Nagorski quoted an eye-witness account that demonstrates Russia's grit.

“A German soldier who was sent to the Eastern front in August 1941 described his shock in discovering that the Red Army was employing the same kind of human wave tactics that were used in World War I. The Soviet assaults ‘were carried out by masses of men who made no real attempt at concealment but trusted in sheer weight of numbers to overwhelm us,’ he wrote.”

“Describing the vision before him as ‘an unbelievable sight, a machine gunner’s dream target,’ he added, ‘It was rumored that the [Russian] commissars worked out the number of machine guns which we had, multiplied that number by the number of rounds per minute that we could fire, calculated how many minutes it would take a body of soldiers to cross the area and added to the final total a couple of thousand men. Thus some men would get through our line...’”

The Nazi soldier continued: “‘At 600 meters we opened fire and whole sections of the first wave just vanished, leaving here and there an odd survivor still walking stolidly forward,’ he recalled. ‘It was uncanny, unbelievable, inhuman. No soldier of ours would have continued to advance alone.’ As German machine guns overheated from the continual firing, the Soviet side kept sending in more waves of troops. ‘The Ivans,’ as he called them, kept up their attacks for three days, and he never saw a stretcher-bearer during the entire time.”

In addition to using “human waves,” Russian forces favored tactical retreats—using the vastness of their country to their advantage. In this way, the Soviets could direct where battles would be fought, and could use their familiarity and preparation for the harsh weather to their advantage. German military planners knew this before entering the Eurasian nation and even intended to stop this maneuver. However, the immense size of Russia and the extreme swings in weather were still formidable assets for the Red Army.

The Soviets also bolstered their fighting forces by tapping into a demographic other nations refused to even consider: women. Females made superb snipers in the defense of Stalingrad, and some women aviators were so effective in their nighttime harassment bombing raids that Germans infamously dubbed them the *Nachthexen*, or Night Witches.

Using female soldiers on the front line meant Stalin could increase the size of his standing army up to 40 percent. This fact, along with tactical

Russia Build-up Near Border



retreats, the people’s willingness to sacrifice, and the ability to survive harsh weather, gave Russia a fighting chance against Germany.

Land of Superlatives

Another feature unique to Russia is its size. The nation stretches 5,600 miles from east to west, and about 2,000 miles north to south—covering an area of 6.3 million square miles. That is nearly twice the size of the United States. Because of this, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* dubbed it the “land of superlatives.”

“By far the world’s largest country...It extends across the whole of northern Asia and the eastern third of Europe, spanning nine time zones and incorporating a great range of environments and landforms, from deserts to semiarid steppes to deep forests and Arctic tundra.”

This means the nation shares borders with Poland, Lithuania, North Korea, China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia and Estonia, as well as Finland and Norway. Such a wide variety of next-door neighbors complicates the nation’s foreign policy.

“Russia contains Europe’s longest river, the Volga, and its largest lake, Ladoga. Russia also is home to the world’s deepest lake, Baikal, and the country recorded the world’s lowest temperature outside the North and South poles” (ibid.).

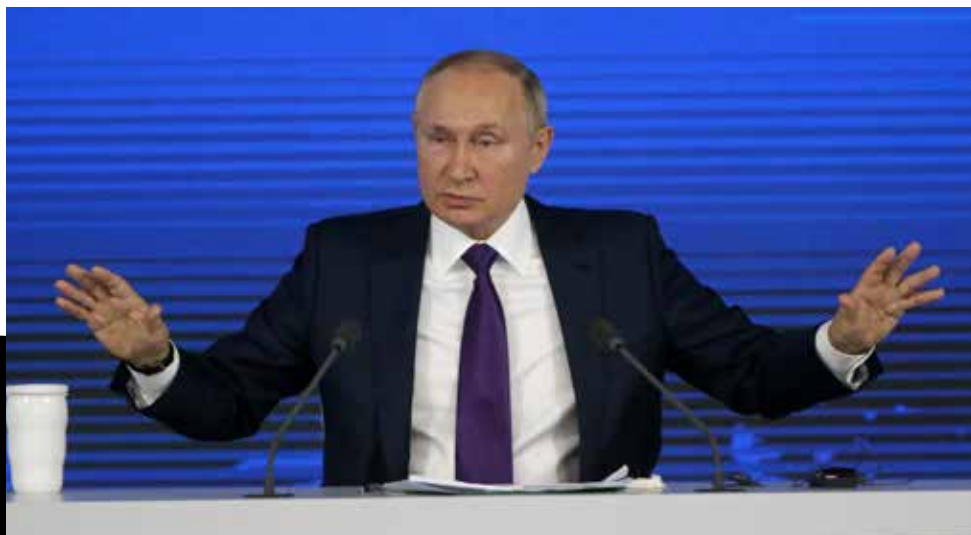
These unsurpassed landholdings come with an added benefit: natural resources. The CIA’s *World Factbook* states that Russia has a “complete range of mining and extractive industries producing coal, oil, gas, chemicals, and metals.” The nation supplies a substantial portion of energy to Europe and increasingly to China, which is Russia’s largest trading partner and second-largest export destination.

Families Grown Large

Russia’s national characteristics and problems today are often traced exclusively to the policies of the communist USSR. While this explains some of the current conditions, many of the nation’s attributes have deeper historical roots.

Metalworking has long been a trade associated with Russian excellence. Before the 1917 Red Revolution, Russia’s abundance of natural resources allowed it to hone the skill.

Why Russia Won't Leave Ukraine Alone



Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks during his annual press conference at the Moscow Manege (Dec. 23, 2021).

MIKHAIL SVETLOV/GETTY IMAGES

Tensions between Russia and Western powers in Eastern Europe swelled to their highest point since 2014 when Moscow amassed troops near Ukraine in December 2021. Up to 90,000 soldiers were present near the border as U.S. officials began warning Russia could launch an attack against Ukraine in the coming weeks.

As the on-the-ground threats mounted, Moscow published demands that NATO deny membership to Ukraine and other former Soviet countries and roll back the alliance's military deployments in Central and Eastern Europe—ultimatums that were rejected by the U.S. and its allies. President Vladimir Putin reiterated the need for security guarantees in multiple video calls with U.S. President Joe Biden.

The recent flashpoint is the result of unresolved tensions from Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Since then, fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine has killed over 14,000 people and devastated Ukraine's industrial heartland, known as the Donbas.

A 2015 peace deal, brokered by France and Germany, ended large-scale hostilities in Donbas, but efforts to reach a political settlement of the conflict have failed so far.

Ukraine, which was part of the Russian empire for centuries before becoming a Soviet republic, won independence as the USSR broke up in 1991. The country has moved to shed its Russian imperial legacy and forge increasingly close ties with the West.

A decision by Kremlin-leaning Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to reject an association agreement with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Moscow sparked mass protests that led to his ouster in 2014. Russia responded by

annexing Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and throwing its weight behind a separatist insurgency that broke out in Ukraine's east.

Earlier in 2021, Mr. Putin ominously said a military attempt by Ukraine to reclaim the east would have "grave consequences for Ukrainian statehood."

While Moscow sent tens of thousands of troops near Ukraine's border, it accused Kyiv of its own troop buildup in the east, saying Ukrainian military could be planning to reclaim the rebel-held areas by force.

The Russian president has repeatedly described Russians and Ukrainians as "one people" and claims that Ukraine has unfairly received historic Russian lands during Soviet times.

For one, President Putin's moves in and around Ukraine is a measure of self-defense. Yet some experts say it goes deeper. That for "Mr. Putin—and many other Russians—the nearly eight-year-old conflict with Ukraine is not simply about geopolitics; it is about a hurt national psyche, a historical injustice to be set right," *The New York Times* reported. "One of his former advisers, Gleb O. Pavlovsky, in an interview described the Kremlin's view of Ukraine as a 'trauma wrapped in a trauma'—the dissolution of the Soviet Union coupled with the separation of a nation Russians long viewed as simply an extension of their own."

Based on this view, as long as Moscow feels it is being deprived of its Soviet-era glory, it will continue to seek a stronger foothold in Ukraine.

Mr. Putin hinted at that in a July article. "It would be no exaggeration to say that the course of forced assimilation, the formation of an ethnically pure Ukrainian state aggressively oriented against Russia, is comparable in its consequences to the use of a weapon of mass destruction against us," he wrote. □

“In [Southern] Russia...a very vigorous metallurgical industry has grown up since 1860 in conjunction with the iron and coal mining,” the 1911 edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* stated.

Blacksmiths in the nation did produce practical pieces, such as iron tools, but they also created works of beauty, such as intricately designed keys, and ornamented lanterns and lighting stands.

Women were also used in the armed forces before the Soviets took power. According to the book *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, females fought for the country in the first world war: “Exact numbers are impossible to ascertain; but even if they were only a few dozen, the phenomenon of women soldiers in battle does not seem to have occurred in any other country during World War I (except for a Scottish woman who fought in the ranks of the Serbian army with great distinction).”

The book also mentions a Russian women's military company during the reign of Catherine II, a woman who fought in the cavalry in the Napoleonic Wars and rose to the rank of captain, and reports of women fighting in the Crimean War.

In addition, tactical retreats have long been used by Russia throughout history. When Napoleon invaded the country in the early 1800s, he hoped to winter in Moscow. Yet the czar's forces burned the city to the ground before abandoning it to leave the French conqueror with few options to survive the cold.

Moreover, mounted cavalry troops have always been an earmark of Russian military defense. So-called Cossack horsemen were effective against Hitler's forces because of the speed at which they could patrol areas and report to commanders.

In all of this, there was a much older culture at work than what was born in the minds of communist leaders such as Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin. This should have been especially known to Stalin, who was of the Ossetians—a people who hold to the traditions of the ancient Scythians.

Some Scythians (a broad term for a number of tribes who lived north of the Caspian Sea) had similar earmarks to Russian culture as seen during the Soviet era and today. Other branches of Scythians, from a different stock, migrated to Europe and the British Isles. (Read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabibp to learn more.)

The Russian Scythians were a horse-riding people who had substantial skill in creating intricately decorated metal objects. These warriors stymied foreign conquerors by using tactical retreats, and are thought to have pioneered this maneuver. They were known to poison wells and set plains on fire to gain the upper hand against enemies.

The tribe also allowed women to fight in battle. Burial mounds found in Eastern Europe and southwestern Russia contain remains of women dressed in armor.

The modern-day nation of Georgia, which borders Russia's North Ossetia region, claims ties to a tribe similar to the Scythians—the Meskhetians—who also lived between the Black and Caspian seas. This people has been variously called Meskhi or Moschi throughout history.

Bible historians almost unanimously believe that Moschi equates with Meshech, a tribe mentioned throughout the Old Testament. In the Bible, nations, which are merely families grown large, are named after their ancestors. Meshech slowly moved north, along with his brother Tubal's descendants, until they settled in modern Russia.

Notice Genesis 10: “The sons of Japheth”—one of Noah's three sons—“Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras” (vs. 2). Interestingly, Tubal (sometimes spelled Tabal) and Meshech (Moschi) are phonetically similar to the modern-day Russian cities of Tobolsk and Moscow.

These brother nations were renowned for their “vessels of brass” (Ezek. 27:13), and the Bible calls to mind human-wave military tactics when mentioning, “Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude” (32:26).

Also, note that Madai gave rise to the *Medes*. Put together: When Meshech or the Medes are mentioned in Bible prophecy—events that have not yet occurred—you should think Russia!

A prophecy in the book of Daniel compares a force that would overrun the neo-Babylonian empire to a bear. History records that was the Medo-Persian Empire—made up of Medes—which sacked Babylon in 539 BC under Cyrus the Great.

Interestingly, for the past four centuries, Russia has been characterized as a bear. Its most populous political party today, United Russia, has a bear on its emblem.

Climactic Events

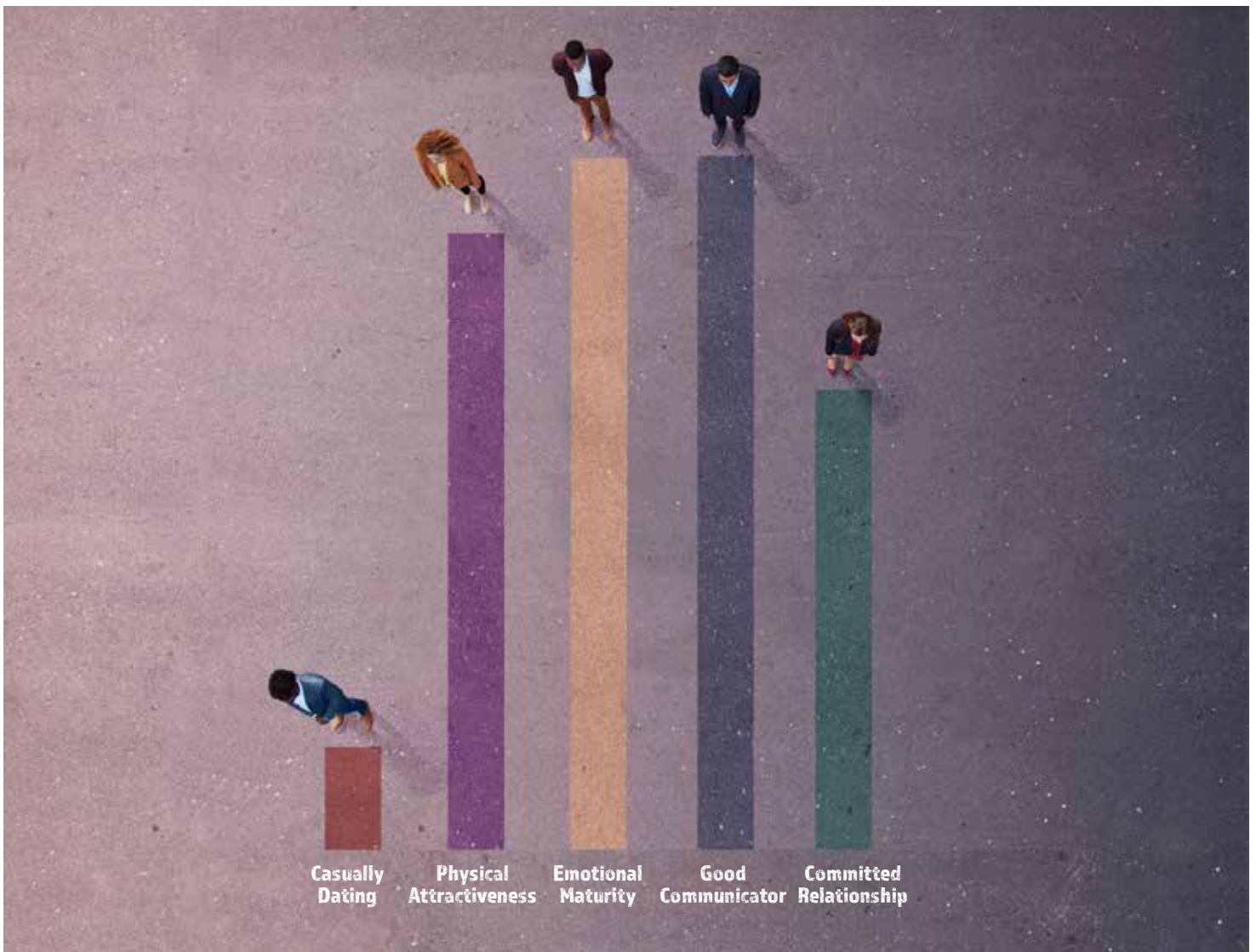
Yet the Bible is not merely a history book, from which can be gleaned only a few interesting tidbits of information. A full one-third of it contains prophecy, which can be likened to history written in advance. Its pages lay out what is *yet* to happen—especially events surrounding God's plan to set up a world-ruling supergovernment known as the Kingdom of God. Russia features heavily in this picture.

Some of the most momentous events coming soon will be clashes in and around the Middle East. These military battles will include all the nations of Earth and are a crucial part of getting mankind's attention as God sets up His Kingdom.

Daniel 11:44 references coming tensions between two power blocs. One will be centered in Europe and ruled by figures known as the “king of the north” (vs. 40) and the “prince of Tyre” (Ezek. 28:2). Another will be a Russian-led confederacy headed by a figure called “Gog” who is also “the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.”

The European military leader will move his forces to the Holy Land (Dan. 11:45). Soon after, Gog's advancing forces will catch the king of the north's attention. Notice: “But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury

*Please see **RUSSIA**, page 30*



Finally, a Positive Dating Trend

A new study shows American singles have changed their priorities for potential partners. What do you need to do to match up to the new standards?

BY DAVID J. LITAVSKY

ANOTHER DATING trend. Those words can evoke unwelcome feelings for people who have embarrassing blind-date stories or experienced cringy connections via Tinder or Facebook Dating.

Before you pass up the newest craze, however, realize this one does not involve apps and algorithms. Rather it is for anyone looking for a meaningful match.

According to a study published November 2021, for the first time in

11 years, singles are more concerned about finding a partner who is emotionally mature than just physically attractive.

The survey, conducted by online dating company Match, found that 83 percent of U.S. singles prefer emo-

tional maturity in their partner over physical attraction. Though 78 percent also wanted a partner with good looks, that figure is down from 90 percent in 2020.

Those surveyed—most of whom were Generation Zers and millennials—also said they were looking for a partner who is open-minded and accepting of differences (83 percent indicated they preferred these traits) and a good communicator (84 percent).

Likely, these trends are positive byproducts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Another Match survey found that the majority of millennials and Gen Zers took up new hobbies (72 percent) since COVID-19 spread across the globe, made strides in their career (69 percent), got better at managing their finances (69 percent) and got better at managing their time (68 percent).

The long pause in routines during the pandemic gave many time to reevaluate priorities.

“It’s a lot of personal growth, self-reflection, thinking about what you want in life,” Lisa Clampitt, president and founder of her self-named match-making company in New York City, said to *Time*. “People have had so much time to reflect, and they want to be with someone who’s also reflecting on similar things.”

Starting a hobby or improving your career, while they take time and commitment, can be relatively easy to do. But emotional maturity? How can you capitalize on this yourself? What does emotional maturity even mean?

There are actionable steps to take to learn to manage your own emotions—and make you an even more desirable date.

Single Yourself Out

Growing up physically is automatic. There is little we can do to stop ourselves from growing through our formative years. Yet that can trick us into thinking all the other traits that bring adulthood success are automatic as well.

That is simply not the case when it comes to developing emotionally.

Just as children sulk when they do not want to accept blame, get furious at playmates who do not share a toy, or get frustrated when people do not pay attention to them, a 30-year-old who has not practiced controlling his emotions will react just as impulsively if he is accused of wrongdoing, feels he is being mistreated or is not given attention.

“People who are emotionally immature don’t meet society’s expectations for social behavior within their age range,” WebMD states. “It’s safe to assume that a grown-up will be able to consider their impact on others and pay attention to their feelings. Emotionally mature people can accept criticism and learn from it. Adults with emotional maturity can think about and plan for the future as well. People with emotional immaturity, however, struggle with these things.”

“Not many consider the Bible as a source of relationship advice. Yet it is a book almost exclusively about personal growth and improving relationships.”

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The website listed examples: impulsive behavior, demanding attention, name-calling, avoiding responsibility through excessive escapism, and narcissism.

Any one of these traits can deal a deathblow to a budding relationship. Yet no one is perfect. We all have undesirable tendencies if we are honest with ourselves. So do not get discouraged—identifying your weak points is the first step toward maturing.

The next step is to learn from a role model. We already picked out the perfect match.

Relationship Role Model

Not many consider the Bible as a source of relationship advice. Yet it is a book almost *exclusively* about personal growth and improving relationships.

For example, virtually everyone is familiar with Jesus Christ’s “golden rule” instruction: “Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them...” (Matt. 7:12).

In other words, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Yet have you considered the line that immediately follows: “...for *this is* the law and the prophets.” The law and prophets refers to the writings in the Old Testament (the New Testament was not yet written).

In effect, Christ summarized the **WHOLE POINT** of Scripture—learning proper behaviors to better relate to others! God’s Word is a book that, if taken seriously, will help you mature.

This is very different from the supposition that Christ came to do away with the “old teachings.” Notice where He upheld the Law—known as the Ten Commandments—by boiling it down to its two core tenets: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like [it], namely this, *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31).

All that Jesus Christ preached during His earthly ministry simply went into greater detail of how to fulfill the commandments. Look at some from the “sermon on the mount” in the book of Matthew:

■ If you are merciful, you will receive mercy (5:7)

■ Never lash out in anger—it only harms yourself (vs. 21-26)

Please see **DATING**, page 31

Did God Keep His Word?

The Bible was promised to remain pure and preserved over thousands of years. Records show this promise has not been broken.

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

“BRING THE scroll and read it to me” King Jehoiakim commanded. His princes had just told him of a mysterious document written by one of God’s prophets. It was told to contain a disturbing prophecy concerning their fate.

A subordinate was sent to fetch after the scroll, unroll it and begin reading to the king of Judah as he warmed himself in front of a fireplace.

To the astonishment of the princes who stood by, each time the man finished reading a part of the text, the king inexplicably grabbed the scroll and cut out the section with a knife before tossing it into the flames!

Instead of pitching the entire scroll into the fire at once, the irreverent king repeated this bizarre ritual until the entire sacred manuscript was burnt up. The princes begged the king to not desecrate God’s Word, but he snubbed them and threw each piece in until the whole scroll was ashes. In the king’s twisted mind, the words and the events they described were gone forever.

Undeterred, God ordered the scroll’s writer—the prophet Jeremiah and his assistant—to rewrite the text. He then punished the king for his brazen disrespect of His message. God banished the monarch’s descendants from the throne and declared that his

corpse would be left to decompose like a dead animal on the streets of Jerusalem (Jer. 36:20-30).

Allow this Old Testament Bible account to illustrate the lengths God went to preserve Scripture. He would not allow even a small section of His written words to be destroyed and severely punished those who desecrated them.

For us today, burning a Bible would not mean God’s words are gone forever. The scriptures are one of the most published texts of all time. Yet many today do share Jehoiakim’s disregard for what God has to say. It is fashionable to view His words as cobbled together musings of uneducated shepherds and religious fanatics.

But not everyone is so openly hostile toward Scripture. They are open to the idea of the Bible being God’s Word, but they struggle to know if the book on their shelves represents the original Hebrew and Greek text as inspired and given by God. Does canonized Scripture match the original words and their true intent?

The Bible says *every* word of God is pure (Prov. 30:5). The psalmist added, “The words of the LORD are *pure* words...*purified seven times*” (Psa. 12:6). Would God put all this effort into ensuring the integrity of His words only to let them corrupt over time? He promised they would not.

If fallible human beings can successfully preserve the authenticity of crucial documents, such as govern-

ment constitutions or financial reports, God can preserve His Book.

The story of how He divinely engineered events to maintain the accuracy of the Bible over thousands of years proves He *did* keep His Word.

“My Words Shall Not Pass Away”

Jesus Christ said in Matthew 24:35: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.” He even more precisely stated, “Till heaven and earth pass, *one jot or one tittle* shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18).

Jesus Christ is called the Word of God (John 1:1, 14). He would surely understand *all* there is to know about the scriptures. Therefore, to learn more about the canon of Scripture we should focus on what Christ said about the Bible.

In Luke 24:44, Jesus explained that there are three major divisions of the Old Testament: The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. He then called them “scripture” in verse 45. The Old Testament would have been the only Bible Christ had as He walked the Earth. The New Testament would be written and then officially compiled decades after His death.

You may have wondered why archeologists and religionists were so excited about the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls nearly 75 years ago and subsequent Bible-related discoveries in the same area. It is directly con-

nected to what Christ said about the Old Testament.

In 1947, a Bedouin shepherd discovered a leather scroll in a cave in Wadi Qumran near the Dead Sea. The 2,000-year-old document was a copy of the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Archeologists found that the scroll's text fundamentally agreed with the current book of Isaiah, including its 66 chapter divisions.

Within four years of this find, more manuscripts containing 19 books of the Bible were unearthed in nearby caves. These documents, all dating 100-300 years before Christ walked the Earth, helped prove that the Old Testament held its authenticity over the centuries.

Those who follow this subject closely know that there is *some* variation between the text discovered near the Dead Sea and official Bible manuscripts. Yet this was expected since Jesus never recognized the Dead Sea sects as having authority over maintaining the Masoretic Hebrew text (more on this later).

Bible translations, even based on official text, will always have certain variations. Unless you are reading the Old Testament in its original Hebrew or the New Testament in its original Aramaic or Greek, you are likely reading either a word-for-word or a thought-for-thought translation. Do these inevitable variations mean the Bible cannot be trusted? Far from it.

Language translators know there are always gaps in translation when converting one language to another. Certain words or phrases can be unique with no corresponding rendition in the new language. Also, translators can inadvertently or advertently interject their own interpretation into the text.

God knew this would happen when He chose to use human beings to preserve Scripture. He *intended* His words to remain understandable to future generations. The Bible is a *living* book using living languages that change over time. The fact that God's Word remains understandable to a contemporary audience proves He is guiding the process.

There are two types of translations you can consider for your Bible

study—word-for-word and thought-for-thought.

Word-for-word Bible translations attempt to convert each word to the new language. They are more trustworthy than thought-for-thought translations. However, one of the limitations of word-for-word translations is the original meaning can get lost when brought into a modern language. This is why some Bible verses are difficult to fully understand or appear to contradict other verses.

A thought-for-thought translation is an attempt to convey the intended meaning of a passage. These are good supplements to a word-for-word translation—but there are many, many versions of these and most do not have the ability to know which is best.

Perhaps the most reliable English translation is the King James Version from the year 1611. It is a word-for-word translation that effectively conveys the authors' intent.

The Role of the Jews

The Bible says in several places that God selected the Jews to preserve Scripture. Notice: "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*" (Rom. 3:1-2). Oracles here refers to God's words.

History reveals that none of the Hebrew Bible was lost. Even through war and persecution, the Jewish people preserved the books of the Old Testament in Jesus' day so that they are the same as ones read in synagogues and churches today.

What the Jews preserved is known as the Masoretic Hebrew text. The Masoretic text was meticulously assembled and codified from the original text of Hebrew Scripture.

When the final codification of each section was complete, the Masoretic scribes counted and recorded the total number of verses, words and letters in the text to allow any revisions to be detected. This rigorous treatment of the Masoretic text explains the remarkable consistency found in Old Testament texts since that time. The Masoretic text

is universally accepted as the authentic Hebrew Bible, *The Encyclopedia Britannica* states.

What more did Christ say about Scripture? He said it was preserved "beginning at Moses and all the prophets" (Luke 24:27). Most do not consider that mankind had the means to preserve text even thousands of years ago—they were not entrusted to ignorant or uneducated men.

Speaking of Moses, the book of Acts says: "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). Moses recorded and compiled all five books of the Law (also called the Pentateuch) during Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. He used pre-Flood documents and other sources to write Genesis.

Moses presented the five books to the priesthood of Israel who stored them in the Ark of the Covenant, a special chest designed to preserve these writings among other items (Deut. 31:9). Under the authority of the high priest, scribes made copies of these scrolls for distribution. Others besides Moses also contributed important parts of the Law, including Samuel the priest (I Sam. 10:25).

But it was Ezra who may have been the most prominent figure in the preservation of the Hebrew scriptures. Few, even among Bible readers and Christian teachers, fully appreciate his role in the preservation of God's Word.

Ezra was a priest and scribe in the 5th century BC who gathered all the books and made the final canonization of the Old Testament. Along with meticulously copying the scriptures as he received them, Ezra was guided by God to insert editorial notes to bring clarity to readers of his time and in the future. Some of the notes attributed to Ezra are Genesis 14:7, 17; 23:2, 19; 36:31-39. The priest later added comments in Deuteronomy 34:5-6, 10 about Moses' death since he obviously could not record his own burial.

Through Ezra and others, God ensured safekeeping of the scriptures during the Jews' captivity in Babylon.



Special jars in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were found rolled up, at the Jordan Museum in Amman.

DAVIDE MAURO/CC BY-SA 4.0

The prophet Daniel's position of authority in the gentile nation allowed him to preserve several copies (Dan. 9:2, 11).

Divine protection of the Bible also came after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. Preservation of the text subsequently became the job of religious sects instead of the Jewish state.

Some Jews did try to introduce illegitimate copies of the scriptures over the centuries. For instance, the Septuagint—a Greek translation of the Old Testament—was translated by 72 Jewish scholars. It disagrees with the official Hebrew version.

Yet there were Jews who ensured the integrity of the original text as God promised. Christ promised in Matthew

26:54, 56: “But 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.” Jesus would not have confirmed the authenticity of Scripture had the Jews not kept it properly.

Then Came the Greeks

Even though the first-century Jews especially of higher authority rejected Jesus Christ, they could not prevent God from preserving all of Scripture.

A prophecy in Isaiah 8:13-17 explains that the Messiah would have servants bind up and seal the written record of His life. In order to fulfill that prophecy, the writings about Christ—which would form the New Testament—would have to be given as much importance as the preserved words of the Old Testament.

To circumvent Jews who would not accept New Testament writings, God turned to the Greek language. Greek writers and speakers picked up the responsibility of preserving the gospels of Christ and the writings of the New Testament Church. Eventually, the writings from the apostles and other disciples of Christ went on to be canonized as part of the Bible.

The apostle Paul assured those in Rome that the Jews' unbelief had no bearing on the integrity of the Bible. Notice: “What if some [Jews] 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; as it is written, That you might be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when you are judged” (Rom. 3:3-4).

The Jews originally had an advantage over the Greeks since they first received God's oracles. When the Jews spurned Christ's message, God raised the apostle Paul to go to the Greek-speaking world with the same message.

Paul went almost exclusively to the Greeks and the Greek-speaking world fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy repeated in Romans 10:19-20: “But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses said, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a fool-

ish nation I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold, and said, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me.”

God used the “foolish” Greeks (called this based on their vanity and ignorance of the Old Testament scriptures) to provoke the Jews to jealousy, even though the Greeks did not seek God on their own. From this point forward, God made “no difference between the Jew and Greek” (Rom. 10:12).

This transition to working with the Greeks instead of exclusively working with the Jews proves God always intended to spread His Word to *all* mankind regardless of ethnic background.

God inspired the Greeks to copy and publish the New Testament text in their language. The Samaritans, Latins and Egyptians all made attempts to translate the New Testament, but they altered and thus corrupted the text. Only the Greeks accurately copied and preserved the New Testament.

Nearly 4,500 Greek manuscripts examined by experts confirm the integrity and purity of the modern New Testament. In 1935, a fragment of John's gospel in Greek dating from the time of Roman Emperor Trajan, AD 98 to 117, was discovered in Egypt. The fragment indicated that the entire New Testament, in proper order, was circulating within 20 years of the apostle John's death.

This is evidence God's Word was secured across thousands of years and through multiple language translations. But how did Scripture successfully make it across countries and continents?

The New Testament record was complete after John, but much of the original texts remained local. In 1453, the Turks conquered Constantinople, the capital of the Greek world. As the Greeks fled west, they took their preserved Bible manuscripts. These manuscripts permeated a religious world dominated at the time by the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible.

The Latin Vulgate was the work of Jerome, a biblical scholar com-

missioned by the Catholic Church to produce a Latin version of the Bible. He used many Latin translations which all differed. As a result, the Vulgate is not closely based on the original Greek New Testament. It instead traces back to the Septuagint and Alexandrian influences. Jerome himself admitted the Latin translations he used were corrupted.

One example of its flaws is the addition of text in I John 5:7, which alludes to God as a trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This made it into the King James Version via the Latin Vulgate. However, this verse was in none of the Greek manuscripts.

Despite its inaccuracies, the Latin Vulgate dominated the Western world for 1,300 years. It was the only “Bible” accessible during the Middle Ages.

The addition in the epistle of John notwithstanding, the KJV Bible came from authoritative Greek manuscripts for the New Testament and the Masoretic Hebrew text for the Old Testament.

Other Books?

Where do the apocrypha and the so-called lost books of the Bible fit? To begin, neither were intended to be a final part of Bible canon.

The apocrypha contains seven whole books and portions of three others. They are usually found in today’s so-called Catholic Bible. The seven full apocryphal books are: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch and I and II Maccabees. The partial books are “Song of the Three Holy Children” inserted in the middle of Daniel 3 along with “Susana and the Elders” and “Bel and the Dragon” added at the end of Daniel.

Apocrypha is a Greek word that means “hidden” or “secret.” This likely adds to their appeal—people are intrigued by secrets and hidden knowledge. But the apocrypha contains a mix of historic truth and error. In English, synonyms for “apocryphal” include the words “inauthentic” and “ungenuine.” This shows even society vaguely understands these writings cannot be trusted!

But if you still think the apocrypha could be of *some* use, consider this.

The New Testament contains approximately 263 direct and 370 indirect quotations of the Old Testament. In each of these, Christ and the apostles never referenced the apocrypha. Not a *single* time.

The Jewish scribes authorized to preserve the Old Testament never accepted the apocrypha. Jerome left it out of the Vulgate because he knew it was filled with error. Even the Catholic Church held off declaring the apocrypha equal with official books of the Bible until the Council of Trent in 1563.

Another popular apocryphal piece is the book of Enoch, which is filled with eschatological theories and supposed revelations. Proponents of the book tie its validity to a single reference to the Bible patriarch Enoch in Jude 1:14-15. Yet the verse makes no mention of a book, and the book goes far beyond the one sentence in the short book of Jude.

The so-called “lost books of the Bible” could be a little trickier to discern as Bible canon since they are actually referenced in authorized Scripture. The books and their location in the Bible are:

- Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num. 21:14)
- Book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13; II Sam. 1:18)
- Book of the Acts of Solomon (I Kgs. 11:41)
- Book of Nathan the Prophet (I Chron. 29:29)
- Book of Gad the Seer (I Chron. 29:29)
- Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (II Chron. 9:29)
- Visions of Iddo the Seer (II Chron. 9:29)

The last four books were listed in books that Ezra canonized. But he did not add them to the canon because God never authorized him to do so. In the sense, these “lost books” were not lost. They simply were not intended to be canonized.

Yet these books were listed in Scripture. Why? Perhaps they were drafts God inspired to help contribute to larger books in the Bible. Whatever



A library technician unrolls a Hebrew scroll of the book of Esther at the McDonald Rare Book Collection at Oregon State University.

THERESA HOGUE/CC BY-SA 2.0

the reason, God did not include them in the final version of His Word.

Bible canon is a vast and technical subject with enormous implications for those of the Christian faith. Ultimately, Bible readers need to trust that the words they study and live by are pure and unadulterated.

You can trust the veracity of the modern Bible as God’s inspired Word, and that it carries the same message as it did millennia ago. Consider the alternative: to trust and worship a God unable to ensure the only words He left were preserved and remained pure. Such a Being would not be worthy of worship.

To learn even more about the authenticity of the Bible, read our two-part *Real Truth* article “How Was the Bible Canonized?” on our website. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

separate conferences to tackle an issue mankind has deemed most important: climate change.

The G-20 was first held in Rome, Italy, followed by the COP26 held in Glasgow, Scotland. Aside from a few photo-ops, the meetings were largely unproductive. Environmentalists around the globe who sought hard and fast commitments from the world's leading nations were angered by the lack of progress.

While mankind is fixated on resolving the "climate crisis," God long ago said He would, "open unto you His good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto your land in his season" (Deut. 28:12). Conversely, He warned that disobedience would "make the rain of your land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon you, until you be destroyed" (vs. 24). Only the arrival of God's Kingdom will bring lasting change to the world's climate and all the issues we will now detail.

Mounting Crises

While world leaders focus their attention on the impact of carbon emissions, real threats of full-scale war in Eastern Europe look more likely by the day. Russian President Vladimir Putin has amassed troops on the Ukraine border in preparation for conflict.

CNN reported: "Russian President Vladimir Putin has built military capacity on the border of Ukraine that is 'much larger and on a much more lethal scale' than preceded Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea, Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland said...warning of severe risks to Moscow if it invades Ukraine. Moscow has positioned approximately 100 tactical groups and nearly all its ready ground forces based west of the Urals at different spots along its border with Ukraine, Nuland told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. 'Much of this comes right out of Putin's 2014 playbook,' Nuland said, 'but this time, it is much larger and on a much more lethal scale.'" Ms. Nuland fur-

ther explained that Russian forces have Ukraine surrounded on *three sides*—a tactic she said has never been seen before.

The United States president warned Mr. Putin against military action and threatened sanctions "like he's never seen." Few believe such a warning will deter a superpower with a deep and longstanding fixation on the Ukraine. Although *threats* of war are evident in Europe, regions of Africa are being decimated by *actual* war.

Ethiopia's civil war (between the nation's military and the Tigray People's Liberation Front) has resulted in thousands of deaths, atrocities committed on both sides, over 2 million displaced, and looming famine for about 400,000. Now over one year long, the conflict is only intensifying.

The nation's military has struck training sites, military manufacturing factories and other targets, resulting in at least 10 civilian deaths, including children, prompting a nationwide state of emergency for the next six months. Ethiopia's prime minister appealed to citizens to "organize and march through any legal manner with every weapon and power...to prevent, reverse and bury the terrorist TPLF" (BBC). He also declared, "Dying for Ethiopia is a duty for all of us" (CBS News). The U.S. suspended Ethiopia's access to duty-free trade due to human rights violations and warned of potential sanctions. Additionally, hundreds of Tigrayans and some UN staff members were arrested.

Again, let's ask: What could put an end to these conflicts around the world? Leaders and heads of state have not found the solution. Without God's supernatural intervention, wars and rumors of wars like the ones just described would continue in perpetuity! And so would all other troubles plaguing the world.

Just a thousand miles north of Ethiopia, the lack of water in Jordan has come to a point of dire emergency. Jordan is the second-most water-scarce country in the world, according to UNICEF. Lower rainfalls, depleted ground water and increased popula-

tion due to arrivals of refugees from Syria have all contributed to a looming water catastrophe. As wells run dry, many rely on water deliveries from the government, however they are expensive and not always available. Some try to collect rainwater to use. One farmer said: "Today I might farm and there will be water. Another day, I can't farm because there is no water...No one knows what to grow any more. The tomato yield is bad, and onions are the same. Every farmer in Al Ghor is at zero" (*Al Jazeera*).

Society Splintering

There are many nations facing COVID lockdowns, and the resistance is POWERFUL! Demonstrations have recently happened in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Guadeloupe (one of France's overseas territories), Italy, Northern Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Thousands also rallied in the Australian cities of Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. Many are also protesting vaccine mandates and vaccine passports. Some demonstrations turned violent as protestors threw rocks, set off fireworks, and set police cars on fire. Police responded with water cannons, tear gas, and fired warning shots.

The United States is similarly wrestling with recent mandates for all employees to be vaccinated in companies with over 100 staff. Resistance has been seen in almost every sector—most notably transportation. Thousands of flights have been canceled in recent weeks under the guise of weather and basic staffing issues. Many thinking minds realize, however, these shutdowns are not mere coincidence. Thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—of key employees are resisting the mandate. Some of them are taking paid leave. Others, unpaid leave. Many are at risk of being fired. Where this stalemate will go, no one yet knows.

Thousands of intelligence officers from various agencies could face dismissal for refusing the vaccine, raising security concerns as they are particularly hard to replace due to specialized work and security clearance.

Ask: What business could function with a sudden loss of much of its workforce? And what would it mean for the former employees and their families? And further, what would it mean for the industry in which that company is a key part of and for the greater economy? If this is a microcosm of what is playing out across the nation, America is in DEEP trouble!

In conjunction with the massive shortages in the trucking industry, a

recipe for disaster is brewing. Will the president have to call in the National Guard to deliver goods on the streets, as some speculate? What might the country look like in just a few short weeks if time went on? And with consideration of the saying “As goes America, so goes the world,” what do America’s woes mean for the *global* economy?

Readers, at Christ’s Return we will see what Acts 3 calls a “time of refresh-

ing” and “time of restitution” (vs. 19, 21). The word *restitution* comes from a Greek word that means “reconstitute—in health, home and organization.” Society’s entire construct will be changed to follow God’s Laws and Ways! *Refreshing* in the Greek means a “recovery of breath.” The world is now gasping for air, on the verge of death. The ultimate “breath of fresh air”—complete societal overhaul—is coming! Believe your Bible and wait for it! □



Left, an aerial picture shows the Jordan River flowing into the northern part of the Sea of Galilee, one of the main water sources in Israel, during a drought (July 15, 2021). Right, displaced Afghans reach out for aid from a local Muslim organization at a makeshift camp for displaced people in Kabul, Afghanistan (Aug. 10, 2021). Bottom, medical assistants administer COVID-19 sampling tests to laboratory technicians at Foxconn Assembly in Houston, Texas (Aug. 13, 2021).

MENACHEM KAHANA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES (LEFT); PAULA BRONSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT); BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM)



RUSSIA

Continued from page 21

to destroy and annihilate many” (vs. 44, *New King James Version*).

Russia is north and east of Jerusalem, the city God uses as a starting point from which to reference the location of other geographic regions mentioned in Bible prophecy.

So, there is a future time coming where Russia and its allies will fight against Europe. After this, there is another event God says will occur to Gog and his army. The Russian forces will be used to demonstrate to the entire Earth that He is God (Ezek. 38:23).

Here is what God says He will do to Gog and his forces: “And I will turn you back, and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you forth, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armor, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords... and you shall come from your place out of the north parts, you, and many people with you, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army” (38:4, 15).

“Thus says the Lord God; Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: and I will turn you back...and will cause you to come up from the north parts, and will *bring you upon the mountains of Israel*” (Ezek. 39:1-2).

God declares to the army that He will “smite your bow out of your left hand, and will cause your arrows to fall out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you, and all your bands, and the people that is with you: I will give you unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, says the Lord God” (vs. 3-5).

Similar to the aftermath of Stalingrad, a new bone field will have to be cleaned up by the locals in Israel: “And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the

shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years” (vs. 9).

The passage continues: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it the valley of Hamongog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land” (39:11-12).

What a gruesome and awful picture! Yet this is *not* the end for the Russian people.

Russian Desire Realized

God punishes nations so He can get their attention. Ultimately, He wants all peoples to be part of His Kingdom and to help bring an end to all of the world’s ills.

In a way, God’s purpose aligns with a main desire of the Russians. Recall the quote from *The Russian Advance*. They believe it is their duty “to restore to the confused, hopeless, struggling peoples of the earth those forms of social order and political authority.”

God will do all those things and more with His Kingdom.

The Creator is “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34), and He desires “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 2:4). God sees all human beings as potential sons and daughters, and wants everyone to learn to lead lives of prosperity and happiness.

God will give all men—everyone who has ever lived—a chance for salvation. This includes Russia and its people.

A prophecy in Ezekiel 37 helps depict how this will happen, and it involves the bones of the dead. In this biblical account, God takes the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel—in a vision of the future—and sets him “down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones” (vs. 1).

Ezekiel walks through this area in verse 2 and finds there “were very many [skeletal remains] in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.”

God then declares, “Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you [the bones], and you shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord” (vs. 5-6).

The account continues, “...there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone...the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above...and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (vs. 7-8, 10).

The Eternal God tells Ezekiel that the bones “are the whole house of Israel” (vs. 11). But this physical resurrection of Israel is an example of what will happen to all of mankind—recall that God wants “all men to be saved.”

God will “lay sinews,” “bring flesh upon,” “cover with skin,” and “put breath in” countless billions, including those who lay in the bone fields of the battle of Stalingrad and those who have died throughout history.

When God’s supergovernment is fully in place, He will teach all nations a way that leads to peace and prosperity. Under this perfect system, Russia’s national trait of uniting to support a common cause will be fully realized.

This system is the Kingdom of God. Daniel 7:14 describes it: “And there was given Him [Jesus Christ] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Under the Kingdom, Russia will finally be part of a perfect government that encircles the globe—and they will help fulfill their long-held national desire to ensure order and peace in the world. □

DISCOVERY

Continued from page 15

Revolution and the massive resources needed to fuel it.

As society was on the verge of using up each source of power, it discovered something even better. Each resource was replaced just in time before it was completely exhausted.

However, if one were to change even small aspects of our planet's environment (varying gravity or the levels of gases in the atmosphere) the first power source—trees—would never have existed, or would have been depleted long before we discovered the next sustainable source.

With most of the planet covered in water, it *should* be unlikely that each successive resource was within reach. Sustainable power sources almost always need the crushing weight of a landmass to form. Even in modern mining operations, it has been proven time and again that the minerals and materials we need are in locations

that make them relatively easy to extract.

Are you beginning to question the striking coincidences that keep appearing?

All Blind Luck?

The complex order of our planet and the ability to learn about it are not things one can dismiss as pure chance. As you have seen, the potential for each discovery was placed before us. In many cases, the knowledge of one allowed understanding of another. And with each discovery, it seems everything mankind needed was right at its fingertips.

It is almost as if humanity has gradually been taught what it needs to know, each successive step at a time. It is only now that technology has allowed us to look back at Creation and discover what has been there all along.

Thousands of years ago, the ancient Bible writer Job was told to look for the fingerprints of a Creator in everything around him: “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach you; and the fowls

of the air, and they shall tell you: *Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach you:* and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto you. Who knows not in all these that the hand of the LORD has wrought this?” (Job 12:7-9).

It has not been until recent decades that man has been able to so fully “speak to the earth” and allow it to teach him. With scientific advancement, the precision and beauty of Creation becomes more apparent.

This has been done for a reason: The great Creator does not want any who are willing to objectively weigh the facts to come to any other conclusion. The apostle Paul reiterates this in the book of Romans: “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood by the things that are made*, even His eternal power and Godhead” (1:20).

Putting the evidence together, it becomes easy to “understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Heb. 11:3). His fingerprints are found in countless places—for those willing to look. □

DATING

Continued from page 23

■ Replace vengeful feelings against those who revile you by seeking to help them (vs. 38-42)

■ Recognize and address your own faults before correcting others (7:1-5)

Each of these has to do with developing mature emotional responses, which is key to “loving your neighbor”—meaning maintaining relationships.

A more detailed instance of this is Christ introducing a method to resolving interpersonal conflict. Notice: “If your brother shall trespass against you, go and *tell him* his fault between you and him alone” (Matt. 18:15).

Instead of silently stewing over an offense, gossiping to others about the issue, or flying off the handle, the offended party must *initiate* a formal discussion with the offender.

If followed, this method would prevent one of the main causes of divorce—poor communication. The ability to

openly and calmly discuss problems lands big points on the emotional maturity scoreboard from potential partners. Harboring ill-will and exhibiting passive-aggressive anger does not.

Beyond Christ's teachings, the Bible is filled with many more concise keys and benefits of emotional control. Here is a sampling:

■ How to respond in the face of anger: “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1, NKJV).

■ Honesty and keeping promises: “Let your yes be yes, and your no, no; lest you fall into condemnation” (Jms. 5:12).

■ Be vulnerable instead of trying to be seen as “perfect”: “Confess your faults one to another...” (vs. 16).

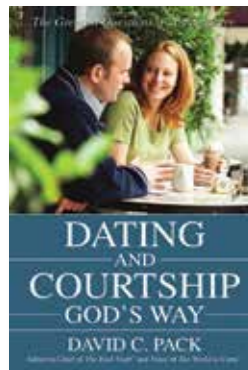
■ A warning against holding grudges: “You shall not hate your broth-

er in your heart: you shall in any wise rebuke your neighbor”—in other words, talk about the issue—“you shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people” (Lev. 19:17-18).

If sincerely applied, this will not only give you an edge at a time when singles are seeking stable, communicative and balanced partners—it will benefit you in *all* your relationships.

The Bible contains much more about emotional maturity—and exactly how to achieve it. That is all laid out in “Are You Emotionally Mature?” at rcg.org/ayem.

On top of this, God's Word contains *the* blueprint for dating on the path to a happy marriage. Our book *Dating and Courtship – God's Way* will help you steer clear of relationship woes and find the right person for you! □



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WEATHER & ENVIRONMENT

Wildfires Torched up to a Fifth of All Giant Sequoia Trees

Los Angeles (AP) – Lightning-sparked wildfires killed thousands of giant sequoias in 2021, leading to a staggering two-year death toll that accounts for up to nearly a fifth of Earth’s largest trees, officials said.

Fires in Sequoia National Park and surrounding Sequoia National Forest tore through more than a third of groves in California and torched an estimated 2,261 to 3,637 sequoias, which are the largest trees by volume and date back to ancient civilizations.

Nearby wildfires in 2020 killed an unprecedented 7,500 to 10,400 giant sequoias that are only native in about 70 groves scattered along the western side of the Sierra Nevada range. Losses now account for 13 to 19 percent of the 75,000 sequoias greater than 4 feet in diameter.

Blazes so intense to burn hot enough and high enough to kill so many giant sequoias—trees once considered nearly fire-proof—is the result of hotter droughts combined with a century of fire suppression that choked forests with thick undergrowth.

“The sobering reality is that we have seen another huge loss within a finite population of these iconic trees that are irreplaceable in many lifetimes,” said

Clay Jordan, superintendent of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

California has seen its largest fires in the past five years. The year 2020 set a record for most acreage burned and 2021 ran second.

Tree deaths this year might have been worse if heavy rain and snow October 25 had not dampened the fire. Fires burned from August 2020 to January 2021.

After the Castle and SQF Complex fires in 2021 took officials by surprise, extraordinary measures were taken to save the largest and oldest trees.

The General Sherman tree—the largest living thing on Earth—and other ancients that are the backdrop for photos that rarely capture the grandeur and scale of the giant sequoias were wrapped in foil blankets.

A fire-retardant gel was dropped on canopies that can sit above 200 feet tall. Sprinklers watered trunks and flammable matter was raked away from trees.

The measures helped spare the Giant Forest, the premiere grove of massive trees in the park, but the measures could not be deployed everywhere.

The bulk of the Suwanee grove in the park burned in extreme fire in the Marble Fork of the Kaweah River

drainage. The Starvation Complex of groves in Sequoia National Forest was largely destroyed.

The greatest amount of damage was done in Redwood Mountain Grove in Kings Canyon National Park. The inferno became so intense it created a fire cloud that whipped up 60 mph winds.

A fire ecologist accurately predicted the areas that would burn hottest, but nothing could be done in such erratic conditions to save trees in the second-largest grove, said Christy Brigham, chief of resource management and science for the parks.

“That’s even more heartbreaking to me that we knew it and we couldn’t take action to protect it,” Dr. Brigham said.

Many damaged trees are expected to perish in three to five years.

Save the Redwoods League, which lost the Waterfall tree—one of the world’s largest—in 2020, suffered losses in its Red Hill Grove.

Not all the news in the park’s report on the fires was bleak.

While flames burned into 27 groves and large numbers of trees were incinerated, a lot of low-intensity fire that sequoias need to thrive will clear out vegetation and the heat from flames will open cones so they can spread their seeds.

There was also less damage in many of the groves where the park has routinely used prescribed fire to clear out accumulated vegetation under cooler and more humid conditions. Those successes emphasized the need to expand that work and, where that is too risky, begin thinning forests.

However, areas where fire burned so hot that seeds were killed and trees cannot regenerate may need additional help. For the first time, the park is considering planting seedlings to preserve the species.

If seedlings are planted, though, it will take hundreds of years to replace the trees that were lost. □

Using Mechanical Tools Improves Language Skills, Study Finds



Our ability to understand the syntax of complex sentences is one of the most difficult language skills to acquire. In 2019, research had revealed a correlation between being particularly proficient in tool use and having good syntactic ability.

A new study, published in November 2021 in the journal *Science*, further proves this by showing both skills rely on the same region of the brain.

The study, conducted by researchers from Inserm, CNRS, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1 and Université Lumière Lyon 2 in collaboration with Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, also found that it works both ways. Motor training using a tool improves our ability to understand the syntax of complex sentences and—vice-versa—language training improves our proficiency in using tools.

Syntax Exercises and Use of Tongs

In 2019, Inserm researcher Claudio Brozzoli in collaboration with CNRS researcher Alice C. Roy and their team had shown that individuals who are particularly proficient in the use

of tools were also generally better at handling the finer points of Swedish syntax.

In order to explore the subject in greater depth, the same team, in collaboration with CNRS researcher Veronique Boulenger, developed a series of experiments that relied on brain imaging techniques and behavioral measurements. The participants were asked to complete several tests consisting of motor training using foot-long pliers and syntax exercises in French. This enabled the scientists to identify the brain networks specific to each task, but also common to both tasks.

They discovered for the first time that the handling of the tool and the syntax exercises activates the brain in common areas.

Cognitive Training

In the second part of their study, the scientists looked into whether it is possible to train tool handling to improve language.

This time, the participants were asked to perform a syntactic com-

prehension task before and after 30 minutes of motor training with the pliers. With this, the researchers demonstrated that motor training with the tool leads to improved performance in syntactic comprehension exercises.

In addition, the findings show that the reverse is also true: training of language faculties, with exercises to understand sentences with complex structure, improved motor performance with the tool.

Motor Training and Syntax Exercises

The motor training involved using the pliers to insert small pegs into holes that matched their shape but with differing orientations.

The syntax exercises which were completed before and after this training consisted of reading sentences with a simple syntax, such as, “The scientist who admires the poet writes an article.” Sentences with more complex syntax included, “The scientist whom the poet admires writes an article.” Then the participants had to decide whether statements such as, “The poet admires the scientist,” were true or false. Sentences with the French object relative pronoun “que” are more difficult to process and therefore performance was generally poorer.

These experiments show that after motor training, the participants did better with the sentences that were considered to be more difficult. The control groups, which performed the same linguistic task but after motor training using their bare hands or no training at all, did not show such an improvement.

Along with linguistic skills, working with your hands has been proven the key to building focus, mental dexterity and creativity. More important, it brings purpose and passion to your life.

Our article “Make Something!” (available on rcg.org) explains why and proves you do not have to be a handyman to reap the rewards. □



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