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THE

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# REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



ISRAEL  
TURNS  
75

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Hindu devotees listen to a religious leader during the annual traditional Magh Mela festival (Jan. 31, 2023).

AP/RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

**The Rise of India**

India overtaking China as the world's most populous nation shines a spotlight on the emerging superpower.

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**Front Cover:** A military parade in Tel Aviv, Israel, on the seventh anniversary of the country's independence (April 26, 1955).

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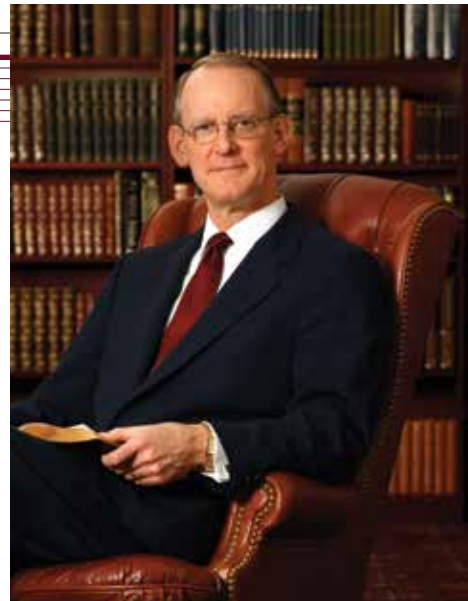
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## PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



# Where Did Satan Come From?

**T**HE DEVIL has been a subject of interest for millennia. He has been pictured as a ghost, boogeyman and spook—or as a “devilishly” handsome man in a red suit with horns and a pitchfork. He has also been portrayed as the nebulous “epitome of all evil”—or the cause of everything bad that people do. Most are familiar with the expression “the devil made me do it.” Some think the Beast of Revelation is the devil, even though the Bible states it is Satan who gives the Beast his power.

While popular, these ideas are all wrong! They terribly misrepresent this powerful spirit.

Just who is the devil? The Bible calls him “the god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4). But where did this being come from? How does he influence people? Did God create him as he is? Will his influence ever come to an end?

One can scarcely turn around without hearing—or seeing—references to the devil or demons. Think of how often the subject of the devil, demons, angels or the spirit world is spoken or written about. Many television series are dedicated to these subjects with more appearing all the time. Movies and books have focused on the devil for years. But now they come more often, and are more odd, bizarre, macabre—and frightening—than ever before! Also, Satanism and witchcraft are now promoted and even practiced more openly.

Some authors write almost exclusively about the spirit world, often mixing a false understanding of prophecy into the plotline—and legions of fans purchase their every book.

Millions spend vast sums annually on psychic hotlines, palm readers, astrologers, crystal ball gazers, witches, wizards, channelers and other mediums to learn their future.

The devil sells—and people are buying as never before!

But few understand who and what the devil really is. This Personal will strip away the mystery, ignorance, myth, misconceptions, superstition and confusion shrouding the truth about his identity and origin.

The apostle Paul wrote, “For God is not the author of *confusion*, but of *peace*” (I Cor. 14:33). While widespread confusion surrounds the devil, you need not be confused.

The Bible is the foundation of knowledge. Examine it carefully and see the real truth that has always been on its pages. Do not believe something just because we—or I—say it, but rather only if you see it proven in your Bible.

God’s Word contains the answers to all of life’s biggest questions. The plain truth of its instruction is not taught in this world’s churches. From as early as Sunday school, millions are taught to believe what

everyone *assumes* the Bible says. What it has to say about the origin of Satan the devil will surprise you. But you must let God reveal him for what he is.

The Bible tells its readers, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thes. 5:21) and “Prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

We will examine the verses that explain Satan’s origin and *who* he really is. We must abandon men’s ideas and only accept what can be *proven* from the Bible.

The devil is alive and real. Revelation 12:9 says he “deceives the whole world.” This includes the truth about his identity. But has he *always* been the devil? Has he *always* been the evil, murderous, lying “prince of this world,” as the Bible calls him (John 14:30)? Was he *created* this way?

No! He was not. But these questions require explanation. Careful study brings the whole picture. The Bible describes Satan in many scriptures.

### The Devil’s Origin

Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” This scripture sets the stage for our study.

God originally created three arch-angels: Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer (who became Satan). Each led one-third of hundreds of millions of angels. (Read Revelation 5:11.) Lucifer ruled the pre-Adamic world. He and his angels rebelled against the government of God, and today he leads these now fallen angels, called demons.

The book of Job describes the time when God created the Earth, billions of years ago. God asked Job: “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding. Who has laid the measures thereof, if you know? Or who has stretched the line upon it?...When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4-5, 7).

These “stars” were angels (read Revelation 12:4)—also described here as “sons of God.” (Of course, literal stars do not sing.) Notice “all” of them

“shouted” and “sang together.” This proves there were not yet demons at the time of Creation in Genesis 1:1.

This scripture also shows the Earth was created in a wonderful—a beautiful—condition. There was great joy and singing!

Verse 2 is mistranslated and does not reflect the meaning of the original Hebrew. The King James Bible says, “And the earth was without form, and void.” Three key words are all mistranslated here, thus obscuring, and actually hiding, the verse’s true meaning.

The word translated “was” is *hayah*. The same word is correctly translated “became” in Genesis 2:7 and “become” in 9:15. The words for “without form, and void” are *tohu* and *bohu*. These actually mean “chaotic, in confusion, waste and empty.” In short, a perfectly created Earth (vs. 1), “became chaotic and confused” (vs. 2).

Isaiah 34:11 translates *tohu* and *bohu* as “confusion and emptiness.” Isaiah also clarifies God’s Creation: “For thus says the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain [*tohu* again—meaning not chaotic or waste], He formed it to be inhabited” (45:18). It becomes clear the Earth *became* chaotic *after* God created it—between the events of Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The latter describes the re-creation of Earth 6,000 years ago. Verse 1 describes the original creation of the entire universe that, according to scientists, occurred some billions of years ago.

Psalms 104:30 says God “renews the face of the earth.” During the seven days of the Creation week, God repaired a terribly damaged Earth, then completely covered with water (Gen. 1:2).

We now know *what* happened—but *how* did it happen? How did the Earth go from beautiful and perfect at Creation to chaotic, confused, waste and empty? Since God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33), we know *He* did not destroy Earth. Then *who* or *what* did?

The Bible reveals many important facts about a subject—if one reads *all* of the scriptures that pertain to it.

Revelation 9:11 describes a “king” who leads a demonic army at the time of Revelation. He is called “the angel of the bottomless pit.” (Later you will see this association with the “bottomless pit” makes clear the being described is the devil.) Continuing in verse 11, his “name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon [meaning “a destroying angel”], but in the Greek tongue has his name Apollyon [“a destroyer (that is, Satan)”].” Satan and the great mass of angels he turned to his way are the only candidates powerful enough to have brought destruction on this scale.

Let’s read more about Lucifer *after* he had become Satan. Isaiah 14:12-15 tells a remarkable story containing many clues about where Lucifer was once located, what he did, and what happened to him: “How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, which did *weaken the nations!* For you have said in your heart, I will *ascend into heaven*, I will exalt *my throne* above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the *sides of the north*: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: *I will be like the Most High*. Yet you shall be brought down to *hell* [meaning the “grave”—see verses 9 and 11], to the sides of the pit.”

God inhabits the north part of the heavens or the “sides of the north.” Job sheds light on Lucifer’s attempt to overthrow God there: “He [God] stretched out the north over the empty place, and hangs the earth upon nothing” (26:7). The “empty place” in the “north” as it describes here coincides with what astronomers have noted as an area having a *strange lack of stars*. No doubt, Satan attacked God in that direction when he sought to ascend from his throne to take over God’s throne. Just let the Bible reveal the story!

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 29



# HELD CAPTIVE and Completely Unaware!

**T**here are forces at work that have held sway over civilization since the dawn of mankind. Humanity has believed the soothing words of a captor, thinking themselves better off under this subtle but powerful influence. Yet deliverance is coming soon!

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# Israel at 75

When will God fulfill Isaiah 40:2 and tell the nation its constant warfare and conflict is finally over?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

**T**HE CONTRADICTIONS that make up Israel—its economic and military prowess and its deep divisions and rancorous politics—were on full display as the country mourned its fallen soldiers and began celebrating its 75th Independence Day.

The jarring transition from Memorial Day on April 25 to Israel's landmark anniversary ceremony the next day was meant to be a stunning display of unity that transcends the usual noise of Israeli politics. But it came as the country faces one of the gravest crises in its history. What transpired reflected the troubles of a nation preoccupied not only with external enemies but also with its internal conflicts.

A plan by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government to overhaul the judiciary has stoked widespread discontent and spurred weeks of protests that have brought cities to a standstill. Critics fear the changes would weaken the Supreme Court and erode the country's democratic character. Mr. Netanyahu and his supporters argue that the overhaul is needed to rein in a liberal and overly interventionist court of unelected judges.

The proposed changes have garnered widespread pushback. Fighter pilots have threatened to stop reporting

for duty. High-tech investors have considered relocating. The nation's leaders have openly warned of civil war.

The nation must be yearning for the fulfillment of God's words in Isaiah 40:2: "Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished..."

Memorial Day—which honors Israel's 24,213 war dead and 4,255 victims of militant attacks—is meant to be the most solemn day on the nation's calendar. This year it was anything but.

At a cemetery in the southern city of Beersheba, hardline National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir attended and addressed a Memorial Day ceremony, even after bereaved families appealed to him to stay away—or at least not speak on behalf of the government. When he was 18, Mr. Ben-Gvir was banned from compulsory military service on the grounds of his extremist ideology and conviction for incitement to racism and support for a terrorist group.

Even before Mr. Ben-Gvir turned up at the graveyard, scuffles and insult-laden shouting matches broke out between his supporters and opponents. Some attendees threw water at each other after the ceremony.

Demonstrators light flares during a rally in Tel Aviv to protest the Israeli government's judicial overhaul bill as the country begins celebrations for its 75th anniversary (April 25, 2023).

AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES/JACK GUEZ





In Tel Aviv, a group of bereaved families held a separate ceremony to avoid visiting cemeteries and interacting with right-wing politicians whose presence drew shouts of “Shame!” from protesters.

“This year, the Israeli nation is torn between extremists,” said Israel Shur, who attended an alternative ceremony in Tel Aviv near the building where Israeli independence was declared 75 years ago. “We don’t want to confront the politician bringing their agenda inside our sacred place.”

### **Divided Nation**

As is customary on Memorial Day, people across Israel came to a standstill for two minutes when the whine of air raid sirens sounded late in the morning. Motorists and pedestrians froze in the street, got out of their cars and stood with heads bowed. Bereaved families visited cemeteries while television and radio programming shifted to somber music and documentaries about slain soldiers.

“Citizens of Israel, the siren this year, the intensely Israeli signature call, is a wake-up call for all of us. The cost of internal strife is heavy,” Israel’s figurehead President Isaac Herzog said.

In a speech at the ceremony at a Jerusalem military cemetery, Mr. Netanyahu recalled the lives of several fallen soldiers. He spoke of the “brotherhood” of the Israeli people, a kinship fortified by military service that is compulsory for most Jews.

“We will stand together as brothers and ensure our independence from generation to generation,” Mr. Netanyahu said. “We will bow our heads to the bravery of the fallen.”

After sundown on April 25, the country shifted from melancholic contemplation to exuberant celebration, kicking off its 75th Independence Day as trumpets blared and drums rolled. The doleful ballads performed at the military cemetery on Mount Herzl became pulsating dance tunes. The dark space became illuminated by flashing blue and white lights.

Mr. Netanyahu emphasized national unity in his pre-recorded address at the mass commemoration. “Doing it together means crying together in memorial services and rejoicing together at Independence Day,” he said.

Yet even as the party got underway and the speaker of parliament, Amir Ohana, began lighting the first of 12 torches, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, crowds of anti-government protesters poured into the streets of central Tel Aviv. They unfurled a massive banner featuring a blazing torch labeled “Democracy.”

Protesters also marched the following Saturday—the 17th consecutive week of demonstrations.

The Independence Day celebration went smoothly despite swirling fears of disturbances. Transportation Minister Miri Regev, who oversaw the ceremony, had directed the event’s organizers to cut away from the live broadcast in the event of anti-government protests, Channel 12 News, Israel’s top television program, reported.

Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948, but the holiday, like all national holidays, is observed according to the Hebrew calendar. Palestinians generally commemorate what they call the “nakba,” or the “catastrophe,” of May 15, 1948, in which hundreds of thousands fled or were forced from their homes during the war surrounding Israel’s creation.

This year’s commemorations came as Israeli-Palestinian fighting in the occupied West Bank has surged to heights unseen in years. Just before the sirens wailed on Memorial Day, the Israeli military said a Palestinian shooting attack in the West Bank wounded an Israeli.

A day earlier, Israeli security forces killed a Palestinian man in a West Bank raid. Five people were wounded when a Palestinian rammed his car into pedestrians near a popular Jerusalem market before being shot and killed.

Over 90 Palestinians and at least 19 Israelis and foreigners have been killed since January.

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has undoubtedly lived up to the words

of Isaiah 40:2—“her warfare” has been perpetual. The nation has fought half a dozen wars with neighboring Arab countries, battled two Palestinian uprisings and endured scores of deadly militant attacks over the last 75 years.

### **At the Center**

Israel views Jerusalem as its “unified, eternal” capital, and the city is at the center of the nation’s conflict. It captured east Jerusalem, which includes the Old City, in the 1967 Mideast war, along with the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians want those territories for a future state, with east Jerusalem serving as their eventual capital. Many in the international community refuse to recognize Israel’s annexation of the area.

The fate of east Jerusalem has been one of the thorniest issues for the Middle East peace process, which ground to a halt more than a decade ago.

Most often, clashes occur near or around Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City. The mosque is the third-holiest site in Islam and sits on a sprawling plateau that is also home to the iconic golden Dome of the Rock. Muslims refer to the compound as the Noble Sanctuary.

This walled plateau is also the holiest site for Jews, who call it the Temple Mount because it was the location of biblical temples. Romans destroyed the Second Temple in AD 70, with only the Western Wall remaining. The mosques were built centuries later, and the site has been under Muslim care for 1,300 years.

Neighboring Jordan serves as the site’s custodian. It is operated by an Islamic endowment known as the Waqf. The site is open to tourists during certain times, but only Muslims are allowed to pray there. The Western Wall is the holiest site where Jews can pray.

In recent years, groups of religious and nationalist Jews escorted by police have been visiting the compound in greater numbers and holding prayers in defiance of rules established after 1967 by Israeli, Jordanian and Muslim religious authorities. The Palestinians view the frequent visits and attempted prayers by Jews as a provocation, often igniting scuffles or more serious violence.



After increased clashes between Israelis and Palestinians in April of this year, Mr. Netanyahu barred Jewish visitors to the Temple Mount until the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Even attempts to keep the peace are contentious in Israel. Commenting on the prime minister's decision, Mr. Ben-Gvir said it was "a serious mistake that will not bring peace, but may only escalate the situation" (*Haaretz*). His thinking was that the move "will automatically lead to the dilution of the police force stationed on the Mount, which will create a fertile ground for huge demonstrations of incitement to murder Jews."

### Ancient History

To truly understand modern Israel requires a deeper look into the past. The Temple Mount remains the focal point.

Christianity and Judaism claim the site is Mount Moriah, the location of Solomon's Temple. Muslims say it is where the prophet Muhammad took his night journey to heaven on his horse to receive the mandate to pray five times per day. Christian heritage also connects to the Mount, which carried the footprints of Jesus Christ and the apostles. In addition, it was a site of Catholic cathedrals during the Crusades.

BBC broadcast journalist Tim Franks put it this way: "If Jerusalem is the crucible of the Middle East Conflict, then the Old City is the crucible of the crucible, and the [Temple Mount] is the crucible of the crucible of the crucible."

The land, which rises 2,428 feet above sea level between the Kidron and Tyropoeon valleys, has passed through the hands of great civilizations and empires.

Yet it all started with the biblical patriarch Abraham. The first recorded mention of Mount Moriah comes from the book of Genesis. After rescuing his nephew Lot from four Canaanite kings, Abraham met with King Melchizedek at the base of the mount.

After a meal, Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Gen. 14:19-20).

Later, the patriarch returned to the same spot after God commanded

Abraham to sacrifice his son. "And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood" (22:9).

God spared Isaac and blessed Abraham for his faithfulness.

### Divided Family

Abraham has even more ties to Moriah. He had two sons: first, Ishmael (by Hagar, a handmaid), then Isaac (by his wife Sarah).

Though Abraham passed the birthright to Isaac instead of his first-born, Ishmael was also blessed. His offspring became the modern Arab people. Ishmael's 12 sons (Gen. 25:16) went on to form major Arab nations, not insignificant nomadic tribes as some believe. These peoples intermarried primarily with the Egyptians and were located southeast of Canaan, in the region of Arabia.

Isaac's wife Rebekah had twins: Esau was the eldest, and Jacob the younger. However, Esau lost his birthright to Jacob.

Esau married Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael (28:9). The house of Esau, also known as the Edomites and Amalekites, gave rise millennia later to the Ottoman Turks, as well as the Seljuk Turks, who conquered and held most of Asia Minor, and the Caucasian Osmanli Turks, who controlled the Holy Land from AD 1070 until they surrendered it to the British in 1917.

Both Ishmael and Esau remained bitter for not getting the birthright blessing. The jilted brothers jealously despised the descendants of Jacob, whom God renamed Israel.

### How Will It End?

Conflicts among Abraham's descendants, and the religions that have ties to him, have driven events in the Middle East for millennia. Yet ironically, those same ties influenced the name for 2020's "Abraham Accords," the U.S.-brokered process to normalize relations between Israel, the United

Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and other Arab nations.

The accords declaration states: "We encourage efforts to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue to advance a culture of peace among the three Abrahamic religions and all humanity.

"We believe that the best way to address challenges is through cooperation and dialogue and that developing friendly relations among States advances the interests of lasting peace in the Middle East and around the world."

It continues: "We pursue a vision of peace, security, and prosperity in the Middle East and around the world."

These are noble intentions, yet they will inevitably end the same way all manmade peace processes do.

Stop and consider. The world's greatest politicians and thinkers have not found the solution to unending Israel-Palestine violence. Even more, Israelis cannot even agree among themselves how to move forward as a nation.

Consider this question on a larger scale. Why has mankind never been able to bring lasting peace throughout history? A major part of the answer is human nature gets in the way.

Notice what the God of Abraham says about mankind in His Word: "... the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Isaiah 59:8 more bluntly states, "The way of peace they know not..."

The 75 years of the modern nation of Israel have seen only war, conflict and strife. Same for Jerusalem and the surrounding Holy Land throughout the centuries. The Old Testament shows ancient Israel fared little better than its modern counterparts.

But God will soon intervene in world affairs. He will bring an end to war in Jerusalem, which is just one element of Him setting up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44)—bringing peace to the Middle East and the entire world.

The Bible is filled with how God will cause war to cease across the globe. Read *How World Peace Will Come!* at [rcg.org/hwpwc](http://rcg.org/hwpwc) for more. □



# Many Kids Are Struggling in School. **What Can Parents Do?**

The effects of pandemic school disruptions continue to plague children. But there is a path to resolving this.



**E**VENA JOSEPH was unaware of just how much her 10-year-old son was struggling in school. She found out only with help from someone who knows the Boston school system better than she does. Her son, J. Ryan Mathurin, was not always comfortable pronouncing words in English. But Ms. Joseph, a Haitian immigrant raising him by herself, did not know how far behind he was in reading—in

the 30th percentile—until a hospital where her son was receiving treatment connected her with a bilingual advocate.

“I’m sad and disappointed,” Ms. Joseph said through an interpreter. “It’s only because I was assigned an educational advocate that I know this about my son.”

It is widely known from test scores that the pandemic set back students across the country. But many parents do not realize that includes their own child.

Schools have long faced criticism for failing to inform parents about their kids’ academic progress. But after the COVID-19 school closures, the stakes for children have in many ways never been greater. Opportunities to catch up are plentiful in some places, thanks to federal COVID aid, but they will not last forever. It will take better communication with parents to help students get the support they need, experts say.

“Parents can’t solve a problem that they don’t know they have,” said Cindi Williams, co-founder of Learning Heroes, a nonprofit dedicated to improving communication between public schools and parents about student academic progress.

A 2022 survey of 1,400 public school parents around the country by Learning Heroes showed that 92 percent believed their children were performing at grade level. But in a federal survey, school officials said half of all U.S. students started this school year behind grade level in at least one subject.

The struggles that ultimately brought J. Ryan to the hospital for mental health treatment began in third grade when he returned to in-person school after nearly a year of studying online. J. Ryan was getting frustrated, disrupting lessons and leaving the classroom. His teacher called frequently, sometimes every day.

J. Ryan displayed these behaviors during English language arts and other classes, including Mandarin and gym, according to his education plan shared with *The Associated Press*. He happily

participated in math class, where he felt more confident.

### **Pursuing a Cause**

Ms. Joseph changed her work schedule at a casino to the night shift so she could talk with teachers during the day. The calls continued in fourth grade. But she said teachers never mentioned his problems reading. Last spring, she sought treatment for what was becoming obvious: Her son was depressed. She was teamed up at the hospital with the parent advocate, who speaks English and Haitian Creole.

The advocate, Fabienne Eliacin, pushed to get J. Ryan’s scores from the tests given each fall to monitor student learning. She explained to Ms. Joseph what scoring in the 30th percentile meant. It is not good, Ms. Eliacin told her. He can do better.

To Ms. Joseph, it suddenly made sense why J. Ryan was acting out in English class. But why, she wondered, were his teachers only focused on her son’s behavior if his trouble reading was causing his distress? “They don’t really care how much they learn, as long as they stay quiet,” Ms. Joseph concluded.

Before this year, it was up to Boston schools to share midyear evaluations with parents, but it is unclear how many were doing it. In the fall, Boston rolled out a communications campaign to help teachers explain testing results to parents as often as three times a year.

There are many reasons teachers might not talk to parents about a student’s academic progress, especially when the news is bad, research shows.

“Historically, teachers did not get a lot of training to talk to parents,” said Tyler Smith, a school psychology professor at the University of Missouri. School leadership and support for teachers also make a difference, he said.

This is consistent with findings from national teacher surveys conducted by Learning Heroes. At times,

A teacher walks among masked students sitting in a socially distanced classroom session at Medora Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky (March 17, 2021).

GETTY IMAGES/JON CHERRY

Ms. Williams said, teachers also “make assumptions” that some low-income parents do not care or should not be burdened or that parents will not believe them.

Without these conversations, parents have had to rely on report cards. But report cards can be subjective, reflecting how much effort students show in class and whether they turn in homework.

The progress report for Tamela Ensrud’s second-grade son in Nashville showed mostly As and a B in English, but she noticed her son was having trouble with reading. She asked to discuss her son’s reading test scores at a fall parent-teacher conference but was only shown samples of her son’s work and told, “Your son is doing well.”

Her son’s afterschool program, run by a nonprofit, tested his literacy and math skills this fall and found he was reading below grade level. He qualified for their reading intervention program.

“I don’t think the full story is being told,” Ms. Ensrud said.

She looked at the scores online and found them impossible to interpret.

Many districts have poured their federal pandemic recovery money into summer school offerings, tutoring programs and other interventions to help students regain ground lost during the pandemic. But the uptake has not been what educators hoped. If more parents knew their children were behind academically, they might seek help.

Once Ms. Joseph and her advocate learned J. Ryan was so far behind in reading, they asked his school for small-group tutoring, an intervention believed by experts to be one of the most effective strategies for struggling students.

But they were told the school did not offer it. They moved him in November to another school that said it could provide this form of help. J. Ryan says he likes the new school since they are learning more advanced long division. “I like challenging math,” he said. But he does not understand the texts he reads much better.

Ms. Joseph is not getting phone calls from the teacher complaining about his behavior, which she attributes to her son getting adequate treatment for his depression. But she has not received a report card this year, or the test scores the district says it is now sending to families.

“I’m still concerned about his reading,” she said.

#### Practical Tips

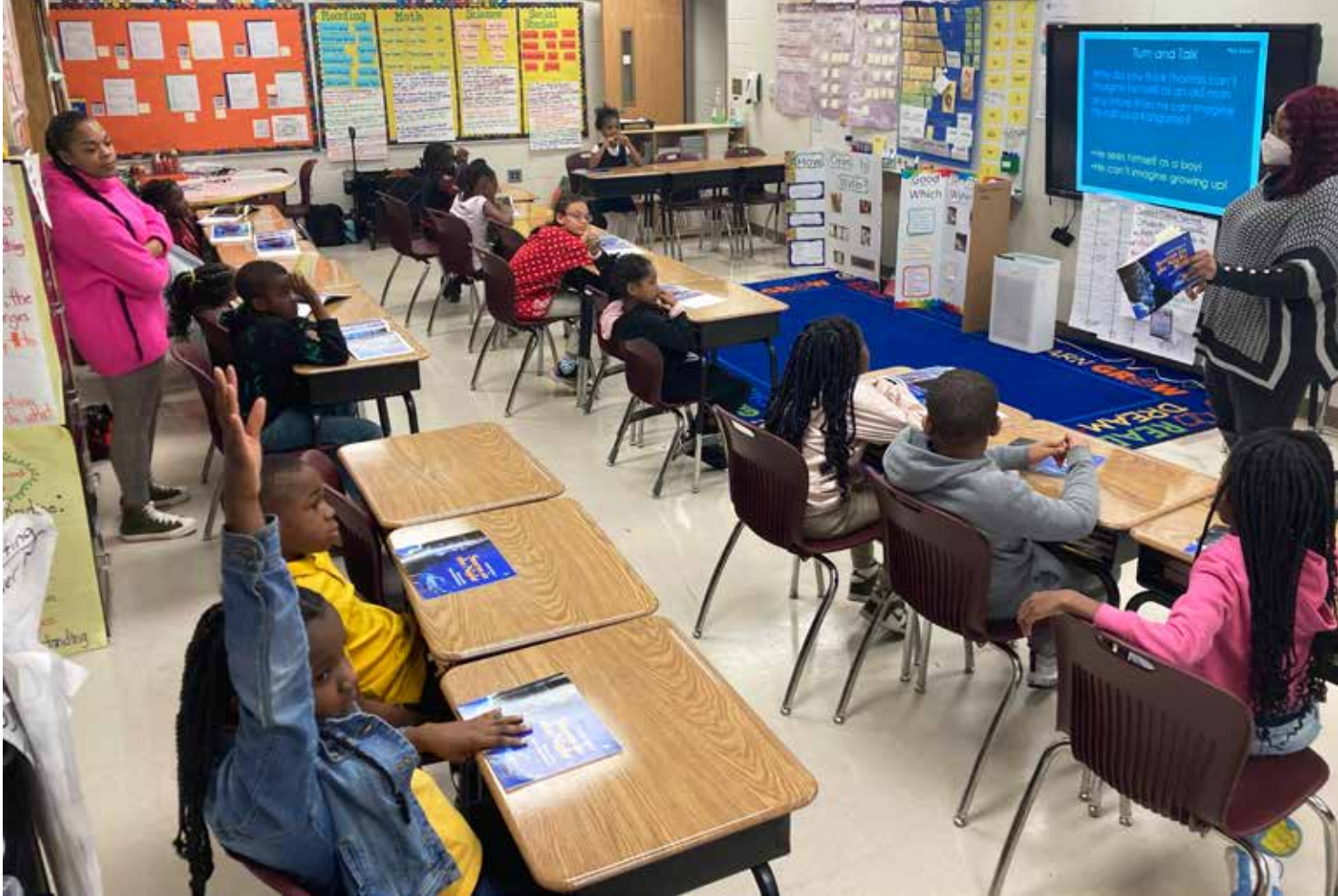
These accounts paint a vivid picture: Parenting in today’s world is *hard*. The unique challenges we all face in life, including economic status, language barriers, where we live and other factors, present obstacles for mothers and fathers to stay informed and make a difference in their child’s educational success. Here are some practical ways to begin turning the tide.

**Reach out to your child’s teachers:** Take the initiative to communicate with teachers to better understand your child’s progress and what may be causing their struggles. Do not wait for the school to contact you if you suspect



A third grader reads a book at Good Springs Elementary School in Good Springs, Nevada (March 30, 2022).

AP/STEVE MARCUS/LAS VEGAS SUN



Students answer questions as they read a book with their third-grade teacher at Boyd Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia (Dec. 15, 2022).  
AP/SHARON JOHNSON

there is an issue. Be warm and friendly, yet persistent.

Strive to find common ground and develop a relationship with the educators your son and daughter spends the most time with. Their teachers may be able to identify specific areas where your child is having difficulty and offer suggestions for how they can improve and how you can be involved in the process. Also, be diligent in attending parent-teacher conferences and take advantage of any apps, websites or other tools your school provides.

**Develop a routine:** Establish a regular routine in your household for your child to do their homework and study. While needs can arise in your schedule that may force you to deviate, strive to preserve this time slot every day as much as possible. Make it clear that schoolwork is a priority. Also, explain and remind your child *why* it is important. This structure can help your child forge good study and time manage-

ment habits that will serve them into adulthood.

**Provide support:** This can include helping with homework, providing extra tutoring or resources outside of what the school offers and simply being available to answer questions and provide encouragement. Do not just leave your child alone during study time. While you do not want to be involved too much—you should not be doing their work for them—it should be clear that you are deeply invested in their success. If you are weaker in a subject, take time to study it or consider looking to a friend or family member for advice.

**Teach a love of learning:** Yes, it is important to succeed in every class in school and achieve a broad foundation of knowledge. But it is also vital to inspire your child to identify and pursue specific interests and passions. Provide opportunities for them to explore different subjects and find what they truly enjoy. Make it clear that they are not just

learning to get a good grade—learning has benefits that transcend any report card. Set a good example for them by regularly learning and gaining knowledge yourself. Read books, watch edifying television programs, listen to educational podcasts and more. Then discuss what you are learning as a family.

**Address health issues:** Depending on the nature of your child's school struggles, there may be underlying issues that need to be addressed. This can include learning disabilities or various health challenges. Talk to your child's doctor if you think this could be the case for your child.

#### **A Perfect Resource**

As you apply the above tips, you will notice small victories in your child's schooling over time. Yet the list above is incomplete and will not produce lasting change without addressing something much more foundational. Is there a single resource that can guide par-

ents to raise their children successfully—not just academically, but more importantly, in life in general?

The countless parenting books and websites espousing philosophies and tips from every perspective can quickly feel overwhelming. Some of this advice is good, and some of it is misguided. What would be ideal is a book from an expert that could be relied on in its entirety because it contains no errors or missteps. While a natural reaction would be that such a book does not exist, it *does*.

This book is the Bible. Its author—God—is the foremost expert on raising children. He is the Being who created mankind and set the pattern for rearing children when He commanded the first married couple to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). And you can find this book in virtually any language, as well as in audio format.

Instructions on childrearing are throughout the Bible, which is written “here a little, and there a little” (Isa. 28:10). Studying it from cover to cover reveals this.

Yet for the benefit of those seeking to learn about parenting and hoping to avoid years of intense research or having to learn via the “school of hard knocks,” an extraordinary book based on clear biblical verses and principles has been written. It is a thorough guide to understanding what God has to say about childrearing.

Written by *Real Truth* Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack, this book is *Train Your Children God’s Way*. Thousands have benefited from the instructions contained within its pages.

In the book, Mr. Pack, a father and grandfather himself, writes: “It has been said that children represent a parent’s greatest stewardship. We could ask: What else even comes close?”

“Think of all that is at stake in how parents rear just one child. This little human being can either be armed with how to succeed in life, or literally programmed to fail—left defenseless against the many problems that life will throw at him! Further, the child’s children—the parents’ own grandchildren—will be directly affected by the

principles of childrearing (good or bad), which could then in turn continue to be at least partially employed, potentially for generations to come. Then there is the effect the child will have on all the other people with whom he comes in contact throughout the balance of his life. And what about the very real peace and happiness—or lack thereof!—that the child brings to his parents as another direct result of how well they did their job? All these things are measured in very real terms, and carry implications almost too numerous and far-reaching to comprehend.

“Your task is to recognize what all of this means to you as a parent, which must translate into action—what you must do!”

**“You must put solid, proven methods into action. Any parent must implement techniques revealed by the ultimate Parent, God the Father, as the most effective.”**

“To produce a happy, moral, emotionally mature and productive adult—including a strong relationship with the true God—parents must swim against a swirling ocean of powerful currents represented by the trends, pulls and overwhelming pressures of the modern age.”

“Vast numbers of parents, forced to rely on themselves or on the misguided opinions of so-called experts, have no way of knowing what to do when it comes to properly rearing children. They need help, not recognizing the problems that they are facing are spiritual, not physical. They need to turn to the only source of true

spiritual understanding—the Bible—God’s Word!

“Most do not know that childrearing is a biblical doctrine—and that the Bible has much to say about it. They do not recognize that it is a teaching from God, like baptism, conversion, salvation, tithing, the Sabbath, God’s annual Holy Days, faith, grace, law and sin—and every other teaching in His Word.”

This only begins to scratch the surface of the useful information in this book.

#### **Make the Commitment**

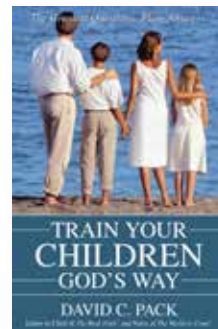
Your children need guidance. They were made to receive instruction. Lessons can come from many sources, including their teachers at school. But you, their parent, must take the lead. God expects a child’s father and mother to be their primary educators. Ephesians instructs, “provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (6:4).

If you are a parent, decide today to do all you can to train your children. Recognize that despite life’s challenges and the complex nature of the education system in today’s society, it *is* possible to raise a balanced, well-rounded young person. The process will not be easy and will not happen overnight. It will take a long-term commitment and much hard work.

You must put solid, proven methods into action. Any parent must implement techniques revealed by the ultimate Parent, God the Father, as the most effective.

While raising a balanced and capable child in our modern age can feel nearly impossible—it *can* be done. Begin reading Mr. Pack’s free book *Train Your Children God’s Way* today to learn much more about the biblical doctrine of childrearing.

By doing so, you can prove the following verse to be true: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). □



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# Finland's Historic Shift

With its inclusion in NATO, is the nation shedding its long-held trait of neutrality?



Officials attend a flag-raising ceremony after Finland's accession to NATO, at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium (April 4, 2023).

OLIVIER MATTHYS/POOL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

**F**INLAND formally joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in early April, its flag unfurling outside the military bloc's Brussels headquarters. This marked a historic policy shift spurred by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The move immediately drew a threat from Moscow of "counter-measures."

NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance formed in 1949, with the primary aim of providing collective defense against potential security threats to its member states. With the

addition of Finland, NATO now has 31 member countries, including the United States, Canada and most countries in Western Europe.

The organization's purpose as stated on its website is "to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means. Collective defense is at the heart of the Alliance and creates a spirit of solidarity and cohesion among its members. NATO strives to secure a lasting peace in Europe, based on common values of individual liberty,

democracy, human rights and the rule of law."

The alliance operates various political and military bodies, including a Military Committee, a Civilian Committee and its headquarters in Belgium.

Finland's accession roughly doubles the length of the border that NATO shares with Russia and bolsters its eastern flank as the war in Ukraine grinds on with no resolution in sight.

Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto completed the accession

process by handing over an official document to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken at NATO's headquarters. Finland's flag—a blue cross on a white background—was hoisted alongside those of the alliance's 30 other members as a military band played in bright sunshine.

“For almost 75 years, this great alliance has shielded our nations and continues to do so today,” NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg declared at the ceremony. “But war has returned to Europe and Finland has decided to join NATO and be part of the world's most successful alliance.”

Mr. Stoltenberg earlier noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin had cited opposition to NATO's eastward enlargement as one justification for invading Ukraine.

“He is getting exactly the opposite... Finland today, and soon also Sweden will become a full-fledged member of the alliance,” Mr. Stoltenberg said in Brussels.

Finnish President Saul Niinisto said Finland's most significant contribution to NATO's common deterrence and defense would be to defend its own territory. There is still significant work to be done to coordinate this with NATO, he said.

“It is a great day for Finland and I want to say that it is an important day for NATO,” Mr. Niinisto said at a joint news conference with Stoltenberg.

Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said the move raised the prospect of the conflict in Ukraine escalating further. The Kremlin stated it would strengthen its military capacity in its western and northwestern regions in response to Finland joining NATO.

The Ukrainian government also hailed Finland's move. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff Andriy Yermak wrote on instant messaging service Telegram that Finland “made the right choice. NATO is also a key goal for Ukraine.”

#### **End to Military Non-alignment**

Joining NATO marks the end of an era of military non-alignment for Finland

that began after the country repelled an invasion attempt by the Soviet Union during World War II and has more recently opted to try to maintain friendly relations with neighboring Russia.

But the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 prompted Finns to seek security under NATO's collective defense pact, which states that an attack on one member is an attack on all.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the NATO expansion was an “encroachment on our security and on Russia's national interests.” Moscow would watch closely for any NATO military deployments in Finland, he said.

Since the end of the Cold War three decades ago, Moscow has watched successive waves of NATO enlargement to the formerly communist east of Europe with consternation, and the issue was a bone of contention even before the invasion of Ukraine.

NATO has repeatedly stressed that it is solely a defensive alliance and does not threaten Russia. Moscow says the funneling of heavy weaponry to Ukraine by NATO countries since the war began proves the West is bent on destroying Russia.

Finland's accession brings NATO significant military capabilities developed over the years as it is one of the few European countries to have retained a conscription army through decades of peace, wary of Russia next door. In addition, Finland's ground, naval and air forces are all trained and equipped with one primary aim—to repel any Russian attack.

Soon after the accession, Helsinki residents welcomed Finland's entry into NATO, saying they felt more secure.

“I feel it's a good thing that Finland is joining NATO. We have been here next to Russia for ages,” said Outi Lantimaki, 59, a designer at a shipyard. “My father was in the war with the Russians so this is like a personal thing to me.”

Yet people in the Russian city of St. Petersburg, only 93 miles from the

Finnish border, said Finland could be making problems for itself by joining NATO.

“I don't think this is a very pleasant thing because we had good, neighboring relations with Finland for quite a long time. It joining NATO isn't based on anything. But I hope reason will prevail and that there'll be no bad, military conflicts after this,” said one resident who gave his name only as Alexi.

Many wonder if Finland still intends to preserve the neutrality it is known for after this dramatic move. The step of joining NATO appears to be a big shift. Yet joining a defensive alliance does not necessarily mean Finland has abandoned its longtime trait.

#### **Balancing Act**

Finland has long been known as a country molded by its geographical location. With Russia to the east, and Sweden and the rest of Europe to the west, Finland has always had to perform a diplomatic balancing act throughout its past.

During the Middle Ages, Finland was a battleground between its two closest neighbors, Russia and Sweden. From the 12th century until 1809, it was largely under Swedish rule, which today continues to influence its culture, government and laws. During this time, Finland was considered only a group of provinces, with little sense of a national entity.

Not until the war of 1809 (which Sweden lost to Russia) did Finland become an autonomous Grand Duchy, under the control of the Russian emperor, as Grand Duke, whom the Governor General represented. Under this new governmental structure, the senate, filled with Finnish leaders, was the highest governing body and presented domestic issues directly to the emperor, leaving out other Russian authorities. These new freedoms of self-rule enabled much of the past Swedish influence to hold ground: Swedish (along with Finnish) remains the official language and the Lutheran



Church retains its position, even to this day.

Nationalism gained momentum as the Grand Duchy remained part of the Russian empire while enjoying extensive privileges, virtually making Finland a state within a state. Privileges included its own legislative assembly, and the power to elect local officials and maintain an army, currency, postage stamps—and even its own official border.

This was a sore point for Russian nationalists, who pushed for the Russification of Finland. This led to the first era of oppression (1899-1905), continued by a second era of oppression (1909-1917).

Finland had a brief respite during the Russian Revolution of 1905, and a new legislative body replaced the former assemblies the following year—a pivotal point in Finnish history. This changed it from a four-estate diet to a unicameral parliament with universal suffrage. Finnish women were the first in Europe to gain the right to vote.

The new parliament approved its own declaration of independence on December 6, 1917. A brief civil war followed as a breach between liberal and conservative parties became irreconcilable. Finland became a republic in the summer of 1919, and quickly developed during the 1920s, healing the wounds of the civil war.

Public sentiment moved Finland away from communism, which took root in Russia. The Nordic nation initially pursued a foreign policy based on cooperation through the League of Nations. Yet the League's inability to ensure world peace became evident in the 1930s and Finland retreated to focus on Scandinavian-based policies.

Finland played a delicate balancing act between communist Russia and Nazi Germany during World War II. First, Russia attacked Finland in 1939—the “Winter War,” in which Finnish troops used the weather to their advantage and employed guerilla-war tactics to inflict massive casualties. Hostilities led to the signing of a peace treaty in the spring of 1940, with

Finland losing part of its southeastern region to the Soviets. Shortly after Adolf Hitler's Operation Barbarossa invasion against the Soviets, Finland entered the war allied with Russia. With great prowess, the Finns used their nation's resources and geographical position to remain one of the few major European countries not occupied during the war.

After the Cold War began, Finland was once again caught between two great world powers: the East (the Soviet Union and its satellite nations) and the West (the United States and Western Europe). Finland maintained a neutral stance, which helped its international position grow stronger. It focused on diplomacy by joining the United Nations and Nordic Council in 1955.

Yet, is this neutrality borne from necessity, or something much deeper?

#### **Biblical Origin**

Few know that the Finnish people are actually descended from one of the biblical tribes of ancient Israel. Key insights on the nation's character can be found in the pages of God's Word. In fact, the nation was specifically foretold to be perpetually caught in the middle.

Genesis 49 states, “Issachar is a strong ass [donkey] couching down between two burdens” (vs. 14). There has never been a point in history in which Finland has not been wedged between two “burdens” (nations or powers).

Supporting this, Issachar's coat of arms was a donkey or ass carrying a heavy load, as observed in the book *Symbols of Our Celto-Saxon Heritage* by W.H. Bennett.

Various sources acknowledge that the tribe of Issachar is primarily found in Finland. Yair Davidy, a contemporary historian who researched the migration of the tribes of Israel, wrote in his book *The Tribes* that “Finland has been identified in this work as belonging mainly to the Tribes of Gad, Simeon and especially Issachar. For many years, Finland was ruled by

Sweden...and many Swedes remained in Finland...Both the Sword (Simeon) and the Lion (Gad) are prominent on the Finnish coat of arms.”

As the war between Russia and Ukraine rages on, Finland will face tough choices. Only time will tell to what degree it will keep its neutrality. Yet realizing that this trait is ingrained in the Finnish people as revealed in Scripture provides an enormous advantage in knowing what to expect from them going forward.

The Bible reveals the ancient origins of not just Finland but many other modern nations. If you want true insight into what to expect from these nations, God's Word provides what modern commentators and researchers cannot.

Which other nations are modern descendants of the tribes of Israel? The tribe of Manasseh is in the United States. The tribe of Ephraim is mainly the English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon countries of the British Commonwealth. This includes Canada, New Zealand, parts of South Africa and Australia. The modern-day Jews are descendants of the tribe of Judah and are also scattered among many nations. A large portion of them live in the modern nation called Israel.

Upon examining information from prophecy, as well as biblical and secular history, the locations of the remaining tribes can be known: Reuben—France; Simeon and Levi—scattered among the other Israelite nations; Zebulun—the Netherlands; Benjamin—Norway and Iceland; Dan—Ireland and a portion of Denmark that mixed within the other Israelite nations; Naphtali—Sweden; Gad—Switzerland; Asher—Belgium and Luxembourg. Of course, many gentile nations—meaning those of non-Israelitish backgrounds—have mingled in these same countries, particularly in major metropolitan areas.

This is a lot to take in. But you do not need to take our word for it! For the full Bible proof of the identities of these tribes, read our free book *America and Britain in Prophecy* at [rcg.org/aabibp](http://rcg.org/aabibp). □

# IS GOD LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE



Love the  
Foreigners  
Deuteronomy 10:18

Seek  
Justice  
for the  
Oppressed  
Isaiah 1:17

Defend  
the Poor  
and  
Needy  
Psalm 82:3

# CONSERVATIVE?

Politicians often use the Bible to prove a point. Here's the problem with that...



**W**HO DOES the Christian God side with in U.S. politics? The religious demographics of Congress may help reveal the answer. According to Pew Research, 88 percent—or 469 of the 534 total voting members in the 118th Congress installed January 2023—claim Christianity as their religion.

Nearly all congressional Republicans—268 out of 271, or 99 percent—say they are Christians, along with about three-quarters of Democrats (201 out of 263, or 76 percent). Both parties are more heavily Christian than are U.S. adults as a whole (63 percent), meaning one could make a case for either side of the political spectrum being in line with God and His views.

Let's look elsewhere. What about the teachings of specific denominations in modern Christianity? When examining each one's view on specific political issues, does God land on the left or right?

We will find little help here, either. Ever since Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation and groups broke off from the Catholic Church, Christianity has fractured into hundreds of separate groups, each with its own ideas.

Even *within* specific branches of Christianity, political leanings are diverse. Just look at Lutherans in the United States. The three main synods are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. ELCA takes a liberal view that women can be ordained, does not condemn homosexuality and believes the Bible should not always be taken literally. LCMS is somewhere in the middle. It condemns same-sex relations and believes God's Word is literal. WELS is the most conservative and does not even recognize the other two synods as being Lutherans.

Searching for an answer gets even more complex from here. The most significant wrinkle comes when attempting to define what liberal and conservative even mean.

Both political ideologies came into their own around the time of

the American Revolution, with their main goal being to remove tyrant rulers. Historically, conservatives stick to long-held traditions and distrust sudden change in society. This viewpoint tends to steer clear of what are seen as abstract, “high-minded” ideas and favors limited government. Liberals also initially believed in small government while emphasizing individual rights. Liberalism is more receptive to societal change due to technological advances and moral shifts.

Simplified, conservatives generally continue with what has worked in the past, slowly offering new changes. Liberals tap into intellectual arguments and theories to bring about swifter change and “justice for all.”

Many of America’s Founding Fathers borrowed from both camps. On some issues, they leaned conservative. On others, they shifted liberal. Much of early United States history was formed along this line of thinking.

The rift between these viewpoints suddenly widened in the early 20th century. Many liberals felt limited government intervention allowed the wealthy to grow too rich, perpetuating a societal imbalance and exploiting the poor.

To correct this, a new form of liberalism was born: the social liberal. This meant government intervention was necessary to take from the rich, usually through higher taxes, and redistribute the funds to the poor. This thinking was behind President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal and President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society program, which gave rise to Medicare and Medicaid.

With each passing year, the ideals of conservatives and liberals evolve into increasingly varied and complex forms. Rather than reaching a consensus, individual ideas seem to only result in the birth of disagreeing factions. Now there are neo-conservatives, classical liberals, libertarians, green liberals, traditionalist conservatives and so on. There are even liberal conservatives and conservative liberals!

When examining the modern religious and political landscapes, the answer to the titular question becomes

painfully obvious: God is neither. The God of the Bible transcends political squabbles and interdenominational wrangling.

Yet just because God does not skew right or left, it does not mean you cannot know who and what He is—and His view on the many problems facing mankind.

#### **God’s Perspective**

God revealed His Law to ancient Israel in the Old Testament. Comprised of commandments, statutes, judgments and precepts, God’s Law evidences His viewpoints on a wide range of civic, social, environmental and other issues.

The Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17) establish that there is right and wrong behavior. God also explained that there are penalties when one breaks His laws (Lev. 26:14-39). All this would seem to align God’s views with traditional conservative ideas.

On the other hand, God also explains that He is merciful and gracious (Psa. 116:5). He promises to bless and care for those who heed Him (Deut. 28:1-14). He also says that He watches over the poor, widows, orphans and foreigners among His people. This would seem to place Him firmly in the camp for the “social justice” Christians.

In addition, God proclaims His love for all human beings and countries (John 3:16), going so far as to promise that, one day, *all nations* will be blessed (Gen. 26:4). His love and compassion extend so far that He promises to do away with all pain, sorrow and death (Rev. 21:4).

However, this same God who explains that He *is love* (I John 4:8) also announces that He will bring His furious wrath upon those who disobey Him (Nah. 1:2). He will “by no means clear the guilty” (Ex. 34:7) and will bring destruction on the wicked (Psa. 37:20).

God’s unique and perfectly balanced combination of compassion and swift justice is unseen in the political philosophies of men.

#### **Using Moderation**

To those reared in traditional Christianity, many of these verses could

seem to contradict the concept of God they have been taught all their lives—a deity who has never matured beyond the point of a moody teenager. The world’s ministers, pastors and religionists teach either an out-of-control, fire-and-brimstone “God” who devours those who upset Him—or a pacifist, weak, “come as you are,” permissive “God” who allows everyone to do whatever they please as long as they “just have love.”

Both extremes contradict the true God, who exercises perfect balance, moderation, judgment and discernment in all His decisions. In every aspect of life—personal, social or educational—God demonstrates what could be considered both liberal and conservative thinking.

If this sounds strange, recognize this: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

God does not limit His ability to make correct and just decisions by locking Himself into any of man’s political ideologies.

#### **Fiscal Responsibility and Service**

Citing III John 2, many churches correctly teach that God wants Christians to be blessed and prosper. Yet these same religious organizations often neglect to teach that He requires people to do their part—to work hard, save their income and be wise stewards (or managers) of their finances.

Few today understand that God has a detailed financial system that, when obeyed, yields blessings. The core component of this system is tithing. God wants men to demonstrate their ability to save money and “stretch a dollar” by giving Him the first 10 percent of their income. In return, He promises those who trust Him abundant blessings and a significant gain on investment (Mal. 3:8-10).

God’s financial system also includes mercy upon the poor and those struggling economically. He commands men not to oppress the impoverished by

exacting interest from them (Ex. 22:25) and to mete out debt relief by a fair and forgiving standard (Deut. 15:1-2). In addition, all citizens are to do their part in taking care of the poor by making sure their needs are met (vs. 7-11).

For instance, God required farmers to leave enough crops during the harvest season “for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow” to be their food (Deut. 24:19-22). However, these same disadvantaged people had to labor—they had to work in the fields and glean the crops for themselves.

Clearly, *both* sides of the political and social spectrum—conservative investment and fiscal responsibility on the one hand, relieving the poor on the other—are simultaneously reflected within God’s view on money.

### **Crime and Punishment**

Modern criminal justice systems struggle with how to uphold the laws of the land effectively. Some governments follow a permissive course, such as tolerating illegal drug use and other social ills. Other systems exact terrible punishment for the simplest infractions—and even punish victims of the crimes along with the criminals who committed them.

Many legal systems are powerless to actually punish criminals, with the most horrific offenders sometimes released without punishment.

Even those who are imprisoned live comfortable lives that are often better than those in ghettos and other dying communities that inspired them to a life of crime in the first place.

The slow process of court systems, legal battles and appeals often takes years—allowing criminals to gloss over the whole purpose of reform. As a result, Ecclesiastes 8:11 becomes a reality: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

In contrast to these extremes, God designed a balanced system of justice and equity. He explains that the penalty for any crime should be as severe as the original infraction (Ex. 21:23-25) and that some crimes require the pepe-

trator to restore more than the initial damages (22:1).

### **Natural Resources**

The world’s religions and philosophies often profess extreme and opposing opinions regarding the environment and wildlife. Some believe the entire Earth is sacred and, therefore, man should not harm it—even going so far as to avoid eating animals or tapping natural resources. At the other extreme are those who believe any animal can be slaughtered without cause and that all the Earth’s resources are man’s to squander without repercussion.

In the first chapter of Genesis, God says He gave man dominion over the Earth and all animals (vs. 26-30). This includes its natural resources. God also provided certain animals for man’s diet and explicitly outlined which animals should and should not be eaten (Lev. 11).

Concerning natural resources, God also set a clear example for their use by commanding that the ark of the covenant, as well as articles in the Holy Tabernacle, be constructed of fine wood, precious metals and the best materials available (Ex. 25-27).

Along with using natural resources, mankind is charged with taking care of the Earth (Gen. 2:15). Part of this responsibility includes giving the land a rest from farming every seventh year (Lev. 25:1-4). Clearly, God’s view is to conserve the land. He created the Earth to be used appropriately, not abused.

### **God’s Solution**

Religionists of traditional and modern Christianity selectively choose which of God’s views and laws to preach and which to ignore. So do those of the conservative right and liberal left who turn to churches and religious leaders for political support.

This broken system leaves many frustrated and angry, like Lot from the Old Testament.

Lot was a righteous man who lived in Sodom, a city known for its wickedness. Despite the corruption around him, Lot remained steadfast in his beliefs and did his best to live a right-

eous life. However, the political and moral corruption of Sodom eventually became too much for Lot to bear. He became “vexed” (II Pet. 2:7-8) by the sin and immorality around him.

Like Lot, many people today can feel upset by society’s political division and wrong conduct. The polarization can be overwhelming and upsetting, leading to a sense of hopelessness and distrust of progressive and conservative politicians and those claiming to be moderate.

Much of this distrust is fueled by what citizens see as bald corruption and dishonesty.

Both liberals and conservatives are subject to human nature, which invites illicit conduct. Leaders on both sides can be impacted by money, lobbyists, and the opportunity for power and influence. Yet, sadly, while there is often intense partisan rhetoric in the media and online, politicians from both sides often work together behind the scenes in pursuit of selfish gain. This all occurs while average citizens are led to believe the views on either side of the political aisle are irreconcilable.

The political divide in the United States often results in people voting for the left in one cycle and the right in the next, in search of permanent solutions. The repeated failures of liberals and conservatives to fix problems points to the need for a truly just and righteous government, which only God can bring. Read Isaiah 9:6-7.

Thankfully, the God who hates evil (Prov. 8:13) and yet is reasonable—who says to all who are willing, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18)—will soon establish His government upon the Earth. It will administer true justice and equity for all nations. Therefore, a Christian’s ultimate allegiance is to God, not a political party.

God is neither liberal nor conservative. To achieve success, mankind must pursue His perfect principles of justice, righteousness and love in all areas of life (Mic. 6:8, Matt. 22:37-40).

To learn more about God’s coming government, read our free booklet, *What Is the Kingdom of God?* at [rcg.org/witkog](http://rcg.org/witkog). □



# MAKE THE MOST OF SUMMER WITH YOUR KIDS!

BY FRANK LYDICK

**W**E CAN all remember family trips and excursions we took as children. For me, these were opportunities to escape the oppressive summer heat in one of Oregon's inland valleys where we lived. Trips to the state's coast, exploring the mountains, or wandering through the Redwood Forest immediately come to mind. Yet the big trips were not the only ones that made an impression on me, but also many smaller, personal family activities.

Without these special times as mile markers, my childhood would be much less vivid today—so would be the memories of my parents.

The trips we took during summer vacations resulted in my childhood's most cherished family memories. They are the moments that connect me to the memories of my parents and other close family members. At the time, I had no idea what was occurring. Now that I am a father myself, however, I more fully appreciate what my parents did for me. It inspires me to do the same for my young son.

In today's busy world, it is a challenge to spend this time together anymore. But parents cannot ignore the many benefits of family time. In the summer months, find ways to maximize each day and work to establish enduring bonds!

Making an effort now will pay huge dividends at the end of your child's summer vacation. It will create memories that last for a lifetime.

### **The Importance of Family**

We all know that making time for family is the right thing to do. But *why* is it? This question can be answered by looking at God's mind on the subject.

Our Creator intended for human beings to be family centric. Time spent together as a family has many benefits and has always been at the forefront of God's mind.

Open your Bible and *investigate* God's Word. You will find that God emphasized family from the beginning. The Creator said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our

likeness" (Gen. 1:26). He followed this up by stating, "male and female created He them" (vs. 27). Then He directed them to "be fruitful, and multiply" (vs. 28). He commanded mankind to have families!

God reinforced this in Genesis 9:1: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." This command further strengthens the point that man was encouraged to have families. In Luke 3:38, during a listing of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the first man, Adam, is described as "the son of God." God's plan includes the prospect of ever-growing families. Have you ever considered that you are part of this incredible plan?

**"In today's busy world,  
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of family time."**

Given this, no one would dispute that families benefit from spending quality time together. That time spent correlates directly with the quality of relationships within the family unit and, ultimately, sets the children up for success later in life.

The summer months present the perfect time for families to create lasting memories and strengthen their relationships by spending time together. The fun challenge that we as parents have is finding the time to make those memories.

As stated in Genesis 5:3, when we have children, they are formed after our "own likeness, after [our] image." This description is identical to how God views us as His children and reminds us of the close connection between parent and child. Think back

to how you felt the first time you held your child in your arms. Our Creator feels the same way about us!

Going back as little as 50 years, you would find a world that emphasized families spending quality time together. Contrast that to today, where parents and children spend an average of four hours of quality time together weekly. That is just over 30 minutes per day to devote to helping children navigate the complicated world in which they live.

A 2020 Harvard University podcast recounted the benefits for families who had a meal together at least five times per week: improved physical health, brain health, academic performance and mental health. However, it said that only 30 percent of families manage to sit together regularly at mealtime.

How do you turn around such a situation?

For God to so plainly emphasize family and His desire for mankind to "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Gen. 1:22), we should closely examine why families are not spending enough time together.

Honestly ask yourself: How well is my family doing with spending quality time with one another?

Psalms 127:3 adds to the importance of this question: "Lo, children are the heritage of the LORD; and the fruit of the womb is His reward." As parents, we are to count our children as precious and nurture them. What better way to do this than to spend time with them?

### **Find Solutions to Potential Roadblocks**

The ancient philosopher Socrates wrote, "Beware the barrenness of a busy life." We can easily overfill our time. Yet, by recognizing the importance of our family, we can ensure we focus on what is truly important: enhancing our family relationships!

A busy schedule does not mean you cannot spend quality time together during the summer. If you let them, many things get in the way: work commitments, school activities (athletics, clubs, camps), technology, distance, finances and a lack of good communication.

How do you ensure that spending time together as a family remains a priority? The key is to get ahead in the game and start planning right now. You will find that some items on your “busy” list fall away when you look at your time and what is most important to you.

The first step is to prioritize time together and make your children feel like they are of value. Include them in the planning! Sit down with your son or daughter, make plans and set those plans into a schedule. Make a list of activities you want to do and plug them into a calendar as potential

traveling to national parks and visiting out of state relatives—while making some tourist stops along the way.

Keep simple ideas in mind too. You could make visiting a favorite local park part of your regular schedule. If it is within walking distance—all the better!

If you have the funds and vacation time to take a more extended trip, now is the time to plan. Pencil a list of dates and activities onto a calendar so the ideas stay on your mind.

Not everyone can afford extravagant trips or activities. That is where

ily closer to your Creator God: “You are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth (Psa. 115:15).”

Take plenty of photos of the special moments that come this summer. Create a family adventure journal or compile a summer photo album. One of my family’s favorite things to do is to review photos and videos from several years ago. This is a great way to bring back the emotions and excitement from past experiences and rekindle interest in doing similar activities again. The definition of nostalgia, according to *Merriam-Webster*, is “a sentimentality for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.” Use nostalgia to strengthen bonds!

Another key is to be prepared to be flexible. There is a time and place for spontaneity. It is essential to seize the opportunity when you realize you have spare time to take a short walk or have a chat before going to bed. Be on the lookout for such moments. Sometimes, my parents and I would walk down the road from our home to feed the horses pastured nearby. We would bring along apples or carrots for them to enjoy. I still have memories of those times, many of which happened at golden hour after we had sat down to a family dinner.

These spontaneous moments will often create some of the most treasured family memories of all.

#### **Make Time for Learning**

Remember that learning opportunities should also be a part of your planning. Learning and having fun do not always naturally come together. But they do if you plan things out. Capitalize on the combination of fun family activities and the chance for your children to learn simultaneously.

What are your child’s favorite activities? Explore options to add these items to your list. My son has an interest in dinosaurs and paleontology. As a result, we try to include his interests in our plans, whether a visit to a natural history museum or a fossil dig at a local state park.

**“This summer is the perfect time for you and your kids to discover how ‘the Earth is full of Your [God’s] riches’ (Psa. 104:24).”**

dates. This approach will prioritize your family’s activities, ensuring the time you spend together is purposeful and enjoyable.

#### **How to Make Time for Family**

The summer months present a prime opportunity for families to be outdoors in God’s Creation. Warm weather and your child’s availability are an excellent combination and the recipe for spending more time together outside. This summer is the perfect time for you and your kids to discover how “the Earth is full of Your [God’s] riches” (Psa. 104:24).

The list of outdoor activities is nearly endless: camping, boating, visiting amusement parks or museums,

budget-friendly options come in: bike rides, geocaching, trips to a local lake or beach, hiking, backyard barbecues, visiting free museums or zoos, family projects around the house or attending free community music concerts.

One of my favorite summer activities as a child was stargazing with my dad and mom. Parents, your children do not have to be up early for school the next morning, so this summer vacation option works well!

Consider Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” Ponder this verse every time you see a night sky on a clear and dark night. If you have never done this with your family, try it! It will draw your fam-



Your local library likely offers summer reading programs for kids. Reading books will allow your child's mind to stay engaged in learning while they can still focus on subjects that interest them and that they enjoy. Libraries often include prizes or other incentives to keep your children reading. If they fail to provide rewards, you can create your own motivations. For instance, you could offer a visit to an ice cream parlor as a prize for completing a specific number of books. You know what rewards will motivate your kids best!

### Start Now!

What do you do first? Commit to a family meal several times a week. Change your schedules if you must! Use these times to discuss what you would like to accomplish as a family this summer. Including your children in the planning is key. What would you like to do? When would you like to do it?

Write down a wish list of family activities and start plugging them into your calendar. Maximize your time together this summer through fun activities or enriching learning experiences.

But you should also work with your spouse to plan as well. Make goals for what you want to accomplish. Moms and dads, how well did you do last summer? How can you improve during this vacation?

As the summer goes on, use every possible moment to grow closer. Enjoy being outside in God's Creation as a family. At the same time, do not lose sight of those simple moments at home, sitting together and talking. Those can be just as beneficial to building family bonds.

Being intentional about setting a regular time for family activities is essential to maintaining healthy relationships. If you put in the effort, you will experience rewarding moments you will all cherish forever.

Parents, if we follow God's guidance to nurture and develop our families, we can pave the way for our children to have a prosperous future. □

# SUMMER FUN ON A BUDGET



**1. Visit a local park:** Take your family to a nearby park for a picnic or to play an outdoor game like Frisbee.



**2. Plan a simple campout:** Set up a tent in your backyard and spend the evening stargazing and roasting marshmallows.



**3. Have a game night:** Gather your family for fun, creative board games, card games or even video games. Goodwill or other thrift stores will likely have a selection.



**4. Go on a nature walk:** Explore the natural beauty around you by going on a hike.



**5. Have a movie night:** Pick a film the whole family can enjoy and set up a cozy theater environment at home.



**6. Try a new recipe:** Get creative in the kitchen and work together on a delicious new dish.



**7. Go to the beach:** Spend a day playing in the sand, swimming and soaking up the sun.



**8. Visit a local museum:** Many museums offer free or discounted admission for children, so take advantage and have fun learning.



**9. Have a water balloon fight:** Cool off on a hot day by playfully flinging water balloons as a family!



**10. Attend a community event:** Do a little research on events in your local area and attend a free or low-cost event such as a concert, festival or farmer's market.

Remember, your focus this summer is on spending time with the people you love. Don't get stressed out about planning extravagant activities. These simple, budget-friendly ideas can create lasting memories and strengthen your family bonds!

Bihu dancers take part in rehearsals for a Guinness World Record event at Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati (April 11, 2023).

AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES/BIJU BORO

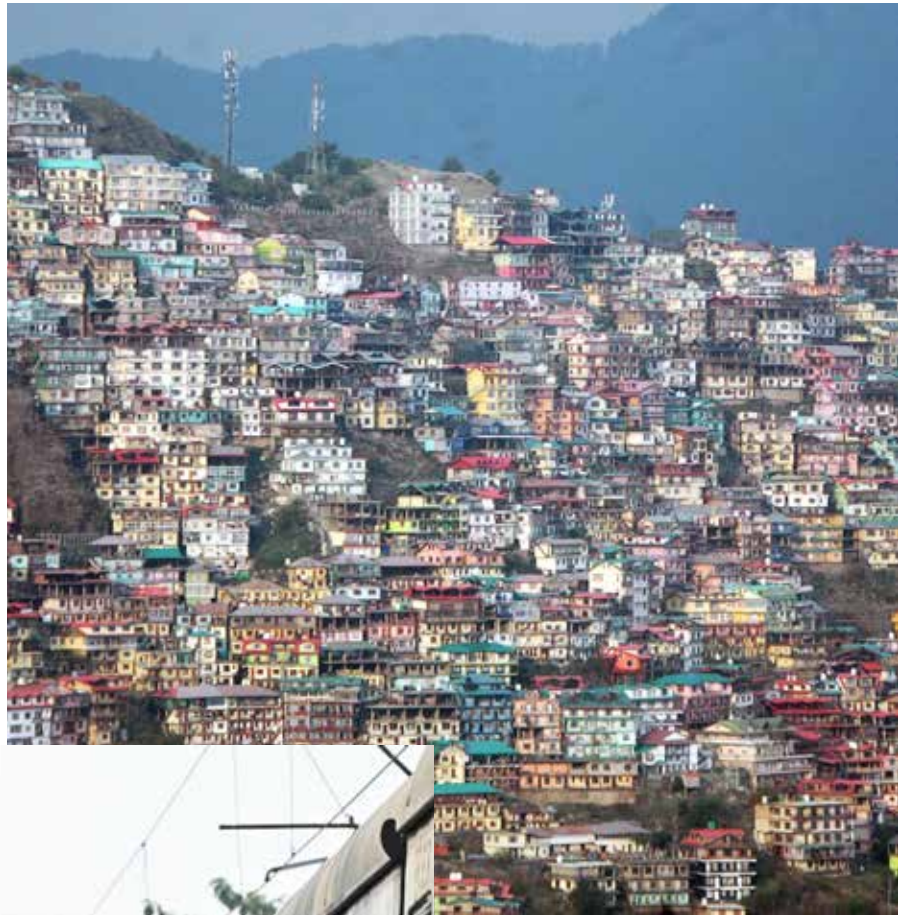
# THE RISE OF INDIA



**I**NDIA BECAME the world's most populous country in April, eclipsing an aging China, the United Nations reported. The milestone raises questions on whether India can repeat the economic success that has made China central to the world economy and a leading global power.

The news came as India is promoting itself as a rising international player as the host of this year's Group of 20 summit. It is also becoming a more attractive destination for multinational companies seeking to reduce their reliance on China.

India's population was estimated to have reached 1.425 billion in April, which means it has surpassed mainland China, the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs said in a statement. The forecast is based on latest estimates of the global population.



It is unclear exactly when India's population passed China's. Demographers say the limits of population data make it impossible to calculate a date.

The Indian government, which has not performed a census since 2011, has not officially commented on the UN estimates. The timing of when India surpassed China in population will likely be revised once India conducts its next census, John Wilmoth, director of the United Nations' population division, said at a news conference at UN headquarters in New York.

"The precise timing of this crossover isn't known, and it will never be known," Mr. Wilmoth said. "There is uncertainty in the data."

Similarly uncertain is what India's exact role will be on the world stage—most notably, how it will get along with its neighbor China.

The two Asian nations have a complicated relationship, including robust trade ties and a long-running border dispute. The United States and its allies

Top, a general view of residential houses on a hill in Shimla (April 25, 2023). Bottom, commuters watch after their train was blocked by leftist activists at a railway station during a nationwide general strike against the policies of the central government in Kolkata (March 28, 2022).

(TOP) AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; (BOTTOM) AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES/DIBYANGSHU SARKAR



increasingly see India, the world's largest democracy, as a counterweight to China.

But New Delhi's interests do not always align with Washington's. India, unlike much of the West, has refrained from condemning its Cold War ally Russia over its war in Ukraine, instead adopting a neutral stance as India's purchases of Russian crude have soared.

Some in India see Western sanctions against Russia as an opportunity.

"It is a windfall situation. We are getting discounted oil which is a huge advantage for India. Compared to virtually nothing prior to the Ukraine invasion, India's crude oil imports have risen to over a million barrels of oil per day from Russia," Manoj Joshi, distinguished fellow at the Observer Research Foundation told *Voice of America*. "And now that they are under sanctions, India sees an opportunity in promoting exports also, so that will be a double advantage."

Geopolitical concerns aside, India's sheer size and its young population give it the potential to replicate China's economic trajectory.

Young workers who flooded into China's cities to take factory jobs starting in the 1990s were an essential ingredient in the boom that saw China become the world's second-largest economy.

But China's population peaked in 2022 and has since started to fall. By

Left, commuters disembark from a suburban train at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus railway station in Mumbai (Nov. 4, 2022).

AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES/DIBYANGSHU SARKAR

**"India has the world's largest young population, a higher fertility rate, and has seen a consistent decrease in infant mortality. Experts caution against alarm about overpopulation, however, as the country's fertility rate has been steadily falling, from over five births per woman in the 1960s, to two in 2022."**



Right, farmers shout slogans against the central and Punjab state governments while blocking railway tracks during a demonstration at a railway station in Amritsar (April 18, 2023).

AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES/NARINDER NANU

the close of the century, its population could drop below 1 billion, the UN said. The country's elderly population is swelling while its birth rate is still plunging, from 1.7 babies per woman in 2017 to 1.2 in 2022, according to UN data.

By contrast, India has the world's largest young population, a higher fertility rate, and has seen a consistent decrease in infant mortality. Experts caution against alarm about overpopulation, however, as the country's fertility rate has been steadily falling, from over five births per woman in the 1960s, to two in 2022. India's population is expected to stop growing and stabilize around 2064.

"The main driver is the levels of fertility in these two countries," Mr. Wilmoth said.

Historic reforms in the 1990s spurred spectacular growth and India's \$3 trillion economy is the fifth largest in the world today as its high-skilled sectors have soared.

But India's economy is still far behind China's. In 1970, the two countries had nearly equal per capita incomes, but today China's gross domestic product is \$12,556 per person, compared to India's \$2,256, according to 2021 World Bank data.

Economists warn that even as India's GDP has surged, so has joblessness. About 80 percent of Indian workers still toil in informal jobs,

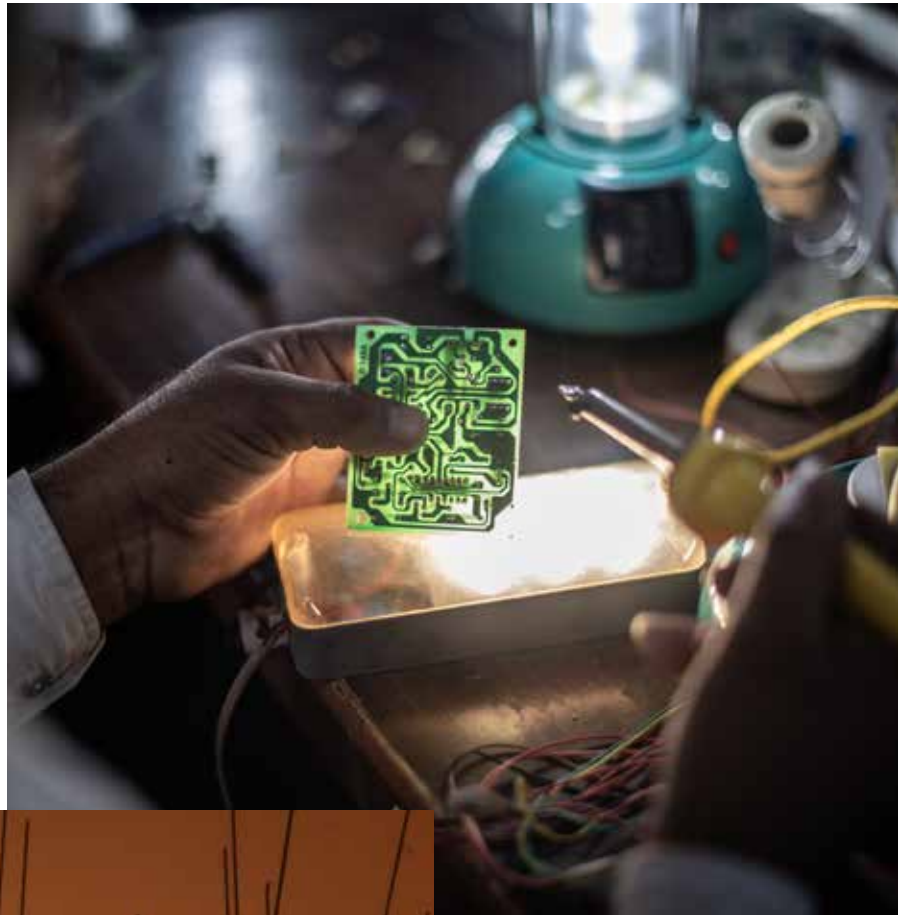


Middle, Indian devotees and foreign tourists take part in Holi festival celebrations in Pushkar, in the Indian state of Rajasthan (March 2, 2018).

AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES/SHAUKAT AHMED



“India stands to benefit from what is referred to as a ‘demographic dividend,’ when the swelling of the working-age population spurs rapid economic growth, provided there’s strong participation in the labor force.”



Top, an Indian villager tests a circuit board for a solar lamp in a class held as part of the Barefoot Solar Project to bring solar powered lighting to rural areas in Solawata, India (March 25, 2023). Bottom, laborers work at a construction site as the moon partially obscures the sun during a partial solar eclipse visible from Gurgaon (Oct. 25, 2022).

(TOP) GETTY IMAGES/REBECCA CONWAY; (BOTTOM) AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES/VINAY GUPTA

which are often precarious, low paying, and offer little to no benefits. Still, India stands to benefit from what is referred to as a “demographic dividend,” when the swelling of the working-age population spurs rapid economic growth, provided there is strong participation in the labor force, Mr. Wilmoth said.

India’s vast population also means that many challenges play out on a huge scale, whether this is grappling with climate change, disparities between its urban and rural populations, a shrinking number of women in the workforce or a widening religious divide.

“For this century to belong to India, it must make the most of its demographic advantage,” said Brahma Chellaney, a professor of strategic affairs at the Centre for Policy Research. “China’s demographic crisis is timely for India’s growth—but only if it can find enough good quality employment for its teeming youth.” □

# PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

Ezekiel 28:12-17 parallels and reinforces Isaiah 14 and is equally important for study. This account describes one who some “scholars” claim was a *human* “king of Tyrus.” Careful reading shows this is ridiculous.

Verse 12 speaks of one who “seals up the sum, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty,” who had also “been in Eden the Garden of God.” No human has ever been perfect, and it was the devil—the serpent—who beguiled Eve in the Garden. Verse 13 states, “you were created,” and Satan is a created being. Verse 14 calls him “the cherub that covers.” (Exodus 25:17-20 describes the remaining two faithful “cherubs that cover[ed]” God’s throne in the Old Testament tabernacle. Their wings cover the mercy seat.)

What earthly king fits any of the above description?

Ezekiel 28:14 says this “king” was “in the mountain of God” and “walked...in the midst of the stones of fire.” This describes the area around God’s throne. Verses 15 and 16 declare, “iniquity [or lawlessness] was found in you” and calls it there “sin.”

Verse 16 also describes this cherub as having been “cast...out of” heaven. Verse 17 reveals that his “heart was lifted up because of [his] beauty” and that his wisdom was “corrupted...by reason of [his] brightness.” The verse ends with God “casting him down to the ground,” where the kings of the Earth would “behold him,” as it says.

Lucifer was a brilliant being—an “angel of light,” as are “his ministers” (II Cor. 11:13-15). The name *Lucifer* means “the light bringer.” This once-perfect being originally brought *brilliant light* to all who were around him. But he rebelled and sinned—and became the prince of *darkness*. His rebellion turned him into a twisted, perverted being. While of great intelligence, he has literally become an *insane fallen angel*, no longer knowing right from wrong!

## A Powerful Broadcast

Ephesians 2:2 references the devil’s power and influence upon the world. Notice: “Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the *prince of the power of the air*, the *spirit* that now works in the *children of disobedience*.”

Did you grasp this? Satan has the power to use the “air” to broadcast—through his spirit—an attitude of disobedience. His spirit sends moods, feelings and attitudes of hostility into people’s minds. These “work” to bring disobedience. This “air power” gives the devil tremendous *influence*, allowing him to send thoughts of deceit, anger, pride, hatred, vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, envy and confusion directly into people.

His cunning has been so seductive he has even been able to convince most that he *does not exist!*

The devil is immensely more powerful than most realize. Look at what his position as the world’s god permits him to do: “The *god of this world* has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine unto them” (II Cor. 4:4).

Satan blinds and deceives on a staggering scale. The result is a world filled with disobedience—filled with lawlessness.

You can now better understand the “children of *disobedience*.” Like Christians with the Holy Spirit, these people are also inspired and guided by the spirit of this world’s god. Satan broadcasts a *spirit* of rebellion against—and disobedience to—God’s Law.

A deceived world knows nothing of this understanding!

If you listen to the radio, you choose a station that plays what you want to hear. People browse radio or television stations, and of course the internet. Eventually something interests them, and they stop and listen *by choice*. They have control over what they hear or watch.

It is not the same with *Satan’s* station. The world—and you—do not decide to tune into the devil’s broad-

cast. No one sets out to be deceived. But every person on Earth is automatically tuned to Satan’s wavelength! His wickedness, hostility, rebellion, deceit and selfishness are continually “on the air.”

Therefore, it is really *Satan’s nature* that is labeled as *human nature*. In fact, once it is injected into people, Satan’s nature becomes *natural* to them. It becomes their nature—now, again, *human nature*.

It is critical to see how this spirit works. It is the single most important key to understanding how Satan can deceive and manipulate now over *eight billion people*. Of course, Satan injects his attitudes into an unsuspecting mankind—it has no idea what he is doing. The devil does not announce his intentions audibly.

Just as God the Father has children, Satan is also a father with his own children! In one of the most profound verses in the entire Bible, Jesus said this to His listeners: “You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do” (John 8:44). On one occasion, Paul labeled a man: “*You child of the devil*, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” (Acts 13:10).

Notice that “children of the devil” are enemies of *righteousness* and the ways of God. This is sobering, but it is what being Satan’s children means!

What is righteousness? “All Your [God’s] *commandments are righteousness*” (Psa. 119:172). Satan’s children hate and are enemies of God’s laws—His Commandments. Remember, they are “children of *disobedience*.”

The Christian resists Satan, who is active at every turn. But it is not through human strength or effort that this can be achieved. Notice: “Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the *wiles* of the devil. For we *wrestle* not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the *rulers of the darkness of this world*, against *spiritual wicked-*

ness [more accurately translated in the Greek, wicked spirits] in high places” (Eph. 6:10-12).

### The Tempter

In Matthew 4, we read about Christ’s confrontation with the devil. Verse 1 said Jesus was “to be tempted of the devil.” Verse 3 called the devil “the tempter.” Because Christ was immensely hungry after 40 days of fasting, Satan tried to tempt Him into “turning stones into bread.”

The devil appeared in the form of a serpent in Eden and successfully seduced Eve through temptation (Gen. 3:1-6). Verse 1 reveals how the devil tempts people into disobedience and sin. It says, “Now the serpent was more *subtle* than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.” The serpent, the devil, deceived Eve by tempting her with the beauty of the tree of which God had forbidden her to eat. He made captivity look attractive.

Temptation never comes from God. James 1:13-15 says: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.”

Temptation always originates from “the tempter,” working on the lusts of people. The devil recognizes exactly where human nature is vulnerable, where people can be “enticed” so that “sin is conceived,” making death the final result (Rom. 6:23). Remember, the devil is a killer, seeking to murder those he deceives and tempts into sin. He kills through deceit and the pulls of temptation. Ephesians 6:11 warns of the “*wiles* of the devil,” while Revelation 2:24 warns of the “*depths* of Satan.” II Corinthians 2:11 warns not to be “ignorant of his devices.” Christians are constantly on guard for his schemes.

The full picture of exactly how the devil has captured the entire

world should now be coming clear. II Timothy 2:26 speaks of those who “recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him [to do] his will.” These verses reveal that sin opens the door to capture. Verse 25 speaks of God “giving them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” as the key to deliverance from captivity.

After repenting of doing the devil’s will, Christians seek and practice doing God’s will for the rest of their lives.

### Satan’s Influence Will Be Eliminated

Satan will one day be restrained from influencing the nations. Revelation 20 opens with a mighty angel binding him “a thousand years” by “casting him into the bottomless pit,” where he is shut up (vs. 1-3). This angel then “set[s] a seal upon him, that he should *deceive the nations no more*, till the 1,000 years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season” (vs. 3).

Paul referenced a time when Satan’s broadcast is eliminated when he said, “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20). This is God’s promise to all true Christians—and all humanity—because Satan has persecuted the former and deceived the latter for thousands of years.

The apostle Jude stated that Satan and his demons will be cast out of the universe into a place where the Bible explains there is no light, and describes these wretched beings as “wandering stars to whom is reserved the *blackness of darkness forever*” (Jude 13). The “prince of this world” and his angels will get what they deserve—what they brought on themselves. The one once known as the “light bringer” chose darkness. God will give him complete darkness.

Hebrews 2:5 describes the Earth as also being under the “subjection of angels” now, but makes clear they will not have this position in “the world to come.”

Additional verses in this chapter explain what will happen after the fall-

en angels are replaced. Notice: “What is man, that you are mindful of him?... You made him a little lower than [or inferior to] the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor...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” (vs. 6-8).

Next, speaking of Christ, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him...in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (vs. 9-10).

Grasp what you read. These verses contain the promise of a staggering potential available to you. True Christians—those who are part of the only Church that Jesus Christ built—are called to inherit “*all things*” and be “crowned with glory and honor,” offered to them by the calling of God and sacrifice of Christ—“the Captain of their salvation.”

“*All things*” means all things. *Nothing* will be excluded from this inheritance.

Satan, who we saw earlier is also called the “tempter,” offered Christ rulership over “*all things*” in Matthew 4:9 if He would “fall down and worship him.” Christians are promised rulership over the same “all things”—but only on the condition that they worship the true God—and in the manner that He commands. This includes understanding and practicing all of His laws and truths. It also includes understanding *all* the important aspects of Satan’s origin, history and temporary role within God’s master purpose for mankind.

To learn more about the devil, and how God’s people resist him, you will want to read our truly eye-opening booklets, *A World in Captivity* and *Who Is the Devil?*, as well as our inspiring book *The Awesome Potential of Man*. They are available at [rcg.org](http://rcg.org). □



## World Military Spending Rises to an All-time High



A Leopard 2 tank is seen in action during a visit of German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius at the Bundeswehr tank battalion 203 at the Field Marshal Rommel Barracks in Augustdorf, Germany (Feb. 1, 2023).

AP/MARTIN MEISSNER

**S**tockholm (AP) – Global military spending grew for the eighth consecutive year in 2022 to an all-time high of \$2.24 trillion, with a sharp rise in Europe, chiefly due to Russian and Ukrainian expenditure, a Swedish think tank said.

Spending globally increased by 3.7 percent in real terms, but military expenditure in Europe was up 13 percent—its steepest year-on-year increase in at least 30 years, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI, said in a report. Military aid to Ukraine and concerns about a heightened threat from Russia “strongly influenced many other states’ spending decisions.”

The independent Swedish watchdog said that last year, the three largest arms spenders were the United States, China and Russia, who between them accounted for 56 percent of global expenditure.

The rise “is a sign that we are living in an increasingly insecure world,” said Nan Tian, a researcher with SIPRI’s Military Expenditure and Arms Production Program.

Several states significantly increased their military spending following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, while others announced plans to raise spending levels over periods of up to a decade. Some of the sharpest increases were seen in countries near Russia: Finland (36 percent), Lithuania (27 percent), Sweden (12 percent) and Poland (11 percent).

Both Sweden and Finland jointly applied for NATO membership in May 2022, abandoning decades of nonalignment in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. While Finland has been admitted, Sweden’s bid to join NATO remains stalled by opposition from Turkey and Hungary.

“While the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 certainly affected military spending decisions in 2022, concerns about Russian aggression have been building for much longer,” said Lorenzo Scarazzato, a researcher with SIPRI’s Military Expenditure and Arms Production Program.

“Many former Eastern bloc states have more than doubled their military spending since 2014, the year when Russia annexed Crimea.”

Russia also has increased its military spending. SIPRI said that grew by an estimated 9.2 percent in 2022, to around \$86.4 billion. That is equivalent to 4.1 percent of Russia’s gross domestic product in 2022, up from 3.7 percent the previous year.

Established in 1966, SIPRI is an international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. □

## UN: 2023 Off to a Deadly Start for Migrants Crossing Mediterranean Sea

Rome (AP) – The first three months of 2023 were the deadliest first quarter in six years for migrants crossing the central Mediterranean Sea in smugglers’ boats, the UN migration agency reported, citing nations’ delays in initiating rescues as a contributing factor.

The International Organization for Migration documented 441 migrant deaths along the dangerous sea route between northern Africa and Europe’s southern shores during January, February and March. In 2017, 742 known deaths were documented in the same period, while 446 were recorded in the first three months of 2015.

“The persisting humanitarian crisis in the central Mediterranean is intolerable,” IOM Director General Antonio Vitorino, commenting on the figures the agency released in a report.

“With more than 20,000 deaths recorded on this route since 2014, I fear that these deaths have been normalized,” Mr. Vitorino said. “States must respond. Delays and gaps in state-led SAR [search-and-rescue areas] are costing human lives.”

While this year has started out on a distressing note, IOM tallied higher numbers of people dead or missing in the Mediterranean in six other quarters since 2017, with the most documented in the second quarter of 2018, at 1,430.

The true number of lives lost among migrants who set out on smugglers’ unseaworthy rubber dinghies or decrepit fishing boats is unknown because the bodies of people who perish at sea often are never recovered.

Many deaths only come to light when survivors recount that their vessel set out with more passengers than the number who ultimately made it to safety.

The International Organization for Migration said it also was investigating “several reports of invisible shipwrecks”—cases in which boats are reported missing, where there are no records of survivors, remains or search-and-rescue operations. It estimated that “the fates of more than 300 people aboard these vessels remain unclear.”

Without naming nations, the agency blasted policies aimed at complicating the work of rescue boats operated in the central Mediterranean by humanitarian organizations.

The report cited a March 25 incident in which members of the Libyan Coast Guard fired shots in the air as a charity rescue boat, Ocean Viking,

was responding to a report of a rubber dinghy in distress.

“State efforts to save lives must include supporting the efforts of NGO actors to provide lifesaving assistance and ending the criminalization, obstruction of those efforts” by humanitarian groups, the IOM said.

The agency’s report said the deaths of at least 127 people so far this year came in six incidents in which “delays in state-led rescues in the Central Mediterranean were a factor.” The report’s authors lamented the “complete absence of response” in a seventh situation, in which at least 73 migrants lost their lives.

The authors also cited a boat carrying some 400 migrants that remained adrift in the sea between Malta and Italy for two days before the Italian Coast Guard came to its aid.

Italy’s governments have at times impounded charity-run boats for tech-



A ship carrying some 700 migrants onboard enters the Sicilian port of Catania (April 12, 2023).

AP/SALVATORE CAVALLI

nical reasons or, as the country's current right-wing government is doing now, required them to disembark their rescued passengers farther away from the southernmost ports that jut out into the Mediterranean.

Italy's premier Giorgia Meloni and her Cabinet declared a six-month state of emergency to cope with the country's latest increase in migrant arrivals.

Among the goals of her coalition, which includes the stridently anti-migrant leader of the League Party, are efforts to step repatriation of migrants who are not eligible for asylum. Many of the asylum-seekers who reach Italy are fleeing poverty not war or persecution and see their applications denied.

According to the Italian Interior Ministry, 31,192 migrants had arrived in Italy by sea this year as of April 11.

The figure didn't include some 700 migrants crowded aboard a smugglers' boat that apparently ran out of fuel and got towed the morning of April 12 to a port in Sicily under an Italian Coast Guard escort.

Migrants aboard that vessel cheered and shouted "Beautiful Italy," when they reached Catania, Italian state TV reported.

Italy for years has sought to prod fellow European Union nations to take more of the rescued migrants who step ashore in Mediterranean countries, many with the aim of finding jobs or family members in northern Europe.

Under current EU rules, the country where asylum-seekers first arrive is responsible for them.

"The situation in the Mediterranean has been a humanitarian crisis for over a decade now," IOM spokesperson Safa Msehli said. "And the fact that deaths continue on its own is very alarming, but the fact that that's increased is extremely alarming because it means that very little concrete action was taken to address the issue." □



A newborn baby rests on his mother's arms inside a room of the Santo Spirito Hospital in Rome, Italy (Nov. 14, 2022).

REUTERS/REMO CASILLI

## Births in Italy Hit Record Low in 2022, Population Shrinks Further

Italy (Reuters) – Births in Italy dropped to a new historic low below 400,000 in 2022, national statistics bureau ISTAT said, as the population continued to shrink.

Italy's dearth of babies is considered a national emergency, and fixing the problem was a prominent policy pledge by Giorgia Meloni ahead of last year's election, which saw her become the country's first woman prime minister.

Last year Italy recorded more than 12 deaths for every seven births and the resident population fell by 179,000 to 58.85 million, ISTAT said in its annual demographic report.

The population decline slowed somewhat compared with 2021 and 2020, two years heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Italy recorded 392,600 births in 2022, down from 400,249 the previous year, ISTAT said, the 14th consecutive fall and the lowest number since the country's unification in 1861.

"A major factor is the reduction and the aging of the female popula-


tion in the 15-49 age group conventionally considered reproductive," the institute said in a note.

The fertility rate edged down to 1.24 children per woman from 1.25 in 2021, registering a decline in central and northern regions and a marginal increase in the south.

The trend was partly offset by immigration, with immigrants exceeding emigrants by 229,000 last year compared with a net inflow of 160,000 in 2021. Foreigners made up 8.6 percent of the country's population in 2022, for a total of 5.05 million.

Italy's overall population has been falling steadily since 2014, with a cumulative loss since then of more than 1.36 million people, equivalent to the residents of Milan, the country's second biggest city.

ISTAT predicted in September that Italy could lose almost a fifth of its residents, with the population set to decline, under a baseline scenario, to 54.2 million in 2050 and 47.7 million in 2070. □



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