

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2024

THE

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# REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

2024

WHAT THE  
BIBLE SAYS  
ABOUT  
TODAY'S  
WORLD



Men unload discarded food as it is mixed in to start a 12-month composting process at Zero Waste Houston in Conroe, Texas (Nov. 21, 2023).

JASON FOCHTMAN/HOUSTON CHRONICLE VIA GETTY IMAGES

**Feast and Famine in America**  
Americans throw away enough food to feed every citizen. Why do so many *still* face hunger every day?  
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**Front Cover:** Composite by Jody E. Lydick.

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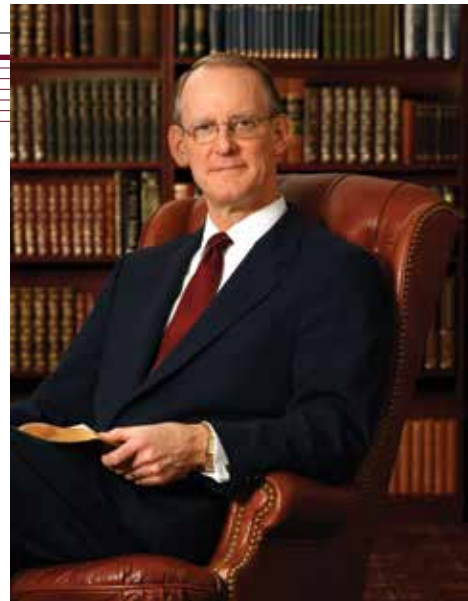
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## PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



# Why Is One-third of the Bible Devoted to Prophecy?

**E**VERYONE WANTS to know what the future holds. Most have *no idea*. So many are confused, not knowing where to turn for *answers* to the great questions about the future.

Suppose you could know the direction and *conclusion* of world events—*world history*—before the outcome. What if you could know the courses of nations in advance? Imagine knowing tomorrow's biggest headlines before they come to pass, and how events will affect *you*, and all human beings, *personally*.

About one-third of the Bible is prophecy—history written in advance. Over four-fifths of this *future history* is yet to be fulfilled. Tragically, most Bible readers are unaware of awesome, impending world events, soon to involve all nations. Vast sections of Scripture remain outside their understanding—completely hidden to them.

Here is why God records prophecy in His Word—and the keys to unlocking it!

### Who Is It For?

Many have opinions about Bible prophecy, but few know how to find real answers. Others think they

already understand prophecies of the Bible, but are ignorant of vital *life-changing* knowledge.

Any study of prophecy begins with the definition of what it is. Most lack even this most basic knowledge. Bible prophecy is “the inspired, divine revelation or foretelling of historical events, written *in advance* of those events, pertaining to the unfolding of God's Plan for mankind.” A shorter definition is “foretelling the future.”

Prophecy is factual history *recorded in advance!* God foretells major events *before* they happen. He wants His servants to know what the future holds—what lies ahead for the world. The Bible is about 750,000 words. This means 250,000 are devoted to prophecy. With over 80 percent unfulfilled, many major events must yet come to pass.

Let's ask: What purpose would God have for devoting so much of His divine Word to a subject, and then leave mankind in the *dark* about it?

What keys unlock Bible prophecy?

The first key is that prophecy is for God's servants—no one else. Many have been taught or believe that God's intention is to leave all prophecy *sealed*, closed from understanding. Yet the introduction to

the book of Revelation shows God's intent is to reveal to "His servants" what lies ahead for all nations. The apostle John records, "The Revelation [meaning a *revealing*] of Jesus Christ [not John]... to show unto *His servants* things which must shortly come to pass...signified... unto His servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ...Blessed is he that *reads*, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: *for the time is at hand*" (Rev. 1:1-3). The end of Revelation states for emphasis: "*Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book*" (22:10).

How many have known this? More important, how many have concerned themselves with whether or not they truly are God's servants? Be careful assuming who is.

Obviously, none can keep the prophecies of Revelation, or any others, unless they understand them. God must provide the necessary *clues* to make this possible. You are about to learn them.

Notice that Matthew 24:15 concludes referring to "Daniel the prophet" and the admonition "whoso reads, let him understand." Most will never understand the events soon to smash into civilization. Here is one big reason. God's servants obey Him (Acts 5:32). Understanding flows from obedience to God. Notice: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a *good understanding* have all they that do His commandments" (Psa. 111:10).

Grasp this. All real understanding of God's Plan and spiritual truth comes from God. It is only the action of His Spirit that opens one's eyes. Notice: "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ...give unto you the *spirit of wisdom* and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the *eyes* of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1:17-18).

All who yield themselves in obedience to God, wishing to be His servants will come to understand all the great prophecies to be fulfilled in the last days—prophecies now almost upon us! Professing Christianity refuses to obey God, rejecting His authority over them—and remains blind as a result. No

amount of puzzling over prophetic passages will unlock God's purpose to those who ignore His commands.

The great *first* key then to grasping the meaning of biblical prophecies—small and large—is that they are intended for, and will only be understood by, God's people—those who truly obey Him. All others will remain in confusion, mangling and misunderstanding the great, world-shattering events that will soon directly impact every person on the planet!

#### **All Prophecy Sealed Until "the End"**

A crucial second key must be identified by all seeking to grasp God's end-time purpose. Without it, nations have remained in *total blindness* regarding even the question of human survival. Scales cover their eyes. Of course, unable to understand, cynics and skeptics have dismissed all the prophecies of the Old Testament as dusty, antiquated, "old Hebrew literature and poetry, of no use to us today."

They will soon learn how terribly wrong they have been—and how they should have done much more homework while they could!

Note this second key well, for few have understood it. Most major prophecies of the Bible have been sealed by God until the "time of the end"—the "last days." This key speaks to the group that says prophecy is sealed. Close to the truth, they have missed a central point. Many of the great prophecies are no longer sealed!

You do not need to take my word for it. The prophet Daniel makes this point plain—for all who will believe it. Recognize as we read in a moment that God is speaking through Daniel, rather than Daniel giving some personal opinion about future events.

Daniel's book spans over 2,500 years, detailing the fulfillment of events then *all* yet to occur. Generations of Bible students, unwilling to believe God—and of all stripes of belief and practice contrary to God—have attempted to interpret Daniel's prophecy. All have failed, resulting in endless disagreement and confusion.

An angel instructed Daniel at the end of his prophecy: "But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the *time of the end*: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (12:4). (Seven times, in just this one chapter, it speaks of the "end," "time of the end," or when all things would be "finished.")

Unsatisfied, and not grasping what he was told, Daniel again sought to understand: "I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the *end of these things?*" (vs. 8).

The angel repeated: "Go your way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; *but the wise shall understand*" (vs. 9-10). Remember Jesus was citing Daniel when He repeated that "the wise shall understand" events to occur at the end of the age. And also remember, God says obedience brings understanding. No wonder Daniel adds, "none of the *wicked* shall understand." Any who rebel against God's Law, regardless of how they see themselves, fall into this category.

Daniel foretells a time when "knowledge shall increase." His book reveals the compelling—electrifying—story of what God plans to do in our time. Daniel's message had no application for his own time.

God's promise was to *unseal* the prophecy when the end time arrived!

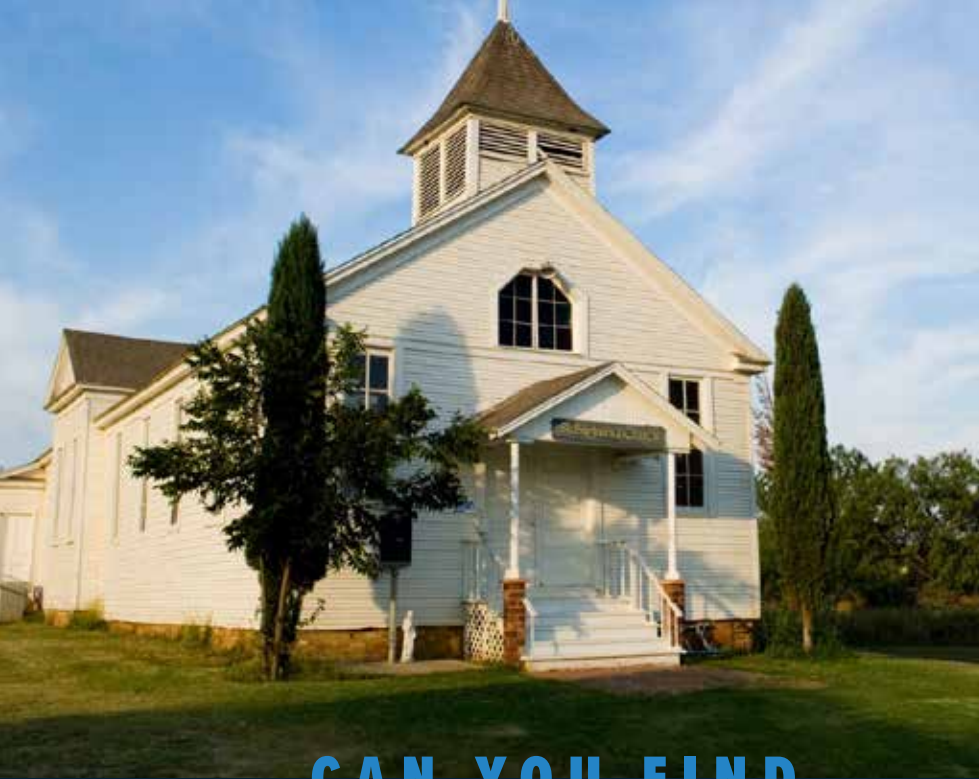
So, the second vital key to properly understanding Bible prophecy is that *all previous generations*—of even God's true servants—had *no chance*—none!—to comprehend events in Daniel's book, or passages related to it.

The Bible's greatest prophecies now thunder a powerful warning to all who will hear—and heed!

#### **A "Sure Word"**

The apostle Peter wrote how God intends that prophecy illuminate the

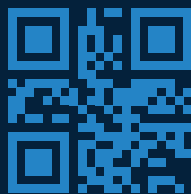
Please see **PERSONAL**, page 32



CAN YOU FIND

# GOD'S CHURCH TODAY?

Jesus Christ declared, "I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Since He promised His Church would never be destroyed, where is it today? Jesus gave identifying signs in the Bible to locate it.



Order your *free* copy of  
*Where Is God's Church?* at  
[rcg.org/wigtc](http://rcg.org/wigtc)

# What the Bible Says About Today's World

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD, MANAGING EDITOR

For me, the day Hamas attacked Israel on October 7 will always be one of stark contrast. As the news poured in—Islamist extremists murdering and raping civilians and brazenly attacking Israeli military bases—I was in sunny Florida with my family for the Feast of Tabernacles, along with other members of The Restored Church of God, the organization behind this magazine.

Hamas' attack threw global stability into a tailspin. It caught everyone off guard. Worries immediately cropped up that this was a flying leap toward World War III.

This is where the contrast comes in. The Feast, outlined in Leviticus 23:34–36, pictures the time when God's Kingdom will be set up and peace and unity will spread worldwide.

Leading up to the attack, I and other Church members had been meditating on the time when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isa. 2:4). Knowing God's overall plan for mankind helped cut through the confusion of October 7 and its aftermath.

In my decade-long tenure as managing editor of *The Real Truth* magazine, together with our dedicated team of writers, editors and designers, we have strived to bring that same clarity and comfort from God's Word to our readers.

And all the momentous events of 2023 definitely needed to be viewed through a biblical lens.

Following the recent attack, we published “Israel vs. Hamas: 4,000 Years in the Making,”

which revealed the ancient roots of the animosity between Palestinians and the Jewish people. In June, we wrote “Why Do Migrants Want to Be in America?,” revealing the reason for the abundance in the United States. We also covered the only true solutions to economic troubles in “7 Old Testament Laws That Would Fix the Global Economy.”

The Bible is not an irrelevant, out-of-date book. It has much to offer in understanding current headlines.

Looking forward, our effort to help you make sense of a confusing world will continue in 2024. That is why we decided to call this first issue of the year “What the Bible Says About Today's World.” Each article contains a towering principle to understand God's plan for mankind.

To kick things off, our Editor-in-Chief, David C. Pack, wrote about the importance of Bible prophecy in understanding today's trends and what the future holds.

Another feature article covers the subject of war. The turmoil in the Middle East is not the only war underway—far from it. From global conflicts like the Russia-Ukraine war to internal battles in Sudan, Ethiopia and Pakistan, “Is War Really the Answer?” reveals God's perspective on military conflicts.

Other features include “Feast and Famine in America,” exploring the paradox of food scarcity amid abundance, and “Biblical Identities of Modern Nations,” revealing unexpected scriptural insights into the origins of major geopolitical players. Lastly, “Does the

World Need God?” tackles this question on the minds of many abandoning organized religion.

Each article adds to a larger narrative about God’s role in the affairs of mankind.

Keep all these Bible principles in mind over the next 12 months. They will help you make sense of everything occurring and yearn more fully for God’s coming Kingdom. Of course, we will be right there with you, continuing to bring God’s perspective to the events of the new year.

Significantly, more than half of the world’s population will hold an election in 2024. These expressions of democracy are not just political events. For many frustrated citizens, they are personal.

In a year marked by elections worldwide, our coverage will extend beyond mere political analysis to explore what God is doing in the establishment of leaders and governments. Romans 13:1 teaches, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” If God ultimately chooses leaders, where do the votes of the public fit in?

The 2024 U.S. presidential campaign will be a slog. Cities are less safe. There remains social, racial and economic unrest. There are also the issues of abortion, inflation, gun violence and problems in families. Americans are deeply concerned about the nation’s trajectory.

Reflecting on these times, I find Paul’s words in II Timothy 3:1-4 quite relevant. He says that a period called the “last days” would be marked by people who are “lovers of self, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”

Is this not a commentary on today’s world?

Amid societal shifts, many are putting faith in emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence. AI is leading a transformative era, like the changes seen during the Industrial and Information Revolutions. For us at *The Real Truth*, how AI will impact journalism and the spread of misinformation is of utmost interest.

AI definitely holds the potential to significantly enhance our knowledge and productivity. However, this advancement raises concerns about its benefits being equally accessible to all—that it could further widen the gap between the haves and have-nots.

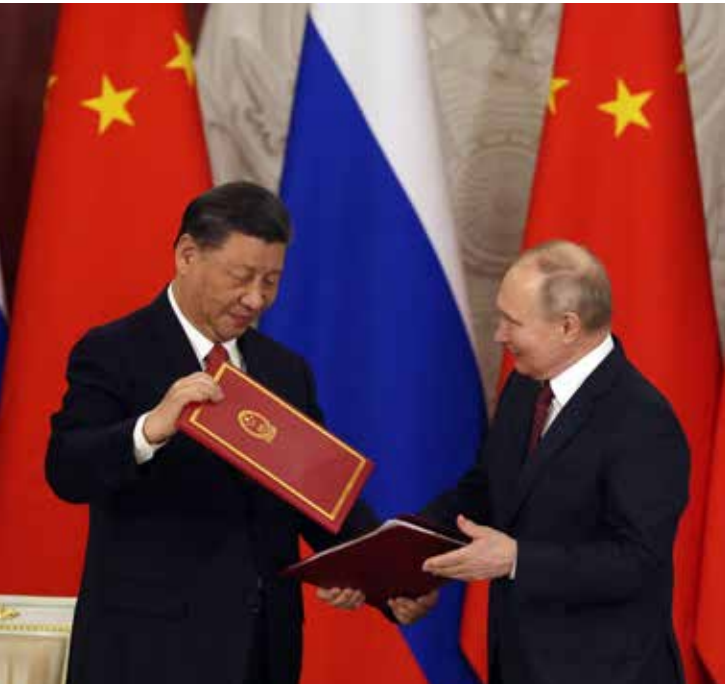
Proverbs 22:2 reminds us, “The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.” This is just one of many scriptures that call us to consider the broader implications of our decisions and their impact on all people.

2024 will also see many ongoing debates over complex problems for which mankind has no clear answer. Think of energy production and the environment. Governments and corporations are trying to determine which energy sources are the cleanest and most efficient. Although green energy seems like the best option, it comes with difficulties in practical implementation and environmental impact. Fossil fuels, on the other hand, are abundant, efficient and credited with bringing many primitive societies into modernity. Yet they are harmful to the environment. A key point is which to choose when both are mired in competing agendas and financial interests.

Looking ahead to all the complexities of 2024, the world remains unpredictable and in turmoil. This only increases the need for deeper discernment and insight only found within the pages of Scripture.

In such difficult times, we at *The Real Truth* are committed to shedding light on what is happening. We will continue to report and analyze the news to bring God’s clarity to a world filled with confusion. □

Top, a destroyed church in Bohorodychne, Ukraine (Jan. 4, 2023, Dimitar Dilkoff/AFP). Middle, Ukrainian soldiers prepare mortar to fire (August 21, 2023, Diego Herrera Carcedo/Anadolu Agency). Bottom left, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands in Moscow (March 21, 2023, contributor). Bottom right, Ukrainian flags are placed on the graves of soldiers (Jan. 24, 2023, Spencer Platt). (All images on pages 6-13 are from Getty Images.)





*Top left, a camp in Dolow, Somalia, where hundreds are temporarily living after being displaced by floods (Nov. 25, 2023, Hassan Ali Elmi/AFP). Top right, smoky haze from wildfires in Canada diminishes the visibility of New York City (June 7, 2023, David Dee Delgado). Bottom right, burned structures and cars two months after a devastating wildfire in Lahaina, Hawaii (Oct. 9, 2023, Mario Tama).*



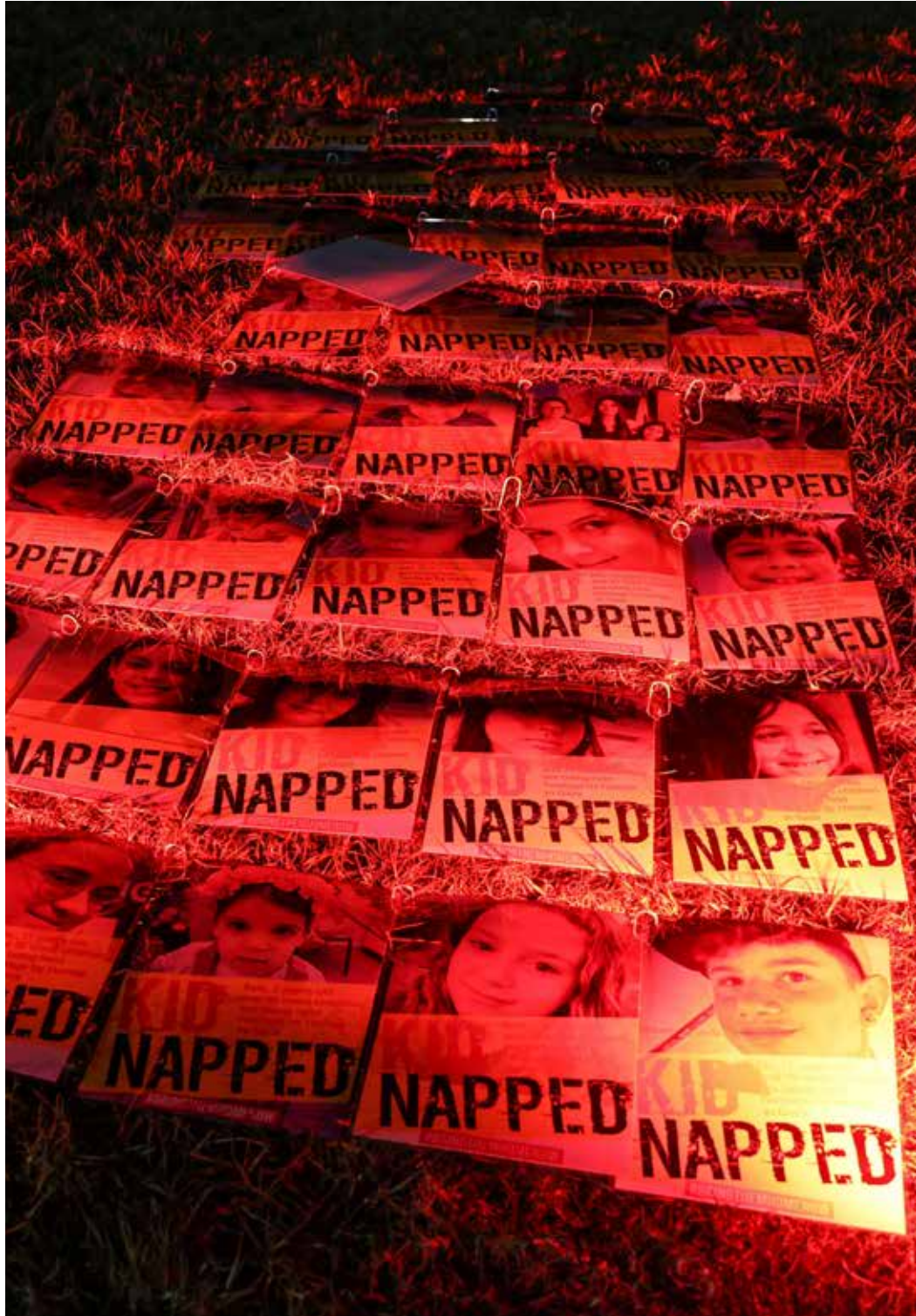


*Top, border patrol agents process migrants who entered the U.S. illegally the day before, taking them to a port of entry in Jacumba, California (Dec. 6, 2023, Valerie Macon/AFP). Bottom left, former President Donald Trump arrives for an arraignment hearing, his first court appearance following an indictment by a grand jury, at New York Supreme Court in New York City (April 4, 2023, Michael M. Santiago). Bottom right, immigrant families cross into the United States from Mexico to seek asylum, in El Paso, Texas (May 8, 2023, John Moore).*



Top, Israeli tanks gather in a field near the kibbutz Beerli (Oct. 14, 2023, Thomas Coex/AFP). Middle, a fireball erupts during Israeli bombardment in the northern Gaza Strip (Oct. 14, 2023, Aris Messinis/AFP). Right, portraits of Israeli children hostages are displayed (Nov. 20, 2023, Ahmad Gharabli). Bottom left, Palestinian children run as they flee from Israeli bombardment (Nov. 6, 2023, Mohammed Abed). Bottom center, U.S. President Joe Biden talks with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as he meets with the Israeli war cabinet in Tel Aviv (Oct. 18, 2023, Brendan Smialowski/AFP).

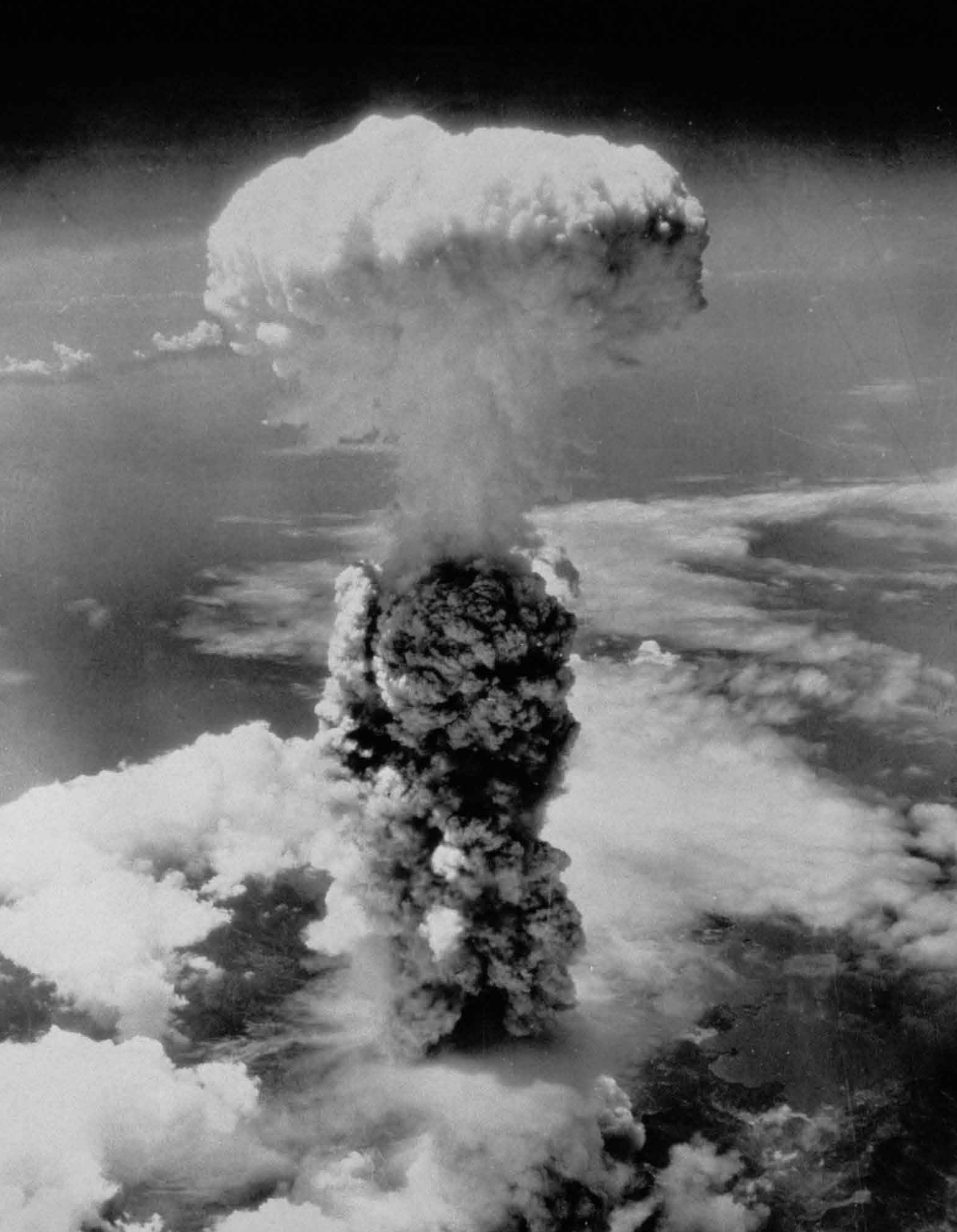




*Left, sailors assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group 2 recover a high-altitude surveillance balloon off the coast of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina (Feb. 5, 2023, Petty Officer 1st Class Tyler Thompson/U.S. Navy). Right, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby places the St. Edward's Crown onto the head of Britain's King Charles III, sitting in King Edward's Chair; during the Coronation Ceremony inside Westminster Abbey in central London (May 6, 2023, Victoria Jones/AFP).*









# IS WAR REALLY THE ANSWER?

Violent conflict has been constant throughout man's history.  
Here is what God thinks.

BY JAMES E. HABBOUSH

**W**HEN RAIN threatened to halt the Third Army's march across the Rhine to deal a decisive blow to Nazi Germany's forces, U.S. General George S. Patton commissioned a prayer, asking God "to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend." He asked for the power to "crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish Thy justice among men and nations."

The chaplain who penned the prayer was to "have 250,000 copies printed and see to it that every man in the Third Army gets one," with the general insisting they collectively beseech God for victory.

A colonel explained the result: "Whether it was the help of the Divine guidance asked for in the prayer or just the normal course of human events, we never knew; at any rate, on the twenty-third, the day after the prayer was issued, the weather cleared and remained perfect for about six days. Enough to allow the Allies to break the backbone of the Von Rundstedt offensive and turn a temporary setback into a crushing defeat for the enemy."

Failure could have meant a world reimagined in the image of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. Had these men

not persevered, all could have been lost. But is war the answer? In a world cut off from God, it seems *necessary* to pursue peace. Is it what God intended?

Patton's counterpart General Omar Bradley lamented, "Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living."

U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who fought alongside both these men, poignantly expressed his hatred of war: "I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity."

Two thousand years earlier, the apostle Paul warned the Romans to "avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head" (12:19-20).

This is the very *opposite* of men waging war! Jesus Christ was just as plain, telling the masses, "Blessed are the PEACEMAKERS: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9).

The clear message was that true Christians *do not go to war*. Yet the same Christ is pictured in the book of

Revelation as a mighty warrior: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does *judge and make war*" (Rev. 19:11). Speaking of God the Father, Moses also recorded in a song, "The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is His name" (Ex. 15:3).

Why would God, repeatedly called the "God of peace" (I Thes. 5:23), wage war? And why does He even seem to *permit* war?

## The Horror of War

Beyond soldier fighting soldier, civilians often suffer the most during armed conflicts—being displaced, maimed or even killed. As of the end of 2022, the United Nations reported that over 100 million non-combatants worldwide were "forcibly displaced...as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order." The number has only grown.

During WWII, Hitler corralled millions of Jews into cattle cars destined for concentration camps, where they were met with untold horrors and ultimately death.

To end the war Hitler began, U.S. President Harry S. Truman carefully

weighed the assets and liabilities of unleashing nuclear weapons. In the final analysis, it was decided to drop atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The thinking was that the horror of the resulting deaths of over 200,000 people, mostly civilians, would hasten the war and ultimately save lives. Such catastrophic munitions have not been used in battle since.

These are the awful decisions required during wartime. In a world separated from God, such choices might be called a “necessary evil.”

Japan surrendered less than a month later. But at what cost? In war, one side may “win,” but humanity always loses. Since man first learned war (Isa. 2:4) thousands of years ago, century by century, millennia by millennia, the death toll has risen. Children orphaned. Wives widowed. Life-changing injuries robbed the futures of veterans. The psychological toll of being subjected to the horrors of war—victim or soldier—cannot be quantified.

Before our modern time, warfare was, relatively speaking, primitive. Bloodshed was localized, and weapons of mass destruction did not exist. No one spoke of civilization-ending conflict. And, since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, nuclear annihilation was little talked about—until recently, after Russia invaded Ukraine.

With Russia’s back to the wall, citing NATO aggression, the nation put the nuclear option on the table. The world was in shock. Saber-rattling continued, and the prospect of nuclear war has only grown since.

Repeated discussions of nuclear options have a desensitizing effect—creating a sort of “banner blindness” wherein society begins to ignore the possibility. Yet the threat is more menacing than ever!

Created during the Cold War, the DEFCON system is short for Defense Readiness Condition or Defense Condition. *Military.com* defines it as “the U.S. military’s ranking system for defense readiness for a potential nuclear attack.” The system has five levels



**World War I: 1914–1918**  
Estimated deaths: 21,500,000



**World War II: 1939–1945**  
Estimated deaths: Up to 60,000,000



**Korean War: 1950–1953**  
Estimated deaths: 3,000,000



**Vietnam War: 1954–1975**  
Estimated deaths: 3,300,000



**War on Terror: 2001–Present**  
Estimated deaths: Over 900,000



**Russia/Ukraine War: 2014–Present**  
Estimated deaths: Over 190,000

with DEFCON 5 signifying “peacetime normal” and level 1 representing “the highest level of readiness for nuclear war.”

While not publicly released by the U.S. military, the level was estimated to have increased to 3 in early 2023—“generally seen as a standby level of alert, and it is the highest level of alert during peacetime,” the military website stated.

Because so many nations have nuclear weapons—and the U.S. and Russia have vast stockpiles—any use of these could lead to mutually assured destruction, which is the “principle of deterrence founded on the notion that a nuclear attack by one superpower would be met with an overwhelming nuclear counterattack such that both the attacker and the defender would be annihilated” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*).

All-out nuclear war would spell extinction for humans. Those not killed in the initial exchange would likely perish in the nuclear winter precipitated by sun-blocking smoke that would enshroud the Earth.

### **A Necessary Evil?**

The course of human history has been defined by war. Imperialists have sought to expand empires at the cost of human lives. The prospect of riches led explorers to conquer indigenous peoples. In both WWI and WWII, aggressors sought to impose their will on mankind and were stopped by those in opposition. History books record the toll on humanity.

The litany of wars and the cost of human life tells the sad story.

But was *war* God’s Plan for *peace* from the beginning? Does He subscribe to man’s idea of a “just war,” which is the idea that resorting to armed force is justified under certain conditions?

While no one could imagine God would endorse reckless, power-hungry tyrants, what about using war to defend against them?

Defense spending comprises large chunks of national budgets and is

soaring ever higher. The U.S. alone allocated over \$1.5 trillion for defense during the 2023 fiscal year, in which it collected about \$4.5 trillion. This means more than a *third* of revenue went toward war!

As reported by the Department of the Treasury: “Generally, Congress allocates over half of the discretionary budget towards national defense and the rest to fund the administration of other agencies and programs. These programs range from transportation, education, housing, and social service programs, as well as science and environmental organizations.”

Put another way, defense spending outweighs all other government-funded programs!

God has a very different way of ensuring peace. Not long after delivering Israel from Egypt by raining plagues down on their enemies, He told the Israelites: “Dread not, neither be afraid of [your enemies]. The LORD your God which goes before you, *He shall fight for you*, according to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes” (Deut. 1:29-30).

Such divine protection requires national obedience to God—which is far from the case today. In fact, God says peace is an IMPOSSIBILITY when left in human hands. As the prophet Isaiah explains: “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have *separated between you and your God*, and your sins have *hid His face from you*, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2).

It is in mankind’s “separated” state that verse 8 comes to bear: “The *way of peace they know not*; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: who-soever goes therein *shall not know peace*.” Human beings have—wittingly or unwittingly—chosen war over peace.

### **What God Says**

War has been glorified for millennia. Boys and men alike dream of battle—victoriously vanquishing foes. In 1943,

General Patton told the 45th Division in Tunisia: “Battle is the most magnificent competition in which a human being can indulge. It brings out all that is best; it removes all that is base. All men are afraid in battle. The coward is the one who lets his fear overcome his sense of duty.”

Patton later commented on such speeches in his diary. He wrote, “in all my talks, I stressed fighting and killing.”

This is the essence of war: fighting and killing. It is why God—who commands “you shall not kill” (Ex. 20:13)—hates war. God alone holds the authority to determine who should live or die (Luke 12:5). He alone reserves the right to *make war* as a means to ending war.

Many believe Jesus “did away with the law.” Yet Christ said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). It was in this context that Christ chose to *amplify* the sixth commandment about killing.

He told his audience: “You have heard that it was said of them of old time, You shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [a term of contempt], shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (vs. 21-22).

Understand what is being said here. Emotions and words, which are mere *precursors* to war, are to be avoided at all costs. How much more does this apply to bloody conflict!

The apostle John wrote, “He that hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and knows not where he goes, because that darkness has blinded his eyes” (I John 2:11).

Building on Christ’s words a chapter later, John explained, “Whosoever

Please see **WAR**, page 31

# Feast and Famine in AMERICA



# Americans throw away enough food to feed every citizen. Why do so many *still* face hunger every day?

BY JUSTIN M. FRAZIER

“O BEAUTIFUL FOR spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain! America! America! God shed His grace on thee.”

The song “America the Beautiful” ties the nation’s natural beauty and agricultural output to God’s blessings.

And U.S. agriculture truly *has* been blessed. America led the world in agricultural exports in 2021, shipping about \$177 billion worth of food and farm products to the rest of the world. And this is only a little over 20 percent of the food it produces.

Such abundance has led to a uniquely American problem: More than a third of the food kept for domestic use is never eaten. Much of it ends up in landfills, exacerbating health and environmental issues. These concerns led over 50 local officials to sign a letter in October 2023 calling on the Environmental Protection Agency to help municipal governments cut food waste in their communities.

The EPA recently released two reports on the scope of America’s food waste problem. Tackling food waste is a daunting challenge that the U.S. has attempted to address before. In 2015, the United States Department of Agriculture and the EPA set a goal of cutting food waste in half by 2030, but the country has made little progress, said Claudia Fabiano, who works on food waste management for the EPA.

“We’ve got a long way to go,” Ms. Fabiano stated.

But the land of plenty has a second, unexpected food problem. An estimated 17 million households reported problems getting enough to eat in 2022. A recent Department of Agriculture report paints a sobering picture of

post-pandemic hardship with “statistically significant” increases in food insecurity across multiple categories. The report said 12.8 percent (17 million households) reported occasional problems affording enough food in 2022.

The United States has about 130 million households. That means that last year, one out of every eight households had difficulty regularly putting food on the table. Many of the households that experienced these problems include children.

Too much food, yet too little. How can American prosperity allow the nation to produce more food for export than any other country and discard over one-third of the rest—all while so many citizens struggle?

## Food Waste by the Numbers

Recycle Track Systems, a company that helps municipalities and businesses with waste management, estimates that America discards nearly 60 million tons of food annually. To put this in perspective, the average U.S. adult eats just under one ton of food each year. Enough food ends up in landfills each year to feed over 30,000 people an average diet or nearly double the minimum daily energy requirement.

Why does so much food get trashed?

RTS says that food spoilage, whether real or perceived, is a major culprit. Americans tend to buy more food than they need, with the excess destined to spoil. Since many citizens were never taught how to store food properly, even some of their *necessary* food ends up spoiled and thrown away.

In addition, over 80 percent of Americans throw away *edible* food. Much of this stems from fear of foodborne illnesses and confusion about the “best by,” “use by,” “sell by”

and “best before” labels and associated dates.

Even grocery stores throw away food. A recent viral video showed one store with three lines of over eight carts—each one full of T-bone steaks, chicken and other refrigerated items. All of it was destined for the dumpster because the coolers malfunctioned. In such instances, the food could potentially have still been good, but laws state retailers can neither sell nor donate refrigerated food that has gone over a certain temperature.

American advertising has conditioned consumers to expect their food to look “right” and forego imperfect produce. Anything with a scar, blemish, or discoloration gets shunted from the store shelves. Carrots with bends or multiple roots, potatoes with marked skins, yellowed cucumbers, green oranges or too-small lemons either get disposed of or shipped to commercial or industrial facilities.

In addition, restaurants, caterers and other commercial food venues often include large portions, leaving much to be discarded. Consumers may take leftovers home only to let them rot before chucking them in the trash.

Industrial food production, such as packaging factories, try to squeeze every penny out of the food they buy. This usually results in less tasty food that consumers are less likely to finish eating.

Food losses come from many other sources beyond supermarkets, beginning with overproduction on the farm. Food that cannot be sold for a profit often remains to decompose in the field.

Most of America’s food is produced domestically. California produces fruits, vegetables, nuts and dairy. Iowa leads the nation in corn, soybeans and eggs. Texas leads the nation in beef, and produces cotton, hay and grains. Nebraska is another large source of beef, corn and soybeans. The Midwestern states contribute to the nation’s corn, soybean and wheat production.

America imports fruits and vegetables, like avocados, tomatoes, ber-

ries and peppers from Mexico. Canada provides fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy and grains. Seafood and some fruits and vegetables arrive from China and other Southeast Asian nations. South American countries provide the U.S. with many varieties of fruits, while the EU exports wine, cheese, chocolate and specialty foods.

But all this food must travel from its source to the consumer, which takes incredible logistics. Ships transport food from other nations where it joins domestically produced food on the American rail and roadway systems.

The American Trucking Association estimates that over 70 percent of all freight in the U.S. moves by truck, and a significant portion is food. Inefficiencies and damage during transportation, storage and distribution create further losses before the food even gets to the consumer.

Wasted food that finds its way to a landfill represents more of a loss than just the food itself. Consider the logistics costs, from fuel, the normal wear and tear on man and machine, storage, inventory carrying costs and consumables, such as tires and fuel, not to mention the secondary requirements such as administrative support personnel and information technology.

Just the human hours taken to pick, process, package and transport food across the country and around the world can stagger the mind. All this cost and effort to move tons of food that so often goes from the farm to the landfill.

### **Hunger Amid Plenty**

The term “food security” refers to how available food is in a community and whether the people there can access and afford it. People with food security can focus on improving the quality of their lives and their community, but those without it typically face many other hardships, including poverty, higher crime neighborhoods and poorer education.

Analysts and food security professionals in the United States point to the dual impact of high inflation and the gradual expiration of multiple

pandemic-era government assistance measures as leading causes for the rise in food insecurity in 2022.

“This underscores how the unwinding of the pandemic interventions and the rising costs of food has taken hold,” said Geri Henchy, director of nutrition policy for the Food Research and Action Center. “It’s like a horrible storm for families.”

The number of households reporting more serious forms of economic hardship has also increased. A recent report by the USDA’s Economic Research Service tracked families with “very low food security”—a condition it defines as families having to ration food consumption and where “normal eating patterns were disrupted at times during the year because of limited resources.”

Households experiencing this level of hardship in 2022 rose to 5.1 percent (6.8 million households), up from 3.8 percent (5.1 million households) in 2021 and 3.9 percent (5.1 million households) in 2020.

Increased benefits and more relaxed enrollment rules for SNAP—the foundational government assistance program commonly known as food stamps—did not end until early 2023. But a host of other federal and state-level pandemic aid initiatives wound down in 2022. One key national change Ms. Henchy highlighted was the end of universal free school lunches for all students, a policy that ended over the summer of 2022.

“These were healthy, nutritious meals because the schools had good standards,” she said. “It was great for the kids. It was stigma-free, and it was huge for people’s budgets.”

Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack called the reported results “unacceptable.” He highlighted the increased fruit and vegetable benefits for recipients of WIC—an aid program that specifically targets mothers and young children. The increased WIC benefits package is one of the few pandemic policies that is continuing, although there have been proposals in Congress to bring those benefits down to pre-pandemic levels.

“The experience of the pandemic showed us that when government invests in meaningful support for families, we can make a positive impact on food security, even during challenging economic times,” Mr. Vilsack said in a statement. “No child should go hungry in America.”

These findings broadly mirror real-time anecdotes from late last year, when multiple food banks and charitable groups reported being surprised by the higher-than-expected levels of need entering the 2022 holiday season. In several cases, food banks and charities made educated estimates of how much food they would need to distribute, only to find that those predictions were far too low.

Food banks gather food to distribute to smaller, more local pantries and soup kitchens. A soup kitchen gives prepared meals to people, while a food pantry provides food for people to take home and prepare themselves. Different organizations sponsor or run food pantries, including churches, schools and nonprofits. For many people with food insecurity, a food pantry becomes a lifeline.

But food pantries are notoriously difficult to stock and run. All the food these provide must be donated or purchased with donated funds. When times get harder for people in general, food pantry donations decrease. Many food pantries do not have enough space to store good food. When it comes to nutritious fresh foods, refrigeration becomes an issue. Food pantries are nonprofits, which means they face further difficulties finding enough staff and volunteers to ensure their clients get what they need.

Despite this, food pantries provide a vital service to those facing food insecurity. A 2021 study by the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and the University of Dallas found that a 10 percent increase in visits to food pantries correlated to a 5.7 percent decrease in food insecurity.

But consider the difference in these numbers. An increase in using a food pantry yielded about half as much

decrease in the problem. If everyone who needed food went to a food pantry, they could address about half the problem. Ultimately, food pantries can only provide a temporary lifeline to people because they only address one *symptom* of a much larger problem.

### Gleaning: A Patchwork Solution

America has tried many programs to address the twin issues of food waste and insecurity. Some people have pushed food rescue programs where volunteers “rescue” food about to be discarded and take it to soup kitchens or other social service providers. Others have sought policy changes, like the local leaders asking for help from the EPA. Some try to use technology to improve how food is stored or distributed.

One type of program that has both reduced food waste and increased food security is called gleaning. Similar to food rescue programs, gleaning aims to redirect excess food from some of the major sources of food waste *and* food loss by going to farms, farmers’ markets, restaurants, grocery stores and other sources and move the excess food directly to food pantries.

A program at the University of Kentucky showed that a small group of dedicated people can make an impact on local food security. The USDA even has a gleaning toolkit that explains what gleaning is and how to start a program.

The difficulty with modern gleaning programs lies deeper than simply getting excess food to where it is most needed. First, these organizations must find donors, and then they must find a pantry that will accept fresh food. Second, gleaning only provides food during the harvest season, but people must eat year-round.

In 2020, there were over 160 gleaning organizations in the U.S. Five large volunteer groups had over 14,000 volunteers putting in nearly 50,000 hours to glean, package and distribute food. And yet the reports from the EPA and the USDA show that, even with this massive effort, the problem has not been solved.

# 7 Ways to Reduce Food Waste



## 1. Store food correctly

Improper storage leads to a massive amount of food waste.



## 2. Learn to preserve

Pickling, fermenting and canning techniques can help you extend the shelf life of your food.



## 3. Use your freezer

Freezing food is a great way to extend its shelf life. Just make sure to label and date everything.



## 4. Get creative with leftovers

Instead of throwing away leftovers, try to repurpose them into new meals.



## 5. Prep your meals

Preparing your meals ahead of time can help you save time and reduce food waste.



## 6. Donate food

If you have excess food that you cannot consume, consider giving it to someone in need.



## 7. Compost

Composting is a great way to reduce food waste and create nutrient-rich soil for your garden.

The same God credited for U.S. abundance in “America the Beautiful” also set up gleaning as a way to feed the poor. The Bible has many practical instructions that deal with food waste and food insecurity.

Leviticus 19 explains how this worked: “And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God” (vs. 9-10).

Farmers in ancient Israel sowed these areas just like the rest of the field, but they went unharvested—left for the poor and the stranger in the land.

On top of this, during harvest, any produce not gathered by the farmer on his first pass was commanded to be left behind for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow (Deut. 24:19-21). This included grain, olives, grapes and other produce.

Through these commands, God generously made provision for those who fell on hard times, but He required them to work for it. They had to put in the effort to go into the field and glean what was left for them.

Also, people were permitted to eat food from any field they passed through (Deut. 23:24-25). Travelers did not need to worry about carrying enough food for their journey or being famished next to a field full of delicious fruits and vegetables. They could eat as much as they needed when hungry, but were not allowed to take any with them.

#### **Permanent Food Security**

The poor are so important to God, He required each person to, every three years, “bring forth all the tithe of your increase the same year, and...lay it up within your gates, and the Levite, (because he has no part nor inheritance with you,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within your gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD your God may bless you in all

the work of your hand which you do” (Deut. 14:28-29).

This special tithe—10 percent of a person’s harvest—was given to the Levites to distribute to those in need. (To learn more about tithing, read *End All Your Financial Worries* at [rcg.org/eayfw](http://rcg.org/eayfw).)



**“The Bible has many practical instructions that deal with food waste and food insecurity.”**

These Old Testament laws were simple, yet effective in taking care of the poor in Ancient Israel. Some modern attempts to care for the poor have been noble and sincere, yet ultimately fall short because they were not administered on a national scale or based on godly principles.

All of this lays bare a bedrock truth: On its own, mankind cannot solve its problems. No matter how hard government leaders and individuals try, the world is faced with a Gordian knot of evils and ills.

Food waste and food insecurity is a perfect example. As you dig into the issue, you find that it ties into many other problems society faces. Greed leads to income inequality, pride and hatred leads to conflicts between people and war between nations, lust leads to the breakdown of family, stealing leads to the breakdown of civil order and disobedience to God’s way of life leads to every other evil in society.

Yet this will not continue forever. In the near future, God promises to come and implement His commands, including how food should be provided and distributed to the poor. During this coming Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), all people will enjoy abundance. No longer will massive amounts of food go to waste, nor will people go hungry without hope.

Food insecurity will be gone because every family will be able to grow all the food they need. Notice Micah 4: “They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken it” (vs. 4). The book of Amos adds, “Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that sows seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt...and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them” (9:13-14).

Yet, in the short term, man will continue to pursue his own solutions to food problems. These will continue to fail. Only by obeying God and following His principles can a society truly prosper.

To learn much more about why man and his governments cannot fix societal woes, read our booklet *Why Man Cannot Solve His Problems* at [rcg.org/uun](http://rcg.org/uun). □



# Biblical Identities of Modern Nations

Many of today's nations can be found within the pages of the Bible. You just have to know where to look.

BY GARRICK R. OXLEY AND SAMUEL C. BAXTER

“**A**DAM, SHETH, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered, Henoah, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and...”

Genealogies in the Bible seem to go on forever, don't they?

This quote is from I Chronicles 1, and it continues for 407 verses—with about 1,000 names. While this is the longest familial list in the Bible, such daunting blocks of text are found throughout the Old Testament and can make reading God's Word a challenge.

So why are genealogies included in Scripture?

Everything in the Bible has a purpose. Psalm 12:6 says, “The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, *purified seven times*.” This means God preserved the names of people who lived thousands of years ago for a reason.

Think. Nations do not appear out of thin air—they each started small. Individuals named in Scripture had families and descendants over many generations. As families grew large, they gradually became nations. For

example, the nation called Israel began with a man named Israel.

God wants Bible readers to understand scriptural lineages and identities because they are directly tied to understanding nations. He uses the nations of the world as instruments to fulfill His Plan. Job 12:23 states that God “makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and guides them” (New King James Version). Many of the individuals named in Bible genealogies have become populous countries in today's world.

Some nations were foretold in Scripture to become allies with one another, while others are bitter rivals. Some families grown large have become mighty empires, while others have more narrow, specialized roles to play.

This principle does not just apply to Jewish people in modern Israel, or only to certain lesser-known countries. The most powerful nations today have origins that can be directly traced to the pages of Scripture.

Understanding the Bible identities of modern nations reveals incredible insights into our world—as well as pointing to what role these peoples will play in prophecy.

## America and Britain

The world has long been suspicious of America's biblical origins. Puritan leader John Winthrop, in a 1630 sermon titled “A Model of Christian Charity,” said that, if the Puritans did justly, loved mercy and remained humble, “We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when He shall make us a praise and glory that men shall say of succeeding plantations, ‘may the Lord make it like that of New England.’”

In this last phrase, Winthrop was paraphrasing Genesis 48:20, which states: “The nation Israel will invoke blessings by you, saying, ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh’” (Christian Standard Bible).

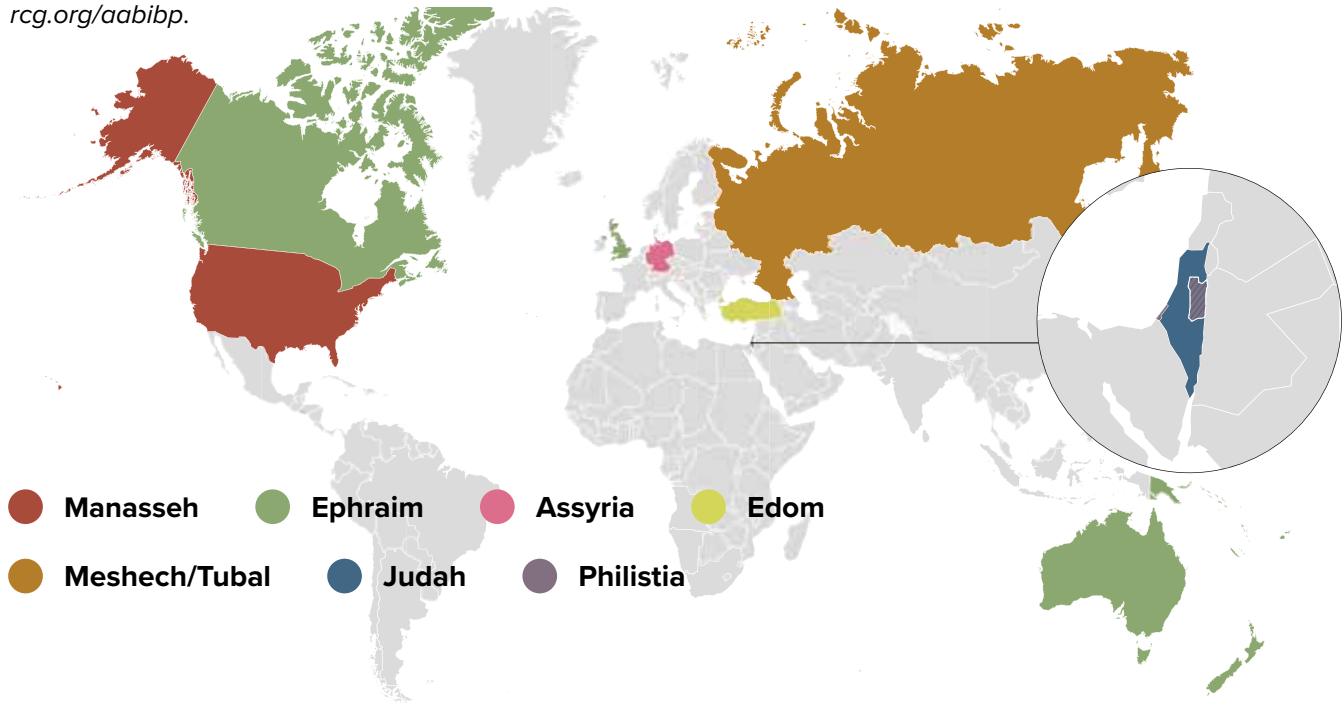
Little did Winthrop know what he was saying. The verse quoted helps prove the Bible identities of both the United Kingdom and America.

In Genesis 48, Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh were given separate blessings. Verse 19 states that Manasseh “shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.”



# Ancient Tribes—Modern Nations

The Bible and history reveal that today’s modern nations were once known by other names. This map is not an exhaustive record of where these peoples live today. For more information, visit [rcg.org/aabibp](http://rcg.org/aabibp).



Scour the record of history. There are only two brother nations with a common heritage where one was a massive empire—a “multitude” or “company of nations”—and the other became a single, great nation. These are the United Kingdom with all of its commonwealth countries and the United States.

These blessings came to these nations as the result of a promise God gave to Ephraim and Manasseh’s great-grandfather Abraham. Because of this patriarch’s obedience, God assured him, “in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Gen. 22:17).

That promise was passed down through Abraham’s line, and today’s residents of the U.S., UK and commonwealth nations are the unwitting recipients of this special blessing.

Britain also has heavy ties to ancient Israel.

In modern Britain, two hymns are often sung at royal weddings and funerals—as well as sporting events. One titled “Jerusalem” muses about

a non-biblical legend of a young Jesus Christ coming to visit Britain with Joseph of Arimathea: “And did those feet in ancient time, walk upon England’s mountains green?”

There has even been a campaign to have “Jerusalem” replace “God Save the King” as Great Britain’s national anthem.

The other is the Welsh hymn “Bread of Heaven.” A literal translation of the words reveals a song about ancient Israel traveling to the Promised Land. It asks God to “guide me through the wilderness,” “give me manna,” and provide drink from “the sweet springs which gush forth from the rock.” Another translation calls this “the Rock that is.”

Is it any wonder these two hymns are so popular in modern Ephraim?

Then there is the stone that has sat beneath the coronation throne for every British king and queen for centuries. Writing about the crowning of King George IV, *European Magazine* said in 1821 that beneath the throne “is enclosed a stone, commonly called Jacob’s Stone,

or the Fatal Marble, being an oblong square...of which tradition relates, that it is the stone on which Jacob lay his head, on the plains of Luz...”

Ancient Irish annals tell of a patriarch called Ollam Folla or Ollav Fola (roughly meaning “prophet” in both Hebrew and Celtic languages). Irish lore and historical evidence point to his identity as being the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. These chronicles of Ireland also record that he brought with him the coronation stone. The tomb of Ollam Folla is still located near Oldcastle in Ireland today.

As far as character goes, Ephraim and Manasseh have historically been incredibly generous, fulfilling Genesis 22:18, which states that through Abraham’s descendants, “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” The *U.S. News & World Report* stated that “the U.S. gives more money in foreign aid in total dollars than any other country in the world, distributing more than \$530 billion globally between 2012 and 2021. In 2021 alone—the most recent year for which data is complete—the U.S. gave

foreign countries about \$52.4 billion.” The UK is in second place.

Yet God also calls out the sinful character of these nations. Isaiah 28:1 mentions the “drunkards of Ephraim” and Hosea 7:11 calls the tribe “a silly dove without heart.” These criticisms go beyond just the British people, as Ephraim is often used in Scripture to include all the tribes of Israel (Ezek. 37:16).

What will befall the modern nations of Israel is found throughout the prophets in the Old Testament, including punishment for national sins.

### Israel

The nation of Israel has its roots in biblical times and was formed from the descendants of a man named Israel, who had 12 sons. Following the death of King Solomon, the nation was divided into two separate kingdoms. One was the House of Judah—which consisted of descendants of Israel’s fourth oldest son Judah, as well as Benjamin, the youngest son, and Levi, the third oldest son. The other kingdom was called the House of Israel. Over time, the descendants of Israel lost their identity.

Judah, however, was never considered lost and is understood to be the Jewish peoples of today. The Jews never lost sight of their biblical identity—because they generally continued to observe the seventh-day Sabbath, a sign that identifies God’s people (Ex. 31:13).

One of the first things the House of Israel did when it split from Judah was set up its own holy days, laws and other religious observances. Israel rejected the identifying sign that would have, over the centuries, reminded them of their ancient origin. Today, most who are descended from Israel—the U.S., UK, Ireland, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland and Greenland—believe they are Gentiles!

### Russia

There is a much older culture at work in Russia than what was born in the

minds of communist leaders such as Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin. This should have been especially known to Stalin, who was of the Ossetians—a people who hold to the traditions of the ancient Scythians.

Some Scythians (a broad term for a number of tribes who lived north of the Caspian Sea) had similar earmarks to Russian culture as seen during the Soviet era and today.

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

Bible historians almost unanimously believe that Moschi equates with Meshech, a tribe mentioned throughout the Old Testament. Meshech slowly moved north, along with his brother Tubal’s descendants, until they settled in modern Russia.

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

Throughout history, the Russians have been known to use human-wave military tactics, sending hordes of soldiers to overwhelm the enemy. Similarly, the nation is known for banding together and sacrificing for a common cause. Ezekiel 32:26 alludes to these characteristics when mentioning “Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude.”

Note that Madai gave rise to the Medes. So when Meshech or the Medes are mentioned in Bible prophecy—events that have not yet occurred—you should think Russia. All the Medes and Russians who have ever lived have a giant role to play in prophecy, as recorded in Ezekiel 38-39, Jeremiah 51:11 and Isaiah 13:17-18.

### Turkey

*Encyclopaedia Britannica* explains the dual branches of Turks: “The Turkic peoples may be divided into two main groups: the western and the eastern. The western group includes the Turkic peoples of southeastern Europe and those of southwestern Asia inhabiting Anatolia (Asian Turkey) and northwestern Iran. The eastern group comprises the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, Kazakhstan, and the autonomous region of Xinjiang in China. Turkic peoples display a great variety of ethnic types.”

While there has been some intermarriage, the western Turks are generally Caucasoid (white) and known as Oguz. The eastern clans are distinctly Mongoloid (of Asian descent).

You are likely familiar with the Ottoman Empire. A clue to the origin of the Oguz Turks can be found in the name “Ottoman.” Note that it was adapted from the ruler Osman, which is also spelled Othman and Uthman. Volume II of Edward Gibbons’ *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* includes additional spellings: “...Thaman, or Athman, whose Turkish name has been melted into the appellation of the caliph Othman.”

Thaman was a family name with roots in the Bible: Teman was a chieftain of the ancient Edomite kingdom and the grandson of Esau. William Hazlitt’s *The Classical Gazetteer* spells Teman as Thaman.

So the modern Turks are the descendants of Esau.

The Old Testament shows that Esau was the son of Isaac and older twin of Jacob (who was renamed Israel). Both brothers were grandsons of the patriarch Abraham. The Oguz Turks have a direct tie to the land of Israel as Esau was born in that region.

Esau is another nation that has forgotten its ancient roots. Read Genesis 36: “These were dukes [chieftains] of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the firstborn son of Esau; duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke Kenaz” (vs. 15).

The Esau-Eliphaz-Teman line gave rise to the Ottoman Turks and modern Turkey. The Ottoman-Teman connec-

tion is just one proof of where most of Esau's descendants reside today. Esau is synonymous with Edom: "Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom" (Gen. 36:8).

A classic Edomite trait is allying with other peoples and adopting their cultures—such as the Oguz among the Mongoloid Turks.

This started with Esau himself. He married a daughter of Ishmael (the father of the modern Arabs), a daughter of the Hittites, and another Hittite woman who also had ties to the Hivites (Gen. 36:2-3).

Psalms 83, Isaiah 63 and the book of Obadiah reveal Edom's role early in God's Kingdom. Amos 9:11-15 reveals a happy ending for Esau's descendants after tumultuous events.

### **Palestine**

The name Palestine encompasses the ancient Holy Land and the modern nation of Israel. The Romans assigned this name to the region about the second century AD, switching it from Judea. The change was likely an attempt to quell the continued revolts from Jews in the area.

Yet Palestine can still be found in the Bible. The Hebrew term Pelesheth, which refers to the land of the ancient Philistines—Philistia—can be found in Exodus 15:14, Isaiah 14:29 and 31 and Joel 3:4.

Gaza is also referenced throughout the Bible.

The Philistines were descendants of Ishmael, the half-brother of Isaac. The friction between those siblings continues today in modern Israel. To learn more, read our article "Israel vs. Hamas: 4,000 Years in the Making."

### **Germany**

British lexicographer Sir William Smith described the early Germans: "Their men found their chief delight in the perils and excitement of war. In peace they passed their lives in listless indolence, only varied by deep gaming and excessive drinking."

Germans have long been known to have an almost Jekyll-and-Hyde per-

sonality—changing drastically between wartime and peace.

Biographer Emil Ludwig said in *The Germans: Double History of a Nation*: "The Romans no more than the Franks or the Italians—indeed, not a single neighbor of the Germans—could ever trust the Germans to remain peaceable. No matter how happy their condition, their restless passion would urge them on to ever more extreme demands."

British filmmakers Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger mused on the dual nature of Germans in their 1943 film "The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp." One character, seeing WWI German officers in a prisoner-of-war camp quietly listening to orchestral music, observed: "I was thinking, how odd they are...For years and years they are writing and dreaming of beautiful music and beautiful poetry. All of a sudden they start a war: they sink undefended ships, shoot innocent hostages, and bomb and destroy whole streets in London, killing little children. And then they sit down in the same butcher's uniform and listen to Mendelssohn and Schubert."

Most historians believe the Germans originated in Europe along the Baltic Sea but are unclear as to where the people derive their ancient roots.

Smith reveals a clue to their origin: "The Germans regarded themselves as indigenous in the country; but there can be no doubt that they were a branch of the great Indo-Germanic race, who, along with the Celts, migrated into Europe from the Caucasus and the countries around the Black and Caspian seas [modern-day Turkey], at a period long anterior to historical records."

Anthropologist Sir Leonard Woolley records in his book *The Sumerians* a strikingly similar tribe living in the same region: "To the north and east of them, in the Zagros hills and across the plain to the Tigris, there lived a people of very different stock, fair-haired and speaking a 'Caucasian' tongue, a hill-people akin to the Guti..." (Some historians equate the Guti with the Germanic tribe known as the Goths.)

Woolley continues by stating that after an attempt to take over the Tigris River valley, they "remained in what was afterwards Assyria..."

When looking at how Assyria is described in the Bible, their ties to the modern Germans become clear. Isaiah 10:5-7 lays bare the nation's character: "O Assyrian, the rod of My anger, and the staff in their hand is My indignation...Howbeit he means not so, neither does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few." God, who ultimately directs world events and the future of nations, is describing the Assyrian people as a tool of punishment.

Germany was at the heart of both world wars. Yet those in the nation today are adamant that they will never again do such a thing.

The Assyrians repeatedly clashed with ancient Israel. For instance, Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul) forced the nation to pay tribute to him (II Kings 15:19-20). The Assyrians will again be used to punish Israel in prophetic events—with both nations ultimately coming to peaceful ends (Isa. 11:16).

### **All Nations**

There are many other national identities that could be covered. For example, China, India and other Asian nations descend from Japheth, and they play a role in "the kings of the east" in Revelation 16:12.

In addition, many prophecies mention all nations—and it means *all nations*, usually including everyone who has ever lived. Notice Isaiah 2:2: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and *all nations* shall flow unto it."

God's Plan includes all nations, yet He often focuses on Israel because He expects more from it—God intended it to be a model nation (Deut. 4:5-8).

Read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at [rcg.org/aabibp](http://rcg.org/aabibp) for much more understanding of what the Bible says about today's geopolitical players. □



# Does the World Need God?

Many are moving away from organized religion and belief in a higher power. They argue the world would be better off doing the same.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

**M**IKE DULAK grew up Catholic in Southern California, but by his teen years, he began skipping Mass and driving straight to the shore to play guitar, watch the waves and enjoy the beauty of the morning. “And it felt more spiritual than any time I set foot in a church,” he recalled.

Nothing has changed that view in the ensuing decades.

“Most religions are there to control people and get money from them,” said Mr. Dulak, now 76, of Rocheport, Missouri. He also cited the many sex abuse scandals in churches. “I can’t buy into that,” he said.

As Mr. Dulak rejects being part of a religious flock, he has plenty of company. He is a “none,” meaning he checks “none” when pollsters ask, “What’s your religion?”

The decades-long rise of the nones—a diverse, hard-to-summarize group—is one of the most talked about phenomena in U.S. religion. They are reshaping America’s religious landscape.

In U.S. religion today, “the most important story without a shadow of a doubt is the unbelievable rise in the share of Americans who are nonreligious,” said Ryan Burge, a political science professor at Eastern Illinois

University and author of “The Nones,” a book on the phenomenon.

The nones account for a large portion of Americans, as shown by the 30 percent of U.S. adults who claim no religious affiliation in a survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Other major surveys say the nones have been steadily increasing for as long as three decades.

They are the atheists, the agnostics, the “nothing in particular.” Many are

A billboard in St. Paul, Minnesota, says that atheists vote too.

MICHAEL SILUK/UCG/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

“spiritual but not religious,” and some are neither or both. They span class, gender, age, race and ethnicity.

The one thing that binds this diverse group: THEY REALLY DO NOT LIKE ORGANIZED RELIGION.

In a way, can you blame them? In May of 2023, the Illinois attorney general revealed that more than 450 Catholic clergy abused nearly 2,000 children from 1950 to 2019. Add this to the many thousands more boys and girls that have been abused around the globe. In 2019, a 288-page report detailed how the Southern Baptist Convention systematically hid sexual abuse allegations among its leaders.

Then there are the rampant financial schemes. One minister took some \$16 million from members of church flocks in 43 states in the name of the so-called “prosperity gospel,” *CNBC* reported. One family gave the man their entire life savings of \$1.3 million, believing it would further God’s kingdom—but it all turned out to be a Ponzi scheme. The man is now serving a 19-year federal prison sentence for fraud.

The men and women who claim to be selected by God to lead churches keep failing parishioners. Over and over.

Such actions by church leaders fly in the face of what the Bible clearly says—driving away adherents even more.

Take the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:27-28: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also *outwardly appear righteous* unto men, but within you are *full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*”

Despite this clear condemnation of hypocrisy, think of all the scandals that fly in the face of that.

Beyond bad examples of individual ministers and church leaders, religion in general has a sordid track record throughout history. The sheer number of negative things done in the name of God fills history books. Muslim extrem-

# Rise of the Nones

*Why are people shifting toward Nones instead of Christianity?*

*“Nones” are those who do not identify with any religion.*

## Lack of Belief

Many people who identify as nones do not believe in God or a higher power.

## Science

Some nones may reject religious teachings because they appear to conflict with scientific evidence.

## Personal Experience

Negative experiences with religion or religious institutions may lead people to become nones.

## Lifestyle

Some nones may prefer a secular lifestyle that is not tied to religious beliefs or practices.

## Politics

Political beliefs and values may influence a person’s decision to identify as a none.

## Diversity

The nones category includes people from a wide range of backgrounds and beliefs, and some people may prefer this diversity over the homogeneity of a single religion.

## Social Norms

The rise of nones may be due in part to changing social norms and attitudes towards religion.

## Religious Pluralism

The increasing religious diversity in the United States may make it more difficult for people to identify with a single religion.

## Individualism

The rise of individualism in American culture may contribute to the growth of nones.

Source: [pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org)

ists attacked the U.S. on 9/11 and, more recently, Hamas' attack on Israel sparked the ensuing gruesome war.

Historical religious wars carry hefty body counts. The Reconquista conflicts between Muslim and Christian states led to some 7 million deaths. The Thirty Years War between Catholics and Protestants killed at least 8 million people. The Taiping Rebellion, led by a Christian sect in China, killed more than 20 million.

This is where many of the “nones” may be on to something. They look at all the evils and ills that come from organized religion and decide to look elsewhere.

The nonreligious, agnostics and even atheists have legitimate questions that deserve answers. One of the biggest is this: Does the world really need God in the 21st century?

### The Trend

In 2018, *U.S. News & World Report* found that a majority of people identify religion as the “primary source of most global conflict today.”

Read this another way. Most people believe that things done *in the name of God* are the root of the world's problems.

The article noted that spiritual beliefs create “us vs. them” scenarios. This grows worse during times of conflict.

“When societies shatter, they generally shatter along tribal lines. People are seeing themselves as irretrievably different from their neighbors,” Sam Harris, a neuroscientist and philosopher who has published books on the conflict between religion and science, told the news outlet.

The article continued: “The divisions created by religion are deeper and potentially more harmful than those formed through other aspects of identity such as race, nationality or political affiliations because they confront individuals with differing opinions on the ultimate purpose of life, experts say. And more than 80 percent of those surveyed said that religious beliefs guide a person's behavior.”

While the U.S. is trending away from religion, this is not the case globally. Amid all the religious conflicts throughout Earth today, the problem is poised to grow worse.

In 2022, Pew Research Center reported that from 2010 to 2050, Muslim adherents are projected to grow faster than any other religion—and will rival or surpass “Christians as the world's largest religious group before the end of this century.”

Religious unaffiliated will go from 16 percent in 2010 down to 13 percent in 2050, Pew stated. During that time, Muslims will increase from 23 percent to 30 percent of the world population. In addition, by 2060, over 40 percent of the world's Christians are predicted to live in sub-Saharan Africa.

As the religious unaffiliated shrink and religions grow larger, does anyone think that violent conflicts will not result? The clash of Muslim-based Hamas with majority Jewish Israel is just one example. The coming decades are slated to have so many more such bloody conflicts.

Is this all worth it? In the name of God, many individuals and organizations want to do the right things. They want to help. Yes, they do *some* good, but it always seems to come with sordid scandals and violence.

### God and Morality

Does the world really need God to be ethical and moral? Many say no.

Pew asked 38,426 people in 34 countries a question along these lines in 2019. A median of 51 percent reported that belief in God is not needed to be moral and have good values.

However, the study revealed many regional differences.

Pew's report stated: “People in the emerging economies included in this survey tend to be more religious and more likely to consider religion to be important in their lives, and they are also more likely than people in this survey who live in advanced economies to say that belief in God is necessary to be moral.”

Wealthier nations show an opposite trend: “In the eight Western European publics surveyed, a median of just 22% say belief in God is necessary to be moral, while in the six Eastern European nations studied, a median of 33% share the same view. Prior research establishes the European continent as increasingly secular on the whole, though among Europeans, there are notable differences between Eastern and Western countries in attitudes toward religion and religious minorities.”

In America, 44 percent said belief in God is necessary to be moral.

The U.S. is a great case study of religion versus the secular. Other Western nations have long subscribed to a more secular approach—Canada and the United Kingdom answered the question with 26 percent and 20 percent respectively.

In America, the clashes between religious and secular groups can be seen daily in its political discourse. Abortion, gender issues, and what is taught in schools are all polarizing topics that lead to heated debate. For the religious right in the U.S., they have taken it upon themselves to push for “godly” laws.

The problem with this? It goes against what Jesus clearly taught.

While on trial before His crucifixion, Jesus addressed whether His followers should fight, protest or campaign in His name: “My Kingdom is not of this world: if My Kingdom were of this world, *then would My servants fight*, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My Kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36).

Some believe God's Kingdom arrived after Christ's resurrection and ascension, so they think this instruction does not apply today. However, did the 12 apostles ever fight the powers that be? Is there any evidence that they campaigned to enact change in their governments?

Nope. So trying to make the U.S. more Christian now is against what Christ taught—and will only cause more bitter division.

But this does not let secularists off the hook. Canada, the UK and much of Europe all have their own problems, despite being less religious as a whole.

### **Divine Indifference?**

One of the most pointed questions from agnostics and atheists is this: If God is all-knowing and all-powerful, why does He not intervene? Why does He look down on all the war, abuse, corruption and awfulness and then seem to do nothing?

The typical reaction to this question is that, because God does not intervene, He either does not exist or is not worthy of devotion.

Why does God seem to be indifferent to the overall affairs of man?

Perhaps surprisingly, this question has been asked by believers themselves—and it is recorded in the Bible. Psalm 10:1 starts this way: “Why stand You afar off, O LORD? Why hide Yourself in times of trouble?”

Religionists cannot answer this towering question.

Yet the Bible does answer it! God gave human beings free will. He is giving human beings a portion of time to try out their own ways and governments to see that they do not work. Justly, God is allowing people space to see that only by following His ways is true peace and prosperity possible.

So, today’s awful world is the result of thousands of years of man doing his own thing. The decisions and systems of human beings have contributed to all the evils and ills in this world.

But this has a purpose. God wants everyone to finally recognize a powerful truth: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). God wants everyone to see we cannot do this alone.

Ultimately, God will intervene by establishing His Kingdom on Earth. This is the same message that Jesus preached: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives,

and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18).

When the Kingdom arrives, God will work with everyone who has ever lived. They will be able to remember the awful ills that come from following man’s ways and compare them to the conditions that come from society following God’s Law.

One of the first orders of business will be to address religious leaders.

In Jeremiah 50:6, God states, “My people have been lost sheep: their shepherds”—THEIR MINISTERS!—“have caused them to go astray...”

Ezekiel 34:2-3 reveals God’s immense displeasure with hypocritical religious leaders: “Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat, and you clothe you with the wool, you kill them that are fed: but you feed not the flock.”

Verse 10 says God is “against the shepherds,” and the whole chapter shows how He will deal with them.

### **“The Unknown God”**

So does the world need God? Yes, and desperately so. Yet God clearly believes it is not quite time for Him to bring the Kingdom and utterly change the world.

An account in Acts 17 describes how God feels about the current age. The apostle Paul was preaching to the people of Athens.

Paul said: “I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you” (vs. 22-23).

The true God of the Bible is that same UNKNOWN GOD. Most have no idea He exists, trapped by false religious ideas.

Paul continued, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He gives to all life, and breath, and all

things; and has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (vs. 24-26).

The apostle was introducing the true God to these pagan Athenians. Yet Paul’s words also introduce the true God to anyone who will listen.

Notice verse 27: “That they”—everyone who has ever lived—“should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us.”

God wants everyone to seek Him. He wants them to “feel after Him, and find Him.” Yet, sadly, as Romans 3:11 states, “...there is none that seeks after God.”

But this does not mean God is not working with individuals today. At the end of the story in Acts 17, “some mocked” what Paul had to say, while others had the right attitude: “We will hear you again of this matter” (vs. 32).

God does “draw” individuals to Him (John 6:44) by opening their minds to His truths, similar to how the Athenians were ready to hear more of what Paul had to say.

The same goes for you. You may have been asking the same questions posed in this article: Why are so many religions so hypocritical? Why does God not intervene in world affairs?

Or even bigger questions: Can I prove God exists? What role does Satan play? Is the Bible God’s Word? Does He have a true Church?

You deserve answers to these questions! To help you on your way, visit [rcg.org](http://rcg.org) and read *Does God Exist?* and *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?* These are both produced by the publisher of *The Real Truth: The Restored Church of God*.

Do not just take my word for it. Also, do not just take the Church’s word for it. *Prove* these things for yourself from your Bible.

The world *does* need God, and He will soon intervene, bringing the Kingdom of God. Do you need God? Yes. But it is up to YOU to answer His calling. □



# WAR

Continued from page 17

hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (I John 3:15).

In chapter 4, John asks a very pointed question, underscoring what a Christian’s perspective on hatred is: “If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (I John 4:20).

Christians do not hate others, but they are repeatedly commanded to “hate evil!” As the adage goes, “Hate the sin, not the sinner.”

The apostle James asked a question of his own, pointing to the usual motivation behind war: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not” (Jms. 4:1-2).

Rather than relying on God for defense and their needs, nations instead rely on SELF. The result has been bloodshed and death of uncounted millions of humans made in the image of God. God is the God of LIFE, contrasted to Satan, who was “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44).

## War Is NOT the Answer!

Some wonder why God at times *commanded* ancient Israel to go to war. It was never His purpose that this be their path, but Israel’s decisions made it necessary.

When Israel requested a king, God told the prophet Samuel, “Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you: for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them” (I Sam. 8:7). God was willing to go along with the request of imperfect human beings so that they could learn the consequences of their decision (vs. 8-18). The result was a long series of Israelite rulers

enriching themselves at the citizenry’s expense.

War is similar. Because Israel refused *total reliance* on God, He used them to fight battles—to learn the hard lessons of war.

*Real Truth* Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack wrote this in his booklet *War, Killing and the Military*: “God instructed Israel that He would protect them—that they did not need to fight and defend themselves. However, they rejected this instruction—and *protection*—so that they could participate in the adventures and conquests of war waged by the nations around them. Again, God *allowed* them to do this, but gave them instructions—*rules* of war—that they were to follow if they did. These rules are found in Deuteronomy 20.

“Notice, none of them involved the actual teaching of war skills, strategies and tactics—the *art* of war—to Israel. They also allowed for certain ones to receive military exemptions (vs. 5-9). Study the chapter. God said (twice) that He would now fight ‘with’ them (vs. 1, 4) at the time they actually went to war. He would no longer *exclusively Himself* defeat Israel’s enemies.

“But this did allow Israel to be able to drive out certain degenerate, idolatrous peoples from the Promised Land. Yet, Acts 7:45 reveals who was really responsible for their success. Stephen, before he was stoned, referred to ‘the Gentiles, whom *God drove out* before the face of our fathers.’”

These nations—given to cannibalism, demon worship, child sacrifice and numerous other abominations—had gone too far in this life. God did not want these practices to spread among His people. A merciful God therefore put the rebellious people in these nations to “sleep” and plans to resurrect them in the coming Kingdom of God. Then, He will educate them in His ways and provide them the opportunity for eternal life that they could not receive in their original lifetimes.

At this time, “the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the

mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come you, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2-3).

Only with this change in attitude and way of life can mankind achieve true peace. The next verse makes this clear: “And [God] shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war any more*” (vs. 4).

War will end permanently. God’s Kingdom—His Government on Earth—will ultimately give rise to a time of everlasting peace, explained only seven chapters later in Isaiah. “Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end...The zeal of the LORD of Hosts *will perform this*” (Isa. 9:7).

God will bring this about *methodically* and *justly* until war is completely eradicated. Notice Jude’s summary: “The Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (vs. 14-15).

In other words, God will *use war* to *end war*. He has a series of campaigns outlined in both the Old and New Testaments that will rid the world of anyone who—after being given the greatest chance for success—persists in rejecting God. What will be left are vast billions who have learned to hate war and love God’s Way, which is the only way that leads to peace.

Here is the ultimate result of the gospel—the good news of the Kingdom of God—that Jesus Christ preached: a permanent era of unbroken peace! □

## PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

understanding of those who study it: “We have also a more *sure word of prophecy*; whereunto you *do well* that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place...” (II Pet. 1:19). This verse reveals God’s purpose—His “*sure word of prophecy*,” bringing “light” to “dark places”—so people will “take heed.” You must be willing to heed what is written.

Now continue: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (vs. 20). This is crucial. No single verse—or even any two or three passages—is enough to bring full, correct prophetic understanding on big events.

Grasp this. *All* verses on every aspect of prophecy must be carefully *assembled* first. And building the truth begins with the most clear and obvious passages. These are two of the greatest rules of Bible study when exploring any of this Book’s topics. Sadly, these rules, and the rest of the 12 rules of Bible study, are not followed by, or even known to, almost any who read God’s Word. Supposed prophecy experts are no exception.

Back to II Peter: “Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (vs. 21). In short, prophecy comes from God, through His servants, as He inspires them to record His words.

Many of the Bible’s greatest servants were prophets. These men held high office. In fact, most whom God worked through in the Old Testament held this office. And their names jump from Scripture.

Acts 3:19-21 shows prophets announce the coming Kingdom of God. Every prophetic Old Testament book records something about God’s coming Kingdom, with only one exception, Jonah. Most prophets also delivered powerful warnings.

### Proof of God’s Existence—and Power

Prophecy can be summarized as having four distinct purposes. Yet first you

must realize there is only one source for true prophetic knowledge—the Holy Bible. Psychics and seers can sometimes see elements of the future, but their visions invariably have errors alongside any correct elements—because they are connected to the wrong side of the spirit realm.

Despite this, few go to the one infallible source, which foretells—and with astounding, absolute accuracy—all the important events that will soon come upon the entire world! You need never again doubt the authority of *anything* in the Bible—including all subjects discussed in its other half-million words.

So then, the first purpose is that, when proven to have been fulfilled, prophecy becomes undeniable evidence of the *existence* and *power* of God. He alone can fulfill prophecy. No human being has even the *knowledge* of what are world-shattering future events, let alone the power to bring them to pass centuries or even millennia beyond his lifetime. For this reason, it has been said that prophecy is the challenge skeptics *dare not accept*.

How true!

God openly taunts skeptics. This is from Moffatt’s translation: “The Eternal cries, bring your case forward, now, Jacob’s King [God] cries, state your proofs. Let us hear what happened in the past, that we may ponder it, or show Me *what is yet to be*, that we may *watch how it turns out*; yes, let us hear *what is coming*, that we may be sure you are gods; come, do something or other that we may marvel at the sight!—Why, you are things of naught, you can do nothing at all!” (Isa. 41:21-24).

This passage is God’s challenge to disbelievers.

Now another bold statement in Isaiah: “Behold, the former things are come to pass, and *new things* do I declare: *before they spring forth I tell you of them*” (42:9).

God is careful to ensure the credit for foretelling events goes to *Him alone*, not any false prophet or false god. Again from Isaiah: “I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of My mouth, and I

showed them; I did them suddenly, *and they came to pass*. Because I knew that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to you; before it came to pass I showed it you: lest you should say, My idol has done them, and...has commanded them” (48:3-5).

God does not guess the future. He is not just a good or the best *forecaster* or *prognosticator*. Acting deliberately, He brings to pass what He says will happen. If He tells us something—anything—is to occur, it will occur! Moffatt renders verse 3, “What has occurred I *foretold long ago*; it fell from My lips, I predicted it, then suddenly I *acted—it was done*.”

Prophecy is simply God telling human beings what He will do!

God is capable of thwarting and overthrowing the purposes of governments and nations. Notice: “The Eternal wrecks the purposes of pagans, He brings to nothing what the nations plan; but the Eternal’s purpose stands forever, and what He plans will last from age to age...The Eternal looks from heaven, beholding all mankind; from where He sits, He scans all who inhabit the world; He who alone made their minds, He notes all they do” (Psa. 33:10-15, Moffatt translation).

Yes, men may have their plans about how to solve the big, complex problems facing civilization, but God “wrecks” them and brings them to nothing. God has plainly told us how He plans to do this at the end of 6,000 years of human affairs.

### A Means of Encouragement

A second purpose for prophecy is to *encourage* Christ’s true followers. Jesus understood that the Christian way involves trials and difficulties throughout life. This is an inescapable fact for those in whom God is working. These are essential to the character-building process.

One of these trials is persecution. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus warned, “The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). He

had just reminded His disciples, “I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (vs. 19). Of course, Jesus was persecuted, horribly tortured and crucified.

The apostle Paul recorded, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Tim. 3:12). “All” means what it says! Jesus said His servants would be hated! But He reassured them, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20).

Another element of encouragement flows from *prophecy itself*.

Some may assume that all biblical prophecy is “gloom and doom” and “fire and brimstone.” This is not true! In fact, far from it. The ultimate message of prophecy is the most *positive* news in all history. Hundreds of verses preview a time of universal peace, prosperity and happiness—drawing closer daily—that all people will have an opportunity to experience.

Those who choose to yield to God and learn His way of life now *look forward* in a special way, and draw encouragement from these prophecies.

### To Warn and Call to Repentance

A careful study of the Bible demonstrates that God always warns before punishment—whether it be the destruction of cities such as Nineveh, or Sodom and Gomorrah—or of individuals such as wayward kings of Israel and Judah—or of the whole inhabited world before the Flood.

God gives us *this* certain promise of what will happen in advance of events He intends to fulfill: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He *reveals His secret* unto His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). God keeps His promises. He always reveals major events *before* they happen. And they are recorded in the prophets.

So a third purpose of prophecy is that a loving God gives human beings—free moral agents who must choose between right and wrong—space to repent.

Ancient Israel has been the main recipient of such admonitions. Notice: “If My people...shall humble them-

selves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chron. 7:14).

When giving the prophet Ezekiel his commission, God stressed what His servants were to do: “Son of man, I have set you a watchman unto the house of Israel [these are the modern nations descended from ancient Israel]; therefore you shall hear the word at My mouth, and *warn them* from Me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die; if you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hand. Nevertheless, if you warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul” (33:7-9).

It has been my long and sad experience that most people will not truly listen to what God says. They cannot seem to make themselves take *seriously* His commands, instructions and warnings.

With each warning through the ages, some few do heed and repent. Those who do not—having been warned!—bear responsibility for their choices and actions.

### Powerful Motivator

A fourth purpose of prophecy is to *motivate* those who wish to seek God and claim His promise of protection. Knowledge of what is ahead—both the terrible and wonderful elements—motivates true Christians to serve God more fully.

The most serious events just before Christ’s Return will descend like a *snare* on an unsuspecting world—except for those who “watch,” “pray” and “escape” (Luke 21:36). Let’s read: “As a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth” (vs. 35). It becomes clear then that a group is promised to be *protected* during the times just ahead.

Paul wrote this sobering warning: “Of the *times and the seasons*, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you.

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then *sudden destruction comes* upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief... Therefore let us not sleep, *as do others*; but let us watch and be sober” (I Thes. 5:1-6).

Those who take the Bible seriously know what is coming, and live their lives accordingly.

Isaiah explained that God’s Word is written, “*Precept upon precept*, precept upon precept; *line upon line*, line upon line; *here a little*, and *there a little*...” (28:13). Nowhere is this Bible pattern more true than of prophecy. The passage continues with God explaining why His Word is this way: “That they [readers] might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.”

Again, Revelation is written to God’s servants to show them—not others—what must “shortly come to pass.” Isaiah underscores that prophecy *cannot be understood* by those who do not seek to serve and obey God. God has scattered bits and pieces of information on prophecy (and all other subjects) throughout His Word in a way that will cause the mere casual reader to fall backward, be broken, snared, and taken—how?—by false understanding!

They will not comprehend. Visit [rcg.org](http://rcg.org) and look at all the titles we offer *just on prophecy*—the truth of prophecy, and that are all free—not the confusing gobbledygook by so many who write books for sale—for money—who pretend to understand prophecy in order to make a living. These men do not know what they are talking about and do not speak with God’s authority.

In just a few minutes, you have learned more about prophecy than most will ever know.

This article ought to sober each reader, who should now be asking, “How serious am I about understanding—and acting on—Bible prophecy?” Now is the time to consider this question. □



**17,670,000,000,000  
miles**

The night sky has a way of making us ponder our existence. The stupendous grandeur of stars, planets and galaxies—or the Bright Pillar in the Carina nebula pictured here—can make us feel tiny and insignificant. This feeling is nothing new. Millennia ago, ancient Israel's King David wrote this in Psalm 8:3-4: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; WHAT IS MAN THAT YOU ARE MINDFUL OF HIM?"

What is your purpose? While most never find a concrete answer to this question, you CAN know! To learn about your incredible human potential, read the eye-opening book *The Awesome Potential of Man*.

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