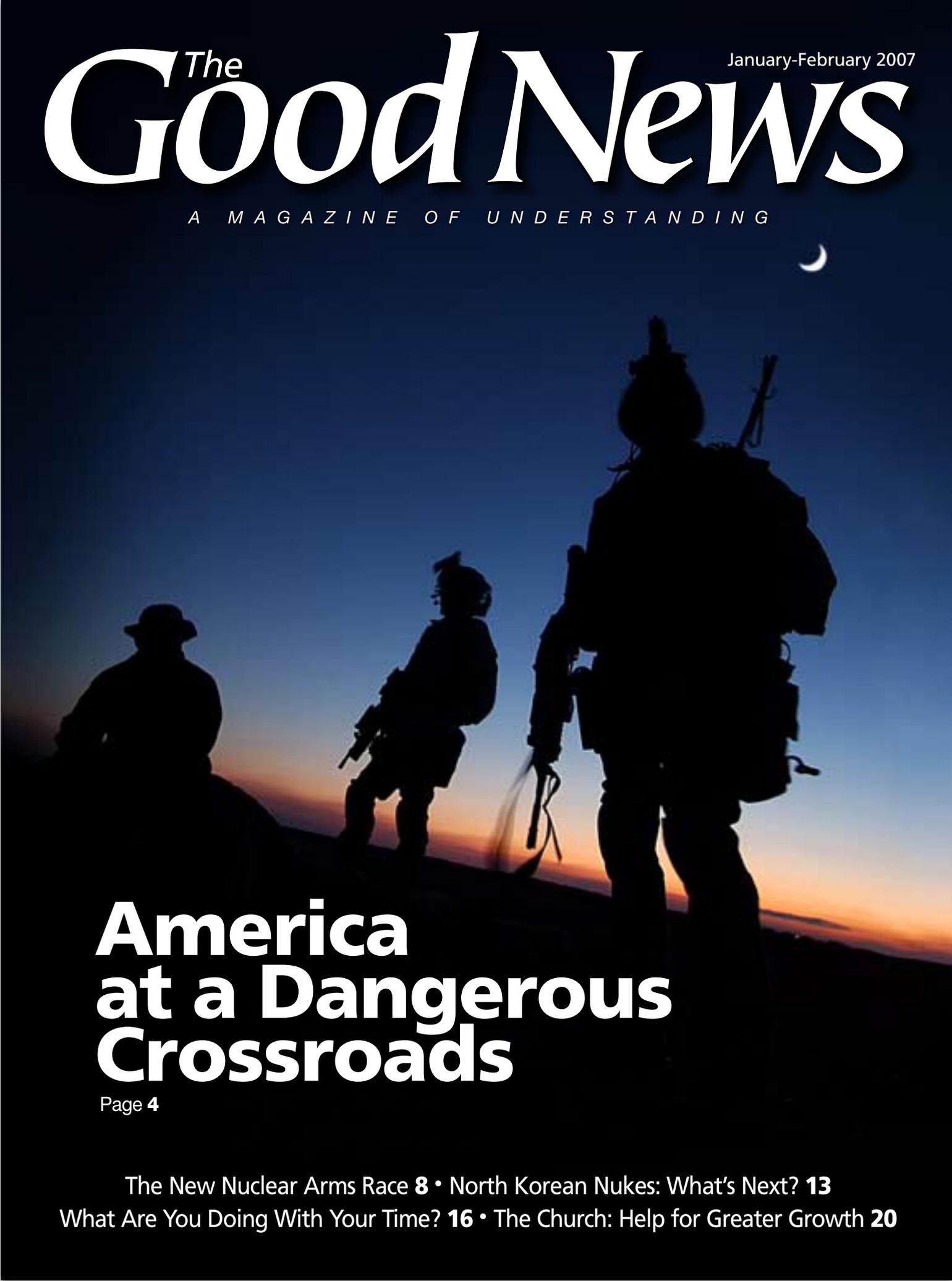


# The Good News

January-February 2007

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



## America at a Dangerous Crossroads

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Recently I had the privilege of spending two weeks in Turkey, long a crossroads, both north-south and east-west, between the vast continents of Asia, Europe and Africa and their armies.

The sense of history one gains from a visit like this is staggering. We saw artifacts and remains from the great empires of history that march across the pages of the Bible—Egypt, Israel, Judah, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Objects from the reigns of ancient monarchs like Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Shalmaneser, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great and Herod made the Bible leap to life.

Yet perhaps most staggering of all is how the great God of the Bible foretold the rise and fall of these mighty empires (see, for example, the remarkable prophecies of the empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome found in Daniel 2, 7, 8 and 11).

## Are we now seeing the stress fractures that signal a major shift in world power, as happened with the British Empire?

And rise and fall they did. Some, like the Roman Empire, endured for a thousand years. Other lasted far less.

All had their day in the sun as superpowers before which others trembled. But today their crumbling ruins stand in silence, mute witnesses to the fact that “the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men” (Daniel 4:17, 32, New International Version).

With the relative stability the Western world has enjoyed over recent decades, it’s hard to imagine that we could be on the verge of another earthshaking shift, a transition from one dominant empire to the next.

For the last two centuries two superpowers have ruled the globe. The first was Britain, measurably the greatest empire the world has ever seen. And though at its peak the sun never set on the British Empire, that empire eventually saw its sunset. The long struggle for survival in World War II left it exhausted, no longer strong enough to hold an empire together. Within a generation it was history.

Since then another superpower has dominated the globe. The United States emerged as the greatest single nation the world has ever seen, facing down even the mighty Soviet Union and its client states before its disintegration.

Are we now seeing the stress fractures that signal a major shift in world power, as happened with the British Empire? Could they spell the end to America’s period of dominance?

Some truly bizarre alliances have emerged in recent years. Fundamentalist Muslim countries like Iran are teaming up with atheist communist nations like China and Stalinist North Korea to trade oil, nuclear know-how and deadly missile systems. Supposed U.S. allies like France and Germany subverted UN sanctions to supply arms to Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. And with Iran and North Korea rushing to produce nuclear arms, Russia and China block any meaningful UN action to prevent it.

What do all these have in common? They’d all like to see the United States taken down a notch or two, if not *taken out altogether*.

And as polls and elections have shown, the United States is deeply divided over its values, direction, place in the world and what to do about it.

Does Bible prophecy offer insights on these developments? We examine that question in the pages of this issue.

—Scott Ashley, Managing editor

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*Publisher:* United Church of God, an International Association *Council of Elders:* Aaron Dean, Robert Dick (chairman), Bill Eddington, Jim Franks, Clyde Kilough, Victor Kubik, Les McCullough, Joel Meeker, Richard Pinelli, Larry Salyer, Richard Thompson, Leon Walker

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Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement Number 40026236.  
Canada return address: *The Good News*, 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, ON N8T 3B7.

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to  
*The Good News*, Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027.

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**A**merica's last few elections have shown it is obviously divided on its direction, values and future. Never before has it seen its national leaders so denigrated, mocked and attacked—a constant, unrelenting assault from the mass media and many foreign countries.

Yet paradoxically the United States is still clearly the most powerful nation in the world. Its economy, even in spite of the enormously expensive war on terror, remains the powerhouse of the world. The U.S. gross domestic product—its total output of goods and services—accounts for almost a third of the output of the entire world. Its economy is 2½ times larger than Japan's, 8½ times that of China and 30 times that of Russia.

America's military budget is greater than that of Russia, China and the European Union combined. And with the United States accounting for almost 80 percent of the world's military research and development expenditures, it clearly possesses the world's most advanced weaponry—as demonstrated in its lightning-quick victories in toppling hostile regimes in Afghanistan in 2001 and in Iraq in 2003.

and find some of today's sentiments about Iraq expressed about Vietnam. The Aug. 7 issue of *Time* magazine that year described the Southeast Asian conflict as a “dirty, ruthless, wandering war, which has neither visible front lines nor visible end . . . Now there is no more talk of being out by 1965—or any other year in the foreseeable future.”

Conditions in Vietnam were to get much worse with the conflict dragging on another decade until the mid-1970s. Today's president has to live with the fact that the patience of the American Congress and citizenry has grown much thinner than in earlier conflicts.

For example, while America has suffered nearly 3,000 battle deaths in Iraq,

in many ways quite dramatically.

When World War II ended in 1945, the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union dominated the world, having defeated the Axis Powers of Germany, Italy and Japan. Yet within a decade the British Empire, long a stabilizing force throughout the world, had been virtually dismantled (with few exceptions like Gibraltar and Hong Kong, the latter returned to China only recently in 1997). Drained by the cost of a long war, Britain could simply no longer afford to maintain its empire.

The Soviet Union and the United States soon entered the long Cold War that didn't end until the epochal fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 along with the attendant



# America at a Dangerous Crossroads

*The mass media's relentless emphasis on bad news from Iraq has led to a major shift in U.S. political fortunes and demands for withdrawal. But this hasn't happened in isolation. Let's review some aspects of 20th-century warfare, diplomacy and current affairs—and most important of all, where the Bible indicates America is headed.*

by John Ross Schroeder

And yet why does a superpower nation like the United States seem unable to quell the ongoing turmoil in Iraq and Afghanistan? Why has history's most powerful nation appeared so impotent in enforcing its will on Iran and North Korea in their pursuit of nuclear weapons? And most important of all, what do these critical dilemmas portend for the future of America and the rest of the world?

## Troubled recent military history

One can open the pages of a popular American newsweekly from the year 1964

that 3½-year total, while tragic, is barely larger than the number of U.S. servicemen killed in *one day* during the D-Day invasion. It's dwarfed by the 426,000 U.S. combat deaths in World Wars I and II, Korea and Vietnam, which took place when America's total population was much smaller than today. Yet seldom do we see such numbers put in perspective. As happened with Vietnam, it appears that most of America no longer has the stomach for a protracted, bloody conflict.

Many Americans' perspective on America's place in the world has also changed—

collapse of the iron curtain.

David Rothkopf, a former national security adviser to the U.S. government, comments on U.S. constraints: “During the Cold War, the power of the United States to act internationally was constrained by the countervailing interests and strengths of the Soviet Union. We could act, but we always had to anticipate and compensate for a reaction from our large adversary” (*Running the World*, 2004, p. xiii).

Out of this atmosphere grew the concept of limited war, that the stakes were too high for America to risk all-out war

again. The Berlin Airlift of 1948-49, the U2 spy plane embarrassment involving an American pilot shot down over Soviet territory in 1960 and held for two years, and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 were three highly dangerous incidents that brought America into potential nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union.

### Change of fortunes in Korea and Vietnam

In the early 1950s North Korea tested America's will to keep peace in the world and to thwart a communist threat in Southeast Asia.

To end the Korean War (1950 to 1953), the United States settled for a stalemate—

their families from the roof of the American embassy as Saigon fell to the onrushing forces of Ho Chi Minh from the North. Soon after, neighboring Cambodia and Laos likewise fell to the communists.

As historian Niall Ferguson points out, "The doctrine of limited war led to a draw in Korea and a defeat in Vietnam" (*Colossus*, 2004, p. 287). Millions died in Southeast Asia as a result.

### New leadership challenges

Coming into office after the defeat in Vietnam, U.S. President Ronald Reagan embarked on a massive military spending program to reestablish American supremacy. The Soviet Union, trying to keep pace,

power America still holds—even if the nation sometimes lacks both the political will and biblical wisdom in using that power.

President John F. Kennedy once promised in a speech to "fight any foe" in the interest of liberty and justice in the world. He belatedly recognized that there were limitations to American power and that he could not intervene in every conflict in the world. Even those with awesome power have to hold their fire and wisely select when and where to intervene in the perceived national interest.

Returning to the present, the most disturbing new challenge to U.S. leadership occurred on Sept. 11, 2001, with the suicide airplane attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. with a tragic loss of some 3,000 lives. Only then did the United States wake up to the fact that the Islamic terror machine had been warring with America for 20 years (remember Beirut in 1982, the attack at the Twin Towers in 1993, embassy bombings in Africa in 1998 and the 2000 attack on the U.S.S. *Cole*—just to name a few).

### What we fail to appreciate

Historian Andrew Roberts articulates a much-needed counter perspective of events in the war on terror. "Those who accuse Bush and Blair of exacerbating Islamicist terrorism through their invasions of Afghanistan and especially Iraq fail to appreciate that murderous and pitiless war-making was already underway long before 2003.

*"If anything, the War against Terror was a belated response . . . Only after 9/11 were the English-speaking peoples finally prepared to fight the struggle properly and employ every element of national power to form a coherent and strong response"* (*A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900*, 2006, p. 601).

Truly 9/11 stunned the world. Many cheered in third world countries. Initially much of the rest of the world rallied around America. Now, just a few years later, the United States can count its friends in the world virtually on one hand. Even friendly governments are paying a price for their loyalty to America and have to bravely withstand the outcries of opposing partisan groups within their own citizenry.

America's reliable allies consist of only a few mostly English-speaking nations: Britain, Australia, Canada and Israel. In reality these friends aren't just friends, but



## Major interventions in Korea, Vietnam and in the Persian Gulf have not led to greater American national security.

one that, considering North Korea's recent test of a nuclear weapon, proved how shortsighted anything but the clear-cut victory that U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur wanted would produce. Considerable American military forces remain stationed in South Korea to this day to maintain an uneasy peace.

The Korean stalemate was followed by the debacle in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. Again, American will to police the world was at stake. Supporters of the war cited the domino theory, that Southeast Asia could follow North Vietnam's lead into communism without firm U.S. intervention.

During that conflict U.S. President Lyndon Johnson observed, "Our will is being tried." The most telling images of the end of that draining conflict were U.S. helicopters evacuating South Vietnamese military and governmental personnel and

soon bankrupted itself, leading to the collapse of the iron curtain and freedom for the former Warsaw Pact nations of Eastern Europe. America soon found itself the sole global superpower.

Rothkopf sums up the situation that would now challenge American leadership: "Indeed, in a new global environment, not only was the power of the U.S. leadership unprecedented, it was also unanticipated . . . American leaders were effectively making decisions affecting the lives and fortunes of tens and hundreds of millions, of billions, who did not choose them, did not understand what they were doing or how they were doing it . . . *We were the defacto leaders of the global community, crowned by history and circumstances . . .*" (*Running the World*, p. xiii).

No nation should let adverse circumstances and setbacks in the United States lead it to underestimate the awesome

are truly blood brothers. (To understand the vital historical connection between these nations, request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Without this essential biblical and historical knowledge, you really cannot truly understand current affairs affecting the English-speaking world.)

**Facing a stacked deck**

The nature of America’s foreign ventures in Southeast Asia and the Middle East has worked against it. As a feature article in the October 2006 issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique* explains: “If the 20th century is any guide, no low-intensity guerrilla war or insurrection has ever been won on foreign soil. The US, like the Soviets in Afghanistan, the French in Algeria and its own forces in Vietnam, might possess far more advanced and destructive firepower, but it is far less committed than its opponents and is far more fragile and prone to losing momentum.

“In a conflict perceived as being between a selfish crusade and selfless jihad, highly trained, paid and equipped US, Israeli and British soldiers strive to stay alive as they fight wars of choice against low-tech volunteer militants who are ready to sacrifice themselves and die as martyrs in a confrontation of necessity. The U.S. mourns its dead; resistance groups celebrate theirs” (Marwan Bishara, “US: World Empire of Chaos”).

U.S. historians Steven Ambrose and Douglas Brinkley point out the nobility of American aims as professed by the nation’s leaders: “From 1961 onward, American presidents never tired of proclaiming that the United States was making sacrifices in Southeast Asia only for the good of the people of that region. The United States had no territorial objectives, nor did it wish to replace the French as the colonial masters of the Vietnamese” (*Rise to Globalism*, 1997, p. 241).

Nonetheless, “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell, a U.S. general based in China before and during World War II, is chiefly remembered for advising his American compatriots not to get involved in land wars in Asia. He knew the “terrain”—the difficulty of fighting a determined foe on his own ground halfway around the world.

**American interventions— a mixed record**

In 1939 America had a relatively small army with few if any real military alliances and virtually no troops stationed in any

foreign countries. Except for a venture or two in Mexico and Cuba and of course World War I, wars with foreigners had been rare in American history, especially compared to Europe. The dominant national mood veered towards isolationism.

However, with enormous American involvement in World War II after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in late 1941, all that changed rather rapidly. Since then the United States has had a fairly large standing army, navy and air force with huge military budgets to support their activities. Technologically, its weaponry

Has America won its last war?

Taking our quest for understanding all these events to a higher level, could there be an all-important, highly significant dimension we have not considered in taking America’s temperature as a nation?

The national motto of the United States, as found on its currency, is “In God we trust.” Yet have not far too many left God out of the picture? Is there a moral dimension that is having a far greater effect on America’s national fortunes than we now realize?

We need to diligently consult a valuable



**In a conflict perceived as being between a selfish crusade and selfless jihad, highly trained, paid and equipped US soldiers . . . strive to stay alive as they fight wars of choice against low-tech volunteer militants who are ready to sacrifice themselves . . .”**

is even more impressive.

Major interventions in Korea, Vietnam and in the Persian Gulf have been punctuated by minor ones at various locations in the Americas like Grenada and Panama. America has forged military alliances with many nations and has sent huge amounts of armaments to those perceived as friendly governments.

Yet American national security has been constantly in jeopardy, perhaps never more so than now with the ongoing war on terror. In spite of heavy U.S. military intervention in the first Gulf War in 1991, in Afghanistan in 2001 and in Iraq in 2003, the problems haven’t gone away. America showed its powerful military could win the war, but couldn’t win the peace.

Overall, U.S. foreign interventions have not had successful outcomes since World War II. Indeed, that’s an understatement. Current conditions at home and abroad might cause us to ask a crucial question:

and reliable source that most Americans have somewhere in their homes. It is, of course, the Bible, which U.S. President Andrew Jackson called “the rock on which our Republic rests.” Consider a passage from Deuteronomy 32:7-9: “Remember the days of old . . . When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations . . . He set the boundaries of the peoples, according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD’s portion is His people; *Jacob is the place of His inheritance.*”

God had His eyes on ancient Israel, and that has not changed when we understand who Jacob’s descendants are today. And yet He is concerned for all nations and all peoples.

**“Righteousness exalts a nation”**

King Solomon, ruler of Israel at the zenith of its power, recorded a great principle of national life: “*Righteousness exalts a nation . . .*” (Proverbs 14:34).

This is true of any nation!

God has blessed America with freedoms and material prosperity perhaps beyond any country in all of history. (Why else do so many people in economically deprived countries want to uproot and move to the United States?)

There has been a measure of biblical understanding in American history. Indeed, some U.S. presidents like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were truly men of great integrity and respect for the Bible. Lincoln even called his countrymen to a national fast and established a national day of thanksgiving. A French author and traveler once remarked that “America is great because America is good.” Perhaps he knew that “righteousness exalts a nation.”

However, there is another side to that same proverb. It continues, “. . . *But sin is a reproach to any people.*” Somehow we Americans have let righteous conduct slip through our fingers, particularly in the recent decades since the end of World War II.

Our pioneer ancestors in America wouldn’t understand our current behavior as a nation. Most of them would be appalled by our lack of morals. They would say that we have turned our backs on God. *And they would be right.*

Indeed, we are denying our Creator and removing Him from public life. Prayer and the Bible have been banned from public schools. Some have tried to take “under God” out of the Pledge of Allegiance. There is a concerted and growing effort to remove the Ten Commandments from the public sphere.

As a nation we have allowed and tolerated rampant sexual immorality, financial impropriety, theft, pornography—the list seems endless. We have already legalized homosexual behavior and in some places have even legalized same-sex marriage. We have aborted our unborn children by the millions, usually for our own convenience.

### Blessings and curses

Believe it or not, what is happening to our English-speaking peoples was forecast in the pages of the Bible a long time ago. You should read carefully the blessings and curses listed in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. God had greatly blessed ancient Israel just as He has also blessed their descendants residing principally in the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, parts of South Africa and Northwest Europe.

Notice another passage in Deuteronomy: “But Jeshurun [another name for Israel] grew fat and kicked . . . *Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation*” (Deuteronomy 32:15).

One of America’s founding fathers, John Adams, said that “riches, grandeur and power will have the same effect upon American as upon European minds.” He meant it as a stark warning. He understood the patterns of history.

The blessings, obligations and warnings—clearly reminiscent of our modern plight today—reside in an earlier chapter of Deuteronomy. There God, through Moses, addressed the Israelites as they stood poised to enter the Promised Land and its abundant natural resources:

“For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of waters, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper” (Deuteronomy 8:7-9).

In principle this passage describes America even more accurately than ancient Israel.

Though geographically they occupied only a very small region of the earth, the Israelites of old were actors on a larger stage. Their audience was the whole human race and their time frame projected itself far into the future.

### Not giving credit to God

God’s divine instructions and warnings followed: “When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. *Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God* by not keeping His commandments, His judgments and His statutes which I command you today. Lest—when you have eaten and are full and have built beautiful houses and dwell in these . . . and all that you have is multiplied, when your heart is lifted up . . . *Then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth’*” (verses 10-17).

Later God said through the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah that “My people have forgotten Me days without number” (Jeremiah 2:32). The tragic results are everywhere to be seen today. In fact, the book of Leviticus talks about Israel’s power being broken. We still have that power

in America for now, but our pride has been shaken to its roots by the events of the last 50 years.

God is the unseen actor on the world stage. He simply stated: “I will *break* the pride of your power” (Leviticus 26:19). Do we think that our Creator doesn’t have the power to do it? Jesus referred to the Father as “Lord of heaven and earth” (Matthew 11:25). He is all-powerful! The Bible and history are a record of empires and kingdoms that rose and fell at His command!

The Bible also talks about a coming “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7) in which our English-speaking nations—the modern descendants of Jacob—will undergo a period of indescribable pain and suffering because of our disobedience to God’s laws. This will happen during the period Scripture calls “the time of the end.” (To learn more, request our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*)

### Is there a way of escape?

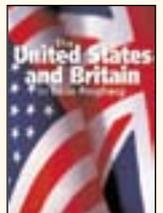
Is it too late for the United States of America? Or is there a way out? Can we still avert a future national disaster of unbelievable proportions? We have been given plenty of warnings. Do we really think that our Creator God was powerless to prevent 9/11?

Noted author Samuel Huntington says this: “All societies face recurring threats to their existence, to which they eventually succumb. *Yet some societies, even when so threatened, are also capable of postponing their demise by halting and reversing the processes of decline and renewing their vitality and identity*” (*Who Are We?*, 2004, p. xviii).

God is even more encouraging! “If My  
*Continued on page 27*

### Recommended Reading

How did the United States rise from a lowly backwater colony hugging the eastern seaboard to become the most prosperous and powerful country history has ever known? What’s behind the remarkable story of how immigrants and refugees inherited a continent blessed with abundant water, astounding mineral wealth and millions of acres of the world’s best farmland? Does Bible history shed any light, and does Bible prophecy indicate what lies ahead? You need to read our eye-opening booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Request or download your free copy today!



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[www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)



# The New Nuclear Arms Race: Will Man Destroy Himself?

*Iran seems intent on joining North Korea in the nuclear club. Uneasy neighbors will likely soon start their own nuclear programs. What does the proliferation of nuclear weapons mean for the rest of us?*

It's a common misconception, but Jesus Christ did not talk about the end of the world. Rather, He talked of the end of the *age*—the age of man's rule, which will directly precede the establishment of the Kingdom of God at Christ's return. God's Kingdom will be a literal kingdom on this earth. That's the good news—the gospel message He gave to the world (Mark 1:14).

When the disciples asked Him, "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3), Jesus began a long prophecy about the events that will take place just before His second coming.

He listed a series of cataclysmic events and then stated, "If that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive; but for the sake of God's chosen it will be cut short" (verse 22, Revised English Bible).

It's easy to read this particular verse and not think too deeply about it. We know that man has the potential to destroy himself. We also know how destructive man is.

*But what many overlook is that mankind for a very long time never had the ability to bring about his own extinction!*

It is only in our day that man has acquired this ability. Perhaps this is why Jesus adds in verse 34 that "this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place." A generation now exists that can destroy itself. Put that together with the realization that humankind has never invented a weapon that wasn't eventually used and you can see just how likely we would be to destroy ourselves if not prevented by God!

## Spread of the most deadly weapons

World War II was nearing its end when we entered the atomic age with the detonation of the first atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But even then mankind did not have the potential to destroy itself. That came a few years later with the inven-

tion of the hydrogen bomb and its development and proliferation by both sides in the Cold War.

By the mid-1950s we had entered the era of "mutually assured destruction," aptly abbreviated as MAD.

By 1964 there were five nuclear powers—the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, France and China.

Forty years later, we have to add other nations to that exclusive list. Israel almost certainly has nuclear weapons. India and Pakistan, who have fought each other in three wars since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1947, both successfully tested them in 1998.

Of greater concern is the intense work being done to acquire them by North Korea and Iran, both longtime supporters of terrorism.

North Korea announced a successful nuclear test on Oct. 9, 2006, three months after rattling their sabers with a series of ballistic missile tests. The Japanese in particular may feel that their only realistic defensive option is to launch their own nuclear-weapons program.

Iran's mid-November announcement that its nuclear program is near completion will likely trigger a nuclear arms race throughout the Middle East, with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and other predominately Sunni Muslim nations desperately wanting nuclear weapons to defend against Shiite Iran's revolutionary brand of radical Islam.

The rapid acquisition of nuclear arms in the most volatile region of the world bodes ill for the future peace and stability of the planet. Logically, the more nations that have nukes, the more likely it is that one or two of them will trigger the end-time events that led Jesus Christ to make that prophetic assurance to His followers: For



**Clergymen look on as Iranian Revolutionary guards fire test missiles during war games in Iran in November 2006. Iran test-fired dozens of missiles, right, including some demonstrating capabilities previously unknown to Western intelligence.**

their sakes, He will intervene to prevent human extinction.

That's the good news for all mankind, the gospel of the Kingdom—man will not be allowed to destroy this planet. But the bad news of devastation that precedes that time of worldwide peace is the stuff of nightmares.

## What's behind Iran's race for nukes?

Almost three decades have passed since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, a revolution that overthrew the pro-Western shah of Iran and replaced him with a radical Islamic theocratic regime. That single event triggered a series of developments that has radicalized much of the Middle East.

In Iran itself, amid expectations of the imminent arrival of the mahdi—the messianic deliverer in Shiite theology—President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad believes he is in contact with "the hidden imam" (leader), a key figure who, in Shiite belief, will emerge to usher in Islam's triumph as the dominant

and only religion over the entire world.

Iran is also issuing increasingly hostile threats to the West, lately directed at Europe. On Oct. 20, speaking under a banner reading "Israel must be wiped off the face of the world," President Ahmadinejad warned Europe not to support Israel: "We have advised the Europeans that . . . the [Muslim] nations are like an ocean

Iran will be the main beneficiary.

Iran, already a regional superpower in the Middle East, looks set to become even stronger. Iranians believe that America is a "sunset power" (in decline), while they are a "sunrise power," growing stronger and rising inevitably to greatness. The possession of nuclear weapons will only hasten that rise and add to their international stature.

Strategic Studies, said that it was clear that the sudden drive for nuclear expertise was to provide the Arabs with a 'security hedge.' 'If Iran was not on the path to nuclear weapons capability you would probably not see this sudden rush,' he said."

On Nov. 2 Iran tested long-range missiles capable of hitting Israel and other targets in the region, including U.S. military bases and deployments, particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf. Other potential targets are India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey, each of which has its own reasons to fear Iran.

The spectacular swarm of sophisticated missiles fired in Iran's surprise military exercise stunned military planners in the United States, Israel and Europe. The precisely planned firings of scores of surface missiles demonstrated technical abilities and weaponry the Iranians were not previously known to possess.

#### **Threat to Europe a spark for the end time?**

Military experts worry that one of the missiles tested, the Shahab-3, may be more than a match for American, Israeli and European anti-missile systems. The missile's 1,250-mile range puts Israel, Egypt, Turkey, India and U.S. Mideast forces within reach.

A Nov. 4 report from DEBKA, a Middle East political, military and news analysis Web site, notes the potential threat to Europe: "The spectacular missile show may have been designed for European consumption as much as to impress the US and Israel. Rather than making a secret of the display, General Rahim Safavi, commander of the Revolutionary Guards, which staged the exercise, bragged that Iran had proved its ability to strike targets outside the Middle East.

"Europe, which Tehran sees as susceptible to such threats, *was being warned that it would be first in line for a backlash* from a US or Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear facilities" (emphasis added).

Readers of this magazine are familiar with biblical passages that prophesy a coming clash of civilizations between the "king of the South," a leader to emerge from the Islamic world, and the "king of the North," head of a European-centered coalition of 10 leaders who come together to form a new but short-lived

*Continued on page 27*



that is welling up, and if a storm begins, the dimensions will not stay limited to Palestine, and you may get hurt."

Not to be outdone, the chief of Iran's judiciary, Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, threatened that the United States and Zionism "are on the threshold of annihilation."

The following week the Iranian government announced the doubling of its uranium-enrichment program. At the same time, the UN Security Council squabbled over a largely meaningless European resolution whose sanctions, in the words of Middle East expert Daniel Pipes, "would do no more than prohibit Iranian students from studying nuclear physics abroad, deny visas for Iranians working in the nuclear area, and end foreign assistance for Iran's nuclear program, oh, except from Russia."

#### **High stakes for a dangerous region**

Iran is undoubtedly emboldened by America's continuing problems in neighboring Iraq. Only two things now seem certain in Iraq. One is that, following the congressional election setbacks for President Bush Nov. 7, the United States will at some point pull out; the second is that

Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons will have a ripple effect throughout the region. *The Times* of London reported Nov. 4 that six Arab states are joining the rush to go nuclear. Alarmed by a resurgent Shiite Iran exporting its radical brand of Islam to Afghanistan, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, fear is growing among the Sunni Arab nations of yet more instability in the area:

"The spectre of a nuclear race in the Middle East was raised yesterday when six Arab states announced that they were embarking on programmes to master atomic technology. The move, which follows the failure by the West to curb Iran's controversial nuclear programme, could see a rapid spread of nuclear reactors in one of the world's most unstable regions, stretching from the [Persian] Gulf to the Levant and into North Africa.

"The countries involved were named by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Tunisia and the UAE [United Arab Emirates] have also shown interest."

Further down, the article adds: "Mark Fitzpatrick, an expert on nuclear proliferation at the International Institute for

## The Middle East: Facing a bleak future?

**G**eography, historical events, world and regional politics, centuries of ethnic and religious strife, a critical natural resource and the dark side of human nature have all conspired to turn the Middle East into the cauldron of conflicts it is today.

A London *Times* feature article observed that “it is one of the world’s most unstable regions, where conflicts over land, ideology and religion have raged for centuries.” Although the Middle East has a long and complicated history, some observers view European penetration as the beginning of the present series of difficulties.

World War I (1914 to 1918) brought the Ottoman Empire of the Turks to an end and ushered in several decades of considerable British influence. The aftermath of World War II (1939 to 1945) drained Britain and Europe of much of its power and influence in the region.

The founding of the present state of Israel in 1948 proved to be an epochal event, along with an Israeli victory in the Six-Day War some 20 years later. The crucial importance of the location of an abundance of crude oil reserves in several Arab states was highlighted by the 1973 energy crisis. The Palestinian



**“The Middle East will remain a troubled and troubling part of the world for decades to come.”**

problem with its periodic intifadas has dominated much of the last three decades.

What may lie ahead in the Middle East is of crucial importance to the West and to the world. American influence has taken a blow due to unrelenting insurgencies in the aftermath of the Iraq war. Small private armies throughout the region are mushrooming due to actual and perceived weaknesses in

state authorities. They will inevitably be drawn into regional conflicts.

Current evidence appears to show that most Arab nations will resist democracy, leaving authoritarian dictatorships in place for the foreseeable future. Anti-Americanism is rife and growing in most Islamic nations. Economic growth due to globalism is unlikely to greatly benefit this part of the world, with the exception of Israel.

Iran is the biggest threat to peace although the Iraqi and Palestinian problems remain running sores. The hoped-for peace process itself appears to have been cast aside, at least for the present.

*Foreign Affairs*, published by the Council on Foreign Relations, summed up its view of the region’s future: “The Middle East will remain a troubled and troubling part of the world for decades to come” (November-December 2006 issue).

The Bible partially agrees with this viewpoint but also guarantees a bright future in the long run. Our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* explains both the region’s historical background and its prophetic future, more immediate as well as long term. Request or download your free copy at [www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets). (Source: *Foreign Affairs*, *The Times* [London].)

### Iranian president keeps up verbal pressure on Israel

**I**ranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has talked of “taking the final step” in his country’s preparations for possessing a nuclear bomb. According to Agence France-Presse (AFP), “Iran’s President stated that ‘I hope by the end of the year (Iranian year to March 2007), we will be able to hold the great celebration of Iran’s nuclear right.’”

The Iranian leadership is extremely hostile to the state of Israel. According to another AFP

### The Iranian president spoke of the “disappearance and destruction” of Israel during a recent discussion.

report, the Iranian president spoke of the “disappearance and destruction” of Israel during a fairly recent discussion with his ministers.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has urgently called on the West “to believe him and stop him.”

The November 2006 issue of *Commentary* stated that Western and UN diplomatic overtures to the Iranian leadership have “not succeeded in influencing its fundamental error or curbing its radical ambitions.” (Sources: Agence France-Presse, *Haaretz* [Tel Aviv].)

### The Strait of Hormuz: A serious Iranian threat

**W**hile most of the world has focused on the Iranian nuclear threat, Tehran has been gradually moving to try to assume control over the Strait of Hormuz with more conventional weaponry.

How important is this crucial waterway? About 40 percent of the world’s crude oil exports are shipped through the narrow strait bordered by Iran and Oman. Estimates for 2025 run as high as 60 percent. Closing the waterway would put a stranglehold on the lifeblood of the world economy—oil.



Token Western forces patrol these waters. However, according to *Commentary*, “The Tehran regime has made no secret of its desire to gain control of the Straits, as part of its larger strategy of turning the Gulf into an Iranian lake.” A senior Iranian government official told the European Union, “We have the power to halt oil supply . . . down to the last drop.” (Source: *Commentary*.)

### Will Palestinians make a lasting peace with Israel?

**M**any hoped that after Israel withdrew from Lebanon following last summer’s war, peace would be restored to Israel—not just with Lebanon, but also with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. That hope was recently dashed again.

“Israeli troops withdrew from the Gaza Strip as an unexpected truce took hold Sunday [Nov. 26], but two major Palestinian militant groups, saying they had no intention of stopping their attacks, fired volleys of homemade rockets into Israel. The rocket

attacks by Hamas and Islamic Jihad tempered hopes for a lasting cease-fire, which was meant to end five months of deadly clashes” (Associated Press, Nov. 26, 2006).

Israel’s Prime Minister Ehud Olmert “ordered the army to show restraint in the face of the rockets. ‘Even though there are still violations of the cease-fire by the Palestinian side, I have instructed our defense officials not to respond, to show restraint, and to give this cease-fire a chance to take full effect,’ he said” (ibid.).

Will there ever be peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis? The Bible says that there will be no lasting peace until the Messiah comes, forcing peace on those that are bent on war (see Zechariah 14; Revelation 19:1-20:6). (Source: Associated Press.)



## The German Reich and the new German Pope

An intriguing report from Germany stated, "The medieval Europe-wide German Reich is a valid model for the union of European countries." In thoughts attributed to Berlin State Minister for Culture Bernd Neumann, *"The memory of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation shows 'an inner historical consistency' with the founding and steady expansion of the European Union"* (emphasis added throughout).

Both the German pope, Benedict XVI but still known to Germans as Joseph Ratzinger of Bavaria, and the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, will attend Berlin festivities and celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the European Economic Community (now the European Union). According to German-Foreign-Policy.com, "Ratz-

### Some believe these plans are part of an agenda to emphasize German leadership of the European Union.

inger is a committed supporter of the 'imperial ideal' (Reichsidee) and is to speak on the 'spiritual foundations' of Europe in the German capital."

Some observers believe that these plans are all part of an agenda to emphasize and underline German leadership of the European Union. The nation wants to see a revival of the now defunct EU constitution (rejected by referendums in both France and the Netherlands) and wishes to begin to revitalize it during its six-month presidency of the EU.

Remembering the warfare of the last century, several other European countries still fear the possibility of German hegemony over the continent. The Bible itself warns of a coming European-centered superpower that will do much to usher in a series of prophetic events leading to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The book of Revelation speaks of a new religious hegemony alongside powerful secular leadership in an end-time union of nations. To understand more, request our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Sources: German-Foreign-Policy.com [an English translation], EUobserver.com.)

## U.S. out-of-wedlock births increasing

“Out-of-wedlock births in the United States have climbed to an all-time high, accounting for nearly four in 10 babies born last year [2005] . . . While out-of-wedlock births have long been associated with teen mothers . . . births among unwed mothers rose most dramatically among women in their 20s” (Mike Stobbe, AP medical writer, Nov. 21, 2006).

Part of the problem is that young people are living together while putting off marriage, seemingly indifferent about the sanctity of marriage. Of course, when they have been programmed in high school and college to believe that God is an outmoded concept and nature is all there is, this shouldn't come as a surprise.

Out-of-wedlock births would drop precipitously

if the Bible's instructions on the sanctity of marriage were followed. If you'd like to learn more about those instructions, request or download *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* at [www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets). (Source: Associated Press.)



## A nation behind bars

A staggering 7 million people—one in 32 U.S. adults—were on probation or parole or locked behind bars at the end of 2005, according to U.S. Justice Department statistics. Of that total, 2.2 million were in prison or jail.



The number of inmates rose almost 3 percent over the previous year. While prison releases are increasing, admissions are increasing even more.

More sadly still, though the number of men behind bars greatly outnumbers female inmates, women are catching up. While the male prison population increased by 1.9 percent over the last year, the number of females incarcerated grew by 2.6 percent. Women now account for 7 percent of all prison inmates. (Source: Associated Press.)

## UN troops assault those they're assigned to protect

A particularly ugly side to UN peacekeeping missions is the number of situations where troops under the UN banner have sexually assaulted and abused the very people they are assigned to protect. Since 2004, nearly 180 soldiers, police and civilian employees have faced disciplinary action for sexual abuse, according to a UN spokesman. The UN has investigated 319 peacekeeping personnel during that span.

Compounding the problem is the fact that the UN cannot discipline some 80 percent of the 100,000 personnel serving in peacekeeping operations—they can only be disciplined by their home countries.

A recent BBC investigation found that in Haiti and Liberia, children had been raped and forced into prostitution by UN peacekeeping troops. Another investigation found that in Congo, soldiers had sex with women and girls for food or money. (Source: Associated Press.)

## Nuclear neighbors now likely in the Middle East

The likelihood of an Iranian nuclear armory has opened up the possibility of uncontrolled nuclear proliferation among neighboring countries.

The London *Times* stated that "the Middle East may

now be entering the most precarious era of its history, with the sudden rush by Arabs, Iranians and Turks to master nuclear technology and one day unlock the secrets of the atomic bombs" (Nov. 4, 2006).

It certainly appears that countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates want nuclear technology sooner rather than later. An editorial in *The Times* stated that "the countries that know Iran best, its regional neighbours, are suspicious of its true intentions" (Source: *The Times* [London].)

## How Can You Make Sense of the News?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the *World News & Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening site offers you a perspective you won't find anywhere else—the perspective of God's Word, the Bible. Visit us at [www.wnponline.org](http://www.wnponline.org) today!



## Television Log

All channels and times listed are for cable TV unless stated otherwise. For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or view programs online, visit [www.beyondtoday.tv](http://www.beyondtoday.tv).

### UNITED STATES

**Arizona**  
Prescott ch. 13, Sundays 6:30 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.  
Prescott Valley ch. 13, Sundays 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.; Mondays 9 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. & 3 p.m.  
Tucson ch. 73, 98, Sundays 7:30 a.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.

**Arkansas**  
Fayetteville ch. 18, Sundays 10 a.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.  
Mena ch. 19, Sundays 8:30 a.m.  
Mountain Home ch. 7, 22, Sundays 9 a.m.

**California**  
Alamo ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Berkeley ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.  
Clayton ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Concord ch. 26, 6, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Danville ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Dublin ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.  
El Cerrito ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.  
El Sobrante ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.  
Emeryville ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.  
Eureka ch. 10, Fridays 7 p.m.  
Hayward ch. 28, Tuesdays 10 p.m.  
Hemet ch. 3, Fridays 3 p.m.  
Hercules ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.  
Lafayette ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Livermore ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.  
Marin County ch. 26, Thursdays 10:30 a.m. & 8 p.m.  
Martinez ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Modesto ch. 26, Thursdays 8:30 p.m.; Fridays 6 p.m.  
Monrovia ch. 16, 98, Tuesdays and Saturdays 4:30 p.m.  
Moraga ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Newark ch. 27, 29, Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Novato ch. 71, Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.  
Oakland ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.  
Orinda ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Palo Cedro ch. 26, Thursdays 10 a.m.  
Pasadena ch. 56, Sundays 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.  
Petaluma ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.  
Piedmont ch. 26, Sundays 8 a.m.  
Pittsburg ch. 26, Thursdays 12 midnight  
Pleasant Hill ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Pleasanton ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.  
Redding ch. 11, Sundays 11:30 a.m.  
Richmond ch. 26, Thursdays 9 p.m.  
Rossmore ch. 26, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.  
Sacramento ch. 18, Thursdays 6 p.m.  
San Diego (South) ch. 18, 19, 23, Thursdays 10 p.m.  
San Diego (North) ch. 19, Sundays 3:30 p.m.  
San Francisco ch. 29, Sundays 9 a.m.  
San Jose ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.  
San Rafael ch. 26, Tuesdays 8:30 p.m.  
Santa Clara ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.  
Santa Rosa ch. 72, Sundays 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays 10:30 a.m.  
S. Pasadena ch. 6, Thursdays 4 p.m.  
Verdugo Hills ch. 20, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.  
Walnut Creek ch. 6, Thursdays 7:30 p.m.

**Colorado**  
Boulder ch. 43, Fridays 1 p.m.

**Florida**  
Clearwater ch. 21, 96, Sundays 6 a.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.; Fridays 10:30 a.m.  
St. Petersburg ch. 21, 96, Sundays 6 a.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.; Fridays 10:30 a.m.  
Tampa ch. 19, 20, Sundays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 1 p.m.

**Georgia**  
Cornelia ch. 4, Sundays 2 p.m.

**Hawaii**  
Lanai ch. 13, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.  
Maui ch. 52, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.  
Molokai ch. 13, Fridays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 7 a.m.

**Idaho**  
Boise ch. 11, Wednesdays 7:30 p.m.

**Illinois**  
Arlington Heights ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Bartlett ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Buffalo Grove ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Chicago ch. 36, times vary  
Des Plaines ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
East St. Louis ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.  
Elk Grove Village ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Glenview ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Golf ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Hanover Park ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Hoffman Estates ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Lincolnwood ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Morton Grove ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Mt. Prospect ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Naperville ch. 17, Sundays 10 a.m.  
Niles ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

Northbrook ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Palatine ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Park Ridge ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Prospect Heights ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Rolling Meadows ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Romeoville ch. 6, Sundays 9 a.m.  
Schaumburg ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Skokie ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Springfield ch. 4, Fridays 3 a.m., 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.  
Streamwood ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Wheeling ch. 35, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.  
Wilmette ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

**Indiana**  
Bloomington ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.  
Elkhart ch. 99, Mondays 4:30 p.m.  
Evansville ch. 7, Mondays 5:30 p.m.  
Ft. Wayne ch. 57, Thursdays 2 p.m.  
Valparaiso ch. 99, Tuesdays 8:30 p.m.

**Iowa**  
Des Moines ch. 15, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

**Kentucky**  
Covington ch. 17, Sundays 9 a.m.; Fridays 8 p.m.  
Hopkinsville ch. 23, Wednesdays and Fridays 11 a.m.  
Murray ch. 19, Sundays 8 p.m.  
Owensboro ch. 52, Sundays 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.  
Paducah ch. 2, Sundays 2 p.m.

**Massachusetts**  
Amherst ch. 12, Tuesdays 9 p.m.  
Boston ch. 22, 23, 83, Sundays 7 a.m.; Wednesdays 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.  
Cambridge ch. 22, 23, 83, Sundays 7 a.m.; Wednesdays 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.  
Greenfield ch. 17, Tuesdays 4 p.m.; Wednesdays 10:30 a.m.  
Palmer ch. 15, Sundays 12, 2:30 & 8 p.m.  
Shrewsbury ch. 33, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 7 a.m.  
Worcester ch. 13, Thursdays 10 a.m.

**Michigan**  
Ann Arbor ch. 17, Thursdays 4:30 p.m.  
Grand Haven ch. 22, Mondays 4 p.m.  
Grand Rapids ch. 25, Tuesdays or Wednesdays 11 a.m.  
Kalamazoo ch. 19, Sundays 8:30 p.m.  
Midland ch. 3, Fridays 5:30 p.m.  
Mt. Pleasant ch. 3, times vary  
Traverse City ch. 2, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

**Minnesota**  
Albert Lea ch. 6, Sundays 9:55 a.m.  
Austin ch. 6, Sundays 7 p.m.  
Blaine ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.  
Brooklyn Center ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.  
Brooklyn Park ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.  
Burnsville ch. 14, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 4:30 p.m.; Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays 4:30 a.m.  
Centerville ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.  
Circle Pines ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.  
Eagan ch. 15, Sundays 6:30 a.m.; Mondays 12:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays 3:30 p.m.; Fridays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 9:30 a.m.  
Golden Valley ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.  
Ham Lake ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.  
Inver Grove Hts. ch. 15, Sundays 6:30 a.m.; Mondays 12:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.; Thursdays 3:30 p.m.; Fridays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 9:30 a.m.  
Lexington ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.  
Lino Lakes ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.  
Litchfield ch. 10, Sundays 2 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 1 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 1 a.m., 3 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 6:30 p.m.  
Maple Grove ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.  
Minneapolis ch. 75, Mondays 6:30 p.m.  
New Hope ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.  
New Ulm ch. 72, Sundays 5 p.m.; Thursdays 10 a.m.; Fridays 10 p.m.  
Osseo ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.  
Plymouth ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.  
Robbinsdale ch. 19, Sundays 4 a.m., 10 a.m., 4 p.m.; Saturdays 10 p.m.  
Rochester ch. 10, Sundays 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.  
St. Charles ch. 20, Sundays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 3 p.m.  
Spring Lake Park ch. 14, Sundays 1 & 9 a.m.; Saturdays 5 p.m.  
Willmar ch. 8, Thursdays 8 a.m. & 5 p.m.;

Winona ch. 20, Sundays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 3 p.m.  
Wabasha ch. 20, Sundays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 3 p.m.

**Missouri**  
Cape Girardeau ch. 5, Sundays 9 a.m.  
Jackson ch. 5, Sundays 9 a.m.  
Jefferson City ch. 3, Wednesdays 6 p.m.  
Poplar Bluff ch. 54, Tuesdays 4 p.m.  
Springfield ch. 26, Sundays 8:30 a.m.; Wednesdays 7 p.m.; Saturdays 8:30 a.m.  
St. Charles ch. 18, Sundays 8 a.m., Saturdays 10 p.m.  
St. Louis ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.

**Montana**  
Billings ch. 7, Sundays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 11 a.m.  
Helena ch. 11, Sundays 3 p.m.  
Missoula ch. 7, Sundays 11 a.m.

**Nebraska**  
Carson City ch. 10, Wednesdays 7:30 p.m.  
Reno/Sparks ch. 16, Wednesdays 7 p.m.

**New Hampshire**  
LaConia ch. 25, 26, Sundays 7:30 a.m. & 4:30 p.m.

**New Jersey**  
Newark ch. 19, Sundays 6:30 a.m.

**New Mexico**  
Albuquerque ch. 27, Saturdays 7 p.m.  
Reno/Sparks ch. 16, Sundays 10 a.m.; Mondays 6:30 p.m.

**New York**  
Binghamton ch. 4, Thursdays 5:30 p.m.  
Brooklyn ch. 56, 69, Sundays 10 a.m.  
Canandaigua ch. 12, Sundays 2 p.m.  
Long Island ch. 20, Thursdays 9:30 a.m.  
Manhattan ch. 57, Sundays 7 a.m.  
Olean ch. 6, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.  
Oneonta ch. 23, Mondays 6 p.m.; Wednesdays 9 p.m.  
Queens ch. 35, Mondays 10:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 4:30 p.m.  
Rochester ch. 15, Tuesdays & Thursdays 8 a.m.  
Woodbury ch. 20, Sundays 8:30 a.m.

**North Carolina**  
Asheville ch. 20, Wednesdays 2 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.  
Burlington ch. 5, 10, Sundays 10 a.m.  
Charlotte ch. 21, Saturdays 2 p.m.  
Durham ch. 8, Wednesdays 7:30 a.m.  
Greensboro ch. 8, Sundays 10 a.m.  
Hickory ch. 3, Sundays 7 p.m.  
Mebane ch. 5, 10, Sundays 10 a.m.  
Raleigh ch. 22, Tuesdays 6:30 p.m.

**North Dakota**  
Bismarck ch. 12, Sundays 2:30 p.m.  
Fargo ch. 12, Tuesdays 10:30 a.m.

**Ohio**  
Akron ch. 15, Sundays 9:30 a.m.; Mondays 11 p.m.  
Athens ch. 23, Sundays 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 7 p.m.  
Brunswick ch. 21, Tuesdays 7 p.m.; Wednesdays 12:30, 4:30 & 8:30 a.m.; 2:30, 6:30 & 9:30 p.m.  
Cincinnati ch. 12, Wednesdays 10 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Thursdays 11 p.m.; Saturdays 6:30 a.m.; Sundays 11:30 a.m.; Thursdays 7 p.m.  
Cleveland West suburbs ch. 12, Tuesdays 11 a.m.; Saturdays 3 p.m.  
Dayton ch. 5, Sundays 12 noon; Thursdays 6 p.m.  
Defiance ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.; Thursdays 8 p.m.  
Fairborn ch. 12, Sundays & Saturdays 9 a.m.  
Greenview ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.  
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.  
Springfield ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.  
Trotwood ch. 1, daily 8 a.m., 2 p.m. & 11 p.m.  
Urbania ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.  
Vandalia ch. 3, Wednesdays 2 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.  
Washington Court House ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

**Oregon**  
Ashland ch. 15, 31, 95, Sundays 2 p.m.  
Eugene ch. 29, Mondays 12:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.  
McMinnville ch. 11, Sundays 5:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 8 p.m.  
Oregon City ch. 21, Mondays 8 p.m.  
Portland ch. 22, Sundays 7:30 p.m.  
Salem ch. 23, Sundays 12:30 p.m.; Fridays 2 p.m.; Saturdays 11:30 a.m.; Sundays 9 a.m.

**Pennsylvania**  
Pittsburgh ch. 21, times vary  
York ch. 16, Sundays 8:30 p.m.; Mondays 4:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.

**Rhode Island**  
Rhode state ch. 14, Fridays 10:30 a.m.

**Texas**  
Arlington ch. 95, Mondays 1:30 p.m.

Austin ch. 11, Mondays 6 p.m.  
Dallas ch. 148, 74, Sundays 12:30 p.m.; Thursdays 9:30 p.m.  
Del Rio ch. 19, Sundays 9 a.m.; Wednesdays 5 p.m.  
El Paso ch. 15, Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays 1 p.m.  
Fort Worth ch. 28, Tuesdays 5:30 p.m.; Thursdays 1 p.m.  
Houston ch. 17, 98, Sundays 3 p.m.  
Longview ch. 10, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Fridays 12 noon  
San Antonio ch. 20, Mondays 10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

**Virginia**  
Hampton Roads ch. 71, 74, Sundays 10 a.m.

**Washington**  
Everett ch. 77, Wednesday 5 p.m.  
Kennewick ch. 13, Sundays 6 p.m.; Tuesdays 8:30 p.m.  
Olympia ch. 22, 29, Sundays 9 a.m.; Thursdays 10:30 p.m.  
Spokane ch. 14, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.  
Vancouver ch. 3, 3:30 p.m.; Thursdays 12 noon; Fridays 8 p.m.

**West Virginia**  
Morgantown ch. 3, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 3 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.

**Wisconsin**  
Beloit ch. 12, Thursdays 6:30 p.m.  
Eau Claire ch. 11, Sundays 2 p.m.  
Kenosha ch. 14, Sundays & Mondays 7:30 p.m.  
Madison ch. 4, Sundays 12:30 p.m.  
Milwaukee ch. 96, times vary  
Oshkosh ch. 2, Mondays 4 p.m.; Tuesdays 2 p.m.; Fridays 1 p.m.; Saturdays 8 p.m.  
Stevens Point ch. 3, Mondays 5 & 9:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.; Thursdays 9 p.m.  
West Allis ch. 14, times vary

### CANADA

**Nationwide**  
Vision TV, Sundays 11 p.m. (PST)  
Star Choice Digital Channel 399, Sundays 10:30 a.m. (EST)

**Alberta**  
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sundays 8:30 a.m.

**British Columbia**  
The Christian Channel Telus ch. 158, Sundays 7:30 a.m.

**Manitoba**  
The Christian Channel MTS ch. 21, Sundays 9:30 a.m.  
The Christian Channel Cogeco ch. 186, Sundays 10:30 a.m.

**New Brunswick**  
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

**Newfoundland and Labrador**  
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sundays 12 noon

**Northwest Territory**  
The Christian Channel Northwestel ch. 226, Sundays 8:30 a.m.

**Ontario**  
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sundays 10:30 a.m.

**Saskatchewan**  
The Christian Channel SaskTel ch. 282, Sundays 8:30 a.m.

## Radio Log

For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or view programs online, visit [www.beyondtoday.tv/radio/](http://www.beyondtoday.tv/radio/).

**Nationwide**  
Internet Radio live365.com, Sundays 9 a.m. (PST)

**Alabama**  
Birmingham 1070 AM, Sundays 7:30 a.m.

**Arizona**  
Douglas 930 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.  
Globe 1240 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.  
Sierra Vista 1470 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.  
Tucson 940 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.

**California**  
San Diego 760 AM, Sundays 6 a.m.

**Indiana**  
Ft. Wayne 1190 AM, Sundays 10 a.m.  
Indianapolis 1070 AM, Sundays 7 a.m.

**Louisiana**  
New Orleans 870 AM, Saturdays 9:30 p.m.

**Michigan**  
Flint 89.7 FM, Sundays 7 a.m.  
Lansing 88.1 FM, Sundays 7:30 a.m.  
Lapeer 88.1 FM, Sundays 7 a.m.

**Montana**  
Helena 101.9 FM, Mondays 8 p.m.; Fridays 8 p.m.; Saturdays 8 a.m.

**New York**  
Buffalo 930 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.

**Nebraska**  
Omaha 1110 AM, Sundays 7:30 a.m.

**Oklahoma**  
Tulsa 740 AM, Sundays 8 a.m.

**Washington**  
Seattle 770 AM, Sundays 7 a.m.

**West Virginia**  
Wheeling 1170 AM, Fridays 8:15 p.m.



# North Korean Nukes: What's Next?

*Longtime Stalinist Kim Jong Il has officially brought North Korea into the nuclear club. Now that North Korea has nuclear devices, what can the rest of the world expect?*

by *Beyond Today* host Darris McNeely

**T**he 4.2 magnitude blast on Oct. 9 came in blatant defiance of world opinion and broke North Korea's promise (made several years ago) not to develop nuclear technology.

The result is a frightening new world that has sent diplomats into scramble mode. It took several days for the United Nations Security Council to impose more sanctions that included a ban on luxury goods, as if limiting sales of Louis Vuitton handbags in Pyongyang will change North Korea's present course!

The great fear is that other nations, Iran being first in line, will develop the ultimate weapon of mass destruction. Reports speculate that Saudi Arabia, Egypt and others may also push ahead with plans to develop nuclear weaponry.

One former U.S. Defense Department official says: "The North Korean test blew a hole in the nonproliferation regime of Northeast Asia. I think this is bad news for the country, bad news for the region, bad news for the world" (*Time*, Oct. 23, 2006, p. 32).

## How will Japan react?

Of immediate concern is whether North Korea's bomb will provoke South Korea and Japan to go nuclear. For decades both nations have enjoyed safety, peace and economic security under the protective umbrella of American military force.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice traveled to Japan and South Korea, reaffirming the strategic relationship and promise of American protection. Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso said that Japan "is absolutely not considering a need to be armed by nuclear weapons."

This stance may change if the growing nationalistic feelings within Japan continue to rise. Newly installed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe heads a new breed of leaders not shackled by feelings of war guilt.

In fact, the day Mr. Aso made this state-

be key to world reaction should Japan announce its intention to develop a nuclear bomb.

## China's behind-the-scenes role

What is the role of China, the rising



**A soldier of the "hermit kingdom," North Korea, gestures angrily at a photographer taking his picture from across the border with China, left. North Korea is so impoverished that its soldiers have to wash from a river, right, while the country spends a huge amount of its budget on one of the world's largest militaries and programs to develop nuclear arms.**

ment, Prime Minister Abe testified to a parliamentary committee that Japan should begin debating going nuclear: "The reality is that it is only Japan that has not discussed possessing nuclear weapons, and all other countries have been discussing it." Other high-ranking Japanese officials have called for an open debate on the issue.

Will America promote a nuclear Japan? World reaction will be interesting to watch. For the most part, Japan has adhered to the nonmilitarized portions of its postwar constitution. But it is a dynamic economy, a model Asian democracy and one of America's few dependable allies in Asia. This last fact will

economic giant, in this Asian mix? China's long-term ambitions are well served by North Korea playing the bad-boy role. China has been content for North Korea to be part of President Bush's "axis of evil."

This creates a convenient buffer between China and the American client states of South Korea and Japan. Both countries have American troops stationed within their borders and represent a significant obstacle to China's ambition to dominate Asia.

China does not fear a nuclear North Korea; Kim's nukes are pointed elsewhere. But a nuclear Japan would alter the equation.

Photos: (from left): Reuters/Adam Dean/Newscom, Frederic J. Brown/AFP/Getty Images/Newscom

China seems to have a longer memory of Japan's war atrocities than Western nations do, and the prospect of Japan holding nuclear weapons strikes a chilling chord of fear within the Chinese soul. Were Japan to threaten to join the nuclear club if China didn't pull the plug on its support for North Korean nukes, China might well drop that support. This may be the only way to reverse North Korea's current path.

China's desire to remove American influence from Asia is a long-held strategic goal. It moves relentlessly forward through many methods to dominate Asia, remove American influence and confirm its ancient belief that it is the primary power at the center of the earth.

China has deliberately allowed North Korea to develop the bomb in spite of repeated requests from America to prevent it from happening. China supplies North Korea with many of the components for its missile program and weapons of mass destruction.

### Russia pushes for more power

The key to the immediate crisis is the U.S. nuclear umbrella and the perception of American power to hold together the present world order. If American influence and power retreats, the resultant vacuum would encourage further nuclear proliferation and threaten international security.

Many nations already see American military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq as a window of opportunity to flex their muscles and political will. This is what North Korea has done in recent months.

Russia is doing the same in blockading air, rail, sea and postal services to the Republic of Georgia (a U.S. ally) over a series of espionage allegations. While seemingly insignificant, it illustrates Russian boldness in the face of American preoccupation in Iraq. Russia feels it can move at will to secure its own interests, even when they conflict with those of the United States. The net effect is a weakening of American power.

Add to this the prospect of President George W. Bush becoming hamstrung by Democrats, who in November won control of both houses of Congress. They could block the president's foreign policy goals through their budgetary control. Seeing this, other nations would have a green light to push their agendas in critical regions of the world.

Are we seeing a decline in American power around the world? What is the solution? Will changing the political leadership

alter the fortunes of the nation?

Sadly, the answer is no. The problems are spiritual in nature, requiring a radical departure from the nation's current moral course. Without it, this trend of shifting world power will continue. The result will be a far different world from the one you and I have come to know.

### Are we witnessing a major change in history?

North Korea's nuclear bomb blast means the world situation is heating up. We are living in momentous times. Other nations see gray hairs on the American empire and are relentlessly moving to change the course of modern history.

Bible prophecy shows a coming time of trial for America, Great Britain and other English-speaking nations who have received great material blessings. The national sin of ingratitude has led our peoples to forget that the God of Abraham has provided us the physical blessings we enjoy. America has a veneer of spirituality, but God's Word tells us that is not enough to merit continued protection and blessing.

For too long America has held the view that its exceptional position in the world is the result of its democratic form of capitalism alone. For too long America has worn its brand of spirituality like a protective blanket of security, yet it leads the world in exporting immorality via various media forms. For too long America has forgotten that God is the source of its national blessings. He will ultimately call it to account for its sins.

The words of Jeremiah, God's prophet to the biblical kingdom of Judah in its final days, apply to the scene before us today: "*Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you.* Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing that *you have forsaken the LORD*

*your God, and the fear of Me is not in you,*' says the Lord GOD of hosts" (Jeremiah 2:19, emphasis added throughout).

### Following a path to destruction?

Like doomed Judah, America trusts in a hollow spiritual veneer that ignores God's law, which is the basis of true spirituality. Failing to embrace it will surely bring on God's judgment.

Jeremiah stood in front of the Jerusalem temple, the symbol of Judah's religious life, and warned the people not to trust in tradition of the past for their immediate physical safety. "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Do not trust in these lying words, saying, "The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these [that is, relying on the presence of the temple and its rituals to ensure their protection].

"For if you [instead] thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, *then* I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

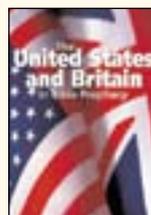
"Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations"? Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,' says the LORD" (Jeremiah 7:3-11).

God foretold the collapse of their world order unless they repented and changed. "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place—on man and on beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground. And it will burn and not be quenched'" (Jeremiah 7:20).

America, Great Britain and other Western nations are walking the same path ancient Israel and Judah did. We are watching the beginning phases of a sea change on the world scene. It may not happen next month or next year, but it is taking place according to ancient prophecies revealed in your Bible. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

The United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and other English-speaking peoples have played a major role in modern world history. What does the Bible say about the role they will play in the future? Our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* will explain this subject in greater depth. Request or download your free copy to understand what lies ahead and to gain greater insight into these momentous events of today's world.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at [www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)

# God, Science and the Bible

News from the world of science about God and the Bible

by Mario Seiglie, Tom Robinson and Scott Ashley

## Archaeology supports story of Samson and Philistine temple

Archaeology has been found to support yet another biblical story—the account of mighty Samson and his death in a Philistine temple.

Samson, you may recall, was the Israelite hero

rejoice . . . So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, 'Call for Samson, that he may perform for us.' So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars . . .

"And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life."

Critics, of course, have doubted the story and called it a myth. They have argued that a Philistine temple would not have had two central pillars supporting the roof since this wasn't a typical architectural design of Middle Eastern temples.

But after the remains of two

Philistine temples have been excavated, what do they reveal? *Both* had two main pillars supporting the roof.

One of the Philistine temples is at Tell Qasile, now part of the modern city of Tel Aviv. Archaeologist Amihai Mazar found the remains of a small Philistine temple in the 1970s, and sure enough, he discovered

two column bases for a pair of central pillars supporting the roof. They were close enough together that a large man could reach both of them at once.

Some 20 miles away, at the Philistine site of ancient Ekron, archaeologist Trude Dothan discovered another temple in the 1990s with the same characteristics—two central pillars supporting a roof.

The city of Gath, where Samson's account takes place, has not been excavated, as a modern city has been built on top of the remains. Yet, being one of the main Philistine cities, it is reasonable to imagine that it would have had a much larger temple, holding many more people.

Archaeologist Bryant Wood explains the significance of the discoveries: "Two Philistine temples have been uncovered by archaeologists . . . Both temples share a unique design—the roof was supported by two central pillars!"

"The pillars were made of wood and rested on stone support bases. With the pillars being about six feet apart, a strong man could dislodge them from their stone bases and bring the entire roof crashing down. The archaeological findings match the Biblical story perfectly and attest to the plausibility of the account . . .

"The Bible writer knew his facts. He knew that Philistine temples were supported by two pillars and that this was how Samson pulled the temple down. The report is that of an eye-witness, again demonstrating that indeed the Bible is the world's most accurate textbook" ("*Samson and the Temple of Dagon*," *Bible and Spade*, 1974, pp. 53-54).



Two circular pillar bases of the Philistine temple at Tell Qasile are close enough together that a large man could press against both pillars at once—exactly as described in the biblical account of Samson.

whose strength was legendary among the Israelites and their enemies, the Philistines. Tricked, captured and blinded by the Philistines, he was put to work grinding grain as a beast of burden. The story of Samson concludes in Judges 16:23-30:

"Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to

## Another fraudulent attack on the Bible doesn't hold water

Perhaps you've heard of the lawsuit filed against *The Da Vinci Code* author Dan Brown, claiming he plagiarized much of his material from an earlier book titled *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent and two others. Baigent lost the case, but that hasn't stopped him from again trying to cash in on the massive publicity generated by *The Da Vinci Code*.

Both books propose that Jesus married Mary Magdalene and that she bore His child, and that Jesus' bloodline continued in Europe. These facts, they argue, were scrupulously covered up lest Christianity be exposed as a fraud.

Baigent is back again with a new book and a new twist on history. *The Jesus Papers* claims that papyrus documents exist—in Jesus' own handwriting, no less—proving that He didn't die when crucified, but was still alive in the flesh as late as A.D. 45. Further, Jesus supposedly said in these papers that He never claimed to be divine and that it was all essentially a misunderstanding.

Baigent makes a number of claims that are ludicrous for someone who claims to be a student of history. For example, he claims that the documents from which his book gets its title were excavated from under a house in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1961 by an Israeli man looking for artifacts.

But as anyone familiar with Middle Eastern archaeology knows, papyrus cannot be preserved longer than a few years in a climate like that of Jerusalem—it's simply too moist. Papyrus is preserved only in extremely dry desert climates. No ancient

perishable documents have ever been found in or around Jerusalem—they've long since disintegrated.

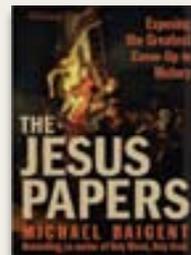
Baigent is also quite sure of what the documents say—even though he can't read Aramaic, the language in which he says they were written. Where are the documents today, and who has possession of them? Sorry, he can't share that information.

He makes other claims that are demonstrably false. For example, he says there is no extrabiblical evidence for Jesus' crucifixion. Yet several notable historians and Roman officials, including Flavius Josephus, Cornelius Tacitus, Caius Suetonius Tranquillus and Pliny the Younger, all mention Jesus. Some give details of His crucifixion; others note that His followers considered Him divine.

Baigent also tries to have it both ways when it comes to the Gospels. On the one hand he dismisses them as fabrication when they contradict his ideas, but then he quotes them when he thinks they support his points.

*The Jesus Papers* is filled with other problems—rampant speculation masquerading as fact, no verifiable evidence to support his theory, and denial or misrepresentation of facts that contradict his theory.

Like other books that supposedly disprove the origins of Christianity, *The Jesus Papers* is more fiction than fact, proving once again the lengths to which some will go to deny any claim the Bible might have on their lives. If you would like to learn the real truth of Jesus Christ's life and why the biblical Gospels are an accurate historical record, request our free booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*.



# What Are You Doing With Your Time?

*Rich or poor, old or young, male or female, we all have the same amount of one thing—time. How we use it will largely determine how far we'll go in life and in our relationship with our Creator.*

by **Ralph Levy**

Imagine there is a bank that deposits \$86,400 into your account each morning. But there's a catch—it carries over *no* balance from day to day, so you lose every dollar you don't spend.

What would you do? You'd spend every cent, of course!

But each of us has just such a bank. Its name is *time*. Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off, as lost, whatever you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance; it allows no overdraft.

Each day it opens a new account for you. Each night it burns the remains of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against tomorrow.

You must live in the present on today's deposits. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness and success. The clock is running. Will you make the most of the time you've been given?

## Does time matter that much?

Is time—a little or a lot—all that important? Consider the following:

*To realize the value of one year, ask a student who failed a grade.*

*To realize the value of one month, ask a mother who gave birth to a premature baby.*

*To realize the value of one week, ask the editor of a weekly newspaper.*

*To realize the value of one day, ask a daily-wage laborer with several children's mouths to feed.*

*To realize the value of one hour, ask the lovers who are waiting to meet.*

*To realize the value of one minute, ask a person who missed the train.*

*To realize the value of one second, ask a person who just avoided an accident.*

*To realize the value of one millisecond, ask a person who won a silver medal at the Olympics.*

The anonymous author of these words helps us realize just how important time is.

Jesus Christ told us to be careful how we handle our time, asking, "Are there not twelve hours in the day [the daylight portion



of the 24-hour cycle]? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of the world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him" (John 11:9-10).

And the apostle Paul felt it necessary to remind the Christians in Ephesus that they ought to be "redeeming [buying back] the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16; compare Colossians 4:5).

Time: It's what our lives are composed of. Yet in this busy modern world it has become all too easy to let time, the stuff of life, run away from us. E-mails, new software, multiple television channels, cell phones and all the other products of the technological revolution that were supposed to have simplified and enhanced the quality of our lives seem to have conspired to strip us of the time needed for the really important things of life.

What are some of the important things that should occupy our time? How does God tell us to use our time? Here's a checklist of the truly important activities that should be included in our day.

## Prayer: Communicating with God

King David once told his Creator, "O God, you are my God; early I will seek

You" (Psalm 63:1). He also disclosed that he regularly prayed to God at least three times per day: "Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice" (Psalm 55:17).

The top priority in our lives should be to acknowledge our Creator and Sustainer, the One who gives us every breath of air we breathe and every morsel of food we eat. Prayer—the deep, heartfelt, regular prayer modeled by Jesus Christ Himself, and by the apostles and prophets—is one of those activities that can all too easily be pushed aside, and even out of our lives, if we allow it.

It's good to study the prayers of the great servants of God as recorded in the Bible. If we do that, we will probably be struck by one interesting feature of many of those prayers—they were long!

In fact, they were sometimes *very* long! Check Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9:3-19, and Ezra's prayer in Ezra 9:5-15, to get a feel for how lengthy and detailed were the prayers of these men of God. Theirs weren't the "Sorry, God, I have to go now; I'll talk to you later" variety of prayer. Nor were they the "Please bless everything" type of prayer.

These biblical models of prayer depict men and women of God who talked at length, and in detail, with their Creator about their praise for Him, the needs of other servants of God and the needs of the work of God. When appropriate (and it's just about always appropriate!) they confessed their own sins and those of their community.

Their prayers weren't disrupted by phones going off and other interruptions. Theirs are the model for the kind of intense, personal prayer time so sorely needed in our modern world, but so easily neglected (or lost).

## Study of the Word of God

"My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word," wrote the psalmist (Psalm 119:148). Here he talked about another essential use of our time—studying the Word of God, the Holy Bible. Here's

another activity for which we need to make room in our busy lives, but which all too easily gets pushed aside.

Note what the author did: He didn't just *read* the Bible. He *meditated* on the Word of God. This suggests a man who read, studied and took time to think over the implications of what he read—someone who asked such penetrating questions as “What does this tell me about God and His greatness?” and “What does this tell me about how I must live my life to be in harmony with the will of my Creator?”

It's been said that meditation is to Bible study as digestion is to eating. If we eat lunch in a fast-food restaurant or a sandwich shop, we may jump up shortly after that last bite and rush off to our next activity. But on those rare occasions when we eat in a quality restaurant, our enjoyment is enhanced by taking time to savor the food and properly digest it.

So it is with this most essential of daily activities. We must study the Bible, but not in haste. As we do so, we should meditate, savoring the Word. Good digestion makes for good health, just as unhurried meditation contributes to our spiritual health. We ought not to run off and suffer indigestion. We need to take the time to digest our spiritual food too.

### **Fasting: Understanding our need for God**

From time to time, those who have committed their lives to God and Jesus Christ find that another activity is essential to spiritual growth. It may not be our favorite activity, as it can be uncomfortable, but it is much needed.

That activity is *fasting*. Fasting is the practice of going without any food or drink for a period of time, usually a day, to draw closer to God. Notice Jesus Christ's words to His disciples: “Moreover, when you fast . . . But you, when you fast . . .” (Matthew 6:16, 17). Note that He didn't say, “*If* you fast . . .” He said, “*When* you fast,” clearly expressing His expectation that those who would follow Him would indeed fast from time to time.

But how easy it is to let the needed activity of fasting go by the board! There's always some commitment, *some* activity, that prevents us from fasting—or at least so it seems. It requires some determination to set aside a day for fasting and extra prayer. Yet when we do that, this short-term exercise in “afflicting our souls” (to use another biblical term for it) pays rich dividends in spiritual growth and answered prayer.

### **Another priority: Family time**

In speaking of the kind of fast that God expects, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to declare that we should not “hide” ourselves from our own families (Isaiah 58:7). This leads us to perhaps the most important use of our time as far as other human beings are concerned. We must spend adequate quality time with our families.

According to a recent survey done in Britain, more than 90 percent of children want more time with their fathers. Three times as many children said that *caring*, rather than breadwinning, is their father's most important job.

The same survey indicated that 9 out of 10 girls would rather the father of their children be caring than rich, and 88 percent of the boys said they wanted to be dads when they grew up. Over half of those children surveyed indicated they felt parenthood should be taught in schools.

In a world all too often obsessed with making money, these results tell us something we should know: The emotional well-being of our families should be given a higher priority than making that extra dollar (or euro, or pound). Time spent with the family is an excellent investment.

The Bible exhorts fathers, “Provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, King James Version). Husbands are exhorted to “dwell with [their wives] with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).

Dwelling with one's spouse and nurturing and admonishing our children are activities that require time. They can't be rushed. Are we setting aside adequate time to spend with our loved ones?

We mustn't neglect other important uses of our time. When it comes to family, we must also maintain the home with work around the house and chores. And our regular job will probably take up the single biggest portion of our time. We should also give adequate time to education to prepare ourselves for the future and that we might better provide for our families.

### **Time to relax and recharge**

Finally, there is one more critical use of time that may seem paradoxical after what you've read so far. It's time for relaxation—down time, time to employ a real change of pace that rests and rejuvenates us.

We should do this on a regular basis, since burnout helps no one. If we're going to be productive during our time of work, we also need to enjoy some time to relax and unwind.

Solomon, in his wisdom, wrote that there is a time to laugh and a time to dance (Ecclesiastes 3:4), as well as a time to work hard and push oneself. For this reason most employers give their employees much-needed vacation time. It is time well-earned, and it needs to be used, if only to maintain our productivity in the times when we do work.

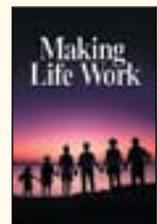
I recall the comment made by the wife of a colleague of mine when I was teaching at a small college in Texas. She commented about her husband that when they went away on vacation, it took him an entire day just to relax and unwind. Sadly, we can often be too intense about our work and find it hard to remove our foot from that accelerator of life, to slow down. At times it may take longer than a day for one truly under stress to recuperate or adjust to a change of pace.

Those who are involved in creative work know the need for relaxation and recreation. Trying to force creativity out of oneself rarely works. That essential creative spark usually kindles itself at unexpected moments, when we are relaxed and not feeling pressure. Perhaps this is why the Gospels record the fact that Jesus Christ at times felt a need to get away from the crowds and be alone. It's the quiet, unhurried time that stimulates our creativity.

Time: It's the essence of life. If we use it wisely, we can become better, more productive, more God-fearing people. We can love others more effectively. We can remember to play a little and to stay young at heart. And we can learn the keys to eternal life as described in the holy Word of God. **GN**

## **Recommended Reading**

You may not realize it, but you probably already own one of the best (and best-selling) self-help books of all time—the Bible! In its pages you'll discover a wealth of practical, helpful, down-to-earth advice about family, friends, finances, career, health, marriage, parenting and much more. We've gathered some of the Bible's best advice in each of these areas into a handy guide to life titled *Making Life Work*. Request or download your free copy today!



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# Before You Ask Someone to Be Your Valentine...

*Millions send Valentine's Day cards to express their affection for someone special. But how did this holiday originate? And does Valentine's Day represent what true love is all about?*

by Jerold Aust

**E**very year, more than a billion Valentine cards are bought and sent throughout the world. The act of sending a nice card seems to fill a natural yearning to express how much we care for someone.

But does Valentine's Day really celebrate true, caring love? Or does this popular holiday actually promote something else?

## Origins of Valentine's Day

When we think of Valentine's Day, we call to mind hearts, chocolates, flowers and expressions of love. Yet before joining in the fun, wouldn't it be wise to know where this tradition came from?

First, we should understand that Valentine's Day began when the early Roman Catholic Church tried to Christianize an ancient pagan Roman holiday called Lupercalia. That celebration was a licentious festival that honored Lupercus, the hero-hunter of wolves. This festival was so immensely popular among the Roman people that church leaders included it in their calendar, hoping to retain their new parishioners and turn them from sexual licentiousness to morality by linking it to a saint.

The saint they chose for this mid-February Roman festival was St. Valentine. One source explains: "St. Valentine is believed to have been a Roman priest who was martyred on this day [February 14] around [A.D.] 270. How he became the patron saint of lovers remains a mystery, but one theory is that the Church used the day of St. Valentine's martyrdom in an attempt to Christianize the old Roman Lupercalia, a pagan festival held around the middle of February.

"Part of the ancient ceremony entailed putting girls' names in a box and letting the boys draw them out. Couples would thus be paired off until the following year. The Church substituted saints' names for girls' names, in the hope that the participant would model his life after the saint whose name he drew.

"But by the 16th century, it was once



again girls' names that ended up in the box. Eventually the custom of sending anonymous cards or messages to those one admired became the accepted way of celebrating St. Valentine's Day" (Helene Henderson and Sue Ellen Thompson, editors, *Holidays, Festivals, and Celebrations of the World Dictionary*, "Valentine's Day," 2005, p. 576).

Although all historical sources contain some of the same notions about how Valentine's Day developed, each one highlights another facet of the story. Another states: "Some people have tried to connect the historical Saint Valentine with the later practices of Valentine's Day by saying that the saint married couples despite the emperor's prohibition, or that he sent a note signed 'from your Valentine' to the daughter of his jailer.

"However, the early Christian saint Valentine probably had nothing to do with the traditions later celebrated on his feast day; it is simply by his placement in the Christian calendar that his name became associated with it. Later, the word *valentine* may have been confused with the Norman French word *galantine*, meaning lover of women, as the *g* and *v* were often interchangeable

in common pronunciation.

"In any case, February 14 gradually became a traditional date for exchanging love messages, and Saint Valentine became the patron saint of lovers" (*Macmillan Profiles: Festivals and Holidays*, 1999, p. 363).

Theories differ as to how a holiday for lovers developed in February. Some think the mating of birds at that time of year is connected with the tradition:

"One is based on the belief throughout rural Europe during the Middle Ages that the birds began to mate on February 14. Chaucer, in his 'Parliament of Foules,' refers to the belief in this way: For this was Seynt Valentyne's day. When every foul cometh ther to choose his mate" (Stephen Christianson, *The American Book of Days*, 2000, p. 139).

Regardless of the varied sources and ambiguous history of Valentine's Day, a few identifiable points continue to surface: Valentine's Day originated with an ancient pagan Roman feast called Lupercalia. That festival was based on fertility and sexual licentiousness. In the third century, the Roman Catholic Church attempted to Christianize the ancient festival practice by naming it after a martyr.

The hope was that the festival adherents would thereafter follow the examples of church saints, no longer engaging in the ancient practice of free sex while honoring an ancient god. Despite some success, the holiday still contributes to immorality among many and promotes a wrong view of love.

### A counterfeit holiday

Something that is counterfeit always

## What Kind of Love Does Valentine's Day Promote?

We often talk about true love. Yet what many people call love is actually only *infatuation*, defined as a foolish, unreasoning or extravagant passion or attraction (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, 1994).

Infatuation is a “falling-in-love” experience brought on by drastic changes in brain chemistry. Scientists now believe that the euphoria of infatuation is induced by the action of phenylethylamine (PEA). Naturally occurring in the chemistry of the brain, it is an amphetamine-like neurotransmitter.

PEA acts with dopamine and norepinephrine—a chemical derived from dopamine—to form what family and marriage therapist Patricia Love calls the “love molecule” or the “love cocktail” (*The Truth About Love*, 2001, pp. 28-29).

This “love cocktail” creates a euphoria or altered state of consciousness (*ibid.*). But is this love?

The Greek language in which the New Testament was written uses three different words to describe three kinds of love. One is *phileo*, used of fondness or brotherly love. Another is *eros*, which refers to erotic or sexual love. The third is *agapao*, a broader term used in the New Testament for a selfless, outgoing concern for others (compare John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 13).

So this brings up an interesting point: If a Valentine's Day kind of love could be defined, what would it be? Based on its origins, it actually more closely resembles infatuation, or *eros*, and not an outgoing concern—the kind of true love between a husband and wife.

indicates there is something real that it stands in place of, the genuine article. Could the same be true of a holiday? The roots of Valentine's Day lie in a pagan festival, not the Bible. In the Catholic Church's efforts to “Christianize” a pagan festival to gain adherents, did it overlook the real thing—holidays that reflect God's perspective on love and giving?

In fact, what was overlooked in the adoption of pagan holidays was God's true Holy Days and what they mean. We can find all of God's Holy Days or festivals listed in Leviticus 23. And you can also find in the New Testament that Jesus Christ, the apostles and the entire early Church all kept those exact same festivals. Jude is apparently referring to these when he writes of “your love feasts” in Jude 12.

In contrast, the holidays that are widely celebrated in modern Christendom, including Valentine's Day, are not found in the pages of the Bible. Instead, they are largely rooted in ancient pagan holidays that have been given a veneer of Christianity. (If you want to know more about God's festivals, please request or download our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.)

### Where does God stand on Valentine's Day?

We learn from the Bible that God is strictly opposed to any religious or secular holiday that keeps humankind blinded from His precious truth. Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). God wants people to be truly free, not held captive by false beliefs and ideas.

The Bible reveals God's Holy Days and festivals. Each one illustrates a significant part of His ultimate love for humanity and His plan to save mankind—a love that led Jesus Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners. Valentine's Day has no part in the salvation of humanity. In fact, it stands in contradiction to it—originating as it does in sinful, pagan worship.

Valentine's Day may be acceptable to millions of people, but not to God. It substitutes human reasoning for God's truth. It focuses the attention of people on infatuation, not a deep abiding love, on “getting love,” not giving or sacrificing for others.

God warns all who claim to represent Him, who claim to be Christians, to avoid the ways of the ancient pagans and their counterfeit holidays and feasts: “Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your

children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

“When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’

“*You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods . . . Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it*” (Deuteronomy 12:28-32, emphasis added).

In fact, God told the Israelites to eradicate all elements of pagan worship among them (see verses 1-4).

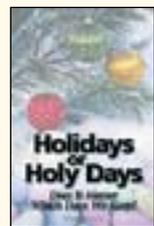
God is keenly interested in our welfare. He created us and gave us His manual, the Bible, to follow so we can get the most out of this life and that He might give us eternal life forever.

Valentine's Day is rooted not in God's Word, but in ancient paganism. It is not from the true God but from this world and its false god, Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4). God says: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

So to return to the issue raised up front: Should you ask someone to be your Valentine? Not if you care more about true love and about what God thinks. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Many people are surprised when they discover the ancient origins of most of our popular holidays. They're also surprised to read in the pages of the Bible exactly what God thinks of them! What about you? Are you willing to face up to some uncomfortable truths? Request or download your free copy of *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Really Matter Which Days We Keep?* And to learn more about the Holy Days of the Bible, request our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.



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# The Church: Help for Greater Growth

*Just exactly what is the Church? What is its purpose? Why do you need it? The Church that Jesus Christ founded and directs can be a priceless tool for aiding personal growth.*

by Don Hooser

Jesus Christ loves His Bride—the Church! He “nourishes and cherishes it”! Jesus has a close relationship with the members of His Church, describing them as “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:25-30). “Also Christ is head of the church,” providing loving care and leadership (verse 23).

The members of His Church, because they are still human, are far from perfect or sinless. But for those who are submitting and committing themselves to the Master’s rule over their lives, Jesus is very busy “washing” them to spiritually transform them into “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing . . . that [it] should be holy and without blemish” (verses 26-27). Nothing is more miraculous or awe-inspiring!

## What and why a Church?

The Bible describes the Church as a loving and zealous *community* of believers—those who *commune* and *communicate* with each other and strive for *unity*! God wants *cooperative coworkers* to work *together* in the gargantuan task He has given His Church.

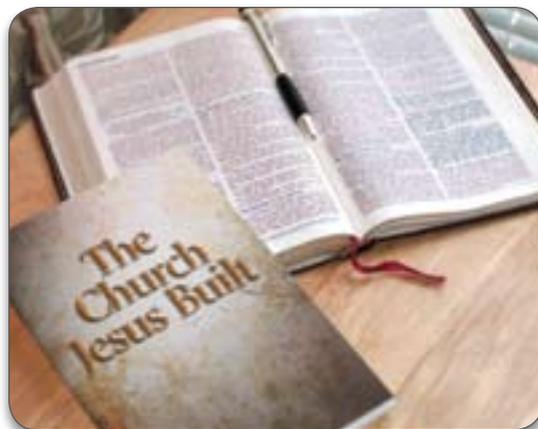
Consider the circumstances of the early New Testament Church: “Now all who believed *were together*, and had all things in common” (Acts 2:44, emphasis added throughout). In the King James Version of the Bible, the English word *together* appears 484 times. God likes *togetherness*!

What did Jesus say would be a primary identifying sign of His followers? “By this all will know that you are My disciples,

if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

In the Bible, *love* includes *unselfish actions of service*, not only emotions. How can Christ’s disciples serve one another if they don’t know each other and aren’t together? Hebrews 10:25 emphasizes the need of “assembling of ourselves *together* . . . and so much the *more* as you see the Day [of Christ’s return] approaching.”

The preceding verse, Hebrews 10:24, stresses the need to “stir up



***“Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you . . .”***

love and good works” among one another. Through Christian fellowship with other believers, we do just that—encourage, strengthen, comfort and help one another. God knows that it’s difficult to survive spiritually on our own—that we need the support and encouragement we get from being with others of like mind.

The focus of church services should be about worshipping God and learning more about His Word and how He wants us to live. Paul describes the Church as “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15, New International Version). The Church is the primary source through which God’s truth is taught and learned.

But another focus of the Church is on *giving of ourselves* to one another. Notice this essential evidence of spiritual conver-

sion: “We know that we have passed from [spiritual] death to life, because we love the brethren . . . By this we know love, because He [Jesus] laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:14, 16).

The most common fulfillment of “laying down our lives” is that we give of our *time* for our brethren.

Members of God’s Church should be striving to become like Jesus Christ, but are far from that perfection. Each member is a “work in progress,” endeavoring to be “transformed” by God and gradually “conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 12:2; 8:29).

Every member is at a different point in his or her spiritual progress. Sometimes problems arise just like we read about in

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Photos (from left): Shaun Venish, Scott Ashley (2)

the New Testament. But we know that God expects those He has called to His Church to work on themselves and to love, forgive and encourage others.

### How does one become a member?

Surprisingly, an individual cannot “join” the Church on his or her own. First, God must *call* or *draw* you to Christ (John 6:44-45). Then you become a member of



God’s Church when “the Spirit of God dwells in you,” as Paul put it. He explains that “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Romans 8:9). “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (verse 14).

Paul also wrote, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized [immersed, inserted] into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). That “one body” is “the body of Christ” (verse 27). Christ’s “body . . . is the church” (Colossians 1:24).

How does one receive the Holy Spirit? As was explained in the last article in this series, once a person believes the Bible, has repented of his sins and has been baptized “for the remission [forgiveness] of sins,” he will “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38) through the laying on of hands of God’s ministry. The Holy Spirit sets apart or *sanctifies* the convert as

a new child of God. That is why the Bible frequently refers to members of God’s Church as *saints* (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, “For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). God’s forgiveness cleanses us of sin and the indwelling of God’s Spirit imparts God’s righteousness. This is how we become saints

## The Church Behind The Good News

The New Testament Church belongs to our heavenly Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ. Together they inspired the New Testament writers to refer to the Church as the “Church of God,” which means it is a spiritual organism that belongs to God.

Thus the legal name of the church organization that publishes *The Good News* is “United Church of God, an International Association.” Our chosen name first reflects our commitment to using the biblical name of the Church.

God expects His people to get organized and coordinate their efforts to more effectively fulfill His work. The word “United” reflects our goal of striving for spiritual unity and harmony, which the New Testament heavily emphasizes (Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Corinthians 12).

“An International Association” reflects our representation in many countries around the world and our commitment to fulfill Christ’s commission to “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15, NIV). We are trying to reach everyone of every race in all nations to give them the wonderful “words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

or spiritual virgins betrothed to Christ.

At the return of Christ, the saints will be raised in a resurrection to eternal life and glory (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54; Revelation 20:6). The “marriage of the Lamb” to His betrothed Bride will then take place (Revelation 19:7). The Church of God will then become part of the Kingdom of God!

### Defining the Church and its mission

Jesus said that part of His earthly mission was to “build My church,” and He began by training 12 disciples and other followers (Matthew 16:18). The Greek word here translated “church” is *ekklesia*. This explains why the English word *ecclesiastical* means “relating to the church.”

This Greek word means essentially “those called out to an assembly”—which indicates that someone has authority over

them to *summon* them to the assembly. Church services are called “holy convocations” in the Bible (Leviticus 23:2). The word “convocations” means *commanded assemblies*, and they are “holy” because it is *God* who has commanded or convoked them. This means that God expects His people, whenever possible, to be in attendance when He convokes an assembly.

Jesus gave orders to His disciples (and all future disciples) regarding their mission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Jesus summarized this aspect of the mission another way when He told Peter to “feed My sheep” (John 21:15-17). Later, Paul reminded the elders to “shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28). This primarily means to teach and preach the Word of God, stressing the practical application in our daily lives (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; 4:2).

It’s clear from other scriptures and the apostles’ examples that the Church is also commissioned to fulfill Christ’s prophecy that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14; see also Matthew 10:7; Mark 1:15; 16:15; Luke 9:2, 60; Acts 28:30-31).

The United Church of God, an International Association, publisher of *The Good News*, is deeply dedicated to fulfilling this twofold commission—to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God in all the world and to shepherd and nurture the members of God’s Church. Our recognition of and commitment to this instruction is reflected in our logo: “Preaching the Gospel, Preparing a People.”

### Preaching and practicing what the Bible teaches

We in United Church of God fully believe that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). And Christ’s followers must be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22; Revelation 14:12).

The Bible is full of many warnings to beware of deceitful teachers, such as those who preach about the *Messenger* but don’t teach His *message*, much less the rest of the Bible (2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15;

*Continued on page 27*

# Correction With a Gourmet Flair

*Giving someone else needed correction is never easy. However, using this method will usually help make the process productive and profitable and lead to better results.*

by Bonnie Greider

**M**ost of us have been in a position at some time when we had to give correction to another person. This situation is almost always uncomfortable. But if we take the time to prepare for it well in advance, the task can become not only easier, but have positive and encouraging results.

As anyone who has ever received correction knows (and who hasn't?), the manner in which it is given has a great impact on how it is received and, additionally, on whether or not it is ingested and produces good fruit.

So how can we go about giving correction in a way that leads to the best outcome? The following method may sound a little unusual at first, but if you try it, you may experience a positive result.

## Prepare ahead of time

Preparing and giving appropriate, timely and loving correction can be compared to serving a good meal. After all, your purpose is to help the other person, giving something nourishing so he or she can grow. Here are some helpful steps:

- **First, plan your menu well in advance.** What are your anticipated outcomes? Is this a heavy conversation from an employer to an employee, such as a yearly evaluation? Maybe it is in preparation for a raise or promotion.

Perhaps it is an intense disciplinary meeting. If this is the case, considerably more time and effort will be needed in the planning stages. Additionally, documentation of the items discussed and, in many cases, the signature of the individual with whom you are meeting could be required. There could be applicable labor laws to consider, and there may be a need to invite another individual to witness or take part in the discussion.

- **Second, consider your motivation.** Providing correction should be an act of love and concern for the other individual. Your goal is to *help*. Anger, jealousy, hurt feelings or other negative emotions should not be a part of the picture.

If these feelings are present, you should,



**Balancing corrective statements with encouraging facts is like serving tasty garnishes or side dishes alongside the main dish, which by itself might be hard to swallow.**

if possible, wait for another opportunity. Emotional conflict will not only likely distort your judgment and perspective, but it also will rarely produce the desired end result. If you don't care enough about the person you are working with to help him or her move in a positive direction, you probably should not be giving correction at all!

- **Next, think about location and timing.** Make sure that your seating is comfortable and not intimidating. Think about the immediate environment. Will other people be around who might inadvertently overhear? What is the state of mind of the other person? What time of day will this conversation occur?

Are the circumstances in the room comfortable and pleasant, or will they cause uneasiness in either you or the person with whom you are conversing? Have you spent enough time thinking about what you

are going to say to ensure that you will not blurt out something unintentional or something that could be misconstrued?

- **Finally, make sure that all your facts are accurate.** Hearsay evidence, supposed actions, gossip or insinuations are never appropriate reasons for corrective action.

Additionally, you must be very sure that you are not putting *your* motives behind another's actions. Sometimes we can hear a statement or witness another's deeds and assume that we know their motivation based on what we would be thinking if we had done or said the same thing. This often reveals a motive, but not the one we intend! The perceived actions of another could be far more innocent than ours would have been in the same situation!

## Presenting the situation

Once you have considered these steps,

how do you actually deliver? Continuing with the analogy, consider the steps a master chef takes to serve a well-prepared meal.

- **Set the table.** Make sure that the environment, as discussed earlier, is conducive to producing the right results.

- **Use the right serving tools.** Just as you wouldn't serve gravy with a fork, you need to make sure you have the right tools to serve correction. Prior to the event, arm yourself with prayer and meditation. Make sure that your facts are accurate. Have paper and pen handy (and maybe a box of tissues!). Know where to go if you discover you have need of further expertise.

- **Prepare an appetizer.** Draw the other person into the event by giving him or her a reason to want to be there. Correction should be positive; it should bring about a change that makes life or work better. Encourage the other person by showing how much he or she will benefit from the information you are going to provide.

- **Provide a well-balanced, attractive meal.** Think about every aspect of what you need to say to be sure that it flows well and is palatable. Balancing corrective statements with encouraging facts is like serving tasty garnishes or side dishes alongside the main dish, which by itself might be hard to swallow. It gives a variety of things to "chew on," is much more pleasant to the eye and allows for diversity.

Stick to the facts, to be sure, but intersperse them with lighter statements that are still on point, but perhaps not all of the same weight.

- **Use appropriate seasoning.** Provide liberal amounts of gentleness, meekness, kindness and possibly even humor. Sprinkle humility liberally over the

course of the conversation.

- **Provide a beverage.** Constantly pressing an individual with facts and statements can be like continually showing dry bread into his or her mouth. Giving him or her time to occasionally breathe and "lighten up" can be like supplying a refreshing glass of water (which you might also like to do!). Give the person time between "gulps" of information to pause and be refreshed and digest what he or she has heard.

- **Finish with a good dessert.** What do you want this person to take away from the table? You want him or her to be full and nourished by all that's been ingested, but the taste at the end should be even more pleasant and intriguing than the appetizer. After all, the purpose for the correction is to bring about and encourage positive change that will make life better.

You should end on an uplifting and encouraging note and, as much as possible, leave your "guest" willing to come back for more. If your motive is that of love, this is actually possible!

### Adapt to other situations

Of course, there are times and situations when having a lot of preparatory time is not possible. When correcting a child who is engaging in dangerous activity or stopping a sudden or emerging situation, there may not be an opportunity to do much other than put a sudden and abrupt halt to the actions of another.

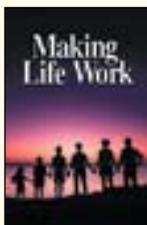
But after the immediate situation has passed, and when time permits, it is still imperative to take the time to stop and discuss what happened and why, and to formulate a plan to prevent the situation from occurring in the future. This should be done privately, and with love and genuine concern.

And regrettably, with some people a gentle approach like that described here simply won't work or isn't enough. Then a more direct and forceful approach will be needed.

So whatever type of correction you are serving, be sure to plan your approach—your menu—well with the health of your "guest" in mind, having a variety of encouraging and tantalizing morsels that are well prepared, and leaving him or her with a positive plan for growth and improvement. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Did you realize that you probably already own the best self-help book ever published? That book is the Holy Bible! It's packed with timeless and powerful advice on relationships, finances, parenting, job and career, success and so much more. We've gathered some of the best advice into a booklet called *Making Life Work*. Request or download your free copy today!



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# How Does God Expect His Work to Be Financed Today?

*What is the biblical method of funding the preaching and publishing of the gospel of the Kingdom? Let's examine the Scriptures to discover the answer.*

by Tom Kirkpatrick

**T**he *Good News* is printed and mailed to about 500,000 subscribers around the world in five languages—English, Spanish, German, Italian and French. In addition, some 600,000 booklets and other publications were requested in 2006 and mailed to our global readership. We also mailed over 75,000 lessons of our *Bible Study Course* to students in the United States alone.

We also maintain several extensive Web sites, showing a strong and steady increase in visitors. We sponsor the *Beyond Today* television and radio programs. We publish a youth magazine, *Vertical Thought*, sent free to more than 20,000 subscribers around the globe. Our letter-answering staff answers biblical questions from our readers all over the world.

A dedicated and loyal staff supports the publishing of the gospel at our home office near Cincinnati, Ohio, along with our associated offices located in key areas overseas.

All these activities and many more constitute the understandable expenses incurred in spreading the true gospel all over the world. God wants to see His truth go out to this generation. The apostle Paul said, “Woe is me if I do not preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16). The same could be said of the Church today.

## The key biblical principles

God's Word, the Holy Bible, includes laws and instructions—some of them regarding financial matters. God is the Creator of everything and by right the owner of everything. King David said, “The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1).

In effect, *everything* belongs to God. So it is within His divine prerogative to determine how wealth should be used. Since it belongs to Him, He has the right to specify *how* it should be used.

This does not mean that God mandates how we spend every penny. However, He

has revealed instructions in the Bible as to how we ought to handle wealth. He also gives us the freedom to choose whether to obey His laws, including those that cover physical wealth, income and money (see Deuteronomy 30:19).

It's very important that we begin to understand the key points of God's method of financing as revealed in the pages of the Bible.

## Old Testament teaching

The principal biblical method of funding the work of the Church is *tithing*. The definition of

tithing is very simple. To give a tithe is to give a tenth part of the whole.

After the Israelites came out of Egypt, they were instructed to give a tithe of their increase to the Levitical priesthood, Levi being one of the 12 tribes of Israel. However, the first indication of tithing in the Bible dates back to the patriarch Abraham, the father of the faithful. This incident occurred long before there was a Levite or Levitical priest, since the early patriarch Abraham was Levi's great-grandfather.

Genesis 14:18 states that “Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed [Abraham] and said: ‘Blessed be [Abraham] of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth . . . who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And [Abraham] gave him a tithe of all”



***God has revealed instructions in the Bible as to how we ought to handle wealth. He also gives us the freedom to choose whether to obey His laws, including those that cover physical wealth.***

(emphasis added throughout).

Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe of everything. (Our free booklet *Who Is God?* shows that Melchizedek was in reality the preincarnate Jesus Christ before the divine Word became the Son of God as explained in John 1:1-3, 14. Please request your free copy.)

## What's the reason for tithing?

We learn three significant things from this first recorded act of tithing. These establish the key points of this biblical practice for all time.

The first is the *basic reason for tithing*. It is an *acknowledgement of God* as the ultimate Owner of all wealth and the Provider of all blessings.

How can human beings please God today in a monetary sense? By honoring

Him with a portion of our increase in money and material things. Our Creator wants us to remember that He is the source of all physical and material blessings that come our way. He doesn't want us to develop a prideful sense of self-sufficiency (Deuteronomy 8:11-18).

Tithing is for *our* good. God doesn't need anybody's money since everything belongs to Him. How is He impoverished if we don't tithe? How is he enriched if we do? Tithing is for the good of *our* relationship with Him.

King Solomon wrote, "Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase" (Proverbs 3:9). The first thing that we should do with any financial increase that comes our way is to honor God with it. This practice reminds us that *our Creator provides everything we have*, including the power to earn wealth, our natural aptitudes, our health and any other blessings.

### How is a tithe calculated?

The next point is determining the basis for tithing. It was to be done on *all the increase*. In Abraham's case it was the spoils of battle.

So a person tithes on his or her real increase from whatever source—earnings, profits, agricultural produce, etc.

### Who should receive the tithe?

The third point to understand is the recipient of the tithe is God's representative on the earth at the time. Our Creator is the source of divine blessings to the tithe-payer, and in Abraham's case His representative was Melchizedek.

Long after Melchizedek manifested Himself on earth, God and the nation of Israel agreed on a covenant at Mt. Sinai. We need to understand its application to tithing. Leviticus 27:30 states that the tithe was holy to God. It was still based on the increase, but instead of going to Melchizedek, it was now given to a different designated recipient.

Under the terms of the Old Covenant at Sinai, the tithe went to the tribe of Levi, the Levites. Nothing changed here except God's appointed agent to *receive* tithes.

Leviticus 27:30 also shows us that

the tithe of a person's increase is *holy to God*. It is *not* holy to the Levite, it is *not* holy to the Church, *it is holy to God*. That is a very important point for us to understand.

We cannot pay our tithes directly to God today as the patriarch Abraham did to Melchizedek (the pre-incarnate Christ). God is practical. He says, in essence, *in lieu of giving it directly to Me, you give it to My designated agents*. It is not, however, *their* tithe. It is still *God's*, to be used in His work on earth. The Bible reveals that over time the God-ordained recipients have shifted.

### Times of reformation

The history of the people of ancient Israel reveals that they were obedient to God only sporadically. Occasionally they would get into trouble and call out to God, who would respond by sending them a strong leader.

This often charismatic person would restore them to the ways of the Creator. During these periods of reformation, two things would be stressed—a return to keeping God's annual Holy Days and a restoration of the law of tithing.

One account is recorded in 2 Chronicles 29–31, where King Hezekiah brought the people back to God and His ways. One of the things this righteous king did was to reinstitute tithing (2 Chronicles 31:6).

When the Israelites stopped tithing, the Levites had no support for their religious service to God and the people. So the systematic provision of religious instruction was allowed to lapse and the people lost their moral guidance. Thus they often sank into the worship of Baal and the other false gods of paganism. This was blatant idolatry!

However, once tithing was reinstated, the Levites could concentrate on their many duties of representing God in various worship responsibilities. Order was then restored to the people of Israel and they received appropriate religious teaching.

### Monetary instruction in Malachi

The Christian Old Testament ends with the prophetic book of Malachi. It includes an important reference to tithing in the third chapter.

## Tithing and the Priesthood

The book of Hebrews makes it clear that Aaron and his line are no longer the high priests.

So did the priesthood pass away? No, we still have a High Priest—Jesus Christ. Did the law of tithing pass away? No, it did not originate with the codification of the law at Mt. Sinai and it did not end with Christ's crucifixion and subsequent resurrection.

Tithing preceded the Old Covenant and extends on into the New Covenant. It is not like certain physical ordinances and washings associated with the temple liturgy, which were rendered no longer necessary (Hebrews 9:9-11).

Hebrews 7 explains how a change in the priesthood relates to tithing. It says: "And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises" (verses 5-6).

This passage is referring to Melchizedek, who received tithes from Abraham long before his great-grandson Levi was even born.

Notice verses 7-10: "Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him."

Now read verse 11: "Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?" So were the people perfected spiritually under the Levitical priesthood? Clearly not!

Continue in verse 12: "For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law."

What was changed? *The priesthood* was. Was the law of tithing changed? Yes, but only in the aspect of the *recipient* of the tithe. Tithing is first mentioned with Melchizedek, and this law continues throughout all generations of humankind.

Notice verse 13: "For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe . . ." Jesus Christ was a Jew belonging to the tribe of Judah—not of Levi. Under the terms of the Old Covenant, Jesus would have had to be a son of Aaron to be a priest—descended from the tribe of Levi.

*Therefore, Christ's divine office as High Priest has superseded the Levitical priesthood!*

Verses 14-16 explain: "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life."

So again, there was a change in the law in terms of who actually receives the tithes. This role reverts back to the model of the Melchizedek priesthood. Verse 17 explains that Jesus Christ is "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Christ built His Church nearly 2,000 years ago and works through it today just as He has all through the intervening centuries. As the priests and tribe of Levi were God's designated representatives on earth in ancient times, today the ministry of His Church, the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12), has been designated to represent Him.

Here the Creator asks: “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me!” Notice that the people responded in an insolent manner: “In what way have we robbed You?” God plainly replied: “*In tithes and offerings*. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation” (Malachi 3:8-9). It is clear from this account that God takes tithing quite seriously.

Did those who refused to tithe rob the Levites? Only indirectly. Who are those who do not tithe ultimately robbing? The answer is the great Creator God. *The tithe belongs to and is holy to God!*

Our Creator continues the challenge: “‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it’” (verse 10).

We balance this prophetic account with the rest of Scripture to show that not every Christian, not every faithful tithe-payer, is going to be as wealthy as a Sam Walton, Warren Buffett or Bill Gates. Nonetheless, God does bless us in countless ways if we choose to obey Him.

### New Testament teaching

The question may be asked: Does tithing continue under the terms of the New Covenant? Jesus clearly stated: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).

Notice His follow-up statement in chapter 23: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin . . .” (verse 23). Was Jesus condemning them for tithing? No, He is criticizing them because of their hypocritical approach and their lack of spiritual balance. A lack of spiritual perception was their basic problem.

Jesus continued: “For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, *without leaving the others undone*.” Jesus Christ is not saying to forget tithing and focus only on these three spiritual components—justice, mercy and faith. He says to practice *both*, but keep them in proper perspective.

Counting every leaf and every little seed of these spices and herbs also revealed a stinginess on their part. They were not going to give God anything more than

exactly 10 percent. They didn’t understand that God is well able to bless us abundantly if we display a generous approach to giving (2 Corinthians 9:6).

### Tithing not a ritual law

Luke’s Gospel contains a parallel passage where Jesus upholds the law of tithing just as He did in Matthew’s account. “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe the mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, *without leaving the others undone*” (Luke 11:42). However, here He also upbraids the Phar-

## ***The gospel of the Kingdom needs to be spread all over the globe. It is one of life’s mountaintop experiences to participate in a work of God for the benefit of others.***

isees for their added ritualistic washings (verses 38-40).

Jesus Christ makes a clear distinction in Luke 11 between something that He still upholds and something that is not necessary.

Men made many unnecessary additions to the ritualistic laws of God. True, there were certain ritualistic laws in the Old Testament that lasted only until Christ’s sacrifice rendered them no longer necessary. But the Pharisees added things like washing not just their hands before eating, but the whole forearm up to the elbow. Jesus taught that these human additions were unnecessary but at the same time He upheld the law of tithing.

### Preaching and publishing the gospel today

The United Church of God, publisher of *The Good News*, believes and teaches that tithing is the primary way God finances the work of the Church. Tithing is one of the

means by which human beings can honor God—gratefully and obediently acknowledging Him as Creator of everything and Provider of all good things.

The Church believes that, as shown by the Scriptures, tithing has historically been the primary revealed method for financing God’s work on earth and is equally in force today.

Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to take the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all nations (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20). They are to preach and publish God’s message of repentance around the world (Luke 24:47).

While we certainly emphasize a warning message directing the attention of our readers and listeners to man’s sinful activities and their consequences, the gospel also contains the wonderful good news of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins and promises a utopian world to dawn on mankind soon after the second coming of Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21).

Undertaking this divine mandate of proclaiming this message to the entire world requires enormous amounts of funding. As we have seen in this article, the biblical way of obtaining the necessary financing is the scriptural practice of tithing.

Obedience to God’s laws is voluntary in this age of man. The Creator is not forcing His will on people. But it makes very good sense to follow God’s way of life. His laws bring order to our lives and teach us to manage our affairs rather than simply let things happen. They also teach us to cultivate an outgoing concern for the well-being of others.

Why not take an active part in this crusade for sanity? The gospel of the Kingdom needs to be spread all over the globe. It is one of life’s mountaintop experiences to participate in a work of God for the benefit of others.

Do you know what it says in Daniel 12:3 about those who bring truth to other human beings? “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament [heavens], and those *who turn many to righteousness* like the stars forever and ever.” What an awesome reward God promises to those who faithfully obey Him! **GN**

### Recommended Reading

This article has only covered a few of the biblical passages and principles on financial matters and tithing. If you would like to understand in more detail how God financially supports His work on earth today, please request or download our free booklets *What Does the Bible Teach About Tithing?* and *Managing Your Finances*.



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# Nuclear Arms Race

Continued from page 9

superpower the Bible calls “the beast.”

Daniel 11:40 prophesies that “the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships.”

While Iran is to the east of the main events prophesied in this passage, the Iranian revolution is spreading Islamic fundamentalism throughout the region, leading to increasing nervousness among Arab leaders. A nuclear-armed Iran will only lead to more instability.

We also must not overlook the dangerous situation in Pakistan. Its leader, Pervez Musharraf, has already survived several assassination attempts and for years has walked a tightrope in trying to balance his support for U.S. antiterrorism efforts with a military and civilian populace that is largely supportive of Islamic fundamentalist aims.

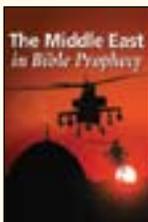
Should a future assassination attempt prove successful, Pakistan’s dozens of nuclear warheads and missiles could come under the control of Islamic fundamentalists overnight.

Added to the growing sense of instability is the continuing war in Iraq and the threat of a withdrawal by American, British and other coalition forces. This would leave a huge vacuum in the region, particularly if the United States were to eventually turn its back on the Middle East.

Mideast oil is vital for the world’s economy, with the countries of Europe more dependent than most. A security vacuum in the region, with its resulting chaos, could be the catalyst that precipitates the prophesied ascendancy of the European-centered union of nations that will usher in end-time events. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

Why does the long-troubled Middle East so often dominate the headlines? Why do the hostilities never seem to end? It’s almost impossible to understand without a firm grasp of what the Bible reveals about these ancient antagonisms. You need to learn how it will all play out—culminating in the return of Jesus Christ, the true Messiah, to rule the entire earth! To discover the eye-opening truth, request or download your free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* today!



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# Crossroads

Continued from page 7

people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

America is truly at a momentous—and dangerous—crossroads. The clear message sent by the latest election results, and the increasingly loud demands that the United States withdraw its forces from Iraq, show that American patience and commitment in Iraq are likely nearing an end. Indications point to America trying to find a way to exit without losing too much face.

But ominously, these things also show something else—that should America turn its back on its commitment to Iraq at this point, it’s almost certain that no future U.S. administration, regardless of party, will soon commit American military power overseas for anything short of an attack on U.S. soil that could dwarf the devastating 9/11 attacks.

This almost certainly ensures that the world will soon become an even more dangerous place. Regimes like North Korea and Iran, long supporters of international terrorism, are actively developing nuclear arms and the means to deliver them. At the same time they openly threaten to destroy the United States.

What message will lack of American resolve, real or perceived, in dealing with rogue states and terrorists send to the rest of the world? If the United States won’t stand up to them—and the United Nations’ track record in dealing with such problems is abysmal—who or what will head off an explosion of global instability?

In times like these the utter foolishness of rejecting God and His ways should be evident. On the one hand we seek to remove Him from our public life and shrilly demand that we don’t want Him around, and then we wonder why He doesn’t respond when tragedy strikes.

Nevertheless, He will hear those who sincerely seek Him with all their hearts, and will aid and comfort those who put their trust in Him. “Seek the LORD while He may be found,” He tells us in Isaiah 55:6-7, “call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” **GN**

# The Church

Continued from page 21

Matthew 7:20-23; 24:4-5, 11, 24-25). Much of today’s “Christianity” is *syncretism*, meaning a blend of ideas from many ancient religions. Jesus expects His religion to be the same in this 21st century as it was in the first century (Hebrews 13:8).

The Church as described in the Bible obeys all of the Ten Commandments. This includes the Fourth Commandment about remembering the day that God made holy at creation (Exodus 20:8-11; Genesis 2:1-3). *All places* in the Bible that mention the weekly Sabbath mean the same thing—the seventh day of the week, which is Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.

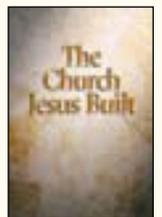
Therefore our weekly worship services are on the biblical Sabbath. This is the day God made holy. No human being can make *any* day holy or transfer the Sabbath to another day. And there is not a shred of evidence that God ever took the holiness from the seventh day and transferred it to some other day. (Our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest* gives abundant proof that the Sabbath is still God’s holy day and that God gives great blessings to those who reverence it, celebrate it and obey Him in this manner.)

We warmly invite all who are interested—and your children—to visit our Sabbath services any time. Or you may desire to talk with one of our ministers first. Contact us for the location of the nearest congregation or pastor.

The next and final article in this series will show how to use *all* the biblical tools to continue your spiritual progress—so that, as Paul said in Ephesians 4:15, we “may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” **GN**

## Recommended Reading

This article has barely scratched the surface regarding the biblical description of the Church. Sadly, it’s one of the most misunderstood subjects of all. Why are there literally hundreds of denominations, all claiming to get their beliefs from the Bible? How can you know which is right? You need to learn what the Bible really teaches! Request or download your free copy of *The Church Jesus Built* to begin discovering the real answers. While you’re at it, also request or download *This Is the United Church of God and Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest*.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our Web site at

[www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets)

## “The Top Ten Reasons Why I Don’t Celebrate Christmas”

I absolutely love your magazine. Only one has been received so far, but it is just what we needed. We gave up Christmas three years ago, so it was good to see the article in your magazine—at last someone not scared to write about the truth.

V.D., Sydney, Australia

Please cancel my subscription immediately. I have never read a more narrow-minded article than “The Top Ten Reasons Why I Don’t Celebrate Christmas.” Your author is missing the point in not associating our modern Christmas holiday with honoring Jesus’ birth.

R.G., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

The subject is your article about Christmas. I am looking for ideas that could help us celebrate some of the Holy Days that Jesus observed. How do you do it, if you do? I will celebrate Jesus’ birth, not because we are commanded to or not to, but because it is the most important birth the world has ever known. But I am serious about celebrating some days Jesus observed. Great idea. Thanks for putting the bug in my ear.

R.B., St. Paul, Minnesota

*The United Church of God (publishers of The Good News) observes all seven of the annual Holy Days and festivals—whose celebrations are clearly revealed in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. To understand how, when and why, request or download our free booklet God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind.*

Could you please send me information on the Feast of Tabernacles celebration? I celebrated it in Israel this year [2006], but may not be able to go next year [2007]. So if I could attend at a site in this country, that would be great.

Mrs. D.H.B., South Wales

*We have gladly done so.*

## The Good News

Thank you very much for *The Good News* magazine as well as the booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. I find them all highly informative and educational. These write-ups have gone a long way to broaden my horizon on the issues contained therein.

S.E.A., Malaga, Spain

Thanks for publishing the “richest” magazine in the world. *The Good News* has arrived to quench my thirst. I am new in these teachings, and I’ve grown in interest in knowing the truth about some basic issues that have to do with the Christian faith. To this end, I request the following:

1. Please place me on the subscription list.
2. Send me past issues of *The Good News*.
3. Send me materials on relationships: family, marriage and finances.
4. Enroll me in your *Bible Study Course*.

I shall be grateful if my requests are met and I am given the privilege of knowing the truth on issues like the Sabbath, Christmas, true love, etc.

F.T., Nigeria

*We’re glad to help. We are privileged to serve our subscribers from all around the world.*

## Reader expresses appreciation

Although I am a Roman Catholic, not worshipping in your church, you never ask me to join your church. Instead you continue sending me booklets and newsletters that can change my life and uplift my faith in God without a token from me, which I so much appreciate. How I wish there were a million ways to express my gratitude and appreciation as your church is a source of blessing to humanity, spreading the news that will last in our hearts forever.

M.J.C., AP, India

*We are happy to continue providing The Good News without charge. This is possible because of the commitment and generosity of many. See “How Your*

*Subscription to The Good News Has Been Paid” on page 20.*

## Misunderstandings clarified

I have read and enjoyed many of your magazines. However, I recently noticed that you don’t believe Jesus was God. Don’t try to convince me otherwise. Take my name off your mailing list. Do not send me anything else!

C.K., Elko, New York

*We regret any reader cancellations, but especially the ones where our readers think we believe something that we clearly don’t. The two free booklets Who Is God? and Jesus Christ: The Real Story both show that Jesus Christ is God along with the Father (see Hebrews 1:8; Titus 3:4; John 20:28).*

I enjoy the news articles in your publication. However, as I was reading the Sept.-Oct. 2006 issue, I was very concerned about a statement made in the article about repentance. “As we read in Acts 2:38, once a person repents and believes the gospel, he must then be baptized to receive forgiveness of sins and spiritual conversion.” I would have to say, according to the Scriptures, that is incorrect. The baptism that Peter is referring to is the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

P.I., Elk Park, North Carolina

*Consider some of the other New Testament passages about baptism. Later, when the Gentiles were called to obtain salvation, the apostle Peter clearly stated: “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:47-48).*

*When Paul was being converted, Ananias asked him: “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Jesus Christ said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16).*

*The clear indication is that Acts 2:38 refers to water baptism. To understand further, request or download our free booklets The Road to Eternal Life and Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion.*

## Readers in Britain

*The Good News* is very precious literature. It’s fascinating and provides me with the knowledge of the most important things on earth for the human race. I am also waiting impatiently for the next booklet, as I will read it from page one to the last page.

Mrs. L.B., Cheltenham

Thanks so much for sending me these magazines. They are packed with so much information and teaching. I get excited wishing for the next one. I go to a Baptist church which is really great, but there is not enough time on Sunday to learn as much as we need to know. We have also started home educating our children this year due to the many problems at school. Your information really helps and strengthens what we should be teaching our children.

Mrs. K.B., Slough

Lesson one of your *Bible Study Course* is very good teaching. Reading it and looking up the scriptures has given me more insight to the understanding of the mighty Creator God and His works. I have finished this first lesson, but intend to reread it and meditate on the scriptures to obtain more knowledge. I look forward to receiving lesson two.

K.R., Manchester

Your literature is quite mind-opening as well as being a detailed explanation of some of the unexplainable doctrines in the Bible. Thanks for enabling me to understand. The last booklet that you sent me, *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*, was very interesting.

L.G., Derby

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to *The Good News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254-1027, U.S.A., or e-mail [gninfo@ucg.org](mailto:gninfo@ucg.org) (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).



**Q: I am writing about your obviously controversial article “The Top Ten Reasons Why I Don’t Celebrate Christmas.” The author is concerned about involving himself in pagan customs. We celebrate Thanksgiving and that’s not about glorifying God, even if it should be. Should we stop celebrating that too?**

**Dec. 25 is a date. Who cares about the date? We don’t know exactly when Jesus was born anyway. No, the Bible doesn’t tell us to celebrate Jesus’ birth, but we celebrate it on our own. So why wouldn’t we celebrate His birth, that of the most wonderful Man ever to step onto this planet? Your author is going to teach people not to celebrate Christmas instead of teaching them about Jesus just because of the date.**

*S.P. Dover, Delaware*

A: Thank you for sharing your comments concerning our recent article about Christmas. Questions often arise regarding how Christians should view religious holidays whose origins are not from the Bible. The perspective of *The Good News* is always to address the issue from the viewpoint, “What does the Bible say?”

As pointed out in the *Good News* article, Deuteronomy 12:30-32 explicitly commands that God’s people are not to use pagan religious customs to worship Him. Christmas employs pagan customs such as decorated evergreen trees to honor Jesus Christ. And its date wasn’t chosen at random or by research, but specifically because it was *already* the time of the pagan Romans’ most popular celebration.

We don’t expect our readers to simply take our word for it. But you should see for yourself what the Bible and the record of history have to say!

You might notice, for example, the origins of Christmas and its customs as explained in an editorial in the Dec. 11, 2006, issue of *USA Today*: “For Christmas is, in its origins and its symbolism, perhaps the most pagan-inspired of all Christian holidays. Its dating derives from the ancient Roman festival of Saturnalia, which was determined by the winter solstice, that astronomical point in the year after which the periods of sunlight on Earth lengthen.

“And that’s not all that contemporary Christians have in common with neopagans. Most of the popular symbols surrounding Christmas—evergreen trees and other greenery, mistletoe and holly, the Yule log, candles and bonfires and holiday lights, mystical spirits with the ability to fly and to enter and leave a house through its chimney, tricksters who treat or taunt little children, not to mention those elves—all derive from older, pre-Christian Europe” (Mary Zeiss Stange, “Christmas, Pagans and Religious Divergence”).

The Bible states that we must not adapt pagan customs in our worship. It is impossible to honor God through disobeying Him. That is the bottom line.

The line of reasoning that since we don’t know the date of Christ’s birth we can just pick one to celebrate is an interesting one. Consider, though, that you have not just picked one. You have instead embraced one that early Catholic theologians chose for you when they decided to relabel an idolatrous pagan celebration as “Christian” specifically to swell the ranks of the church.

The noted Scottish historian and scholar Sir James Frazer (1854-1941) explains in his classic work *The Golden Bough*: “Accordingly when the doctors of the [Catholic] Church perceived that the [formerly pagan] Christians had a leaning to this festival [the nativity of the Sun, Dec. 25], they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnized on that day . . . The heathen origin of Christmas is plainly hinted at, if not tacitly admitted, by Augustine when he exhorts his Christian brethren not to celebrate that solemn day like the heathen on account of the sun, but on account of him who made the sun. In like manner [Pope] Leo the Great rebuked the pestilent belief that Christmas

was solemnized because of the birth of the new sun, as it was called, and not because of the nativity of Christ.

“Thus it appears that the [Catholic] Church chose to celebrate the birthday of its Founder on the twenty-fifth of December in order to transfer the devotion of the heathen from the Sun to him who was called the Sun of Righteousness” (1993, pp. 358-359).

The truth about the origins of Christmas is simple: One of the ancient world’s most popular celebrations—a festival that originated in sun worship and honoring pagan gods—was renamed and reborn as traditional Christianity’s most popular celebration. But as noted above, the Bible condemns such “Christianizing” of pagan worship customs. So those misguided church leaders were acting contrary to the Bible in what they did. And if we persist in the practice, then we are in the wrong as well.

Some think we can conquer pagan holidays for Christ. Did God allow the Israelites to conquer pagan temples and use them to worship Him? No. God told them to *eradicate all vestiges of pagan worship* from their midst (Deuteronomy 12:1-4). In the same way, God will not accept Christmas trees, holly wreaths, mistletoe and the hallowing of Dec. 25 in His honor—no matter how sincere we may be in wanting to glorify Him through these customs.

The fact that some misuse Thanksgiving Day is not cogent to the issue of Christmas observance. Unlike Christmas, Thanksgiving is acceptable because it was instituted for an honorable purpose and did not originate in pagan worship.

Thanksgiving was originally celebrated in 1621 to give thanks to God for His watchful hand in helping those early pilgrims survive the rigors of the weather and other severe difficulties. Later, American president Abraham Lincoln made it a national holiday. Since its original purpose was to give thanks to our great God, Christians are free to celebrate Thanksgiving to not only give thanks, but to also rejoice with family and friends. This *does* glorify God.

It is a shame that some misuse Thanksgiving, but this error of others does not mean we should reject it ourselves. As for Christmas, however, the principle problem is not that some misuse it today contrary to its proper use. Rather, the problem is that *it has no proper use*. It should never have been instituted as a Christian holiday in the first place, as scriptural instruction and history make clear.

You closed with the thought that teaching people to reject Christmas is neglecting to teach them about Jesus. That is simply untrue. In *The Good News* we have very much to say about Jesus Christ, the Savior of humanity—the story of His birth, yes, but also the good news He preached, the way of life He taught and exemplified, His saving work in dying for our sins and living within us today, and the fact that He is coming again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

In fact, we teach about the true biblical worship days that point to Christ and that He personally observed. Consider that the work of Jesus in saving humanity is portrayed through the biblical festivals laid out in Leviticus 23. Rather than asking why we wouldn’t celebrate Christ’s birth, a better question might be: Why wouldn’t we celebrate the Holy Days that God *actually commands* us to in His Word—the ones Jesus and His apostles observed that reveal His saving work according to God’s plan?

Interested readers should read our free booklets *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind* and *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Really Matter Which Days We Keep?* The former shows that each one of God’s Holy Days teaches us important knowledge about God’s plan and purpose for all humanity, step by step and in purposeful, chronological order—which all pagan holidays fail to do. The latter comprehensively analyzes and deals with both Christmas and Thanksgiving from a biblical viewpoint.

And for more on what we proclaim and teach about Jesus, we welcome all readers to request our free booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*. Those who do will likely discover a great deal about our Savior they’ve never heard before, all backed up from the pages of the Bible. Request or download any of our booklets free of charge at [www.gnmagazine.org/booklets](http://www.gnmagazine.org/booklets).

# COMFORT ZONES: MEANT

by Debbie Whitlark

*A monthlong solo backpacking trip through Europe took me far out of my comfort zone—and brought a profound realization about our Christian calling.*

**I**n the midst of the Swiss Alps, I clung desperately to a cliff face that demanded both proper gear and experience, and reflected that I had neither. My right hand clutched a tuft of grass, my left hand knocked away loose stones, and my feet were splayed against the rock as I felt a sickeningly slow loss of traction. There was no other human being in sight, and I knew I must either keep moving or fall.

I had lost the path heading over the ridge—and though I soon realized the error, the slope was too steep to descend safely. I kept going, realizing too late that a disastrous mix of misguided optimism, perceived necessity and stubbornness had brought me to a very dangerous position, maintained only by rapidly tiring muscles.

I was two weeks into a month of backpacking solo through nine European countries, and the past five days alone had brought six languages, four currencies and countless border crossings.

As I set off from home, many mistakenly chalked the adventure up to bravery. But I did not go because I am a fearless adventurer. As a methodical, organized and reserved perfectionist with a deep need to feel competent, my comfort zone was nowhere to be found.

It was not until after I returned home that I finally realized that was the point. I had set off from the United States not completely sure how I would survive a month on my own, and returned a relatively experienced traveler, with priceless life lessons and a deeper knowledge of myself that could not have been learned except through facing the challenging situations I encountered. Although the wisdom of my choices can be questioned (I deeply appreciate God's mercy and protection!), the lessons I learned are important ones.

In both physical and spiritual matters, people often meet every challenge—and thus every opportunity—with a well-practiced list of excuses for why they will



avoid the issue or why they will only expect a mediocre performance from themselves. But fears are conquered only through action, and they are only intensified by avoidance.

Failed attempts can be painful and humbling, but refusing to make a legitimate effort to reach a worthwhile goal leads without exception to the ultimate failure: forfeiting that unique human ability to choose who we are. The Bible makes it clear that God did not grant any of us that ability merely for us to neglect it! He expects that we use it and take control of how we live, even—or especially—when a challenge puts us outside our comfort zone.

Though parents love their newborn child, they do not expect the infant to remain an infant. A child will learn, grow, stumble and try again until he or she learns to walk with confidence.

Likewise, when it comes to both our actions and our character, God does not accept stagnation. We should see our weaknesses as areas of potential growth rather than viewing them with an attitude of “Well, that’s just the way I am!” Christ emphasizes that when He comes, He will reward the person “*who overcomes*” (Revelation 21:7).

## Growing in Christ

In Ephesians 4:12-13, we are told to continue in the work of God and the edifying of the Body of Christ, “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

We are reminded by God’s Word that ignoring the problem areas isn’t the answer. We have the responsibility to face them! Far from being a destination, our conversion is a process of continual growth in which we should learn better and better each day how to imitate Christ. We must press on until the very day Christ returns and rewards

us for our labor.

When God liberated the Israelites from Egypt, the Promised Land was not a paragon of perfection, but instead was still full of

# TO BE BROKEN

sin and idolatry. Likewise, when we are baptized, our battle has only begun. We must continually clear ourselves of the dark side of our own human nature—steadfastly refusing to be influenced by the evils of the world in which we live.

While we should enjoy our progress along the way, there is no destination in this life and no time at which we can sit down, take off our armor and rest in a complacent way. We are encouraged by God's Word that He will be with us in our battles. We are making a mistake if we claim the battle is too difficult. The fact that it is difficult is part of the point and is what makes our learning process so powerful.

God has called us to be spiritual warriors, and warriors are to be faithful, unyielding, courageous and obedient. We should remember that every challenge in life is a priceless opportunity to grow. We should

not ask God to take away the problem while reciting a long list of explanations as to why we won't be able to overcome the challenge at hand. Instead, we can confidently trust that God will see us *through* the trial, not necessarily always lift it from us.

When God asked whom He could send to do His work, Isaiah did not try to avoid His calling. Instead, he responded: "Here am I! Send me" (Isaiah 6:8). Likewise, as true Christians we must be eager to confront the challenges of the unknown in order to allow God to perfect us and use us as a tool in His hands.

## Back to the mountain

After an hour of agonizingly slow progress, I still clung to the side of the mountain in the Alps. Though I found myself near the top, the way was impassable without gear, and I had no other options. I half-slid, half-fell down the steep slope

and eventually stumbled upon the path I had lost an hour and a half earlier.

Though back to square one, I was oddly excited to climb 300 meters of rough switchbacks back to the top of the ridge. I eventually reached the 3,000-meter (nearly 10,000-foot) summit after my eight-hour hike and then began the grueling descent. Back at the youth hostel, other travelers shared their pasta with me, and I crawled into bed covered in a layer of sweat, blood and dirt, which I hardly even noticed.

My European trip and its purposes came full circle at my final stop, Amsterdam. Wandering the rooms of the Vincent van Gogh museum, I read a quote by Pablo Picasso that perfectly captured the challenges of life and true Christianity: "*I am always doing what I cannot yet do, in order to learn how to do it.*"

That approach to life will inevitably lead to occasional disappointment and failure. But growth cannot occur within familiar, comfortable territory. We must choose to keep discovering and expanding what we are capable of, rather than always staying within a comfort zone that would insulate us not only from nominal failure, but also from real success.

So have the courage to challenge who you are and see what you might be! Whether it's trying out for a new sport at school, meeting someone new, learning to get the most out of college, finding a new job, taking a once-in-a-lifetime trip or overcoming a character flaw, we must, in wisdom, forge new and worthwhile paths without using the crutch of complacency.

Let us never grow weary in using every opportunity in this adventure called life to learn about God and to exercise our uniquely human ability to respond to His divine calling by saying: "Here I am, God. Send me!" **GN**



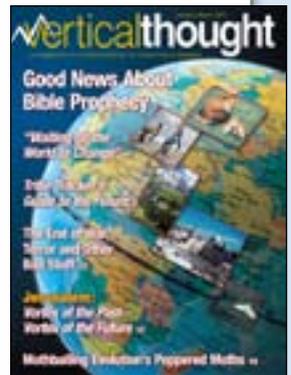
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This magazine is specially written for our younger *Good News* audience. Each issue is packed with helpful insight and eye-opening articles to help today's young adults get the most out of life—both now and in the future.

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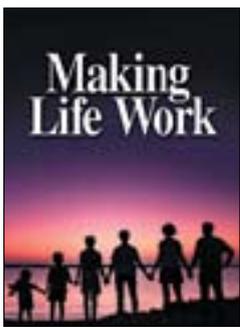


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