

The Good News

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A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



What Will the Next President Face?

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As I write, President-elect Barack Obama, soon to be the most powerful man on earth, is in the process of naming his staff of advisers.

Around 2,600 years ago, in one of history's greatest empires, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon interviewed and appointed a brilliant young Jewish captive to be on his staff. An extraordinary, life-threatening event soon thrust Daniel onto a meteoric rise to power that even the slickest political schemer could never have contrived, resulting in the king making him "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men" (Daniel 2:48).

Daniel had what could only be called a phenomenal career, surviving everything from a murder conspiracy to several administrations spanning two different empires! He foretold, and survived, one of the most stunning topplings of any government in history—the Persian takeover of Babylon. And incredibly, instead of having him killed or imprisoned, the Persian rulers retained his services!

The world will find itself in an end-time "lions' den" of power-hungry nations bent on war and wickedness.

Daniel advised the kings well, because he knew he was simply the servant of a much higher king—God Almighty! His legacy, therefore, is not found in the politics and policies of the human rulers he served, but in the prophecies and plans of the God whose word he delivered.

Anyone familiar with Daniel only because of his legendary brush with death in the lion's den has missed the most important parts of his story. The account of God delivering him is remarkable indeed, but the prophecies of God delivered through Daniel for us today are truly life-and-death matters!

His writings are partly history and partly prophecy, and we'd do well to learn from both. The prophetic sections are crucial, because they are the headlines of the future. And, yes, it's "good news/bad news."

The good news in Daniel is really good—it's the central prophetic message found throughout the Bible! As Daniel explained it to Nebuchadnezzar while interpreting his troublesome dream, the emerging world-ruling powers through history eventually culminate when "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). He later added, "The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever" (Daniel 7:18).

But the bad news is, well, really bad. The world will find itself in an end-time "lions' den" of power-hungry nations bent on war and wickedness, culminating in a terrible time of great trouble "such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time" (Daniel 12:1).

Daniel interpreted for Belshazzar, the last Babylonian king, the "handwriting on the wall." Are any leaders today wise enough to see the similar prophetic signs of the times? Are any willing to humbly seek God's advice and bravely lead their people according to His will?

Will any modern leader like Persia's Darius the Mede arise and, with similar reverence, decree "that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel!" (Daniel 6:26)?

Maybe someday we'll see a leader likewise heed Daniel's advice to Nebuchadnezzar to "break off your sins by being righteous . . . Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity" (Daniel 4:27).

Would that we could see another godly adviser like Daniel in government today! In the absence of such a one, though, God has preserved His Word, for anyone who will listen. God told Daniel that at the end "the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:9-10). You can be among those!

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

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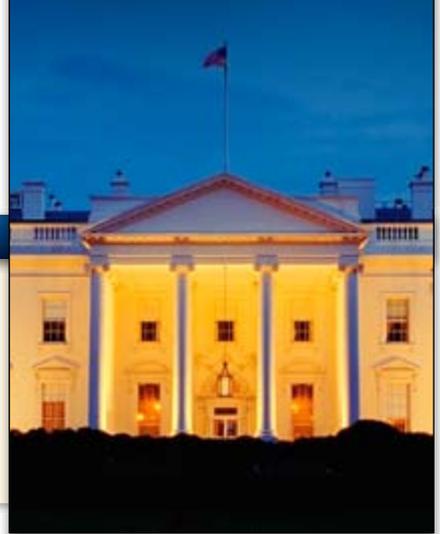
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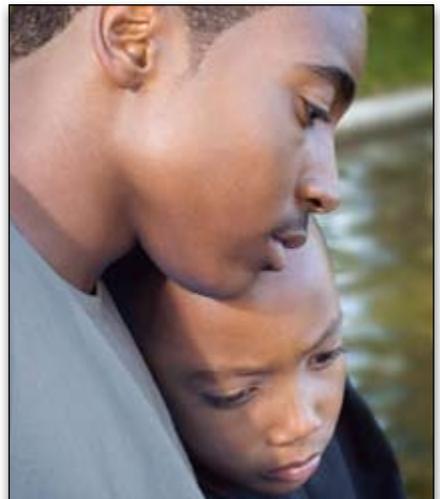
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What Will the Next President Face?



by Darris McNeely



In the days of biblical Israel, advisers counseled the king on how to lead the nation based on the Word of God. Samuel guided Saul. Nathan counseled David. Isaiah revealed God's will to Hezekiah. These men of God represented the word of God to the king. What might a servant of God say today if he entered the Oval Office with an analysis of the world and America for the president?

It is the first full working day for the new president of the United States. What might he hear if a servant of God gave recommendations from the Bible of how God would expect the president to govern? Let's imagine.

Good morning, Mr. President. Let me congratulate you on your new responsibilities, and may I offer wishes for your success as you take the helm of the world's most powerful nation. Your inaugural speech made clear your intent to maintain that position for the nation while at the same time seeking to reach out to both friend and foe to forge a bond of respect and cooperation.

You are coming into office at perhaps the most critical time in America's existence. The financial crisis of recent months is the most severe in this generation. America's relative position in the world faces the greatest challenge since the end of World War II. Iran's nuclear program could soon destabilize the entire Middle East. Many wonder what your administration will do to counter this threat.

Other world problems demand your attention and leadership. The security and prosperity of this nation and the maintenance of the current world order are at stake. Many voices are offering advice on the way forward. Here is an analysis and counsel from God's Word. The choice is yours as to which way you, and the nation, will go.

A crushing global financial crisis

Your administration is inheriting a global financial crisis. The geography of Wall Street has changed. Financial institutions such as Lehman Brothers, Bear Stearns and Merrill Lynch have gone out of business or were forced to sell themselves to other banks to keep operating.

Investors have lost billions, if not trillions, of dollars as the stock market has staggered. The speed and ferocity of this crisis makes it far different from others of the post-World War II world. Governments and banks have had no previous experience with the scope of the shock and stresses generated by this global financial storm.

That the epicenter of this storm has been in the West, primarily the United States, has caused the rest of the world to reassess its relationship with America. Nations like India, China and Brazil have usually been on the receiving end of advice and sometimes aid from the ruling order, led by America.

This crisis is different. New and resurgent powers such as India, Brazil and Russia can now exert a great deal of

influence. They have accumulated reserves of foreign currency, having learned lessons of the past. Their foresight is helping to lessen the impact this global crisis would otherwise have had on them.

Your fellow world leaders will tell you, Mr. President, that an era is ending. The United States must realize it can no longer dictate or control global order. The time when nations and regions can be made in America's image is over. For more than two centuries, first Great Britain and then America have fashioned the world's financial, political and cultural order.

America is still vital to the global economy with its huge market, consumer culture and technical innovation. The world economy still needs America; it is too big to be allowed to fall. But the time when it was *everything* to the world is coming to a close.

The rest of the world will form bonds and relationships to ensure their continued growth and prosperity. They see that to continue depending on America to call the shots puts their well-being in jeopardy. It may not be the end of the world, but it is the end of *a* world.

What does God expect the person who holds the most powerful office in the world to do? We should all learn this lesson: Debt is not good. Debt as a way of life will lead to a multitude of problems and spiritual ills that will ultimately bring any nation to its knees.

America has wallowed in debt to a point that is nearly unbearable. To finance homes, goods and a lifestyle the American people could not afford required dependence on nations like China and Saudi Arabia to buy and hold bonds, treasury notes and dollars. They financed an unparalleled orgy of spending that has resulted in trillions of dollars of debt, mortgaging future generations.

Written in the instruction God gave to ancient Israel is a financial principle for the ages: "The borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). Sir, it is time the government you lead works to return this nation to financial ethics based on godly principles that will

ensure stability and prosperity for all. The nation is on the brink of a financial enslavement that will break its power. It may not be too late, *but time is running out*.

Relations with the Islamic world

Mr. President, your predecessor was forced to focus his foreign policy on radical Islamic terrorists. The devastating attacks on 9/11 stunned the country into the reality of terrorist activity aimed at America. U.S. troops were committed to action in Afghanistan and Iraq, with Iraq becoming the center of attention.

The Taliban were driven from power in Afghanistan—at least temporarily—and Saddam Hussein was deposed by invading Iraq. Massive numbers of our troops have been engaged in Iraq. At times it looked bleak, as if America might lose this battle as guerrilla insurgencies whittled away at both Iraqi civilians and American troops. But the past two years saw a renewed surge of troops and commitment that have turned the tide and stabilized the country.

While it now appears troops can begin to be withdrawn, the long-term stability of the Iraqi government will no doubt be tested by Iran, Syria and other terrorist forces. Whether the American-delivered Iraqi-style of democracy can survive in the tough neighborhood of the Middle East is yet to be seen.

You will be faced with deciding how many U.S. troops to withdraw and at what speed. You will be tempted to move those troops to Afghanistan to counter an insurgent Taliban.

The pressure and need to maintain stability in this region is strong. Pakistan, the world's only nuclear-armed Islamic nation, is walking a tightrope between support for the West and radical Islamist elements that want to seize control.

Remember that in the 19th century Great Britain could not control that perennially troubled region, nor could the Soviet Union with 120,000 troops. Even Alexander the Great, back in the fourth century B.C., could not fully subjugate this area of the world.

The fact is that with all its other commitments, America does not have enough military resources to commit to the region to make a lasting difference. It will be a burdensome challenge to know what to do and for how long. To withdraw too many troops too soon from this region would invite disaster, something the world does not need.

And then there is Iran.

The next nuclear power?

Mr. President, you have been left with

unfinished business with Iran. This radical Islamic state has been actively pursuing a nuclear weapon. Its president curses the state of Israel and threatens to wipe it off the map. Among its clerical leaders runs a strong messianic belief in the end of the world and the appearance of the Mahdi, a mystical religious leader who supposedly will usher in a reign of Islamic domination over the earth.

Many experts believe that when Iran develops a nuclear weapon its leaders will not hesitate to use it to advance their Islamic vision. To protect themselves, Sunni Muslim states will feel the need to develop or obtain their own nuclear arsenal. The entire region would face unprecedented instability.

Of course, a nuclear-armed Iran puts the United States in a near-untenable position. It not only threatens U.S., European and regional security, it also threatens energy supplies for much of the world. If that weren't bad enough, much of the Middle East would fall under the domination of a radical, terror-supporting regime.

Permanent solutions to the problems of the Middle East have eluded every one of your predecessors. Before you make your decision about what to do, I respectfully suggest you understand what few will admit—that the God of all the earth guides the course of nations. He alone ultimately determines the rulers of the people and the boundaries of the nations. Carefully consider the following lessons before committing to any long-term policies.

A lesson from history and prophecy

You would be wise to read the prophecies of Daniel to understand what God has in store for the Middle East. Focus on the pride that overcomes leaders when they do not recognize the power that God holds over the course of empires and peoples.

Notice what God revealed to the prophet Daniel and what Daniel said to Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar when Babylon was at the peak of power in this region. God gave the king a symbolic dream about the future that troubled his spirit, and none of his counselors could interpret it. It was a dream of a tall image "whose splendor was excellent . . . and its form was awesome" (Daniel 2:31).

"This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.

"Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the

God removes rulers and raises up rulers. No world leader holds office without His consent.

silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:32-35).

Here in a few sentences Daniel traced the outline of history from the fifth-century B.C. Babylonian Empire through the following Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian and Roman Empires up until the time ahead of us when Jesus Christ will intervene in world affairs to establish His Kingdom throughout



the earth. God gave to Daniel special understanding in geopolitics that continues to teach us today. You can learn from this book of prophecy, but only if you gain the perspective Daniel had.

Three lessons

Daniel understood three principles that wise leaders will heed. Failure to learn these lessons could be costly to your new administration.

Before Daniel entered Nebuchadnezzar’s throne room he consulted with his three closest friends and advisers, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, asking that they join him in seeking God’s understanding of this dream (Daniel 2:17-18). God’s answer was quick, and it contains three principles (verse 21).

First, God has power over nations and the long-term course of world events. History can only be understood from this foundational truth.

Second, God removes rulers and raises up rulers. No world leader holds office without His consent. It is not the genius of a well-run political campaign or the huge amounts of money spent in campaigning that led to your election victory. You, sir, sit at this desk because God has allowed it. Remember this and you can avoid the great all-consuming sin committed by

many in high office—*pride*.

Third, God gives wisdom, knowledge and understanding to those who understand their needs for these qualities. Seek and trust in Him, look to His Word as the foundation of knowledge, and He will give you the wisdom necessary to chart a correct course for the nation during these turbulent times.

Notice God’s instruction to the rulers of His nation Israel. It concerns how the kings could ensure success and a peaceful reign for themselves and their country. Deuteronomy 17:18-20 tells us what a new ruler is to do

when he comes into power:

“He shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book . . . And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom . . .”

God’s Word and His law, Mr. President, is the key to being a successful leader. Study and apply the Bible’s teachings and God will be with you. Ignore them and you run the risk of serious mistakes and problems ahead.

Therein lies the key to wisdom and understanding of today’s world events and what lies ahead for the nations. The reason this nation has prospered throughout its remarkable history is because of God’s direct blessing. But whether that blessing will continue depends on the attitude and behavior of the country’s leaders and its citizens.

If you will listen to and obey what God says and will lead your people to listen and repent too, you can be assured of God’s watchful care over this country. If you will call on the nation to understand how far it has fallen from the knowledge of God, then you can lead a national turnaround. The

opportunity is there and the choice is yours.

A change in Europe

You are taking office at a pivotal moment. The world is at a crossroads of history. Let’s consider two more critical matters.

Europe, Mr. President, is a deceptive mix of conflicting images. Along with the United States, the European Union forms one of the two largest trading blocs in the world. Its sheer size in terms of economics, population and global involvement makes it a major player on the world stage. In its more than

Because of our growing moral corruption, God’s protective presence and blessing will be removed from the land we so dearly love.

50 years of existence it has continually grown to become the large economic union of today.

Yet not all its members, notably Great Britain, use the euro as their currency. Twice in the last three years it has failed to ratify a constitution meant to strengthen the union politically. The EU has no common foreign policy or military arm. Each nation retains those unique elements, and that is a key reason Europe is not the true superpower that America is or Great Britain once was.

Europe has an aging population, and the people are not replacing themselves. At the same time there is a growing Muslim presence in all the major nations. This is a threat to the stability of the region as the Western Christian culture clashes with the Islamic.

Europe prides itself on its tolerant multicultural approach to world affairs. It sees itself as the home of the enlightenment values that form the basis for Western civilization. Yet the region that produced Bach, Beethoven and Mozart was also the breeding ground for two world wars in the last century that cost the lives of tens of millions. Prejudice against ethnic, religious and racial minorities still runs deep in Europe.

Europe was caught unprepared in the current global financial upheaval. It became apparent that Europe’s vaunted economic unity has a long way to go to deal effectively

with future crises. This does not mean the European experiment is over—far from it. Look for the nations to learn from this latest crisis and form a system that will bounce back from recession. Don't count Europe out as a power to be reckoned with in coming years.

Bible prophecy tells us that a powerful political and economic system will emerge near the end of this age of human misrule. It is called "Babylon" in Revelation 17 and will involve the combined power of 10 rulers of nations or groups of nations.

These rulers will give their power and authority to one appointed leader who will provide global stability and prosperity. We know this system will be anchored in the historic seedbed of Europe, as the prophecies of both Daniel and Revelation show.

But the appearance of this system will have dramatic consequences for America and our historic ally Great Britain. America will no longer be the world's leading economic and political power. The Bible prophesies a time of trouble for these two nations unlike any in previous history. It will be a collapse from which there will be no recovery.

We are not yet at that point. America is still strong, albeit weakened in many ways through the economic, political and military crisis of recent years. You carry the hopes of many that a renewal of optimism and change is on the horizon. But this nation's future rests on a spiritual renewal found only in the pages of the Bible. Let me trace some of its key elements.

Blessings and curses

Mr. President, there is a biblical passage that explains the source of our national blessings and reveals what is occurring now. Take that copy of the Bible on which you swore your oath of office and open it to Leviticus 26.

In the opening verses you see that God states two inviolable commandments. First, do not make idols and bow down to them. Idols distort the true God and cause the worshipper to be blind, deaf and dumb, just as the graven image, to true spiritual values and principles.

Idolatry is alive and well in our present society and prevents people from seeing God and His teachings in the clear light of day.

Second, God says, "You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD" (verse 2). God has ordained holy times for mankind to come and worship Him. These have long been neglected and ignored by humanity, but they are unchangeable laws that still have spiritual force in the universe.

On these two laws turn much of remainder of this chapter. They form the heart of how we come to love and obey the God who

says He gives blessings and removes these blessing for disobedience.

Verse 3 is critical. God says, "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments . . ." If His people obey His laws, God promises every conceivable blessing a nation could hope for. Look at what the following verses promise for obedience:

"I will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

"I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land. You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you. For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you" (verses 4-9).

God's great desire, "to walk among you and be your God, and you shall be [His] people" (verse 12), is still in force. He wants to dwell within a godly people reflecting the shining light of His way, not human tradition.

But there is another side to the covenant. The promises to ancient Israel were *conditional* on their obedience. If they threw aside God's commandments, God would remove His blessing.

Prophecy at work in history

God went on to say: "If you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments . . . I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you" (verses 14-17).

The ancient nation of Israel, to whom this prophecy was first directed, received in part these promises in the land provided by God. They started with good intentions, but their history shows they quickly departed from their Creator's ways.

In spite of the repeated warnings from God and His servants the prophets, the people of Israel and Judah continually sinned and were eventually removed from the land. Ten of the 12 tribes of Israel were "lost" to history, only

to reappear in modern times as the two great powers of the last two centuries, America and Great Britain, and other modern peoples.

A little-understood part of this story is that the prophecy we've been reading concerns these nations today. It shows that, because of our growing moral corruption, a time is coming when God's protective presence and blessing will be removed from the land we so dearly love. If America ignores the final warning of collapse, God will use the power of this "Babylon" described earlier to inflict this punishment on the nation.

Do not lightly dismiss this warning based on what you currently see on the world scene. Even modern history, between World Wars I and II, shows us how quickly world powers can rise.

You, Mr. President, have an opportunity to listen to the wisdom in this ancient prophecy. It holds direct application to you and your administration. There is time and opportunity to try to turn the nation around and chart a course back to the God of the Bible who stands behind these awesome prophecies.

This God today stands in the darkening storms that hover over the nation. For the moment He is shielding America from those who would attack and bring unspeakable destruction. While we trust in our armies and intelligence to keep the walls secure, this passage we have read actually shows us the true source of our blessing and security. *God* is our refuge and our source of blessing.

It is time that this nation humbles itself in a deep and heartfelt repentance, unlike anything this nation has ever seen. Sir, we need a great awakening of historic proportions.

You stand in a pivotal moment of opportunity. You can listen to this warning or ignore it. *The choice is yours. GN*

To Learn More...

How did the United States rise from a lowly backwater colony hugging the eastern seaboard to become the most prosperous and powerful nation 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 prophecy shed any light and indicate what lies ahead? You need to read our eye-opening booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Download or request your free copy today!



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Change Is Coming

Five Ways Jesus Christ Will Change Government Forever

by Howard Davis

Politicians try to win votes with promises of change. Yet all too often nothing really changes or we end up with even bigger problems. However, that doesn't mean great change isn't coming. Your Bible reveals how monumental government change will come about!

As in so many elections, the 2008 U.S. presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain campaigned under the mantra “Change is coming!” They said, like candidates the world over, “The people want change!”

That is usually true. But after making claims that only God could keep, politicians everywhere usually find it difficult to keep their promises when elected. Few succeed in turning those promises into changes that endure the test of time.

Most people don't realize that Jesus Christ was—and remains—the greatest advocate for change. His plan includes changing all human governments, from the richest and most advanced countries to the world's poorest. He proclaimed that total change *is* coming to human civilization—through a *perfect government* that He will establish at His second coming.

Did you know that Jesus' message was *about government*? He called His teaching the gospel, or good news, of the *Kingdom* of God.

People today often think that the kingdom Jesus proclaimed is one set up in men's hearts—confined to human thoughts and emotions. But that's not what He taught. Rather, He spoke of an *actual government* to be set up over all nations.

The contrast between Jesus Christ's promises for good government and what human politicians fail to deliver couldn't be greater.

All humanly created political systems fail to meet the truly high standards of Jesus' teachings on government. This includes American democracy, which has remained enmeshed in cross-purposes, political and economic corruption, short-sighted policies that don't work and wars that Americans love to hate.

Human beings pledge to make positive changes they can't deliver—and make promises they cannot keep. Promising peace and prosperity, their leaders give them change through wars, prosperity for some, economic policies that don't work and social changes that in the end often do more harm than good.

In His teaching and prophecies, Jesus Christ announced sweeping changes that will create the perfect government when He returns to rule the world—when “the kingdoms of this world [will] have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ” (Revelation 11:15).

Here are five foundations that will create the perfect civilization—five ways Christ will change government forever!

1. Government will promote one universal faith.

One of His first acts in establishing a universal government will be to abolish the separation of church and state. It's not hard to understand why, since religious deception and division have always plagued humankind.

The promotion of one universal faith (the *true* faith) and accompanying religious practice will be the cornerstone of a new and transformed society and government centered in Jerusalem. Christ will impose divine laws for religious observance that will benefit the whole world. Only the true God will be worshipped throughout earth (Zechariah 14:9).

One universal religious faith will create a unified culture, making it possible for all peoples to cooperate with Christ's administration. All nations will interact with one another from the standpoint of common religious ideals and values.

Everyone will learn and comprehend

the policies, laws and teachings of Christ, whose impact will be far greater than that of any president or political figure in all history. As people experience the blessings His laws and teachings bring, they will hunger to learn more about how to apply them in their personal lives, communities and nations (Micah 4:2). They will at last have the world leader they can believe in, One who means it when He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

The resulting unity of faith will eliminate religious arguments, conflicts and wars, which have been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of millions throughout history. The world will at last know peace, coming to learn the very *way* to peace.

Christ's religious principles will not be based on human reasoning, human nature or human efforts but will flow from God Himself.

Today's world's system, like ancient Babylon, is a mixture of faiths. Even Christianity as practiced today is largely a humanly devised system of man-made beliefs built on human views of Christ with a few sprinklings of biblical principles thrown in for added flavor.

But the bulk of these faith systems don't come directly from Jesus Christ. They either distort or replace what Christ actually taught. All humanly devised faiths must be replaced with the true religion He will establish.

The introduction of this new universal faith will result in global repentance as one nation after another sees the error of its

Jesus Christ announced sweeping changes that will create the perfect government when He returns to rule the world.

former religious traditions. All peoples will gain an understanding of their personal sins and evils, recognizing their own responsibility for the anguish and pain they have experienced.

King David foretold the coming of Christ's Kingdom, saying, "All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name" (Psalm 86:9). David also prophesied that "all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him" (Psalm 72:11).



This universal religion will include required observance of the religious festivals that God revealed to the ancient Israelites and that were later kept by Jesus and His disciples. For example, "it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16).

The biblical Sabbath, the seventh day of the week (from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown in biblical reckoning of time), will also be a required religious observance of all people. ". . . And from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the LORD" (Isaiah 66:23).

2. Government will be directed toward the perfecting of man.

All governments need a singular guiding purpose to endure. For example, a goal of the U.S. government, as stated in the Declaration of Independence, is to enable its citizens to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

This is a lofty, wonderful and inspiring purpose of government. However, such purposes are all too often thwarted because of

the limitations of human nature expressed through human politicians with personal character flaws. And sadly, the pursuit of happiness now is often taken to mean merely the pursuit of materialistic pleasures, which the Bible labels as covetousness and lust.

Human governments tend to become corrupt simply because both the rulers and the ruled citizens are inherently flawed. For that reason, the framers of the U.S. Constitution designed a government of checks and balances between three distinct power-sharing

institutions—the presidency, the Congress and the court system. A government headed by a singular despotic ruler, it was believed, would inherently tend to abuse power.

The same appraisal of human nature led to the Constitution establishing the country as a republic, with representative government, rather than as a straight majority-rule democracy. The idea was to blunt the negative tendencies of "mob" rule. Similar thinking was involved in the creation of two legislative bodies in the Congress—the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The framers of the Constitution understood from the Bible and the wisdom of experience that human nature was corruptible. They also knew that human government could not change human nature.

The prophet Isaiah describes the corruption that bad leadership can bring to all levels of social structure: "For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and those who are led by them are destroyed . . . For everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly" (Isaiah 9:16-17).

But the Kingdom of God, in contrast, will be ruled by perfect, righteous rulers. The goal of government will not be "the pursuit of happiness" as it has typically been interpreted—the pursuit of pleasure. Rather, it will have a much higher purpose, which

involves bringing people *true* happiness and joy.

Under Christ's administration of the Kingdom of God, all government activity will be designed for one universal purpose—the development of righteous character in every person through conversion toward God's divine nature.

This purpose is superlatively greater than the purpose of human government. As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Christ's

Christianity today is largely a system of man-made beliefs about Christ with a sprinkling of biblical principles added for flavor.



purpose will be the perfecting of human character through the remaking of the human heart—changing its motives, intents, thinking, desires, decisions and actions.

As a result, humanity will become governable for the first time in a way that can permanently sustain progress, peace and prosperity—and real happiness. This progress will be sustained continuously for 1,000 years.

This change of the human heart and character can come only by receiving God's

own divine nature through the gift of His Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God is not generally accessible to mankind now. But God will change all that: “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh” (Joel 2:28).

The Spirit of God, available only from Him, is the essential nature of God Himself, somewhat as DNA is the code that contains the essence of the human being.

The Spirit’s role in a person’s life is to perfect the person’s character, to make him like God. Its fruits, being shown in human behavior, are the divine attributes of God: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . . And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:22-24).

In due time, the opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit will be extended to everyone on earth so that all will be able to have God’s laws written in their hearts and minds. One nation after another will be converted to God’s way of thinking. God’s laws of loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27) will be written into the human character through the Spirit of God. As God says, “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Hebrews 8:10).

3. Government will be based on God’s Word.

A principal role of government is to create a framework of knowledge for smooth and harmonious social development and material progress. Peace and prosperity depend in large part on a common foundation of knowledge.

The modern world has brought man unbelievable progress, but because of incomplete and flawed knowledge of the purpose and nature of man, human-generated knowledge has brought mankind to the brink of instant global destruction. This strange paradox flows from the human obsession with material knowledge while rejecting the *true* foundation of all knowledge—which is *spiritual* knowledge.

The essence of all true spiritual knowledge lies in God’s divinely ordained laws. It is God’s desire that we be “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding . . . in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of

God” (Colossians 1:9-10).

While our materialistic world lacks understanding of this truth, the foundation for logical thinking in such diverse disciplines as science, history, physical and mental health sciences, accounting, business practices, economics, sociology, psychology, strategic planning, environmental conservation, urban design and much more



All of Christ’s policies will make the family the centerpiece of social, economic and educational organization.

can all be found within the Word of God—the Bible.

Under the reign of Jesus Christ, the opening up of biblical understanding will lead to answering mysteries yet to be solved in science and all other forms of knowledge. Immersing the world in an explosion of spiritual knowledge from Scripture will open progress to levels of achievement never before seen by the human race. “The government will be upon His [Christ’s]

shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Isaiah continues describing a world of knowledge with no harm or destruction allowed anywhere: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

4. Government will focus on the family.

All of Christ’s policies will make the family the centerpiece of social, economic and educational organization. The family is the primary organizational structure God works through. Starting with Adam and Eve, God designed social relationships to flow from marriage and parents (who have authority over and responsibility for their children) into the extended family, community and nations.

Jesus Christ explained that over all human beings is a great God the Father—whom He revealed, as the Father had not been known before Christ’s coming (Matthew 11:27). Besides being the Father of humanity by physically creating us, God also intends to be our Father in a greater, spiritual sense.

Christ and His apostles made it clear that marriage and family are the focus of social development within the Church, as they were in ancient Israel. Mankind can be connected directly to God the Father and Christ in a family relationship.

The administration of religion as well as the system of civil and criminal laws will all enhance the family unit, “so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life” (Deuteronomy 6:2, New International Version).

The allocation of land and resources will strengthen the family’s well-being with property permanently held within families. “Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid” (Micah 4:4, NIV).

Education in the way of God and the approach toward knowledge will similarly revolve around the family. Deuteronomy 6:7 says of God’s words, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall

talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”—that is, at every opportunity.

5. Government will show breathtaking progress and achievement.

Christ will structure government to empower our human potential for astonishing personal achievement and progress in every aspect of society. The outcome will be a utopian civilization beyond the imagination of modern man or ancient philosophers.

Regions that are currently inhospitable will be transformed: “The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose” (Isaiah 35:1).

Food production will explode as one huge crop cannot be fully harvested before planting time of the next: “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it” (Amos 9:13).

Even the natures of dangerous animals will be changed so they will never harm human beings: “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and the little child will lead them . . . They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain” (Isaiah 11:6-9, NIV). This is also figurative of the peace that will exist among nations.

All nations will travel to Jerusalem, which will be the international center of religion, education and government: “All nations shall flow to it . . . and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD . . . and we shall walk in His paths’” (Isaiah 2:2-3).

The earth will burgeon with beautiful new gleaming cities in a Garden-of-Eden environment. “He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD” (Isaiah 51:3). “And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:4; see also Ezekiel 36:35).

Christ focused on changing government

Government has always been a central focus of the entire struggle of man. It is also a central focus within the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. While Christ stressed at His crucifixion, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36), that does not mean He condoned the evils of human government in what the Bible calls “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4).

Jesus Christ condemned the manipulation of government by selfish, greedy and arrogant men who often dominate the world’s system. He explained that the rulers of His day, like so many in our own time, loved to lord it over the peoples, making themselves appear to be benefactors when, in fact, they were unjust exploiters of the common man (Matthew 20:25).

Jesus taught that true leadership resides in serving others and loving your neighbor as yourself. In one of His first recorded messages He said this: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19, NIV).

Jesus Christ is the greatest advocate for government change who ever walked the earth. After all, He created the earth for His government under the coming Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God taught by Christ remains the greatest unrecognized truth in the meaning of human life. But that truth is being revealed here in this publication proclaiming Christ’s original gospel.

Christ’s entire message rests on the foundation of the promise of a new world system based on His government that will be established at His second coming.

Make no mistake—*change is coming*, and it’s no empty political promise! As recorded in Mark 1:15, throughout His ministry Jesus said: “The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel.” **GN**



Who’s behind *The Good News* magazine? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *The Good News* free to all who request it. Simply put, *The Good News* is provided by *people*—people from all walks of life, from all over the world.

But those people have a common goal: **to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to observe what Christ commanded** (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought—the wonderful *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that have long plagued humankind. Through the pages of *The Good News*, various booklets (also free) and our TV programs, we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten our very survival.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God’s purpose and plan for us as taught by Jesus Christ.

The United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services in your area, contact us at the appropriate address on page 2. Visitors are always welcome.

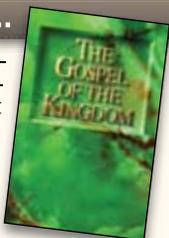


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Do you understand the true gospel? What exactly was “the gospel of the Kingdom of God” that Jesus Christ proclaimed? What is that Kingdom, and how will it come? Who will be in it, and who will be its head? Discover the answers as revealed in the pages of your Bible! Download or request your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom* today!



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What's the state of the world as we enter 2009?

What's ahead in the new calendar year of 2009? *The Good News* is not in the business of short-term political and economic forecasting, but we can bring you a region-by-region overview of major trends to watch around the world—undergirded by biblical teaching (see Luke 21:34-36). As Daniel Franklin, editor of *The Economist's* publication *The World in 2009*, states in his lead editorial, “Anyone hoping for a period of calm after the turbulence of the past year will be disappointed . . . 2009 promises to be a period of bracing adjustment for a changed world.” Let's now pan across the globe, taking note of conditions in the light of biblical prophecies. Since the largest portion of *The Good News* mailing list is in North America, we begin here.

The United States faces daunting challenges

It's hard to ignore the significance of widespread claims that “America may be turning the page on an era,” as *The Wall Street Journal* put it (Nov. 5, 2008). The challenges the new president faces are daunting. Foreigners have placed much of the blame for the current global downturn squarely on America's shoulders.

Peer Steinbrueck, German finance minister, stated in a speech to the Bundestag, Germany's parliament, that “the U.S. will lose its status as a superpower of the world” and “the world will never be the same again” (*The Guardian*, Nov. 21, 2008, emphasis added throughout).



The Russian leadership shares this viewpoint. Russian president Dmitry Medvedev stated that “the financial crisis in the United States should be taken as a sign that America's global economic leadership is drawing to a close” (*International Herald Tribune*, Oct. 2, 2008).

A *Guardian* article states: “The United States' leading intelligence organisation has warned that the world is entering an unstable and unpredictable period in which . . . [the United States] will no longer be able to ‘call the shots’ alone, as its power . . . begins to wane” (“2025: The End of US Dominance,” Nov. 21, 2008).

As *The Good News* has warned for years, the United States, barring national repentance, is heading for severe decline and fall. Are we seeing its early stages?

Brazil emerging in South America

Anti-American Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez continues to behave as expected, but he is no longer the biggest news in Latin America. Brazil is.

According to a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*: “After decades of stop-and-start growth and political disorder, Brazil today seems poised to finally fulfill its long-unrealized potential as a global player” (November-December 2008). Daniel Franklin in *The World in 2009* predicted that “the shift in power to places such as Brazil, Russia, India and China will quicken. These countries will expect a bigger say in how the world is run.”

The chief long-term danger to Brazil may be from Chavez's Venezuela. A headline in the Nov. 12, 2008, *International Herald Tribune* reported that “Caracas sets itself up as hub for world's leftists.” Last

October the capital city of Venezuela, Caracas, hosted a conference of leftists from many countries. Hopefully Brazil will be able to resist any attempted injection of left-wing poison from Caracas.

Australia faces a changing region

Generally speaking, Australia in recent times has been a bright spot among the English-speaking nations descended from the biblical patriarch Joseph (see our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*). As the undisputed superpower in the South Pacific, Australia has had to take a policeman's role in taming unrest in the sometimes strife-ridden nations of that region.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has also sounded a regional warning of the spread of nuclear weapons technology and his fear of it falling into the hands of terrorists. He also warned: “We are looking at a time in the Asia-Pacific region and world history where, for the first time in several hundred years, we are going to have powers other than Anglo-Saxon powers who will be dominant players in the world” (Agence France-Presse, Sept. 10, 2008).

China's rapid military expansion

Perhaps the most worrying news out of the People's Republic of China is its rapid military expansion. A headline in *The Daily Telegraph* reads: “Beijing's Military Will Soon Match Its Rivals, Say Experts” (Sept. 29, 2008). Defense correspondent Thomas Harding further wrote that “China is rapidly developing a highly modern military that will be the equal of Western armies” (ibid.).

Christopher Foss, editor of *Jane's Armour and Artillery*, related that “China is developing a modern, highly manoeuvrable force able to operate anywhere as well as, if not better than, Western armies.” By 2015 the expectation is that China will possess six Jin-class submarines with the capacity “of firing the JL2 ballistic nuclear missile that could threaten both the western and eastern American seaboard” (ibid.).

Pakistan and Afghanistan: countries in crisis

A column in *The Wall Street Journal* rightly described Pakistan as a “nuclear-armed Islamic giant run by

an unproven new government, beset by internal political rifts, conducting a fitful struggle with Taliban and al Qaeda insurgents along its border with Afghanistan, and threatened by Islamic radicals angry over American military strikes along that same Afghan border” (Nov. 14, 2008).

Further, “violence along Pakistan's border has driven tens of thousands of people to seek refuge in eastern Afghanistan, the United Nations reported. Military data showed suicide attacks throughout the country killed nearly 1,200 people in the past 15 months” (*USA Today*, Sept. 30, 2008).

A November-December 2008 *Foreign Affairs* article commented on the overall situation in the two nations: “Afghanistan and Pakistan are in crisis. More U.S. troops, more money, and attacks into Pakistan's lawless tribal areas will do little to counter the growing threat or avert chaos.”



Russia's muscle-flexing

Russian leaders Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev have been using the country's oil wealth to rebuild and modernize its military. The armed incursion into neighboring Georgia and threats to deploy missiles to counter the proposed U.S. missile shield are a reflection of Moscow throwing its weight around.



Dmitry Medvedev

The *Daily Mail* reported that “the Russian Navy is poised to sail into the Mediterranean to conduct operations in NATO's backyard for the first time since the end of the Cold War” (Oct. 4, 2008). Russia is presently conducting a fresh diplomatic offensive in selected nations. For example, *The Sunday Times* of London reported that “Russia is considering increasing its assistance to Iran's nuclear programme . . . The Kremlin is discussing sending teams of Russian nuclear experts to Tehran and inviting Iranian nuclear experts to Moscow for training” (Sept. 7, 2008).

A *Wall Street Journal* news report related that the “Belarus president seeks to deploy Russian missiles . . . that could reach deep into Europe” (Nov. 14, 2008). Medvedev has also signed energy deals with Hugo Chavez designed to help develop Venezuelan oilfields. Muammar Gadhafi has offered Russia a naval base in Libya. A diplomatic push in Moldova has begun. Montenegro has a new nickname, “Moscow-on-the-sea.” All these trends show that Russia seems intent on re-exerting its former cold war power.

Troubles in the Congo

Economic and political disaster continues largely unabated in Zimbabwe. South Africa is showing disturbing signs of increasing political unrest and other internal troubles. But at the moment the big news on

the continent of Africa is in the Congo.

Congolese rebel leader Laurent Nkunda stated: "I want Europe to know Congo is at the birth of a revolution. It must not muzzle it" (*Financial Times*, Nov. 15, 2008). But what about the appalling cost in human life and suffering? The stark reality of a festering trouble spot on an already conflict-burdened continent persists unrelentingly.

The Iranian dilemma

A September 2008 article in *Standpoint*, a new conservative news commentary magazine published in Britain, sheds light on the situation in Iran under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: "Iran has tested Western resolve in other blunter ways. It has breached its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and made a mockery of inspections. It supplied weapons to Shia militias in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan . . . It routinely announces that Israel should be 'wiped off the map.'"



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

Michael Ledeen, Freedom Scholar at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a *National Review Online* contributing editor, says: "If the Iranians do have a weapon, it is impossible to imagine that, at a moment of crisis, they will not use it. The point is we have an implacable enemy which has no intention of negotiating a settlement with us. They want us dead or dominated . . . There is no painless way out, and the longer we wait the greater the pain is going to be" (*Imprimis*, October 2008).

The Sunday Times stated that "in the baking heat of the Negev desert [in southern Israel], the Israeli air force's top guns are training for a secret mission . . . In a further indication that this squadron is preparing for conflict, 80 US technicians based at the nearby Nevatim air base in the Negev have installed the world's most advanced X-brand radar system with a range of 1,250 miles, that it will hugely enhance Israel's tactical capacity in the air." One of the pilots said, "We feel the future of Israel isn't safe and we want to do what we can to defend it" (Nov. 23, 2008).

Israel's bleak future under new leadership

A *Sunday Times* report revealed that "Barack Obama is to pursue an ambitious peace plan in the Middle East involving the recognition of Israel by the Arab world in exchange for its withdrawal to pre-1967 borders" (Nov. 16, 2008).

If this report is true, Israel's future may very well

be bleak. *Land for peace* has had a terrible track record in Israel. The country gained key strategic military advantages from the 1967 war, but would lose them if this peace plan were to be implemented—rendering the nation much more vulnerable to Arab attacks.



To understand the historic backdrop of Israel's place in the Middle East and how events there will affect the world, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

Berlin and Washington: a shifting relationship

In recent years France normally played the role of obstructing American policy goals and intentions. This habitual French posture eased considerably after the election of President Nicolas Sarkozy. Now it's Germany. One senior American official labeled Berlin as "the new Paris."

The Economist reported: "On Russia, Iran and Afghanistan—trouble spots that matter to both countries—Germany's position is annoying Washington. At the NATO summit in Bucharest [Romania] last April, [German Chancellor Angela] Merkel stood most visibly against American pressure to grant a Membership Action Plan—a road-map to join the alliance—to Ukraine and Georgia. This was a marked change from previous summits at which France habitually obstructed American proposals.



Angela Merkel

"After Russian troops pushed into Georgia in August, America wanted to ostracise the Kremlin while Germany appeared eager to return to business as usual. Germany had been the leading Western sceptic in toughening economic sanctions on Iran to discourage its alarming uranium-enrichment programme" (Nov. 1, 2008). German exports to Iran are greater than those of any other Western country. Russia is one of Germany's main trading partners. Berlin imports about a third of its gas and oil from Moscow.

The question was asked in an *International Herald Tribune* daily column: "Could you get elected German Chancellor Sept. 27 next year if your opponents say your goals are 'emancipating' Germany and Europe from the United States, and setting a policy course for a Europe 'equidistant' between Russia and the Americans? Could be" (Sept. 16, 2008). These shifts on the international stage are in line with the direction in which Central Europe is prophesied to go at the time of the end. To understand more, request or download our

free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

Britain and aberrant family lifestyles

Protecting children from family abuse has become a big story in Britain—especially due to the infamous death of "Baby P," a 17-month-old boy who died after suffering more than 50 injuries, for which his mother, her boyfriend and another man lodging with them were convicted, the mother having pleaded guilty to the charge of causing or allowing his death. With an average of four dying from abuse weekly, abuse of babies and small children is fast becoming an embarrassing problem.

Government agencies monitoring these abusive parents or boyfriends have rightly been blamed for serious misjudgments. But society must also bear blame.

Noted columnist Melanie Phillips has written of these cases: "They are the outcome of a process that has been going on for the past three decades and more, in which *the fundamental values of civilised society have been systematically trashed and up-ended*. They are the result of the doctrine that all lifestyles must be considered equal and that no one has the right to pass judgment on anyone else. Thus, women had a God-given right to bear babies out of wedlock . . . Disapproval of adultery or elective lone parenthood were dismissed as 'Old Testament fundamentalism'" (*Daily Mail*, Nov. 17, 2008).

Government policy has tended to penalize marriage and reward biblically illicit lifestyles. Phillips concluded that "the people who really have blood on their hands are the progressive intelligentsia who have simply written orderly, married, normative family life out of the script, enforced the doctrines of multi-culturalism and nonjudgmentalism with the zealotry of the fanatic, and caused Britain to descend into an age of barbarism" (*ibid.*)

Summing up the troubled world scene

Many signs show that the world is increasingly entering an era of revolutionary change. The international chessboard is rapidly shifting, with nations vying for power and influence. However, we should always remember that the Creator God is "Lord of heaven and earth" and is ultimately guiding events to work out what He has foretold in Bible prophecy.

There are inevitable penalties for the way the world is living, and God's spiritual law is self-enforcing. If you wish to discover what is really wrong with society in general, request or download our free booklet *The Ten Commandments*.

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Is Iran the New Mideast Superpower?

The Middle East is at the center of Bible prophecy. Iran looks set to become the new regional superpower as the United States and its allies withdraw from or sharply reduce their presence in the region. What are the consequences—especially for the Jewish nation of Israel?

The bottom line is that Iran is our principal enemy in the Middle East, and perhaps in the entire world . . . As for the question of nuclear weapons, it seems hard to imagine that Iran does not *already* have them. Iranians are not stupid, and they have been at this for a minimum of 20 years in a world where almost all of the major components needed for a nuclear weapon—not to mention old nuclear weapons—are for sale. A lot of these components are for sale in nearby Pakistan.

“And if the Iranians do have a weapon, it is impossible to imagine that, at a moment of crisis, they will not use it. The point is, we have an implacable enemy which has no intention of negotiating a settlement with us. They want us dead or dominated, just as our enemies did in the 1930s and ’40s. You can’t make deals with a regime like that.”

This blunt warning is from Michael Ledeen, a former national security advisor and U.S. State and Defense Department employee who is now a contributing editor at *National Review Online* and the author of more than 20 books (“Understanding Iran,” *Imprimis*, October 2008, emphasis in original throughout).

Mr. Ledeen clearly feels that no deal is possible with Iran. Others feel differently, including many European leaders and the new administration in Washington, D.C.

Get it wrong and the consequences are enormous: *A major conflict could erupt in the Middle East, the central focus of Bible prophecy.*

Another warning appears on the cover of a new book by former CIA operative Robert Baer, *The Devil We Know: Dealing With the New Iranian Superpower*: “Over the last thirty years, while the United States has

turned either a blind or dismissive eye, Iran has emerged as a nation every bit as capable of altering America’s destiny as traditional superpowers Russia and China. Indeed . . . in some ways, Iran’s grip on America’s future is even tighter” (2008).

So what is the truth about Iran?

The 1979 revolution set the stage for conflict

It may come as a surprise to most Americans to learn that Iran has been in a state of war with the West for 30 years, ever since the overthrow of the pro-American shah of Iran early in 1979. A major failure of U.S. intelligence led to the Islamic fundamentalists under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini seizing power in the country and taking over the American embassy. U.S. hostages were held for 444 days before being released as the new administration of Ronald Reagan assumed control in Washington.

“The simple facts regarding Iran are easy to understand,” notes Ledeen. “We are dealing with a regime that came to power in 1979, when the Iranian revolution overthrew the Shah. Immediately thereafter, Iran declared war against the United States, branding us ‘The Great Satan.’

“The Iranians have been at war against us for 30 years, and prior to 9/11 the Iranian regime was directly or indirectly responsible for the murder of more Americans than any other country or organization in the world. It also may well be that the Iranian regime was involved in 9/11” (*Imprimis*).

For some years now, Western nations have been concerned that Iran is developing a nuclear weapon—particularly since Iran has tested missiles that can easily reach Israel or U.S. bases in the Mideast, as well

as most of Europe.

Attempts by European governments to end Iran’s nuclear program have gotten nowhere. In late November the International Atomic Energy Agency, which has been charged with monitoring Iran’s nuclear program, released a report concluding that Iran had now produced enough enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon. Experts consider that enriching uranium and obtaining enough for a weapon are the most difficult parts of building a nuclear warhead.

Now the big question is whether the United States or Israel will strike at Iran to thwart its nuclear ambitions. Some feel that if America opts not to, Israel will be compelled to, since the tiny nation’s very existence has been repeatedly threatened by Iran’s leaders. However, the new U.S. administration has expressed a desire to talk further with the Iranians and may try to block unilateral action on the part of the Israelis.

Do further negotiations hold out much hope? “In fact, we *have* been talking to the Iranians, almost non-stop, for 30 years,” observes Ledeen. “There isn’t an American president from Jimmy Carter to the present who has not authorized negotiations with Iran.

“The classic case occurred during the Clinton administration. We ended all kinds of sanctions against Iran, let all kinds of Iranians into the U.S. for the first time since the 1970s, had sporting matches with the Iranians, hosted Iranian cultural events, and unfroze Iranian bank accounts. Then President Clinton and Secretary of State [Madeleine] Albright started publicly apologizing to Iran for this and that.

“But when all was said and done, [supreme leader of Iran] Ali Khamenei reminded everyone that Iran is in a state of war with the U.S., and that was the end of negotiations. This is what has happened every single time we have tried talking to or appeasing Iran . . . There is a striking tendency among people in modern Western governments not to recognize the existence of evil in the world” (*ibid.*).

Bible prophecy foretells a coming clash

According to Islamic theology, a conflict is inevitable between Islam and the West. The Bible also prophesies such a clash.

In chapter 11 of the book of Daniel we find one of the most detailed prophecies in the Scriptures, a prophecy largely fulfilled in the ancient world but with some portions remaining to be fulfilled “at the time of the end” (verse 40).

The prophecy deals with two dynasties, the “king of the South” and the “king of the North” (references to both begin in verse 5). These two governing dynasties were the successors to Alexander the Great, the Greek king who conquered the Middle East—including Persia, ancient Iran. After his early death his kingdom was divided up among his four generals, exactly as Daniel prophesied more than two centuries earlier.

in the Holy Land from the time it was destroyed under the Roman Empire until 1948 when the state of Israel was established. The prophecy is about the Jews and the two hostile powers that affected them in the past and will again affect them in the future.

The modern successor of the king of the North is set to be the leader of a revived Roman Empire, the prophesied “beast” power of Daniel 7 and Revelation 17:12: “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.” We know this to be an end-time event as these nations “will make war with the Lamb [the returning Jesus Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them” (verse 14).

The king of the South, it appears, will be the head of a powerful Islamic nation

quoted from it in Matthew 24:15: “‘Therefore when you see the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand).”

God, speaking through the Old Testament prophet Zechariah, states unequivocally that Jerusalem will be the center of global conflict at the time of the end: “For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem” (Zechariah 14:2) and “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem” (Zechariah 12:2).

Watch Iran in the near future

Ironically, it is the United States and Great Britain that inadvertently helped create the new Iranian superpower in the Middle East. By invading Iraq and overthrowing



For much of the time covered in this prophecy, the king of the North ruled from Syria, to the north of Jerusalem, over a vast territory that sometimes stretched as far east as Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. The king of the South, meanwhile, was based in Egypt to the south of Jerusalem.

These two monarchs and their descendants frequently fought each other. Whenever they did, the Jewish people were trampled in the middle. For a century and a half their conflict continued, culminating in the desecration of the temple in Jerusalem by the northern ruler Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. Not long afterward, the northern kingdom was absorbed into the Roman Empire.

The prophecy then jumps to the modern day. There was no Jewish political state

or alliance that may include Iran. These powers are prophesied to clash in Daniel 11:40-44.

This clash will affect the Holy Land: “At the time of the end 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; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land [the Holy Land], and many countries shall be overthrown” (verses 40-41).

Jesus Christ restated the importance of the Middle East to Bible prophecy: “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:20). He also confirmed the veracity of the book of Daniel when He

Iran desperately needs to force up oil prices or face serious economic trouble. One way would be to start another conflict in the oil-rich region.

Saddam Hussein, they removed Iran’s greatest enemy and the buffer to Iranian power.

“Iraq is lost. Iran won it,” writes Robert Baer (p. 29). “The Iranians know we’ll leave sooner or later . . . there’s a growing confidence in Tehran today that the United States will finally have to come around to recognizing Iran’s true stature in the world as the only important player in the Middle East—a superpower, even. Iran is confident that America will have to accept the inevitable, that we’ve been wasting our time with the Gulf Arabs, and that we have to come to terms with Iran” (p. 31).

At this moment Iran is struggling economically due to the falling price of oil, which is a direct result of the global economic downturn. Dr. Nimrod Raphaeli of the Middle East Media Research Institute

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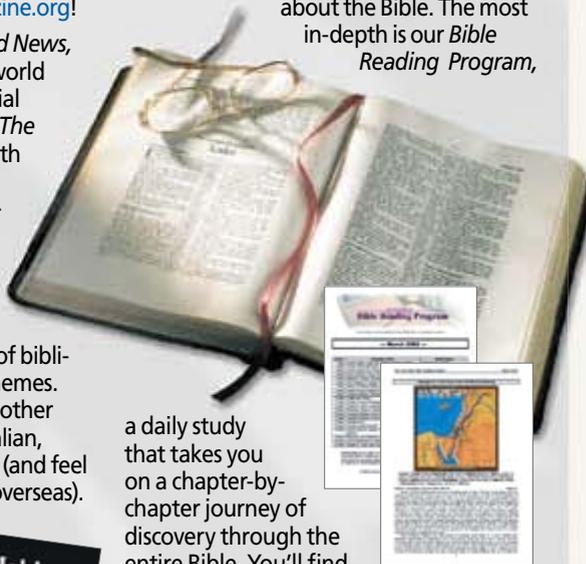


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wrote on the organization's Web site Oct. 30, 2008, that Iran desperately needs to force the price of oil up or face serious economic consequences.

One way to do so, he explained, would be to start another conflict in the region—and the Iranians have plenty of options.

"First, Iran could escalate the conflict in Iraq to a degree that would deny the market a supply of 1.5-2.0 million [barrels per day] of much needed Basra light crude. The Shi'ite cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr, with his Iran-paid Mahdi Army, is a potent troublemaker to carry out such a mission in the service of Iran.

"Iran could use its many agents in southern Iraq to sabotage the oil pipeline that carries Iraqi oil to Um-Qasr port. In a desperate move, Iran might cause an incident with one of the U.S. naval ships patrolling Iraq's oil platforms.

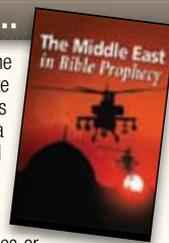
"Second, Iran's Revolutionary Guards could sabotage an oil tanker in the Gulf of Hormuz on some flimsy argument that the tanker has violated Iran's territorial waters. Such act would raise the political tensions to high levels and greatly increase insurance premium to suffocating levels or discourage oil tankers from transporting Gulf oil.

"Third, Iran could instigate a conflict between Hizbullah and Israel that could plunge the Middle East into a new round of a military conflict that might also involve Syria (Iran's strategic ally in the area). Armed conflicts in the Middle East quickly translate into higher oil prices, with or without global recession."

Regardless of whether Iran turns out to be the catalyst that leads to the fulfillment of these end-time prophecies, all readers should remember to keep their eyes on the Middle East and especially Jerusalem, the center of Bible prophecy. **GN**

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Why does the news out of the Middle East so often dominate the headlines? Why has this troubled region so long been a source of conflict, violence and bloodshed? Does Bible prophecy tell us where it will lead? You won't find the answers in your newspaper, newsmagazines or your TV's nightly news. But you will discover them in the pages of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. Download or request your free copy today!



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Will Global Economic Turmoil Precede Jesus Christ's Return?

by Roger Foster

What possible connection could the global marketplace have with Jesus Christ's return? Do you understand the Bible's prophetic links?



Growing global economic problems have given rise to civil unrest, food lines and riots in some countries, leading to demands for greater government intervention and control. Bible prophecy indicates that a new global economic system will emerge shortly before Jesus Christ's return.

Changes in the world's economy, now shaken by a major downturn, significantly threaten your personal lifestyle. As *Time* magazine expressed it, the recent events are "the most dangerous shock in mature financial markets since the 1930s" (Oct. 20, 2008). Faced with a problem of this magnitude, we should seriously consider these economic trends in the light of biblical prophecy!

Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is devoted to prophecy. John says that it's literally "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly [or quickly] take place"—especially in the last days (Revelation 1:1).

The book's 18th chapter describes a dominant system of international trade supported by corrupt political and religious allies whose combined sins "have reached to heaven" (verse 5). The Bible also shows that the return of Jesus Christ will bring about the collapse and destruction of that global system.

Before that happens, though, it will exercise for a short time immense control over the lives of the earth's inhabitants so that "no one may buy or sell" without its permission (Revelation 13:17). It will stringently regulate all international commerce.

Prior to the recent economic crisis it would have seemed almost absurd to predict such a drastic global change in economic outlook

and practice. After all, our society greatly values individual freedom. What could possibly induce the citizens of civilized nations to accept such intrusive controls over their right to buy and sell as they please?

An earlier time of economic turmoil

On a regional level this scenario has already been played out once in the last century. The collapse of the world's free economies, trade wars and the economic turmoil of the Great Depression of the 1930s helped catapult Adolf Hitler to power. Hitler's solutions restored Germany to world power and made him a hero among most of his own people until the military defeat of his Nazi regime in 1945.

Today those who were adults during the Great Depression are rapidly passing from the scene. Their accounts of plummeting wages, loss of homes and jobs, and pervasive hunger seem long ago and far away. At one point in the 1930s, unemployment reached more than 25 percent in America.

The stock markets went crazy, and corporate shares fell in value overnight. As wages fell, debt repayment became more and more difficult.

Mortgage defaults skyrocketed. Business earnings dropped. Large corporations went bankrupt. People became aimless and idle. Hunger and fear became their constant companions. It was a downward spiral into economic oblivion. Little wonder that our parents and grandparents referred to the financial disaster they experienced as the Great Depression.

Could history repeat?

Today few people in the industrialized world have any concept of what happens when severe *deflation*—an economically crippling drop in prices and wages—sets in. The possibility of out-of-control deflation is already a threat as a direct result of the current economic crisis.

A recent leading headline, "Deflation Threat Grows Worldwide," in the *International Herald Tribune* (Nov. 2, 2008) bears this out. The article, by national economic writer Peter Goodman, went on to say: "As dozens of countries slip deeper into financial

This major crisis in the global financial system should cause us to reflect on how greed and manipulation of human needs affect our future.

distress in alarming unison, a new threat may be gathering force: the prospect that goods will pile up without buyers and prices will steadily fall, suffocating fresh investment and worsening joblessness for many months or even years.

“The word for this syndrome is deflation, or falling prices, a term that generates chills among professional economists. Deflation accompanied the Great Depression of the 1930s. Persistently falling prices were at the heart of Japan’s so-called lost decade following the catastrophic collapse of its real estate bubble at the end of the 1980s, a period in which some experts now find parallels to the U.S. predicament” (emphasis added throughout).

Only a few short months ago *inflation*—rising prices—was the dominant economic problem as skyrocketing costs of oil and food battered the world economy. But, as the article notes, “that now seems like another era. As the U.S. economy has weakened, and as much of the globe has followed, demand for oil, iron ore, grains and other commodities has swiftly diminished, bringing prices down sharply.

“The new worry is that *the end of inflation may be the beginning of something more malevolent: a long, broad retrenchment in which consumers and businesses worldwide lose their ability to buy and prices for many goods fall.*

“That would prompt businesses to slow production and accelerate layoffs, taking more paychecks out of the economy and further weakening demand for many products and services.”

Worldwide recession on the horizon?

In contrast to inflation, Goodman notes, *deflation* is a far more difficult economic malady to cure. “Policy makers can generally choke off inflation by raising interest rates and dampening economic activity and reducing demand for goods.

“But as Japan discovered in the 1990s, an economy might remain ensnared by deflation for many years, even when interest rates are dropped to zero. Falling prices reduce opportunities for profit, making companies reluctant to invest even when they can borrow money for free.”

This is what happened in Japan in the 1990s, with devastating results. Property prices fell, along with the prices of many goods. Businesses had no incentive to invest, so they laid off employees. For lack of buyers, goods piled up—sending prices even lower in a downward spiral.

Do we see similar dangers today? “Some fear the U.S. economy could be sinking toward a similar experience as consumers lose their wherewithal to purchase just as much of Europe, Asia and Latin America succumb to a slowdown,” Goodman cautions.

The recent economic crises show that such a problem likely would not be limited to just the United States.

“Not since the Great Depression have so many countries been required to tackle so many interlocking afflictions at once,” Goodman notes. *“A financial crisis born in the United States has gone global, like a virus mutating in the face of every experimental cure.* From South Korea to Pakistan to the Baltics to Turkey to Brazil, the pandemic has spread, bringing with it a tightening of credit that has starved even relatively healthy companies of the ability to finance operations, prompting job losses and diminishing demand for goods.”

Goodman quotes former International Monetary Fund economist Kenneth Rogoff as saying: “We’re entering *a really fierce global recession.* A significant financial crisis has been allowed to morph *into a full-fledged global panic.* It’s a *very dangerous situation.*”

Will history be repeated?

During times of such economic deprivation, history has shown that people respond favorably to strong leaders who show promise of quickly bringing order out of chaos.

But drastic problems can lead to drastic solutions. People want immediate action, not principles and platitudes. The leaders most likely to act decisively are those who have no objection to trampling on the rights of others to accomplish their agendas. They get things done, but at a high cost to the freedom and rights of others.

In the end they reward those who provide the support they need to keep themselves in power. They call themselves benefactors and statesmen. History sees them as *despots and tyrants.*

This is what happened in Central Europe between 1929 and 1945 as rulers assumed dictatorial powers and plunged the world into a global conflagration.

Bible prophecy indicates that a similar scenario will unfold just before Jesus Christ returns. It reveals that 10 “kings”—heads of state—will throw their power, authority and support behind a superleader whom the Bible compares to a clever and powerful animal, a “beast” (Revelation 17:12-13). The political entity this leader will create is

likewise characterized as a beast—a cunning and dominant animal that preys on the very ones it purports to protect.

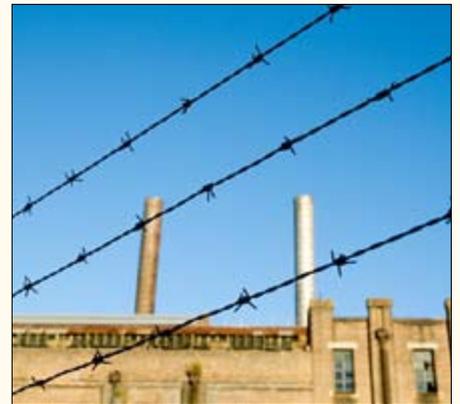
The Bible indicates that managing the global economy—by controlling what can be bought or sold, and by whom—may be a major reason for this system’s initial appeal. For this to happen the international community may have to enter an economic crisis so enormous, so threatening, that nations will find themselves desperate for a solution.

If history repeats itself, a bold and daring new plan may be presented and adopted. And as before, the loss of individual rights and freedoms built into this new socio-economic and political system may well be presented as only temporary. But the Bible shows that what ultimately follows will become so appalling that only the return of Jesus Christ can stop it.

Let’s now consider an unseen power destined to bring about this global change.

Ancient origins of an end-time system

In committing to writing the revelation that Jesus Christ gave him concerning this coming political and commercial system, the



The Bible indicates that managing the global economy—by controlling what can be bought or sold, and by whom—may be a major reason for this system’s initial appeal.

apostle John first connects us with this evil system's spiritual roots. According to the Bible, an unseen spirit being, a fallen angel called Satan the devil, rules the earth behind the scenes. This malevolent spirit is increasingly angry as he sees the approaching end of his influence.

John speaks of that "great dragon . . . , that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9; see also 1 John 5:19). This enraged adversary of God and His people has committed himself to make war against those who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (verse 17). He and his army of unseen demonic spirits are the unrealized driving force behind these events. (To understand further, request or download our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

The apostle John next refers to the physical and cultural origins of this ungodly system that is yet to arise from deep in the reservoir of ancient human tradition: "I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion" (Revelation 13:1-2).

These are the exact characteristics the book of Daniel ascribed to the ancient kingdoms of Greece, Persia and Babylon. John is telling us that there is a direct link between some of the dominant characteristics of those kingdoms and the socio-political system that Jesus Christ will destroy at His coming.

Ancient Babylon, in particular, destroyed the temple of God in Jerusalem, conquered the kingdom of Judah and took its people into captivity. As such, it symbolically became the ultimate adversary of God's people.

Notice who will manipulate the world's final superdictator from behind the scenes: "*The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority*" (verse 2). Satan is never far from the action. It is his agenda that will really shape this new power that will emerge.

The important religious connection

At present the nations of Europe appear to be growing more and more secular. But this era will end. The new system described above will embody much more than socio-political aspects. It will also have enormous religious support. To convey this point the apostle John introduces "another beast" that, in some ways, resembles a lamb but speaks "like a dragon" (verse 11).

This beast performs miracles and "deceives those who dwell on the earth by *those signs* which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast" (verses 13-14). These verses describe a great religious deceiver who is referred to as "the false prophet" in Revelation 19:20. His miracles will abruptly bring the present secular era to an end.

His influence will be enormous. "He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:16-17). Also he "causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast" (verse 12).

By throwing the full force of his deceptive religious power behind the socioeconomic and political schemes of the first beast, this false prophet will play a leading role in persuading humanity to accept and support the coming transformation of the world's economic and political structures. All who consent will unwittingly enslave themselves to the state.

The masters of commerce

In the end it will be the merchants and traders who will make this Babylon-like system function (Revelation 17:5). Their global trade will include "merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet . . . every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble . . . fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots [transport vehicles—cars in our day], and [even] bodies and souls of men" (Revelation 18:12-13).

Today, as we experience a major credit crisis in the world's financial system, it is appropriate that we reflect on how greed and the manipulation of human needs will dramatically affect the future of mankind. We can't know exactly *when* it will happen, but based on Bible prophecies it seems a likely scenario that at some point a general breakdown of the world's economy will trigger a massive rethinking of man's social, political and economic assumptions.

The chaos of that time will set the stage for the next event. The Bible reveals that a powerful, appealing political "beast" will emerge with vast military and economic powers. For a short time his economic policies will lead some to revel in their regained prosperity, wealth and power. But his system will succeed only because all opposition will be smashed. Those who refuse to submit to

his economic system will be excluded or killed (Revelation 13:15-18).

Dawn of a new era

The book of Revelation also reveals that God the Father will finally send Jesus Christ back to the earth to end and replace all ungodly governing systems: "After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her'" (Revelation 19:1-2).

At the return of Christ the oppressive political and economic system springing from ancient Babylon will be permanently destroyed. At that time "the merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing'" (Revelation 18:15-17).

Also "the kings of the earth"—the world's leaders and power brokers—"who committed fornication [here symbolizing illicit political relations] and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come'" (verses 9-10).

Then the world's final experiment with the political, religious and economic systems patterned after the dictatorial Babylonian model will end, and Jesus Christ's righteous rule on earth will begin! **GN**

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Dinner Time:

The Perfect Time to Rebuild Family Togetherness

by Scott Hoefker

Competing pressures and priorities may be making dinners together a thing of the past for many families. If this is happening to you, perhaps you need to think about what you're really missing!



As a professional counselor, I've learned that food plays an integral part in drawing human beings together. It also plays a big role when it comes to family stability.

Yet we see an ever-increasing trend within society to diminish the amount of time families spend together in enjoying an evening meal or dinner. This trend has been growing at an alarming speed.

The evening meal may in fact be the only time families sit down together (if they even do). Nowadays with the availability of every type of modern media easily accessible, family time faces an even greater challenge when competing with TV and other enticing forms of entertainment. When parents and children don't set aside time to really converse with each other, a key ingredient to keeping the family stable is lost.

One of the most important ways to find out how everyone in the family has been feeling, and what they've been doing all

day, is to search for and institute creative ways to make the dinnertime experience fun! Parents can make dinnertime a unique, special and enjoyable time to build values they wish their children to live by.

Why family dining is disappearing

Good food, good conversations and good laughter—that's what family dinners are supposed to be made of. But our busy schedules are making it hard for our families to pencil in mealtime together. Does it really matter?

The most common reason teenagers give as to why family dinners are not more frequent is that "parents work late."

The most common reason parents give is "conflicting schedules."

Other common reasons include "families choosing to not eat together," "interference of teen activities" and "television watching that simply cannot be missed."

More than one in five parents with children and teens say they are simply "too

busy" to have family dinners together. Given the importance of frequent family dinners and the impact parental engagement has in preventing teen substance abuse, families should work to overcome the barriers to frequent family dining! (See "Dining and Drugs: The Surprising Correlation" on the next page.)

Opening the lines of communication

I find in counseling that many of the challenging issues facing families today can be redirected and healed by simply making time for dinner and making time for healthy, positive discussion and conversation—and not caving in to the rush-rush of our 24/7 world.

Many years ago a well-known line from the movie *Cool Hand Luke* stated, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." The common complaint within families today is similar: "We just don't talk anymore."

Some families complain of fragmentation and loss of continuity, yet openly discuss how important it is to not cancel soccer practice, band, gymnastics, parents' travel schedules or any one of dozens of activities that rob us of family togetherness.

Setting priorities comes easily for most people at work, but these same people face seemingly unmovable barriers when it comes to the family at home. Most parents openly admit that successfully performing their jobs requires effective planning. But do we consider that eating meals together also needs to be part of our planning for effective families?

Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy of the famous Kennedy political clan was said to have on several occasions given her children an article from the newspaper to read at breakfast. She then gave an assignment for the evening meal: Each child was to discuss their article and explain their observations and viewpoints in discussion with other family members in a roundtable discussion.

Regardless of whether we agree with the political viewpoints of many of her children, that does not negate the importance of what they learned and the benefits it gave them later in life.

Dining and Drugs: The Surprising Correlation

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University has documented the importance of family dinners and their correlation with lessened drug and alcohol abuse.

Their findings revealed that the more often children and teens eat dinner with their families, the less likely they are to smoke, consume alcohol or use drugs. Compared to children who have fewer than three family dinners per week, children who have frequent family dinners are:

- At 70 percent lower risk for substance abuse.
- Half as likely to try cigarettes.
- Half as likely to be daily cigarette smokers.

- Half as likely to try marijuana.
- One third less likely to try alcohol.
- Half as likely to get drunk monthly.
- Likely to get better grades in school.
- Less likely to have friends who drink alcohol and use marijuana.
- 40 percent more likely to say future drug use will never happen.

If there were a magic wand that could be waved to reverse the trend of substance abuse in youth, a key ingredient would be to make sure every child had dinner with his or her parents at least five times a week. Setting aside a minimum of a half hour—an hour being better—would produce noticeable results.

Rediscovering the lost art of dining together

Keeping in mind that family dinners are ever so much more about building family stability than just sharing food, let's consider how to make a family mealtime work.

- Plan to have family dinners and stick to it until it becomes a family tradition, scheduling other important daily and weekly tasks around that time. It will take work, but it's doable and the results will be noticeable. Start out realistically—maybe every Sunday evening—then work for more evenings.

Set aside a specific amount of time for the meal. An unhurried timetable creates a better environment for digestion. Medical authorities have long proven this produces many positive effects on the overall well-being of each person. Rushing our meals or gulping down our food has been proven to eventually lead to other health challenges.

- Have dinner around the table, not the TV. Share the meal where the family can enjoy real conversation. Eating dinner on trays while watching the TV does not promote conversation. It's sad but not surprising that sales of dining room tables have continually declined over the last decade. Many homes do not even contain a dining room table, much less a dining room.

- Take turns saying something meaningful before eating—allowing everyone to give input, not just a parent. Simple things like thanking the person who did the cooking, talking about the reason for daylight saving time and the onset of the seasons can give perspective and remind us of the cycle of nature.

Reading a poem to start the meal can be beneficial. The *Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest* gives several good examples of mealtime reflection. One of his most famous rings true regarding the importance

of family dinnertime:

*A tablecloth that's slightly soiled
Where greasy little hands have toiled;
The napkins kept in silver rings,
And only ordinary things
From which to eat, a simple fare,
And just the wife and kiddies there,
And while I serve, the clatter glad
Of little girl and little lad
Who have so very much to say
About the happenings of the day.*

- In conversation, emphasize the positive. Christianity is about focusing on the positive.

Philippians 4:8 tells us to think and meditate on positive things. Use open-ended questions like, "What did you do that made you feel good this week?" or "What happened this week that made you feel grateful?" or "What was the happiest thing you did today?"

- Use the dictionary during your meal to learn new words. Parents do not always have to be the one to present a word. Take turns letting family members present a new word and discuss its meaning. Then use the word in a sentence. This can be fun, as the usage of the word becomes perfected.

- Try new foods. It's amazing how many people simply eat the same things day after day. Providing a different food taste at dinner tends to liven up any discussion as well as expand the family horizons. Maybe once a week your family could try a meal of foods from a different part of the world.

- Where did the food come from? Talk about this. I remember a story, conveyed during a family discussion at dinner, where one member thought milk came from the supermarket and had no idea what a cow was. Funny? Perhaps, but surprisingly such lack of knowledge is more and more common today. Was it an animal? Was it kept frozen in transportation to the market? Did it come from a cardboard box, is it

fresh, or was it canned? From what country did this food originate? Such questions provide thought-provoking and beneficial conversation at family dinner.

- Take time to laugh! Proverbs 15:15 tells us that "he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast." Sharing a joke at dinner time can set a tone of enjoyment and help the experience to be a positive one. Libraries and bookstores have humor collections that will appeal to those with younger children. Studies have shown that laughter even aids proper digestion within adults and children.

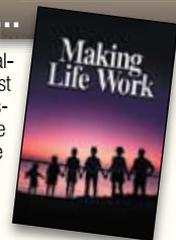
I can't help but notice that talking together is an integral part in all the above suggestions. No wonder family mealtimes are so good at improving family communication!

Although trends that do not reflect what God desires for mankind are increasing in society, we can reverse the tendencies in our families. As Jesus Christ assures us in Luke 11:9, God promises help to those who ask, sincerely seeking His help.

We at *The Good News* try to deal with very real issues facing very real people in a very real world. The art of family dining need not become a thing of the past! **GN**

To Learn More...

Many people probably don't realize that they own the world's best guide for a happy and successful life—the Bible! It's a treasure trove of practical, proven advice on marriage and family relationships, friendships, career, health and much more. We've gathered much of its timeless advice into a free, full-color booklet that we'd like to share with you—*Making Life Work*. Download or request your free copy today!



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Kindness: From the Heart to the Helping Hand

God's nature is that of incredible loving-kindness toward all people. And He will kindly help His followers cultivate the much-needed fruit of godly kindness.

by Don Hooser

Take a look at what, according to Scripture, accompanies true kindness: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each another, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31-32, New International Version).

To consistently live up to all this is humanly impossible! But “with God, all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

How important is kindness? In a 2003 study of 37 cultures around the world, 16,000 subjects were asked about their most desired traits in a mate. For both sexes, the first preference was *kindness!*

People want to be *treated* kindly but have a harder time *being* kind themselves. A large-scale study of school bullies was recently conducted to learn why they bully other kids. The conclusion? Most do it because they *enjoy* doing it.

This illustrates how cruel, mean and sadistic raw human nature is. Kindness must be *learned*, and many children are not being taught it.

In fact, much of the media they're exposed to teaches the opposite. Violence and other terrible influences in media entertainment cause people to become desensitized and calloused toward the needs and feelings of others.

Some people think kindness is weak—not something for “go-getters” to be bothered with. *Big* mistake! If we want God, who has ultimate control of how things go in the universe, to be kind to us, we'd better be kind to others. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

People have many excuses: “I'm too busy.” “The person deserves his suffering.” “God is probably punishing him” (like Job's friends assumed wrongly in the book of Job). But God doesn't accept excuses for failing to show kindness.

Lack of kindness is epidemic. The

apostle Paul accurately foretold a cold and hard-hearted world “in the last days” (2 Timothy 3:1-3). As a result, people are starved for the milk of human kindness!

What is kindness?

Kindness starts with *caring*—being tenderhearted and compassionate toward others. If God wants us to be kind to animals, how much more to people! (See Proverbs 12:10).

Next, we must make it our goal and habit to be actively looking for opportunities to show kindness. When we see one, we need to act quickly before the opportunity is gone.

The Greek word for “kind” is *chrestos*. Part of its meaning is *useful*, which makes it clear that biblical kindness involves *action*. “Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; *let us really show it by our actions*” (1 John 3:18, New Living Translation, emphasis added throughout).

Action includes some kind of *self-sacrifice* and therefore *generosity* on our part, especially of our time. (That doesn't mean we neglect sufficient rest and whatever is needed to refill our own well.)

Of course, the emphasis on deeds over mere words does not mean words are unnecessary. Action *includes words*. Encouraging words of comfort, courtesy, compliments and even correction can be heartwarming acts of kindness. Several biblical proverbs attest to this.

What to say and not say should be guided by awareness of the sensitivities of others. We must help people *heal* from their emotional wounds rather than rubbing salt in those wounds. Sadly, when people know what “buttons to push,” they often use that insight to further hurt each other.

Our motive for “charitable deeds” should not be to impress people (Matthew 6:1-4). The greatest rewards from God come when our acts of kindness are done humbly, quietly and, when practical, anonymously.

Doing someone a favor to get a favor in return is not wrong unless it's illegal or unethical (like bribery). But a favor done to get some benefit is not true kindness. Genuine kindness is lending a helping hand when you expect nothing in return.

Kindness should begin with our kin. Ironically and tragically, many people display their most unkind behavior with the ones they should love the most. God is not unaware of this hypocrisy.

And Jesus Christ emphasized that we must be kind to *everyone*, not just our family and friends (Luke 6:31-34). If you do this, “your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to [even] the unthankful and evil” (verse 35).

Be kind to the unthankful? Ouch!

If you and I are kind to hundreds of nice people, doesn't that prove we are kind people? Perhaps yes, according to normal standards. But God's standard requires being kind to *all*—even “evil” people.

Now if we do a good deed for someone and there is no “thank you,” don't we feel we should “give him what he deserves” and wash our hands of him?

Of course. But our reacting in this “natural” way is not sufficient if we want to be “sons of the Most High.” We must ask, “What would Jesus do?” and then do likewise.

Some people have not been taught to be thankful and are blind to the sin of ingratitude. It's good to remember a line from Glen Campbell's 1970 song, “Try a Little Kindness”: “And if you try a little kindness, then you'll overlook the blindness.”

A huge factor in the world today is that many people are psychologically confused, wounded and scarred by being neglected, rejected or abused, especially during the vulnerable time of childhood. They can be full of depression, fears, anger and suspicion.

And people who have *not* been abused themselves may well have absorbed attitudes passed along from those who *have* been abused.

If you reach your hand out to pet a dog, will he wag his tail or bite you? If he has been repeatedly beaten and abused, he may interpret your gesture as a threat and bite.

Likewise, many people are suspicious of any favors. They assume everyone has a selfish ulterior motive and is out to manipulate them or hurt them. They often “bite the hand that feeds them.”



Kindness starts with caring—being tenderhearted and compassionate toward others.

But these people need kindness more than anyone! Persistent efforts to be kind to them can gradually convince them that you are a true friend. Furthermore, your kindness can bring about progressive healing for their wounded hearts.

How to cultivate kindness

It takes genuine effort to be truly kind. In Galatians 5:19-21, the apostle Paul refers to human nature as “the flesh” and our natural tendencies as the “works of the flesh.” These include *hatred, jealousies, selfish ambitions and envy*. All these traits are selfish and self-centered.

Kindness requires the opposite—*caring*

concern for others. “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem *others* better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also *for the interests of others*” (Philippians 2:3-4).

Our innate human nature must be replaced by *God’s* nature, and that can only happen by receiving the gift of God’s Spirit dwelling in us and the wonderful fruit it produces: “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, *kindness*, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Each characteristic here clearly relates to the others. Longsuffering, the previous one explained in this series of articles on the fruit of God’s Spirit, is linked with kindness in two other lists (2 Corinthians 6:6; Colossians 3:12). And both are important components of *love*: “Love suffers long and is *kind*” (1 Corinthians 13:4).

How does one obtain the Holy Spirit? The apostle Peter explained the basic requirements in Acts 2:38: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Follow the Bible’s examples of kindness

Great examples of kindness can inspire us to greater kindness: King David toward

Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 9). The Shunammite woman and her husband toward Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-10). Dorcas, a beloved woman who “was full of good works and charitable deeds” (Acts 9:36-39). The Samaritan in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Barnabas, whose name meant “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36).

Another is the “virtuous wife” who diligently attends to the needs of her family and of many others (Proverbs 31). “She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy” (verse 20). “And on her tongue is the law of kindness” (verse 26).

May our tongues be guided by the law of kindness!

One of the most important Hebrew words in the Old Testament is *hesed*, used there 240 times. It is often translated *mercy*, but the meaning is broader—concerning *loyal or steadfast love and covenant faithfulness*. No single English word is adequate to translate it, partly because language is insufficient to describe this central quality of God’s character. The word *devotion* perhaps comes closest. But the demonstration of this committed love in actions is also included. That’s why the word is sometimes appropriately rendered as *mercy*, as mentioned, and as *loving-kindness* or just *kindness*.

The Scriptures frequently praise the *hesed* of God. They also tell us that we should have *hesed* toward one another.

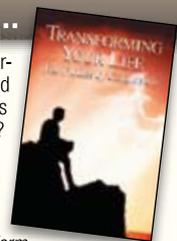
Jesus Christ practiced kindness that was radical for that time and culture. He always had great concern for women as well as men, for children as well as adults, for other races as well as the Jewish race, and for the sick and weak as well as the strong. Often He wore Himself out praying for people, healing people, feeding people and helping them in other ways.

When Jesus looked on the multitudes of people with all their problems, sicknesses and confusion, He was “moved with compassion” (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 18:27). As we look at the people around us, we, too, should be *moved with compassion*. We, too, should be helping, giving, sharing, caring, encouraging, extending mercy, filled with compassion and acting on it as we are able—in a word, *kind*.

With each of us, may the fruit of kindness continue to blossom and grow. Above all, may we strive to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who personified God’s *hesed* in the greatest example of loving-kindness. **GN**

To Learn More...

How can you develop the wonderful fruit of the Spirit as described in this article series? What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? How can you have that Spirit at work in your life? You need to understand! To discover the answers, request or download your free copy of *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. This free booklet explains the little-understood truth revealed in your Bible!



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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.

UNITED STATES

Arizona
Prescott ch. 13, Sun 5 p.m.; Sat 3:30 p.m.
Prescott Valley ch. 13, Sun 9 a.m.; & 6:30 p.m.
Tucson ch. 72, 120, Sun 8 a.m.
ch. 73, 98, Sat 8 a.m.

Arkansas
Fayetteville ch. 18, Sun 10 a.m.; Wed 6 p.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

California
Alamo ch. 26, Thu 7:30 p.m.; 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Anaheim (west) ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Berkeley ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.; Thu 9 p.m.
Clayton ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Concord ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Costa Mesa ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Cypress ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Danville ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Dublin ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.
El Cerrito ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.; Thu 9 p.m.
El Sobrante ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.; Thu 9 p.m.
Emeryville ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
Eureka ch. 12, Fri 8 p.m.
Fountain Valley ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Fremont ch. 29, Tue 6:30 p.m.
Garden Grove ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Hayward ch. 28, Tue 10 p.m.
Hemet ch. 3, Fri 2:30 p.m.
Hercules ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.; Thu 9 p.m.
Huntington Beach ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Lafayette ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Livermore ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.
Los Alamitos ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Marin County ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.
Martinez ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Midway City ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Modesto ch. 26, Thu 8:30 p.m.; Fri 6 p.m.
Monrovia ch. 16, 98, Tue, Thu and Sat 4:30 p.m.
Newark ch. 29, Tue 6:30 p.m.
Novato ch. 71, Tue 9:30 p.m.
Oakland ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
Orange ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Orinda ch. 26, Thu 7:30 p.m.; 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Palo Cedro DCA cable link, Thu 10 a.m.
Pasadena ch. 56, Sun 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Petaluma ch. 26, Sun 9:30 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.; Wed 6 p.m.

Piedmont ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
Pittsburg ch. 26, Thu 12 midnight
Pleasant Hill ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Pleasanton ch. 26, Fri 4 p.m.
Redding ch. 11, Sun 9 a.m.
Richmond ch. 26, Sun 8 a.m.
Rossmoor ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Sacramento ch. 18, Thu 6 p.m.
San Diego ch. 18, 19, 23, Mon 5 p.m.
San Francisco ch. 29, Sun 9:30 a.m.
San Jose ch. 15A, Wed 4:30 p.m.
San Rafael ch. 26, Thu 9 p.m.
Santa Clara ch. 15A, Wed 4:30 p.m.
Santa Rosa a.m. ch. 30, Sun 7:30 p.m.; Sat 10:30 a.m.
S. Pasadena ch. 6, Thu 4:30 p.m.
Stanton ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Verdugo Hills ch. 20, Thu 9:30 p.m.
Walnut Creek ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Westminster ch. 3A, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.

Colorado
Boulder ch. 43, Fri 1 p.m.

Georgia
Cornelia ch. 4, Sun 6:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.

Idaho
Boise ch. 11, Wed 7:30 p.m.

Illinois
Arlington Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Bartlett ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Brookport ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Buffalo Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Chicago ch. 36, times vary

Des Plaines ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
East St. Louis ch. 18, Sat 5:30 p.m.
Elk Grove Village ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Glenview ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Golf ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Hanover Park ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Hoffman Estates ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Lincolnwood ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Metropolis ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Morton Grove ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Naperville ch. 17, Sun 10 a.m.
Niles ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Normal ch. 20, Sun 9 p.m.
Northbrook ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Palatine ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Romeoville ch. 6, Sun 9 a.m.
Schaumburg ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Skokie ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Springfield ch. 4, Wed 12 a.m., 8 a.m. & 5 p.m.
Streamwood ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling ch. 35, Wed 6:30 p.m.
Wilmette ch. 19, Wed 6:30 p.m.

Indiana
Bloomington ch. 3, Sun 9:30 p.m.
Evansville ch. 7, Mon 5:30 p.m.; Tue 6:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne ch. 57, Sun 8:30 a.m.
Valparaiso ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.

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

Kentucky
Berea ch. 5, Fri 9 & 9:30 p.m.
Owensboro ch. 72, Sun 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Paducah ch. 2, Sun 2 p.m.
Richmond ch. 5, Fri 9 & 9:30 p.m.

Massachusetts
Boston ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
Cambridge ch. 22, 23, 83, Sun 7 a.m.; Wed 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
East Longmeadow ch. 5, Sun 11:30 a.m.
Greenfield ch. 17, Tue 4 p.m.; Wed 10:30 a.m.
Shrewsbury ch. 33, Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 7 a.m.
Worcester ch. 13, Thu 10 a.m.

Michigan
Ann Arbor ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.
Grand Haven ch. 22, Mon 4 p.m.
Grand Rapids ch. 25, Tue or Wed 11 a.m.
Kalamazoo ch. 95, Sun 9 & 9:30 a.m.
Michigan City ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.; Thu 7 p.m.
Midland ch. 3, Tue 5:30 p.m.
Mt. Pleasant ch. 3, times vary
Petoskey ch. 2, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Fri 5 p.m.
Traverse City ch. 2, Sun 11:30 a.m.; Fri 5 p.m.
Ypsilanti ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.

Minnesota
Albert Lea ch. 6, Sun 9:55 a.m.
Austin ch. 6, Sun 7 p.m.
Blaine ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Bloomington ch. 16, Wed 10 p.m.; Thu 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.

Brooklyn Center ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Brooklyn Park ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Centerville ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Circle Pines ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Eagan ch. 15, Sun 6:30 a.m.; Mon 12:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 p.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Thu 3:30 p.m.; Fri 12:30 p.m.; Sat 9:30 a.m.

Eden Prairie ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Edina ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Golden Valley ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.

Ham Lake ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Hopkins ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Inver Grove Hts. ch. 15, Sun 6:30 a.m.; Mon 12:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 p.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Thu 3:30 p.m.; Fri 12:30 p.m.; Sat 9:30 a.m.

Lexington ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Lino Lakes ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.

Litchfield ch. 10, Sun 2 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 1 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wed 1 a.m., 3 a.m., 8:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Maple Grove ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.

Minneapolis ch. 75, Mon 6:30 p.m.
Minnetonka ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.

New Hope ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.

New Ulm ch. 72, Sun 5 p.m.; Thu 10 a.m.; Fri 7 p.m.

Osseo ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.

Plymouth ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.

Richfield ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.

Robbinsdale ch. 19, Sun 4 a.m., 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.

Rochester ch. 10, Sun 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.

St. Charles ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.
Spring Lake Park ch. 14, Sun 1 & 9 a.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Wabasha ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.
Willmar ch. 8, Thu 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.; Sat 5 p.m.
Winona ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.

Missouri
Cape Girardeau ch. 5, Sun 7:30 a.m.; Tue 6 p.m.; Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 7:30 p.m.
Jackson ch. 5, Sun 7:30 a.m.; Tue 6 p.m.; Thu 12:30 p.m.; Fri 7:30 p.m.
Jefferson City ch. 3, Wed 6 p.m.
Poplar Bluff ch. 54, Tue 4 p.m.
Springfield ch. 18, Sat 5:30 p.m.
St. Louis ch. 26, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Wed 7 p.m.

Montana
Billings ch. 7, Sun 6 p.m.; Sat 11 a.m.
Helena ch. 11, Sun 3 p.m.
Missoula ch. 7, Sun 11 a.m.

Nevada
Carson City ch. 10, Wed 7:30 p.m.
Reno/Sparks ch. 16, Wed 7 p.m.

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

New Jersey
Newark ch. 19, Sun 8:30 a.m.

New Mexico
Santa Fe ch. 16, Sun 10 a.m.; Mon 6:30 p.m.

New York
Binghamton ch. 4, Thu 5:30 p.m.
Bronx ch. 70, Mon 3 p.m.
Brooklyn ch. 56, 69, Sun 10 a.m.
Canandaigua ch. 12, Sun 2 p.m.
Long Island ch. 20, Mon 10 p.m.
Olean ch. 6, Thu 9:30 p.m.
Oneonta ch. 23, Mon 6 p.m.; Wed 9 p.m.
Queens ch. 35, Tue 8 p.m.; Thu 3 p.m.
Westbury ch. 56, Sun 10 p.m.; Thu 4:30 p.m.
Ch. 115, Fri 5:30 p.m.

North Carolina
Asheville ch. 20, Sun 1 p.m.
Charlotte ch. 21, Sat 1 p.m.
Durham ch. 8, Wed 7:30 a.m.
Greensboro ch. 8, Sun 10:30 & 12:30 a.m.
Hickory ch. 10, Sun 7 p.m.
Raleigh ch. 22, Tue 6:30 p.m.

North Dakota
Bismarck ch. 12, Sun 2:30 p.m.
Fargo ch. 12, Tue 10:30 a.m.

Ohio
Athens ch. 23, Sun 7 p.m.; Wed 7 p.m.
Brunswick ch. 21, Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 12:30, 4:30 & 8:30 a.m.; 2:30, 6:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Cincinnati ch. 4, Sun 11 a.m. & 8 p.m.; Mon 5:30 p.m.; Tue 4 p.m.
Cincinnati (Union Twp.) ch. 12, Wed 11 a.m.
Dayton ch. 18, Sun 10:30 a.m.; Tue 10 p.m.; Thu 11 p.m.; Sat 6:30 a.m.

Defiance ch. 8, Sun 2:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 a.m.; Wed 11 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.
Fairborn ch. 5, Sun 12 noon; Thu 6 p.m.
Fairborn ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.

Greenville ch. 3, Thu 8 p.m.
Oberlin/Wellington ch. 12, Sun & Sat 9 a.m.
Springfield ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Urbana ch. 1, daily 6 a.m., 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Vandalia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Wash. Court House ch. 3, Wed 2 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.
Xenia ch. 23, Sun 5:30 p.m.

Oregon
Eugene ch. 29, Tue 2 p.m.
McMinnville ch. 11, Sun 5:30 p.m.; Wed 8 p.m.
Medford ch. 15, 95, Sun 5 p.m.
Oregon City ch. 21, Mon 8 p.m.
Portland ch. 22, Sun 7:30 p.m.
Salem ch. 23, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Fri 2 p.m.; Sat 11:30 a.m.
Woodburn ch. 11, Sun 9 a.m.

Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh/Moon Twp. ch. 21, 14, Sun 12 & 2 p.m.
York ch. 16, Sun 8:30 p.m.; Mon 4:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.

Rhode Island
Entire state ch. 14, Fri 10:30 a.m.

Texas
Austin ch. 11, Mon 8:30 p.m.
Dallas ch. 14B, 74, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 9:30 p.m.
Del Rio ch. 19, Sun 9 a.m.; Wed 5 p.m.
El Paso ch. 15, Mon, Fri, Sat 1 p.m.
Fort Worth ch. 28, Tue 5:30 p.m.; Thu 1 p.m.
Longview ch. 26, Tue 2 p.m.; Wed 10 p.m.; Fri 12:30 p.m.; Sat 9 p.m.
San Antonio ch. 20, Mon 10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Virginia
Charlottesville/Albemarle County ch. 13, 14, Wed 10 p.m.
Hampton Roads ch. 71, 74, Sun 10 a.m.

Washington
Everett ch. 77, Wed 5 p.m.
Kennewick ch. 13, Sun & Tue 8:30 p.m.
Olympia ch. 22, 29, Sun 9 a.m.; Thu 10:30 p.m.
Vancouver ch. 11, Sun 11 p.m.; Mon 5 p.m.; Sat 11 a.m.

West Virginia
Morgantown ch. 3, Mon, Wed & Fri 3 p.m.; Sat 10 a.m.

Wisconsin
Beloit ch. 12, Thu 6:30 p.m.
Eau Claire ch. 96, Sun 2 p.m.
Kenosha ch. 14, Sun & Mon 7:30 p.m.
Madison ch. 4, Sun 12:30 p.m.
Milwaukee ch. 96, Mon 2 p.m.; Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 2 p.m.
Omro ch. 19, Sun & Sat 1 p.m.
Stevens Point ch. 96, 984, 984-1, Mon 5 & 9:30 p.m.; Tue 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.
Wausau ch. 10, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Sat 9 a.m.
West Allis ch. 14, times vary

CANADA

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

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

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

Manitoba
The Christian Channel MTS ch. 21, Sun 9:30 a.m.

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

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

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

Ontario
The Christian Channel Rogers ch. 396, Sun 10:30 a.m.
The Christian Channel Cogeco ch. 186, Sun 10:30 a.m.

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



Secular Humanism

Between the Ideal and the Lie

by **Beyond Today** host Gary Petty

Recent U.S. elections showed a nation strongly and sometimes bitterly divided over many issues, not least the basic direction of the country. What's behind the battle? The seeds were sown long ago.



A war of philosophy and of what defines morality is being fought daily in the media, judicial benches and legislative halls across the Western world. Issues include separation of church and state, euthanasia, abortion, gay rights and whether “one nation under God” should stay in the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance or “In God We Trust” should remain inscribed on U.S. currency.

On one side stand fundamentalist Protestantism and conservative Catholicism and on the other side secular humanism. The “religious right” claims that humanism is dragging the United States into an abyss of crime and relativism. Secular humanists point to incidents like the pedophile priest scandal rocking the Catholic Church to trumpet that Christianity is discredited and has failed to produce a moral and safe society.

Many find themselves in the middle, accepting some traditional religious ideas while embracing many secularist positions. What is secular humanism, and what are

its effects on cultural development in the United States?

Humanist manifestos

In 1933 a small group of philosophers, educators and ministers issued the Humanist Manifesto. They presented their statement of 15 beliefs as concepts deeply rooted in the democratic ideals of American culture.

The document begins with assertions that progress in scientific knowledge has necessitated a radical change in the way humanity defines religion. The first statement of humanism is: “Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.” The cornerstone of the Humanist Manifesto is the belief that the universe is the result of mindless evolution.

In the following decades secular humanism continued to influence the philosophical and religious thought of many in the field of higher education. Humanism blossomed in the cultural experimentation of the 1960s. In 1973 the Humanist Manifesto II greatly broadened the philosophy

in political intent and practice.

The 1973 Manifesto’s section on religion includes the statement that “we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species.” It goes on to claim, “Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful.” The document reaffirms the humanist tenet that human beings are simply a result of blind, purposeless evolution.

The section on the individual denies any divine authoritative code of behavior. This is specifically espoused in relation to human sexuality. The Manifesto states: “We believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religious and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized.”

It further contends, “Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their lifestyles as they desire.”

The Manifesto explicitly condones euthanasia and, concerning politics, advocates a world community without national boundaries.

Obviously many secular humanist ideas have filtered into mainstream culture. Millions of Americans are abandoning long-held Christian ideals and standards and embracing secularism. Humanists point out that this increase in the acceptance of secularism exposes the failure of Christianity to fulfill people’s fundamental needs.

Paul Kurtz, chairman of the Council for Secular Humanism, wrote: “Given the intense conflicts between contending fundamentalist dogmatic claims in the world today, many people have grown exasperated with policies formulated ‘in the name of God.’ They have asked for concrete secular, political, and ethical alternatives to resolve these conflicts.

“Here secularism has an important role to play. For it can show that it is possible to lead the good life, be a good citizen, and

display exemplary moral conduct without benefit of religion or clergy. Indeed, contemporary secular European societies enjoy high standards of living and education, and they suffer less violence, addictive behavior, repression, or tyranny than religious societies.

“We hope the secular trends now emerging in the United States will continue to grow. This is the vision and the call of secular humanism—to demonstrate to everyone the positive reach of humanist values as an alternative to God-intoxicated theologies and the importance of keeping alive reason rather than faith” (“Bravo! Secularism Growing in the U.S.,” *Free Inquiry*, Summer 2002).

Historical revisionism hard at work

A central argument in the political hoopla from both the “religious right” and secular humanists is that their positions are the original intent of the founding fathers of the United States.

There is no doubt that the individuals instrumental in the creation of the U.S. Constitution were religious men who believed in a Supreme Being. After all, the American colonies were strongly steeped in European Christianity.

Many original colonists came to the New World seeking religious tolerance. Among them were the Puritans of New England, Quakers of Pennsylvania, Catholics of Maryland, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, German Reformed, Lutherans, Baptists and Methodists, although large segments of the population continued to support the Church of England.

The framers of the Constitution envisioned a nation where people were free to practice their own religion and where the government couldn’t establish a state religion. It is historical revisionism to claim that the founders were anti-God and anti-religion. It is also revisionist, however, to claim that they were uniformly fundamentalist Christians, although most were.

Though it was generally looked down on, some in early America adhered to deism, the philosophy that God created humanity and a universe governed by immutable laws, but that He does not intervene in His creation. The Bible was seen by some deists as a compilation of good moral teachings along with much myth and evil teachings. God, it was thought, was to be discovered only in nature, not in supposed miracles or divine revelation.

Over time this and like ideas gained ground, though remaining very much in the minority. But throughout the 1800s proponents of humanism claimed scientific discovery discounted biblical accuracy. Evolution became the humanists’ answer to creation. Eventually, the religious beliefs of deism and the humanism of the 18th century evolved into modern secular humanism.

Despite remaining in the minority, these views have had a gradual and pervasive effect. How much has humanism molded the culture of the Western world? How much has it affected you?

Secular humanism and the Bible

It’s vital to understand that, from a biblical viewpoint, basic untruths underlie the heart of secular humanism. These deceitful assertions are increasingly accepted as wisdom in our postmodern, pluralistic culture. It is important that Christians identify these fraudulent claims and expose them for what they are.

One basic deception of secular humanism is that humanity is an accident of nature and that there is no plan of salvation. The result of this belief is the propagation of evolutionary theory, support of abortion and euthanasia, and disdain for organized religion. The societal consequences of these ideas include attempts to remove the Bible from public schools, the defamation or ridicule of those who claim to have a relationship with God, loss of a sense of purpose for humanity and abandonment of hope in a future after this life.

A second deception is the belief that all religions are equal. Not all humanists are atheists; some believe in some form of Supreme Being. But in the humanistic model, the Bible becomes just another book containing many ethical ideas but also one filled with myths and even promoting evil. This has led to dismissal of the Bible while accepting and propagating many forms and variations of non-Christian beliefs.

A third deception of humanism is that each person is his or her own ultimate authority. Frederick Edwords writes in “What Is Humanism?” published on the American Humanist Association Web page:

“The Secular Humanist tradition is in part a tradition of defiance, a tradition that dates back to ancient Greece. One can see, even in Greek mythology, humanist themes that are rarely, if ever, manifested in the mythologies of other cultures. And they certainly have not been repeated by modern religions. The best example here is the character Prometheus.

“Prometheus stands out because he was admired by ancient Greeks as the one who defied Zeus. He stole the fire of the gods and brought it down to earth. For this he was punished. And yet he continued his defiance amid his tortures. This is one source of the Humanist challenge to authority.

“The next time we see a truly heroic Promethean character in mythology it is Lucifer in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. But now he is the Devil. He is evil. Whoever would defy God must be wickedness personified. That seems to be a given of traditional religion. But the ancient Greeks didn’t agree. To them, Zeus, for all his power, could still be mistaken.

“Imagine how shocked a friend of mine was when I told her my view of ‘God’s moral standards.’ I said, ‘If there were such a god, and these were indeed his ideal moral principles, I would be tolerant. After all, God is entitled to his own opinions!’

“Only a humanist is inclined to speak this way. Only a humanist can suggest that,

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Basic untruths underlie the heart of secular humanism. These deceitful assertions are increasingly accepted as wisdom in our postmodern, pluralistic culture.

even if there be a god, it is OK to disagree with him, her, or it.”

The result of each person becoming his or her own ultimate authority is situation ethics. Institutions like lifelong marriage become merely personal choices on par with purchasing a new car. Homosexuality and divorce become acceptable as long as “no one gets hurt.” The societal consequences? Epidemic sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, mental illness, broken families, poverty, crime, war—the very ills humanists claim to want to change.

Paul's denunciation of pagan Rome

In Romans 1:18-21 the apostle Paul confronts the idolatry of the Roman world of the first century. He writes: “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened” (New International Version).

Paul says that the creation itself reveals the Creator so obviously that idolatry is senseless and futile. This same argument exposes secular humanism, which claims to be based on reasoning. Darwinism, the foundational concept of early 20th-century humanism, has been rejected as scientifically untenable by a growing number of scientists. The design and complexity of nature proves the intellect of a Designer. Yet secular humanists refuse to explore the possibility that their theories are flawed.

Paul continues in verses 22-25: “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made

to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is for ever praised” (NIV).

The superstitious people of ancient Rome believed in a myriad of gods and goddesses while denying the Creator. Paul says they “exchanged the truth of God for a lie.” Humanists don’t worship idols of wood and stone. Instead they’ve tried to substitute the worship of humanity and self for the worship of the Creator God. In secular humanism every person is his or her own god.

Paul goes on to show the results of human theories that deny the Creator God: “Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

“Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

“Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them” (verses 26-32, NIV).

Ironically, the consequences of secular humanism in society aren’t any different than the idolatry of Rome: sexual immorality, homosexuality, lack of love and mercy,

violence, destruction of the family and a hatred of God.

The only real solution

Only 34 men signed the original Humanist Manifesto, but a look at the names is revealing. One signer was John Dewey, founder and first president of the American Association of University Professors and one of the most influential men in reforming the public educational system in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Under the influence of Dewey and others, public schools went through dramatic changes. Science replaced religion as the foundation of education. Human reasoning replaced the belief that the Bible is the guiding truth of the Creator.

Secular humanists are correct when they claim that historical Christianity has failed to produce a utopian society. The problems with Christianity are the same as with humanism—human nature. When we seriously study the Bible, it becomes clear that the Christianity of Jesus and the apostles has been eclipsed by a counterfeit Christianity they would have difficulty recognizing. Until human beings are willing to submit to the Creator and the way of life He intends for us, we will continue to repeat the same tragic mistakes.

The Bible reveals that God is sending Jesus Christ to earth to establish His Kingdom. When that happens, *all* false religion—including mainstream Christianity as well as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and, yes, secular humanism—will cease to exist as people at last learn the truth and submit to Christ’s authority. The results will be the peace and happiness that all people desire!

Before He returns you should get to know—by really studying—the Bible for yourself. Don’t be blindly swayed by humanistic criticism of it! **GN**

To Learn More...

Does God Exist? The question is crucial because the implications are so far-reaching. Are you the result of a series of lucky cosmic accidents? Does your life have no meaning or purpose at all? Or are you the product of a plan by an unimaginably powerful and loving Creator who has a great purpose for you? You need to know the answers! Request or download your free copy of *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* today!

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

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

“Ten Things You Should Know About God”

I enjoyed this article as in 10 brief sections it describes the essential attributes of the true God of the Bible. As you stated in the introduction, this is a God even professing Christians do not seem to know, much less those who have been brought up in a post-Christian society such as Britain. Your comment about how so many view God's law as a “yoke of bondage” is just one example of how distorted people's views of God have become, when one considers that God is also a God of love and mercy. How sad so few people really know the true God and His Son, Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

B.F., Lancashire, England

A new ad has recently appeared on some London buses saying: “There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” This sign presupposes that believing in God means we won't be able to enjoy life. Your points about what God is like show us that believing in and serving God bring joy to our lives rather than preventing it.

J.S., England

The Good News

I thank you for providing me with *The Good News* and all the booklets over the many years. These have been the real backbone in providing answers and sanity in this totally disturbed world. I read a few pages every day. The messages are written very articulately and are well thought out. The more I read, the clearer everything becomes. Your great works play an indispensable part in my life.

J.K.B., Kenya

I've been subscribing to your magazine and have noticed that the quality is excellent, the subjects are very current and the articles give us solutions about how to live better in this world. That's a good reason to subscribe to it again. Congratulations for the issue that reports about families. A good suggestion was to turn off the TV and look for something positive to do instead of wasting time.

D.W., Brazil

The Good News contains a lot of inspirational things which are playing a vital role in calling our society back into godly values. The way you write and address questions can make an atheist turn to God.

Your style is unique because you don't just write about God; rather you take advantage of the broken world to show the futility of man without God. I can sense your dedication, fear and honouring of God through the pages. I repeat, *The Good News* is very inspirational, which led me to sign up for the *Bible Study Course*. It is strong but digestible, possessing dignity which can only be attributed to the emphasis on God's character. I am a potential partner in donation.

O.N.O., London, England

Church Web site

I stumbled on your Web site during one of my searches about God and relationships. I am excited that there is an organization out there offering, free of charge, God's word and teachings to make many things in the Scriptures clearer and simpler. God richly bless all your hard work.

Sincerely speaking, I am keen to know how this ministry is funded. Can individuals or ministries partner with you, give money and resources to encourage the work that you do? God bless you all once again.

Dr. J.E., Kent, England

The Good News is funded by the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and the many coworkers and donors who believe in sharing the message of the true gospel with others around the world. Their generosity makes it possible for us to share The Good News and other publications in English, Spanish, German, French, Italian and other languages. Donations are appreciated and are tax-deductible in the United States and Canada. You may wish to contact our British Isles office at the address listed on page 2.

I wish to thank you for such a wonderful Web site! It is packed with relevant information and enlightenment. I visit it at least three times per day to get some of my biblical questions answered. It is nice to see a group of Christians still

standing by the Word of God and upholding its value.

J.C., Internet

Bible Study Course

I am happy to be able to finish all 12 lessons of the *Bible Study Course*. It has taught me to love reading the Bible for the purpose it has been written—the greatest gift that links us to God the Father and Jesus Christ our Saviour. I thank all those who made it possible free of charge to help me know more and read the Bible more. A Christian should read the Bible for as long as he or she is able to. I will still want to continue reading *The Good News*. The advice at the end of the course, to study through again the 12 lessons, is the best.

C.F., London, England

Returning to the fold

I just want to thank you and all who support your work for helping me come to repentance through your online sermons and literature. I grew up in God's Church but lusted for the riches of the world as a teen. Now, 25 years later, I find myself in serious regret for not believing as I should have. The journey out of a world and life of sin that I have led is going to be so difficult for me now that I fear that it is almost impossible if not for God's Holy Spirit and your Church members providing so much inspired and encouraging messages for sinners like me.

T.P., Internet

The Church Jesus Built

I just want to thank you for the inspiration that your Web site shows concerning the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I have ordered the booklet *The Church Jesus Built* and am looking forward to its inspired reading. I am a person who has always wondered why churches never went along with Christ's teachings. There is only one true Church and that is the Church that teaches the true doctrine of our Lord and Savior. I am looking forward to reading the booklet.

H.L., Internet

I have learnt so much from your literature, but now have a dilemma. I've stopped going to a “Sunday” church because I have come to believe in Saturday as the Sabbath and all the other truths that you teach. I have a very deep desire to live God's way. I don't really know anybody that has come to the same knowledge. I feel alienated spiritually from my friends. I live in Cape Town, South Africa. How can I get in touch with other members of the United Church of God?

F.V.Z., Cape Town, South Africa

We have forwarded your letter to our office in South Africa, where we have several congregations meeting regularly. By now someone should have been in touch with you.

Booklets about finances helpful

I take this opportunity to praise the Lord Jesus for the good job you are doing in spreading *The Good News* to those who cannot be reached by you physically. I did receive your two booklets *What Does the Bible Teach About Tithing?* and *Managing Your Finances*. They have been of great value to me and many that I have shared them with. They uplifted me spiritually and now I can plan with my wife about money matters without fighting or hiding. I have come to understand the importance of tithing in the right way.

S.M.M., Nairobi, Kenya

A Jewish point of view

I really appreciate your sending me *The Good News*. As a Jew I am really pleased with your concern for Israel and sharing with your audience such vital pieces of information about Israel. With all due respect, I must add that I differ with some of your Christian views regarding the coming of the Messiah. You very accurately point out in *The Good News* the Jewish life of Jesus, quoting from Matthew the Shema commandment. Jesus was a Jew who obeyed all the commandments of the Hebrew Bible. And if (or when) He were to come back, where do you think He would pray: in a church or a synagogue?

Why is it that Christians today follow Paul's teaching about the “supercession” theology that caused so much misery for the Jews over 2,000



Q: I would like to know why I was put on this planet because I'm fed up with my life.

S.H., Leicester, England

A: We have all at one time or another felt a degree of frustration with our particular circumstances. You are certainly not alone in that respect.

While we do not know the precise situations that are causing you to be very distressed with your life, we do offer you our empathy and our prayers that your circumstances will improve.

Sometimes we may be the victims of "time and chance" (Ecclesiastes 9:11), while at other times we may suffer at the hands of others or because of things that are our own fault because of our own choices or actions. Whatever the cause, we are easily burdened with the stress of the situation and the resultant feelings of hopelessness.

The question of why we were put on this planet contains within it an underlying question: *Who* put us here? The answer points us to the purpose of life itself.

Many people have wondered if there really is a God or whether we, this planet and the universe itself, are merely a chance occurrence—without purpose and thus without hope beyond any fleeting pleasures. But if God exists and the human race is His creation, that knowledge has important implications. It allows us to view our personal circumstances from a more positive perspective. You may wish to request or download our free booklet *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*

Yet there is another underlying question to consider: If an all-powerful, holy and kind God—who takes a personal interest in His whole human family—really exists, then why does He allow circumstances that cause some in His human family to become so distressed with life itself?

There may be several reasons, but it is not because our Creator is disinterested in His human family or malevolent towards it. Nor is it because He is capricious. Our free booklet *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* provides rational and insightful answers.

On a personal level, what can we learn from being distressed with our lives? Our frustrations should encourage us to seriously address some fundamental questions: Does God exist? And if so, what is our relationship with Him and what does He want it to be?

King David, ancient Israel's hero-king, was a paragon of faith. Yet even he asked: "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?" (Psalm 13:1-2, New International Version throughout).

At that point in his life David was very distressed and dealing with many problems. Yet he continued to look to God to provide him with hope. He still relied on God for the solution: "Look on me and answer,

O LORD my God . . . I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me" (verses 3-6).

In realistically reviewing our lives, we are likely to see that not everything has been negative. In any case, we need not be void of all hope. The Scriptures contain the records of many individuals whose lives changed for the better through divine help.

The biblical story of Ruth is but one encouraging example. She was the wife of one of two Jewish brothers who had come with their mother and father to live in the land of Moab. After a few years, the father and then the two brothers died and their widowed mother Naomi prepared to return to Israel.

Ruth, now a widow herself, chose to accompany her mother-in-law to what was for her a foreign land and culture. Her reason for doing so is striking. She told her mother-in-law: "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

In the midst of difficult circumstances, Ruth and Naomi had hope through their belief in the God of Israel. Ruth, although not a native-born Israelite herself, found fulfillment and joy and ultimately became a direct ancestor of Jesus Christ through her marriage to Boaz. God the Father and Christ provide us with additional perspective regarding our personal sufferings, promising us the hope of future glory in the family of God.

The apostle Paul writes: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, *but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.* And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, [which] he has given us" (Romans 5:1-5, emphasis added throughout).

You may find our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* very helpful. It covers in greater detail the subject of life's greater purpose and meaning.

As Paul wrote to the Colossians: "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, *growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,* and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light" (Colossians 1:10-12).

Paul's aptly written words provide us with great encouragement for the present along with the hope of a glorious future destiny beyond the present constraints and trials of our human lives.

years—arguing that the Old Testament is obsolete instead of emulating the life of Jesus? I have always been befuddled by this issue and I would very much appreciate it if you could enlighten me. Such a pity that misunderstandings over 2,000 years led to persecution and slaughter of millions of my people. People like you and your magazine try to correct these misunderstandings, and I am truly humbled by your love for Israel.

I.C., Chicago, Illinois

*You may find that our free booklet **The Church Jesus Built presents a much more insightful viewpoint of the true teachings of both the Old and the New Testament. And as the apostle Peter tells us, the apostle Paul's teachings have been seriously distorted (2 Peter 3:15-16). Many completely misunderstand his theology and ignore his support for the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. For an accurate understanding of Paul's teachings, request***

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Creating Winning Habits

by Steve McNeely



It's possible to reengineer the surface of your brain to be more successful in shooting baskets—and much more!

Have you ever pulled into your driveway and not remembered how you got there because you were deep in thought about something else or had been singing at the top of your lungs?

Our brain is an unbelievably complex and efficient organ. Though constantly changing and rewiring, it allows us to do routine things smoothly, almost effortlessly. (As King David said in Psalm 139:14, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made”!) The continuous, physical reengineering of our brain cells enables learning and multitasking. It also enables the formation of habits.

Habits can be awesome, powerful tools for our good, and they can be devastatingly destructive. What is a habit? What does it take to *build* a habit? Without becoming too technical, let's think about how our brain, nervous system and muscles learn habits—sometimes called *muscle memory* in sports. And let's consider how we develop habits.

Hoop habits

Learning to properly shoot a basketball is a great example. It's not easy to learn proper shooting form. I remember my dad bought me a basketball when I was very young and could barely heave it over my head. As I grew older, we always had a basketball hoop in the driveway, and I spent countless hours working on shooting form.

Each passing year brought more strength and the ability to better execute a fundamentally sound shot: feet and shoulders square to the basket, elbow in, right arm extended toward the hoop, left hand coming off the ball an instant before the shot, releasing just before the peak of the jump, with the right wrist flicking the ball toward the basket, giving it a gentle backspin.

Someone instilled in me that it was more important to develop great form when I was young than it was to make a basket. Making baskets would come naturally. Through my early teen years each year would bring a conscious effort to reengineer my shot—to make it better. I found it took increasing time and effort.

Why? Because I had to *unlearn* the way I had been shooting and learn a better way. Sometimes the change and improvement was slight, but the effort was bigger each year.

Habits can be awesome, powerful tools for our good, and they can be devastatingly destructive.

This is an extremely important point—unlearning bad habits is very difficult! In fact, you can't really unlearn a bad habit. You can only replace it with a different, more deeply ingrained, good habit. Like a bigger nail drives out a smaller nail, so a better habit drives out a worse habit. So develop good habits early while it's easy!

Great shooters don't have to think about shooting. They hit from any angle—sometimes falling away, sometimes spinning, sometimes at the end of an acrobatic move, sometimes with a defensive player draped on them like a blanket and sometimes after being fouled. Why? Because they don't have time to think; they just react, and all the years of putting proper form and technique into muscle memory pay off—*nothing but net!*

One of my college coaches said it takes 25 times of practicing something right to put it in muscle memory. (Practice doesn't make perfect; *perfect* practice makes perfect.) Well, 25 is not the magic number for everyone, but research proves it takes a lot of repetition to construct a habit.

Here is a primer on how our brain and body work together to create a habit.

Millions of interconnected computers

Our brain is like millions of interconnected computers. Billions of cells work in concert to manage the biochemical-electrical-spiritual machine that is us.

Neurons are tiny cells in the brain and throughout our nervous system that can connect to each other. We are born with a full complement of neurons but few connections. When we learn something new, the brain creates a pathway of connections so it can send and receive messages throughout the body.

The more we do the same thing, the stronger the connection. The brain doesn't want to waste time, chemicals and electrical impulses on doing the

same-old-same-old, so it builds a highway that can be used over and over again.

Think of it as a river cutting a path through sandstone. The more water flows, the deeper the cut. In time the riverbed is set and, unless there is a flood or other interruption, the water will flow in the same, predictable path. In fact, it is physically impossible for the river water to do anything but seek the lowest point of the path.

When we develop a habit, we are actually engineering a physical change in the cell structure of our brains. The more we repeat the habit, the stronger and more permanent the connections, the deeper the riverbed. While young, you have a wonderful opportunity to engineer good habits into the very structure of your brain. It will never be easier. The older you get, the harder it will be to change.

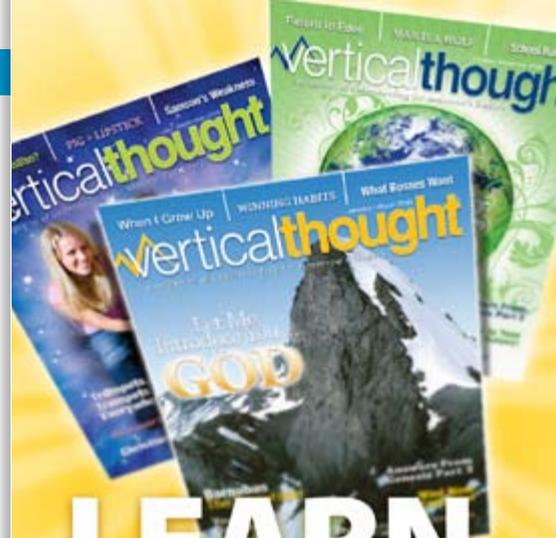
An experiment for you

Try an experiment. Take 30 days and force yourself to develop a good habit. Say your current habit is when you come home, you grab a snack and plop down in front of the TV. Maybe you'll get to your homework, maybe you won't.

Make yourself do something different. Have your mind command your body to walk in the door, grab a snack, leave the TV off, head straight to the table and work on homework. After you finish your homework, reward yourself immediately with some TV, video games or basketball. Relish the fact that you don't have to think about those completed assignments again. You are free from them!

The key, no matter how difficult, is to make yourself do it 25 or 30 times in a row. It will then be a habit that can easily be maintained. Finishing your homework first will become automatic. It will feel weird to walk in the door and not head straight for the homework. If you try to turn on the TV, an invisible force field will pull you back—*must . . . not . . . touch . . . remote!* Thirty days of teeth-gritting self-discipline is a small price to pay for custom engineering your brain cells for a lifetime of successes!

Armed with good habits, you will be able to consistently live in a manner pleasing to God and accomplish the seemingly impossible. And it will feel effortless because things that are hard for other people will be easy for you—for you will have purposefully engineered your brain to do them automatically! **GN**



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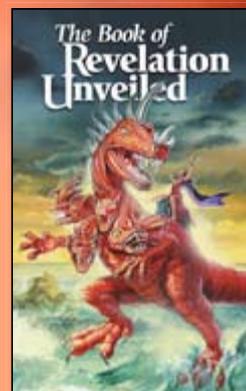
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