January-February 2010

The Good News

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

Are America's Superpower Days Numbered?

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The "Prophecy Factor"

Readers of *The Good News* know that we focus a lot on prophecy. In fact, you can't get past the title of this publication without being directed to the Bible's chief prophetic subject—good news!

"More space in the prophetic Scriptures is devoted to a future rule of God on earth than to any other theme," is how *Nave's Topical Bible* describes it. "A number of expressions are used in the [New Testament] with reference to various aspects of God's sovereign rule, a vast and complex revelation, encompassing His government on earth and in heaven." That revelation is the best news you can hear!

Prophecy is essentially tomorrow's news delivered in advance, but it's not simply about foretelling events. It includes practical lessons for life, especially in understanding cause and effect. Indeed, the capacity to predict the future often lies in the ability to understand the difference between common human behavior versus godly behavior and the

Many prophecies also deal with *behavior*—how people act and what subsequently happens.

logical consequences of each. Prophecy's practical side offers those who perceive future consequences the chance to structure their lives to avoid the negative and attain the positive.

This raises a question of huge societal importance: Can you actually "prophesy," predict with accuracy, what happens to people when they lack prophecy? The book of Proverbs offers an unusual insight into what people will do under such circumstances. Whether their lack of prophecy comes from ignorance, apathy or rejection, the proverb is remarkably accurate in predicting a basic, consistent human response.

"Where there is no prophecy," states Proverbs 29:18 in the New Revised Standard Version, then something happens. What? If you were to stop reading at this point and fill in the blank, what would you say?

Most people think of biblical prophecy as the divine foretelling of future events, and so it is. But prophecies are not limited to forecasting the good news of God's Kingdom, or the bad news of the calamities that come first. Many prophecies also deal with *behavior*—how people act and what subsequently happens. That's the focus of this proverb.

Such prophecy is, at its most basic element, largely understanding cause and effect—"if you do this, that will happen; if you do that, this will happen." So what happens where there is no such prophetic sense?

The verse continues, *"The people cast off restraint."*

What then? Any society's character, order and success depends on its people restraining themselves from destructive behavior. When those restraints—their moral, ethical, philosophical and emotional controls—are shed, the fabric of society will unravel! Such restraint is built on a number of factors. Among these are respect for authority and a strong sense of responsibility and accountability. But one of the most powerful is the "prophecy factor"—the ability to see the consequences ahead.

What do you see around you today? How well are the biblical, spiritual, moral and ethical restraints holding up? Has God been so marginalized that we aren't even aware of His prophecies for today? Is there a cause-and-effect link between the critical situations we face in the world today and people "casting off restraint"?

In this issue we explore the prophetic aspects of several of these situations. We don't need new prophets to rise up today (unless God sends them). We just need to raise our eyes to see what is already in God's Word. The "prophecy factor" *can* be understood! And most important for you, you can know how to live, how to structure your life in a way that results in happiness, peace of mind and hope for your future!

—Clyde Kilough, Church president

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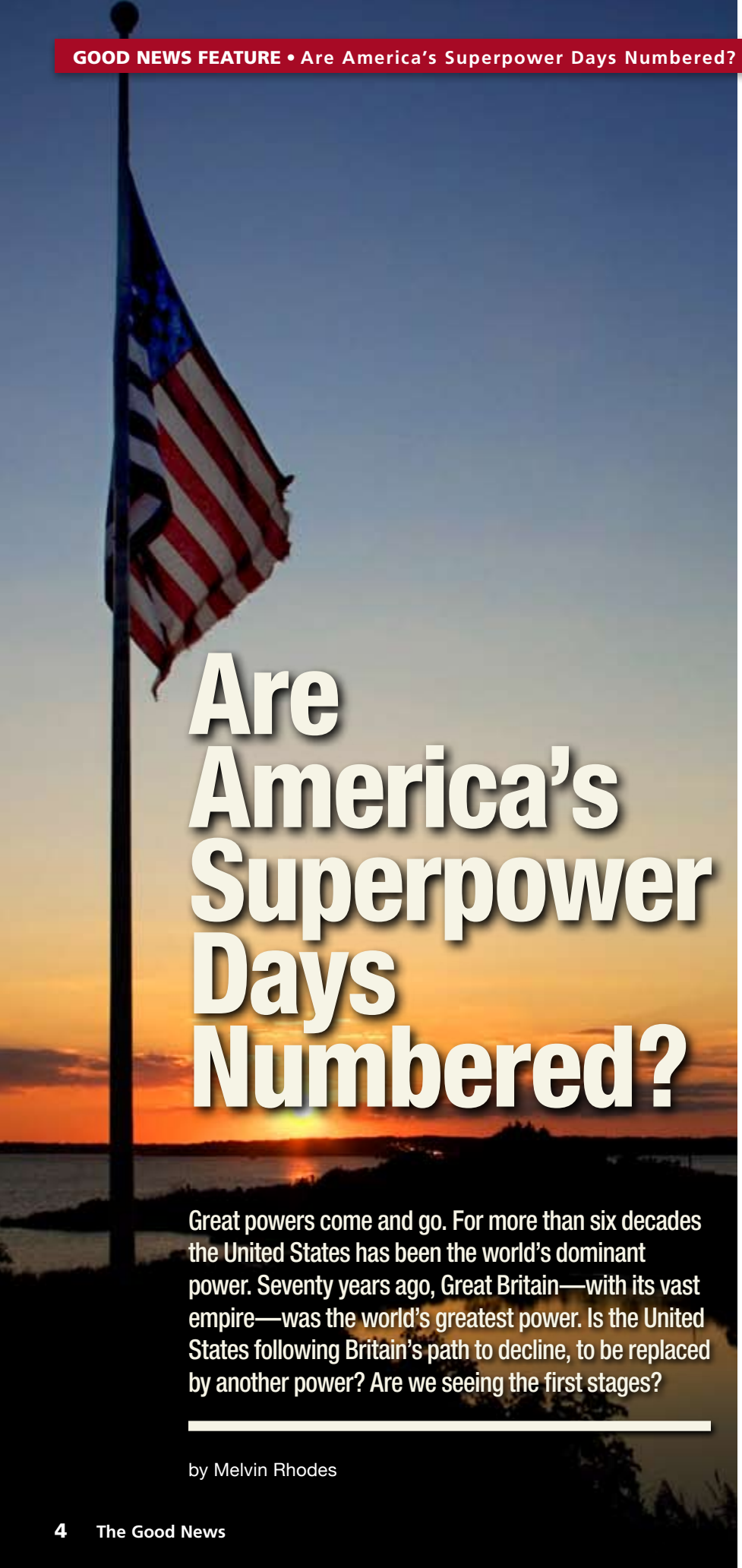


Are America's Superpower Days Numbered?

Great powers come and go. For more than six decades the United States has been the world's dominant power. Seventy years ago, Great Britain—with its vast empire—was the world's greatest power. Is the United States following Britain's path to decline, to be replaced by another power? Are we seeing the first stages?

by Melvin Rhodes

One of the consequences of the financial upheaval of the past 18 months is that Europe is now richer than North America. The accumulated national wealth of North Americans has dropped by 21.8 percent while Europe's fell by only 5.8 percent, "down to 22.2 trillion euros—a quarter of the globe's total wealth" ("Europe Now Richer Than North America," *BusinessWeek,* Sept. 16, 2009).

Since great wealth is necessary for global power, could Europe be on the verge of taking over from the United States?

Bible prophecy shows that a new, European-centered superpower will exist immediately before Jesus Christ's return. It will be a great commercial system whose trade dominates the world.

It's no coincidence that all 27 member countries of the European Union have signed the Lisbon Treaty, uniting Europe more than ever before with its own president and foreign minister collectively representing all member nations.

Its currency, the euro, is now valued at 1½ times the U.S. dollar and is used by more people. With more than 500 million citizens, the EU is the world's biggest single market and by far the world's greatest trading power. Having now surpassed the United States in economic power, could it soon replace America as the world's foremost political and military power?

Lessons from a fallen empire

There's a lesson for the United States in the memory of some still living.

Few people alive today can remember a time when the world was dominated by the British, but that's the way things were before World War II. After fighting alone against the Third Reich for two years (assisted only by forces from Commonwealth countries), the British were joined by the Soviets when Germany attacked them in June 1941. Another six months would pass before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which brought America into the war.

Americans expected that their boys would all return home after the war, just as they had done after World War I. U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt told British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin that American troops would leave Europe two years after the war's end. No one expected U.S. forces to stay longer. But American troops still remain in Europe 65 years later!

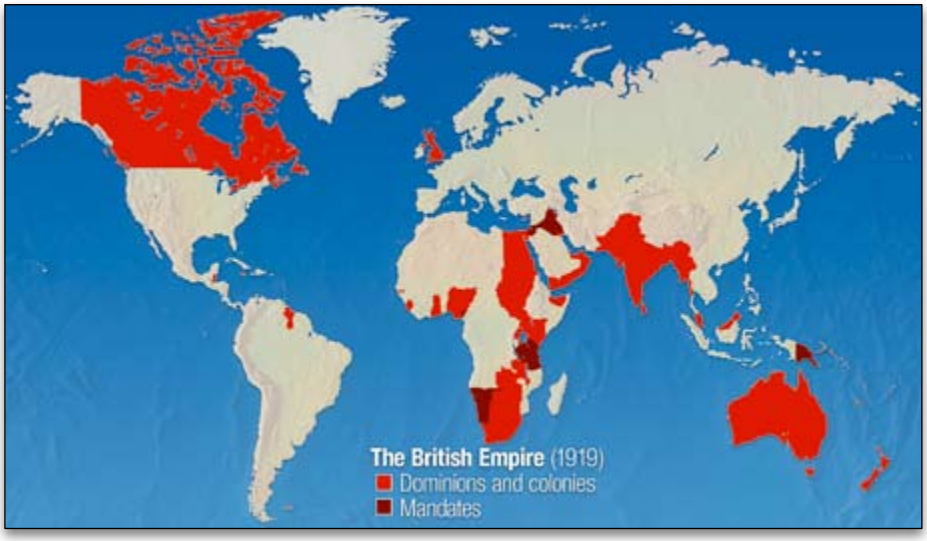
What change led to American troops remaining in Europe? Quite simply, *Britain was broke!* London was not able to return to the role it had held for two centuries, the task of policing the world. Such a role requires great wealth. After fighting two world wars in just over three

Photos: iStockphoto; map by Shaun Venish

decades, the British did not have the funds for foreign commitments and could no longer support their allies around the globe.

This wasn't apparent immediately after the war ended in 1945. The British Empire remained intact. Some British possessions in the Far East had been conquered by Japan, but all voluntarily returned to British rule.

In his 2008 book *Picking Up the Reins,* which describes the transition of superpower status from Great Britain to the United States, historian Norman Moss states: "British atlases showed a quarter of the earth either ruled by Britain or linked to it in the Commonwealth. Britain ruled directly much of Asia and most of Africa and it was the dominant power in the Arab world" (p. 27).



At its peak the British Empire directly controlled almost a quarter of the world's land mass and a quarter of its population. But less than two decades from its peak, the empire had to cede its leadership role to the United States. America is now swiftly following the same path of decline.

Other European powers did not fare so well. The Dutch soon lost Indonesia, and the French had to fight a prolonged war in Indochina.

"A catastrophe scarcely thinkable"

One of America's most respected historians, James Truslow Adams, wrote a book titled *The British Empire 1784-1939* in 1940—the crucial year of the Battle of Britain, an airborne struggle for survival, when the future of the world depended on Britain holding out against an attempted Nazi invasion.

At the end of the book, he wrote the following warning to his fellow Americans: "The possible overthrow of the British Empire would be a catastrophe scarcely thinkable. Not only would it leave a vacuum over a quarter of the globe into which all the wild winds of anarchy, despotism and spiritual oppression would rush, but the strongest bulwark outside ourselves for our own safety and freedom would have been destroyed" (p. 358).

It certainly seemed that the preservation of the Empire intact was in the best interests of the United States and other nations.

One year after the war, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff similarly advised: "The defeat or disintegration of the British Empire would eliminate from Eurasia the last bulwark of resistance between the US and Soviet expansion . . . Our present position as a world power is of necessity closely interwoven with that of Britain" (quoted by Moss, p. 64).

For two centuries Britain had been the world's dominant power. Then, under financial and military strain, she passed leadership to the United States.

On top of financing their empire—which included a quarter of the world's people—the British were also soon embroiled in a war against communists in Greece, where Britain stationed 9,000 troops to support the anti-communist forces and had given 40 million pounds in financial assistance in the months following World War II.

But by February 1947, in the middle of the harshest winter on record, the British could no longer afford to support Greece. A cabinet meeting on Feb. 18 led to London asking Washington to take over, announcing that aid to Greece "would stop on March 31. It was accompanied by another note saying Turkey also needed help and Britain could not provide it" (p. 62).

Although few comprehended it at the time, this change was truly momentous. "For two centuries Britain had been the dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean. Now it seemed to be surrendering that role in two key countries.

"It is often said that Americans lack a historical sense that Europeans have, but on this occasion it was the Americans who saw the historical significance of that moment. To British ministers, battling from day to day to keep the country's head above water, this seemed to be just a temporary retrenchment in one area. None of them appeared to see any larger implications in the decision.

"The American view was put in grandiloquent terms by Joseph M. Jones, who was in the State Department at the time: 'Reading the messages, [it was] realized . . . that *Great Britain had within the hour handed the job of world leadership, with all its burdens and all its glory, to the United States"* (p. 64, emphasis added throughout).

The date was Feb. 21, 1947—the day the United States effectively replaced Great Britain as the world's global superpower.

Changing roles prophesied

"And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh," reads Genesis 48:20. In this passage of Scripture, the patriarch Jacob, whom God had renamed Israel, prophesied that the descendants of his two grandsons, the sons of Joseph, would "become a multitude of nations" and a great nation. This prophecy was fulfilled in the British Empire and Commonwealth (the multitude of nations) and in the United States (the great single

nation), which broke away from the empire. Ephraim, the multitude of nations, was to be great before Manasseh.

Ephraim, the younger brother, was foretold to be greater than Manasseh (verse 19). Without any knowledge of the biblical significance of the moment, Dean Acheson, then undersecretary at the U.S. Department of State, said that "Britain was so weakened financially that there were now only two great powers in the world. Not since Rome and Carthage, he said, had there been such a polarization of power, and it was between democracy and dictatorship" (Moss, p. 68).

Rome and Carthage were major rivals before the time of Christ. Will Clayton, assistant secretary of State, in May 1947 summed up the situation with these words: "The reins of world leadership are slipping from Britain's competent but now very weak hands. These reins will be picked up either by the United States or Russia."

Both men realized that the United States already had a major rival in the Russian-dominated Soviet Union, something the British had not had to contend with.

Britain had enjoyed unrivalled global power during the time of the "Pax Britannica"—between the fall of Napoleon and World War I a century later. In relative terms, the United States was to be less dominant, as Bible prophecy had foretold.

It wasn't until the collapse of the Soviet Union and its communist allies in Europe more than 40 years later that the United States would enjoy unrivalled power. But even then it was brief. Now facing mounting financial problems, Washington has to contend with the rising power of China and may soon have to deal with a resurgent Europe.

Just as global power passed from Britain to America, could power now pass from America to Europe?

God controls the rise and fall of nations

The Bible tells us that God intervenes to bring about the rise and fall of nations. In Daniel 2:21 we read that "He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings."

In the same chapter, Daniel asked God to help him interpret the cryptic dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. In verse 19 God revealed its meaning to him. Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon, the world's greatest power at the time, came to understand that after Babylon would come another great power, then another and another. Eventually, the last of these powers would be replaced by the Kingdom of God, a world government directly ruled by God that will put an end to the present misrule of man.

Daniel himself had a similar vision in chapter 7 giving more detail. Babylon, where Daniel lived for almost seven decades as a Jewish exile following the invasion of his own country, would lose its preeminence to Persia. In turn, Persia would lose its position to Greece, and then Greece would lose its to Rome. The prophecies revealed to Daniel in the sixth century before Christ were fulfilled in the centuries that followed.

The supremacy of Britain with its empire and then the United States of America was prophesied for "the last days" (Genesis 49:1). However, at the time immediately before the end, preceding the second coming of Jesus Christ, there is to rise a revived and renewed Roman Empire—the new world superpower mentioned earlier.

Just as the British Empire collapsed due to debt and an overstretched military, so the United States faces the same problems today.

How could the United States lose its power?

British historian Paul Kennedy, who now lectures at Yale, wrote his monumental book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* in 1987. In it, looking back to the year 1500, he showed that the qualities that lead to nations' rising to power and the reasons for their decline and fall have certain commonalities—debt and imperial overreach.

Just as the British Empire collapsed due to debt and an overstretched military, *so the United States faces the same problems today.* It cannot field enough troops for all its military commitments, and debt is a crucial and growing problem. No nation in the history of the world has ever accumulated debts as great as those of the United States—and certainly not in so short a time!

As *The Economist* recently observed: "For years America's fiscal problems had a surreal quality. No one disputed that an aging population and health-care inflation could bust the budget, but that prospect was decades away and procrastination seemed painless.

"No longer. *A giant hole has opened in the budget* because of stimulus, bailouts and a recession that has savaged economic growth and tax revenue. On current policies the pub-

Photos, from left: U.S. Army, iStockphoto (2)

licly held federal debt, 41% of GDP last year, *will double in the next decade*. Total government debt will move well above the G20 average" ("Dealing With America's Fiscal Hole," Nov. 21, 2009).

Only a generation ago the United States was in such sound financial condition that it was the world's greatest lender. No longer. Due to its profligate spending, now it is the most indebted nation in history!

Massive problems loom in financing Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid as tens of millions of baby boomers retire in the coming years. Some economic experts estimate that, when these unfunded liabilities are factored in, America's true national debt is greater than *$50 trillion*—approximately half

a million dollars for every U.S. household!

Inevitably, defense spending will be impacted by America's enormous debt load, just as it was with Great Britain six decades ago. As another *Economist* article titled "Stemming the Tide" reports, "Defence and discretionary items represent just a third of spending, and Mr Obama has already planned to shrink both in nominal dollars by 2014, as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (with luck) wind down and the stimulus expires" (Nov. 21, 2009).

Rising costs for health care

Interestingly, even the administration's plans for a government-run health-care system parallel the United Kingdom after World War II. At the very time when the country was exhausted and broke after fighting two global conflicts, "the British Government was determined to soldier on and not be deflected from its course by Britain's straitened [limited] economic circumstances. In April 1948 it introduced the National Health Service, despite Opposition arguments that the country could not afford it. This was at the center of its welfare program" (Moss, pp. 159-160).

The initial estimated cost was minor compared to the eventual (and still rising) cost. By 1956, a crucial year in the country's decline and fall from global power, "a new generation was finding its voice, people who were prouder of the National Health Service than of the British Empire" (p. 199).

The *Economist* article "Stemming the Tide" hints at the increased financial burden that will come on the United States as it, too, embraces universal health care. "Mr Obama had long planned that his health reform would not just cover the uninsured but also stop the long-term growth in health costs. In the bills currently in Congress, that second goal may be out of reach. Although Mr Obama insists that the reform will not raise the deficit, it will still absorb some of the revenue that could have been used to reduce it."

A Nov. 14, 2009, article in *The New York Times* reported China's concerns about U.S. government health-care plans. It's not that the Chinese are concerned about the medical care of Americans. Rather, they are concerned about the burgeoning U.S. deficit, as they are the ones financing most of it.

The article described Obama's visit to China as "assuming the role of profligate spender coming to pay his respects to his banker" and indicated that American domestic policies may have to first gain Chinese approval. "Like any banker," the article notes, the Chinese want "evidence that the United States [has] a plan to pay them back."

It reports that "in a July meeting, Chinese officials asked their American counterparts detailed questions about the health care legislation making its way through Congress . . . They wanted to know, in painstaking detail, how the health care plan would affect the deficit" (Helene Cooper, Michael Wines and David Sanger, "China's Role as Lender Alters Dynamics for United States").

Commenting on this trip, a Nov. 16, 2009, Canada Free Press article warned: "Obama's socialist spending spree does not simply come at the expense of America[n] freedoms, it explicitly puts China in charge of American policy. The price for universal health care will not simply be paid by Americans, it will be paid for by American allies in Asia" (Daniel Greenfield, "Obama in China and Twilight for America").

Just as Britain was unable to send any more financial and military support to Greece in 1947, so it appears the United States will be unable to help traditional allies around the world. And the American military empire will inevitably follow the British Empire into history.

Historian Niall Ferguson recently wrote: "This is how empires decline. It begins with a debt explosion. It ends with an inexorable reduction in the resources available for the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Which is why voters are right to worry about America's debt crisis. According to a recent Rasmussen report, 42 percent of Americans now say that cutting the deficit in half by the end of the president's first term should be the administration's most important task—significantly more than the 24 percent who see health-care reform as the No. 1 priority.

"But cutting the deficit in half is simply not enough. If the United States doesn't come up soon with a credible plan to restore the federal budget to balance over the next five to 10 years, the danger is very real that a debt crisis could lead to a major weakening of American power" ("An Empire at Risk," *Newsweek,* Nov. 28, 2009).

Why Europe and not Asia?

While many are warning that China will replace the United States as the world's dominant power, Bible prophecy shows otherwise—though it should be emphasized that the Scriptures strongly suggest that the revived European-centered Roman Empire will not last long.

Revelation 17:12 tells us that the leaders who will unite and surrender their national sovereignty to this new geopolitical force will "receive authority for one hour." An hour is symbolic of a short period of time.

The Bible also prophesies a great power rising in the Far East when it writes of massive military forces coming against the revived European power from beyond the Euphrates River (Revelation 9:14-16; 16:12). This could very well include China, perhaps in alliance with other regional powers.

China is a great power and is set to become even more powerful. However, its economy is closely tied to the United States and could be negatively affected by developments in America.

At the same time, there are serious concerns about its own banking system. "The current expansion in lending . . . risks creating China's own home grown banking crisis with a rise in non-performing bank loans . . . Chinese bank regulators are concerned that new lending is being used to finance real estate and stock market speculation rather than productive purposes" (Satyajit Das, "China: A Future That Was," eurointelli-

gence.com, Nov. 20, 2009). Putting it simply, China is repeating America's mistakes!

In comparing the European Union and China, we should also note that, as an article in the Nov. 15, 2009, *Sunday Times* points out, the European Union's gross domestic product "is just behind that of the United States and China combined" (Matthew Campbell and Bojan Pancevski, "Europe Rises as the Modest Superpower").

The article continues: "Europe, however, also seems more secure and united than at any point in its blood-soaked history and the financial crisis may have served to strengthen that cohesion. The more regulated brand of capitalism favoured from France to Finland is now the preferred model for the rest of the world—including America—and countries are queuing up to gain admission to the protective fold of the EU.

"With 71,000 troops stationed beyond its borders, the EU can claim a military presence overseas second only to America's. It has led to Europe being hailed as 'the modest superpower' by *Newsweek* magazine. Its rise can be seen in the increase in membership from 12 to 27 countries since 1989 and in the fading of tensions between old and young members. It is also evident in the way Europe has beaten America out of recession, led by the usual Franco-German motor."

Europe's long-term goal in sight

The European Union was formed by the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Its six founding members pledged themselves to form "an ever closer union." The Lisbon Treaty is the latest phase, creating a single political entity that overnight rivals the United States and China.

Its first president is Herman van Rompuy, who was prime minister of Belgium. Its first foreign minister is British Baroness Catherine Ashton. According to Wolfgang Munchau, writing in the Nov. 23, 2009, *Financial Times,* these two are just what the EU needs as it deals with "three fundamental problems": "an inability to set precise policy goals; poor follow-through; and perhaps most importantly, poor co-ordination and crisis management" ("Van Rompuy Is the Right Man for the Job").

In other words, these two will streamline the EU, making it more efficient and more effective and thereby more powerful.

To be clear, however, the EU is not the prophesied end-time power in its final, biblical form. Bible prophecy clearly states that 10 "kings"—we might call them presidents, premiers or prime ministers—will give their power and authority to a final supreme leader who rules over them all. What the EU has achieved is a powerful commercial and political system that places Europe in a position of global leadership. The final European power will likely emerge from this. Exactly how remains to be seen.

The European Union has the clout to make it a second superpower that can stand on equal footing with the United States.

But Europe has come a long way, even in the five-plus years since T.R. Reid, former *Washington Post* London bureau chief, wrote his book *The United States of Europe: The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy.*

"At the dawn of the twenty-first century," he wrote on the book's first page, *"a geopolitical revolution of historic dimensions* is under way across the Atlantic: the unification of Europe. Twenty-five nations [now 27] have joined together—with another dozen or so on the waiting list—to build a common economy, government, and culture. Europe is a more integrated place today than at any time since the Roman Empire" (2004).

Continuing, Mr. Reid wrote: "The new United States of Europe—to use Winston Churchill's phrase—has more people, more wealth, and more trade than the United States of America. The New Europe cannot match American military strength (and doesn't want to, for that matter). But it has more votes in every international organization than the United States, and it gives away far more money in development aid.

"The result is global economic and political clout that makes the European Union exactly what its leaders want it to be: *a second superpower that can stand on equal footing with the United States.*"

Waiting to take the lead from Washington

Since Reid's book came out, we've gone through the early stages of the international financial crisis, a transitional period that has seen Europe become richer relative to the United States. Whereas America has accumulated a record debt burden, Europe is solvent!

There's a great irony here. Great Britain established the 13 colonies that eventually became the United States, which, less than two centuries later, took over London's leadership role in the world. In a similar way, America forced the creation of a united Europe in its early stages through the Marshall Plan, a U.S. government aid project to get Europe moving again after World War II.

"The Marshall Plan . . . was a joint European-American program for restructuring the economies of western European countries and joining them more closely together, to set them on their feet, give them social and political stability, and make them once again trading partners on equal terms with the rest of the world. It achieved all of this. It also, with American pressure, sowed the seeds of the European Union" (Moss, p. 100).

Washington did not want to have to deal with 16 individual European countries all needing help, so it encouraged them to cooperate and work together economically. This fledgling project led to "an ever closer union" and today's European Union, now set to rival the United States—and will, just as Washington took over from London, eventually lead to Europe taking over Washington's leadership role in the world. ***GN***

To Learn More...

Is the United States really mentioned in Bible prophecy? While Bible prophecy mentions several rather insignificant nations by name, are major powers left out? Or are they identified in ways that few people understand? You need to see what the Bible reveals about the future of the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries. Request or download your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* today!

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Does the United States Appear in Bible Prophecy?

Photo, iStockphoto

by Howard Davis

Small nations like Egypt, Jordan and Libya are found in Bible prophecies of the time of the end. But what about the major English-speaking countries like the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia? Are they absent from Bible prophecy, or do we just not know where to look?

This may sound like crazy fiction to many people—and maybe to you too. But a considerable amount of Bible prophecy specifically talks about the United States and other major English-speaking Western nations at our time in history—a time the Bible calls "the time of the end."

Most readers of the Bible believe it's the basis of spiritual truth. Many know that a large number of prophecies are found within it. But without the vital key to understanding where these nations are found in Scripture, Christians cannot perceive what's going to happen next in the world.

Nations small and great described in Bible prophecy

Several midsize and smaller nations, such as Egypt, Jordan and Libya, are identified clearly in the Bible. So does it makes sense that the greatest single nation of our time or the greatest community of nations would be left out?

Many events now in the past were laid out in advance in the Bible. God's prophets accurately foretold the rise and fall of great empires and nations, and sometimes specific kings one after another. Many prophecies, including those dealing with the United States and other major English-speaking nations today, were spoken and written down thousands of years before their fulfillment.

Prophecies make up a fourth to a third of the Bible. But why are the scriptures that identify the United States and give advance news of its future not widely taught or understood among Christians today?

A primary reason is that the key to understanding the most sweeping prophecies *has gone largely ignored*. It can be found in the first books of the Bible—especially the book of Genesis.

Key to the prophecies of the United States

In the book of Genesis we find that God made great promises to one man—Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham. We read about this first in Genesis 12:1-3: "Now the LORD had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you *a great nation;* I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; *and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*'" (emphasis added throughout).

Within God's statement to Abram are two promises. The first is that God would make from him *"a great nation."* Now when God calls something great, it is *great!*

Most people are blind to the tremendous meaning of this promise today. If they have any opinion at all, most think modern Jews fulfill this prophecy. But they are wrong. Although significant, the Jewish people have constituted a relatively small nation in world history—with modern nation-states such as the United States, China, India, Russia, Germany, Britain and others far exceeding them in terms of national greatness.

And indeed, God's promises of national greatness to Abraham's descendants *have* been fulfilled among other great nations—nations *related to* the Jewish people, as we will see.

Most churches generally acknowledge the second part of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12—that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This deals principally with the saving knowledge of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, and God's gift of eternal life through Him.

However, God intended to shape all history through His promises to Abraham's descendants of building a great nation—one that would dominate the world in the time before Christ's second coming. Another would have significant influence

over much of the rest of the world.

Promise of a great nation and multiple nations

Later God *expanded* His national promises to Abraham. He said, "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that *if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered"* (Genesis 13:16).

Then, when Abraham was 99 years old, God spoke again, making these national promises even bigger, more elaborate and everlasting: "I will make you *exceedingly fruitful,* and I will make *nations* of you, and kings shall come from you" (Genesis 17:6). So not just a single nation but multiple nations would descend from Abraham.

God also promised that He would deal with Abraham's descendants directly. He would guide their history through the ups and downs of prosperity, peace, war and poverty, whether they acknowledged Him or not: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you" (verse 7).

It's important to recognize that the covenant promises of national greatness—including multiple nations—were to be fulfilled through Abraham's son Isaac (compare verses 19-21).

Notice that at first God told Abraham his descendants would possess and rule over the land of Canaan where Abraham sojourned: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever" (Genesis 13:14-15).

The land of Canaan is all the territory that theologians, Christian and Jewish, will acknowledge as the national promise to Abraham. But next let's notice that this promise extended to vast regions of the entire earth, not just the sliver of land in the Middle East. This fact helps to explain the many more Bible prophecies indicating that the Israelites would be spread throughout the world in the future—prophecies not fulfilled in the ancient world.

The expansion was revealed in a dream to Abraham's grandson through Isaac, Jacob—whose name was later changed to Israel. First, God reconfirmed that Jacob's descendants were to possess Canaan. God began the prophecy saying, "The land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants" (Genesis 28:13).

A few centuries after the dream, Jacob's descendants were led out of Egypt and occupied the land of Canaan. This fulfilled the first part of the dream promise, but the Israelite territory was generally much smaller than the Egyptian empire and other great empires of the ancient world, except for a short time under David and Solomon.

Manasseh's people lived with Ephraim in Great Britain until it was time for their separation through westward colonization and independence, which formed a great single nation—the United States.

The United States doubled its size with the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, in which it acquired more than 800,000 square miles of land for about 3 cents an acre. Expanding across the continent, in less than a century the young nation added vast amounts of rich farmland and valuable natural resources, laying the groundwork for the the nation's biblically prophesied emergence as a great world power.

But notice that God added a huge extension of national greatness in Jacob's dream: "Also *your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth*; you shall *spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south"* (verse 14). They were to move far beyond their boundaries in the Middle East!

Later, God made it clear that the promise of multiple nations was to come through Jacob. In fact, God specifically told Jacob that through him would come "a nation and a company of nations" (Genesis 35:11).

Never fulfilled in ancient times

The promise of national expansion beyond Canaan into a great nation and company of nations was never fulfilled in biblical times by the Israelites. After having reached the peak of their power during Solomon's reign, the tribes of Israel split into two competing kingdoms at his death.

The 10 tribes of the northern part of the land of Israel formed the kingdom or "house" of Israel. Two tribes of the south, Judah and Benjamin (along with most of the scattered priestly tribe of Levi), formed the smaller territorial state of the kingdom or "house" of Judah—so named after the larger of the two tribes and from which the term "Jew" is derived.

Curiously, the first time reference to "Jews" is found in the Bible (2 Kings 16:5-6, King James Version), they are *at war* with their northern cousins in the kingdom of Israel! This shows, contrary to what most people assume, that "Jews" and "Israelites" are not the same peoples. Being descendants of Jacob or Israel, all Jews are Israelites. But not all Israelites are Jews!

Both of these small Middle Eastern states disappeared off the map in ancient times. First, Israel was taken into captivity through invasions by the Assyrian Empire, one in 733 B.C. and another in 722 B.C. Because of their many sins, as 2 Kings 17:23 tells us, "the LORD removed Israel out of His sight . . . So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day." Never returning to their

Map by Shaun Venish

homeland, they became known to history as "the lost 10 tribes" of Israel.

The kingdom of Judah, repeating Israel's sins, was conquered and exiled by the Babylonian Empire in 586 B.C. Only a small group of exiles of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi (Nehemiah 11:3-36) returned from Babylon to set up the politically weak provinces where Jesus Christ's ministry took place.

However, after two disastrous rebellions against Rome from A.D. 66-73 and 132-135, Jewish power was shattered. They were only reestablished as the modern state of Israel in 1948. Even then, Israel exists as an independent state largely because the United States and Britain have supported its existence in the Middle East.

Joseph's descendants to be great

We see, then, that these promises of national greatness were never fulfilled anciently by either Israel or Judah. So how were they fulfilled?

Jacob, or Israel, was the father of 12 sons who founded the 12 tribes of Israel. When he went to Egypt to be reunited with his son Joseph, God inspired specific prophecies of national greatness to the two sons of Joseph. Of all the tribes of Israel, those from Joseph would be the specific nations on which the promise of national greatness would predominantly come—not the descendants of Judah, the Jews.

Again we need to understand that this would not be fulfilled among the people of the small kingdom of Israel in ancient times. Rather, the fulfillment would be vastly greater, yet still among *the same peoples of the house of Israel,* though much later in history, when Israelites would dwell around the world.

Jacob told His son Joseph that his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, would grow to become *great* powers on earth, not in a tiny portion of the Middle East. Conveying to them the promises originally given to Abraham (and later expanded), he said, "Bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and *let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth*" (Genesis 48:16).

The language is very expansive. God said the promise of national greatness would mean a world power involving "a multitude" in the middle of the entire world system—global in scope and power.

Prophetic fulfillment "in the last days"

When were these stupendous prophecies of national greatness going to be fulfilled? The Bible is very clear. Just before he died, "Jacob called his sons and said, 'Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you *in the last days'"* (Genesis 49:1). The promises of global greatness to the descendants of Joseph would occur "in the last days"—the time leading up to the second coming of Jesus Christ!

The language in this prophecy shows that the blessings of burgeoning population, fabulous wealth, power and military dominance were to be fulfilled on a global scale.

Notice this prophetic description of Joseph's descendants "in the last days": "Joseph is a fruitful bough . . . his branches run over the wall . . . The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob" (verses 22-24).

God inspired Jacob to get quite specific about the characteristics to look for in the nations that would fulfill the promises made to Abraham, his grandfather. And the promise of national greatness would not be limited to the small corner of the world.

"The Almighty . . . will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breast and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph" (verses 25-26).

The nation and company of nations identified

Jacob revealed that the descendants of Joseph would become two great peoples—brother nationalities. Those descended through his son Manasseh would become a great people, while those who would come through his other son, Ephraim, would become a group or multitude of nations (Genesis 48:19). Both would dominate the earth as no others in history.

Thus, through them would be fulfilled the earlier promise to Jacob of a nation and company of nations. But have the prophecies of Israel's global greatness been fulfilled? *Yes*—by two geopolitical powers on the world stage that have defined global greatness for the last two centuries.

Descended from Ephraim was the group of nations that formed out of the greatest empire the world has ever seen, the British Empire.

It ruled over five times the territory of the Roman Empire, and four times the number of people. Its territory encompassed almost a quarter of the earth's population and surface, including many of its most fertile and productive regions. Meanwhile, the Royal Navy ruled the seas. Out of this power came the British-descended countries of the Commonwealth of Nations—Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

From Manasseh came the great single nation. Its people dwelt with the Ephraimites in Great Britain until it was time for their separation through westward colonization and a war for independence—the American Revolution, by which came the formation of the United States.

The post–World War II period saw America rise to replace the British Empire as the world's wealthiest and most dominant nation. Since World War II, up to *half* of the wealth of the world was owned by America. And until the current recession, 33 percent of the gross domestic output of the global economy was from the United States despite having only 4 percent of the world's population. Militarily, as Britain dominated the 19th century, America dominated the 20th—and remains the world's lone superpower.

Many prophecies in the books of Isaiah, Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel foretold the future history of the ancient scattered Israelites who would one day form the United States and the other British-descended nations in the last days. The promises of national greatness God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are fulfilled in these nations. Americans called it their "Manifest Destiny" to become the greatest nation of the world in their time. They were right!

Yet these prophecies also show what is going to happen next to the United States—as well as all the British-descended nations. Your life and future may depend on understanding these prophecies and acting in accordance with God's warnings and instructions! ***GN***

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There's much more to this story that we can't begin to relay to you in this short article. That's why we at *The Good News* want to give you a free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy.* This crucial publication reveals the right foundation to understanding Bible prophecy. Download or request your free copy today!

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Peril or paradise—what will the next decade bring?

While statesmen earnestly seek a new world order, what threatens to be served up in the coming year is more like a *new world disorder.* Consider just a few of the major challenges we face in the next decade (not to mention wars, terrorism and nuclear disaster): "The end of the fossil fuel era, the fragility of the global food web, growing population density, and the spread of pandemics, as well as the emergence of radically transformative bio- and nanotechnologies—each of these threatens us with broad disruption or even devastation" (Jamais Cascio, "Get Smarter," *The Atlantic,* July-August 2009).

During the late 1990s the prospect of the 21st century first threatened us with Y2K, the so-called "Millennium Bug." It was thought that the world's computer systems might fail to understand the difference between 20th-century dates and those starting century 21, with potentially catastrophic results. But probably primarily due to sufficient preparation, those fears turned out to be a false alarm.

However, the harsh reality of 9/11, with the tragic loss of almost 3,000 people, soon overtook America. Largely as a direct consequence, the United States remains caught in the vise of two unpopular foreign wars—one in Iraq, in which America is suffering damaging aftereffects, and another with its ally, the United Kingdom, still going strong in Afghanistan. (Both the United States and the U.K. have recently assigned more troops to Afghanistan.)

Then in mid decade Hurricane Katrina swamped New Orleans and southeastern Louisiana, causing massive suffering and the loss of well over 1,800 lives. Economic meltdown followed in 2008-09, with unemployment climbing to over 10 percent of the American workforce.

As *Time* magazine observed about America, "In large part, we have ourselves to blame" (Andy Serwer, "The '00s: Goodbye (at Last) to the Decade From Hell," Dec. 7, 2009). Cause and effect inevitably fell into place. We have reaped the results of our own careless neglect, government and corporate greed, myopic selfishness and cavalier deferral of our own responsibilities to future generations.

But where are we headed from here? Will the United States and the world at large pull out of these present crises during the next decade? Let's consider just a few carefully selected crucial points from around the globe.

10 key signs show U.S. decline

"Many Americans are angry, confused and worried . . . 58% of Americans think the country is on the wrong track, suffering an economy that's sick, a politics that's broken, a culture that is growing more violent, coarse and scary, and a government that's out of control. They want things to get back to normal but increasingly feel that there is no normal any more. Nearly every aspect of American life seems to have veered off course into uncharted territory with unforeseeable consequences."

So wrote former *Wall Street Journal* reporter and *Des Moines Register* editor Jim Gannon in a Dec. 8, 2009, *USAToday* editorial titled "There Is No Normal Anymore." He seems to have perfectly captured the mood of much of the country.

It's no wonder the American people seem so troubled. They suffer enormously from the consequences of failing to obey the great God who gave them their bountiful land. We all reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7).

Cultural commentator Jim Nelson Black, in his 1994 book *When Nations Die,* identified and documented 10 crucial factors—the inevitable fallout from rejecting our Creator's way of life—that afflicted past civilizations and inevitably led to their decline and fall. They are:

1. Increase in lawlessness.
2. Loss of economic discipline.
3. Rising bureaucracy.
4. Decline in education.
5. Weakening of cultural foundations.
6. Loss of respect for traditions.
7. Increase in materialism.
8. Rise in immorality.
9. Decay of religious belief.
10. Devaluing of human life.

All of these factors, bad enough at the time he identified them, are far more evident today in American society and culture. These social and moral cancers seriously threaten the country's very existence.

Shifting loyalties in Latin America

Even the economic mirror of Latin America reflects declining respect for the United States. National resources south of the border are increasingly being shipped to China. The dragon across the ocean has become Brazil's largest export market.

The United States has always been the primary market for Venezuela's raw petroleum. But already a Chinese company has interests in some small oilfields and is planning more such investments. President Hugo Chavez is no friend of his northern neighbor.

In brief, the British magazine *The Economist* sums up this distressing situation: "Latin America is *tilting toward China, Iran and the global 'south'—and away from the United States*" (Aug. 15, 2009, emphasis added throughout).

The economic emergence of China and Southeast Asia

A few months ago *The Sunday Telegraph* of London reported: "China, Japan and South Korea have vowed to push ahead with plans for a new union that would reduce their economic dependency on the West. The three countries, dismayed at falling levels of trade and investment from the US and Europe, met in Beijing to plan for more structured levels of co-operation.

"The move came as HSBC [The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, the world's largest banking group] warned there is likely to be a '*shift in the world's centre of economic gravity from West to East*'" (Malcolm Moore, "New Order Takes Shape in East," Oct. 11, 2009). Based in London since 1992, HSBC issued this statement in the wake of opting to relocate its chief executive officer back to Hong Kong.

Asia's emerging economies are recovering more quickly than those in other parts of the world. *Fortune* magazine proclaimed on its Oct. 26, 2009, cover, "The Chinese have $2 trillion and are going shopping," and asked, "Is your company and your country on their list?"

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

Inside, an article reported that "while most of the global community casts a wary eye on Tehran's nuclear ambitions, China has been quietly buying up the nation's [i.e., Iran's] oil resources."

But the Chinese threat is not confined to commerce. As author Joshua Cooper Ramo related, "The Chinese military [in the autumn of 2002] had a doctrine of developing what they called 'assassin's maces'—computer viruses, antisatellite weapons, microsubmarines—*which would use high tech to knock out bigger powers (read: the United States) that might one day attack China"* (*The Age of the Unthinkable,* 2009, p. 83).

China views American hegemony, particularly in Asia, as an impediment to its own geopolitical ambitions. After World War II, the Pacific virtually became an American lake, not only militarily but economically as well. "The United States had already defined a 'great crescent' of defence around east Asia. In 1951, it sealed Japan's subordinate independence in a treaty of mutual security" (Geoffrey Hawthorn, *The Future of Asia and the Pacific,* 1998, p. 9). But are we now slowly drifting back into the hostile commercial conditions that defined the Pacific in the pre-war 1930s?

Israel and Iran: Potential for war

The World in 2010, the 24th edition of *The Economist*'s annual collection of predictions for the upcoming year, pictures Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu as "a prime minister with Iran on his mind." What he reads about Iran in the news today will not ease his anxieties.

The Wall Street Journal reports that "President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad unveiled . . . plans to build 10 more nuclear facilities for enriching uranium" (Farnaz Fassihi and Jay Solomon, "Defiant Iran Beefs Up Nuclear Plans," Nov. 30, 2009). A London *Times* front-page headline put it this way: "Iran stokes tensions with huge nuclear expansion" (Nov. 30, 2009). This was Tehran's rebellious reaction to the recent UN censure.

Author Jerome Corsi recently wrote a book titled *Why Israel Can't Wait,* referring to its need to respond to Iranian words and actions. The book begins: "'For us, a nuclear-armed Iran is an existential threat,' Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Strategic Affairs Moshe Yaalon told the author in a private, audio-recorded interview in

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his Jerusalem office on June 14, 2009. 'We have to be ready to defend ourselves'" (2009, p. 1).

According to Corsi, most of the Israeli officials he interviewed in the Netanyahu government confirmed Mr. Yaalon's views. Summing up their assessment, Corsi writes: "Iran's nuclear weapons program is an existential threat to the survival of Israel, to the extent that Israel is reluctantly prepared to launch a preemptive military strike on Iran, with or without the approval of the United States, as early as the end of 2009 or the beginning of 2010, if the United States and the world community fail to stop Iran" (p. 1). He quotes Moshe Yaalon as stating: *"The appeasement road is not going to work with Iran"* (p. 3).

The Israeli state is so small that just one or two well-placed nuclear weapons could essentially destroy the entire country. Unless we understand the geography, geopolitics and history of Iran, we may fail to appreciate the depths of its threat to the West, especially to Israel. This nation is not just another Iraq.

American journalist Robert Kaplan writes in *Foreign Policy:* "Virtually all of the greater Middle East's oil and natural gas lies in this region [the Persian core, stretching from the Caspian Sea in the north to the Persian Gulf on Iran's south]. Just as shipping lanes radiate from the Persian Gulf, pipelines are increasingly radiating from the Caspian region to the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, China and the Indian Ocean.

"The only country that straddles both energy-producing areas is Iran . . . The Persian Gulf possesses 55 percent of the world's crude-oil reserves and Iran dominates the whole gulf . . . a coastline of 1,317 nautical miles, thanks to the many bays, inlets, coves, and islands that offer plenty of excellent places for hiding tanker-ramming speedboats" ("The Revenge of Geography," May-June, 2009, p. 105).

Kaplan also notes that "Iran runs *an unconventional, postmodern empire of substate entities* in the greater Middle East: *Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Sadrist movement in southern Iraq"* (ibid.).

A number of well-known statesmen have publicly warned Israel *not* to attack Iraq, including Israel's own president, Shimon Peres—plus officials in the Obama administration. But Israel may have no choice. (To understand the historic background, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy.*)

Updating the European Union

A *Newsweek* article related a common viewpoint in its introduction, stating, "It's become all fashionable in Washington, Moscow and Beijing these days to dismiss Europe as an aging continent in terminal decline" (Nov. 16, 2009). But the writer, Stefan Theil, did not agree with that assessment—his piece being titled "The Modest Superpower."

A London *Sunday Times* article was similarly titled "Europe Rises as a Modest Superpower." The text noted that *"the EU is now wealthier than the United States"* (Nov. 15, 2009).

Gareth Harding in *The Wall Street Journal* adds his voice to the chorus in a piece titled "Europe Reborn." He states categorically: "Contrary to the view of Europe as sclerotic and incapable of reform, no continent on earth has changed more radically—at least in political terms—than Europe since the end of the 1980s. Of the 47 countries that comprise the Council of Europe, 19 did not even exist in 1989 . . .

"The EU, which emerged from the ashes of a world war that left Europe shattered, humiliated and sidelined, is now the world's biggest economic power, exporter, trading bloc, aid donor and foreign investor" (Nov. 3, 2009).

The recently approved Lisbon Treaty enabled the EU to add two new potentially pivotal offices: a long-term president and a foreign policy secretary, with the Belgian Prime Minister Herman van Rompuy and Baroness Catherine Ashton of Britain being appointed to these offices, respectively. It took eight years to push this treaty through.

But where does Europe go from here? Nowhere, according to many skeptics who predict that the EU will ultimately fail. But the EU contains the framework and perhaps even the seeds of a future union foretold in the Bible. (To understand more, request or download our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*)

Germany's role in unifying Europe

On Nov. 9, 2009, some 30 heads of state joined German Chancellor Angela Merkel in celebrating the collapse of the Berlin Wall. The fall of the Wall has become a symbol of reunifying a divided Europe, breaking down *the "iron curtain,"* the phrase Winston Churchill coined in a speech while visiting President Harry Truman in his home state of Missouri on March 5, 1946.

Angela Merkel

On Oct. 3, 2010, the Germans will celebrate the reunification of a previously divided East and West Germany. What has happened since? Writes Robert Zoellick, president of the World Bank, in the *International Herald Tribune:* "Over the past 20 years, Germans have accomplished important things. *They have helped integrate the countries of Central and Eastern Europe into the European Union* and into the trans-Atlantic security of NATO. They have helped build an historic European Union in peace" (Nov. 7, 2009).

Germany has become the fulcrum state of the European Union. Pope Benedict XVI is a native of Germany. The Bible foretells a future European-centered union in which the Roman church plays a major role. (To learn more, request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled.*)

Why the British still punch above their weight

David Goodhart, editor of the British magazine *Prospect,* asked in the title of his lead editorial, *"Why are we British such eager interveners all over the world?"*

He further asked in the text: "Is it a generous outgoing spirit of wanting to do our bit to make the world a better, less dangerous place—a sort of global welfareism? Or is it the last vestiges of an imperial spirit, wanting to plant the flag in as many places as possible, and clinging on to a past at the top table despite our relative decline over the past century? *Perhaps it's a bit of both . . .*" (August 2009).

An article in *Newsweek* also highlighted the outsized British role in the world. Britain, it says, "is the only country of its size in recent history that has sought such a disproportionately large role on the world stage . . . During [Tony] Blair's decade in office, from 1997 to 2007, Britain fought three wars—in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq—in which its military participation was right behind that of the United States" (Stryker McGuire, "Forget the Great in Britain," Aug. 17, 2009).

The Bible addresses this dilemma. God Almighty assigned a special prophetic role to the English-speaking peoples. Though most have no inkling of it, the British and American people are in large part descended from the two sons of Joseph, the son of Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel). To learn much more, request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy.*

Where do we go from here?

Much of the Bible is prophetic. Its prophecies reveal crucial knowledge about the future of mankind. They explain what's happening in the world today—both the historical background and where events are headed. These prophecies are reliable because God Himself inspired them (Isaiah 46:9-11).

To really grasp the overall world picture today, request or download our free booklet *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy.* It covers the whole panorama of the subject, and its overall scope and scenario reaches into a future age of unparalleled peace and prosperity beyond the dismal scene we see around us today. There is indeed good news beyond today's troubled world. Thus the title of this magazine.

How Can You Make Sense of the News?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the *World News and Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening site offers you a perspective so badly needed in our chaotic and confused world—the perspective of God's Word, the Bible. Visit us at **www.WNPonline.org** today!

God's Time Machine

by Mario Seiglie

During this age of science, many have dreamed of traveling to the past or to the future as in the famous novel *The Time Machine.* But could there exist a time machine we are not aware of? Read on to find out!

"Long ago I had a vague inkling of a machine,' [said the Time Traveller] '. . . that shall travel indifferently in any direction of Space or Time, as the driver determines . . . Would you like to see the Time Machine itself?' asked the Time Traveller. And therewith, taking the lamp in his hand, he led the way down the long, draughty corridor to his laboratory.

"I remember vividly . . . how there in the laboratory we beheld a larger edition of the little mechanism which we had seen vanish from before our eyes. Parts were of nickel, parts of ivory, parts had certainly been filed or sawn out of rock crystal. The thing was generally complete, but the twisted crystalline bars lay unfinished upon the bench beside some sheets of drawings, and I took one up for a better look at it . . .

"'Upon that machine,' said the Time Traveller, holding the lamp aloft, 'I intend to explore time.'"

Thus the stage is set for H.G. Wells' famous novel *The Time Machine,* first published in 1895.

Can we explore time?

Wouldn't it be marvelous to travel in a time machine? To witness different civilizations of the past—perhaps view the construction of Egypt's great pyramids or gaze upon Solomon's magnificent temple? On the other hand, we might prefer to travel to the future and observe how mankind will have fared 20, 50 or 100 years from now.

We have something much better than Wells' fictional time machine—and a much more positive future ahead!

Yet when all is said and done, we would be only bystanders, mere observers of what has happened or will happen in the future.

In Wells' novel, the Time Traveller journeys far into the future—nearly 100,000 years ahead of his day. There, Wells describes a bleak picture of society. Two races of human beings are left—the Eloi, who live on the surface of the earth as primitive, ignorant but peaceful beings, and the Morlocks, a race that has degenerated into horrific, apelike beings that live underground. They actually feed and clothe the Eloi so they can later *eat* them.

What a forlorn image of mankind! Due to many wars, human beings are eventually reduced to primitive and ignorant beings, totally bereft of education, culture or intellectual progress.

Wells' Time Traveller then goes on to explore even further into the future, and witnesses the slow death of the earth. The sun eventually becomes a glowing red giant of a star that turns the earth into a lifeless wasteland.

But the good news, unlike this depressing depiction of mankind's future, is that we have something much better than Wells' fictional time machine—and a much more positive future ahead!

You have access to your own time machine!

Curiously, this virtual time machine is available to anyone who wants use it. With it, you can figuratively travel back in time or go to the distant future. And the even better news is the future this time machine reveals is not a bleak or meaningless end, but a wonderful, glorious age that lies ahead for mankind!

This time machine is not composed of glass, metal or circuits. In fact, it easily fits in a discreet place in your home.

It is, if you haven't guessed by now, *your Bible*—a type of a wondrous time machine your loving Creator bequeathed to all of us. Yet to properly operate it, you have to meet some conditions and rules.

In Wells' novel, once the Time Traveller arrived at a point in the future, he removed a lever out of the time machine so no one could use it. Similarly, God has taken out

Photos, from left: iStockphoto, photo illustration by Shaun Venish/Corbis Digital Stock

a figurative "lever" from His time machine so it can't be properly used unless He grants the person this privilege. We will come back to this point later.

You might be asking, "How can the Bible be like a time machine?"

The answer is, simply, because our Creator *designed the Bible to fulfill that role.*

He stated: "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done,* saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:9-10, emphasis added throughout).

He is the ultimate narrator of the Bible, although He chose to transmit the actual words through carefully selected individuals. These persons were called by God to write down the narrative and to express it through their personality and culture.

As we read, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God* [literally, "God-breathed"], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

God reveals the future through prophecy

What about the prophetic aspects of the Bible as a type of a time machine? The apostle Peter describes the Bible's prophecies—which record future events and also leave us with a historical account of fulfilled prophecy.

He writes, "And so we have *the prophetic word confirmed,* which you do well to heed *as a light that shines in a dark place,* until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that *no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,* for prophecy never came by the will of man, but *holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:19-21).

We therefore have a great advantage over Wells' imaginary time machine. Instead of just being a human bystander to the happenings in the past or in the future, this time machine has *God,* and not a fallible and imperfect mortal, at the helm.

How about taking a trip in this time machine to the distant past? Let's see how it works!

Back to the beginning

As we journey in this time machine, we don't use a lever to go back in time as H.G. Wells' imaginary craft did. Instead we simply turn the pages of our Bible back to the very beginnings of creation—to the start of universe!

Who was there? Our time machine reveals that it was God Himself!

The Bible majestically begins at the very moment of the creation of our physical universe, declaring, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

So we see that the universe begins with a Creator so powerful and wise that He can bring forth the very universe from nothing! He also produces light to illuminate the cosmos.

So we see that the universe begins with a Creator so powerful and wise that He can bring forth the very universe from nothing!

Incredibly, after many centuries of study, most astronomers and physicists have concluded that the universe had a beginning through a tremendous flash of light, in the form of electromagnetic energy, which partly coalesced into matter. This great cosmic expansion, from nothing to everything, they call the Big Bang.

How could the Bible get it right? No other ancient book even comes close—and up to the 20th century, even scientists had not discovered the true origins of the universe.

David Berlinski, molecular biologist, mathematician and philosopher, puts it this way: "There is nonetheless a striking point at which *Big Bang cosmology and theology intersect*. The universe has not proceeded from the everlasting to the everlasting. The cosmological beginning may be obscure, but the universe is finite in time.

"This is something that until the twentieth century was not known. When it became known, it astonished the community of physicists—and everyone else . . . *The hypothesis of God's existence and the facts of contemporary cosmology are consistent"* (*The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions,* 2008, p. 80).

Astrophysicist Robert Jastrow, a former director of NASA, remarked: "A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.' It is unexpected because science has had such extraordinary success in tracing the chain of cause and effect backward in time.

"Now we would like to pursue that inquiry farther back in time, but the barrier to further progress seems insurmountable. It is not a matter of another year, another decade of work, another measurement, or another theory; at this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation.

"For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, *he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries"* (*God and the Astronomers,* 1978, p. 116).

A window on the creation

The Bible later describes, still in the first chapter, another amazing revelation that has been confirmed: "And God made the beast of the earth *according to its kind,* cattle *according to its kind,* and everything that creeps on the earth *according to its kind"* (Genesis 1:25).

In the 18th century, Carl Linnaeus was able to classify the living beings on earth "according to kind." Despite centuries

of scientific advancement, scientists still use the Linnaean classification, because it remains so adaptable and accurate.

The main classifications of animals —birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles and mammals—remain in their separate classes, in spite of all the efforts of evolutionists to blend these differences into a supposed gradual tree of life. Instead, what has been found are veritable genetic barriers between the main classes of plants and animals—with no fine gradation between them. How could the Bible describe this biological law so accurately?

Molecular biologist and medical doctor Michael Denton notes about the Linnaean classification: "By the mid-nineteenth century, when knowledge of comparative anatomy was virtually complete, the idea that the pattern of life was reducible to highly ordered groups within groups was almost universally acknowledged . . . Note how every class is perfectly distinct and totally inclusive or exclusive of other classes.

"There is a *complete absence* of any partially inclusive or intermediate classes indicative of sequential relationships. The scheme expresses succinctly the pre-evolutionary belief that nature's order was fundamentally non-sequential. Even with the rise of evolution and the rejection of the whole metaphysical basis of typology, *the perception of nature's order as fundamentally hierarchic persisted largely unchanged*" (*Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,* 1996, p. 124).

Revealing insight on mankind

Lastly, there is another feature mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis that has an enormous impact on mankind. "Then God said, 'Let Us make man *in Our image, according to Our likeness*" (Genesis 1:26). Here is the origin of the dignity of humankind that separates us from the rest of the created order of living things on earth. Man is not just another creature, but possesses the *mental and spiritual qualities that belong to God*—though of course at a much lower level.

What happens when that dignity of being made in God's image is removed? Historian Paul Johnson explains: "Years later, I began my book *Modern Times,* a detailed study of the era from World War I to the early 1980s. This is the first epoch in nearly 2,000 years in which most governments have been guided by what might be called post-Christian ethics. And I find it to be *unique in its cruelty, destructiveness and depravity.*

Today we have enough nuclear weapons to wipe out humanity at least five times over. How could the Bible predict such an accurate scenario 2,000 years in advance? Because it is *God's* time machine.

"Once again, I discovered that the historical record actually strengthened my faith. These huge evils occurred precisely because great power was placed in the hands of men who had no fear of God and who believed themselves restrained by no absolute code of conduct [Lenin, Stalin and Hitler] . . . The history of the 20th century proves the view that as the vision of God fades, we first become mere clever monkeys; then, *we exterminate one another*" ("Why I Must Believe in God," *Reader's Digest,* June 1985, pp. 126-127).

Next, God's time machine takes us to the Middle East, the beginnings of man's civilization; and it accurately describes such ancient empires as Egypt, Babylon and Assyria. But the most important feature as you travel in this time machine is that the narrative is given from *God's* perspective. He shows no partiality. Ancient Israel, although chosen to be an example to other nations of right living through His laws, is still punished when it sins. He reveals not only the virtues, but also the flaws of even His chosen leaders.

Of course, at the center of this past history is Jesus Christ. This part of the story shows God's supreme love for us. Jesus came as God in the flesh to dwell with humanity so He could willingly pay for our sins and provide grace and salvation (John 1:14-17).

A look at the near future

What about the present? Does this "time machine" accurately describe what we are seeing in our days and reveal the near future?

The Bible describes society as it nears the prophetic end times—and that description sounds very much like typical headlines of today! Let's notice several prophetic summaries of society as it continues to degenerate.

The apostle Paul wrote, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:1-4).

A few days' worth of news on the TV is enough to include most if not all of the conditions just described!

The Bible also accurately foretold what knowledge, technology and transportation would look like during the end time.

God revealed to the prophet Daniel certain characteristics of this period: "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; *many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall*

Photos, from left: Wikimedia Commons, iStockphoto

increase" (Daniel 12:4).

Rapid mass transportation and the explosion of knowledge are both characteristics that uniquely set apart our present society from all previous human history. Around the world we see massive transit of people in cars, trains, ships and airplanes. Just by aircraft alone, an average of 1.5 billion people fly every year—more than 4 million per day! Moreover, the computer and Internet age have multiplied knowledge and technology to mind-boggling levels.

Where will mankind end up?

How about the future? This time machine revealed that people would eventually

possess the military power to totally erase mankind from the face of the earth!

Jesus Christ Himself prophesied that "if that time of troubles were not cut short, *no living thing could survive"* (Matthew 24:22, Revised English Bible).

Just imagine—when this was said, human beings possessed only spears, swords, and bows and arrows! Gunpowder was unknown and would not be discovered for almost another 1,000 years. Yet even with gunpowder, it would still be impossible to exterminate all of mankind. But today, we have enough nuclear weapons to wipe out the earth's population at least five times over. Again, how could the Bible predict such a remarkably accurate scenario 2,000 years in advance? That is only possible because it is *God's* time machine.

Be sure to read the other articles in this issue to learn more about the astoundingly accurate aspects of this prophetic time machine.

Who controls the time machine's lever?

One final point that we left for the end. We spoke about the missing "lever" of this time machine that only God holds. What is it? What can we know about it? How can we use it to operate God's time machine?

God gives this lever of understanding *only to those whom He wishes*. Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (John 6:65). This plainly tells us that spiritual understanding of the Bible is *something God alone grants,* and is not based on one's intellect or position in life.

God looks to the person who totally yields to Him and obeys all of His commandments. He tells us, "On this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2). *Humility and submission to God's will* are essential.

We must also understand that the Bible interprets itself. As we read in 2 Peter 1:19-21, Bible prophecy is not to be deciphered by private interpretation, but by other scriptures that clarify the meaning and through godly discernment.

As the apostle Paul said: "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, *comparing spiritual things with spiritual*. But the *natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him;* nor can he know them, because *they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Corinthians 2:13-14).

One must have God's Spirit to truly understand the things of God, and that Spirit comes only to those who truly repent, are baptized, and live a life of obedience to God (Acts 2:38; 5:32).

Yes, we have a wonderful time machine provided by our Creator. Let's study it carefully to gain faith by acknowledging prophecies fulfilled in the past and then spiritually preparing for the prophesied events yet to come in the end time! ***GN***

To Learn More...

The Bible contains many prophecies of the "last days" and "the time of the end," a time unlike any other in human history. What does it reveal about this period? How can we identify it? Are we already in it? You need to know! Request or download your free copy of *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* today!

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America's Economic Meltdown: What Does It Mean?

by Becky Sweat

Unemployment, debt and trade imbalances are soaring while the dollar's value is plummeting. What's behind the shocking economic meltdown in the United States? Does Bible prophecy help us understand?

Superpower. This term was first applied to the United States in 1945, after a victorious end to World War II. In the decades that followed, that label stuck. America had a powerful military, the strongest economy in the world, immense international political power and the ability to defend and enforce its interests globally. It was also the world leader in science and technology.

We all know the rest of the story. Over the years, the United States faced some "bumps in the road"—the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the oil crisis of the 1970s, the 1973-74 and 1980-82 recessions, the Persian Gulf War and the horrors of 9/11 to name a few—but nothing it couldn't get through. Its superpower status was never threatened. That is, until recently.

Crisis upon crisis

Since the summer of 2007, the country has been grappling with one economic disaster after another. First came the burst of the housing bubble and the mortgage crisis. From there, the government has had a steady stream of bank failures and auto industry bailouts to contend with. Now there are concerns about the state budget shortfalls and the rising unemployment rate. This is in addition to the mounting federal debt and trade deficit.

It all has the world community talking. How can a nation hang onto the title of "world superpower" if its economy is in shambles? Many experts are saying it can't. Several world leaders have recently made public pronouncements to that effect. They say American preeminence is coming to an end. And some believe the nation has already lost its superpower status.

"The general perception of the United States as the key base of the world economy is shaken badly right now," observes Alan Porter, professor emeritus of the School of Public Policy at Georgia Tech University. "That will spiral into foreigners being less inclined to put their money into our government and companies. And that will lead to less investment and production."

To be a superpower, a nation needs to have a strong economy, Porter says. That's the only way a nation will be able to maintain extensive armed services, finance military operations, fund scientific and technological research, and have the political clout to be able to influence other nations—all of which are necessary to be a true superpower.

"Military might depends upon economic wherewithal," Porter says. "We are now so stretched that this is certainly slipping."

The Congressional Research Service estimates the 2010 costs for the war in Iraq to be $746 billion and for the war in Afghanistan $300 billion more. Porter and others don't see how military spending can continue at that level. Sooner or later the U.S. government is going to have to face the reality of balancing its budget, and that is going to require spending cuts, most likely in the military. Furthermore, if the dollar continues its decline, oil could become so expensive that the nation could no longer fuel its military forces.

The U.S. government will probably have to reduce its scientific funding as well. This, too, will have a detrimental effect on America's standing in the world.

Newsweek journalist Daniel Lyons summed up the situation after attending a scientific conference in Washington, D.C., last fall: "I came away convinced that the United States, which for decades has been the world leader in science and technology, will soon be eclipsed by China and other countries. Alternative energy is the next tidal wave in tech innovation. If we miss it, we will not only weaken our economy and harm our national security—we will turn ourselves into a second-rate nation . . .

"The rest of the world is racing past us. In solar energy, the leaders are Japan, Germany, and China. In wind, it's Germany, Spain, and Denmark. In nuclear, it's France. 'You can go up and down the list—in some cases we're players, but we're no longer leading,' says Ralph Cicerone, president of the National Academy of Sciences.

"The current administration has boosted spending on energy research. But to really catch up, Cicerone says we'll need 'a sustained commitment the likes of which are hard to see in American history'" ("An SOS for Science," *Newsweek*, Oct. 12, 2009).

True, some of these predictions might not happen right away. There could be some positive fluctuations in the economy, at least for the short-term, in the months or years ahead.

But realistically, the long-term outlook is bleak. Many financial experts doubt the U.S. economy will regain enough of its former strength to be able to maintain superpower status. There are just too many factors working against it. Let's consider here the four factors that are probably hurting the U.S. economy the most.

The exploding national debt

Nov. 16 marked a milestone for the U.S. national debt: It topped the $12 trillion mark. The exact calculation as of that day was $12,031,299,186,290.07—a "16-digit tongue twister," as several news agencies referred to it. Divided evenly among the U.S. population, this amounts to *$38,974.34 for every man, woman and child in America*.

These numbers were not unexpected, considering that in October the Congressional Budget Office had just issued a report estimating the 2009 budget deficit would hit an all-time high at $1.42 trillion. That's about 10 percent of gross domestic

product (GDP) and more than triple the previous year's record high.

Of the $12 trillion national debt, $4.4 trillion is owed to intra-governmental holdings (Social Security, Medicare, federal employees retirement funds, etc.) and $7.6 trillion is "held by the public" (money loaned by nongovernment sources such as banks, insurance companies, mutual and pension funds, U.S. savings bonds, foreign and international institutions, etc.).

Budget deficits—the difference each year between government revenue and spending—are projected to average nearly *$1 trillion per year* over the next decade, pushing the federal debt (the accumulated borrowing necessary to finance years of annual budget deficits) to even higher levels.

A November 2009 report by the International Monetary Fund predicted that in 2014, America's debt-to-GDP ratio (a measure of a nation's debt burden against its capacity to generate sufficient funds to repay its creditors) will reach 108 percent. This means the total amount of federal, state and local government debt will be an amount that is more than a full year's GDP.

That's a steep rise from 2007's pre-economic crisis ratio of 62 percent. Once the United States crosses the 100 percent threshold, it will be joining a very small handful of nations—such as Zimbabwe, Lebanon and Jamaica—with alarmingly high debt-to-GDP ratios.

Of course, these are just estimates of future debt levels. The numbers could be even higher, depending on what interest rates do. Interest rates were low in 2009, adding up to $202 billion in interest payments in 2009, compared to $260 billion for 2008. If interest rates rise, that could make it considerably more expensive to finance America's debt, economists warn.

But even if interest rates stayed relatively low, the Congressional Budget Office predicts that by 2019 payments on the federal debt will still rise to $799 billion.

Truly, it is the interest on the federal debt that makes America's future unstable.

The Wall Street Journal ran an article that stated: "The exploding size of that burden suggests that, short of devaluing the dollar and taking a large bite out of the middle class through inflation and taxation, there is no way to ever pay down that bill.

"Unless Americans are made aware of this financial crisis and demand accountability, the very fabric of our society will be destroyed. Interest rates and interest costs will soar and government revenues will be devoured by interest on the national debt. Eventually, most of what we spend on Social Security, Medicare, education, national defense and much more may have to come from new borrowing, if such funding can be obtained.

"Unless Americans are made aware of this financial crisis and demand accountability, the very fabric of our society will be destroyed."

"Left unchecked, this destructive deficit-debt cycle will leave the White House and Congress with either having to default on the national debt or instruct the Treasury to run the printing presses into a policy of hyper-inflation" (Lawrence Kadish, "Taking the National Debt Seriously," *The Wall Street Journal,* Oct. 12, 2009).

The situation is even more serious when we take into account everyone this money is owed to. According to Treasury Department reports, foreign countries own about 50 percent of the publicly held federal debt. China and Japan are the United States' two biggest creditor nations by far, holding $798.9 billion and $751.5 billion worth of U.S. Treasury securities, respectively, as of November 2009.

These loans represent an accumulating claim on future output of the United States. Lender nations could call for payments on these loans at any time. If the U.S. couldn't pay up, that could bring about a spike in interest rates or a collapse of the U.S. dollar. America would be at the mercy of those nations holding its debt obligations, with little room to maneuver. Ultimately, it could bring about a loss of national independence.

The soaring trade imbalance

Between 1991 and 2006, the U.S. trade deficit soared from zero to $763.3 billion—an amount equal to 6.5 percent of America's gross domestic product.

True, with the recent recession, there's been some relief in terms of the trade deficit. Consumer spending and imports went down. The declining dollar made American products more affordable overseas and boosted U.S. exports. Oil prices declined sharply. As a result, the trade gap narrowed to $711.6 billion in 2007 and $695.9 billion in 2008. However, this is probably a short-lived trend, economists say.

As the recession comes to an end, economists predict the trade gap will widen again. It could even explode, say experts at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, especially if the U.S. debt rises as expected.

Economist Fred Bergsten explained how higher budget deficits lead to higher trade deficits: "The additional debt that the government takes on to finance the budget imbalance increases U.S. interest rates . . . High interest rates attract large inflows of foreign capital, which work to push up the value of the dollar.

"This has an adverse effect on the competitiveness of U.S. companies that export goods or compete with imports on the U.S. market, and it expands the United States' trade deficit" ("The Dollar and the Deficits," *Foreign Affairs,* Nov. 1, 2009).

If policymakers do not take action to reduce the size of the budget deficits, Peterson economists predict that by 2030 the trade deficit will soar to more than 15 percent of GDP or more than $5 trillion annually.

Of course, even if the trade deficit doesn't get that high, any kind of ongoing trade gap is still very detrimental to the United States because it is financed with loans, adding to America's external debt.

The other issue with trade imbalances is what they do to American industry. If American consumers continue to purchase certain types of imported products, U.S. companies will gradually stop making these items, economists say. Eventually there won't be any American manufacturers with the equipment or expertise to make these products, and the country will lose its ability to compete in these product lines in the world marketplace. That means job losses and decline in exports.

This has happened in many product

Photos: iStockphoto

categories over the years, but most notably the automobile industry. The success of Asian automobile manufacturers over the last few decades all but destroyed American automotive giants General Motors and Chrysler. Economists believe the country is now at risk of having the same thing happening to its computer, semiconductor and aerospace industries—which each year are losing a greater amount of market share to foreign manufacturers.

The real estate and banking crisis

Two and a half years after the housing bust and subprime credit crisis, the rising tide of foreclosures remains a huge threat to the U.S. economy. Industry experts predict that the number of home foreclosures will total 3.5 million for 2009. That's up from 800,000 foreclosures in 2005, at the height of the housing bubble.

But nowadays, it's not just subprime loans and it's not just California and Florida real estate that are defaulting, said Mark Zandi of Moody's Economy.com: "Foreclosures are taking place coast to coast. They're high-end homes, low-end homes, prime mortgages, jumbo loans, you name it."

An increasing number of people are actually *willingly* defaulting on their home loans. An estimated 588,000 people did so in 2008, double the number in 2007. These are people whose mortgages are now "upside down"—meaning the amount they owe is higher than the value of the homes.

Financially, it doesn't make sense to hold on to their homes. As of November 2009, Moody's Economy.com estimated that the mortgages of *16 million* Americans were upside down. Economists are concerned about just how many of these people may simply walk away from their homes.

According to Citigroup's mortgage division, one in five borrowers who defaults does so willingly, even though they're able to pay the mortgage. These "strategic defaults," as they're being referred to, are now driving the foreclosure crisis, economists say.

But if that wasn't bad enough, economists are now worried about an impending commercial real estate bust. Similar to what happened with the housing market, commercial mortgages were extended, based on certain assumptions—in this case, that occupancy rates and rents on office buildings, hotels, stores and other commercial property would keep rising.

But with the economic downturn, that hasn't been the case. Now an increasing number of commercial properties aren't generating enough cash to make principal and interest payments.

In normal times these property owners might try refinancing or increasing the size of their mortgages—just to try to stay in business. But that's not an alternative anymore, not with how much real estate values have plummeted. Moody's Investors Service says the value of U.S. commercial real estate has fallen from the 2007 peak by an average of 35 percent.

As a result, many commercial property owners are finding themselves foreclosed. According to credit-rating agency Realpoint LLC, the commercial mortgage delinquency rate is now more than *six times* the level it was a year ago.

The continuing number of foreclosures are fueling the number of bank failures. A recent *Time* article stated, "In the next week or so, the U.S. will reach a somber milestone: 100 banks down the drain in 2009." The number had climbed to 133 by Dec. 11.

The article continues: "The worst is far from over. The FDIC says 416 banks are at risk of failure, up from 117 a year ago. Soured commercial real estate loans alone may generate a fresh $600 billion in losses by 2013. Veteran bank analyst Gerard Cassidy of RBC Capital Markets expects as many as 1,000 lenders to go bust in total" (Stephen Gandel, "Spotlight: Bank Failures," Oct. 26, 2009). The nation's real estate and banking crisis is anything but over.

The diluted dollar

The last year has also not been good for the U.S. dollar. In the last 12 months, the greenback dropped 18 percent against the euro, 11 percent against the British pound and 40 percent against the South African rand—as the U.S. government printed more money and lowered interest rates to try to keep the economy afloat. Analysts say the economic downturn would have been much more severe if it hadn't been for the diluted dollar.

Of course, even before the 2008-09 recession, the dollar was on a downward trend, declining in value by 15 percent from 2000 to 2007 (according to historical data from the U.S. Dollar Index, a measure of the value of the U.S. dollar relative to other major currencies).

What's causing the dollar's demise? A recent *Washington Post* article stated: "Analysts say the fall of the dollar reflects a basic economic truth: The U.S. financial situation is no longer as solid as it once was. Rather than being undervalued, many argue that the dollar has room to fall further.

"'The dollar is weaker not so much because people are buying yen because they think Japan is suddenly going to be the next hot thing again,' said Stephen King, chief economist at HSBC in London. 'Instead, there is a sense that in some very defined and critical way, the dollar and the U.S. have lost their way.

"The U.S. has borrowed so much from foreigners. They've got a rising budget deficit and few ways to bring it under control that investors see as viable. Those are things that affect the value of a currency'" (Anthony Faiola, "The Dollar's Fall Is Felt Overseas," Oct. 29, 2009).

Put another way, *other countries are losing confidence in the U.S. economy.* They think that if they continue to hold their wealth in U.S dollars, *they will lose their investment*. Creditor nations see the falling dollar and have been gradually changing their assets to other currencies to stem their losses.

"The reputation of our nation's money is being severely compromised," wrote Judy Shelton in *The Wall Street Journal*. "The U.S. has long represented the virtues of democratic capitalism. To be 'sound as a dollar' is to be deemed trustworthy, dependable, and in good working condition . . .

"It used to mean all that, anyway. But as the dollar is increasingly perceived as the default mechanism for out-of-control government spending, its role as a reliable

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Only a generation ago the United States was the world's greatest lending nation. Today it is *the most indebted nation in world history.*

standard of value is destined to fade" ("The Message of Dollar Disdain," Oct. 14, 2009).

As the dollar weakens, America's purchasing power shrinks and the U.S. share of global GDP declines. Everything the United States imports, from petroleum to electronics, becomes more expensive. Because Americans import the vast majority of things they need, this could result in higher inflation and interest rates in the future. Ultimately, a weak dollar could cause living standards in America to decline.

The dollar's status as world reserve currency could also be in jeopardy. Recently, the United Nations, China, Russia and other nations have questioned that status, advocating replacing the dollar with another currency or a basket of strong regional currencies.

Even the American-born World Bank president, Robert Zoellick, warned in a speech this past September that "the United States would be mistaken to take for granted the dollar's place as the world's predominant reserve currency." He said that in the years ahead, "there will increasingly be other options to the dollar."

Losing reserve currency status would be a huge blow to the U.S. dollar. A *Foreign Policy* article explained: "The greenback's function as the world's leading reserve currency has been one of the key features of Washington's privileged place in the world since World War II.

"For decades the dollar has been the currency the world's countries tend to use when they do business with each other. Most central banks around the world have held the lion's share of their foreign exchange reserves in dollars, while most globally traded commodities (like oil) have been priced in the U.S. currency, too.

"It's an arrangement that translates into many benefits for the United States, most notably lower borrowing costs (because there's always more demand for the reserve currency than others). And then there are the myriad political and cultural knock-on effects—the power and the prestige—that accrue to the currency at the top of the economic pecking order" (Christian Caryl, "Decline of the Dollar," Oct. 16, 2009).

If and when the dollar will be ousted as world reserve currency is the subject of much speculation. Right now, the greenback is still the most used for international transactions and constitutes more than 60 percent of other countries' official foreign-exchange reserves.

However, that percentage is steadily slipping. Several ideas are being bantered about regarding what currency could replace the dollar. The euro, Chinese yuan and a completely new international reserve currency appear to be top contenders. And while Europe or China may not be quite ready to take the lead as economic superpower right now, they are definitely moving in that direction.

America's decline foretold in the Bible

As sobering as all of this is, *it was foretold in the Bible many centuries ago.* Though most do not realize it, the startling truth is that America's heritage can be traced back to the ancient nation of Israel with its 12 tribes. Long ago, God prophesied that the people who came to inhabit America would rise to become a great nation—and, conversely, that America's superpower status would eventually come to an end due to the nation's rejection of Him. (To learn more, see "Does the United States Appear in Bible Prophecy?" beginning on page 9.)

Leviticus 26:19 states: "I will break the pride of your power." Unquestionably, with the U.S. national debt and trade gap as huge as they are, and the dollar and banking system edging toward collapse, national prestige is being taken away.

God warned ancient Israel again and again what would happen if they did not follow Him. Deuteronomy 28:43-44 states: "The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him." Only a generation ago the United States was the world's greatest lending nation. Today it is *the most indebted nation in world history.*

In Jeremiah 17:3-4, God told Israel they would serve their enemies if they did not obey Him: "I will give as plunder your wealth, all your treasures, and your high places of sin within all your borders. And you, even yourself, shall let go of your heritage which I gave you; and I will cause you to serve your enemies in the land which you do not know; for you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever" (Jeremiah 17:3–4).

In Habakkuk 2:6-8, Israel is warned specifically about getting overloaded in debt: "Will not all these take up a proverb . . . and say, 'Woe to him who increases what is not his—how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges'? Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty. Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you." These warnings applied to ancient Israel, and they apply to the modern-day descendants of Israel too.

Of course, no one knows how close we are to the final fulfillment of these prophecies. Perhaps real estate values will start appreciating again, and maybe the GDP will bounce back. But as long as the United States continues to maintain the world's largest mountain of debt, these positive economic upswings are likely to be only a temporary reprieve. We are getting closer to many of the end-time events foretold in the Bible.

One thing is for certain: Prophecy *will* be fulfilled. The good news that we can and must focus on is that the Bible also tells us that someday Israel—the people of the United States and other nations descended from the 12 tribes—will once again constitute a very prosperous nation and a blessing to the rest of the world. It will be a wonderful future! That is what we need to remember as we face the uncertain times ahead. ***GN***

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Abundant Fresh Fruit: To Serve God and Share With Others

We can become like God by having His Spirit dwelling in us. As we grow spiritually, we should see more and more evidence of that miracle—more and more "fruit of the Spirit." And with more and more fruit, there is more and more to give to others!

by Don Hooser

Right in my own back yard is an Italian plum tree. I consider it a huge blessing! When we first moved here, I had no idea what kind of tree it was until I saw the fruit! Likewise, we are known to God and to other people by our "fruits" (Matthew 7:16).

Our tree is not very pretty except when it's covered with spring blossoms. But what counts is this: *It is fruitful*. In most years it produces prolifically!

Two things give me great satisfaction. One is the delightful taste. When those plums are ripe, they're soft and juicy and sweet and "plum good." I feast on them for weeks!

My other joy is giving plums to others. Almost everyone loves this fabulous fruit! I spend hours and hours trying to harvest all the plums to give them away. I give away *many hundreds* of these large plums—to neighbors, fellow Church members and food banks. What a treat for me to see all the smiles!

Lessons from fruit trees

Jesus Christ compared His followers to fruit trees. This comparison can teach us many valuable lessons.

To begin with, most fruit trees are relatively small and unimpressive compared to other trees. Most of us, likewise, are not that much to look at.

But that's okay. It's not outward beauty but inward beauty that "is very precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:3-4). God doesn't judge us by "outward appearance, but the LORD looks *at the heart*" (1 Samuel 16:7, emphasis added throughout).

Just as a "good tree" is one that bears "good fruit," a *good heart* is one that *produces good spiritual fruit* (Matthew 7:17).

The "beauty" of fruit trees is their bountiful production of luscious fruit. Likewise, we are beautiful to God when we are producing good fruit and much fruit (Matthew 7:17; John 15:5, 8). God wants *quality and quantity!*

Those two goals and related principles were explained in the introductory article for this series—"Christ's Command to Us: Bear Good Fruit and Much Fruit" in the January-February 2008 issue. (All previous articles are available in the *Good News* archives at www.GNmagazine.org/issues.)

Every man's need: A spiritual heart transplant

But there's a problem that prevents us from producing good fruit. The natural "heart"—the thinking and inclination—of man is *not good!* Jesus said that "out of the heart of men" proceed a long list of evils (Mark 7:20-23).

When the apostle Paul listed typical sins of the natural man, he called them "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Then Paul listed the main traits of God's character that are grown in us when we are implanted with His Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (verses 22-23). That is *good fruit!*

Most people manifest some of these virtues some of the time. But a person's character will never be consistently defined by these qualities until he or she has God's Holy Spirit.

In fact, all true "goodness, righteousness, and truth" is "the fruit [result and effect] of the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:9).

Some people bear fake fruit

Sadly, we are tempted to be more concerned about *looking* good and *sounding* good than in *being* good. We want to make a *good impression* without doing all that is necessary to acquire a *pure and godly heart*. This is just *fake fruit!*

But we can't fool God. Jesus saw right through the pretense of the self-righteous hypocrites of His day. He condemned them for that, saying, "You also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:28).

And besides guarding against fake fruit in ourselves, God tells us to watch out for it in others. He doesn't want us to be fooled. The Bible repeatedly cautions us to beware of religious deception. Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets [teachers and preachers], who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits"—by their actions over time (Matthew 7:15-16).

Beware of impressive people with empty promises. They are like "clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit" (Jude 12).

Our best protection is to *know the Bible*. It alone has absolute authority because it is God's revelation. Don't be swayed by eloquent speeches or sermons that don't agree with God's Word. That fruit is polluted with poison!

But again, we must first be aware of what usually deceives us the most—our own minds and hearts! "The heart is more *deceitful* than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9, New American Standard Bible).

Here is what God prescribes for that sickness: "I will give you a *new heart* and put a *new spirit* within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Remember that Jesus said, "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good" (Matthew 12:33, New International Version). Likewise, when God gives us a new heart, our spiritual fruit will be good.

"Make the tree good and its fruit will be good"

Do you see? The *whole* tree must be healthy to produce lots of good fruit. Like-

wise, *we* must become spiritually healthy and whole. We must be healed with a heart transplant that results in total transformation and conversion.

God gives us a new heart by implanting His "Spirit in our hearts" so that our human nature is gradually replaced with His godly nature (2 Corinthians 1:22).

How does God accomplish this? When God starts working with someone, He begins to give the person spiritual understanding of the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:10-14).

Then, through that understanding, "the goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Romans 2:4). What is repentance? It is the experience of beginning to see one's own sins and feeling deeply sorry for them (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). It also means committing to *turn one's life around*—from a life of disobeying God to a life of love, obedience and service to God—and striving to follow through (Ezekiel 18:30-32).

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Jesus Christ compared His followers to fruit trees. This comparison can teach us many valuable lessons.

Once a person has faith in God and is sincerely repentant, he or she should have an intense desire to obtain two of God's great gifts—the gift of forgiveness and the gift of God's Spirit.

The apostle Peter explained how to receive these gifts. He said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

When Peter said "be baptized," everyone knew he meant immersion in water. Baptism symbolizes putting to death and burying the old way of life and being raised to "newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

The subject of God's Holy Spirit, with its *many benefits* and how to obtain it, was explained in the second article of this series—"God's Spirit: The Power to Transform Your Life."

Good works are also the fruit of godly character

Only God can make a tree, and He deserves the credit for the fruit. But God calls us *to work, not just watch.*

We must *work hard* in partnership with Him to *cultivate* the fruit! And good fruit includes good works. We show our love for God by works of *obedience* and *service!*

Forgiveness and salvation certainly can't be earned by human works, but "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). We are to "maintain good works" so we will be "profitable" to God and to others and not "unfruitful" (Titus 3:8, 14).

Good intentions, thoughts, feelings and words are not enough. We must be *"doers* of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). Christ "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), and we should follow His example.

We must walk the walk and practice what we preach. We must do more than profess—we must *produce!*

However, words are important too. The "fruit of our lips" is a big part of our works, and God holds us accountable for our words (Hebrews 13:15; Matthew 12:36).

Jesus said, "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matthew 16:27). We will be judged by how we live—either stirring up and using the Spirit God makes available to us, or neglecting it.

The great harvest

Jesus likened Himself to a master gardener who hopes for a bountiful harvest. But He also warned, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 7:19). It is cut down because the one who had access to God's Spirit failed to produce fruit.

He went on to explain that religious works will not save you if you don't also have the *works of obedience* to God's commandments: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice *lawlessness!'"* (Matthew 7:21-23).

At a later time, Christ described the great spiritual harvest when He "will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice *lawlessness,* and will cast them into the furnace of fire . . . Then *the righteous will shine forth* as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:41-43).

When Christ returns, may you not be counted as an "unprofitable [unfruitful] servant" (Matthew 25:30). Instead, may you hear the joyful words, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (verse 23).

In conclusion

As part of the conclusion for this series on the fruit of the Spirit, we encourage you to reread the wonderful 15th chapter of the book of John. In it, Jesus is talking heart to heart with His disciples—and heart to heart *with you.*

He tells us: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

When the life-giving Spirit flows from Christ into you and through you, it produces much good fruit: *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control* (Galatians 5:22-23).

And when you have much fruit, you experience the joy of giving it away to others! ***GN***

The Perfect Example of the Fruit of the Spirit: **Jesus Christ**

by Vince Szymkowiak

It's vital that Christians bear fruit in their lives—the fruit of the Spirit. But what does that fruit look like? In Jesus Christ we have the perfect example of what God's Spirit should produce in our lives.

In this issue *The Good News* wraps up a series of articles on the fruit of the Holy Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23. What better example can we look to for showing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives than our ultimate example, Jesus Christ?

He perfectly exhibited all these wonderful traits of the Holy Spirit, not only during His entire earthly ministry, but also during His arrest, trial and crucifixion. Of course, Jesus was more than just a man—He was God in the flesh. As such, He showed His disciples what can be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Showing the fruit of the Spirit by His life

The first fruit of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians 5 is *love*. Jesus' entire ministry was characterized by love. And the greatest demonstration ever of that love was the sacrifice He made for all of us. Jesus, who was a divine Being with the Father (John 1:1), sacrificed His heavenly power and glory to become a human being and subject Himself to painful humiliation, suffering and death for the sake of mankind (Philippians 2:5-11).

Jesus emphasized the fruit of *love* at His last meal—often referred to as "the last supper"—with the disciples. Notice His words: "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love . . . This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:9-13).

Of course, these weren't mere words to Him. Jesus *did* lay down His life for His friends, serving as the supreme example of love.

The second listed fruit of the Holy Spirit is *joy.* Christ was filled with *joy* at the prospect of "bringing many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10). Hebrews 12:2 further tells us that "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, . . . for the *joy* that was set before Him endured the cross, despising [disregarding] the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (emphasis added throughout).

Amazingly, just before He suffered, instead of thinking of His own upcoming cruel suffering, He reminded His disciples that His *joy* would "remain in you, and that your *joy* may be full" (John 15:11). He told them that they would be sorrowful over His departure, but "your sorrow will be turned into *joy,*" and that "your heart will *rejoice,* and your *joy* no one will take from you" (John 16:20-22).

This chapter concludes with Jesus reminding them that "in the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And, after His resurrection, the first word Matthew records the resurrected Jesus as saying is *"Rejoice!"* (Matthew 28:9).

In spite of the terrible suffering Jesus endured for you and me, He counted it a joy to serve humanity by washing away our sins in His blood.

Jesus was also a man of *peace,* the next listed fruit. One of His very titles is the "Prince of *Peace"* (Isaiah 9:6). He referred to this fruit of the Spirit at the last supper when He said: *"Peace* I leave with you, My *peace* I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). One of the first statements to His followers after the resurrection was *"Peace* to you" (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21).

And, in the coming Kingdom of God on earth, over which Christ will be King of Kings, there will be no end to the *peace* that will characterize His glorious reign (Isaiah 9:7; Romans 14:17).

Exhibiting fruit throughout His ministry

The fourth fruit of the Holy Spirit as listed in Galatians 5 is *longsuffering*. As the *Good News* article on this characteristic points out, the Greek words translated "longsuffering" also encompass the meanings of patience and endurance.

Jesus exhibited this fruit throughout His earthly ministry. The apostle Paul described an aspect of the ministry of Jesus this way: "I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited *patience"* (1 Timothy 1:16, New International Version). Even while suffering a painful death by crucifixion, Jesus exhibited the *patient endurance* to pray for those who were tormenting and killing Him (Luke 23:34).

Kindness, the next fruit on the list, was another hallmark of Jesus Christ's ministry. Paul noted this godly fruit as he wrote to Titus: "But when the *kindness* and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared . . . according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:4-5).

Christ's act of healing the ear of the high priest's servant Malchus even while being arrested is an incredible example of His kindness even under very difficult circumstances! Instead of worrying about Himself and His approaching pain, He reacted with kindness and compassion to Malchus' injury and immediately healed his ear, making the man whole again (Luke 22:51).

Goodness and good news

The next fruit of the Holy Spirit listed is *goodness*. When Peter summarized the ministry of Jesus, the ministry of which he was an actual witness, he stated: "Jesus of Nazareth . . . went about doing *good"* (Acts 10:38). And Jesus, regarding His supreme sacrifice, referred to Himself as the *good* Shepherd who "gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

His message is referred to in dozens of references as "the gospel," a term meaning *good news*. Indeed, the entire ministry

and sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the greatest example of God's *goodness* toward humanity.

The next fruit is *faith* or *faithfulness.* Jesus had total trust and confidence in God the Father, and He was Himself *faithful* to the responsibility the Father gave to Him. Even as He stated that He was in anguish due to His impending crucifixion, He resolved to stay with the plan of redemption to the very end. He summarized His mission in John 12:27: "For this purpose I came to this hour." He continues to serve His Church today as "a merciful and *faithful* High Priest" (Hebrews 2:17).

Gentleness is listed next. The Greek work is *praus,* with a basic meaning of *gentle,* humble and meek. Jesus declared that He was *"gentle* and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Toward the end of His ministry, He came to Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy that the King would come *"gentle* and riding on a donkey" (Matthew 21:5, New International Version). However, gentleness does not mean weakness, as some assume. Jesus was anything but weak.

The last fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5 is *self-control,* the ability to control one's behavior. Jesus, as the One to whom the Father committed judgment (John 5:22), could have called down enormous power at any time against His enemies. But instead He exercised self-control throughout His ministry.

One example of this is found in Matthew 26:53-54. When Peter was trying to take things into his own hands, Christ reminded Peter that if He wished, He could call in "more than twelve legions of angels"—tens of thousands—to deal with those who were abusing Him. Instead, He stayed true to His calling, exercised godly self-control and allowed Himself to be arrested and crucified.

We should show the same fruit

Jesus Christ not only exemplified all the fruit of the Holy Spirit throughout His ministry, but He has made it possible for us to produce the same spiritual fruit as well. As His true followers, He expects us to abide in Him and bear much fruit (John 15:4, 8). Indeed, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus will live His godly way of life through us if we are yielded to Him (Galatians 2:20).

Following His example, the converted children of God will be manifesting the fruit of the Spirit—not only now in this life, but also forever in the soon-coming Kingdom of God! ***GN***

Jesus Christ perfectly exhibited all the wonderful traits of the Holy Spirit, not only during His entire earthly ministry, but also during His arrest, trial and crucifixion.

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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 *Beyond Today* TV program, 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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UNITED STATES

Alaska
Anchorage — ch. 18, Fri 4 p.m.

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 9:30 a.m.; ch. 73, 98, Sat 9:30 a.m.

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

California
Anaheim (west) — ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 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.
Eureka — ch. 12, Fri 8 p.m.
Fountain Valley — ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Garden Grove — ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Hayward — ch. 28, Tue 10 p.m. (monthly)
Hemet — ch. 3, Fri 2:30 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 5 p.m.
Los Alamitos — ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Marin County — ch. 26, Wed 7 p.m.; Thu 1 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.
Novato — ch. 71, Tue 9:30 p.m.
Orange — ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Orinda — ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Pasadena — ch. 56, Sun 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Petaluma — ch. 26, Sun 9:30 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Wed 6 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.
Pleasant Hill — ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Rossmoor — ch. 26, 2nd & 4th Mon 8 p.m.
Sacramento — ch. 18, Mon 6:30 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, Sun 10:30 a.m.
Santa Clara — ch. 15a, Wed 4:30 p.m.
Santa Rosa — ch. 30, Sun 7:30 p.m.; Sat 10:30 a.m.
Stanton — ch. 3a, 6, Sun 12:30 & 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.

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

Hawaii
Hilo — ch. 53, Sun 10 a.m.; Thu 7:30 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.
Elkgrove 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. 35, 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. 17, Sun 11:30 a.m.

Kentucky
Owensboro — ch. 72, Sun 8 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Paducah — ch. 2, Sun 2 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 6:30 a.m.; Sun 6 p.m.
Palmer — ch 12, Tue 11 p.m.
Worcester — ch. 13, Thu 10 a.m.

Michigan
Ann Arbor — ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.
Cadillac — ch.97 Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Charlevoix — ch. 97 Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Cheboygan — ch. 97 Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 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.
Mackinaw City — ch. 97 Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Manistee — ch. 97 Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Michigan City — ch. 99, Tue 8:30 p.m.; Thu 7 p.m.
Midland — ch. 99, Tue 5:30 p.m.
Mt. Pleasant — ch. 3, times vary
Petoskey — ch. 97 Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Redford — ch. 12, Mon 6 p.m.
Traverse City — ch. 97 Sun 11:30 a.m.; Wed 6:30 p.m.; Fri 5:30 p.m.
Ypsilanti — ch. 17, Thu 4:30 p.m.

Minnesota
Albert Lea — ch. 13, Sun 10:30 a.m.
Austin — ch. 13, Sun 10 a.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 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Brooklyn Park — ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 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.
Crystal — ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.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 6 a.m. & 2 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.
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., 12:15 p.m., 7 p.m.; Wed 3 a.m., 8:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Maple Grove — ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Minnetonka — ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
New Hope — ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
New Ulm — ch. 72, Sun 5 p.m.; Thu 10 a.m.; Fri 7 p.m. ch 14, Thu 9 a.m.
Osseo — ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Plymouth — ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sat 10 p.m.
Richfield — ch. 15, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Thu 5:30 p.m.
Robbinsdale — ch. 19, Sun 6 a.m. & 2 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.
Winona — ch. 20, Sun 2 p.m.; Wed 3 p.m.

Missouri
Cape Girardeau — ch. 5, daily 5 & 9 p.m.
Jackson — ch. 5, daily 5 & 9 p.m.
Jefferson City — ch. 3, Wed 6 p.m.
Poplar Bluff — ch. 54, Tue 4 p.m.
Springfield — ch. 26, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Wed 7 p.m.

Montana
Helena — ch. 11, Sun 3 p.m.
Missoula — ch. 7, Sun 11 a.m.

Nevada
Carson City — ch. 210, Sun 2:30 p.m.; Sat 9:30 a.m.
Reno/Sparks — ch. 216/16, Wed 6:30 p.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.
New York — ch. 57, Sun 7 a.m.
Oneonta — ch. 23, Mon 6 p.m.; Wed 9 p.m.
Queens — ch. 35, Tue 8 p.m.; Thu 3 p.m. ch. 56, Thu 3 p.m.; Sat 12:30p.m.
Woodbury — ch. 115, Sat 2:30 p.m.

North Carolina
Charlotte — ch. 21, Sat 1 p.m.
Durham — ch. 18, Wed 7:30 a.m.
Hickory — ch. 10, Sun 11 a.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.
Bryan — ch. 4, Sun 11:30 a.m. & 8:30 p.m.; Mon 8:30 p.m.
Cincinnati (Union Twp.) — ch. 8, Sun 2:30 a.m.; Tue 9:30 a.m.; Wed 11 p.m.; Sat 2:30 p.m.
Dayton — ch. 12, Sun 11 a.m.; Wed 7 p.m.
Defiance — ch. 5, Sun 12 noon; Thu 6 p.m.
Fairborn — ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Greenville — ch. 3, Thu 8 p.m.
Huber Heights — ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Oberlin/Wellington — ch. 12, Sun & Sat 9 a.m.
Springfield — ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood — ch. 6, Sun 5:30 p.m.
Urbana — ch. 1, daily 6 a.m., 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Vandalia — ch. 6, 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.
Monmouth — ch. 17, Sun 11 a.m.
Portland — ch. 22, Fri 4:30 p.m. ch. 22a, 33, Sun 7:30 p.m. ch. 23, Mon 6:30 p.m.
Salem — ch. 23, Sun 12:30 p.m.; Fri 2 p.m.; Sat 9 a.m.

Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh/Moon Twp. — ch. 21, 14, Sun 12 & 2 p.m.

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

Texas
Austin — ch. 11, Mon 8:30 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.; Sat 9 p.m.
San Antonio — ch. 20, Mon 10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Virginia
Charlottesville/Albemarle County — ch. 13, 14, Mon 5:30 p.m.; Wed 10 p.m.; Thurs 4:30 p.m.
Hampton Roads — ch. 71, 74, Sun 10 a.m.

Washington
Bainbridge Island — ch. 12, Sun 9:30 a.m., 6:30 p.m., 11 p.m.; Sun-Sat 1 a.m.; Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat 5 a.m.; Tue, Thu 5:30 a.m.
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.
Spokane — ch 14, Sat 5:30 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 6:30 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. 96a, 981d, 98a, 980d, Sun 8:30 a.m.; Sat 9 a.m.
West Allis — ch. 14, times vary

CANADA

Nationwide
Vision TV, Sun 7 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.

Will 2012 Bring the End of the World?

by ***Beyond Today*** host Gary Petty

It is claimed that an ancient Mayan calendar mysteriously ends at the winter solstice in the year 2012. Will that mark the end of human history? TV, magazines, major movie studios, booksellers and dozens of Web sites are fanning the 2012 craze. Does Bible prophecy reveal what's really coming?

The predictions are of total devastation! According to some forecasts, entire cities will be destroyed by enormous tsunamis, earthquakes and Category 5 hurricanes; meteors will rain down fiery death from heaven; and human history will come to a violent end.

The hype is based on a mixture of speculation about Mayan calendars, the book *The Bible Code,* some ancient Eastern prophecies, the writings of Nostradamus and passages from the biblical book of Revelation.

While movie special effects of tsunamis sweeping across the land can be visually spectacular, the answers to your future can't be found in speculations about Mayan calendars or in the writings of Nostradamus or self-appointed prophets. The real answers to questions about the end of the world are found in the *only* true source of prophecy—the Bible.

Many people believe that the Bible, specifically the book of Revelation, foretells a fiery destruction of humanity. A close study of the book shows that, although Revelation does contain descriptions of cataclysmic future events, it is ultimately a book of great hope.

The end of the world?

Revelation was written toward the end of the first century by the apostle John. His recounted visions reveal that, before Christ returns, humanity will suffer devastating wars, disease pandemics, religious strife and famine on a global scale. Many of these happenings are trends we see announced in daily headlines and newscasts today.

Watching your world teeter on the brink of economic chaos can leave you anxious. Nightly news reports of pandemics, the ongoing crises in the Middle East, rogue nations developing nuclear weapons, religious and racial tensions, and predictions of environmental disasters can make you want to crawl into a hole and hide from all the bad news.

Don't despair! In His great prophecy near the conclusion of His ministry on earth, Jesus declared that He will return to save humanity from total destruction (Matthew 24:22). Revelation tells us about the time of deliverance He proclaimed.

What does the book of Revelation foretell?

Revelation 6 begins the countdown to the end of this age of man's reign on earth. It describes a series of six seals that depict a series of events that will shake the world. The first four of these seals are the infamous "four horsemen of the Apocalypse," representing widespread religious deception, brutal warfare, famine and deadly disease epidemics (verses 1-8; compare Matthew 24:5-7).

Following that is a fifth seal, representing religious persecution and martyrdom of a number of God's true servants (verses 9-11; compare Matthew 24:9). Next comes the sixth seal, representing a massive earthquake and terrifying heavenly signs (verses 12-17; compare Matthew 24:29).

The story of what happens to our planet continues in Revelation 8 with what are called the seven trumpet plagues. The first is an onslaught of "hail and fire"—possibly a meteor storm from space—which destroys a third of our planet's vegetation (verse 7).

The next plague—"something like a great mountain burning with fire . . . thrown into the sea"—may be describing a volcanic eruption or an asteroid or comet impact, destroying a third of all sea life (verses 8-9). The third plague—"a great star . . . from heaven, burning like a torch"—seems to more closely describe an asteroid or comet impact. It poisons a third of the world's fresh water supply (verses 10-11).

Following on its heels is a plague of darkness, obscuring much of the light of the sun, moon and stars—possibly due to the smoke, dust, ash and other debris resulting from the previous three plagues (verse 12).

Next will come two great military forces—the first one inflicting months of torment and the second unimaginably killing a third of mankind (Revelation 9:1-18), more than *2 billion people* at current population levels.

More horrifying events follow, as the succeeding chapters of the book show. Needless to say, the entire world as we know it—with everything and everyone in it—will be shaken to its core. Truly the human race will be on the brink of extinction!

Matthew 24:21-22 tells us: "It will be

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a time of great distress, such as there has never been before and never will be again. If that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive; but for the sake of God's chosen *it will be cut short"* (Revised English Bible). In this time when it seems that all hope is lost, the world's last best hope will arrive.

In Revelation 19 we read a description of the return of Jesus Christ: "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

"He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses . . . And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (verses 11-16).

He will first destroy the Satan-inspired leadership that has brought the world to the brink of ruin and then exterminate the armies that have nearly exterminated mankind (verses 17-21).

Many people believe that Christ's coming in power to destroy evil is the end of the story, but this is not the final scenario revealed by God to John. He writes that after these gruesome events, Jesus will establish God's Kingdom on the earth for a thousand years, bringing peace and prosperity (Revelation 20:1-7).

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah was inspired to announce what the earth will be like during the reign of Jesus Christ. One passage, in Isaiah 2, states, "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it" (verse 2).

In Bible prophecy, mountains are often symbolic of governments. This is telling us that Jesus Christ, as the head of *God's* government, will reign over all governments throughout the earth. Continuing: "Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD . . . He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

"He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (verses 3-4).

This is indeed a prophecy that should fill us with great hope. Humanity will ultimately survive to see a prosperous world of peace and purpose beyond our wildest dreams!

What should you do?

So where does that leave us with 2012? The Bible clearly shows that humanity is *not* going to experience extinction in 2012 or any other year, since Jesus Christ will ultimately rescue us. Nor will the end-time events we've read about conclude in 2012.

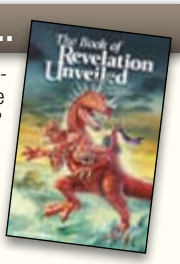
Too many other events foretold in Bible prophecy must first come to pass. The conditions aren't quite right yet—but *they are growing ever closer,* and *they will surely come*. Indeed, there is much evidence to show that we are living in the last days of this age of human misrule under Satan (request or download our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*).

Thankfully, as noted above, the Bible *does* show that Jesus Christ will return to save humanity from destruction. Between now and then you can live in hopeful anticipation of that day by turning the control of your life over to your Creator *now.*

Through the advanced newscast of Revelation, God tells us that some very bad times lie ahead; but this book also tells us that a unique and total change of society is coming. Jesus Christ is returning, not as a baby in a barn, but as Lord of Lords and King of Kings to establish God's Kingdom on the earth. He is coming to save the world!

It will be the beginning of real life and prosperity without war, crime, disease epidemics and hopeless poverty. It will be a time when all people will know the Creator and live His ways. A fantastic future is waiting for humanity! ***GN***

To Learn More...



Many are puzzled by the mysterious book of Revelation. What is the meaning of its unusual symbols? What is its purpose? Is it possible for us to understand it? You need to know, because it reveals what will come to pass in the time leading up to Jesus Christ's return! Be sure to request or download your free copy of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled.* It's yours free for the asking!

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

www.GNmagazine.org/booklets

Could You Use Some Hope in Your Life?

If you are like the rest of us, you could probably use more hope in your life. You might be worried about the mortgage, the kids and the job. And with all the hype, you now have to worry that the end of the world is just around the corner. The book of Revelation shows us that there are reasons life is so hard, and there are keys to help you discover hope in your future.

A central theme of *hope* runs through the entire Bible and culminates in the book of Revelation. The message reveals why human societies fail and, most importantly, how the problems will eventually be solved. This message of hope centers around seven basic concepts that apply to you personally:

1. You have a special purpose in life, and there are solutions to your problems. You can keep applying the same old solutions to the same old problems and you will keep having the same old problems. You must turn to the Creator of life as the source of the solutions to life's problems.

2. God created you in His image, but is His purpose being fulfilled in your life? Most people today are not fully aware of God's plan and are not actively participating in it. This is why humanity suffers from anguish, war, hatred, greed, inequality and disease.

3. You can experience a relationship with God and live your purpose. God can heal you spiritually, emotionally and physically.

4. This change can only take place when you accept your need to change and believe change is possible through God's involvement in your life.

5. You must seek God's way of life, which is outlined in the Bible. The Bible isn't just an ancient book of stories. It is relevant to your life as God's instruction book for how life works.

6. Jesus Christ is coming to save the world, and you need to be preparing for that day by becoming His disciple. Jesus is coming to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. It will be a Kingdom based on God's universal values and laws. His government will create a new agricultural system, pollution-free manufacturing, a universal educational system, one world religion, and peace and prosperity.

7. Your ultimate destiny is to become a child of God, and you can have a Father-child relationship with Him now.

Nothing can bring more happiness, hope, love and power into your life than living by this basic biblical theme!

Letters From Our Readers

"Creation or Evolution: Which Is More Believable?"

I was very impressed with the *Good News* article "Creation or Evolution: Which Is More Believable?" The article presented one of the most cogent arguments in favor of an all-wise Creator God, without resorting to illogical guesswork and ridicule. It used quotes from individuals and current media sources plus direct quotes from the Scriptures, so as to present the way the true God is rather than attempting to describe mankind's ideas. The theories of Charles Darwin and Richard Dawkins were left unprovable. This entire issue has given us, yet again, a very balanced view of current affairs, world events and Christian living without pulling any punches.

D.J., Sussex, England

I just finished reading *The Good News.* All your articles were very informative and motivational. Creation versus evolution is one of my favorite subjects. It is a thrill to see the evidence of creation mounting up and also to see public awareness turning against belief in evolution in America.

D.H., Bellingham, Washington

I would like two additional copies of the November-December issue of *The Good News* about creation or evolution. These are the most concise and well-defined arguments against Darwin. I want to pass this magazine on to both my children, for their children.

D.C., Mesa, Arizona

I enjoyed going through the November-December magazine in which you discussed creation, evolution and Darwin's theory. They were beautiful articles and should convince doubting Thomases that God created the world. Thank you for these enlightening articles. The one about Darwin was well researched.

A.C.O., Silver Spring, Maryland

I think you damage the religion that you try to protect. If the reader gets the impression that he or she must believe your booklet [*Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*] in order to believe in religion, it would call belief in God into question. It is not necessary to deny science. The pope has said, "Truth cannot contradict truth."

D.C., Bristol, England

Many embrace the concept of theistic evolution, believing God guided the process of evolution to produce all life on earth. Yet this is a denial of Scripture. Genesis 1 says that each living creature was designed to reproduce "according to its kind"—contradicting the evolutionary principle of kinds producing new kinds. Human evolution from apes is expressly ruled out. For at what point did apes produce a child with a human spirit? Did Adam have ape parents?

Many dismiss this by claiming Adam and Eve to be merely allegorical. Yet the New Testament confirms their historicity—including the fact that Eve was formed from Adam (see Matthew 19:4; Luke 3:38; Acts 17:24, 26; Romans 5:12, 14; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9; 15:22, 45; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; Jude 1:14).

And even if one rejects Scripture, theistic evolution—just as atheistic evolution—is a denial of clear scientific evidence. The fossil record simply does not show any graduated progression from simple to complex life. Thus, there is no denial of science in rejecting what evolutionists maintain—only a rejection of false science.

I have received your *Good News* magazine for a long time. I really appreciate it and think it's wonderful. But in your latest issue [in the "Creation or Evolution?" article], you state that both men and women were made in God's image. Genesis 1:26-27 states: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.' . . . So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." So God created man only in His own image, not woman.

J.K., Boone, North Carolina

The conclusion reached here is based on a misunderstanding of the wording of Genesis 1:27. The verse does not mean that only the male bears God's image. In stating that "man" is created in God's image, the term is then explained to include both male and female. Actually, the Hebrew word for "man" here is adam *(meaning "red earth," from which man was formed), so the terminology could seem exclusive to the first man Adam. However, Genesis 5:2 spells things out more clearly. It says that God "created them male and female, and blessed them, and* called their name Adam *in the day when they were created" (Green's Literal Translation, emphasis added). That is, both Adam and Eve were referred to as* adam*—meaning man. The New King James Version renders the word here as "mankind."*

Indeed, the word adam *is used for human beings in a general sense throughout the Hebrew Old Testament. Both masculine and feminine qualities in human beings are patterned after divine attributes. For instance, while God is certainly a Father, he also has the nurturing and caring qualities of a mother (compare Isaiah 66:13; Matthew 23:37). Men and women together give a more complete picture of the image of God in humankind. Both were created in the image of God for a great purpose. To learn more, request or download our free booklet* What Is Your Destiny?

"A Crucial Factor in Producing Fruit"

I cannot thank you enough for the free subscription to *The Good News.* Your magazine is so informative and accurate. I would like to give you special thanks for daring me to produce fruit by eradicating sin in the recent article "A Crucial Factor in Producing Fruit: Eradicate the Weeds of Sin."

A.A.A., Los Angeles, California

International comments about *The Good News*

I want to thank you for the wonderful work you are doing in sending out life-giving *Good News* magazines and by serving as a watchman to a world that is spiritually drowsy. I am from a Muslim background and I am the only person in my family who goes to church, so I need help as to how to progress steadily. I find it difficult to pray as my mind wanders. So I would appreciate all your resources on prayer.

H.A., Nigeria

We recommend our free booklet You Can Have Living Faith *and several* Good News *reprints on the subject of prayer. You can find them at www.GNmagazine.org/booklets and www.GNmagazine.org/reprints.*

I read your *Good News* magazine (July-August 2009) at the doctor's office. Needless to say, I was greatly impressed by your insightful take on "The New World Disorder." I want to take this opportunity to thank you, and I will certainly enjoy perusing your library of booklets and other publications. I am also very interested in your *World News and Prophecy* newsletter. Thanks again to all your members who are responsible for supporting all these publications.

N.P.S., Trinidad and Tobago

I have returned the card to renew my subscription to *The Good News.* This magazine is so informative and relevant to these times that it has become a part of my life. There are not enough words to express how grateful I am for your ministry and for giving me the opportunity to receive such inspiring literature. We are living in such a dynamic and changing world that we need men and women who are focused on the Word of God and led by the Holy Spirit to interpret the times we are living through.

D.C., Jamaica

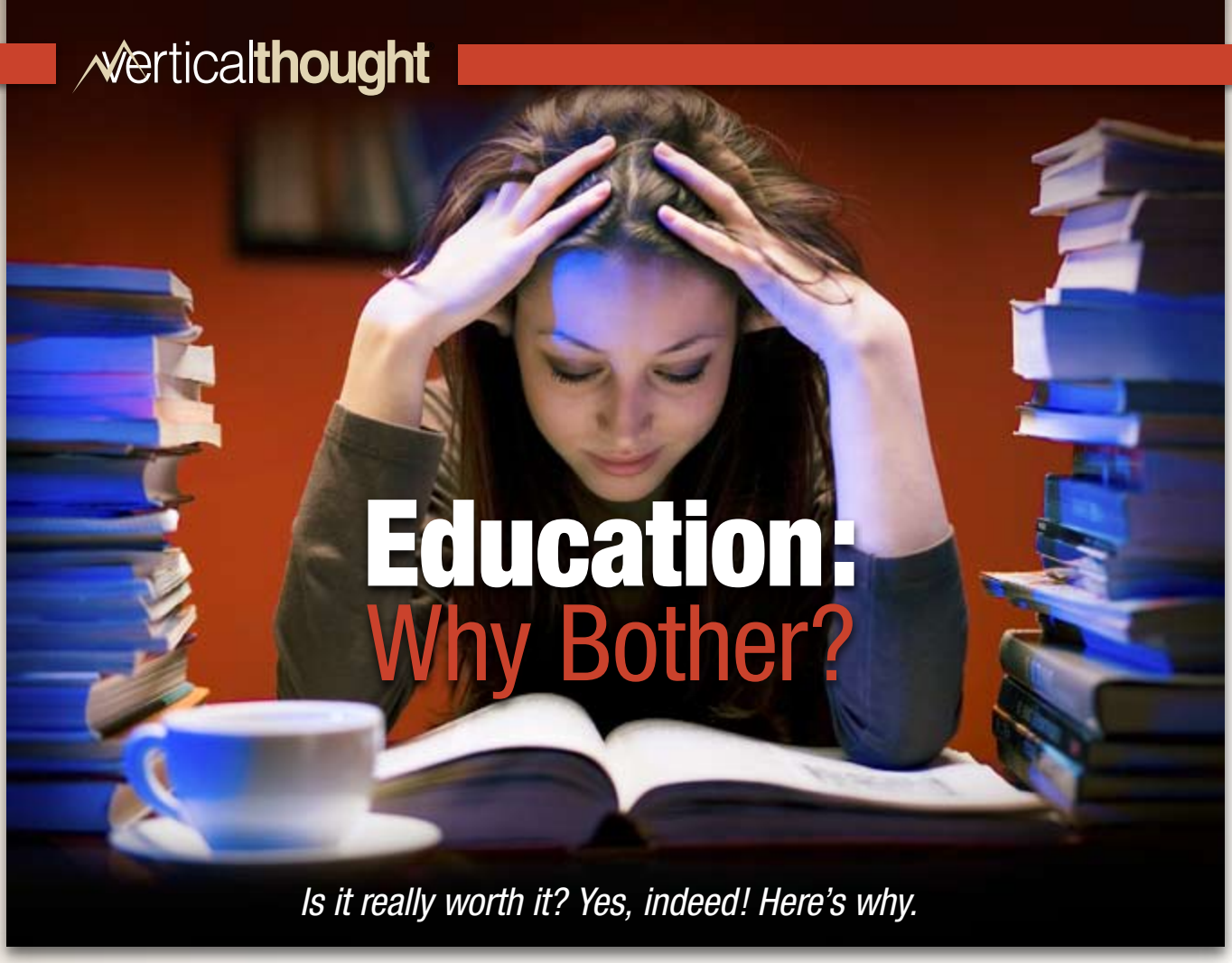
The secret rapture: fact or fiction?

Your subscriber services department sent me your article on the rapture. I have searched the Bible myself because I knew that the rapture was not true, even though everyone around me was enamored with the idea. My husband and I had studied Jesus' return and we definitely knew that we would not be raptured. I am so glad to have your article in my hands because it is exactly how I believe.

N.B.G., Hartley, Texas

Any readers who would like to understand the subject are welcome to request our free reprint about the rapture, a false view of the true biblical account of the second coming of Christ.

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



Education: Why Bother?

Is it really worth it? Yes, indeed! Here's why.

by Jeremy Lallier

King Solomon of Israel, a man of great wisdom, wrote, "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). A few sentences before these words, he had also denounced life as "vanity of vanities," wearily adding, "All is vanity" (verse 8).

That settles it, then. If the man with wisdom imparted by God Himself describes learning as wearisome and vain, who are we to argue? The only conclusion to draw here is that education is a waste of time, right?

Well, not quite. Also recorded in the pages of the Bible are God's laments over backsliding Israel, namely, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (Hosea 4:6).

What we need to understand about Ecclesiastes is that Solomon wrote it after seeking knowledge and understanding through all kinds of physical pursuits. In the end, he cautioned his readers that one cannot be truly happy and successful apart from God. The melancholy overtones of the book stem from his realization that a life without God is empty.

We can see this with learning. Suppose, for example, that you dedicate your life to becoming the foremost expert on the matter of breeding whippets (we are also supposing that, for some inexplicable reason, you are big on whippets—a breed of dog). At the peak of your career, you are renowned across the globe for your invaluable contributions to the field of whippet breeding. When the world thinks of whippet puppies, they think of you. You are Dr. Whippet, legend.

But at the end of your life, you are a very dead Dr. Whippet, however legendary. Even supposing your eager students compile your veritable hoard of whippet wisdom into *The Analects of the Late Dr. Whippet, Legend* and garner you an impressive cult following within whippet circles, you have no idea. Six feet under, you can no longer enjoy the fruit of your whippet labor.

In other words: Congratulations, you accomplished something and then died.

Which brings us to that age-old question: Why bother? What's the point of learning if the end result is that you still end up as a corpse in the ground?

Here's the answer: When you factor God into the equation, that whole death problem disappears. When you take into account that God's plan for all humanity involves ultimately giving eternal life to those who choose to follow Him, and establishing those called in this life as kings and priests in His perfect, everlasting Kingdom, the question becomes not *"Why* should I learn?" but rather *"What* should I learn?"

What follows is practical advice for becoming an effective learner now in order to maximize your experience in this life—and the next.

Remember the Source

It's all well and good if you want to gain a better understanding of the world around you, but you won't get very far

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unless you recognize where both the understanding and the world come from. Solomon wrote, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

Without a healthy respect for and knowledge of the God who created the universe, we are limited in what we can understand about His creation. While the world's most brilliant scientists have intimate and detailed knowledge about certain pieces of the puzzle, they do not understand that what they are looking at *is* a puzzle.

Understanding the character and plan of God allows us to look at the same pieces that are mysteries to the world's top minds, examine them and see where they fit in the big picture.

In pursuing the fields we enjoy, we will come to understand with increased clarity who God is and grow closer to Him as a result.

Class is always in session

American historian George Iles once said, "Whoever ceases to be a student has never been a student." In other words, being a student is a lifelong state of mind, not a role limited to classrooms stuffed with desks and with posters of atoms, prepositions or famous battles lining the walls. A true student's classroom is life and everything in it. His or her goal? To find the lesson in every situation and apply it personally.

When our approach to any scenario we encounter is, "What should I learn from this?" we will haul away treasure troves of useful knowledge. We may learn conflict resolution skills, refine communication skills or even come to understand ourselves better. We may learn patience, trust, self-control and kindness. There is no end to the possibilities as long as we keep our eyes open for them.

Pursue what you love

True, not everyone is excited about breeding whippets (sorry, whippet breeders). And although we all have different tastes and interests, there is bound to be *something* that excites you—something that, at your core level, you just connect with and enjoy.

Once you've found that something, I urge you to pursue it. Don't just dabble in it every now and then. As much as possible, integrate it into your day-to-day life. Whatever your something is, it can strengthen your relationship with God.

Why? Because "from the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature" (Romans 1:20, New Living Translation).

God's handiwork is present in *all* His creation. Science teaches us about the myriad intricacies of His designs. Math teaches us about His detailed sense of order and consistency. History shows the perils of disobeying His commands and His faithfulness to His people. Languages teach us the beauty and depths of the communication He has enabled between mankind and Himself. Art gives us a glimpse into the creative ability He has designed into us.

The list goes on, but the point remains: In pursuing the fields we enjoy, we will come to understand with increased clarity who God is and grow closer to Him as a result.

By the time this article goes to print, I will be returning from a 2½-week trip to Africa. I'm going because it's an opportunity to help others in need. But I'm also going because it's an opportunity to grow. I have no doubt that there will be much to learn from many I will meet halfway across the world—and I can't wait to learn it.

I can think of no better way to conclude an article on the importance of learning than by borrowing from the apostle Peter's conclusion in 2 Peter 3:14, 18: "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless . . . [and] grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." ***GN***

If you like reading our articles for teens and young adults in *The Good News,* be sure to take a look at our companion magazine, *Vertical Thought,* at **www.VerticalThought.org.**

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

You'll uncover lots of fascinating facts, meet many interesting people, discover what's really going on behind the scenes in our world, learn answers to your questions and find practical, down-to-earth guidance on all kinds of subjects.

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What Does Bible Prophecy Tell Us About the Time of the End?

For thousands of years people have been fascinated with predictions of the end of the world. If we look into the inspired writings of the biblical prophets and apostles, we find many prophecies that refer to the time of the end. Should we take them seriously? Are world conditions such that these prophecies could be fulfilled in our day?

Jesus Christ Himself talked of a future time so horrendous that no human lives would be spared "unless those days were shortened" (Matthew 24:22). Did He have our time in mind?

Many biblical warnings leave us in no doubt that increasingly cataclysmic events will occur before God's direct intervention in human affairs. These terrifying prophecies will see their fulfillment at some future time. The crucial question is *when.*

The eye-opening booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* examines exactly what Jesus, His apostles and the biblical prophets really said about the intriguing days referred to in Scripture as the time of the end. Download or request your free copy today!

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