



FROM THE EDITOR **GERALD FLURRY**

This Isn't Incompetence. This Is Treason!

America's stunning defeat in Afghanistan demonstrates the collapse of a superpower. How could the Biden administration have enacted a policy so devastating to the nation? The answer goes deeper than you realize!

THE AFGHANISTAN CATASTROPHE IS AN ABJECT, SHAMEFUL dishonor for America. The mighty American military simply *surrendered* to the Taliban. Our nation lost nearly 2,500 soldiers and spent \$275 million per day every day for 7,267 days on that war—more than \$2 trillion in 20 years. Yet our soldiers were evacuated in absurd haste to leave this nation to barbarians.

THIS HAS BEEN THE WORST FOREIGN-POLICY DISASTER IN THE NATION'S HISTORY. This terrible defeat was a spectacle seen by the entire world—and they were watching intently! It will mar our history, perhaps for the rest of time.

Many people say it proves Joe Biden's incompetence. But this catastrophe isn't the result of bungling and bad judgment. IT IS A DELIBERATE, PLANNED EFFORT TO DESTROY AMERICA.

And it has been terribly successful.

With its rushed pullout, the Biden administration managed to squander 20 years of sacrifices in Afghanistan in mere days. It permitted the very extremist group we went in to destroy to regain control and create another radical Islamist state. Back



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in July, it abandoned a massive air base that would have made an evacuation far easier and safer. It left 5,000 terrorists in its prison that the Taliban were able to set free. It failed to evacuate at least hundreds of Americans safely and abandoned thousands of Afghan allies. It sent an unmistakable message to both allies and enemies worldwide: *America does not keep its promises. We do not honor commitments. We cannot be trusted even to protect our own people!*

Now, millions of people are going to be greatly persecuted and killed. Children and women are going to be abused, raped and murdered. The Taliban immediately began gathering up girls age 15 and even younger and giving them to their fighters as “wives.” They began publicly executing women for failing to wear a burka.

The Taliban, a primitive organization of around 75,000 fighters, threatened America—the most overwhelmingly powerful nation in history—that if it didn’t completely vacate by the end of August, it would face consequences. Many other nations with people in Afghanistan pleaded with Joe Biden to remain and get everyone out no matter how long it took. Biden refused. *He obeyed his orders from the Taliban!*

Joe Biden is commander in chief of the most militarily sophisticated nation in world history. He could use that power to drive the Taliban and every other terrorist group out of Kabul for as long as he wanted!

But he didn’t. Instead he *begged* the Taliban to let our people out. He didn’t want to upset these thugs. He would rather OBEY THEM, even if it meant enraging and alienating America’s allies and abandoning American citizens!

Former war correspondent Lara Logan said this administration wants you to believe “that Afghanistan is complicated,” but, in reality, “the United States *wants* this outcome.” She said America’s leaders “could do anything they want to change this. And they’re not.”

She is absolutely right. This is not mere incompetence. It is calculated destruction. IT IS TREACHERY!

America’s Collapse

Just days before the evacuation was to be completed, a terrorist attack at the Kabul airport killed 182 people, including 13 American servicemen. The Taliban have armed checkpoints on every road leading to that airport. Clearly they *allowed* suicide bombers and armed gunmen in to commit that heinous act. But Biden’s people said they needed to *work with* the Taliban to prevent more attacks.

They even gave the Taliban a list of American citizens, green-card holders and Afghan allies, supposedly to facilitate their evacuation. THE TALIBAN ARE KNOWN TO TORTURE, MUTILATE, BEHEAD AND BURN PEOPLE WHO HAVE HELPED AMERICA! To give them such a list is beyond stupidity—it is a grotesque betrayal!

Usually when America retreats from a war zone, if it has to leave any armaments behind it destroys them so they won’t fall into enemy hands. The Biden administration did the exact opposite! It gave a staggering \$85 BILLION worth of U.S. military equipment to this extremist group—including that massive air base, 2,000 armored vehicles, 45 Black Hawk helicopters, 208 total aircraft, 10,000 air-to-ground rockets, over 2,500 bombs, and millions of U.S. dollars in cash. Victor Davis Hanson noted that the night-vision equipment, more than 20,000 grenades and 1,400 grenade launchers, more than 7,000 machine guns and 600,000 small arms, and millions of rounds of ammunition are “the perfect equipment for jihadist terror operations and asymmetrical street fighting” (August 30). OVERNIGHT, AMERICA CREATED ONE OF THE MOST WELL-FUNDED, HEAVILY ARMED TERRORIST NATIONS IN THE WORLD!

Hanson compared this haul of armaments with the military aid America has given to Israel over the last 70 years, which has totaled around \$100 billion. “In other words, in one fell swoop, THE PENTAGON DEPOSITED INTO TALIBAN HANDS ABOUT 80 PERCENT OF ALL THE MILITARY AID THAT WE’VE EVER GIVEN TO ISRAEL SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE JEWISH STATE.”

WHAT A WRETCHED DEED BY THE AMERICAN “SUPERPOWER”! This is as shameful as anything America has ever done.

America is not just declining, it is in the last throes of death. It is being destroyed before our eyes. Many are now in open despair. This Afghanistan disaster is the *worst evidence ever* of how the United States has COLLAPSED as a superpower!

Other nations around the world see this clearly. They are taking advantage of this and preparing to replace American dominance with their own dominance.

The facts are irrefutable. Many people see the damage President Biden is doing. The most clear-eyed analysts recognize that THERE MUST BE MALICIOUS INTENT BEHIND IT. These actions truly cannot be explained any other way.

What is particularly stunning is the way *all* of the civilian and military leaders in Joe Biden's administration called the evacuation a tremendous *success!* They repeatedly said that everything went according to plan, and that it was a "heroic and historic" operation. Reporters pressed them on whether they felt they made any mistakes, and the answer—time and again—was NO!

This proves just how arrogant and impervious to correction these leaders are. But even more—it shows you that THEY PLANNED for this operation to be so disastrous! It all followed their plan—to America's great hurt!

Many people recognize that there must have been malicious planning and intent behind what America did in Afghanistan. But almost NOBODY can tell you WHY the Biden administration is pursuing a policy so disastrous to America!

However, THERE IS A REASON. If you have followed the *Trumpet* for any length of time, you probably have a sense of what it is. There is a *spiritual dimension* to what is happening that you MUST understand.

The Obama Years

Many of the seeds for this disaster were laid years ago, when Joe Biden was *vice* president—second in command to Barack Obama.

I have written extensively on how, for eight years, the Obama administration was working dangerously against America's interests—and WHY. With a background in radicalism,

Marxism and communism, President Obama enacted a series of policies that wreaked havoc on the nation. He stirred up racial hatreds. He opened up America's borders to dangerous illegal immigrants. He massively expanded the government's control over the private economic sector. He sank the nation trillions deeper into debt. He attacked and cast aside the Constitution and other laws. He weaponized the nation's intelligence services against American citizens. He overlooked provocations by powers like Russia and China. He trashed America's relationships with allies like Britain and Israel.

President Obama also empowered Islamists in many ways. In Egypt he helped oust President Hosni Mubarak from power and supported the Muslim Brotherhood. He allowed America's outpost in Libya to be overrun by jihadis, who killed a U.S. ambassador and several soldiers. He failed to enforce his own demands on Syria, undermining America's strength and leaving a murderous dictator in place. Most importantly, he empowered the most extreme elements within the world's number one terrorist nation, Iran. He turned his back on the people of Iran who rose up in protest against their tyrannical leaders. And as the regime withered under economic sanctions, Obama threw it a lifeline: He authored the disastrous nuclear deal that gave the mullahs millions in cash and a clear path to build nuclear weapons!

Throughout his presidency, Barack Obama pursued treacherous pro-Iran, pro-Muslim policies. The way that Joe Biden just gifted Afghanistan to the extreme Islamist Taliban—along with \$85 billion in armaments—is entirely consistent with Obama's policies, and it must be viewed in that context.

What Joe Biden did in Afghanistan is a continuation of the DISASTROUS ANTI-AMERICAN POLICIES of Barack Obama.

WHY WOULD HE DO THAT? There is a sinister reason.

Many people can clearly see that Joe Biden is not really in charge of the government. He has filled his administration with Obama-era officials, and Mr. Obama himself is really

directing the show! Some say—correctly—that this is effectively *Obama's third term*.

Eight years ago, during Obama's presidency, I wrote my booklet *America Under Attack*. It explains the *reason* behind these ruinous policies. I wrote, "Many people can see that these are disastrous decisions. But we must understand that this isn't simply the result of ineptitude on the part of this administration, or naivety about how the world really works. We are seeing the aftereffects of a calculated, aggressive, satanic attack aimed at weakening and ultimately destroying the nations of Israel, starting with the world's most powerful nation!"

That booklet exposes the spiritual reality behind these terrible actions: **SATAN THE DEVIL IS WORKING TO BRING DOWN AMERICA.**

Many biblical scriptures explain and underscore this truth. You cannot grasp the malevolent intent behind Barack Obama's actions without recognizing this. (If you have not read this booklet, please request a free copy.)

Purging the Military

President Obama also *specifically* prepared for this summer's disaster in Afghanistan with some crucial decisions during his administration.

One diabolical act of his received little attention. As president, **OBAMA COMPLETELY RESHAPED THE LEADERSHIP OF AMERICA'S MILITARY.**

DURING HIS FIRST FIVE YEARS IN OFFICE, PRESIDENT OBAMA RELIEVED CLOSE TO 200 GENERALS AND MANY OTHER HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS OF THEIR COMMAND. Presidents often change some top military staff, but **SEVERAL RETIRED GENERALS CALLED WHAT OBAMA DID A "PURGE."** In 2013, retired Army Maj. Gen. Patrick Brady said, "There is no doubt he is intent on **EMASCULATING THE MILITARY**" (emphasis mine throughout). Retired Navy Capt. Joseph John told *World Net Daily* that "the U.S. Armed Forces have been under **RELENTLESS ATTACK** by the occupant of the Oval Office for five years" (Nov. 4, 2013). Retired Army Maj. Gen. Paul Vallely

told *Investor's Business Daily* that Obama was "intentionally weakening and gutting our military, Pentagon and **REDUCING US AS A SUPERPOWER**, and anyone in the ranks who disagrees or speaks out is being purged" (Oct. 29, 2013).

President Obama enfeebled America's armed forces in many ways—but **THIS WAS PERHAPS THE DEADLIEST!**

NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL OR NUMEROUS OR SOPHISTICATED THE MILITARY, IF IT LACKS STRONG LEADERSHIP IT CAN ACCOMPLISH NOTHING!

The leaders Obama put in office prioritized political correctness, racial and gender equality, and other outrageous causes that gutted America's defenses. They supported Obama allowing transgenders into the military. They directed resources toward promoting radical-leftist ideas in foreign countries rather than protecting America's interests and securing the globe.

Their goal was never to train soldiers to love their country and fight and even die to save their country! These leaders often trained soldiers to *commit treason* against their own country!

When Donald Trump became president, he worked to restore the might of America's military. But even he was disappointed with the quality of many of the leaders under his command. And once Joe Biden took over, he went right back to the Obama-era madness: offering transgender soldiers "free" gender-reassignment surgery, working to purge "racism" and "right-wing extremism," and so on. Reading lists for sailors and soldiers feature books that indoctrinate them in anti-American thinking. Earlier this year, when one lieutenant colonel wrote a book revealing how Marxism had infected the military elite, he was immediately fired! Prior generations of soldiers *sacrificed their lives* to **STOP** the ideology that this generation of soldiers is being taught in our military academies!

THESE DECISIONS BY AMERICA'S LEADERS HAVE DEADLY CONSEQUENCES! What happens when military commanders are more dedicated to promoting radical ideas than to defending the country? What happens when

they don't even believe in the ideals of the nation they represent?

SHOULD WE BE SURPRISED THAT MILITARY LEADERS NO LONGER FELT RESPONSIBLE FOR DEFENDING AFGHANISTAN FROM TERRORISTS AND WELCOMED THE TALIBAN TAKING IT BACK?

This is a dramatic fulfillment of God's prophecy in Isaiah 3:1-3, where He promises to curse America by removing "[t]he mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, The captain of fifty, and the honourable man," and other effective leaders.

Negotiating With Terrorists

When America announced it would be out of Afghanistan by August 31, the Taliban began taking over the country at lightning pace. Some sources say the offensive was masterminded by Khairullah Khairkhwa, a jihadist who has long aimed to eliminate America's presence from Afghanistan. This past spring he promised the White House that if the U.S. removed all its troops, the Taliban wouldn't attack. He became the chief Taliban negotiator speaking with the Biden administration.

The fact that Biden's team would talk with this man is deeply condemning! It turns out, America knows him well. He had been captured and was confined at Guantanamo Bay Prison. "Mullah Khairkhwa previously served as the Taliban's interior minister in Afghanistan, where he oversaw enforcement of brutal Islamist punishments, including beheadings and stonings," the *New York Post* reported. "After 9/11, he was arrested in Pakistan and sent to Gitmo in 2002. The Pentagon accused him of closely associating with Osama bin Laden and bin Laden's al Qaeda henchmen" (August 16). Khairkhwa and four other high-ranking Taliban terrorists were to be lifetime prisoners there. The Pentagon called them the "hardest of the hardcore" among Guantanamo prisoners.

But these five men were released—BY BARACK OBAMA. He let them go in 2014 in exchange for U.S. Army deserter Bowe Bergdahl.

THIS WAS ANOTHER MOVE BY OBAMA THAT

PROVED TO BE DEADLY! As soon as Khairkhwa was released, he reportedly went back to his terrorist activities. Now he has helped deal a crushing blow to America!

Still, Mr. Obama—through the Biden administration—IS TREATING THIS MAN AS A TRUSTWORTHY NEGOTIATION PARTNER. This is TREASONOUS!

It also DIRECTLY LINKS the current disaster in Afghanistan with former President Barack Obama.

Certainly the Biden administration's eagerness to treat the Taliban—these brutal terrorists who have killed so many Americans in the past 20 years, not to mention Afghan citizens—as a legitimate partner is very consistent with THE WAY OBAMA HAS BEEN WORKING FOR YEARS.

Most people, however, are only looking at the surface. All the blame and anger over the Afghanistan fiasco is being directed almost solely at Joe Biden! People are failing to see the bigger picture.

I believe Barack Obama *intended* Biden to take the flak for what has happened here. Joe Biden has talked about getting out of Afghanistan for years. He really believed it was best for America. And now this man is rashly carrying out this policy in the worst way possible both to humiliate America and empower our enemies, heedless of all the horrifying evidence of what tragedy it is creating.

I do not know exactly how this was orchestrated, but IT HAS ALL FULFILLED MR. OBAMA'S DESIRES PERFECTLY. America has retreated, it has proved itself to be a spent power, Islamists control Afghanistan and are ascendant in the Middle East, and Joe Biden is taking the fall for all of it.

From the beginning, Kamala Harris was Obama's preferred candidate for president. She has been invisible throughout the Afghanistan ordeal and is taking *none* of the blame. Neither is Obama. This is ALL by design! *Something* is causing many of Joe Biden's most loyal supporters to turn on him dramatically and fiercely!

Will we see a change in America's leadership soon as a result of this debacle?

Blotting Out Israel

The biblical book of Kings is part of the former prophets. And most of its prophecy is for this end time.

I have often pointed to the prophecy in 2 Kings 14:26-27. It is speaking of the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel—America most of all. It says, “For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, *nor any helper for Israel*. And the Lord said not that he would **BLOT OUT THE NAME OF ISRAEL FROM UNDER HEAVEN**: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.”

SOMEBODY is trying to **BLOT OUT THE VERY NAME OF ISRAEL!** And the only thing that is going to prevent that is *God’s intervention*.

That is the *real aim* of what Barack Obama has been doing and continues to do through the Biden administration. This gets to the truth in a way that no one else can recognize. Everything is happening in a way that causes maximum destruction to this country!

THE REAL MASTERMIND IS NOT EVEN BARACK OBAMA—IT IS SATAN THE DEVIL! He is the one who “made the earth to tremble”! (Isaiah 14:16). A human being could NOT plan out these events to create such scale of devastation. But the devil is extraordinarily shrewd and skilled at sabotage and destruction. And he intensely hates America, to which God gave the birthright blessings promised to the descendants of ancient Israel. (Request *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* for a thorough explanation.) So he is passionately attacking America.

Ephesians 2:2 calls Satan “the prince of the power of the air, **THE SPIRIT THAT NOW WORKETH IN THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE.**” Yes, this evil spirit **WORKS** in people! He is able to influence people’s thinking and emotions. The more that human beings allow themselves to be influenced by him, the more they can do terrible things! And you see a lot of that in our nations today.

Revelation 12:7-9 is an end-time prophecy that describes a war in heaven between righteous angels and the devil and his demons. It says that “the dragon [Satan] fought and his

angels [demons], **AND PREVAILED NOT; neither was their place found any more in heaven.** **AND THE GREAT DRAGON WAS CAST OUT, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: HE WAS CAST OUT INTO THE EARTH, AND HIS ANGELS WERE CAST OUT WITH HIM.**” Can you see that the *whole world* has fallen prey to the devil’s deceptions? He is far more active in world events than people realize!

Verse 12 warns: “**WOE TO THE INHABITERS OF THE EARTH AND OF THE SEA! FOR THE DEVIL IS COME DOWN UNTO YOU, HAVING GREAT WRATH, BECAUSE HE KNOWETH THAT HE HATH BUT A SHORT TIME.**” As his time grows shorter, Satan is more wrathful than ever!

WHY is God allowing this satanic attack on America? Look closely at 2 Kings 14:27, and you see that God will prevent the devil from blotting out the name of Israel. But how severe will He allow the attack to get?

Jeroboam

As *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* proves, many Bible prophecies explain WHY God is allowing all this to take place. God is correcting America for its sins! (You can read more about this in “Why America Really Failed,” page 4.)

Do you recognize the Afghanistan disaster as the earthshaking event that it is? This should shake us all to our core and cause us to acknowledge that **GOD IS CURSING AMERICA!**

Ultimately, this is not caused by a bad president. It is not caused by the wickedness of the radical left. **GOD IS CURSING US FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE NATION.** We ALL need to turn to God in repentance! We as a people are disobeying God and are facing the terrifying consequences! And because we refuse to acknowledge this, these wretched events are going to get far worse before this is over.

God has given America incomparable blessings, and He wants to continue to bless us. But He cannot do so while we live in rebellion against Him. He is correcting us—as a father who loves his children! (e.g. Hebrews 12:5-7).

And 2 Kings 14:27 indicates that, even if we fail to repent collectively, in His mercy, God is

going to ensure that the name of Israel is not **BLOTTED OUT!** He is going to save America “by the hand of Jeroboam”—temporarily.

As I have written for years, the end-time type of Jeroboam in this prophecy is Donald Trump. When he came to power, we saw a sudden and dramatic reversal in the direction of the nation! Mr. Obama’s plans were abruptly halted. So he and his people determined to do whatever was necessary to prevent Mr. Trump from getting a second term—including stealing the 2020 election! That too reveals just how much they are being influenced by the devil in his worst wrath.

But that is not the end of the prophecy. Verse 28 shows that this Jeroboam is going to *war* to “recover” something. I am convinced that is talking about the stolen election. Somehow, Donald Trump will return to power. He could even have the support of the military in doing so. I explain this in my article “What Will Happen After Trump Regains Power” (theTrumpet.com/23957). This prophecy

suggests that the diabolical influence of Barack Obama will be stopped.

The Bible provides the keys to understanding these otherwise incomprehensible events. **THE STARTLING TRUTHS THAT GOD HAS REVEALED ABOUT BARACK OBAMA OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS HAVE BEEN MADE ALL THE MORE VIVID AND PLAIN BY THE AFGHANISTAN DISASTER!**

As Amos 3:7 says, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” God explains all these truths so we can recognize what is happening, heed His warnings, and turn from our sins! He also gives the outline of where these events will lead so we can **SEE GOD’S HAND** in what is happening as events unfold according to His prophecies!

Every American needs to recognize this and act on it! But regardless of what happens nationally, God gives you the power and the choice individually to do so. ■

With editorial assistance from **JOEL HILLIKER**

Why America Really Failed

There is a host of reasons for America’s humiliation in Afghanistan. At its core, though, the problem was spiritual. **BY JOEL HILLIKER**

THE SHAMEFUL DEPARTURE FROM Afghanistan was agonizing for Americans. It was embarrassing to flee from a menagerie of Third World terrorists. It was humiliating to receive an evacuation deadline from the Taliban—and for the White House to weakly submit. It was insulting to hear the barefaced lies from this administration: that other nations support our withdrawal, that Americans had no trouble reaching the airport, that the Taliban have reformed, that al Qaeda is no longer a threat, that we accomplished our mission. It was painful to watch enemy nations gloat over America’s hasty and ugly retreat.

Americans are ashamed and angry at how

this was handled. But the truth is, even Joe Biden’s political foes agree with him on the basic premise: that we needed to get out. With Americans today, stationing troops in foreign countries is not popular.

This wasn’t so in previous generations. After World War II, the United States established a military presence in 3 out of every 4 countries on the planet. The most widely deployed nation in history, it oversaw *Pax Americana*—the relative world peace that has prevailed in the Western world since World War II. There have been no full-scale wars between major powers. The number of battle deaths per capita has been at a historic low.

Demands to withdraw from Bagram, Kandahar and Helmand province have been far more strident than they have been to bring our boys home from Okinawa and Iwakuni, Ramstein and Bavaria, Kunsan and Osan, Incirlik, Stavanger, Guantanamo, or any other of the more than a thousand American bases, forts, annexes, installations, embassies and missions worldwide. But the trend line is clear. A growing number of Americans don't really see the purpose in standing watch on foreign soil.

It's not difficult to understand why. We are filling our public education curricula with the toxic message that the nation was founded on genocide, built by slavery, and sustained by racism and oppression. Many Americans disagree, but the "enlightened" masses emerging from our universities and filling our bureaucracies, legislatures, corporate offices and newsrooms view the notion that American influence could be positive as egotistical and imperious. In their values-relative world, who's to say that the Taliban are any less deserving of sovereignty than the white males that dominate America?

America's former confidence, patriotism and pride, borne of a sense of purpose and destiny, have been supplanted by self-loathing. Why maintain a presence abroad when we don't even believe in the ideals for which the nation once stood?

America's loss of prestige and identity is disheartening to many people. But it has a definite, though little-understood, cause.

American Destiny

America's founders sought to establish a lasting beacon of liberty and democracy to the nations. Early American Lyman Beecher said America was "destined to lead the way in the moral and political emancipation of the world." The founders considered this a noble political experiment, one upon which the eyes of the world were set. Abraham Lincoln said the nation's success or failure would answer the question whether any government so constituted could long endure.

There was a sense of responsibility to the nations: to serve as an example, a

benefactor, and a haven for the oppressed and dispossessed. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," wrote Emma Lazarus, personifying the iconic Statue of Liberty. The nation believed in itself and the light of freedom it represented. And immigrants, aflame with the promise of the New World, flocked to America in waves that swelled ever larger by the decade.

This belief underpinned the sense of Manifest Destiny that extended America's borders clear to the Pacific Ocean and beyond. It informed epic territorial acquisitions by Thomas Jefferson and James Polk. Theodore Roosevelt led with energy and confidence as he constructed the Panama Canal and established the United States as undisputed overseer of the Western Hemisphere. This fulfilled God's dynamic promise to the seed of Abraham to give them "the gate of his enemies" (Genesis 22:17). This vital passageway joining the Atlantic to the Pacific proved to be a boon not just for America but also for Panama and many other nations. With expansionist ambition, the U.S. eventually gained control of all the great Pacific sea lanes, including the Aleutians, the Hawaiian Isles, Midway, Guam, Wake Island and even the Philippines.

America was blessed mightily with favorable geography, bountiful resources, fertile soil, flourishing population, industrial might and material prosperity. Many in America would take credit—but the reality is that these blessings were given by the great God. And this wasn't for the righteousness or greatness of our people, but because of prior promises God had made. These gifts fulfilled the birthright promises God had made to Israel's latter-day descendants—promises that included this: "And I will make of thee A GREAT NATION, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and *thou shalt be a blessing*" (Genesis 12:2). (This and many related prophecies are richly explained in Herbert W. Armstrong's landmark book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*. If you have not read this book—and even if you have—it is worth devoting the time to study it in light of recent events. We will gladly send you a free copy upon request.)

As America prospered, it increasingly embodied a set of noble ideals, enshrined in the nation's Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," and the Constitution, which was to "establish justice ... promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." The nation truly has been a matchless beacon of individual rights, opportunity, equality and liberty. Not only has it secured these benefits for millions of native-born citizens and millions more immigrants, it has inspired peoples the world over to pursue these same ideals. It has also devoted enormous resources and efforts to building, stabilizing, protecting and defending nations across the planet. It has been a genuine blessing to untold multitudes.

It is important to remember this history, to better recognize just how much America has lost.

Scripture shows that *retaining* all those promised blessings was *conditioned* on obedience to the God who gave them. In fact, God promised in His Word that if we *failed* to obey—if we cast Him aside, ignored His laws, and went our own way—He would replace those blessings with curses.

A Byword to the Nations

Colonial-era lawyer John Winthrop was aware of those scriptural warnings when he said in 1630 to a developing, infant nation: "We must consider that we will be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us, so that if we deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword throughout the world."

This has happened. *This* is what is driving a dramatic reversal of fortunes in America today. It has been in process for years, but it is epitomized by the Afghanistan withdrawal—and is prophesied to get still worse. And along with a growing number of our blessings, America has also lost its sense of duty to other

nations, its purpose, and its destiny.

While Afghanistan has absorbed all the headlines, similar retreats are happening elsewhere. On July 22, Joe Biden agreed to withdraw all American combat forces from Iraq by the end of the year. U.S. forces are already pulling out of Somalia, to the benefit of the terrorist group al-Shabaab. The U.S. is no longer supporting Saudi Arabia in Yemen, a boon for Iran-backed Houthis. America is retreating everywhere, from Pakistan to the Horn of Africa, to the elation of radical groups. Emboldened Islamists are increasing attacks on commercial vessels in the region. Great nations everywhere are making cold, pragmatic decisions on how to conduct themselves in a post-American world.

Right now, many observers can explain *what* is happening—they can tell you just how far America has fallen and how fast—but they cannot explain the true *cause*. We see a lot of finger-pointing—at the president, the previous president, bad advisers, poor military leadership, a lack of foresight and planning. Yet all these problems are actually *symptoms* of a much more serious and elemental cause.

That cause is revealed with crystal clarity in the Bible. It explains exactly why America has lost its leadership role in the world. In fact, it explicitly foretold it. You cannot understand Afghanistan without understanding this.

Mr. Armstrong spelled out the biblical explanation in *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*. Speaking of the prophesied fall of these two nations that have dominated the world for decades, he wrote, "Do you think so great a fall could not come to so great powers as Britain and America? Do you say, 'It *can't* happen here?' ... You need to wake up to the *fact* that the United States, even still possessing unmatched POWER, is *afraid*—fears—to *use it*, just as God said: 'I will break the PRIDE of your POWER'; that the United States has *stopped winning wars*—that America was *unable*, with all its vast power, to conquer little North Vietnam! The United States is fast riding to the greatest fall that ever befell any nation! The handwriting is on the wall!"

Mr. Armstrong wrote these words in 1980. His reference to the humiliation of America's retreat from Saigon in 1975 has now been *eclipsed* by the nightmare in Kabul.

Leviticus 26—from which Mr. Armstrong quoted—and Deuteronomy 28 are two crucial prophetic chapters that list the curses America would suffer if it rebelled against God. Ask yourself whether these are coming to pass: “But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments ... I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror ... And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. ... And I will break the pride of your power ... And your strength shall be spent in vain ...” (Leviticus 26:14, 16, 17, 19, 20). Consider the fear and weakness crippling American foreign policy. Consider the armaments the U.S. spent billions of dollars on that is now in Taliban hands. Consider the terror among those who are suddenly American refugees. Consider the Americans slain before their enemies—all in vain.

“And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations ...” (Deuteronomy 28:37). Winthrop was right to take this warning literally. Today, many are secretly or openly gleeful at the loss of American prestige.

Uncorrectable

Read through those chapters, and you see the *purpose* behind these curses: God is punishing us to try to help us see our sins, and to turn us back to Him. “God's punishment only reflects God's LOVE—turning us from *causing* evil results to the way that brings *happy* results!” Mr. Armstrong wrote. “God is now about to STOP US from bringing colossal evils on ourselves! God is not angry because we are harming HIM—but because we are harming *ourselves*—whom God *loves!*” (ibid).

Several times in these “blessings and curses” chapters of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 God warns, *If, in spite of all this, you don't turn back to me, then the curses will intensify.*

Sadly, however, even as Americans are sustaining grievous curses, *nobody will take responsibility*, let alone hearken to God. Joe Biden repeatedly insists he did everything right. His staff apparently feel they handled this situation perfectly. They watched thousands of stranded Americans, Afghans and other nationals shocked at their betrayal, they see America's international reputation in tatters—and in their minds, it all confirms the correctness of their decision. “So you don't think ... this exit could've been handled better in *any way? No mistakes?*” one reporter asked Biden. He responded, “No. ... The idea that somehow there's a way to have gotten out without chaos ensuing, I don't know how that happens.” What would this man have to see for him to recognize he could have handled it better?

“Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him” (Proverbs 26:12).

Hatred of admitting error is intrinsic to human nature. It matters not how much evidence accumulates, nor how spectacular are the failures that they directly cause, nor how grievous the curses become. Human beings *hate* saying, “I was wrong.”

Isaiah 9 prophesies about our uncorrectable nations. It criticizes the leaders who “say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars” (verses 9-10). Even as punishment from God escalates, we keep trying to solve our problems any way possible—as long as it does not entail humbling ourselves toward God. “For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts” (verse 13).

Many people are angry with Joe Biden right now. But this is a *national sin*. *Everyone* seems to think the problem lies with someone else. Yet America is being hammered by *all manner* of curses—economic curses, health curses, immigration curses, weather curses. Recognize these curses for what they are: punishment from God! God is cursing us for our sins: pride, arrogance, godlessness, family

breakdown, immorality and lust, materialism, greed, idolatry, hatred and violence. Our mass-scale sins, in which everyone has a part, *have consequences*.

Those two “blessings and curses” chapters—and the whole Bible—show you the *purpose* behind punishments. God is correcting us to help us see our sins, and to turn us back to Him.

If we refuse to be corrected, then what is God to do?

The curses will have to intensify even more. And God Himself will have to intervene even more directly—which is exactly what He prophesies He will do.

Proud Shall Be Made Low

The nations of Israel are guilty of worshiping money and other idols instead of the Creator God who has had a special relationship with them and their ancestors. “Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made,” the Prophet Isaiah wrote. Then, he prophesied of God’s dramatic entrance: “Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low” (Isaiah 2:8, 10-12).

This describes the return of Jesus Christ to literally take over the government of all nations. He will first punish mankind, then put down all rebellion and mortify their arrogance. Verses 17-19 say, “And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the

haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.”

God will humble America’s leadership, and the American people, including the conservatives—as well as the Taliban and the nation’s gloating enemies. He will make *all men* realize how small and pitiful they are!

“God is going to take mankind to the point where people will know there is no hope in man and they are willing to heed God’s Word—the Bible,” writes Gerald Flurry in *The Epistles of Peter—A Living Hope*. “The experiment of human government will prove itself a grandiose failure, and people will begin to recognize that they *do* need God’s help. What a world that will be! When human arrogance has been leveled, people will be humble and childlike, ready to be taught by God! But to reach that stage, mankind must experience destruction just short of destroying all humanity—every man, woman and child.”

How about you? Will you need to receive greater and greater chastisement from God before you recognize how much you need Him? Or will you humble yourself before Him and be taught by Him—today?

Realize that this is what it feels like to be in the last minutes of the millenniums of human civilization. America’s will is gone, its society is imploding, and its remaining positive influence on the world is fast evaporating. These curses are only going to heighten.

What suffering you can be protected from, individually, if you will learn the lesson that America is collectively failing to learn today. ■

With Enemies Like These, Who Needs Friends?

The Taliban and Iran are not enemies. They are fighting for the same team, and Iran is king. **BY BRENT NAGTEGAAL**

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE UNITED STATES invaded Afghanistan in 2001, the *Trumpet* forecast that it would end in defeat for the world's lone superpower. "While the U.S. wants to eliminate terrorism and is becoming much more aggressive in trying to do so, its efforts will fall short," wrote *Trumpet* managing editor Joel Hilliker. "It frankly does not have the necessary WILL to tackle the enormity of the problem!" (November 2001).

Afghanistan's collapse to the Taliban after America's ill-conceived and shameful retreat has proved that forecast true.

That same 2001 *Trumpet* article made another astounding prediction—also based on biblical prophecy: "[W]e can see unequivocally that the terrorist snake will survive America's aggression—head intact, and stronger than ever. ... Make no mistake about it: Iran is the head of the snake."

Realize the significance of this statement: Just as the world's lone superpower invaded Afghanistan with the most sophisticated weaponry ever used in warfare, we prophesied that by the end of the failed campaign, not only would Islamic terrorism survive, but Iran, the chief sponsor of terrorism, would emerge stronger than ever.

Has that forecast come true?

It is easy to recognize America turning Afghanistan over to the Taliban as a victory for Islamist terrorism. Yet how will this affect Iran's dominance as the head of the terrorist snake?

For over 30 years, *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry has directed readers to focus on radical Islam *led by Iran* as being the fulfillment of the "king of the south"

prophesied in Daniel 11:40: "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over." This military push from the king of the south initiates a forceful response from the king of the north, which is the first step plunging the world into great tribulation.

This prophecy shows that a powerfully destructive, radical regime in Iran is a direct prerequisite for end-time events to occur.

Yet when Kabul fell to the Taliban, prevailing media opinion was that Iran feared what would come next. "Taliban Surge Will Force Iran to Forge a New Defense Strategy," reported *Haaretz* on August 13. "Iran Braces for Life Next Door to the Taliban Once Again," Bloomberg headlined on August 19. Germany's *Deutsche Welle* wrote, "Afghanistan: Taliban Offensive Puts Iran in a Bind." These three headlines represent the broad consensus that while Iran might be happy America is gone from Afghanistan, it is terrified of the Taliban.

This narrative is worse than false. It is dangerously naive.

The Taliban gaining power will not counter Iran's hegemony in the region. In fact, not only did Iran plan for America's eventual exit from Afghanistan—there is proof it also worked with the Taliban for almost a decade to bring it about.

The Taliban takeover gives the forces of radical Islam a massive economic, military and ideological boost. And the power that will benefit most is Iran.

Campaign to Strengthen the Taliban

As America retreated, *Foreign Policy*'s Shelly Kittleston was the only mainstream reporter to show Iran's role in the Taliban's gains. Writing from Kandahar in July and August, Kittleston documented several firsthand accounts of Iranian intervention inside Afghanistan that welcomed, encouraged, financed and fought alongside the Taliban in pushing out the U.S.

"Several sources I spoke to on the ground across the country during a monthlong reporting trip between July and August this year said that Iran has played a major role in the conflict," Kittleston wrote. "While I was reporting from Kandahar, multiple security officials told me that Iranian weapons had been found in the hands of killed Taliban fighters in the area" (August 18).

She noted that when critical Iran-Afghanistan border crossings fell to the Taliban in early July, Iranian officials warmly welcomed the terrorists. Another curiously timed and underreported act of accord was the Taliban's high-level visit to Tehran in July, right in the middle of its lightning offensive across Afghanistan.

Yet these are only recent examples of a brotherly relationship between former enemies. A search through open-source reports reveals that Iran has been allied with the Taliban for almost a decade.

In 2013, representatives of the Taliban participated in a conference on Islam in Tehran. During the visit, footage captured Taliban officials embracing Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that by the end of 2013, Afghan security officials had evidence that Iran was training Taliban fighters inside its borders.

By 2015, the Taliban had its own footprint inside Iran. It had established four Taliban training bases in the Iranian cities of Tehran, Mashhad and Zehedan and in the province of Kerman. Initially, "Iran was supporting the Taliban financially," a senior Afghan official told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2015. "But now they are training and equipping them too" (June 11, 2015).

That same 2015 article interviewed a Taliban commander from central Afghanistan whose salary was paid by Iran. "Iran supplies us with whatever we need," he said. At the time, those supplies included 82-mm mortars, light machine-guns, AK-47 rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and materials for making roadside bombs.

This boost in support for the Taliban was the work of the late Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force commander Gen. Qassem Suleimani. The Middle East Eye reported that Suleimani visited Afghanistan in 2015, where he made several deals promising to "provide unlimited financial and technical support" to the Taliban. The Middle East Eye also reported that IRGC officers went to Afghanistan to train and advise Taliban fighters. As part of the agreements, Iran provided Taliban leaders safe haven.

In 2016, Afghan officials in the western Farah province announced that members of the IRGC were embedded in Taliban ranks. Farah Provincial Council head Jamila Amini told Radio France International at the time that 25 Taliban killed in a December 2016 battle were actually members of the IRGC.

A year later, the *New York Times* published an investigative piece titled "In Afghanistan, U.S. Exits, and Iran Comes In." It recapped a three-week "Taliban" siege of the city of Farah, where only a massive bombardment by the U.S. could rescue the Afghan troops. "[O]nly when the smoke cleared did Afghan security officials realize who was behind the lightning strike: Iran," the *Times* wrote.

Among the deceased were four senior Iranian commandos, whose funerals took place in Iran. The wounded were sent to Iran for recovery.

Reporting on the gravity of this Iran-led attack, the *New York Times* wrote in 2017, "The assault, coordinated with attacks on several other cities, was part of the Taliban's most ambitious attempt since 2001 to retake power. But it was also a piece of an accelerating Iranian campaign to step into a vacuum left by departing American forces—Iran's biggest push into Afghanistan in decades" (Aug. 5, 2017).

In 2018, several mainstream media stories further showcased Iran's role in the Taliban offensive. "Iran Funding Taliban to Affect U.S. Military Presence in Afghanistan, Say Police and Lawmakers," headlined *Arab News* on May 27, 2018.

A month later, on July 2, the *Times* of London featured a report written from Kabul by Anthony Loyd, titled "Taliban's Best Fighters Being Trained by Iran." The first two paragraphs are shocking considering the Taliban's takeover just three years later: "Hundreds of Taliban fighters are receiving advanced training from special forces at military academies in Iran as part of a significant escalation of support for the insurgents, Taliban and Afghan officials have told the *Times*."

"The scale, quality and length of the training is unprecedented and marks not only a shift in the proxy conflict between the U.S. and Iran inside Afghanistan, but also a potential change in Iran's ability and will to affect the outcome of the Afghan war."

Shortly before this *Times* piece, then U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo became the first American official to expose what Iran was doing. He stated on May 21, 2018, "Iran's support to the Taliban in the form of weapons and funding leads to further violence and hinders peace and stability for the Afghan people."

Through 2019, Iran paid bounties to the Taliban to target coalition forces in Afghanistan. According to a Pentagon briefing seen by CNN, the Haqqani Network (part of the Taliban) was reimbursed for at least six attacks against the U.S. or coalition forces in 2019. On Dec. 11, 2019, the Haqqani Network executed a well-planned attack on Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan involving 10 of its members and an explosives-laden vehicle. U.S. air strikes were required to repel the attack, in which two civilians were killed and 70 were injured, including four American personnel.

This highly underreported event took place less than a month before U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the killing of General Suleimani. The justification for his assassination was a strike that had killed an

American contractor in Iraq in late December. However, U.S. government officials told CNN that Suleimani's push into Afghanistan was also part of the reason.

Nevertheless, Suleimani's death on Jan. 2, 2020, did not slow Iran's support for the Taliban. Instead, Suleimani's number two, Ismail Qaani, took over the Quds Force. His domain of expertise is Afghanistan.

"Even though Suleimani's death has affected Iranian subversive activities across the greater Middle East, its Afghanistan portfolio might actually get a boost because the man who managed it as Suleimani's deputy is now his successor," wrote the *Hill* (Feb. 6, 2020). Soon after, sophisticated antitank guided missiles, likely from Iran, started to appear on the Afghan battlefield.

According to the *New York Times* in July 2020, two coalition Black Hawk helicopters were hit by antitank missiles. The *New York Times* wrote, "American and Afghan officials claim the weapons used in both strikes were most likely supplied by Iran, but they offered no evidence to support the assertion. The accusation would be alarming if true, as the influx of anti-tank guided missiles could not only give the Taliban a tactical advantage over the Afghan military but also suggest Tehran was trying to undermine the American mission as it is poised to wind down" (July 30, 2020).

One year on, that article seems almost prophetic.

Don't Ignore Iran

It is clear that by 2015, Iran was actively equipping, funding and training the Taliban as Tehran worked to remove the U.S. from Afghanistan. Thus, America's defeat is not just a victory for the Taliban, it represents a surrender to radical Islamic forces led by Iran.

In the November 2003 *Trumpet* issue, Mr. Flurry prophesied that America's war on terrorism would fail, specifically because America failed to go after Iran. "The *fruits* and *evidence* of the past two decades overwhelmingly prove where the king of state-sponsored terrorism is! The whole world can

see that. However, the solution to terrorism lies in **DOING** something about it! We must confront the source. The terrorist movement flows from Iran,” he wrote. “If the Iranian leadership were eliminated, the whole course of Mideast history would change radically for the better, because it is the *king*. Sadly, Bible prophecy reveals that will not happen.”

Indeed, it has not happened.

America has been unable to win in Iraq because it refused to go after the head of the terrorist snake: Iran. America has now been defeated in Afghanistan for the same reason. The Bible prophesies that Iran—not the Taliban, nor the Islamic State—will lead radical Islam. Whether it be from working with the Taliban or being called in to help check the Islamic State’s rise in Afghanistan, Iran will no doubt emerge far stronger after the Taliban’s takeover.

The Taliban and Iran are not enemies. They are fighting for the same team, and Iran is king.

Many observers are focusing on the threat Taliban rule might pose for the world, or wondering whether Iran’s power in the region will shrink. But Bible prophecy answers these questions.

Iran’s current push for regional control, and its quest for obtaining nuclear weapons to fulfill its genocidal ambitions, demands that we not take our eyes off Iran. What Mr. Flurry wrote about the Islamic State in Iraq in 2014 could be applied right now to Afghanistan: “The shocking barbarity of the Islamic State consumed a lot of the world’s attention the past few years. In one sense that was understandable. But if people had viewed those events in the context of Bible prophecy, they could have seen that there was an even *bigger danger* that was being overlooked” (*Trumpet*, January 2018).

That danger is the rise of Iran! While America’s defeat is an important fulfillment of

prophecy in its own right, we must not allow the Taliban takeover to cause us to overlook how Iran-led radical Islam has been strengthened.

While this fact is concerning, God also intends it to provide a profound sense of hope.

Recall Daniel 11:40. This prophecy says that Iran and its radical Islamist supporters will become strong enough to initiate a violent conflict with a German-led European empire. This terrible conflict will thrust the whole world into great calamity.

But there is good news in the end. Daniel 11 does not just warn of tremendous war. It also describes events leading to Jesus Christ’s return.

Daniel 12 is part of the same vision. Verse 1 says the catastrophe and suffering surrounding the coming of the Messiah will be “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time ...” Thankfully, this period of chaos and war will last only 3½ years (verse 7).

At the end of this period of terrible tribulation, God will powerfully intervene in world affairs. Yet this can only happen after the king of the south makes his prophesied push. Afghanistan’s fall to the Taliban surely accelerates the timetable.

In the context of Bible prophecy, the rise of radical Islam led by Iran is a sign that Christ’s return to Earth is imminent.

Then He will usher in a new age of peace and prosperity for all men. The wonderful new world government prophesied by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and other prophets will be established on Earth. At this time, those who were faithful to God “shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (verse 3).

Ultimately, this is where the present events in Afghanistan will end: in a dramatic climax that will see Jesus Christ come to end the age of man and begin a new world! ■

Why Europe Is Shaking

The foundations of European security have been rocked. How will it react? Prophecy foretells. **BY RICHARD PALMER**

THE FALL OF KABUL IS A CRISIS FOR EUROPE. Not just because they are watching their soldiers return home in defeat. Not just because it could create a terrorist haven. Not just because it could trigger a new refugee crisis.

It is a crisis because it shakes the foundation of European security: the belief that America will protect its allies.

Europe right now is in the same position the Afghan government was in six months ago.

The Afghan military had nearly 300,000 soldiers. Behind them stood fewer than 5,000 American soldiers stationed in the country.

The presence of these relatively few American soldiers, as we now see, was critical. It was, above all, a promise. America was committed enough to keep its personnel in the country, meaning that if the enemy wanted to overrun the Afghan military, it would inevitably run into America. That promise enabled the Afghans to control most of the country.

Then America pulled its soldiers out, suddenly, precipitously, and even with thousands of *Americans* still inside. This showed that the promise no longer stood. And the Afghan military collapsed immediately.

European Union countries have 2.4 million soldiers. Behind them stand 55,000 American soldiers stationed within their borders. In a full-scale conventional war with Russia, this would be too few men to defend a continent. But they symbolize a promise. Most of Europe is part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the agreement is written in black and white: If a NATO member is attacked, America will defend it.

This promise has enabled geopolitical pygmies like Estonia to flourish in Russia's shadow. It has enabled nations to save vast amounts of money on their militaries and to focus instead on building generous welfare

states or, in Germany's case, to build a world-leading export economy.

After the fall of Kabul, this foundation of European security looks far shakier. If America forsakes its Afghan allies so completely, could it do the same to others?

Alarm Bells

China hopes so. The editorial board of the Global Times, China's state-run news agency, wrote this threat to Taiwan: "From what happened in Afghanistan, they should perceive that once a war breaks out in the Straits, the island's defense will collapse in hours and the U.S. military won't come to help. [Government] authorities will quickly surrender, while some high-level officials may flee by plane" (August 16).

Closer to home, Ukraine is similarly worried. "[T]he nature of the American withdrawal from Afghanistan has set off alarm bells throughout Ukraine and served as a wake-up call for anyone who still believes that continued Western support can be relied upon indefinitely," wrote Alyona Getmanchuk, director of the New Europe Center (Atlantic Council, August 16).

It's a question being asked around the world. British commentator Melanie Phillips warned, "America's allies can now see that the U.S. is a faithless friend, the weak link in the chain of Western defenses and with untold consequences for their own security" (August 16).

Gérard Araud, former French ambassador to the U.S., wrote, "Europeans have nothing to expect from the United States in Ukraine, Syria, Libya and the Sahel beyond diplomatic support. Europe is in flames, but the U.S. fireman will not come" (Atlantic Council, August 18).

Those fires could break out more and more often. "If a band of brutal Islamist extremists can defeat the United States, China will have

no doubt that with time, resources and good organization, it will also prevail against the United States in its neighborhood,” former U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker wrote. “Russia will not take seriously any threat to push back on its military aggression and absorption of territory belonging to its neighbors. ISIS and al Qaeda will use the Taliban victory to renew calls for jihad against the United States” (CEPA, August 13).

It is America’s commitment that keeps Russia out of Europe. And over the last five years, the U.S. has been the main force restraining Iran and radical Islam. The Afghanistan debacle sends a lightning-bolt message: Europe will have to deal with the problems created by these emboldened powers on its own.

That doesn’t mean that this realization will hit Europe with enough force to get it to act right away. Europeans have enjoyed U.S. protection without having to pay for it. It will probably take a crisis or two to shake them from that torpor. “I doubt that Kabul will be the wake-up call they need,” said Araud.

But because of Afghanistan, those crises could be just around the corner.

Terrorist Safe Haven

The biggest fear about the Taliban’s return is that it could lead to another 9/11. If it does, there’s every chance that *this* 9/11 occurs on European soil. In the last decade, about 70 people have been killed in Islamist terrorist attacks in the United States. In Europe, it’s nearly 400.

The Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan has released hundreds of imprisoned al Qaeda fanatics, including some known to have been plotting to attack the West. A June 1 United Nations Security Council report warned, “Large numbers of al Qaeda fighters and other foreign extremist elements aligned with the Taliban are located in various parts of Afghanistan.”

Perhaps even more dangerous are Iran’s links to the new regime. Iran sponsors numerous terrorist groups around the world. Working together, what will they accomplish?

Compounding this is the threat of a new migrant crisis.

Even before the Taliban took over, 30,000 people fled Afghanistan each week. Sybille Schnehage, an aid worker in Afghanistan, warned, “We can assume that up to 3 million Afghans will make their way to Europe in the foreseeable future.”

Less than half that number of refugees from around the world—1.3 million—arrived in Europe in 2015. The resulting political crisis shook the foundations of governments across the Continent and sparked an outbreak of political extremism not seen since the 1930s. Can European politics as we know it survive the arrival of 3 million Afghans? What if, as has occurred repeatedly in Europe, that mass of refugees harbors even a few terrorists?

Last time around, Europe “solved” the refugee crisis by paying Turkey to prevent immigrants from traveling to Europe. But Turkey already has 3.7 million Syrian refugees and 300,000 Afghan refugees. Refugees are now a political issue in Turkey too. This time, that solution may not be available.

The potential for a new migrant crisis immediately arrests the attention of EU leaders. The day after Kabul fell, French President Emmanuel Macron warned, “We must anticipate and protect ourselves against significant irregular migratory flows that would endanger those who use them and feed trafficking of all kinds.” A foreign-policy spokesman for one of the European Parliament’s largest parties quickly warned on August 16, “We must now do everything we can to ensure that those fleeing get protection close to home.” In other words: *Make sure they don’t come here!*

Appalled at America

Considering these catastrophic consequences, it’s no wonder Europe is livid about the way America handled its evacuation.

France 24 reported: “European leaders ... looked on with dismay at the rapid collapse of two decades of a U.S.-led Western campaign in the country” (August 17).

“Across Europe, officials have reacted with a mix of disbelief and a sense of betrayal,” wrote Politico. “Even those who cheered Biden’s

election and believed he could ease the recent tensions in the trans-Atlantic relationship said they regarded the withdrawal from Afghanistan as nothing short of a mistake of historic magnitude” (August 17).

Afghanistan was Germany’s longest, most extensive military mission since World War II. The Germans responded to America’s request for help in Afghanistan 20 years ago. Now they feel their sacrifice has been casually tossed aside. Chairman of the Bundeswehr Association André Wüstner called the situation in Afghanistan “shameful” and claimed that veterans would be “enormously furious.”

Armin Laschet, leader of the Christian Democratic Union and a leading candidate to become Germany’s next chancellor, called Afghanistan “the biggest fiasco” since the founding of NATO.

All this means that European countries must do more to defend themselves. Politico wrote: “At a time when some European leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, have been pushing for the bloc to pursue a security policy less dependent on America, Afghanistan is bound to be used as evidence for why ‘strategic autonomy’ is necessary” (ibid). These leaders reason that if they don’t boost their independent military power right now, they will be forced to when crises worsen and the U.S. declines to step up.

A Prophesied Dynamic

In these events, we see a clear and specific Bible prophecy coming to the fore.

Daniel 11:40 is the crucial prophecy for understanding events in the Middle East. It states, “And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.”

“The king of the south” refers to radical Islam, led by Iran. Its main enemy lies to the north.

Other prophetic passages help us identify this northern “king.” The book of Revelation describes this dominant power in the end time as “the beast.” Revelation 17 depicts it

being led by a “woman,” symbolizing a church (e.g. Ephesians 5:22-27). Revelation 17 tells us this beast power is led by a succession of kings: It rises and falls *seven times* (verses 9-10).

In all world history, you can find an empire that is led by a church and has repeatedly risen, fallen and risen again in only one place: Europe. This fits with the geographic references in Daniel 11.

But Revelation 17 tells us that some important changes will soon come to this European power. Verses 12 and 13 show that it is composed of 10 kings who pool their military resources to create a gigantic war-making machine. The aftermath of Afghanistan is pushing Europe in exactly this direction.

The king of the south “pushes,” or attacks and provokes, this northern power. Nearly 400 terrorist deaths in a decade show this push is already beginning. We can expect it to intensify.

What is *not* said in Daniel 11:40 is another crucial element of this prophecy. “As these two powers build toward confrontation, America, Britain and Judah are nowhere to be found in the Daniel 11 prophecy,” wrote *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry in 2016. “The nations of Israel aren’t even in the picture. They will be helpless victims, not aggressors, in the coming war.”

America is allowing itself to be pushed out of the picture. Having once surrounded Iran and much of the Middle East, it has withdrawn from Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, it has withdrawn from Iraq, and now it has disastrously withdrawn from Afghanistan. Iran is free to push Europe even harder.

But the Europeans won’t respond in the same weak way as the Americans.

Once finally forced to act, Europe will reclaim its “strategic autonomy” by mobilizing a war machine that sweeps through the Middle East like a flood.

The vision in Daniel 11 leads right into Daniel 12, and it concludes with a countdown to the return of Jesus Christ to Earth (verse 12). This prophecy points us toward some catastrophic conflicts directly ahead, but it also directs us to Christ’s return. The early stages are already coming to pass—and we can expect events to conclude exactly as God prophesies as well! ■

Breaking the Brotherhood

Will the special relationship be another causality of the Afghan war? **BY RICHARD PALMER**

JOE BIDEN'S DECISION TO HASTILY withdraw from Afghanistan has created the biggest divide between the United States and the United Kingdom in decades.

The British government was so opposed to the pullout that it tried to piece together a coalition to replace American troops before they left. But with the U.S. evacuating so suddenly and Britain failing to get enough support from other countries and unwilling to remain in Afghanistan alone, British troops were also forced to hastily fall back. The Taliban swept across Afghanistan, into Kabul, and up to the airport gates.

An emergency debate in the House of Commons devoted *hours* to condemning the U.S. “The American decision to withdraw was not just a mistake—it was an avoidable mistake, from President [Donald] Trump’s flawed deal with the Taliban to President [Joe] Biden’s decision to proceed, and to proceed in such a disastrous way,” said Sir Ed Davey, leader of the Liberal Democrats.

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote on August 21, “We didn’t need [to retreat]. We chose to do it. We did it in obedience to an imbecilic political slogan about ending ‘the forever wars’ ...” Whom does Mr. Blair regard as an imbecile? Slogans about “forever wars” were a significant feature of the election campaign of Joe Biden.

Almost immediately after Kabul fell on August 15, Prime Minister Boris Johnson telephoned the White House. Biden didn’t pick up. British officials struggled for 36 hours to finally get him on the phone to coordinate a response.

As this crisis went from bad to worse to even worse, Britain made an obvious and reasonable request: Extend the deadline for withdrawal beyond the August 31 deadline decreed by the Taliban. The fact was clear that

not everyone would be evacuated by the end of the month: Afghans who helped British forces and even British citizens would be stranded, effectively hostages—or victims—of the Taliban. Labour Shadow Foreign Secretary Lisa Nandy said, “The painful reality is that there will be many people—Britons and the Afghans who supported us over two decades—who simply aren’t going to get out. This is a really dark moment ...”

Another way to put it is: This chaotic, avoidable, inexplicable betrayal is splitting Britain and America. And this split will change British foreign policy.

The most memorable speech from Parliament’s condemnation of Mr. Biden came from Conservative M.P. and Afghan war veteran Tom Tugendhat. “Like many veterans, this last week has been one that has seen me struggle through anger and grief and rage,” he said, “the feeling [of] abandonment of not just a country, but the sacrifice that my friends made.”

But Tugendhat was not just helplessly bemoaning America. He plotted a new course for Britain, saying: “We can set out a vision, clearly articulated, for reinvigorating our European NATO partners, to make sure that we are not dependent on a single ally, on the decision of a single leader, but that we can work together—with Japan and Australia, with France and Germany, with partners large and small—and make sure that we hold the line together.”

There it is—a flat statement of what many are thinking: Britain cannot depend on America and should turn more to allies like France and Germany.

This is not official government policy, yet. But after the fall of Kabul, Britain found itself much closer to France and Germany than to the U.S. These three countries in particular worked together, often in opposition to the U.S., trying to pick up the pieces.

This pivot to Europe is exactly the response the Bible said Britain would take in reaction to a falling America.

Hosea 5:13 warns, “When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his *wound*, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.” *Ephraim* in Bible prophecy refers to Britain (find proof in our free book *The United States and Britain and Prophecy*).

“Hosea prophesies that wounded Judah and sick Ephraim will go to Germany for help,” writes *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry in his booklet *Hosea: Reaping the Whirlwind*. “Why? BECAUSE AMERICA IS EVEN SICKER THAN BOTH OF THEM AND CAN BE OF NO HELP AT THAT POINT!”

The entire 20-year war in Afghanistan, and most of all its defeat and catastrophic retreat, is compelling proof that *America is sick*. It may recover, temporarily, under strong leadership from Donald Trump in the future. But the spirit of Hosea 5:13 is clearly visible in Britain already: *We cannot rely on the Americans. We must turn to Europe.*

This divide is a serious problem for both

nations. In the July 2021 *Trumpet*, Mr. Flurry wrote: “Britain and America have done great things by working together. Winston Churchill dedicated much of his life to building a special relationship between America and Britain. They fought together in World War I and won the war. The same occurred in World War II. Had Britain been left to itself, it could not have won! When these nations are divided, both are less secure. ... The division developing between our nations is a deadly weakness.”

Mr. Flurry then explained a prophecy of a time when men would work to blot out the name of Israel—referring to Britain and America, the modern nations of Israel.

“People are creating and aggravating divisions *within* America and Britain—regarding race, class, politics and anything else they can think of,” he continued. “Now they are sowing divisions between these two nations. Splitting Britain and America apart from one another means that they cannot help each other.”

The Afghan fiasco exposes how divided these two powers already are. And it is yet another proof that you can trust Bible prophecy. ■

Why Russia and China Are Rejoicing

America's rivals in the East are walking on Central Asian sunshine. **BY JEREMIAH JACQUES**

WHO ARE THE MAIN VICTORS OF America's chaotic Afghanistan withdrawal? At first glance, it may look like the Taliban came out on top. Within weeks of the United States' ignominious exit, the Islamic terrorist organization took control and, with state-of-the-art U.S. weaponry, suddenly became the best-equipped militant organization in history.

But in the broader geopolitical picture, the even bigger winners are China and Russia.

China Taunts Taiwan

For the last 70 years, the Chinese Communist Party has considered itself the government of not only mainland China but also of the island nation of Taiwan. The Taiwanese have worried that the regime will use military force to absorb their country. But they have managed to stay independent because of political support, weapons sales and, most importantly, security assurances from the U.S.

These assurances have been intentionally ambiguous since the late 1970s, but it has been well understood that if China waged war on the island, the U.S. would mobilize forces to defend it.

But now China sees Afghanistan as proof that those assurances are just empty rhetoric. On August 16, China's government-controlled Global Times emphasized the blood and treasure America spent in Afghanistan and said that was the reason for the hasty withdrawal and abandonment of U.S. partners in the Afghan government. It then gleefully asked, "[H]ow many lives of U.S. troops and how many dollars would the U.S. sacrifice for the island of Taiwan? ... From what happened in

Afghanistan, [Taiwan's leaders] should perceive that once a war breaks out in the Straits, the island's defense will collapse in hours and the U.S. military won't come to help."

"[T]he U.S. would have to have a much greater determination than it had for Afghanistan, Syria and Vietnam if it wants to interfere," the Times stated.

Chinese officials previously spoke in terms of "if" war breaks out. Since the Afghanistan withdrawal, they speak of "once" a military conflict erupts.

The Chinese also pointed to the U.S. failure to subdue the Taliban as proof that America has become a paper tiger, unable to defeat China even if it tried. "No major power was behind the Afghan Taliban, but the U.S. lost anyway," stated another Global Times article. "The U.S. calls the move a drawdown. It is, in the truest sense, a meltdown" (August 16).

The Chinese are emboldened. And the likelihood that Chinese President Xi Jinping will solve the "Taiwan problem" with an invasion has grown far greater.

The same may be true of Russian President Vladimir Putin in some of the former Soviet space.

Russia Eyes Ukraine

Ukraine is a top priority for Russia. Putin forcibly annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and ignited a smoldering uprising that put the country's eastern regions under the control of Russia-backed separatists. Ukrainian officials say the conflict has killed 14,000 people so far and worry that Putin could use the simmering violence as a pretense for major invasion at any time.

To deter such a move, Ukrainian officials have worked to strengthen their partnership with the U.S. and to bring Ukraine into the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization. So far, America has limited its involvement to supplying weapons and training, but U.S. officials have promised to help the nation defend itself in the event of a Russian invasion.

But as the world watched America's rushed exit from Afghanistan, one of Russia's highest-ranking security officials said it meant U.S. promises to the Ukrainian government were empty.

The U.S. abandoned its Afghan allies to "the whim of fate," said Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of Russia's Security Council and a close ally of Putin, during an August 19 interview with *Izvestia*. Ukraine's leaders are "obsequiously serving the interests of its overseas patrons, striving to get into NATO," Patrushev said. "But was the ousted pro-American regime in Kabul saved by the fact that Afghanistan had the status of a principal U.S. ally outside NATO?" Obviously not. He continued: "A similar situation awaits supporters of the American choice in Ukraine."

Both Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin see that the U.S. is deeply divided, war weary and in the midst of a profound leadership crisis. Both understand that America would have a difficult time mobilizing its partners to fight shoulder-to-shoulder again—whether for the type of unified and far-reaching alliance it led in Afghanistan, or even for the kind of smaller "coalition of the willing" it led in Iraq.

And both are enraptured by this new reality and the possibilities it opens up in their drive toward global dominance.

Inroads Into Afghanistan and Beyond

It is true that both China and Russia have plenty to worry about regarding the instability and jihadi extremism that the U.S. left behind in Afghanistan. While this chaos is 8,000 miles from America, for China and Russia it's just a Taliban-piloted Super Tucano away.

Some of China's most crucial Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure runs through the region, including the vast network of

highways, railways and ports that make up the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. China also shares a border with Afghanistan and deplores the possibility of jihadis entering its territory, or Uyghur separatists in China using Afghanistan as a base of operations. Meanwhile, Russia has several important allies—former Soviet states—that border Afghanistan and still considers the region a key part of its sphere of influence. One of Russia's most important military bases abroad is in Tajikistan, and the Taliban now controls the entire Afghanistan-Tajikistan border.

Neither China nor Russia want to send their militaries into Afghanistan, particularly since the latter failed to win a demoralizing, decade-long war there during the Soviet era. To safeguard their interests, they are instead focusing on political and diplomatic strategies.

In July, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and the leader of the Afghan Taliban Political Commission, Abdul Ghani Baradar, held a landmark meeting. Wang repudiated America's treatment of the nation and dangled major economic prospects in front of the Taliban, including an offer to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor into Afghanistan. Baradar and other Taliban leaders called China a "warm friend" and pledged to safeguard its investments in the region.

"The Afghan Taliban will never allow any force to use the Afghan territory to engage in acts detrimental to China," a Chinese statement after the meeting said.

Andrey Serenko, head of the Center of Contemporary Afghan Studies, said: "China has all the trump cards now. China influences Pakistan; China retains its position inside Afghanistan; they hold the Taliban accountable" (*Financial Times*, August 17). China could ultimately cause the Taliban regime to become so economically reliant on it that it could transform Afghanistan into a Chinese client state.

Meanwhile Russia, despite having followed America's lead and declared the Taliban a terrorist organization in 2003, has built a significant relationship with the group in recent years. The Russians see the Taliban

as a power broker they need to work with and have gone so far as to host its members for bilateral and multilateral meetings. These efforts are already paying dividends. While the U.S. and many other countries scrambled to evacuate their embassies in Afghan cities, Russia and China continued to operate their Kabul embassies at normal capacity.

The situation is complex for both China and Russia. But the bottom line is that as a result of the United States' chaotic withdrawal and the ineptitude demonstrated by the Biden administration, both countries are growing more influential in Afghanistan, and stand to become far more influential throughout Central Asia.

A 'Catastrophic Storm'

For decades, the Americans and British stabilized much of the world and helped advance civilization for many peoples. America's campaign in Afghanistan accomplished this for some Afghans and helped apply pressure against the nation's neighbor to the west, Iran. But the ultimate failure of this campaign shows that the temperate Anglo-American era is ending. Clouds are gathering for a dark new global epoch.

During His ministry on Earth, Jesus Christ prophesied of this approaching age, calling it "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). The term "Gentiles" simply means nations of the world which did not descend from the patriarch Israel. The Israelite peoples include the Jewish nation called Israel and also the

United States, Britain and other related nations.

"Once you understand who Israel is, then you can understand how the Gentiles—the non-Israelite peoples—have started to take charge of the world *already*," *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote in the February 2020 issue. "[W]hen this prophecy is completely fulfilled there will be two *major* powers—one revolving around Russia and China, and the other around Germany."

He noted: "These 'times of the Gentiles' are yet to be fully realized. However, we are in the outer edges of this catastrophic storm."

That was written 20 months ago. In light of Afghanistan's transition from Israelite control to Gentile rule, it is clear that we are even deeper into the outer edges of that "catastrophic storm."

In His forecast about the tempestuous days ahead, Christ said it would be a time of "[m]en's hearts failing them for fear" (Luke 21:26). But in the very next verse, He promises that the destructive storm will eventually break up and give way to an unparalleled radiance: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (verse 27).

These times of the Gentiles—the overcast outer edges of which the world has already entered—lead directly to Jesus Christ's return! He will end the era of mankind's violent rule. And for Afghans, Americans, Chinese, Russians and the whole world, He will bring in a new age of peaceful skies. ■

Death of the U.S.— Death of Freedom

The United States is paving the way for a new world of authoritarianism. **BY JOSUÉ MICHELS**

THE GLOBAL TREND TOWARD AUTHORITARIAN governments has greatly accelerated during the so-called coronavirus pandemic. Eighteen months ago, no one could have predicted unprecedented lockdowns, arrests of people not wearing masks, or enforcement of mandates with experimental vaccines. What can we expect in the *next* 18 months?

These alarming trends are the warning signs of what a world without freedom would look like. In World War II, the United States prevented a tyranny from wrapping its tentacles around the world. Then it fought communism and sought to safeguard democracy, free press and free speech. The dollar rose as the reserve currency, enabling free trade and aid for countries in need.

Fundamental principles the U.S. once stood for are under attack—including free speech, freedom of religion, freedom of movement, the free flow of cash. Subverting these principles erodes the foundation of free society.

Now these pillars of our current world system are crumbling. The one power that restrained authoritarianism is falling. The United States is virtually the only country in the world in which leading politicians have successfully resisted elements of the new COVID tyranny. But even the U.S. does not have the same belief in freedom that it once had. The spirit of tyranny is rising again—even *within* the U.S.—this time equipped with cameras, fingerprint sensors, biometric data, financial data and monitoring capabilities that megalomaniacs once only dreamed of.

As the United States fails to stand up for the freedoms it once defended, another power is filling the void. The Chinese Communist

Party has already implemented a fearsome surveillance state. But during the days of the coronavirus, another, lesser-feared power has revealed its true face. Europe is pushing for global control of the movement of every person, the exchange of every word, and the transaction of every cent.

The authoritarian response to COVID is actually a symptom of a world rejecting U.S. leadership. After Afghanistan, that leadership carries less weight than ever—and we can expect a more authoritarian world as a result.

Ignoring the Science

An Imperial College–London study released in March 2020 was *the* study that prompted lockdowns in the U.S. and United Kingdom. It was wrong. Its worst-case scenario predicted that 2.2 million Americans and half a million Britons would die. It suggested a peak in daily deaths after about three months. Applying the same model to Sweden, Swedish scientists predicted 85,000 deaths if the country did not lock down. But the Swedish government refused to be scared into submission. To this day, not even a third of these numbers have been reached. Sweden saw less than *a fifth* of the projected number. By August of this year, Sweden was nearing zero COVID-19 deaths a day, after experiencing fewer than 15,000 total COVID-related deaths.

Comparing restrictive California with open Florida is telling. As of this past March, in Florida, 8,979 people per 100,000 were infected; in California, that number was 9,079. The death rate in Florida was 146 per 100,000; in California, 135. Clearly, lockdowns are not the cure-all they were purported to be.

Still, many elites say the average person does not understand the science and needs to trust government experts. Thus, even with the pandemic on its way out, we are seeing an *intensification* of the attack on people's liberties. Some governments now say that *only the vaccinated* should have basic freedoms. Refuse the jab, and you can't travel, meet in groups, patronize restaurants, exercise or, in some cases, even work. Leaders claim this is necessary to stop a "pandemic of the unvaccinated" that risks the lives of all.

Leaders are finding a succession of excuses to block people from everyday life. Their motive is not public health but absolute control.

Look particularly at Europe. There, leaders are pushing for control of the movement of every person, the exchange of every word, and the transaction of every cent. "Europe's response to the pandemic is accelerating the fulfillment of one of the most crucial end-time prophecies of your Bible!" *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote in our July 2020 issue. He called this "one of the most important effects of the global panic over COVID-19."

Europe is seeking absolute control, and there is a profound reason.

Vaccine Passports

The Italian government introduced a "Green Pass" on August 6, without which citizens are barred, fined or arrested for many normal activities. The app was reportedly downloaded 20 million times in its first three days. It is now mandatory for long-distance public transport and for those who work at schools.

The vaccination efforts have the blessing of the Vatican. Pope Francis was vaccinated in January and requested his Green Pass as soon as they were introduced.

At first, only the vaccinated, recovered or tested could use the Green Pass. Then European governments took the next step: They removed the option to prove you had tested negative or made tests an impossible financial burden.

But tens of thousands have protested the pass. Giorgia Meloni, party leader of the Brothers of Italy, said this "ghastly" trend is

"unconstitutional madness. For us, individual freedom is sacred and unassailable." She called it the "last step toward the realization of a George Orwellian society" (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 14). Yet such Orwellian measures are sweeping Europe.

On August 20, France made its health pass compulsory for employees who work in the leisure, cultural, catering, long-distance transport or commerce sectors. Anyone who works face-to-face with the public must get the jab or take a COVID test every 72 hours at their own expense. Around 1.8 million people are affected by the new law.

Millions of people fear exclusion from work, from school, from most of society because they have not taken the vaccine. Thousands have demonstrated against these measures. Videos went viral of police brutality against demonstrators. The German government has responded by putting certain citizens under nationwide surveillance: monitoring meetings, intercepting e-mails, screening bank accounts and tracking financial flows. Those surveilled are not right-wing extremists or terrorists but in some cases just critics of the government's coronavirus measures.

These measures do not save lives. But they do increase government control.

Europeans are getting accustomed to authoritarian rule, police control and intimidation tactics. Vaccine passports ensure the government knows where you are at every point of the day. The technology being used today to track, check and exclude people from activities of the government's choosing could easily be used for whatever purposes authorities want.

The virus may vanish, but will the government control apparatus vanish with it?

Ross Clark warned for the *Spectator* that vaccination passports and electronic ID cards are quickly morphing into something like China's social credit system, which blacklists people for antisocial offenses and rewards them for good behavior. The UK, he wrote, has already stepped in that direction: "[T]he government is planning to introduce a health app in January which will monitor our

shopping, our exercise levels, or intake of fruit and vegetables—and reward us with virtue points which we can exchange for discounts, free tickets (to what kind of event is not clear) and other goodies” (July 24).

What we are seeing in Europe in particular portends worse to come. Mr. Flurry warned: “THE PEOPLE OF EUROPE ARE BEING CONDITIONED TO ACCEPT MORE TYRANNICAL LEADERSHIP” (op cit). In fact, this trend lays the foundation for modern tyrannies described in Bible prophecy.

Digital Currencies

While governments are deciding which citizens can and cannot take part in social events and business, they are also undertaking a related project: waging a war on cash.

Banks can track credit-card and debit-card spending, and can pass this information on to governments. Cash, however, provides an easy way around that. This could soon change.

In January, the European Central Bank and the European Commission agreed to cooperate on the technical implementation of a digital euro. A 2021 survey by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) found that 86 percent of central banks are researching a potential digital currency, 60 percent are experimenting with the technology, and 14 percent have already deployed pilot projects. These technologies promise a more secure and efficient financial world. Yet they also give government central banks absolute control.

Digital currencies would allow governments to track every cent in the financial system, from businesses to the digital wallets of individuals.

Some leaders may have good intentions, but their desire for control is spinning quickly out of control.

On Oct. 19, 2020, the International Monetary Fund hosted a discussion on how central bank digital currencies might facilitate cross-border payments. In the discussion, the BIS’s general manager, Agustín Carstens, a powerful figure in global monetary policies, said: “We don’t know who’s using a \$100 bill today, and we don’t know who’s using a 1,000-peso bill today.”

But with the central bank digital currency, “the central bank will have absolute control on the rules and regulations that will determine the use of that expression of central bank liability, and also we will have the technology to enforce that.”

Today, leaders will arrest you for taking a walk. Imagine how they will use “absolute control” over your cash flow and “the technology to enforce that.”

Former German Economics Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg wrote a thesis about the high level of corruption in cross-border payments. His solution to criminals and terrorists abusing the ability to send payments is the same as Carstens’s: more supervision and introducing digital currencies that are tightly controlled by governments.

Money Metals Exchange director Clint Siegner warned that with such use, government digital currencies become “a tool for eliminating privacy and for central bankers to force citizens to use currency exactly when, where and how they are told.” He said it gives bureaucrats extraordinary power: “Officials could limit spending to certain geographic boundaries, and thereby impose a restriction on travel. They could pick winners and losers, favoring some merchants or industries or crushing others” (July 12).

People like Carstens insist they only want to target criminals, but say they’ll protect people’s freedoms. But these were the same promises we heard when COVID passports were introduced. Despite assurances that they would not curtail freedoms, they are proving to do just that.

The war on cash is a war on liberty. It is no coincidence that politicians are pushing for a digital euro and digital passports at the same time.

There have been a lot of problems with the U.S.-led financial system. But look at the systems now competing to replace the dollar. A switch to a euro- or renminbi-based financial system would not merely change the color of the paper that people use. It would change the character of the whole system.

Religious Control

America was in part founded on the basis of religious freedom. Many ancestors of U.S. citizens fled across the Atlantic because of the religious persecution they suffered in Britain and Europe. This ideal of religious freedom has uniquely shaped America. In the decades since its founding, many other countries have followed America's example to some extent, giving religion a small part in public life.

Now, however, this trend is reversing. This development, more than any other, reveals where our world is heading. And again, it is *Europe* we must watch closely on this point.

On July 23, France's National Assembly passed a new law aimed at regulating religious groups, particularly Islamic ones. The bill seeks "to strengthen the respect of the principles of the republic"; it strictly requires these groups to report to the government and restricts wearing religious symbols in public. (Interestingly, just the week before, President Emmanuel Macron visited the historic church of Notre Dame de Lourdes—the first pilgrimage of a French head of state since 1941. So while some religious activity must be limited, endorsing Catholicism is apparently fine.)

Across Europe, secular and religiously pluralistic nations are encouraging Catholicism at the same time that their tolerance for other religions shrivels. The Hungarian government, while taking strict stands against immigration (which is mostly Islamic), has entered a strong cooperation with Catholic and Protestant churches. Next door, Austria under Catholic Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has done the same. Germany, after 16 years of Chancellor Angela Merkel's rule, could also soon have a staunch Catholic chancellor with Armin Laschet.

One can understand why historically Catholic Europe would seek to clamp down on the spread of Islam within its borders given the flood of immigration it has absorbed and the Islamist terrorist attacks it has suffered in recent years. But this trend must be viewed in light of Catholicism's defining role on the Continent.

For centuries, Europeans lived under the dictatorial rule of the Holy Roman Empire as it experienced a series of revivals and collapses. This history is filled with bloody crusades, inquisitions and pogroms, motivated by a church that felt responsible to convert humanity to the "only true religion." And it repeatedly used the military and political muscle of civil leaders to enact its aims.

Unbeknown to many, the U.S. vanquished one of these revivals by defeating Adolf Hitler in World War II. That was the sixth of seven prophesied resurrections of this empire. (These resurrections are explained in our free booklet *The Holy Roman Empire in Prophecy*.)

In our day, "when the transgressors are come to the full" and because of the world's sins, God is allowing this ancient, bloody empire to rise again, one final time (Daniel 8:23). Prophecy shows that it will be this church-state system that replaces U.S. dominance in the world.

As it has done so often in the past, this empire will suppress freedom, trample on human rights and establish a dictatorial religious regime.

The Beast of Revelation

America and Britain have upheld principles of relative freedom for 200 years. We take them for granted. We see a free world as the default. But we're already seeing a world with radically different political philosophies. As future emergencies arrive, the answers will be more authoritarian. And it's clear America lacks the strength to go against that grain.

Bible prophecy confirms this, giving a shocking picture of a post-American world.

All the authoritarian trends sweeping through Europe take on far greater significance in the context of the Bible's prophecies of Europe's future.

The final rise of this ancient European religious empire will bring specific consequences for individuals around the world. Revelation 13:17 warns of a time coming when "no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

Revelation 18 describes the financial system led by this new power. It dominates the world, and businessmen benefit—but it is very different from America’s. Trade goods includes “slaves, and souls of men” (verse 13).

The Bible symbolizes this government as a “beast” (request *Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?* for proof). Those who refuse to accept the mark of this beast will not be able to hold a job or engage in business. Today, some people believe that *vaccine mandates* are this “mark of the beast.” Others believe that a *digital currency* will be this mark. Indeed, these can both lead to people being excluded from

business. But they are not what this prophecy is referring to. (Read our article “Coronavirus and the Mark of the Beast” at theTrumpet.com/22230 to learn more about this.) Still, the infrastructure we currently see rising may be the means through which the mark of the beast is enforced.

The fall of the U.S. opens the way for this beast to rise once more. Thankfully, however, prophecy also reveals that this empire will be confronted and supplanted by Jesus Christ Himself, who will then rule this world as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:15-16). ■

War on the Dollar

THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, OTHER global and regional institutions, and powerful individuals like Bill Gates are calling for a “great reset” of the economy in response to the pandemic. They say this will help eliminate poverty. Plans include the introduction of wealth taxes, governmental regulations and infrastructure-spending programs. After shutting down the economy, they plan to rebuild it in a socialist style.

This is a direct attack on the current global financial system—specifically on its dependence on America. The coronavirus is being used as a pretext.

One system already in place is intended to replace the United States dollar as the global reserve currency. In the 1970s, people feared the dollar would lose its value. The proposed solution was special drawing rights (SDRs) allocated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). SDRs were created as “the principal reserve asset in the international monetary system.” Thus far, they have gotten little use. But because of the pandemic, SDRs have received fresh life.

American economist and author Jim Rickards warns that the use of SDRs could cause the dollar to cease to function as the global reserve currency. Instead, he warned, it would become a local currency that is no

longer used to determine the price of oil nor as the settlement and balance of payments between countries. The large corporations could then “publish their financial results in SDRs, not in dollars.”

Since their creation, SDRs have been allocated only four times. The record high was \$250 billion, allocated in 2009 during the Obama administration. Now the Biden administration, largely controlled by Obama, has allowed an allocation more than twice that: On August 2, the IMF announced the “historic” allocation of \$650 billion in SDRs.

This extreme measure was allegedly taken to help poor countries replenish their financial reserves, which were decimated in the coronavirus crisis. In reality, most of the allocations go to economically strong countries. Even worse, each nation that is given SDRs could technically trade them in for U.S. dollars at low cost. While they could also trade them in for euros or renminbi, the dollar is the far more favored currency. Most countries have to get dollars to trade anyway, and SDRs are an easier way to get them.

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio wrote on March 24 that “there is absolutely no reason to promote an international reserve currency over the U.S. dollar.” He warned that tyrannies such as Russia and China could make use

of the allocated SDR and harm the U.S. Unsurprisingly, the main powers calling for SDR allocations are China and Europe.

Also noteworthy is that the IMF is considering a digital version of the SDR. China and the EU are also actively working on digital currencies. By themselves, China and Europe may not have the strength to replace the dollar, but together, connected through the IMF, they may break its neck. SDRs, while they harm the dollar, actually strengthen the other currencies in the IMF's basket. For example, SDRs can be traded in for Chinese renminbi, thus strengthening China's currency as a global reserve. China in turn could request that the IMF increase the renminbi's share in its basket of currencies and diminish the share the dollar holds. At some point the dollar would become one of many equal reserve currencies connected through SDR.

Importantly, those contributing to the basket of currencies also have a say on who

receives SDRs in the future. As the U.S. loses power, this trend could quickly escalate.

A recent example shows what power the IMF could soon hold. On August 18, Reuters reported that the IMF suspended Afghanistan's access to its resources, including \$440 million in new monetary reserves. The U.S. requested the ban because of the Taliban's takeover of Kabul. In this case, few criticized the action. But who knows whom the IMF may exclude tomorrow if China and Europe call the shots?

However it may occur, the world is preparing to shun the dollar as the primary reserve currency. Once this happens, the U.S. loses its economic clout. This would open the door for another power to control world trade according to its own rules and dictates.

Once the dollar is replaced and a digital currency is established, we will wake up in a radically different world.

JOSUÉ MICHELS

A Positive Vision of Empire

Empire has a bad name today. But what happened in Afghanistan shows why the world needs empire! **BY GERALD FLURRY**

ANOTHER WORLD POWER HAS FAILED IN Afghanistan. They call that country "the graveyard of empires." Several empires have failed there and entered decline. Now the American superpower has dramatically failed. All human empires eventually die.

The end of America's world dominance follows that of the British Empire before it. Even though these related nations did a lot of good for the world, Britons and Americans today are ashamed of their history as great powers.

What they do not realize is that these two nations actually point to an empire that is going to last forever and bring peace to this whole world!

What happened in Afghanistan has caused

a lot of people to despair. But it points to an inspiring hope that this world acutely needs.

Churchill's Motivation

Historian Martin Gilbert wrote the seven-volume official biography of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. This great man accomplished the staggering feat of saving the Western world from Nazi tyranny! You would think that revealing Churchill's *motivation* would take up an entire volume. The first book that Churchill himself wrote was about the theme that motivated him so powerfully. Yet Gilbert wrote little about Churchill's highest purpose. He apparently did not understand or was wary of providing the big picture—the motivation of Winston Churchill.

THE LODESTAR THAT GUIDED CHURCHILL'S ACTIONS WAS HIS DESIRE TO SUSTAIN THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

Lord Moran, Churchill's doctor for the last 25 years of his life, said, "If Winston has believed in anything at all in the course of his long life, it has been in the British Empire and all that it stands for."

So strong was this motivation that when Britain prevailed and ended World War II, and the world could see Churchill's role in saving it, he felt like a failure. The reason was that although Britain had survived and won the war, he knew the British Empire was collapsing.

Why was the empire so important to this man? It wasn't just about winning wealth, status, power or pageantry for his nation. Kirk Emmert summarized Churchill's view this way: "The glory of the British Empire was its service to a cause that transcended Britain, that transcended history, that transcended time itself, that acts to lift human life away from barbarism and savagery towards civilization and human excellence" (*Winston S. Churchill on Empire*).

That truly is a motivating and inspiring vision! Look around and you *know* this world is filled with "barbarism and savagery." Afghanistan under Taliban rule is a perfect example. There is a REASON why people were so desperate to escape when the Taliban closed in around Kabul. An empire that lifts human life away from such degradation and "towards civilization and human excellence" is truly good. This world *needs* that kind of an empire!

Think of the terrible cultural practices human nations have devised. Think of the heinous things that dictators do to their *own people*, let alone their enemies. Think of nations who terrorize the world with suicide bombs and who are working to get nuclear missiles. Don't you want to be part of an empire that *stops* those evils with overwhelming power and force? Don't you want to help as many who are suffering as possible? You can do that with an empire.

Churchill realized the value of an empire and how much it can accomplish if everybody

is behind it. It was a high and noble purpose in his mind. The British Empire was working with peoples who had languished in poverty and under barbaric practices. For millions of people, the empire provided prosperity, freedom and direction that civilized their lives. Churchill was willing to give up anything, even his own life, for that cause.

In Emmert's words, Churchill believed in "the fostering of civilization as the highest purpose of empire." Beyond that, he said that "empire civilizes both the ruled *and their rulers*." Yes, empire thinking ennoble those who believe in it, like it did Churchill. James Anthony Fraude wrote in *Oceana*, "A man ... who is part of an institution, who has devoted himself to a cause—or is a citizen of an imperial power—expands to the scope and fullness of the larger organism ... His thoughts are wider, his interests less selfish, his ambitions ampler and nobler."

Nineteenth-century British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli stated in a famous dictum: "I have endeavored to develop and strengthen our empire, believing that combination of achievement and responsibility elevates the character and condition of a people." Developing and strengthening an empire the right way builds character in people! An empire transcends the individual, the self—it transcends politics and petty divisions. That motivation makes leaders stronger, and it makes followers into leaders. And if your empire is a force for good in the world, it is amazing what you can achieve!

A Vision Lost

Look at America and Britain today, though, and it is clear that this noble sense of cause is absent. Fewer and fewer are willing to dedicate or lose their life for what our nations stand for. As a whole, our peoples cannot even agree on what our purpose should be.

The very concept of empire has been viciously attacked. That thinking infected the British Empire for decades and led to its dissolution and fall. After World II, people began using the word "commonwealth" to describe Britain rather than "empire." Only

nations that want to build an empire like that word. (Germany, for one, loves it.) That change revealed a total turnaround and retreat from everything that made the British Empire so successful! And today, even Britain's *commonwealth* is accused of being a racist and oppressive institution—a ridiculous, ignorant, baseless charge.

DID YOU KNOW THAT GOD WAS THE ONE WHO GAVE BRITAIN ITS EMPIRE AND WHO MADE AMERICA SUCH A DOMINANT POWER? THIS SHOULD BE A SOURCE OF GREAT PRIDE TO OUR NATIONS—NOT SHAME!

Regarding the birthright nations that descended from the great patriarch Abraham, God promised He would make one (Britain, modern-day Ephraim) an empire and the other (America, modern Manasseh) the greatest single nation ever to exist (Genesis 35:11). He promised to give them strategic sea gates that would protect them and allow them to overcome their enemies (Genesis 22:17). When God wants to make a nation into an empire, He really can make it great!

Britain and America did an enormous amount of good in the world, compared to other empires in history. Yet even their power and beneficence is only a small foretaste of what God is going to accomplish with His Empire, the Kingdom of God!

A Different Kind of Empire

God revealed to the Prophet Daniel a vision of a different kind of empire. He prophesied of four world-ruling empires that would rise and fall throughout history.

Daniel explained this to the king of the first of those empires, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon: “Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay” (Daniel 2:31-33).

This prophecy provides a stunning overview of world history! Daniel explained that the statue's head of gold represented the rule of

the Babylonian Empire (verses 37-38). This empire would be overcome and succeeded by the Medo-Persian Empire, which would subsequently be supplanted by the Greek Empire, which would then be overtaken by the mighty Roman Empire.

Daniel described that empire: “And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise” (verse 40). What a fitting description of Rome at its imperial peak! These Gentile empires truly can be brutal. Though they had some stunning achievements, at their worst they bring terrible suffering and oppression! Their legacy is very different from that of the empires of Abraham's descendants.

Notice how the quality of metal in the statue degenerates as it progresses, symbolizing how these four successive empires degenerate in their dignity and culture over time. Mankind is not getting better and better.

Look at history, and look at what is happening in this world and how evil people can be to one another. In Daniel 7, a companion prophecy, these four successive empires are symbolized by *beasts*—ferocious beasts that love to kill!

Note briefly, too, the details recorded about that last empire—with two legs (symbolizing Rome's division into two parts, with capitals in Rome and Constantinople), feet of iron and clay, and finishing with 10 toes (Daniel 2:41-43). Put together with other prophecies, we recognize that this describes the modern-day resurrection of that old Roman Empire, coming together in Europe today. It is disunified like iron mixed with clay, and it will ultimately include 10 kings (e.g. Revelation 17:12).

The great majority of this extraordinary prophecy has already been fulfilled, step by step! SO WE CAN BE CONFIDENT THAT THE REMAINING DETAILS ARE CERTAIN TO COME TO PASS.

Notice, then, what happens next. Daniel 2:34-35 show a great stone SMASHING the entire statue, breaking it to pieces and reducing it to powder that is carried off by the wind! Then the stone grew to become a

great mountain that filled the whole Earth. Verse 44 explains the symbolism: “And in the days of these kings [the 10 European kings in the end time] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed ... but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

We are living in the final days before this magnificent Empire of God is established! God is about to break all these other empires to pieces. We can thank God for that! Watch world events, and you quickly realize you wouldn't want anything other than this outcome!

The history of empires and nations teaches us that *men cannot rule over men*. Only God can rule justly. He is about to establish His Empire *in place* of the governments of this world. And He is right now preparing an organized government of leaders who will rule as *He* guides and directs.

When that Empire is established, it will bring beauty to this world and to the universe that is truly breathtaking!

Preparation and Training

The Bible is full of wonderful details about the rule of this coming Empire. It truly will lift human life away from barbarism and savagery—and toward a transcendent civilization like this Earth has never seen!

Herbert W. Armstrong wrote a booklet called *The Wonderful World Tomorrow—What It Will Be Like*. Its Bible-based descriptions of that Empire are truly inspiring! We will gladly send you a free copy upon request.

That coming government will be implemented by Jesus Christ, overseeing resurrected and glorified servants of God like the Prophet Daniel.

Yes, by giving him responsibilities and even throwing him into close contact with mighty kings, God was actually preparing Daniel for rulership in this coming Empire. After hearing Daniel's prophecy, “the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. ... Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of

Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon” (Daniel 2:46, 48). Daniel truly was trained and prepared for kingship!

Daniel's friends, too—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—were exalted (verse 49). They went on to bear powerful witness for God, standing up to one of the most potent and terrible leaders in world history without flinching (Daniel 3). You can be sure that they too thus qualified for high office in God's Kingdom.

These men received high offices even within physical kingdoms during this age of man. God knows that with men who respond to Him like that, men who believe in God's noble cause enough to sacrifice *anything* for it—even to die for it—He can do great things! He can use their help in building an empire that will truly change the world!

Through the ages, this same scenario has played out in the lives of dozens, hundreds and many thousands of saints whom God has called out of this world: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Hannah, Samuel, David, and so many others. God prepared these people for imperial rule! The Apostle Paul and all his assistants—Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Luke, Mark, Philemon—were all specifically prepared to govern the Gentiles! And they will do so with authority and love that will truly be a blessing to those they govern.

In his *World Tomorrow* booklet, Mr. Armstrong wrote about all the saints through the ages who are about to be resurrected to hold high office in God's coming Empire: “Every one of these men was freed from the shackles of pagan teaching, tradition, erroneous knowledge, false sense of values, and pagan customs. Every one was trained in God's way, based on God's law, and the principles of that law. They were trained in the ways of righteousness. They became skilled in applying the principles of God's commandments, laws, statutes and judgments.”

Throughout this age of man—with all its barbarism and savagery—God has been building the leadership of the World Tomorrow. There are people qualifying *right now* for a job in that Empire of God!

God's Kingdom is this world's only hope! And God's Church today is in the final phases of preparation for its establishment on Earth. The Church is, in fact, that Empire in embryo! God "hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" already (Revelation 1:6).

Anyone who has that "empire vision" will live their life with great *purpose!* Anyone with that lodestar—to build God's Empire and all that it stands for—will be highly motivated to do the work of God, whatever it requires.

In A.D. 70, when the Jews were about to be destroyed, they believed that these prophecies of Daniel were going to be fulfilled in their time. So they fought fiercely because they believed the Messiah was coming!

If you have that hope in your mind—you know Jesus Christ is about to come and you want to help Him bring justice, civilization, prosperity, freedom and hope to all

people—then you are going to be one fierce spiritual warrior. That will really make you stand up for God!

That is a vision that *changes* you! It smashes your selfishness, expands your thinking, and makes your ambitions ampler and nobler! It elevates your character and condition. It turns lowly people into great people, and transforms them from followers into leaders!

Get this vision into your mind. See what God is about to achieve, and it will motivate you in any difficulty or trial you may face. This transcends everything on this Earth!

An empire is coming that will never be destroyed! It will bring God's loving government to every human being on Earth and beyond. God is offering you the unparalleled opportunity to be a part of that. Respond to Him, obey Him, stand for Him—and allow Him to start your imperial training today! ■

Worldwatch

The Mediterranean is on fire

A weather system named “Lucifer” turned the Mediterranean region into a hothouse, bringing the region its hottest recorded temperature on August 11. Floridia, a town in Sicily, reported a temperature of 119.8 degrees Fahrenheit. Wildfires afflicted 47 Sicilian towns.

Wildfires also plagued Algeria, killing 90 people. Although much of the North African country is desert, much is also covered in forest. Neighboring Tunisia, meanwhile, recorded the hottest-ever temperature for its capital, Tunis: 120 degrees Fahrenheit on August 10. Wildfires also surged in Greece. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis called it the country’s worst heat wave in over three decades. Turkey was hit with both fires and floods. *Al Jazeera* reported on August 16 that at least 77 people had died in flooding in the Black Sea region, with 47 missing.

Is the answer to why disasters like this happen really climate change? Or is there a deeper cause?

The Bible reveals that God is in control of the weather. “[T]he Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence ...” (Nahum 1:3-5). To learn more about why, read our booklet *Why ‘Natural’ Disasters?* ■

France passes new law to control religions

France’s National Assembly passed a new law on July 23, placing heavy regulations on religious groups, particularly Islamic ones. It contains strict new requirements on how these groups must report to the government, and it seeks to reduce the wearing of religious symbols in public. Paradoxically, French President Emmanuel Macron, who supports the bill, has taken unprecedented steps to draw closer to the world’s largest religion.

Religious neutrality of society, the government and public institutions is legally enshrined in the French Constitution. The 1905 law on the Separation of the Churches and the State is the foundational document for this pillar of French society. Several additions have since been proposed and adopted.

Under the new law, the government can shut down religious gatherings it judges to be preaching incitement to hatred or violence. This can be done without a court order. The definition of hatred or incitement to violence is open to interpretation. While this type of teaching is a problem, the new law risks the abuse of governmental powers.

All religious groups are now required to obtain a permit from the government, which must be renewed every five years. If they receive funds from abroad, their accounts must be audited each year.

The law also regulates intimate family decisions. Parents who choose to homeschool their children must receive government authorization of the curriculum they will teach. Muslim men who refuse to allow their wives to be examined by male doctors face fines of up to \$89,000 and up to five years in jail.

The *Trumpet* closely monitors the interactions of European leaders with the Catholic Church. Despite its tradition of separating church and state, the French government is now seeking power over religious groups. The Bible warns that church-state separation will ultimately disappear, leading to the seventh resurrection of the infamous Holy Roman Empire. ■

Italy follows France in mandating vaccine passports

The Italian government introduced a “Green Pass” coronavirus passport on August 6 and banned access to restaurants, gyms, music venues and many other aspects of public life for those who do not have it. The Green Pass app, used to provide proof of a COVID-19 vaccination certificate, was downloaded 20 million times in three days. The government

has extended its ban to include long-distance public transport and working at schools.

Tens of thousands of Italians have protested the pass. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* quoted Giorgia Meloni, leader of the Brothers of Italy party, describing the regulations as “ghastly” and the “last step toward the realization of a George Orwellian society.” This, she said, is “unconstitutional madness. For us, individual freedom is sacred and unassailable.”

But the Vatican is siding largely with the government’s push. Pope Francis was immunized in January and requested his Green Pass as soon as it was introduced. “The head of the Catholic Church is thus explicitly and publicly supporting the Italian government’s vaccination campaign,” Germany’s *Welt* noted on August 10.

Only those who are vaccinated, recovered or tested can use the pass. Institutions that do not enforce the laws are subject to fines. In France, police are patrolling the streets and punishing people in outdoor cafés who are not carrying proper vaccine documentation.

Europeans are getting accustomed to authoritarian rule, police control and tactics of intimidation. *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry warned in the July 2020 issue: “European leaders are increasingly behaving like dictators and assuming dictatorial power. The people of Europe are being conditioned to accept more tyrannical leadership.” ■

New foreign minister, same radical agenda

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has replaced Mohammed Javad Zarif as Iran’s foreign minister. Many in the West considered Zarif a “moderate ally” they could work with. Abdollahian is an anti-West hard-liner with ties to Iran’s most radical elements.

Abdollahian has served as ambassador to Bahrain, deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs, and adviser for international affairs for speakers of the Iranian parliament. As deputy foreign minister, he implemented foreign policy in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, working with the Islamic Revolutionary

Guard Corps (IRGC), which the United States has officially designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

He also worked closely with Gen. Qassem Suleimani, the infamous leader of the IRGC’s Quds Force. Abdollahian said he knew Suleimani “closely,” praised him as a “commander of peace,” and was once photographed kissing his forehead. When the U.S. assassinated Suleimani in January 2020, Abdollahian issued the first public vow of retaliation by the IRGC.

The new foreign minister is also very close with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader. The Middle East Institute reports that at least 10 analytical articles on Khamenei’s own website are authored by Abdollahian, which is “unusual and noteworthy, as the publication of even a single exclusive analysis on this website is viewed as a significant privilege for an Iranian official.”

Abdollahian’s post came three weeks after Ebrahim Raisi was appointed president. Raisi is an Islamist hard-liner. He is infamous for ordering mass executions in the years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and has been called “the butcher of Tehran.”

These appointments by Khamenei’s regime sends a clear, openly hostile message to the West: It is ready to push harder with its radical Islamic agenda and nuclear weapons program. In *The King of the South*, *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry shows that radical Islam, led by Iran, will push the world toward World War III. ■

Rouhani’s parting gift: a key to lock Hormuz

Outgoing Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced on July 22 the opening of the export terminal for the Goreh-Jask oil pipeline. Iran exports most of its oil from the terminal at Kharg Island, deep in the Persian Gulf. But the Goreh-Jask terminal on the Gulf of Oman bypasses the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

The Goreh-Jask pipeline can transport 1 million barrels of oil per day, increasing Iran’s export capacity by about 50 percent. It also enables Iran to continue significant exports

even if it or another nation causes a conflict in the Strait of Hormuz.

Regarding a closure of the strait, Rouhani said earlier this year, “[C]ustomers who buy oil from us want to be confident that they can take our oil under any conditions [O]n a rainy day, it would be us who would be in trouble [if the Strait of Hormuz were to close]. We have got past this problem.”

The pipeline and export terminal give Iran greater control over one of the most important choke points in oil trade and a viable threat to cripple the oil-dependent economies of the West. And now the key is controlled by an even more openly radical regime led by Iran’s new president, Ebrahim Raisi. ■

China exports tyranny to Cuba

After Cubans staged the largest protests in six decades against the island’s Communist government, the regime shut them down with help from the Chinese Communist Party, according to an August 3 report in the *Diplomat*.

The protests broke out on July 11, coordinated through social media and mobile Internet, which has existed in Cuba for only three years. Protesters organized marches, warned each other of secret police, and broadcast their message to the world. The Communist Party of Cuba shut down Internet and mobile networks and selectively cut landline phone service.

Cuba’s only Internet provider is Etecsa. All of the company’s vendors are Chinese—ZTE, Huawei and TP-Link—and are therefore controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. Without the Chinese Communists’ approval, the Cuban Communists would have been hard-pressed or unable to shut down the Internet—and the people.

But with China’s help, Cuba killed the Internet and the protests. The Communist Party of Cuba is now identifying protest leaders and tightening its grip on the Cuban people.

Bible prophecy indicates that China’s role in Cuba could directly affect not only the Cuban people but also the United States and, indirectly, the world. Read “*Preparing to Storm America’s Castle*” ■

Putin: Sovereign Ukraine does not exist

“There is no such thing as a separate Ukrainian people,” Russian President Vladimir Putin asserted in a 5,000-word manifesto in July, a political declaration of intent toward Ukraine.

The manifesto came in response to a law passed by the Ukrainian government stating its intent to protect Tatar, Karaite and Krymchak minority groups within the country. Most of these populations reside in Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula, which Putin forcibly annexed in 2014 and claims Russian sovereignty over.

“They are one with the Russians,” he wrote, adding that the “state of Ukraine is an artificial creation” and a “fluke of history that should be grateful to Russia for allowing it to exist.”

As Anders Aslund, an adviser to Putin’s predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, put it: “Putin is setting the stage for war.” Read *The Prophesied ‘Prince’ of Russia*, by Gerald Flurry. ■

China multiplying its nuclear missile silos

China is building a new nuclear silo field near the city of Hami in Eastern Xinjiang, the Federation of American Scientists announced on July 26. The field is the second recently discovered by specialists examining satellite images of China.

Experts believe that, after its first nuclear weapons test in 1964, the Chinese regime maintained 200 to 300 nuclear weapons for decades, with only 20 operational silos for liquid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles.

But under Chinese leader Xi Jinping, this strategy is changing. On July 2, satellite imagery revealed about 120 new silos under construction near Yumen and another 25 across China. Another 110 are under construction in Hami, meaning that China will soon have 12 times as many silos: a total of about 250. That equates to more silos than Russia and more than half of the number operated by the United States. Depending on the missiles that are loaded, these silos could accommodate between 415 and 875 nuclear warheads.

The Chinese Communist Party’s nuclear arsenal also includes about 100 mobile launchers and six Type 094 Jin-class

submarines, which carry up to 12 missiles each. In addition to existing shorter-range nuclear-capable missiles and bombs, it is also developing a new strategic stealth bomber.

China's rapid expansion of nuclear firepower is occurring at the same time as advancements in Russian nuclear missiles, improvements in nuclear delivery systems in North Korea, increased vulnerability in Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, and a race in Iran to develop its own nuclear program. Meanwhile, training is increasing for German personnel to use American nuclear bombs deployed in Germany.

The United Nations and other organizations have failed to stop the global nuclear threat. *Read **Nuclear Armageddon Is 'At the Door,'** by Gerald Flurry.* ■

Cyberattack on U.S. company triggers chain reaction

Up to 1,500 businesses were hit by a vast cyberattack over the July 4 weekend. The attack is considered by some to be the largest ransomware attack ever.

Florida technology firm Kaseya and its virtual system administrator software, which computer administrators worldwide use to manage systems remotely, was the target. Kaseya said the attackers encrypted data used by 800 to 1,500 companies worldwide and demanded a ransom of \$70 million to decrypt it. Nations around the world witnessed major disturbances. Hundreds of Coop supermarkets in Sweden, for example, were forced to close. At least nine schools in New Zealand were also affected. A group called REvil claimed responsibility.

"America is the greatest superpower this world has ever known," *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote in the January 1995 issue. "But we have a very vulnerable point in our military—our own Achilles' heel. It is so dangerous that I am amazed it hasn't received more publicity." He identified this critical vulnerability as the heavy reliance of the military—and society—on technology.

"They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof" (Ezekiel 7:14). Regarding this prophecy, Mr. Flurry wrote

that when everyone expects the military to act, a great tragedy occurs. "Will it be because of a computer terrorist?" he asked.

America has become so heavily reliant on computer systems that one major attack could throw society into turmoil and damage or destroy the nation's war-fighting ability. ■

\$1.2 trillion spending bill passes

The United States Senate passed a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure deal on August 9. The 2,700-page bill was supported by Democrats and 19 Republicans, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Though no one has read the whole bill, Republican Sen. Kevin Cramer indicated that it allocates only \$450 billion to roads, bridges and other actual infrastructure. The main \$800 billion in spending goes to initiatives including climate change programs, clean energy research, massive government expansion into the energy network and sweeping government regulations on motor vehicles. The bill, still pending, constitutes a Trojan horse to force through the radical left's agenda to transform America.

Donald Trump responded, "[T]his is not an infrastructure bill; this is the beginning of the Green New Deal." The Green New Deal was radical legislation presented by radical leftist Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in 2019 that aimed to tear down and remake the U.S. economy to become 100 percent reliant on so-called clean energy, as well as to supposedly eliminate poverty and to increase collective ownership of companies.

This agenda would cause the collapse of key industries that give the U.S. its economic power and force the nation to rely on weaker, unproven, unreliable technology that, ironically, still produces pollution.

God instructed the nation of Israel in Deuteronomy 28 and other chapters of the Bible that economic and other blessings result from obedience to His laws, and that curses come from disobedience. He warned that if the Israelites or their descendants, which include the Americans, disobeyed, they would suffer economic ruin. Guilty of economic and other sins, Americans' economic dominance is now disappearing. ■

SOCIETYWATCH

COVID-19 making Big Tech and Big Pharma even bigger

Economists estimate that the costs of the COVID-19 pandemic and its lockdowns are a staggering \$16 trillion. Eighty percent of small-business owners say lockdowns have hurt their businesses. While money has flowed out of the middle class, it has flowed in torrents into huge technology and pharmaceutical companies, which are making record profits. Apple, Microsoft and Google have more than doubled in value since the pandemic was declared, and government pressure and mandates for vaccinations are providing Merck, Moderna, Sanofi, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson with an estimated \$40 billion in profits.

The pharmaceuticals and health products industry donated more than \$5.9 million to Joe Biden's presidential campaign, and now it is reaping dividends. On February 11, Biden agreed to purchase 600 million COVID-19 vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer. On February 27, he approved Johnson & Johnson's vaccine for emergency use.

Government responses to a disease similar in significance and scale to the regular flu have consistently destroyed the finances and independence of the middle and lower classes and consistently benefited Big Tech and big pharma. Before this is over, giant corporations may be the only businesses left.

This economic transformation is reminiscent of a transformation that occurred in ancient Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II. Israel expanded in power, but a new class of powerful elites arose and used their wealth to exploit their own people, and the gap between the rich and the poor grew larger (Amos 6:1-7). This history is also prophecy, and Amos condemned these elites in Amos 8:4-7 as they that “swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail.” ■

Biden's White House tells Facebook what to censor

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on July 15 that the American government is working with Facebook to censor certain information. Speaking about the government's response to COVID-19, she said the president's team is “flagging problematic posts for Facebook that spread disinformation.” She defined “health misinformation” as “false, inaccurate or misleading information about health, according to the best evidence at the time.”

“[T]oday we live in a world where misinformation poses an imminent and insidious threat to our nation's health,” she said. “[T]he truth is that misinformation takes away our freedom to make informed decisions about our health and the health of our loved ones.” Psaki called for an “all-of-society approach to fight misinformation.”

Despite the spin, the fact is that the federal government has admitted that it pressures a powerful private company to censor certain information—while that company enjoys immunity from many lawsuits thanks to a special federal law. Facebook claims it is not responsible for what its users write and therefore cannot be sued, yet it acts as a publisher, working with partisan federal bureaucrats, and actively edits out content. This collusion against freedom of speech is out in the open, and many have protested against it, yet the Biden administration feels bold enough not only to continue the practice but to chide Facebook for not censoring what it considers “violative posts” quickly enough.

A prophecy in Amos 8:11 foretells of a time when government censorship will grow so bad that even those preaching the truths of the Bible will be silenced. Society is swiftly approaching this “famine ... of hearing the words of the Lord.” ■

Biden's spending has stolen your savings

Joe Biden and Congress have authorized huge amounts of spending since taking

power. Democrats have claimed that this manufacturing of money has not caused the inflation that Americans are experiencing, and that those rising prices are temporary. But many Americans see that this is false.

On July 13, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the consumer price index had risen 5.4 percent over 12 months, the most significant jump since the 2008 Great Recession. John Williams, of shadowstats.com, says that if inflation were still calculated the way it was back in 1980, the official inflation rate over that period would be about 13 percent.

Forty years ago, the late news forecaster Herbert W. Armstrong wrote an article titled “What’s Happening to the U.S. Standard of Living—and Why?” This article addressed the causes of American economic decline and explained that God blessed America with the highest per capita income on the planet because of a promise He made to Abraham in response to his faith and obedience. Abraham’s descendants in America have shown neither faith nor obedience, and will therefore see their inherited financial blessings evaporate. ■

PRINCIPLES OF LIVING **JOEL HILLIKER**

Humility and the Path to Greatness

A powerful lesson amid recent painful events.

OF ALL THE PLAGUES IN TODAY’S WORLD, one of the greatest is the arrogance of our leaders. You see it in their handling of the coronavirus pandemic, in America’s disastrous evacuation of Afghanistan, in crisis after crisis. Despite mountains of evidence proving that they are making major, even fatal errors, our leaders act as if they couldn’t be more right!

History is liberally populated by men who believed they were right, that they were solving problems and helping people. And the Earth is stained with the blood of the millions they killed.

Man can be so disastrously wrong—and so unwilling to acknowledge it!

Refusing to admit error is not just a problem in our leaders. It is a problem with every human being, whether leading a nation, a business, a community, a school, a family or even just his or her own life. In pursuit of making things right according to *their own* definition of right, people destroy lives. And it is our nature to refuse to confess error.

Where does this way of thinking come from? Why is it so deeply ingrained in us, even when it is clearly wrong and harmful?

Whittaker Chambers, a reformed Communist, described the foundation of communism as the exalting of human reason as the highest authority in the universe. He called it “man’s second-oldest faith. Its promise was whispered in the first days of the creation under the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: ‘Ye shall be as gods.’”

Who actually established this faith? Someone who had lived in a peaceful environment governed by God—but who then began to rely on his own mind. Someone who became convinced and, despite a universe of evidence to the contrary, *remains* convinced that *he is right!*

Lucifer’s efforts to “improve” things based on his own ideas caused universal cataclysm! (Isaiah 14:12-14). Everything he has done since has produced destruction, yet he still thinks his way is better than God’s! And he tempted the first human beings to adopt that same belief.

Each of us has accepted this attitude, whether we realize it or not. It’s not that our leaders are wrongly insisting that they are right while you and I actually *are* right. We are all deeply infected by Satan’s self-is-right attitude. When we trust our own reasoning, we are doing what Adam and Eve did before

us, and what Satan did before them. And the devil can manipulate us because of it, just as he manipulated our first parents.

In Proverbs 6, God tells us He *hates* “a proud look.” As comforting as pride in ourselves seems to us, God knows what it leads to: *millenniums* of deceit, self-justification, emptiness, suffering, hopelessness and death.

“The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate” (Proverbs 8:13). God warns in Proverbs 16:18 of this law of cause and effect: Pride *always* leads to destruction.

This way of thinking, promoted by the subtle and persuasive serpent—“the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2)—is fatal. And it is impossible to cure—without God.

From its first pages to its last, the Bible advocates for men, even kings, to cultivate humility and the fear of God. King David developed this beautiful attitude, and expressed it throughout his psalms. King Solomon told God he regarded himself as a “little child: I know not how to go out or come in.” This wasn’t false humility. It was a recognition of fact: Our minds are wrong, and God is right. When you understand the truth about human nature, you realize how terrible the universal sin of self-pride is, and how necessary and wonderful is the attitude of exalting not your own will but God’s instead.

The greatest Being of all existence and all eternity, next to God, became a man. He set minds alight with His teaching, healed people instantly, resurrected people from the dead, and sacrificed Himself for the world. Jesus Christ, the greatest human being of all time, was also the greatest example of humility toward God. He said, “I can of mine own self do nothing ...” (John 5:30).

The Apostle James wrote, “... God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. ... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:6-10).

What a profound lesson to draw from these recent painful events. Here is real, powerful, true hope: If you will *humble yourself*, the super-powerful Satan will *flee from you* because you will be drawing near to the all-powerful God!

Jesus Christ, the most humble and submissive Being ever, is about to return with overwhelming force to take over all human governments. With Him will be those who have learned to submit, repent and obey His law of love. *Humble yourself* in the sight of the Lord, and He *will* lift you up. ■

A Way of Escape

When you don't know what to do about disasters like Afghanistan, here is what to do.

IN THE FINAL CHAOTIC DAYS OF AMERICA'S withdrawal, tens of thousands of Americans, Afghans and others desperately hoped to escape the nightmarish rule of the Taliban. They tried to navigate chaotic city streets. They were getting caught and beaten—or worse—by gunmen. They tried to climb over walls and press through razor wire. Young girls screamed not to leave them to become Taliban “wives.” Parents passed their *babies* through crowds in the general direction of U.S. and allied soldiers atop the airport walls.

What they wanted was a plane. To be one of those stuffing themselves into cargo jets. Some even clung to the sides of aircraft taking off, falling to their deaths. It all brings to mind images of people clawing at the sides of Noah's ark when God sent the Flood. The consuming craving is the same: *escape*.

That desperation is a poignant symbol of the dangers spreading across this dying world. The Bible prophesies that what we are seeing in Afghanistan is a sign of even worse crises that will ultimately saturate human civilization!

Watching it all and fearing what is now happening to those left behind in Afghanistan—and to this world—makes you feel helpless. Helpless for those Afghans, helpless for those soldiers, helpless for when this madness finally reaches your own family.

But there is something you can do.

“... Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand” (Luke 21:29-31).

Face the fact that this season of human civilization itself is ending. But realize that this also means a new civilization is coming: the Kingdom of God!

“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting

[carousing], and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares,” Jesus warned. “For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth” (verses 34-35).

As the most blessed nation in world history succumbs to its own sins, is there not a lesson to be learned in this—a personal lesson? Jesus Christ is telling you there is. Watch the news and understand Bible prophecy, yes. But also realize that you must change your life.

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (verse 36).

Do you crave escape from this madness? Then obey Christ's direct command: *Watch and pray*.

God *does* offer protection. As in Noah's day, He is raising up a work to match the magnitude of the times. This work, as did Noah's, teaches God's prophecies and warnings. Today, as in Noah's time, most are uninterested. But there is a sliver of time left in which you can watch, pray, “take heed to yourself,” and repent of the human nature and sins that are the ultimate cause of catastrophes, past and future, individual and international.

Learn the lesson of Afghanistan, and that of the history of all human civilization and every human's individual life: All human attempts to make our own decisions and our own governments ourselves apart from God are fatally flawed and grossly corrupt! Our only hope is the institution of the literal government of God over all nations. Our only hope is that “the kingdom of God is near at hand.”

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is

not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

This is the perspective you need. Are you going the way of this world, which is indeed passing away in spectacular fashion, or are you striving to forsake lusts and sins and submit to the will of God, the law of God and the work of God?

God’s work is a plane taking off from the disaster zone of this world, its societies and

its wars. But it is not evacuating in shame; it is carrying the world’s only hope: God’s message! It is on a mission. If God is calling you (John 6:44), He is calling you to board it—not as a refugee, but as the crew.

Look up from the despair of this world. Heed the command of Jesus Christ: Watch and pray always that *you* might be accounted worthy to escape and to stand before God. ■

Request your free copies of *A Pivotal Sign of the End Time and How to Pray.*