

**NEWS MATTERS**

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FEBRUARY 2005

THE PHILADELPHIA

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# TRUMPET

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## Asia's tsunami puts God on trial

An Indian mother  
mourns the death of  
her child after the tidal  
wave destroyed her town.



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An Indian mother mourns the death of her child after the tidal wave destroyed her town. In the foreground of the picture is her child's foot. Reuters photo.



Gerald Flurry

# Did the Tsunami Shake Your Faith?

**T**HE TSUNAMI IN SOUTHEAST ASIA CREATED A DISASTER of unfathomable proportions. Certainly the fact that over 225,000 people died is shocking and sobering to each one of us. But there is a greater tragedy—and that is, *how ministers have responded to that disaster.*

This should be a *much* BIGGER NEWS STORY than the tsunami itself!

Some very prominent priests and theologians have said it is not God's will that something like the tsunami happen. Some of them even question the existence of God. That is a tragedy.

I will honestly tell you that this tsunami has *increased my faith*—not decreased it!

In the *Sunday Telegraph* appeared this headline: "Archbishop of Canterbury Admits: This Makes Me Doubt the Existence of God" (January 2). This man is the head of 70 million Christians in this world! And the tsunami has diminished his faith.

The article paraphrases the archbishop, Dr. Rowan Williams, as saying, "The Asian tsunami disaster *should make all Christians question the existence of God*" (emphasis mine throughout).

The tsunami doesn't make ME question the existence of God! On the contrary! In fact, I will show you why it should STRENGTHEN everyone's belief in God, according to your Bible. That article said, "Prayer, [the archbishop] admits, provides no 'magical solutions' and most of the stock Christian answers to human suffering do not 'go very far in helping us, one week on, with the intolerable grief and devastation in front of us.'" If that's the way our prayers are, something is wrong. And if these "stock answers," as he calls them, don't really satisfy anybody, something is wrong. Something is terribly wrong with that religion!

We cannot be careless about something so critical. We're talking about the state of our eternal lives!

In his own article, the archbishop wrote, "The question: 'How can you believe in a God who permits suffering on this scale?' is therefore very much around at the moment, and it would be surprising if it weren't—indeed, it would be wrong if it weren't." That is not the kind of statement that builds people's faith.

I have a right to respond to some of these statements. After all, he presumes to speak for all Christians. But he doesn't speak for me. I don't agree with him at all—not even close.

**Christ's Warning** Does God exist? Does this catastrophe diminish God? Why did He allow this to happen? Do you know? There is a Bible answer to that! There is a tremendous answer, and it ought to strengthen our faith. We need faith in the midst of these terrible times.

In Matthew 24, Jesus Christ was asked by His disciples about what signs would precede His

Second Coming and the end of this present world. He responded with THE PIVOTAL PROPHECY OF HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY—the Olivet prophecy. Every end-time Bible prophecy revolves around it. A red-letter Bible shows that these are all Christ's own words.

Christ spoke about the end time—the time we live in right now. In verse 14, He gave us *the major sign* of His return: the gospel being preached around the world. If you know the history of God's Church, you know that has happened. In verses 21-22, Christ said there is a time coming when *no flesh would be saved alive* if He didn't return and prevent it! We

must realize that in today's age of weapons of mass destruction, this is a very realistic scenario. These are obviously end-time prophecies.

But notice verses 4-5: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I [Christ] am Christ; and shall deceive many."

This is the FIRST WARNING Christ gave—it is THE MAJOR WARNING SIGN we need to watch out for. He warned that people would come in Christ's name, but they *wouldn't believe Christ's message*. And He said that these false ministers would deceive MANY!

The prophecy continues: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers [different] places" (verses 6-7).

Here is another sign of the end time: *earthquakes in different places*. The Asian tsunami was caused by a 9.0 earthquake, which jolted trillions of tons of water in an instant, creating gigantic waves that crashed into the surrounding countries and swept thousands and thousands of people away. CHRIST SAID THIS WOULD HAPPEN: *devastating earthquakes in different*



## DEMOLISHED

An Indian woman wanders through the remnants of fishing boats. Survivors burned wreckage left by the tsunami.



REUTERS

places. He told us to expect it.

Is it God's will? Well, that depends on how you look at it. It isn't His will that people have to suffer like that—but if they reject His message or turn away from Him, then that's another matter. Then He wants to correct them so He can bring them into His Family for all eternity.

Christ also spoke of famines—not enough food and water—and then pestilences, or disease epidemics. Southeast Asia is strewn with rotting corpses, and that brings disease; authorities say this aftermath will be worse than the initial devastation caused by the tsunami. Earthquakes, famines, pestilence: These are among the signs Christ gave of the end of the world we know—and the beginning of a beautiful new world we can hardly even imagine.

## Isn't it strange that not one of these prominent ministers talked about lawlessness? They blame God very quickly, but they don't like to blame man.

Can we ignore Christ's words? Why won't religious leaders BELIEVE these crucial *signs of the end*? Why won't so-called *Christians* simply BELIEVE CHRIST?

But the prophecy gets even more shocking.

**The Beginning of Sorrows** In the very next verse, Christ tells us, "All these are the beginning of sorrows" (verse 8).

Jesus Christ was the greatest newscaster ever. If you doubt that, just watch what happens. Compare what He said with what these ministers are saying. Learn Christ's prophecies, and then watch what happens. *Every single one of them will be fulfilled.* And then, right on the heels of all these catastrophes, HE WILL RETURN.

The point at which we find ourselves today, Christ told us, *is only the BEGINNING of sorrows.*

One Indonesian man said, "When the second wave came ... I thought it was the end of the world." In a way he was right. It is *the beginning of sorrows.* The BEGINNING of the *end of the world!* Jesus Christ is about to usher in a new world—a world without

tsunamis and without disasters, without any such troubles because Christ will be ruling! When He governs Earth, it will be an absolute paradise. The Bible is full of prophecies about that.

The problem now is, most men are not ruled by Christ. They may say He rules them, but most of them are wrong. Their statement simply will not stand the test of the Scriptures.

If we don't listen to Christ, the troubles will intensify—to the point where *no flesh* would live if Christ didn't intervene! "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (verse 21). The tsunami is just a *little sliver* of the sorrows about to come. Do you believe Christ? Most people do not, and that's why we have all these problems. We wouldn't *have* to experience the sorrows if we would only *listen to Christ!*

At the end of the previous chapter in Matthew, Christ said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37). *You wouldn't allow it—you wouldn't do what I wanted you to do!* Those are strong words. We must listen to them, or the sorrows are *only beginning.*

**Lawlessness** "And because *iniquity* [lawlessness] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). The translators, because of their human nature, obscured a key word in this verse. Christ said that, in our day, LAWLESSNESS would ABOUND.

Oh—is that ever true! *Everywhere* today we see lawlessness. Do you suppose *that* has anything to do with the problems we face? God wants us to KEEP *His law.* In 1 John 5:3, He goes so far as to *define* the love of God as KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS.

Think about this. Isn't it strange that not one of these prominent ministers—at least none I read about—talked about LAWLESSNESS? They blame God very quickly, but they don't like to blame man.

In Southeast Asia, 250,000 children are trafficked annually into prostitution. That's more human beings—and these are children—than died in the tsunami!

If we're going to evaluate God, how about evaluating man? How about assessing what's happening in this world? It seems to me that we ought to look at our sins too. Those poor children! In that same part of the world, those children are practically *born* into the twisted world of prostitution. That is absolutely abominable. I can't think of a more disgusting, repugnant sin than that—can you? The world those children live in is *worse* than the tsunami in many ways. Do we really care? That needs to be stopped!

But nobody says a thing about it.

Can you see the evil in this world as God does?

When Jesus Christ came to this Earth, He was bludgeoned to death by sinners. We're all guilty of His death, because we all sin. Even those "innocent" human beings who died in the tsunami weren't so innocent. Not one of us is.

It's true that, when He has to, GOD DOES BRING EVIL UPON PEOPLE. In the book of Daniel, which is for the end time (Daniel 12:4, 9), the Prophet Daniel said, "all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, *that we might turn from our iniquities*, and understand thy truth. THEREFORE HATH THE LORD WATCHED UPON THE EVIL, AND BROUGHT IT UPON US: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice" (Daniel 9:13-14). God allows evil, and sometimes He brings it upon us. But why? "That we might turn" from our LAWLESSNESS!

**Believe God** "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved [the Moffatt translation says '*saved alive*']: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:22). All flesh would be destroyed if Jesus Christ didn't come back to this Earth and stop it from happening.

Now, Christ didn't bring those nuclear bombs into this world. He didn't invent the terrible weapons of mass destruction we possess today. *Man did that, in violation of God's law.* Will we blame God for all of this like we do for the tsunami?

God is going to put the people of this world through great tribulation until they know that, without Him, there is no hope at all—there's nothing man can do. People will be brought to the point where they *have* to rely on God! So often, an alcoholic has to hit rock bottom before he'll ever say, *I'm wrong and I want to change.* That is the way mankind tends to be.

THE TWO HARDEST THINGS IN THE WORLD FOR PEOPLE TO DO ARE, FIRST, TO ADMIT THEY'RE WRONG, AND SECOND, TO BELIEVE GOD.

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (verse 24). False prophets are going to appear who will actually be able to show *signs and wonders.* Do you know the difference between a false prophet and a true one? You **MUST**, or you will be deceived.

But God's very elect cannot be deceived. Do you know why? It's because they simply believe Christ. They hold on to what He said and won't let go.

A lot of ministers talked about the tsunami. What is strange, though, is that I didn't hear one of them—not one of them—quote Scripture. That is staggering! Why not? What does God have to say?

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, "The dean of St. Mary's Cathedral, Neal Brown, has criticized religious leaders who say the tsunami disaster is the will of God.

"The comments came after the Anglican dean of Sydney, Phillip Jensen, said disasters were part of God's warning that

judgment was coming. ... At a mass dedicated to victims of the tsunami, Father Brown told a congregation at St. Mary's yesterday that *humans could not know the will of God*" (January 3).

You can't know the will of God? Then what is the Bible for? What is the Holy Spirit for? We are to let the mind of Christ *dwell in us* (Philippians 2:5).

## **A lot of ministers talked about the tsunami. What is strange, though, is that I didn't hear one of them quote Scripture. That is staggering!**

The article continued, "Father Brown is joined by Jewish and Hindu leaders who say the tsunami cannot be described as the will of God, or punishment from God.

"Rabbi Raymond Apple ... said humans could not read God's mind. 'One cannot imagine God deliberately, willfully bringing such suffering on innocent human beings'" (ibid.). Are we really so "innocent"? We are all guilty of crucifying the Son of God. Let's be careful how we use the word *innocent*.

In his *Sunday Times* article, the Archbishop of Canterbury wrote, "The traditional answers will get us only so far. ... If some religious genius did come up with an explanation of exactly why all these deaths made sense, would we feel happier or safer or more confident in God? Wouldn't we feel something of a chill at the prospect of a God who deliberately plans a program that involves a certain level of casualties?"

That is a rather dangerous statement, I think. HE IS SCOFFING AT THE IDEA THAT ANYONE COULD HAVE AN EXPLANATION. BUT JESUS CHRIST HAS AN EXPLANATION! IT'S THERE IN THE BIBLE. Christ is a "religious genius," and He has the answers. Is the archbishop familiar with Matthew 24?

This man is destroying people's faith—exactly the opposite of what a spiritual shepherd is supposed to do for his flock.

Are these religious leaders willing to look at the Bible and simply believe God?

**Christ's Return** "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:27). Wow! Christ is going to return, and that's what it will look like. Change is on the way like this world has never known! That is the best possible news you could ever hear.

"So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, *know that it is near, even at the doors.* Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (verses 33-34). Christ's return is *right at the doors*—it is almost upon us! True, we don't know the day or the hour (verse 36)—but Christ said **WE SHOULD KNOW WHEN IT IS AT THE DOORS.** And we can be certain that *everything He prophesied* will be fulfilled—both the bad news, and the *best possible news!* Do we believe that?

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (verse 35). You can always trust His words of life. They will **NEVER FAIL.**

My faith has been strengthened by the tsunami. My faith has *grown* because these earthquakes and tsunamis were *prophesied* by Jesus Christ, and it's all coming to pass precisely as He said!

We must build our faith—and prepare for a rocky future until Christ gets here. Yes, God brings evil upon us, but He also shows us how to turn away from our sinful way of life so we'll receive nothing but blessings, on top of blessings, on top of blessings. ■

# Death Toll: Over 225,000

# WHERE WAS

# GOD?

The lesson each of us must learn from the tsunami

BY JOEL HILLIKER AND MARK JENKINS

## STRICKEN

An Indian mother mourns her child, a victim of the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami in Southeast Asia.

**T**HE MIND STAGGERS. “Decomposing corpses are everywhere,” said a South African relief worker. “It is as if bodies were scattered from the sky.”

Over 18½ miles under the sea, the earth rocked, showing an ocean onto a continent. Mammot waves swallowed beaches, engulfed villages. More than 225,000 lives were snuffed out. Millions were left without food. The grotesqueness of the Asian tsunami tragedy left the world in shock.

That aid worker drearily watched the unidentified dead being bulldozed into mass graves in a hasty effort to ward off disease. “In almost 15 years of relief work, I have never experienced this extent of utter desperation and hopelessness,” he said (*Star*, South Africa, January 3).

Whenever a catastrophic natural disaster strikes, among our tumult of emotions and thoughts we tend to put God on trial. The idea, clung to by so many, of an all-loving, all-merciful Deity who smiles down on humanity, seems shattered by the violence of the calamity.

One woman who lost her child in

the Indian fishing village of Valainkani wailed, “Oh God! Why have you taken my son away?” (*Manila Times*, Dec. 30, 2004). The horror of losing a child is unimaginable to most; now, more than ever, this woman needs hope.

Staring into the faceless brutality of the worst such disaster in anyone’s memory, even religious leaders have found themselves bereft of answers. It’s an unenviable task, really: explaining *why* God would allow such an incalculable level of suffering. Perhaps no one has ever really *wanted* to answer this question. Undoubtedly, many fear they cannot.



REUTERS

In the *Wall Street Journal*, from theologian David Hart we read: “When confronted by the sheer savage immensity of worldly suffering—when we see the entire littoral rim of the Indian Ocean strewn with tens of thousands of corpses, a third of them children’s—no Christian is licensed to utter odious banalities about God’s inscrutable counsels or blasphemous suggestions that all this mysteriously serves God’s good ends. We are permitted only to hate death and waste and the imbecile forces of chance that shatter living souls, to believe that creation is in agony in its bonds, to see

this world as divided between two kingdoms—knowing all the while that it is only charity that can sustain us against ‘fate,’ and that must do so until the end of days” (Dec. 31, 2004).

Eloquent—but laced with the same desperation and hopelessness of that aid worker.

Paul Stenhouse, a Catholic priest, wrote, “Christianity does not teach that God causes natural disasters; nor does it teach that God causes them in order to punish the wickedness of the victims” (*Australian*, January 4). This man is sure that God didn’t cause the tsunami. But

the question remains: Why would He *allow* it? Certainly an all-powerful God could have stopped it before it happened. Why didn’t He? Could He possibly be that callous to such an incalculable level of human suffering? The natural mind struggles for an explanation. Some blame God, accuse God—even give up on the idea that there is a God.

The regrettable reality is, most people *do not accept* the God who reveals Himself in the Holy Bible! They are worshipping a god of their *own creation*.

God’s Word **DOES** explain—in *explicit detail*—why such things happen. Their causes are spelled out from the first book of the Bible to the last.

The ministers who are saying that it *couldn’t be God’s will* to cause something so destructive as that tsunami **DO NOT KNOW GOD!**

*There is meaning.* There is a lesson, a profound lesson, wrapped within the loss of life and breadth of desolation—one that *each of us* must consider deeply. We need to be able to recognize the hand of our Creator. We must comprehend **WHAT GOD IS DOING**. Yes, it is aching difficult. But platitudes cannot assuage grief, and ignorance does not change truth.

The truth—contained within the deadly waves of the tsunami—is *filled with LIVING HOPE!*

**Origin of Human Suffering** The point must be made from the beginning that **THIS IS NOT GOD’S WORLD.**

If it’s the God of the Bible we are putting on trial, let us look at the biblical narrative to frame the terms of the debate.

It is true that *God is love* (1 John 4:8, 16). What is that love? It is God’s *giving way of life*, manifested, for example, in God *giving* His only begotten Son to the world (John 3:16). That love is defined by and expressed in God’s commandments: “For *this is the love of God*, that we keep his commandments ...” (1 John 5:3).

At the beginning of human existence, God created Adam and Eve at the very pinnacle of the material world. They were cast in His very likeness: Unlike the animals, human beings look like their Maker. God intended that they care for and rule benevolently over the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26-31). He endowed them with intellectual and creative powers, enabling them to grow into God’s own *image*, or character. Earth was the training ground so that these two, and the family of man that would spring from them, could

eventually fulfill their fullest potential as eternal children of God.

True character must be developed through right decisions, so God made Adam and Eve free moral agents. He then gave them a choice. On one hand, they could have followed God's instructions and chosen the tree of life, which represents God's Holy Spirit and the path to eternal life. Had they done so, they would have continued to live under His protection; they would have developed a relationship with God, learning to think like Him and live His way of give.

## Shouldn't we ask the more piercing question: Is it possible that we don't love God?

Instead, the first two people trusted in themselves, succumbed to the temptations of Satan the devil, and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 3:16-19 show that because of this decision, God removed His protection and guidance, and pronounced upon them certain curses; then He banished them from the Garden and cut off their access to the tree of life (verses 22-24).

To comprehend the tsunami, we must grasp the implications of this fateful moment in human history.

It was not a quick-tempered outburst: God, to preserve the exalted potential of man, had to seal off the tree of life. To bring the first two humans into His eternal Family while they were making choices contrary to His commandments—opposing His love—would have produced eternal division and misery. So instead, God took the occasion to teach Adam and Eve, and all those who would follow them, an enormous lesson.

In his final book, *Mystery of the Ages*, Herbert W. Armstrong explained what God, in essence, told Adam when he made this decision:

“Go, therefore, Adam, and all your progeny that shall form the world, produce your own fund of knowledge. Decide for yourself what is good and what is evil. Produce your own educational systems and means of disseminating knowledge, as your god Satan shall mislead you. Form your own concepts of what is god, your own religions, your own governments, your own lifestyles and forms of society and civilization. In all this Satan will deceive your world with his attitude of SELF-centeredness—with vanity, lust and greed, jealousy and envy, competition and strife and violence and wars, re-

bellion against me and my law of LOVE.

“After the world of your descendants has written the lesson in 6,000 years of human suffering, anguish, frustration, defeat and death—after the world that shall spring from you shall have been brought to confess the utter hopelessness of the way of life you have chosen—I will supernaturally intervene” (emphasis ours).

Yes—every aspect of our society has been affected because Adam and Eve defied their Creator! This fatal choice at the beginning of human history made necessary the writing of that lesson in hu-

**A Call to Repentance** True repentance bridges the gap between an individual and God. Thus the very first step toward real and everlasting happiness is a genuine, deep, complete repentance. To recognize our own helplessness, unhappiness and inadequacy apart from God is the most fundamental lesson any of us could learn.

Whenever God begins working with someone, He begins by humbling that individual. As it says in Proverbs 15:33, “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.” God wants to give each of us phenomenal honor—but the humility, rooted in a deep respect for the Creator, must come first.

The curses God imposed upon Adam and his seed were intended to teach this lesson. The suffering that saturates this present world, cut off from God, is intended to teach this lesson.

When God was working with the carnal nation of ancient Israel, here is how He did it: “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19; you may find it helpful to read verses 15-20). This goes beyond just the natural consequences for obeying or disobeying God's laws. God said He would bless for obedience and curse for disobedience. When the Israelites obeyed, He prospered them; when they rebelled, He would send a plague, or turn the weather against them, or remove His protection and allow them to go into captivity. Essentially God was teaching them a proper fear of Him.

God has as much control over natural phenomena today as He did then. In His omnipotence He could have stopped that tsunami; after all, Jesus Christ stilled a storm with just a few words (Mark 4:39). Whether the earthquake was caused by a random tectonic shift, or the devil himself, God could have prevented it—but didn't. There is a reason.

Note this! When something like the recent tsunami disaster occurs, we should ALL grow in GODLY FEAR. God's desire is that the WHOLE WORLD would learn to fear Him in the face of such catastrophe.

**The God of Judgment** Neil Brown, dean of the Roman Catholic St. Mary's Cathedral, criticized one minister for saying that the disaster was part of God's warning that judgment was coming. Brown told his congregation, “It is not a Catholic belief, and it's a rather horrible belief when you begin to think about it.”



**AFTERMATH**  
Corpses await burial in a mass grave.

man suffering—the 6,000-year period of which mankind is now nearing the end.

All of mankind remains at present under the malicious influence of the devil (Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Swayed by Satan, without God in our life, each of us is hostile toward God (Romans 8:7-8). We are carnal. We naturally HATE God's law.

In order to restore to us the exalted human potential that our first parents turned their backs on, God seeks to convert the heart of every carnal person in the world—to help us recognize the error in going the wrong way, and to instill in us a deep love for God's way of life. “The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). That is a tremendous ambition, given the mountainous obstacle that each heart presents. He is not doing this on a mass scale today, but His overarching plan, once fulfilled, does include everyone willing to come to repentance.



Does this man know the God of the Bible? The God who blesses for obedience—and *punishes for disobedience*?

A Christian priest in Sri Lanka asked, “How do you explain to a people that God loves you, that God cares for you? It’s difficult.” Truly—to the woman who lost her son, or to people who saw thousands of corpses strewn on a beach, the cliché that “God loves you” would be difficult to swallow.

But can we recognize the *love* in God’s CORRECTION? And shouldn’t we ask the more piercing question: Is it possible that *we* don’t love GOD? Might *that* be the problem?

Something is flawed with the notion that no matter how much evil is perpetrated, *no matter what we do*, God is obligated to shower only blessings upon us. Ponder these profound words of the Prophet Malachi: “Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, *Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them*; or, Where is the *God of judgment*?” (Malachi 2:17).

Do we know *this* God? Do we really have the proper fear of God? Are we willing to accept this plain truth from the Bible? Consider it.

One can only imagine how horrifying the sight must have been: stories-high water rushing toward you, death almost certain; entire villages being swept aside, smashing the hopes and ambitions of the residents who lived there; knowing that you and everyone you loved were probably about to die.

And only Noah and his family survived. By the hand of God, *every inhabitant of the Earth was wiped out*, sparing only eight people.

Yes, if the Bible is your authority, God has wiped the planet clean with water before in a cataclysm exponentially more destructive than the recent Asian disaster.

Repeatedly Scripture describes God’s judgment on the nations and on His own people. Read the account of the Flood in Genesis 6-8, and of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. Read God’s judgment against Egypt in Exodus 12:29-30, and against Israel in Amos 4:10. Read the prophecies of the plagues God will rain down upon this world in the time just ahead, spelled out in Revelation 16.

Should we be so shocked when we see such calamities today? To say that God would never cause such suffering—that it *could not be His will*—is to admit frankly that WE DON’T KNOW GOD.



## A THOUSAND WORDS

Satellite images of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, before and after the December tidal wave.

**God on Death** To understand how correction through calamity can actually be an expression of love, one must have God’s perspective on human life. Human death means nothing to God except a *temporary sleep* (1 Corinthians 15:51-55) because He is able to *resurrect* humans from the grave!

One of the greatest, most hope-filled truths in Scripture is that of the *resurrection of the dead*. Hebrews 6:1-2 list the resurrection as being one of the foundational doctrines of your Bible. Scripture actually refers to three separate resurrections, each serving a unique purpose (this truth is explained in our free reprint article “The Three Resurrections”). In God’s immense wisdom and mercy, every individual who ever lived will be given one genuine chance to choose eternal life or eternal death. The vast majority in this Satan-gripped world have not yet been given that choice, and are not yet judged (Hebrews 9:27).

Those who died in the tsunami will be raised again! God has promised it! That is a message of hope. Those who grieve for their loved ones need to understand this. Those now dead will be resurrected in a future utopian world, ruled by God—one far kinder than the world fraught with nightmares that we now inhabit. At that time they will re-

ceive, for the first time, the opportunity to *understand* God’s precious truth and apply it in their lives.

God’s perspective is very different from ours. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). It is not cruelty that leads Him to correct—even to allow some to die. It is rather His lightning-bolt message to those *still living*—the Creator’s call to repentance.

**“Ye Shall Likewise Perish”** In Luke 13, Jesus Christ speaks to this subject. Some of those following Him told Him of some wicked Galileans who were killed by Pilate in an especially gruesome manner. Jesus answered the question as to whether they deserved their fate: “Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:2-3).

Christ followed up with an example that expanded the discussion. Eighteen people had been crushed by the collapse of a tower—an accidental and tragic death. They too bore no particular guilt above anyone else around them who was spared. But again Jesus followed up with the barbed statement: “[T]hink ye that they were sinners above all men that

dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH” (verses 4-5).

No one can impute wickedness on the people who died in the tsunami. Their deaths offer no proof of their being any more sinful than those who survived—or anyone else in the world. Romans 3:23 explains that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

Christ was saying that the disasters that befall others should *serve as a warning* to us—that we will be subject to the same fate *unless we repent of our sins!*

## Those who died in the tsunami will be raised again. God has promised it! That is a message of hope.

God provides protection only for those who turn to Him in repentance and obedience (see the Commentary on page 37).

Referring to Christ’s warning to the Jews, the *Trumpet’s* editor in chief, Gerald Flurry, wrote: “God told them they must REPENT OR THE WHOLE JEWISH NATION WOULD DIE IN THE SAME VIOLENT WAY! That is precisely what happened to the Jewish nation in A.D. 70! Only God’s loyal remnant escaped to Pella. They are the only ones who heeded Christ’s warning!” (June 1995).

But, Mr. Flurry explained, “We must not forget that what happened to the Jewish nation is only a *type* of what is to happen to Israel—mainly the American and British peoples in this end time.” This critical truth is explained in vivid detail within our free book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.

Mr. Flurry continued, “Jewish historian Josephus recorded that there were *many* catastrophes which were rapidly intensifying before the Jewish nation was destroyed in A.D. 70. Disasters were very common. Today, we see the same scenario in end-time Israel. Horrifying events are becoming common for us today. It is all leading to the total destruction of our nations unless we repent! These disasters are the strongest kind of warning from God. ...

“*Why* all these disasters? They are a warning from God to REPENT! The disasters will keep coming until we repent. That is our *only* hope.”

Yes—the disasters will keep coming. We can count on that.

**The Beginning of Sorrows** Notice what Christ prophesied in the Olivet prophecy for our day now: “For nation shall

rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and *earthquakes, in divers places*. All these are *the beginning of sorrows*” (Matthew 24:7-8). The disasters occurring now are only the beginning of sorrows! God is going to bring them upon the whole world.

Ezekiel 5 contains a prophecy revealing that one third of the people of biblical Israel (the United States and the British peoples today) are going to die with “fire” and “pestilence” (verses 2, 12). *Pestilence* in the original Hebrew means

*destruction or death*. For the U.S., that means 100 million people will die!

Then, Ezekiel prophesies, will come foreign attack—in which another third of the population will “fall by the sword” (verse 12). That means another 100 million in the U.S.

Only one tenth will survive the national captivity that follows. This is destruction on an unprecedented scale. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22).

*Why would God allow that suffering?* What is God’s ultimate PURPOSE in all this? “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; *but that the wicked turn from his way and live*: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11). God wants us to repent *so we can live!*

Thus, God is determined to allow suffering to increase until mankind accepts that there is *no hope in man!* Regrettably, mankind will sink to unprecedented depths before people will admit that they are wrong!

The truth is, if God were to pull up now and cut His losses—to accept *only* those few on Earth who had genuinely repented and whole-heartedly accepted His rule in their lives, *He would have a family of perhaps only thousands*.

But by allowing the full 6,000 years of human existence in Satan’s world to play themselves out—to in fact cause events to climax in unprecedented catastrophe—God is creating conditions

whereby *many hundreds of millions—EVEN MULTIPLE BILLIONS* of human beings made in the likeness of their heavenly Father—will recognize the futility of the ways that seemed right to them but led only to death, and embrace the God-ordained way of love, of joy and peace—the way that leads to *life*.

God is a GOD OF LOVE. To comprehend the love of God, we must realize that what we have now is not *real life*—it is merely a short-lived chemical existence. God *wants* to give us *real life—ETERNAL LIFE!* That is why He will allow so much destruction and suffering to come upon this world: *so as many as possible* will repent, and He can then reward them with eternal life.

“And *take heed to yourselves*, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. *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*” (Luke 21:34-36).

Even in the face of these catastrophes—even as we see these types of natural disasters increase, and see human suffering increase—we can be filled with a vibrant hope. Why?

Because knowing that we are in the last days tells us that Jesus Christ is about to return! When He does, this 6,000-year-long lesson in human suffering will be over, and everyone on Earth will have seen the futility of following after the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. People will be ready to do what’s right, to live the way of peace, joy and happiness that God offered Adam and Eve 6,000 years ago.

Satan the devil will be banished, and Jesus Christ will rule over the greatest time of prosperity that has ever been.

Finally, with God’s benevolent government in place, the hope of the resurrection will become reality, and everyone who has ever lived—including our loved ones, the victims of the tsunami—will be raised into a world where the right choice has been made, where, as the Prophet Isaiah said, the knowledge of the Eternal covers the Earth as the waters cover the sea. ■

To learn more, request our free booklet **Repentance Toward God**.



# The Precious Jewel of Iran's Plan



## NUMBERS

Hundreds of thousands of Muslim worshippers flock to Jerusalem, Islam's third holiest city, every year.

**For over a decade, Gerald Flurry has warned us to watch for signs of Iran trying to seize Jerusalem. Today we can see them.**

BY JOEL HILLIKER

**M**UHAMMAD'S FIRST FOLLOWERS prayed toward Jerusalem. It was there, to the Temple Mount of the Holy City, that Muhammad was said to have been transported in a vision from his home in Mecca in his famous "night journey"; it was from there that he was met by the great biblical prophets and then ascended to heaven to speak with Allah before returning home.

Only later did Muhammad, who founded the religion of Islam, redirect his supporters to pray toward Mecca, located in Saudi Arabia. But in the minds of Muslims, the night journey and ascension forever marked Islam's spiritual connection to the City of God.

To this day, many Muslims believe *the city belongs to Islam*.

In their view, Jerusalem's current occupation by Jews is just as wrong as its previous occupations by Romans and by Catholics, from whom Muslims forcibly

took control on multiple occasions. Jewish control over Jerusalem is essentially a symbol of the injustice of Western imperialism—and a bitter reminder of the powerlessness of today's Muslim society.

The growing giant among the Islamic nations today is Iran. And for over a decade, the *Trumpet's* editor in chief has warned readers to watch for signs of Iran's meddling in Jerusalem.

In his booklet *The King of the South*, Gerald Flurry wrote, "During the Crusades, Jerusalem was always the main prize. This city is of supreme religious importance to Jews, Christians and Muslims. ... These two great and powerful religions [Christianity and Islam] both passionately desire Jerusalem."

A decade ago, Mr. Flurry berated the West for being "spellbound by peace treaties" and thus suffering willful blindness to "Iran's massive plot to control the Middle East." Then he wrote: "*The most precious jewel of Iran's plan is to conquer Jerusalem*. This would then galvanize the Islamic world behind Iran!" (*Trumpet*, February 1995; emphasis mine throughout).

This is one of many of Mr. Flurry's statements that is proving itself more true with the passage of time.

Intelligence continually emerges on how the mullahs in Tehran, in pursuit of this "precious jewel," have plotted a takeover in Israel for many years. To lay the groundwork, they have drawn from their standard arsenal of espionage, arms smuggling and terrorism—feverishly, furtively working to subvert the Jewish government and position themselves to assume control.

Now, with Yasser Arafat dead and buried and Ariel Sharon caught in a political bramble bush, an opportunity is opening for Iran to strike. Watch for it! *Iran is trying to take over Jerusalem!*

**The Spoiler** The Prophet Isaiah forecast a time at the end when "the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly." That time is swiftly approaching—but Isaiah's prophecy already seems to describe our day. Years of effort at creating peace in the Middle East have been a grim failure.

Why? One of the principal reasons has been *Iran's designs on Jerusalem*. The Islamic Republic has placed guns in the hands of terrorists, paid Palestinians to blow themselves up among Israeli civilians, fomented hatred and campaigned for war. As far back as the August 1998 *Trumpet*, Mr. Flurry boldly stated,

“IRAN HAS VIRTUALLY DESTROYED THE PEACE PROCESS SINGLE-HANDEDLY. Still, the world continues to talk about peace. Iran and radical Islam don’t want peace, and words won’t deter them.” When has Iran ever been held accountable for this disaster?

Mr. Flurry then called attention to this stunning declaration by intelligence analyst Joseph de Courcy in the *Islamic Affairs Analyst*: “Subscribers should be in absolutely no doubt about this. From Iran’s support for subversion in Bahrain, through its improving ties with Egypt, its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon

### To this day, many Muslims believe the city belongs to Islam.

and the Islamist revolutionaries in Khartoum, to its close strategic alliance with Moscow, everything has the same ultimate purpose: *the liberation of Jerusalem from under the Zionist yoke.*”

This fact is critical to note. Yasser Arafat presided over a failed regime; his corrupt government essentially impoverished his people and delivered on none of his promises. Many see his death as opening the window to sunny new scenarios for democracy and peace in Israel. The reality is, the power best organized to fill the leadership gap is just as stained by terrorism as Arafat was—but with ties to Iran. And Tehran has the muscle, and the will, to take its campaign to “push Israel into the sea” to another level of horror.

Let’s look at a scripture that points directly at the likelihood of this event.

Zechariah 14:2 prophesies that half of Jerusalem will be taken into captivity. As our booklet *Jerusalem in Prophecy* explains, this must occur soon, because other prophecies dated to the beginning of the biblical “Great Tribulation” (Matthew 24:21) describe the city being *completely* overtaken, in that case by a European power (Luke 21:20). Zechariah is speaking of an impending, *partial* conquest of the Holy City by *Islamic warriors*—one that will *precede* the Tribulation.

Writing about this prophecy in our companion magazine *Royal Vision*, Mr. Flurry explained, “These verses prophesy that the Palestinians are going to take over half of Jerusalem very soon. I don’t believe that the Palestinians, by themselves, could do that—but they could if the king of the south [Iran, as labeled in the prophecy of Daniel 11:40] supported and helped them. We need to watch: Iran wants to take over that city. Such a conquest would

galvanize the whole Islamic world to get behind the king of the south—a goal Iran has been working toward all along” (January-February 2005).

How SPECIFIC! Is this something we can see unfolding in today’s newspapers? Absolutely.

**The Party of God** The spiritual roots of Lebanon-based terrorist group Hezbollah lie in Iran. Like Iran (and unlike the majority of Muslims), it follows the Shia version of Islam. In its foundational document “Program,” written in February 1985, the group identifies itself as “sons

of the *umma* (Muslim community), the party of God (Hizb Allah), *the vanguard of which was made victorious by God in Iran.*” It went so far as to name the Ayatollah Khomeini, who led the Iranian Revolution in 1979, as the group’s “commanding jurist,” whose orders it must obey.

Iran has nurtured and funded this terrorist group from its beginning, and this relationship has allowed Iran inroads not only into Lebanon, but also Israel. Hezbollah’s charter identifies the Jewish state as one of its chief enemies, saying, “Our primary assumption in our fight against Israel states that the Zionist entity has been aggressive from its inception, and built on lands wrested from their owners, at the expense of the rights of the Muslim people. Therefore our struggle will end only when this entity is obliterated.” One of Hezbollah’s greatest victories was its battling the Israeli presence in southern Lebanon, which, after 15 years, culminated in Israel retreating to its own border in May of 2000.

Hezbollah’s founding document also makes clear its fundamental opposition to anything resembling a peace process: “We recognize no treaty with [Israel], no cease-fire, and no peace agreements, whether separate or consolidated. We vigorously condemn all plans for negotiation with Israel, and regard all negotiators as enemies, for the reason that such negotiation is nothing but the recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist occupation of Palestine.” Hezbollah operatives, funded by Iran, have been responsible for hundreds of attacks that have sabotaged peace efforts over the past 20 years.

What is alarming, then, is how well this blood-stained “party of God” has positioned itself to influence Palestinian politics in the post-Arafat period.

An Israeli intelligence report authored in October 2004 showed that Hezbollah has been actively trying to infiltrate the Jewish state from within ever since Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon. At that moment, as reported by IsraelNationalNews.com on Dec. 9, 2004, “Hezbollah and Iran realized the ‘explosive potential’ available in the *Israeli-Arab population*. Full-fledged citizens with complete mobility throughout the country, the Arabs of Israel were seen as a perfect way of enhancing Hezbollah’s ability to strike out at Israel.” In addition to collecting intelligence from Israel’s Arab citizens, Iran and Hezbollah began using them to establish and expand terror cells, to smuggle weapons, and to provide logistical and operative aid to other terror groups, all within Israel’s borders. An Israeli Arab arrested in November for spying for Iran offered an unsettling peek at the truth of the report. Voice of Israel radio said Iranian intelligence had given him a number of assignments, including recruiting terrorists and distributing money to the families of suicide bombers.

In December, more proof turned up. “Israeli security officials said Iran has expanded its office in Beirut established to recruit Palestinians and Israelis for espionage and other operations against the Jewish state. The officials said that Iran has allocated new funds for a range of operations in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip” (Middle East Newline, Dec. 10, 2004).

In a chilling story in the Dec. 13, 2004, *Weekly Standard*, Aaron Mannes documented further infiltration into Israel by Hezbollah and, by extension, Iran. “Iran and Hezbollah have provided funds, weapons and training to Palestinian terrorists. Many of the *intifada’s* most successful tactics were learned from Hezbollah. But all this assistance came at a price. According to Israeli intelligence, IRAN IS NOW ‘IN CONTROL OF TERRORISM IN ISRAEL.’”

The evidence is copious. Hezbollah has established close relationships with the majority of small leftist Palestinian organizations. The umbrella group Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which includes several radical Palestinian Islamic factions, is under heavy Iranian influence and cooperates with Hezbollah. Alarming, Hamas, a terrorist group whose political support among Palestinians is rapidly growing (see sidebar, page 11), is actually *coming under Hezbollah control*. Mannes reports that “Hamas’s political leadership is now exclusively Syria-based, and

*Hezbollah operatives in Lebanon direct Hamas operations*" (ibid.)—certainly a point to remember when following ongoing developments in Palestinian politics.

Hezbollah's—and hence Iran's—sway has also extended into the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Fatah, Arafat's former dominions. "Officers in Arafat's personal bodyguard, Force 17, directed the first Hezbollah cells in the West Bank and Gaza," Mannes explained. "In exchange for providing arms such as those on the Karine A—the arms-smuggling freighter intercepted by Israel in

January 2002—Iran was allowed to open hospitals and social institutions in the West Bank and Gaza. *These institutions serve as a cover for an expanded Iranian presence.* In late 2002, a captured Palestinian agent for Hezbollah confessed to Israeli security that Hezbollah had established a network of supporters in the West Bank and Gaza to infiltrate Fatah and the PA in order to take control when the PA collapses." That Hezbollah agent said he reported both to Iran and to Fatah leader Farouq Qaddumi, who after Arafat's death essentially became no

more than a Palestinian front man for Hezbollah's activities in Israel.

If Hezbollah—or, perhaps more plausibly, a Hezbollah-controlled Hamas—does end up playing a large role on the new Palestinian political scene, it will amount to an Iranian takeover. "[I]n politics the advantage goes to the organized, and Hezbollah and its patrons have been preparing for this moment for some time" (ibid.).

Given these facts, it's not difficult to see how Iran could swell Palestinian politics with enough power to throw Israel into even greater chaos in the time ahead. We must keep our eyes fixed on

## Politics Tainted by Terrorism

ON DEC. 23, 2004, IN the first Palestinian local elections since 1976, the Islamic terrorist group Hamas won a considerable portion of the vote—35.6 percent—making "an impressive entrance onto the political scene" (Stratfor, Dec. 28, 2004). The support for Hamas was enough to undermine the confidence of the popular Fatah faction, which the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, is a member of.

Though Hamas did not participate in the January presidential elections—perhaps because it knew it would lose and didn't want to sacrifice its popular image—it plans to take part in legislative elections slated for July. Hamas is aware that, based on its performance in the municipal vote, "it has enough clout to emerge in [these] elections as a significant player in Palestinian politics" (ibid., January 14).

Clearly, Hamas is attempting to gain political legitimacy—and succeeding—while at the same time it continues its campaign of terror attacks against Israel. Indeed, just two days before Abbas was sworn in on January 15, a Hamas attack killed six Israelis.

Hamas's stated aim is

to destroy Israel. In a rally last December, its leader denounced the "road map for peace" plan. The same month, the group staged an anti-Israeli demonstration at which its supporters burned models of an Israeli tank and a group of houses representing a Jewish settlement. Its leader rejected calls to give up violence against the Israelis.

At the heart of Hamas's popularity is its Islamist message, which is supported by a major and growing portion of Palestinians. The terrorist group has undertaken significant social programs for impoverished Palestinians to improve their lot and buy their sympathy. The same methods were used by Hezbollah to gain political legitimacy and seats in the Lebanese Parliament. "Like Hezbollah, Hamas's instrumental objective is to establish a *sovereign Islamic state* through a democratic process, and win its struggle against the Israelis ... through any means necessary—armed or otherwise" (op. cit.; emphasis ours).

The popularity of Hamas was clearly of concern for the so-called moderate Abbas in the run-up to the January 9 elections. Abbas wooed hard-line militants by making appearances with terrorist leaders—even

being carried on the shoulders of a terrorist wanted for organizing suicide attacks against Israel—and promising not to use force against Hamas or forcefully disarm any of the terrorist groups.

*Newsday* (New York) reported that the Palestinian

being absorbed into the Palestinian political system. To think they will "reform" their ways is incredibly naive, given the history of Palestinian politics.

It is yet to be seen how much political power Hamas will gain, but given



**A NEW POLITICAL VOICE**  
Hamas supporters call out anti-Israel chants in the Gaza Strip.

Authority's leadership "knows it cannot punish militants for violent acts supported by many Palestinians .... These leaders have signaled that controlling militants [read *terrorists*] will mean absorbing them as officers in an internationally sanctioned Palestinian security force, and co-opting their leaders by welcoming them into Palestinian government" (Dec. 16, 2004).

What it amounts to is that, as a result of the popularity of militant Islam and its goal to destroy Israel, terrorists are increasingly

the growing Islamist support base—not to mention Bible prophecy—an Islamist takeover of what is currently a secular Palestinian leadership is sure to occur. As the article above explains, Iran is infiltrating the entire Palestinian political spectrum. Directly and through Hezbollah, this Islamic power is attempting to get a foothold in the Holy Land. With Hamas growing in popularity at the same time it is "falling into Hezbollah's orbit," Iran is gaining ground (*Weekly Standard*, Dec. 13, 2004).

the “city of peace” to watch for the violent fulfillment of Zechariah’s forecast: Thanks to Iranian infiltration, *half the city is about to be conquered!*

**Good News** As grim as that vision is, one can recognize it as wonderful news when it is put in the whole context of Zechariah’s prophecy.

The first verse of Zechariah 14 sets up the time frame: “Behold, the day of the Lord cometh”! Verses 4 and 5 portray the stunning reality, just ahead of us, of Jesus Christ returning from heaven to smash the armies that will have gathered in the region to fight Him, and then touching down on the Mount of Olives, in the same great city where He was crucified and resurrected two millennia before.

The Islamic invasion of half of the city

is presented right in the same context because, as Mr. Flurry describes in *Jerusalem in Prophecy*, it is the TRIGGER that will start a CHAIN OF EVENTS leading inexorably toward the Second Coming!

Please note—and do not forget—these words from that *Royal Vision* article by Mr. Flurry: “When we look at these prophecies, we need to realize what they are all tied to. What you’re seeing in Jerusalem today is a prelude to Christ’s return. It will all lead to that climactic event, step by step!

“So watch Jerusalem!”

**For anyone interested in the future of this city, Gerald Flurry’s free booklet *Jerusalem in Prophecy* is a must-read. Request your free copy today.**



## History’s Focal Point

Only one city on Earth is called the City of God. And for good reason: Jerusalem was founded by the Creator Himself. It was the location to which God sent Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. A millennium later, King David placed Israel’s capital there, and his son Solomon built there the house of God, a temple whose brilliant opulence attracted worldwide renown.

But the “city of peace” has been the locus of war ever since.

Nebuchadnezzar captured it in 597 B.C. and subsequently razed it. Shortly after, the city was conquered by the Persian King Cyrus, during whose reign the Jews built their second temple. Alexander the Great then took control for the Greeks, after which it was briefly recaptured by the Jews, and then, in A.D. 63, the Romans. Following a major unsuccessful Jewish revolt, in 135 the Romans banned Jews from entering the city.

Islamic conquest of the region began in 633. In A.D. 635, Muslim armies captured Jerusalem, and set about Islamicizing the Temple Mount, first by constructing the al-Aqsa mosque, then the Dome of the Rock on the biblical site of Abraham’s sacrifice and Solomon’s temple. Quite unlike the hostility that persists between these groups today, the Muslims allowed Jews access to the city during this period.



AP/WIDEWORLD

In 1099, Catholic Crusaders invaded, mercilessly expunging all Muslims and Jews. They occupied the city for 88 years, converting the Dome of the Rock into a church. Salah al-Din (Saladin), the Egyptian and Syrian sultan, recaptured the city in 1187, defended it against Catholics during the Third Crusade, and restored its position of prominence within the Islamic community.

At the beginning of the 16th century, the Turks conquered and ruled the city until the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century. The British liberated it in World War I and it was subsequently split between Jewish and Arab interests. The State of Israel was born in 1948, and, in the face of Arab attack, overtook the whole of the city in 1967.

Over the decades, Muslim desire to recapture Jerusalem has been carefully nurtured, spawning dozens of state and non-state attacks on the Jewish nation that presently controls it. Bible prophecy shows that, in the time just ahead, Islamic forces will succeed in capturing *half* of the city, before it is completely overrun once again by the crusading Catholics from the north at the start of the bloodiest period in human history.

After this, however, Christ will return to the city of His crucifixion, cleanse it of its corruption, and establish the headquarters of His world-ruling Kingdom in the City of God.

## SCORCHED EARTH

A Sudanese rebel views the abandoned village of Chero Kasi in the Darfur region, set on fire by Janjaweed militiamen.



# The Ove

More casualties than Iraq. Genocide

**K**HARTOUM! THE TERM RINGS with the reverberations of a history of desert conflict, of the clash of scimitars, of the westward sweep of the Ottomans in their conquering race to Spain—of visions of Lawrence of Arabia, of camel trains, desert horses with nostrils flaring at the full gallop as Arabian and black African clash through the centuries. Was there ever a name written amid blood and flame as was *Khartoum*?

But, if our perspective on this exotic place of legend, mystery, intrigue and bloody history is fixed in the past, or in the movie sequences of the 1966 film to which this expanse of largely desert land gave its name, then we need to be jolted into an awareness of the reality that is *today’s* Khartoum!

Though much hope has been pinned on the signing last month of a peace accord between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) of the south, the war in Darfur rages on. This little-known war, greatly overshadowed by the continuing conflict in Iraq, has witnessed tens of

the north and the south. And, similar to the Balkans, a self-interested outside power seeks control of Sudan's major resources and strategic location.

In 1983, the south rebelled against Khartoum's repression. The intervening years have resulted in the slaughter of an estimated 2½ million Sudanese and the displacement of 4 million, with hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing into neighboring countries.

The collapse of social infrastructure in the south has been all but complete. Author and journalist Blaine Harden lists the following tragic results of Khartoum's succession of cruel administrations and civil war: "... the total collapse of education, of child immunization programs, and of drilling schemes for fresh water. Cattle inoculation programs ended as epidemics of livestock disease spread unchecked. Land mines were sewn under fruit trees and beside wells, killing and crippling thousands of civilians, most of them children" (*Africa: Dispatches From a Fragile Continent*).

Sudan's present leader, President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, took over the presidency when a coup toppled the elected parliamentary government in 1989. His style of leadership can be measured by his response to Sudan's worst natural disaster of the 20th century. In 1998, massive floods wiped out the homes of around a million people. Bashir called an all-night emergency session of his parliament. But what did they discuss? Was it emergency relief for the devastated masses, their meager possessions washed away in one massive deluge? Believe it or not, Bashir and his cruel minions spent the entire session arguing the point of Islamic law reform that mandated *crucifixion* among other unsavory punishments!

But this is the cold, hard reality of the type of mind that too often is tolerated by politicians on the world scene due to political convenience—far too often neglected by a United Nations, which is proven time and again in the face of such cruel administrations to be but a paper tiger with the roar of a mouse!

Of all the misery that has been the lot of the Sudanese, it is in the west, in the province of Darfur, that the most suffering has occurred.

**Darfur** Historically there has always been tension between two rival groups in western Sudan: the settled farming folk (the Fur), and the nomadic herders who

# rlooked War

worse than the Balkans. Yet the world remains oblivious. **BY RON FRASER**

thousands more casualties in battle and massive numbers of displaced persons, compared to the Balkan conflict of the 1990s. Reports of ethnic cleansing on a scale far greater than anything observed during the Balkan wars have filtered through to the press. The United States Congress has leveled accusations that the government in Khartoum is tolerating genocide within the borders of Sudan. Around 200,000 people have crossed into neighboring Chad to seek refuge. An estimated 2.2 million people remain in urgent need of food or medical attention. United Nations estimates indicate that more than 70,000 people have died and more than 2 million have been left homeless due to Khartoum's war against its own Muslim citizens in Darfur.

Simply put, "a conglomeration of factors, including religious bigotry, racial and ethnic hatred, has combined with greed and foreign multinational oil interests to create *the world's greatest humanitarian emergency*" (*Africa News*, Nov. 5, 2004; emphasis mine throughout).

You need to understand the truth behind "the world's greatest humanitarian emergency."

**Tyrants' Legacy** Some have termed Sudan "the Balkans of northern Africa," and not without cause.

Akin to the Balkan Peninsula in southern Europe, Sudan is comprised of a multifarious mix of peoples. As the Balkans is a virtual crossroads for all points of the compass in Europe, so the Sudan is where the cultures of northern Africa meet those of the south, the west and the east. Most essentially, it is where Arab and black African meet. It is the crossroads of Islam to the north and animist (nature worshiping) African tradition to the south, with Christian influence in the south adding to this volatile mix.

Historically, conflicts in Sudan have been stimulated by successive governments in Khartoum seeking to impose their influence on the south, in the process creating a real divide between north and south. Akin to the Balkans situation of the past decade, self-serving powers in Khartoum, intent on consolidating and extending their own power base since Sudan's independence was granted 49 years ago, have seized upon ethnic, cultural and religious differences to inflame division and dissension between

wreak a certain seasonal havoc on the Fur's farmlands by moving cattle periodically for feed and water. But this has gone on for centuries. It is patently not the root cause of the genocide being presently endorsed by Sudan's government.

Why then has Khartoum recently seen fit to purge Darfur of its traditional inhabitants? After all, the Fur were in western Sudan long before the Arab incursion into Sudan from the north. The very name the Arabs gave to the western provinces, *Darfur*, means *the land of the Fur*.

The conflict in Darfur was sparked in early 2003, when rebel groups challenged the government in an attempt to have a say in the administration of their region and the control of resources. In response, the *Janjaweed* militia group, comprising Arabs primarily of Baggara tribal connection, armed and backed with air support by Khartoum, consequently mounted a wave of raids on Darfur, pitting Muslim Arab against Muslim black African. The results have been horrific, raising accusations of deliberate genocide by President Bashir's government.

The last thing the peacekeeping West wants on its hands at this moment is another Afghanistan, yet western Sudan has the potential to devolve into such a quagmire. Why would any government encourage such a scenario? Well, as is the case with so much of northern Africa and the Middle East, it all centers around black gold—oil!

**Why would any government encourage such a scenario? Well, as is the case with so much of northern Africa and the Middle East, it all centers around black gold—oil.**

**The Oriental Connection** Just over five years ago, Sudan began exporting crude oil. This brought about, in the final quarter of 1999, the country's first ever trade surplus. Finally there were hopes that Sudan could drag itself out of generations of economic deprivation into reasonable economic stability. Trouble is, the oil is located in the *south—including southern Darfur*. Obviously, Khartoum needed control over these areas in order to guarantee a regular supply from the oil fields via pipeline to the country's Red Sea terminal at Port Sudan.

And who is the main beneficiary of this oil? Sudan's major trading partner, *China*. At this point things get interesting.

Coincident with the development of their oil interests in Sudan, the Chinese have built armaments factories for Khar-



toum in the north. In fact, Beijing is supplying Sudan with the very ammunition to perpetrate its genocide. "Over the past decade, China has ... emerged as the principal supplier of heavy and light artillery and arms to Sudan. Weapon supplies have included ammunition, tanks, helicopters, antipersonnel and antitank mines and fighter aircraft—armaments that have been used in the genocide in Darfur" (*Africa News*, op. cit.).

Why? The scarcer the world's major source of energy, the higher the cost—both in money and, if necessary, *in human lives!* It just so happens that the concessions for Block 6, a major oil field in the south of Darfur (and extending into the neighboring region), are reserved to the China National Petroleum Corporation. This Oriental entity is the largest foreign investor in the Sudanese oil industry.

There's a long-term strategy at play here. "Ports in Sudan are looking forward to an increase in business as a direct consequence of oil discoveries in the country. But this won't happen overnight, says Hamza Osman, general manager of the Sea Ports Corporation. 'We have a 20-year plan, *drawn up by Chinese consultants*, to develop Port Sudan ...' he says" ([www.worldreport-ind.com/sudan](http://www.worldreport-ind.com/sudan)).

Take a look at a world map.

China is a significant customer of Middle Eastern oil, much of which is shipped via tanker through the Persian Gulf, south through the Strait of Malacca, then via the South China Sea to mainland China. In March 2002, the Chinese broke ground on development of a huge new port facility on the Pakistan coast at Gwadar, near the entrance to the Persian Gulf.

The Chinese, renowned for long-term thinking, are simply sewing up their major sources of supply, plus the terminals and major ports necessary to fill their continuing—and drastically increasing—thirst for oil. Port Sudan and Gwadar give them twin facilities on the most strategic sea routes for shipping oil from North Africa and the Middle East: the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf! China's long-term strategy is to link with trans-Caucasus pipelines to pipe Middle Eastern oil via Russia to tank farms in China. *That's* what will have the greatest impact on Sudan's future! Black gold! *That's* what's at the crux of the genocide in Darfur!

Sudan needs armaments to supply Khartoum's loyalist forces and to arm Muslim militia who are sympathetic to Khartoum's government in order to police—and where necessary either forcibly remove or annihilate—any group that stands in the way of guaranteeing the Chinese reasonable security of Sudan's oil fields and its pipeline to Port Sudan. Hence the construction by China of armaments factories in Sudan's north. Again, Russia sorely needs the cash, so it is willing to provide fighter aircraft to Sudan, bought by Sudan's oil revenues from China. The fighters are used to give added security to the oil resources and infrastructure. Finally, Iran enters the picture, simply because any pipeline to the east from the Persian Gulf must cross Iranian territory. Hence Khartoum's cozy relationship with the radical Islamic camp.

**Intensifying the Slaughter** Analysts say that 15,000 to 20,000 troops would be needed to secure Darfur. No one, least of all the thinly spread U.S., is going to commit such numbers. Meanwhile the UN Security Council, despite its rhetoric, is hamstrung by the veto-wielding China. This fast-growing, oil-starved country is not about to put in jeopardy its cozy relationship with Khartoum in order to put an end to a humanitarian catastrophe. "If sanctions were to block oil from ... Sudan, China would be



forced to scramble to find other sources, which could be difficult” (*International Herald Tribune*, January 18). It is little wonder then that China is blocking any attempt to impose economic sanctions on the government of Sudan.

In the Balkans, the German-inspired European Union got the U.S.-led forces to do its dirty work so as to secure the first colonies of the Euro-monolith and hand over the strategic crossroads of Europe on a silver platter, albeit garnished with Serbian blood. In Sudan the situation is slightly different: China, the major beneficiary of the country’s only significantly saleable asset, is content to make the guns and bullets which keep the Sudanese busy slaughtering each other as the Chinese go about securing the energy lifeblood to drive their own expanding economy. Such is the cruel nature of power politics in the 21st century.

Though much is being made of the cease-fire agreement promising an end to hostilities between the north and south, there is reason to believe this will only intensify the slaughter in the west, because the government “can now concentrate its military power and other force on the Darfur region in its continuing efforts to crush not only the rebels, but the civilian communities,” in the words of Salih Booker of Africa Action (National Public Radio, January 12). Moreover, the political capital Sudan has gained by its apparent success in the south will mean Khartoum “likely will be given some slack in resolving the Darfur crisis,” as far as the international community is concerned (Stratfor, January 12). Additionally, by bringing the SPLM/A into a power-sharing government, Khartoum would be gaining a potential ally, “as al-Bashir and [SPLM/A leader John] Garang now have a similar stake in the outcome of the Darfur crisis” (ibid.). Besides, at the end of the day, peace accords in this, the longest-running civil war in the world, have a history of failure.

**Those Who Weep** So the women and children of Darfur continue to weep in their great trauma and suffering, as Sudanese have wept for generations under Khartoum’s cruel rule as it continues to perpetrate scenes such as the following: “[T]ear gas was fired at people, mostly women and children, queuing at a ... medical clinic. We witnessed harrowing scenes. One woman was crying hysterically because her baby son had been lost in the panic” (BBC News, Nov. 10, 2004).

But it ought to make *us* weep—and *cry out* for whatever it takes to wipe the blight of man’s inhumanity to man from all time and existence—not just from the one running sore that is Darfur, but from this whole wretched planet.

Aid programs are but a drop in the bucket. The institutions that this world has set up in its futile efforts to bring peace are exposed for the sham that they are.

The BBC dispatch from Darfur continued, “Police fired tear gas and assaulted residents at El-Geer camp near Nyala, hours before the UN’s Sudan envoy was due to arrive, witnesses said. The UN and African Union are seeing the assault as a calculated affront .... Government officials in the area knew the UN secretary general’s representative would shortly arrive at the camp .... In spite of this, government forces staged two assaults on displaced people, and would not desist from bulldozing their camp, despite the presence of UN representatives, the African Union and international aid agencies. ... The raid took place a day after the government and the rebels signed what has been described as a breakthrough agreement aimed at ending the crisis” (ibid.).

Is it any wonder, when the very institutions that the world has created to solve its humanitarian problems are treated with such disdain, that the masses lose heart?

“The police showed open contempt for United Nations officials when they ar-

## **Deeply embedded inhumane treatment of one’s fellow human beings such as witnessed in Sudan is a problem way beyond the very best efforts of man to solve.**

rived .... The population is terrorized and bewildered, with little faith in the power of the international community” (ibid.).

Plainly, deeply embedded inhumane treatment of one’s fellow human beings such as witnessed in Sudan—aided and abetted by foreign nations intent on filling their own wish list for raw materials—is a problem way beyond the very best efforts of man to solve.

A few realists who recognize the cause of this world’s ills also recognize that there can be only one solution. Political philosopher Leo Strauss was such a one: “[N]o bloody or unbloody change of society can eradicate the evil in man,” he wrote. “As long as there will be men, there will be malice, envy and hatred, and hence there cannot be a society which does not have to employ coercive restraint” (*The City and Man*).

Surely 6,000 years of the documented history of man ought to be sufficient to demonstrate that man, of and by himself, does not have the capacity to employ “coercive restraint” in a caring, balanced, selfless and loving manner such as works to the total benefit of mankind. Self-interest is always present in the mind of man.

Truly, if there is to be an ultimate solution to mankind’s ills, as Gen. Douglas MacArthur once said, “It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.”

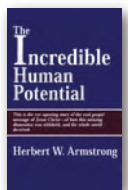
This then demands help from a higher source than man, from beyond planet Earth—from man’s Maker!

There are those who are being prepared for such a task, at this very moment, under the direction of their Maker. In fact, over the centuries, Almighty God has been preparing a select group of people to support Him in this very task. They are those spoken of in Paul’s epistle to the Romans: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:22-23).

God will harvest those who genuinely sigh and cry over the evils of this world, and whom He leads to deeply understand the *only* way to solve those problems. Perhaps *you* are such a one.

Perhaps *you see!* (Revelation 3:18). Perhaps *you* are one to whom God is reaching out to select, to train and prepare to be part of the great *solution* to the overwhelming problems of mankind.

If this is so, you need to immediately request your own free copy of our book *The Incredible Human Potential* and deepen your understanding of the great vision that Almighty God is intent on fulfilling through mankind! Fulfillment of *that* vision will, ultimately, bring not just the oppressed of Darfur, not the Sudanese alone, not only poor, blighted Africa, but *all* of mankind out of this world’s misery, to a full realization of its incredible, God-given, human potential! ■



**FREE UPON REQUEST**

**T**HIS PLANET HUMS WITH COM-motion, and CNN is there to make sure we hear it all. So is the Associated Press, and scads of other media entities nestled in every nook of all seven continents. Over 90,000 people from America alone gather the news to fill the 600 hours of network news each year, the 24-hour content of three cable news channels, the non-stop news radio and talk radio, the 1,500 daily newspapers and 7,500 weekly papers, the thousands of news websites, newsmagazines and analytical journals.

Certainly there is a bustling demand for news. But what's it all for? How important is it to keep up with all that information? *Why* watch world events?

For that matter, what is the *Trumpet's* purpose in reporting the news? Does the world need another newsmagazine? How is the *Trumpet* different?

The reason we vigilantly watch and report on world events is that *Jesus Christ TELLS US TO*. The *Trumpet* has a sense of responsibility.

Fact is, world events are hurtling toward the greatest news story ever to occur: the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We know this because, in His Word, Jesus provided a detailed description of what would transpire globally just before it. When one evaluates His prophecies with the key that unlocks them, it becomes clear that His return is imminent! The *Trumpet* therefore endeavors to take on a corresponding *urgency* in the way we look at the world.

The Bible contains dozens of MAJOR prophetic events to be on the watch for, and hundreds of additional events. But why? Stop and think about it: *Why* would God prophesy *in detail* what would occur during this time leading up to Christ's return?

**The Olivet Prophecy** Toward the end of His ministry, Christ delivered the tremendous Olivet prophecy, recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. What was it about? It was His response to the disciples' earthshaking question, "[W]hat shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3). In other words, the Olivet prophecy is Christ's explanation of the *world conditions that would precede His return*.

Let's take an overview of this momentous prophecy. I would suggest you turn to the 24th chapter of the book of

Matthew and follow along throughout this article.

Christ began by describing the four horsemen of the apocalypse, which bring false religion and its attendant problems and conflicts, as well as wars, famines and disease epidemics (verses 4-8—compare with Revelation 6:1-8) and other horrific events (verses 9-11). He then spoke about a falling away within His own Church in this end time (verse 12)—which puts the

## Why Watch the News?

Here's the reason the *Trumpet* tracks world events—and what makes them so critical to your daily life.

BY JOEL HILLIKER

time frame right into OUR DAY TODAY (read "Breaking Ground" on page 22, and request from us a free copy of Gerald Flurry's book *Malachi's Message* for a thorough biblical explanation).

Now notice how closely tied in with these events are Christ's admonitions for HOW TO SURVIVE them: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be *saved*" (verse 13). Yes, there will be people SPARED from these nightmares.

And then, verse 14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Right in the middle of this description is a prophecy about a WORK OF GOD. Herbert W. Armstrong fulfilled this prophecy. Largely through the *World Tomorrow* television program and the *Plain Truth* magazine, he warned this world for over 50 years with an intense prophetic message. Now the Philadelphia Church of God, through the *Key of David* telecast and the pages of this magazine, is PROPHESYING AGAIN (Revelation 10:11)—even *more intensely*, since fulfilled prophecy reveals we are that much closer to Christ's return.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains" (verses 15-16). Here are the *specific events* that will pre-

cede those who are under God's protection being taken to a *place of safety*.

The link between these cataclysms and God's people is reinforced in verses 21-22: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but *for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened*." In the middle of these world-encompassing calamities, God's people, or "the elect," are right there in the prophecy.

Then, in verse 30, we see what all these signs lead to: CHRIST'S RETURN. This is key! The *Trumpet* aims to focus on the connection between all the gloom and this most spectacular and hope-filled of all events!

Now, notice the admonition Christ gives: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all

*these things, know that it is near, even at the doors*" (verses 32-33). Christ tells us that we have to be on the LOOKOUT: You will know that the end of this age is near, and that Christ's return is near, by WATCHING as the *specific signs* He has given us are fulfilled, step by step.

**Reasons for Prophecy** Why would God give us these signs? Why would God give us all these prophecies and then tell us to be vigilant about watching for them?

The primary reason is to serve as a WARNING OF WHAT IS COMING. This is why the *Trumpet* each month shows how world events are fulfilling Bible prophecy. Some of our readers protest that the *Trumpet* seems too *negative*. We always try to show how all the bad news leads to the GOOD NEWS of Christ's return. But we cannot shy away from the commission to do God's merciful *warning work* (Ezekiel 33). God isn't just going to spring these calamities on us—He is giving plenty of warning.

Part of that warning message is God's admonition to *repent*—to turn away from the sin that is *causing* all these disasters: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked *turn from his way and live*: turn ye, *turn ye from your evil ways*; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11).

In effect, the *Trumpet* is completing

the same job Noah had before the ancient Flood: forewarning the world of imminent global ruin. Continuing with Christ's Olivet prophecy: "But as the days of [Noah] were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that [Noah] entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37-39).

There are two entities talked about in these verses: 1) All the people who weren't paying attention and just pretending things would continue forever, unchanged; and 2) Noah, with the support of his family, who labored for years and warned the people of what was coming.

Notice: Christ then immediately begins talking about people doing a WORK: "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (verses 40-41). Christ said there would be people at the end doing the Noah work—and, like Noah, at the critical moment they will be taken out of the crisis and protected.

Each of us, individually, determines which side of this equation we will be on. Are we hearing the warning, but not taking it seriously? Will we be among those heedlessly carousing, or will we repent and join those who are *warning* the others—supporting a NOAH WORK?

Back in Ezekiel, God told this prophet to say to the people, "Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" (Ezekiel 33:10). God's answer: "[I]f he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right ... he shall surely live, he shall not die" (verses 14-15).

**Watch and Pray** "WATCH THEREFORE," Christ continued in Matthew 24, "for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (verse 42). We are told, individually, to WATCH. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (verse 44). Being ready requires ongoing effort. It requires vigilance.

The parallel passage in Luke 21 concludes, "WATCH ye therefore, and PRAY ALWAYS"—and WHY?—"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).

Our watching and our praying have a bearing on whether God will count us worthy to escape! To escape these nightmares coming on the world, we must be *watching and praying always*.

What can happen to the one who is *not* vigilant? The one who is careless—or heedless—about the day of Christ's return? "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:48-51).

You can see how our attitude about Christ's return—our urgency, our excitement about those signs He has given us—DOES have a direct relationship to our *personal conduct*. Meditate on this connection.

Looking for the day of Christ's return puts a perspective on our lives that should translate into a desire to seek God's way of life. God gives a host of signs to be watching for, but not just so we will *watch*—He gives them as a means of *stirring us up* about the return of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ!

How it puts life in perspective when we attentively watch for Christ's return! It should get our minds on what God is doing on Earth today. It should spur us to *actively prepare* for what is coming. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (verse 46). God will bless and reward us for an attitude such as that.

**The Hope of Salvation** At the end of 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul talks about Christ's return. Right in that context comes the same message, urging *vigilance*: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3). A lot of people are about to be caught unaware—but only because they are ASLEEP to what is going on.

Many people think this world will go on forever. But the prophesied Great Tribulation is coming in *this generation!* That is the astounding reality!

"But let us, who are of the day, be so-

ber, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and *for an helmet, the hope of salvation*" (verse 8). We need the HOPE OF SALVATION like a helmet strapped to our heads—guarding our minds—protecting us from the distractions of this evil world that would pull us away. Our minds are the most important part of us—the part that most needs to be defended. Disruptions come at us, trying to steal our thoughts and capture our minds. But if we have this *helmet* on—if we have the *hope of salvation*, if our minds are on Christ's return—those things won't affect us.

**Christ Is Returning** Editor in chief Gerald Flurry has often admonished our readers to *watch Jerusalem*. That is the focal point of prophecy—and, astoundingly, it is also the focal point of world news today! (See article, page 9, and request our free booklet *Jerusalem in Prophecy*.)

Look now at Luke's version of the Olivet prophecy. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (Luke 21:20). The idea of sending foreign "peacekeeping" armies into Jerusalem has already been talked about by world leaders for several years. If Christ's words are true, we are about to see it happen!

As we watch the times getting worse, we must be careful to avoid the tendency to become depressed. Remember—always remember—where it is all leading: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And *when these things begin to come to pass, then LOOK UP, and LIFT UP YOUR HEADS; for YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH*" (verses 27-28). We need a posture of vigilant, hope-filled ANTICIPATION! Lift up your head—Christ is about to return! Don't lose your hope!

In the world today, the worse things get, the worse will be most people's despair. But we must not respond like that. The worse things get, the greater should be our HOPE!

The more vigilant we are—the more diligently we watch and pray—the more filled with hope we will become! It is all pointing toward the event this world so desperately cries out for: the Second Coming.

In the midst of calamity, we can be brimming with positivity. Not a positivity that comes from *ignoring* what is happening in the world—but that comes from TRULY UNDERSTANDING it.

See NEWS page 33 ▶

## EUROPE

### Playing Cyprus Card With Turkey



**TURKISH MARCH** Will the EU force Turkey's troops from Cyprus?

IS THIS THE BEGINNING of the end of EU isolation for Turkey? At a Dec. 17, 2004, summit in Brussels the European Union agreed to begin accession talks with Turkey in October this year. The setting of a date for negotiations—expected to last about a decade—has been hailed as a historic breakthrough after 40-odd years of Turkey's striving to get to this starting point.

After persistent, decades-long rebuffing of the Muslim nation by a largely Christian Europe, is this a dramatic change of heart for Europeans? Or does the EU have ulterior motives? The answer largely revolves around a strategically located island in the eastern Mediterranean: Cyprus.

Cyprus is a divided nation, with the majority Greek south having been accepted as an EU member in May last year, leaving the Turkish Cypriots in the north on their own. Since 1974, when Turkey annexed the northern portion of the island in response to a Greek-backed attempted coup, Ankara has refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Greek Cypriot government in Nicosia. After decades of negotiations and peace talks, the situation remains a stalemate, with over 30,000 Turkish troops still occupying the north of the country.

A primary condition for Turkey to start official negotiations with the EU was that it formally recognize Cyprus. Though Ankara didn't go that far, at the December summit it accepted a compromise deal whereby it promised to extend its customs union with the EU to the 10 newest member nations—including Cyprus.

For Turkey, formal recognition of Cyprus would mean acknowledging the Greek Cypriot government as sovereign over the entire country and withdrawing recognition of the northern Turkish Cypriot administration. It would also raise the question of whether Turkey's 30,000 troops stationed in the north

are occupying EU territory.

If Ankara does *not* recognize Cyprus as an EU member, Nicosia has threatened to veto Turkey's EU membership every step of the way. To clear this hurdle, Turkey now has a new incentive to push for a peace settlement that would enable it to recognize the Cypriot government.

In reality, the carrot of EU membership—and the threat of a Cypriot veto—is a means of inducing Turkey to *allow the EU to gain more influence over Cyprus*.

In a referendum last April, Greek Cypriots rejected a United Nations peace plan because the Turkish north didn't agree to enough concessions. However, just days after the EU summit, Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan—in a clear indication that he's prepared for further compromise—said the rejected plan could be revised.

Such compromise would mean the "Turkish Cypriots must be ready to live without the Turkish security umbrella" (*Financial Times*, London, Dec. 23, 2004). Indeed, Nicosia "has hinted it will place more demands

on the table ... such as the withdrawal of some 30,000 Turkish troops occupying the north of Cyprus" (Agence France Presse, Dec. 17, 2004).

Watch for the EU to force Turkey to make every concession possible, *but still ultimately refuse it EU membership*. At the same time, watch as the EU prepares to use Cyprus as a bridge into the Holy Land. A Cyprus peace agreement leading to a reduction of Turkish troops on the island would open the way for EU "peacekeeping" troops to take charge in Cyprus—and be in place to pursue further "peacekeeping" missions in nearby Jerusalem.

In August 1998, editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote, "More than one crusade has been launched from Cyprus. Will we see the last crusade launched from there as well? ... Is the EU already thinking about Cyprus as a launching pad from which to protect [its] Jerusalem interests?"



### EU Wines, Dines Mediterranean

THE EUROPEAN UNION, IN accordance with a clear prophetic story line, is moving south. A list of its initiatives in the Mediterranean includes the following:

- On Dec. 21, 2004, defense ministers from 10 Mediterranean rim countries (the "5+5" group—five EU members plus five North African nations) met and confirmed an action plan for 2005 over security and defense in the Mediterranean, namely a permanent structure to deal with terrorist threats and illegal smuggling. "It

is very important for the European Union to continue its enlargement toward the east and the north, but we all know that the threats and the core of our security come also from the south," said Portugal's defense minister, Paulo Portas (Xinhua News Agency, Dec. 21, 2004).

- The European Investment Bank (EIB) announced on Dec. 22, 2004, that it was providing €340 million in loans to Egypt and Tunisia under the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP). The money will

fund purchases for transport equipment and infrastructure, including seven Airbus aircraft to EgyptAir and upgrade of road and rail networks in Tunisia. EIB's vice president commented: "Today more than ever, the countries of the Mediterranean are the Union's new neighbors. ... FEMIP is financing the key infrastructure required to create a vast Euro-Mediterranean area ..." (European Commission press release, Dec. 22, 2004). A smaller, similar loan was granted to



**HIGH AIMS** Galileo satellite rendering

TECHNOLOGY

## Europe's Edge

BY 2008, THE EU'S NEW satellite system, "Galileo," will be fully functional. Last December, a €150 million contract was signed between the European Space Agency and Galileo Industries giving the go-ahead to build the first four Galileo satellites—to be deployed in 2008. By 2010, the full constellation of 30 satellites will be in orbit.

This presents a huge challenge to America's Global Positioning System (GPS)—a satellite system founded for military purposes. GPS has greatly contributed to America's military edge on the world scene.

Consider the tremendous advantage offered to the U.S. by its superior navigation system. For example, in the last two Iraq campaigns, missiles could be aimed so precisely they could enter a specifically targeted window. An

estimated 60 percent of the bombs used in Iraq were GPS-guided.

Galileo will be more advanced, simply because it will be 30 years newer. Upgrades are not planned for the GPS system until after Galileo is already active.

Although Galileo is supposed to be a commercial system, the EU is clearly intending to use its new technological edge for military purposes, even over the objection of member state Britain. The January 3 *Space Review* derided the notion that Galileo is intended as a civilian system as being "as silly as that of a civilian aircraft carrier or a civilian armored personnel carrier." It also noted that for Britain's objections to be dismissed so readily "indicates that Galileo's backers believe that there are some very high stakes involved."

In fact, Galileo will be used as a key component of the EU's military resources, and the U.S. will have lost the advantage provided by its GPS. For more information on where the EU's space program is headed, see our December 2003 article "Space Wars!" under Issue Archives at [www.theTrumpet.com](http://www.theTrumpet.com).

Algeria on Dec. 17, 2004.

- The first Euro-Mediterranean Investment Summit was held on January 13-14. Regional ministers, financial leaders and business executives discussed ways to boost investment in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

- The European Commission (EC) and Moroccan officials are working toward bringing Morocco under the Galileo umbrella through a cooperation agreement. "Such an agreement will enable Galileo to become established in the west-

ern Mediterranean and West Africa," said EC Vice President Jacques Barrot (*ibid.*, Dec. 7, 2004).

Watch for the EU to maneuver through the Mediterranean to North Africa, as prophesied in Daniel 8:9: "And out of one of them came forth a little horn [a coming strong European leader], which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land [Jerusalem]." For more information, request our free booklet *Daniel—Unsealed at Last!*

ASIA

## Russia, China: Alliance to Watch

THE RAPID POLITICAL and economic revival of Russia and China over the past few years should shock the world. Both have risen out of social and economic doldrums to become key global powers. Individually, these nations wield considerable global influence; combined, their power would be daunting. Two events of late indicate that such an alliance is already forming.

In the recent Yukos debacle, the Russian government essentially forced a massive, privately-owned oil company (Yukos) into bankruptcy, thereby forcing it to auction off assets, including a giant subsidiary company. This subsidiary (Yuganskneftegas) is now owned and operated by the Russian government.

Late last December, according to the *New York Times*, a senior Russian official said that one of China's state oil companies, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), could be offered a 20 percent share in Moscow's newly acquired oil company (Dec. 31, 2004). This, combined with remarks made by Russian President Vladimir Putin during a visit to Germany in December, provided strong indication that China is about to play an intimate role in Russia's energy industry. "We don't rule out that CNPC would take part in the production of Yuganskneftegas," remarked Putin (*Financial Times*, London, Dec. 22, 2004).

This potential oil deal between Russia and China is hugely significant: After it is

finalized, it will mean hardware and manpower from both nations will be combined to develop the Russian oil and gas industry. Russia will welcome China's money, manpower and technical expertise, while Beijing will be thrilled at the easy access to Russia's mammoth oil fields.

In another sign of a rapidly strengthening alliance, for the first time in history Russia and China have agreed to conduct joint military exercises in the last six months of this year. Editor of *Russia in Global Affairs Magazine* Fyodor Lukyanov put the Sino-Russian war-games in context: "It's a response to a series of political defeats Russia has suffered, most recently in Ukraine," he told the Associated Press. "It's a reminder that Russia is still a great military power" (Dec. 27, 2004).

There is more to war-games than simply training soldiers and testing military tactics: Military exercises are one of the best ways to show off military prowess. And joint exercises are a direct reflection of the state of relations between two nations. In this case, they provide proof that a strong Sino-Russian alliance is building.

The *Trumpet* has long foretold this alliance. To see where it is leading, request a free copy of our booklet *Russia and China in Prophecy*.



**TO CHINA** Yukos oil tankers ready to roll

## Sex Scandal Uncovered

THE YEAR 2004 WAS bad for the United Nations. Its credibility was shredded by the oil-for-food scandal. Some called for Secretary General Kofi Annan's dismissal. Annan himself commented, "No doubt that this has been a particularly difficult year, and I am relieved that this *annus horibilis* is coming to an end" (*International Herald Tribune*, Dec. 22, 2004).

Unfortunately for Annan, it appears that 2005 will usher in a new scandal, even as revelations about oil-for-food continue to pour out.

The latest scandal involves allegations of sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: over 150 accusations of rape, child abuse, solicitation and other sexual crimes—70 in Bunia alone. Hundreds of images of child pornography involving Congolese children were found on the laptop of a French UN civilian working in Goma (*Independent*, London, January 11).

Despite an investigation, the UN's own oversight agency says the problem is "serious and ongoing" (Associated Press, January 7). "It was clear that the investigation did not act as a deterrent for some of the troops, perhaps because they had not been made aware of the severe penalties for engaging in such conduct, nor had they seen any evidence of a negative impact on individual peacekeepers for such behavior," the UN oversight agency report said (*ibid.*). More specifically, not one UN soldier has been charged, although the allegations in at least six cases have been fully substantiated! Rather, the report recommended that the

countries that sent the peacekeepers take action. The UN itself has not held the perpetrators responsible.

Somewhat surprisingly, there has been very little reporting on this scandal. Compare the media coverage of this story to the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. This is a glaring double standard.

Consider it: This story was first uncovered by an investigation in February 2004. Now, a year later, the problem continues unabated, and the media don't seem to care. Had this been an American scandal, rest assured they would be demanding that someone be held accountable. As we saw throughout the banner year of 2004, however, the United Nations is accountable to no one.



**LINE-UP** UN troops in the DRC face allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse.

## AFRICA

## Rest of Land to Be Seized as Nation Starves



**PERSECUTION** Residents of a white-owned farm are harassed.

ZIMBABWE'S RULING party, ZANU-PF, is determined to strip the few remaining white farmers of their land, according to a leaked confidential report from the party's central committee. Over the last four years, almost 90 percent of white landowners have been violently driven from their farms by President Robert Mugabe's radical reforms. The central committee's latest resolution aims to complete the job, yet contradicts claims by Mugabe that land seizures are over.

This does not bode well for the people of Zimbabwe already suffering severely under an imploding economy. "Food production fell by 60 percent because of disruptions caused in the agric-

cultural sector by the farm invasions, and Zimbabwe has escaped starvation in the last three years only because donors chipped in with food" (Zim Online, Dec. 13, 2004).

Agricultural minister Joseph Made announced that less than a quarter of the targeted agricultural land was ploughed and planted in 2004 (*Independent Online*, Dec. 26, 2004).

The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) reports that the average food cost of a family of six has risen 12.5 percent in the last two months alone. The CCZ has also recorded sharp increases in the cost of basic foods as well as non-food items.

Additionally, "The cost of living in urban areas has increased steadily over

2004, and the majority of urban households struggle to meet their basic expenditure requirements. The cost of food and non-food items has increased 92 percent from January to November 2004, and wages and salary increases have lagged" (FEWS NET, January 5).

Lovemore Matombo, president of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, has disputed government claims that all is well in the job market, remarking that "anyone who estimates this country's unemployment rate at less than 70 percent is out of touch with reality"; the actual figure could be well over 80 percent (*Africa News*, Dec. 23, 2004). The cause? Matombo explained, "The disruption of agriculture through the land-reform program threw many people out of employment. The present situation in the sector is that it is no longer employing because there is nothing happening on the farms—most are under-utilized, if not derelict altogether" (*ibid.*).

The situation in Zimbabwe is desperate and the forecast dire. With food production all but wiped out, who will Mugabe blame when he is unable to feed Zimbabwe's 12 million inhabitants?

## Trading America Out

THE UNITED STATES is finding itself stuck between two increasingly aloof trading partners. To the north, Canada is nuzzling up to Europe; to the south, Latin American nations are rejecting free-trade agreements with America in favor of expanded trade elsewhere.

Of the two, Latin America is more vocally anti-America. Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador and Uruguay have all elected leaders who bristle at what they perceive as America's arrogance toward its southern neighbor. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, before he became Brazil's president, called the Free Trade Area of the Americas (a stalled plan that the U.S. is trying to revive) "a policy of annexation of Latin America by the United States" (Reuters, Dec. 28, 2004).

As a result, Latin American nations have strengthened trade ties among themselves. In December, 12 Latin nations founded the South American Community of Nations, creating a free-trade zone of over 360 million people.

But they haven't stopped there. Evidence of Latin America's growing independence from the U.S. includes an increase in exports to China, South Korea and other Asian Nations. Also, Latin American countries agreed in 2004 to accelerate trade talks with Europe.

Further aggravating U.S. and Latin American relations is the Byrd amendment, which helped U.S. steel industries but was ruled illegal by the World Trade Organization. Mexico, Brazil and Chile were among the countries authorized in November and December of last year to impose penalties

against exports from the U.S. because of its failure to retract the law.

Even Canada, a heavy-weight U.S. trade partner, submitted a complaint to the WTO because of the U.S. steel amendment. It is coordinating with Europe to produce lists of U.S. products on which to impose sanctions in order to fully exploit the effect of the penalties. The sanctions could be substantial, totaling around \$150



MARTIN



DA SILVA

million a year (Associated Press, Dec. 21, 2004).

Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin has made it a "priority" to diversify Canadian trade beyond just North America (*cnews.canoe.ca*, January 9). Disputes with the U.S. over lumber and

beef, as well as the falling value of the U.S. dollar versus the Canadian dollar, have helped to drive Canadian trade dollars elsewhere. In the last two months, Martin has made strides toward increasing trade with both Brazil and China.

The trends all point in one direction: Nations that used to be comfortable with America as their primary trading partner are progressively seeking trade agreements elsewhere. Expect this to continue, and the U.S. gradually to become more isolated.

## China in U.S. Backyard

ANTI-AMERICANISM has swept the globe this past year, penetrating more than just the minds of Islamic terrorists. The strengthening of Sino-Latin relations could mark the beginning of the end of U.S. domination in Latin America.

For Brazil and Venezuela, "the strategic partnership with China also includes *strengthening a multipolar geopolitical framework that challenges U.S. hegemony*" (Stratfor, January 3; emphasis ours throughout). After years of relying on U.S. investors and consumers, Latin American nations are now looking at other interested parties. And if they respond to China's interest anything like Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has, the outcome for America could be devastating.

After visiting China in December 2004, Chavez returned to Venezuela to declare a new energy partnership. "Chavez says Chinese oil and gas companies will be assured access to contracts in Venezuela ranging from exploration and production of crude oil and gas, to the construction of refineries and petrochemical plants" (*ibid.*, Dec. 29, 2004).

Although it will likely take a while for China to establish itself as a major player in Venezuela's oil industry, the immediate issue that is truly worrying is the anti-American



**TIES** Venezuela's Chavez visits Hu in China.

mindset behind Chavez's newfound relations with Beijing. Stratfor continued, "Chavez wants to break free of Venezuela's decades-old energy relationship with the United States, and is banking on China's thirst for oil to achieve that goal" (*ibid.*).

Venezuela is currently the fourth-largest supplier of oil to the U.S., and if anything, American demand for oil is likely to increase. Clearly, President Chavez's newfound relations with China are more about breaking free of Venezuela's *reliance* on America than needing to secure future oil exports.

Washington's influence in Latin America will continue to wane. Chinese companies already own critical sea gates in the region. Before long, Latin America will simply become another international entity bitterly opposed to American power.

Many *Trumpet* readers are familiar with our six-year lawsuit with the Worldwide Church of God over Herbert W. Armstrong's literature. When it ended on March 7, 2003, we obtained ownership of all the literature we had been fighting for. The following article is excerpted from a forthcoming book about the lawsuit. Stephen Flurry, a minister in the Philadelphia Church of God, is the son of Pastor General Gerald Flurry. This chapter might be considered the story behind the story. It goes back several years *before* the litigation, describing in detail the humblest beginnings of the organization that sponsors this magazine.

# Breaking Ground

Here is how it all started 15 years ago. BY STEPHEN FLURRY

**B**EFORE HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG DIED IN 1986, WE had been warned many times about the final era of God's Church—called Laodicea in Revelation 3. It would be an era characterized by spiritual lukewarmness—God says that those who become Laodicean are “neither cold nor hot” (Revelation 3:15). They lose sight of God by trusting in material things (verse 17).

“The **BAD NEWS**,” Mr. Armstrong wrote in 1979, “is that we, undoubtedly of the Philadelphia era, are in serious danger of **BECOMING** also the Laodicean era” (*Good News*, August 1979).

Mr. Armstrong knew the Laodicean era was prophesied, and he warned us about it—as did many other Worldwide Church of God (WCG) ministers. We knew the Laodicean era would come.

We just didn't know how it all would happen.

**Supporting Headquarters** My father, then a minister in the WCG, staunchly supported the changeover from Mr. Armstrong to Joseph W. Tkach in January 1986. He arranged for all the church members in his Oklahoma City congregation to sign a card encouraging the new pastor general to carry on doing the work. He also invited Mr. Tkach to visit the Oklahoma brethren if he could fit it into his schedule.

After making church visits to Phoenix, Big Sandy, Chicago and Anchorage in early 1986, Mr. Tkach accepted my father's invitation and stopped in Oklahoma City on June 7, 1986. According to the *Worldwide News*, quoting my dad, Mr. Tkach's sermon was “the type of sermon that is good for the ministry and can pave the way ... for the type of sermons we need to be preaching to God's people. It left all with the feeling we need to become more on fire for God's work, inspiring us to be more enthusiastic and involved” (June 30, 1986). Coordinating the special weekend, my dad arranged for the churches to present Mr. Tkach an oversized greeting card that played “Hail to the Chief,” a fanfare often used for greeting U.S. presidents. The Oklahoma church areas also presented Mr. Tkach with a gold-plated, brass centerpiece as a gift of appreciation for his visit.

Clearly, my father was not against Mr. Tkach's appointment as pastor general. Even after my dad first noticed disturbing changes coming out of WCG headquarters in Pasadena, he initially tried to push these concerns out of his mind. Jesus Christ, he firmly believed, was Head of the Church. If leaders at headquarters needed correction for any of their new teachings, Jesus Christ would take care of it.



HEADQUARTERS

The famed Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, California—former headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God.

In the third year of Mr. Tkach's leadership, sometime in 1988, my dad's thinking began to change. In studying into Revelation 2 and 3, he learned that, most of the time, churches **DO** go astray. Once he accepted that fact, his discernment sharpened. He noticed many more things coming out of Pasadena that simply did not square with the Bible. By the end of 1988, he was well aware of the evil lurking within the Worldwide Church of God leadership.

At the outset of 1989, my dad began searching the Scriptures for God's perspective on all the changes. Why were they happening? Where were they leading? What should we do?

**Transfer to Big Sandy** The first time I personally remember my father expressing dissatisfaction with headquarters occurred sometime in January 1989. As a freshman at Ambassador College, Pasadena, I had given some thought to possibly transferring to the Big Sandy campus for my sophomore year. I knew what my dad felt about the idea. Although he would have supported my decision either way, he had always wanted me to stay at the headquarters campus. Since that is where most of the top ministers in the Church were assigned, he felt I could learn more in Pasadena.

During one particular phone conversation about Big Sandy, however, I was surprised to hear him encourage me to apply for the transfer. “Dr. Meredith is over Big Sandy,” he told me. “I think he's more conservative than some of the ministers in Pasadena.” He was careful not to say much more than that.

I didn't give much thought to his comment. I was just excited that he was happy for me to apply for the transfer.



**Getting the PGR** When Larry Salyer explained why the WCG discontinued *Mystery of the Ages* in the Jan. 31, 1989, *Pastor General's Report* (PGR), a publication for the ministers of the Church, it upset my dad terribly. But to read Mr. Tkach's own words two weeks later, in the February 14 report—how the book had “peripheral or incidental” errors and that it was outdated—was just too much. He had to vent.

He received that issue of the PGR on Friday, February 17, and then called me that night. At first, he was careful not to seem too upset. After a bit of prying, though, I got him to reveal how he really felt. He said, “Some of the things ministers are saying today would have gotten them fired if Mr. Armstrong were around.” I sat, listening, in disbelief. Could it really be that bad? He went on to explain that they had discontinued *Mystery of the Ages* because of “minor errors” and “money.” This was the first time I had ever heard that. Here I was at headquarters and no one—none of the ministers, faculty, student leaders—had ever told me that *Mystery of the Ages* was discontinued. My dad later said, “We may very well be in the Laodicean era.” He also encouraged me to read the Old Testament book of Malachi—saying that some of the prophecy in that little book might be happening right then.

All of this was a lot for a 19-year-old to digest. I tried to piece together my dad's comments with other things I was aware of. Four weeks earlier, during announcements at services, Mr. Tkach told the brethren how upset he had been recently, when he discovered that one of his assistants had been going “behind his back,” complaining about “changes” in the Church. Michael Feazell, Mr. Tkach's personal assistant, followed those announcements with a sermon titled “Eternal Truths.” In it, he discussed a number of changes in the Church, but reassured the brethren that some things would never change—these so-called *eternal* truths. A week later, on January 28, Dr. Herman Hoeh gave a sermon on “change.” A number of us students wondered if something big was about to happen.

For me, something big had happened the night of February 17. The man I trusted more than any other human being on Earth had told me that the church I had grown up in was now headed in a dangerous direction. It scared me.

**Beginning of Malachi's Message** A few weeks after our phone conversation, my dad began working on a manuscript to explain, from a biblical perspective, why the WCG was making so many changes. He now believed the Church had indeed moved into the Laodicean era and that a number of Bible prophecies explained *how* and *why* it was happening.

We continued our occasional phone conversations, talking about school, family and areas of Scripture he had been studying—usually the minor prophets. But he never mentioned his paper. When I told him I was accepted to Big Sandy on April 4, he was glad to hear that I would be coming home toward the end of summer—and that I would only be a few hours from home during my sophomore year. More than that, he was glad that I would be getting out of Pasadena—the seat of the anti-Armstrong liberalism, so far as he was concerned.

He and my mom arrived in Pasadena on May 16 for my sister's graduation from Ambassador College. Once again, he made no mention of the manuscript. No one, except him, knew about it—not even my mom.

Meanwhile, rumors had been flying around campus that the Church was going to put the Pasadena property up for sale. On Memorial Day, May 29, a few friends of mine went

to a baseball game with Fred Stevens, the WCG accounting manager who assisted Leroy Neff, the Church treasurer. I happened to ask Mr. Stevens about the rumors of selling the headquarters property. He said, “If anything like that ever happened, Mr. Tkach is not so dumb as to keep it a secret.” He brushed aside these rumors as “a bunch of lies.”

**My Dad's Initial Feedback** On Friday, July 14, I flew to Oklahoma to spend the rest of the summer at home. My dad picked me up at the airport and we drove directly to Robbers' Cave in southeast Oklahoma. (My dad's congregation was sponsoring a youth campout there for the Oklahoma area churches.) It was a two-hour drive I will never forget.

For four months, my dad had been working on his paper, telling no one about it. He occasionally worked on it at home in his office, but that was inconvenient and nerve-wracking, with my mom around. His favorite work place was a vacant building in Enid, Oklahoma, where he pastored a second small congregation of about 100 people. The church area rented a room in a vacant building for services and Bible studies, and the owner liked the church so much, he just gave my dad a key and said we could use it whenever we liked. Thoreau had Walden Pond—my dad had a remote, second office in a small Oklahoma town. He may have looked funny hauling a typewriter in and out of that vacant meeting hall, but it worked well for him. He wrote the bulk of his manuscript at that secluded location, about an hour and a half from his house.

When he picked me up on July 14, he had a rough draft of *Malachi's Message* tucked away in his briefcase in the trunk of the car. During the drive, he told me about a number of other things going on in the Church—again, things I was totally unaware of. He said there were several ministers in the field who were disgruntled with the changes coming out of Pasadena. And adding to his comment months earlier about the Church being in the Laodicean era, he said he believed the Church was headed toward a “definite split.” He later said he wanted me to read something he had written about all of this. All of this, you see, had been pent up inside his mind for four months. I could tell that he finally felt better, just having gotten it off his chest. The thought of reading his paper made me nervous.

I put off reading it until Sunday, two days later. I didn't want to seem over-eager. What if, after all, my dad was wrong? What if God was behind all of the changes in the Church? Whether I read the manuscript or not, I knew, based upon what he had already told me, that I needed to study more on my own. I needed to prove for myself who was right and who was wrong. I didn't want to just take my dad's word for it.

We had planned to head back home that Sunday around noon. I set aside the morning time to begin reading his paper. As I read, I could tell my dad was anxiously awaiting any kind of feedback. He was very fidgety—constantly in and out of the cabin, trying to “keep busy” while I took the time to read.

I got through about half of it before we had to gather our things to leave. “So, what do you think so far?” he asked.

“Well, it will certainly get you fired,” I responded. Deep inside, I knew its content rang true—it was even *inspiring*—but I couldn't yet commit to agreeing with the material without first digging into Mr. Armstrong's foundational teachings. How could I say the Church had fallen away from the truth when I hadn't yet fully proven the truth in the first place? I was 19—interested in baptism—and had so much yet to learn.

He agreed the content would get him fired. But believing

it was from God, he fully intended to deliver the message to Church leaders in Pasadena—perhaps in January of 1991—the end of the WCG’s third 19-year time cycle. That was still a year and a half off, I thought. What a relief it was to know he didn’t intend to act immediately. That would buy me some time—time I needed for much Bible study.

We talked about his paper most of the way home. Even with my limited understanding, I felt pretty sure about one thing: that we were now in the Laodicean era. But was it my dad’s place to warn headquarters and the Church about this? This is the question I would wrestle with most over the next several months. Why not some other minister? Why not a top-ranking minister from headquarters? Why couldn’t my dad just tend to his flock in Oklahoma and let someone else face the dragon?

**“This Church Is Laodicean”** Mr. Tkach was in Big Sandy for my orientation on August 14. He gave an odd introductory message—considering it was the kick-off to another exciting school year. He seemed paranoid and defensive. He was upset that some people were criticizing him. He then proceeded to criticize Mr. Armstrong, saying that in the past, we had focused too much on prophecy.

Later that week, I met a sophomore whose dad also happened to be a minister. From what I could gather, it seemed like his dad was upset about the changes too. I remember feeling good about that—maybe my father wasn’t totally alone in this.

The next week, on August 22, I got a part-time job in the college library. For the most part, I was responsible for organizing and storing sermon, Bible study and forum tapes. Many of the older tapes, by Mr. Armstrong and other leading ministers, weren’t even available to students. But as tape librarian, I had access to all the archives. This wonderful collection proved invaluable as the semester wore on. As changes filtered their way into new sermons and lectures at Big Sandy, I often made side-by-side comparisons between what they were preaching in 1989 and what the Church had taught when Mr. Armstrong was alive.

On Sunday night, October 1, I called my dad to chat about college and Church subjects. During our conversation, he told me that his assistant, John Amos, had heard that headquarters intended to remove Dr. Meredith from his position as head of the school in Big Sandy for being slow to accept the changes. My dad went on to say that he wondered if I should continue on at Ambassador College after my sophomore year. That comment shook me more than the Meredith rumor.

Four days later, Mr. Tkach, via telephone hook-up, announced that Dr. Meredith was being “transferred” to Pasadena to “write articles.” He was replaced by our dean of students, Dick Thompson. Gary Antion would move in from Pasadena to replace Mr. Thompson as dean.

The whole announcement was upsetting. But I couldn’t help being excited too. The rumor Mr. Amos heard was, in fact, true! To me, it indicated that there were some rumblings of dissatisfaction among the field ministers around the world. It wasn’t just my dad! If there indeed was a split in the Church, hopefully the majority would stand up for the truth, or at least maybe it would be a 50-50 split.

That night, I happened to be eating with a fellow student named Rick. I had never met him, though I knew of him. After everyone at our table left dinner that evening, he told me, half joking, that the Church had drifted into a “lukewarm attitude.”

Once he saw that I didn’t disagree, he quickly turned serious. “This Church is Laodicean,” he said. “I don’t care what anyone says. The same thing is happening now that happened in the 1970s [a liberal period in the Church’s history], only this time, I’m old enough to see it”—this from someone I had just met! I immediately thought to myself, “Now here is someone I need to spend more time with.” When his friend Chris sat down to join us in mid-conversation, I politely changed the subject. Rick interjected, “Oh, don’t worry, he thinks the same way I do.”

*This was too good to be true!* Sure, the overwhelming majority of students thought Dr. Meredith’s transfer was nothing more than “business as usual.” But for me to stumble upon two students who were upset by the news and felt that the Church was Laodicean seemed like a miracle from God. I really needed those two guys. The three of us started listening to old tapes together. We dug up old literature in the library to get a good grasp of what Mr. Armstrong had taught on all the Church’s foundational teachings.

**Our Last WCG Feast** My family came to Big Sandy for the Feast of Tabernacles in mid-October 1989. My sister read my dad’s manuscript during that Feast, giving us lots to talk about. She told me that while she couldn’t refute anything in the paper, her only concern was, *why did it have to be Dad?* She and I were struggling to clear the same hurdle.

Before the Feast started, I gave my dad a copy of a video Rick had gotten hold of a couple weeks earlier. It was Mr. Armstrong’s sermon from the Feast of 1985. The message was preceded by a 20-minute segment about the uniqueness and importance of *Mystery of the Ages*. My dad added a couple of points from that video to his own Feast sermon, given the fourth day of the festival, Oct. 17, 1989. It was the last Feast message my dad would give in the Worldwide Church of God.

Later that Feast, when Mr. Tkach announced that the Church would be donating \$100,000 to victims of the earthquake in San Francisco, I distinctly remember my dad saying, “They can afford to make a huge donation for the earthquake, but they can’t afford to print *Mystery of the Ages*.” He was disgusted.

**Getting Turned In** Soon after I read the paper over the summer, my dad began discussing the disturbing direction of the Church with his assistant pastor, John Amos. Mr. Amos was also upset with the Church’s direction and didn’t know how God intended to fix the problem—that is, until after reading the manuscript. He was so gung-ho for what my dad was studying and writing that it inspired my dad all the more to press on with the project, knowing that God would back him in the end.

There were also several members in my dad’s church area who were upset about the changes. He was much more guarded around them—telling them nothing about his manuscript and only that “God would work things out.” Three individuals, however, persisted in asking my dad to explain what was going on: Don Avilez and Stuart Powell (both local church elders), and a deacon named Dan Elliott. My dad finally agreed to meet with them, along with Mr. Amos, on Sunday, November 5 (Mr. Powell and Mr. Elliott also brought their wives). During the meeting, which lasted for several hours, he told them why he believed these changes were happening. He later issued copies of the manuscript, suggesting they study it first before meeting with him again a few weeks later.

On the way home with Mr. Amos, my dad had his doubts, wondering if he had done the right thing. Much of the feed-

back at the meeting was encouraging—even enthusiastic. But it was clear that the five of them were shaken by my dad’s explanation.

Their follow-up meeting had been set for early December. This time, when my dad and Mr. Amos arrived at the old building in Enid (the same one where much of *Malachi’s Message* had been written), the two wives weren’t there—only the three men. (Conversely, Mrs. Amos, who was now in full agreement with her husband’s support of my father, decided to attend.) Don Avilez had taken the lead among the three men, saying that my dad was out of line to criticize Mr. Tkach and headquarters. Though not completely shocked, my dad and Mr. Amos were both deeply disappointed. My dad asked the three to return their manuscripts, which they did, and assured them that he would eventually deliver a completed copy to Mr. Tkach. Until then, he asked that they keep these discussions confidential.

Later that week, Don Avilez called Arnold Clauson in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. (Mr. Clauson had been the previous pastor in Oklahoma City before my dad replaced him in 1985.) Mr. Clauson then called Joseph Tkach Jr. in Church Administration sometime on December 6.

The cat was out of the bag.

**Moving Headquarters** In an ironic twist, I actually saw Joe Tkach Jr.’s dad in Big Sandy the same day Joe Jr. saw my dad in Pasadena. (The striking difference, however, was that I couldn’t fire his dad.) Mr. Tkach Sr. was on the Big Sandy campus for a groundbreaking ceremony. The day was cold, cloudy and damp—which, as I look back on it now, seems fitting—considering what finally came of their big ideas for Big Sandy.

The Church and the college had been going through so many changes. First, Mr. Tkach decided not to close Big Sandy in 1986—reversing one of Mr. Armstrong’s final decisions as pastor general. Then they set out to pursue accreditation in 1988. In December of 1989, Mr. Tkach decided to close the Pasadena campus and consolidate all college activities in Big Sandy. More and more of the Church’s focus had centered on the Big Sandy campus.

Mr. Tkach wrote in his Dec. 19, 1989, *PGR* “Personal”: “Under careful study is also the possibility of moving one or more major departments of the work to Big Sandy, where costs of construction are significantly less than in Pasadena, and cost of housing would be considerably more affordable for our employees.”

He continued, “If God leads me to see that some parts of the work should be relocated in Texas, sale of any resulting unused facilities here would also help in the costs of building there.” As it turned out, there was something to those rumors we had been hearing in Pasadena earlier in the year. Mr. Tkach even acknowledged the rumor mill in his column: “Now I realize that such moves may sound drastic at first to some (though I understand rumors have been circulating for months)” (*ibid.*; emphasis mine). According to the report, Mr. Tkach had commissioned a “careful and detailed feasibility study” on the possibility of such a move back in the spring of 1988. No wonder rumors had been circulating!

Later, Mr. Tkach said, “Big Sandy has served as a second headquarters for decades”—which wasn’t true. It might have been a second Ambassador College campus—but certainly NOT a second headquarters. “I believe God is now leading me to see that a consolidation of as many of our resources,



**MOVED**

**The new headquarters of the work in Edmond, Oklahoma.**

personnel and operations as possible at our less expensive facility may make good sense in preparation for the bumpy economic times ahead,” he said.

He went on to explain that Mr. Armstrong himself moved headquarters from Oregon to California back in the 1940s. In fact, he continued, “God’s headquarters has moved numerous times since the days of Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness.” Thus, “if any departmental moves occur, they won’t represent the first time headquarters operations have moved.”

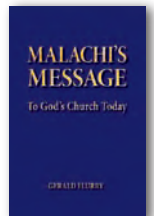
Indeed, plans for this move were already well underway by the time Mr. Tkach informed the Church of the “possibility” in December of 1989. The WCG had been busy buying parcels of land around its 1,600-acre campus in preparation for the massive move. Numerous buildings were in the works, being designed by architects. In 1990, the Church hurriedly built nine new structures in Big Sandy, including five student residences, a 350-seat lecture hall and a church language building.

But the centerpiece of this building program was the Hall of Administration—a three-story office building situated at the end of the campus’s main entrance. This building, once the move was complete, would become the Church’s new headquarters.

Looking back, what I find most remarkable about all these events is that the very day Mr. Tkach broke ground in Big Sandy, the Church’s headquarters actually did move—but not to Big Sandy (that plan never did materialize). On Dec. 7, 1989, the real ground-breaking ceremony took place in Pasadena, California—inside Joseph Tkach Jr.’s office. On that day, Tkach Jr. fired my dad and John Amos.

That’s the day the headquarters of God’s work moved from Pasadena, California, to Edmond, Oklahoma. ■

**Gerald Flurry’s “paper,” *Malachi’s Message*, explaining the split in the Church of God, is available for free upon request.**





# Is Abortion Really MURDER?

BY FRED DATTOLO

**T**HE SUPREME COURT REFUSED to recognize them as legal “persons” so they lost their constitutional rights and protections. They were merely a rough copy of the human being—“sub-human”—morally and mentally lower than any animal, some said. A “parasite” in the body of others and nothing to do with humanity—just a “mass,” the leaders alleged, that could be “evacuated.” A doctor explained that their bodies could be used for medical research “to contribute to the progress of society.”

Sound familiar? It might. These activities began in 1936 when the German Supreme Court ruled that Jews living in Germany were not legal “persons.” It was Hitler who stated in his autobiography and political manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, that Jews “are a parasite in the body of other peoples.” The other comments are excerpted from various Nazi reports and documents (see [www.abortionfacts.com](http://www.abortionfacts.com)). The tragic end of this vicious mind-set was that over 6 million Jews were massacred in Hitler’s Holocaust.

Now let’s compare notes. In 1973, the

U.S. Supreme Court ruled that unborn babies are not legal “persons” (*Roe v. Wade*). Some doctors claimed that a fetus was just a protoplasmic “mass.”

Feminist Gloria Steinem declared that “a woman would have the right to abortion just as she has a right to remove any parasitic growth from her body” (CNN interview, Sept. 9, 1981; emphasis mine throughout).

When a reporter asked what happens in an abortion, noted abortionist Dr. Edward Allred replied, “The contents are evacuated.”

And notice this gruesome comment from Dr. Martti Kekomaki: “An aborted baby is just garbage and that’s where it ends up. Why not make use of it for society?” (*National Examiner*, Aug. 19, 1980).

What eerie parallels to a bygone generation of Holocaust victims! History shows that whenever the sanctity of human life is trivialized, destruction of life ultimately ensues. Jesus Christ warned that at the end of the age “the love of many [would] wax cold” (Matthew 24:12) and that all human life would be obliterated barring His intervention (verse 22).

The Apostle Paul told Timothy that “in the last days *perilous* times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves [very selfish and self-centered] ... disobedient to parents ... Without natural affection ... incontinent [without self-control], fierce [or brutal] ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1-4). These are the very attitudes that lead to illicit sex, unwanted babies and brutal abortions—all signs that confirm we are living in the last days.

These attitudes are reflected in the reasons American women give for having abortions. They include (in order of frequency): to postpone child rearing; cannot afford a baby; partner does not want the baby; too young; disruption to education or job. Over 25 percent of U.S. pregnancies are aborted each year. Let’s call a spade a spade. The vast majority of these abortions—about 95 percent—are induced as a callous means of birth control!

Worldwide, since 1920, 744 million abortions have been reported, and an estimated 922 million total abortions have been committed. Is this not a horrific holocaust of unrivaled magnitude? And it persists. The most recent figures reveal that over 15 million babies per year never see the light of day. Hundreds of millions of people on this planet have come to accept this most common “surgical procedure” among women. Is this not a *stupendous* sign that we are living in the last days?

But wait.

Some say that the Bible doesn’t even address abortion. Besides, it speaks of the “breath of life.” Some think this means that the spirit in man (which many erroneously refer to as the “soul”) doesn’t enter the baby until that first breath. That until then, a baby in the womb is only at an animal level of life. Is it true that what makes a life *human* (as opposed to animal life) does not begin until a baby’s first breath? When DOES human life begin? Is the Bible silent on abortion? Let us definitively prove the answers to these questions. But before we examine the biblical evidence, let’s review the physical.

### The Physical Evidence of Life in the Womb

The growth and development of a baby in the womb is probably the most awesome and breathtaking marvel of the physical creation. Here’s an overview of just the first 12 weeks, summarized primarily from a video presentation that can be found on the Internet at [www.justthefacts.org](http://www.justthefacts.org):

**Day 1:** The sperm penetrates the egg and a cell is formed containing 46 chromosomes (23 from the father and 23 from the mother) with about 30,000 genes that shape the genetic blueprint of the baby. From the moment of conception, physical characteristics such as the sex, facial features, body type and color of hair, eyes and skin are determined. Even aspects of intelligence and personality are conveyed through this genetic code! A *unique* person that has never existed before and never will again is *already* being formed.

**Day 4:** The microscopic baby communicates by sending a hormonal code to the mother requesting nourishment. The mucous lining of the womb responds by softening enough to accommodate it.

**Day 18:** In less than three weeks, there has been *rapid* development. The head shows budding cerebral vesicles. Also making an appearance are the lungs, intestine, stomach and heart, which has started to beat. The foundation of the nervous system has been established.

**Fourth week:** The heart is pumping blood through the baby's circulatory system. Backbone and muscles are forming. Arms, legs, eyes and ears begin to show.

**Fifth week:** The baby is about a third of an inch long. Arm and leg stumps are clearly visible. On the 40th day, brain waves are detected and measurable. The baby's brain is able to send messages to the mother and baby.

**Sixth week:** The baby is half an inch long. Eyes are wide open but no eyelids or irises have formed. Fingers have grown to the first joint but, like the toes, are still webbed.

**Seventh week:** The liver is producing blood cells. The jaw, including teeth buds in the gums, is taking shape. The brain is beginning to control muscle and organ movements.

**Eighth week:** All the organs have been fashioned. Everything is present that is found in an adult. Stomach and kidneys are functioning. Cartilage begins to change into bone.

**Ninth week:** Fingerprints are apparent in the skin and the grasping reflex is now present.

**Eleventh week:** The baby is two inches long. The ribs are rapidly forming. Totally immersed in amniotic fluid, the baby practices "breathing" by inhaling and exhaling just enough of the salty solution to send it in and out of the lungs. To prevent drowning, the umbilical cord provides oxygen to the baby's blood.

**Twelfth week:** The features are more defined. The baby can open and close its lips, raise its eyebrows, wrinkle its forehead and turn its head.

What a testimony to the great Creator who designed such awe-inspiring works! It's wondrous to contemplate these incredible developments in the first trimester of pregnancy. Yet it's during this time that 88 percent of all aborted babies in the U.S. are snuffed out.

Picture a hospital. Two women, each about midway through their pregnancy, sit at opposite ends of a hallway. The first has concluded that she can't afford another child. She's decided to have an abortion. After all, she reasons, the fetus is not a "viable" human being anyway. So it's killed. The other woman is having complications. She desperately wants to save her baby but it will have to be delivered prematurely. This baby survives and grows up to be a healthy human being.

Why is the first baby not considered a human being while the second one obviously is? Nothing unusual happens at birth to make an unborn baby human. It's the *same baby* whether inside or outside the womb! Let's face it. The only difference is that one is *wanted* and the other is not!

In 1981, the U.S. Congress convened hearings in an effort to determine when a human life begins. The testimony garnered at that time may stun you.

Dr. Jerome Lejeune, world-renowned geneticist, said that "each individual has a very neat beginning: the moment of its conception." Dr. Watson A. Bowes Jr., from the University of Colorado Medical School, testified, "The beginning of a single human life is from a biological point of view a *simple and straightforward matter*—the beginning is conception." Dr. Alfred Bongiovanni from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School added: "I am no more prepared to say these early stages [in the womb] represent an incomplete human being than I would be to say the child prior to the dramatic effects of puberty ... is not a human being. This is human life at every stage albeit incomplete until late adolescence." The chairman of the Department of Medical Genetics at the Mayo Clinic, Professor Hymie Gordon, confirmed, "By *all* criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of conception."

The biologists and geneticists are the ones who ought to know. Of the dozens who testified, there was *overwhelming* agreement that *conception* marks the beginning of a human life. Why, one might ask, are abortions legal then? It's because of personally biased judges, self-serving

politicians, self-centered parents, radical feminists, morally bankrupt doctors and mixed-up theologians who promote and support this appalling evil.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton once defended the Bible-believer's "pro-choice" stance by using a supposed biblical argument. He said theologians don't agree when life begins; that some believe the "soul" [perceived to mean the spirit in man] enters a human being when it takes its first "breath of life" (an expression used four times in the Bible). Therefore, what makes a baby fully *human* (the spirit in man) is missing inside the womb. In light of this controversy, so the argument goes, women ought to be free to make their own choice.

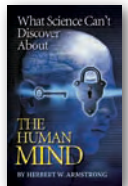
But does the Bible really proffer such a choice? Let's examine what it says.

**The Biblical Evidence of Life** Let's first understand that the "soul" does not enter a man. All good Bible dictionaries show that the word *soul* defines ANY living thing composed of flesh and blood—including animals. The soul is composed wholly of matter. In other words, man, *like any animal*, is a soul.

Yet there is a spiritual component in man. That which *elevates* human beings above animals is *the spirit in man* (Job 32:8; Zechariah 12:1). It is this human spirit that empowers the human brain with intellect and *mind* power. Man's ability to reason, understand, imagine, choose moral and spiritual values or to develop character is bestowed by the spirit in man (1 Corinthians 2:11). This is why animals, some with brains very similar to humans, cannot comprehend what man knows. Their brains lack this spiritual component. For a fascinating detailed look into this subject, write for our free booklet *What Science Can't Discover About the Human Mind*.

But can we determine from the Bible *when* the human spirit enters the man? Is it with the "breath of life"? Firstly, that's not logical. If it were so, then all new-born flesh-and-blood creatures would have access to this spirit upon drawing their first breath. How could the human spirit be accessible only to humans? Both humans and animals draw breath.

Secondly, the Scriptures verify that the "breath of life" applies equally to humans and animals. (The four places



**FREE UPON REQUEST**

where the phrase “breath of life” is used are Genesis 2:7; 6:17; 7:15, 22.) Let’s understand what this means.

The Bible says “the life of the flesh [both human and animal] is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11). And we know that the blood needs oxygen from the air. *All* flesh needs to breathe in order to oxidize the blood. In other words, the blood, through the circulatory system of the body, in both humans and animals, sustains the *physical* component of life. A baby in the womb gets its oxygen from the mother through the umbilical cord. Just because the baby is *dependent* does not make it any less human. Simply put, the “breath of life” is the process that kick-starts the *self*-sustaining, INDEPENDENT physio-chemical existence of all new-born flesh (whether human or animal). It is a purely physical process. There’s nothing *mystical* about the “breath of life.” To use that as a basis to justify abortion is utterly bogus.

Now notice Ecclesiastes 11:5: “As you do not know how the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of

God who makes everything” (Revised Standard Version). God says we don’t know *how*, but we know *when* a child receives the human spirit: when it’s *in the womb!* An unborn child is not merely animal-level life. To be fair, we should note that most Bibles do not translate this verse in quite the same way. But there is other proof that a child in the womb has the same status as one born.

In order to escape a severe drought, Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) moved his family to Egypt. The names of those who went are recorded in Genesis 46. The Bible says that the sons and daughters (plural) who descended from Jacob’s first wife Leah, and who made it to Egypt, numbered 33 (Genesis 46:15). Yet there are only 32 names given for those who went and only *one* of them is a daughter. Why the discrepancy?

The answer is found in the book of Numbers. One of Leah’s sons, Levi, had a daughter that was not listed, who was born *in* Egypt (Numbers 26:59). *The Companion Bible* proves the *only* explanation is that Levi’s wife was pregnant at the time of the journey and the child wasn’t named yet because she hadn’t been born. Nevertheless, God made sure she

was counted as one of the persons who made the journey! This child became the mother of the man God would use to bring Israel out of Egypt—Moses!

Furthermore, the laws that God gave the ancient nation of Israel after the exodus included the following: “If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give *life for life*” (Exodus 21:22-23; New King James Version).

In other words, if there was no injury caused to the infant, the perpetrator had only to pay damages because of whatever inconvenience or hardship might have been imposed on the parents. However, if his actions caused the unborn child to die, then he was sentenced to death!

Clearly, God considers the life of an unborn child equal to that of an adult.

To those who have “ears to hear” what God thinks about abortion, the Bible reveals even more than this.

**Understanding “Born Again”** Often, the spiritual things of God can be understood by His creation (Romans 1:20). In fact, the physical often mirrors the spiritual because God created all things visible *and* invisible (Colossians 1:16). The family is one such example. God created the *physical* family to teach us about the *spiritual* God Family! If we understand how we may be born into *His* Family, it will enlighten our knowledge of the physical birthing process and why abortion is murder. To this end, the religious “born again” teaching is a damnable heresy! We are NOT “born again” when we “accept Jesus” and undergo some sort of “revival.” What does it mean then, to be “born again”?

Jesus explained this fundamental teaching to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Pharisees. He told him, “Except a man be born again, he *cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). Nicodemus was befuddled. He UNDERSTOOD that Christ meant a *literal* birth, because he asked Him how that could be possible. Would he have to enter into his mother’s womb a *second* time and be born, he wondered. It seemed ludicrous. But Jesus responded: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (verse 6).

Pinch yourself. You are still in the flesh, aren’t you? You were born “of

## Abortion Risks

**A**bstortions have very real physical and emotional risks. Mild side effects include abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. In as many as 1 percent of abortions and 2 percent of late abortions, physical complications may include heavy bleeding, infection, tearing of the cervix, scarring of the uterine lining, perforation of the uterus, embolism, convulsions, endotoxic shock, damage to internal organs and, in very rare cases, even death of the mother.

Scarring or other injury may threaten future pregnancies with heightened dangers. Miscarriages are more common in women who abort their first pregnancy and so are placenta previa, ectopic pregnancies and pelvic inflammatory disease. Studies have also shown that women who have an abortion increase their risk of cervical, ovarian and liver cancer—apparently due to the unnatural disruption of the hormonal changes that accompany pregnancy.

Furthermore, 27 of 34 commissioned studies have linked abortion to breast cancer. Since abortion causes a sudden drop in estrogen levels, it is thought that this makes breast cells more susceptible to cancer. A study conducted by the National Cancer Institute found that of pregnant women, those who induced an

abortion were 50 percent more likely to develop breast cancer. In 2001, it was discovered that the incidence of breast cancer in the U.S. had increased 40 percent since abortion was legalized in 1973, while the incidence for all cancers had declined overall (Reuters, June 5, 2001). Breast cancer kills more women between the ages of 20 and 59 than any other cancer.

The emotional impact of an abortion that some women face is known as post-abortion stress. The symptoms include guilt, anger, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, abortion flashbacks and anniversary grief, sexual dysfunction, eating disorders and alcohol and drug abuse. In February 2000, the *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* published a study linking abortion to subsequent drug or alcohol abuse. It was at least the 16th study to do so. In this case, the authors discovered that women who aborted their babies were five times more likely to engage in subsequent substance abuse than women who carried their babies to full term.



flesh” (from a physical mother) and you still *are* flesh. Unless you are composed of spirit, you have NOT been born “of spirit.” So you have not been born *again!* In essence, Jesus taught that our *physical* birth is a TYPE of a second *spiritual* birth—yet future. This will help us understand how God feels about abortion.

Remember that Jesus said we cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless we are born again—born of the Spirit, *literally*. Likewise, the Apostle Paul said we cannot inherit the Kingdom of God as long as we are composed of flesh and blood (1 Corinthians 15:50). So we inherit God’s Kingdom whenever we are no longer composed of flesh and literally born of the Spirit—at the resurrection of the saints (1 Corinthians 15:51-52) and the return of Jesus Christ! (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Now here’s the critical question. How can we be born “of the Spirit” at the resurrection if we are still composed of flesh and blood at that time? We must first be BEGOTTEN of the Spirit by God the Father, while we are yet composed of flesh and blood, before we can be BORN of the Spirit later. The same is true of the *physical* birthing process—begettal and a certain amount of growth must precede birth.

Upon real repentance and baptism, a true Christian is *begotten* with a “deposit,” or “down payment,” of God’s Holy Spirit! (Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 5:5). We must then mature spiritually (2 Peter 3:18) and grow enough to become like our Father (Matthew 5:48) before we can literally be born “of the Spirit” that is already inside us! The physical life of a spiritually begotten Christian prior to his literal, spiritual birth into God’s Family is TYPED by the gestation of a baby in the womb.

Now here is the crux of the matter as it relates to abortion. In this spiritually begotten state, all true Christians are *already* children of God and *heirs* to the Kingdom of God, though not yet inheritors. “The Spirit itself [God’s Holy Spirit] beareth witness with our spirit [the human spirit in man], that we ARE the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we MAY be [yet future] also glorified together [when we are literally born of God’s Spirit]” (Romans 8:16-17). There



### PROTECTED

**A 3-D ultrasound image shows an unborn child sucking its thumb as it is nourished inside the womb.**

are *many* scriptures that attest to the fact that God considers spiritually begotten Christians His children—even though they are not yet born!

It’s no different on the *physical* level.

**The Magnificent Parallel** Our awesome Creator God designed the amazing and breathtaking process of *human* begettal and birth as a TYPE of the spiritual process in order to demonstrate, in physical terms, our incredible human potential—to be born into the Family of God! Let’s clearly understand the parallels.

■ **Begettal.** Just as a physical father imparts life to the ovum when it is fertilized by the male sperm cell, when a Christian truly repents, is baptized and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, he is begotten with the presence of God-life from the very spirit body of God the Father! Even though he won’t be born until there is sufficient growth, he is now a son of God and always will be—unless he self-destructs and aborts. Since the Holy Spirit is imparted at the conception of a spiritual life, *we can conclude that the human spirit is imparted at the conception of a physical life!* Abortion therefore, really is murder!

■ **Gestation.** Just as the unborn child is nourished and protected in the womb of its mother until it is ready to be born, the spiritually begotten Christian is nourished and protected by God’s true Church—which in the Bible is pictured as our mother! (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews

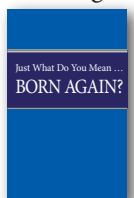
12:22-23). A child is *dependent* upon its mother to grow and get ready for the birth. Likewise, a Christian must be fed by the true Church in preparation for his spiritual birth.

■ **Birth.** The physical birth of a child that is thrust into the world is truly spectacular! When the umbilical cord is severed and the child takes its first breath, he is no longer dependent on his mother for oxygen. He becomes an *independent*, self-contained human life rather than a *dependent* human life. Likewise, the spiritual birth of a Christian into the Kingdom of God will be spectacular beyond comprehension! When the begotten children of God are delivered from the Church into the Kingdom, or Family, of God, they will literally be born again—this time of God’s Spirit that is within them (or which they had when they died). They will then be *fully* composed of spirit (1 Corinthians 15:53-54), with a glorious *spiritual* body (Philippians 3:21) and *immortal* life *inherent* within themselves!

The process of begettal, gestation and birth of physical children was designed by the Creator to teach us about our incredible human potential as the literal children of God the Father! Although He allows the incorrigible to ultimately opt out of His Family (Hebrews 6:4-6), He NEVER aborts a spiritually begotten life (Philippians 1:6). Likewise, the Supreme Court of Heaven prohibits anyone from killing a physically begotten life. It is formed in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and has the human spirit at conception. When you fully understand it, there is no doubt that abortion *really is* murder!

If you have had an abortion, be assured that upon real repentance, God will forgive you. If you are pregnant and you or your family truly can’t keep your baby, consider the adoption option. There are hundreds of thousands of couples who want desperately to love and raise your baby. FAR more couples are seeking to adopt than there are babies available. Don’t make a hasty decision to murder your unborn baby just because it’s “legal.” Consider the ramifications. The *only* choice in the sight of God and before the Supreme Court of Heaven is to preserve *life*. ■

**Request a free copy of our booklet *Just What Do You Mean—Born Again?***



Are you content with the material possessions that you have? Or do you anxiously want more? Here's how to curb your desires for more material things. BY DENNIS LEAP

# You Shall Not Covet

“LIVE RICHLY.” THAT is the key message in a TV commercial for one of the major credit card companies. The meaning is obvious. If you do not have the cash, use the card!

The truth is, many Americans have been wholeheartedly following such advice. In 2004, consumer debt topped \$2 trillion for the first time according to the U.S. Federal Reserve—up from \$1 trillion in 1994. The average American household carries about \$8,000 in credit card debt—up from \$3,000 in 1990. Are Americans living richly? Actually, debt is dragging more and more families into bankruptcy. The Administrative Office of the U. S. Courts tells us that 1.6 million people declared personal bankruptcy in the 2004 fiscal year, up from 1.2 million in 1999. It is surprising to note that the age group with the highest number of declared bankruptcies is 18 to 25. The level of credit card debt in the United States is shocking. Unfortunately, as credit card interest rates rise—and they will rise—the debt load will crush many people.

What is the cause? Why does one of the wealthiest nations ever to exist in the history of man have such a problem with debt?

Covetousness is not a word we often think about. Yet coveting is at the core of the problem.

Contrary to what most would like to think, credit card debt is not the result of a low income. It is simply a matter of overspending to obtain *material things* or to satisfy *personal pleasures*. We are a nation *deceived* with the philosophy of *buy now, pay later*. What many people fail to recognize is that there is a high cost associated with paying later—in the form of interest. Of course, Americans are not alone in their debt woes. You will find the same misuses of credit in all Western nations.



**Devoted to Possessions** We must take an honest look at what is happening in the world around us. We live in a drastically different world than our parents and grandparents did. The dramatic change came just after World War II. The development of Western civilization and culture sped up. But instead of getting better, our society degenerated.

Major, stable institutions such as marriage and two-parent families are crumbling before our eyes. We seem not to care. Under the *shadow of the bomb*, people are in a hurry to make *more* money, get *more* things and have a grand time. As a generation, we have come to yearn for extravagances that our grandparents would never even consider—because of their known harm to strong moral values. We desire opulent homes, trendy cars, a lush lifestyle and expensive vacations.

We live in a culture that has succumbed to *raging materialism*. This inclination is rampant on a national and international scale, particularly in West-

ern nations. Our so-called *in* or *cool* way of life focuses on the self-centered idea of *getting it all—while the getting is good!* Marketing experts bombard people with high-pressure ads to *strive, compete* and *lust* after as many possessions as your neighbor owns. Nearly everyone desires to be rich and famous. Most want to live a lavish lifestyle. There is a continual pressure applied to get ahead, which means making more money and having more things. This pressure is not only the underlying cause of most financial problems, it is the source of many marital, emotional and mental problems.

This poor example set by Western nations—the emphasis on *getting* and on *self*—is going to backfire. Third World countries want to compete and have as much our *have* nations. We must come

to see that world war will be the natural result. The Apostle James warned, “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:1-2). There are grave dangers ahead if something does not change quickly. You can learn how to protect yourself from the certain suffering to come.

Our materialistic society is the ruin of our spiritual health. We must recognize that an insatiable desire for more and more material things is *idolatry*. No human being will find true and lasting happiness through *things*. When people put all of their effort into obtaining more possessions, little effort is devoted to seeking God and the ways of God. It is only through a sustained, active relationship with the living God that all men will find lasting happiness and real peace of mind.



**Tenth Commandment Stated** When we disobey God's laws, we suffer. In our study of the preceding nine commandments, we have learned that only through obedience to God and His spiritual law can we find the solutions to our problems. The Ten Commandments reveal the way to peace, happiness and *real* prosperity, but man stubbornly insists on doing things his own way—which is the *wrong* way. God intends to give to all men everything that is good for us, but humans lack the faith and patience to wait upon God. Therefore, we live broken lives—even financially.

There is a way to change our covetous, materialistic culture. Do you know how?

God's voice thundered out to the Israelites, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's" (Exodus 20:17). Similar to commandments five through nine, God desires to *protect* all men in their personal and social life. This commandment speaks specifically to man's relationship to other men. Let's not forget that the Ten Commandments are living, *spiritual* laws. When we break them, they break us. Our generation especially needs to understand and learn how to apply this commandment.

Notice carefully how this commandment safeguards the welfare of others. It speaks to the things held most dear to every human being. No human being should *covet* another's house, wife, possessions or anything that is our neighbor's. Remember that it is not wrong to lawfully desire a house, a wife or possessions. But to yearn, or develop an *inordinate desire*, to possess something that belongs to our neighbor is sin! In a similar vein, it is also sin to yearn for or develop an inordinate desire to have goods just like our neighbor. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is an outward sign of covetousness.

**God—the Great Giver** Obedience to this commandment reveals the depth of a person's spiritual life. James teaches us this eternal truth about God. He wrote, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). It is truly God's desire to give

us everything that is good for us. In fact, the gospel of the Kingdom of God shows that God wants to give mankind *the entire universe*—not just planet Earth! In other words, it is God's desire to provide a home, a husband or wife, and possessions for us. This commandment is the acid test that reveals whether we are fully submitted to God's will to provide for our material needs when He so plans.

The Bible is full of examples of what happens to those people who are not willing to wait for God to give. The fruits of covetousness are always tragic. King David's illicit relationship with Bathsheba is a prime example of the destruction caused by disobedience to this vital Tenth Commandment. On the positive side, the Bible also gives numerous examples of those people who patiently and faithfully waited for God to fulfill His promises. Study Hebrews chapter 11.

Jesus Christ knew God the Father intimately. He believed and had real faith that His Father's word is always reliable. God *promises* to provide our every need. Jesus Christ taught this *absolute truth* in what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32). We are physical beings. We need food, shelter and clothing to live a high-quality life. God promises to provide these necessities. God wants us to have an abundant life (John 10:10). We should not put undue effort into obtaining an *overabundance* of such things. It truly is a waste of time.

Those who do not know God or have a shallow relationship with God seek a multitude of possessions. Why? Mostly people do this to mask their deep need for God. Jesus Christ warned: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Although it can be a comfort to have property and wealth, lasting happiness comes from a completely different source. What we accomplish spiritually is all that really matters. At the return of Christ, a big house, a flashy car, money, clothes or whatever we possess will not

be used to measure a human being's fitness to enter the Kingdom of God.

All men, women and children must learn how to set proper priorities during this extremely short mortal life. There is another, *better* way of living.

**Build God's Character** Instead of putting all of our efforts into acquiring material goods, we should put a priority on seeking the spiritual wealth that can never be lost. Jesus Christ taught, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Matthew 6:33-34). We should be seeking a deeply rewarding spiritual life with God—first. That should be our primary focus in life. We must put attaining God's Kingdom and developing His righteousness—His very character—first on our priority list.

Of course, we should work at having a good job and career. We should do all we can to provide an affordable, comfortable home and an automobile for our family. It is a wonderful thing to be married and have a family. But we get into real spiritual trouble when we allow these things to become so important that God becomes secondary or even non-existent in our lives.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ gave us promises that we can count on. When we put God, His Kingdom and character first in our lives, He'll take care of providing all our material necessities.

Since we are physical beings, it takes God's righteous *character* to control our desires. This commandment speaks to the physical things of life. Yet, it clearly demands that we obey the *spirit of the law* to fulfill its requirement. Remember that all sin begins in the mind. Certainly, we should be able to see that the sin of coveting is the clearest example of this fact.

We need God's Holy Spirit in order to control our minds. Paul taught the Corinthians, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of

**When we put God, His Kingdom and character first in our lives,  
He'll take care of providing all our material necessities.**

God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). This scripture represents the heart of true Christianity. Those who follow Christ must be fully obedient to Christ in both action and thought.

**Understand Human Nature** Remember, the Bible shows that we are what we think (Matthew 15:19). Action always follows thought. When we secretly entertain thoughts that are opposed to God’s principles and way of life by lusting after something that we cannot come to lawfully possess with His blessing, an *outward sin* will be the result. Mental rebellion, unless quickly repented of, *always* results in an act of sin! We must allow God to have full authority over all our thoughts. This is thinking as God thinks.

One fact we must accept about ourselves is that it is more *natural* for us to covet than to wait upon God to provide our needs. That is how our human nature works. James wrote this to God’s people: “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (James 4:5). The *normal* human mind is full of vanity, selfishness, competition, greed, hate and lust. Human beings don’t naturally think like God. His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). For this reason, all men must repent and become converted. Jesus Christ and all the original apostles showed that our receiving eternal life depends upon repentance and real conversion (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19).

We must have our minds completely changed—to go the way of God’s perfect law. Paul wrote the Philippians, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Thinking and living as Jesus Christ lived is the only way to true happiness and success in this life. Living as Christ lived is the *only* way that will lead to eternal life.

We cannot afford to kid ourselves about God and true religion. There are no shortcuts where eternity is involved. Jesus Christ set us the perfect example. He loved God and the ways of God above all else. He said, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). Jesus Christ lived His life to please the Father. We must come to love our Creator God, His ways and His laws with all of our being, or we will automatically turn away from God, His authority and His rule over our lives. If we *willfully* follow a carnal way of thinking, we will become bitter and resentful of the lov-

ing God and will lose out on eternity. We will suffer the ultimate fate—eternal death (Romans 8:6-7). What an unnecessary tragedy.

**The Tenth Points to the First** If we take a frank look at our world, it is not difficult to see a society founded on covetousness. When we open our eyes, we can see hundreds of examples of this society-wrecking sin. We must take a candid look into our personal lives as well. It is time to see our own covetousness. Then we must ask God

**This Tenth Commandment points us right back to the very first—“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”**

sincerely to help us repent of it and give us the spiritual strength to overcome it! It will take hard work and continual prayer and deep Bible study. Our lives—mentally, emotionally and spiritually—will make an amazing turnaround when we do.

There is an incredible perfectness and unity to God’s magnificent Ten Commandments. This Tenth Commandment points us right back to the very first: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Paul taught the Colossians, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). Take very careful note: Paul states that *covetousness is idolatry*. When we idolize something, we put it in place of the true God. We *break* the First Commandment. Do we get it? Breaking the tenth means we also break the first.

There is even more depth to consider.

If we are breaking the tenth, we are probably also guilty of breaking more than the tenth. In fact, we are most likely guilty of breaking *all* ten. Besides having an idol in place of the true God, coveting can lead to idolatrous worship, disrespecting God’s name, breaking God’s

Sabbath and holy days, disobedience of parents and other authority, murder, adultery and fornication, and lying. We must learn this life-and-death lesson. We must set our life’s goal to obey *all* of God’s commandments.

Let’s not forget that to covet is to bring pain and suffering into our lives. Paul taught the Romans, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16). When we covet material things, we literally *serve* them. We spend our precious time, energy and hard-earned money for *our* things. Generally, in such a situation, we do not spend enough time in thorough study of the Bible or earnest, heart-rending prayer. In addition, we often find ourselves becoming tightfisted with people who need our help and even with God and His work.

If not caught in time, covetousness will slow-boil us like a frog in a pot. Covetousness will reduce us to a miserable existence. This sin will cut us off from God and from those who truly love us.

Paul gave similar instruction to Timothy, a young evangelist. He warned, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9). It takes a spiritually mature person to understand this. What is the better way? The aged apostle also taught, “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (verse 6). Real peace of mind and happiness come from pursuing godliness and *contentment* with what we have. Now that is real wealth!

As we close this series on the Ten Commandments, let’s remember that God’s way of life is the way of giving, sharing, helping and cooperating—toward God and man. Jesus Christ said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). When we give our whole life to God—truly serve Him—and to others as God directs—then we will find real happiness, and ultimately eternal life.

All men and women need to ask God for His help and Holy Spirit in order to obey the commandments. The commandments are the only way to achieve happiness in this life. They are the means God is using to build righteous character in human beings. Obeying the Ten Commandments opens the door to a future—an eternal life of giving and serving in the Kingdom of God. ■

WE ARE LIVING IN THE MOST MOMENTOUS TIME IN MANKIND'S HISTORY. God's Kingdom is about to be established! Events being fulfilled are staggering! In this last hour of man's civilization before the establishment of God's government on Earth, there is a tremendous need to stay tuned to world events. We need more than ever to have our mind on the current fulfillment of prophecy. "Verily

I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled*" (verse 32). We are almost there!

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (verses 34-35).

Be careful—don't get caught up in the evils of society. Have a posture of vigilance.

Recognize, and really FEEL to your bones, your personal responsibility to WATCH! As it says in verse 36, "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." ■

## "But What Do I Watch For?"

Okay—so it is important to be vigilant. But how? How do we watch world events the way Christ commands—that we may be, as He said, "accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass"? Here are a few broad guidelines and principles that will help you in this critical responsibility.

The Bible talks about four major power blocs being on the scene in the end time: the nations of Israel, the king of the south, the king of the north, and the kings of the east. Being able to identify these blocs on the world scene is absolutely essential to be able to distinguish what is truly important in world news. The nations of Israel are essentially America and Britain (as we prove in our free book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*). The king of the south will be Iran (documented in our booklet *The King of the South*). The king of the north will be a German-led consortium of European nations (request *The Rising Beast*). The kings of the east include Russia and China at the head of several Asian nations (request *Russia and China in Prophecy*).

Prophecy also tells us the general trend to watch for in each of these power blocs. The Bible tells us to watch, in the end time, for America and Britain to be falling from power, the king of the south and king of the north to be rising in power, and the kings of the east to be coming together.

Are we seeing these trends on the world scene today? Absolutely! The world today provides eye-popping evidence of the dependability of God's Word.

The Bible then gives us an outline of the major interactions these blocs will have with one another (some of which we can see in embryo even now): First, all will unite against America to bring it down. With the major power in the world today crippled, the king of the south will push at the king of the north, and subsequently be destroyed by it (Daniel 11:40-43). The king of the north will next push at the kings of the east, who will counterattack (Revelation 16:12-14).

That is the overall picture given in the Bible.

So, what do you watch for? Well, the closer to this formula whatever you are watching is, the more important it is.

We must be able to see world events as they are shaping this prophetic reality. How is a specific event bringing America and Britain down, or exalting the king of the south, or assisting the king of the north, or bringing the kings of the east together?

This is the approach the *Trumpet* takes. This is the single factor we use to determine an event's newsworthiness. If the *Trumpet* doesn't extensively cover an event that some may perceive as major, it is simply because it is not relevant within this prophetic framework.

Of course, we mustn't get too simplistic. Things often transpire in a way we might not expect. We should never assume we see the

whole picture. But having this overview enables us to see the reality behind what is occurring—and to see where it is truly leading. This is what gives the *Trumpet* its unique perspective that even the most brilliant news analysts in the world lack.

In addition to this overall picture, God gives us several specifics to watch for in each of these areas.

Regarding America and Britain, there are precise prophecies that talk about these nations' moral decline; family breakdown; leadership void; destroyed military will; loss of possession of the world's sea gates; unbridled immigration; race problems; stock market crash and economic disaster; decline in health; widespread pestilence and disease epidemics; famine; weather disasters; violence within the cities; terrorism; attack by Germany; nuclear destruction; cities without inhabitants; and national captivity—to mention a few.

Concerning the king of the south, the Bible prophesies of the rise of Iran and radical Islam and their domination of the Middle East; influence over Iraq; alliance with Egypt; increasing military might; support of terror attacks against America and British nations; backing of the Palestinians against the Jews; conquest of East Jerusalem; provocation of Europe; obliteration by a European force; and initiation of World War III.

Prophecies relating to the king of the north include those foretelling the German domination of Europe and its rise to global dominance; return to fascism; increase in racist crime; popularity of neo-Nazism; political swing to the right; economic and social destabilization; institution of a federal system of law and order; establishment of a police state; alliance with the Vatican; development of a European army; colonization within the Mediterranean, northern Africa, ex-Soviet satellite countries and the Balkans; rise of a demagogue who gains office by flatteries; adoption of the role of aggressive "peacemaker" on the world scene; temporary cooperation with Russia; role as chief negotiator for "peace" in the Middle East; temporary alliance between Germany and Japan; continued internal division; destruction of the Islamic nations; and conquest of Jerusalem, America and Britain.

In Asia, or the kings of the east, biblical prophecy specifies the emergence of one massive power bloc; departure of American presence; improvement of relations among countries in the region; greater collusion between Russia, China, India and Japan; rallying of Russian satellites to the mother country; complete self-reliance economically and militarily; massive military buildup; formation of the most gargantuan army in history; annihilation of the European power and march to Armageddon.

These events are already in motion. We can watch them happening in our daily news.

Just as God said. ■



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DATING

## Dating Outdated

AMONG WOMEN WHO ARE seniors at college, only 50 percent have been asked out on a date more than six times during their college career. Approximately *one third* have been asked out on two dates or less.

These are some of the findings highlighted in the 2001 report, “Hooking Up, Hanging Out, and Hoping for Mr. Right: College Women on Dating and Mating Today.” According to the report’s investigators, Norval Glenn and Elizabeth Marquardt, dating has all but disappeared from popular culture. In its place is a “hookup” culture that allows young people to still have sex without any relationship strings attached.

According to the report, 40 percent of college women admitted to hooking up with a young man for casual sex. Ten percent had done it more than six times. Some 91 percent said hookups occurred “very often” or “fairly often” at their school.

The 20th-century custom of dating began in the years between World Wars I and II. Back then, a guy’s popularity in high school was largely determined by how many different gals he could take out on a date—but *not have sex*

*with*. Dating widely was seen as the popular thing to do.

After World War II, a number of factors helped lower these standards. Single women outnumbered the men because of wartime casualties. An avalanche of sex knowledge descended on the American public in the form of books, magazines and articles—all of it missing God’s instruction on the subject. Female magazines frightened women into thinking they might never marry. Thus, the average age for girls to marry plummeted. In 1959, nearly half of all new brides were *under 19*.

As the median marriage age dropped, the custom of dating changed too—more and more young people opted for *exclusive* dating, or “going steady,” as opposed to dating widely. Human nature being what it is, once this custom took root among young adults, it wasn’t long before younger teens started pairing off.

As Herbert Armstrong wrote in *The Missing Dimension in Sex*, “The very familiarity of steady dating makes it easier for the boy to make bolder advances in ‘necking,’ and then going on further into sexual intercourse. It makes it more

difficult for the girl to say ‘no.’ It tends to lower bars of resistance, and increases the temptation to carry intimacies to the limit.”

The sexual revolution made matters worse. During the 1960s and ’70s, marriage was no longer seen as the primary objective of steady dating—*now it was sex*. And as sex became more widely available, it further pressured young people to have sex *earlier on in the dating process*—perhaps after the first or second date.

Now we’re at the point where dating has become obsolete. Indeed, the above-mentioned report found that “no term for interactions between college women and men holds more ambiguity, and reflects more confusion, than the word *dating*.” Young people today are entering the marriage union with little or no dating experience—at least not the kind that God *encourages*.

Much has been written, and not just in the pages of this magazine, about the disastrous decline of marriage and family in our society and its many causes—weak men, feminism, working moms, deadbeat dads, parental selfishness, lust and no-fault divorce, among others.

Precious little, however, has been written about the *single greatest cause of our family breakdown*: ungodly dating practices. For God’s perspective on dating, marriage and sex, request our free book *The Missing Dimension in Sex*.

## Teen Majority

“Young people, especially **boys**, like to gamble. About **80 percent** of those age 17 and younger have **gambled at least once within the past year** . . .”

Christian Science Monitor,  
Dec. 22, 2004

TEENAGERS

## Home, But Not Alone

IN DECEMBER 2002, researchers for *Pediatrics* magazine surveyed teens answering this question: “Where are kids having sex?” Of more than a thousand boys surveyed from six different public schools, 91 percent of those who had intercourse said the last time they had it was in a home setting—either their own home, the girl’s home, or at a friend’s house. And most of the time, these sexual escapades took place *after school, before parents came home*.

Few commentators are willing to connect the dots between these trends. In her book *Home-Along America*, Mary Eberstadt draws what ought to be an obvious conclusion. Leaving children unsupervised increases the likelihood that they will experiment with sexual activity.

Parents who leave their children to themselves, even as they pursue the American dream, may soon find that their teenagers weren’t alone after all.



## Battling the Bulge

**A**TKINS, South Beach, high protein, low carbs, low calories, or low fat? Americans spend \$42 billion a year on diet and health books. Some 45 percent of American

women and 25 percent of men say they are on some kind of a diet (ABC News, January 10). Yet, despite diets of every kind, America's big problem has not shrunk. According to government studies, the average American weighs 25 pounds more than in the 1960s.

One national survey found that 80 percent of the women who had tried a diet considered it a failure; 71 percent of them gained back every single pound they had lost (*Science Letter*, Oct. 26, 2004). Even worse than gaining the weight back, many "quick fix" solutions jeopardize long-term health by depriving the body of certain foods with essential nutrients.

Some of the government's newest suggested guidelines to healthier living include eating more fruits, whole grains, and vegetables, and reducing calories, fat and carbs.

As we have often noted in this column, there is no secret trick or miraculous fad behind healthful living. Healthy living comes primarily as a result of healthy eating. There are other health laws of course, like exercise, sleep, fresh air, etc. But more than any other law, how we feel and look physically is determined primarily by *what* and *how much* we eat.



## Water for Your Blood

**D**RINKING WATER CAN remedy low blood pressure, according to a study in December 2004 conducted by researchers at Imperial College London and St. Mary's Hospital.

Elderly patients who had problems regulating blood pressure and whose blood pressure fell after standing were asked to drink two glasses of water in the test. All the patients registered a "significant rise" in blood pressure 5 to 13 minutes after drinking (BBC News, January 14).



**SOCIETYWATCH** is compiled and edited by Stephen Flurry, with assistance from the *Trumpet's* editorial team. If you run across items that could be used here, send them to us at **SOCIETYWATCH, P.O. Box 1099, Edmond, OK 73083**, or e-mail [societywatch@theTrumpet.com](mailto:societywatch@theTrumpet.com). If you e-mail a story from a website, be sure to include the URL address.

## TEENAGERS

### Gambling Away Their Future

**M**ILLIONS OF AMERICAN teenagers are addicted to gambling, and many have their parents' approval. Poker, dice and the lottery are among the favorite games teens are trying their hand at.

According to CBS News, 30 percent of high school students gamble periodically (July 14, 2003). Many parents admit they would rather their children play cards in the basement than go out.

Gambling equipment is in high demand at retail stores. Internet gambling is also gaining momentum, especially among teens who have access to credit cards. One big reason for the rise in popularity is the way gambling is glamorized on television.

Perhaps the easiest place for kids to gamble is at their own school.

According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, those who gamble before the age of 20 are three times more likely to become compulsive gamblers (Dec. 22, 2004).

Young gamblers have a higher chance of developing addiction problems than an adult. Gambling addiction experts warn that even small-time gambling can lead to other high-risk activities. Studies show these teenagers are more likely to drink, use illegal substances, and have psychiatric problems.

## FAMILY

### Morning-After Pill Sales Soar

**Australian**, January 13  
"SALES OF THE MORNING-after pill have soared 60 percent in the 12 months since the emergency contraceptive became available over the counter in pharmacies. [Australian] Health Minister Tony Abbott last year expressed concern about reports girls as young as 13 had requested the emergency contraceptive."

## PORNOGRAPHY

### Teens Top Viewers of Child Porn

**New Zealand Herald**, January 14  
TEENAGERS ARE THE BIGGEST viewers of child pornography. One study profiled 185 child-porn users. "Young people aged 15 to 20 were the single biggest demographic group, accounting for one quarter of all child porn users tracked and caught by investigators. One third of the 185 criminals gave their occupations as students, of which 60 percent were studying at tertiary [university] level."

## HEALTH

**Moving to U.S. Can Cause Weight Gain** **Daily Telegraph (London)**, Dec. 16, 2004  
"A STUDY OF IMMIGRANTS' health shows that people born abroad are rarely obese until they have lived in America for 10 years or more, and succumbed to its car-driving, burger-guzzling culture. Only 8 percent of immigrants who had lived in the country for less than a year were obese, but that jumped to 19 percent after 15 years. The figure compared with 22 percent of American-born residents surveyed."

We received a thoughtful and well-composed critique of our December cover story, "The Coming War between Catholicism and Islam." "Personally, I believe that this war with Islam is here and now," it said. "You expect another war between Catholics and Muslims. This has me confused. In Muslim lands, Islam is the state under the *sharia* [Muslim koranic law]. It is easy for them to form armies. But from where will come the forces of the pope? The pope has no army. Surely he can't depend on Europe, where you say that more than 50,000 Europeans convert to Islam each year. It is Europe being conquered by Muslims without firing a shot. ... Europeans are into an orgy of sex, excessive birth control, abortion, euthanasia, and homosexuality. They are facing extinction. If the forces of the pope don't come from Europe, whence then? ... You use the word *crusade* as if it were a great evil. You worry that the Catholic Church will embark on more crusades. But, only a coward will not defend his culture, his freedoms, his family, his religion from barbarians. It is Islam that is the aggressor. It is Islam behind more than 90 percent of violence around the world. ... If we are to save Western civilization and a place in the world for Jesus, the pope and many more nations will have to stand behind President Bush in his war. Else, we can kiss Western civilization goodbye." The e-mail concluded, "This is my first exposure to your magazine. I am disappointed in your anti-Catholic propaganda. Catholics are not our enemies. It is Islam that is the enemy of Western civilization and the world."

This response points to the vast difference between the *Trumpet* and any other newsmagazine, explained in our article on page 16, "Why Watch the News?" In describing the history of conflict between the Catholic Church and Islam, we don't seek to assign sole blame to any particular party, but rather to warn of how such conflict is destined to be repeated. We place greater emphasis on the violent history of the Catholic Church—and its part in the Crusades—only because *Bible prophecy* shows it will be a Catholic-led force that will be the victor in not only a coming clash against Islam, but also against the nations of America and Britain. Putting history together with prophecies such as those in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and 17, we can say with certainty that what we see in Europe now is the rising of the seventh resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire—which will once again, as in the days of the Crusades, powerfully retaliate and destroy an Islamic force when provoked. Our articles "The Truth About Religion in Europe" (January 2005) and "Are We Wrong About Europe?" (December 2003) show that, despite appearances, a European force is in the making that will fulfill biblical prophecy. It is the crisis that Europe now finds itself in, together with the growing threat from Islam, that will precipitate the uniting of Europe behind the pope. Though at this time it may seem Islam is gaining the upper hand in the world, prophecy tells us that a Catholic force will be triumphant—for a time. Ultimately, only Christ's return will save mankind from itself and its wars—religious or otherwise.

## Home of the Hated

YOUR ARTICLE IN THE NOVEMBER 2004 issue ("Land of the Free, Home of the Hated") touched on the reason we are hated but failed to mention the real reason. Instead you spent several pages touching on the forms in which the hatred manifests itself. Anti-globalism, intellectualism, jealousy and the like are not causes of anti-American sentiment, seeing as how they are all backed by groundless arguments as to why Americans are the bad guys. These are merely excuses used to hate us. As you said, it was prophesied that modern Israel would fall out of favor with the rest of the world, but why would God condemn us to such a fate? Would God punish us because some intellectual doesn't like us or because some heathen nation got jealous? No, God punishes us for our sins. ... Foreign nations wouldn't hate us if we were obeying God's laws.

Will Benedetti—COLUMBUS, OHIO

THE ARTICLE "LAND OF THE FREE, Home of the Hated" was extremely interesting and on point with everything that I have read and understood from the prophetic scriptures of the Bible and many secular articles on this subject. As an investor in real estate, the article "The Biggest Bubble Ever" (November) was

also very informative. Overall, I found this magazine to be biblically solid, supported by well-researched information.

Preston Pfeifly—BELLEFONTE, PENN.

## Can You Be Positive?

YOUR MAGAZINE IS SOMEWHAT INTERESTING. However your level of negativity is almost overwhelming! Looking at the world's problems in a fish bowl is simple and very easy to point out—the daily paper, as well as the television news, does it well. They have no solutions. Nor does your magazine; at least I did not see them. Were they in parables perhaps? No, pointing out problems has to be balanced with focusing on the positive as well. The next thing we must ponder is, can you be positive?

R. Kennedy

Please refer to our article "Why Watch the News?" on page 16 of this issue for the answer as to why the *Trumpet* examines the negative events occurring in this world and the great hope that we strive to portray.

## So Different

YOUR MAGAZINE HAS BEEN VERY BENEFICIAL to me .... You are so different from these televangelist preachers. In fact, you are the closest to the truth of any church I've ever seen .... You don't ask

for money, and your reasoning is based soundly on the Bible and common sense. I never understood the Bible growing up. In particular, it never made sense to me that the church I was raised in kept every commandment but the Sabbath. Nor did I understand why they kept the Old Testament in their Bible but said it was all outdated. This kind of thinking does nothing but confuse people and drive them away from church. ...

Daniel Procyk—IOWA PARK, TEX.

I FIND THE INFORMATION THAT YOU DISCUSS very enlightening; you seem to know the right questions to ask. More of us should be asking these same questions.

Jerald Segars—FT. BRAGG, N.C.

THE *TRUMPET* IS SO UP-TO-DATE AND informative. Your writing style reminds me of the *Plain Truth* magazine so much. I still have copies of it dating back to the early '50s. Mr. Armstrong was a man of extraordinary vision and understanding.

BAHAMAS

## Comments?

letters@theTrumpet.com  
 or: The Trumpet, P.O. Box 1099,  
 Edmond, OK 73083

# A Place of Refuge

Can you be protected when disaster strikes? BY MARK JENKINS

**W**HEN THE TSUNAMI STRUCK, MANY WERE KILLED, but a far greater number survived. Even in the midst of the destruction, there were stories of hope, survival and rescue. Here are just a few:

One woman was swimming with her two sons in a hotel pool in Thailand when the tsunami came: “I just saw a big wall of water coming straight for us and just started running .... I had both of them in my arms, one in each arm and we started going under.” Unable to hold on to both, she let go of her oldest son, certain she would never see him again. But she did. He found something buoyant to hold on to and survived. The family was reunited a couple of hours later.

A 13-year-old girl survived by clinging to a wooden door in the ocean for two days.

An Indonesian woman survived by clutching a sago palm tree in the Indian Ocean for five days, surviving by eating the fruit and bark of the tree. She certainly suffered horribly—she was hospitalized afterward—but she was the lucky one; her husband has not been found.

Any student of the Bible knows that as the last days approach, wars, earthquakes and other natural disasters will increase (Matthew 24:7). Jesus Christ Himself told us so. Even more ominous, in verse 8 of Matthew 24, He calls this the *beginning* of sorrows. The real destruction lies yet ahead: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (verse 21). We need God’s protection! Can you guarantee that you will have it?

There was a very sinful metropolis in the ancient world that did find a way to protect itself from God’s wrath. The example its inhabitants set would save the entire world if it were followed by nations today!

When Jonah came with God’s warning, Nineveh was just 40 days away from total destruction (Jonah 3:4). Just this one time in biblical history, an entire city’s inhabitants, under the direction of their leaders, humbled themselves in sackcloth and ashes, fasted before God, and truly repented. The city was spared the horrible fate it had been warned about. This was—and remains to this day—the only time in history that a Gentile city repented before God. What an example of hope it left for our time today. What beautiful results the warning God sent had in Nineveh. (This episode is described in more detail in our free booklet about Jonah.)



**SURVIVOR** Rizal Shahputra was dragged out to sea by the tsunami waves. He survived, floating on a raft of tree branches.

The nations of the world today are in the same situation that the city of Nineveh was in nearly 2,800 years ago—filled with sin and on the brink of destruction. The warning is being delivered. If even one nation would repent, God would spare it as surely as He did Nineveh. But the world has, unhappily, become so immoral that the chances of even a single nation turning away from its present course of destruction are pitifully low. Although they are being given the chance to repent, the nations of this world probably will not.

The world’s leaders will almost certainly reject the forgiveness that God is offering them. But what about you?

While the Bible gives only one example like that of Nineveh, it is *filled* with examples of individual repentance and individual protection. If we repent, God can protect us just as surely as He protected Daniel from the jaws of the lions. Not one hair was singed when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were cast into the fiery furnace. He can bless us in our individual lives as He did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and so many others. The warning you are receiving today is

one of hope; if heeded, it will also give you a rock-solid promise of protection from God Himself! “Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Psalms 91:9-11).

When trouble comes, many are at the mercy of time and chance (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Others will finally cry out to God for His intervention in their lives. But they may be too late! We must seek God “while he may be found” (Isaiah 55:6). We must heed God’s warning before time runs out! At some point—a time when the world is saying “peace and safety”—sudden destruction will come (1 Thessalonians 5:3). We need to take action while the *warning* is still going out, not when calamity is already here!

In the stories you read at the beginning of this article, some of those people were undoubtedly saved by time and chance, but you can *know* you will be spared in the terrible times ahead. God has promised protection for those who hear His warning and turn to Him in repentance. Then, we can claim God’s absolute promise in Psalms 91:7 that “[a] thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.”



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