

THE PHILADELPHIA Trumpet

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Lift up
your
eyes

The inspiring
Artemis II
moon mission



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projects are doing is exciting.
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The lunar surface fills the frame in sharp detail,
as seen during the Artemis II lunar flyby,
while a distant Earth sets in the background.



God's Space Program

Looking to the heavens should stir us!

FOUR ASTRONAUTS WERE LAUNCHED TOWARD THE MOON on April 1, the first humans to travel there since 1972. They circled around its far side, seeing parts of it with human eyes for the first time in history, and splashed back down into the Pacific Ocean on April 10—successfully completing the Artemis II mission.

Artemis I was an unmanned test mission in 2022. Artemis II was a sensational manned lunar flyby mission. Artemis III will be a manned test mission to orbit the Earth, and Artemis IV is scheduled to return man to the surface of the moon in 2028.

NASA administrator Jared Isaacman announced plans to “establish an enduring presence” on the moon with a permanent base on its surface by 2032. He also said NASA aims to have its first nuclear-powered interplanetary spacecraft launched by the end of 2028. NASA wants to make trips to the moon and then Mars a matter of routine.

What NASA accomplished with Artemis II has impressed and inspired millions of people. But did you know that God also has a space program?

In the past, NASA administrators and others who look to the skies have been moved by scriptures like Psalm 8:1, 3-4: “O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. ... When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? ...” They are dazzled by statements linking the wonders in the heavens with the great Creator who made them!

Yet the true picture of what the Bible reveals about the universe and its purpose—and our connection to it as human beings—is far more resplendent and inspiring than they realize!

What NASA and other space projects are doing *is* exciting. They lift our eyes upward and stir our hearts. But God wants us to have an even more inspiring vision: HIS SPACE PROGRAM!

Great events like the Artemis II mission are an opportunity for us to capture this vision. If you really ponder and grasp it, it will inspire you as nothing else can!

‘Plant the Heavens’

NASA has to plan out its space program years in advance. God has been preparing His program for far, far longer! It has taken a lot of work, even suffering, to get man ready for outer space.

Isaiah 30:8 shows us that the book of Isaiah was recorded specifically for us in the end time. God’s space program is revealed in Isaiah 51.

“And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I MAY PLANT THE HEAVENS, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people” (verse 16).

I think that is one of the most inspiring statements in the Bible! If we truly understand it, it will make our spirits soar!

God wants to “plant” and beautify Earth. He purposes to make Earth like the Garden of Eden (verse 3). And verse 16 shows that God intends to continue that beautification out into the universe—to “plant the heavens.” The Hebrew word translated *plant* has the same meaning in English: to plant like you would a garden or a tree, to make something take root and grow.

Right now, the universe is lifeless. But God is going to make it blossom with life and beauty!

This verse shows that *human beings* are part of this plan. God plans to send man to other planets in outer space, to “plant the heavens.”

Many verses in the Bible testify of man’s universe potential.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Hebrews 2:6: “But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?” He was quoting Psalm 8, written centuries before by King David. That psalm shows David looking up at what he could see of the universe—“thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars”—and asking God why He was mindful of man.

Paul continued the quote: “Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. ...” (Hebrews 2:7-8).



The moon sets behind NASA's Artemis II launch system at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.



What does “all things” mean? Paul answered with this amazing statement: “Thou hast put everything in subjection under his feet.’ For this *subjecting of the universe to man* implies the *leaving nothing not subject to him*. But we do not AS YET see the universe subject to him” (verse 8; Weymouth New Testament).

Yes, the creation on Earth is subject to man to this day. But the universe is *not yet* subject to us. The implication, though, is that one day it *will be*.

In Romans 8:19-22, Paul wrote: “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now” (Revised Standard Version).

The whole of God’s creation, the entire universe, is groaning, in bondage to decay. Other passages, such as Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, describe Satan the devil rebelling against God. That rebellion wreaked destruction and decay on the whole universe. The universe is now *waiting* for man to be born again as children of God! Why?

Because God has plans to put the universe under man’s rule! We are going to help God restore the universe to a state of order!

Isaiah 51:16 shows that man won’t just reverse the destruction caused by Satan’s rebellion—but will **PLANT** and **BEAUTIFY** the heavens! That is a major reason why God created mankind: to work together with Him, as part of His Family, in finishing and beautifying the vast creation!

Isaiah 35:1 says that “the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” Is that just on the Earth? There are deserts all over the universe. Perhaps it is expressed that way because God is going to make deserts blossom as the rose throughout the universe!

‘The Right Stuff’

God wants us to think big on this subject, and He wants us to be practical.

Traveling to the moon and orbiting it required years of training. Artemis II’s commander, Reid Wiseman, was selected as a NASA astronaut in 2009. All the crewmembers, who are 47 to 50 years old, have trained for 13 to 17 years.

God says in Isaiah 51:16 that He will “say unto Zion, Thou art my people.” There is a special group of people—typified by “Zion,” the site of ancient Israel’s temple—whom God is training and working with. Revelation 19:7 states that at Jesus Christ’s return, His Bride has “made herself ready.” God is preparing His Church to be His Bride and to help Christ lead the world out into the universe.

Today God is calling people who have the “right stuff”—as it was called in the early American space program—to go into outer space after they have been trained on Earth.

NASA sends missions to Mars and beyond trying to learn about the origins of life on Earth. To be part of God’s program, you have to learn about that from your Bible, inspired by the Spirit of God. Scripture shows us exactly what our origins are. God is teaching those who are part of His space program where they come from, why they are here, and what His plan is.

God will eventually invite *all mankind* to join this program, but right now He is working with a select few in advance. They will then help Him bring all mankind into this project.

NASA hopes to put men on Mars. That is a gigantic ambition, yet it is *puny* compared to what God has planned for man! Perhaps God is letting man do a little space exploration to get a taste of what our future will be like. But what God will do with Mars and the planets, solar systems and galaxies beyond is bigger than anything anyone in NASA or anywhere else has ever dreamed of!

Hope and Correction

God has some tough correction for mankind in Isaiah 51. There is a critical lesson we must learn before we participate in God’s space program.

Verse 17 reads: “Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.”

The worst possible wrath of God is coming upon mankind, starting with the nations of Israel! Why is God so angry?

God lovingly created us to fulfill this inspiring plan that should make our spirits soar, yet we have *rebelled* against Him. Our imaginations should be ablaze with joy, gratitude and ambition when we understand what God has prepared for us. God wants to shower us with so many blessings. But we constantly rebel against His plan and try to take those blessings our own way.

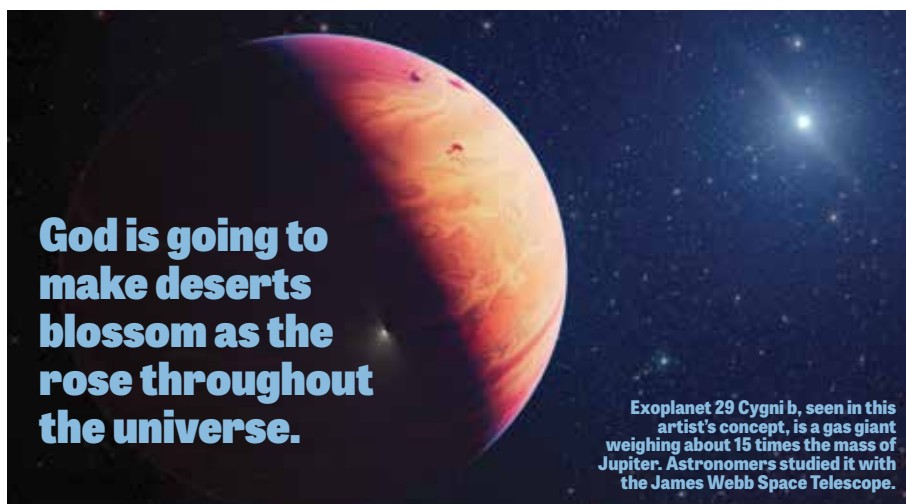
This is the key. Man does not know how to live the way of joy and abundance. Man has no idea how to make the wilderness look like Eden. We must go to God to learn how to do that. God wants to show us how to have every joy and blessing. But we won't listen. Instead, we actively fight against His message.

"There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up" (verse 18). God sent prophets in the past to guide us, and man killed them! Something is desperately wrong with man!

The whole world is deceived (Revelation 12:9). We need God to guide us, but we don't recognize that need, so we keep suffering. It simply cannot work without God.

Solve Problems God's Way

Mankind is dealing with catastrophic problems. Look at the United States: Right now, we are fighting a war with Iran that



we will not be able to win. The nation is in massive debt: Our debt grew by *\$1.8 trillion* just last year! How can America avoid economic collapse without God's help? The mighty Soviet Union collapsed because of its economic problems. That is certain to happen here as well.

God doesn't want us to experience these problems. He wants us to prosper and be in health (3 John 2). He will show us the way to prosper, individually or nationally—if only we would turn to Him and listen!

In Isaiah 51, God gives us this spectacular vision of planting the heavens—but He is also telling us: *You're going to have to learn how to solve your problems on Earth MY WAY before you will be able to go out there and plant the heavens!*

The great patriarch Abraham learned this lesson. God begins Isaiah 51 by pointing us back to him (verses 1-2). He was the father of physical Israel and is the father of the faithful saints God has called out of the world (Romans 4:16). Why does God honor him so much? Because Abraham simply *did what God told him to do*. His life teaches us how to live by faith in God and how to solve our problems.

Abraham had a vision few men ever had. Despite the serious problems he faced, he kept following God, looking for a city whose builder and maker was God (Hebrews 11:8-19). He looked

for new Jerusalem, the glorious city of God that will come down to Earth after all human beings have been born into God's Family. It is after that point that, under God's direction, we will go out and plant the heavens.

God will comfort Zion (Isaiah 51:3). Only God can solve our problems and comfort us. He "will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." What a beautiful message! We can have that joy and gladness *today* if we look to God for direction!

God says in verse 4, "Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people." This world tends to view God's law as negative, a set of oppressive restrictions. In truth, it is a set of instructions on how to be blessed! God's law and judgment will be "a light of the people." God is going to bring all nations together. Submit to Him, and all can be blessed!

The Way to Beautify Mars

Man can get to the moon and send satellites and spaceships to Mars and beyond. He has a great mind, because God created it. We are made after the image of God (Genesis 1:26), which shows that our purpose is to grow to resemble His character. Man *cannot* make the moon or Mars like the Garden of Eden! We don't know how! Turning the moon into Eden will take much more than just transforming the landscape by seeding it with water.

Man is very good at solving physical problems, but he doesn't know how to get along with fellow man or fellow nation. He cannot bring peace, and sadly,

he always tends to destroy whatever physical beauty he creates! Look at the state of our *own* planet and the human beings on its surface. Isn't it obvious that we need God's character first?

Participating in God's space program starts by letting God direct our lives.

Hebrews 5:12 tells members of God's true Church that they are called to be teachers. This is how God is preparing to plant the heavens. He is teaching a way of life—a beautiful way, based on God's law, that can turn Mars into Eden—to a few He has called out today so that they can teach others after Jesus Christ returns.

God is calling man to *become perfect as God is perfect* (Matthew 5:48). That is what it will take to plant the heavens!

"Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Isaiah 51:11). God wants to give us everlasting joy! NASA's space program cannot do anything like that.

This vision of God's space program is the only source of real comfort and everlasting joy. Get that vision into your mind, and you will be singing, and your spirit will soar! ■

You are meant for something great. Learn what this is in Herbert W. Armstrong's free book ***The Incredible Human Potential***.



Artemis II
Commander
Reid Wiseman
looks back at Earth
en route to the moon

The Moon Mission and the Overview Effect

If you feel connected to humanity, and humanity to the universe, there is a good reason why. **BY JOEL HILLIKER**

REID WISEMAN SAID HE IS “NOT really a religious person.” But aboard a United States Navy recovery ship on April 10, he asked for a service chaplain to visit for a few minutes. “There was just no other avenue for me to explain anything or to experience anything,” he said. “And when that man walked in—I’d never met him before in my life,” but at the mere sight of someone who professed to represent the God of the Bible, “I just broke down in tears.”

Commander Wiseman and his three crewmates had just launched in a 32-story rocket, hammer-thrown their spacecraft around the globe, sling-shotted 350,000 miles, beheld Earth, witnessed the far side of the moon, watched Earthset, felt the three-dimensional depth of the galaxy, traveled farther from Earth than any human beings ever, and came back at 24 times the speed of sound to splash down in the Pacific Ocean. These four Artemis II astronauts all experienced a remarkable expansion in their perspectives.

Perspective

What is your perspective? Physically your viewpoint is somewhere around five feet

above the ground, and on a flat plain, you can see about 3 miles to the horizon. If you climb a 1,000-foot hill, you can see for 38 miles. What a difference! From a 10,000-foot mountaintop, you can see for more than 120 miles; from an airplane window at 30,000 feet, more than 200 miles. Below, the tiny trees and miniature houses give you perspective on how small you yourself must look—and are. The first space tourists have reached altitudes of 50 miles, seeing 800,000 square miles of Earth at once, or 364 miles, viewing 9 million square miles. The moon astronauts saw the full circle of the Earth, about 99 million square miles.

“As we are so far from Earth and looking back at the beauty of creation, I think that, for me, one of the really important personal perspectives that I have up here is, I can really see Earth as one thing,” pilot Victor Glover said. “And you know, when I read the Bible and look at all of the amazing things that were done for us, who were created You guys are talking to us because we’re in a spaceship really far from Earth, but you’re on a spaceship *called Earth* that was created to give us a place to live in the universe, in the cosmos. Maybe the distance

we are from you makes you think what we’re doing is special, but we’re the same distance from you, and I’m trying to tell you—just trust me—you are special. In all of this emptiness—this is a whole bunch of nothing, this thing we call the universe—you have this oasis, this beautiful place that we get to exist, together. ... This is an opportunity for us to remember where we are, who we are, and that we are the same thing, and that we’ve got to get through this together.”

As the spacecraft approached its farthest distance from Earth, just before going out of radio contact as it passed behind the moon, Glover said, “As we continue to unlock the mysteries of the cosmos, I would like to remind you of one of the most important mysteries there on Earth, and that’s love. Christ said, in response to what was the greatest command, that it was to love God with all you are. And He also, being a great teacher, said the second is equal to it. And that is to love your neighbor as yourself.”

For 10 days in April, humanity looked up again. And there were four of us looking down, carrying human intelligence, perspective, songs, bursts of laughter, tears, care, emotion, grief, friendship, love and “moon joy” out into the blackness and back home again. And they urged us to understand something.

Others who went into space have had similarly profound experiences. In fact, it has a name: the Overview Effect.

Oasis in Infinity

Wiseman’s remark connecting *what he had just experienced* to the *God of the Bible* came in response to a reporter’s question *about* the Overview Effect. Recalling how an Apollo 14 astronaut had such a profound experience that he devoted the rest of his life to learning about human consciousness, the reporter pointed out that each of these moon astronauts had mentioned similar sentiments during the mission. “Do any of you feel as though you had an experience [of] this sense of universal connectedness: Did you experience a shift in consciousness, somehow?”

The response was *Yes!*

The man who organized the first national conference on the Overview Effect called our home planet an “oasis against the backdrop of infinity.”

One space tourist, age 90, was in space for less than five minutes, barely enough to see the curvature of the planet, and he came back filled with emotion, struggling to get out the words through the tears. He managed: “I hope I never recover from this. I hope that I can maintain what I feel now. I don’t want to lose it.” “All of a sudden, the blue was down below, and the blackness of space,” he said a few days later, still in awe. “Now, space is interesting: The universe lies there. But at that moment, in that big window, it was only black and ominous, and *that* was death, and *this* was life, and everything else just stood still for a moment. I was overwhelmed with the experience, with the sensation of looking at death and looking at life.”

One Apollo astronaut said you experience “an explosion of awareness” and an “overwhelming sense of oneness and connectedness ... accompanied by an ecstasy ... an epiphany.”

The first humans to see the full disk of the Earth, the crew of Apollo 8, actually read Genesis 1 out loud to humanity.

The Overview Institute says when you see Earth from space, it “is immediately understood to be a tiny, fragile ball of life, hanging in the void, shielded and nourished by a paper-thin atmosphere.”

No wonder this *moves* people—and so many of them are also moved by the *Bible* without even knowing why.

Like physical elevation, elevating your spiritual viewpoint also helps you grasp reality far better.

Consider God’s vantage point: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). God inhabits eternity; His character is perfect. He created energy, gravitation, thermodynamics, electromagnetism, quantum mechanics and radiation. He made light, atoms, mass, moons, planets, stars and galaxies. He formed bacteria, tarantulas, octopuses, peacocks and orangutans. And He made you and me in His own image. How vast is His understanding! Meanwhile, we are made from dust; we lead brief lives; we are distractable and self-absorbed.

Yet remarkably, God wants to lift us out of our tiny world and share His transcendent thoughts and all-encompassing perspective with you and me!

Look up! See the stars. Feel that awe and wonder and transcendence. Get the big overview, and let your wonderment and ambition soar toward those stars because you were created to go and *bring life* to planets that orbit them!

Cosmic Perspective

At this point, physical life exists in only one place in all the universe: the place where God renewed the surface, said *Let there be light* and planted it with life. If you compare the Earth to a basketball and the moon to a tennis ball, the farthest humans have gone away from it is



23 feet. This planet is so precious and important. Understand the overview, though, and you realize that it is just a *launchpad*!

God sees this view all the time. He “sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ...” (Isaiah 40:22). Consider *His perspective* on the conflicts that divide us and the need to create one global society with a united will, a world of real peace!

It takes the 200 to 400 billion stars within this galaxy to complete one revolution around its center point about 250 million years. And this is but one galaxy in a universe that contains some 2 to 3 trillion galaxies.

God has a name for every last one of the hundreds of billions of stars that compose each of those trillions of galaxies (Isaiah 40:26). Why? Because He created all those stars, and the planets that orbit them, for a marvelous purpose!

God wants us looking up at the heavens—but not to get distracted by a bunch of physical matter. Verse 26 says, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things ...”! See the Creator, and behold His cosmic ambitions. He is rocketing toward those ambitions by

what He accomplishes in the lives of His people today.

The closer we are to things on Earth, the more caught up in life’s niggling trivialities we are. But the more we elevate our thinking, the more we will experience a type of that Overview Effect: the needed perspective and sense of awe, wonder and transcendence.

The Apostle Paul had a far-reaching spiritual perspective. “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth,” he wrote (Colossians 3:2).

To “set your affection” requires you to be intentional and to work at it, day after day. Coming to think like God takes real effort, and even then, you need God’s Spirit. We are only scratching the surface of “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ... which passeth knowledge,” “the deep things of God” (Ephesians 3:16-19; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10). We always have more spiritual work to do to ascend above the pulls of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the allure of the world, the weeds of distraction—and to think like our infinite Creator.

Overview Effect author Frank White says that from space, you don’t see the sun in a blue sky. You see it as a star in a black sky. “So you are seeing it from a cosmic perspective.”

A *cosmic perspective* is difficult to achieve with our eyes only five feet above the ground, but it is exactly what we need.

You exist in a creation that proves the reality of the Creator and His love. You were created to have a relationship with that Creator. You are here on Earth to learn to see what He sees. God wants us to look up at the heavens, to see the galaxy in 3-D. Why?

Isaiah 40:26 says, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold *who hath created these things* ...”!

There is a reason why the rockets, the clouds, the blackness, the brightness, the *humanity*, the *stars* stir deepest awe in us.

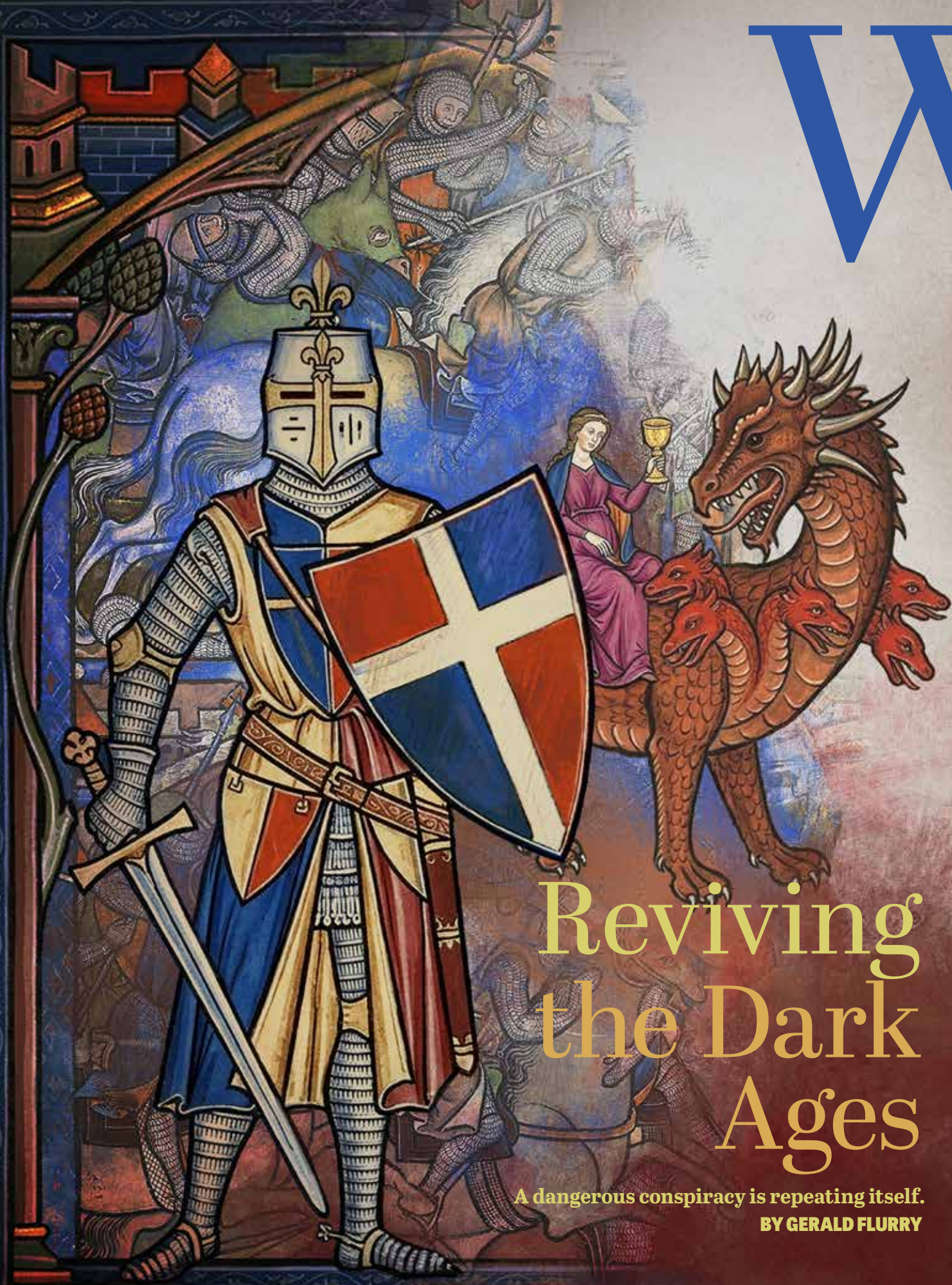
“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ...”

See your Creator. Behold His cosmic ambitions—for you! ■

Cosmic perspective

Request your free copy of *Our Awesome Universe Potential* to connect the Bible to the universe—to your future.

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Reviving the Dark Ages

A dangerous conspiracy is repeating itself.

BY GERALD FLURRY

WE ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE darkest age in world history. I can prove this to you from world events and Bible prophecy.

The term *Dark Ages* means different things to different people. I view it as a time of severe religious suppression during the time of the Holy Roman Empire. It was a time when the Catholic Church, together with the civil government, attacked other religions. It was a time when Jews and “heretical” Christians were tortured alive and/or burned at the stake!

Many Catholics are unaware of this history, and I am not attacking them. But we cannot afford to be ignorant—because the Bible warns that our physical and spiritual lives are at stake.

Read this pivotal prophecy in Revelation 12: “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. ... And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (verses 3, 6).

This passage is about God’s true Church running for its life from a beast led by a great false church—speaking of the Holy Roman Empire! Applying the day-for-a-year principle (Numbers 14:34), this is referring to a period of 1,260 years of intense persecution.

God’s Church endured 1,260 years of trial from A.D. 554 to 1814, hiding out to survive the wrath of this great false church! Those certainly were *dark ages* for the people of God! And untold thousands got slaughtered. Yet their record in history has been virtually erased!

This horrific story is not yet complete. Ninety percent of God’s prophecy is being fulfilled *in this end time*. The darkest part of the Dark Ages is just now beginning to develop! *Another* 1,260-day period talked about in Revelation is 1,260 *actual days*, or 3½ years of punishment, soon to afflict the world. God will punish the end-time descendants of physical Israel—as well as the lukewarm saints within spiritual Israel, God’s true but rebellious Church—for their sins and for not heeding His warning message.

We are headed back to the Dark Ages.

You may find this hard to believe, but that is what this great false church is talking about right now, and is about to lead this world into!

The time is approaching when Jews and “heretical” Christians will once again be slaughtered for their beliefs.

Moving Into a Darker Age

Right now, the Roman Catholic Church, backed by Germany, is stirring the flames for this conflict by disputing the Jews’ right to the land that God gave to ancient Israel. They do not view the Jews as having a legitimate claim to the land of the State of Israel. This view is becoming rapidly more common today—even in America, which has been very supportive of the Jewish state in the past.

Back in 2010, journalist Melanie Phillips wrote about comments by a Catholic archbishop who said the Jews have no right to the Holy Land. She thundered a powerful warning that the Vatican was “revers[ing] into a darker age.”

What did she mean? Europe’s history certainly has a lot of darkness—and that has been largely caused by *false religion*.

During the Middle Ages, entire cities experienced starvation followed by killer diseases. Thousands of dead bodies could not be disposed of quickly enough. Rats spread the bubonic plague (called the Black Death) through all of Europe in the 14th century; more than 25 million Europeans—about one third of Europe’s population—died horrible deaths from 1346–1353. Because the Jews followed the biblical laws of quarantine and hygiene, the infection and mortality rates in Jewish communities were substantially lower. Sadly, this led to many Europeans blaming the Jews for the plague—and they tortured and killed them! By the end of the century, thousands of Jews had been killed, and MORE THAN 100 JEWISH COMMUNITIES HAD BEEN WIPED OUT.

These centuries of the Middle Ages also saw the barbaric slaughter of pagans in an attempt to “Christianize”—or rather, Catholicize—Europe. It was also the time of the Crusades, which also brought the slaughter of Jews. Later on, the Catholic Church’s efforts to suppress the Protestant Reformation culminated in the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) that again devastated Europe’s population.

That is why many Protestants call it the Dark Ages. Many of them were *killed*, along with God’s true saints. In several places in Europe, especially Spain, there are hardly any Protestants because most all of them were killed!

Historians limit the Dark Ages to a certain time period, but the truth is they never really ended. Certainly, with the rise of the British Empire, circumstances eased somewhat—though they starkly regressed during the world wars. Our world has seen dark and not-so-dark times. But even today, we live in a dark age!

Could the Catholic Church really be pushing toward an even darker age than the present? The years since Phillips wrote her article, especially the last few years, prove that it is doing just that!

THE DARKEST PART OF THE DARK AGES IS JUST NOW BEGINNING TO DEVELOP!

Phillips’s Warning

The specific comments Melanie Phillips warned about came from Greek-Melkite Archbishop Cyrille Salim Bustros. He said, “The Holy Scriptures cannot be used to justify the return of Jews to Israel and the displacement of the Palestinians, to justify the occupation by Israel of Palestinian lands. ... We Christians cannot speak of the ‘Promised Land’ as an exclusive right for a privileged Jewish people. This promise was nullified by Christ. There is no longer a chosen people—all men and women of all countries have become the chosen people.”

Is that true? NO, THAT IS NOT WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS!

The Jews are part of the descendants of Israel that God chose. This man claims this designation was nullified by Christ, thus making all people chosen. That is not so. In fact, it makes little logical sense. God has given the land of Israel to a specific physical people—*separate* from the promise of grace open to all mankind. Nowhere in the Bible will you find a call on Christians to drive out the descendants of ancient Israel. Instead, you will find dozens of prophecies of not just Jews but all of Israel returning to the Promised Land.

What that archbishop said 16 years ago wasn’t an aberration. The church is saying the same things today—and even stronger, as we will see.

Who are they to talk like that? On what authority do they make such audacious claims? Where did they get that idea? They didn't get it out of the Bible, but they still want people to listen and think that it's somehow spiritual.

"Even if the head of the Israeli state is Jewish, the future is based on democracy. The Palestinian refugees will eventually come back and this problem will have to be solved," Bustros said.

They don't want to see a Jewish leader rule the land of Israel—despite the fact that King David was Jewish, and so was Jesus Christ, who will rule Jerusalem for all eternity!

Melanie Phillips wrote: "He thus seems to be saying that Israel itself is illegitimate, therefore should no longer exist as a Jewish state because the Jews have no right to their own country."

This is essentially what the Catholics are saying! If Jews don't have a right to live in the land of Israel, **THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO LIVE ANYWHERE AS A NATION!** This teaching is absolutely anti-Jewish and anti-God! **IT IS DIABOLICAL!**

Phillips put it this way: "It does not explain why since other people are allowed to have their own nation states, the Jews alone should be singled out to be denied their historic national homeland."

The Catholic Church may advocate politically for a two-state solution (which would put a terrorist state right next to Israel), but the church's theological view is that the Jews don't have any right to their own country *at all*.

"The reason Bustros says the Jews have no right to their own country is not political but theological," Phillips wrote. That is true. Many politicians try to make a political argument. But this isn't about politics—it's about theology!

"But above all, it is a resurrection of the ancient Christian calumny that the Jews are damned for all time as cosmic exiles on account of their refusal to accept the divinity of Christ. It is therefore a profoundly anti-Jewish statement" (ibid).

What is ironic is that Catholics, sincere as they may be, also reject Christ

in a sense, because they put their traditions ahead of the Bible! They don't follow what Christ taught. For example, Christ observed and taught the seventh-day Sabbath, yet the Catholic Church teaches Sunday worship. Some even admit that this doctrine has nothing to do with the Bible and is based on the sole authority of the Catholic Church.

The article continued: "First of all, is this merely a rogue outburst by a partisan bishop? If so, the Vatican must



For nearly 2,000 years, the Roman Catholic Church has been one of history's most militant institutions. Has it ever repented of this condemning history?

immediately distance itself from these remarks. If it does not, it would seem that the Vatican has taken a giant step backwards into a darker age."

You can see by what they are doing today that they haven't distanced themselves at all from this.

Attacking Jews and Other Christians

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, along with other religious leaders in Jerusalem, condemned "Christian Zionism" in a letter released January 17. They listed it among "damaging ideologies" that "mislead the public, sow confusion, and harm the unity of our flock."

In other words, IF YOU AS A CHRISTIAN BELIEVE THAT THE JEWS HAVE A RIGHT TO THE HOLY LAND, THEN ACCORDING TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, YOU ARE A HERETIC!

The church issued this letter in conjunction with the Eastern Orthodox,

Oriental Orthodox, Lutheran and Episcopalian churches. They all basically agree in their hatred for Jews and for American evangelicals who support them.

Here is an excerpt from their statement: "The patriarchs and heads of churches in Jerusalem reiterate that they alone represent the churches and their flock in matters pertaining to Christian religious, communal and pastoral life in the Holy Land."

They **ALONE** claim authority of Christian religious practices in the Holy Land.

How audacious! Yet they themselves refuse to be ruled by the authority of the Bible.

This January 17 letter was written in the spirit of the Crusades!

"The patriarchs and heads of churches in the Holy Land affirm before the faithful and before the world that the flock of Christ in this land is entrusted to the apostolic churches, which have borne their sacred ministry across centuries with steadfast devotion" (ibid).

These centuries of "steadfast devotion" are the Dark Ages, when Catholic crusaders killed and executed Muslims, Jews and *other* Christians.

They were called the *Christian* Crusades, but that label is a deception; they were primarily *Catholic* Crusades. Other Christian religions have their problems, but let's not blame them for what the Catholics did. For nearly 2,000 years, the Roman Catholic Church has been one of history's most militant institutions. Has it ever truly repented of this condemning history? The answer is no. Yet this world is unwilling to hold it accountable. People seem almost unaware of these monstrous crimes.

In *A History of the Crusades*, Steven Runciman wrote, "The Crusades were the pope's work."

The crusade philosophy has made Catholic popes the bloodiest religious leaders in history! Two hundred years of Catholic crusading left the blood of several hundred thousand to several *million* people soaking into the Holy Land!

DARK AGES PAGE 30 ►



The Vatican's Endgame in Jerusalem

The final chapter in the Roman Catholic Church's long quest for control of the Holy Land is quickly unfolding. **BY ANDREW MILLER**

WHEN DO YOU BLOCK A cardinal from attending mass? When he might get hit by an Iranian rocket.

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, was stopped by police from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to celebrate Palm Sunday Mass on March 29. At the time, Iran was firing missiles at Israel. The Old City of Jerusalem has few modern bomb shelters and no easy escape routes, so for safety reasons, Israeli officials closed several public areas—including the Western Wall, the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Pizzaballa turned the situation into a public standoff. He called the police action “unreasonable and grossly disproportionate” and said it set a dangerous precedent—the first such blockade in centuries. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stepped in and ordered officials to let the cardinal enter so he could “hold services as he wishes.” Church leaders later reached an agreement with authorities to allow Christian Holy Week and Easter events in Jerusalem.

But the damage was already done. Within hours, news outlets such as CNN, BBC, the *Guardian* and Al Jazeera ran stories casting the event as a significant Israeli attack on Christianity. Many

included photos of the cardinal at the barricades. On social media, hashtags such as #IsraelPersecutesChristians and #HandsOffJerusalem spread quickly. Pro-Palestinian and pro-Catholic groups helped push the story.

The Vatican has long called for an internationally guaranteed “special statute” for Jerusalem’s holy sites. This would give outside powers a say in how the sites are run, ostensibly to protect religious freedom. The Palm Sunday incident fueled international anger toward Israel, increasing pressure for such a deal.

This calculated incident points to a larger reality: The Vatican is working hard to gain more influence in Jerusalem. While the world watches the United States-Iran conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, the Catholic Church is quietly pushing forward its centuries-old plan for the Holy City. Over the years, the church has used crusades, diplomacy and negotiated agreements to strengthen its position there. Now those efforts are intensifying.

Bible prophecy warns of a coming bloody struggle for control of the Holy City—one that will pit religious ambitions against modern realities in a high-stakes clash destined to shake the nations.

Anti-Semitic Roots

Jerusalem’s holy sites are often a focal point of tension because the city is sacred

to three major religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

For Christians, Jerusalem is invaluable. It is where Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected from the dead. It is where His followers received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, where the apostles first preached the gospel, and where the First Council of Jerusalem met around A.D. 50.

Many Christians do not know that the early church in Jerusalem changed hands after the Bar Kokhba revolt from A.D. 132 to 135. Historian Eusebius wrote that Jewish Christians, some of whom were relatives of Jesus, led the Jerusalem church until then. The last Jewish bishop was Judah Kyriakos, a great-grand-

son of Jesus’s brother Jude.

After Emperor Hadrian crushed the revolt in A.D. 135, he renamed Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina and banned Jews from the city on pain of death. He also banned Sabbath-keeping and forbade teaching the Old Testament. Judah Kyriakos was removed, and a Gentile bishop named Marcus was installed—the first in a line of leaders who followed Hadrian’s anti-Jewish rules. From that point on, the Jerusalem church was led by Sunday-observing Gentiles rather than Sabbath-keeping Jews.

With Jewish Christian leaders pushed out, mainstream Christianity increasingly shifted toward opposition to the Jews. Around A.D. 140, the influential teacher Marcion of Sinope gained influence in Rome. He made a large donation of 200,000 sesterces to the Roman church and began teaching that the God who sent Jesus was entirely different from the God of the Old Testament. He portrayed the Jewish God as harsh, vengeful and inferior—essentially the devil—and argued that Christians should reject the Hebrew Scriptures. Although Church leaders like Polycarp strongly condemned Marcion, famously calling him the “first-born of Satan,” his ideas spread rapidly and intensified mainstream Christian disdain for all things Jewish.

Soon after, the Christian apologist Justin Martyr wrote that the Jews as a group

were guilty for Jesus's death. He said Sabbath-keeping and circumcision were signs of God's punishment on them. Later, Christian theologian Augustine (A.D. 354–430) built on these ideas. He taught the “doctrine of Jewish witness,” which claims God has kept the Jews scattered and lowly as proof of Christian truth. This argument held that, like Cain—who was marked after killing Abel—Jews carried the Old Testament Scriptures (which pointed to Jesus) while living in a humbled condition that testified to the superiority of the New Covenant.

This thinking shaped Catholic views for centuries. To many traditional Catholics, a strong Jewish state in the Holy Land goes against the teachings of the early church fathers. Those fathers taught that Jews were cursed to wander without a homeland of their own. A Jewish-controlled Jerusalem challenges the idea that the Catholic Church has replaced Israel. This helps explain why the Vatican has resisted Jewish control over the holy sites.

The Crusader Kingdom

In A.D. 451, the Council of Chalcedon made the bishop of Jerusalem a patriarch alongside the patriarch of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch. This gave the church in Jerusalem stronger official standing over Christianity's key holy places, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. That church was built in A.D. 335 by Emperor Constantine on the site where Christians believe Jesus was buried and rose again.

Christians held Jerusalem until Muslim Arab forces took it from A.D. 636 to 638. Under early Muslim rule, Christians could usually keep a presence at the holy sites. But in 1009, the situation collapsed into crisis. The Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (often called the “Mad Caliph”) ordered the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and banned Christian worship there.

This event became one of the main catalysts for the Catholic Crusades.

In 1095, Pope Urban II called for the first of the Crusades. Freeing Jerusalem and recovering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were its major goals. The cry “God wills it!” inspired tens of thousands of European Christians to fight to take Christ's tomb back from Muslim control.

Sadly, their crusading fervor was not only directed against Muslims. When they captured Jerusalem on July 15, 1099, they also killed thousands of Jews. Many who hid in the main synagogue were burned alive.

After taking the city, the crusaders set up a small state in the Eastern Mediterranean called the Kingdom of Jerusalem. They removed the Eastern Orthodox patriarch, installed a Latin patriarch loyal to Rome, and created a church structure under the pope. They also banned Jewish settlement in the city. Jerusalem had almost no Jewish residents for about 90 years.

Once the Kingdom of Jerusalem was reconquered by the Muslims in 1187, a limited number of Jews were allowed to return to the city. Muslims treated both Jews and Christians as second-class people, required to pay extra taxes. But Islam did not have a teaching like Augustine's “doctrine of Jewish witness.” Thus, the Muslims did not exclude the Jews from Jerusalem to the extent Catholics did.

Even after suffering this sore defeat, the Catholics never abandoned their goal to reconquer the Holy Land.

Fascist Sympathies

Seven hundred years later, the Vatican's basic position had not changed. In 1904, Zionist leader Theodor Herzl asked Pope Pius X for his support of a Jewish return to Palestine. The pope replied, “We cannot prevent the Jews from going to Jerusalem—but we could never sanction it. The Jews have not recognized our Lord, therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people.” He added that while it was unpleasant to see the Turks in possession of the holy places, supporting Jewish control of them was impossible. The church fathers had taught that such a thing would never happen.

Despite the pope's stance, God soon intervened in human affairs to bring about the Jews' return to the Promised Land. The late Herbert W. Armstrong explained this powerfully in his booklet *The Proof of the Bible* (free upon request). He showed that God used Great Britain to deliver Jerusalem from the Ottoman Turks on Dec. 9, 1917—exactly 2,520 years after Nebuchadnezzar's 604 B.C. acceptance of the Jews' surrender. This 2,520-year period (seven prophetic

“times” of 360 days each, applied via the biblical day-for-a-year principle; see Ezekiel 4:6) is a measure of divine punishment and restoration (see Leviticus 26 and Daniel 4).

After the British Army liberated Jerusalem from the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled it for exactly 400 years, the Vatican tried to use its influence with the newly established League of Nations to ensure that Italy or another Catholic state gained control of the Holy Land. Pope Benedict XV did not want Britain or any other Protestant nation to control Jerusalem, because he feared they would help the Jews return.

Yet the League of Nations awarded the Holy Land to Britain in 1922, and the British allowed Jews to return to the Promised Land. The Vatican staunchly opposed both of these decisions.

In June 1940, 30 Italian bishops sent a telegram to Italian dictator Benito Mussolini urging him to crown the “unfailing victory of our Army” by planting the Italian flag over Jerusalem. Reports also surfaced in *Time* magazine that the Axis powers planned to turn control of the Holy Land over to the Vatican, with Italy managing the territory.

Through many more divine miracles, however, the Allied Powers won World War II, and the Holy Land remained in British hands until November 1947, when the United Nations General Assembly voted in favor of partitioning the Holy Land into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

This ran counter to the Vatican's desires. Yet since Italy's fascist government had fallen, Pope Pius XII had no choice but to accept the UN decision. Instead of pushing for Catholic control of the entire Holy Land, the pope began pushing for Jerusalem to become an international city-state run by the UN.

Palestinian State

The very existence of the State of Israel has created deep division in the Catholic Church.

Many traditionalist Catholics who attack Jews and Christian Zionists today are trying to defend Augustine's teaching that the Jews must remain scattered as punishment for rejecting Christ. To them, a Jewish state in the Holy Land is a challenge to the idea that the Catholic Church has completely replaced Israel.

On the other hand, reform-minded Catholics have been forced to admit that God still has an ongoing covenant with the Jewish people. This split underscores the challenges the Vatican faces in navigating the realities of modern Israel.

The Vatican did not officially recognize the State of Israel until 45 years after it was created. By comparison, it recognized the Islamic Republic of Iran immediately after it was created in 1979.



Pierbattista Pizzaballa leads Palm Sunday services at St. Saviour's Church in East Jerusalem on March 29.

Today, the Vatican supports a two-state solution in the Holy Land. At the same time, it demands that Jerusalem be recognized as a shared city under some form of international oversight.

This brings us directly to Cardinal Pizzaballa's standoff with Israeli police at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The incident was not just about one mass on Palm Sunday. It was a carefully timed move that generated worldwide headlines against Israel and increasing pressure for exactly the kind of international control the Vatican has sought for centuries.

After the cardinal was stopped, U.S. political commentator Jack Posobiec posted a message to his 3 million followers on X that Pizzaballa "does not need to ask for permission to go to his own church." He declared, "Never forget that the Crusades were defensive and justified. Defend the Church of the Holy Sepulchre." His post stirred strong emotions and revived historical memories of Catholic claims to holy sites.

Prominent European leaders quickly joined the criticism. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said the action "constitutes an offense not only against

believers but against every community that recognizes religious freedom." French President Emmanuel Macron condemned the decision, saying it added to "the worrying increase in violations of the status of the holy places in Jerusalem." European Union foreign-policy chief Kaja Kallas called it "a violation of religious freedom and long-standing protections governing holy sites."

These swift, strong statements from top European leaders helped turn a local safety measure into an international controversy. They increased pressure on Israel and gave fresh support to the Vatican's longstanding call for outside powers to guarantee access and control over Jerusalem's holy sites.

New Headquarters

In Zechariah 12:3, God says, "And in that day will I make *Jerusalem* a burdensome stone for all

people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." *Jerusalem* means "city of peace." But this passage shows that it will not be a place of peace in the latter days. Rather, it will be a burden.

Zechariah 14:1-2 reveal that the nation of Israel will soon lose control over East Jerusalem, the half it acquired in 1967. Then a revived Holy Roman Empire will reconquer the city and the entire surrounding region.

These verses reveal the Vatican's endgame in Jerusalem. First, Catholic leaders like Cardinal Pizzaballa will help stir up anti-Jewish sentiments and a Palestinian resistance movement that will violently conquer half of Jerusalem. Then European "peacekeepers" will move in to "protect" Jerusalem's holy sites by establishing the sort of "Palestinian Mandate"

that those 30 bishops urged Mussolini to create in the 1940s.

This means another crusade is coming.

In the October 1951 issue of the *Plain Truth*, Herbert W. Armstrong highlighted a prophecy in Daniel 11:45 indicating that the Vatican will move its headquarters to Jerusalem just before Christ's return. In reference to the leader of a revived Holy Roman Empire, this verse says: "And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."

"There it is!" Mr. Armstrong wrote. "As the Communist red hordes roll 200 million strong over Europe, destroying everything in their path, the capital of this revived Roman Empire, along with the Vatican, will make a lightning move to Palestine—probably Jerusalem! That shall be the *last* abomination to be set up there! Notice, in Daniel 11:45, 'tabernacle' is a place of worship, and 'palace' the residence of a king."

Bible prophecy shows that the Vatican's centuries-long quest is heading toward this dramatic climax. Cardinal Pizzaballa may sometimes sound like a peacemaker, but his goal is the same as that of Pope Urban II. He wants one overarching church ruled by one overarching pope from one universal headquarters: Jerusalem.

The current war between Israel and Iran is giving the Catholic Church an opportunity to turn public opinion against the Jews. Bible prophecy tells us that neither Jew nor Arab will come out on top in the peace process. Rather, the Roman Catholic Church will lead one final crusade before "he shall come to his end."

Jesus Christ will return and put an end to all man's schemes for the Holy City. He alone will establish peace in Jerusalem and the whole world. The Vatican's endgame is rapidly unfolding, but God's plan will prevail! ■

Jerusalem's future foretold

This city of burden will become a city of peace. Understand why so many kill for control of Jerusalem, why the city has suffered so much, and God's plan to finally bring peace. Request your free copy of Gerald Flurry's book *The Eternal Has Chosen Jerusalem*.



Without NATO, Europe Will ERUPT

An explosive trans-Atlantic split is becoming inevitable. **BY RICHARD PALMER**

THEIR VILLAGE WAS DOOMED. The 7,000 residents of Zafferana Etnea prepared to watch their homes and livelihoods destroyed forever. The 1,000-degree centigrade lava from Mount Etna's latest eruption was flowing slowly downward. Who could withstand a literal force of nature?

As it turns out: NATO could. In the spring of 1992, the Italian military dug embankments, blew up lava tubes, and set up barriers. And the United States Navy and Marine Corps airlifted numerous 4-ton concrete blocks to divert the lava away from the town.

Only a single house, on the outskirts of Zafferana Etnea, was burned.

American aid was made possible by the Sigonella airbase in eastern Sicily, just 15 miles away. This incident was a powerful example of how sharing a base with the U.S. can benefit a nation.

'All Your Bases Belong to Us'

In 1957, Sigonella was undeveloped agricultural land marred by the ruins of a German wartime airfield. To strengthen

NATO's southern flank against the Soviet Union, Italy opened it up to the Americans, who brought amphibious landing craft filled with materials and equipment and constructed one of the key American bases in the Mediterranean theater: Naval Air Station Sigonella. In 1965, Italy's 41st Antisubmarine Warfare Wing moved in. Today, roughly 2,000 American troops and 1,000 Italian troops are stationed there.

When Italy denied America use of the base on March 31 during hostilities with Iran, the U.S. Air Force was stunned.

Similar stories played out across the Continent. Bases America built, bases the Europeans asked for, bases they benefited from for decades, were suddenly closed to American forces.

Iran is an undemocratic, authoritarian, oppressive, radical Islamist regime. It is the enemy of every liberal cause so cherished by Europeans. It has been threatening and attacking America and other nations for 47 years. It is the world's biggest state sponsor of Islamic terrorism. It was and is trying to build nuclear bombs. The United States is outside the range of their missiles, but Europe is not.

It is reasonable therefore for the U.S. to expect help from its NATO allies.

But Spain and France closed their airspace entirely to all U.S. aircraft involved in the Iran war. France refused access to aircraft trying to rescue a downed pilot. Even Poland, one of America's closest European allies, rejected a request to redeploy Patriot missile systems to the Middle East. Britain, which has fought side by side with the Americans through so many conflicts, also hampered the effort. It eventually acquiesced and allowed access to its bases, but only for acts of "collective self-defense."

European nations have the legal right to do this. But America expected more from allies it had protected for decades.

The U.S. continued to seek more help, asking European navies to help open the Strait of Hormuz, through which 10 to 20 percent of European oil supplies flow. The Europeans said they would help patrol it—but only after the war is over.

Earlier this year, Donald Trump's aggressive rhetoric and pursuit of Greenland—an autonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark—had damaged the alliance. But Europe's stark reaction

to the Iran war, effectively aiding the Islamofascists in order to hurt the Americans and the Jews, brusquely nailed the alliance's coffin shut.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that European leaders are now deliberately sabotaging the union.

Papal Schism

Into this breach stepped Pope Leo XIV—who proceeded to make it wider.

Shortly after U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth encouraged Americans to pray for victory in the Iran war, Leo spoke out on March 29 to assert, “God does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war.”

On April 10, the pope posted on social media: “God does not bless any conflict. Anyone who is a disciple of Christ, the Prince of Peace, is never on the side of those who once wielded the sword and today drop bombs.”

The next day, apparently still unmindful of the dozens or hundreds of conflicts popes have blessed for the past 2,000 years, Leo said: “Dear brothers and sisters, there are certainly binding responsibilities that fall to the leaders of nations. To them we cry out: Stop! It is time for peace! Sit at the table of dialogue and mediation, not at the table where rearmament is planned and deadly actions are decided!”

A group of three Catholic cardinals went on *60 Minutes* to support the pope and criticize President Trump and the war effort. Cardinal Robert McElroy of Washington, D.C., said the war on the Iranian regime “is not a just war.”

Inevitably, President Trump hit back. “Pope Leo is weak on crime, and terrible for foreign policy,” he posted on Truth Social. “... I don’t want a pope who thinks it’s OK for Iran to have a nuclear weapon.”

“I don’t want to get into a debate with him,” the pope responded, then went on to imply the president had “abused” the gospel.

Leo has had much less to say about Iran’s ongoing threat against shipping in the Strait of Hormuz or the tens of thousands of Iranian people the mullahs murdered in January or the hundreds of thousands who could die if Iran gets nuclear weapons.

Vice President JD Vance, a Catholic convert, said: “Was God on the side of

the Americans who liberated France from the Nazis? Was God on the side of the Americans who liberated Holocaust camps and liberated those, those innocent people, you know, those who had survived the Holocaust? I certainly think the answer is yes.”

Veteran journalist Melanie Phillips went even further: “The pope’s refusal to support a war to end one of the

Meloni is leader of a 70 percent Catholic country. When forced to choose between president and pope,



world’s greatest evils has called to mind the disturbing example of Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust. In 1933, he signed the Reich Concordat, which secured for the German Catholic Church protection from the Nazis and effectively bought its silence over the extermination of the Jews. Arguably, Leo’s stance is yet more shocking, because even Pius didn’t say it was morally wrong to fight Hitler” (*New York Post*, April 14).

Pope Leo “not getting into a debate” with U.S. leaders by getting into a debate with them seems to have stiffened anti-American resolve in European capitals.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was the only European leader to attend Donald Trump’s inauguration. He has called her “a marvelous woman” and “a great leader.” But Meloni is leader of a 70 percent Catholic country. When forced to choose between president and pope, she chose the latter.

“I find President Trump’s words towards the [pope] unacceptable,” she said in an interview with the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper. “The pope is the head of the Catholic Church, and it is

right and normal for him to call for peace and to condemn every form of war.”

President Trump responded by calling Meloni herself “unacceptable.”

“I thought she had courage, but I was wrong,” he said.

He later tried to patch things up, partially by calling for Iran’s place in the FIFA World Cup to be taken by Italy, which had failed to qualify for the contest.

But the Iran war seems to have created conditions for a permanent break between Donald Trump

and the few allies he had in Europe.

Fair-weather Friends

After President Trump’s 2024 election victory, the fringe right in Europe jumped on board the Trump train and received enthusiastic support from Trump, Vance, Elon Musk and others. Then Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem attended the European branch of the CPAC event last year, sharing a stage with many of these figures. President Trump himself sent video messages to CPAC Hungary. His national security strategy last year called for America to actively “cultivate resistance” to the European Union by working with these fringe-right figures. The “growing influence of patriotic European parties ... gives cause for great optimism,” it says.

But the Iran war and Trump’s criticism of the pope have caused these “patriotic European parties” to decisively reject the Make America Great Again movement.

Many of these parties, like the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany and National Rally in France, already had anti-American streaks, but they backed MAGA partly opportunistically and partly

because Trump promised to bring home U.S. troops and stop new wars.

The double whammy of the Greenland spat and the Iran war has destroyed that relationship. Conservative Catholics are prominent in many of these parties, giving the pope's words special weight.

AfD coleader Alice Weidel has told senior party figures to reduce their trips to Washington and to instead cultivate ties with Russia and China. The party's other coleader, Tino Chrupalla, accused Israel of dragging America into war with Iran, praised Spain for its refusal to cooperate, and called for Germany to evict American troops from German bases.

Marine Le Pen, a leader of France's National Rally, called President Trump's war aims "erratic." The party's president, Jordan Bardella, accused Trump of attempting the "vassalization" of Europe.

One of the few right-wing leaders who did not turn on Trump was Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Vance visited Hungary in a strong sign of support for Orbán's reelection campaign—and Orbán got voted out in a landslide.

The leaders deserting President Trump were never truly friends. Despite the legacy of America's participation and assistance in fairly recent world wars—including the presence of European bases that connect directly back to those conflicts—these leaders believe America has fundamentally been a force for evil in the world, *and they want to see it fall*.

Prominent leaders of the AfD have a radically different view of the legacy of World War II: *They think the Nazis were heroes*. It should have been obvious to people like Vance and Musk that these were not America's true friends.

This leaves America with almost no friends in Europe.

This leaves America with almost no friends in Europe.

New Alliance

European leaders are already creating and operating in a post-American world. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that they are working on a "European NATO," an attempt to maintain NATO's command structures with European-only personnel—no Americans. Europe's leaders are "tackling practical military questions, such as who would run

NATO's air-and-missile defenses, reinforcement corridors into Poland and the Baltic states, logistics networks and major regional exercises if U.S. officers stepped aside" (April 14).

The EU is tackling the same issue. Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty makes the EU a mutual defense alliance just like NATO. But it lacks the clear command structure and set of procedures needed to implement it quickly. At an April 23-24 meeting in Cyprus, EU leaders worked on creating just that.

U.S. leaders sound like they have moved on as well. "I was never swayed by NATO," President Trump told the *Telegraph*. "I always knew they were a paper tiger, and Putin knows that too, by the way." When asked if he would re-think America's participation in NATO, he responded: "I would say [it's] beyond reconsideration" (April 1).

Secretary of State Marco Rubio made a similar statement on Fox News: "I do think, unfortunately, we are going to have to re-examine whether or not this alliance that has served this country well for a while is still serving that purpose" (March 31).

Rubio used to be the *pro-NATO* voice in Trump's cabinet. Yet apparently even he has turned against it.

"The trans-Atlantic alliance has already been called into question by Trump's own actions," wrote Eurointelligence. "But it will not recover from Europe's coordinated refusal to help the U.S. in this war" (April 2).

Donald Trump lacks the power to formally leave NATO; Congress would have to approve such a move, and it is unlikely to do so. But he can effectively cripple it. He could simply state that he would not honor America's commitment to defend any NATO state if attacked, refuse to share intelligence with NATO allies, or stop delivering advanced weapons.

Eurointelligence wrote that it is difficult to see how the EU can stand alone "without a political and fiscal union" (ibid). It is right: For these nations to wean themselves off economic and military reliance on America, *the EU would have to coalesce as a superstate*.

The pope + German power = trouble

The Bible prophesies of a time of trouble the world has never seen. Know what is coming by requesting your free copy of *The Holy Roman Empire in Prophecy*.

A New Volcano

Mount Etna sits on the fault line between two tectonic plates. When they move and create friction, earthquakes happen. When things heat up too much, an explosion abruptly follows.

Europe itself is primed for an explosion, boiling over with anger. An end-time prophecy in Jeremiah 1:13 describes this rising power as "a seething pot."

"This symbolic language is describing modern Germany," wrote *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry. "Beneath the surface, that nation is full of simmering dissatisfaction with the current world order. Germans are angry at the U.S., and especially furious with President Trump. The imperialistic ambition that prompted Germany to start both world wars is alive and well. It is 'seething'!" (*Trumpet*, September 2018).

But Germany is not a mindless volcano. Europe's most ambitious leaders don't want NATO forces dropping road blocks as their power spreads around the region. So they are taking the opportunity to destroy NATO now.

"Many elite Germans feel their nation has now gotten all it can from the U.S., and they are ready to move on," wrote Mr. Flurry. "Some powerful Germans today are thinking more and more about the Holy Roman Empire, and they want modern Germany to assume more power of its own in the spirit of that empire" (ibid).

Revelation 17 describes an alliance of 10 kings (verses 12-13) led by a woman, or church in Bible symbolism (verses 3-4). Based on this prophecy, Herbert W. Armstrong said in 1945 that Germany would rise as part of a "European union."

NATO was designed to prevent Germany from leading Europe and to instead keep it locked into a U.S. alliance.

Now we see a pope helping to bring together a European alliance independent of the United States.

The alliance is building fast. The volcano is ready to erupt. And American forces are being prevented from stopping it. ■





THE FATE OF MIGHTY NATIONS CAN BE decided by a single waterway.

Seventy years ago, the British Empire shamefully retreated from the Suez Canal after a stunning military victory against a radical Islamic regime in Egypt. They won the battle yet lost the Suez. This geopolitical tipping point in 1956 changed the world and signaled the end of Britain's imperial power. Britannia no longer ruled the waves and was no longer feared by its enemies.

The United States appears to be making the same mistake in the Strait of Hormuz.

For more than two months, the United States has hammered Iran with its unmatched arsenal of bombs and missiles. While many parts of Iran lie in ruins, the radical regime remains defiant.

When Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps announced the closure of Hormuz to all ships on March 2, the consequences of the Iran war went global. A battle of willpower is being fought in the strait, and it is accelerating two important trends in Bible prophecy: the decline of the United States and the ascendancy of Iran. These prophecies are connected to the start of a nuclear World War III!

'Sea Gates'

The Strait of Hormuz is a 21-mile-wide waterway connecting the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. It includes territorial waters of both Iran and Oman, with some lesser disputed claims by the United Arab Emirates. No part of it is considered international waters. Since it is narrow, with several islands, large ships must pass through limited, specific lanes. These are well within

range of Iran's weapons, and during the current conflict Iran has attacked several ships with missiles, drones and mines, killing several crew members, and commandos have used small, fast boats to commandeer oil tankers.

Hormuz is vital to global energy supplies. In peacetime, 20 percent of the entire world's oil and liquefied natural gas supply passes through it. Most of the energy resources produced by Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates use this route, supplying global markets, particularly in Europe and Asia.

Europe receives only 8 percent of its oil from the Gulf states, but it relies heavily on the region for refined products like jet fuel and diesel. Asia is also affected. The United States Navy is at least partially blocking shipments that would be beneficial to Iran, including cheap oil supplies to China. This increases costs in China and deprives Iran of an estimated \$500 million per day.

The stoppage in this key artery in the international energy circulatory system has spiked fuel prices, which affect transportation costs of all other materials and products, forces factories that normally operate 24/7 to sit idle, costing millions per day, forces build-up at distribution points that may result in the loss of oil wells, and causes many other direct and indirect effects.

Threatening ships in Hormuz is a powerful economic weapon. And America has struggled to summon the firepower—and more so, the willpower—to defeat it.

Bible prophecy reveals how we have arrived at this "sea gate" crisis.

Starting around 1800, Britain and America began gaining possession of every major strait, canal and passage across the globe, giving them unparalleled power and directly fulfilling prophecies from God!

God gave these nations these sea gates because He promised the patriarch Abraham that He would give national blessings to his descendants, and the Americans and British are among Abraham's descendants. Read the Bible and secular history for yourself in your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, by Herbert W. Armstrong.

"[S]ince the birthright pertains to nations, the 'gate' of our enemies would be such passes as Gibraltar, Suez, Singapore, the Panama Canal, etc," Mr. Armstrong summarized in *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*. "Britain and America came into possession of every such major 'gate' in this world! So we must be modern Israel. World War II hinged on these 'gates.' They had become not only strategic passes, but the world's greatest fortifications."

Suez Crisis

Constructing the Suez Canal was a joint French-Egyptian venture that was completed in 1869. The British purchased Egypt's 44 percent ownership stake in 1875. In 1882, the British occupied Egypt to secure control of Suez, which connected it to its eastern possessions, trade routes, theaters of war and, later, oil supplies when the Royal Navy changed from coal to oil.

Following World War II, Egyptian opposition to the continued British presence intensified into civil unrest and terrorist attacks on military bases in the Canal Zone. In 1952, a military coup forced King Farouk to abdicate, and the new anti-British government demanded the removal of British troops by 1956. President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez, removing British and French ownership of the sea gate.

Expecting a military response, Nasser deliberately sank ships at the entrances of the canal, blocking all traffic. This was a serious threat to European strategic and economic security.

Britain and France carried out a bold, successful attack in November 1956, Operation Musketeer, to retake control

of the Suez with assistance from Israel, which was being threatened by Nasser's Egypt, and achieved the capture of the entire Sinai Peninsula. This was a show of willpower of the nations that descended from Abraham to hold on to the blessings God had given them.

Despite the stunning military success, Britain was forced into a humiliating withdrawal due to pressure from U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden had not consulted the president before the attack. Eisenhower believed the United Nations should intervene, and he threatened to heavily damage Britain's financial system if it did not forfeit its victories and the canal. Britain capitulated.

The Suez humiliation was the last straw that broke the back of Britain as a

economic issues—and Iran seized control of the Strait of Hormuz. In 1979, Iran's Islamic Revolution shocked the world, and the strait was now under constant threat by radical zealots.

The Iran war is proving to be the modern Suez Crisis. After strong military victories, the United States may be compelled to end the war, leaving Iran's regime in place, further radicalized and wielding more aggressive control over this sea gate. Simultaneously, the ineffectiveness of American firepower, the lack of American willpower and the blow to American prestige could accelerate America's decline!

"Anything short of total victory against Iran and its radical ideology will prove a curse on America, the Middle East and the whole world," *Trumpet* editor in chief

Ethiopia in Prophecy. "When it eventually gains influence over Ethiopia and Eritrea, Iran will control the Red Sea. When that happens, Iran will have the power to lock down virtually the *entire* Middle East!"

Daniel 11 reveals that Egypt will actually soon ally itself with Iran, giving it even more control over the Suez. And Iran's Houthi proxies in Yemen have already proved willing to attack ships in the Bab el-Mandeb (the strait that allows access to the Red Sea and Suez).

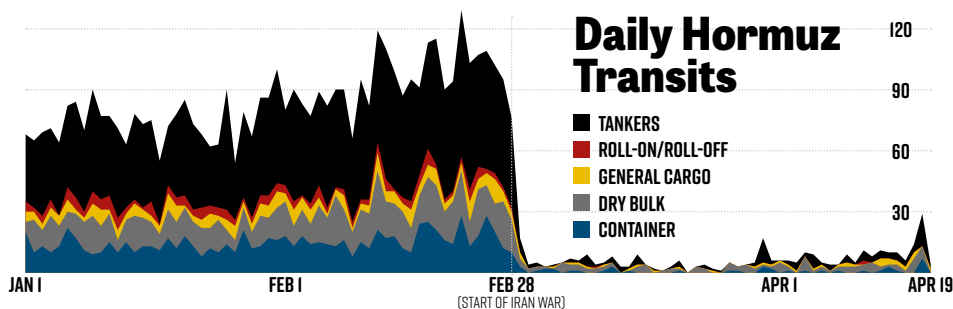
Mr. Flurry writes in *Germany's Secret Strategy to Destroy Iran*: "Now rather suddenly, Iran—the world's greatest state sponsor of terrorism—has basically become the gatekeeper to this [Red Sea] strategic asset. This really does threaten the peace of the world! ...

"It is not farfetched to see Iran using its power to control the flow of oil out of the Middle East. ... Daniel 11:40 shows that the United States won't be a factor as these events play out! It is *Europe* that Iran is going to push against. And it is *Europe* that will respond."

"It may be that this push could take place in the very area of Yemen or the Gulf of Aden," he wrote.

These prophecies reveal the outcome of this battle in Hormuz. Iran will retain control of these sea gates. The U.S. looks powerful today, but soon it will no longer be a factor in the Middle East, and may experience a humiliating withdrawal. The "push" that provokes a German-led European whirlwind attack may well be triggered by control of these sea gates. This attack begins World War III.

Struggles for sea gates, the fall of empires and a world filled with war will not be the end of the human story. These are signs that the greatest event to ever occur is on the horizon. Man clashing with man leads to a new age of Jesus Christ's perfect government ruling over all of nations in peace. That is the hope in the battle for Hormuz! ■



first-rate world power. Massive national debt, apathetic public opinion, cost-of-living issues and crumbling prestige had already hollowed it out, and now the world saw how weak it really was. Since then, British forces and the British people have been reduced almost to irrelevance.

The debacle was miscalculation compounded by lack of determination. From retirement, Winston Churchill said this about the effort to retake Suez: "I would never have dared; and if I had dared, I would certainly never have dared stop."

"The Middle East is one of the hardest-hearted areas in the world," he wrote a couple of years later, in 1958. "It has always been fought over, and peace has only reigned when a major power has established firm influence and shown that it would maintain its will. ... Force, or perhaps force and bribery, are the only things that will be respected."

In the late 1960s, Britain still controlled the Persian Gulf and guaranteed security to some Gulf states. But it withdrew in 1971—again largely due to severe

Gerald Flurry wrote in our last issue. "... America and Israel's attack will not end up cutting off the head of the snake. It WILL INSTEAD ENRAGE IT AND MAKE IT MORE AGGRESSIVE." ("*World War III Will Start With Iran*," *theTrumpet.com/34019*).

Bible prophecy reveals that the Suez Crisis and now the Hormuz Crisis are significant developments leading toward World War III.

The Strait of Hormuz in Prophecy

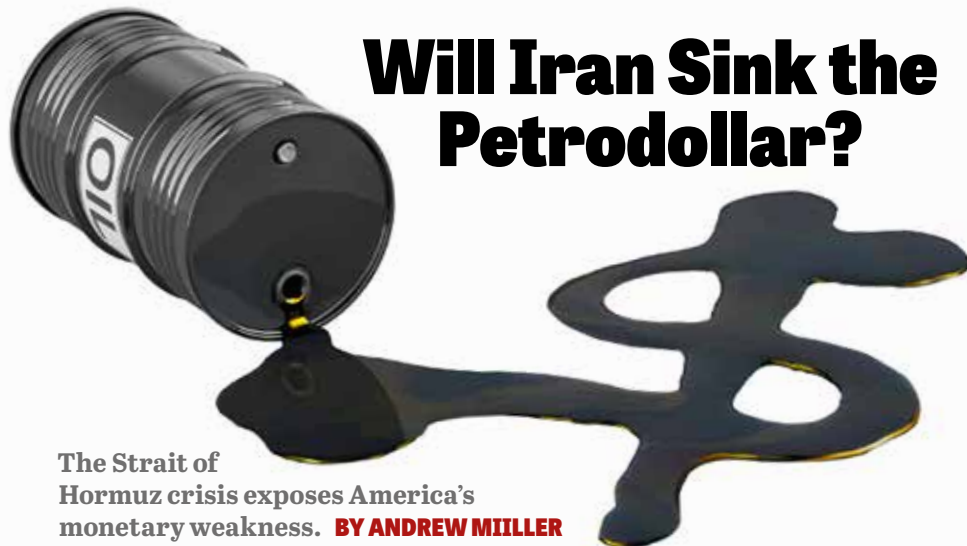
For years, Mr. Flurry has emphasized that Iran is working to threaten the world by gaining a choke hold on trade from Hormuz through the Bab el-Mandeb to Suez.

"Iran controls the Strait of Hormuz, and via its Islamic allies in Egypt is fast gaining decisive influence over the Suez Canal," writes Mr. Flurry in *Libya and*

Iran will emerge stronger.

It may be hard to see it now, but your Bible prophecies that Iran will be a powerful key player in world events. To learn what the Bible prophecies about Iran, request Gerald Flurry's free booklet *The King of the South*.





Will Iran Sink the Petrodollar?

The Strait of Hormuz crisis exposes America's monetary weakness. BY ANDREW MILLER

THE IRAN WAR ENDANGERS AMERICAN and Israeli fighters, trade ships and civilians. It also threatens the petrodollar system that underpins much of America's economic power.

Iran's Islamist terrorist regime does not aim for direct military victory over the United States. Instead, it employs asymmetric tactics, including strikes on infrastructure, oil facilities and vessels. Its strongest leverage is disrupting civilian cargo traffic through the narrow Strait of Hormuz.

Since March, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has shut down nearly all commercial transit through the Strait of Hormuz by threatening and attacking vessels linked to the U.S., Israel and their supporters. This blockade has triggered one of the largest oil supply disruptions in history.

Petroleum flows that formerly averaged 20 million barrels per day have slowed to a trickle, prompting Arab Gulf producers to slash their combined output by at least 10 million barrels per day. This is a crisis for the Arab Gulf monarchies, whose economies are about 30 percent dependent on oil—and for the rest of the world, since those nations produce as much as a quarter of global oil supply.

The dollar is tightly linked to oil. In fact, much of the dollar's enduring global strength stems from the fact that international oil trade is overwhelmingly priced and settled in U.S. dollars. Countries worldwide must hold large dollar reserves to buy oil. This creates constant demand for the currency.

This petrodollar system originated more than 50 years ago.

As U.S. President Richard Nixon ended the last of the dollar's convertibility to gold in 1971, his administration, led by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, deepened ties with Saudi Arabia. In exchange for U.S. security guarantees, the Saudis agreed to price and sell their oil in U.S. dollars and use the profits to buy American assets, particularly U.S. treasuries. Other major oil exporters followed, creating the "petrodollar" system that has fueled global demand for the dollar ever since.

The current war has thrown U.S. security guarantees into question.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has urged President Donald Trump to act decisively to reopen the strait and to bring down Iran's Islamist regime. But President Trump faces domestic and international resistance.

This is an enormous test. It's not just about 150 oil tankers and \$4 gas prices for unhappy American consumers or midterm elections. *It's about America's position as the world's superpower.* Can America "guarantee" your security when you need it? Because if it can't or won't, nations like Saudi Arabia have no reason to keep lending America the money it needs to police the world.

If Saudi Arabia and its neighbors reduce reliance on the dollar—pricing oil in other currencies and cutting treasury purchases—the dollar could lose its reserve status. That would fuel U.S. inflation and elevate interest rates on the national debt. The U.S. government already devotes 19 percent of tax revenue to pay interest on its debt, so further rate increases could trigger a fiscal crisis.

Herbert W. Armstrong forecast that a financial crisis would trigger a restructuring of Europe. In a July 22, 1984, co-worker letter, he warned that a U.S. banking crisis "could suddenly result in triggering European nations to unite as a new world power larger than either the Soviet Union or the U.S."

If America cannot or will not reliably protect the strait, Gulf states will seek new protectors. Could a European leader negotiate security guarantees from the EU—or a German-led power—in exchange for pricing oil in euros and recycling surpluses into European assets? A prophecy in Psalm 83 says Gulf states will ally with Germany (biblical Assyria) against America, Britain and Israel. (For a detailed explanation of Psalm 83, read "[A Mysterious Prophecy](#)," by *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry; theTrumpet.com/8136.)

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has signaled readiness to support freedom of navigation in the strait, proposing contributions like minesweepers, maritime intelligence, reconnaissance aircraft and possibly escorts. Speaking after talks in Paris with French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Merz conditioned German intervention on a stable ceasefire, a strong international legal basis (ideally a UN Security Council resolution) and German parliamentary approval. He expressed desire for U.S. participation but envisioned an EU-led coalition for long-term security.

Such a coalition could be an initial step toward a new financial order. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman may back Washington temporarily if Trump projects strength. Ultimately, though, the Gulf states could realign as the petrodollar weakens and a different global system emerges. Events in the Strait of Hormuz are testing not only regional security but also the foundations of American financial power. The crisis highlights vulnerabilities in the dollar's dominance and raises the prospect of a radically altered world order. ■

The dollar will fall. Are you ready?

If you need help preparing, request *Solve Your Money Troubles!*



SOCIAL MEDIA DESTROYS

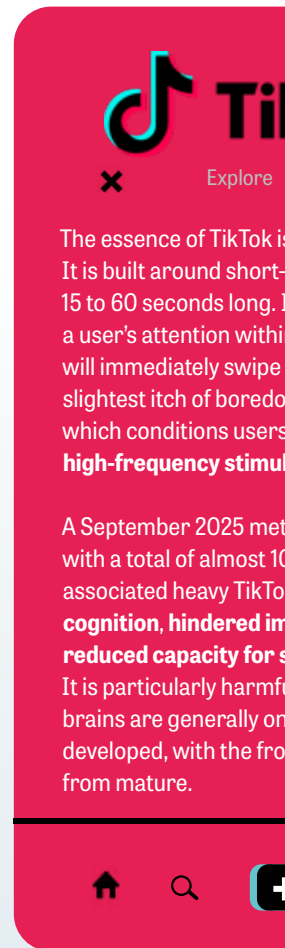
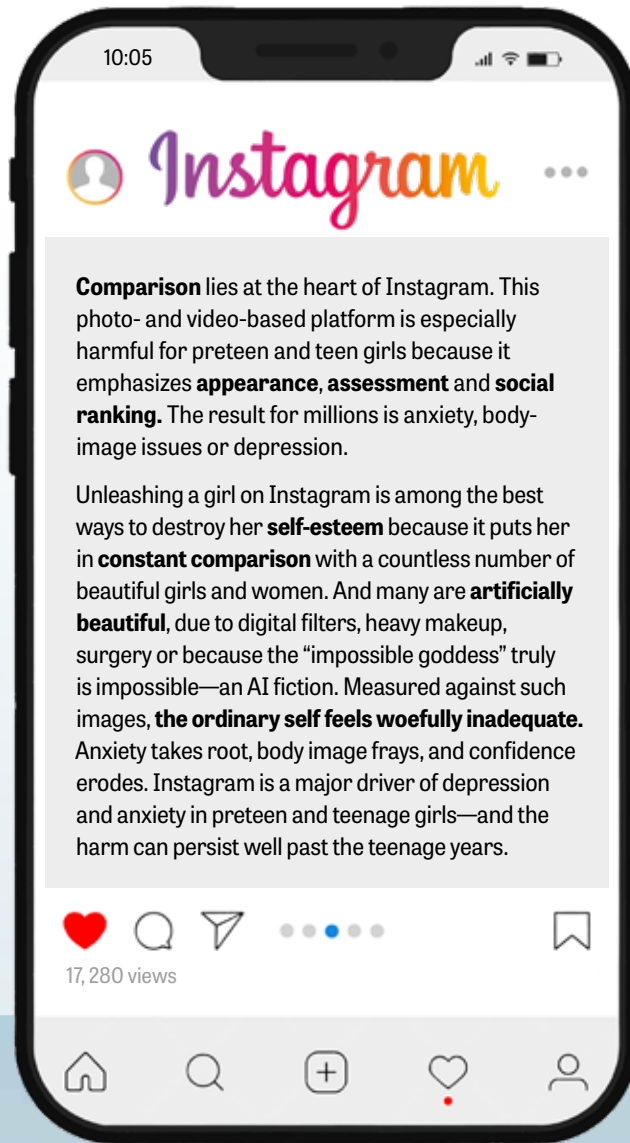
PLATFORMS OF PERSUASION

Around the turn of the millennium, a handful of companies thrust social media upon the world, buoyed by nearly universal techno-optimism. The prevalent view was that these platforms would make the world better connected, more productive and more fun, especially for young people.

Two decades on, a starkly different picture has emerged. We have seen a dramatic upturn in youth depression, attention impairment, anxiety, eating disorders, drug abuse, suicide and other crises.

In *The Anxious Generation*, Jonathan Haidt lays out the problem plainly: “By designing a fire hose of addictive content that entered through kids’ eyes and ears, and by displacing physical play and in-person socializing, these companies have rewired childhood and changed human development on an almost unimaginable scale.”

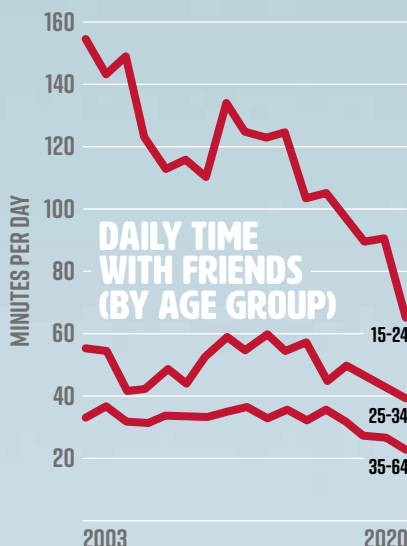
Parents, educators and policymakers are finally waking up to the dangers that social media pose to young people. Yet many remain unaware of the harms posed by specific platforms, and the specific ways they are harming young, still-developing minds.



FOUR CORE HARMS

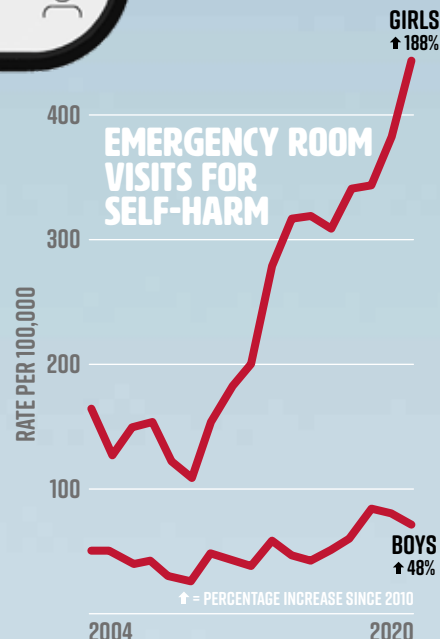
SOCIAL DEPRIVATION

Time spent face to face with friends for 15-to-24-year-olds has plummeted from around 150 minutes per day in 2003 to just 67 minutes in 2019. COVID accelerated the decline, but Gen Z was already socially distanced long before the outbreak.



ADDICTION

With social media companies shrewdly using nonstop rewards, novelty and emotional connection to keep young brains “engaged” as long as possible, these platforms have potent addictive power. In her book *Dopamine Nation*, addiction expert Anna Lembke likens it to a “modern-day hypodermic needle, delivering digital dopamine 24/7 for a wired generation.”



YOUNG MINDS

TikTok

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SNAPCHAT

The core design of Snapchat is **ephemeral messages** and **limited traceability**. The perception that content disappears after a recipient sees it makes this an ideal platform for **adults to meet and groom children**—and for people of all ages to engage in **coercion** and **predatory behavior**. Snapchat also has ineffective age verification methods, and pushes users to connect with friends of friends, resulting in many young users **engaging with unfamiliar adults**.

Snapchat has also come under scrutiny from law enforcement, lawmakers and litigants for its role in facilitating **illicit drug sales**—particularly fentanyl-laced pills that have been linked to a wave of **adolescent overdoses**. A lawsuit initiated by 60 American families suing the platform for its role in the overdose deaths of their teens states: “Snapchat has evolved into a **digital open-air drug market**.”

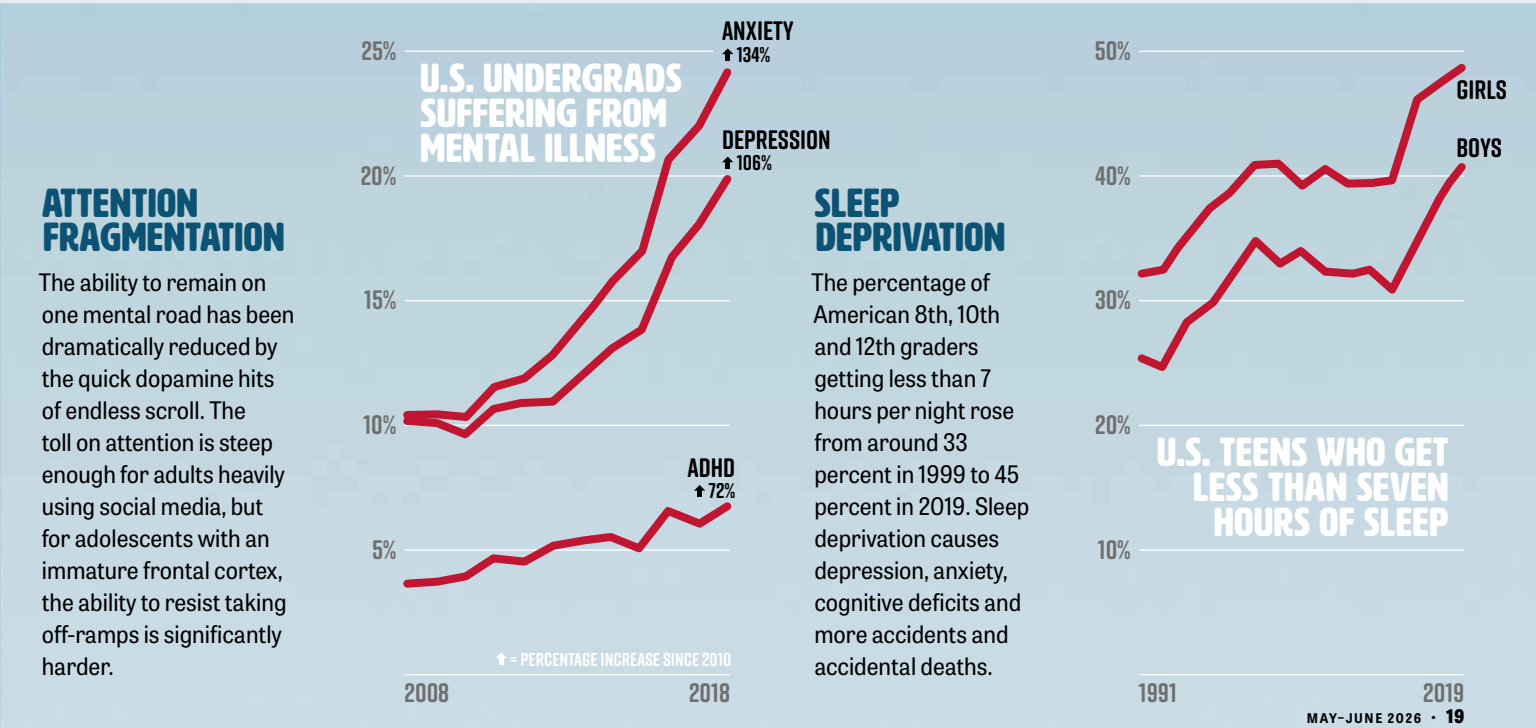
X

X tends to foster **political outrage**, **polarization** and **conflict** among its users. Algorithmic rankings push posts that generate the **strongest emotional reactions**, while reposts and quote-posts can propel contentious exchanges to large audiences.

Younger users may be especially vulnerable, as algorithms **trap them in echo chambers** that amplify the **emotionally charged material** they are more susceptible to.

At the same time, millions of bots run by operatives in nations like Russia and China make extremist ideas appear to be mainstream, often by posing as Americans. Among their goals is to make real Americans become **anti-democracy**, **anti-rule of law** and **isolationistic**.

A 2025 survey by Gallup and the Charles F. Kettering Foundation found that of heavy American social media users, only 57 percent say democracy is the best form of government, compared with 73 percent of light users.





THE QUIET GAINS OF LOGGING OFF

The addiction can be broken—and what follows is often striking.
BY JEREMIAH JACQUES

OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES, social media has come to be seen as the default setting of youth. For younger generations, platforms such as Discord, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and X are not merely tools but social infrastructure—platforms where trends are minted, relationships are maintained, worldviews coalesce, and identities are forged.

Yet a small but notable countertrend has emerged. More and more young people are experimenting with partial or total withdrawal from these platforms. Their reasons vary, but their reported benefits are remarkably consistent.

'The Clarity to Focus'

"The decision to leave wasn't easy," Denzel Damba wrote on the digital magazine platform *Medium*. "It felt like tearing myself away from a digital lifeline."

There were several false starts, but he finally cut the cord last year.

The change was profound. "I discovered that stepping away created a space I didn't realize I was missing: a space to think, to feel, to learn and, most importantly, to live," he wrote. "Without the endless feeds dictating what I should care about or how I should feel, I began to see the world—and myself—with fresh eyes. I found more room to read books, to engage in meaningful conversations and to reflect on life without the constant distraction of curated perfection or divisive rhetoric."

Damba is not looking back, he says, because quitting gave him "the clarity to

focus on what truly matters: the people around me, the ideas that challenge me, and the truths that ground me."

'I Don't Waste My Time'

"Man, the stories I could tell you of being a young woman with no social media. People get crazy, they get so mad at me!" 30-year-old nurse Morgan Richardson told the *Guardian*. They're mad because she refuses to conform to the dictates of the social-media age and shuns constant online visibility.

But she discovered that the gains far outweigh any criticism.

"The things I've been able to accomplish in a short amount of time with no social media is insane," Morgan said. "I'm in school right now and work full-time. I'm getting ready to apply to master's programs. And because I don't have social media, I don't waste my time. I'm not bombarded with people constantly taking away my time from me. I put it towards myself and my goals."

"I get better sleep. My attention span, I

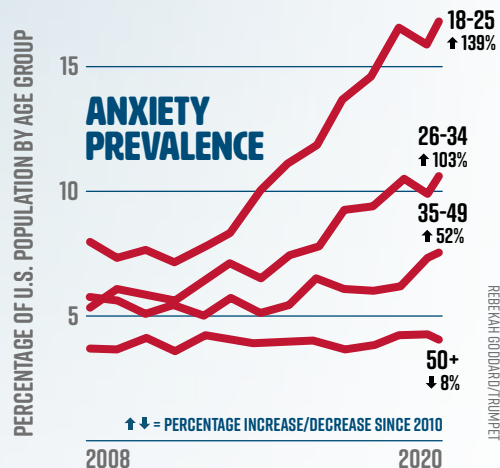
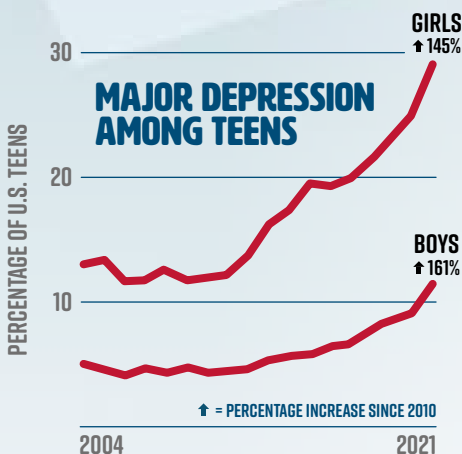
think, is great. I definitely see my other friends reaching for their phones, looking for their phones, looking on social media, even in nursing school. I would just study for hours and hours, and they wanted a break. I got a 4.0. I would just work hard, and I wasn't distracted."

'Extra Background Noise'

When Kristen Domonell was 29, she decided to go from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day with no social media. It was a big decision, since she had been a heavy user since age 15. She wanted to see "what life would be like without all the extra background noise and daily subtle comparisons."

Just hours after deleting the apps, she realized how habitual her usage had become. "I found my thumb instinctively swiping to find the Instagram app after I answered texts, an unconscious loop that my brain had developed."

But within days, she began feeling more like herself. "What slipped into social media time more often than I care to admit was now totally free for other things. I dove into podcasts I had been meaning to listen to. I read a real book



made out of paper. ... When I walked my dog, it was just she and I and whatever we noticed along the way.”

When the experiment ended, Kristen discovered something surprising: “On January 1, I took a deep breath and started to catch up, expecting to see a whole bunch of interesting stuff I had been missing out on. But I got bored before I even finished and realized that I already knew what I needed to know about the people who I care about. I’d rather text, call or e-mail friends than ‘connect’ with them on Snapchat, anyway.”

The Wider View

Testimony by scroll stoppers like Damba, Morgan and Kristen is confirmed by big-picture data.

In 2018, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found that capping social media use at 30 minutes per day significantly reduced anxiety, loneliness and depression, relative to unrestricted use.

In an experimental 2024 study published in *BMC Psychology*, participants who logged out of social media for just two weeks were compared with a control group that carried on as usual. The abstainers emerged with noticeably lower levels of anxiety, depression and loneliness, alongside gains in body image and overall well-being.

In 2020, researchers at Stanford University asked some 36,000 social media users to log off ahead of the 2020 United States presidential election. Some deactivated for six weeks, some for one week. Those who stepped away from their feeds for a longer period reported a noticeable boost in emotional well-being and mental clarity compared to those in the second group. For many, these gains translated into improvements—sometimes dramatic—in sleep and productivity.

Such findings should not surprise us. Those who log out of the noise and resist the algorithm are taking a step toward reclaiming their attention and their lives. Whether knowingly or not, they are moving in the direction of the Apostle Paul’s admonition in Ephesians 5:16: “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Each of us has the power to heed this wisdom that can change the course of our lives. The clock is ticking. ■



Why Does Everyone Have Allergies Now?

What is behind the 60-year breakdown in human health?

BY JORG MARDIAN

THE TREND IS UNMISTAKABLE: IN A single generation, allergies have exploded from a minor nuisance to an epidemic. In the United States, nearly 1 in 3 adults and more than 1 in 4 children now have a seasonal allergy, food allergy or eczema. Over 100 million Americans are affected by immunity problems.

Emergency treatment for food-induced anaphylaxis rose 377 percent between 2007 and 2016. More recent figures estimate that there are now 3.4 million food allergy-related emergency visits in America each year—roughly one every 10 seconds.

What makes this surge so striking is how quickly it emerged. Before 1960, asthma was rarely mentioned in pediatric textbooks; by 1990, it had reached epidemic levels. The *World Allergy Organization Journal* projects that by 2050, 4 billion people worldwide will suffer from allergic disease, concentrated almost entirely in developed and rapidly developing nations.

Even so, modern allergy care remains centered on symptom control through medications, combined with avoidance

of known triggers. We aren’t getting answers about *why* millions of people have developed allergies in the first place.

Why Are We All Allergic?

Many people say allergies are caused by genetics. This shifts the blame to a mystery shrouded in the mists of the past and away from real causes and real effects—and the people responsible.

If DNA were the cause, allergies would have shown up much more consistently throughout history, with gradual increases and decreases. They didn’t. The recent spike has happened over a 60-to-70-year period. Human DNA itself does not change; only gene expression does. Genes can basically be turned on or off within a lifetime due to environmental triggers.

Simple scientific logic keeps coming back to the basic question about this rapid spike in allergies that many are avoiding: *What is the cause?*

The evidence points to significant changes in our environment over the past 60 to 70 years—a cluster of modern environmental, dietary, infectious, chemical and medical stresses. Each carries its own risks, but combined, they are driving a massive surge in allergies.

ALLERGIES PAGE 32 ►

Should You Paint Jesus?



Is religious art acceptable to God? Here is what the Bible says.

BY MIHAİLO S. ZEKIC

WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER, ONE of my relatives had an image of Saint Michael, our family's patron saint, hanging on the wall with an incense burner. Growing up in an Eastern Orthodox household, I knew little about spirituality but recognized the icon as something sacred in our religion. In church services, congregants queued up to bow down to and kiss similar images. When I passed by that icon, I stopped and made a little bow.

By doing so, was I worshipping God?

The Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, along with many Lutheran sects, venerate images in their worship. Many in other denominations also pay special respect to sacred artwork.

Revelation 12:7-9 record Michael as the archangel who defeated the devil in battle. When I was a little older, I read in the same book of Revelation the Apostle John's record of his encounter with an angel: "And I fell at his feet to worship

him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not ..." (Revelation 19:10).

Worship here is translated from the Greek *proskyneō*. Unlike the modern English meaning of *worship*, *proskyneō* has no connotation of accepting someone or something as God. *Strong's Concordance* defines it as "to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand" as well as "to fawn or crouch to." *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* says it's a kiss of the hand "in token of reverence." These descriptions are similar to my memories of the practices of the Orthodox congregants in my youth.

Exodus 20:4-6 (New King James Version) record God giving the Second Commandment: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

Does God want us to honor "sacred art"?

Following is a list of commonly given explanations for the role of sacred art in mainstream Christianity, along with comparisons to what the Bible actually states, with additional commentary.



Old Testament examples provide precedents of art being used in worship.

EXODUS 31:1-5 DESCRIBE GOD CALLING the artisan Bezaleel "[t]o devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship." The ark of the covenant was made with two representations of angels on either side of the mercy seat (Exodus 25:18). The walls of Solomon's temple likewise were carved with images of angels (1 Kings 6:29).

The Bible describes paying homage to an image in reverence being an act of worship. The Second Commandment forbids us to make images for the purpose of worship, to "bow down thyself to them, [or] serve them."

One day, before Israel entered the Promised Land, God sent venomous snakes to punish the nation for sin. After the Israelites cried out to God for help, God commanded Moses to make a bronze snake and set it up on a pole. When an infected person looked at it (not bowed down to it or worshiped it), he was miraculously healed (Numbers 21:4-9).

Centuries later, ancient Judah venerated this bronze snake in remembrance of the healing and burned incense to it. King Hezekiah, whom God commends for his righteousness (2 Kings 18:3), destroyed the bronze snake in his purge of idolatry (verse 4). Hezekiah dismissed the statue as "merely a piece of bronze" (verse 4; Living Bible).

In other words, the moment people began shifting their focus from the God who healed them to the object itself, *God's righteousness demanded the destruction of what was "merely a piece of bronze."* Again, the commandment says that men must never make any aid, picture or physical object to worship God.

The depictions of angels in Solomon's temple were wall decorations. People did not bow down to them or serve them. In addition, many of the Bible's descriptions of angels are too fantastical for human imagination to accurately render (e.g. Ezekiel 1). The common portrayal of angels in art today looks nothing like what the Bible describes. Nevertheless, even accurate images made for the purpose of worship still break the Second Commandment.



Honoring sacred art doesn't worship the object; only what it represents.

EXODUS 32 RECALLS THE DAY WHEN THE high priest Aaron constructed a golden calf for the Israelites. He used the calf in worship during "a feast to the Lord" (verse 5)—a worship aid for the God who freed Israel from Egypt.

Herbert W. Armstrong cited this example in his book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* regarding sacred images: "Go into an Anglican church or a Roman Catholic church today and ask the priest or official whether the images of 'Christ' and of 'Mary' are idols They will indignantly say, 'No! We don't worship idols. We don't worship the images. We don't claim the images actually *are* Christ or Mary—only that they *represent*, or picture to us, what Christ or Mary looks like!'

"Well, that is precisely the way ALL PAGANS ALWAYS WORSHIPED IDOLS! But God's wrath waxed HOT at this (Exodus 32:7-10). God will NOT ACCEPT such worship!"

Throughout the Bible, God condemns men comparing Him to the works of men's hands in worship services (e.g. Isaiah 46:5-7; Jeremiah 10:1-6; Habakkuk 2:18-20). In Acts 17, the Apostle Paul, shaken by ancient Greece's idolatrous customs (verse 16), taught the Athenians: "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things" (verses 24-25; NKJV).

Furthermore, venerating depictions of personages is strictly banned by God's law. We have already looked at Revelation 19:10, which forbids angel worship. So does Colossians 2:18: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels" The word rendered "worshipping" in this case is the Greek *thrēskeia*, which Strong's defines as "ceremonial observance."

What about Mary? The official Catholic distinction is that men are to "worship" God (from the Latin *latria*) while they "honor" or "venerate" Mary (from the Latin *dulia*). This is a distinction promoted in the Latin Vulgate, a Catholic translation of the Bible into a foreign language hundreds of years after God inspired the original New Testament text in Greek.

Using the Latin definition moves the goalposts regarding what God forbids. And the Roman Catholic Church subtly recognizes there isn't much of a

distinction. In some places, the church openly states it worships Mary. For example, the Notre Dame Cathedral's museum in Paris has an entire display of relics dedicated to "Marian worship" and its place in Catholic theology.

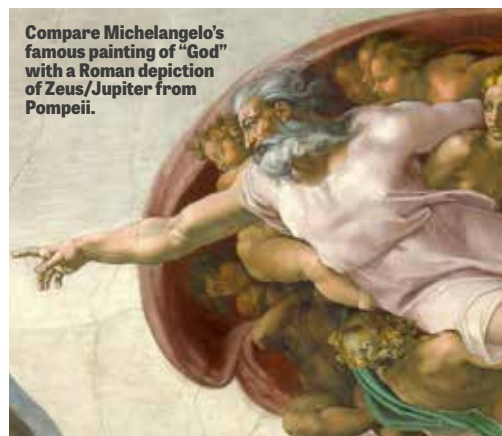
In Revelation 19:10, after the angel told John not to worship him, he said: "[W]orship God" When Satan tempted Christ to bow down before him, Christ answered: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

For those who claim that religious tradition supersedes "old interpretations," Christ refuted this argument to the religious authorities of His day: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:9).

The God of the Old Testament was invisible, but we know what Jesus Christ looked like.

IT IS AN EASILY PROVABLE FACT THAT *THE traditional image of Jesus is far from what He looked like.*

Nowhere does the Bible describe Christ as a long-haired, bearded figure in a toga. Paul wrote that "even nature itself teach[es] you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him" (1 Corinthians 11:14). Christ looked like an average Jew of His day. He was so "generic looking" that Judas had to point Him out to the authorities with a kiss (Matthew 26:48). (Incidentally, early Roman iconographers depict Christ as youthful, without a beard and with short hair. Images like those so common today only became mainstream hundreds



Compare Michelangelo's famous painting of "God" with a Roman depiction of Zeus/Jupiter from Pompeii.



of years after the last eyewitnesses of Christ's ministry were dead.)

Some depictions of "God" have blatant pagan influence. Have you ever noticed Michelangelo's depiction of God in the Sistine Chapel bears a remarkable resemblance to Greco-Roman depictions of Zeus?



The Christian world has unanimously accepted image veneration for 2,000 years.

EVEN IN THE LATE ROMAN WORLD, THE veneration of icons was never universally accepted. Starting with the Eastern Roman Emperor Leo III in A.D. 726, various emperors—sometimes with the church's backing—recognized icons as idolatry and banned them throughout the empire. This continued on and off until A.D. 843. This was centuries before the Schism of 1054 split the Catholic and Orthodox worlds.

This was also heavily debated in the early Protestant world. Andreas Karlstadt, a 16th-century German reformer and colleague of Martin Luther, wrote in "On the Removal of Idols" that having "images in churches and houses of God is wrong and contrary to the First [more specifically the Second] Commandment. ... Therefore it is good, necessary, praiseworthy and pious that we remove them and give Scripture its due and in so doing accept its judgment."

John Calvin, who founded the religious traditions of countries like Switzerland, Scotland, the Netherlands and much of early America, wrote that "a true image of God is not to be found in all the world; and hence that His glory is defiled, and His truth corrupted by the lie, whenever He is set before our eyes in a visible form."

These critics were correct on this point.



The Ten Commandments don't actually ban graven images.

THE CATHOLIC SUMMARY OF THE TEN Commandments jumps from "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" to "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." "Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image" is folded into the First Commandment.

The Catholic Church works around this to still get 10 commandments by splitting Exodus 20:17, separating "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife" from "Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbour's." That is preposterous. The Seventh Commandment already forbids adultery, and Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28 that lust and adultery are equivalent. In Exodus 20:17, coveting your neighbor's wife is listed between coveting his house and his manservant. It isn't listed as a commandment by itself.

What is the difference between the first two commandments? "The First Commandment forbids putting anything or anyone in the place of the true God," we write in our booklet *The Ten Commandments*. "... The Second Commandment shows us *how* to worship the true God. ... Images and pictures give us a false *concept* of the true God."

The Catholic Church skips the Second Commandment because it is breaking it and doesn't want people to know.



Why the fuss over images?

GOD SPECIFICALLY forbids creating "any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above." That obviously includes God Himself. God's temple

anciently was decorated with beautiful artwork. God is not against beauty. But the art itself holds no inherent sacred authority or power. Treating it as such points people away from God and toward the work of men's hands.

"True spirituality must be measured against the Bible," Richard Palmer wrote in our November-December 2025 *Trumpet*. "Don't just look to ancient tradition. An organization can be ancient without the teachings of Jesus Christ as its foundation. Every individual has the responsibility to prove what he or she believes."

There are few questions more fundamental to true religion than the nature of God. Yet it is this question that so many churches disagree on. It is also this question that sacred art tries to answer—and fails miserably. As *The Ten Commandments* states: "Anyone who needs a picture or statue to worship God simply does not know the true God."

God's law reveals God's mind—how He thinks. The more we think like God (Philippians 2:5), the more we see God for who He really is.

Worshiping an object supposedly representing God limits the concept of God to what man can imagine. But God is far greater than what man can imagine. Getting to know the true God by obeying His commands is the *real* way to "[see] him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). God commands that we worship Him, as Christ said, "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). It is impossible to worship either in spirit or in truth when you break God's command against worshiping Him with images, which are false and actually create obstacles in our relationship with Him. Obey that command and develop a true, intimate, spirit-level relationship with the one true God!

The Ten Commandments plainly explained

These foundational laws of God are key to leading a moral and happy life. For a plain and detailed explanation of these profound commands, request your free copy of *The Ten Commandments*.



Don't Deceive Yourself!

God gives us several warnings about this danger. Consider these honestly so you won't make this common mistake! **BY GERALD FLURRY**

“**T**he most difficult thing for any human seems to be to admit being wrong—to confess error of belief and conviction,” wrote Herbert W. Armstrong. Scientists studying the brain have concluded that people respond to correction and criticism in a similar way to physical pain.

But why should it be so hard for us to accept correction?

In Hebrews 12, the Apostle Paul writes that God is a Father who corrects His children. “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you *as unto children*, MY SON, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVETH HE CHASTENETH, AND SCOURGETH EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVETH” (verses 5-6).

Correction is a gift from God. If we receive correction, it means God is preparing us for sonship in His Family!

The Father loves His sons deeply. He does correct us, even intensely when we need it, because He loves us. We all have a lot of growing to do to achieve our potential and fulfill our calling. We *ALL must* receive correction. His correction is aimed at helping us see where we are off track so we can grow in righteousness.

Considering how sinful mankind is, doesn't it make sense that God would need to correct us at times?

“But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (verse 8). Are *you* receiving correction from God? If we are not, we are not even considered His children!

What is *your* natural response to correction?

Most people immediately get defensive. We begin to justify ourselves. We think the critic doesn't have the whole story. We reason why what we did was not that bad or was actually correct. We defend our actions. We answer back.

The Bible repeatedly warns against that response.

God tells us *we need* correction and reproof. We *MUST* learn to listen and heed. In fact, we should *WANT* correction.



God gives us a lot of reproof and correction in His Word, but we have to take it to receive its benefits. “ALL SCRIPTURE is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for REPROOF, for CORRECTION, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The question is, will you take that personally and put it to use in your life? It is not easy. Very few people are willing.

Do you really want to know what God thinks of you? Do you want His

evaluation of your spiritual state? Do you want the TRUTH?

We should always be actively seeking God's view. Don't make excuses.

We are ALL prone to self-justification. We all need to examine ourselves for it and be vigilant against it. We all need to ask God to help us overcome it. Accepting correction from God is the only way we stand a chance of avoiding self-deceit.

The Bible warns us repeatedly against deceiving ourselves. Our human nature wants to believe we are doing just fine spiritually. Our deceitful heart produces self-justification, pride and spiritual blindness. We fool ourselves and don't even realize it.

Our Deceitful Heart

Think carefully on this verse: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

Most people do not believe what God says here. They think the human heart is basically good. They could not be more wrong! The truth is, THERE IS *NOTHING* MORE DECEITFUL THAN A HUMAN HEART!

That is why people think they are good. We like to think of ourselves as good even when we are doing things we *know* are wrong! We justify and flatter ourselves; we explain away our sins; we downplay our guilt.

THE PHRASE “DESPERATELY WICKED” SHOULD READ “DANGEROUSLY SICK,” “INCURABLY SICK” OR “SICK UNTO DEATH.” CAN YOU SEE THIS IN YOUR OWN HEART? We cannot trust our thinking.

When will we learn how deceitful our own minds are? Understanding this profound verse is more important than any education in this world.

Deceitful and sick hearts should not be trusted. Yet astoundingly, the human heart is the foundation of this world's education and government. Our educators and leaders believe man is fundamentally good and trustworthy. They trust in evil human reasoning.

Look at the sickness in this world, and you see evidence everywhere of men trusting in sick human minds. Terrifying problems are mounting all around us—and STILL men trust in their own minds. It seems *nothing* can convince them we are off track. Deceitful, desperately wicked human hearts are leading this world to the point where, if Christ didn't intervene, we would annihilate ourselves! (Matthew 24:21-22).

The number one problem of humanity today is that people don't see their own terminal sickness. THAT IS PROFOUND SELF-DECEIT.

This is what happens when people will not listen to God!

So God is *forcing* mankind to face the truth. Soon this world will be engulfed in a nuclear holocaust created by sick human minds. Only the worst time of suffering in history will get them to acknowledge the real problem! They will no longer be able to deny the fruits of their human reasoning. Then God can begin to teach them.

If you really understand the fundamental truth of Jeremiah 17:9, you will *cry out to God every day* to save you! You won't let a day pass without intensely praying and studying for the help to overcome your fatally sick heart!

God ends verse 9 with the question, "Who can know it?" Only God knows the human heart. Only God can explain the mind and emotions of man. Our greatest need is to let God reveal our own sickness and heal it.

Until we learn this lesson, we are living under a curse (verse 5). We will remain deceived as long as we continue to look to men—and that includes trusting in *our own reasoning*.

"I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (verse 10). Look at the terrible, devastating fruits of *our* ways and *our* doings! Following our hearts is causing all the world's problems and leading to nuclear war!

There is no hope in man. There is endless hope in God.

Vanity of Vanities

Human nature is naturally vain. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2; 12:8). It is easy to get an inflated view of ourselves. We are all prone to self-righteousness, which includes thinking too highly of our works, relying on *our own* deeds, *our own* righteousness.

That is a powerful form of self-deceit. "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, HE DECEIVETH HIMSELF" (Galatians 6:3). Pride, vanity, self-righteousness, overestimation of oneself—all are self-deception that we need to examine ourselves for and rid ourselves of.

We need God to show us our errors and to cleanse us from our hidden faults and those sins we can't even recognize.

Such self-deceit and self-righteousness PUSH GOD RIGHT OUT OF THE PICTURE. THEY BLIND US TO GOD. WE CAN'T EVEN SEE HIM! Our thoughts become too filled with SELF and leave too little room for God. WE BREAK THE FIRST COMMANDMENT BY PLACING SELF AHEAD OF GOD! God passionately hates that because He is a jealous God who loves us.

Look at the example of Job. He was quite a righteous man. But when he did good deeds, he took the credit. He liked to be seen as good by other people (e.g. Job 29:14). He gave his charity to show what a terrific guy he was—rather than what a terrific God we serve! His motive was to exalt himself, not God (Job 32:1-2).

God helped Job overcome his problem by putting him through some excruciating trials. That brought Job's sins right to the surface: self-justification, self-exaltation, self-righteousness. God then gave Job an awe-inspiring glimpse into His own immense and fearsome power, the vast scale of His creation, His command of the elements, His provision for all creatures, His majesty and rulership (Job 38-41).

Once Job realized his own insignificance next to God's all-encompassing greatness, HE COULD SEE GOD! "I have

heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6).

The more clearly we see God—in all His power, judgment, love, mercy and excellence—the less impressed with ourselves we will be. And the more open we will be to listening to God and accepting His correction.

See Your Sin

Romans 3:23 says that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." The sharper your picture of God in all His glory, the better you will see HOW FAR SHORT of the glory of God you fall!

Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). God's law is holy, just and good (Romans 7:12). It is "perfect, convert-

ing the soul," more desirable than fine gold, sweeter than honey (Psalm 19:7, 10). God gave us His commandments, statutes and judgments to help us see where we are not thinking like Him, where we need to change. "Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (verse 11).

Do you really see the sin in your life? "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults" (verse 12). Yes, because of our deceitful heart, it is very difficult to truly see our sins. In fact, IT TAKES A MIRACLE FROM GOD. We need God to show us our errors and to cleanse us from our hidden faults and those sins we can't even recognize. God must open our eyes, because "[e]very way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts" (Proverbs 21:2).

Naturally we convince ourselves that our faults aren't that serious. This is pure self-deception. "If we say that we have no sin, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). There it is again! Don't fall into the trap of such blindness. God commands us to continually repent in prayer for our sins so He can cleanse us (verse 9).

"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have

dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression” (Psalm 19:13). Yes, when we break God’s law, sin has *dominion* over us—it **RULES** us! Jesus Christ said, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). Sin enslaves us in bondage (Romans 6:16; 2 Peter 2:19). Only God can free us from that bondage.

God’s law is a “perfect law of liberty” that leads to *freedom*! (James 1:25). Most religions are in bondage because they reject God’s law and call it freedom! Men routinely think bondage is freedom—intellectually and spiritually.

Only the truth will set us free (John 8:32). And God’s Word is truth (John 17:17).

One of the easiest ways to deceive ourselves is simply to *hear* God’s Word and fail to apply it. “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, **DECEIVING YOUR OWN SELVES**” (James 1:22). You can read about this in Chapter 2 of my booklet *How to Be an Overcomer*, “Are You Deceiving Yourself?”

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but **DECEIVETH HIS OWN HEART**, this man’s religion is vain” (verse 26). A lot of religion is worthless because people aren’t controlling their tongues or their lives. They are deceiving their own hearts.

We may fool ourselves for a while, but in the end, the truth will come out. God will judge us according to our works. All pretense and hypocrisy will be exposed. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Corinthians 3:13). How much better for us to learn *now* where we are off track than to wait until our sins are revealed by fire!

We must do all we can to avoid the common, deadly sin of deceiving ourselves. “**LET NO MAN DECEIVE HIMSELF**. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. ... The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. ...” (verses 18-21).

How different our human perspective is from God’s! And how crucial it is that we humble ourselves and ask God to

show us where we are deceiving ourselves and to help us see reality!

A Broken Spirit

If we have godly wisdom, James 3:17 says we are “easy to be intreated.” Think of King David. He committed adultery, caused a man’s murder, and lied about it! Major sins. Yet when the Prophet Nathan confronted him, what were his first words? “**I HAVE SINNED AGAINST THE LORD**” (see 2 Samuel 12:7-13). He didn’t fight God. He accepted the correction and repented immediately.

What a beautiful attitude! Nathan responded, “The **LORD** also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die” (verse 13). David still faced some consequences, but his repentance saved his life.

David gives us the most powerful example of repentance in the Bible. Read Psalm 51, his psalm of repentance. He had “a broken and a contrite heart” (verse 17). We must be teachable and have a broken and contrite spirit for God to be able to lead us and use us. God wants to guide you as His son or daughter, but He cannot do it if you lack a broken spirit. You must allow God to convict you of your sins and teach you. This attitude was fundamental to David’s repentance, and it is a big reason why God considered him “a man after mine own heart” (Acts 13:22).

David committed some terrible sins. That didn’t prevent God from loving him! But He did correct David severely.

Hebrews 4:12 says that “the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” God’s Word reveals our true thoughts and intents. It exposes what is going on in our mind. It helps us face the truth about our own heart and to see how we are ruled by human nature. It reveals where we are evil so we can change!

That is uncomfortable—but it is so necessary and beautiful. It leads to life!

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11). When we accept correction, it produces wonderful fruit in our life.

Accept Correction

Are you willing to be corrected?

“The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding” (Proverbs 15:31-32; see also Proverbs 13:18; 10:17). Proverbs 12:1 says if we refuse reproof, we are **STUPID**.

How can Christ save us if we do not accept His correction? How can you start as a terrible, evil, ugly human being and expect to grow in character without receiving correction?

What happens if God shows us where we are wrong, and we don’t accept it? That is a deadly serious problem!

Proverbs 15:10 says, “Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof **SHALL DIE**.” In the end, **YOUR ETERNAL LIFE DEPENDS ON LOVING AND ACCEPTING GOD’S REPROOF!**

“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1). That is talking about **ETERNAL DEATH**. Nothing is more serious!

Yet so many people are making this mistake. When they are in the nuclear holocaust, they will no longer play games of self-deceit! **GOD IS GOING TO ALLOW THE GREAT TRIBULATION TO COME UPON THIS WORLD IN ORDER TO CRUSH ALL HOPE MAN HAS IN HIMSELF AND TURN HIM TO HOPE IN GOD.**

You need to learn this lesson today—*before* that calamity.

Heed God’s warnings. Realize that self-deception is our natural inclination due to our deceitful heart, our pride and our failure to apply God’s truth. Avoid that snare. Ask God to search your heart (Psalm 139:23-24). Accept the loving rebuke and correction of your heavenly Father. Confess your sins honestly. And act on God’s Word. ■

God wants to work WITH YOU.

God wants a relationship with you, but sin will separate you from Him. Learn how to fight through sin in Gerald Flurry’s free booklet *How to Be an Overcomer*.





Handing Syria to Al Qaeda

Mission accomplished in Syria? The threats are just getting started.

BY MIHAILO S. ZEKIC

UNTIL RECENTLY, AHMED al-Sharaa had a \$10 million bounty on his head from the United States government.

Sharaa enlisted with the terror group al Qaeda around 2003, joining the War on Terror on the side of the terrorists who made New York City burn on 9/11. He pioneered al Qaeda's entry into Syria, running an affiliate that eventually split to form its own entity, known today as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). He conquered territory from secular Syrian dictator Bashar Assad and ruled it as a strict Islamist state. He has never renounced his links to the world's most notorious terror groups. He still commands armies of thousands of jihadists who journeyed from all over the world to be guided by his Islamist vision.

This same man, after ousting Assad in late 2024, now rules Syria. And U.S. President Donald Trump, who sits in the same White House from which President George W. Bush announced the war on al Qaeda, said in May 2025 that he wants to give Sharaa's new Syria "a chance at greatness."

Throughout 2025, the U.S. progressively removed economic sanctions on Syria, HTS and Sharaa himself. It

accepted Sharaa's Syria as a member of the international coalition against the Islamic State. It transferred control of prisons holding Islamic State members to the Syrian government.

Last November, Sharaa became the first Syrian head of state ever hosted at the White House. It was a surreal spectacle seeing the leader of an al Qaeda offshoot being greeted by supporters shouting "Allahu Akbar!" at the gate of the president's mansion. At a press conference, President Trump praised Sharaa as being a "strong leader" and said, "We'd do everything we can to make Syria successful." The president shrugged off a question regarding Sharaa's connection with terror groups, stating: "We've all had rough pasts."

President Trump trusts Sharaa so much he is willing to hand over all U.S. military assets. Syria's Foreign Ministry confirmed April 16 that all former U.S. military bases are under its control. U.S. Central Command confirmed the next day this is "part of a deliberate and conditions-based transition." America no longer has a meaningful military presence in Syria.

Sharaa's regime is still relatively new. He has only recently finished

consolidating his hold on power. But the actions he and his men have already taken give clues about where he intends to take Syria. It doesn't look good.

Persecuting Minorities

Sharaa and HTS obtained power in December 2024. Sharaa said he would lead a secular, democratic republic. He returned Syria's flag to its pre-Assad design. He emptied Assad's dungeons.

Then he began filling them with his own prisoners.

In March 2025, Assad loyalists began attacking HTS positions. Sharaa-aligned factions accused elements within the Alawite community—the minority from which Assad hails—of supporting the insurgency. March 6 and 7 saw clashes where Sharaa's Sunni Muslim forces targeted Alawite civilians. Later inves-

tigations suggest that more than 1,400 civilians, mostly Alawites, were killed over several days. Even more dramatic massacres were committed in July by Islamists affiliated with Sharaa against another minority, the Druze. Ethnic clashes left an estimated 1,700 people dead according to the United Nations, the vast majority being Druze.

The Damascus government has tried to distance itself from much of the bloodshed, claiming this was the result of rogue actors and that it would investigate. Whether or not Sharaa personally ordered or approved the violence, it happened under his watch. His men didn't join a subsidiary of al Qaeda without expecting to go after "infidels."

This past January, the next group to be targeted was the Kurds. Kurds are non-Arabs who speak a different language and have been pushing for their own country in one form or another for over a hundred years. During Syria's civil war, Kurdish militias controlled their own territory independently of Damascus. After Assad fell, these militias were the biggest counterbalance to Sharaa's rule.

After a lightning offensive capturing Kurdish positions, the Syrian government pressured the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the main Kurdish militia, to sign an agreement that was essentially a surrender, where the militia agreed to



merge with the government and give up the dream of Kurdish autonomy. This time, the government was less heavy-handed. The Kurdish militias were to be integrated into the main military rather than disbanded, and the Kurds received cultural rights like protection of their language. But it was still the regime consolidating power against its opponents.

America's sponsorship of Syria's Kurds goes back over a decade. Syria wouldn't have launched its January offensive if it thought America would intervene to protect the Kurds; America didn't. U.S. Special Envoy to Syria Tom Barrack posted on social media after the surrender: "The U.S. has no interest in [a] long-term military presence; it prioritizes defeating [Islamic State] remnants, supporting reconciliation, and advancing national unity without endorsing separatism or federalism." He elaborated: "[T]he original purpose of the SDF as the primary anti-[Islamic State] force has largely expired."

In other words, *You're on your own. We're siding with Sharaa now.*

Harboring Terror Groups

During the civil war, HTS was not a uniquely Syrian force. Sunni extremists traveled from all over the world to spread jihad in Syria under Sharaa's leadership. Many of these terrorists came from places as remote as Xinjiang, China. Such connections are one of the reasons China is a major international adversary of HTS; HTS collaborated with Chinese jihadist groups like the Turkistan Islamic Party fighting Assad. Starting in June 2025, the regime began integrating these foreign fighters into Syria's military despite international opposition.

In November, Israeli public broadcaster KAN claimed Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Gaza-based terror group that helped Hamas invade Israel and massacre civilians on Oct. 7, 2023, had been consolidating forces and developing military capabilities near Damascus. The group reportedly favored Syria for this purpose because of U.S. pressure on Israel not to strike the country. KAN claimed Sharaa was not only aware of this militarization but had even appointed a presidential envoy to facilitate communication between Syria and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

At the very least, this all suggests Syria under Sharaa is becoming a haven for terrorists. Sharaa either feels powerless to stop them or actively supports them. Neither is good for the West.

Despite all this, the Trump administration has gone out of its way to reintegrate Syria into the international community. The U.S. is becoming one of Syria's biggest backers, if not the biggest.

Today, it's clear Sharaa's victory was no victory for freedom in the Middle East. Syria has replaced one tyrant with another. Siding with a former enemy with a history like Sharaa is astonishing. And Bible prophecy reveals it is *extremely dangerous*.

Blotting Out America

The relevant passage, in Psalm 83, describes several Middle Eastern peoples who combine forces "that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (verse 4). "Israel" in prophecy includes the modern State of Israel and also the United States. (Request your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, by Herbert W. Armstrong.)

This alliance is composed of "[t]he tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them ..." (verses 6-8).

Trumpet editor in chief Gerald Flurry has identified this as a prophecy for our time. "The key to unlocking this prophecy is to know the *modern descendants* of these peoples," he wrote in his 2021 article "[Deadly Flaw in Mideast Peace Deals](#)" ([theTrumpet.com/23199](#)). "And God in this end time has supplied this key. Based on biblical and historical research and with God's inspiration, Herbert W. Armstrong gave a good general idea of which nations these peoples correspond to today, equating the

Ishmaelites with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, the Hagarenes with Syria, the Philistines with the Palestinians, Gebal and Tyre with Lebanon, Moab and Ammon with Jordan, and Edom and Amalek with Turkey. ... Notice too that *Assur*, or *Assyria*, is on this list. This refers to modern-day Germany."

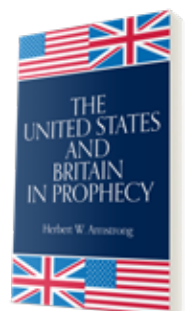
Other prophecies show Germany and its allies will fight against Iran and its radical Islamist allies. (Mr. Flurry's free booklet *The King of the South* explains in more detail.) Syria was, for years, one of Iran's most important proxies. That ended with the fall of the Assad regime. But the new Syria, while less beholden to Iran, is also overtly anti-American. *Through naivety or supposed pragmatism, President Trump is helping build this new al Qaeda-led Syria.* He is giving "a chance of greatness" to jihadists connected to al Qaeda.

"We all want peace," Mr. Flurry wrote. "But sadly, these recent peace pacts have a deadly flaw. ... While it seems that these nations are moving away from radicalism and violence, we must look beneath the surface. After all, this prophecy reveals that they will take 'crafty counsel'—subtle and shrewd dealing. This sure prophecy shows that these nations will ally to try to *blot out the name of Israel forever!* That is intense hatred!" (ibid).

Mr. Flurry wrote those words regarding the "Abraham Accords" that President Trump brokered between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain during his first term. The U.A.E. and Bahrain are stable, prosperous Gulf states not ruled by jihadists. If Mr. Flurry's words apply to the Gulf Arabs, they definitely apply to a country like Syria, which has a long history of warring against America and Israel and is now ruled by the successors of the terrorists of 9/11. America sponsors the new Syria to its own peril. ■

Do you know who the Israel of the Bible is today?

Knowing the identity of Israel is the key that unlocks Bible prophecy and your understanding of world events. Prophecy has much to say about what is happening in the world, but you can only understand it if you first know Israel's modern-day identity. To discover it, request a free copy of Herbert W. Armstrong's book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.



It is important to study the Crusades because they reveal the Roman Catholic Church's insatiable lust for Jerusalem and the barbaric measures it will take to control this city. And the Bible reveals that the Catholic Church will initiate one final crusade over Jerusalem before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ!

Seven Heads

The Vatican has taken a giant step backward into a darker age. If we just look at their history, we know what this means. But we must look at Bible prophecy to truly understand where it is heading and, most of all, to see God's light.

Revelation 17 talks about the resurrections of the Holy Roman Empire, which would be better termed the "unholy" Roman Empire.

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of THE GREAT WHORE THAT SITTETH UPON MANY WATERS: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Revelation 17:1-2).

These verses refer to the *same* Satan-inspired empire described in Revelation 13 (verses 1-10). However, the beast in Revelation 17 pictures only the *last seven resurrections* of that empire. It adds the knowledge that *a woman* rides or guides the last seven heads of the beast. This woman, named "Mystery, Babylon the Great," is drunk with the blood of the saints.

If we just study the persecution of God's Church through the centuries, we can see what is coming.

God's Church in the Dark Ages

Around A.D. 365, the Catholic Council of Laodicea wrote in a famous canon: "Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather, honoring the Lord's Day [referring to Sunday]. ... But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ."

Notice they called them *Judaizers*. They persecuted these Christians for keeping God's observances such as the Passover and the Sabbath. But these are

not *Jewish* days—they are *GOD's* days, ordained BY GOD! (Request a free copy of *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*)

THESE CHRISTIANS WERE KILLED BECAUSE THEY KEPT THE SABBATH! You can see how this hatred for supposedly "heretical" Christians and for the Jews go hand in hand. If you see the Catholic Church go after the Jews, *know* that next, THEY WILL GO AFTER TRUE CHRISTIANS AND ANYONE WHO WON'T SUBMIT TO THE POPE!

In *Mystery of the Ages*, the late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote, "This was a virtual sentence to torture and/or death. The false church did not *herself* put true believers to death, but *caused them* to be put to death (Revelation 13:15)." And in *Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?* he wrote, "History shows that the civil government martyred millions who were declared 'anathema from Christ' or 'heretics.'"

Mr. Armstrong noted that true Christians at the time "left few records. Occasionally they appear as a footnote of history, rejected as heretics, ridiculed, and hounded by their enemies" (*Mystery of the Ages*).

Yet, Christ's words in Revelation 2:9-10 apply to them: "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. ... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revised Authorized Version).

Revelation 2 and 3, a prophecy of the seven successive eras of God's true Church, shows that the Church during these years was the church of Smyrna followed by the church of Pergamos. Mr. Armstrong explained: "These had been called to carry the truth through one of history's most difficult periods—the Dark Ages. ... [T]hey were never far from threat of persecution and martyrdom" (ibid).

During these *Dark Ages*, God's people were "NEVER FAR FROM THREAT OF PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM"! These true Christians had to stand their

ground all the way to death! But they accepted death rather than give in to these tortures and renounce the truth.

This is nothing new for God's Church. All the original apostles were killed, except John. Many in this end time will face the same. But God promises physical protection to most of those who repent before the great tribulation (Revelation 12:14). Sadly, Bible prophecy reveals there will be few who heed this message today.

In 1161, during the Thyatira era, a man named Peter Waldo began publicly preaching the truth of God. But it wasn't long before the Catholic Church started persecuting him and his followers.

In 1197, it was commanded that the Waldensians, named after Waldo, be burned at the stake. The Waldensians fled to Castile. But many were mercilessly tracked down and slaughtered.

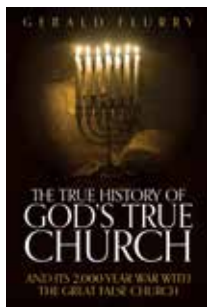
In 1208, Pope Innocent III declared the Albigensian Crusade—an attack against God's people and the civil rulers who protected them.

"When the war began in 1209, the Provençal civilization was the most brilliant in Europe. When it was over, after 20 bitter years, that civilization had been completely destroyed," the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course* states. "South France had become a backward region completely subject to Paris and Rome.

"The infamous Inquisition was then set up to complete the job by eliminating religious objections. Papal bull decreed severe punishment against any person suspected of even sympathizing with 'heretics.' Confiscations, imprisonments, burnings and every imaginable form of persecution continued for more than a hundred years."

This kind of persecution went on for *centuries*!

"By the beginning of the 13th century, the Albigenses had become a threat to THE VERY EXISTENCE of the [Roman Catholic] Church in southern France. During the next 10 years, the [Catholic]



Billions don't know, but you can.

Which church is the one Jesus Christ founded and leads today? Read the fascinating true story in your free copy of *The True History of God's True Church*.

army led by Simon de Montfort forced the surrender of the most important heretical strongholds, employing in the process methods that were cruel even by medieval standards” (*Encyclopedia Dictionary of Religion*).

THIS WAS BEFORE THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION AND THE INFAMOUS SPANISH INQUISITION. In fact, it was Satan’s attempt to blot out *true* religion! Imagine being tortured with instruments “cruel even by medieval standards” until you renounce your faith—or die holding fast to it!

You can travel around Europe and see the Habsburg castles even today. Many of them have dungeons below them. Tour guides will tell you that the Habsburgs would have great feasts upstairs, listening to the finest classical music, while people were being tortured to death below. Similarly, Hitler could listen to beautiful opera while his minions were committing unspeakable atrocities.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, members of the true Church found relative safety in England, where the Sardis era began before it transitioned to the United States. The U.S. ever since provided far greater religious freedom than Europe ever had. But prophecy shows these days are nearly over.

How Many Victims?

Many historians have tried to estimate the number of people killed by Roman Catholics over the centuries. Some calculations put the figure at 50 million! In his 1871 book *The History of Romanism*,

author John Dowling wrote, “From the birth of popery in 606 to the present time, it is estimated by careful and credible historians, that more than 50 millions of the human family have been slaughtered for the crime of heresy by popish persecutors, an average of more than 40,000 religious murders for every year of the existence of popery.” *Halley’s Bible Handbook* agrees: “Historians estimate that, in the Middle Ages and Early Reformation Era, more than 50 million martyrs perished.” (sidebar, below)

The late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote about this time in his booklet *Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?* Most people are ignorant of this history and will pay for their ignorance by becoming victims of that empire!

As recently as World War II, the pope and Hitler worked closely together. The title of John Cornwell’s book is revealing in itself, referring to Pope Pius XII as *Hitler’s Pope*. God says “you shall know them by their fruits.” The Vatican was the heavyweight in helping Nazi leaders escape after World War II in the infamous ratlines. Almost all of the worst Nazi criminals escaped with the Vatican’s help. This is clearly documented in books like *The Unholy Trinity*, by Mark Aarons and John Loftus (a Catholic).

This is deadly dangerous for every human being, especially those in the sights of this organization: God’s people and the descendants of Israel, especially Britain, the United States and the Jewish state in the Middle East.

Could the Catholic Church really be reverting back into such a dark age? It is doing so right now! It is far more now than it was when Melanie Phillips wrote her article. We have to warn you about this because it will affect every one of us.

THE DARKEST AGE EVER IS YET TO COME! It will eclipse all those dark ages of the past.

Enter Germany

You will have noticed that Revelation 17 also talks about a BEAST, which is symbolic for an empire. Throughout history, the Roman Catholic Church used the state to force its will.

The Catholic Church’s power comes from the European governments that back it, primarily Germany. Shrewd analysts understand that Germany is backing the Vatican and the Catholic Church, as it has done so often in the past.

Bible prophecy reveals that the Catholic Church will use Germany’s rising military power to attack Israel. It will betray the trust of the Jewish people in a horrendous way.

Daniel 11:40-41 show that Assyria, modern-day Germany, will lead Europe to the “glorious land”—Jerusalem—and will “enter into” it. Nothing indicates that it will have to *fight* its way in; it will be INVITED, apparently to protect the Jewish state. By this point, it will have already defeated the king of the south, Iran.

But just as it did in the Crusades of old, it will promise liberty—but bring bloodshed!

50 MILLION? REALLY?

SOME HISTORIANS SAY THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS killed some 50 million people or more over the centuries. Adding all the religious wars such as the Thirty Years’ War, the Crusades, the various inquisitions and earlier mass slaughters, one can easily approach and far exceed this number. David A. Plaisted, a computer scientist who references various historic works, proved this in “Estimates of the Number Killed by the Papacy in the Middle Ages and Later.”

However, many have disparaged and discredited these numbers. Chief among them, unsurprisingly, is the Catholic Church. Plaisted wrote: “In general, in reconstructing the computation, it is helpful to remember that these death tolls tend to decrease with time due to the influence of the Catholic Church, so that death tolls that are considered high today were probably used in the computation. For example, Lockman ... writes that during the Huguenot wars in France, even when

many Protestants were being forcibly converted to Catholicism the Romish clergy were claiming that these conversions were entirely voluntary. Thus the Catholic version of history will tend to reduce the magnitude of past persecutions.” The Catholics have largely prevailed in blotting out this history.

But let’s judge by fruits. Today, almost the entire Christian world keeps Sunday rather than Saturday, as Christ and the apostles did. Almost all keep Easter, instead of the Passover that Christ kept. Almost all keep Christmas, although it is not commanded in the Bible and no such celebration is recorded by the disciples. Virtually all believe in the trinity—a doctrine that appeared over a century after most of the New Testament had been written—while the Bible talks about Father and Son. The list goes on and on. Why do billions of people believe in these doctrines? The answer is that the truth has been attacked—violently.

JOSUÉ MICHELS

Prophecy shows that one man will be leading the charge: “And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people” (Daniel 8:23-24). “Not by his own power” indicates that he will be possessed by an evil spirit!

This man is going to lead that powerful empire and cause the worst suffering the world has ever seen! It will bring about the darkest age ever known in the world!

We are seeing this seventh head of the Holy Roman Empire rise. All these prophecies we so often write about are soon to come to pass!

Wait for the Light

In our present evil world, you see a lot of terrible darkness. Bible prophecy shows that it is going to get much darker. But remember, it is darkest just before dawn! And prophecy shows that beyond the darkness will come a beautiful age of light!

Daniel 12:1 talks about “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.” This is the darkest moment of the dark age we are living in.

But just after that, a time comes when “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (verse 3).

The return of Jesus Christ will end our dark age (Matthew 24:30). At that time, we who publicize this message to the world for God today will shine like stars forever and ever! Never again will there be a dark age!

If we support God’s work and deliver His message before Christ’s return, we will receive the ultimate reward! Shortly afterward, all other humans will have an opportunity to shine brightly too.

We are about to witness the end of the dark ages and the dawn of a new age! In the darkest moment of human history, Jesus Christ will return and bring unprecedented light. From then on, the world will grow brighter and brighter and BRIGHTER for all eternity! (Revelation 22:5). ■

► ALLERGIES FROM PAGE 21

The first major immunity-shaping event of life happens during birth. One of the miracles of natural birth is the establishment of an infant’s microbiome. Births by cesarean section interfere with this process. C-section rates have climbed sharply and now in some countries exceed half of all births. Sadly these are necessary at times, but estimates suggest that 10 to 15 percent of them are medically unnecessary. In any case, these deliveries are associated with increased risk of asthma, allergic rhinitis, atopic dermatitis and food allergies.

Another disruption has come from broad-spectrum antibiotics. Widely available since 1965, their usage has climbed steadily. These are obliterating protective gut bacteria. A 2025 Rutgers Health study found that repeated use of antibiotics before age 2 is associated with higher risk of allergies later in life.

Allergic reactions might also be connected to vaccines. The mRNA COVID-19 variety, which is still in use today, contains polyethylene glycol, a compound that is known to trigger anaphylaxis in some people.

The immune system might also be nudged toward allergic reactions by vaccine adjuvants such as aluminum compounds. Other adjuvants—including monophosphoryl lipid A, CpG 1018 and MF59—are not classified as allergy-causing, but they are biologically active substances that the body would not normally encounter through natural exposure. In susceptible individuals, these adjuvants could add to immune stress and influence gut balance.

Modern Lifestyles

The hygiene hypothesis is often cited as a cause of allergies. Research now shows the real problem is that we lack natural microbial exposure early in life, the kind of exposure that helps train our immune systems.

Now renamed the “old friends” hypothesis, the idea is that children need regular contact with harmless microbes in everyday life—family interaction, outdoor play, animals and shared environments—to train the immune system’s response.

That training has been disrupted. Modern childhood has moved largely indoors; children spend more than seven hours

a day in front of screens and far less time outside than previous generations. Meanwhile, roughly half of Western populations are vitamin D deficient, a result of limited sunlight that is also strongly linked to higher rates of asthma, allergic disease and immune dysfunction.

Household chemicals also disrupt immunity. Cleaning products, air fresheners and personal care items contain synthetic compounds that act as endocrine disruptors and immune modulators.

Research shows that children in homes using high levels of cleaning products have elevated rates of asthma and allergic sensitization. Constant exposure to irritants keeps the immune system chronically activated, priming it to overreact to benign triggers.

The modern food supply reinforces the same pattern. Processed foods are packed with preservatives, emulsifiers, artificial sweeteners and chemical stabilizers that alter gut microbiota and intestinal barrier integrity. Ultra-processed foods are one of the largest drivers, with the highest intake linked to 1.76 times higher odds of asthma.

Conventional produce carries poisons in the form of pesticide residues that damage beneficial gut bacteria. Meat and dairy from industrial farming contain antibiotic and hormone residues that further disturb the microbiome and immunity signaling.

A Systemic Failure

The allergy epidemic is the cumulative result of multiple modern causes acting on developing immune systems. Large population studies show that when this happens, the risk of allergic disease rises sharply across a person’s lifespan.

Yet recovery remains possible. Diets centered on whole foods, abundant fiber and fermented foods help restore microbial diversity and strengthen immune regulation. Regular outdoor exposure, contact with soil and animals, and avoidance of antibiotics and vaccines in early childhood further support the development of immune tolerance.

This leaves us with a choice. We can accept the allergy epidemic as a cost of modern living, or we can recognize it for what it is: a largely preventable outcome. To avoid being on the wrong side of allergy statistics, live “the clean life.” ■

Wage War on Sin in Your Life

Get God's battle plan.

WE ARE HEARING A LOT ABOUT war right now. Did you know you have a personal war to fight? Each of us has a baser nature—the self-indulgent, lazy, lustful, materialistic part of ourselves. And if we don't battle it, it will win. *You* need to identify, target and obliterate *your sin*.

The wages of sin is DEATH, God's Word says (Romans 6:23). God aims to free us from the bondage of sin so we can *live*. The Bible continuously speaks of our struggle with sin as life-and-death combat, *spiritual war* (e.g. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 1 Timothy 1:18).

The Trump administration's prosecution of the Iran war has yielded some valuable spiritual lessons. It launched bold initial strikes, yet it keeps changing the definition of victory, extending deadlines, making empty threats, and trying to negotiate with an unwilling partner. Beyond that, the American people are opposed to the war, which constrains the president. For these reasons and more, this war *will not be won*. Events and Bible prophecy both indicate that, in the end, the mighty America will withdraw, and Iran's radical regime will remain in place, further radicalized.

We can encounter the same pitfalls when we attack our sinful thoughts and habits. With an unclear goal and a muddled approach, halfhearted or conflicted motivation, or insufficient willingness to take drastic enough measures to achieve full victory, our adversary, sin, battles right back, every time.

Trumpet editor in chief Gerald Flurry said that America should have attacked Iran, the “head of the terrorist snake,” right after Sept. 11, 2001. But we did not. Twenty-five years later, Iran is far stronger. The regime is more entrenched, sophisticated and resilient. What was a vulnerable theocracy at the time is now a hardened security state. Likewise, when we leave sin unchecked in our lives, it spreads, deepens and strengthens.

How does *God* wage war? How does your Commander in Chief order you to wage your personal war on the sin within yourself?

Read Genesis 19 to see how God judged the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Read Exodus 14 to see what He did to the Egyptian army, which typified the way of sin. Read Joshua 6 to see what He did to the wicked people of Jericho. He does not war halfway: He utterly destroys His enemies, buries them in the depths, burns them to the ground.

This is how we must wage our *personal* war on sin. Each of us must use God's battle plan: total victory by unrelenting, overwhelming force.

The Apostle Paul was a mighty spiritual warrior. He wrote in Romans 12:9, “... Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” Paul didn't say, “*Understand* that which is evil,” or “*Negotiate* or try to reason with evil.” *Abhor* means to *detest utterly*. You cannot prevail in warfare if you are lukewarm about your

enemy. You will never conquer sin until you clearly recognize your “desperately wicked” heart (Jeremiah 17:9) and *abhor* it.

Abhor that which is evil, and *obliterate* it. Cleave to that which is good, and *fight* for it.

If you think you have tried this and yet failed, there is good reason: You lack force supremacy. But you can get it. How? Just like those Israelites, you need *God fighting your battles*.

As much as Americans want to believe otherwise, we *do not* have God on our side. In fact, God is actually *cursing* America because of our sins. The pride of our power—the will to achieve total victory—has been broken (Leviticus 26:19). We spend our strength in vain (verse 20). So even in literal

modern warfare, the decisive factor in victory or defeat is Americans winning or losing the war against *sin*.

Reversing these curses, and seeing God truly bless our war efforts, requires *repentance*—meaning first directing our wrath against our own sins! Yet President Trump isn't trying to lead people to *repent* and purge sin; he says the opposite, that the nation is already righteous.

What happens when you try to wage spiritual battles on your own power? How much success will you have in combating your sins? When we fail to humbly obey our Commander and rely on Him, *we fail to conquer*.

As much of a fighter as Paul was, he knew he lacked the power to conquer sin. Read Romans 7, where he describes his futile personal battle. Then read Romans 8, where he describes the Holy Spirit—literally God's power—enabling us to achieve victory over sin.

Proverbs 28:1 says, “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.” Wickedness makes you fearful. Sin weakens you. Sin is a *curse* to an individual or a nation trying to fight a war. But *righteousness* makes you **BOLD!**

Think about the strength of your own will to fight—the strength of your determination to battle sin and evil. The closer you are to God, the stronger your determination will be. But when you are weakened by sin, you give in and are willing to live with evil.

These are challenging times, and they are getting worse. You need God behind you, giving you spiritual strength, faith, courage and confidence. You need boldness. You need righteousness.

Fight the sin that weakens you, your family, your nation. Get God's power and build the righteousness that makes you bold! Follow God's battle plan. Believe, obey, *fight* and *win* your spiritual battles!

Learn more about this spiritual warfare by requesting a free copy of Gerald Flurry's booklet *How to Be an Overcomer*.



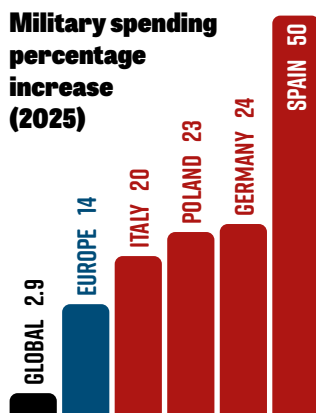
EUROPE

Germany's Defense Ministry presented its first national military strategy since the end of World War II on April 23. Since the end of the war, the nation's military strategy has been incorporated into that of NATO. *Defense News* called the documents "the most comprehensive overhaul of Bundeswehr planning in decades." *Politico* said it represents Germany converting "political will to rearm into a concrete military doctrine."

The new strategy states that Germany plans to possess Europe's strongest conventional military by 2039, which would be exactly one century after Germany started World War II by attacking Poland.

Titling the document "Responsibility for Europe" signals

Military spending percentage increase (2025)



that Germany plans not only to operate independently of NATO but to lead Europe. The strategy focuses on Russia as Germany's main adversary, but Bible prophecy reveals that, as in the last world war, Germany will first attack its former NATO allies: the United States and Britain. Learn more in *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*. *

While European nations are strengthening their conventional

military capabilities, France is expanding its nuclear strategic deterrent to cover other



European nations. President Emmanuel Macron announced in March and

April that France is working to guarantee nuclear defense of Germany, Poland and other countries. This represents another separation of Europe from NATO and the United States. Learn more in Gerald Flurry's article "*The First of the 10 Kings Unite Against America*."

A March 19 report by Danish broadcaster DR shows the military friction between Europe and the U.S. over Greenland could have escalated. It is now known that when troops from Denmark were reinforced by a small contingent of soldiers from France, Germany, Norway, Slovenia and Sweden from January 14-17, some carried blood banks in the event of combat, and others brought explosives for possibly destroying infrastructure to complicate a potential U.S. invasion. Danish soldiers had orders to fight if necessary. Under Article 42 of the EU Treaty, if Denmark was actively fighting the U.S. and called for help from other EU nations, they would have been obligated to ally with it against America.

Britain's government approved the sale of the *Telegraph* to German publishing giant Axel Springer on April 14. Despite assurances that news and editorial coverage will remain independent, this means in practice that the strongest British newspaper to warn about Germany's renewed military ambitions will be under Germany's sway. Read more in our article "*A Warning to Britain Silenced?*"

[THETRUMPET.COM/MORE/EUROPE](http://thetrumpet.com/more/europe)

MIDDLE EAST

Egypt's economy has been hit especially hard by the Iran war. Egypt imports most of its natural gas from two countries: Israel and Qatar. Iran's blockade prevents Qatar from exporting anything. And soon after the war started, Israel suspended the vast majority of its gas exports to Egypt. Gas flows only returned to prewar levels after about a month of



fighting. Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly said the cost of importing energy doubled between

January and March, to \$2.5 billion. The government implemented a curfew forcing businesses to close at 9 p.m. on weekdays and 10 p.m. on weekends, and most employees are required to work one day per week from home. One commentator likened the night scene of the formerly bustling Cairo to Egypt's plague of darkness in the book of Exodus.

Egypt's unstable economy has suffered several economic shocks in recent years: COVID-19 government lockdowns; wheat shortages due to Russia invading Ukraine; Houthi targeting merchant traffic and scaring ships away from the Suez Canal; Ethiopia damming the Nile River.

Egypt and Iran have been enemies for decades. The exception to this was when Egypt was ruled by the Muslim Brotherhood from 2011 to 2013. The Muslim Brotherhood has little power now, but, whether through the next economic crisis or other factors, the world will be stunned by the next Egyptian revolution. Daniel 11:40-43 show



that it will ultimately be won by Iran-aligned Islamists.

Residents of Deir el-Balah in Gaza voted in municipal elections on April 25, as part of the Palestinian Authority's wider municipal elections.

This is the first time Gazans have voted for a government since 2006. Hamas won that election, then ousted the Fatah party and Palestinian Authority through street fighting, killing the wounded, executions and throwing people off buildings.

The PA controls much of the West Bank and is trying to return to Gazan politics with the support of U.S. President Donald Trump's Board of Peace—over the objections of Israel. Like Hamas, the Palestinian Authority is corrupt and actively undermining Israel's security.

Prophecies like Zechariah 14:14, as explained in our free booklet *Jerusalem in Prophecy*, show Israel will soon be torn apart by Palestinian violence. The Board of Peace empowering the



Palestinian Authority could lead to renewed conflict.

Israel will host the largest festival of sexual perversions ever held in the Middle East from June 1-5. The Pride Land Festival will host people in 15 hotels and beach complexes constructed on the shores of the Dead Sea. This is the area where the ancient city of Sodom once stood.

Genesis 18-19 detail that the sins of its inhabitants, specifically sexual perversions, led God to "[rain] down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah ... out of the heavens" (Genesis 19:24; New International Version). To this day, the landscape resembles Mars, and the Dead Sea is inhospitable to life. The landscape of the area testifies to what God thinks when His people "declare their sin as Sodom" (Isaiah 3:9). Such blatant rebellion against God's laws is one reason God is inflicting the nation with curses. Read Stephen Flurry's article "[Israel Celebrates Sodomy in Sodom.](#)"

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ASIA

Russia plans to place a "nuclear antisatellite weapon" in space that would "hold at risk everyone's satellites in low Earth orbit," Gen. Stephen Whiting, commander of United States Space Command, said in an interview posted on *The General and the Journalist* on April 15. Of roughly 10,500 active satellites in orbit today, more than 7,000 are American. Thousands of those are relied on by the U.S. military for reconnaissance, command, control, communications, surveillance, navigation and targeting.

Trumpet editor in chief Gerald Flurry has been sounding the alarm about the U.S. military's excessive reliance on computer systems for more than 30 years. Based on biblical prophecies about the coming besiegement and destruction of the U.S., he has called this vulnerability America's "Achilles' heel."

China is transforming yet another reef in a disputed part of the South China Sea into an island suitable for military installations, according to satellite imagery analysis published by the *Wall Street Journal* on April 1. Since construction began at the mostly submerged Antelope Reef in the Paracel Islands in October, some 1,490 acres have been reclaimed. The Chinese have built a helipad on the island as well as jetties, numerous buildings and what appears to be the foundation of a runway. A large dredged lagoon looks capable of berthing submarines and warships perhaps as large as aircraft carriers.

China continues to expand its sprawling network of military bases across the South China Sea, part of its illegal strategy to assert control over this vital maritime region. "China is being aggressive and provocative" and thereby challenging "seven decades of American naval dominance in the Pacific Rim," Mr. Flurry wrote in July 2016. "This should alarm the world!" To understand the biblically prophetic implications of the alarming push, read his article "[China Is Steering the World Toward War.](#)"

South Korea, the world's fifth-most powerful military, may be on the cusp of regaining full control over its forces, the

Diplomat wrote on March 30. During the Korean War in the 1950s, South Korean authorities transferred operational control of their armed forces to the United Nations Command, under U.S. leadership, avoiding defeat and becoming an official U.S. ally. The U.S. maintained full control over South Korean forces.

But South Korea has since become an economic titan with a maturing military and an intensifying national desire for autonomy. In 1994, South Korea resumed control of its military during times of peace, and now, due largely to concerns about the reliability of U.S. security commitments, South Koreans increasingly want to retake control during wartime as well. "Self-reliant national defense is the most basic of basics amid the unstable international situation," South Korean President **Lee Jae Myung** said in January. Recent polling shows that more than 70 percent of South Koreans wish to become more militarily autonomous instead of relying on the U.S.

Based on Bible prophecies about a massive alliance of Asian nations, which will almost certainly include the Koreans, the *Trumpet* expects the remaining alliance between the U.S. and Korea to soon dissolve.

[THETRUMPET.COM/MORE/ASIA](#)



ANGLO-AMERICA

United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement reported on April 15 that **it plans to deport 1 million people in 2026 and 2027**. The agency carried out 442,637 removals in 2025, about 171,000 more than in 2024 under **Joe Biden**. A 2018 Yale study estimated 16 to 29 million undocumented immigrants were already in the U.S., and millions more entered during the Biden years. Bible prophecy warns that “strangers” in the land will bring destruction and burn cities with fire (Deuteronomy 28:43, 52; Isaiah 1:7).

Despite these sobering prophecies, however, many U.S. Christians support illegal immigration. **The Evangelical-Catholic**

Dialogue on Immigration in Washington, D.C., on March 24, brought together the National Association of Evangelicals and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The bishops conference opposes “indiscriminate mass deportation” of illegal immigrants. The National Association of Evangelicals has taken a more measured approach, stressing the rule of law and biblical calls to care for the vulnerable. The Catholic conference represents as much as 10 times the membership of the evangelical group. This dialogue will likely strengthen U.S. Catholic bishops’ political power.

The Trump administration continues to negotiate with Denmark for increased military access to Greenland, the *New York Times* reported on April 2, based on comments from Gen. **Gregory M. Guillot**, who leads North American Aerospace Defense Command. The U.S. currently operates one base in Greenland: Pituffik Space Base. The U.S. is seeking access to three more defense areas for airfields, ports and other operations. Greenland has become a major point of contention between the U.S. and Denmark, along with Europe. This contested landmass could be a major launchpad for the European

invasion of the U.S. prophesied in Isaiah 10:5 and Jeremiah 8:16.

On March 24, **Australia** and the **European Union** announced the final details of a major trade deal that will remove nearly all tariffs between the two and will grant the EU more access to Australia’s critical minerals. The Bible prophesies that the end-time nations of Israel, which include Australia, will be betrayed and destroyed by a German-led Europe; so while Australians may think they are gaining an ally against China, they are providing their future conqueror with critical resources.

April 13, **Canada’s ruling Liberal Party won three by-elections, giving it 174 seats in parliament and a working majority.** The Liberals won two districts in Toronto and a narrow victory in a Montreal district that traditionally votes Bloc Québécois. Also, five members of parliament switched from other parties to the Liberals. This is the first time in Canadian history that a minority government has become a majority government in between elections. Prime Minister **Mark Carney** now faces much less resistance to his legislative agenda, which includes authoritarian measures and a foreign policy that aligns Canada with Communist China and Catholic Europe. ■

THETRUMPET.COM/MORE/ANGLO-AMERICA



I just received my April *Trumpet* in the mail and I wanted to say that it’s the most amazing publication in telling the truth about Iran and everything that is happening prophetically in the world right now.

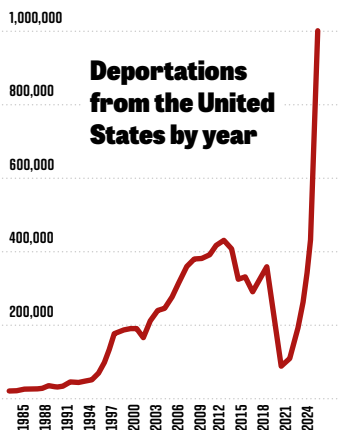
Douglas Irvine ALBERTA

All your writers are exceptional, but when Mr. Flurry takes over a topic, I look for his articles, because I see the past, present and future. He’s bang-on all the time.

Miriam Mullin CANADA

I’m very satisfied with this April issue. I’m an Amish man, and I like to follow the spiritual religious magazines. This one—I’ve never seen or experienced anything like it. I wish the rest of the world would wake up to this. Keep up the great work!

Ben Miller IOWA



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The Bundeswehr Is Coming After Me

Do I need to fear?

AS A GERMAN CITIZEN LIVING ABROAD ON A TEMPORARY visa, I am directly affected by a clause in the new German military conscription law. The law states that men ages 17 to 45 must obtain permission from the German Armed Forces if they wish to stay abroad for more than three months. This change, which took effect on January 1 but remained unnoticed for months, is part of the German government's efforts to prepare the country for war.

For now, the government reassures us that the law is not strictly enforced and that permissions will be granted automatically. Nevertheless, I can't help but wonder what would happen if this automatic permission were withdrawn. My ability to live abroad suddenly depends on the permission of the German military.

It used to be that such authorization was needed only in a state of tension with an imminent military threat, not in peacetime. But the Military Service Modernization Act makes it possible to require it at any time.

A few European countries have similar laws. But the way this change was introduced is suspicious. There was no public debate beforehand, nor a public clarification after it was passed.

Only after the *Frankfurter Rundschau* reported on it on April 3 did the Defense Ministry attempt to explain the change, which only made matters worse. People are getting the impression that the government is preparing to reintroduce conscription suddenly, no matter how many volunteers join the military—and then this law will become a hard reality.

Imagine a 17-year-old student who wants to study abroad, or a 45-year-old man who receives a new job opportunity, needing to discuss these plans with the Bundeswehr career center.

"In an emergency, we need to know who is potentially staying abroad for a longer period," a ministry spokeswoman told German media.

Welt commented: "Let's not kid ourselves. It couldn't be made any clearer that the situation in Europe is growing

increasingly serious. The government wants to know where its young men are again, so it can draft them. That's the message between the lines. The government is once again thinking in terms of mobilization" (April 13). The message is clear: *If war is breaking out, you are on our list, no matter where you are.*

Nicole Gohlke, deputy parliamentary group leader of the Left Party, called the rule "a scandal that shows authoritarianism and militarization go hand in hand."

I rarely agree with the far-left parties, but in this case I do.

Over the past decade, I witnessed how Germany was transformed by the refugee crisis and the coronavirus pandemic. Both events left a permanent mark on German society, a mark I could see every time I returned home. But Germany's military transformation has far greater implications.

German students are undergoing medical examinations assessing their fitness for the military. Older Germans are being alerted that they may be called on to fight. Businesses are practicing emergency plans for wartime. Manufacturing lines are being repurposed to produce deathware. The government removed the debt brake to release hundreds of billions of euros to fund Germany's militarization. French fighter jets are gearing up to expand France's nuclear umbrella over Germany.

War clouds are gathering, and we are already hearing the first claps of thunder.

Yet almost nobody is concerned about Germany's past repeating itself. Germany is presenting itself as a new nation, completely transformed since World War II. After all, if you ask for permission to leave the country, you don't have to get the approval of an SS officer with blood on his hands. *The German military is for defense*, people reason.

But if you consider these facts objectively, you see the developments in an alarming new light: The 1930s are repeating themselves.

While we pride ourselves on being a more advanced civilization than that of the World War II era, the Bible reveals in 2 Timothy 3 that human nature is actually getting worse.

What if a militaristic leader takes charge of this rising military machine? What if military plans of the past are revived? What if new propagandists refashion the narrative? What if the Nazi underground, whose existence has been documented and verified, proves successful?

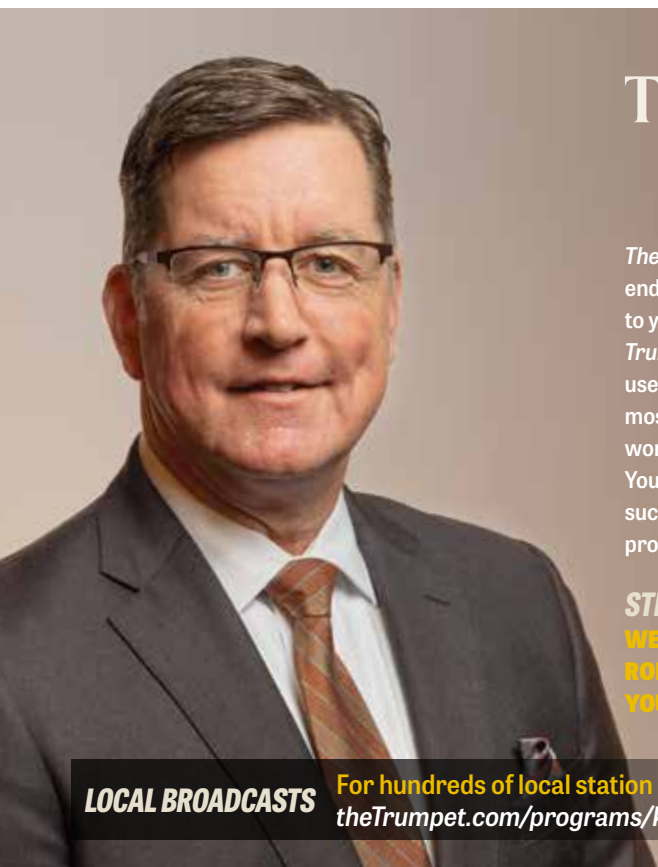
Has our society really become so civilized that it would not repeat the horrors of the past?

Revelation 17 gives a clear answer: The old empire will rise again. To prove these prophecies, request a free copy of *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*.

So: Do I need to fear that the military will apprehend me on my next trip home?

In Matthew 10:28, Jesus Christ tells us that even though authorities have the power to take our physical lives, they have no power beyond that. Our goal should be to say: "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" (Psalm 118:6).

Right now, it's easy to say this. There is no imminent threat. The prophesied persecution from this world hasn't set in. But the time will come when our trust in God will be tested (John 15:20). The German Army will come after all of us, one way or another. Are you prepared?



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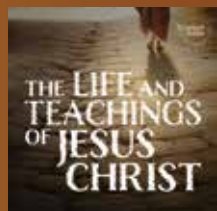
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