

**A CALL
FOR SUNDAY**

Behind the pope's plea

**SPECIAL ISSUE
KATRINA**

**CARVING
ISRAEL**

A tragic retreat from Gaza

NOVEMBER 2005

THE PHILADELPHIA

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TRUMPET



Wake-Up Call

SPECIAL ISSUE

“A tragedy of biblical proportions”



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FROM THE EDITOR

Gerald Flury

The Pope Trumpets Sunday

REUTERS



DRAWING THE LINE Pope Benedict is ready to firm up one of his first orthodox initiatives: a stricter adherence to Sunday observance.

IN AUGUST, POPE BENEDICT XVI MADE GERMANY THE DESTINATION of his first trip abroad. On Sunday, August 21, as part of the World Youth Day celebration, the pontiff conducted a mass with over 1 million people where he stressed the importance of Sunday worship: “Sunday is a free day Yet this free time is empty if God is not present,” he said. “Sometimes our initial impression is that having to include time for mass on a Sunday is rather inconvenient. But if you make the effort, you will realize that this is what gives a proper focus to your free time” (*International Herald Tribune*, August 22).

These comments came just a few months after similar statements at a mass celebrating the closing of the 24th National Eucharistic Congress on May 29. In front of 200,000 in the Italian city of Bari, Benedict declared that the *reinforcement of Sunday worship* is fundamental to his mission.

To students of history, this focus represents a return to the apacities of old, the apacities of that ever-recurring imperial European power, the *Holy Roman Empire*.

Pope Benedict perceives the secularist moral vacuum that has plagued Europe since the time of the Enlightenment. Now, after resounding rejections of the European Constitution by both France and the Netherlands in referenda earlier this year, European unification appears to be in disarray.

But it seems Benedict wants to fill that vacuum—the old *Roman* way. That way was never sympathetic to the idea of the public *voluntarily* accepting its tenets. Rather, as even a cursory study of history will reveal, it was imposed by *force*.

This pope’s dream coincides with that of his predecessor, John Paul II. It is a huge vision—a vision of a Europe united from the North Sea in the west to the Ural Mountains in the east.

But here is the trouble: The only times throughout history this vision has been fully realized is when Rome *imposed* its religion. Since Charlemagne’s “conversion” in the eighth century, the Roman Empire, with its common religious ideology, was able to hang together in repeated resurrections and wreak havoc on those who resisted it.

As Texas-based think tank Stratfor said, “Europe, for geopolitical reasons, cannot be unified except beneath the heel of a conqueror” (June 2).

Pope Benedict is committed to reinstating the active observance of the Roman Catholic Church’s chief icon: SUNDAY. He knows that to popularize religion in Europe, he has to reintroduce a means of promoting what marketers call *brand loyalty*. The most historic brand the pope can offer to bond the people together is the ancient day of worship, fashionable since Babylon, the old day of the sun—*Sunday*. Hence his promotion of

that old Roman brand in his recent addresses.

If we understand how the church has enforced this day in its past history, we should be very alarmed.

Who Changed the Sabbath?

The Bible commands worship on a *seventh-day* Sabbath. Who changed the Sabbath to the *first* day of the week?

Here is what Herbert W. Armstrong wrote on this subject: “WHERE DID SUNDAY ORIGINATE? Not with the Roman Catholic Church, but with the pagan religion of the ROMAN EMPIRE, long before there was any Catholic Church! It is the day on which the ancient pagans assembled at sunrise, faced the east (as they do Easter Sunday morning today), and worshiped the rising SUN. It was Constantine, emperor of the Roman EMPIRE, not a pope, who made SUNDAY the official so-called ‘Christian day of rest.’ But it was *enforced*—people were *caused* to accept it universally—by the Roman Catholic CHURCH!” History proves Mr. Armstrong to be absolutely correct!

Sunday observance was initiated by Constantine, not a pope—but it was ENFORCED by the Roman Catholic Church. According to *The History of Roman Catholicism* (1836), “The accession of Constantine the Great to the throne of the caesars and his subsequent conversion to Christianity, forms A MOST IMPORTANT ERA IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.” It is important, as the writer points out, because this *began* the intimate relationship the Roman Empire developed with the ROMAN CHURCH—a relationship that lasted for many centuries.

Constantine changed the official day of worship to Sunday during the Nicene Council of A.D. 325.

In a letter regarding the council, Constantine spoke of the enforcement of Sunday worship for Easter services: “At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day.” This statement was directed at those who kept the Passover—one of God’s seven annual festivals commanded in Scripture—rather than Easter, and kept it several days *before* Easter. “[F]irst of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews. ... *Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd* ... [I]t has been determined by the common judgment of all, that the most holy feast of Easter should be kept on one and the same day” (emphasis mine throughout).

In other words, Easter was to be kept on Sunday, and the “Jewish” Passover—which is actually *God’s biblically commanded assembly*—was expressly forbidden!

In another letter, specifically regarding Sabbath worship, Constantine wrote, “Forasmuch, then, as it is no longer possible to bear with your pernicious errors, we give warning by this present statute that none of you henceforth presume to assemble yourselves together. We have directed, accordingly, that

you be deprived of all the houses in which you are accustomed to hold your assemblies: and our care in this respect extends so far as to forbid the holding of your superstitious and senseless meetings, not in public merely, but in any private house or place whatsoever. Let those of you, therefore, who are desirous of embracing the true and pure religion, take the far better course of entering the Catholic Church ... [F]rom this day forward none of your unlawful assemblies may presume to appear in any public or private place. Let this edict be made public.”

This was confirmed at the Council of Laodicea almost 40 years later in A.D. 363. At that conference, it was determined, “Christians MUST NOT JUDAIZE BY RESTING ON THE SABBATH, but *must* work on that day, rather honoring the Lord’s Day. ... But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema [*curse*d and *ex-communicated*] from Christ.”

There you have it: historical proof of the ENFORCED OBSERVANCE of Sunday. To assemble together on any other day for a religious observance was unlawful.

Today, many Sunday-observing “Christians” admit that the Sabbath was changed. Notice the question posed to the Catholic Church in the book *Catholic Doctrinal Catechism*, written by a Catholic priest with the intention of *defending* Catholic doctrine: “*Question*: Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept? *Answer*: Had she not such power, she should not have done that in which all modern religionists

agree with her—she could not have SUBSTITUTED the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, A CHANGE FOR WHICH THERE IS NO SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY.”

As Christians today, are we to heed what a great church has

admittedly changed—or what is divinely inspired in the Bible?

Here is a quote from the *Theological Dictionary*, by Charles Buck, a Methodist minister: “Sabbath in the Hebrew language signifies rest, and is the seventh day of the week ... and IT MUST BE CONFESSED THAT THERE IS NO LAW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCERNING THE FIRST DAY.”

And finally, here is what Isaac Williams wrote in *Plain Sermons on the Catechism*: “And where are we told in Scripture that we are to keep the first day at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh; but we are no where commanded to keep the first day ... [T]he reason why we keep the first day of the week instead of the seventh is for the same reason that we observe many other things, not because the Bible, BUT BECAUSE THE CHURCH HAS ENJOINED IT.”

God’s Church During the Middle Ages

When Constantine made his decree in A.D. 325 enforcing Sunday observance in the Roman Empire, a tribulation period began. Those saints who remained faithful to God’s Sabbath command were forced to flee into hiding for fear of their lives. Persecution against these people set in almost immediately.



Emperor Constantine

GETTY IMAGES

“Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord’s Day. ... But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.”

God's Church was REVIVED during the last half of the 12th century by a man named Peter Waldo. After much study of the Scriptures, Waldo claimed that nowhere was Christian life observed as commanded by Christ. He quickly amassed thousands of followers. The Catholic Church considered him a great threat.

Pope Alexander III made this stunning decree at the Council of Tours in A.D. 1163: "Whereas a damnable heresy has for some time lifted its head in the parts about Toulouse, and already spread infection through Gascony and other provinces, concealing itself like a serpent in its folds; as soon as its followers shall have been discovered, let no man afford them refuge on his estates; NEITHER LET THERE BE ANY COMMUNICATION WITH THEM IN BUYING AND SELLING: so that, being deprived of the solace of human conversation, they may be compelled to return from error to wisdom."

Notice that people were forbidden to *buy or sell* with these "heretics" because of what they *believed*. Bible prophecy says those who *refuse* a "mark" will be unable to *buy or sell* in the near future. (For more information, request our free booklet *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*.)

The Waldensians grew nonetheless. Waldo devoted his life to making more copies of the Scriptures. Back then, very few people owned Bibles, and were thus forced to take the Catholic priests at their word regarding what the Scriptures said. With the rapid spread of Bibles came the increase of dissension. Many Waldensians began to meet privately in homes to discuss the Bible.

Pope Innocent III ruled the Catholic Church in the early 1200s. Though he admitted it was all right for the common people to study the Scriptures themselves, he nevertheless warned, "It is not proper for you to hold your meetings in private, nor to act as preachers, nor to ridicule the priests. Remember that men must have a SPECIAL TRAINING before they can understand the deep things of Holy Scripture. The priests are trained for this purpose. Listen to them. Respect even the most ignorant of them. Beware of thinking that you alone are correct, and despising those who do not join you" (*History of the Christian Church*, 1879).

As dissension grew, those who were reading the Scriptures for themselves began to be persecuted. The author of *History of the Christian Church* continued, "They were called Waldensians, as if that were a hard name. Force was applied to them. They were routed; their versions were burnt, so far as possible; their opinions rooted out. The priests of Metz breathed freely again, and went on in their old ways of ignorance, idleness and vicious selfishness. Like cases seem to have occurred at Auxerre, and various towns in France, until the Council of Toulouse, in 1229, FORBADE THE LAITY TO POSSESS THE BOOKS of the Old and New Testaments in any language ..."

That's history. A great church actually forbade people to READ THE BIBLE. Throughout history, this church has spoken "GREAT THINGS."

In any doctrinal controversy, we must believe the Bible, NOT MEN!

The followers of Peter Waldo were persecuted by the Roman Empire. The cause behind it was the Roman Church.

"We Cannot Live Without Sunday"

Note the terms Pope Benedict used in his May 29 mass to motivate the people to return to this ancient Roman practice: "Sun-



FREE UPON REQUEST

day, day of the Lord, is the propitious occasion to draw strength from him, who is the Lord of life. The Sunday precept, therefore, is not a simple duty imposed from outside. To participate in the Sunday celebration and to be nourished with the Eucharistic bread *is a need of a Christian*, who in this way can find the necessary energy for the journey [of life] to be undertaken. ... We must rediscover the joy of the Christian Sunday."

The pope concluded with this prayer: "[M]ay today's Christians again become aware of *the decisive importance* of the Sunday celebration ..." (*Zenit*, May 29).

The intensity of the papal commitment to enforcing Sunday worship in Europe was underlined in the pope's statements as reported by one of Italy's most popular conservative newspapers. It reported his words as follows: "*We cannot live without Sunday*. ... The religious *holiday of obligation* is not a task imposed from the outside, but a *duty of the Christian*" (*Corriere Della Sera*, May 29).

Sunday—we "cannot live without" it, it's a "*holiday of obligation*" and a *Christian "duty."* Those words ought to send a chill up the spine of any honest student of the history of the Holy Roman Empire.

A Matter of Life and Death

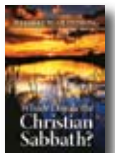
Here is another excerpt from *The History of Roman Catholicism*: "The Roman Church has adopted as its fundamental principle that it can never err, and the body of the civil law when once chosen by the church, as the basis of its system of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, partook at once of its infallibility, and unchangeableness and became one of its prominent features. To change it in one of its most unimportant [details] would be to acknowledge that the church had erred, WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE. ... Thus the Roman pontiff is clothed with supreme authority, and combines at once in his own sacred person all the functions of the legislative, the judicial, and the executive powers. He has no constitutional restraint, he is absolutely unlimited and without control. ... Those surely are fallacious reasoners, who argue that because the pope has never yet exercised the power that he really possesses, with evident political effect, that he will never exercise it; they cruelly and fatally deceive themselves who indulge in pleasant slumbers when the *voice of the past* calls upon them to ROUSE TO CEASELESS WATCHFULNESS."

Remember, this powerful church was prophesied to speak GREAT THINGS. Throughout history, the pope has been referred to as the *vicar* of Christ. *Vicar* does not mean *Christ's representative* as some assume. It means "IN PLACE OF" Christ. Those truly are "great words." The author of the above-mentioned book urges readers who falsely assume a pope would *never* really exercise his full power to remember the "voice of the past."

Historic facts show that under Charlemagne, the observance of Sunday within Europe actually became a matter of life or death. Many were put to the sword, burned at the stake, stretched on the rack, or met their end by some other horrible means at the hands of others who *literally* meant that citizens *could not live without Sunday!* These unfortunate souls were declared *heretics* by Rome—but *martyrs* by historians (including the 16th century's John Foxe).

Let us hope this pope, Benedict XVI, did not have this long and agonizing history in mind when he uttered that most unfortunate phrase, "*We cannot live without Sunday.*"

For more information on this vital subject, request our free booklet ***Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?***



A photograph of a woman lying face down in a flooded urban area. The woman is wearing a patterned top and shorts. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding environment, including a modern building with a glass facade and a curved walkway. Several cars are parked in the background, and a green bus is visible on the right. The scene is set in a city with palm trees and modern architecture.

WAKE-UP

A critical American city lies deserted. A stunned nation has effectively witnessed the results of a major nuclear attack.

CALL

In an age of terrorism, who would have imagined that a tropical storm would launch the most effective tactical strike in American history?

Over 225,000 dead in the Asian tsunami last year did not spur us to brace ourselves for such a disaster in the United States of America. Now an entire city has been set back to pre-industrial conditions—so devastated that it will not support a population for months, if not years. And once the city's infrastructure is resurrected, how many people will return? In the years it will take to restore New Orleans, many will have established new lives in areas that are not 30 feet below sea level.

Experts hadn't expected a city to fall in a storm; terrorism was the main fear. Nevertheless, Katrina decimated New Orleans as surely as a nuclear strike. Up to 160,000 homes—unusable. The Mississippi River—the center of American commerce—closed to business. The city—virtually without inhabitant. Around it, an area the size of England lies razed, with hundreds of corpses lying in graves of splintered wood and noxious water.

What happened? 9/11 could be blamed on a handful of terrorists representing a radical global network. In this case, with the primary villain being a strong wind, culpability is harder to assign.

Nevertheless, accusations are flying.

The biggest target has been the U.S. government, which is under intense criticism for failing to respond with the speed some would have expected—if they had expected the disaster in the first place. Many have blamed racism for the sluggish reaction time—even, remarkably, for the disaster itself. Law enforcement has taken heat for failing to

REUTERS

SUBMERGED Floodwaters ravage the streets of New Orleans.



EXODUS Residents of America's top port city flee its flooded environs with the clothes on their back—and little else.

control the criminal barbarism that overtook the city. Federal engineers have been lambasted for the deficient levees.

There is enough blame to go around to keep people arguing for years. But America is making a grave mistake if the only lessons we take from this disaster involve demanding more of our government.

Many say New Orleans' destruction was only a matter of time. Sadly, it is not unique in that respect. In towns across the country, residents know that when the dam breaks, it's time to head for the hills, assuming they can outrun the waters. Municipalities lie below sea level, tempting future tempests to sink them as well. Cities sit atop known fault lines. Los Angeles seems to have been positioned specifically to maximize its vulnerability to mud slides, forest fires, coastal floods, and seismic calamity caused by one of the worst fault lines on the planet.

But our environment poses only one set of dangers. We also have other humans to contend with. Islamic terrorists, for example, yearn to see another American city fall—or better, all of them.

One thing is certain: This isn't the last mega-catastrophe we will witness.

When New Orleans drowned, the government was caught flat-footed. Despite years of advance warnings, no plan was in place to respond. This reveals the vital difference between *knowing* the worst could happen and actually bracing for it. We are similarly ill prepared for a major biological, chemical or nuclear attack.

And the plain fact is, no matter how impressive our plans, thorough our preparation or robust our defense, there could always be a climatic disaster strong enough, or enemy attack clever enough, to overwhelm us.

As we catalog and survey the overwhelming losses brought by a violent wind named Katrina, this cold reality is perhaps the last thing we want to consider. But the scope of this disaster demands that we dispense with fictions and soberly assess reality.

One of the most celebrated cities within the world's greatest nation is gone, its entire population dead or displaced. We have crossed a threshold. We have gazed upon a city without inhabitant.

It is time to ask searching, fundamental questions. *Where was God? Why did He allow this? What is the purpose? How are we to respond?*

The Gulf Coast tragedy is not about federal disaster management. It is a warning about what dangerous times we live in. It is a reminder of our own fragility, individually and nationally. It exemplifies our need for answers, and for protection—both of which can come only from God.

REUTERS



A Jewel in America's Crown LOST

Though Katrina's full impact is yet unknown, America has lost something vital: the showpiece in a territorial gift that helped make it the greatest single nation ever known. BY RON FRASER

TO UNDERSTAND THE EXTENT OF the America's loss in New Orleans' decimation by Hurricane Katrina, a bit of British history is worthy of review.

India was traditionally known as the jewel in the crown of the British Empire. Colonized by Britain in 1858, the acquisition of India by the empire led to Queen Victoria adding to her regal imperial titles the phrase "Empress of India" in 1877.

Britain's acquisition of the Indian subcontinent opened up an eastern door, a great sea gateway, which consolidated the empire's reach into all hemispheres—north, south, west and east. It enhanced Britain's strategic trade and security structure as a globe-girdling empire beyond any before or since. The whole world became the beneficiary, to one extent or another, of this British in-

fluence (Genesis 12:3).

The British were fulfilling a great prophecy of God as they became a great company of nations (Genesis 35:11).

The influence of that great empire still impacts the old British colonies to this day. Its greatness hinged on its possession of the world's major sea gates (Genesis 22:17; 24:60). The extent of these possessions by one nation had never before occurred in history, and has not been matched since.

Paradoxically, even as it was the colonizing of India that made Britain's empire the greatest company of nations in history, it was the loss of that prime piece of real estate, when India was granted independence in 1947, that accelerated Great Britain's demise as a great imperial power. The decolonization of India portended a rush by Britain—a nation exhausted

following two great world wars—to grant independence to most of the rest of its vast foreign possessions. Just 20 years later, the British Empire was no more. Dispossessed of its strategic sea gates, Britain became a second-rate power.

Now note the parallel with New Orleans.

New Orleans—National Sea Gate

Track back to the year 1803. Napoleon is grasping for funds to fight his megalomaniacal wars in Europe. The upshot is a take-it-or-leave-it offer to the United States to purchase a huge swath of French-owned territory in North America, centered around that which we know as the state of Louisiana, for just \$15 million. The Americans grabbed the deal.

Known as the Louisiana Purchase, this acquisition gave the evolving, upstart na-

tion of the United States the most strategic of land possessions, with a potentially large seaport—providing a crucial junction for the inland waterways of North America—at the mouth of the great trunk route of the Mississippi River. It was this famous purchase that helped rocket the U.S. into the position of the greatest single nation on Earth, politically and economically. The U.S. had inherited and was fulfilling the great promise God made to its patriarch over 3,000 years before (Genesis 35:11). And it all revolved around a great river and sea gateway. Louisiana, with its strategically located Port of New Orleans, became a jewel in America’s crown.

Then, just over 200 years later—*disaster!*

On August 29, one of the greatest storms in U.S. history struck at the heart of this greatest of America’s seaports, obliterating New Orleans’ entire city infrastructure. The workforce fled. America sustained the most mortal of geopolitical wounds within its own shores in its entire history as a nation. A great sea gate lies crippled. The jewel in America’s crown has been crushed, not by any strike from

its enemies, not from any nuclear missile, nor from any flying Islamic bombs—but, seemingly, by a quirk of weather!

Geopolitical Impact

Media commentary has focused, emotionally, on the human factor, and, to a lesser extent, the impact on the oil industry, with its concomitant result of higher gas prices at the pump. Overarching all this is the nauseatingly banal attempt to blame it all on the nation’s president.

What is missing is insightful analysis of the *massive geopolitical impact* of this latest curse on the United States, and the ripple effect on the global economy.

One phrase, from a thoughtful article in an Australian newspaper, *The Age*, pointed to the heart of New Orleans’ destruction, declaring, “The aorta of the American economy ripped asunder.” The *Washington Post* quoted C. James Kruse, director of the Center for Ports and Waterways at the Texas Transportation Institute, as saying, “I don’t think there is any historical precedent for an incident of this scale” (September 1).

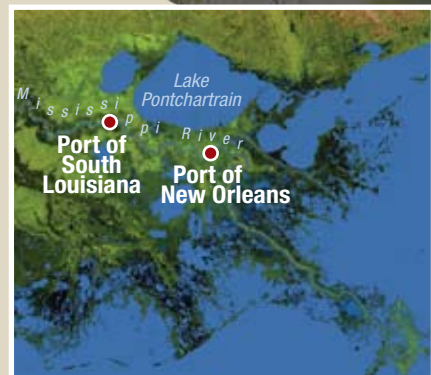
Take a look at a map of the U.S. Its

entire road, rail and goods distribution infrastructure, the veins and arteries of commerce, are all geared to one major clearing point—the huge handling facilities of the ports of South Louisiana and New Orleans located on the southern end of the mighty Mississippi River. “On its own merit, the Port of South Louisiana is the largest port in the United States by tonnage and the fifth-largest in the world. ... [T]he New Orleans port complex ... is where the bulk commodities of agriculture go out to the world and the bulk commodities of industrialism come in. The commodity chain of the global food industry starts here, as does that of American industrialism” (Stratfor, September 1).

Dr. George Friedman, who heads up the prime U.S. news analysis service, Texas-based Stratfor Systems, put it this way: “[I]t seems almost as if a nuclear weapon went off in New Orleans. ... It appears to us that New Orleans and its environs have passed the point of recoverability. ... It is not about the facilities, and it is not about the oil. It is about the loss of a city’s population and the paralysis of the largest port in the United States” (ibid.). This truly gets to the crux

The Ports of New Orleans

The New Orleans port complex was vital. The Port of South Louisiana is the largest port in the United States by tonnage, and the fifth-largest in the world. Katrina’s strike on New Orleans will have staggering national and global effects.



Via the Mississippi River, the Port of New Orleans is the gateway to the 14,500-mile Mid-American inland waterway system. The map above highlights major rivers that service the Port of New Orleans. Exports from the port go to over 50 countries.

New Orleans: Gateway to the world

- The New Orleans port accounts for 20 percent of U.S. export and import trade.
- New Orleans port users had direct and economical rail access to or from anywhere in the country, as it was the only deepwater port in the United States served by six class-one railroads.
- New Orleans port facilities are located near the mouth of the Mississippi River, the world’s busiest waterway: More than 6,000 ocean-going vessels move through New Orleans on the river every year. Hailed as America’s most intermodal port, it is served by 16 barge lines, 50 ocean carriers and 75 truck lines.

Fixing the Port

- Buildings and cranes need repairs.
- Infrastructure leading to the port could take years to rebuild.
- Katrina has rendered the port area uninhabited, and potentially uninhabitable, significantly reducing the usefulness of the Mississippi River.
- Port officials say it may be six months before the port is fully operational.



of the problem the U.S. now faces.

The jewel in America's entire system of national and international commerce has been lost. As Dr. Friedman further observed, "Katrina has taken out the port—not by destroying its facilities, but by rendering the area uninhabited and potentially uninhabitable. That means that even if the Mississippi remains navigable, the absence of a port near the mouth of the river makes the Mississippi enormously less useful than it was. For these reasons, the United States has lost not only its biggest port complex, but also the utility of its river transport system—the foundation of the entire American transport system" (ibid.).

Louisiana Purchase

Many of our readers will remember that Herbert W. Armstrong once pointed to the Louisiana Purchase as being the seminal event that enabled the U.S. to suddenly rise from its status as a nation of little geopolitical influence to the single greatest nation in history. "By 1804 London had become the financial hub of the world. The United States had exploded out of its swaddling clothes of the 13 original states and had acquired the expansive Louisiana Purchase. It was fast sprouting up to become the mightiest nation of all time" (*The United States and Britain in Prophecy*). At just 3 cents an acre, the Louisiana Purchase is considered perhaps the greatest real-estate deal of all time. Thomas Jefferson called it "a transaction replete with blessings to unborn millions of men." Henry Adams also wrote that

this purchase was "an event so portentous as to defy measurement."

With the stroke of a quill in 1803, America—small and relatively unproven in affairs of state—nearly doubled in size overnight. The deal set this great nation on a course that would propel it to greatness.

What the great ocean gateway of India was to the British Empire, the great southern mouth of the Mississippi was to become, nationally, to America: its most prestigious blessing!

Two centuries later, the loss of this great blessing, America's chief port complex, attaches itself to a history that goes back thousands of years. It is the history of two nations—one destined to become the greatest global empire known to man, the other slated to become the single greatest nation ever. It is a history of stupendous blessings, withheld for 2,520 years from these nations before finally being lavished upon them in the 19th and 20th centuries.

It is also a history of great national curses upon two nations that failed to give honor to the great God who gave these blessings to them due to the simple obedience to Him of just one man (Genesis 12:1-3). Since the last decade of the 20th century, these curses have increasingly impacted the English-speaking peoples. Hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans is the most recent such event. It will not be the last.

PropheSied History

This still-unfolding history of the British and American peoples was prophesied millennia ago. The prophecies are published for all to read in the Bible; their meaning is made clear in Mr. Armstrong's book, from which we quoted above. (Copies of this book are available free of charge.) In the instance of Louisiana, what was prophesied millennia ago has now become documented historical fact. The world is witness to past national blessings and an emerging immediate future of huge curses.

Britain and the United States were founded by God through the descendants of Joseph, patriarch of one of the tribes of Israel. Referring to the prophecies in Genesis 35:11 and 48:18-20, Mr. Armstrong stated, "Now we see that the 'nation' to become truly great is to spring from the seed of Manasseh, the son of Joseph. The 'company of nations' is to grow

out of Ephraim. Notice that, before dividing the promises, this prophetic blessing indicated plainly that the descendants of these lads should remain together, and together grow into a great multitude, then become separated, Manasseh becoming a great nation, and Ephraim a still greater company of nations" (ibid.). Thus was prophesied the separation of Britain and America at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War with the peace treaty signed between the two in 1783.

For 20 years, the fledgling nation of the U.S. remained of small consequence on the world scene. Then came the Louisiana Purchase, providing more than 800,000 square miles of land from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains.

Consider the history of Britain and America from 1803 on. "Between them the British and the American peoples had acquired more than two thirds—almost three fourths—of all the cultivated physical resources and wealth of the world. All other nations combined possessed barely more than a fourth. Britannia ruled the waves—and the world's commerce was carried on by water. The sun never set on British possessions" (ibid.). That's the way it was till the two great world wars. Then, following World War II, the sun quickly set on the great British Empire.

What happened?

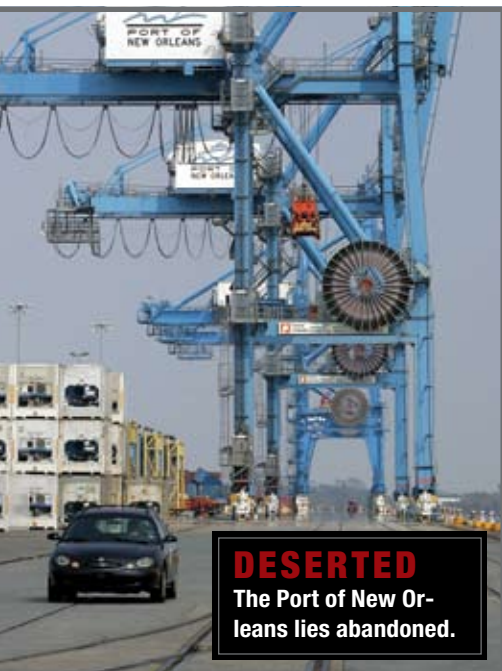
From Blessings to Curses

Almost as quickly as it had gained its great global empire, barely a century later, Britain lost it! By the latter part of the 20th century, Britain—sapped of the moral fiber and political will that sustained it for two whole years as it faced the Nazi onslaught alone—had its imperial roar reduced to a meek whimper on the world scene.

Truly the great prophecies of Britain's rebellion had swung into play. "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard. Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me" (Hosea 7:11-13).

To this day, Britain remains reduced from its sole-superpower status of the 19th century to the role of a second-rate power.

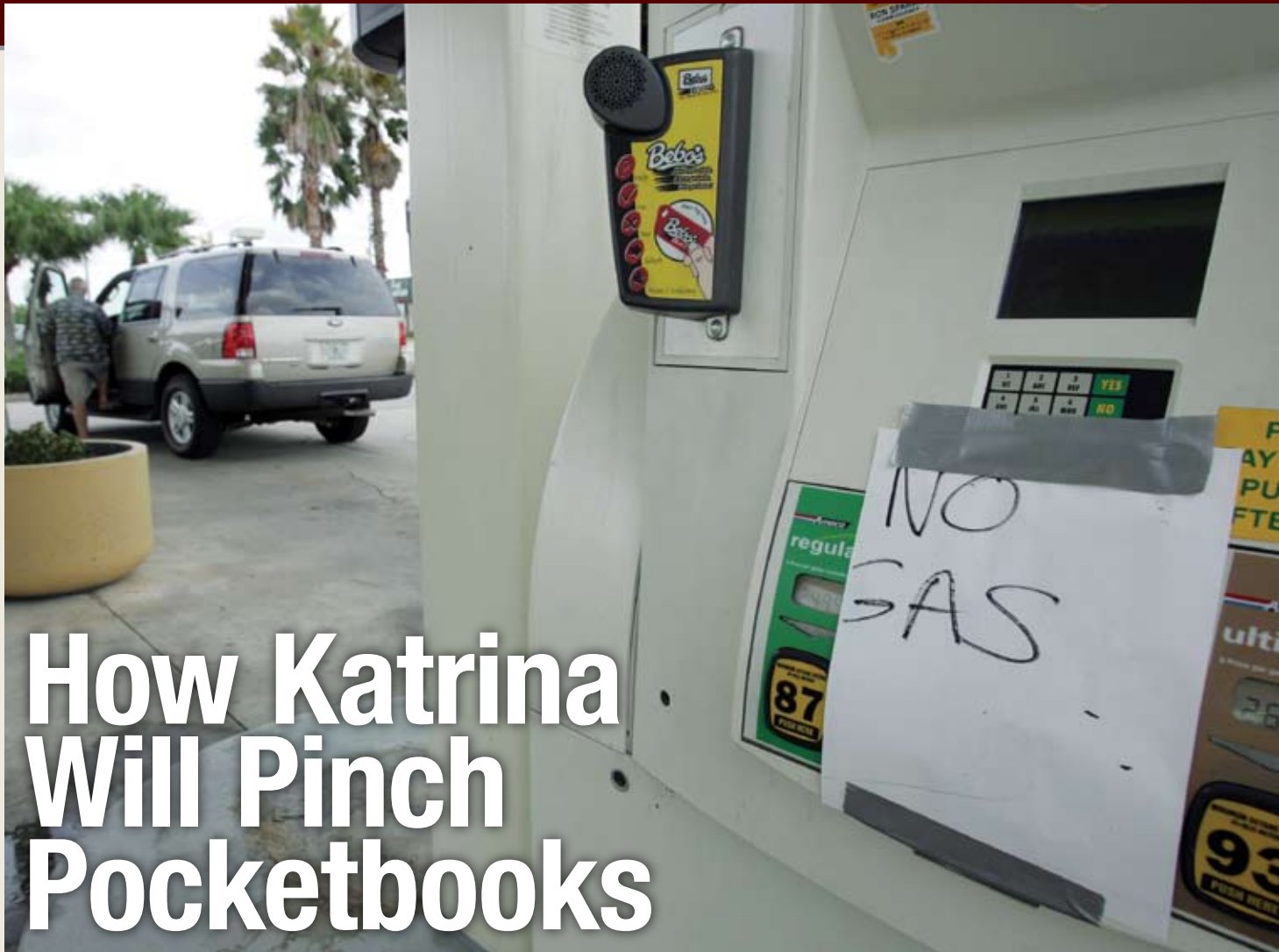
See **JEWEL** page 21 ▶



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How Katrina Will Pinch Pocketbooks

From coast to coast, everyone in America will feel the effects. BY BRAD MACDONALD

Paralyzed by putrid floodwater, insolvent infrastructure and no manpower, the Gulf Coast is months, perhaps years, away from reassuming its role at the center of the American economy.

And Katrina's wrath will do more than bring suffering to millions of Gulf Coast residents: It will smack all Americans in the coming weeks and months. Like 9/11, this hurricane will be recorded as a milestone calamity in American history.

Cost estimates for Katrina vary, yet few doubt it will be the most expensive natural disaster in American history. Insurance claims could top \$40 billion. Many analysts expect total economic losses to exceed \$150 billion.

Within days of the catastrophe, all Americans started to

feel Katrina's fury, most notably in the pre-Labor Day weekend hike at the gas pump. As a result of closed pipelines, gas prices in some southern states ran between \$6 and \$8 a gallon, while the rest of the country had to contend with hikes of 40 to 70 cents a gallon. Natural gas prices also soared and will likely remain high as the U.S. heads into winter.

In spite of the headlines, surging oil and natural gas prices aren't the worst problems the U.S. will face in coming weeks and months.

Hurricane Katrina struck an overwhelming blow to the foundation of the national economy. As America's largest port in terms of tonnage and the fifth largest in the world, the Port of South Louisiana was the funnel of the American economy. With this out

of commission—or even operating at less than full capacity—the repercussions will be felt far and wide. In addition, disruption of transportation and agricultural production will pinch pocketbooks across the nation.

The price of some foods is sure to increase throughout America. Forty percent of the nation's oysters were harvested in Louisiana. Sugar, coffee, fruits and vegetables from Central and South America were imported through Gulf state port systems. Compounding the problem is the fact that sizeable portions of Mississippi's sugar cane and cotton crops were decimated just weeks before they were due to be harvested.

Katrina virtually cut off companies and lines of transportation supplying the nation. The Gulf area hit was a chokepoint—a

network of ports, rail lines, barge traffic and major highways.

This put a tremendous strain on the trucking industry, which provides 80 percent of Americans with the freight they consume, according to Bill Graves, president and CEO of the American Trucking Associations. Katrina brought trucking "to a near grinding halt" in the regions hit by Katrina (*Fleet Owner*, September 13).

Trucking was already taking a financial blow from the rising cost of fuel. This year, the industry is expected to spend \$85 billion on fuel—a \$23 billion increase over last year. And, said Graves, "Ultimately, rising fuel prices have the potential to increase the cost of everything that is moved by truck" (*ibid.*).

The hurricane also created a huge bottleneck for farmers—

wiping out places to ship or store their crops. And many of these farmers have not even hit their peak harvest yet.

The damage to ports and shipping channels, as well as the barges that went missing, all contributed to increase shipping costs. Trains are up to five times more expensive for shipping goods—not to mention that Katrina halted three major rail carriers in the port area.

The Mississippi River is the cheapest shipping route for many exports. America exports a quarter of the grain it produces, and half of that goes through the Mississippi ports struck by Katrina. Alternative ports simply aren't equipped to handle these types of exports. "If this is a week-long problem, it's probably not too damaging," said J.B. Penn, undersecretary of agriculture for farm and foreign agricultural services. "But if it's much longer, then it's a real problem" (*Washington Post*, September 1).

Many analysts believe Katrina will slow America's recent economic growth and aggravate its deepening financial problems such as its unprecedented trade deficit. Forecasts for fourth-quarter economic growth dropped from 3.5 percent on an annualized basis to 2.5 percent, and some economists speculate that the lowered rate will likely remain throughout 2006.

Along with the thousands of homes, Katrina destroyed the infrastructure and facilities of thousands of companies. It is estimated that the storm destroyed half a million jobs in New Orleans and other Gulf Coast areas. "Hurricane Katrina, by forcing an exodus of workers and families from New Orleans and surrounding areas, appears likely to rank alongside Sept. 11, 2001, and the Arab oil embargo of 1973 as one of the nation's most serious and sudden economic shocks—particularly in terms of job losses—in recent memory" (*Washington Post*, September 3).

Virtually every facet of the American economy has been

impacted. Agriculture, imports, exports, transport, oil and gas, manufacturing and retail sectors are all suffering. High energy prices, which were further exacerbated by Katrina, have driven many to tighten their budgets, an ominous sign for retailers who rely on the traditionally robust fall and winter holiday season.

The price of lumber and construction materials began to rise within days of the hurricane and continues to increase in areas of high demand. This will drive up the cost of building new homes across the nation, perhaps putting a chill on the nation's "hot" housing market, which is presently the motor of the American economy. Katrina struck at a bad time, when many in real estate believe America's housing market is already beginning to wane.

While the economic impact is

The Numbers

\$150 billion

Total economic losses due to Katrina expected by many analysts

\$40 billion

Amount that insurance claims could exceed

10 years

Length of time FEMA estimates it will take to rebuild New Orleans

1 million

Number of people displaced due to Hurricane Katrina

500,000

Estimated number of jobs lost

absorbed by all Americans, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama will continue to feel the brunt of the hurricane's blow. Of particular concern is the government's ability to rebuild and repair New Orleans and its surrounding infrastructure.

Discussing this concern, Dr. George Friedman stated, "[I]t is

not the population that is trapped in New Orleans that is of geopolitical significance: It is the population that has left and has nowhere to return to. The oil fields, pipelines and ports required a skilled workforce in order to operate.

That workforce requires homes. They require stores to buy food and other supplies. Hospitals and doctors. Schools for their children. In other words, in order to operate the facilities critical to the United States, you need a workforce to do it—and that workforce is gone" (Stratfor, September 1).

New Orleans and its surrounding infrastructure are essential to the American economy and must be rebuilt, at least to a certain extent, but at what cost? Before building anything, the government will have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars cleaning up the mess. Soil and water in and around New Orleans—deeply contaminated with oil, chemicals and human feces—require detoxification. Additional money will have to go toward enticing contractors and construction companies back into the area; facilities to service their needs must be built first.

As federal and state governments allocate billions of dollars to reconstructing the Gulf Coast infrastructure, watch for foreign companies to seek a piece of the pie. China, for example, could seek involvement in rebuilding port facilities to add to its collection of port interests around the world. While support from foreign nations will be appreciated, this catastrophe might well provide an avenue by which China and other nations can gain an influential foothold at the center of America's key industries.

Even after the complete reconstruction of critical infrastructure, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama will have to undertake an extensive and expensive public relations program in order to entice a labor force back to the region. Tens of thousands of trained people will be required.

Will they be available? Thousands of evacuees have stated

that they will not return; many thousands will likely take their insurance payout and relocate to another state. This trend could be devastating for these states—and a wound to the entire United States.

Even if and when the Big Easy lives again, the city and its environs will remain susceptible to another such catastrophe.

"[S]cientists who study such storms and the way society reacts to them say that more dangerous storms could be on the way, and that they are likely to come more often than many people expect," said the August 30 issue of *Forbes*. Roger Pielke Jr., director of the Center for Science, Technology and Policy Research at the University of Colorado, was quoted as saying, "We haven't seen the worst-case scenario by any stretch of the imagination."

In fact, the distinct possibility looms that another hurricane could strike the southern states this year.

How many more Katrinas can the U.S. economy handle? This one struck a bone-jarring blow. The federal government has already spent billions and will spend billions more. A number of state governments (particularly in the south) are buckling under the pressure of the hurricane's residual costs. Katrina compounded the already crippling debt burden suffered by America as a whole.

"The financial ripples of Katrina will be massive. ... This virtually guarantees that the federal budget deficit will balloon again," stated the British *Independent* newspaper. After predicting in July that this year's fiscal 2005 deficit would drop to \$333 billion, the government's hopes were dashed by Katrina. "Next year's deficit is likely to far exceed the \$341 billion predicted two months ago ..." (September 8).

It is difficult to comprehend the true extent of the economic impact Katrina will ultimately have on America. With interest rates on the rise and gas prices already climbing to record heights, this was the last thing the U.S. economy needed. ■

New Orleans' speedy descent from chaos into barbarism is a gut-check warning for all of us.

BY JOEL HILLIKER

TWO DAYS. THAT IS ALL IT took to loosen a city's apparently tenuous grip on civility. *Two days* to create a nightmare of lawlessness.

When Hurricane Katrina veered slightly east just before making landfall, New Orleans natives sighed with relief, believing they had avoided the worst. But then the levees broke and the floods came. Residents who hadn't evacuated were stranded without electricity, without transportation, without communication, and enclosed by rising toxic waters.

Law enforcement officials turned their attention to search and rescue.

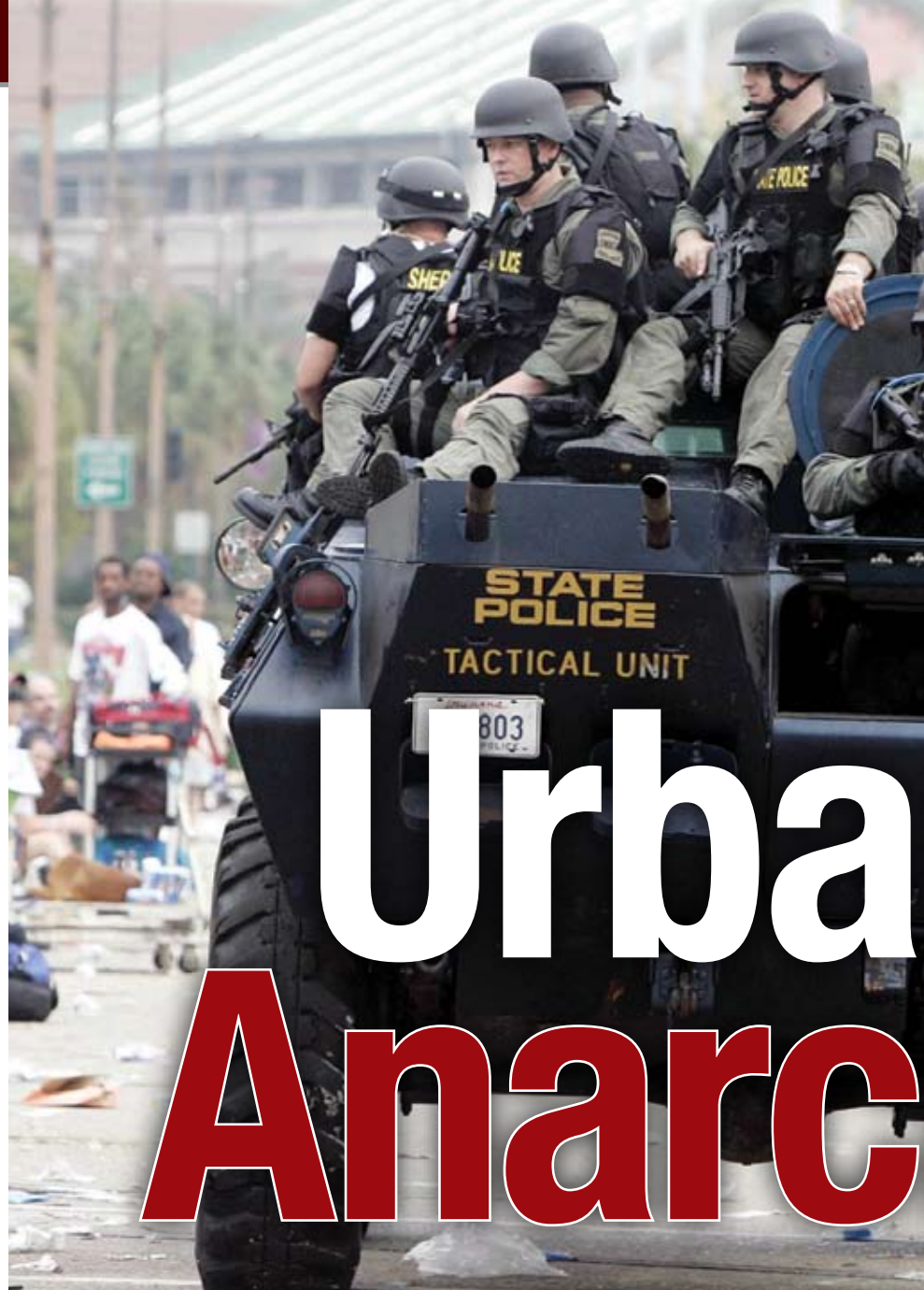
Criminals seized the moment.

First came looting. People smashed their way into evacuated shops and took what they would—not just water and food, but jewelry, small appliances, TVs, computers. They brazenly roamed the streets hauling boxes, trash bags and shopping carts packed with stolen goods. They ransacked casinos, cracking slot machines for change. Most alarmingly, they emptied weapons dealers and pawn shops—even Wal-Marts—of all knives and guns.

Within two days, the city was besieged by thugs and gangs. Arsonists arbitrarily set buildings ablaze.

Many who came to rescue the sick, deliver supplies or restore order found themselves becoming targets: Snipers fired at military helicopters; one shot a policeman in the head; crooks assaulted trucks trying to reach survivors with provisions. The chaos was so violent that beleaguered national guardsmen were given shoot-to-kill orders—against ungovernable American citizens.

Thousands who had sought refuge in the Louisiana Superdome were subjected to trials worse than impersonal gale-force winds. With a handful of police officers and national guardsmen deployed to supervise a horde of 30,000 trapped in increasingly unbearable conditions, anarchy broke loose. Fights erupted with flying fists, blades and firearms. Some sick few saw the mess as an opportunity to beat their fellowman, even to rape and murder.



Urba Anarc

Each passing hour aggravated the problems. Talk intensified about the sluggishness of government intervention. Emotions flared over the fact that the people most affected were poor blacks; some people began accusing authorities of racism (in the worst-hit neighborhoods, some residents were convinced the government had *dynamited* the levees to divert floodwaters from “rich” areas to “poor” areas). A hostile mob beat back a crew of 88 policemen that tried to calm them. Some police decided the hassle wasn't worth it—officers joined in the looting; two committed suicide; some turned in their badges (a week after the storm, close to one third of the 1,600-member NOPD force remained unaccounted for). A tour-

ist who asked one policeman for help was told, “Go to h---, it's every man for himself.” Such incidents only exacerbated the explosive climate of bitterness, mistrust and anger against all authority.

With the rest of the country and the world watching the unfolding tragedy via the news media, it was clear that Katrina damaged more than just the levees of Pontchartrain and the city canals—it also smashed through the levees of decency and morality.

The worst calamity was not caused by the cruelty of a tempest—but by the harshness of human hearts.

Catastrophes like Katrina always produce stirring acts of heroism. But they also lure the worst elements of human

BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

Louisiana State Police patrols downtown in a muscular attempt to restore order.

AP/WIDEWORLD

n hy

nature from the shadows and expose the ugly underbelly of our culture.

Look squarely at what was uncovered when the floodwaters swept away the top layer of social order within a major American city. The appalling lack of character, the moral depravity on parade there—if only by a criminal fringe—is not an isolated case. It is a symptom.

A Glimpse

It challenges our thinking to conceive that such a state of affairs could occur within our electronic, high-tech world. So it comes as a much greater shock when it actually does occur.

Herein lies the problem.

Few of our political leaders, let alone

their constituents, consider the prospect of such catastrophes occurring—not just as one-off events, but as regular phenomena. Yet records show undeniably that natural disasters have accelerated dramatically over the past 15 years.

We must add to this trend the fact that *terrorism* is common to life in the 21st century. Even if our leaders and the public wake up to, recognize and begin preparing for an intensifying storm of weather disasters, the scenarios that any escalation in *terrorist attacks* on Western societies conjure up are too much for most to even begin thinking seriously about.

Yet think seriously we must. Now is the time to do so: while the heart-rending images and thoughts remain fresh in

our minds of a celebrated American city brought to its knees.

Reflect on what happened there—and on what it tells us about ourselves.

New Orleans gave the world a hint of what wickedness Americans can descend to when plunged into great tribulation.

These are dangerous times. Realistically, city-destroying problems are only going to multiply.

Those evils will soon play out in other cities. Bible prophecy foretells it. We must brace ourselves.

Ripe for Disaster

America is the most affluent nation in world history. Though its consumers comprise 4.5 percent of the world's populace, they account for 20 percent of global gross domestic product.

Today, the average American home is over 2,300 square feet (compared to 983 square feet in 1950). The U.S. has twice as many shopping centers as it has high schools. It has more registered cars than licensed drivers, and despite high gas prices, the cars are huge: an average of two tons—25 percent bigger than a generation ago. America's energy needs—per person—are almost double those of Great Britain.

Of course, much of that material prosperity is borrowed. In addition to mortgages and other loans, the average American family owes \$8,400 in credit card debt. So glutted on opulence is the American public that, even as quickly as our *wealth* has increased, it simply has not kept pace with our rising general standard of living!

Americans seem increasingly unable to distinguish luxuries from necessities. We are virtually *all*, to one degree or another, accustomed to affluence, softened by push-button technology, reliant on the infrastructure of commerce, dependent on openhanded government.

Though not prosperous by American standards, the poor that filled the bowels of New Orleans—as in all our major cities—still embody a culture of dependency and welfare. (Many considered themselves absolutely incapable of vacating the city without the government plucking them up and moving them.) Leaving aside the fact that America's poor—including its 2-million-strong prison population—are generally wealthier than much of the world's middle class, the reality is that they are largely habituated to the dole, like children still on the breast.

This is not a race issue. It is, in many

ways, a general American cultural issue.

What if the affluence ended?

What if the government checks stopped coming? Or if they became worthless?

What if the convenient food ran out—if Americans by the millions faced boarded-up fast food joints and grocery stores with empty shelves?

What would happen if gasoline first became too expensive to afford—and then too scarce to find?

How much patience would Americans exhibit? For how long would they peacefully suffer such conditions? How well would they work together under the rule of law?

Likely, the vast majority would bear up relatively well. But what about the rest? And how long before the criminals emerged?

Fire in the City

A peculiar prophecy in the book of Ezekiel is worthy of study. God instructed the Prophet Ezekiel to shave off his hair and divide it into equal thirds. The first third he was to burn with fire; the second, he was to strike with a sword; the third, he was to scatter in the wind. This curious ceremony was intended to illustrate the future downfall of America and

the modern nations of Israel (for proof of America's identity as part of biblical Israel, read our free book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*).

America's destruction will happen in three parts. The first third of the population will be burned "with fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled" (Ezekiel 5:1-2). The siege is referring to an economic battering by foreign nations (see Deuteronomy 28:52). As America's economy suffers, unemployment will become epidemic, bringing with it a host of other social ills.

In this climate of increasing want and desperation—as in New Orleans—the layers of social order will begin to erode, particularly "in the midst of the city." Inner-city criminality will begin to spread—not merely within a single city, but from city to city.

Ezekiel provides more detail about this future drama: "A third part of thee shall die with *the pestilence*, and *with famine* shall they be consumed in the midst of thee" (Ezekiel 5:12). Notice that *pestilence* is mentioned first—it is actually the principal cause of the famine. *Pestilence* simply means destruction or death; one definition of the root word is "to lay snares, to plot against, to destroy." It doesn't nec-

essarily mean a physical disease; it could refer to a plague of *violence and burning*—terrorist attacks, race riots, any kind of violent bloodshed in the cities.

The fulfillment of this terrifying prophecy began on Sept. 11, 2001, when 3,000 people were murdered by terrorists on U.S. soil. We witnessed its second massive blow in a flooded Louisianan city.

It will end when a mind-numbing 100 million American souls have been snuffed out by violence in the cities.

Plus 20 million Britons. Plus 11 million Canadians. Plus 7 million Australians.

Why will God allow this? Because of the people's disobedience to Him (verses 5-7; "Jerusalem" is a type of all the nations of Israel, including America). The curses of weak character and poor government, exacerbated by terrorism and other violence, will precipitate America's downfall because, God says, "Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations" (verse 8).

"Behold I, even I, am against thee." This statement should strike terror in our hearts. God puts special emphasis on the statement: "*Behold I, even I, am against thee.*" Concentrate deeply on that: *GOD is against the nations of Israel.* They are not up against mere foreign armies; Israel has made the omnipotent *God* into an enemy! There is no defeating Him! Israel will lose in a spectacular way, because God is bringing it down.

The New Orleans violence is just a type of what will happen to major cities across the nation. It is a stark prophecy of our future!

The spark igniting the violence could be so-called natural disasters or human terror. We have witnessed the results of each over the past five years. The terror of 9/11 was concentrated on two cities, New York and Washington. Katrina's wrath was reserved largely for one city, New Orleans. Can we even begin to imagine such occurrences happening either at the same time, or in rapid succession, to a multiplicity of heavily populated American cities?

Terrorist attacks, rioting and burning are the main thrust of the pestilence mentioned in Ezekiel 5. And this violence will spread to other Israelite nations—unless people repent!

God will get our attention one way or another.

Descent Into Barbarism

It didn't take long for a thriving American city to turn into a chaotic, lawless mess.

MONDAY, Aug. 29 Katrina, weakened to a Category 4 hurricane, blazes through Louisiana. New Orleans appears to escape the brunt of its force.

TUESDAY, Aug. 30 Levees break, flooding an estimated 80 percent of the city, with water up to 20 feet deep. The looting begins—thieves steal everything from jewelry to electronics to guns in broad daylight. The same day, a police officer assisting in a rescue operation is shot in the head by a robber.

THURSDAY, Sept. 1 Officers report people have been raped, beaten and shot as New Orleans descends into anarchy. Several military helicopters, attempting to rescue people, are shot at. National guardsmen are dispatched in greater numbers to attempt to restore order.

BEHAVE Lawlessness necessitates the dispatch of U.S. soldiers to guard people at the Superdome.



GETTY IMAGES

One Scenario

Try to envision it.

Multiply the compounding effects of one disaster in one major metropolis by two, four, six or ten.

At a moment in the near future, the U.S. economy is in a slump. The dollar is shedding its value. Factories are shutting down. The number of homeless and hopeless grows in the cities. Shipping grinds to a halt as companies close and energy prices climb.

The inner-city poor are hit hardest. Charity efforts are unable to meet demands. Lines form at grocery stores for dwindling supplies of food at rising prices. Some, desperate for sustenance, resort to crime.

Racial tensions and resentment against the government escalate. Police officers are trapped between restoring order and being indicted for discrimination. As more people are victimized, both by economic depression and rising crime, emotions boil over.

The evils of human nature begin to emerge in force. Riots and looting break out in a handful of cities.

And then, within this edgy atmosphere, a crude nuclear bomb is set off in New York or Chicago.

Unlike Hurricane Katrina, this attack provides no opportunity for a mandatory evacuation. Eighteen thousand people are instantly vaporized. Power is out; the sanitation system has been disabled; there is no water; electronic communication from the area dies; information is blacked out; interstates clog with city-dwellers desperate to escape and suffering the first symptoms of radiation sickness.

Emergency units from neighboring states rush in to tend to the untold tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands who are slowly dying from radiation exposure, straining state and federal crisis management resources to their limits within days. Vast mobs of refugees migrate to neighboring cities.

The ripple effects of the strike further paralyze the country's already-crippled economy and overtaxed police force. Effects are felt nationwide. Reports emerge of people starving to death in what until recently was the most prosperous nation on Earth.

As disorder mushrooms, government intervention buckles. Urban predators go on the offensive. Gangs take over. Pillaging and rioting increase. Buildings burn in the night. The worse the violence

and burning become, the worse the famine gets. The worse the famine becomes, the more intensive the violence gets.

In the midst of the chaos, reports emerge of a spreading sickness. Unsanitary conditions in the city have facilitated an aggressive outbreak of cholera and a particularly deadly influenza virus. People begin dying in dozens, then hundreds. Then, the diseases begin popping up in neighboring cities—spread there by the refugees. A massive quarantine effort is needed, but with local law enforcement at its breaking point and the military already maxed out, only so much can be done. The plague spreads, and with it the crime.

This is only one of a thousand possible scenarios we may soon witness. Independent analysts and federal officials are imagining such eventualities based on observable evidence in order to plan their responses and to mitigate the devastation. But their imaginations simply cannot conceive what actually awaits.

What these individuals don't realize is that—barring national repentance—these disasters are prophesied to claim the lives of *one third* of the people within our borders. God's prophecy will stand. "The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and *he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him*" (Ezekiel 7:15). The pestilence—the plague of rioting, terrorist violence and burning—will ravage our cities. People in the country, or field, will die from other causes (verse 24).

The seeds of this future calamity have already been sown.

There is only one solution to this nightmare: Our people must repent and turn to God. If we fail to do that, the suffering is just beginning.

Be Soft

The human mind reels at such prospects.

Naturally we want only to put it out of our minds. We want things to stay as they are. We want to forget about the toxic human nature that rose with the fetid floodwaters in New Orleans.

This forgetfulness causes many people, in spite of a massive death toll mounting before our eyes, to carry on as if everything will work out. It is because of this forgetfulness—which is actually a manifestation of hard-headedness—that Jesus Christ warned specifically, "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeit-

ing, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so *that day*"—that is, the period of destruction just ahead of us—"come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:34-35).

It is also because of our hard-headedness that this "snare" must be so achingly severe.

"Southern Decadence," an annual homosexual bash in New Orleans, was scheduled to have kicked off just as the Big Easy's levees gave way. Rather than cancelling this celebration of sin, however, organizers moved the event to nearby Lafayette. People are already talking about how important it is that next year's Mardi Gras, the 150th anniversary of the bacchanalia, proceed unhindered. That is not courage. That is audacity.

Apparently, it will take more than one city's destruction to soften some hearts.

In the shadow of such climatic fury and in the aftermath of such despicable human conduct, the proper response is not defiance. It is quiet contemplation. Self-examination. Introspection. Meekness. Repentance. Spiritual rejuvenation. A fearful looking at the great Creator who permitted, perhaps even unleashed, the tempest—and who witnessed every ugly act that followed.

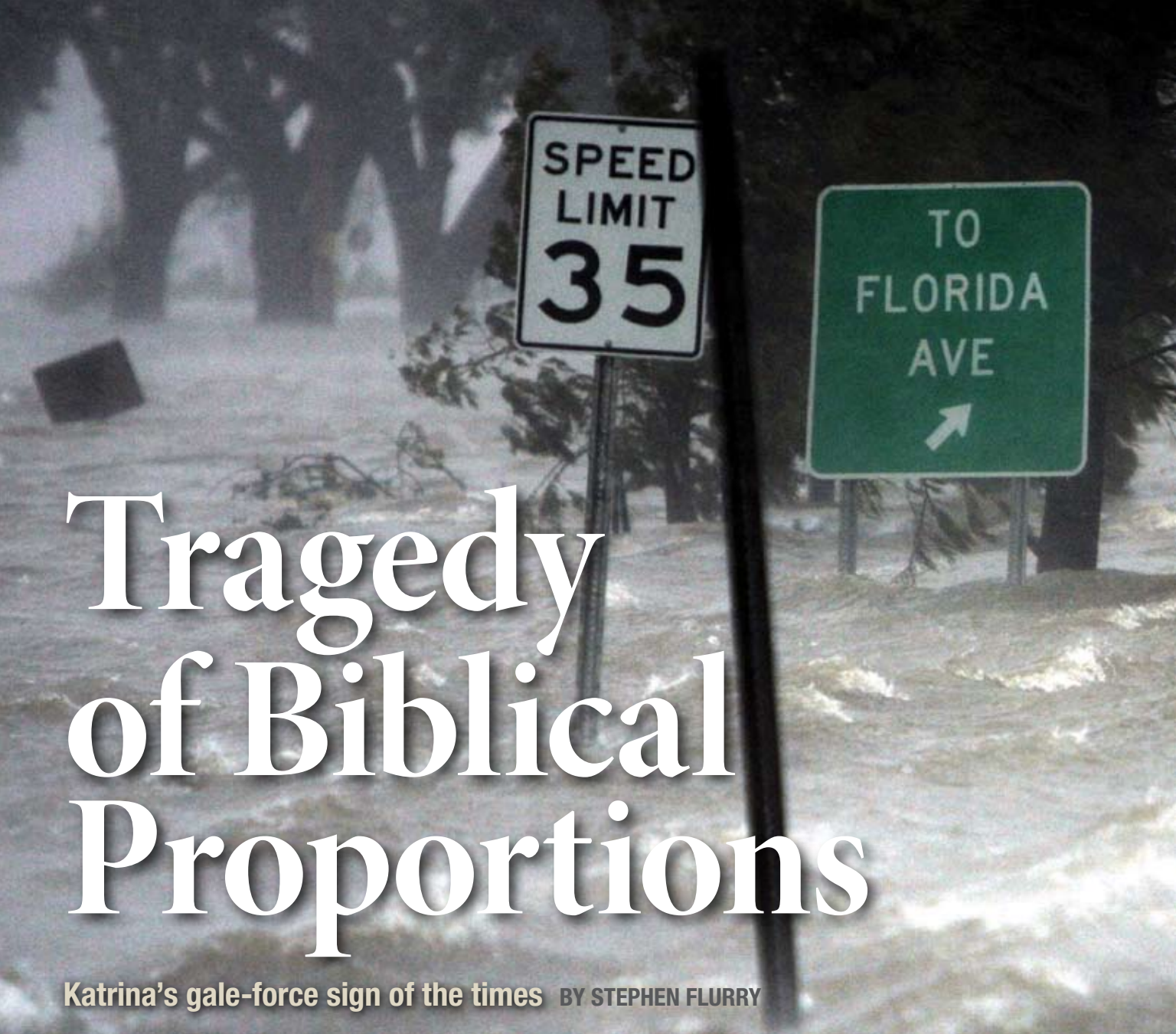
Take heed to yourselves.

That day should not come upon *you* unawares; it need not ensnare *you*. The same great God who is measuring this destruction of America and the nations of Israel also seeks *your* repentance. And to those who truly turn to Him with supple hearts, He offers individual protection—*escape*—from the worst of the coming storms (verse 36).

There is *purpose* in prophecy. In the midst of terrifying and tumultuous events, prophetic warning is nothing less than our Creator reaching out to His creation.

A terrible period of darkness is prophesied to occur. But also prophesied is that within this darkness—shining in a sick and war-weary, increasingly terrorized world—would be a burning light: a bold message calling for repentance and proclaiming, beyond the darkness, the glow of *eternal hope*.

Luke 21:27-28 declare that hope to the disciples of Jesus Christ: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." ■



Tragedy of Biblical Proportions

Katrina's gale-force sign of the times BY STEPHEN FLURRY

YOU KNOW IT'S BAD WHEN LEADING VOICES start using biblical language. MSNBC called it an "Armageddon-like atmosphere." The governor of Arkansas said it was actually *equivalent* to Armageddon—that it was "*apocalyptic* in nature." Dozens of media outlets said it was a disaster of "*biblical* proportions."

Not that you can fault them for making such comparisons. *Katrina* was, after all, *America's worst weather-related disaster ever*. But such comparisons, while understandable in midst of a human tragedy of this magnitude, nevertheless reveal a certain degree of biblical ignorance.

Armageddon is a Hebrew word mentioned just once in the Bible (Revelation 16:16). It means "fortified hill of Megiddo." It's just a *place* on Earth, located about 70 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Now it does happen to be the staging ground for multiple-million-man ARMIES to gather together before triggering the war to end all wars—against Jesus Christ *in Jerusalem*. But the Bible refers to *that* as the "battle of that great

day of God Almighty"—not *Armageddon* (see verse 14). If, by using the term *Armageddon*, commentators mean to equate New Orleans to the battle of mankind against Christ, then, as bad as Katrina's aftermath has been, to compare it to the final climactic battle of the ages is actually a huge exaggeration.

The flood following *that* end-of-the-world battle will overflow out from Jerusalem's Kidron Valley, filling a ravine stretching across Israel for *180 miles*. Picture a 6-foot flood flowing through all of New Orleans, then east along Interstate 10 where the eyewall of the hurricane ravaged the Gulf Coast, blanketing Gulfport, Biloxi and Mobile—even reaching the western edge of the Florida panhandle. And, like New Orleans after Katrina, this prophesied flood will also be a toxic dump of human waste, animal carcasses and man-made pollutants. There is, however, one key difference—this prophesied flood won't be one of *water* breaking through crumbling levees—but of *blood* FLOWING OUT OF MILLIONS OF SLAIN SOLDIERS.

Calling Katrina's destruction an "apocalypse" is another odd comparison, technically speaking. *Apocalypse* is a Greek

DELUGE Floodwaters surge through the streets as Katrina hits the Crescent City.

AP/WIDEWORLD/IMAGES



word that means revelation or disclosure. According to *Webster's*, *revelation* means “something that is revealed by God to humans.” I can’t imagine *that* being the idea they want to communicate when using the word. There is, however, a book in the Bible called the *Apocalypse* in Greek manuscripts—or, as it is translated in English, the *book of Revelation*. And because of certain dire prophecies recorded in that book, its Greek name has become a euphemism for tragic events.

Again, I’m not taking issue with the journalists and politicians who have used terms like “Armageddon” and “apocalypse” to describe Katrina. I wish more commentators would make such comparisons! Since *some have*, why not take a step further and actually *open the Bible* to see what it has to say, if anything, about our increasingly frequent and intensifying “natural” disasters?

We live in PERILOUS times! It’s NOT ENOUGH to merely *refer* to God’s Word—or to compare tragic events with those described in the Bible. We MUST *look into* the Bible and accept what God says!

What Man Can Do

In the storm’s aftermath, Germany’s environmental minister laid part of the blame for Katrina on the shoulders of President Bush because of his environmental policies. His comments reflected the sentiments of America’s own far-left environmentalists who have repeatedly urged the president to do something about global warming.

Leaving aside the global-warming debate, let’s apply the German minister’s criticism more broadly: Is there anything *human beings* CAN DO to prevent “natural” disasters?

In fact, the surprising answer is YES—but not because *man*, in any way, controls the weather. GOD DOES. But in the pages of the book that has been referred to frequently in recent weeks, God says He will bless those who OBEY Him. Now open that book and read for yourself about some of the blessings God pours down upon the obedient. “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; *Then* I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26:3-4). Notice! God says if YOU walk in all His ways, then HE will bless you with a mild climate, seasonal rain and bumper crops.

He spells out these same conditions in Deuteronomy 28:11-12: “And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The Lord shall open unto thee his *good treasure*, the *heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season*, and to bless all the work of thine hand . . .”

These two chapters, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, are the pivot points on which *all* Old Testament prophecies turn. Anciently, God made these conditional promises to the people of Israel. When the Israelites turned from God in rebellion, God sent prophets to warn them of the consequences for disobedience: curses and captivity. This is the context we need in order to grasp what is recorded in the writings of the major and minor prophets.

The thing is, many of these ancient prophetic warnings were written and recorded *after* the Israelites had already been taken captive as slaves. Daniel, for instance, wrote his book after the people of both Israel and Judah had been uprooted from their homeland and carted off as slaves. There is no way he could have delivered his message to captive slaves. Besides that, he wrote at the end of his own book that he himself did not understand the prophecies he received, and that the message was “closed up and sealed till the *time of the end*” (Daniel 12:9).

God told the Prophet Ezekiel to deliver his message to the house of Israel. Yet Ezekiel wrote his book a full 130 years *after* Israel had been overrun by Gentiles! By the time of Ezekiel’s ministry, Israel had been lost from world view!

So who are these messages for primarily, if not ancient Israel?

We know they are for the END TIME. We also know they are addressed to a people *called* Israel. And so all that remains to be discovered, then, is the IDENTITY of ancient Israel’s modern descendants. (If you haven’t yet proved who those descendants are, please write for our free book—requested by more than 5 million people—*The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.) These modern descendants of Israel primarily reside in America, Britain and the little nation called Israel today.

That means this message in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 is directed to OUR PEOPLES.

It is a warning for us today!

The Great Big “IF”

Continuing with the conditional promises of these pivotal prophecies, God says in Leviticus 26:14, “But if ye will not hear-ken unto me, and will not do all these commandments”—if we don’t obey God, it says, then God will bring upon us ever-intensifying curses, the likes of which this world has never seen! God says He will appoint terror over us, break the pride of our power, make our highways desolate and send pestilence (verses 16-25).

Notice verses 30-31 in particular: “And I will *destroy your high places*, and cut down your images, and cast *your carcasses upon the carcasses* of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. And I will make your *cities waste*, and bring your *sanctuaries unto desolation*, and I will not smell the savour of *your sweet odours*.”

Deuteronomy 28 says we would build houses and *not* dwell in them and that our wives would be raped (verse 30). Later, God compares the plagues that come upon modern-day Israel with those He brought upon Egypt in the book of Exodus. “Then the

The president concluded, “May God continue blessing the United States of America.” But if God can bless the United States, isn’t it also true that He can curse us? And if the present conditions are how God continues blessing us—one wonders what it would be like when He sends curses.

Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of *long continuance*, and *sore sicknesses*, and of long continuance. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee” (verses 59-60). In Egypt, by the way, the very first plague God brought upon them was to turn the nation’s water supply into a toxic dump of blood and dead carcasses.

The book of Amos is another message directed at Israel in this end time (Amos 8:2). “And also *I have withholden* the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and *I caused it to rain upon one city*, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered” (Amos 4:7). Notice—this is God talking through His prophet. God *causes* these weather disasters! In one region God sends a drought—in another region, floods—and it all happens right before harvest time.

“So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: *yet have ye not returned unto me*, saith the Lord” (verse 8). This is hitting awfully close to home. People from one city wandering into another, searching for water to drink. And why is this happening? *God causes it because we haven’t returned to Him*. Amos is trying to help us see the connection between extreme weather upsets and human sin.

In verse 9, God says, “I have smitten you with *blasting* and *mildew* ...” The *International Critical Commentary* (icc) says this “blasting” refers to a scorching “east wind.” Most commentaries seem to think this is a hot blast of drought that wipes out crops. But the fact that the word is paired with “mildew” (as in Deuteronomy 28:22) might give this verse a broader application. The icc says this mildew is “caused by dampness and heat, having a yellow appearance.”

Katrina blasted the Gulf Coast with 140-mile-per-hour winds and 20-foot tidal waves. In the storm’s aftermath, with a

soaked landscape, hot summer temperatures and plenty of dead carcasses, conditions were ripe for disease and pestilence.

Amos continues, “I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt ...” (verse 10). And all of this happens, God says again, because you have “not returned unto me.”

The book of Nahum is another end-time book, although its message is primarily directed at the modern-day descendants of ancient Assyria. Even still, the prophet begins by drawing attention to the command God has over disastrous weather. “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the *whirlwind* and in the *storm*, and the clouds are the dust of his feet” (Nahum 1:3). In today’s language, this is speaking of hurricanes and tornadoes. Again, just as in Amos, it says **GOD SENDS STORMS**—and these storms result in flooding and destruction.

“He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth” (verse 4). Anciently, Bashan, Carmel and Lebanon possessed some of the most fertile farmland in the world. But *God* dried the rivers with droughts, and all the abundance of those regions just withered away.

Here is what our editor in chief wrote in his booklet on Nahum: “God wants this world to learn that He controls nature. Many natural disasters are anything but *natural*. Soon, arrogant men will learn this lesson very deeply.”

God controls the weather. And in the many biblical passages quoted above, He reveals that there is a direct connection between the weather we experience and **HOW WE ARE LIVING**.

Confronting Our Decadence

After the July terrorist bombings in London, British columnist Minette Marrin had this to say about her own culture: “One of the things that strikes me more, not less, forcibly as time has passed is the contempt that Muslim extremists feel for us. They despise us for our decadence, and I feel more and more forced to accept the painful truth that they have a point. I don’t want to exaggerate; there are many things about Britain that are still great. People have shown courage and compassion in response to the bombings, and a restraint that is truly heroic. And the police have discovered and arrested the failed suicide bombers with an efficiency that is anything but decadent.

“All the same, it can hardly be denied that with all our celebrated freedom, and all our wealth, we have somehow created a society that is characterized by growing disorder, uncertainty and loss. For a long time now, Britain—or rather many of its institutions and traditions—has been suffering from a loss of nerve and a loss of will which amounts to a national moral funk” (*Sunday Times*, July 31).

As in London, the aftermath of Katrina brought out the very best in some human beings. But it also revealed the ugliest side of human nature—drug addicts looting hospitals for “medicine”; gangs roaming the streets with shotguns and liquor, stealing designer clothing, shooting at rescue workers and raping little girls; policemen abandoning their posts by the hundreds; government officials at the local, state and federal levels all pointing fingers at each other’s mistakes; and so on.

New Orleans became a disgusting spectacle to the world. It was enough to provoke an outpouring of defensive responses from dozens of commentators worldwide who stepped for-

ward to defend the city's reputation with sentimental recollections about life in the Big Easy *before* the storm.

But according to the *New York Times*, New Orleans before the flood had "been a place of crushing poverty, of dreary housing projects and failing schools, where crime and violence have been an incessant shadow in daily life" (September 4). One British commentator described it as a "black city where the murder rate was already 10 times the national average because the local forces of law and order had long ago given up" (*Daily Mail*, September 5).

Of course, when reflecting on the "charming" days of New Orleans, commentators don't mean the poverty-stricken, crime-infested slums that tourists were constantly warned to avoid. They are talking about the party section in the upscale French Quarter and Garden District. One British journalist described the city as the "Queen of the Deep South." He then offered this description of life in the Crescent City: "Mardi Gras turned the city into an annual bacchanalia of drunken debauchery and hedonistic overindulgence each February; a party atmosphere that lingered throughout the year—until now. Bourbon Street, aptly named as it straddles the French Quarter awash in booze, bare-breasted women and naked dance clubs, for the first time in decades no longer smells like a brewery in the morning" (*Express*, September 3).

And Mardi Gras isn't even the worst of it. In August, homosexuals from all over the country were preparing to descend upon New Orleans for Southern Decadence. A week-long homosexual street "party," the event has been a Labor Day tradition in the French Quarter for 34 years. FrenchQuarter.com described the event this way: "Southern Decadence may be most famous (or infamous) for the displays of naked flesh which characterize the event While police have started to crack down on public lewdness and pressure from a local crackpot conservative religious organization has caused the five-day festival to become a little more sedate than it was in years past, the atmosphere of Southern Decadence has stayed true to its name, and public displays of sexuality are pretty much everywhere you look."

This is the city commentators the world over are so enamored by?

Last year, more than 110,000 homosexuals attended the event. This year, thousands more were expected to attend. A day before the carnival started, organizers canceled it as floodwaters spread over 80 percent of New Orleans, and while the French Quarter was being ransacked by looters.

Charming, quaint and lovely are not the adjectives God would use to describe a city like this.

But who really cares about what God thinks these days? We might call upon God after tragedy strikes, like Governor Blanco and President Bush did during the floods, asking Americans to beseech God in a day of prayer. We can evoke biblical terminology to *describe* disasters. But NEVER should we imply

that God had a hand in SENDING this storm to wake up a stubborn and rebellious nation—or so the thinking goes.

In an interview with the president on September 1, Diane Sawyer asked President Bush about the similarities between this storm and the terrorist strike on 9/11. Both events left a massive trail of devastation, the president said. But as for the *cause* of the wreckage, that was different. "9/11 was ... a man-made attack," he said. "This is a *natural* disaster. And I had a little different sense of emotion about realizing that there are some killers out there killing Americans as opposed to a *storm*" (emphasis mine throughout).

This popular notion maintains that while Muslim fundamentalists were responsible for 9/11, *no one* is responsible for America's worst-ever hurricane disaster. *Not Islamic killers. Not Americans. And certainly not God.*

Storms just happen.

After a speech on September 3, the president concluded with this remark: "May God *continue* blessing the United States of America." But if God can *bless* the United States, isn't it also true that He can curse us? And if so—if the present conditions in America are how God continues *blessing* us—one wonders what it would be like when He sends curses.

As in the Days ...

"I felt like I was leaving Sodom and Gomorrah," one survivor said after being rescued from the flood. "I never looked back—I never plan to go back there either," she said.

Jesus made this exact same comparison. "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:28-29). And what society was Jesus comparing to Sodom? "Even thus shall it be in the *day when the Son of man is revealed*" (verse 30). Jesus said

it would be this way immediately before His Second Coming, when He will be revealed before all the Earth's inhabitants.

But before that blessed event, Jesus assures us there will be widespread destruction because of our many sins. "For then shall be GREAT TRIBULATION, *such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time*, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved..." (Matthew 24:21-22). This is speaking of World War III—a 3½-year bloodbath that will culminate in the "battle of that great day of God Almighty."

But *before* all this—*before* the battle of mankind against Christ—*before* the European beast power and the Asiatic kings of the east square off—*before* Europe destroys the nations of Israel—*before* Europe surrounds Jerusalem with armies—*before* the European Union comes against the Islamic king of the south like a whirlwind—*before* Arabs capture East Jerusalem—*just before all of this happens*, JESUS PROPHESED THAT WEATHER PATTERNS WOULD TAKE A VIOLENT TURN FOR THE WORSE! "And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines,



Celebrating Sin

The appropriately named Southern Decadence festival, a week-long homosexual party famous for public displays of nudity and sexuality, is held every Labor Day weekend in New Orleans. This year, Katrina killed the festival—almost. A few—30 to 40 people—didn't let a lack of food or water ruin the festivities. Although delayed by four days, the annual celebration of immorality went ahead.

and pestilences; and fearful sights and *great signs shall there be from heaven*” (Luke 21:11). Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:7). *These are the days* we are living in RIGHT NOW! Weather disasters, as they increase in frequency and intensity, are actually fulfilling Bible prophecy.

We are *experiencing* the outer edges of a storm that is about to inflict the worst suffering mankind has ever known. Jesus said so. “All these are the *beginning* of sorrows” (verse 8). It’s just the *beginning*. It’s going to get much worse. The *Trumpet* must tell you this—not because we derive some kind of sick pleasure from seeing people suffer—but because God says we must WARN! God takes no pleasure in seeing people die, the Prophet Ezekiel said. “Wherefore turn yourselves, and live,” God says (Ezekiel 18:32). He wants us to turn to Him in obedience with our whole hearts so we don’t have to suffer and die.

God controls the weather. The Bible says that earthquakes, droughts, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes and tsunamis are anything but normal.

These intensifying disasters are not God’s fault. *They are our fault*. National tragedies are upon us, and will increase one hundredfold because of our disobedience to God’s law and our rebellion against His authority.

The Last Hour

Of course there will be skeptics and scoffers—just as there were in the days before Noah’s Flood and before God rained fire from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Jesus said there would be those who scoff. There will *always* be deceivers who insist that we are in no special danger today. *We’ve always had enemies*, they say. *We’ve always fought wars*. *We’ve always had storms*. *We’ve always bounced back*. *We’ve always rebuilt*.

To which, God responds, “But evil men and seducers shall wax *worse and worse*, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13). As evil worsens, so does God’s punishment. Paul is addressing those of us living in the last days. “This know also, that in the *last days* PERILOUS [or *dangerous*] times shall come” (verse 1). People deceive themselves by thinking there is no special danger right now—that the world has *always* been like this. While it is true that human nature has always been hostile to God’s law (Romans 8:7), the Bible says that Satan-influenced nature waxes worse and worse as the day of Christ’s return approaches. Satan has been cast down to this Earth, it says in Revelation 12:9. Add to that this stark reality: Not until these latter days has man’s rebellious nature gained possession of weaponry powerful enough to annihilate himself. And add to that this frightening fact: GOD IS AGAINST US! (Ezekiel 5:8).

These are not normal times. Things will never return to the way they once were—even 10 or 15 years ago.

The *New York Times* story I quoted from earlier referred to the “lull” we had in hurricane activity between 1970 and 1995 and how this may have contributed to our complacency in preparing for disasters in areas like New Orleans. “But more recently,” it went on to point out, “a string of studies found that after 1995, a *natural* Atlantic cycle had switched from the pattern that stifles storms TO ONE THAT NURTURED THEM”

(op. cit.). The *Wall Street Journal* similarly noted that the duration and intensity of hurricanes and typhoons “has increased markedly since 1970.” According to the report, the power of storms in the Atlantic has tripled (September 2).

Of course, we’re led to believe that this is all moving in accordance with *Mother Nature’s* plan. It’s a *natural, normal cycle* you have to understand. *God created us—He sends blessings—He continues blessing the United States of America—BUT HE CAN’T STOP A STORM*, the twisted logic goes. Poor God—He’s just not strong enough to stop “Mother Nature.”

Sorry—but that’s NOT the truth of the Bible. God controls the weather. The Bible says that earthquakes, droughts, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes and tsunamis are anything BUT normal. They are *curses* man has brought upon himself as a result of disobedience to God’s laws. And the Bible says that, in the modern nations of Israel, these curses are about to explode—they are about to get so bad that they might *legitimately* be compared to the events described in the pages of the Holy Bible!

In May of 2001, the *Trumpet’s* editor in chief announced that the world had entered into its last hour before Jesus Christ’s Second Coming (see 1 John 2:18, Revised Standard Version). In September of that year, we referred to that proclamation in the pages of this magazine. And about the same time that issue landed in mailboxes all over the world, 19 Islamic terrorists were putting the finishing touches on their plan to blow up the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the Capitol.

Our editor in chief then wrote about the significance of this attack in his “Personal” the following month. He wrote, “In a sermon in May, I said *we should expect this last hour to be different than any other hour in the history of man!* Just four months later, the face of the world changed dramatically. The terrorist attack of September 11 changed so much” (November 2001).

Now please—PLEASE—think about how different this world is today as compared to the way it was before 9/11—before the last hour. Look at how different the Middle East is today, with Iran poised and ready to grab control of the whole region—looming as a much, much bigger threat to world peace than Iraq ever was! And now it no longer has Saddam Hussein to worry about. Before it’s over, Iran will have a friend in Iraq—no longer a foe. And what a tremendous cost America has paid to remove the obstacles in Iran’s path toward Middle Eastern dominance. What a price we’ve paid—in terms of lives, morale and treasure. Look at how we have stretched our forces and divided our people.

Ask yourself, *Is the world a better, safer place than it was five years ago? Have things improved since the last hour began?*

Earlier this year, on June 4, our editor in chief announced in a sermon that the world had now entered the *last half* of the last hour. Less than *five months* after his 2001 announcement, 9/11 jolted the United States. After the June announcement, in less than *three months*, Katrina smashed into the Gulf Coast.

God, in His mercy, is trying to shake our peoples out of their drunken stupor before the real Armageddon-like events hit home!

After 9/11, our editor in chief said, “In the future, it will get so bad that they won’t even be able to take care of all the dead. God is going to get our attention.” Now please weigh those words—written four years ago this month—against the images we witnessed in September of *this year*—rescue workers searching for survivors in New Orleans even as dead bodies floated by unattended to.

God is trying to get our attention, as we noted back in 2001:

“What we saw is just a tiny little problem compared to what is coming. Multiply what happened on September 11 by maybe 30 or 40 thousand to begin to get a picture of what it will be like in the future, with all the blaring sirens and the bleeding nation. The unparalleled violence will continue until we repent!”

The same can be said about Hurricane Katrina.

It Could Have Been Worse

As devastating as this storm was, the worst is yet to come. In fact, Katrina itself could have been much worse, according to meteorologists. If you watched the news as I did on Sunday night, August 28, you witnessed a monstrous Category 5 steam-rolling across the Gulf, with New Orleans directly in its road.

The next morning, just before the storm hit landfall, a “puff” of Midwestern dry air weakened Katrina to a Category 4 and nudged its eyewall ever so slightly to the east. Thus, the coast of Mississippi and Alabama withstood the storm’s fiercest wrath, whereas the much larger, below-sea-level, critical U.S. port of New Orleans barely escaped a direct hit. Residents of the city and commentators alike collectively breathed a sigh of relief as New Orleans had been “spared.” Of course, the nightmare that followed was brought about by two breaches the storm surge had punched in the city’s levees.

But think about how much worse it could have been if a Category 5 had hit New Orleans dead on—especially considering the number of city residents who did not evacuate. We’ve seen what a *Category 4* did to the Mississippi coast. What if the homes, hotels, businesses and office buildings in *New Orleans* had been leveled like the structures in Biloxi?

Of course, it’s normal for a “puff” of dry air to come billowing out of the Midwest right at the point of contact between Katrina and the coast.

Or maybe—just *maybe*—God mercifully spared us from something that could have been much more deadly and destructive. There are, after all, end-time prophecies in the Bible that speak of ENTIRE CITIES being left without inhabitant (Isaiah 6:11; Jeremiah 2:15). New Orleans has essentially been left without inhabitant, although *most* of its residents were spared—either by fleeing before the storm or by being rescued out of it. Perhaps God is giving us a small foretaste of what it will soon be like when *all* the inhabitants will GO DOWN WITH THE CITY—when there won’t be time to evacuate—or anywhere else to go.

God is giving YOU advance news of the storm that will soon strike all of America, Britain and the Jewish nation—just like those meteorologists warned us about Katrina *before* it struck. *Think about that.* Step back in time for a moment and put yourself in the path of Katrina. What would you do if you knew, ahead of time, that a Category 5 was barreling down upon your neighborhood? Would you heed the warning?

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees in His day because they had become quite good at making weather predictions. *You can discern the face of the sky,* He told them. *But you can’t discern the signs of the times!* (Matthew 16:3). Besides weather predictions, these religious zealots were also quite good at reciting Scripture, pointing to significant biblical events, even comparing the events of their day with those of old, as referred to in God’s Word. But they didn’t *obey* Christ. And they disregarded His *repeated* warnings. They could not discern the many signs—advance warnings—of the times in which they lived.

What about *you*? Will you discern the signs of the times? Will you heed Jesus Christ’s warning?

Or ignore it? ■

Now, consider Britain’s brother nation, the United States of America. This once-great superpower is following the same pattern as Britain. Bountifully blessed with rapid development since that great land deal of 1803, the U.S. rose to stride the world as the singular superpower in a unipolar world. This great nation, having seemingly vanquished the Soviet enemy by 1990, just 15 years later is becoming the most hated nation on Earth. Look at the list of its current woes.

By 2005, the U.S. carried a total national debt to the tune of \$8 trillion.

Since 1991, America has been involved in a war in Iraq that will not go away. Having fought three campaigns to finally rid the world of Saddam Hussein, the U.S. is currently sucked deeply into insurgency warfare in Iraq, a situation destined to continue to sap the nation of both political will and moral fortitude.

The terrorist attack of 9/11 and resultant declaration of a war on terror continue to have powerful negative effect on the U.S. economy, on national unity and on America’s image abroad.

Then comes Katrina.

This storm of massive fury ripped the aorta of American commerce asunder. The current estimated bill for the devastation in southern Louisiana tops \$150 billion! The ripple effect of this gaping wound on America’s southern seaboard is yet to be fully comprehended.

From blessings to curses. That is the evolving history of the U.S. and Britain.

We have long been satiated by the blessings—but we have refused to give our great God the credit for them, let alone begin obeying our Creator! The time of Britain’s and America’s blessings is now history. This is the time of curses—curses for disobedience to our most loving and merciful God.

Thus, as the loving parent of humankind, our God is now moving to correct us for our gross national sins and disobedience to His immutable law. Katrina was a curse upon America! New Orleans is now a powerful witness to that truth.

And this, along with the 9/11 terror strikes, is just the beginning.

From Curses to Blessings

Yet the great paradox here is that these great national curses now accelerating within the lands of the British and Americans are a harbinger of a future bestowing of blessings on these nations that vastly supersede those they enjoyed at the peak of their national greatness!

Read it for yourself in the prophecy of Amos: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them” (Amos 8:13).

New Orleans will never be the same. Right now the city has ceased to exist as a viable entity. Attempts will be made to revive it, but the chances are they will never reach fruition before another government—one that will never fail the people, one that will be geared to respond with immediacy to their every need—a government, not of man, but of God—will revive the wasteland of the Mississippi delta into a pristine, moral, peaceful, secure, uncorrupted city of thriving wealth and commerce in a far, far better world than you can ever imagine! Write for your own free copy of our book *The Wonderful World Tomorrow* to discover this future for yourself, now! ■





Israel's Bleeding Wound

In the name of peace, an embattled nation declares war on itself. BY JOEL HILLIKER

IN EARLY SEPTEMBER, NEWS coverage got swamped with a nation-shaking disaster and a harrowing evacuation in the United States. The event overshadowed another evacuation—possibly just as nation-shaking—that had occurred not two weeks before on the other side of the world.

Israeli soldiers called it the most difficult mission they have ever been asked to carry out in service to the democracy they love. With few exceptions, they dutifully obeyed orders to evict all 9,000 Jewish residents from their homes in settlements throughout the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank—even as they withered inside.

In a gut-wrenching account printed in the August 23 *Wall Street Journal*,

Israeli reservist Michael B. Oren well expressed the maelstrom of emotion he felt while following his orders: pride in his fellow soldiers, respect for his elected government, heartache for his dispossessed countrymen, fear for the future of his homeland.

Oren described an illuminating scene that unfolded at one synagogue. Soldiers, before evacuating the people, granted them an hour of parting prayer; the settlers took two, and the soldiers entered. Encountering a grieving mob, they first tried to comfort them—and ended up breaking down themselves. “[S]oon,” Oren wrote, “soldiers and settlers were embracing in mutual sorrow and consolation.” Finally, before the sobbing people were escorted to evacuation buses, a request by the rabbi to address the soldiers was granted. “So it hap-

pened that 500 troops and 100 settlers stood at attention, with Israeli flags fluttering, while the rabbi spoke of the importance of channeling this sorrow into the creation of a more loving and ethical society. ‘We are all still one people, one state,’ he said. Together, the evicted and the evictors, then sang ‘Hatikvah,’ the national anthem—‘The Hope.’”

And so it went. Lots of ache, but no arms. It wasn’t easy: Troops had to drag men, kicking and thrashing, out of their homes, while children sat by crying; at a children’s nursery, mothers stood outside holding tightly to their babies while soldiers collected toddlers; settlers ripped their clothes in mourning. But in the end, what was scheduled to take three weeks—with the Israeli government committing some 14,000 troops to the mission, the country’s largest-ever

Sadly, however, this bitter sacrifice didn't move the deadlock one inch closer to a solution. It achieved precisely the opposite.

In addition to rending the hearts of Israel's citizens, the action only inflamed the fervor of Israel's foes—and quite possibly handed the worst of those enemies a base of operations for the next phase in their war on the Jewish state.

While individual soldiers may have exhibited courage, discipline and compassion, the unilateral retreat they undertook on behalf of their government is a poignant reflection of the division, lack of national will, and depletion of faith that will soon prove to be a *fatal wound* for this embattled nation.

What, after all, is going to happen in the Gaza Strip now that Israel's watchful eye is gone?

At War With Itself

The Gaza pullout polarized Israeli society. Polls showed the Israeli populace split straight down the middle on the issue, with sizeable numbers on each side absolutely staunch in their belief that the other is dead wrong.

The “ultranationalists,” as the press calls them, believe the Gaza Strip and West Bank are part of the land bequeathed to the Jews by God. Today, this is seen as the extreme view. It wasn't always. Once, the nation was united in its determination to defend every inch of its land, firm in its belief that God was its protector.

Today, however, faith in God is seen as thin stuff on which to base foreign policy.

God specifically prophesied that because of Israel's lack of faith and its disobedience to Him, the *nation's will* would be broken (Leviticus 26:19).

That is just what has happened. Wracked by division within and hostility without, a slight majority of Israelis now see *retreat* as their only way forward.

This is nothing less than a mindset of resignation—a very public surrender to war-weariness. To think that it will produce peace is to ignore every lesson of history and every shred of logic.

“Judah's Wound”

Territorial concessions have been a hallmark of the Arab-Jew peace process, which, as editor in chief Gerald Flurry has stated for almost a decade based on biblical prophecy, will prove to be “Judah's wound.”

The Bible refers to the present nation of Israel as “Judah” (hence the name *Jew*).

In Hosea 5:13, the interesting word *wound* can be found. *Gesenius' Lexicon* defines it, “the pressing together, binding up of a wound; here used figuratively of a *remedy* applied to the wounds of the state.” In other words, *THE REMEDY IS THE WOUND!*

Look at the last 12 years of Israel's history—since the Oslo agreement in 1993—and one can easily see what a *wound* it truly is to trust in your *enemies* to guarantee your protection—enemies who have a self-declared and oft-proclaimed mission to crush you from existence, no less.

Throughout this “peace process,” Israel made concessions based on the premise that the Palestinians would become satisfied, and hence friendly neighbors. But with each concession, terrorist attacks only increased—a trend that openly exposed the utter falseness of this reasoning.

Israel's first territorial concession in its modern history came in 1979, when it turned over the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. Since then, the Jews have surrendered numerous pieces of strategically important land to the control of the Palestinians in return for empty promises of peace.

This latest withdrawal, however, is the first complete territorial withdrawal since the Sinai.

And whereas withdrawal from the Sinai came with a promise of peace by Egypt (which more accurately could be described as a state of non-war), the Gaza withdrawal doesn't even involve the pretense of a peace agreement by the Palestinians. They have made *no* commitment to stop their war against Israel. The Palestinian Authority refuses to disarm the terrorist group Hamas, which, along with other militant organizations, maintains its commitment to Israel's ruin.

Appeasement and Defeat

Gaza has been a critical component in Israeli internal and foreign policy ever since the nation won it in the 1967 Middle East war. During this time, however, it has given Israel no end of trouble. For over a decade, weapons have been smuggled to Palestinians across the Egyptian border through a complex network of tunnels. The Gaza Strip has been a base of operations for some of the worst Arab-Israeli savagery.

It has come to the point where, according to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, it is “no longer realistic” for Israel to hold on to Gaza (Associated Press, August 17).

To the Palestinians, that statement reads, “Israel admits defeat in Gaza.”

COMPATRIOTS

A Israeli woman is forcibly evacuated by Israeli police from the Neve Dekalim settlement in the Gaza Strip August 17.

military operation outside of war—was finished in only a few days.

“While the settlers' overall restraint should be recognized, the bulk of the credit can only go to the [Israeli Defense Force],” Oren wrote. “Never before has an army relocated so many fellow-citizens against their will and in the face of continuing terror attacks with so extraordinary a display of courage, discipline and compassion.”

Thus, a fragile nation carved into itself.

Why? In the pursuit of peace.

This evacuation is thought to be a step toward achieving peace in the Middle East. Many view it as the first phase of Israel's retreat from land Palestinians want in order to establish their own state—which also includes the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Spoils of War

Prior to World War I, the area known as Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. When the British defeated the Turks in 1917, they occupied the region till the end of the war. In 1920, the League of Nations mandate over Palestine was given to Britain. This territory included what would become the State of Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In 1922, the League of Nations passed the Palestine Mandate, which specified the responsibility of Britain to “secure the establishment of the Jewish national home.” The British mandate of Palestine was dissolved in 1948.

On the day of Israel’s founding, Arab armies invaded the Jewish state. Following the war, Egypt remained in occupation of the Gaza Strip. The armistice agreements concluded between Israel and the aggressor Arabic nations reflected the temporary military position of early 1949. The Arab nations refused to negotiate a final settlement, avowing that they would not rest before achieving their declared aim of “throwing Israel into the sea.”

Israel gained formal recognition as a UN member in May 1949. Violating an express Security Council resolution, the Arab states continued to claim a “state of war” between them and Israel. This Arabic mindset found its outlet in Egypt’s closure of the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping, effectively blockading the straits of Tiran.

By 1956, Egypt had created a military alliance with the Arab states bordering Israel, and with their armies under its command, launched a powerful military buildup in the Sinai. In self-defense, Israel struck back in 1956 and broke the Suez blockade. Then, without allowing a final peace settlement, the two superpowers, Russia and the U.S., pressured Israel into withdrawing from the Suez. Israel did gain right of passage via the gulf and the Suez, however, and a UN force was



FOG OF WAR The smoke of battle rises behind Israeli tanks on the last day of the Six Day War of 1967, during which Israel captured the Gaza Strip.

established to patrol the Gaza Strip, the Sinai and the gulf entrance.

In 1967 Egypt summarily dismissed the UN force, reimposed the gulf blockade and amassed a powerful force in the Sinai desert. All previous international agreements went out the door and the world left tiny Israel to its fate. The result was the Six Day War. In one of the most astonishing actions in military history, the little nation of Israel defeated the combined Arab might and reclaimed the Gaza Strip, along with the other areas the Arabs had previously occupied.

In the 1970s, the Israeli government created a wedge of settlements in the Gaza Strip to prevent an Egyptian-Palestinian build-up along the coast that could prove a threat to Israel. These settlements were built almost entirely on uninhabited sand dunes.

Today, however, “It seems the world has forgotten that those areas were *won in a war* where the Arabs were trying to annihilate the Jews” (Gerald Flurry, *Jerusalem in Prophecy*). And that the Arabs still have the same goal.

We are tired of fighting. We will leave our homes, our businesses, our land. We've had enough; we're getting out. Please, just give us some peace.

A top Hamas figure in Gaza, Ahmed al-Bahar, was a little more pointed in his assessment of the withdrawal: “Israel has never been in such a state of retreat and weakness as it is today following more than four years of the *intifada*. Hamas’s heroic attacks exposed the weakness and volatility of the impotent Zionist security establishment. The withdrawal marks the end of the Zionist dream and is a sign of the moral and psychological decline of the Jewish state. We believe that the resistance is the only way to pressure the Jews” (*New York Sun*, August 9).

The Arab militants first saw this approach work in southern Lebanon, when Israeli troops withdrew in 2000. After years of terrorist attacks by Hezbollah, the price in violence became too great for Israel to remain there. In fact, some say it was that withdrawal that inspired the Palestinians to begin the *intifada* that

has yielded the same result in Gaza.

Though presented by Sharon as a strategic decision in the interests of Israel’s security, the withdrawal is seen as a momentous victory for terrorism by the Palestinians. A joint Israeli-Palestinian public opinion poll in June found that 71 percent of Palestinians believe Israel’s Gaza withdrawal is a triumph for the Palestinian armed struggle against Israel.

Gaza’s Hamas leader, Mahmoud Zahar, stated in an interview, “I stress that the resistance was what drove the occupation out of the Gaza Strip” (*Jerusalem Post*, August 22).

To the Palestinians, 400 attacks in Gaza over the past five years have paid great dividends. And how can they *not* view it this way? Does anyone believe Israel would have given up conquered territory to its enemy if 1,200 of its people hadn’t been killed in the past four years? The message from Israel to the Palestinians is, *terrorism works*.

“It certainly wasn’t good Palestinian democrats who believe in the rule of law

that persuaded Israel to give up Gaza,” said Arnaud de Borchgrave (United Press International, August 17).

In Hamas’s words, on a banner in downtown Gaza City, “Four years of sacrifice beat 10 years of negotiations.”

The disengagement was accompanied by mass celebrations by the Palestinians; chief among them were members of Hamas and other terrorist organizations.

“You can tell a lot about a political or historical event by looking at who’s celebrating it—and in this case it should be obvious that anything which gives Hamas encouragement is most assuredly a dangerous and foolhardy mistake” (IsraelNationalNews.com, August 16).

As the withdrawal from Gaza began, various Palestinian terrorist groups held rallies and marches of celebration and victory. Masked gunmen marched in a Hamas procession; hundreds of Democratic Front supporters marched through the streets; a Fatah/al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades procession was attended by hundreds of armed men; supporters of the

Popular Resistance Committees fired guns into the air and burned Israeli and American flags; Palestinian Islamic Jihad held a procession that included a military show by its terrorist-operative wing; a Fatah faction also had a parade featuring a military show and gunfire. In addition, Islamic Jihad put on an unprecedented military seaborne parade to celebrate its “victory.” About 50 boats filled with militants wielding assault rifles, rocket-launchers and Palestinian flags sat off the Gaza coast.

The weeks that followed saw repeated victory parades and shows of military force by the various terrorist groups. The day after the last of the Israeli troops vacated the Gaza Strip, Hamas held its largest rally ever. Spokesmen for the different groups made clear their commitment not to disarm but rather to continue their armed struggle against Israel.

If Israel hoped to appease the Palestinians by feeding them land, retreating from Gaza was a clear and abject failure.

Abbas's True Colors

The Gaza pullout has reinforced the trend of Palestinian popular support swinging toward Hamas and other terrorist groups. Hamas in particular is likely to perform well in next January's Palestinian parliamentary elections, thanks to the role it is perceived to have played in securing Israel's retreat.

Though the hopes of many for peace are still pinned on Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, he has virtually no control over Palestinian terrorist organizations, and he apparently risks losing the sympathy of his people by taking a peaceful approach.

In fact, if we take Abbas as his word, he shares the same goals as the terrorists—and even sympathizes with their methods. In the days following the Gaza pullout, he practically sounded like a Hamas spokesman. To a gathering of Palestinians who had been wounded in hostilities against Israel, he said: “The credit for the evacuation is for you and for the martyrs who sacrificed themselves and gave their lives for the homeland” (Associated Press, August 22). IsraelNationalNews.com reported September 4 that, in a recent speech to Gaza students, Abbas patently praised suicide bombers: “They receive their reward in the Garden of Eden,” he said, reminding the students that martyrs and suicide terrorists “brought about the withdrawal from Gaza.”

Thus, even this “moderate” politician,

who enjoys the confidence of the United States, has openly acknowledged that terrorism works. How much of an actual difference is there between him and the terrorist groups he is meant to rein in?

Gaza's New Tenants

With all Israeli military installations dismantled and troops gone from the Gaza Strip, terrorists are now free to build up stockpiles of weapons and launch rocket, mortar or missile attacks into Israel.

And that is just what they have done.

Immediately after the IDF completed its evacuation, thousands of Palestinians flooded into the former Jewish settlements, destroying, vandalizing, burning and looting. They even destroyed greenhouses and an industrial center donated by pro-peace groups intended to help the Gazan Palestinians by providing 26,000 jobs and a dependable source of export revenue. Despite pledges to Israel guaranteeing post-evacuation security, Palestinian Authority and Egyptian police did little to stop the rampage. Not a good sign of things to come.

Terrorist groups exploited the period of disorder to transfer hundreds of terrorists, along with their weapons, from neighboring Egypt into the Gaza Strip. Just a few days of weapons smuggling included hundreds of anti-aircraft missiles, anti-tank rockets and bomb components, according to Israeli military assessments.

As the Israeli Defense Force completed its withdrawal on September 12, two Kasam rockets were fired from Gaza over the border into Israel—one landing close to a tent city of expelled Gazan Jews, the other near a city in southern Israel.

Of course, Israel reserves the right to enter at will to counter any threats. But that will come at its own increased price—possibly an unleashing of a deadly round of terrorist strikes on Israel.

In a not-very-veiled threat, the military wing of Hamas posted a statement on its website in August that included: “Any Zionist violation of the liberated territories after the withdrawal, be it a violation of the land, sea or air space, will be encountered by force. We reiterate that the presence of any Zionist soldier or settler in the liberated territories, crossings or border areas would mean fighting this presence with all available means” (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, August 20).

(Thus we see what a “liberated” Palestinian-controlled area is to be: *completely devoid of Jews*. Meanwhile, of course, within the Jewish state Arabs are free to

live, work, vote, even seek government office. Consider: How would the world respond if the Jews became adamant about eliminating Arabs from within their borders?)

Apart from home-grown Palestinian violence that the Gaza withdrawal will no doubt promote, there is also the probability of an influx of reinforcements. Surrounding Arab states see the withdrawal as an opportunity to offload some of the Palestinian refugees in their countries. Considering the lack of jobs available in Gaza and the resulting social discontent, terrorist recruitment among the local population is likely to flourish.

As for controlling the Strip's borders, Israel, again, faces a no-win situation. If it allows the Palestinians to operate a seaport and airport, it opens the door to smuggled weapons. If it doesn't allow open borders, the territory will stagnate economically even more, providing a breeding ground for terrorism.

Then there is the potential problem of the Egyptian/Gaza border, with the Israelis turning over border security duties to the Egyptians. Egyptians harbor a deep and age-old resentment against the Jews. Despite a certain “peace” existing between the two countries today, armaments have steadily flowed over the Egyptian border to the Palestinians for years. Though the present Egyptian government cooperates with Israel in trying to control the border, if a more radical Islamic government comes to power in that country (which we can expect to happen at some point), Israel's security situation could suddenly become far more desperate.

Israel's Desperation

Clearly, as Israel retreats, violence is bound to advance. Few dispute this reality.

One Israeli politician recently said, “A unilateral withdrawal is not a recipe for peace. It is a recipe for war.” These words weren't uttered by a staunch opponent of the Gaza withdrawal. They are the words of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon—the one who fought half his own cabinet to make it happen.

In early 2003, in fact, it was the very issue of withdrawal from Gaza that gained Sharon the prime ministry—as an *opponent* of it. (Later the very same year, Sharon joined his political rivals on the issue.)

It was Sharon who actually led the campaign to persuade Israelis to settle there after the Six Day War in 1967. For the last 40 years, it was he who *drove* the

campaign to settle Israelis on land that the Palestinians wanted to claim—working in various ministerial posts building settlements for over 20 years, and as settlements minister under Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

In one instance, in the mid-1970s when he was an adviser to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, he even joined squatters in resisting soldiers who had come to evacuate them from land in the West Bank (*Advertiser*, August 20).

A commentator in one Israeli paper wrote, “We will not forget, Mr. Sharon, your recurring statements year after year: ‘Go to the hilltops,’ ‘Settlement protects the State of Israel,’ ‘Settlement protects the coastline’ and so forth” (*Hatzofe*, August 17).

Sharon’s about-face epitomizes the desperation of Israel and the futility of its current strategy.

A measure of the truly muddled thinking behind the Gaza retreat came on June 9, in a speech by Israel’s Vice Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to the Israel Policy Forum in New York. He said that withdrawing from Gaza “will bring more security, greater safety, much more prosperity, and a lot of joy for all the people that live in the Middle East.” He then explained, “And we all desperately need it. *We are tired of fighting, we are tired of being courageous, we are tired of winning, we are tired of defeating our enemies, we want that we will be able to live in an entirely different environment of relations with our enemies. We want them to be our friends, our partners, our good neighbors.*”

Truly, Israel is in *retreat*.

In the face of enemies bent on its destruction, *it hardly stands a chance of survival* if it is not only tired of being a target, but also tired of *winning!*

Addled and weary, Sharon has trashed his reputation as a warrior, and, like his predecessors, taken a reckless route. He has pushed increasingly daring measures to try to break the deadlock with the Palestinians: building a security wall to separate the Jews from the Arabs; releasing Arab prisoners from Israeli jails—and now the evacuation of Jewish settlements.

Sharon’s reasoning, it is said, is that this withdrawal will de-

crease international pressure (particularly from the U.S., its primary patron) on Israel and thus make it easier to hold on to the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

This is very mistaken thinking. The U.S. itself faces a war against Islamic terrorism, and one of the stated reasons for the anti-Americanism driving the terrorism is America’s support for Israel. As America’s problems intensify, we can expect to see the U.S. question more and more whether its support of Israel—against Arabs—is really worth it.

Then there is pressure from Europe, which Bible prophecy indicates will become more involved in the Middle East peace process as time goes on. The European Union has made quite clear its position on the matter of Israel’s territorial concessions. Last October, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said that the Gaza withdrawal would be a good first step but that it must be followed by a full and complete withdrawal from the West Bank and East Jerusalem (*Jerusalem Newswire*, Oct. 24, 2004).

Will even a reinvigorated terrorist campaign stop the international community from pressuring Israel to compromise further? Not if history is our guide. As one commentator declared, “Untroubled by facts, [Israel’s critics]

will demand further Israeli withdrawals” (*New York Times*, August 9).

As for Sharon’s own stated intentions not to give up the larger settlements in the West Bank or Jerusalem, his backflip on the Gaza settlements belies such pledges.

In fact, the history of Israeli politics since the start of the misnamed peace process is strewn with instances of Israel’s leaders going back on promises in desperate hopes of achieving a state of peace.

Ironically, the fact that the withdrawal was relatively smooth and quick—despite expectations of possible violence and a prolonged operation—could actually work against Sharon. Instead of highlighting the huge sacrifice Israel has made, thereby decreasing pressure on it to go further, it could do just the opposite. Certainly, for the Israeli settlers who wanted the withdrawal to be so painful and politically costly that no government would ever attempt such a disengagement again, the success of the withdrawal is undoubtedly a huge setback.

And of course, it has given the Palestinians the assurance that Israel is quite capable of retreating from land they claim as their own.

Jerusalem Next?

Though the Palestinians will certainly accept the gift of the Gaza Strip, *Israel’s concession will do nothing to slow them in their drive for the control of Jerusalem.* “Our march will stop only in Jerusalem,” asserted the Palestinian Authority’s prime minister, Ahmed Qureia (*New York Sun*, August 9).

At a mass rally in Gaza the week of the withdrawal, about 10,000 Palestinian Arabs celebrated in the streets, singing, dancing and chanting, “Today Gaza, tomorrow Jerusalem.”

The Palestinians also make no secret of the tactics they plan to use. “Now, after the victory in the Gaza Strip, we will transfer the struggle to the West Bank and later to Jerusalem,” said Hamas’s leader in the Gaza Strip, Mahmoud Zahar (*Jerusalem Post*, August 17).

Further, Zahar stated: “Neither the liberation of the Gaza Strip, nor the liberation of the West Bank or even Jerusalem will suffice us. Hamas will pursue the armed struggle until the liberation of all our lands. We don’t

Pursuing Peace



recognize the State of Israel or its right to hold on to one inch of Palestine. Palestine is an Islamic land belonging to all the Muslims” (ibid.).

How much clearer could he have made it?

The Israeli withdrawal from four settlements in the northern West Bank will make way for Hamas and these other militant groups. Hamas has announced its plan to move its base of operations to the West Bank. The Popular Resistance Committees, an alliance of various Palestinian terror groups operating in the Gaza Strip, is transferring its rocket-

What was supposed to be a step toward peace will more likely prove to be the spark igniting another intifada.

making and other military technology to the West Bank.

Israeli military officers reported that, since early in the year, Palestinian terror groups have sought to deploy heavy weapons into the West Bank, with the assistance of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah.

Former Labor Party Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami is worried about what the Palestinians may do next: “A unilateral retreat perpetuates Israel’s image as a country that runs away under pressure,” he stated. “In Fatah and Hamas, they will assume that they must prepare for their third intifada—this time in [the West Bank].”

What was supposed to be a step toward peace will more likely prove to be the spark igniting another *intifada*.

What Is to Come

Israel’s critics say that all the Palestinians want is for Israel to give them the “occupied” territories. That all their hate-mongering, suicide bombings, terrorist attacks will stop if they could just create their own state.

But the Arab-Israeli conflict can never be solved by territorial concessions. Quite simply, the Arabs have a fundamental problem with Israel’s very *existence*. Eighty percent of Palestinian Arabs deny the Jewish state’s right to exist. As long as Israel exists, Arabs will seek its destruction. To believe anything else is to deny history, reality and the Arabs’ own declarations.

Territorial concessions will always be seen as a sign of Israeli weakness and galvanize the Arabs in their quest for full victory. After Israel’s Gaza concession, terror and violence will only get worse in this war-ravaged nation!

As Gerald Flurry states in *Jerusalem in Prophecy*, “Through the peace process, Judah has become vulnerable to the enemy, with very little freedom to strike back. ... Soon the whole world will see what the Arabs saw all along—that the peace process is a wound from which the Jews will never recover!”

The Palestinians have their eyes set on Jerusalem. *No concessions, talks or agreements can ever stop them from seeking control over this much-coveted city.*

In this, the Arabs are prophesied to succeed. Referring to Zechariah 14:2, editor in chief Gerald Flurry forewarns, “East

Jerusalem—one half of the city—will be conquered by the Palestinians!” (ibid.).

Zechariah 14:1-2 state, “Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”

Mr. Flurry explained, “This prophecy revolves around the Day of the Lord—the *end time*. We are living in that time right now.

“Christ prophesied that He would ‘gather all nations’ to battle Him in Jerusalem. Then He makes what might appear to be a strange statement. One half of Jerusalem is to be taken captive. THAT CRISIS TRIGGERS A SERIES OF EVENTS THAT LEADS TO THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST! One half of Jerusalem being taken captive is like the first domino to fall, leading to Christ’s return and battle against all nations in Jerusalem! It all begins and ends in Jerusalem. But what a glorious end!

“The nation of Israel was established in 1948. At that time the Jews only had roughly *one half* of Jerusalem. The Arabs had East Jerusalem. Zechariah 14 is also a prophecy that the Jews would conquer all Jerusalem, because in order for *half the city to be taken* just before Christ returns, the whole city has to be controlled by the Jews now. That happened in the 1967 war.

“So the prophecy in Zechariah 14:1-2, which has not yet been fulfilled, has to happen between 1967 and the Great Tribulation. Jerusalem is going to be *totally* captured in the Tribulation (Revelation 11:1-2). Many prophecies tell us that.

“Today the Arabs live in roughly one half of Jerusalem. They just don’t control it—*yet*” (*Trumpet*, November 1997).

The tragedy currently unfolding within the embattled State of Israel brings the day of the fulfillment of this prophecy nearer.

Israel’s deadly *wound* will bleed that little nation to death.

Look again at Hosea 5:13: “When Ephraim [speaking of modern Britain] saw his sickness, and Judah [today’s Israel] saw his *wound*, then sent Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.” Finally, in a desperate diplomatic frenzy (involving Britain), Israel will cry out to the *Assyrian*—the presently uniting European power with Germany at its head—for protection as its last hope for survival as a nation. It will, one last time, try to remedy its plight through a peace pact.

“The Israelis will finally see that their peace pact with the Palestinians has failed. The Jews really only see the *effect* of their wound. They don’t see the *cause*. That is why they turn to Germany for another peace pact! This time they place their trust in an even greater enemy! Once again they fail to trust God” (*Jerusalem in Prophecy*).

Catholic Europe has been waiting for years for just such a request. By then bristling with military might, it will respond to the call—ready to finally fulfill its ambition in the Holy Land. With anarchy reigning between Arab and Jew, Europe will intercede and impose “peace” on the region. “He [the European power] shall enter also into the glorious land [Jerusalem], and many countries shall be overthrown” (Daniel 11:41). Jesus Christ Himself prophesied that this intervention would be anything but peaceful: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem COMPASSED WITH ARMIES, then know that *the desolation thereof is nigh*” (Luke 21:20). What will appear to be a sincere effort to establish security in the Holy City will end up being a grisly repetition of the Crusades!

The stage is already being set. But as the outlook for Israel grows more bleak, the day nears when Jerusalem finally—rather than being a source of conflict—will become the focal point and the source of a genuine global peace. ■

With reporting by **DONNA GRIEVES**

Want to learn more? Request a copy of our free booklet *Jerusalem in Prophecy*.



IRAN

40,000 Human Bombs Ready

ON JULY 2, AL ARABIYA TV went to air with a story detailing the movement and recruitment of Iranian suicide bombers. The terrifying report was barely covered by Western media.

Since early last year, the Iranian movement called the World Islamic Organization's Headquarters for Remembering the Shahids (martyrs) has been recruiting and training suicide bombers for assaults throughout the West. According to the Al Arabiya broadcast, the volunteers of the movement "said they wanted to carry out martyrdom operations to liberate Islamic lands and stated that so far 40,000 'time bombs' have been recruited" (Iran Press Service, July 15). With 40,000 suicide bombers signed up and more on the way, this isn't a small, irrelevant movement. This is a newsworthy story.

In the Al Arabiya story, a spokesman for the group said that "since the movement's beginning a year and a half ago, he has been busy signing up recruits, organizing conventions and training members for martyrdom operations."

The Iranian government claims it is playing no role in the development of terrorist groups. But consider the facts for a moment.

"The organization's supporters and those participating in its activities include public figures such as Mehdi Kouchak-Zadeh, from the prominent conservative party Coalition of Iran's Developers, which backed Iranian [President] Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Revolutionary Guards officers such as General Salami, head of The

Revolutionary Guards Headquarters for Strategic Operations" (Iran Press Service, op. cit.). Don't believe the lie that the Iranian government is uninvolved with terrorist movements within its borders.

"[T]here is no doubt that they have the full support from powerful hardline senior clerics, as they are allowed to recruit in the open and use facilities from the Revolutionary Guards for the training of the militants, giving them theoretical and tactical and operations instructions, including [for] suicide operations, like those carried [out] in Madrid and London" (ibid.).

There is no mistaking that Tehran fully supports the terrorist element within the nation. In a public speech on July 25, President Ahmadinejad praised mar-

Iranian Arms Smuggled Into Iraq

A TRUCK FILLED WITH high-tech explosives was stopped early August at a checkpoint on Iraq's border with Iran. The fact that shipments of weapons are being smuggled into Iraq from Iran sparked concern at the Pentagon. U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reacted to the news soberly: "It's a problem for the Iraqi government," he said. "It's a problem for the coalition forces. It's a problem for the international community. And ultimately it's a problem for Iran" (BBC News, August 9).

Though the Iranian government quickly denied being involved, U.S. officials believe the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps is responsible for the smuggling. Of course, the lead-



READY TO EXPLODE Masked members of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades march in the West Bank city of Nablus.

tyrdom operations and stated that Islam would conquer the world.

In a separate announcement, the president's spiritual adviser, Ayatollah Mohammad Misbah Yazdi, called on Iranians to carry out further terrorist attacks and register in terrorist movements. "Acts of martyrdom are the great pinnacle

of the [Iranian] people and the height of its courage," his announcement read. "The commander [Iranian leader Ayatollah] Khamenei has announced registration for the forces of martyrdom in all of Iran's provinces, in order to defend Islam and to fight the enemies of Islam. Our sacred organization, [the organization of martyrs belonging] to the Islamic Republic, is

ing mullahs fully support the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, which was created by decree from the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979.

While acknowledging that it is unclear who exactly acquired and transported the weapons cache into Iraq, Rumsfeld said, "What you do know ... is the Iranians did not stop it from coming in" (CNN, August 10). He specifically referred to Iran's failure to stop weapons smuggling as being "unhelpful."

There are several points of interest in this revelation.

First, Iran has been stoking the Iraqi insurgency. Now, this may appear contrary to conventional wisdom—since the insurgency is primarily fueled by Sunni Muslims, and Iran is Shiite. But consider what is happen-

ing on the ground in Iraq.

Insurgents are making life very difficult for the American-led coalition forces. Their objective is not to *win* on the battlefield—in that realm they are clearly outmatched. All they have to do is *outlast* their opponents; they seek merely to make the costs of America's presence in Iraq outweigh the benefits, and thus expedite America's inevitable retreat (clearly the U.S. won't remain in Iraq forever; the insurgents just want to speed up the timetable). In this objective, it appears they are beginning to succeed: Grappling with a rising death count and no let-up in violence in the streets, the U.S. is now talking about pulling out a significant number of its troops sometime next year.

Does Iran benefit from

EUROPE

Imams Ousted

RHETORIC EMANATING from both the Vatican and extremist Islamic groups is boiling over in light of the terrorist bombings of recent months.

But it is not words alone—a Catholic-dominated Europe is taking *action* against Islam.

It appears the July 7 London bombings were a wake-up call to some powerful politicians.

The *Washington Times* of August 4 described a campaign underway across Europe to expel radical Islamic clerics who incite extremism and condone terrorism. This is an effort “to root out extremist imams [Islamic leaders] who help radicalize disenchanted Muslim youths and recruit them for violent causes.”

In early August, eight fundamentalist Palestinian preachers were expelled from Italy. France deported an

Algerian imam who was arrested in “a preventative anti-terror operation.” Another Algerian was expelled from France for preaching inflammatory sermons. More deportations are expected to follow. “We will not keep people on our territory who issue calls to hatred, to violence and to the disrespect of our democratic values,” French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy stated.

At the same time, more stringent legislation is being passed in European countries to make prosecution easier. Austria passed a law allowing the deportation of Muslims who preach sermons that are “a danger to public security.” In the Netherlands, legislation has been proposed that would outlaw the praising of terrorism, and France



ROBERT MICHAEL/AP/GETTY IMAGES
CONTROVERSIAL A mosque in Germany

has announced plans to strengthen its anti-terror laws.

In early September, a Moroccan-born citizen of Denmark became the first person charged with instigating terrorism under a new anti-terrorism law in that country. The law, which limits free speech, “illustrates how democracies across Europe are adopting tougher measures in an era of rising extremist violence, despite protests that civil liberties are being sacrificed in the process” (*New York Sun*, August 30).

These moves in Europe to crack down on Muslims who preach hatred are just a precursor of an infinitely more aggressive campaign.

The Roman Catholic Church’s influence over Europe is prophesied to increase. As it does, we can expect to see the Catholic Continent’s attitude toward radical Islam become more hardened.

See Gerald Flurry’s article “Are Two Great Religions About to Trigger Nuclear War?” in our September-October issue for more on where this confrontation will lead.

intended for those interested in carrying out *shahada* [martyrdom]” (Middle East Media Research Institute, July 29).

The Iranian government has barely attempted to hide the fact that it condones and facilitates terrorism, yet America and the West appease and compromise with Tehran. And the media generally refuses to report such critical news.

As long as Iran is allowed to remain the beating heart of terrorism, the Western world’s efforts to destroy terrorism will be futile. Iran and this world’s terrorist movements will grow bolder, inflicting greater pain on the West as they do.

Ironically, it is the very boldness that is driving the success of Iran—and terrorism—today that will ultimately lead to its destruction. The terrorists’ growing impudence toward the Roman Catholic Church and Europe will soon set off a clash of two empires. Watch events build

this development? Absolutely.

Tehran wants nothing more than an expanded influence within Iraq. This is perhaps the most important immediate stepping-stone to the mullahs’ goal of regional

supremacy. America’s presence in Iraq is an obvious hindrance to achieving that objective. Certainly a U.S. pullout would open Iraq to greater influence by Iran.

Thus, there is a perverse logic in supplying arms to the Sunni insurgency, even though it is making life harder on the fledgling Shiite government. The important function of the insurgency, as far as Iran is concerned, is that it turns the screws on the U.S., forcing Washington to think seriously of shrinking its presence in Iraq. So is it possible, even probable, that the news is true? We at the *Trumpet* believe it is.

But perhaps even more interesting than the fact that Iran could very well be arming Iraq-based terrorists is the sheer mildness of

Washington’s response.

Iran holds enormous influence in Iraq and therefore plays a critical role in the U.S.’s plan to stabilize the nation. Without secure borders, coalition forces will never be able to stem the insurgency and bring security to Iraq.

Evidence of Iran directly supplying terrorists with arms—even armor-piercing shaped charges specifically designed and constructed to target American soldiers—is just the latest in a mountain of proof that Iran is the greatest state sponsor of terrorism in the world.

“Unhelpful” is feeble language employed by a “superpower” with no credible intention of forcefully dealing with the brazen threat emerging from Iran.



GETTY IMAGES
BORDER Muntheria, Iraq, is one of the three entry points open between Iran and Iraq.



REUTERS

TERRORISM

Oil and the Terror Premium

EVEN BEFORE HURRICANE Katrina, oil prices were skyrocketing. Contributing to their rise is a \$5-to-\$20-per-barrel “terror premium.”

The price of oil in the U.S.—a net importer of oil—is subject to conditions far outside its borders and its control. Political instability in Venezuela, Nigeria and Iraq, as well as the heightened risk of terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia, cause great concern for oil companies. Doing business in these areas is risky for these companies, which must face corrupt governments, destruction of facilities from terrorists (such as in Iraq), and internal strife.

Stratfor noted this point: “The energy markets are dealing with a terror premium from the fear that the next militant attack could come anywhere, and a war premium from the Iraqi situation. Taking into account the heightened global awareness of political violence, the world has a combined premium anywhere from \$5 a barrel to \$20 a barrel, depending on what analysis you rely upon” (August 19).

According to *Congressional Quarterly*, this “terror premium,” which has contributed to record-high oil prices, is likely to remain (July 27). With growth in demand outstripping supply and spare oil capacity dwindling down to 2 percent of global demand, the

oil market is highly susceptible to price hikes.

The fact that spare-oil-producing capacity has dwindled to 1.5 million barrels a day means that a single terrorist attack on a major supply line could cause a massive shortage. Experts figure it would take a spare capacity of 6 million barrels per day to ensure that no single terrorist attack would cause a shortage.

In an oil crisis simulation called Oil Shockwave, co-sponsored by Securing America’s Future Energy (SAFE) and the National Commission on Energy Policy, experts sought to discover what would happen to oil production as a result of terrorist attacks and regional instability. According to SAFE President Robbie Diamond, the simulation proved “that even relatively small reductions in oil supply will result in tremendous national security and economic problems for the country” (PR Newswire, June 24).

The simulation of a supply disruption of just 3.5 million barrels of oil, in a global market of 83 million barrels, resulted in gas prices rising above \$5 a gallon, oil prices rising to \$161 a barrel, a decline of the gross domestic product for two consecutive quarters, and the U.S. current account deficit soaring to \$1.087 trillion. Such an economic crisis could eas-

ily launch the U.S. economy into a recession and create an economic tsunami the world over.

The effects of an oil supply disruption would be incredible and devastating. So what terrorist organization wouldn’t be tempted to try it?

Ironically, high oil prices help fund terrorists. Iran, the biggest state sponsor of terrorism, holds 10 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves and is OPEC’s second-

largest producer. Is there any doubt that Iran uses a portion of that money to fund terrorist training camps and equip terrorists?

Four years after the war on terrorism began, the U.S. still lacks the will to confront terrorism’s biggest sponsor. As a result, terrorism still runs rampant with the funding and support it needs.

The experts are right. The terror premium is here to stay.

Russia, China Draw Closer



AFP/GETTY

CHINA BEACH Chinese marines storm a beachhead during joint military exercises with Russian troops.

RUSSIA AND CHINA carried out joint military exercises in August with naval ships, bombers, fighter planes and 10,000 troops. Experts say these exercises weren’t really about military training though: They were intended to show how close Russia and China have become.

The scope of these exercises provided exactly the bold, dramatic step needed to grab the world’s attention—especially regarding the often-threatened island of Taiwan. A senior Chinese military official even suggested the

exercises were intended to deter the United States from taking action if the island moved toward independence and China responded with a military attack. A strong military ally for China clearly threatens Taiwanese independence.

As for the Russians, they have now demonstrated that they can carry out major military operations in at least two arenas simultaneously. Stratfor reported on August 16 that Russian President Vladimir Putin attended the MAKS 2005 international air show in Moscow demonstrating Russia’s most advanced

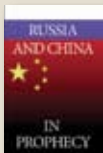
U.S. Losing Foothold

SITUATED A STONE'S throw from some of the world's most roguish nations, Central Asia possesses unique strategic value. This mountainous territory, nestled close to Russia, China, Afghanistan and Iran, has played an important role in America's military ventures in the Middle East and Asia, thanks to U.S.

aerospace systems—before traveling to observe the military exercises. “Both exercises serve to reinforce a powerful message to the United States that Russia is still strong and has modern, high-tech means to defend its national interests at the time of a U.S.-led geopolitical offensive against Russia. The exercises are thus intended to show that Russia could successfully resort to military means to stop Washington's encroachment into its adjacent areas, and that Russia has strong allies ready and able to cooperate militarily with Moscow.”

The *Trumpet* has forecasted this Sino-Russian alliance for over a decade, following after Herbert W. Armstrong, who did the same for decades before that. How did he know, so far in advance, what we would only now see in our headlines?

Bible prophecies spell out the joint role Russia and China will play in climactic end-time events. To read about these prophecies and the events that lead to them, please request a free copy of our booklet *Russia and China in Prophecy*.



military bases there.

But not everyone is pleased with the U.S. military presence and influence in the soft underbelly of Russia and China. Recent efforts aim to oust America from the region.

Meeting in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, in early July, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which includes four Central Asian nations (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan), met with the presidents of Russia and China to discuss how to clean up America's footprints in the region.

A report from intelligence firm Stratfor detailed the importance of the conference. “With the jihadist war declining in importance, the United States has returned to its more traditional geopolitical concerns of restraining Russia and China,” it said. “In doing so, Washington is more aggressively seeking regime change in Central Asia as well. *This directly presures not only the Central Asian governments, but also ... Russia's southern flank and China's western flank* ... Furthermore, with the United States already pushing hard against Russia and China—and Central Asia as well—the SCO members' governments undoubtedly recognize that they must act quickly to collectively bolster their regional positions if they are to block



NOT WELCOME The Uzbek government has called for the U.S. to vacate its Karshi-Khanabad Air Base in Uzbekistan.

the United States, *which is another reason for action at the July summit*” (June 28, emphasis ours).

Renowned for their anti-American sentiment, Russia and China exploited the SCO conference to stir up resentment toward America among the nations of Central Asia. And it worked.

Within two weeks of the July conference, both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan called for the eviction of the U.S. bases presently operating within their nations. While Kyrgyzstan altered its decision and allowed the U.S. to remain in the nation for a short while longer, thanks to a speedy “repair mission” by U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Kyrgyz leaders made it clear that the U.S. military has no long-term future in the country.

Uzbekistan wasn't so amiable. “Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry notified the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, that U.S. forces would be evicted from the Karshi-Khanabad air base, the only U.S. military facility in the country ... The eviction notice gives the United States 180 days to completely vacate the base” (ibid., July 30).

America's presence in Moscow's and Beijing's backyard has gone a long way in keeping these two nations in check—even curbing their efforts to dominate the surrounding regions (not to mention helping to facilitate America's war in Afghanistan and its fight against terror). The eviction of America from Central Asia will constitute a severe geopolitical defeat for the U.S.

“The picture, then, remains gloomy for the United States in Central Asia. ... With the United States on one side, Russia and China on the other, and the Central Asian states in the middle, a chess match has begun to determine who will dominate the region” (ibid., July 26).

Continue to watch for alliances to form, specifically intended to marginalize America's global influence. Dangerous anti-American sentiment pervades international politics as never before. As the anti-America wave rolls across the globe, the U.S. finds itself dangerously short of allies while simultaneously getting embroiled in an increasing number of controversies and wars. Its military will not be able to stand such pressure much longer.

EDUCATION

Miseducation of America's College Students

WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING in today's colleges and universities?

A couple of new books attempt to get to the bottom of the question. What becomes apparent is that for both students and faculty, the very function of universities as places of *learning* seems increasingly archaic.

The average student spends 12 hours a week in class and 13 hours a week (supposedly) studying. So what do students do the rest of the time? It may come as no surprise, but these books contend that, apart from working off-campus jobs, students party wildly, get drunk, "hook up," and participate in other such unhealthy activities. They largely choose their classes according to what fits their schedule—or their social life (i.e. avoiding early morning or Friday classes). Heavy drinking often begins on Thursday night or earlier. Alcohol poisoning fatalities have increased drastically.

The solution the education system has come up with is to fill the students' lives with extra-curricular programs to "keep them out of trouble."

In an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, Naomi Schaefer Riley, referring to the connection between the rise of drinking on campus in recent decades and the introduction of grade inflation, suggests another, more fundamental, solution.

"Experience shows that students who regularly fall down drunk or drag themselves around campus hung over are rarely prepared for class. What if it became hard to get good grades in college

without devoting, say, at least 40 hours a week to attending classes *and actually studying for them?* One suspects that the alcohol problem—and many problems derived from idleness—would sort themselves out" (August 25).

True: Rather than insisting on achievement—on studying and learning—educators have simply lowered the bar. For example, one of the above-mentioned books was written by a professor who, after going back

to school for a year before writing her book, came to the conclusion that because reading is not a priority for students, in the future she would assign her students less to read.

This is the kind of thinking that will ensure the education system becomes ever more inept. The drop in edu-

cational standards of recent years, while perhaps disguising the problem for a while, has perpetuated it. The incentive for students to study hard in order to achieve is becoming a thing of the past.

It seems our modern education system has for the most part forgotten its purpose: to *educate!*

But while educational standards are a huge part of the problem, they are by no means the whole story. Read our July 2005 article "The Ailing State of American Universities" to find out more on the state of the U.S. educational system and what the true solution is.



DREAMSTIME

Teacher Dropouts

COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES work hard to limit school dropout rates. Meanwhile a more damaging dropout rate is rising—that of teachers.

A recent study shows 40 percent of public school teachers in the United States will retire within the next five years. According to the National Center for Education, this rate is greater among high school teachers.

Granted, over a third of teachers are 50 or older, but many admit that they had more in mind than age when making their decisions. The three next most common reasons include low pay, administrative hassles and classroom management issues.

A couple of these reasons are nothing new. Teaching has always been a low-paying profession. Most teachers recognize this fact and accept it before they take their job—forgoing big money in favor of giving back to the community. Administrative hassles, though distracting and frustrating, also come with the territory and are common in other professions as well.

What isn't common in other professions is teenagers flinging verbal abuse and threats to 50-year-olds. Increasingly, "classroom management issues" are a big

factor in hastening the expiration of many teachers' careers.

In a survey taken in Texas, an inability to establish discipline in the classroom was cited as a major reason why 45 percent of the teachers are considering quitting (*Austin Chronicle*, August 12). Teachers are tired of dealing with problem children, especially when increasingly strict legal considerations tie their hands in handling the situations.

England paints an equally bleak picture, with more and more teachers there even fearing for their lives. According to the *Times Educational Supplement*, every nine minutes a teacher in England is verbally abused or physically assaulted. Classroom violence has become so problematic that schools are offering training programs to deal with it.

Struggles with classroom discipline—not to mention an increasing fear of students—no doubt are a major factor causing many teachers to leave school behind. This is a clear illustration of Isaiah's prophecy: "as for my people, children are their oppressors." As long as the modern nations of Israel continue to disobey God, teaching—the profession with perhaps the most adult-child interaction—will be more intimidating, stressful and, overall, more appealing to leave.



ISTOCK PHOTO

AFRICA

AIDS Orphans



REUTERS

CHILDREN BEGGING for pennies, working menial jobs, languidly sitting in the city streets—these are familiar sights in sub-Saharan Africa.

A continent ravaged by war, starvation and disease is also home to 43.4 million orphans, according to a 2004 UNICEF report, “Children on the Brink.” This represents a 30 percent increase since 1990, and the number will continue rising unless the spread of the AIDS virus slows down. Between 60 and 80 percent of Africa’s parentless children have been orphaned by AIDS taking their parents.

Many of these orphans, who are themselves at high risk for contracting AIDS, organize into gangs after being turned away by extended family. They are also vulnerable to human traffickers.

Even within organizations

set up to protect and care for the orphans, children don’t always fare much better. In Lagos, Nigeria, one such institution was caught forcing pregnant girls to hand over their babies, who were then sold to wealthy families. And this in a relatively stable nation. In places like war-torn Congo, helping 3 million orphans is a nearly impossible task.

There is a solution to this terrible problem. God is a Father who intends to bring all of those orphans into His very own Family—and soon.

For much more information about this world’s only sure hope, write for our free booklet *The Wonderful World Tomorrow—What It Will Be Like*.

TEENAGERS

An Epidemic of Teen Pregnancies

THE CANTON REPOSITORY recently reported that 65 out of the 490 female students attending an Ohio public high school are pregnant—a jaw-dropping 13 percent. Officials expect the number of pregnant students in the district to rise to 99 in grades 7 through 12 once school is in session.

Local health statistics are equally abysmal. According to the Canton Health Department, 104 out of 586 babies born in July to residents belong to mothers between the ages of 11 and 19.

The Timkin High School statistics run counter to the general trend in America’s teen birth rate, which has gone down over the

past two decades—largely because of the widespread availability and knowledge of contraceptives and the increase in non-pregnancy-causing sexual activity. But they are consistent with the fact that more teenagers are having sex than ever before—a trend evidenced by the explosive spread of STDs among youths.

Timkin High is implementing a program to address pregnancy, prevention and parenting. Yet these types of programs don’t deal with the problem’s root causes.

Some news agencies blame movies, TV and the like. Though such factors definitely contribute to the increase



ISTOCK PHOTO

FAMILY

Dinner: Most Important Meal

STATISTICS REVEAL THAT THE FAMILY DINNER IS THE most important meal of the day—for many reasons. Sadly, statistics also show that this all-important family meal is on the way out.

According to the *Opinion Journal*, “Fewer than one third of all children sit down to eat dinner with both parents on any given night” (July 29). In today’s age of convenience and both parents working, this meal is easily replaced with fast food, frozen dinners and take-out.

A recent study released by the Harvard Medical School reports that the chances of being overweight are 15 percent lower among those who eat dinner with their family on “most days” or “every day” (ibid.). This shouldn’t be a surprise, considering the on-the-go diet.

But the importance of family dinners extends far beyond physical health. Another study, from Columbia University, found that “teens from families that almost never eat dinner together are 72 percent more likely to use illegal drugs, cigarettes and alcohol than the average teen” (ibid.). That same study reports that those who eat dinner with their parents fewer than three times a week are more likely to smoke and drink than those who eat with their parents six times a week.

Dinner time provides a rare opportunity for the whole family to gather and converse about the day. It provides the occasion for parents to get involved in their children’s lives and build a strong family bond that children can lean on for the rest of their lives. Dinner time can help build close families. Make it a vital part of your family life. Don’t neglect the most important meal of the day.



LIQUID LIBRARY

in teenage sexual activity, the real problem comes down to a lack of right education—particularly at home. And that goes beyond education about birth control.

Teenagers in this permissive society who don’t know God’s purpose for sex will most likely indulge in harmful sexual activity—destroying any chance of a happy family life in the future. What is needed is this right

knowledge—and parents who are willing to teach it.

For more on this subject and the solutions, read “The New Teen Sex Epidemic” in our June 2002 issue.

To contribute possible items for this column, send them to **SOCIETYWATCH, P.O. Box 1099, Edmond, OK 73083**, or e-mail societywatch@theTrumpet.com. If you e-mail a story from a website, be sure to include the URL address.

Times of the Gentiles

YOUR ARTICLE ON “THE TIMES OF THE Gentiles” (Sept.-Oct.) quotes Luke 21:24 and the fall of Jerusalem to describe a future event. Sorry, these verses in Luke describe the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70—past history. “And Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” meant Jerusalem would come under the government control of non-Jews. This has been the case (with the exception of the Bar Kockbar revolt, A.D. 123-35) until Wednesday, June 7, 1967—when “the times of the Gentiles” were completed. Jerusalem today is entirely under Israel’s control. Luke’s Gospel underscores, as do Paul’s epistles, the need of Christians for steadfast patience and endurance during any trial or tribulation. Right now we can put the *parousia* [Christ’s return] on hold, my friends at the *Trumpet*, until we deal with the wake of problems left behind by Katrina and Ophelia.

Mike Nally—GARDEN GROVE, CALIF. We must let the Bible interpret itself. The prophecies in Luke 21, and their counterparts in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, could not be referring only to A.D. 70. Christ was talking to His disciples about the end time (Matthew 24:2-3 and Luke 21:6), and He referred to an obliteration of Jerusalem that would not leave “one stone upon another.” Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70 was only a type of the “times of the Gentiles” that are coming, for this invasion—however devastating—did in fact leave some stones of the temple intact (e.g. the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem). Christ was referring to a time where the survival of all Earth’s inhabitants was at stake (Matthew 24:21-22). Additionally, Christ told the Apostle John, as recorded in the book of Revelation, that the Gentiles would tread the holy city under foot for 42 months. This 3½-year period has not yet occurred. And though Jerusalem is under Jewish control as of right now, another prophecy in Zechariah shows that “half of the city shall go forth into captivity” (Zechariah 14:1-2) in the time leading up to the return of Jesus Christ with His saints to stand upon the Mount of Olives in power and glory (verses 3-5).

Healthy Food

WHILE I ENJOYED AND AGREED WITH most of your article on whole food in the August 2005 issue (“The Clean Life”), I had to write regarding one comment. On page 25, the author writes, “Ask a woman why she does

not feed her children steel-cut oats and natural brown rice. ‘Oh, that takes too much time!’ she will probably answer.”

This comment is way off base. The majority of the mothers today start their babies on whole foods such as carrots, peas, brown rice and sweet potatoes. The problem starts when the child is old enough for table food. The majority of the mothers I speak to have the same problems in getting their children to eat healthy. They cook healthy, but Dad often scoffs at the vegetables and eats just the meat and starch. Then the question comes up, “Why do I have to eat green stuff if Dad doesn’t?” Next the child enters school. At school it is not cool to eat your veggies. Kids make fun of kids who eat their peas. Even if you managed to avoid junk foods such as cupcakes, hotdogs and chicken nuggets at home, you can be sure they will be exposed to these foods at school.

A great way to see the eating habits of Americans is to work for a month as a waiter or waitress. I found that most, but not all, men order meat and starch, while most women order salads and soups. As far as the children go, it is hard to find a restaurant that has a healthy choice on the children’s menu.

In short, it is the man’s job as the head of the house to be a good example to his children when choosing what to eat. If he disrespects the wife’s efforts by not eating the healthy diet she prepares, then why should the children eat it? If you truly ask most women today why they don’t cook healthy, this is what you will most likely hear: “It’s a lost battle. I can’t fight this on my own, and I don’t get any support, so I’ve given up. It is too much of a power struggle. If I don’t have any junk food in the house, my husband complains that there is nothing to eat in this house.”

Marla Pereira—E-MAIL RESPONSE

I THOUGHT THIS ARTICLE WAS VERY interesting, and I believe [getting] back to basics is the real way to live. I think people forgot about simplicity as a way of being healthy and remaining healthy. With all of the fast food restaurants we forget that our bodies need water, fruit and veggies. ...

Felicia Miller—ILLINOIS

A Soldier Responds

I AM PRESENTLY SERVING IN IRAQ. I brought with me the December 2004

issue of the *Trumpet*. I read the editor’s article (“The Coming War Between Catholicism and Islam”), which really brought a lot of insight about the state of the world today and the course in which we are all going. The article caused me to look at things in a whole new way. It opened up my mind, and it made me thirst for more knowledge. ... Your magazine and books have opened up my mind and have answered a lot of questions I have had. It has also shed light upon the practices of my Roman Catholic faith as well. I have always wondered why we were not to worship idols, yet the church was full of saint statues that people would pray to. I never even understood why humans were considered saints or why we would pray to them, in addition to God. ...

Miguel Ortiz—E-MAIL RESPONSE

The Book

I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THE EYE-opener on Moses and Daniel (July and August issues). The Bible so clearly shows that Moses and Daniel are true prophets and workers of God. To any scholar that calls himself a scholar but can’t even read the signs of the times that are shown throughout Daniel—may our Lord have mercy on them and truly open their eyes. But if not, let them pick up a *Trumpet* with no charge and their eyes will be opened.

Jerry Gillum—CHARLESTON, MO.

Who Started World War I?

I WAS PLEASED ABOUT THE ARTICLE “Who Started World War I?” (August). ... Congratulations to Ryan Malone for giving us the details of the causes of the First World War. It takes a lot of guts to tell the truth without fear. ... You revealed the truth to me and all the *Trumpet*’s readers that Germany convened a “secret conference” to deliberately instigate World War I—a war which could have been prevented by Germany only if she had arbitrated the strife between Austria and Serbia.

Akwasi Boakye Yiadom—SANTASI, GHANA

Comments?

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Edmond, OK 73083

A Last Resort

What it takes for God to bring such destruction BY RYAN MALONE

IF THE *TRUMPET* IS RIGHT ABOUT ALL THIS, AND HURRICANE Katrina was in fact destruction measured and sent directly by an Almighty God, then you may have some serious questions.

This may rattle certain presumptions you have had about God—dismantle premises on which you have based your thinking about an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving Creator.

After all, an ENTIRE CITY was brought to ruin.

Could this be the same God of love, peace and joy professing Christians believe in today? Or is this more the work of a brooding, temperamental deity—ready to zap anyone with severe consequences for breaking His strict law?

Let us turn to the Holy Bible—a book that claims to be God's own words, thoughts, opinions—His own nature. If that Book cannot explain these things, then God is beyond understanding, or His existence is beyond belief.

According to the Bible, Katrina wasn't the first time God brought punishment on an entire city. Back in Abraham's day, God wiped out *two* entire cities simultaneously.

God told Abraham, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know" (Genesis 18:20-21).

God wanted to witness the decadence of these twin cities for Himself—to be sure His planned destruction would be warranted. No man could say God destroyed these cities without gathering all the intelligence He could.

Abraham, known as a "Friend of God" (see James 2:23), sensed what God's verdict might be—that destruction of these cities was inevitable. So He began to reason with God: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (verse 23). A good question, particularly because Abraham had a relative living in Sodom—righteous Lot. In the next verse Abraham proceeded to ask God, *What if there were 50 righteous within the city—would you destroy it?* He told God this seemed out of character for "the Judge of all the earth" (verse 25).

Amazingly, this all-powerful God answered the question! "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare ALL the place for their sakes" (verse 26). The entirety of this festering pool of immorality and decadence would be spared for the presence of 50 righteous.

Abraham, who acknowledged in this bold conversation that he was just "dust and ashes" (verse 27), continued to reason with God: What about 45? Or 40? God said He would spare the city for that.

Abraham, asking God not to be angry with Him, pushed some more numbers—30, 20, 10? God patiently returned, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (verse 32).

Certainly we can look at the destruction that God rained on Sodom and Gomorrah and gain tremendous insight into God's opinion of their sins: God completely wiped them off the map. (Righteous Lot and those of his family willing to accompany him escaped with God's help.)

The Bible even uses Sodom later as a warning to those who will not repent—showing that, in the end time, God will bring similar destruction upon entire *nations* that are steeped in similar perversions.

But there is another lesson we can take from Sodom and Gomorrah—that of God's mercy. City-wide destruction was a **LAST RESORT**—even with a city so twisted. Read that again: God would have spared the *entire* city for the presence of 10 righteous people.

Put this together with Ezekiel 33:11, where God says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live," and you can be sure that, before wiping out entire populations, God surveys the situation intently.

As Katrina submerged an entire city, God surely took "no pleasure" in it. What must God have been thinking?

How must we tear His heart out with our sins!

The rest of that verse in Ezekiel 33 has God asking, "Why will you die, O house of Israel?"

More than just a city is going under before it's all over. God speaks of an entire "house of Israel"—elsewhere He speaks of "cities"—plural—"without inhabitant."

As this *Trumpet* has made clear, more destruction is coming. But consider, as it comes, that God would rather have it an entirely different way. Sadly, we are leaving Him no other choice.

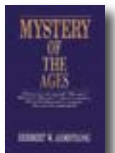
As the Bible shows, however, the greater catastrophes on the horizon will soon humble us to the point where we can *know* God—where we will submit to His perfect law of liberty and enjoy the fruits and blessings of such living! God's punishment will have paid off.

This is the only way the "wicked will turn from his way and live." Only when we humble ourselves and turn to God can we truly *live* as He wants us to. That is what gives God pleasure. If it takes erasing entire cities, then isn't it all worth it?

Those who died in Sodom and in New Orleans will have their chance to know God in a resurrection. The Bible records in three places where Christ talked about Sodom's *coming* day of judgment (see Matthew 10:15; 11:24; Mark 6:11).

Those who partook of those perversions will have their chance to know God. As will those who died in New Orleans. The destruction that came to these cities—although it was a last resort—will have been worth it.

For more on knowing God and understanding His plan of salvation, please request a free copy of Herbert W. Armstrong's *Mystery of the Ages*. ■



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Hawaii, Maui/Molokai/Lanai Akaku Chan. 52 10:00 pm, Sun; 7:30 am, Mon
Idaho, Boise KWOB 10:30 am, Sun
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Indiana, Terra Haute WBI 8:30 am, Sun
Iowa, Cedar Rapids KPXR 5:00 am, Fri
Iowa, Des Moines KFPP 5:00 am, Fri
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Kansas, Lincoln-Hastings-Kearney KWBL 8:30 am, Sun
Kansas, Topeka WBKS 8:30 am, Sun
Kentucky, Bowling Green WBWG 8:30 am, Sun
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Louisiana, Alexandria KAXN 8:30 am, Sun
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Michigan, Alpena WBAE 9:30 am, Sun
Michigan, Detroit WPXD 6:00 am, Fri
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North Carolina, Wilmington WBW 9:30 am, Sun
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Ohio, Zanesville WBZV 9:30 am, Sun
Oklahoma, Lawton KWB 8:30 am, Sun
Oklahoma, Oklahoma City KOCB 9:00 am, Sun; KOPX 5:00 am, Fri
Oklahoma, Tulsa KTPX 5:00 am, Fri
Oregon, Bend KWBO 9:30 am, Sun
Oregon, Eugene KZWB 9:30 am, Sun
Oregon, Portland KPDX 8:00 am, Sun
Oregon, Portland KPXX 6:00 am, Fri
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Tennessee, Jackson WBJK 8:30 am, Sun
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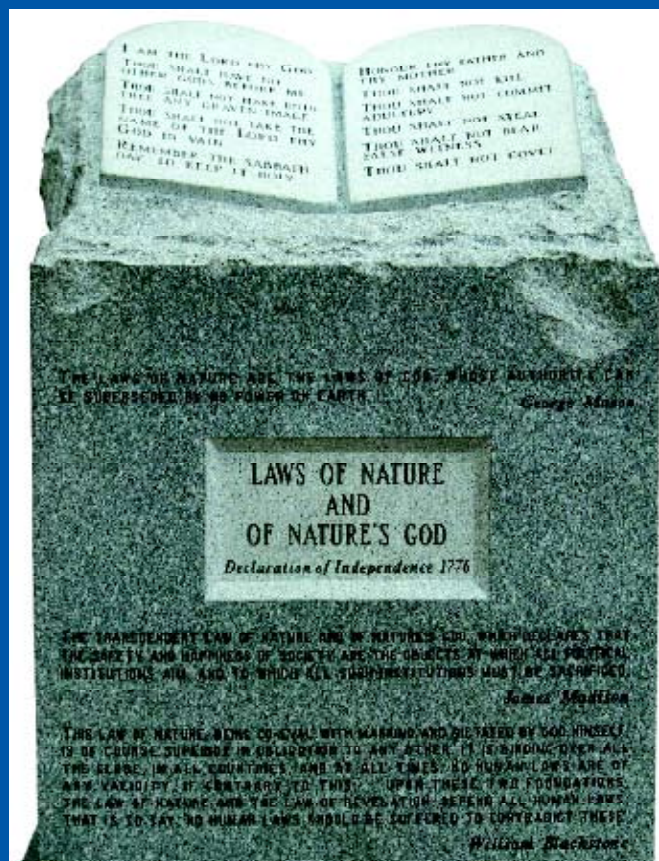
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