

The Good News

September-October 2004

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

Jerusalem

Center of Conflict,
Center of Peace



Israel's Amazing Story • Jerusalem's Temple Mount: Center of Conflict Today
Could Jesus Be Elected President? • The Solution for Africa's Greatest Crisis

Jerusalem, City of God



The collective memory of Jerusalem has echoed down through many generations of the Israelite peoples. This applies to the Jews in particular (the descendants of the ancient kingdom of Judah), as they view Jerusalem as their eternal capital.

During their captivity in King Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon the Jews longingly lamented the loss of their sacred city. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept *when we remembered Zion* . . . How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy" (Psalm 137:1, 4-6, New International Version throughout, emphasis added).

But the passage of time and God's interventions eventually overcame sorrow. Several million Jews now reside in the Holy Land. Psalm 147:2 reflects on what the Creator has accomplished: "The

God long ago chose Jerusalem for a special purpose in fulfilling His plan for humanity. His Word assures us that "the LORD loves the gates of Zion . . ."

LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel." (The intriguing account of how God gathered many Jews to form the nation of Israel during the 20th century is described in "Israel's Amazing Story: Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy" beginning on page 11.)

Yet national resettlement has not prevented conflict in the state of Israel. In addition to unending territorial disputes with the Palestinians, the Israelis have serious problems of their own making. In the book of Revelation the Bible frankly depicts much-less-than-ideal conditions in Jerusalem and the land of Israel. In fact, the comparison is with ancient "Sodom and Egypt" (Revelation 11:8).

Nonetheless, God long ago chose Jerusalem for a special purpose in fulfilling His plan for humanity. His Word assures us that "the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God" (Psalm 87:2-3).

Current domestic difficulties, international conflicts and terrorist bombings will all cease with the return of Jesus Christ. The Bible reveals that Jerusalem has the brightest of futures beyond the present troubles.

Many of the Psalms are prophetic and describe this wonderful future. For instance, Psalm 93:1 speaks of a future when "the LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty . . . and is armed with strength." Christ's divine leadership is going to solve the stubborn, intractable problems of this troubled, chaotic earth.

At that time peace and justice will spread its wings from Jerusalem. "Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations" (Psalm 99:2). Further: "The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores [faraway nations] rejoice . . . Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne" (Psalm 97:1-2).

These majestic millennial conditions stand in sharp contrast to today's uncertain world of widespread conflict and injustice. Thankfully, God will bring us this new age and with it a new way of life where the knowledge of God will overlay the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," wrote King David some 3,000 years ago (Psalm 122:6). That prayer will yet be answered!

—John Ross Schroeder, Senior writer

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Jerusalem: Center of Conflict, Center of Peace

Putting aside all the claims and counterclaims about the ownership of Jerusalem, what does the Bible say about this historic city? Who is its real owner, and what is its ultimate destiny? How will the city of almost continuous conflict become a city of enduring and everlasting peace? Let's examine the intriguing biblical story—past, present and future.

by John Ross Schroeder

This historic city—now sacred to the three major monotheistic religions and also regrettably often the site of horrendous violence—is destined to far outdistance all other cities in world importance.

Jerusalem has been synonymous with conflict, sieges, wars and battles almost from its very first mention in the Bible. It is now the capital of the state of Israel, whose very existence has been threatened by wars and conflicts with the surrounding nations. Today the Palestinians desperately want to take control of East Jerusalem—which includes the Temple Mount, the Western Wall and the old City of David.

Factional divisions within also trouble Israel. Secular Jews dream of an inclusive, utopian homeland based on diplomacy. The ultranationalist Jews stand on expansionist territorial claims and rely on military domination as the key to survival.

3,500 years of conflict

The 50-plus years of contemporary conflict since Israel's modern founding actually extend far back into ancient history. There we discover a climate of trouble and violence reminiscent of present-day troubles in the Holy Land.

Although very early Jerusalem is mentioned in the ancient Tell el-Amarna tablets, the first biblical reference is found in Genesis 14:18-20. Melchizedek, king of Salem (identified as Jerusalem in Psalm 76:1-2), greeted the patriarch Abraham after he had won a decisive battle, with God's help, against regional kings. Abraham had gallantly rescued his nephew Lot, who had been taken captive.

This is the only time that Jerusalem itself is mentioned in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible—though Moriah, a mountain just to the north of the original city, is mentioned in Genesis 22:2.

Yet this historic city—now sacred to the three major monotheistic religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) and also regrettably often the site of horrendous violence—is destined to far outdistance all other cities in world importance. Jerusalem is destined to become the glorious global capital city of peace and truth to which all countries on earth will look.

God has had His eyes on Jerusalem since the time Melchizedek, the King of Peace (Hebrews 7:2), met Abraham—and perhaps even long before. (To understand the true identity of Melchizedek, please request or download our free booklet *Who Is God?*)

Judah and Jerusalem: an intertwined biblical history

To understand our current dilemmas, a strong sense of Bible history is supremely important! It is an accurate guide, especially in understanding this long-troubled region.

A relationship between the Jews (the tribe of Judah) and Jerusalem began early in the history of ancient Israel. Joshua, Moses' successor, defeated the king of Jerusalem in the course of conquering the Promised Land (Joshua 10:1-10). The ancient Amorites had occupied the city. It was part of the territory to be inherited by the 12 tribes

of Israel (Joshua 12:7-10).

Later we find the Jebusites, apparently a Canaanite tribe, still occupying Jerusalem (Joshua 15:8). The Scripture states: "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day" (Joshua 15:63).

The Bible also clearly states that the tribe of Benjamin was to inherit Jerusalem (Joshua 18:21, 28). Putting together all of these passages in Joshua (and later in Judges), plainly the tribes of Judah and Benjamin became closely associated with Jerusalem. Eventually they would ally together to form the southern kingdom of Judah. Remember that the apostle Paul was a Benjamite.

The Jews conquer much of Canaan

After the death of Joshua the Israelites asked God which of the 12 tribes should lead in fighting the pagan Canaanites (Judges 1:1).

Notice God's immediate reply: "And the LORD said, 'Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand'" (verse 2). The tribe of Judah was specially chosen by the Creator Himself to fulfill both His

immediate and long-range purposes in conquering the land of the ungodly Canaanites. According to the inspired Word of Holy Scripture, this choice was distinctly God's and not man's.

Verses 17-18 record Judah's victories over the various Canaanite enclaves, including Gaza, most notably in the more mountainous areas. However, hilly hard-to-conquer Jerusalem (then called Jebus and inhabited by the Jebusites) somehow escaped the victorious hand of Judah, just as it did in the days of Joshua (Joshua 15:8).

Benjamin also had failed to conquer Jerusalem. Judges 1:21 tells us that "the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day [the time the book was written]." So for a considerable time the city apparently remained a Jebusite stronghold in the midst of Israelite territory.

Courageous King David finally conquers Jerusalem

Conquering this almost-impregnable stronghold would be left to King David of Israel, a descendant of Judah and a royal ancestor of Jesus Christ through Jesus' mother Mary.

The biblical record briefly summarizes David's conquest some 3,000 years ago: "In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah" (2 Samuel 5:5).

A key passage then states that "David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David)" (verse 7). Renamed Jerusalem (meaning "City of Peace") by the king, it would also be known as the City of David.

One key factor to always keep in mind is that God Himself chose David to be king over Israel in place of Saul and his descendants (1 Samuel 15:22-28; 16:1-13). The Creator directly intervened in the affairs of the nation. He was the behind-the-scenes Author of the conquest of Jerusalem.

After the 40-year reign of David, his son and successor Solomon allowed blatant idolatry to afflict Israel—especially in the later years of his rule. As a divine punishment, God decided to divide the nation after Solomon's death.

God chose Jerusalem

In announcing His intentions to Solomon beforehand, the Creator stated: ". . . I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son [Rehoboam] for the

Coming: International Control of Jerusalem?

While the court of world opinion wishes to internationalize Jerusalem, many Israelis are absolutely determined to resist such a move.

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu firmly stated: "Israel could not under any circumstances negotiate over any aspect of Jerusalem, anymore than Americans would negotiate over Washington. . . . The notion that Jerusalem will be redivided is sheer fantasy."

Yet he acknowledged that "it is not only the Arabs who cling to this fantasy. In practically every foreign ministry in the West, including the U.S. State Department, there are maps that do not include East Jerusalem as a part of a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty" (*A Place Among the Nations*, 1993, p. 346).

Still, even under the overseeing Jewish umbrella, in some vital respects the city remains divided. Author Bernard Wasserstein described the situation in Jerusalem in 2001, a situation that has only grown worse since.

" . . . In many ways Jerusalem . . . is divided more than ever. Walls and fences were beginning to appear between Jewish and Arab districts. Jewish taxi-drivers were reluctant to take passengers to destinations in Arab neighbourhoods. Israeli ambulance drivers would go into Arab districts only if accompanied by security forces. The [outside] Palestinian Authority's Governor of the Jerusalem District was reported to be exercising effective authority in the Arab community" (*Divided Jerusalem*, 2002, p. 359).

Israeli writer and intellectual Amos Elon adds: "For the most part, the two main communities, Palestinians and Israelis, still work and live apart from one another, in separate quarters, much as though the city were still divided by minefields

and barbed wire" (*Jerusalem: City of Mirrors*, 1996, p. 47).

The struggle for the Holy City and the divisive issue of Jerusalem's status still awaits a resolution.



Will the Vatican eventually offer its services to bring a peace settlement? It's interesting to note that between 1948 and 1967 the papacy showed little interest in the fortunes of Jerusalem. That suddenly changed when the Jews took control of the city in the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day War.

In September 2000, Pope John Paul II urged that Jerusalem be governed under international protective bodies. "The history and present reality of interreligious relation in the Holy Land is such that no just and lasting peace is foreseeable without some form of support of the international community." Perhaps he meant the Vatican in conjunction with the

United Nations and the European Union.

Some are calling for exactly this type of "solution," internationalizing the city and bringing in outside military forces to keep the peace. In recent years the European Union, the Vatican, Russia and the Palestinians themselves have all called for just such a solution.

Curiously, this meshes surprisingly well with Bible prophecy, which foretells that Jerusalem will again come under the domination of non-Jews shortly before Jesus Christ's return (Luke 21:24-28; Revelation 11:2).

The real resolution, however, awaits the second coming of Jesus Christ. He will then rescue the downtrodden, history-burdened city. Only then will Jerusalem gain its biblically intended role as a font of light, glory and truth.

Searching for the Peace of Jerusalem

The Balfour Declaration of 1917, a British document that formed the basis for an upsurge of Jewish immigration to Palestine, stated that nothing should be done toward a Jewish national home that might be detrimental to other ethnic communities in the area.

Though often scarred by violence and bloodshed, words of peace have periodically surfaced during the 20th century. British historian Sir Martin Gilbert summed up the undergirding thoughts:

“At its heart, Zionists had striven for a hundred years for the recognition of its legitimacy by the Palestinians. The many conflicts before and after 1948 . . . could not hide the basic imperative, that a way had to be found for the Jews and Arabs of the small strip of land running between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan to find a way of accepting each other’s right to live and prosper” (*Israel: A History*, 1998, p. 560).

Not long before succumbing to an assassin’s bullet in October of 1995, Israel’s prime minister Yitzhak Rabin appealed to the Palestinians: “We are destined to live together, on the same soil, in the same land . . . We harbor no hatred towards you. We have no desire for revenge. We, like you, are people who want to build a home, plant a tree, love, live, side by side with you—in dignity, in empathy, as human beings, as free men . . . Let’s pray that a day will come when we all will say, ‘Farewell to arms.’”

This appealing prayer for the peace of Jerusalem and Israel will only be answered by the arrival of God’s Kingdom on earth (see Micah 4:3-4). But first the Bible foretells that massive armies will gather their forces outside Jerusalem to fulfill the prophecy of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16)—culminating with the divine deliverance brought about by the second coming of Jesus Christ.

sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen” (1 Kings 11:13).

Later in the same chapter a slightly expanded repetition states that Solomon’s son Rehoboam would retain one tribe “for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel” (verse 32). Clearly it was the Creator who used David and his descendants to accomplish His overall purpose in this holy city. God personally chose Jerusalem!

The Bible is a divinely inspired book that reveals God’s dealings with and purposes for humanity. It records His major interventions in the past and His future plans that ultimately will bless all mankind. More than one passage of Scripture tells us that the Creator

owns the whole earth. It all belongs to Him.

The destiny of Jerusalem

Even while firmly challenging the chosen city for her many sins, God said: “This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her” (Ezekiel 5:5). Located between Europe, Asia and Africa, for over three millennia Jerusalem has seen many invaders. Here lies the crossroads of mankind.

This crucial passage, however, isn’t just referring to mundane geopolitics. It also alludes to what we might call “sacred geography”—to be fulfilled during Christ’s



To understand our current dilemmas, a strong sense of Bible history is supremely important! It is an accurate guide, especially in understanding this long-troubled region.

coming millennial reign and even more so on beyond that period.

But for the present and the foreseeable future, the local and regional inhabitants, surrounding nations and even faraway countries including the United States are continuing to fulfill, in part, a disturbing prophecy in Zechariah:

“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it” (Zechariah 12:2-3).

Just as this prophecy foretold, the unpleasant regional and even international fallout from involvement in Jerusalem’s affairs has been considerable.

This passage in Zechariah also applies on one level to the modern nation of Israel (more accurately Judah), custodians of the ancient city. It has developed a huge siege mentality during the 56 years of its existence as a state.

Why? In addition to enduring endless skirmishes and frequent terrorism since its founding, Israel has fought at least four major wars: 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973. Again and again, the surrounding Arab nations have periodically threatened—and attempted—to drive it into the Mediterranean Sea. Only in recent times has there been any alleviation of such “final solutions.”

As noted author Conor Cruise O’Brien observed: “Does Israel have the right to exist? The State of Israel has lived since its birth—and even before its birth—under the pressure of that question. And that question was preceded by another question:

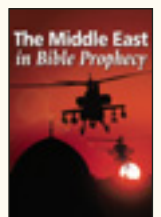
Do the Jews have a right to exist?” (*The Siege*, 1986, p. 25).

In 1936 British Zionist pioneer Chaim Weizmann put it bluntly when he asked the Peel Commission: “Do we have the right to exist?” (*ibid.*, p. 196).

That it would be necessary to even pose such questions says something about our so-called advanced, civilized world today. The only truly hopeful consolation is a pervasive and permanent peace prophesied to come to

Recommended Reading

Jerusalem has been a center of conflict for centuries. This troubled city lies in a troubled region, the Middle East, that will be at the heart of end-time events as Bible prophecy plays out before Jesus Christ’s return. To understand what the Bible says about Jerusalem’s prophesied role in mankind’s history, request your free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.



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the Holy Land—and not by human efforts.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”

King David penned at least a third of the Psalms and possibly more like half. One of his most touching includes a plea for peace for the city of peace. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your palaces’” (Psalm 122:6-7).

This solemn prayer, penned by David some 3,000 years ago, is destined to be answered in previously undreamed proportions. The Hebrew prophet Zechariah adds: “Thus says the LORD: ‘I will return to Zion

In Bible prophecy, “mountains” and “hills” are often used to refer to governments, nations or kingdoms. This prophecy tells us that the government of Jesus Christ will be established and rule over all the nations on earth.

Then Isaiah continues: “Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

Under the reign of the Messiah, war, weaponry, military forces and even military

harm’s way during Christ’s coming 1,000-year rule. Suicide bombers will have passed into the dim recesses of history.

The Bible pictures a majestic, millennial future with a relaxed and peaceful life in the golden city. This is Jerusalem’s destiny, foretold centuries ago.

Looking beyond: The New Jerusalem

Jerusalem is far more than just a physical city. It is symbolic of an entire nation. Human frontiers and borders tend to blur when they touch the infinite. Jerusalem has a spiritual dimension that extends into eternity.

The New Testament Church is called “Jerusalem above . . . the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26). The patriarchs, prophets and kings of Hebrews 11 never received God’s ultimate promises during their human lifetimes. Neither will true Christians today.

Yet these promises of God are absolutely sure! In faith the patriarch Abraham “waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). The Creator is the divine architect of the New Jerusalem. All men and women of faith have envisioned the fulfillment of God’s promises, “having seen them afar off” (verse 13). They know that God “has prepared a city for them” (verse 16).

In His message to one of the seven churches of Revelation, Jesus Christ referred to “the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven” (Revelation 3:12). Then the dwelling place of God will be with spirit-transformed men and women in a transformed world (Revelation 21:3). Death, sorrow, pain and suffering will have passed into history as the ultimate new world order takes shape on a brand-new earth (verses 4-5).

In summary, this is the true message of the enduring presence of Jerusalem in the world. In spite of today’s terrible conflicts, it remains a city like no other, one with an awesome future that is unique. This is one reason Jerusalem is mentioned some 850 times in the Bible. It is the symbolic cornerstone of crucial prophetic messages promising permanent peace to all of mankind—forever! **GN**

Something for Jerusalem to Celebrate

Is a time of peace and safety still possible in Jerusalem? According to Bible prophecy, it will serve as a model city for the entire world. But only under the righteous government of God, compassionately administered through Jesus Christ, will such a wonderful time arrive.

Jesus will bring to fulfillment many prophetic passages that picture a glorious future for Jerusalem. At Christ’s coming, King David will be resurrected to eternal life to lead all of Israel into paths of righteousness, peace and justice (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24-25). The “Israel” referred to in these prophecies includes far more peoples than just the tribe of Judah. (If you would like to understand more, please request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Some 3,000 years ago, David began a healing process when he was crowned king of the 12 tribes of Israel in Hebron. Notice what the tribes said during his coronation acclamation: “Indeed, we are your bone and your flesh. Also, in time past, even when Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the LORD your God said to you, ‘You shall shepherd My people Israel . . .’” (1 Chronicles 11:1-2).

King David’s coronation in ancient Israel foreshadowed a far greater future coronation: that of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus Christ will return not only as a conquering King, but also as a loving Shepherd. He will heal and unify a world torn by strife and sin. Then Jerusalem will at last see true and lasting peace for the benefit of all peoples throughout the entire world.

[referring to Christ’s second coming], and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain” (Zechariah 8:3).

Other prophecies tell us that Jerusalem’s destiny is to become a center of peace for all nations on earth. Nations will send representatives to her even from faraway places to learn and take God’s ways back to their peoples. As Isaiah 2:1-3 says: “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.”

academies will be consigned to the distant past (verse 4). Peace with justice will be administered to all peoples from Jerusalem.

But in no way do these sure biblical prophecies represent conditions in the Holy Land today—a region plagued by corruption, bombings, terrorist acts, kidnappings and murders. Watch the news on television or simply read your daily newspaper.

Yet these millennial prophecies assure us that “old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing” (Zechariah 8:4-5). Both old and young alike will at last be safe from

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A Good News Interview With

Leen Ritmeyer, Ph.D.

Jerusalem's Temple Mount: Center of Conflict Today

Interview by Scott Ashley

The Good News: Could you give a brief perspective on why Jerusalem is such an important place, biblically speaking?

Leen Ritmeyer: Jerusalem was chosen specifically by God. Going back to the time of Abraham, God sent him to Mt. Moriah [which was later the Temple Mount] to sacrifice his son Isaac, a type of the greater sacrifice that later came in the form of Jesus Christ being crucified. Later God told Moses that when they came into the land, He would appoint a certain place where He would “cause his name to dwell there” [Deuteronomy 12:11, King James Version]. So it is the only place in the whole world that God has chosen to “cause his name to dwell there.”

We continue in history to where David built the first altar and Solomon built the temple. It became a centralized place of worship where all the Israelites were to gather three times a year for the great feasts of Passover, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. It was the only center of their worship.

GN: Jerusalem is considered holy by the three great monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. How and when did it come to be considered one of Islam's holy places?

LR: It happened during the seventh century when Caliph Omar came to Israel. During this time Muslims conquered all of the Middle East and went as far as Europe.

The Muslims had their two major holy sites, Mecca and Medina, which were established by the prophet Muhammad. When Jerusalem was conquered by Caliph Omar,

all sorts of legends sprang up. He wanted to find where the Most Holy Place of the Jewish temple was. It later became connected with the legend that says Muhammad came to Jerusalem and went off to heaven on his horse. And from this a third Islamic holy site was chosen, to commemorate the ascent to heaven of their prophet Muhammad.



Muslims. How did it come to its current level of importance to the Islamic world?

LR: It did play second fiddle to Mecca and Medina. But ever since the state of Israel was established, the conflict between Arab and Jew has been growing greater and greater. You have one site, the Temple Mount, that is claimed as the third-holiest



“Under the guise of renovation work, they are destroying or covering up remains of the Jewish temple because they deny that there was ever a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount.”

In the beginning all the Muslims prayed bowing toward Jerusalem, but that was later changed to a new prayer direction toward Mecca. The Dome of the Rock was built about A.D. 700, and the Al Aqsa Mosque was later added to the Temple Mount. There have been renovations and rebuilding, but they are still there basically as they were from the beginning.

GN: After that, for many years Jerusalem wasn't considered that important to the

place by the Muslims and as the only holy place by the Jewish people.

Of course, from the Bible and even from archaeology we know that the Jews were there long before the Muslims. The Muslims, though currently a minority in the land, claim the whole land for themselves—not only the Temple Mount but the whole of the land of Israel. The claim of the Jews goes back much earlier, to the biblical periods, but that is denied by the Muslims. On the



Leen Ritmeyer is an archaeological architect, lecturer and teacher. He is perhaps the world's foremost authority on the architecture and archaeology of Jerusalem's Temple Mount, site of the temples built by Solomon and Zerubbabel and the extensive renovation of the second temple by Herod the Great.

Dr. Ritmeyer has been involved in several major excavations in Jerusalem, producing site plans and reconstruction drawings. His illustrations have appeared in many books, Bible atlases and academic journals.

He holds an M.A. from the University of York and a Ph.D. from the University of Manchester, both in England. He has lectured widely in Israel, Britain, Europe and the United States and currently teaches at Heritage College in Adelaide, Australia.

Dr. Ritmeyer is the author or coauthor of several books, including *The Temple and the Rock* (1996), *Secrets of Jerusalem's Temple Mount* (1998), *From Sinai to Jerusalem* (2000), *The Ritual of the Temple in the Time of Christ* (2002) and *Jerusalem in the Year 30 A.D.* (2004).

other hand, the Muslims say they go back 1,300 years, and no one has a right to come into their land.

The focus of the problem is becoming more and more the Temple Mount. The present-day work the Muslims are doing on top of the Temple Mount is to strengthen their foothold there.

They are converting underground structures like the Golden Gate [a chambered gate structure built by King Herod] and Solomon's stables [a massive expanse dating to Herodian and Crusader times, earlier thought to have been built by King Solomon] into mosques.

Under the guise of renovation work they are destroying or covering up remains of the Jewish temple because they deny that there was ever a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount.

GN: But isn't it true that earlier Muslim



Centuries-old columns, far left, were dug up during illegal work on the Temple Mount. Ornate stonework, left and above, is thought to be from the temple complex of Christ's day.

authorities acknowledged that this was the site of Solomon's temple?

LR: Yes, certainly. That's why it was chosen as the site of the Dome of the Rock in the first place. Caliph Omar specifically asked where the site of the temple was so he could build a shrine to commemorate Muhammad's ascent.

GN: How did we get to the situation where the Muslims control the top of the Temple Mount while the Israelis control the rest of Jerusalem surrounding it?

LR: The whole of the Old City, including the Temple Mount, was captured by the Israelis from Jordan in the 1967 war. There was talk then among Israelis of getting rid of the mosques and rebuilding the temple. But the Israeli government was too afraid of the international repercussions if they were to do that.

So the Israelis control all of the Old City,

but they let the Muslims control the Temple Mount. But that control doesn't mean that they can build and do whatever they like.

They have the right, given by Israel, to worship and exercise freedom of religion and have access to their holy sites, although the Muslims have closed the Temple Mount to non-Muslims in recent years. So they don't stand by their agreement.

Of course, all of the Old City is also an archaeological zone. No one is allowed, according to the law, to dig without having archaeological supervision. But the Muslims have been flouting that law for the last several years with what they're doing on the Temple Mount.

GN: Can you tell us some specifics about what has happened on the Temple Mount recently from an archaeological point of view?

LR: Over the last few years the area of Solomon's stables has been in the news somewhat. This is a large underground hall that contains structures from the Crusader, Muslim and Herodian periods, some of them 2,000 years old.

The Muslims, to make their claim to the Temple Mount stronger, are now using the underground structures as places for worship—especially Solomon's stables. This has been an underground area open for a long, long period, and they recently determined to change it into a mosque.

The problem is that this vast underground area, which could contain 10,000 worshippers, had access only through a narrow staircase. If anything happened, it would be impossible for people to escape. Therefore they needed a much larger entrance to this underground chamber.

They knew they wouldn't get permission to build a new entrance, so in secret, in the middle of the night, they dug out an area about 100 feet square and 30 feet deep. They sent in bulldozers and took out hundreds of truckloads of material so they could build a big staircase down to the chamber.

In the process they have destroyed not only many archaeological artifacts, but judging by the stones that were taken out of that pit, a huge wall also was destroyed. In my estimation that was a wall built by King Hezekiah around 700 B.C.

So major destruction has been done by these excavations. Archaeologists usually don't protest against excavations if you excavate and record what you have been finding. But to bring in bulldozers and destroy everything is totally different. In the debris that was dumped in a nearby valley, beautiful fragments of gateways of the Herodian temple complex have been

found. And although you can photograph and record them, you don't know where they came from.

A huge number of very large limestone building blocks have been found that must have belonged to important Jewish buildings. But they've disappeared. As soon as the pit was dug out they started covering up all the ancient remains, so there's no way of knowing what they destroyed. Some blocks were also carved up and used as paving stones.

It's a sad and illegal situation, but in spite of all the protests of many archaeologists and petitions to the government, nothing has been done to stop it.

GN: So the motivation in this case was at least in part to destroy evidence of a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount?

LR: Yes. For example, from earlier surveys in Solomon's stables we know there's an ancient arch in there and a lot of Herodian stones. In the interior southeastern corner you can see the remains of Herodian windows that were part of a tower. And built into the southern wall is a beautifully decorated Herodian stone with grapevines and geometrical patterns. What happened to those, we don't know anymore.

GN: How do religiously observant Jews view the Temple Mount?

LR: For most religious Jews, that's the only site where they can worship God according to the Mosaic laws. Most Israelis don't care much about the Temple Mount and the thought of having animal sacrifices is repulsive to them. There's also a large group of religious Jews who know they can't really worship God according to the Mosaic precepts unless they have a temple.

Two institutions, the Temple Mount Faithful and the Temple Institute, are desperately trying to worship on the Temple Mount. They've been making the priestly garments, all the gold and silver vessels, the silver trumpets and the golden lampstand. They're ready to worship there tomorrow! But of course, they need to start by building an altar.

Under the present circumstances, they won't be allowed to build an altar or any structure. Ultimately they want to build a temple as well. That's caused a greater difficulty because the Dome of the Rock stands on the place where the Jewish temple stood in the past.

So they know they can't build a temple on their own. But just as in the time of the return after the Babylonian exile when Zerubbabel and Joshua first built an altar, they now want to start building an altar believing that as soon as they have an altar and start sacrificing, the Messiah will come

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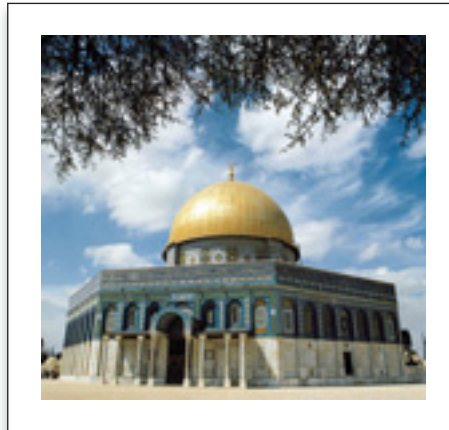
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and help them build their temple.

So every year they try to bring a cornerstone to the Temple Mount to start worshipping. They also try to do again some of the ancient rituals. A few years ago they had a Passover sacrifice on Mount Zion. So these people are desperate to start worshipping God according to their understanding.

This has been accepted by the majority of archaeologists. And after I've been able to locate the Holy of Holies, which is a square of 20 cubits, right in the center you can see the depression Solomon had to make for the Ark of the Covenant. You can't have the ark standing at an angle; it had to stand horizontal in a dignified way. All this has

The Dome of the Rock, below, covers the stone outcropping, right, from which Muslims believe Muhammad ascended to heaven and which many Jews believe was the location of the Holy of Holies of Solomon's temple centuries earlier.



"I believe I've been able to show that the foundation trenches of the walls of the Holy of Holies of Solomon's temple can still be seen on the rock inside the Dome of the Rock."

GN: So they could start sacrifices without a temple if they only had an altar?

LR: Yes, that's true. The altar always goes before the temple. Noah built an altar. Abraham built an altar. David built an altar. The temple was built afterward. The temple was built as a house for the Ark of the Covenant. They don't have the Ark of the Covenant now, but through sacrifice they believe they do have a relationship with God.

So the altar is the first thing they want to build. They think they can only build it where the original altar stood. They believe that the altar that was built by Herod the Great and destroyed in 70 A.D. stood on the same place where Solomon's altar stood, which is the same place where David's and Abraham's altars stood. I've been able to pinpoint exactly where it was, which today would be to the east of the Dome of the Rock.

GN: Do their conclusions about the location of the temple match your conclusions and research on the subject?

LR: Yes, I've researched the location of the temple over many years and I believe I've been able to show that the foundation trenches of the walls of the Holy of Holies of Solomon's temple can still be seen on the rock inside the Dome of the Rock.

been preserved up to today.

There have been some other proposals that would put the temple to the north or south of the Dome of the Rock. I think those are more motivated by having the possibility of rebuilding a temple without destroying the Dome of the Rock, which would start the next world war! But those locations aren't accepted by most archaeologists, and certainly not by the Jewish religious community. They do believe that the temple stood where the Dome of the Rock is now, and they won't build a temple anywhere else.

From a Christian point of view, if you believe we're living in the last days and there's quite a possibility that the altar will be rebuilt by the Jews, then the Muslims and Jews will have to come to an agreement to try to bring peace to this troubled land.

When it speaks in Daniel 11 and 12 about the covenant and sacrifices, it's quite possible that the Jews will be allowed to build an altar and start sacrificing again, just before the return of the Messiah. We'll have to wait and see what happens. **GN**

Readers can learn more about Dr. Ritmeyer, his research and the issues discussed in this interview at his Web site at www.templemountonline.com.

Israel's Amazing Story: Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy

As American writer Saul Bellow asked, "What is it that led the Jews to place themselves, after the greatest disaster in their history [the Holocaust], in a danger zone?" The surprising truth is that Jewish rule over Jerusalem is an essential element of end-time biblical prophecy!

by John Ross Schroeder

Ever since the Roman siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the ultimate loss of the city for nearly two millennia beginning in A.D. 135, many generations of the Jewish people have held a deep desire to return to the Holy Land. Their almost universal cry has been, "Next year in Jerusalem!"

In the earliest books of the Bible, God had decreed that the 12 tribes of Israel should inherit the Promised Land, also called the



Holy Land. The book of Joshua and the first chapter of Judges record how Israel, with God's help, conquered the area of ancient Canaan, which is primarily the land known as Israel today.

A golden age—then trouble

Then, some 3,000 years ago, the monarchy

of the Jewish king David and his son Solomon led Israel to the fullest expansion of the Promised Land. During that golden age, the people's condition was aptly summed up in utopian terms: "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba [cities representing the northern and southern extent of ancient Israel], all the days of Solomon" (1 Kings 4:25).

Primarily because of blatant idolatry, these favorable conditions did not continue long. After Solomon's death, the kingdom of Israel was divided into two separate countries followed by national captivity of the northern 10 tribes some 200 years later. (The resulting fate of the northern 10 tribes has intrigued historians for centuries. To learn more about them, and their own amazing fulfillment of biblical prophecy, request our

free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy.*)

The two southern tribes (making up the kingdom of Judah, its people known as the Jews) followed their northern cousins in rejecting God and turning to idolatry. They soon met the same fate. The kingdom of Judah was invaded and its citizens deported 136 years after the demise of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Eventually a small percentage of Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem about 500 years before the time of Christ. A second temple was built—only to be destroyed by Titus' Roman legions in A.D. 70, helping precipitate another diaspora or dispersion of the Jewish people to other nations.

Nonetheless, massive depopulation was not immediate and the Jews remaining in Jerusalem again revolted against the Romans in A.D. 132-135, unsuccessfully,

leading to another scattering. Nevertheless, a small number of Jews remained in parts of the Holy Land throughout the intervening centuries.

Jewry in Palestine before statehood

By the mid-19th century the Jewish population had reached 10,000, including 8,000 in Jerusalem alone. Many were immigrants from Poland and Lithuania. Russian emigration became more pronounced between 1882 and 1903 with 25,000 Jews entering Palestine. In fact, the Jewish population of Jerusalem alone had reached 25,000 by 1889, compared with 14,000 Arabs.

Still, the Jews remained a minority in the Holy Land by the turn of the century. Their population, however, continued to rise as time went by. For instance, between 1933

In truth, the Jews achieved a modern nation-state in the Holy Land, against a fierce and determined opposition, simply because God had foretold that it would occur. A Jewish state in the Holy Land had to exist so that certain biblical prophecies could be fulfilled.

and 1936 the Jewish presence in the Holy Land increased from about 235,000 to nearly 385,000.

Determined Arab resistance began to slow this increase in 1937, but all future setbacks proved temporary. In the aftermath of World War II, between late summer of 1945 and late spring of 1948, perhaps 40,000 Jews entered Palestine secretly. The first half of 1946 also saw a further 10,000 Jewish immigrants enter the Holy Land by boat.

By the time statehood finally arrived on May 14, 1948, the Jewish population of the Holy Land had reached about 700,000. (We mention a smattering of these statistics because of a general false impression that there were very few Jews in Palestine before statehood.)

In spite of periodic Arab and later British efforts to limit Jewish immigration, the flow of people to the Holy Land continued off

and on—especially during the first half of the 20th century.

David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, understood the importance of having a considerable Jewish presence in the Holy Land when statehood might finally be achieved.

In early 1935, shortly before World War II broke out, Ben-Gurion observed with exceptional prophetic insight: “The disaster which has befallen German Jews is not limited to Germany alone. Hitler’s regime

Covering the Paris trial of the French military officer Alfred Dreyfus, a Jew, in 1894 radically altered Herzl’s perspective. Dreyfus’ trumped-up conviction and subsequent harsh imprisonment based on false evidence was a farce. But what shocked Herzl most was the ugly anti-Semitism displayed by the attendant crowds.

He quickly grasped the seriousness of the situation and immediately began thinking in terms of getting the Jews out of Europe, the sooner the better. (Incidentally, French

more than 700,000 Jews in Israel when the New State was declared” (*The Siege*, p. 315).

The crucial Balfour Declaration

Herzl died at only 44 and it was left for Weizmann to carry the baton forward. This he did effectively for several decades right up to statehood in 1948. Chaim Weizmann was instrumental in Zionist negotiations with the British government in the process of formulating the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

In brief this benchmark document stated: “His Majesty’s Government view with favour *the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people*, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine . . .” (Nov. 2, 1917).

In early December of 1917, the British army in Palestine expelled Turkish forces from Jerusalem, just over a month after Balfour. Theoretically, the way was now open for the British declaration to be implemented in constructing a Jewish national home, paving the way for the Jews to leave continental Europe. Some little progress was made towards these two major goals, although accompanied by many frustrating and supremely costly setbacks as well.

Although 250,000 German Jews managed to find refuge in other nations, those who emigrated to other places in continental Europe before World War II (1939-1945) soon found themselves back in Nazi hands, as David Ben-Gurion had foreseen in early 1935. Hitler’s armies had overrun Europe. Many Jews were deported to Auschwitz and other death camps.

Even though the British record is far from perfect during this troubled era, prior to the war the nation did receive 40,000 German and Austrian Jews. It also made provision for 10,000 Jewish children to escape to Britain from Hitler’s clutches.

A milestone in world history

After World War II, events moved much faster on the path to Jewish statehood. World outrage over the Holocaust sped things up considerably. Although Britain’s Labour government was fudging on the Balfour Declaration, U.S. President Harry Truman courageously stood in the gap and made possible the decisive final steps in the founding of the state of Israel.

Chaim Weizmann played a major role in convincing the American president. Truman later said of Weizmann in his autobiography:



Jewish immigrants from war-torn Europe arrive in the port of Haifa in early 1948, left. At right, David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, declares the birth of the modern state of Israel on May 15, 1948, just before the British Mandate ended.

places the entire Jewish people in danger . . . [It] cannot long survive without a war of revenge against France, Poland, Czechoslovakia . . . and against Soviet Russia . . . Who knows; perhaps only four or five years, if not less, stand between us and that awful day . . .

“In this period we must double our numbers [in the Holy Land], for the size of the Jewish population on that day may determine our fate at the post-war settlement” (quoted by Noah Lucas, *Modern History of Israel*, 1975, p. 148, emphasis added throughout article). The necessary groundwork had been laid years in advance of statehood for a more massive immigration in decades to follow.

Theodor Herzl, Zionist pioneer

Theodor Herzl, Paris correspondent for a prominent Viennese newspaper in the late 1800s, originally believed that Jews should solve their dilemmas by gradual assimilation into the gentile world.

Despite his Jewish roots, in 1892 Herzl had even denied the presence of French anti-Semitism, stating that “the French people remain strangers to, and without understanding of, anti-Semitism” (quoted by Conor Cruise O’Brien, *The Siege*, 1986, p. 65).

anti-Semitism is back in the news with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon alleging “the spread of the wildest anti-Semitism in France,” attributing it to France’s growing Muslim population.)

Commented O’Brien: “The Zionists had been right about the thing that mattered most. They had sensed that the Jews of Europe were in deadly danger . . . Herzl, when Hitler was only six, had already sensed the need for a mass exodus of European Jews” (p. 315).

Theodor Herzl formed the World Zionist Organization with a view to establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. Noted British historian Martin Gilbert has written of Herzl: “On 3 September 1897 he wrote in his diary, ‘Were I to sum up the Basle Congress [in Switzerland] in a word . . . it would be this: *At Basle I founded the Jewish State*. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, and certainly in fifty, everyone will know it” (*Israel: A History*, 1998, p. 15).

In fact, it took just over 50. Zionist Jews like Herzl and Chaim Weizmann, a chemist from Russia residing in Manchester, were also instrumental in saving a remnant of European Jews from the future Holocaust. Partially due to their efforts, “there were

“He had known many disappointments and grown patient and wise in them” (*Years of Trial and Hope*, 1965).

Once truly convinced, President Truman outsmarted the opposition and, behind the scenes, was largely responsible for a positive United Nations vote on behalf of Israel.

Much has been written about the near-miraculous nature of the founding, against all odds, of the modern state of Israel.

For instance, Sir Martin Gilbert observed: “Herzl’s call for Jewish statehood seemed

earnestly for its restoration.

In His final major prophecy before His crucifixion, Jesus Christ described conditions wherein the Jews would again control Jerusalem. He said that the “holy place” would be desecrated, stating: “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place . . . then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15-16).

What did the prophet Daniel say about

In His final major prophecy before His crucifixion, Jesus described conditions wherein the Jews would again control Jerusalem.

too grandiose, too fraught with the complications of local Turkish and Arab opposition, too ambitious with regard to the accepted place of the Jew in the world, to be more than an extraordinary dream, an eccentricity” (*Israel: A History*, p. 13).

In truth, the Jews achieved a modern nation-state in the Holy Land (against a fierce and determined opposition—including at times some very influential Jews) *simply because God had foretold that it would occur*. A Jewish state in the Holy Land had to exist so that certain biblical prophecies could be fulfilled.

The unrealized biblical dimension

Let’s understand that the survival of the religion and culture of this ancient biblical people defies the odds. The fact that the Jews were not assimilated into the nations to any significant degree is unprecedented.

Now, since the 1967 Six-Day War, the Jewish people are again in possession of Jerusalem. On the western side of the Temple Mount, at the retaining wall for the vast platform Herod the Great constructed to support the temple of God in Jesus’ day (now known as the Western or Wailing Wall), many Jews still cry and bemoan the ancient loss of the temple and pray

this “abomination of desolation”? He writes that “the daily sacrifice [will be] taken away, and the abomination of desolation [will be] set up” (Daniel 12:11). A preliminary fulfillment of this prophecy took place in 167 B.C. when the Syrian ruler Antiochus IV (Antiochus Epiphanes) invaded Judah, erected an idolatrous statue at the temple and sacrificed pigs on the temple altar.

Yet Jesus Christ’s prophecy makes it clear that someone or something else will defile the holy place in Jerusalem shortly before His return.

For these prophecies to be fulfilled, it appears that sacrifices will be reinstated in some form. Daniel 12:9-13 describes the abomination of desolation as occurring at “the time of the end” in conjunction with the cutting off of sacrifices. Apparently the Jews will again initiate sacrifices at or near Jerusalem; armies again will surround Jerusalem, and the sacrifices will be halted.

Israel needs a third Jewish temple or some designated “holy place” for this to happen. Before its establishment as a state in 1948, this seemed impossible. Many observers have noted the overwhelming odds against Israeli statehood. Yet it happened!

Furthermore, even after the fledgling nation of Israel was established, it appeared that its inhabitants would never control Jerusalem because the Arab nations had pledged to prevent it. Yet during the Six-Day War of 1967 Israel took full possession of its ancient capital. Still the Temple Mount or holy place was left under Arab supervision, making any building of a temple or setting up of a “holy place” yet future. Christians should look to God to work out events so that His will may be fulfilled.

The state of Israel has a substantial role to play in the realization of key biblical prophecies. Watch Jerusalem! **GN**

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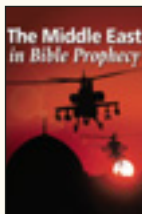


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World News and Trends

An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

North Korean missiles capable of reaching America?

Unconfirmed reports have been circulating for several years suggesting that North Korea might be developing an intercontinental missile, most likely to be launched from a decommissioned Soviet submarine obtained from Russia. According to *The Guardian*, "North Korea is deploying a new missile which may be able to strike the US mainland, a report in *Jane's Defence Weekly* says today" (Aug. 4).

North Korea was included in U.S. President Bush's "axis of evil" along with Iraq and Iran. British writer Simon Winchester, a visitor to the East Asian country, stated: "North Korea isn't just anti-American; it's anti everyone" (*The Times*, May 15).

The Wall Street Journal Europe warned that "If North Korea . . . goes openly and promiscuously nuclear, dangers soar on two fronts. Asian neighbors that now focus on stopping proliferation

might promptly reverse course and join the trend. Japan, South Korea and Taiwan all could embark on nuclear programs in self-defense . . .

"The far larger danger is that North Korea would develop a cash-and-carry arms program, selling to rogue states and terrorists alike in its desperation to feed itself" (Aug. 11). (Sources: *The Guardian*, *The Times* [both London], *The Wall Street Journal Europe*.)

Growing evidence of Iran's hostile intentions

World Net Daily published a report saying that Iran will have nuclear weapons by 2008, indicating that international inspections have delayed the nation's nuclear capability by two years. The report "suggested that Israel may conduct an attack on Iran's nuclear facility to prevent Tehran from attaining a nuclear weapon" (July 30).

The London *Observer* reported that on July 31 Iran said it had "restarted the building of uranium enrichment centrifuges which the United States says are part of a bid to develop an atomic bomb" (Aug. 1).

Buried inside the special bipartisan congressional report on Iraq is the assertion that "it is not Iraq that has links with terrorists, but Iran" (*The Sunday Times*, July 25). This feature article stated further that "ever since the 1979 revolution that deposed the Shah and put Ayatollah Khomeini in power, part of Iran has dreamed of conquering the world with its version of Islam."

Furthermore, a *Sunday Telegraph* correspondent

Iran is "a state whose official policy is the total destruction of Israel."

in Iraq reported that "Iraqi border officials have admitted that buses full of Iranians routinely enter the country without passports or other official identification, despite Baghdad's attempts to clamp

down on terrorist infiltration" (Aug. 1).

According to noted *Daily Mail* columnist Ann Leslie, who visited Iran in late spring, it is "a state whose official policy is the total destruction of Israel" (May 22). All this information is especially significant because Iran sits atop one of the largest oil reserves on the earth. Understandably the United States has not had any official diplomatic relations with Tehran since the 1979 Islamic revolution when student revolutionaries held American hostages for well over a year.

While growing evidence "vindicates President Bush's decision to name the mullahs as charter members of the 'axis of evil'" (*Wall Street Journal Europe*, Aug. 2), there is growing pressure from Britain and certain American voices to reopen a meaningful diplomatic dialogue with Iran.

While the intentions may be good, how is constructive dialogue possible given the growing evidence of Iran's hostility to the West? (Sources: *The Observer*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* [all London], *World Net Daily*.)

American concerns grow over Syrian military aims

The Sunday Times reported that "investigators tracking the spread of nuclear technology and know-how through the clandestine sales network of the Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan believe that Syria might have acquired centrifuges that can purify uranium for use in nuclear bombs" (July 4).

He is known to have in times past assisted North Korea, Iran and Libya in acquiring nuclear components on the weapons black market. Danielle Pletka, a spokesperson for the American Enterprise Institute who is well briefed on the Mideast nuclear situation, said that "the United States government has consistently outlined our concerns with regard to Syria's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. We are very interested to learn the scope of the A Q Khan network, but we are not in a position to say with certainty that Syria has centrifuges" (*The Sunday Times*, July 4).

Also, Steven Cooke of the Council of Foreign Relations stated that "it's no secret the Syrians

have historically sought an answer to Israel's overwhelming conventional superiority and have an active biological and chemical weapons programme. If they could acquire a nuclear option, it would shift the strategic situation in the region" (*ibid.*).

All this information (including the article about Iran above) makes columnist Gerald Seib's comments all the more interesting. In his piece "While US Politics Focuses Elsewhere, Atomic Threat Stews," he says: "If Iran keeps moving toward a nuclear weapon, Israel may launch a pre-emptive strike to stop it . . . If Iran crosses the finish line anyway, Egypt and Saudi Arabia . . . may decide they also need nuclear arms" (*Wall Street Journal Europe*, Aug. 11). The same could apply to Syria.

The Middle East is a very unstable area in an uncertain world. One can see why so much of end-time biblical prophecy is focused on this part of the globe. To understand the real significance behind today's dangerous developments, request or download our free booklets *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* All of these events and trends add to the solid indicators that we are living in what the Bible calls the latter days. (Sources: *The Sunday Times* [London], *The Wall Street Journal Europe*.)

Violence in the home across Europe

"In Europe right now the statistics of male violence against female partners are terrible. For European women aged 16-44, violence in the home is the primary cause of injury and death, more lethal than road accidents and cancer. Between 25% and 50% of women are victims of this violence. In Portugal 52.8% of women say that they have been violently treated by their husbands or partners. In Germany almost 300 women a year are killed by men with whom they used to live" (*Monde Diplomatique*, July issue).

This assessment has been documented by many credible sources. One important observation: "The fact that this violence happens in the home of the victim has always been a pretext for authorities to wash their hands and declare that it is a private domestic matter. Such an attitude is a collective refusal to help people in danger" (*ibid.*). (Source: *Monde Diplomatique*, France.)



Fireworks on the Rock of Gibraltar

A recent celebration of 300 years of British rule on Gibraltar fanned the flames of ownership claims to the Rock. Fireworks were a significant aspect of the celebrations, followed by a revisitation of the respective territorial issues by both British and Spanish politicians. Spain was deeply offended by U.K. participation in the local celebrations.

The 30-year rule on information in the British national archives made possible the recent revelation that former Prime Minister Edward Heath's Tory government was willing to cede the colony to Spain back in 1973, the year Britain joined the European Economic Community—now called the European

Union. The then ambassador of Britain to Madrid said of the Rock: "We cannot go on defending this historical and geographical anomaly. Colonial anachronisms have been cleared up over most of the world. Gibraltar is the only one left in Europe" (*The Daily Telegraph*, Aug. 3).

The then head of the Foreign Office's Southern European Department said at the time: "We hope that within 10 years the European Community will become a political and defence union. When that time comes Gibraltar will be neither British nor Spanish. It will be European" (*ibid.*).

To understand the real significance behind the conflicting territorial claims and Gibraltar's vital role in British history, please request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. (Source: *The Daily Telegraph* [London].)

Could mad cow disease be incubating in thousands more?

An Aug. 5 Associated Press release reports that scientists have found evidence indicating that the human form of mad cow disease

No one knows the incubation period, how many people might be vulnerable, how the disease spreads and whether it can be passed on.

might be infecting a wider group of people than previously thought possible.

Research in *The Lancet* medical journal reported

an infection in one person of what appears to be a human form of mad cow disease known as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Apparently more people than previously thought could be incubating the disease, brought on by eating processed beef products from cattle infected with mad cow disease (medically known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy). Although cattle are screened for the infection before their meat enters the food supply, the frightening part of this discovery is that scientists have no idea how many additional people might be infected with mad cow disease.

Speculative projections range from 10 or more to hundreds of thousands. No one knows the incubation period, how many people might be vulnerable, how the disease spreads and whether it can be passed on. There is no known test to diagnose the disease, no treatment and no cure. (Source: Associated Press.)

Are people evil, and if so, why?

Two alleged acts of wife killing (the Scott Peterson and Mark Hacking cases) have dominated America's evening newscasts. Why do such things happen? Are people evil, and if so, why?

Modern pluralistic thinking assumes human beings are basically good. The 1960s American TV comedian Flip Wilson parodied the notion of human nature gone awry with his famous line, "The devil made me do it!" But is there some truth to his line?

Jesus Christ, speaking to His apostles, said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts

to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11).

The prophet Jeremiah tells us that "the [human] heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick" (Jeremiah 17:9, New American Standard Bible). The fact is that Satan the devil is "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4) and that "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). Scripture also refers to him as "the tempter" (see Matthew 4:3).

The devil has a powerful influence on humankind to do evil, although human beings still have a choice and can do good. If you'd like to learn more, request or download our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*

Forty years of "do as you please"

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, acutely aware of the need to counter out-of-control crime and disorder in scattered areas of the United Kingdom, blamed the permissive 1960s for today's collapsing values.

According to *The Daily Telegraph*, "he said that while the decade had brought about a breakthrough in terms of freedom of expression and lifestyle, it failed to convey the concept that with freedom came responsibility. A society of different lifestyles spawned a group of young people who were brought up without parental discipline, without proper role models and without any sense of responsibility toward others" (July 20). Regrettably, this overall societal trend has continued right on into the 21st century and is very much with us to this day.

Our free booklets *Making Life Work* and *The Ten Commandments* address the issue of the moral collapse of Western society and show how to counteract it in our personal lives. (Source: *The Daily Telegraph* [London].)

Are terrorists fulfilling prophecy?

Could terrorist threats and actions against Europe help fulfill end-time prophecies? In recent months terrorists have made increasing threats against several European nations, telling them to end their alignment with America in the war on terror or face dire consequences.

The March 11 Madrid train bombings showed that such threats can have an impact. The murder of almost 200 passengers precipitated the election of new leadership in Spain. Yet the terrorists may be playing with fire—literally and figuratively. The European continent is poised to become another superpower, a United States of Europe.

The Bible shows that at the time of the end a "king of the South" (from the Muslim/Arab world) will attack the "king of the North" (leader of a European-centered power), instigating a massive invasion of the Middle East (see Daniel 11:40-45). Muslim terrorists threatening Europe may well be playing into the stepwise progression of God's divine prophecies of the end time. To learn more, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.

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Also, to get a biblical perspective on major events, visit www.ugc.org/commentary for a weekly commentary on the trends shaping our world—and what they mean for you.



Could Jesus Christ Be Elected President?

As the United States enters the final weeks of a hotly contested presidential election campaign, this is a good time to ask a crucial question: Could Jesus Christ be elected president?

by Howard Davis

Jesus Christ remains one of the most respected leaders—as well as one of the most controversial—the world has ever known. Most people acknowledge that He was good; many believe He was a great man. If He were on earth today, a fascinating question to ponder is: Would the American people ever elect Him to be president of the United States?

The question isn't that far-fetched. After all, He said He was destined to rule the

demand that an electable leader be in agreement with them on a range of issues.

Americans want religious freedom (or freedom from religion) to define God or gods in any way they want, freedom of choice to select abortion for unwanted pregnancies and freedom to enjoy whatever entertainment they desire—including films, music, books and television drenched with violence and illicit sex. Many Americans demand unrestrained sexual freedom between consenting

that would impact the American voter, is easily discernible from His teachings. After all, the Bible says Jesus is “the same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Read the Bible and you will know His platform.

Redefining the mission of government

First, Jesus Christ would make major changes in the governing documents that define citizens' and government's roles. He would permanently change the intent and nature of government.

His new constitution would be designed to fulfill the ultimate purpose for the creation of every man and woman. He would explain that His new government is designed to prepare people to live forever in the Kingdom of God.

He would call for a new world order based on His Father's law and advocate creating a perfect society of peace, human development and love. His new constitution and government would guide all policies toward the spiritual transformation of physical man, created in the image of God, into the divine man with the nature and character of God. All education and social policy would be directed to this objective.

This purpose is far greater than the founding fathers' intent in creating the Constitution of the United States in 1787. While a marvel of human wisdom, the American Constitution—and the Declaration of Independence Thomas Jefferson penned in 1776—limited men to a humanly defined purpose for government and social policy.

In pursuit of ultimate good, the founders thought American government should be based on what they acknowledged as the God-given rights to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Jefferson, however, did not fully comprehend God's ultimate purpose for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The purpose of life is not found in the U.S. Constitution. And sadly, the Constitution is now subject to interpretation in such a way that people are exercising supposed rights that take away life for some and forfeit the freedom from corruption and evil influences



What Christ's platform would be, and how that would impact the American voter, is easily discernible from His teachings.

Kingdom of God, bearing authority over the earth. The Bible calls Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

So could Jesus Christ be elected president in today's America?

The blunt answer is *no*. Most Americans would not tolerate Jesus of Nazareth in the White House if they had a choice.

What kind of platform?

We can reach no other conclusion when we examine the electoral process and the priorities the American people use in selecting their president. Jesus Christ does not stand a chance based on the platform He would advocate. After all, the American people

adults. They want and fully expect unhindered and total freedom of speech.

Americans want full freedom to define culture and lifestyle issues in their image. They want unrestrained freedom to divorce. True, Americans claim to want fairness, justice, economic and educational opportunity for all. But all freedoms and social values must be defined in their terms.

Above all, they want the ability to get the leader who they think best suits their desires and to get rid of a leader they don't like or get bored with when he fails to bring utopia. They want that choice on a very regular basis. They view this as a sacred right.

What Christ's platform would be, and how

for many. Through exercise of “rights” many are destroyed as they pursue “happiness.”

The problem is that the aspirations of the Constitution, though high in human terms, are too low. Neither Thomas Jefferson nor the other founding fathers ever conceived of the Constitution as a framework for the development of human character in the divine image of God’s nature.

Yet that purpose is the essence of Jesus Christ’s purpose for governance. That is the platform He would use, were He to run for president.

That’s a tragic omission in the American system, founding documents and way of life. While filling these with wonderful-sounding phrases, some of which were borrowed from the Bible, the founding fathers never fully understood the ultimate purpose of government as revealed in the Scriptures.

Most of them considered themselves Christian. Yet none fully grasped the intent and nature of Christ’s pronouncements on govern-

ment as He proclaimed the Kingdom of God.

Reaction to Christ’s platform

How would the idea of a new constitution go over with the American electorate today? A plan to abolish the Constitution and replace it with one authored by Jesus Himself would be the ultimate campaign killer. But many more positions Christ took would eliminate His chances of being elected.

For example, Jesus advocated that the Ten Commandments be universally taught and kept as the standard for human behavior. “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets,” He said. “I did not come to destroy but to fulfill . . . Whoever does and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17, 19).

There goes the atheist vote, agnostic vote and, oddly enough, much of the Christian vote—at least from those who believe the Ten Commandments are too invasive when it comes to their personal freedoms.

The First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” would be considered a major violation of religious freedom.

A large percentage of the electorate believes that observing the commandments and law of God would force a breakdown of the separation of church and state. “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17)—Christ’s position on the Ten Commandments—would be an affront to those who believe that grace does away with a need to keep those Commandments.

Another factor is that Jesus was Jewish, a member of an ethnic minority against which there is still considerable prejudice in America. Jesus’ customs and teachings would appear far too Jewish for most voters, including most Christian voters. For example, He kept the Passover (and told His followers to follow His example) and never observed Christmas, Easter or any other nonbiblical

Continued on page 27

How Significant Is the Race for the White House?

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton predicts that the man Americans choose as their president Nov. 2 “will affect the way we live in America for generations to come” (*USA Today*, Aug. 10).

The actions of the U.S. president are crucially important to the welfare of many nations. The stakes are high when we consider both the domestic and international implications.

As *U.S. News & World Report* recently observed: “Today the United States is the third most populous nation in the world, our economy produces nearly a third of the world’s goods and services, and our military is more powerful than the rest of the world’s militaries combined” (June 28-July 5 issue).

Clearly, whoever wins the November presidential election will make some critically momentous decisions affecting both the United States and the world in general.

National security certainly appears to be the most important and compelling issue. The 9/11 attacks still cast a giant shadow over America.

NBC news anchor Tom Brokaw recently articulated the feelings of many Americans. He said: “*There’s authentic anxiety about terrorism, about the war in Iraq, about the future of the American economy and the culture of this country, and where is the common ground? All those pillars fit beneath that rather large roof of anxiety*” (*USA Today*, July 27, emphasis added).

Mr. Brokaw raised the question of Americans finding common ground. He knows that for several years the media has been talking about a divided America, sometimes using the phrase “two Americas” to describe the national dilemma.

The issue of values appears at the fulcrum of this basic divide. London’s *Financial Times* correspondent Deborah McGregor recently noted that “the U.S. presidential campaign [has] turned into a heated battle over the issue of character and values.”

During the summer campaign both the incumbent and the challenger have championed American values. But the critical question is this: Are they both talking about the same thing? Many citizens are deeply troubled by disturbing trends like same-sex marriages, abortion and the widespread availability of pornography even in many quality hotels and motels. At the other end of the

spectrum, many support these societal trends and others like them.

Before the last American presidential election, author Paul Kennedy summed up the state of affairs as Americans contemplated their choices. His words still carry weight today:

“The currents which seem to threaten international turbulence and batter even the well-founded American ship of state are likely to be an unpredictable combination of both old and new security threats . . . The next few years could be stormy ones in world affairs. And the lack of sustained and wise American leadership could easily produce a shipwreck or two” (*The Independent on Sunday*, May 14, 2000).



The American federal government’s domestic and global responsibilities mushroomed during the 20th century—and there is no sign of a letup as we move toward the latter months of the year 2004 and on into the next presidency. The job of the chief of state is not going to get any easier. Most observers believe that the race itself will continue to be very close right up to polling day in November.

One British writer observed that “this election is being fought in unusual, if not unique, circumstances that make predicting the outcome on the basis of trusted historical formulas especially difficult” (*The Times*, Aug. 6).

Clearly the world needs an American chief executive with a bold, clear vision—one who has great respect for both the laws of God and those of his country (Deuteronomy 17:15-18; Romans 13:1).

Of course the president does not act alone, but in concert with the U.S. Congress. He also needs competent advisers on many levels. But when the chips are down and sudden, risky decisions have to be made, it is the man in the Oval Office to whom both the United States and the Western world in general will look for wise and beneficent leadership.

No wonder the apostle Paul tells us to pray for rulers and all those in authority so that the good news of the return of Jesus Christ—the perfect leader—may be effectively announced (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Are we doing that? We all need to follow through on this important obligation.

—John Ross Schroeder

The Biblical Solution for Africa's Biggest Crisis

At the recent International AIDS Conference held in Bangkok, Thailand, delegates repeatedly condemned abstinence programs. The African continent has been particularly devastated by AIDS. Interestingly, abstinence programs are the only ones that are really working there.

by Melvin Rhodes

I had been invited to speak to the "Kumasi Virgins Club."

They meet every Sunday afternoon. When I was first asked to address the group, I was told that about 100 people would be there, representing all faiths. There were, in fact, 284. Not all the members were present. The Club has 420 registered members, all virgins, each one committed to abstaining from sexual activity until marriage.

Kumasi is Ghana's second biggest city. Imagine a "Virgins Club" in Los Angeles or in Birmingham, England. The group in Ghana is supported by a local radio station. All the members are young and all seemed enthusiastic supporters of the group's goals, wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the words "I'm Proud to Be a Virgin."

Rarely have I spoken before such an attentive audience. Moreover, they very patiently listened while all my words were translated from English into Twi, the local language of the Akan people. Those who were bilingual heard the same message twice.

A continent headed for destruction?

The club is fairly new, having started in response to the spreading threat from HIV/AIDS. Ghana's democratically elected president, John Kufour, instituted the "ABC" campaign, which has been successful in Uganda, another African nation on the other side of the continent.

"A is for Abstinence.
B = Be faithful after marriage.
If you can't, use a Condom (C).
It's as simple as A-B-C."

So proclaim the billboards in a desperate attempt to stop a disaster that threatens to destroy the continent.

That's no exaggeration.

Ghana is not the worst-hit country. The part of the continent most affected by this

devastating plague is southern Africa. South Africa, the most modern of all African nations, has the world's largest number of HIV-positive citizens, about 5 million.

Neighboring countries have an even higher percentage of people infected with the HIV virus. In Botswana and Zimbabwe about 40 percent of the adult population is HIV-positive, all destined to die within a relatively short period of time. Appeals for cheaper drugs from the West can only delay death, not prevent it. Meanwhile, those being treated with the drugs can continue to spread the virus to others.

There are no official statistics on Ghana, but neighboring Burkina Faso tested all the women giving births in hospitals last year and found that 15 percent were HIV-positive. Since borders don't mean much in Africa, it can be safely assumed that a similar figure applies in all the countries nearby, including Ghana.

When the disease affects 5 percent of the population, it's considered out of control. Fifteen percent will soon grow to 30 percent, then 40 percent, and so on. Sexually transmitted diseases spread rapidly. AIDS in Africa is almost exclusively spread through heterosexual relationships.

God's solution for the AIDS epidemic

I invited the Virgins Club members to



Combating the deadly scourge of AIDS is the goal of the "Kumasi Virgins Club" in Ghana's second-largest city. The author, at upper left, addresses the club.

help save the continent of Africa. My wife and I, with our children, lived in Ghana when the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was first identified, back in 1981. Twenty-three years later the plague of AIDS is thousands of times worse than it was back then. We've lost more than two decades in fighting this disease. Millions of people in Africa are already dead. Millions more are dying.

Yet, in the midst of all this bleakness, good news can be found. The good news is that a sure cure for the AIDS epidemic exists. In another two decades we could be completely free of the HIV virus if only everyone would do as the members of the

Virgins Club are doing—and pledge themselves to *abstinence before marriage, fidelity within*.

Option “C,” some are surprised to learn, is no guarantee at all. Condoms are not 100 percent effective against pregnancy. Nor are they a sure protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has this to say on the subject: “The surest way to avoid transmission of sexually transmitted diseases is to abstain from sexual intercourse, or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and you know is uninfected.

“For persons whose sexual behaviors place them at risk of STDs, correct and consistent use of the male latex condom can reduce the risk of STD transmission. However, no protective method is 100 per cent effective, and condom use cannot guarantee absolute protection against any STD” (cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/transmission.htm).

So much for educational campaigns that emphasize “safe sex”—a euphemism for “use a condom.” There is only one guarantee that you won’t get AIDS—and that’s for both partners to enjoy the sexual relationship *within marriage only*.

That’s the way God intended it to be.

When God created Adam, He said: “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Genesis 2:18). Then God created Eve. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (verse 24).

On a continent where polygamy is widely practiced, the Genesis account is quite revealing: God’s intention was that Adam should have only one wife, just the one sexual partner.

The Ten Commandments emphasize this point. “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Adultery takes place when a person engages in sexual activity outside of marriage.

Sex: Playing Russian roulette?

The apostle Paul warns us to “flee sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18). He then added the words: “Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”

What did Paul mean when he added those words?

Immediately, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) come to mind. Again, Ghana

keeps no official statistics on these. But along with the HIV virus come other STDs.

In the United States, STDs are a major and growing problem among young people. In 1967, when I graduated from high school, only 1 in 32 grads had an STD. By 1983 that figure had increased to 1 in 18. Now it’s *1 in 4!* And consider this: In 1967 there were only five STDs to be concerned about. Now there are 30, and *a third of them are incurable*.

HIV is a virus. Science has never yet

A cure for the AIDS epidemic exists, if only everyone would do as the members of the Virgins Club are doing—and pledge themselves to *abstinence before marriage, fidelity within*.

found a cure for a virus. Herpes, the most common STD, is also a virus. It’s also highly contagious, quite painful and stays with you for the rest of your life should you become infected. Other STDs can leave you infertile, unable to bear children.

In 1967 the biggest fear parents had was that their daughter would get pregnant outside of marriage. While that’s still a major concern for parents, most of those who were around in the 1960s are not aware of the fact that today their daughters are *four times more likely to acquire an STD than to become pregnant*. Yet many parents, influenced by the ’60s sexual revolution, put their daughters on the pill, giving them the green light for sex.

That decision can be fatal. Every hour, an American teenager becomes HIV-positive.

Damaging the mind as well as the body

God knew what He was doing when He said, “You shall not commit adultery.” Sex outside of marriage is *always* a sin, *always* wrong and *always* harmful. And this includes more than just sexual intercourse. The HIV virus can be passed from one person to another in several ways. The same is true with other STDs.

Even if all possible precautions are taken, sexual activity outside of marriage remains a sin. That’s another side to the apostle Paul’s warning.

Illicit sex—sex not approved of by God—harms the mind as well as the body.

Wrong sexual habits can be developed during the teenage and young adult years and can leave a lasting negative effect. Then when a person finally does marry, he or she has formed a habit of moving from one partner to another, and it is more difficult and requires greater effort to remain faithful.

Contracting STDs, unwanted pregnancies, abortions and divorce are the frequent consequences.

Even if these don’t take place, mental comparisons are often made between one’s spouse and former sexual partners that kindle feelings of dissatisfaction. Feelings of rejection as relationships break up cause some to build an emotional wall around themselves, making it difficult to fully give themselves to their partner in marriage.

Are such consequences worth the illicit pleasures of these fleeting relationships? Not when stacked against the real cost in human suffering!

More money not the solution

In this age of AIDS we hear, with increasing frequency, many outcries around the world. Always the message is repeated that we need more money to fight AIDS—money to educate people about the disease, money for hospitals to take care of the sick and dying, money for the drugs that enable people to live longer. The list is endless.

But the fact remains that millions of dollars have already been spent on these things—and little has been achieved.

Only one strategy is guaranteed to work. Only one approach will totally end the scourge of AIDS.

Abstinence before marriage, faithfulness within.

Or, as the Bible put it almost 3,500 years ago, “*You shall not commit adultery.*” **GN**

Recommended Reading

For centuries men and women have brought untold misery and suffering on themselves and those around them because they ignored or trampled on God’s greatest guiding principles for life. What are those principles, and how would they transform our world if people were willing to live by them? Request or download your free copy of our booklet *The Ten Commandments* to learn the surprising answers—and how you can avoid much pain and heartache in your own life.



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The Biblical Feast of Trumpets: Foretelling 'the Day of the Lord'

Does this ancient biblical feast hold great meaning for Christians today?

by Gary Petty

Every autumn the Jewish community observes a holiday called *Rosh Hashanah* (meaning “head of the year,” because it begins the Jewish civil year). This is a biblical festival, known in Scripture as *Yom Teruah*, the Day of Trumpets, because the Israelites were to blow trumpets on that day (Leviticus 23:24). A *shofar*, or ram’s horn, is blown calling the faithful to 10 days of repentance culminating in another biblical festival, *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement.

Most Christians find little meaning in these days, but could they hold an important message for you and your future?

In ancient Israel the *shofar* was blown for various reasons, including a *call to war*. Jewish leaders in the first century had to take care when they blew the *shofar* on the Feast of Trumpets so that the occupying Roman soldiers didn’t think a rebellion was being launched.

The Bible speaks of a time before Christ’s return when the earth will be engulfed in war, famine, disease epidemics, earthquakes and other colossal disasters. This era, called “the great tribulation” (Revelation 7:14; Matthew 24:21), will bring humanity to the brink of total destruction—necessitating God’s promised intervention in human affairs.

The period of God’s intervention is called “the day of the Lord.” It is also a time known for the blowing of trumpets.

The prophetic Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord includes a series of cataclysmic events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ and His forceful suppression of humanity’s rebellion against God.

It’s important to understand that prophecies concerning the Day of the Lord can at times have a former and later fulfillment. What that means is that the messages of the

ancient prophets applied in part to the people to whom they were preaching, but many of these prophecies also refer to a *future* time when God will intervene in the affairs of mankind—a time that is *yet to occur*.

Many references to the Day of the Lord in the biblical books of Isaiah and Joel refer to punishment God poured out on ancient Israel and Judah. But when reading these prophecies, and comparing them with historical information, it is clear that they are dual in nature and were only *partially* fulfilled. These verses primarily look to the future when God will pour out His judgment on an unrepentant humanity before the second coming of the Messiah.

This may not be a popular message in



The Day of Trumpets is so named because the Israelites were to blow trumpets—shofars or ram’s horns—on that day.

today’s environment of feel-good religion, but, as we always do on *Good News Radio* and in our publications, we turn to the Bible as the Word of God in our search for truth.

Many centuries ago, the prophet Zechariah was inspired to write: “Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

“Then the LORD will go forth and fight

against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two . . .” (Zechariah 14:1-4).

God’s future intervention

God is a God of love and mercy. But He is also a just and righteous God who doesn’t compromise with evil. Instead of repenting and acknowledging their Creator, most of humanity has been snubbing their collective noses at Him in a pretense of religion and suffering the consequences. But a time is coming when He will intervene by sending Jesus Christ to rule over the nations and save us from ourselves.

Many Old and New Testament prophecies describe the coming Day of the Lord, including those of the seven trumpets in Revelation 8-11. They create a composite picture of a time of blowing of trumpets, a time of catastrophic war, and a time when all nations will be brought together to be judged by God.

The Feast of Trumpets contains an important message for Christians. In fact, it is the most important news on the globe today. It heralds the gospel’s emphasis on repentance and judgment, the warning blasts of the *shofar*; the Day of the Lord and the proclamation that the Messiah is returning to establish God’s Kingdom on the earth.

Jesus Himself makes a key statement in His Mount Olivet prophecy recorded in Matthew 24: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes

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The Horsemen of Revelation

The Fifth Horseman Rides

Most Bible students focus only on the first four horsemen of Revelation 6. The phrase “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” is synonymous with frightening prophecies. But there is another horseman—a fifth, whose ride signifies a much different future and brings promise of a far better age to come.

by Darris McNeely

It seems as if it were a lifetime ago that U.S. President George W. Bush put the prestige of his office into the quest for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Yet it was only a little over a year ago—in June 2003—that the American president met in Aqaba with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Jordan’s King Abdullah and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas to commit their efforts and energies to “the road map for peace.”

The Israeli and Palestinian leaders shook hands, expressed regret for the suffering of the peoples, stated their desire for peaceful relations and committed to travel the road to peace.

But within days of this highly heralded

The book of Revelation shows that God will bring a time of divine judgment on the world that in the end will result in peace. It is the only way this warring, fractious world will be brought to a state of harmony.

meeting, another wave of violence broke on the streets of Israel. Sniper attacks and homicide bombings took more Israeli lives. Seventeen were killed in one grisly bus attack, followed by other suicide bombings that killed and maimed dozens more. Israeli counterattacks took the lives of Palestinian leaders as well as innocent children.

No sooner were the hopes for peace raised than they were dashed to the ground, leaving many to wonder if any peaceful solution to this problem is possible.

Diplomats shuttle between nations, while new solutions to age-old enmities are tried and found wanting. One U.S. senator suggested that the United States may need to commit troops to Israel as a peacekeeping force. The last thing Israel wants is the death of American soldiers in defense of its territory. The imposition of a foreign army into



Israel sounds ominous notes to students of prophecy.

Fruitless search for peace

Where do we find the way to genuine peace? Beyond the Middle East, other areas of conflict continue to flare up. In Sudan and the Congo, little-noticed wars have claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Africans. While attention is focused on Iraq, these wars have been all but ignored by the world powers. It is a sad and discordant commentary on those who try to work for peace in the world.

In the previous four installments of this series, we have focused on the rides of the four horsemen of Revelation 6. These horsemen, who make up the first four of the seven seals opened by Jesus Christ, show the coming destruction caused by false religion,

war, famine and pestilence.

Christ said these seals would herald an unparalleled time of sorrow and great tribulation “such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:7-8, 21).

The prophecies show dark days ahead for this world and its inhabitants. Revelation 8 shows the effect of further plagues, which affect the earth’s vegetation (verse 7) and devastate the waters of the rivers and seas, the planet’s life-support system (verses 8 and 10).

Conditions will grow so bad that men will seek the escape of death in that day, but it will not be found (Revelation 9:6). Why will all this come on the earth, and where will it lead?

God’s righteous judgment

We need to understand a basic principle of God’s judgment on mankind. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He would much rather see men and women live righteously and enjoy the blessings that come from obeying His way. But when the way of man becomes too wicked, there follows a time of righteous judgment, the end of which is ultimate restoration.

Notice Ezekiel 18. In verse 23, God rhetorically asks, “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? . . . and not that he should turn from his ways and live?” Again in verse 30 He says, “Therefore I will judge you . . . every one according to his ways . . . Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin” (emphasis added throughout).

The book of Revelation shows that God will bring a time of divine judgment on the world that in the end will result in peace. It is the *only* way this warring, fractious world will be brought to a state of harmony.

Notice what is sung at the throne of God in anticipation of the seven last plagues.

A song of Moses and the Lamb includes these words: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested" (Revelation 15:3-4).

Another angel, holding a bowl of judgment says: "You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For *it is their just due*" (Revelation 16:5-6).

To the human mind, unaccustomed to thinking about divine judgment, these words strike a jarring and harsh note. How can a loving and merciful God do this to His creation?

Yet our judgment must be guided and shaped by the words of another angelic being from God's altar, who says, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments" (Revelation 16:7).

The ride of the fifth horseman

However, the fifth horseman of Revelation, Jesus Christ, rides not with famine, pestilence or a false gospel like the earlier riders. His ride is not the fifth seal of Revelation 6. Instead He is the returning King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Christ rides onto the world stage at the moment of earth's greatest crisis—and "*makes war.*" But it will truly be *the war to end wars.*

And it will be a war waged in righteous judgment. Notice the description in Revelation 19: "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war" (verse 11).

Like the first horseman of Revelation 6, Christ sits astride a white horse, this image in both places symbolizing conquest. But here the similarity ends. Unlike the *deception* of the first rider, Jesus comes with *truth*. His name is "The Word of God" (verse 13) and He wields a sharp sword, which in other places is used to symbolize the Word of God.

Indeed, there will be a literal battle, after which the true way of God will replace the governments of this world and nations will be subject to the Kingdom of God, the divine reign of Jesus Christ over the entire world. Unlike the previous four horsemen, which foreshadowed increasing world

turmoil and tribulation, Christ's ride will lead to a time of peace throughout the earth.

The war that finally brings peace

Christ will rule the nations according to all the prophecies that foretold His righteous government. Revelation 19:15 carries forward the thought recorded in Isaiah 11:4: "Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Christ's second coming, with power and great glory, will be a time of great conflict and a final battle of the nations gathered at Jerusalem. These armies gather for what will seem to them to be an earthly, temporal matter. But God will have another purpose.

An angel, emblazoned against the sun, appeared to John with this ominous command to the fowl of the skies: "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God" (Revelation 19:17). Plainly, after Christ destroys those armies gathered to fight against Him, there will be nothing left but food for the scavenging birds.

Read in your own Bible the words describing this dramatic scene at the end of this present age of human misrule. While not pretty, it is the only solution to the continual warring of mankind.

When giant oil wells are burning out of control, often the only way firefighters can extinguish the flame is by igniting an explosion in the well head. The explosion sucks out the oxygen, thus taking away a key element needed for the fire. Similarly, the righteous war Christ will wage is like a massive explosion of force that brings the raging flames of war to a halt. Only then will the conditions be set for ushering in the peace of the Kingdom of God.

The Desire of All Nations

Through the prophet Haggai, God sent a message of comfort that echoes through the ages. It speaks to the world at the time of great calamity mentioned in Revelation.

"My Spirit remains among you; do not fear! For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory . . . The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former . . . And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:5-9).

Clearly, Jesus Christ the Messiah is "the Desire of All Nations." What do all nations long for? Is it not peace? Is it not the chance

to live and love and grow old through the generations without fear of war, wasting diseases and want?

Throughout the ages men, women and children have looked and longed for one who would bring lasting peace to the world. The first-century world looked for a golden age that would bring justice and peace to mankind. They sensed the time was right for restoring a time of prosperity and wisdom when the physical and spiritual world worked together in harmony.

The Roman poet Virgil spoke of the return of justice from "a new breed of men sent down from heaven" and "the boy's birth in whom the iron shall cease, the golden age arise . . . He shall receive the life of gods, and see heroes with gods commingling, and himself be seen of them, and with his father's worth reign over a world at peace" (*Eclogue* 4.5-13, 15-18).

Of course, the Roman Empire did not bring a "golden age"—it was more like iron than gold. The peace of Rome was achieved at the end of the legionnaire's short sword—war, but not a righteous one. No leader or nation since then has brought lasting peace to any age of man.

A lasting peace

Where can you turn for a reliable promise of peace and justice?

The search will continue for a lasting peace among today's nations. Conferences will be held, treaties produced and accords signed. There will be short periods of calm giving the illusion of peace. But in the end, the only real peace must be brought by the hand of God through the ride of the fifth horseman of Revelation.

Today the world awaits the voices that will declare, as foretold in Revelation 11:15: "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" **GN**

Recommended Reading

What will happen on earth when Jesus Christ returns? What does Bible prophecy foretell about the transformation of our world under the reign of the Messiah? Why *must* He return? Learn the hopeful, encouraging truth in our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. And to better understand the events prophesied for the end time, also request or download your free copy of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our Web site at www.gnmagazine.org

The Biblical Festivals That Show How God Will Bring World Peace

Will mankind ever experience lasting peace? Humanity's track record isn't very good. But a series of biblical feasts reveals how God will indeed bring lasting world peace!

by Roger Foster

History shows that the greatest barrier to world peace is our human nature. No segment of society escapes the cruelties it causes. Self-serving ambition, lust for power, prejudice and greed are only a few of humanity's dark traits that regularly defeat the best of good intentions.

Conflicts arising from our selfish attitudes and choices victimize families and communities just as relentlessly as they do entire nations. We long for a solution, but can't seem to find one that will endure.

Yet there is an answer, and the God who created us has revealed His intent to miraculously transform our nature so that peace will become possible!

In the Holy Scriptures He is described as "the God of peace" (Hebrews 13:20). The Scriptures also refer to His Son Jesus Christ as the "Prince of Peace" and promise, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end . . ." (Isaiah 9:6-7).

They foretell a time when "He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4, New International Version).

But for now peace continues to be an elusive dream because, as those same Scriptures say of us, "the way of peace they have not known" (Romans 3:17).

Landmarks in God's road map to peace

Mankind simply doesn't know the way to peace! The only sure way to lasting peace is through *changing what is inside us*. It's futile to hope that merely placing restraints on man's outward behavior will produce a *permanent* state of tranquility!

God's plan for changing human nature is the most ancient of all road maps to world peace. It embodies *seven successive steps*, each vital to solving our human nature problem. Its focus is on *transforming humanity from the inside out*. And God assures us that

it will eventually bring lasting peace!

We often celebrate special events. Many celebrations are memorials of landmark events that have shaped our family, community, nation or society.

God has ordained seven unique celebrations that highlight the key landmark events in His plan to create and sustain world peace. Jesus Christ personally observed all seven of these celebrations (in fact, He was crucified on one of them, the first one). These religious festivals celebrate the immense contributions that He has made or

was that their newly acquired freedom from physical slavery was symbolic of God's plan to liberate, in the future, all peoples and nations from their slavery to sin (Romans 6:3-6). The New Testament Scriptures explain that man's enslavement to sin is caused by his fleshly desires that incite the evil tendencies of his human nature (Romans 7:22-23; James 4:1).

Another theme in God's seven annual festivals is that of a harvest. This is the grand theme that pervades all of these feasts. Their dates are set according to the agricultural



God who created us has revealed His intent to miraculously transform our nature so that peace will become possible.

will make toward transforming humankind into the righteous and peaceful children of God.

These celebrations are holy festivals that God instituted when He was transforming the descendants of Jacob (grandson of Abraham) from a slave people into an independent nation under His rule. Several great themes are depicted.

One theme is that of a people who are freed from slavery so they can serve God. When the nation of Israel was freed from Egyptian bondage, they knew they were being rescued from physical slavery.

What they didn't understand at that time

harvest seasons of the Holy Land. For this reason, they sometimes are called the harvest festivals.

But the implications of these festivals go far beyond the realm of agriculture. They lay before us the seven crucial steps in God's plan to *harvest—to gather—human beings* into His everlasting family.

Jesus Christ explained this so clearly! "Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is *gathering fruit for eternal life*, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

“For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ *I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor*” (John 4:35-38, New Revised Standard Version, emphasis added throughout).

The first three festivals

The *first step* in God’s plan is symbolized through the divinely ordained festival called the *Passover* (Exodus 12:21; Deuteronomy 16:1-2). It reminds us annually that Jesus Christ was put to death so that we can receive forgiveness of sin. By recognizing and repenting of our sinful behaviors and attitudes that flow from our selfish nature, we all may receive this forgiveness.

Anciently, the Passover was observed by slaughtering a lamb—which represented the future sacrifice of Christ. At the beginning of Christ’s ministry, John the Baptist “saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29).

The Passover commemorates what Jesus Christ has done in offering His own life to

the *unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

God delivered the ancient Israelites, following their celebration of the Passover, from Egyptian slavery during the days of this festival. That national deliverance figuratively represented God’s commitment to deliver in the future *all* peoples, once they accept Christ’s sacrifice, from the negative pulls of their human nature.

As Paul explains to those who have already repented, accepted Christ’s sacrifice and begun striving to overcome sin and put it out of their lives: “We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin . . . But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:6, 17-18, NRSV).

The *third step* in this divine plan is celebrated as the *Day of Pentecost* (Acts 20:16). It also is referred to as “*the Feast of Weeks*”

Though few in number in proportion to the masses of humanity, their vital mission is to be “the light of the world” until He returns (Matthew 5:14). Not everyone who now claims to follow Jesus Christ has truly repented and received the Spirit of God (Matthew 7:20-21). Therefore, the time of removing completely the spiritual blindness that plagues humanity is yet in the future.

The global implications of the great autumn celebrations

The first three festivals of the spring harvest season represent those initial steps that are essential for preparing the way for the massive global renewal that will occur in the future. This global revitalization is pictured by the last four festivals. All are observed in the autumn (in the northern hemisphere), as the autumn harvest in the Holy Land is being gathered and stored.

God intentionally set them at this time to represent the key aspects of His great spiritual harvest of all nations and peoples. They point to the time when Jesus Christ will assume control over the affairs of the whole world. Ushering in a new age, He will at last rid the world of armed conflicts, deception and spiritual blindness.

The Kingdom of God was the main theme of the gospel message Christ preached at His first coming. “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching *the gospel of the kingdom of God*, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14-15).

The word “gospel” means *good news*. Jesus’ gospel was the good news that the Kingdom of God, which Jesus will establish over all nations at His second coming, will address and solve all of humanity’s problems! Global peace will rank high among His most urgent priorities.

Let’s now see what these sacred festivals reveal about that coming time of global reform.

Jesus Christ takes command

The *fourth step* in God’s master plan is celebrated by the *Feast of Trumpets*. It represents the return of Jesus Christ as the King of Kings to establish the Kingdom of God over all the earth at the sound of a great *trumpet* blast.

Notice descriptions of this crucial event in the Scriptures: “The seventh angel *sounded his trumpet*, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever’” (Revelation 11:15, NIV).

Why Not Join Us for the Feast Jesus Kept?

Jesus of Nazareth, His apostles and the early New Testament Church never observed Christmas or Easter. But they did observe the Feast of Tabernacles, a biblical festival that celebrates Christ’s coming reign over the earth. In fact, when He returns, all nations will observe this festival (Zechariah 14:16-19). But you don’t have to wait until then. You can observe it with us this year, Sept. 30 through Oct. 7, at these locations:

Argentina; Australia (Frederick Henry Bay, Tasmania; Merimbula, New South Wales; Noosa, Queensland); **Barbados; British Isles; Cameroon; Canada** (Collingwood, Ontario; Kelowna, British Columbia; Regina, Saskatchewan; St. John’s, Newfoundland); **Chile; Estonia; France; Germany; Ghana; Guatemala** (Antigua; Esquipulas); **Italy; Jamaica; Kenya; Malawi; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Peru; Philippines** (Baguio City; Davao City; Iloilo City); **Portugal; Rwanda; South Africa** (George, Uvongo); **Togo; Tonga; United States** (Anchorage, Alaska; Bend, Oregon; Branson, Missouri; Escondido, California; Hagerstown, Maryland; Jekyll Island, Georgia; Kerrville, Texas; Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii; Lexington, Kentucky; Panama City Beach, Florida; Steamboat Springs, Colorado; Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin). For more details, visit www.ucg.org/feast.

pay for the guilt of all who will repent.

Jesus and His disciples kept this festival (Mark 14:12-14; Luke 22:13-15), setting the example we should follow (1 John 2:6). And the apostle Paul explicitly stated that Christians should continue following that example (1 Corinthians 11:23-28).

The *second step* in God’s plan is celebrated as the *Days of Unleavened Bread*. Paul explains the spiritual significance of this seven-day period alongside that of the Passover: “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed *Christ, our Passover*, was sacrificed for us. Therefore *let us keep the feast* [of Unleavened Bread], not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with

and “the day of the *firstfruits*” (Numbers 28:26). James 1:18 tells us that “of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be *a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*.”

It was on the Day of Pentecost that the New Testament Church was first established. What made this event so special was the miraculous change, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, that God made in the minds and hearts of those who were converted on that day (Acts 2:1-4).

The time had finally come for God to begin changing a selected body of people from within. Jesus calls those who receive this marvelous transformation of their innermost nature in this present age His “little flock” (Luke 12:32).

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and *with the trumpet of God*. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Not only will Jesus Christ assume command over all the earth, but also all those who have served Him faithfully will be resurrected from the dead to become His executive staff: “And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31).

“Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High” (Daniel 7:27).

“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6).

The great deceiver is removed

The *fifth step* in God’s master plan is foreshadowed by the *Day of Atonement*. In ancient Israel it was on the Day of Atonement that the *entire nation* was ceremonially cleansed of sins committed in ignorance (Leviticus 16:29-34; Hebrews 9:7). Figuratively, this cleansing ceremony looked forward to the real cleansing of *the entire world* of its spiritual ignorance and blindness.

The Scriptures reveal that the one being most responsible for humanity’s spiritual ignorance and deception is Satan the devil (Revelation 12:9). Therefore, one of the first events to occur after Christ returns is the binding and banishment of this great deceiver.

“And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for

a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer . . .” (Revelation 20:1-3, New American Standard Bible).

In ancient Israel this deceiving spirit being was represented symbolically by a goat that, on the Day of Atonement, was banished into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21). With the influence of the devil then removed, all people of the world can become reconciled to God, through the *atonement sacrifice* of Christ. How different from today!

A millennium of global restoration

The *sixth step* in this sacred plan is celebrated by the *Feast of Tabernacles* or the Festival of Ingathering. This seven-day period represents the first 1,000 years of the restorative rule of Jesus Christ on earth. During the first part of His rule He will use several techniques to convince a deceived world that He really is the divine Son of God with the power to give or refuse blessings.

First He will establish Jerusalem as the capital of His kingdom (Zechariah 14:1-9). After that, “Many nations will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

“He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Micah 4:2-3, NIV).

But not every nation will cooperate immediately. Many will have to learn the hard way just how fully Christ can control every aspect of the entire earth. “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

“And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain . . .” (Zechariah 14:16-19)

Christ’s righteous rule will soon secure a peace the world has never before known. “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:7).

Hope for the unsaved dead

At Christ’s return only those who have faithfully served and obeyed God over the centuries are resurrected. Yet Paul explained that “God our Savior . . . desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). And Peter said: “The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

What, then, happens to the rest of the dead who have never repented or really understood about God and His way of life? Is there any hope for them? Indeed there is! God has also taken them into account.

The *seventh step* in God’s master plan celebrates their hope in the Holy Day that immediately follows the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Since the last event in God’s plan of salvation mentioned in the Bible is the Great White Throne Judgment that immediately follows the 1,000-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:11-15), this Holy Day represents the conclusion of God’s final judgment concerning the destiny of human beings.

Concerning those who died without repenting, the Scriptures explain, “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:5).

After the 1,000 years expire, the apostle John explains what happens next: “. . . I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (verses 7, 12).

Jesus clearly included both Israelites and gentiles in that resurrection (Matthew 11:21-24; 12:41-42). Those who at that time accept God’s teaching and repent will be given His Spirit through which they also may receive eternal life (Ezekiel 37:1-14; Romans 8:11).

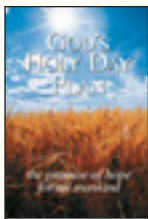
A plan that guarantees peace

On its own, mankind has never discovered a lasting way to peace. Yet, through these biblical festivals, God has revealed how He plans to bring peace to the entire world. We can never achieve it on our own, which is why Jesus Christ *must* return.

If you’d like to experience a foretaste of the coming time when Jesus Christ will reeducate the entire world in God’s way of life, see “Why Not Join Us for the Feast Jesus Kept?” Following God’s command and Christ’s example, thousands of *Good News* readers gather each year to keep the festivals that celebrate these great events in God’s plan. You’re welcome to join us! **GN**

Recommended Reading

To better understand God’s plan for the salvation of mankind and how the world will finally be transformed under Jesus Christ’s righteous rule, be sure to request your free copies of the booklets *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. You’ll discover much more about the amazing good news of the future revealed in the Bible!



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

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Elected President

Continued from page 17

religious celebration or practice not found in the Word of God.

Jesus in fact kept the biblical Sabbath (from Friday sunset until Saturday sunset). He even said He is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28). His Sabbath observance would offend many of those who choose to observe Sunday instead.

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, so He would offend the vast majority of Jewish voters who would consider this claim blasphemous.

What kind of leader would He be?

Ironically, Jesus’ teachings and practices are the same factors that would make Him a perfect leader. His perfect integrity, compassion, miraculous powers of healing, love for all and willingness to die for the sins of mankind—including people of every race, religion and economic status—set Him apart.

Jesus is the ultimate model of leadership—uncompromising but compassionate. With perfect ethics, Jesus taught fairness and concern for the well-being of all, demonstrating virtue and truthfulness in every action. He taught the value of the family, said marriage was inviolable and directed that we should honor and care for our elderly and the disadvantaged.

Yet Jesus—though perfect in His leadership—will never be elected president.

Christ, you see, would never run for the office to start with. He would never attack others for self-promotion. He would not compromise the truth or His ethics and values. He would not curry the favor of special interests in exchange for campaign donations.

We must remember that Jesus was not interested in political maneuvers or in exercising worldly political power in this age. “My kingdom is not of this world,” He said. “If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, . . . but now My

kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

Destined for a higher office

We should have no regrets over the fact that Jesus of Nazareth will never be elected president of the United States or any other nation of this world.

He has, after all, already been selected for *an infinitely higher office*.

He currently serves at God’s throne in heaven as the High Priest for truly converted Christians. And He promises to return as earth’s ruler—under the auspices of His Father—and to take the reins of all authority when mankind needs God’s intervention to save us from the corruption and collapse of human leadership.

As Jesus told the Roman governor Pontius Pilate: “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37).

The message of the Bible is that we cannot rightly rule ourselves. We need a perfect ruler who has demonstrated ultimate love and concern for others to show us the way. Jesus Christ has perfectly qualified. And He will be that ruler.

The Bible says Jesus will one day rule all nations directly from His throne in Jerusalem in what the Bible calls the Kingdom of God. Not only will it bring peace and prosperity undreamed of even by the prosperous Western nations today, it will accomplish nothing less than the transformation of human beings into the divine nature and state of being like Christ Himself.

A totally new form of government under the administration of Jesus Christ will bring all of the earth’s citizens directly under the governance of the Kingdom of God. Only then will all Americans, and the citizens of the world, truly experience “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

It was Christ Himself who said nearly 2,000 years ago: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). He will found the first truly great society, one that surpasses the most optimistic visions dreamed about and proclaimed by politicians.

When Christ comes, there will be no need for a democratic process to elect the nations’ top leadership. He is a king. In fact, He has already been chosen King of Kings. And He has already issued a series of executive orders.

He does not endorse human political leaders today. But He does tell you to believe the good news and accept Him as your leader both now and for all eternity. Are you willing to make that choice? **GN**

Day of the Lord

Continued from page 21

of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels *with a great sound of a trumpet*, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (verses 29-31).

Notice that the return of Jesus Christ is accompanied by *the sound of a trumpet*.

The apostle Paul encourages Christians to keep the coming Day of the Lord in mind. He writes to the church in Thessalonica: “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.

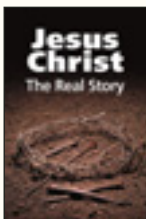
“But let us who are of the day be sober . . . For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him” (1 Thessalonians 5:2-10).

Indeed, the resurrection of the saints to reign with Christ in glory will come at the sounding of the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The prophesied Day of the Lord is coming. The trumpet will sound, the saints will be raised from the grave and Jesus Christ will return to establish His Father’s Kingdom on the earth. The Feast of Trumpets isn’t just for the Jewish people. It is a very special day for all those who wait for the Messiah. **GN**

Recommended Reading

What kind of leader was Jesus of Nazareth when He walked the earth 2,000 years ago? What kind of leader will He be when He returns again to earth? What kind of difference will His rule make for every man, woman and child on earth? Discover the answers in our free booklets *Jesus Christ: The Real Story* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Both are yours free for the asking.



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

www.gnmagazine.org

Recommended Reading

Many people dismiss the Holy Days of the Bible, considering them irrelevant today, but nothing could be further from the truth! These biblical festivals teach us about God’s plan for humankind and how He will powerfully intervene in human affairs! To learn more about these festivals, request your free copy of *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.



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Letters From Our Readers

Your worst issue ever

I hereby ask you to remove me from your list of subscribers. It seems to me like just another vehicle to transport conservative American values, most of them politically motivated, not religiously.

Your July-August issue is, in my opinion, the worst you ever distributed. Your praise for Ronald Reagan doesn't belong in "a magazine of understanding." To remind you: It was mainly Mr. Gorbachev who gave the most important impulses to end the cold war. Mr. Reagan wasn't the biggest part in this process, instead he fueled it and wasted America's money on foolish things like the "Star Wars" project. Also, I am frightened of the European picture you paint. I feel highly discriminated against by your views.

T.R., Germany

Please cancel my subscription. With the name *Good News* I was actually, foolishly, hoping for some good news, not some hypocritical, political, negative propaganda. As far as I am concerned, your church should have its nonprofit status taken away because your magazine is so political. It's hypocritical because all it sounds like to me is judging. Never send me another issue, please.

Reader from Idaho

The *Good News* has no political affiliation. We judge matters on their merits from a biblical perspective. Others appreciated the same issue, as the next four letters show.

"The Battle Over the Bible"

The article "The Battle Over the Bible" in your July-August issue hit the nail right on the head! I was moved by that article. The Scripture references were so relevant. Great job! I am looking forward to showing this article to some of my friends. This is the kind of writing that is needed to open the eyes of some of those who downplay the need for God and His accurate Word.

L.C., Internet

I just finished devouring my first issue of *The Good News*. My husband and I have a ministry that reaches out to people at various levels and stations in life. One of the particularly hard cases we minister to are intellectual types, science-minded individuals that have a hard time with faith.

This particular issue, "The Battle Over the Bible," addressed many of these intellectual roadblocks we so often encounter with those in the academic fields. The articles contained in this issue are so effective in answering a lot of the hard questions.

K.C., Santa Rosa Beach, Florida

William Tyndale

Thanks for the compelling story of William Tyndale in the July-August *Good News*. I read a history of the development of the English Bible a year ago and find the record incredibly sobering and inspiring.

C.M., Arizona

I've been reading *The Good News* since its beginning and have never taken the time to write a thank you in appreciation. I welcome each issue, but this latest one (July-August) is so informative and inspiring that I am compelled to write this note. To think that men were imprisoned and martyred for translating the Bible into English so that we could read it—and now society is rejecting it. This never ceases to amaze me.

S.E., Chicago, Illinois

Letters from around the world

I very much like *The Good News*. The topics included are very interesting and touch the heart. They are really inspiring and the issues analyzed are well presented. I appreciate the English language.

Z.D., Bulgaria

I am very grateful for your sending me *The Good News*. May Almighty God bless you all. I must let you know that this magazine and all your booklets have answered some great questions in my life. Once again, I so much appreciate all your love.

Reader from Nigeria

I am a student, 21 years old. Formerly I found nothing worthwhile in my life. But after reading many stories and articles in your *Good News* magazine and the *Bible Study Course*, I am confident that God is in my life and the Bible will help me to learn how to live in Christ.

B.N.D., Vietnam

I have seen your magazine in the house of my friend a few days ago and I am very

impressed to see this. I want you send me this magazine, OK?

S.D., Lahore, Pakistan

Forward thinking

Please try to be more forward thinking. Do not dwell so much on past biblical writings. Think rational 21st-century thoughts. To succeed, think of an integrated society.

M.C., Bideford, England

Prophecy forms between a fourth and a third of the Bible, much of which is yet to be fulfilled. It heralds the integrated society that you mention. The timeless principles of living revealed in the Scriptures are as applicable to our present day as they were when originally written. Daily we are reaping the bitter results of not observing the Ten Commandments—a spiritual law that is self-enforcing. Consider the next letter.

After reading *The Good News* for many years, I feel the obligation of sending my compliments for your well-written articles. At this time, when ethical and moral writing is at an all-time low, it is encouraging to read.

Knowledge of what is going on in the world is important, but it is only fruitful when it is associated with humility, honesty and wisdom. It is important for us to learn from the great sages of the past such as Jesus Christ and Moses. If we don't live by and emulate their beliefs, we will be forced to take the position of former superpowers—continuous hardships and eventual collapse.

Dr. G.D.M., Boca Raton, Florida

A just and honorable support system

We appreciate the fact that you don't hound people for money. We realize that it costs money to print and send the publications, but some people just can't pay for it. We are happy that God has blessed others enough to be able to help so that everyone can learn these truths. God has blessed us enough to be able to send a small donation now and then.

Mr. & Mrs. F.L., Boise, Idaho

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



Questions & Answers

Q: A friend of mine (who attends with the United Church of God) and I have been discussing some biblical differences. Why should we celebrate the feasts listed in Leviticus 23, as she maintains?

My church doesn't keep these feast days. I talked with my pastor and he said that if we are supposed to observe these feasts, then we should also observe all of the things listed in the Old Testament. But since there is a change and we no longer have to offer sacrifices, why is it necessary to keep the Holy Days?

J.M., Internet

A: You have asked some good and far-reaching questions.

In brief, the United Church of God observes the festivals outlined in Leviticus 23 because they were commanded by God in the Old Testament and that command was never abrogated in the New Testament. In fact, Jesus Christ observed them, as did His apostles and the New Testament Church long after His death (Luke 22:15; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; Acts 2:1; 18:21; 20:16). We should follow their example (1 John 2:6; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

In introducing His command to keep these festivals, God makes an important point: "These are *my* appointed feasts, *the appointed feasts of the LORD*, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies" (Leviticus 23:2, New International Version, emphasis added throughout).

Most people assume these feasts are only for the Jews. Yet God clearly tells us they are *His* feasts, not the feasts of any particular ethnic or religious group. Further, He says they are His "*sacred assemblies*"—appointed times or divine appointments when He commands His people to gather before Him.

One of the major flaws in mainstream Christianity today is how the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible is generally viewed. Over the centuries there has been an enormous effort to cut Christianity off from its roots by claiming that much of the Old Testament is no longer applicable or necessary to the Christian life. Yet the New Testament itself emphasizes the importance of the Old Testament.

Consider what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "... From childhood you have

known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

There was no New Testament canon when Timothy was a child. The "Holy Scriptures" to which Paul referred were what is today commonly called the Old Testament. Far from being obsolete or unnecessary, Paul says these words are "given by inspiration of God" and "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man [or woman] of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Marvin Wilson, professor of biblical and theological studies at Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts, lamented the general state of Christian knowledge of the Old Testament in our modern age:

"... Many Christians seem to have little knowledge about their biblical roots [in the Hebrew Bible]. They have never really penetrated the inner world of biblical thought. Christians can converse intelligently about the latest automobiles, fashions, music and sports, but too few give evidence of a deep understanding of their spiritual heritage. At best, their grounding in biblical soil is both shallow and shaky... Churches have conveyed the attitude that a thorough understanding of this [Old] Testament... is, more or less, optional for today's Christian" (*Our Father Abraham*, 1989, pp. 4-5, 108).

The New Testament mentions Jesus, the apostles or members of the early Church observing six of the seven annual feast days. Only the Feast of Trumpets is not mentioned. But the event that this particular annual Holy Day heralds—Jesus Christ's return—is mentioned prominently in the New Testament.

What few people realize is that these biblical festivals teach us the major steps in God's plan for the salvation of mankind. Passover, for example, foreshadowed the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of mankind (1 Corinthians 5:7)—which took place on the very day of the Passover. The Feast of Unleavened Bread depicts the necessity of Christians to remove sin from their lives and live a new, sinless

life in Christ (verses 7-8).

The Feast of Pentecost, also called the Feast of Firstfruits, foreshadowed the founding of Jesus Christ's Church, made up of those who are the firstfruits in God's plan of salvation (James 1:18; Revelation 14:4). And, not coincidentally, God founded that Church on the Feast of Pentecost when He sent His Spirit to the 120 disciples gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 2). In every sense these are truly Christian Holy Days, as they revolve around Christ's role in God's plan.

If you would like to read more about all of the annual biblical festivals and their meaning, we suggest you read our booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. You can request a free copy or download it from our Web site at www.ucg.org/booklets.

Observance of the Holy Days does not obligate us to keep the law of sacrifices today. Indeed, since the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70, there is no Levitical priesthood to offer them or a place designated by God at which they can be offered.

Even if we did have a temple and a priesthood, sacrifices would not be required for Christians today because the one great sacrifice of Christ made the need for animal sacrifices redundant during this Church age (Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:1-14). This is one of the major points expressed in the book of Hebrews.

Animal sacrifices were part of the administration of the affairs of the physical nation of Israel, whereas today the Church is a spiritual nation called "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). The apostle Peter made it clear that the Church is "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, [called] to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

Those sacrifices include our prayers to God as well as the presentation of our lives as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). This latter expression refers to a life that is dedicated to living God's way and keeping His laws.

This is a rather broad subject, and this answer has hit only some of the high spots. Please be sure to request the free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Also ask for *Jesus Christ: The Real Story*, as it will make plain Christ's teachings on the necessity of observing God's law.

What Will the Kingdom of God Mean for You?

In this magazine we often write about what the Bible refers to as the Kingdom of God—the divine government Jesus will establish after He returns to earth. But what will the Kingdom of God do for you? Why should you look forward to that period of time? You need to know the answer!

by Tom Clark

Many young people are aware of some of the challenges and fears of life—crime, poverty, disease and war. The world today also has to live with the threat of terrorism—knowing that a terrorist can suddenly strike anywhere, anytime, bringing devastation and death.

Young people in particular struggle against the pressures of premarital sex, illicit drugs and alcohol abuse. You may wonder whether you'll be able to afford to go to college or what career path to choose and whether you'll be able to find work after you finish your education. You may also question whether you will ever marry and have an opportunity for a happy family and a good life.

Street gangs and crime are issues with which you may have to wrestle. And some grow up knowing that rape, mugging, verbal and physical abuse, kidnapping and even murder lurk nearby. There has to be a better way to live!

The Bible reveals that Jesus Christ is returning to earth. When He returns, He will bring an end to society as we know it and will open the door to an entirely new world! Terrorism, ethnic cleansing, religious and ethnic hatred and bigotry will all cease to exist!

War will be a thing of the past. Conventional, chemical, biological and nuclear weaponry will be destroyed and any usable parts will be reused to make useful instruments for the betterment of humanity. Jesus Christ and His faithful followers will teach everyone how to live in true peace and harmony! (Isaiah 2:1-4).

Can you imagine how much different life will be then? Can you foresee how different life will be after Christ returns? Let's consider just a few real-life issues.

Peace and safety

The city of Jerusalem is anything but safe



God is describing a place that is safe for the elderly to walk about in perfect peace! Small children will be able to run around the neighborhood without fear of anyone or anything!

today. Probably no other piece of ground on earth has inspired as much fighting and killing. There is not a more dangerous or difficult place to bring peace to than Jerusalem.

So it is highly significant when God tells us what this dangerous city will one day be like: "This is what the LORD says: 'I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain . . . Men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there'" (Zechariah 8:3-5, New International Version).

God is describing a place that is safe for the elderly to walk about in perfect peace! Small children will be able to run around the neighborhood without fear of anyone

or anything. There won't be spray-painted graffiti on the walls or gang members driving by looking for trouble. There won't be any drug dealers, crack houses, pimps or streetwalkers—and no drunken drivers behind the wheel of a car and no one hiding in shadows to mug an unsuspecting pedestrian.

What does it say about families when the elderly and small children are both out with each other without fear? It means families will still be together, not split up by divorce or moving off in every direction chasing a job or trying to escape from boredom. Families will be filled with love and support. No longer will childhood and old age be times of fear. These times will be filled with love and a proper sense of respect!

As Isaiah 11:6-8 tells us, even the nature of animals will be changed. Animals that are natural enemies today, like wolves and

sheep, will live together at peace. While symbolic of peace among human beings, this will also find literal fulfillment in the animal world. The lion, today's fierce king of beasts, will be changed so that it eats grass and hay rather than raw meat.

A tiny child, innocent and unafraid, will be able to play peacefully without worry about snakes, scorpions or any other of today's harmful creatures. This is all recorded in advance in Bible prophecy!

A literal kingdom

Jesus Christ is going to return to the earth in power and majesty. He will establish His Kingdom to rule over all the nations of men. Here is how the Bible says this will occur: "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" (Revelation 11:15).

All these wonderful changes will occur because Jesus Christ will return as King of the whole earth (Revelation 19:16). Yet the

It says three times in Daniel 7 that the kingdom will be given to "the saints of the Most High"—those who, in this life, prove themselves faithful and obedient to God. You can become one of the teachers who will affect so many lives and do so much good. If you learn to obey and faithfully follow God today, He can use you in Christ's government to help bring real peace to this world!

A brilliant future of peace and safety

What will the Kingdom of God do for you? What do all young people have to look forward to after the return of Jesus Christ? Everything—including a brilliant future filled with peace and safety, families filled with love—children, parents and grandparents all working together and showing respect for each other. Again, the nature of animals will even be changed so they no longer pose any threat to human beings or each other—a perfect balance of nature!

And best of all, you can have an important part in making it happen! If you are faithful to God and His laws today, He can use you

What do young people have to look forward to after the return of Jesus Christ? Everything—including a brilliant future filled with peace and safety, families filled with love. Even the nature of animals will be changed so they no longer pose any threat!



change in human nature will not be instantaneous. A world full of people will need to be taught how to live in peace. Jesus will use those who have shown they will always be faithful to Him to teach others how to live without drugs, abuse, hatred and fear. Everyone will need to be shown how to love others as family and friends, and how to obey the God who loves them.

to show others there really is a better way to live. Could anything be more exciting and worthwhile?

All this and much more is what the Bible means when it speaks of the Kingdom of God. It is a better world and a better life for you and everyone around you. We have God's absolute promise that it is surely coming! **GN**



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Will the World Ever See a Time of Lasting Peace?



Today's headlines are filled with bad news—war, famine, natural disasters, governmental scandals and the like. With all this bad news, what kind of future can we look forward to?



Almost 2,000 years ago, a prophet came bringing a vital message for this world. That prophet was Jesus Christ, and His message was “the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark

1:14). The word *gospel* means *good news*. But what was the good news Jesus Christ brought? What is the kingdom of which He spoke? And does it have anything to do with the problems that threaten us today?

Most people don't understand the truth about the Kingdom of God. Yet it is the central theme of the Bible—and truly the best news the world can hear!

In *The Gospel of the Kingdom* you can discover the truth of the surprising message Jesus Christ brought. This booklet shows you, from the pages of your Bible, exactly what that message is—and what it means for you. For your free copy, visit our Web site or contact any of our offices listed on page 2.

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