

THE WORLD AHEAD

A view of today... A vision for tomorrow! September-October 1997

Coming Soon—

WORLD Government

And on page 18— The Coming War for the City of Peace

THE WORLD AHEAD®

In the USA call 1-800-959-1641 for a FREE subscription.
 In Australia freecall: 1800-816-543. In Canada call: 1-800-932-4264.
 In New Zealand freephone: 0800-380-584. In the United Kingdom freephone: 0800-136-362.

September-
October 1997
Volume 5,
Issue 5

REGIONAL OFFICES

UNITED STATES:
 P.O. Box 501111
 San Diego, California
 92150-1111, USA
 or toll free: 1-800-959-1641

AUSTRALIA:
 P.O. Box 772, Canberra
 ACT 2601, AUSTRALIA
 or freecall: 1800-816-543
 or call: (02) 6231-8166

CANADA:
 P.O. Box 577
 Abbotsford, B. C.
 V2S 6R7, CANADA
 or toll free: 1-800-932-4264
 or call: 1-604-850-8910

EUROPE:
 LE SIECLE A VENIR
 Allée Grand Chéniat 30,
 B-6280 Loverval, BELGIUM
 or call: (32) 71-218-190

GUYANA:
 P.O. Box 10271
 Georgetown, GUYANA
 or call: (592) 02-68536

NEW ZEALAND:
 P.O. Box 2767
 Auckland, NEW ZEALAND
 or freephone 0800-380-584
 or call: (09) 435-3592

PHILIPPINES:
 P.O. Box 1774, MCC
 Makati City 1257
 PHILIPPINES
 or call: (63) 2-813-6538

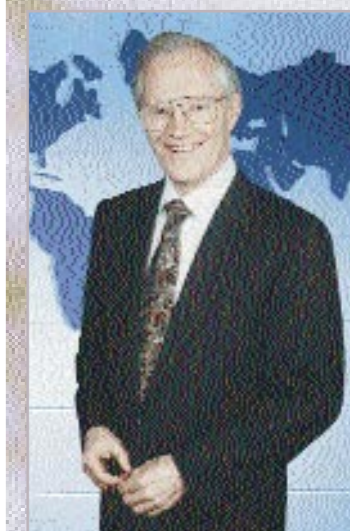
SOUTH AFRICA:
 P.O. Box 1154, Ferndale 2160
 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
 or call: (27) 11-664-6036

UNITED KINGDOM:
 P.O. Box 2111, Derby
 DE21 2ZW, ENGLAND
 or freephone: 0800-136-362
 or call: 01-332-835-498

Find us on the Internet!
<http://www.worldahead.org>

Editor in Chief
 Roderick C. Meredith
Editorial Director
 Larry R. Salyer
Senior Editor
 Raymond F. McNair
Associate Editors
 Gary Foster
 Thomas E. Robinson
Editorial Assistant
 Bradley J. Mitchell
Art Director
 Karen Myers
Art Assistant
 Donna Prejean
Business Manager
 J. Edwin Pope
Circulation
 Wayne Pyle
Information Systems
 Sanford Beattie

EDITORIAL



Roderick C. Meredith
 Editor in Chief

How Easily Are You Fooled?

We are daily, almost hourly, bombarded by lies, half-truths and exaggerations. Yet countless millions of human beings tend to believe whatever they are told. As P.T. Barnum reportedly said, "there's a sucker born every minute!"

For instance, in past decades the tobacco industry has managed to lie and *lie* and LIE—"fooling" millions into believing that no serious harm comes from smoking cigarettes. Yet some of the top tobacco executives have for many years been respected "pillars" in their communities and even in their churches! Now, at last, some of their own scientists and researchers are speaking out. They acknowledge that the tobacco companies have *known all along* that their products were cutting short the lives of millions of people each year—causing untold suffering from the ravages of cancer, heart disease, emphysema and a host of other ailments.

Even a few of the tobacco executives are finally beginning to tell the awful truth they *must have known* for years. The July 22, 1997, *San Diego Union-Tribune* reported, "In an unprecedented spectacle, the chief executive of an American tobacco company raised his right hand yesterday, swore to tell the truth and then testified that cigarettes are addictive and produce deadly diseases.

"Overcoming a withering flurry of objections from lawyers paid by his own industry, Bennett LeBow, the maverick Miami executive who owns the Liggett Group, said he now agrees with tobacco's most strident critics.

"We believe, for many people, smoking is very addictive," LeBow told a Dade County Circuit Court jury....

"He was asked: Does smoking cause lung cancer, heart and respiratory disease and emphysema?

"The answer," LeBow said, "is yes."

In the religious domain, even more people have been fooled by Satan's lies and machinations. Since most tend to believe *whatever* they are told, someone who grows up in a Buddhist family will tend to worship "Lord Buddha" and bow down before his leering idol. Someone who grows up in a Communist Chinese home will tend to accept that system's claim that there is no God. The majority of those living in Western Europe and

(continued on page 30)

How Your Subscription Has Been Paid

The World Ahead has no subscription price. It is supported by contributions from our readers and others who have chosen, voluntarily, to become co-workers with us in this worldwide work. Your subscription has already been paid for by others. However, voluntary contributions are gratefully acknowledged and are tax-deductible in the U.S., Canada and other countries. Please address your inquiries or donations to our office nearest you. Those who voluntarily support this global work are warmly welcomed as co-workers with us in proclaiming Christ's true Gospel to all nations.

3 Editorial

Feature Articles

North & South: The Age-Old Struggle for the Middle East

8 This article explores a remarkable biblical prophecy in the book of Daniel spanning more than 2,500 years!



Twilight of Democracy

12 Western nations have been dedicated to "keeping the world safe for democracy." But is democracy itself a stable system of government—or will it ultimately fail?



The Coming War for the City of Peace

18 Jerusalem, the "City of Peace," has more often known bloodshed—and there will be more! It will be the site of the final, apocalyptic battle of this age.



A Woman's Worth

24 The Bible and nominal Christianity have for centuries been used to debase women. But what picture does God's Word really paint? What did Jesus Christ actually teach?

31 Radio/TV Log

4

Cover Story



Coming Soon—World Government

Many believe that the only way to avert nuclear annihilation and assure global peace is by establishing a "New World Order." And one certainly IS coming—but not as most would envision it!

© Digital Stock/World Ahead illustration

16

Letters to the Editor

23

Questions & Answers

All scriptural references are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

The World Ahead (USPS 012-784) (ISSN 1091-515X) is published bimonthly by the Global Church of God, 16935 W. Bernardo Dr., San Diego, CA, U.S.A.
 Copyright © 1997 Global Church of God ®. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved.
 Periodicals postage paid at San Diego, CA, and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *The World Ahead*, P.O. Box 501111, San Diego, CA 92150-1111.

© Digital Stock

Coming Soon—

WORLD GOVERNMENT

by Roderick C. Meredith

The real message
Jesus Christ
preached has to do
with the Kingdom
of God—a literal,
world-ruling
Government to be
set up on this earth.
And it is coming
much sooner than
most people would
ever imagine!

In recent months, we've all heard or read about the horrifying tragedy of tens of thousands of men and women being brutally slain in civil wars in the Congo Republic, Rwanda and elsewhere. We've seen continuing violence between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, where a new cease-fire is thought by many to have little chance of lasting success. And almost daily we learn of more violence and mounting tensions between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East.

All these world problems, and dozens of others, literally *cry out* for a new form of *world* government—one that would bring peace, equity and universal prosperity to our troubled planet. But is this merely a pipe dream? Not at all. For what few people realize is that this is *exactly* what the Jesus Christ of your Bible intends to bring about!

Shocking?

It shouldn't be. Yet most professing Christians think mainly about some transitory, ephemeral Jesus who may have died for them, but then just "disappeared." They hear and sing about "little Lord Jesus away in a manger." But they do not understand and *have not been taught* that Christ is NOW sitting at the right hand of God in heaven—poised to return to planet Earth *soon* as King of

kings and Lord of lords!

As you read Douglas Winnail's article on page 12, titled "Twilight of Democracy," you will realize even more profoundly how *vital* it is that Christ returns and sets up His perfect Government on this earth! This is not simply a "nice idea." There is an overwhelming NEED to literally prevent the annihilation of *all human life* from this planet! There is an urgent NEED to relieve the mounting agony of broken marriages, teen suicide, drug addiction, alcoholism and the total emptiness of millions of human lives.

Yet most people have *no idea* that the pattern of history and of human government is about to be dramatically CHANGED—*forever!* In fact, EVERYTHING WE KNOW will be *massively transformed* through the direct intervention of the Creator God at the biblically foretold "time of the END."

What God Has Revealed

The Apostle Paul was inspired to describe in *vivid detail* the total selfishness and materialism of our age. Notice: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving,

unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

This passage pictures a degenerate "end-time" civilization sorely in need of the *true* knowledge of God. And although most people don't think about it, our society is also in desperate need of the direct *Government* of God—a whole new civilization and way of life directed by the One who created us and knows not only how we *actually* function, but how we *ought* to function!

Is it too much to hope for—a government with no corruption, no wheeling and dealing for political favors? Will we see the day when problems are *effectively* dealt with? Or will the future be business as usual—living under ineffectual laws produced by convoluted, do-nothing compromises just to please the various power blocs in the voting public.

Can you imagine the *results* of wise, efficient government with justice for all? What a shock it would be to see lawmakers solve problems quickly, without months, years or even decades of political haggling and opposition.

Can you imagine a government

where decisions could be quickly and efficiently implemented for the maximum benefit of the nation as a whole? *Respect* for government would vastly increase, taxes would go down and people would become wealthier, safer, more productive and more blessed in *every way!* But will we ever have this kind of government? We will indeed!

For the *real* solution to our own mounting problems will come from the Creator Himself! From the beginning to the very end of His ministry on earth, Jesus Christ continually talked about the coming "Kingdom of God." It should be clear what He meant. The word "kingdom" refers to *government*—a way of running a country or group of countries. And that is exactly what the Kingdom of God will be—one, world-ruling Government that will benefit all the peoples of the earth!

The Real Good News Christ Preached

After teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus said, "I must preach the *kingdom of God* to the other cities also, because for this PURPOSE I have been sent" (Luke 4:43). Jesus instructs us on how to properly communicate with the Father in what is called the Lord's

prayer. We should pray, "Your *kingdom* come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). In effect, we are instructed to pray that God's Government will be *restored* to this earth!

Now some claim that, rather than being a literal Government, the Kingdom of God is merely poetic language for sentiments of universal love, unity or brotherhood. But this is clearly not supported by Scripture. When Jesus appeared to the apostles after His resurrection, they asked Him, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Here was Jesus' opportunity to teach the apostles that His message about the Kingdom of God was merely an analogy or something only in men's hearts—not the *real government* described by dozens of Old Testament prophecies and by many of His own statements.

But did He? Not at all. On the contrary, Christ said, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:7). So the apostles *continued* to preach the "Good News" of the coming Government of God—with Christ Himself as "King of kings" (Rev. 19:16)—to the very end of the Apostolic Age.

Why a *world government*? Because there's a crying need for

justice, decency and peace to be “restored” to this earth. That’s why the Apostle Peter proclaimed that God would again “send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the **times of RESTORATION of all things**, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:20-21).

Notice that Peter said a new beginning for the world was foretold by appointed spokesmen throughout time! What they prophesied was the direct Government of God being established on earth.

The Prophet Micah described these coming days of peace, “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 peoples shall flow to it. Many nations 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 the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken” (Micah 4:1-4).

We see that men will not even *learn* war anymore. This is the language of peace and prosperity, with people enjoying rest and the fruit of personal endeavor. None shall be afraid, for mankind will be learning to obey God’s law, both as nations and as individuals. And there’s no confusion as to *which* law God means.

The *law* to go forth from

Jerusalem to the nations (v. 2) is summarized by the *Ten Commandments*, and more broadly would include all the teachings found in the first five books of the Bible amplified by the spiritual dimensions of the law explained by Jesus Christ and His apostles. The basic spiritual law of God has been the *foundation* of His instruction to mankind throughout time and will be the very basis of His Government to come.

The Coming Reality

My friends, *do not laugh* at this God-inspired solution to our problems of government! For, after describing a series of specific events to precede His Second Coming, Jesus said, “So you, likewise, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things are fulfilled. **Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away**” (Luke 21:31-33).

A few verses later, our Savior admonishes us, “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that **will come to pass**, and to stand before the Son of Man” (v. 36).

So the world *will* have divine rule—directly under the living Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. We need to get ready now by surrendering our lives to the true Christ—learning His ways—and preparing to be **part of His Government on this earth** (Rev. 5:10).

One of the earliest presidents of the United States, John Quincy Adams, gave us what now seems to have almost been an inspired prophecy for our nation. President Adams stated, “Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit

suicide. It is vain to say that democracy is less vain, less proud, less selfish, less ambitious, or less avaricious than aristocracy or monarchy. It is not true, in fact, and nowhere appears in history. Those passions are the same in all men, under all forms of simple government, and when unchecked, produce the same effects of fraud, violence, and cruelty.”

In so many ways, it seems that the United States—bastion of all free-market democracies—is in the very process of “committing suicide.” The fabric of our democratic society is unraveling at the seams. But what about Christ’s coming Government? Will it, too, shine brightly for a time and then fade into obscurity?

The Prophet Isaiah gives us the answer: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. **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” (Is. 9:6-7).

No human government, democratic or not, can fully care for the welfare of its citizens. God’s divine rule alone will yield the results humanity longs for.

Training to Be Kings

Probably within this generation, the Jesus Christ of your Bible will return to sit on a real throne in the city of Jerusalem. His Government will be established throughout the entire earth—a *literal* Government empowered by Almighty God (Rev. 19:15-16). And what will Jesus’ followers—the *true saints* of God—be doing? The Apostle Paul writes, “Do you not

know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Cor. 6:2-3). In the next few verses, Paul goes on to explain how the Christians in Corinth were supposed to learn God’s form of

And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.

government and practice it *in the Church* by correctly “judging” problems among themselves.

But just *who* would render judgment? To answer, let’s note another key aspect of authority in God’s form of government. The Apostle Paul elsewhere commanded the Evangelist Titus to “appoint elders in every city” where he preached (Titus 1:5). In fact, from Genesis to Revelation, positions in God’s service have always been by *appointment*—NOT by politicking or otherwise making deceptive promises to people to “buy” their votes.

It is the Church’s responsibility to practice the very things we will be doing when God’s Kingdom is established—judging and governing. For Christians are in training *now* to be kings and priests in the soon-coming Kingdom of God. Jesus stated in Revelation 2:26-27, “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the potter’s vessels shall be broken to pieces’—as I also have received from My Father.” So we need to overcome our human ways and human selfishness—and learn to *practice God’s Government now!* Notice this regarding God’s saints in Revelation 5: “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals;

for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” (vv. 9-10). Clearly, the true saints of God will soon have *rulership*—not in *heaven*—but *on this earth!*

Carefully study the parable of the

pounds (Luke 19:11-27) in the *King James Version*. Here Jesus is pictured as going off to heaven to receive His Kingdom and to later return. When He does, He rewards His servants according to how well each has done in using God-given time, talents and wisdom in serving the Almighty. What reward did Christ give His faithful servants? He said to one, “Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities” (v. 17). Likewise He said to another, “You also be over five cities” (v. 19).

Do you see any indication of politicking here? Any “back-room deals”? Not at all. Rather, it is just one more scriptural example to make clear to Christians that the *best* form of government—God’s government—is based on divine appointment. And God’s appointments are *not in any way* based on human compromises, wheeling and dealing, or expedient political “solutions.”

Jesus said, “My Kingdom is *not* of this world” (John 18:36). He certainly did not lower Himself to be part of this world’s wrong-headed approach to governing. Moreover, when Christ *returns* He will deal decisively with the existing governments of this world. “And in the days of these kings [rulers living when Christ returns] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which

shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44).

Later in the book of Daniel, God clearly describes how the true saints will be given authority, under Christ, over ALL the governments of this earth at the Messiah’s return. “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. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (7:27).

Your Future

Modern ministers may try to “spiritualize away” all of these plain, clear scriptures telling us to prepare for a very real *Government* of God here on earth—and to prepare to *serve* in that Government. But you, my friends, will have to decide whether these men and women are *true* ministers of Jesus Christ or *FALSE* ministers masquerading as God’s servants. And in deciding, realize that they certainly preach a very “different” gospel than the one in your Bible. A gospel *only* about Christ’s person—**while completely neglecting His inspired message**. The Apostle Paul warned, “For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it!” (2 Cor. 11:4).

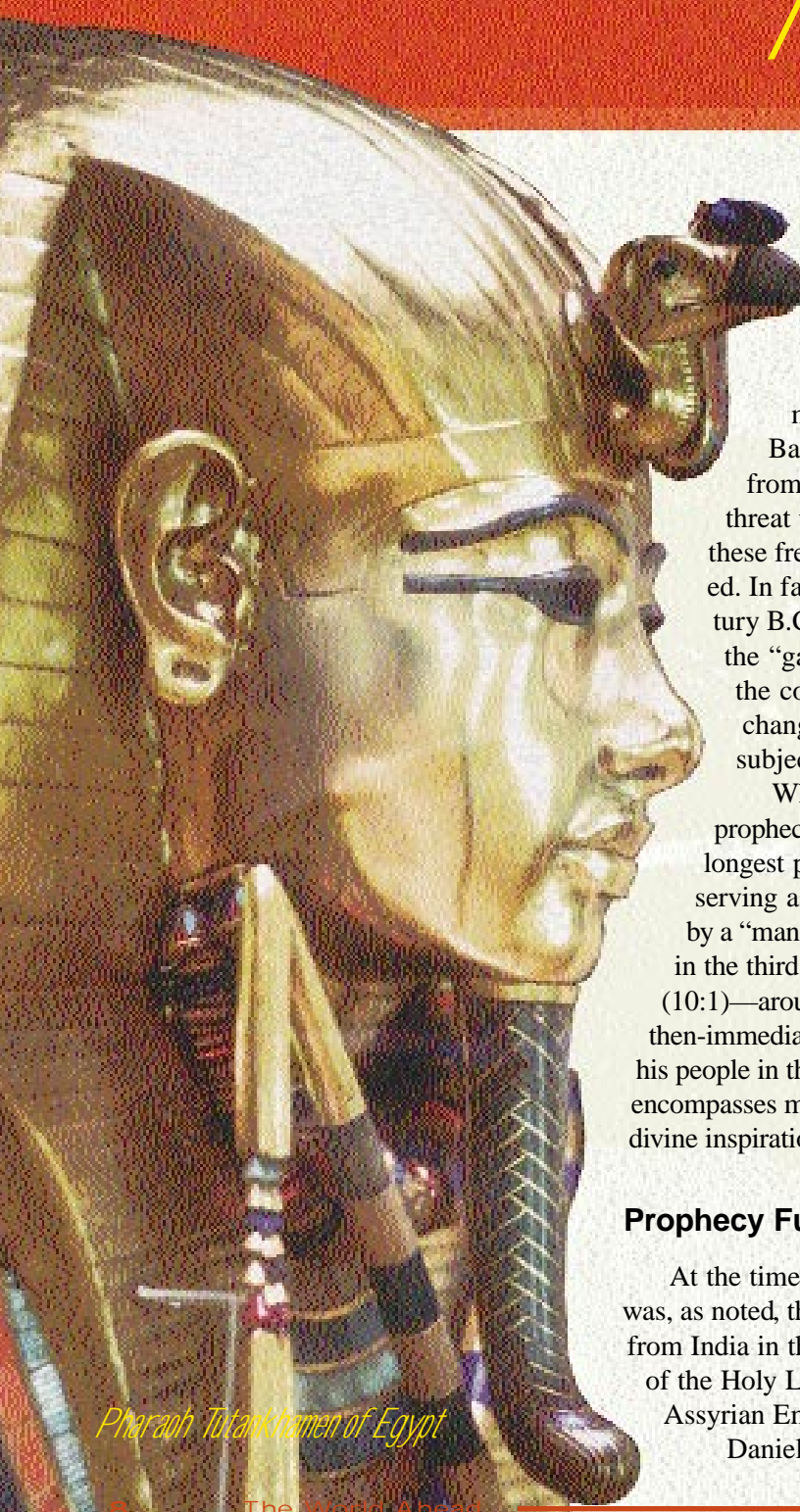
But *if* you believe in a real, universe-ruling God and *if* you believe that the Bible is His inspired revelation to mankind—then you had better prepare for a *real*, world-ruling Government here on earth under

(continued on page 28)

NORTH & SOUTH

by Thomas E. Robinson

The Age-Old Struggle for the Middle East



In ancient times, “god-kings” of the two earliest river valley civilizations—Mesopotamia and Egypt—dreamed of controlling the entire Middle East. And invariably, their path to imperial conquest ran through the Holy Land—the narrow “land bridge” between Eurasia and Africa through which trade and military traffic had to flow. Whether it involved Babylonian, Assyrian, Chaldean or Persian emperors from the *north* or Egyptian pharaohs from the *south*, the threat to the inhabitants of Palestine was almost constant. In these frequent hostilities, the northern power usually dominated. In fact, Assyria briefly *absorbed* Egypt in the seventh century B.C. Later, although specific peoples and rulers changed, the “game plan” seemingly remained the same. Throughout the course of history, rulership of the Holy Land has often changed hands—it being at times autonomous, but usually subject to some great northern or southern power.

Which brings us to one of the most amazingly detailed prophecies in the entire Bible. Found in Daniel 11, it is the longest prophetic passage in Scripture. With preceding chapters serving as an introduction, this prophecy was revealed to Daniel by a “man,” evidently the *archangel* Gabriel (9:21). This happened in the third year of the reign of Persian Emperor **Cyrus the Great** (10:1)—around 536 B.C. The prophecy began with events in the then-immediate future, but also showed Daniel what would happen to his people in the “latter days” (v. 14). All told, this incredible prophecy encompasses more than 2,500 years of Mideast affairs—and proves the divine inspiration of the “Scripture of Truth”! (v. 21).

Prophecy Fulfilled!

At the time of Daniel’s prophecy, the power to the *north* of Judah was, as noted, the Persian Empire under Cyrus. It stretched all the way from India in the east to modern Turkey in the west. And to the *south* of the Holy Land was, as always, Egypt—long since freed from the Assyrian Empire and now ruled by its 26th dynasty.

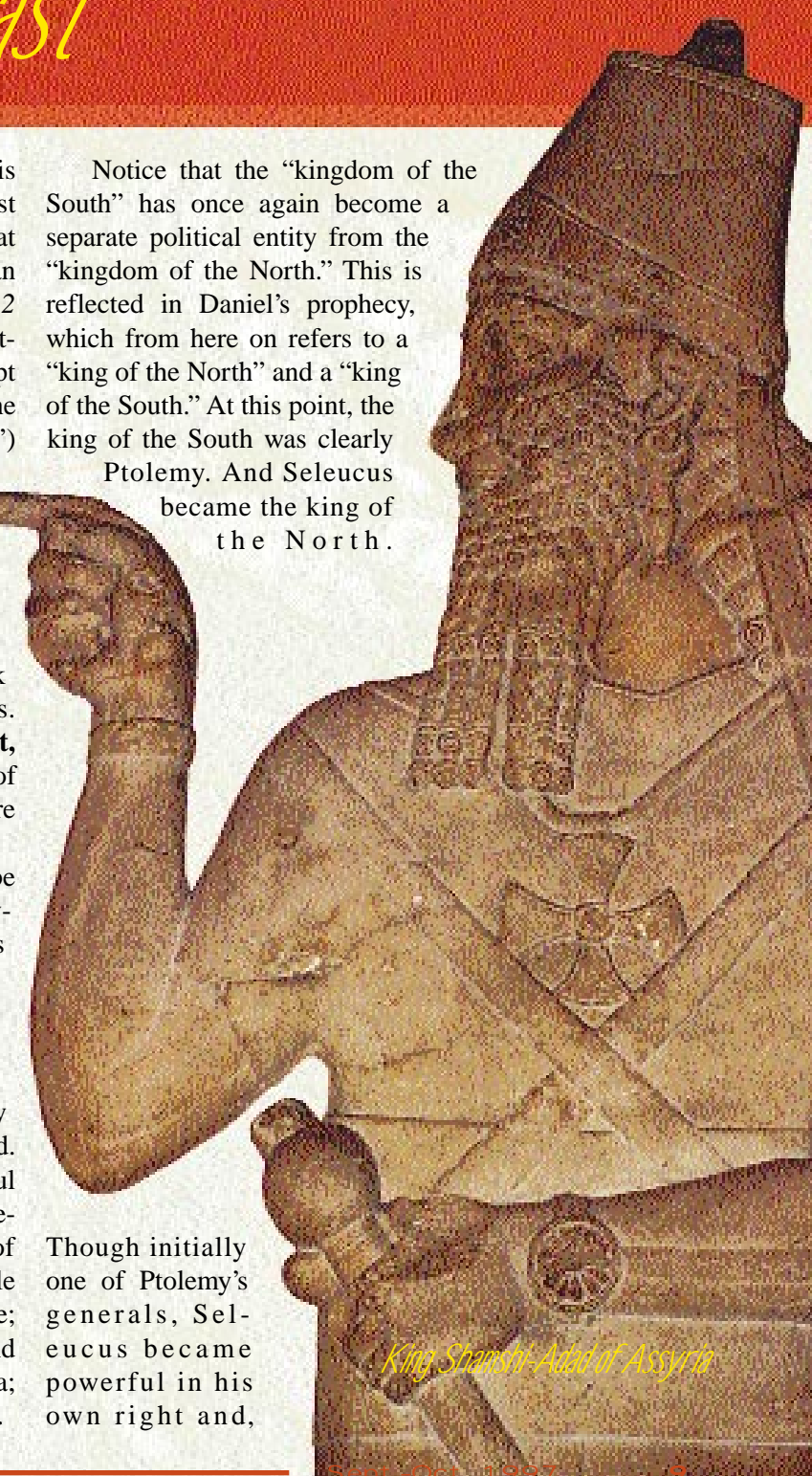
Daniel is told, “Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia,

and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece” (11:2). This is not to say that there would be only four more kings in the Persian Empire following Cyrus—for there were in fact 12 more. Rather, only the first four are being documented here. First came **Cambyses**, who took over Egypt around 525 B.C. (Thus, as before, the “kingdom of the South” was absorbed by the “kingdom of the North.”) Then followed **Pseudo-Smerdis**, **Darius** and finally **Xerxes**, who, being the wealthiest of them all, launched an all-out war against Greece.

“Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will” (v. 3). King Philip of Macedonia determined to defeat the Persian Empire with a mostly Greek army—but died before carrying out his plans. However, his now-famous son, **Alexander the Great**, took up the cause, crushed the Persians at the Battle of Arbella in 331 B.C. and then conquered the entire Middle East all the way to India.

“And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these” (v. 4). And so it was that at the height of his achievements, Alexander suddenly died at age 33. An initial attempt to hold his empire together by a joint regency in the name of his nephew and his unborn son failed. One of his generals made an ultimately unsuccessful bid for power. But within a few years, just as prophesied, the empire ended up split among four of Alexander’s *other* generals who assumed the title “king”: 1) **Ptolemy Soter**, ruling Egypt and Palestine; 2) **Seleucus Nicator**, ruling Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia; 3) **Cassander**, ruling Greece and Macedonia; and 4) **Lysimachus**, ruling Asia Minor (cf. 7:6; 8:8).

Notice that the “kingdom of the South” has once again become a separate political entity from the “kingdom of the North.” This is reflected in Daniel’s prophecy, which from here on refers to a “king of the North” and a “king of the South.” At this point, the king of the South was clearly Ptolemy. And Seleucus became the king of the North.



Though initially one of Ptolemy’s generals, Seleucus became powerful in his own right and,

Pharaoh Tutankhamun of Egypt

King Sardanesh of Assyria

when Ptolemy was tied up fighting a war in 312 B.C., Seleucus established his own throne in Syria over an even greater territory. “Then the king of the South [Ptolemy] shall become strong, as well as one of his princes [Seleucus]; and he [Seleucus] shall gain power over him [Ptolemy] and have dominion. His [Seleucus’] dominion shall be a great dominion” (11:5).

There is then a clear time interval. The prophecies that follow were fulfilled much later in the Seleucid wars between Syria and Egypt: “And after some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement...” (v. 6 NASB). This happened in 252 B.C., when **Ptolemy II Philadelphus** of Egypt gave his daughter **Berenice** in marriage to **Antiochus II Theos** of Syria to cement a peace treaty between them. This required that Antiochus put away his former wife Laodice, who had pushed him into conflict with Egypt in the first place.

“...But she [Berenice] will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in, and the one who sired her, as well as he who supported her in those times” (NASB). And indeed, Berenice, her father and her husband were all removed from power—by death! When Berenice’s father Ptolemy II died, her husband Antiochus II repudiated her and took Laodice back as his wife. Laodice, however, doubting Antiochus’ faithfulness and anxious to secure the throne for her son **Seleucus (II) Callinicus**, murdered her husband. And she had Berenice put to death as well. What an amazing literal fulfillment of God’s Word!

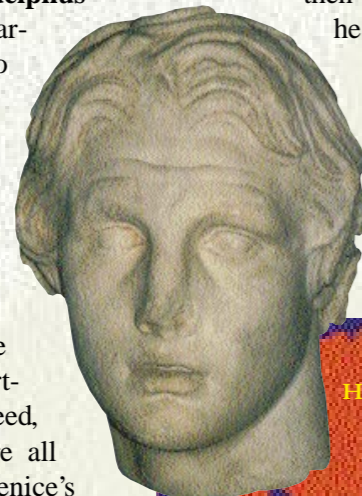
“But from a branch of her roots [i.e. Berenice’s brother **Ptolemy III Euergetes**, since her parents were her roots] one shall arise in his place [as king of the South], who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail” (v. 7). Ptolemy III invaded Syria around 245 B.C. to avenge the death of his sister. And he seized Syria’s “fortress”—Seleucia, which served as the port of Antioch, capital of the kingdom. “And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes and their precious articles of silver and gold...” (v. 8). Ptolemy carried immense wealth back to Egypt, including around 2,500 molten images and idolatrous vessels that Cambyses had taken from Egypt in 526 B.C. “...and he shall continue more years than the king of the North.” Ptolemy II ruled until 222 B.C., four years after the death of Seleucus II of Syria.

And on and on this awesome chapter goes,

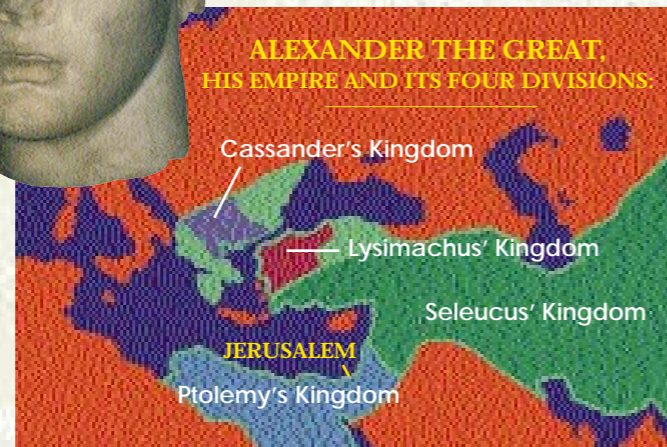
foretelling detail after detail—more than 100 of which have already been fulfilled *exactly as prophesied!*

Abomination of Desolation

Verses 10 through 20 give us specifics about the lives of Syrian Kings **Seleucus III Ceraunus**, **Antiochus III the Great** and **Seleucus IV Philopater**, as well as Egyptian Kings **Ptolemy IV Philopater** and **Ptolemy V Epiphanes**. These men reigned more than 300 years after Daniel wrote about them! Verses 14 through 16 foretold that a number of Jews would actually help Antiochus III in his fight against Ptolemy V but that Antiochus would then “stand in the Glorious Land”—that is, he would wrest the Holy Land from the South’s control, which he did.



Eventually, we come to an individual who served as a type of the end-time ruler to come. Verse 21: “And in his [Seleucus IV’s] place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of



royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.” **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** was a despicable reprobate who came by surprise and—through flattery and deceit—took over the kingdom in 176 B.C. Notice what was to later happen after he defeated Egypt: “While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land” (v. 28). Returning from the South with the spoils of victory in 168, Antiochus set himself against the Jews, massacred many of them and plundered the temple at Jerusalem before returning to Syria.

The next two verses describe his second venture into Egypt—unsuccessful this time because a Roman fleet forced him to give up his fight and return the island of Cyprus to Egypt. “Therefore he shall be grieved, and

return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant” (v. 30). Antiochus vented his fury on the Jews, yet accorded special favor to those among them who rejected their religion.

Then came the worst: “And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; **then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation**” (v. 31). In 167 B.C., Antiochus sent troops to the Holy Land. They desecrated the temple and its sanctuary, stopped the daily sacrifice and set up a pagan altar in the temple, with pigs—unclean in God’s law (cf. Deut. 14:8)—being offered to an image of Zeus! Moreover, the Jews were forbidden to observe the Law of Moses and were forced to adopt the Greek culture!

“Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits” (Dan. 11:32). We’ve already seen how Antiochus extended favor to those Jews who recanted their religious beliefs. And shamefully, as a result, many did. But a number did not. The next year saw the uprising of the Maccabees—followers of Judas Maccabeus of the Hasmonean priestly dynasty. In large part due to the efforts of these patriots, Syrian forces were gradually driven out and independence was reestablished.

But this is where the step-by-step fulfillment of prophecy in Daniel 11 seems to end. Why? We must realize that prophecy sometimes skips forward in time without directly saying so. For example, notice this messianic prophecy in Isaiah 9: “*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;* and the government will be upon His shoulder” (v. 6). Notice that the italicized text refers to Jesus Christ’s *First Coming*, whereas the unitalicized text pertains to His *Second Coming*. Other passages show that these two events are thousands of years apart, but this fact is not directly evident from this prophecy alone.

We should also realize that prophecy is sometimes *dual*—that is, there may be *two* fulfillments of the *same* prophecy. For instance, Malachi 4:5 prophesied that someone would precede the Messiah in the spirit of the prophet Elijah. Now in Matthew 17:11, Jesus confirmed that this “Elijah” would *yet* come, but then explained that such an individual had *already* come in the person of John the Baptist. Thus, according to Christ, this prophecy has two fulfillments—one that preceded the earthly ministry of His First Coming and a similar one that would precede His Second Coming.

With this in mind, let’s look at Daniel 11:32 again: “...the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.” This verse is *dual* in nature and

serves to advance the time frame of Daniel 11. For not only was this true of the Maccabees, but it is even more characteristic of those who have known God better than any group of people on earth—true Christians. Now verse 33 makes perfect sense: “And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by the sword and flame, by captivity and plundering.” Christ and His apostles did teach many people. Moreover, they were all persecuted and *nearly* all of them were killed. Later Christians would experience the same suffering—even as late as the Middle Ages, when millions were slaughtered for their beliefs.

“Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purge them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time” (vv. 34-35). This describes what members of God’s Church have experienced since it was founded—false prophets coming among them (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Peter 2:1-3), and trials and tribulation, even martyrdom, to refine their character and make them spiritually white (Rev. 6:9-11; cf. 7:14).

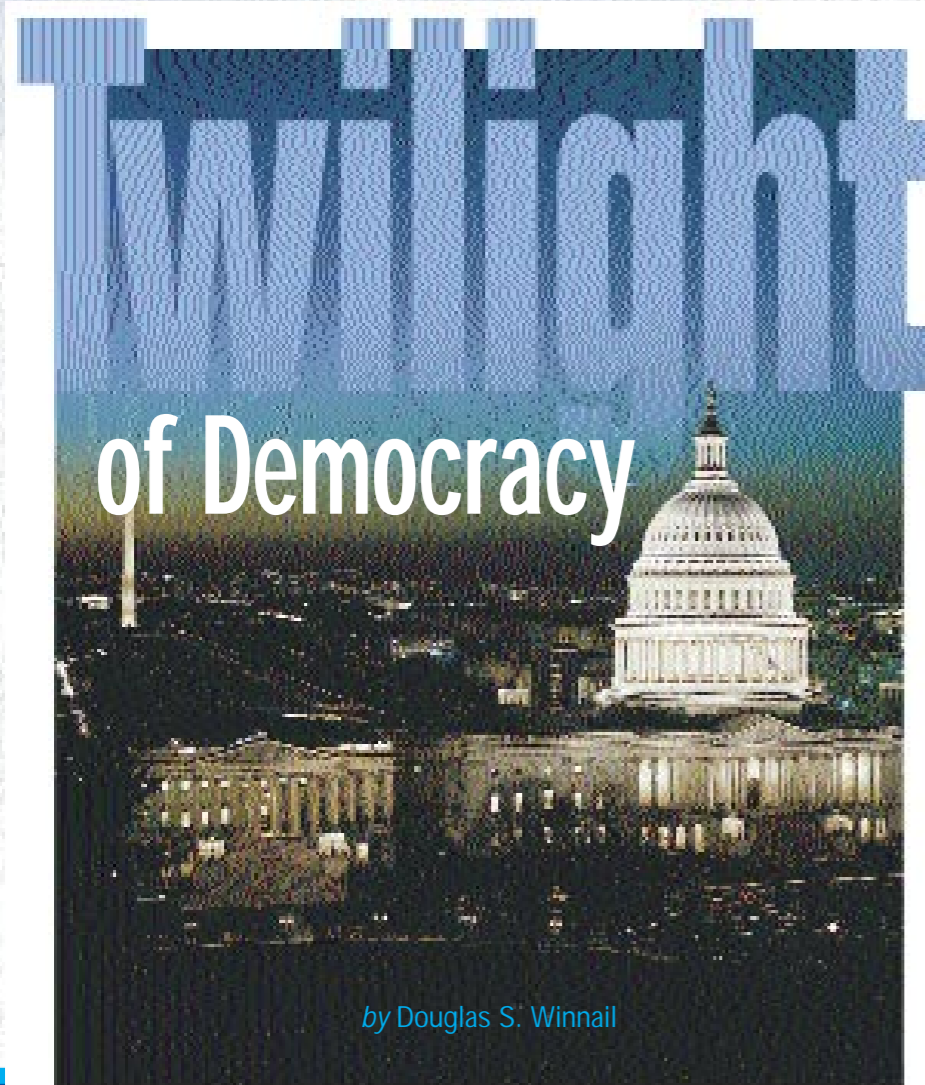
From Apostolic Times to Now

So the prophecy has now come to the New Testament period. But who was the king of the North at this time? In 65 B.C., the Romans took possession of Syria and the Roman state thus became the kingdom of the North. Rome also later annexed Judea. (Note that when *Egypt* was swallowed up by Rome in 31 B.C., the Roman leader did not then become the king of the *South*—because he was already the king of the *North*.)

Notice Daniel 11:36: “Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done.” The Roman emperor had virtually absolute power and required everyone to sacrifice to and worship him *as a god*. Both Jews and Christians were persecuted and killed because they would not participate in this idolatry.

The next two verses show that instead of the old Roman deities, the emperor would, as we’ve just seen, declare *himself* a god and would honor a “god of fortresses” or “forces” (KJV). Indeed, extravagant “defense spending” made Rome the strongest war-making power and the best-defended empire the world had ever known. Furthermore, according to the prophecy, the emperor would also honor “a god which his fathers did not know...

(continued on page 29)



by Douglas S. Winnail

What does the 21st century hold for the United States and the West?

The United States and her Western allies are apparently at the very zenith of power and prestige. The Cold War has been won, national economies are flourishing and no one disputes that Uncle Sam is the only current superpower. Nevertheless, *ominous shadows* lurk on the horizon. America the beautiful, the shining jewel of democracy, is tarnishing. Her society is turning violent and ugly. In fact,

the very genius of the West appears stymied by a growing array of social and political troubles. Will the 21st century see the continued dominance of the United States and her kindred democracies, or will the years ahead witness the *stunning decline* of these once-powerful nations?

Futurists predict dazzling advances in science, technology and medicine. President Ronald Reagan asserted that it's "morning in

America," and President George Bush said that "the American century has not drawn to a close... [in fact,] the best is yet to come" (Paul Johnson, *Caveat*, 1993, p. vi). Politicians talk of moving toward a time of "tranquillity, faith and confidence" (*Arizona Republic*, Aug. 16, 1996). However, a growing chorus of respected voices senses that the United States is in *decline* and heading blindly down the road to disaster. The bridges to the future appear to lead over increasingly troubled waters.

What, then, do the next hundred years hold for the United States and other Western nations? Are we experiencing the birth pangs of a "New World Order," or are we stumbling down the same path that earlier civilizations have traveled—the path to oblivion? Does the Bible give us the answers?

Shocking Views!

Surprising as it may be, ominous views about the future of liberal Western democracies do not come from wild-eyed, gun-toting reactionaries alone. Dire warnings also emanate from acclaimed journalists, respected scholars, high-ranking government officials and a host of international observers. And to ignore such warnings might be very costly indeed!

In *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, a 1987 book that rattled many cages in the West, British-born and Oxford-educated scholar Paul Kennedy argues that "the United States—like Edwardian England, Bourbon France, and Hapsburg Spain—is an *empire in decline*" (*Newsweek*, Jan. 25, 1988, p. 21). Dr. Kennedy, a professor of history at

Yale University, asserts that while the United States "mindlessly borrows to prop up its overextended empire, other less encumbered nations are overtaking it industrially." He further warns that "wise statesmanship can slow the downward slide, but so far at least, **no empire has ever avoided the final fall.**" He is not alone in his thinking.

British journalist and historian Paul Johnson observes that American society is being torn apart *from within* by "self-doubt, self-criticism, and even by a sense of *failure* and *doom*" (p. vi).

Recent books tell the same disturbing story about the decline of the United States and Western democracy in general. Theologian James M. Boice describes the disintegration of the family, youth with no respect for authority who commit horrible "adult" crimes and a growing avalanche of personal and political corruption as signs of danger (*Two Cities, Two Loves*, 1996, pp. 22-25).

Judge Robert Bork, former solicitor general of the United States, discusses how *killing for convenience*—abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia—has *coarsened* modern culture (*Slouching Toward Gomorrah*, p. 2). He notes the destructive influence of radical feminism on the family and religion, and how our insistence that every idea be given equal merit has undermined excellence in education (chaps. 10-14). Charles Colson, who served as special counsel to President Richard Nixon, warns that we face a *crisis* in Western culture—a crisis that "presents the *greatest threat to civilization* since the barbarians invaded Rome" (*Against the Night*, 1989, p. 23).

Educator Vincent Ruggiero is concerned with another destructive factor in Western democracies. He describes the pervasive and corrosive impact of the *media* on society and how popular culture has been

"seduced by nonsense"—truth is relative, morality means anything goes, and feelings are to be trusted more than thought and reason (*Warning: Nonsense Is Destroying America*, 1994, pp. vi, 25, 77). But why do these analysts think our troubles are so serious?

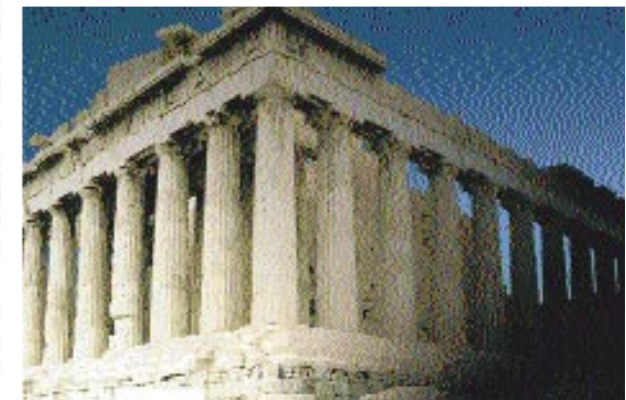
Lessons from History

Vivid lessons from the past suggest that Western society has wandered onto *dangerous ground*. In his book, *When Nations Die*, Jim Nelson Black analyzes the rise and fall of great civilizations and describes *ten warning signs*

of a culture in crisis (1994). A writer, researcher and teacher, Dr. Black states, "When you begin to align the events of history with the wars and international events of our day, you will discover a *startling portrait*. In the great empires of history we see a picture of our own world; and in the fatal decisions that have led time after time to catastrophe, we have a stark warning of the consequences of cultural and moral decay. To ignore such lessons is to *court disaster*.... **Virtually every one of the symptoms of decline that can be detected from history is present in this nation today**" (p. 4).

Our modern Western cultures have descended in part from Greek and Roman democracy. As such, we should be mindful of any parallels with the fall of Rome and the decline of Greek society. The strength of early Roman civilization rested on strong fathers and strong families, respect for parental authority, discipline and education of children in the home. As the state assumed parental authority—and, consequently, the

primary role in education and discipline—the seeds of decline were sown. Corrupted by the infusion of Greek philosophy in education, "with its humanistic and Godless base," the



The strength of early Rome rested on strong, stable family units. When they began to crumble, so did Roman society.

Roman family crumbled and morality waned (*The Rebirth of America*, Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation, 1986, pp. 143-144). We are witnessing these *same* trends today!

The demise of Greece itself is also instructive. Historians Will and Ariel Durant note that the deterioration of democracy in Athens turned the city into a "**chaos of class violence, cultural decadence and moral degeneration**" (*The Lessons of History*, 1968, pp. 73-74). The Durants quote Plato's observations that these founders of democracy "contemptuously rejected temperance as unmanliness," deemed insolence a virtue and equated anarchy with liberty. The common man came to resent any and all authority and completely lost respect for law. Are the same trends not evident today?

Historian Russel Kirk recognizes these parallels, noting that "the analogy between the decadence of ancient civilization and the decadence of our own culture is *striking* and *dreadfully true*" (quoted by Black, p. xi).

Clear lessons from history, then,

validate many sobering concerns about modern Western civilization.

Problems of Today's Democracies

As the 20th century draws to a close we see a world that has yet to find an effective form of government. After more than 200 years of the “great experiment” in modern democracy, its problems are becoming painfully evident. In spite of the fact that democracy is the most popular form of government on the planet today, it is struggling in many areas of the world. Patrick Kennon writes, “To many observers, it seems that Washington is in perpetual gridlock, that Bonn is kowtowing to the skinhead right, that Rome is sinking under corruption, that Tokyo has been sold to the highest bidder, and that Paris and London are intent upon proving that neither capitalism nor socialism can work” (*The Twilight of Democracy*, 1995, p. x). Analysts suspect that the “democratizing wave” that followed the fall of Communism is cresting and that a “retreat from democracy may now be underway” in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America (*Arizona Republic*, June 11, 1997).

These signs of stagnation and retrenchment stem from disillusionment with the democratic *process* and fundamental problems with the democratic *theory*. Many nations trying to establish democracies are learning that *much more* is required than privatizing industry, holding free elections and allowing the market to determine prices. Other indispensable features include the rule of law, a just legal system, freedom of ideas and *sound values* to guide the system. Observers point out that fundamental principles of religion, democracy and the capitalistic marketplace often *conflict* with each other creating “*cracks in the facade*

of Western civilization” (*Foreign Policy*, Summer 1997, p. 56). As a result the foundation of Western democracies is beginning to crumble.

Patrick Kennon comments that “democracy is based on the idea that what is *popular* is right, while religion is based on the idea that what is *moral* is right. Democracy looks to the *people* for its laws; religion looks to *God*” (p. 250). He further states, “The market [as we know it today] favors freedom—even the freedom to do wrong if one can afford it.... In the end, it is the market that *destroys* the religious state” (pp. 250-251).

International financier George Soros comments similarly, “Our sense of right and wrong is endangered by our preoccupation with success, as measured by *money*. Anything goes, as long as you can get away with it” (*Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1997, p. 58). Soros fears that “the unfettered spread of market values (selfishness, greed) poses the *gravest threat* to our democratic society” (*Foreign Policy*, p. 63). Others suggest that the main threats to democracy today are “skyrocketing crime, rampant corruption, high inflation, unemployment and plain old governmental ineffectiveness” (p. 15).

Many of the problems facing democratic societies stem from the *continuing erosion* of fundamental moral principles. French philosopher Jacques Ellul has observed, “No one seems to remember that there has *never* been a society without a moral code” (quoted by Black, p. 195). To try to operate a democracy without a solid and proven moral foundation is an *impossible dream!*

A prime example of the rule of *amoral* market values is the growing disparity of income in democratic countries. During the recent competition-driven downsizing trend that has swept through many market democracies, thousands of

employees have been laid off while many highly placed workers have actually made *more* money. This creates a definite feeling that such actions are unjust and *immoral*—driven solely by *money* and *profits*. Economist Lester Thurow senses that “as the gap widens between rich and poor, between high earners and average workers, frustration and anger will tax the resilience of democracy” (*Harvard Business Review*, Sept.–Oct. 1996). He asks, “How far can inequality widen and real wages fall before *something snaps* in a democracy?” Historians have warned, “If our economy of freedom fails to distribute wealth as ably as it has created it, the *road to dictatorship* will be open to any man who can persuasively promise security to all: and a martial government... will engulf the democratic world” (Durant, pp. 79-80).

Editor Yukio Matsuyama asserts that freedom “is on trial in both Japan and the United States. If we don’t make it work again soon, the victims of excessive liberty may embrace *repressive* ideologies” (*Atlanta Journal/Constitution*, Dec. 1, 1991). Judge Bork has similarly observed, “If society should reach a state of warring groups and individual alienation, a condition in which even personal security is problematic for a majority of people, authoritarian government may be accepted” (pp. 11-12). This is exactly what happened in Germany when the Weimar Republic failed and the Nazis took control. Might history repeat itself?

Robert Kaplan suggests that the growing fragmentation of Mexico’s democratic society and its descent into political corruption and a drug-based economy may *picture the future* of other democracies. He observes that this century’s stable democratic period—from the 40s through the 90s—appears to be “a *rarity* in Mexico’s turbulent history”

(*Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1997, p. 31). In fact, historians believe this to be a principle applicable to *all* democratic societies. In the overview of history, democracies have occupied only “*hectic interludes*” between more stable forms of government (Durant, p. 69). Plato concluded in the third century B.C. that governments appear to follow a *sequence* of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, followed by dictatorship. This progression of government structure occurred in

Ten Warning Signs of a Culture in Crisis

From Jim Nelson Black,
*When Nations Die:
America on the Brink*, 1994

both Athens and Rome (p. 75). The same cycle appears to be manifesting itself today!

What Lies Ahead?

And what of the future? What do these present trends in Western democracies bode for the 21st century? Robert Bork says, “It is impossible to say what the outcome will be, but for the moment *our trajectory continues downward!*” While admitting that much is positive in America, he notes that “there are aspects of almost every branch of our culture that are *worse than ever before* and that the rot is spreading” (p. 2). His conclusion: “**Gomorra**h is **our probable destination**” (p. 343).

And there are even more telling and authoritative pronouncements concerning the future. Though many ignore them, the prophetic passages of the Bible foretell what lies ahead in world events. And one of the key factors in understanding much of Bible prophecy is knowing the *identity of Israel*. The common assumption that the modern Jewish State of Israel is

the primary subject of major biblical prophecies cannot be reconciled with what the Bible says! The biblical patriarch Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28) had 12 sons, only *one* of whom was Judah, the progenitor of the Jews. There remain the descendants of the other sons of Jacob, who themselves are *also* Israelites. And the Bible reveals that the *birthright promises* (global power and territorial expansion) were given *not to Judah*, but to the sons of

- 1) Crisis of Lawlessness
- 2) Loss of Economic Discipline
- 3) Rise of Bureaucracy
- 4) Decline of Education
- 5) Weakening of Cultural Foundations
- 6) Loss of Respect for Tradition
- 7) Increase in Materialism
- 8) Rise in Immorality
- 9) Decay of Religious Belief
- 10) Devaluing of Human Life

Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:5-20). What is not generally understood is that **biblical prophecies about the future of Israel apply primarily to the nations descended from these two men.**

The Bible is not simply about faraway people in faraway lands. It reveals what the 21st century holds for today’s Western democracies. Many Bible prophecies have a *dual* meaning or fulfillment. In other words, they apply to both the ancient Israelites and their modern descendants (primarily most of the inhabitants of the United States, Canada and a number of northwestern European nations). With the keys of *national identity* and the *duality* of many prophecies, biblical passages suddenly come alive—relevant both to the present and the future!

One such passage is found in the

book of Isaiah, where it describes how the people—our people!—have “rebelled” to the point where they no longer recognize the true God or His teachings (1:2-3). They have become a “sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evil doers,” morally sick from head to toe (vv. 3-5). Isaiah portrays Israel—including the lands of *today’s* Israelites—as affluent, and addicted to materialism and the idolatrous worship of what money can buy (2:7-8). He projects the *breakdown* of society and the loss of real leadership (3:1-3).

This is a vivid description of Western nations today. The United States enjoys unprecedented affluence, yet is *crumbling from within*—in no small part due to moral decay. We cannot seem to rise above the ridiculous notions that no one can determine what’s right or wrong and that the will of the majority supported by unlimited funding will somehow solve all of our problems! (Ruggiero, p. 133). The result is that societal *immorality* is being replaced by societal *amorality*. Worse than those who break laws for personal gain is a growing segment of the next generation that does not believe it is even *subject* to the laws of the land!

Ezekiel states that Israel’s wickedness—including *modern* Israel’s—*exceeds* that of other nations (Ezek. 5:4-6). This is certainly the case with the United States—a world leader in divorce and violent crime. Moreover, American films export this cultural depravity to the four corners of the globe. But God is not mocked. He will execute *unprecedented judgment* upon Israel as a lesson for all mankind (vv. 8-9). That judgment is going to include the *sudden demise*

(continued on page 17)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



ANTICHRIST ARTICLE

Your article titled "The Truth About Antichrist" in the July–August *World Ahead* was very informative! Please send me the two booklets mentioned in your article—*What Is a True Christian?* and *The Ten Commandments*.

David James
Costa Mesa, California

I was given a copy of your magazine, *The World Ahead*, to read today and I must say I was very intrigued by much of what your articles had to say—especially in both the editorial and "The Truth About Antichrist." You hit on some of the things I have come to understand in reading my Bible that contradict what many ministers seem to be preaching—things for "itching ears" instead of what God requires of us in His Word.

L.H.
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

The article on the Antichrist in the latest *World Ahead* magazine was very clear and interesting. I want to also thank John Ogwyn for writing about China. He really made it clear how the opium trade contributed to today's drug abuse in the United States.

Barbara Turner
Internet e-mail

The Antichrist article was most informative and encouraging to a "seeker." Thank you.

Dorthie Higginson
Sierra Vista, Arizona

SUICIDE STORY

Having just received the July–August 1997 *World Ahead* magazine, I wanted to write to let you know that I really enjoyed it and to tell you how much the story about suicide ("By Their Own Hand...") meant to me. I liked the information very much for I have come very close to killing myself in the three years I have been in this Texas State Prison. If it were not for my family waiting for my return, I'm real, real sure I would have already put myself out of the misery that sin can put one in.

This article was so true where it talks about the "reasons for suicide" and spoke directly to me. So true about the "public humiliation" of being convicted of a crime, the major sense of "total failure," the loss of *hope*, etc. I am now on medication for major depression and am living proof that God can help those who feel this misery, or dread, called depression. Thank you for publishing this information. God bless you all!

M.Q.
Rosharon, Texas

Referring to the article on suicide in the July–August issue of *The World Ahead*, I cannot believe that the author equates sadness and weeping with depression. Jesus Christ was sad, wept and lamented, but He certainly did not suffer depression. Depression, a feeling of hopelessness, is the character of Satan. Jesus never had one ounce of Satan's character. And to assign depression to Jeremiah because he wept and lamented—or to Joseph just because he was in prison—is unjust and has no biblical support.

Two of depression's main remedies were not even mentioned in the article. One is to draw closer to God, which automatically restricts Satan's influence. And the other is to exercise more of the love of God in one's life. For when we become a living sacrifice in love for others, how can Satan's character of depression remain in our lives? I am sorry to see that the article did not give the advice people so desperately need.

Name withheld
Fort Worth, Texas

The article nowhere states that Jesus suffered from depression. But Christians, at times subject to Satan's negativism, certainly may—and have! Job, Moses, Elijah and Jonah all came to the point where they asked God to simply kill them (Job 6:1-11; Num. 11:11-15; 1 Kings 19:1-4; Jonah 4:1-3). And Jeremiah echoed Job's lament in wishing he had never been born in the first place! (Jer. 20:14-18; cf. Job 3). That's pretty hopeless!

Furthermore, the article did point out the solution: "SEEK GOD!" (p. 30). In fact, the same solution is written in almost everything we publish! And if God and His will are honestly sought, the need to serve Him and our fellow man will become clear. Realize too that this article was not primarily dealing with overcoming depression. Had it been, we would no doubt have more extensively covered the very countermeasures you mentioned—ed.

RESPONSES TO TV

A couple of weeks ago, I was in the Veterans' hospital in Dublin, Georgia. I saw your program on WGN. You sound like a true shepherd. Hope you don't get kicked off the air for having the courage to preach the Truth.

Roy Pitts
Ocilla, Georgia

I try to catch your program on the VISION network every chance I get. I would like to at least keep up to date with your literature, be it booklets or just letters from your organization. I do appreciate your "right-to-the-point" approach to God's Word. I was surprised and yet very happy to see Mr. Richard Ames on your most recent broadcast. I presume he will be an

occasional speaker on the *World Ahead* program. I look forward to seeing and hearing him again on future broadcasts.

George Saunders
Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada

Evangelist Richard Ames, a long-time minister in the Church of God and former presenter for the *World Tomorrow* program, is a welcome addition to our television team. We are pleased to have him serve in this capacity—ed.

GLOBAL MESSAGE

Many thanks for sending *America and Britain in Prophecy*. The secular historical details are very helpful in bringing home the truth of our identity. Thank you also for *The Beast of Revelation*. I'm so glad it makes clear what the mark of the Beast really is.

M.R. Silve
Brighton, England

The March–April 1997 issue of the *World Ahead* magazine was pleasing to read. As a teenager, I was thrilled that you are not wasting any effort in producing such an article (cover story: "Have You Been Deceived?"), a very bold step. I was spiritually moved upon reading it and came to understand as I never have before. Thank you for your help. I wholeheartedly commend and congratulate you for what you are doing to let me and others know the real Truth.

Tweddell Mumure Ttopoqogo
Lae, Papua New Guinea

Thank you for the copy of the booklet you sent me, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* Having read it, I now intend to keep the Saturday Sabbath. Though 60 years old, it has changed my whole attitude toward life.

Terence Whitecunas
Manchester, England

We welcome your comments, criticism or questions. Please mail letters for this section to "Letters to the Editor" at our U.S. address. Be sure to include your name, address and daytime phone number. We reserve the right to edit your comments for clarity, propriety or space.


of the Western nations of Israelite descent (Is. 29:5-6). They will be conquered by a foreign power (Is. 10:5-6). This will be a sobering lesson to the whole world that God does intervene in the affairs of mankind, and that His laws—given for *our good*—must be obeyed (Ezek. 5:13-15).

But in Western democracies, humanistic educators and politicians have put man, science and human reason in place of Almighty God. Misguided scholars and theologians have undermined the authority of Scripture. The secular press has riddled society with godless notions of unbridled personal freedom with no responsibility. And we are all suffering the consequences. But as the Prophet Jeremiah foretold, "My people love to have it so" (Jer. 5:31). God punished *ancient* Israel. He will punish *modern* Israel as well—*unless we repent!*

Literally dozens of Bible prophecies reveal that in the years ahead, we will witness the *stunning decline* of Western democracies. Just as God punished ancient nations for their sinful ways, He will correct and chasten *modern* Israel as well—*unless we repent!* Like the ancient inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, modern Israelites stand on dangerous ground—on the very brink of destruction. If Gomorrah is indeed "our probable destination," we are merely facing the consequences of our own decisions and actions. We need to heed the example of ancient Nineveh. For it provides one of the few cases in history where a nation *did* repent when warned of its sinful ways. The result is that God stayed the punishment that would have befallen the Ninevites (cf. Jonah 3:1-9).

That same Almighty God stands ready to forgive the Bible-promoting, yet not always Bible-believing, peoples of Western democracies—IF we will repent of our sins and follow God's perfect and righteous way of life. The Almighty tells us about His mercy toward nations: "The instant I speak concerning a nation... to destroy it, **IF that nation against whom I have spoken TURNS FROM ITS EVIL, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it**" (Jer. 18:7-8).

Will we be spared the coming punishment of God? Or will we blindly rush headlong into destruction? While politicians paint visions of glowing sunrises, Bible prophecy and knowledgeable observers suggest that, barring heartfelt national repentance, the sun is *setting* on liberty-loving, but no longer God-fearing, democracies.

The 21st century holds some real surprises for the United States and the West. Hard lessons will undoubtedly have to be learned. But despite the specter of even darker days ahead, they will surely be followed by a *new day*—indeed, a *new age!* In this *World Ahead*, the Kingdom of God will be established on earth—when Jesus Christ takes the reigns of government and rules all nations in justice, equity and peace. For more information on the end of this age and the exciting events that lie beyond, please write for our free booklets titled *God's Intervention in World Affairs* and *Your Ultimate Destiny*. You can have a part in God's exciting plan for mankind! You can prepare for the future now! 



The Coming War for the City of Peace

by Raymond F. McNair

*The Bible reveals that an awesome military engagement—
in fact, the last battle of this age—will be fought at Jerusalem.*

Who will win ultimate control of the Holy City—and of the entire Middle East?

Jerusalem

is sacred to fully *half the world's* population. Its name literally means "Possession of Peace." Yet how tragic it is that, down through time, no place on earth has stood at the center of so much conflict and bloodshed. And sadly, the worst is yet to come. For of the end of this age, God says, "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" (Zech. 12:2-3).

Just what political and religious forces will culminate in this horrific end-time military showdown? What exactly lies ahead for the Holy City?

Let us here point out that you may *first* want to read "North & South: The Age-Old Struggle for the Middle East," beginning on page 8. The prophetic overview of Daniel 11 presented in that article serves as a historical backdrop to this one.

An End-Time Invasion

The article mentioned above stated that Germany is prophesied to ally herself with an Arab confederacy

against Israel (cf. Ps. 83). But that alliance won't last! Notice from Daniel 11 what will happen to a German-led European union, the final "kingdom of the North": "At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him..." (v. 40). What might provoke this? We can better understand by considering the nature of the Hitlerian leader of the coming European "Beast."

As we will later see more clearly, Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria (vv. 21-31) was in fact a *type* of this end-time dictator. And Antiochus was a "silver-tongued devil"

who used his oily manner to extend his power at every opportunity. He even made a "covenant" or "league" with elements of Jewish leadership and at first entered "peaceably" into the Holy Land (vv. 22-23). Of course, he acted deceitfully and ended up severely persecuting and even slaughtering the Jews. From this and other scriptural indications, it appears that the end-time king of the North may make similar initial overtures of peace with Israel.

"Israel" in this context probably not only means the modern Jewish state, but the nations that comprise the present-day descendants of the "Ten Lost Tribes" of Israel as well, including the United States and Britain. (Please write for a free copy of *America and Britain in Prophecy* if you don't already have one.) If the new Hitlerian leader proclaims "peace" with modern Israelites, Islamic fundamentalists at the forefront of the Arab confederation—who hate Israel and label America the "Great Satan"—would no doubt see this as an enormous betrayal. Would we not expect them to lash out at some point against their ally-turned-enemy?

Whatever the cause, the king of the South will strike against the Beast, thereby provoking Europe to retaliate with a blitzkrieg of air, ground and sea forces (v. 40). And "he shall also enter the Glorious Land..." (v. 41). We will delve further into the European occupation of the Holy Land shortly.

But let's first see how the Beast's counterstrike will affect other Mideast nations: "...many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab and the prominent people of Ammon"—i.e. modern Jordan.

Others will not fare so well: "He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and **the land of Egypt shall not escape**. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; **also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels**" (vv. 42-43). Note that modern Sudan may be among those nations swallowed up by the Beast,

since its territory was part of ancient Ethiopia.

Interestingly, Libya and Ethiopia were both part of Egypt at various times in antiquity. So the kingdom of the South will again be absorbed by the kingdom of the North.

The Future Abomination

To learn more about the coming invasion of Israel, we must turn to the New Testament. Christ's disciples asked Him when the temple would be destroyed and what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). He answered by giving them an outline of events culminating with His return.

Notice Luke 21: "**But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near**. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains.... For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.... For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (vv. 20-24).

This has *already* happened in certain respects. For in A.D. 70, less than 40 years after Christ spoke these words, Roman armies under Emperor Vespasian's son Titus quelled a Jewish uprising, conquered Judea, destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, and carried the inhabitants away as slaves. From then until modern times, Jerusalem was held by Gentiles. In fact, even present-day Israel has never reassumed complete rule over the *entire* city—for it still allows Muslims to control the Temple Mount.

Matthew and Mark didn't record Christ's remark about armies surrounding Jerusalem. But they did add something Jesus said about the city's "desolation" that is not found in Luke: "**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" (Matt. 24:15-16; cf. Mark 13:14). But hadn't this part of Daniel's prophecy already been fulfilled almost 200 years earlier in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes—when he stopped the daily sacrifices and set up a pagan image in the temple? (Dan. 11:31). Absolutely! So Daniel's prophecy must have a *dual* fulfillment!

Yet, though the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple, no "abomination" was *set up* by them in A.D. 70. So what is the time frame here? Matthew 24 explains what immediately follows: "For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [alive]; but for the

elect's sake those days will be shortened" (vv. 21-22).

This too hearkens back to Daniel's prophecy, which says that at the time of the end, "there shall be a **time of trouble**, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered.... And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (12:1-2; cf. 11:40). So this horrific Tribulation occurs at the end of the age, just before the resurrection of the dead at Christ's return (1 Cor. 15:21-23). In fact, Daniel writes that "from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination is set up," there will be 1,290 days or 43 months until the resurrection (12:11).

Incredibly, then, the prophesied abomination of desolation is yet future. Thus, we see clearly that the previous invasions by the North—especially that of Antiochus, but also that of Titus and perhaps others—were merely *precursors* of a far more sinister end-time fulfillment that will usher in the most terrifying events in human history! But before we focus more attention on this coming catastrophe, let's examine how things will be directly beforehand.

Consider that Christ said the abomination will be "standing in the holy place" and that it is prophetically and historically attached to the removal of the daily sacrifices. It appears, then, that some form of *temple worship* will first be reinstated by the Jews. Otherwise, how could the sacrifices be "cut off"? However, whether there will be an actual *temple*—or just a *sacrificial altar* as in the days of Ezra—is not certain. Yet a strong argument can be made for the former since the Apostle Paul says that the final "man of sin"—the false religious leader known as the Antichrist, who will be in partnership with the Beast dictator—will enthrone himself "as God in the *temple* of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4). In fact, this in itself seems closely tied to the end-time abomination.

It should be noted that quite a number of Jews are right now engaged in reproducing implements of Levitical worship and drawing up plans for a new house of worship on the Temple Mount. If they do actually build a temple or altar in the years to come, this would certainly fan the flames of Arab hatred toward Israel. And it should be easy to see that if Europe's leaders make any pretense of promoting Jewish temple worship, Islamic fundamentalists might well be driven to violent action.

World War III

As we saw in Luke 21, Jesus mentioned "days of vengeance" and national captivity (vv. 20-24). Now while this does in some small way describe the

first-century destruction of Jerusalem, it makes much more sense to understand these verses as parallel to Matthew 24:15-22—which describes the Great Tribulation of the end time. Remember that Christ said, "Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). This refers in part to the fact that Jerusalem would remain under Gentile rule for many centuries. But more importantly, it is also directly tied to an end-time prophecy in Revelation 11:2. There it says that the outer court of the "temple" will be "given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months"—that is, for 1,260 days or 42 months (cf. v. 3).

Zechariah 14 describes the coming "day of the LORD" (v. 1) in which, directly before Christ's return, God begins punishing the nations for their evil deeds. Notice some of the events leading up to this time: "The city [Jerusalem] 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" (v. 2).

But the Jews will not experience this captivity *alone*. Hosea 5:5 says that modern Israelites will "fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall *with* them" (KJV). In ancient times, Judah fell about 135 years *after* Israel did. But in the end time, both will fall *together*. Regarding the Tribulation period ahead, Jeremiah 30:7 says, "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of **Jacob's trouble** [i.e. affecting ALL Israel], but [after suffering through it] he shall be saved out of it."

This all means that around the same time that the Beast power invades Palestine, it will *also* unleash mass destruction against North America, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the democracies of Northwest Europe—perhaps even *nuclear* destruction since, among other factors, all major cities in these nations will be laid waste (cf. Ezek. 6:6). A *third* of their people will be killed in the war, *another third* will die by famine and pestilence, and the *remaining third* will be taken captive and sold into slavery (5:12). This will be an awful, terrible time. To learn more about it, we refer you again to our free brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*.

How long will the Great Tribulation last? Remember that, according to Daniel, the abomination of desolation will be set up 43 months before Christ returns. Then, just one month later—i.e. 42 months or 3 1/2 years before Christ's return—the city will be overrun and the Tribulation will begin. But will it last the full 3 1/2 years? No. For after "Jacob's trouble"—but prior to Christ's actual return—will come the Day of the Lord, mentioned previously. Because of the prophetic "day-for-a-year" principle (cf. Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6),

it appears that the "day" of the Lord will be the final *year* before Christ's Second Coming. So the Tribulation will last 2 1/2 years (cf. Hosea 6:2), ending one year before Jesus' return.

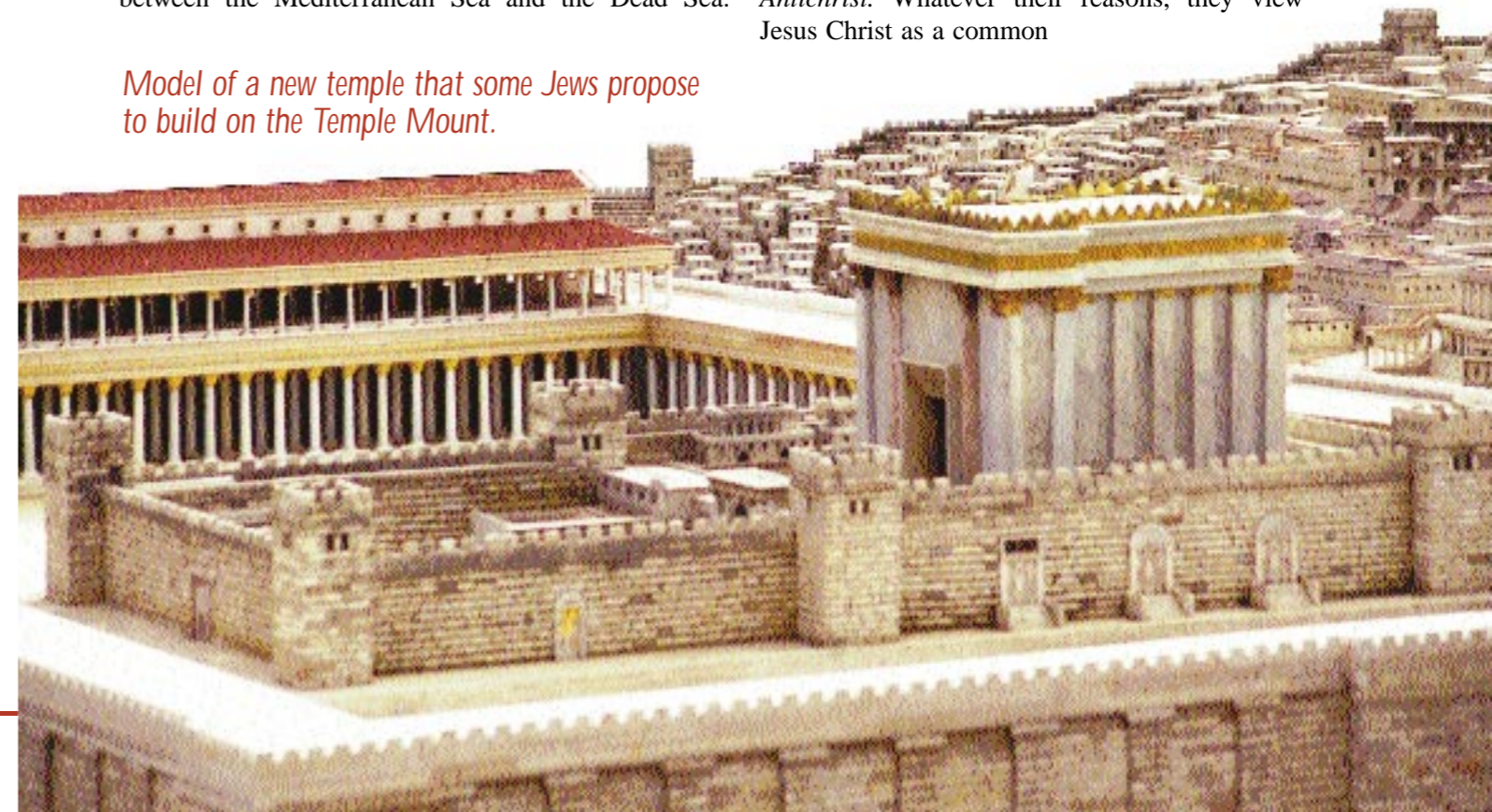
The book of Revelation mentions the Great Tribulation (7:14; cf. 6:9) and, in the next few chapters, describes seven trumpets being blown successively. Evidently, they sound over the course of the next year—the Day of the Lord. The *fifth* trumpet signals "locusts" and "scorpions" rising out of the "bottomless pit" and tormenting men for five months (9:1-12). This may be describing modern helicopters and tanks of the Beast (cf. 17:8), perhaps using chemical or biological weapons (cf. 9:5-6). But against whom?

For the answer, we must return to Daniel 11. Look at what the European dictator will do after his Mideast occupation is well established: "But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many" (v. 44). It seems, then, that rumors of hostility toward him from Eastern capitals and "the north" (Moscow is almost due north of the Holy Land) will cause the Europeans to launch a preemptive strike against the powers of the East, which will be successful for a time.

The Final Assault

The end-time king of the North will then move his capital to the Holy Land: "And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain..." (v. 45 KJV)—i.e. in Jerusalem, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea.

Model of a new temple that some Jews propose to build on the Temple Mount.



"...yet he shall come to his end, and none will help him." How will this transpire?

The sixth trumpet of Revelation signals a titanic and merciless counterattack by Eastern forces from beyond the Euphrates River (9:13-21). By their incredible military force—200 million strong! (v. 16)—they will devastate Europe and much of the world. Nuclear armaments or other weapons of mass destruction will certainly be employed as a *third of mankind* will be killed in a very short time! (v. 18).

The Eastern forces will then march toward Israel, intent on finishing the job of wiping out the Beast power and its leader. The Euphrates River will be dried up "so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared" (16:12). And as explained in our previous issue's installment of this series, the Beast and his forces will meet the European army at Armageddon or Megiddo in northern Israel (v. 16)—in fact, "the kings of the earth and of the *whole world*" will be there (v. 14).

Then, just when it appears that humanity will completely destroy itself, events will not be allowed to run their course (Matt. 24:22). For at that time, "all the tribes of the earth... will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v. 30). Jesus and a mighty angelic army with Him will suddenly appear on the scene (Rev. 19:11, 14). And the resurrected saints will accompany them (Jude 14-15). What an awesome and wonderful event!

But the nations will be "angry" (Rev. 11:18). It may be that they will view the return of Christ as an *extraterrestrial* invasion, or perhaps as the appearance of the *Antichrist*. Whatever their reasons, they view Jesus Christ as a common

enemy! The Apostle John writes, “And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him... and against His army” (19:19). So “all nations” then march together to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (the modern Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem) to fight against the Lord (cf. Joel 3:1-2).

What happens then? God says, “**For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem....** 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, from east to west, making a very large valley.... Then you shall flee through My mountain valley” (Zech. 14:2-5). But just who will flee? Remember that only half of Jerusalem’s people will have been taken captive. And, as the city’s population is currently about 600,000—of which nearly 400,000 are Jews—there will still be quite a few Jews there, as well as in the surrounding countryside.

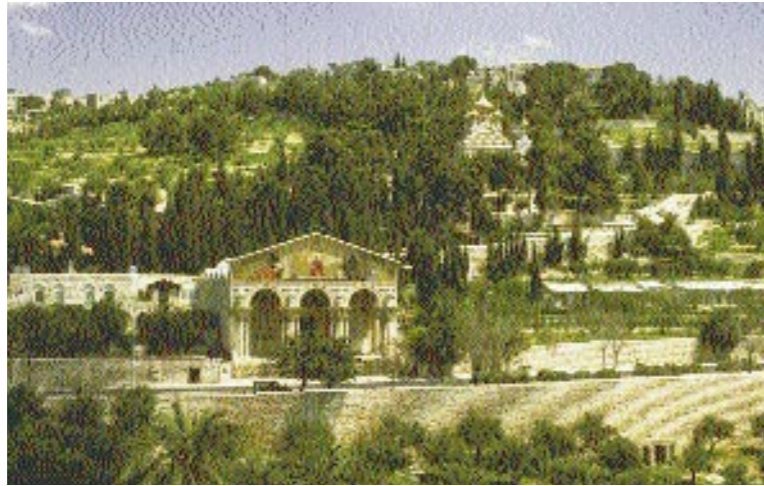
In fact, God says, “On that day I will make **the leaders of Judah** like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place. **The LORD will save the dwellings of Judah first....** On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem” (12:6-8 NIV). And, “**Judah also will fight at Jerusalem**” (14:14), *retaking* the city.

God’s Enemies Vanquished

In the final battle, the Almighty “will strike every horse [armored vehicle?] with confusion, and its rider with madness... every horse of the peoples with blindness” (12:4). Will the electronic sensors and guidance systems of enemy tanks malfunction, causing a flurry of “friendly fire” incidents that spark uncontrolled infighting? Perhaps. But, however He does it, God Himself will send a “great panic” among the attacking nations, causing them to slaughter *one another* in the ensuing confusion (14:13-15)—just as He did to ancient Gentile forces

that came against Judah in the days of Kings Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah (2 Chron. 20; 2 Kings 18-19).

Yet this is not the *primary* method God will use to obliterate the enemy forces. For upon His return, the Living Christ will smite the attacking armies with the equivalent of a nuclear firestorm! “And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve [“consume away” KJV] *while they stand on their feet*, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths” (Zech. 14:12).



A view of the Mount of Olives. Across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem’s Old City, it is where Jesus Christ is prophesied to stand at His return.

The book of Isaiah fills in more details: “For behold, the LORD will come with *fire* and with His chariots, like a *whirlwind*, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the LORD will judge all flesh; and the slain of the LORD shall be many” (66:15-16; cf. 2 Thess. 1:7-8). This is the same fate described for the Beast’s accomplice, the False Prophet, “whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the *brightness of His coming*” (2:8).

In a blinding flash, untold numbers of people will be instantly incinerated: “Moreover the multitude of [Jerusalem’s] foes shall be like fine dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passes away” (Is. 29:5). And as *The Living Bible* renders verse 7, “all the nations fighting Jerusalem will vanish like a dream!” Indeed, the nightmare will at long last be over.

Yet right now you may be somewhat disturbed and frightened at what is to come. But you need not live in fear. For Jesus said, “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to *escape* all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36). You can have God’s protection if you start obeying Him and completely submit your life to His will (cf. Rev. 3:10).

In the end, what will happen after the Messiah decisively defeats the armies that fight against Him, and liberates the Holy City? That will be the subject of the next article in our Mideast series. So be sure to keep reading *The World Ahead*. WA

Questions & Answers

Does James 4:13-16 mean that every single time we say we are going to do something, we must always include the phrase, “if the Lord wills”?

Muslims are taught to add “if Allah [God] wills” to any stated plans. For instance, “I’ll pick up the dry-cleaning tomorrow... if God wills.” Some Christians, as well, believe this is essentially what the Apostle James taught. But is it?

The verses in question state, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”

James was obviously rebuking some traveling merchants in the Church. *The Word Biblical Commentary* says, “What we have here is typical of someone... planning a business trip” (vol. 48, p. 165). Spending a “year” in another city, however, makes this an even more major life decision. James’ problem is not “that these business people are following a ‘secular’ vocation.... What galls our author is that such an attitude reflects a proud complacency that suggests a ‘this-worldly planning’ and a blatant desire to become rich. In other words... their lifestyle had become secular.”

Furthermore, no one knows for sure what tomorrow will bring. Indeed, at any moment, our world could be turned upside down—or even *disappear* through death. So “how does one approach life in the light of not knowing the outcome? The incorrect, i.e., foolish, way is to assume that all will transpire as planned. **The more sensible attitude—because it alone is safe—is to assume that whatever happens is under the control of God....** A trust in God and *not* a well-thought-out plan for aggrandize-

ment and gain is the only way to face the future” (p. 166).

But what about the particular phrase in question? The commentary states, “James is not setting his face against making plans for the future—business plans or other. He simply reports that the person who expresses his desires as personal plans should preface such remarks by some contingent reminder.” But realize that this is mainly in major life planning—not, “Dinner will be at 6:30... if God wills.”

In fact, we should be very careful whenever we use the name of God. As the commentary says, “**the mere verbalization of a catchphrase like, ‘if the Lord wills’ is not the intent here. Just as with any Christian teaching, the phrase can become no more than a vain thoughtless repetition**” (p. 167). And that would violate not only the third commandment itself, but also a particular magnification of it by Christ (cf. Matt. 6:7). Of course, it’s fine to mention God if He and His will are honestly being looked to.

So what is James saying? The commentary puts it well: “**What James is urging here is a conviction (worked out in a congruent lifestyle) that leads one to acknowledge that indeed God is in [ultimate] control of life’s decisions.**” Yes, in any real planning, we should always recognize God’s sovereignty over circumstances—and that *His* planning is ever preeminent. Failing to

You always say that Christians are required to keep the Ten Commandments. But didn’t Jesus already fulfill the law for us according to Matthew 5:17?

We should view this in context. Matthew 5-7 records Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. Many see it as the abrogation of the Ten Commandments and Old Testament strictness, and the introduction of some nice ideas and new spiritual principles. But Jesus was stricter yet concerning the sixth and seventh commandments by explaining that they must be kept even in our thoughts (5:21-22, 27-28).

Now notice verse 17: “Do NOT think that I came to destroy the Law or the

Prophets [the Old Testament based on the Ten Commandments]. **I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.**” Just what does this mean? An excellent explanation is given in the introduction of David H. Stern’s *Jewish New Testament*:

“Did [Jesus] fill or fulfill the [Law]? The common word *plerôsai* means ‘to fill.’ At [Matthew] 5:17 most translations render it ‘to fulfill.’ The theological implications often drawn are that [Jesus] fulfilled all the prophecies of the [Old Testament] pertaining to the Jews, so that none remain for them now; and that he kept the [Law] perfectly, so that no one need obey it today. But these conclusions do not follow logically, and in fact they contradict [Jesus’] immediately preceding statement that he did *not* come to abolish (or destroy) the [Law].

“More fundamental for translation, however, is the question of whether *plerôsai* in this verse should be rendered ‘to fulfill’ at all. [This] translator’s view is that [Jesus] came to *fill* the [Law] and the ethical pronouncements of the Prophets *full* with their *complete meaning*, so that everyone can know all that obedience entails. For this reason the *Jewish New Testament* says that [Jesus] came ‘not to abolish but to complete.’ In fact, this is the subject of the entire Sermon on the Mount; and [Matthew] 5:17, understood in this way, is its theme sentence” (1995, pp. xxii-xxiii).

Christ, then, certainly didn’t *do away* with God’s law! Notice the next verse: “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle [smallest marks in Hebrew writing, thus even the LETTER of the law] will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” Just as heaven and earth still exist—so is God’s law still in force!

That’s why Christ says in the following verse, “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” This would make no sense if Christ had already done it all for us.

Jesus later made it crystal clear: “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments!” (19:17).

The Pharisees came to Jesus and asked him a very pointed question: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" (Matt. 19:3).

The question of divorce and the role of women in society was as controversial in the first century as it is today. The men who asked this question of Jesus were Pharisees—members of a strict sect of the Jews that focused on the "oral law" or traditions passed down by its leaders through the generations. Their teachings were referred to as the *Halakah*—which means "the walk." For these Pharisees, following tradition became more important than obeying the plain injunctions of Scripture (cf. Mark 7:13).

The answer Christ gave surprised the Pharisees. He said that from the beginning God created us male and female for the purpose of joining together and forming a family unit. Divorce, or putting away one's spouse, had been *allowed* because of the "hardness" of men's hearts—but was not what God *intended* (Matt. 19:5-8). Jesus then warned that those who divorce and remarry are guilty of adultery, barring some very narrow circumstances, which serve as the only exceptions.

Christ's disciples were disturbed. They said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry" (v. 10). Why would they say that? Why would the teaching that "what God has joined together, let not man separate" be such a cause for alarm?

A Woman's Worth



by Rex I. Sexton

We can better understand their concern if we look into the status of women in first-century Palestine. Due to the Jews' tumultuous history and Greek and Roman influence on their society, women had come to be thought of as second-class citizens—of lesser *worth* than men.

The Record of History

Historical records and rabbinical writings paint a bleak picture of

women being treated inequitably in many aspects of life.

Marriage: Hillel, an eminent Jewish scholar and rabbinical leader in Jerusalem during the first century B.C., taught that a man could divorce his wife for a variety of trivial reasons, such as her burning his food or him finding someone else more beautiful! (Strack and Billerbeck, *Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Midrash*, I, 312, cited by G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1964, vol. 1, p. 783). According to some historians, "divorces on trivial grounds were hardly less common among the Jews than among pagans" (Kittel, p. 783). Indeed, the most famous Jewish historian of that era, the Pharisee Flavius Josephus, speaks quite complacently of his many marriages (*Life of Josephus*, 414 f., 426 f., cited by Kittel, p. 783).

On the other hand, a woman was *rarely* allowed to divorce her husband—and then, solely on the grounds that he was trying to force her into a morally wrong vow (Kittel, p. 783). This double standard made the plight of a wife locked in an abusive or difficult marriage almost hopeless.

Education: As essential as the study of God's Word, and education in general, was thought to be for boys, it wasn't considered that important for girls. In fact, women were *exempt* from the precept of studying the Torah. Rabbi Eliezer's

view was that "rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman" (*Mishna*, jSota, 10a, 8; cf. Kittel, p. 781). And, "Whosoever teaches his daughter Torah teaches her lasciviousness" (Sota, 3, 4; cf. Kittel, pp. 781-782). This extreme view was probably not shared by everyone. Nonetheless, there was a general consensus that women acquired merit by raising good sons and sending *them* off to study.

Public Worship: There was no order of priestesses in the Mosaic religion, and a woman's role in organized worship was limited to *secondary* functions that were nevertheless important. For example, women often joined in singing praises to the Eternal (Ex. 15:20), attended His Festivals (Deut. 16:14) and could give offerings and prayers at the Tabernacle (1 Samuel 1). In addition, God sometimes chose *individual* women to serve as "prophetesses" (cf. Ex. 15:20; Luke 2:36). And one woman, Deborah, was both a prophetess and one of Israel's ruling judges (Judges 4:4).

But by the first century A.D., women's participation in public worship had become quite restricted. In Herod's temple, female worshipers were confined to an outer court 15 steps below the men's worship area. The sexes were also kept apart in the synagogue.

In the vital area of prayer, women were once again not given the same obligations as men. Along with children and slaves, they were not required to recite the *Shema*, the morning prayer, nor give prayers at meals. The daily benediction said by the men contained a threefold thanksgiving: "Praised be God that he has not created me a gentile, **praised be God that he has not created me a woman;** praised be God that he has not created me an ignorant man." As offensive as this

may seem to most modern readers, this was not, according to Jewish scholars, meant as a sexist insult. Rather, this prayer was simply a daily reminder to the man of his responsibility to study the Word of God and lead his family.

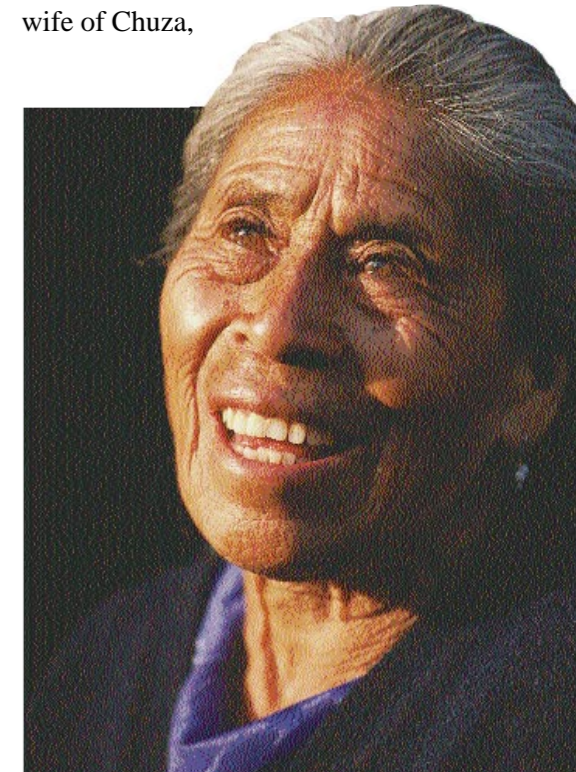
Public Life: Rabbinical writings added more restrictions. Women were not allowed to bear witness in a court of law, nor could they be counted as part of the quorum for a congregation. Rabbis and teachers of the Law were not supposed to converse with women in public—not even their own wives, sisters or daughters. The *Proverbs of the Fathers* admonishes, "Speak not much with a woman." A Jewish adage holds that he "who speaks much with a woman draws misfortune on himself." *No wonder* Jesus Christ's public conversations with women caused such a stir!

Bear in mind that these attitudes did not come from God, but rather from the traditions of men. From the beginning, the Bible states that both Adam *and* Eve were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). And the biblical narrative is filled with stories of God-fearing women who made a difference—Miriam, Esther, Hannah, Abigail, Deborah and others are all extolled as powerful examples of faith. We've also been given some wonderful stories of romantic love—Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, Boaz and Ruth—as models to follow in our own marriages.

Because of these examples, a few rabbinical writers disagreed with the common notion that women were inferior to men or deserving of less respect. Some even wrote complimentary praises such as: "A man without a wife lives without joy, blessing, and good, and... a man should love his wife *as* himself and respect her *more* than himself" (*Mishna*, Yev. 62b).

Christ's Example

One of the first aspects of Jesus Christ's ministry recorded for us in the Gospels is that He taught women in public. When we recall that in Judaism it was considered improper—even scandalous—to teach women the Scriptures, this takes on extraordinary significance. Consider this passage in Luke 8: "He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza,



Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance" (vv. 1-3).

The Greek word translated "provided for" is *diekonoun*, which means "served and cared for." The significance of Jesus having a group of women providing for Him so that He could teach them about the

Kingdom can be more fully appreciated when we understand that certain Jewish teachers, such as Philo, taught that women should not even *leave their households* except for short periods of time.

Although the women with Christ were not among “the twelve,” they were nevertheless also His disciples—who followed and learned from Him throughout His ministry. They wanted to learn about the Kingdom of God—which they valued as a “pearl of great price.”

Breaking with Tradition

All four Gospels portray Jesus’ complete acceptance of and respect for women. Regardless of their social status, He talked with them in public and treated them with dignity and courtesy. Christ was well aware of Jewish traditions that often demeaned women. But He challenged them in the same way that He challenged *other* Jewish traditions concerning ritualistic handwashing (Mark 7:1-4) and restrictive, burdensome Sabbath observance (cf. Mark 2:23-28). Why? Because these traditions were man-made *distortions* of what God intended. The Almighty never meant for Sabbath-keeping to be a burden (cf. 1 John 5:3). **Neither did God ever intend for women to be treated as second-class citizens!**

Let’s consider two instances where Christ raised individuals from the dead. The events surrounding them involve women in a significant way.

The first account, mentioned in both Mark 5 and Luke 8, concerns a ruler of the synagogue named Jairus. This man was obviously a high-ranking Jew of his day—probably a Pharisee. He came to Jesus with an urgent request for Him to heal his 12-year-old daughter, who was dying. Jesus agreed to do so and

set out for Jairus’ home—eventually raising this little girl from the dead since she died before He arrived.

But on the way to Jairus’ house something strange happened that gives us great insight into Christ’s perspective on women. The large group that accompanied Jesus and Jairus no doubt included many other Pharisees and leading Jews. In the crowd as well was a sick woman who planned how she might be healed by Christ—without drawing attention to herself. For she knew all too well that no ordinary rabbi or teacher would converse with her in public—and would certainly never touch her since, due to her bleeding condition, she was “unclean.”

Therefore, she made her way through the crowd and managed to touch the hem of Jesus’ garment from behind. And she was immediately healed! But Jesus had felt power going out from Him. So he stopped, turned around, and asked, “Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45). Trembling in fear, the woman fell down before Him and admitted what she had done. She felt sure that she would be publicly censured for having touched a man—in fact, a great Teacher! Worse yet, the consequences might have been *more* severe since she was ceremonially unclean.

To her amazement she was not only treated well, but was even publicly commended for her faith. She was then given a verbal blessing—“Go in peace” (v. 48)—by the very One she thought would be angry with her. Christ thus sent a powerful message to the Pharisees that He held their traditional views about

women in contempt. Jesus Christ upheld *God’s* laws rather than *man’s* traditions.

Now we come to one of Jesus’ most famous miracles—raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11). The man Lazarus had two sisters, Mary and Martha. Residents of Bethany, just outside Jerusalem, they were apparently members of a prominent family. Jesus had often visited their home and was a personal friend.

When Lazarus became gravely ill, Jesus was summoned—but did



not arrive until His friend had been dead for four days. By that time, many had come from Jerusalem to comfort Mary and Martha in their mourning (v. 19). As it turned out, they would also become witnesses to the astounding miracle of bringing back to life a body that was already decomposing!

But before resurrecting Lazarus, Jesus had a public religious discussion with Martha in which He stated, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (v. 25). Here was a recognized Teacher imparting profound spiritual truth to a woman—in public! All who were present took notice. He then followed through with what He had promised Martha and brought Lazarus back from the dead.

More Examples

There are other incidents in which Jesus defied Jewish tradition on this matter. For one, the first time that He revealed His identity as the *Messiah* was to the “woman at the well.”

Jesus was sitting at Jacob’s well when a Samaritan woman approached. When He asked her to give Him some water, she was surprised that He was even speaking with her (John 4:5-9). After all, she already had two strikes against her—not only was she a *woman*, she was also a *Gentile*. Even so, Christ offered her “living water”—a concept she did not understand—and revealed that He knew her entire life history. He then told her that “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” She responded, saying that no one would be able to teach the truth of this unless He were the prophesied Messiah. Jesus then said to her, “**I who speak to you am He**” (v. 26). She believed Him and hurriedly went and told others in her village.

When Peter and the rest of the disciples rejoined Christ, they marveled that He had been conversing with a woman. It would not be until more than a year later that these men would have the same wonderful truth confirmed to them (Matt. 16:16).

Indeed, nothing that Jesus ever said or did was denigrating to women. In fact, in His parable of the unjust judge, a widow represents the faithful who persist in prayer (Luke 18:1-8). In other parables, Jesus often used typical women’s activities of His day to illustrate aspects of the Kingdom of God. He mentions baking bread (Luke 13:20-21), grinding grain (Luke 17:35), wedding festivities (Matt. 25:1-13) and cleaning house (Luke 15:8-10). And while Jesus never taught—as some claim—that His own physical

mother, Mary, was to be worshiped or revered, He did *honor* her according to the fifth commandment, even making provision for her to be cared for after His death (John 19:25-27).

God’s Word for Women Too!

During the time of Christ, many women felt that their greatest potential was to have a famous son! If they could be the mother of a great teacher or rabbi, then they would have accomplished all they could hope for. One woman of His day came to Jesus with exactly this concept in mind: “And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!’” (Luke 11:27).

But she spoke in ignorance—reflecting a mistaken assumption of the age in which she lived. Jesus Christ nowhere exalted physical motherhood above spiritual responsibility—not even that of His *own* mother. Instead, He emphasized the importance of *everyone* studying the Word of God and living according to it! He answered, “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (v. 28).

This verse should resound in the mind of everyone—male or female—who reads the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Christ plainly told this woman that her first and foremost calling in life was to learn from God’s Word and to live by it! Studying to show yourself approved before God (2 Tim. 2:15 KJV) and living by His every word (Luke 4:4) applies equally to *both* sexes. Women should never think that they are inferior to men in any way when it comes to understanding God’s Truth and putting it into practice in everyday life. God expects—even requires—that *every one of us* “press toward the goal for the prize of

the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). We have many examples of women in the Bible who have done just that—setting an example for all who would follow them.

Sadly, women in our society sometimes become preoccupied with domestic responsibilities and neglect their spiritual ones. God has provided an interesting example of this attitude to teach us a valuable lesson—the contrast between Mary and Martha.

More than a year before the death and resurrection of their brother Lazarus, we see Jesus visiting their house (Luke 10:38). Mary listened to what Jesus was teaching—she knew that He would soon leave and the chores could be done afterward. Not so for Martha—as she was “distracted with much serving” (v. 40).

Martha eventually became upset because her sister Mary was not helping to serve their guests. She went so far as to interrupt the Son of God, asking Him to command Mary to help her with the housework! Surely any Jewish teacher would know that women should concentrate on household chores while only the men learn about God!

Doubtless the answer given was not what she expected: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (vv. 41-42). Jesus Christ did not consider Mary’s *physical* duties to be more important than her *spiritual* ones. He stressed the importance of learning about the Kingdom of God. Martha served a meal that was finished in an hour. But Mary learned truths from Jesus that would endure for eternity!

We need to carefully consider the story of Mary and Martha. It’s easy to become preoccupied with all the physical cares and responsibilities that life in the 90s thrusts upon us. But learning the Word of God

and living by it is still our supreme responsibility before our Creator! Don't let it take second or third place in *your* life.

All One in Christ

Though Christianity and the Bible have been used by some to suppress women and the valuable spiritual contributions they provide, *true* Christianity, in fact, *elevated* the position of women in society. Members of God's Church *all* have equal standing before God: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, **there is neither male nor female; for you are all ONE in Christ Jesus**" (Gal. 3:28).

This, however, is not to say that men and women have the same *roles* to play in God's Church. For just as they have different functions within a family, so it is within the Church. For instance, though Christ sent many *men* out preaching, He never gave *women* this responsibility. And later, we see the Apostle Paul, on Christ's authority, actually *forbidding* women to preach (1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:33-35). Still, women play a valuable part in God's Church (cf. Phil 4:3; Titus 2:3-5). And in the soon-coming Kingdom of God, they will reign with Jesus Christ over all nations—right along with their current *brothers* in Christ.

From all accounts, it should be clear that Christ and the *way of life* He revealed promoted the dignity, equality and spiritual responsibility of women. He lived in a society dominated by men. But most of those men lived more according to their own traditions than by the commandments of God. Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, *spurned* their misguided traditions. Instead, He taught *all* who sought instruction from Him—both men *and* women—the wonderful, priceless Truth about the

WORLD GOVERNMENT (continued from page 7)

Jesus Christ! **For it is coming just as surely as tomorrow's sunrise!**

All the saints will serve under Jesus Christ as King of kings. But many of us may also serve under King David of Israel, who will be resurrected and given his old job back. But this time He will be a perfect divine being with the power of God to rule over and bless the Twelve Tribes of Israel—now the modern *nations* of Israel (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 37:24). We will also get to know Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and every one of the other faithful saints and servants of God from all generations. For then we will truly be born of God—"sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:36).


Remember that, from antiquity, God has repeatedly foretold His end-time RULE over the nations of this earth. "For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth" (Ps. 96:13). Again, for emphasis, God inspired virtually the same prophecy: "For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity" (98:9).

The true saints of God—the real "overcomers"—will be given the opportunity under Christ's leadership to deal with the coming Hitlerian dictators who will dominate end-time events: "Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment—this honor have all His saints. Praise the LORD!" (Ps. 149:5-9. For more information on the global tyranny

that will precede Christ's return, please write for our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*.)

In the New Testament, the Apostle John was inspired to write, "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" (Rev. 20:6). The Spirit-filled apostles and lay members of the first-century Church of God clearly understood and taught that the "Kingdom of God" would be set up at the end of this age as a *literal Government* on earth under Christ and the resurrected saints.

Noted historian Edward Gibbon chronicled this fact in his renowned history, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Concerning the history of early Christianity, he wrote, "The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the Prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years [cf. Ps. 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8]. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labour and contention, which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years [cf. Heb. 3-4; Rev. 20:6]; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth" (p. 403).

It should be absolutely clear to any honest person that apostolic Christianity—the Christianity of the *Bible*—teaches that the "Kingdom of God" will be set up at the end of this age as a *literal Government* on this earth to finally bring genuine PEACE. That, indeed, is tremendous GOOD NEWS! 

NORTH & SOUTH (continued from page 11)

a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain" (vv. 38-39). This commenced with Constantine the Great in the fourth century, when Roman emperors began to honor and expand the power of a "god" in a high religious office. This would progress through various "resurrections" of the West Roman Empire until the end time. (To learn more about this subject, please write for our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*.)

And that brings us to the next verse: "**At the time of the end** the king of the South shall attack him." But who will the northern and southern powers be at the end of this age? As mentioned, the western part of the Roman Empire has been revived numerous times in Europe—by Justinian, Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles V, Napoleon and the Mussolini-Hitler Axis. And at the 1947 Treaty of Rome, which brought the European Economic Community into existence, the signers were, according to former NATO Secretary-General Henri Spaak, "consciously re-creating the Roman Empire once more." Thus, it appears that today's European Union, which traces its roots to that starting point, is paving the way toward the final revival of the Roman Empire that the Bible elsewhere prophesies. It will be led by a Hitlerian dictator of whom Antiochus Epiphanes was a type.

But what about the *southern* ruler? Though the East Roman or Byzantine Empire continued until 1453, Egypt was separated from it during the Arab conquest of 639 to 642, when that nation became an integral part of the Muslim world. Thus, the caliph of Islam became the king of the South, eventually ruling from Baghdad over a huge empire—including the Holy Land. Interestingly, the struggle between North and South never really abated. The Muslims were repelled by Charlemagne's grandfather from taking control of Europe in 732. And the 11th through 13th centuries saw the Crusades, launched by European Christendom to regain the Holy Land.

From around 1250, Egypt was ruled by Mamluk sultans until the Ottoman Turks seized this land in 1517. It then remained part of the Ottoman Empire for 400 years until World War I—when it became a British protectorate. In 1937, Egypt finally gained its independence. Then, in World War II, the North-South struggle erupted yet again, when Axis forces tried to take over the whole of North Africa and the Middle East. The Allies, though, prevented them from doing so.

After the war, Egypt became a key member of the fledgling Arab League in 1945. In 1948, the Arab


League jointly attacked the newly formed state of Israel. Later, from 1958 to 1961, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and the United Arab States were merged into one political union—the United Arab Republic. And in 1965, the Arab Common Market was founded.

All of these events may merely represent the *beginnings* of the Arab "confederacy" prophesied in Psalm 83. Dedicated to wiping out modern Israel, it comprises: "the tents of Edom [including Palestinians] and the Ishmaelites [Arabs in general]; Moab [central Jordan] and the Hagarites [north Arabians]; Gebal [a mountain region of Jordan], Ammon [the environs of Amman, Jordan], and Amalek [a branch of Edomite

Christians of the First Crusade erect a cross in the entrance to Jerusalem in 1099. European Christendom and the Muslim world fought the Crusades for control of the Holy Land—Archive.

Palestinians]; Philistia [Gaza Strip] with the inhabitants of Tyre [southern Lebanon]" (vv. 5-7). But verse 8 says that "Assyria has also joined with them," indicating a future alliance with modern Germany, the leading nation of the coming European empire. (For this last identification, please refer to our free brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*.)

It seems, then, that the final king of the South will be the leader of a coming Muslim confederation, of which Egypt will certainly be a part. That doesn't necessarily mean, however, that the leader will be an Egyptian—though he may very well be. Some might think this can't be since Egypt was, in Roman times, absorbed into the kingdom of the North. However, Daniel 11:42 shows that Egypt will be defeated by the king of the North at the time of the end—proving that this southern nation is not part of the northern kingdom directly beforehand.

To find out how this incredible North-South saga will end, please read Raymond F. McNair's article on page 18: "The Coming War for the City of Peace." It takes us to the very end of this age. 

EDITORIAL

(continued from page 3)

Central and South America grow up in Roman Catholic homes. And it apparently never even dawns on most of them to question *why* they are worshiping Mary and calling her the “mother of God.” Most could not tell you *why* they observe holidays that are never mentioned in the Bible and, conversely, do not keep the very Holy Days that the Bible *does* command—and that Jesus and the original apostolic Church *did* observe.

In another article from the same edition of the *Union-Tribune*, it is reported that a theological liberal, Frank Griswold of Chicago, was just elected to lead the nation’s 2.5 million Episcopalians. The article says, “Griswold won a narrow victory over Bishop Herbert Thompson of Southern Ohio, a more conservative church leader who believes Episcopal priests should abstain from sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman. Griswold, 59, a Pennsylvania native educated at Harvard University, supports ordination of noncelibate gays and lesbians, a highly controversial issue facing Protestant denominations.” How can so many people be part of and support a supposedly Bible-based organization when its teachings so clearly fly in the face of what Scripture really says?

What about you? Would you back the candidacy of a church leader who wants active male and female homosexuals ordained into the ministry of Jesus Christ? Have this man and his followers completely forgotten the very clear New Testament teachings against homosexuality? “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor *homosexuals*, nor *sodomites*... will inherit the Kingdom of God”! (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Why do *you* believe the things that you do? Have you carefully, objectively researched and PROVED your religious beliefs? Are you *sure* that they come out of the Bible—the inspired revelation from God to man? Or did they come out of the vain imaginations of misguided people—CONTRARY to the Word of God?

The Almighty tells us time and again NOT to put our trust in men! Notice God’s inspired warning delivered by the Prophet Jeremiah: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD” (Jer. 17:5). Later in this same passage, Jeremiah warns us to beware man’s duplicitous nature: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings” (vv. 9-10).

In the New Testament, God commands us to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21 KJV). Therefore, *especially* in matters of religion that involve our ETERNAL LIVES, we should definitely “prove” or “test” every idea, concept and doctrine that is presented to us by man—whose very nature is fallible. **Do NOT just passively accept the doctrines and religious concepts you grew up with.** PROVE to your own satisfaction the very real existence and active power of the Great God. PROVE that the Bible is His inspired Word, His revelation to mankind of basic knowledge and spiritual principles. Indeed, it is God’s *instruction manual* to mankind, teaching us the real PURPOSE of life and how to FULFILL that great purpose! Then PROVE any religious idea or doctrine by really STUDYING it *in the Bible*. Check up to see if misguided men “read” this idea *into* the Bible, or if it is what the Bible actually teaches.

Through our *World Ahead* television and radio programs, and in the pages of the *World Ahead* magazine and *all* of our literature, we urge you to do just that. We encourage you to genuinely STUDY your Bible as never before to find out *what it really says!* We also urge you to pray earnestly for spiritual *understanding* and *guidance* from God so you will learn His will!

You don’t have to be “fooled” anymore by half-baked lies and deceptions. *Study* the Book! For, as Jesus said in John 8:31-32, “**if you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**”

