

Virtual Christian Magazine
Hope And Encouragement For The Real World

“And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”—Matthew 24:22

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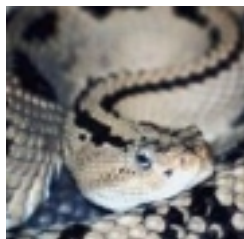


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World War II: A View From Underground

By Len Nymeyer

My family experienced the horrors of war firsthand as members of the Dutch resistance.



I WAS ONLY 12, AND I WAS SCARED. I remember dodging bullets and hiding behind trees all the way home to keep from being killed by the German SS soldiers...

Our lives had changed drastically when the Nazis occupied Holland during World War II.

Invasion!



For years Adolf Hitler had been building up the German war machine, and the world stood by. He believed that the white Aryan race was superior to all other races and planned to rid the world of Jews. He made sure the Hitler Youth were thoroughly indoctrinated with his philosophy.

The Jews tried to get out of Germany, but no other country opened their doors. Then Germany marched into Austria in 1938. Still the other countries did nothing, just wanting peace with Hitler. Next Germany took Czechoslovakia and then Poland, and World War II began. In May of 1940 they marched into the Netherlands where I lived with my parents and five brothers and five sisters.

My oldest brother and my brother-in-law were in the Dutch army, and they fought bravely against overwhelming odds. Holland's little army was nothing against the Nazis.

The German Luftwaffe (air force) destroyed Rotterdam, the busiest harbor in Western Europe, killing 10,000 people in one day! Holland had no choice but to surrender after four days.

I can still see in my mind's eye the seemingly endless columns of German tanks and trucks and horses and soldiers streaming into the country. I can still hear the propaganda speeches Adolf Hitler shouted over the radio. The Germans scrambled all incoming radio waves from free England.



Everything was taken for the German army. Store shelves were empty, and people in the big cities were slowly starving. Can you imagine your own countrymen coming to your door, hungry and willing to give anything just to get some food so they can stay alive a little bit longer?

War changes people. In some, it brings out the worst; in others, the best. Some would betray their neighbor to benefit from it and get favors from the enemy, while others would give their lives to help their fellow human beings.

The underground

My family was very involved in the resistance movement or, as we called it, the underground. My dad and four older brothers were instrumental in rescuing Allied pilots shot down over Holland. They gave them civilian clothes, buried their uniforms and parachutes and helped them back to England to do it all over again!

We listened to coded messages on the radio and relayed them to the underground. Listening to anything but the German-controlled station was strictly forbidden. We were risking an automatic death penalty—a bullet to the back of the head—no trial.



Everyone over 16 had to carry an ID card, but the Jews had to wear a big yellow Star of David so they could be easily identified. Later, all the Jews were rounded up and shipped to death camps. Most of them never came back. My family helped many Jews hide and provided them food and a safe place to stay.

We could hear the bullets

One time one of my brothers and I had to bring supplies to my older brothers, who were away from home in hiding. It had to be done in the dark so no one would follow us. But the curfew was 8 p.m., and we were late coming back. We came across a German patrol, and they shouted for us to stop.

We started running, and they started shooting! We could hear the bullets slam into the big oak trees as we were running from one tree to the next. My brother, who was five years older, came home first. Can you imagine what my dad said to him for leaving his little brother behind!

I will never forget

I will never forget the night of July 8, 1944. Someone knocked on my dad's window and said, "The Germans are on the prowl!" Immediately my brothers disappeared into the many hiding places on our farm.

Shortly after midnight, our house was surrounded by SS troops, and they started banging on the door. Several officers stormed in and searched and ransacked our house and barns.

One young officer, barely out of his teens, put a revolver to my dad's chest and shouted, "Where is your son John?" My dad said, "I don't know," so the officer smacked him in the face with the butt of his rifle and knocked out all his front teeth. Every time my dad said, "I don't know," they beat him again. They told my mom to go back to bed and took my dad to prison.

One young officer, barely out of his teens, put a revolver to my dad's chest and shouted, "Where is your son John?"

Ben sent to a concentration camp

John, the one they came for, was sound asleep under the barn floor and never heard a thing, even though they searched the barn. But they did find my oldest brother, Ben, who along with all my other brothers was on their most-wanted list. Ben's wife had just had their first baby five weeks earlier.

Ben was sent to Westerbork, a concentration camp just north of our city. His wife was allowed to see him just before he was shipped out from there, and he looked so awful and beaten up that she hardly recognized him. She was never allowed to visit him again and did not know where they had sent him.



We learned later that he was shipped off to a concentration camp in Germany under the most horrible conditions of overcrowding, cold, starvation, sickness and death. When someone died, and many of them did, the others fought over his flea-infested blanket.

Since Ben was a carpenter, he was sometimes sent out on a work detail to help repair homes that were damaged by the nightly bombing raids by Allied planes. Sometimes German citizens would secretly hand him a piece of bread, which helped him survive.

He told us later that he prayed for death many a time, even though he was encouraging others to never give up hope.



He escaped three times, and three times he was recaptured. The last time they stripped him naked and threw him in a concrete bunker for three days with no light, no food and no heat in the middle of the winter of 1945. Yet he survived! He came back home when the Allied armies liberated the camp. He was 28 years old and looked like a skeleton at 87 pounds! But he survived.

Meanwhile, back home...

Meanwhile, they had kept my dad overnight and beat him to a pulp. Then...someone made a mistake and set him free! He limped the three miles home and we hardly recognized him. His face was swollen and bloody. He was covered with dirt and was black and blue all over his body.

The next day he was right back at it again! I thought my dad was a hero!

Hitler was now losing the war. The Nazis became more vicious. They no longer put wanted men in prison. One of my brother's best friends was caught and executed on the spot. The principal and a teacher from our local high school were shot for helping and hiding Jews. They each left a wife and little children.

In one small town, all the men over 18 were rounded up and executed as retaliation for a German soldier who was killed by the underground.

The long end

The Allies invaded Normandy June 6, 1944. We thought we would be free in a couple of days! In September they were in the south of Holland, only a hundred miles away! But Hitler was not giving up. He threw all he had against the Allied armies in the middle of Holland and stopped them dead in their tracks at the Rhine River for six months.

Finally, on April 11, 1945, the Canadian army liberated our city of Hoogeveen, and Germany surrendered unconditionally on May 10.



What have we learned?

Do you think man has learned anything from all this?

There is no doubt that man has searched for peace since the beginning of time, but so far it has all been an illusion.

I have seen what happens in war, and I've tried to tell you a little bit about it. In war, nobody wins. Ask those who have lost loved ones and have experienced the pain and the suffering and the heartache that never goes away.

So, will there ever be peace?

God tells us that the Prince of Peace will return to this earth and bring real peace (Isaiah 9:6; 2:4). Humanity will no longer learn the way of war, but will learn the way of peace. Then "all your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13)!

God speed that day!

For more about how real peace will come, see "The Prince of Peace" from our sister magazine *The Good News* at <http://gnmagazine.org/issues/gn42/princepeace.htm>.

War to End All Wars

By Arthur Morris

Mankind has yet to discover the true road map to lasting peace.



IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL, CLEAR SUNNY DAY as we stood on a hill looking out over a small green valley in southeastern Ohio. The flag-draped casket silently spoke of the patriotism of the man inside, and the 21-gun salute, followed by the bugle sounding "Taps," echoed the farewell of his comrades in arms to the gallant one now gone. The color guard then folded the flag into a tight triangle and presented it to the next of kin.

This veteran had volunteered in his late teens to fight in the great dream of the “war to end all wars,” World War I, some 57 years before. The enemy was defeated and an armistice was signed on Nov. 11, 1918. (This year marks the 90th anniversary of that historic occasion.)

As we laid my father to rest there in 1975, I couldn't help thinking how disappointed he must have felt deep down throughout his life that the war they fought and won didn't end all wars. Some 20 years later, war was again raging in Europe in the very area in which he had fought. He came close to having to go and do it all over again in 1941.

I couldn't help thinking how disappointed he must have felt... that the war they fought and won didn't end all wars.

Since Armistice Day in 1918 every generation of Americans has had its war to live through. World War II was far worse than World War I. Then came the Korean War in the early 1950s, then the Vietnam War throughout the '60s and lasting until 1975. Next came the Gulf War in 1990-91 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that continue today.

In all but the last three, American young men were drafted to risk, and many times lose, their lives in places that they had never heard of before—like Pork Chop Hill in Korea or the jungles of Vietnam.

The name of the day has now been changed from Armistice Day to Veteran's Day to include and honor all those who fought in all the wars since the “war to end all wars.” Their patriotism and sacrifice are admirable.

The source of war

The great lesson for us and for the entire world to learn is that as long as mankind is influenced by Satan, there will always be wars. The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write: “The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace” (Isaiah 59:8).



Jeremiah later recorded God's words: “For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 8:11).

In the New Testament, the apostle James explained where wars come from: “Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” (James 4:1-4).

As long as mankind is influenced by Satan, there will always be wars. One would think that mankind would just learn from these principles and seek peace through repentance. But apart from God's Spirit, mankind cannot resist these temptations of Satan. On the world scene we see petty dictators lusting for nuclear weapons and the U.S. Congress beset with scandals of lusts of all kinds.

Satan is the perpetrator of these sins through his temptations and the vulnerability of human nature. Until he is removed from the scene, individual, local and world conflicts will grow to a crescendo until all flesh would be destroyed if Christ didn't intervene (Matthew 24:22). When Satan is removed, the wars will cease.

A wonderful world without war

The apostle John was inspired to write about this future event: "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:1-3).

At that time there will be peace for 1,000 years. But as soon as Satan is loosed, war will resume again for a short time.

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:7-10; for further explanation of this prophecy, see "Beyond the Millennium" from our free booklet [You Can Understand Bible Prophecy](#)).

At this time the world will experience the real "war to end all wars" because Satan will be removed forever.

I know my father and mother, like all the rest of mankind unaware of God's truth, never understood why people could not live together in peace in a world where genocide, torture, murder, suffering, starvation and disease are no more. Man first has to realize that he cannot rule correctly apart from God. Then God will show the way to peace.



Micah envisioned that wonderful time ahead: "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 anymore” (Micah 4:1-3).

What a glorious time that will be, when we all can be there, along with all those who fought and those who gave their lives in war, to see the cause of wars removed forever! It will be a world where no one will learn the science of war anymore, and where there'll be no more 21-gun salutes to memorialize our war dead. The mournful sound of “Taps” at military funerals will be relegated to history in a world where peace and love will be the supreme way of life forever.

Recommended reading

To learn more about this wonderful world tomorrow when war will be a distant memory, request our free booklet [You Can Understand Bible Prophecy](#).

What Do You Mean: Wise and Harmless?

By John McClain

Wolves? Snakes? Doves? What was Jesus trying to tell us?



WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT HIGH-RISK JOBS, what comes to mind? How about bull riders, stuntmen, race car drivers, test pilots and soldiers? Do you think of preachers or evangelists as being exposed to high risks? Jesus did. When He sent His disciples out to preach the gospel, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons, He told them that it would be dangerous work.

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matthew 10:16, first part). One modern version reads, “Stay alert. This is hazardous work I’m assigning you. You’re going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack” (The Message). That sounds pretty risky to me.

Do you think of preachers or evangelists as being exposed to high risks?

Jesus also gave the 12 disciples advice about what to do in this hazardous situation. This is good advice for each of us as we go through our daily lives: “Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (last part of verse 16).

Have you ever wondered what that meant?

Wise and harmless?

How are serpents wise and how are doves harmless? Let’s examine some key word meanings and the most common traits of these two creatures to answer these questions.

Can we do it the other way and be as wise as doves and harmless as serpents?

Can we be just one and not the other, or do we need to be both wise *and* harmless? Can we do it the other way and be as wise as doves and harmless as serpents?

We all know many snake stories, and we know many of their unpleasant traits. There are many ways we do *not* want to be like serpents—but we do want to copy their wisdom!

How are serpents wise?

To be wise means to be marked by understanding of people and situations, to have keen and unusual discernment, and a capacity for sound judgment in dealing with people and situations. Prudent would also be an appropriate synonym.

To discern means to detect with the eyes and with senses *other* than vision. It also means to read character or motives. We would all do well to have this ability. In place of “wise,” other translations use “shrewd” and “wary.” Shrewd means to be practical and to be given to an artful way of dealing with situations and people. To be wary is to use watchful prudence in detecting and escaping danger.



Now consider several facts from snake experts.

Snakes are pros at escaping. Their most common form of self-protection is avoidance. A snake’s first line of defense is to escape to safety among rocks or vegetation. Snakes have to be alert to dangers. Most snakes are not aggressive. Snakes do not want to attack humans. Snakes bite humans only in self-defense. They would rather not confront us.

Remember, a synonym for wise is prudent. Do these facts bring any scriptures to mind? Let’s read Proverbs 27:12 in the New International Version: “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but

the simple keep going and suffer for it.” Another verse earlier in Proverbs mentions both wisdom and prudence: “The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways” (14:8, NIV).

So it seems that we can be as wise as serpents by perceiving and avoiding danger and escaping from it!

Our dove experience

Four years ago we put up two large hanging baskets of geraniums on our front porch, with three plants in each basket. Within three days, unknown to me, a dove had nested in one of them. So when I came with the long-necked watering can, watering the first basket was uneventful. But when I poked the long neck of the watering can into the second basket, I startled the nesting dove, which promptly left with a great flutter of wings.



I was just as startled as she was, since I had not seen her amidst the foliage. She did not attack me or harm me. Her quick departure only startled me such that water went everywhere as I jumped back.

We developed a nice working relationship until her chicks flew from the nest. *She watched me cautiously* but allowed me to water the roots of the flowers, and I was very careful not to poke her again. And you know what? That hanging basket bloomed much better than the other one. She truly was harmless and inoffensive.

To be harmless is to lack the capacity to injure or to be free from inflicting physical or mental damage. Other translations use “innocent” or “inoffensive” instead of “harmless” for this verse. Innocent means to be harmless in effect or intention. Inoffensive means to be giving no provocation.

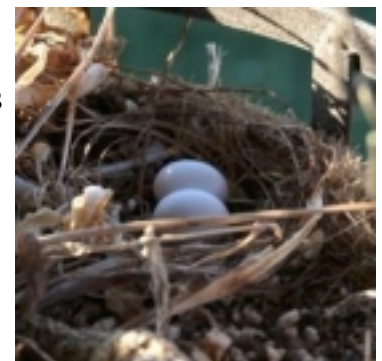
Doves aren’t referred to as the birds of peace for nothing. Their temperament is calm and their disposition is sweet. Doves do not bite. At most they might slap you with a wing if they are guarding the nest or do not want to be picked up. Doves really are harmless.

Don’t get these instructions backward!

We want to get this in the right order—do not be wise as doves and harmless as serpents! Doves are not known for being wise, and serpents are not known for being harmless.

Doves are not the sharpest knives in the drawer. Take, for example, their nesting habits: They either do not build nests or build them very poorly. They may even lay their eggs on a windowsill!

Snakes have a reputation of being harmful, even though few serpents



are truly deadly. Poisonous venom is found in only 1 percent of the serpent population, delivered by biting or spitting. Other harmful serpents are constrictors like anacondas, boas and pythons. And the Bible records the example of the most harmful serpent of all—Satan the devil (Genesis 3:1-5; Revelation 12:9).

We need to heed Jesus' instruction to His disciples: "Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Detect and avoid danger, while giving no provocation or offense. Be wise and harmless—always.

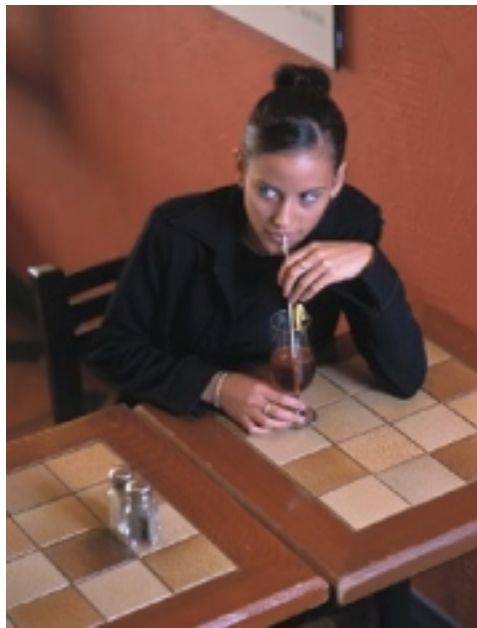
When taken together, these instructions are a wonderful and balanced package of prudence and purity.

For further reading on this subject, see the article "Wise Advice for Wise Decisions" from our sister magazine *The Good News*, on the Web at <http://gvmagazine.org/issues/gn29/wisedecision.htm>.

The Single Malady

By Carol Taylor

As a single, I was suffering from a sickness I didn't recognize, but I found a solution in Scripture that gave me true satisfaction and eventually a soul mate!



WHEN I WAS SINGLE, I suffered from a malady that made my life miserable. If you are single, I wonder if you ever suffer from this disease? Are you worried that you might never find a mate? Are you discouraged that your congregation has too few singles to choose from? Do you date outside the faith because there is nobody for you inside the Church? Do you feel you are sort of wasting your time getting to know members who are not potential mates?

These were some of the symptoms of my own malady. I could go on describing how I judged every function's potential to be a success or failure solely on whether there were any "interesting" singles there. I could tell you how I would look around any group and feel immediately depressed when I could not spot any singles I thought were attractive or even in my age bracket. Sound familiar?

Eventually I discovered that the disease, of which these are all symptoms, is simple self-centeredness—and I had a nice large dose of it! If being completely consumed with myself had been the key to happiness, I would have been extremely happy. But, alas, selfishness has one infallible end: "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there" (James 3:16).

Eventually I discovered that the disease, of which these are all symptoms, is simple self-centeredness—and I had a nice large dose of it!



Do you envy married people or other singles who seem more "marriageable" than you? Are you confused about how to find a mate and what God wants of you as a single person? Do you feel like you just keep going in circles, beating your head against the wall in the whole dating scene? If so, then I rest James' case! Self-seeking could be the problem, as it was for me.

Some have a wholly mistaken idea that you cannot grow much or contribute much or be balanced or truly accepted unless and until you are married. Yet Paul and Christ and many other great Christian men and women were not married for all or most of their lives. And there are many single people in God's Church who lead exemplary lives and are happy and fulfilled.

The solution

These happy singles have undoubtedly found the solution to the problem of self-seeking, which Paul describes in Philippians 2:4, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

When you look out for the interests of others and get your mind off yourself, all kinds of wonderful things can happen.

What if—instead of trying so hard to find a mate for yourself—you tried to help other singles meet their potential mates? What if—instead of getting discouraged because there is no one you want to date in your congregation—you brought singles together for fun and fellowship so they would not feel so lonely? What if you stopped always thinking about fulfilling your own dreams and thought more about helping others fulfill theirs?

When you look out for the interests of others and get your mind off yourself, all kinds of wonderful things can happen. There is no greater joy than in giving—as God Himself attests (Acts 20:35). So when we stop trying to get for ourselves and focus on others' success and happiness, we will be happier—guaranteed.

And if your motives for approaching singles of the opposite sex are truly altruistic, you will probably be more confident and welcomed by them. Haven't you men found many a single woman defensive when you try to talk to her? Is it possible that your "hidden" motives for talking to her are not all that hidden? If you approach a single because you are trying to get people together as a group, he or she may be much more receptive. You may also find you have much more confidence when you are trying to help others.



And if you want to be married one day, why not work on the absolutely essential trait of selflessness now? All singles can grow in this area in the same way married people do by looking out for the interests of others instead of just themselves. And you will be far more "eligible" if you develop this trait as a single person, because all married people must learn to put another person's needs before their own or their marriage will not succeed.

Instead of dating

Do you know singles who do not like to date? Provide a safe place for them to socialize—a group-oriented setting where everyone can just be friends. Do you know singles who find meeting people awkward? Ask them to join a group outing and bring along some of the singles they would like to get to know. Open your home for movie nights or potlucks or have small dinner parties where you can help singles meet those who they might not otherwise meet. Make it your job to bring people out; to help them feel comfortable; to promote friendship and friendly discussions.

Traditional dating is too often counterproductive to friendship and often leaves a trail of heartache and grief, especially if it has led to any kind of intimacy with no commitment.

As an aside, many singles do not like large singles' activities. Wrong or right, they may see them as "meat markets" or sizing up contests. However, they might like smaller, handpicked dinner parties or outings. Everyone does not have to be a part of everything. Instead of criticizing some for not joining in, create different opportunities for all.

There is another benefit of helping others in this way. It is quite possible that you could get to know someone on a deeper level that you did not think you would be interested in and find he or she is your soul mate. This should not be your goal in helping others, but it does happen! I know, because it happened to me! I began getting groups together simply to have something to do on Friday and Saturday evenings and, in time, I found the love of my life! My husband and I had a very solid bond of friendship long before we ever dated one-on-one. It led to love and a very happy marriage.



Traditional one-on-one dating as this world has practiced it is too often counterproductive to friendship and often leaves a trail of heartache and grief, especially if it has led to any kind of intimacy with no commitment. Dating one-on-one is a perfect setup for rushing into romance and intimacy without any previous bond or friendship; most people would not actually treat good friends the way they do “dates”!

Instead of feeling sorry for yourself that you are not married or dismayed because God has not sent your soul mate to you, get proactive and try to help others fulfill their dreams. I guarantee you that the one who will benefit the most will be you! “If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you” (Luke 6:38, New Living Translation).

Recommended reading

“Dating Dos and Don’ts” from the booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* has helpful information for singles of any age. [Read it](#) or [request a copy](#).

Greater Than Gold

By Ken Reid

Throughout the ages, gold has had an incredible pulling power. In 1855, it called men across continents and oceans to the gold fields of Otago, New Zealand. Is it possible that there exists something more powerful than gold?



THERE CAN BE FEW PLACES ON EARTH that have so many contrasts of scenery jam-packed into such a small area as the South Island of New Zealand. Whether you are a fan of snowcapped mountain peaks, rolling country plains, lakes or glaciers, God seems to have created this garden to emphasize His imagination.

Thousands of overseas visitors from far and wide pass through every year to explore this wonderland designed and created by God.

Gold rush!

In 1855, a different influx of visitors took place. They also came from far and wide, yet the scenery was the last thing on their minds. Their target was the newly discovered gold fields of Otago. Gold miners who had gained experience in California and in Ballarat, Australia, found themselves mixed in the surge toward this remote area alongside British miners and around 5,000 Chinese men who had left their wives and families behind. So many different people, but all with the same goal—to improve their position and gain a better standard of life.



Yet there is something more important than gold.

Amazingly, there is something to be sought more than gold.

Skippers Canyon near Queenstown, New Zealand, was one of the more popular gold mines. The road winds around the cliff edge, threading its way deep into the canyon through rugged yet beautiful scenery. It must have been a struggle to build such a road by hand in such a remote area. The workers were obviously strengthened by the enormous pulling power of gold.

Yet there is something even more powerful than gold.

Toward the end of this narrow road lies a small graveyard where the journey for some of the miners came to an end. Poor living conditions brought fatal disease; others died because of accidents, while squabbles in lonely places led to murders. Many headstones show a single Chinese name—the name of someone who traveled so far to fulfill a dream and make a fortune in the hope of returning home and providing his family with a better way of life.

Gold mines of wisdom

Amazingly, there is something to be sought more than gold. While gold is precious, wisdom is more so (Proverbs 16:16). It is even free for the asking (James 1:5). Solomon pleased God when he asked for wisdom (1 Kings 3:7-13). His counsel was sought from far and wide (1 Kings 10:1-7), and his wisdom was shared to the benefit of others.



Wisdom is linked to every action we may take (Proverbs 1:2-7). Only God has all the answers to the many situations we are involved in, all of which He is happy to pass on. Time and again God underlines wisdom as the treasure to dig for. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are gold mines of treasure where we are guaranteed to strike it rich.

Taught wisdom through trials

When wisdom is learned by study and revelation, it will be tested through trials to determine if it has taken root. Wisdom needs to be cemented into place through experience. We are also taught wisdom through trials, and even though wisdom is freely given, God doesn't send it by courier post or in a box to be used at some appropriate time. If He did, wisdom wouldn't stick; it would have no base to work from.

Trials are necessary to clear out the dross within us so wisdom can begin to shine in all our actions.

When we ask for wisdom, we can expect trials because God needs to clear the way to install wisdom deep inside our authentic selves. Just as gold cannot shine until it is heated and refined to remove the dross (impurities), so trials are necessary to clear out the dross within us so wisdom can begin to shine in all our actions. Wisdom can then be called on at any given moment; indeed, it needs to be used constantly because the more we use it, the more it multiplies (Proverbs 3:14, New International Version). Wisdom flourishes through application.



So the beginning of wisdom is to fear God and to have an understanding and listening heart. Wisdom will then begin to make inroads when we have given up all rights to ourselves. Pride and arrogance have no place at the same table with wisdom because wisdom needs to be protected against contamination (Proverbs 8:13).

Sometimes we may have a situation where it is within the law to take a certain course of action, yet it may not be prudent to do so. This is when wisdom needs to call on discernment to lend a hand. Every situation needs to be carefully assessed according to its own merits. Wisdom knows the right time and the right circumstances to apply the right principle to the right person.

The gold miners in Skippers Canyon went through hardship to achieve their prize. We, too, need to go through trials; however, we also know God is watching over us and taking notes (1 Peter 4:17). When we struggle in a trial and are hurting, remember that God is massaging the heart to create a place for wisdom to fit into its perfect slot. The same God who created the wonderland of the South Island, who created the precious metal of gold, also created wisdom; this same wisdom He is willing to share, if we are willing to seek.

The same God who created the wonderland of the South Island, who created the precious metal of gold, also created wisdom...

Then we will shine, not like gold, but eventually like the brightness of the firmament in heaven (Daniel 12:3).

Recommended reading

For more information about the wisdom found in the Proverbs, see the Bible Reading Program beginning with [Aug. 30, 2006](http://vcmagazine.org/brp), available at <http://ucg.org/brp>.

The Wonderful World Beyond Today! Part 2: Priority #1—Human Survival!

By Mike Bennett

What has brought humanity to the brink of extinction, and what can—what will—be done to save us?



OUR NEWS REPORTS—and the world’s top-secret intelligence reports probably even more so—reflect a dangerous world. Dozens of hot spots seem ready to explode into wider violence. Weapons of mass destruction are falling into the hands of despots and terrorist groups. Tensions between races, nations and groups of nations seem to be continually increasing.



But what would an outsider see? What if today’s world were part of a science fiction story? What would a visitor from the stars see? All the same problems, of course, but perhaps a different perspective would give a chance for the visitor to see more clearly the patterns of human behavior that have led to these predicaments.

Consider this description of our time that comes from a perspective beyond the human sphere:

“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” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

The apostle Paul, 2,000 years in advance, nailed this list of many of the causes of humanity's ills. God's Spirit showed clearly the things we are doing that are making our world more dangerous by the minute.

“No one would survive”

Jesus Christ's disciples knew even then that the world was getting worse and worse, and would finally reach a point where these and other evils would crescendo to a final climax. Jesus had told them He would return to begin a new age of peace. So they asked this Man (who they knew was also God in the flesh), “When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3, New International Version).

Jesus Christ identified the time of His return as a time when human extinction was possible. But He promised He wouldn't let that happen!

Jesus' answer was breathtaking in its scope, but one phrase surely caught their ears. “For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, *no one would survive*, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22, NIV).

The future of humanity was at stake! Jesus Christ identified the time of His return as a time when human extinction was possible. But He promised He wouldn't let that happen!

His feet will stand...

Jesus Christ will literally return to this earth! In the same way the disciples saw Christ ascend into the clouds after His resurrection, He will return through the clouds to this earth, this time with power and great glory (Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:30).

That's the biggest news story in history—especially since if He did not come, human history would end.

That's the biggest news story in history—especially since if He did not come, human history would end. Mankind continues to find more ways that we can obliterate every man, woman and child off the face of the earth.

Biblical prophecy describes in detail the time of great distress, or tribulation, that will envelope the earth. Wars, disasters, famines and disease epidemics will decimate the population.

Finally, when the nations of the world gather for battle at a place called Armageddon (Revelation 16:14, 16), Christ must swiftly intervene before it is too late. Sadly, the nations will not recognize or welcome their Savior, but will fight Him.



“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” (Zechariah 14:3-4).

The battle will be over swiftly, ending the painful age of human misrule. Finally, a new day will dawn—a day fresh with the promise of peace and fulfillment, of joy and purpose, of happiness and accomplishment. The nightmares of history will fade, and the dreams of mankind will begin to come to life.

The biggest news story in history: CHRIST RETURNS!

In summary, consider the facts of this incredible news story.

Who: Jesus Christ, who came the first time to pay the penalty for our sins to become our Savior, returns to put an end to sin as our King (Revelation 11:15)!

What: Christ puts an end to human misrule and sets up the long-promised Kingdom of God (Daniel 2:44).

When: In the nick of time before humanity destroys itself (Matthew 24:22). Christ gave signs to identify the end time, but did not reveal the “day and hour” (Matthew 24:36).

Where: Starting with Jerusalem, this Kingdom will spread over the whole earth (Zechariah 14:3-4; Acts 1:11-12; Matthew 5:5; Revelation 5:10; Daniel 2:35).

Why: Christ returns because it is part of God’s plan to show love for everyone, to bring many children to glory (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9; Hebrews 2:10).

How: God’s laws—the way He designed the universe to work—will be taught and will bring real peace and prosperity, but most of all a loving family relationship, to all the world (Isaiah 2:2-4).

“Your Kingdom come!”

The time after Christ’s return will be wonderful beyond imagination! No wonder Christians have always prayed “Your Kingdom come!” At the end of the book, Jesus Christ tells us, “Surely I am coming quickly.” And we fervently respond with the apostle John, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

The events leading up to Christ’s return are described in detail in several of our brochures. For more information, download or request your free copies of [The Middle East in Bible Prophecy](#), [Are We Living in the Time of the End?](#) and [The Book of Revelation Unveiled](#).