**How to Better Watch World Events**

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Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong reported to a congress of leading ministers of God's Church earlier this year that world conditions are once again fast accelerating, indicating, he said, that we are in "the very last of the last days."
   How, then, can we as lay members get a better grasp of this fast-paced world of ours? What events and trends in the world are of significance and hence bear our watching?
   Most importantly, for the purposes of this article, which news sources are most beneficial and reliable? What's the best way to judge the value of a newspaper? What about television news? And what is the overall approach of the news media in analyzing current events?

**The correct perspective**

   First of all, when studying world: events from the viewpoint of Bible prophecy, one must know what to look for. We have not been left without guideposts in this vital area.
   Mr. Armstrong has stressed repeatedly that the 24th chapter of Matthew constitutes one of the most important prophetic passages in the New Testament. This chapter details the signs of Christ's Second Coming and the end of this age.
   Hallmarks of the end time, we have been taught, would be religious deception (verses 4-5, 11), "wars and rumours of wars" (verse 6), famines, pestilences, earthquakes (verse 7) and religious persecution and martyrdom for some (verse 9).
   Through it all, the true Gospel of God would be proclaimed with ever increasing power till — before the end — it would have a powerful impact upon all nations (verse 14).
   We need not go into detail at this point to show how these prophesied end time conditions grip this world right now.
   The Plain Truth magazine continually devotes considerable space to these very trends.
   In addition to focusing our attention on the broad outline of Matthew 24, we have been instructed to watch events in Europe (especially Germany and the Common Market), the Middle East (especially Jerusalem) and the growing influence of the Papacy.
   Plummeting morals, the decay of family life and environmental destruction show we are near the end of man's profligate ways.

**Identity of America, Britain**

   There is another extremely important area that opens our eyes to what to look for.
   Mr. Armstrong has remarked on a number of occasions recently that more preachers are preaching prophecy now. But they all lack the key, he says, to unlock the understanding of Bible prophecy. This key is the identity of the United States and the British people today.
   This understanding is so vital in comprehending world events today that without it we are left prophetically rudderless.
   But with this understanding, we can readily grasp the portent behind one of the single most significant trends in the world over the past two decades — the decline of American and British power and prestige and the corresponding rise in the military might of the Soviet Union.
   This major trend affects nearly everything in the world today, from the changed power relationships in the Middle East to chaos in the global economic structure to the need for Europe to unite.

**Approach of news media**

   No news analysts, aside from those in the Church of God, are going to look at the world from the above perspectives of Bible prophecy.
   But some analysts are definitely better than others in helping us watch world events. Such analysts belong to what has been called the realistic school of international relations.
   Generally speaking, such realists look at the world the way it really is. They are not blinded to political and moral evils in this world. They can plainly see the various power struggles among the nations, the principal one being the East-West ideological conflict centered in Moscow and Washington.
   They believe that major aggressive powers, such as the Soviet Union, act the way they do because of historical precedence and national character and are not likely to "change their spots" and moderate their policies.
   Realists understand that in the world today — which we know is not God's world — lofty, abstract principles such as "social justice" and "human rights" are unattainable, even if all men and nations knew what these concepts really meant. To the realist, the "lesser evil" is preferable to some human-defined absolute "good."
   The second broad approach toward the world and society, taken by many political leaders and the majority of news analysts of the popular press of the Western world, is the idealistic. also called the utopian or liberal. approach.
   Basically speaking, the idealistic school of thought holds that human nature is inherently good and has "infinite malleability."
   An outgrowth of humanism, this philosophical approach believes man has the power to make society better and better according to constantly changing (supposedly improving) human standards. Former President Jimmy Carter, for example, was said to believe in the "essential perfectibility" of human nature (source: First Line Report. a CBS radio program, Jan. 22, 1980).
   Regarding the moral basis of society, the idealistic or liberal school rests on a shifting ground. According to this school, new knowledge can easily upset so-called traditional values. The results of this "enlightened" approach, cut off from biblically based or influenced tradition, are all too obvious: the New Morality, teenage sex, "living together," feminism and the drive to "de-sex" society — even the Bible.
   Concerning the international arena, the idealistic viewpoint prefers a "globalist" approach to one concerned about national interests. Ideological conflicts are trivialized; terms such as "balance of power" or "struggle for power" are treated as relics of the past.
   The vast differences separating the world's peoples in matters of history, religion, race, morality and political and economic development are minimized. The role of the United Nations — the supposed "conscience of mankind" — is elevated beyond its importance and the hostility generated there is played down.

**Choosing a newspaper**

   Knowing the two broad approaches to current events analysis should help us better select from the news sources available to us.
   For some of our brethren, of course, this is rather difficult, especially if they live in more closed societies. In these instances, choices of news sources are limited. Newspapers, radio and television are often either government controlled or heavily supervised to reflect official government positions.
   In pluralistic Western societies, on the other hand, a wider selection of newspapers, magazines and electronic media is available.
   In Britain and other countries in Europe, entire newspapers generally reflect a certain philosophy. The Daily Telegraph. for example – an excellent news source for the Work's News Bureau — is conservative in tone, in both presentation of news and commentary. The Guardian. On the other hand, reflects a definite left-of-center, politically pro-Labor Party viewpoint.
   The Times of London is pretty much in the middle of the road. The Times is widely regarded as the best written, most informative newspaper in the English language.
   Throughout Europe, another excellent news source is the International Herald Tribune. an American style newspaper jointly operated by the New York Times and the Washington Post.
   For their own experience, brethren in the United States should scan copies of the Times of London or the Daily Telegraph in their nearest big city local library, if for no other reason but to realize what they are missing on a daily basis in their local newspapers. Reading the Times each day is an education.
   Choosing a newspaper in the United States presents more of a problem. The United States does not have "national newspapers" as does Britain, with the exception of the small-circulation Christian Science Monitor (an excellent source of world and national news) and the specialized Wall Street Journal.
   Americans are limited to local or regional newspapers, and far fewer of them exist now than before the advent of television. Television and nightly television news have all but destroyed the afternoon newspaper in America. Many cities are now one newspaper towns.
   When a choice between one or more newspapers is available, the prime consideration in deciding which paper to subscribe to should revolve around the stable of columnists who appear on the newspaper's editorial-opinion pages.
   Newspapers of the same size will vary little concerning the hard news of the day. Most generally subscribe to one or more newswires (such as Associated Press or United Press International) plus some supplemental or feature news services. The difference will usually show up on the opinion page. Notice how many syndicated realist columnists appear regularly.
   Who are some journalists of the realist school? Here are a few notable names in the United States to watch for: William Safire, George F. Will, the team of Evans and Novak, Patrick J. Buchanan, James J. Kilpatrick, Norman Podhoretz, Phyllis Schlafly and Georgie Ann Geyer.
   We may not agree with everything these people write, but more often than not they present topics worth reading from a sensible perspective.
   Attention should be drawn to another journalist who brings a great deal of knowledge, historical background and personal experience to his columns. This gentleman is Joseph C. Harsch of The Christian Science Monitor.

**Beneficial magazines**

   It also helps, one's budget permitting, to read a weekly newsmagazine in addition to a newspaper.
   The magazine U.S. News & World Report has always provided the News Bureau with important information every week. U.S. News concentrates on essential facts and figures, with extremely helpful and readily understandable charts and graphs.
   Regarding Time and Newsweek, personal preference is the key. These magazines are helpful in covering major stories in depth.
   Time is best for reporting on the Papacy. Newsweek's format emphasizes more columns, separating, as its editors once advertised, "fact from opinion."
   It has been our experience in the News Bureau that the various international editions of these two weeklies are in some respects superior to the North American versions. Extraneous material of interest only to North America is removed with material pertinent to the European, Australasian and other editorial regions substituted.
   These two news sources can be helpful to brethren in parts of the world where other English-language news sources are not readily available. The overall slant, of course, remains American and liberal, especially in Time.
   Unfamiliar to many Americans but respected around the world is Britain's Economist, probably the most comprehensive newsweekly published anywhere, usually containing in every issue important news items that escape American eyes.
   Business Week is another fine publication with a good "International Outlook" section on world affairs and excellent occasional in-depth reports. However, as a business magazine, it ranks below the fortnightly Fortune.
   It is also important to be aware of several excellent "thinking-piece'; periodicals that are available, especially in North America.
   One such supplemental news source worth mentioning is Commentary, a monthly published by the American Jewish Committee. Commentary is one of the most influential journals in America today.
   Regarding other supplemental news sources, Harper's periodically has articles of considerable social import. And the weekly National Review, while essentially political in tone, often has articles of broad social significance.
   A person may not wish to subscribe to any of the magazines mentioned above. But I would recommend that brethren scan the selection of newspapers and periodicals available at their local libraries.
   One might come across other very informative English-language newsmagazines, such as Maclean's from Canada, The Bulletin from Australia and Asiaweek from Hong Kong (which covers the whole gamut of Asian affairs).
   An excellent source covering events in Europe, especially the Common Market countries, is Europe. It is published every other month by the European Economic Community Commission's office in Washington, D.C. Similar magazines are available in all member countries of the Common Market.
   Also take a look at World Press Review, a supplemental American news source that reprints news articles and editorials from the international press, representing a wide spectrum of viewpoints.
   Articles of interest — for Spokesman Club research, for example — can usually be photocopied. Why not make a trip to the library a monthly or semimonthly habit?
   Remember that time is precious — we are counseled to "redeem" it ([Eph. 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Eph.%205.16)). Don't waste time on the scandal tabloids sold in grocery stores, nor on most of the many popular "personality" magazines (People is probably the best of the generally poor lot).

**Avoid contrary explanations**

   One last area needs to be addressed, specifically because it affects a few brethren in God's Church: This is the fascination with certain theories that purport to explain world events from the point of view of a grand "conspiracy."
   There are variants of the conspiracy theory of history, but they nearly all revolve around an elite cabal of bankers, financiers and wealthy capitalists who are said to be manipulating events internationally with the goal of subjugating the United States and Western nations to the control of a totalitarian, one-world government. The conspirators, it is claimed, not only manipulate Western-world leaders like puppets, but secretly control the governments of the Soviet Union and mainland China.
   For example, last January an article in an issue of Spotlight, a popular conspiracy-oriented tabloid, asserted that the fate of the American hostages in Iran was all up to David Rockefeller, chairman of the board of Chase Manhattan Bank. The Rockefeller family is particularly vilified in conspiracy theory literature, which is, in general, very negative, accusatory and often anti-Semitic.
   In conspiracy publications, Mr. Rockefeller is branded as a "sociopath" and a "mattoid" — the latter word meaning "a borderline psychopath." The sources of such character assassinations inevitably hide behind anonymity.
   There is undeniable evidence of similarity of thinking (internationalist, moderately left-of-center) on the part of the majority of members of certain organizations blamed for being part of the conspiracy, such as the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission.
   There is no doubt, furthermore, that the CFR and TLC exercise enormous influence, out of proportion to membership, upon the economic and political policies adopted in the United States, and therefore bear part of the responsibility for recent failures in these arenas.
   Yet the fact that such organizations exist and that the viewpoints of most of their members are similar does not of itself prove deliberate, calculated conspiratorial intent.
   Furthermore, knowing the fruits of the flesh — "strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit" ([Gal. 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gal.%205.20)) — it is illogical to believe that the alleged conspirators could pursue such a unified, single-minded course of action for any length of time.

**Have sound-minded approach**

   Mr. Armstrong has pointed out the true cause-and-effect relationships responsible for the evils of this world. The get way of life that all mankind, cut off from God, living under the influence of Satan, has chosen is at the root of all man's suffering.
   America and Britain are going down not because of the willful machination of unseen manipulators but for a compendium of national sins spelled out in [Isaiah 1:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Isa%201.4-6):
   "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.... the whole head [government] is sick, and the whole heart [national morale and morality] faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head [meaning the entire society and all its components] there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores."
   For 47 years, the pages of The Plain Truth have pinpointed mankind's problems as being a direct result of sin and lack of the knowledge of God and His laws ([Hos. 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Hos.%204.1)). The English-speaking world is suffering the national curses of disobedience ([Lev. 26](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Lev.%2026), [Deut. 28](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Deut.%2028)).
   Let's keep a sound-minded approach ([II Tim. 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Tim.%201.7)). Above all, let's adhere to the teachings of God's Church. And let's never think that we are privy to information important to salvation beyond what God has revealed to the Church through His apostle.
   In this way, and by using the steps outlined in this article, we'll know better what to look for — and how to look — as prophecy unfolds before our eyes.

**Television As a News Source**    Television can be a very informative supplement to your "news diet," providing that the newscasts are selected properly.
   Unfortunately, however, many people waste hours each day looking at what they think is news, and rarely watch those newscasts and special programs that could really help.
   This is especially true in the United States, because of the dominance of commercial television. It's a pity that Americans cannot view Britain's high-quality BBC news or similar first-class, noncommercial newscasts in other parts of the world.
   In the United States, the most worthwhile regularly scheduled commercial newscasts on world and national affairs are the nightly 30- minute (24 minutes of news plus commercials) ABC, CBS and NBC network programs. Mr. Armstrong regularly watches the network news. Also seen in many areas is the so-called fourth network news program known as International Network News, or INN.
   There are, in addition, supplemental television programs of value, such as Public Television's MacNeil/Lehrer Report (which concentrates on a single news topic each evening) as well as specially scheduled programs. In these cases, let the TVGuide be your guide.
   Be cautious, however, of the local newscasts in your area. They can be time wasters. All too often a local newscast is only entertainment disguised as news!
   Local newscasts, such as the 5 to 6 o'clock or 6 to 7 o'clock "news hours" are big business in America, generating from a third to a half of a local television station's income.
   The ratings wars between the channels during these time slots are fierce. To stay at the top of the market, a station will do anything to make its local "news" juicier: scandals, exposes — anything to hook the unwary viewer.
   Worst of all, the on-screen anchorpersons ("news readers" to our British readers) are hired more for their good looks than for their journalistic ability! And such anchorpersons have become modern- day news carpetbaggers, bouncing from city to city in search of better jobs at fatter salaries. As local newscasters they often know little even about the cities in which they find themselves at the moment and are supposedly serving.
   The local news game is now so ludicrous that TV news executives, frantic in their search for new talent, resort to high-powered consulting agencies (called "news doctors" in the trade) who maintain thousands of videotapes of prospective "news stars."
   Are your ratings slumping? Is your present "news star" getting a little gray at the temples? Has he (or she) lost his (or her) sex appeal? Go to the "news doctor" and find a new "pretty face"!
   Knowing that this is the way TV news functions, concentrate on those newscasts that present world and national affairs and take local television "news" with a huge dose of salt.
   Remember also that network news executives and reporters have their biases. Television can inform, but it can also distort the news in a powerful manner.