

The International Prophetic Voice for the Endtimes

Midnight Call

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World Urbanization

Part 2

P. 13

**The Message of
the Psalter**

P. 16

**The Coming of Jesus and the
Mystery of John**

P. 20

**Living in Imminent
Expectation**

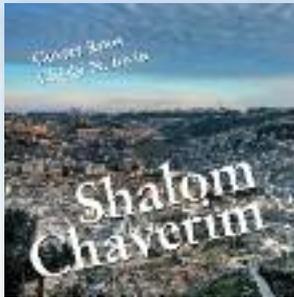
P. 23

**Boundless
Tolerance and the
Christian's
Capacity for Suffering**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

- **Saved by Water**
 - **Faults or Sins?**
 - **Space Exploration**
- P. 32**

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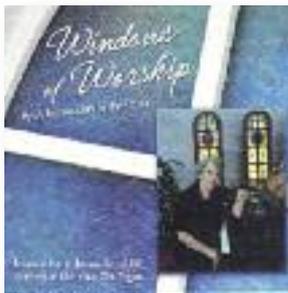
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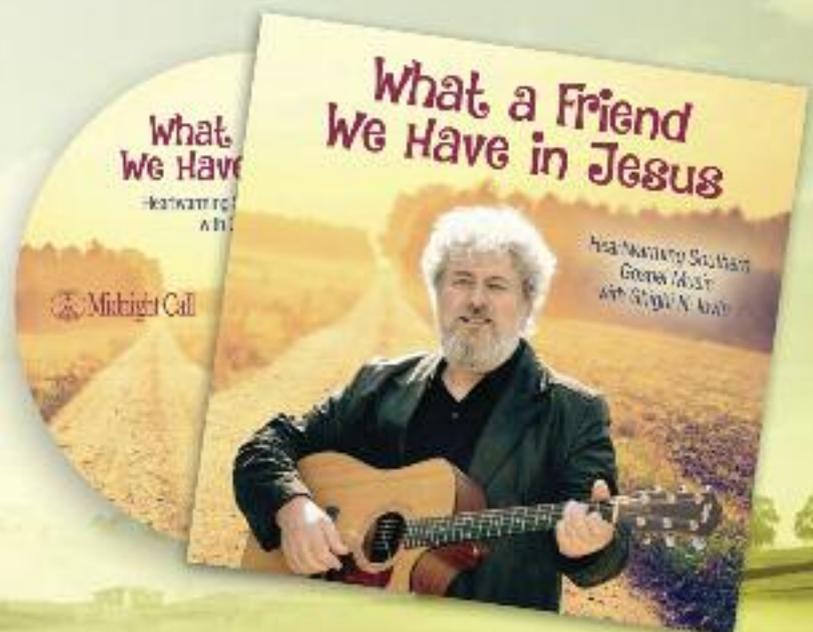
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6 COVER STORY

Boundless Tolerance and the Christian's Capacity for Suffering

By Johannes Pflaum

There can be no discipleship without suffering and restrictions for the sake of the Lord Jesus's will. Christ never promised His disciples a stress-free life. He spoke repeatedly of the cost of discipleship and the suffering which is inseparably connected with it.



26 INDIA
Plans for First Human in Space

26 CHINA
New Call to Protect Data Privacy

13 Money: Ends and Trends

Ripening Times #6 – World Urbanization: Part 2

By Wilfred Hahn

16 The Message of the Psalter

By Dr. Ron J. Bigalke

20 The Coming of Jesus and the Mystery of John

By Wim Malgo

23 Living in Imminent Expectation

By Norbert Lieth



27 USA
Facial-Recognition Expanded for Global Travelers

28 ISRAEL
Measuring Stone Found from Second Temple



29 RUSSIA
Hypersonic Missiles Deployed

30 TURKEY
First Homemade Electric Car Unveiled

DEPARTMENTS

4 Editorial By René Malgo

32 Letters to the Editor By Arno Froese
SAVED BY WATER...FAULTS OR SINS?...SPACE EXPLORATION

35 Fellow Laborers By Norbert Lieth

38 Action for Israel By Arno Froese

40 The Ebenezer Home – Haifa, Israel By Amrei Garbe



“The Whole World Really Lies in the Power of the Evil One.”

By René Malgo

Midnight Call International Editor



Dear Friends,

It seems to be getting darker. Church historian Carl Trueman notes that perhaps for the first time since the 3rd and 4th centuries, loyalty to both society and the church is mutually exclusive. Some European believers are already dreaming about emigrating to Russia with their families. Who could have imagined that twenty years ago?

The Christian West has perished. The seed for this was sown by an event that also became a blessing to many: the Reformation. The subsequent bloody religious wars in the name of God made people cynical about matters of faith... and more lax. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Netherlands turned out to be a barometer for future developments. While mostly-Catholic dictatorship in other countries was replaced by one that was Protestant or Reformed, the young Dutch republic maintained relatively broad freedom of belief and conscience for its time.

Refugees streamed into Holland, especially Jews, Baptists, and Reformists. For about a century, they made the new republic one of the richest and most powerful nations on earth. Even today, the Dutch look back fondly on this time, while the

rest of the world has largely forgotten the “golden age” of the Netherlands.

In this 17th century Holland, philosophers such as René Descartes or Baruch Spinoza, anticipated enlightened ideas from Germany and France that would become established all over the West a hundred years later. The Reformists saw God's blessing on their land when Dutch warships (on which the Bible was read daily and psalms were sung and prayed) plundered the rest of the world. From their pulpits, many preachers praised the republic as the “new Israel,” won from the sea, just as the children of Israel under Moses had been saved through the Red Sea. But godlessness was rampant in the heart of the nation.

Strict Calvinist colonial ruler Jan Pieterzoon Coen burned Jakarta to the ground to build a new city, and wiped out an entire population just to gain a trade monopoly. He hired Japanese samurai fighters to massacre insurgents in the Banda Islands. But God saw it. The rich prevailed at the expense of the poor, except that in the “golden age,” many of the poor were considered pagans somewhere far off, out of sight and out of mind, and lost their lives. Meanwhile the rich considered themselves to be faithful, blessed Christians.

EDITOR'S NOTE

From a spiritual perspective, there never was any “golden age.” If anything, the “new Israel” was the old “whore of Babylon.” Holland’s hoarded wealth became a spiritual pitfall for the people. Although it’s an orderly and quite likeable country today—in which the citizens’ moral standards are still ruled by the Reformed influence—the Netherlands is also one of the most atheistic nations on earth. The Dutch have sought prosperity and enlightenment apart from God. How many souls has the “whore of materialism” claimed for itself in an outwardly Christian culture, without anyone noticing?

Salvation simply isn’t found in this world’s political structures. The “whole world” really lies “in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Russia won’t be able to help Christians, either. A Russian Orthodox believer once complained about how difficult it was to live his faith, because the Church was so interconnected with the state. Yes, in the “golden age” it was easy to be a nominal Christian: you lived externally according to Reformed standards, and otherwise endeavored to increase your wealth. But that isn’t Christianity. And it doesn’t save souls. Christianity is (and remains) to die with Christ to the world and sin, and to live in Him. Paradoxically, this could become more logical for believers in a society that is currently stripping itself of external Christianity, making its ugly face of godlessness, hidden for so long, now publicly visible.

May God help us and have mercy on us; Maranatha, our Lord, come! (MC)

Correction: Dr. Bigalke’s article from January should have been listed as Part 6, instead of Part 5, and February’s as Part 7, instead of 6. Our apologies for the confusion.

In light of the times, *News From Israel* is a necessary monthly magazine that will keep you updated on breaking developments throughout the Middle East. *News From Israel* uncovers hidden information the news media leaves out!



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OUR TASK

Midnight Call Ministries is a nonprofit missionary organization,

dedicated to proclaiming the entire Bible as the unfailing and eternal

written Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the unerring

guide for the Christian faith.

The object of Midnight Call is to call people everywhere to Christ,

to proclaim the return of Christ, to prepare Christians for His com-

ing, and to uphold the faith and warn of false doctrines. *Midnight*

Call magazine is available in twelve languages. All work done

through radio, literature and missionaries is supported entirely by the

gifts and free will offerings of God’s people.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

WE BELIEVE in the divine inspiration of the whole Bible and there-

with the infallibility of the Holy Scripture, which is God’s Word, and in

the eternal Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

WE BELIEVE Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was conceived of the

Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and shed His

blood to save mankind. He died and arose bodily the third day and

later ascended into heaven.

WE BELIEVE that the Lord Jesus Christ died in the place of each

individual sinner and that all who believe in Him as their personal

Savior are justified through His shed blood and have become

children of God.

WE BELIEVE that Israel is God’s chosen people, and that the

restoration of the Jews to their own land is the fulfillment of the

Word of God.

WE BELIEVE in the pre-tribulational appearance of Jesus Christ for

the Rapture of His Church (all born again believers).

WE BELIEVE in the immortality of our souls and the resurrection of our

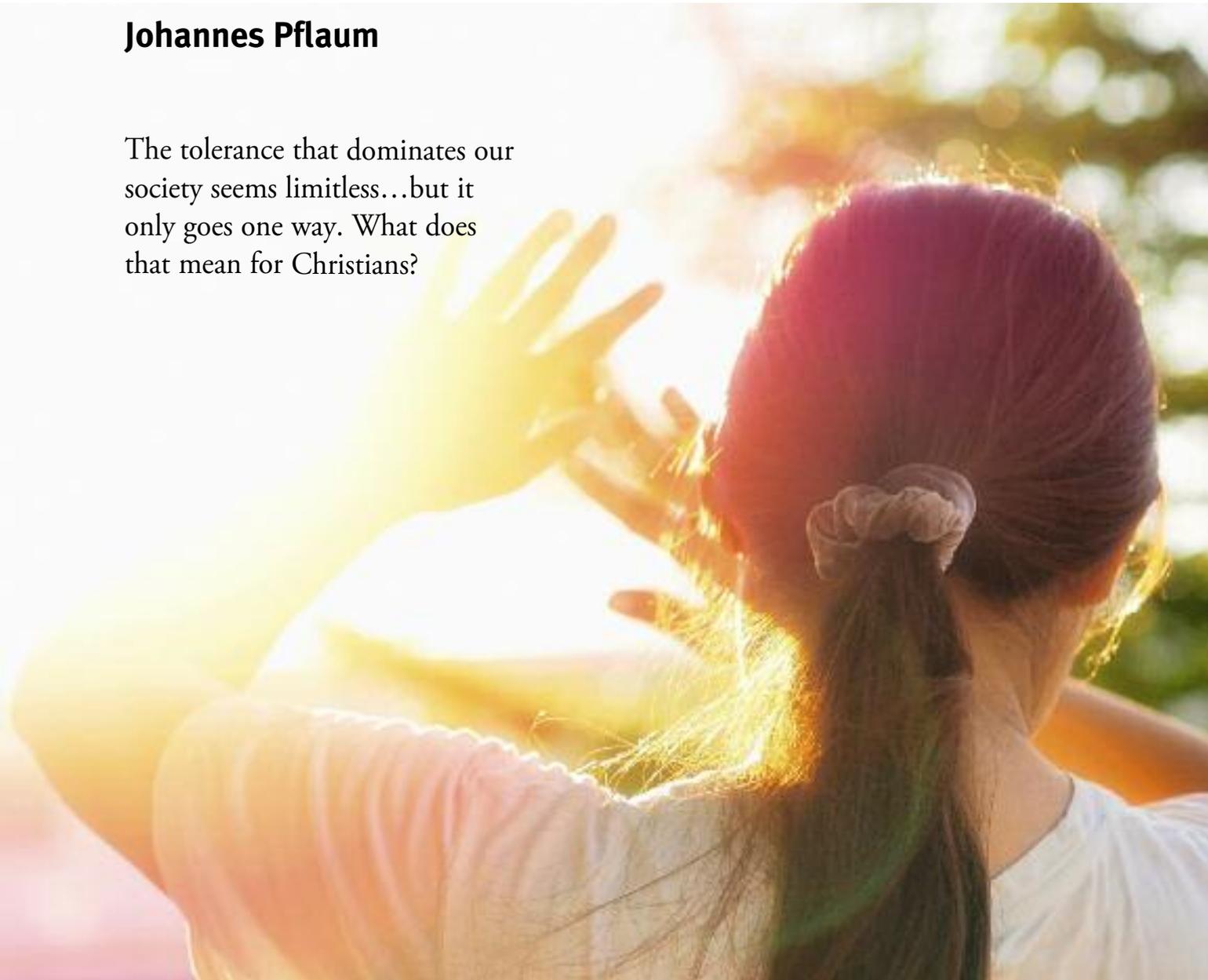
bodies, and in the resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting

blissfulness of the saved and the everlasting punishment of the lost.

Boundless Tolerance and the Christian's Capacity for Suffering

Johannes Pflaum

The tolerance that dominates our society seems limitless...but it only goes one way. What does that mean for Christians?



You may be familiar with the slogan for a well-known pain reliever: “Stop pain where it starts.” We may be truly grateful for all the painkillers available today, especially those of us who struggle with severe pain. Nevertheless, we also need to recognize the danger. These treatments can gradually reduce our pain threshold. We succumb to the delusion that something like a life free from pain and suffering could actually exist. And, we’re not just led to believe this regarding our physical bodies.

Affluent society everywhere wants us to believe that a sort of perpetual well-being and constantly-available wellness are necessary for life. A life without stress, where wishes are immediately fulfilled, is the guiding principle. You don’t need to save your money anymore or consider whether you really need something you want to buy; you can just arrange to pay in installments. If you’re craving French fries, you don’t have to wait for your next meal; just swing by McDonald’s.

This indoctrination automatically transfers from our everyday life to our spiritual one. Here, too, everything should pass us by with as little stress and suffering as possible. Our great dilemma today is that the Scriptures say exactly the opposite about one’s spiritual life and personal discipleship (2 Cor 4:7ff.; 1 Pet 2:11). The Bible doesn’t recognize spiritual life and growth without growing pains. In John 15, the vine is pruned to produce more

fruit. The Lord disciplines and chastises the ones He loves, so that we may share in His holiness (Heb 12:4-11).

There can be no discipleship without suffering and restrictions for the sake of the Lord Jesus’s will (2 Tim 3:12). Christ never promised His disciples a stress-free life. He spoke repeatedly of the cost of discipleship and the suffering which is inseparably connected with it (Matt 10:38; 16:24). Even for the apostles, suffering for the sake of Christ and His truth was part and parcel of preaching (Acts 14:22).

Our society has yet a third feature. In addition to the longing for a pain-free life and perpetual wellbeing, everyone is desperate to be recognized and regarded as an important and valuable member of society. Nobody wants to be marginalized or considered a pariah. Today’s widespread philosophy of “boundless tolerance” reinforces this desire.

Everything seems possible in our society. Nothing is considered bad anymore, unless someone claims that something is an absolute truth. Every opinion or lifestyle can be permitted, just not the idea that something is fundamentally good or evil. Instead, people follow the motto, “The most important thing is that it’s true for you.” And when there’s room for every religion and occult practice, we wrongly believe that there must also be space for the Gospel somewhere. Or we run the risk of wanting to present ourselves as somehow fitting into this plu-

Affluent society everywhere wants us to believe that a sort of perpetual wellbeing and constantly-available wellness are necessary for life.

Boundless Tolerance and the Christian's Capacity for Suffering

Everyone is desperate to be recognized and regarded as an important and valuable member of society.



realistic salad bowl, just so that society will at least recognize us as being equal to everyone else.

Whether or not we want to admit it, we're all naturally afraid of suffering. Even as disciples of the Lord Jesus, we're marked by longing for a pain-free life. And the tremendous prosperity of recent decades has further encouraged this desire for comfort and well-being. The desire to receive social recognition and honor from others is planted in all of us by our sinful nature (John 12:43). These are factors that weaken our spiritual immune system and make us vulnerable to temptation from the current tolerance ideology.

In his book *The Truth War*, John MacArthur observed, "The idea that the Christian message should be kept pliable and ambiguous, seems especially

attractive to young people who are in tune with the culture and in love with the spirit of the age, and can't stand to have authoritative biblical truth applied with precision as a corrective to worldly lifestyles, unholy minds, and ungodly behavior. And the poison of this perspective is being increasingly injected into the evangelical church body." And, "In every generation across the history of the church, countless martyrs have similarly died rather than deny the truth. Were such people just fools, making too much of their own convictions? Was their absolute confidence in what they believed actually misguided zeal? Did they die needlessly? Many these days evidently think so—including some who profess faith in Christ. Living in a culture where violent persecution is almost unknown, multitudes who call themselves Christians seem to have forgotten what faithfulness to the truth often costs. Did I say 'often'? As a matter of fact, faithfulness to the truth is always costly in some way or another."

John Piper notes in his book *The Roots of Endurance*, "There is a mind-set in the prosperous West that we deserve a pain-free, trouble-free existence...This mind-set gives a trajectory to life that is almost universal—namely, away from stress and toward comfort and safety and relief. Then within that very natural trajectory some people begin to think of ministry and find ways of serving God inside the boundaries set by the aims of self-protection. Then churches grow up in this mind-set, and it never occurs to anyone in such a community of believers that choosing dis-

Out of a fear of the growing stigmatization of absolute truth and a desire to continue enjoying the benefits of a tolerance-based society, we simply begin to keep silent on certain subjects.

comfort, stress, and danger might be the right thing—even the normal, biblical thing—to do. I have found myself in conversation with Christians for whom it is simply a given that you do not put yourself or your family at risk. The commitment to safety and comfort is an unquestioned absolute. The demands of being a Christian in the twenty-first century will probably prove to be a rude awakening for such folks.”

We shouldn't wish for suffering, and we should be thankful for every freedom we still enjoy. But, the more the thought of boundless tolerance catches on, the more the journey will inevitably lead to suffering for those who see the Bible and Christ as absolute truth. In fact, the boundless tolerance mindset will corner us much more quickly than, say, the impending Islamization of Western society. Nobody can say for sure whether the latter will actually happen or not.

For us, culture's one-sided tolerance mindset is precisely where the great danger lies. Out of a fear of the growing stigmatization of absolute truth and a desire to continue enjoying the benefits of a tolerance-based society, we simply begin to keep silent on certain subjects. We only stand up for our convictions within the walls of our own church or in secure surroundings. Remember the earlier quote from John Piper! We're developing a kind of submarine Christianity, without a living testimony or profession of divine and Scriptural truth to the outside world.



But what did the apostle Peter advise the believers under increasing pressure? “Watch out, don't talk too much about the Gospel!”? “Be careful where you say things that could be used against you!”? No, something quite different: “always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15).

It's not that we're acting clumsy or stupid by, say, disrupting public events with heckling or inappropriate behavior. Rather, we need the courage to stand firmly on Biblical beliefs, even if we come under pressure and it costs us. False diplomacy at the expense of truth won't just damage our testimony, but also our spiritual life. The more we start to silence ourselves, the quicker the noose of boundless tolerance will tighten around our necks.

Boundless Tolerance and the Christian's Capacity for Suffering

“The idea that the Christian message should be kept pliable and ambiguous, seems especially attractive to young people who are in tune with the culture and in love with the spirit of the age.” – John MacArthur



If the truth and firm convictions are suppressed in the name of unlimited tolerance, a totalitarian dictatorship of thought and conscience will be revealed as under National Socialism (Nazism). It is arguably unique that the National Socialist dictatorship emerged from a democratic movement and was installed, in large part, through democratic elections.

How did it come about that many believers, churches, and faith and missionary organizations, were captivated by National Socialism? Why did they fail to clearly profess the Gospel and the truths of the Bible, which were obviously in opposition to this demonic ideology? We don't in any way want to pose this question to believers accusingly or smugly. We all stand by grace. Moreover, we're in danger today of failing at the same points, albeit under ex-

ternally different circumstances. Just consider the protection of unborn human life, increasing anti-Semitism (also in the context of the matter of the nation of Israel), as well as the adaptation of biblical convictions to the neo-Marxist mainstream.

Some believers who were carried away by the tide of National Socialism, were initially able to recognize the ideological elements that contradicted biblical convictions. But under the pressure of this anti-Christian ideology, they wrongly responded with diplomacy. It was also a matter of concern for maintaining the church's freedom of assembly. Another argument for this ill-fated diplomacy was the evangelistic possibilities: the ones willing to remain silent about this or that issue could continue to evangelize and win people for Jesus. Wasn't that the most important thing? If the corresponding guidelines were adhered to, people were permitted to continue to gather without the threat of a ban. And so began the disastrous balance between supposedly important and unimportant convictions, until a large part of the faithful was eventually carried away by this anti-Christian ideology. The ultimate goal of all this fatal balancing was to avoid suffering.

For the steadfast of that time, there was sufficient affliction in social ostracism, the denial of opportunities for advancement in the workplace, up to and including imprisonment. And for some, faithfulness to the Lord even ended in a concentration camp, leading

One morning, when thousands of prisoners had to appear for roll call, he shouted through the bars of his cell, “Jesus Christ says, ‘I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness!’”



to martyrdom in many cases. Not all were led along the same path. But the Lord, in spite of all hardships and suffering, was with His witnesses.

Pastor Wilhelm Busch was among those who proclaimed the Gospel uncompromisingly, in spite of all the threats. He accepted the enormous risk, both for himself and for his family. He was imprisoned multiple times by the Gestapo. Later, he candidly spoke of the partially dark and discouraged hours that he'd experienced, but how his Master met him there time and again and raised him up. He stressed that he in no way wanted to be celebrated as a hero or a great resistance fighter. On the contrary. In hindsight, according to his assessment, he should have spoken up more.

Or consider Paul Schneider, the preacher of Buchenwald. The young family man was rather shy and reserved by nature. But he explicitly proclaimed the Gospel, named the dictatorship's injustice for what it was, and landed in the Buchenwald concentration camp. Even there he didn't back down from the confession of the truth, although he was tortured to death in the end. One morning, when thousands of prisoners had to appear for roll call, he shouted through the bars of his cell, “Jesus Christ says, ‘I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness!’” All the inmates heard these words, and Nazi henchmen immediately rushed back to his cell to torture him. Even communists who survived Buchenwald were deeply moved

Boundless Tolerance and the Christian's Capacity for Suffering

Let's not be discouraged by the conscience dictatorship of boundless tolerance. Let's resist our innate aversion to suffering! When the cultural headwinds become more intense, let's orient ourselves anew to what Scripture tells us about suffering for the sake of Christ and the truth.

and impressed by this pastor's courageous witness.

Things are still going well for us, compared with professing Christians under the Third Reich, or the unbroken witness of many martyrs in the Middle East and Asia. Our social ostracization and marginalization can't even compare. Nevertheless, we must recognize and name the danger of the dictatorship of boundless tolerance. We must be on guard against falling into the same trap as a significant part of Christianity under the Third Reich. We can't hide clear biblical positions while referencing supposed evangelistic opportunities or freedom of assembly. In other words, woe unto us if we deny biblical truth. The more the boundless tolerance mindset spreads all around us, the more we'll be faced with the question of what faith and godly truth are really worth to us.

It's not even a matter of grand theological questions like the divinity of Jesus, His bodily resurrection, or salvation by faith. Much of what boundless tolerance demands of us by acceptance and relativism is a basic attack on the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Whether it be an understanding of truth in and of itself, the Bible's statements on the subjects of marriage, sexuality, and homosexuality, the purpose of the creation of man and woman in the context of gender issues, etc., etc....

There are already examples of people in the West who lost jobs or career opportunities—not because of their own unmanageable behavior, but for the sake

of their faith or on the grounds of their candidly professed biblical convictions. By and large, these are not isolated cases. And some of these people even chose not to file labor litigation, but kept to the word of 1 Peter 2:21-23.

Let's not be discouraged by the conscience dictatorship of boundless tolerance. Let's resist our innate aversion to suffering! When the cultural headwinds become more intense, let's orient ourselves anew to what Scripture tells us about suffering for the sake of Christ and the truth. Let's also look at the great promises that the Lord has given us. It is only Christ Himself, and His grace, that can strengthen and hold us fast. But we must be willing to fully trust Him, to accept inconvenience and difficulty, and not to let ourselves be guided by our own mentality of comfort and safety. We aren't on our own, but belong to the Lord, to whom all authority in heaven and on earth is given.

It's just as John MacArthur says: "But in every generation, the battle for the truth has proved ultimately unavoidable because the enemies of truth are relentless." Therefore, "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Tim 6:12). And, "do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God" (2 Tim 1:8).

(MR1019/1039)



RIPENING TIMES #6 – WORLD URBANIZATION: PART 2



We continue our series on “ripening trends” of prophetic significance seen around the world, completing our examination of worldwide urbanization. Very definitely, the manifestation of more and bigger cities qualifies as a prophetically significant trend affecting the world today.

By Wilfred Hahn

The Bible uses the metaphor of ripening grapes to indicate the time for judgment. “Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!” (Joel 3:13; cf. Revelation 14:18). In this sense, we indeed see that the world is ripe with last-day trends and is quickly approaching the time of fruition. However, the secular humanist will prefer to recognize “significant” new trends optimistically, as the great advances of mankind and its emancipation.

And so, our age today is “ripe” with many end-time trends. No one will doubt that the world has embarked on an accelerating course of change over recent decades and centuries. Humanity is on a rushed agenda to “rendezvous with history.” The indicators are plain to see for all who wish to see them. After all, information is more easily available to people today than ever before. Unfortunately, at the same time there is less understanding.

Thus, we are systematically identifying the “trends of significance”—this meaning worldwide developments that have recently erupted on the scene in line with Bible prophecy and the promises

of the Lord. These end-time “enabling” trends, we show, are so widespread and advanced that it would be plainly unreasonable to not conclude that the times are ripe for judgment and the return of our Lord.

To date in this column, we have qualified five “significant trends”: 1. A Wealth Explosion; 2. spreading Post-Familialism; 3. Honored Elites (emergence of global plutocrats); 4. Advances of the Titans (the sudden emergence of multinational companies); and 5. Rising Asia. There are yet more ripening trends to review. We now complete our examination of the sixth “ripening” trend—World Urbanization.

Cities: No Biblical Endorsement

Generally, we see that the Bible does not reflect an approving view of great cities. Indeed, cities are necessary. Yet, according to secular anthropologists, greater urbanization tends to go hand in hand with the deterioration of the family unit, lower marriage rates, and consumerism. The value of children becomes their consumerism. As such, we note that world demographic trends interlink with the trend of urbanization.



The “great city” of Babylon mentioned in Revelation twice cannot be interpreted to indicate a physical re-emergence of ancient Babylon. A commercial “great city” has already engulfed the world, in this writer’s opinion.



Sodom and Gomorrah are shown as cities at the apogee of great moral failure.

The woes of Bible prophecy are frequently addressed to cities. One characteristic noted is the potential for smugness and self-determination, the same attitude that afflicted Babel. For example, Babylon the Great boasts in her heart: “[...] I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will

Commenting on demographic trends and their linkage with urbanization, says Stratfor, “The process [of declining fertility] is essentially irreversible. Why? [...] It is primarily a matter of urbanization. [...] In a mature urban society, the economic value of children declines. In fact, children turn from instruments of production to objects of massive consumption.”

As seen from the Bible’s perspective, the aforementioned characteristics of urbanization are not developments that the Creator designed as preferential and most blessed for mankind.

The Bible goes further, indicting other moral pitfalls of city life. Several times it decries large cities for their violence and immorality. For example, of Nineveh, Nahum says: “Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims!” (Nahum 3:1). Isaiah describes Jerusalem as such: “See how the faithful city has become a prostitute! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her—but now murderers!” (Isaiah 1:21).

never mourn” (Revelation 18:7). Sodom is said to be “arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49). Seen in this light, big cities tend to be hotbeds for both humanism and immorality.

One earthly city will be venerated as perfect some day in the future. “This is what the LORD says: ‘I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain’” (Zechariah 8:3; cf. Joel 3:17). That will occur in the Millennial period. As we will yet show, there will be a final eternal “great city.”

Points to Ponder

Today, we see a world of larger and larger cities, ever higher population density, and globalism (this being a form of a global city)—unified, smug and intent upon constructing a world apart from God. The sins of Babel are today being replicated on a massive global scale.

In the end, there is one more alignment that is significant. It is a wonderful and benevolent outcome, considering mankind's poor experience with cities. We observe that God provides the final version of a city ... a virtuous one ... a "great city." It is called the New Jerusalem.

Here is an interesting side note that has prophetic implications: The UNPD projects Baghdad (Iraq) as being the 62nd largest city in the world by the year 2030. If we are to go by the UNPD's forecast, it will yet be some time before Babylon (which is a southern suburb of Bagdad, Iraq) can again rise as a "great city" in the world and serve as the world's nexus point for commerce and trade. A number of prophecy teachers do believe that a physical Babylon will again be revived to be the world's "great city" ... one that qualifies to "[reign] over the kings of the earth" (Revelation 17:18 KJV). This writer does not hold to this view. The emergence of Babylon as a "great city" would be impossible, let alone occurring within the next 7 years (the maximum time this can happen, should the imminent Rapture occur today and the Tribulation Period immediately follow).

Therefore, the "great city" of Babylon mentioned in Revelation twice cannot be interpreted to indicate a physical re-emergence of ancient Babylon. A commercial "great city" has already engulfed the world, in this writer's opinion.

The trend of urbanization definitely qualifies as a "ripening trend." It meets at least seven of our "ripening" criteria. It is an emerging trend that shows "acceleration" ... particularly so since the 1800s. Up to that point in human history, urbanization was relatively stable.

It is a trend that shows acceleration in the recent past, and suddenness. We find ourselves asking, why is urbanization occurring now and not at some other time in history? Yes, it is a trend attributed to industrialization. However, then we must ask, why did industrialization take off when it did? The very improbability and inexplicability of this trend indicates another sign of "significance."

Also, urbanization is undoubtedly a development with global impact and scale. It has conflu-

ence or interconnection with another accelerating trend of "significance"—interweaving and reinforcing demographic developments. And, finally, it is a trend that reflects humanism and breeds immorality.

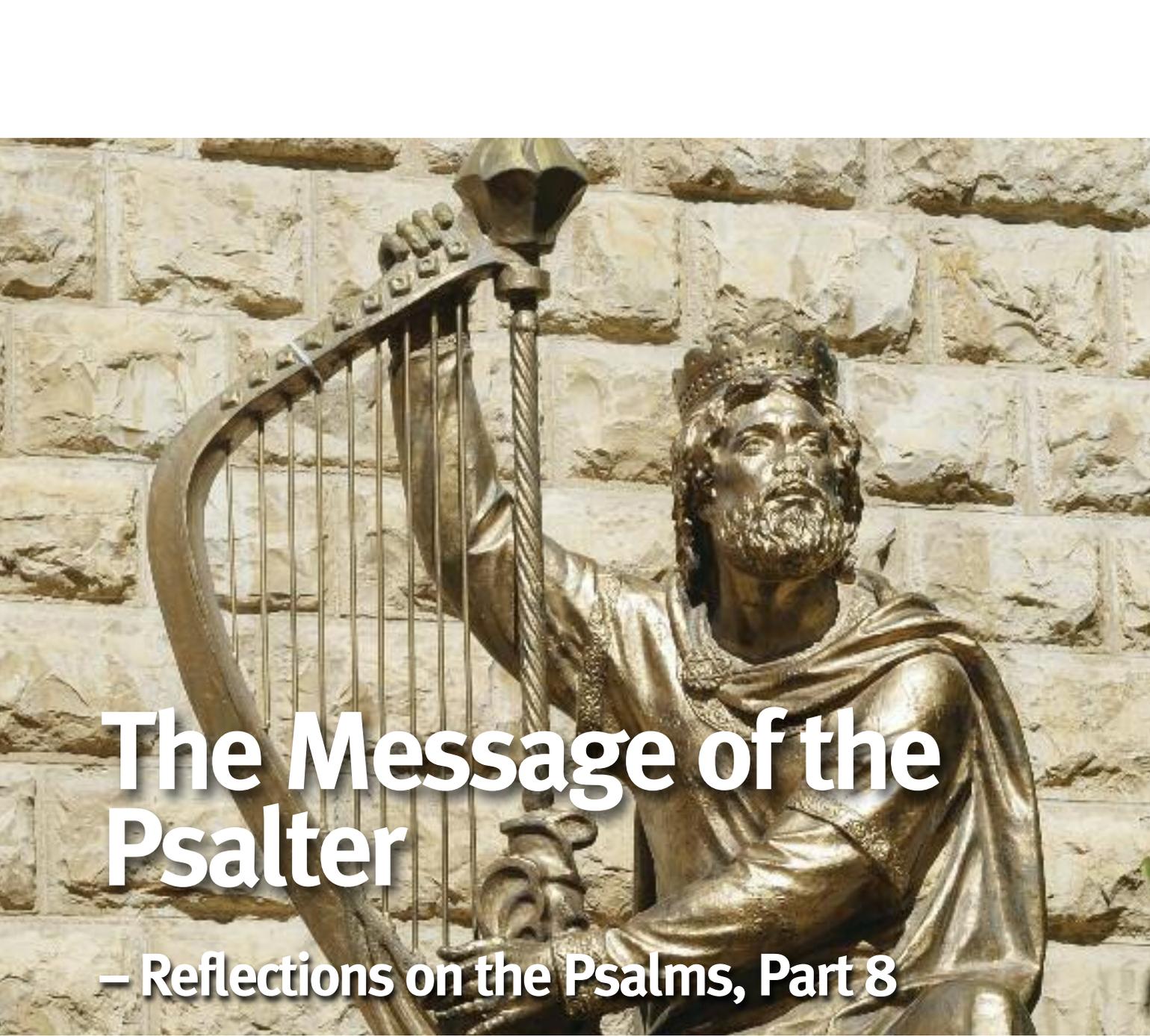
But, where in the Bible is it prophesied that urbanization will occur—or be a symptom of the last days? All seven indicators of significance are noted, but to this point we have not yet referred to any biblical passage about future conglomerations taking place.

We cannot find any such specific statement in the Bible. However, we do note many aligning developments. The 7 indicators of "significance" are compelling proof. But biblical provenance of this development remains important nonetheless.

We can point to several supportive deductions. For example, the word pairing "great city" occurs only 13 times in the Bible. This word pairing is found nowhere outside the prophetic books of the Bible. Revelation alone refers to a "great city" 8 times (also, "mighty city" once). No mention of any "great city" is found elsewhere in the New Testament. This writer does not believe it accidental that "great city" is linked with prophetic events.

In the end, there is one more alignment that is significant. It is a wonderful and benevolent outcome, considering mankind's poor experience with cities. We observe that God provides the final version of a city ... a virtuous one ... a "great city." It is called the New Jerusalem: "[...] that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21:10 KJV). Among a number of features, it also has a "great street" (Revelation 21:21; 22:2).

In a sense, we may see that the world's immoral cities finally have their redemption in the form of the New Jerusalem. Just as God redeems people, so also eventually the great city. (M)

A bronze statue of King David, depicted as a bearded man wearing a crown and a robe, seated and playing a harp. The statue is set against a background of a stone wall. The harp is large and detailed, with many strings and a curved frame. The lighting is bright, highlighting the texture of the bronze and the stone.

The Message of the Psalter

– Reflections on the Psalms, Part 8

Dr. Ron J. Bigalke

▲ Statue of King David in Jerusalem, Israel

The title of the book of Psalms in the Hebrew Bible is *Tehillim* (“praises”), which is appropriate because praise is a primary component of the poems comprising the collection. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (known as the Septuagint) assigned the title *Psalmoi* (“Psalms”). “Psalms” and “Psalter” are derived from the Septuagint, and both originally referenced songs to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument (e.g. harp, lute, lyre). Eventually, the Greek word *psalmoi* simply meant “songs of praise” without reference to a stringed instrument. The common English title, “Psalms,” is an obvious transliteration of the Greek version of the book.

The writers of the New Testament referenced the book of Psalms more than any other Old Testament work. The popularity and prevalence of use among modern believers is proof of the practical message of the Psalms.

The texts of the individual psalms normally do not indicate an author (though of the 150 psalms, 100 are assigned authorship). With few exceptions, each psalm is an independent composition with a message that can be understood without consideration of any other psalms. Several emphases characterize the collection of psalms in their entirety, and those messages can be divided into two primary categories: the practical and the prophetic.

The Practical Message of the Psalms

The writers of the New Testament referenced the book of Psalms more than any other Old Testament work. The popularity and prevalence of use among modern believers is proof of the practical message of the Psalms. The book of Psalms reveals the faith of Israel, and those depictions enable believers in the present time to witness how God's people in the past related to Him. Consequently, the Psalter joins together the ancient and contemporary world more so than any other book in the Bible.

The extensive use of Psalms in both private and public worship indicates the original purpose of the poems. One reason the psalms are so revered is the comprehensive nature of human experiences represented in the Psalter. John Calvin (one of the most significant individuals in the second generation of the Protestant Reformation) wrote in the preface to his *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*: “there is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God, or in which we are more powerfully stirred up to the performance of this religious exercise . . .

in considering the whole course of the life of David, it seemed to me that by his own footsteps he showed me the way, and from this I have experienced no small consolation.”

Indeed, he declared the book of Psalms to be, “An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul”; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has there drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.” One could also include confidence, joy, praise, and trust in that summation. Although the book of Psalms is thousands of years old, virtually all the psalms (in some manner) reflect every believer's joys and struggles in the present time. Regardless of the subject matter of any specific psalm, the poem will certainly give testimony to the emotions of believers in the present as they navigate the crucible of the human experience (and, indeed, for this explicit reason the psalms were composed). The psalms are the inspired response of human emotion to God's revelation of Himself in history, law, and prophecy.

The foundational component for the attention given to the practical experience of the believer is theology (the doctrine of God). The theology of the Psalter is not systematic (since it is not a book of catechism or doctrine), yet the book of Psalms is basic and thorough enough in that content to construct an entire Old Testament theology solely from it. The foundation for the expression of theology in the Psalter is the conviction that the gravitational focus of life, including the entirety of creation

The Message of the Psalter (Reflections on the Psalms, Part 8)

Many prophetic psalms anticipating the Messiah receive the most prominent emphasis. Indeed, the messianic psalms are perhaps the most frequent classification within the Psalter.

and history, is God. The Lord is the sovereign King, and the One to whom everything is subject. The psalms reveal a practical message of the believer's life that is resolutely grounded in the character and nature of God.

The Prophetic Message of the Psalms

The book of Psalms develops several important prophetic themes. Many prophetic psalms anticipating the Messiah receive the most prominent emphasis. Indeed, the messianic psalms are perhaps the most frequent classification within the Psalter. A psalm is traditionally considered messianic if it anticipated the Messiah and if there was little or no relationship to its historical context. "In considering the goal of the Old Testament history in its relation to the God-man," German Lutheran theologian and Hebraist Franz Delitzsch (1813-90) distinguished "five classes of psalms, which are directed towards this goal." The *first* is exclusively prophetic ("prophecy proper") and "looks forth into the future of his [David's] seed and has the Messiah definitely before his mind" (cf. Ps 110).¹

Second, the eschatological psalms look beyond the time of David to anticipate the "king in whom the promise is finally fulfilled." Psalms of this class were to "a certain extent" a type of He who was to come, and may be quoted in the New Testament with the words, "that it may be fulfilled." *Third*, the typologically prophetic are when the psalmist describes his inward and outward experiences, yet "is carried beyond the limits of his individuality and present condition, and utters concerning himself that which, transcending human experience, is intended to become histori-

cally true only in Christ."² *Fourth*, the indirectly prophetic messianic psalms are in reference "to a contemporary king, but without having been fulfilled in him," and expect "their final accomplishment" in Messiah (Ps 45; 72). *Fifth*, the prophetic "Jehovic psalm" describes the coming of the Lord and the establishment of His kingdom, "which is all through brought about by judgment" (cf. 93).³

Psalms anticipating the coming of Messiah depict His sonship (2), His humanity (Ps 8), His suffering and death (22), His resurrection (16), His priesthood (110), and His second coming (2, 24). Israel's future is prophesied in other psalms, yet her future blessings are based in the Messiah (cf. 68, 69, 102). The prophetic message of the psalms also includes the Gentiles (cf. 2, 65, 66). The primary message of the Psalms is prophetic in that the Psalter announces the coming kingdom of Messiah.

The Transforming Message of the Psalms

One of the greatest preachers of the past 200 years, Charles Spurgeon (1834-92), in the preface to *The Treasury of David*, referred to his study of the Psalms as "delightful" for it yielded "boundless profit and ever-growing pleasure." Throughout critical periods in the history of the church, certain books of the Bible have been pivotal and strategic in the lives of God's people. The book of Romans is certainly one such book in the New Testament. Another work that has been used by God to stimulate reformation and revival is the book of Psalms. Indeed, the books of Romans and Psalms both impacted history through the life of Martin Luther.



Not only was Luther converted by his study of Romans, but also as a result of expositional studies of the book of Psalms at the University of Wittenberg in 1513. Luther's study of the Psalms provided him with a transcendent perception of God so profound that when converted, he would have learned the fortitude needed to live the gospel of grace.

Most believers know that Luther posted his "Ninety-five Theses" on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg on 31 October 1517. He did so to protest the unbiblical practices and teachings that were prevalent in his day. Luther pleaded for the return of an obstinate church to the essential truth of the gospel, which is that sinners are justified by grace alone (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*), on the Word alone (*sola Scriptura*), because of Christ alone (*solus Christus*), to the glory of God alone (*solus Deo gloria*).

Since the time of the Protestant Reformation, Luther has been primarily identified with the book of Romans, and one verse in particular (Rom 1:17, "the righteous shall live by faith") which God used in his conversion. Romans 1:17 did indeed become the theological foundation for the Reformation, because the doctrine of justification by faith alone defined the essential truth of the gospel message as proclaimed by the Reformers. However, not only was Luther converted by his study of Romans, but also as a result of expositional studies of the book of Psalms at the University of Wittenberg in 1513. Luther's study of the Psalms provided him with a transcendent perception of God so profound that when converted, he would have learned the fortitude needed to live the gospel of grace. The study of two inspired books of Scripture—Romans and Psalms—preceded his posting of the "Ninety-five Theses" and radically transformed his life.

Romans certainly formulated Luther's doctrinal convictions regarding the purity

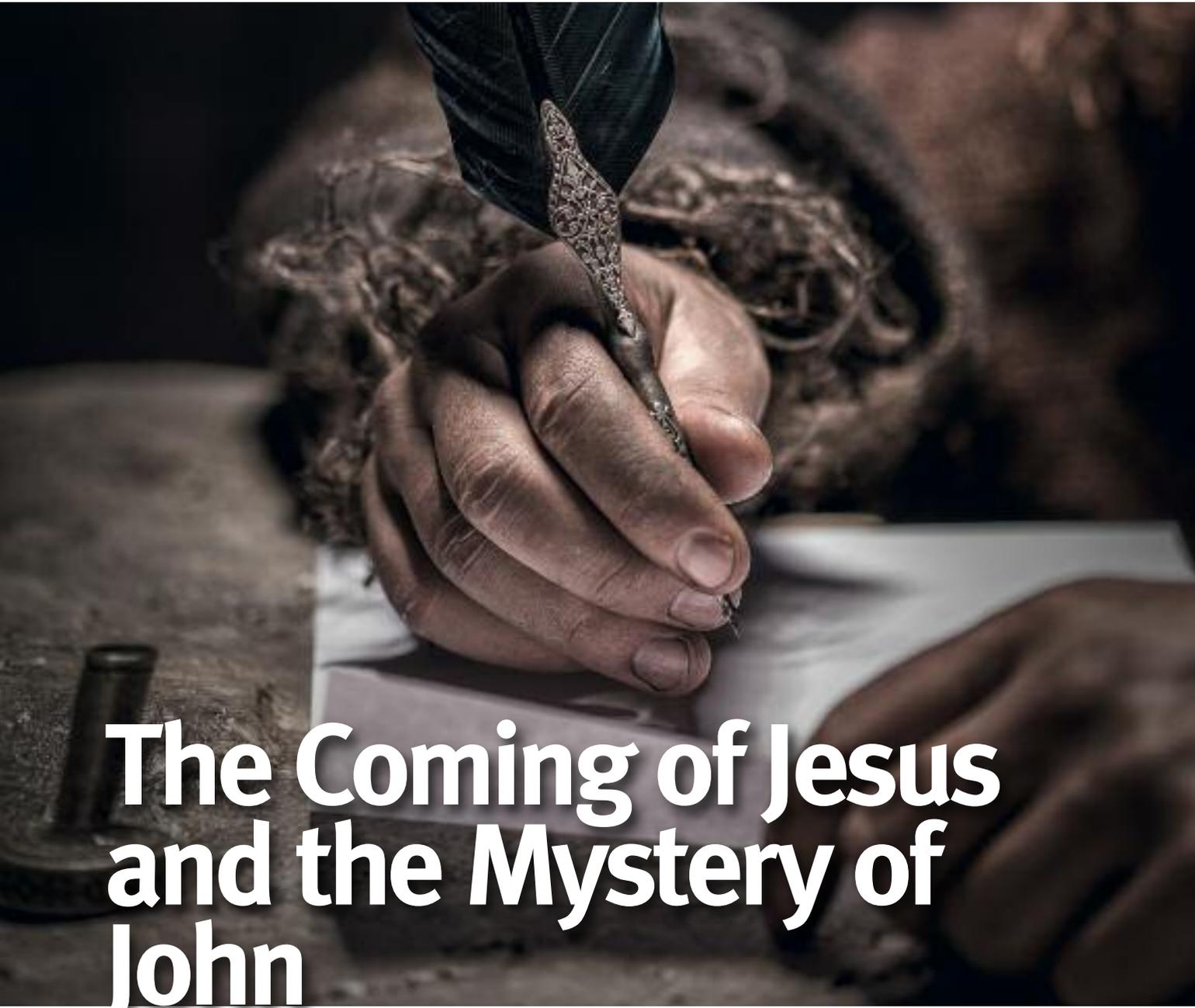
of the true gospel, yet Psalms emboldened him to proclaim the doctrines of grace fearlessly. "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" is often referenced as "the battle hymn" of the Reformation. Psalm 46 was the inspiration for Luther's classic hymn, and he intended it to bring comfort during a time of great opposition. Throughout his life and struggles, Luther would turn to his beloved coworker Philipp Melancthon and say, "Let's sing the 46th Psalm." Luther would sing the psalms to the praise of God, knowing the Lord was with him and would powerfully defend and preserve His church and His Word against every assault of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

What reformation and revival would occur today through a study of the Psalms, as God would use those poems to instill a bold and courageous faith within His people! "Though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea," those who trust in the Lord God "will not be moved" (Ps 46:2, 5a). Why not read the Psalms today and let them fortify your hope in God, resulting in glorious adoration of He who alone is worthy to be praised?

(1050)

ENDNOTES

- 1 Franz Delitzsch, "Psalms," in Carl Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1866-91; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996) 5:40-41.
- 2 Ibid. 5:41.
- 3 Ibid. 5:42.



The Coming of Jesus and the Mystery of John

Wim Malgo (1922–1992)

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 8. Revelation 1:3-7.

◀ John wasn't a particularly well-read man. His writings testify to a small vocabulary. But John was the only one of the twelve disciples to persevere at the cross of Calvary until Jesus died.

John writes, "...the time is at hand" (Rev 1:3). According to God's calendar, the world is at the end of its time. With the birth of the Lord Jesus, His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost, human history entered into not just a pivotal stage, but also its last concluding one. That's why it says, "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..." (Heb 1:2). At the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Peter knew, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:16-17).

Thus, strictly speaking, end time history (in the sense of the New Testament) isn't just the history of the very last period. Rather, the whole of New Testament salvation history is gradually arriving at the completion of end time history. The apostles and the first Christians lived in recognition of this. That's why they couldn't possibly have said, "My Lord isn't coming for a long time" two millennia ago, as the wicked servant in Matthew 24:48 did. Even then they were consciously living in the last hour, in the end time, and that's why certainty was at the center of their thought, speech, and actions: *Jesus is coming!* That was their motivation.

However, we're no longer living in the last hour of salvation history, but in the last second! "Behold, he cometh with clouds."

Who were the first recipients of the Revelation of Jesus Christ as given through John? After the powerful introduction, he turns directly to them. It seems almost Old

Testament-like when he begins writing in letter form in verse 4: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is..." Whoever is born again belongs to this community that was purchased with blood, and now hears the Holy Spirit's affirmation in his heart when reading the first praise in Revelation: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (v. 6).

This first doxology comes from John, who is still on earth, while all the succeeding transfigured saints and the heavenly beings are ascending, praising God and the Lamb.

What was John's secret, that so much from the Lord was revealed to him? No other apostle was shown such powerful things as he was. If we yearn for the Lord to reveal Himself through our lives, then we ought to know John's secret. He wasn't a particularly well-read man. His writings testify to a small vocabulary. But John was the only one of the twelve disciples to persevere at the cross of Calvary until Jesus died. This one, who had been called a "son of thunder" by the Lord, also died to himself there. So, in his gospel he doesn't even dare to speak of himself in the first person, but writes in the third person. He no longer wants to distinguish himself, but says, "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe" (John 19:35).

Now that he has seen Jesus, the Lamb of God, he no longer dares to distinguish himself. Following the masses, having looked at Jesus and persevered with Him at the place of crucifixion, we no longer dare

The Coming of Jesus and the Mystery of John

We can't lead others—by a tract or a testimony—beyond where we ourselves are.



to put ourselves in the foreground. All who seek glory from men have never seen Jesus! Whoever has seen Jesus in His bitter suffering and death on the cross at Calvary, hates himself, steps into the background and begs, “Lord, reveal Yourself!” Such a person is no Pharisee, proud of his own piety.

John can't avoid mentioning himself occasionally, when he wants to testify to what he has seen. But he goes the long way around himself. For example, in John 13:23, “Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.” Because of this, the Lord could say through him in Revelation 2:4, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” He could only speak of the loss of first love because he loved the Lord so much. We can't lead others—by a tract or a testimony—beyond where we ourselves are.

John's extinguished nature is particularly evident in his introduction. In Revelation 1:4, he doesn't say, “John, an apostle and servant of Jesus Christ chosen from the womb,” but simply gives his name. So, he

even renounces his title, as for example Paul and Peter rightly used, so that the recipients of the letter immediately knew who they were dealing with. But John, who saw the crucified Christ and looks to the returning Lord, simply says, “John to the seven churches which are in Asia.”

Next, he speaks a blessing of the triune God over the seven churches, referencing God the Father first: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” Then he refers to the Holy Spirit: “and

from the seven Spirits which are before his throne.” And finally, he references the Son: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth” (v. 5). He praises the Son: “to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever” (v. 6), and then the message immediately follows: “Behold, he cometh with clouds” (v. 7).

No one on earth can escape the encounter with Jesus Christ. John explicitly emphasizes in verse 7 that “every eye (i.e. the nations) shall see him, and they also which pierced him (i.e. Israel).” When He comes with the clouds, He will appear as the “faithful witness” to Israel and the “first begotten of the dead” to the church. He comes as the “prince of the kings of the earth” for the nations. Those purchased by His blood and His return are mention in the same breath. Verse 5: “him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” Verse 7: “Behold, he cometh with clouds...” This proves that because of Jesus' blood, those who are born again are one body with Him! (MR0919/1031)

Living in Imminent Expectation

Norbert Lieth

Can we count on the second coming of Jesus within our lifetime? What does the Bible say about it? Is it mere speculation, or a fundamental necessity? Which is worse: expecting the Rapture at any moment, or not expecting it at all?



Living in Imminent Expectation

When was the last time you urgently prayed for Jesus to come again soon?



John Fletcher once wrote in a letter to John Wesley regarding the right attitude toward expecting Jesus' return, "I know many have been mistaken as to years; but because they were rash, shall we be stupid? Because they said 'to-day,' shall we say 'never,' and cry 'peace, peace' when we should look about us with eyes full of expectation?"

Gerard Kramer said, "We should perhaps ask ourselves how it happens that we aren't a bit more excited about the return of Jesus Christ."

William MacDonald stated, "It is not enough to hold the truth about His coming: the truth must hold us."

And Calvin made the comment, "The believers' most important concern should be focusing their thoughts fully on His return."

Peter writes to the members of the Church of Jesus concerning how they should be distinguished by "holy conversation [conduct] and godliness," "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Pet 3:12).

We're not simply called to expect the Lord's coming, but to hasten to meet him. John MacArthur wrote in a note in his Study Bible, "To hasten towards means to long for a certain thing to happen."

Where can this longing be found? How far have we already drifted from this biblical call? The Church's situation seems like a ship that is moving further and further away from the lighthouse and the destination, the safe harbor, and becoming lost in the waves of the world. Only a few are left standing in the crow's nest [lookout point], shouting "Land ho!"

Dr. Robert Fischer wrote, "Thy kingdom come! Faith that Christ will return to judge the living and the dead has become an unpreached and unbelieved article of faith."

Has the enemy succeeded in robbing the church of the hope of Jesus' return? Has this topic moved from the center of our preaching to somewhere on the periphery? Are we still even asking about Jesus' return? Do we more resemble the faithful or the unfaithful servant (Luke 12:41-46)? When was the last time you urgently prayed for Jesus to come again soon?

Paul writes the Thessalonians with praise: "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:9-10).

Here again, a commentary by John MacArthur from his Study Bible: "to wait. This is a recurring theme in the Thessalonian letters...These passages indicate the imminency of the deliverance; it was something Paul felt could happen in their lifetime."

In my opinion, there is only one reason why the apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, needed to write “we” over and over: imminent expectation should be maintained. The Rapture should be relevant for every generation in every time, because it could happen at any moment.

The Bible teaches the imminent expectation of the Lord all too clearly. It doesn't teach that the Rapture must still be preceded by certain signs and events. Therefore, we're not waiting for the Tribulation or the Antichrist or the number 666. Why? Because we're anticipating Jesus. There's no list of events that would have to occur before Jesus Christ brings His Church home. The Lord Jesus never taught that, and His apostles never said that.

As soon as we preface the Lord Jesus' return with something else, we automatically anticipate that thing beforehand and Jesus Christ only secondarily. But the Bible tells us what we should be expecting first in the following places:

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit 2:13). “Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:7). “Maranatha” (1 Cor 16:22). “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20). “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:10). “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28). “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 21).

All of these Bible passages show that the Lord Jesus could return at any time. When Paul writes about the impending Rapture, he especially emphasizes the word “we”:

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. [...] Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:14-15, 17).

Why does the apostle write “we,” although he himself didn't experience the Rapture? There are several possibilities:

– Paul was mistaken, so he wasn't inspired by the Holy Spirit when he wrote that down. But that's impossible, because he writes, “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord.”

– The Holy Spirit was wrong. This is equally impossible and needs no further explanation.

– God did indeed give this word to Paul, but later changed His mind. However, the Bible cannot contradict itself. There is continual revelation in the Word of God, but none that contradicts itself (“...the scripture cannot be broken”: John 10:35).

In my opinion, there is only one reason why the apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, needed to write “we” over and over: imminent expectation should be maintained. The Rapture should be relevant for every generation in every time, because it could happen at any moment. The born-again of every generation should be able to say “we.” No one knows the time of the Rapture, because Jesus could come back at any moment.

(MR1019/1041)

WORLD FOCUS

INDIA

Plans for First Human in Space

India's space agency says that four astronaut candidates have been selected for its first human mission, targeted to launch by 2022, but they've not been publicly named or identified.



Members of the press cover the launch of the solar-powered rover Chandrayaan-2 in September. The goal was a moon landing, but the craft crashed. Another attempt to send a rover to the moon is underway.

Manjunath Kiran/AFP via Getty Images

India hopes to join the United States, Russia and China as the world's fourth nation capable of sending people to space. It has been developing its own crewed spacecraft, called Gaganyaan (or "sky vehicle" in Sanskrit), that would let two to three people orbit Earth on a weeklong spaceflight.

K Sivan, chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization, said his agency had government approval for its next robotic moon mission, Chandrayaan-3, and that work is already underway. That mission could launch in 2021.

India's first successful lunar mission, Chandrayaan-1, put a spacecraft in orbit

around the moon in 2008 and then later sent a probe hurtling toward the moon's south pole, where it deliberately crashed and released material that got analyzed by the orbiter's scientific instruments, helping to confirm the presence of water ice on the moon.

Then, in 2014, India put a satellite in orbit around Mars, beating its space rival China to the red planet and becoming the fourth national space agency to reach Mars.

So far, however, the only citizen of India to fly in space is Rakesh Sharma, an Indian Air Force pilot who traveled on a Russian spacecraft in 1984.

-www.npr.org, 1 January 2020

Commentary: India prides itself as the world's largest democracy, with a population of approximately 1.3 billion. Eighty percent are Hindu, 14% Muslim, and 2.3% Christian. Life expectancy stands at 69.1 years, and per capita GDP is listed at \$7,200. India's economy is now the third largest in the world, at \$9.4 trillion.

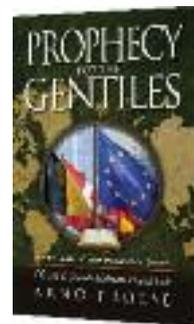
India, like all other nations on planet earth, is equally subject to the god of this world. Because of their success, having reached third place economically worldwide, finances are available to reach the moon. Why to the moon? Because it is the prestige of the nations; everyone wants to be the greatest, the privileged, the favored of their god. But the prophet Obadiah has this to say: "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord" (Obadiah 4). Although this prophecy is directly addressed to Edom, the nations are included, "...We have heard a rumour from the Lord, and

an ambassador is sent among the heathen" (verse 1). After the prophet accuses Edom

and exposes their wrongdoing, he writes: "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen" (verse 15a).

7160

(See *Prophecy for the Gentiles*, Item #1082, \$12.50.)



CHINA

New Call to Protect Data Privacy

China produces huge amounts of online data—and little of it is protected. That has led to a thriving market for stolen personal information, from national identification numbers to home addresses.



A pedestrian uses a smartphone while standing under surveillance cameras in Beijing last May.

Giulia Marchi/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Some of it is used for state surveillance, while much of it is used for private extortion and fraud.

But increasing public concerns about privacy and surveillance have spurred a nascent movement to secure people's data. Lone ad-

(continued next page)

Data Privacy (continued from page 26)

vocates are pushing to hold people accountable for selling stolen personal info. Hackers and bloggers have been posting DIY fixes online to teach others how to encrypt communications or evade surveillance.

“We trade our data privacy for convenience,” says Wu Dong, once a hotel reviewer who has become a campaigner for harsher penalties for personal data thieves.

Wu’s crusade began last year, when he hid a camera in his hotel room to expose substandard cleaning practices. His video went viral.

In retaliation, hotel staff leaked his information—personal details that Chinese hotels collect for the Public Security Ministry.

Wu spent tens of thousands of dollars trying to track down who put his documents online. A hotel employee was eventually fined 500 yuan, or about \$80, for passing on the leak. But beyond that, the trail went cold. Wu never found out who initially doxed him.

“If the Internet develops further as it is today, privacy eventually will be the most expensive commodity in a society,” says Yang Geng, an entrepreneur working to prevent such leaks. He was once Amazon China’s chief security officer but left to start Entropage, a company that provides encryption tools users can add to email and messaging apps.

In January 2019, the state cyberspace regulator announced a stronger stance on data collection. Mobile apps “have played an irreplaceable role in promoting economic and social development and serving people’s livelihood,” it said, but the excessive collection of personal information was “abundant” and “very prominent.”

And there is rising demand for data privacy amid growing awareness of state surveillance. A recent study by a research center affiliated with a prominent Chinese newspaper said 74% of respondents opposed the use of facial recognition identity verification methods, largely because they feared the biometric

data collected would not be sufficiently protected.

“What the people are most afraid of is the endless demands of the state power for personal information of citizens, and the use of this information to combat and control all acts of resistance,” one of the founders of Pincong, who declined to give their name because of the political sensitivity of their work, tells NPR. “Only absolute security can guarantee free speech.”

-www.npr.org, 5 January 2020

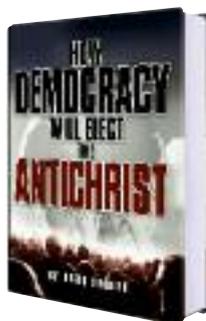
Commentary: Advancements regarding the Internet, artificial intelligence, and robotics are only in the beginning stages. No one can really predict the future development of these technologies, except to say there is no end in sight.

How do we view this development from a Biblical-prophetic perspective? Here again, we reiterate: the world must become one. With the Internet being an undeniable reality, it is the

tool that will usher in total control—total “free speech,” but within the parameters dictated by the prevailing government or, in the end, by Antichrist.

7161

(See *How Democracy Will Elect the Antichrist*, Item #1064, **SALE \$10.**)



USA Facial-Recognition Expanded for Global Travelers

The United States Customs and Border Protection agency (CBP) has announced an expansion of its facial recognition screening program for its optional Global Entry program.

 The CBP has been behind a rollout of facial recognition systems at a number of ports of entry across the country over recent months, including deployments at international airports.



JONI HANE BUTT/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Initial trials for facial recognition scans by the CBP began in a pilot program in 2018 at the Orlando International Airport, and the program has since been expanded to include 14 more airports, including two in Ireland and one in the Bahamas.

The system will operate by having passengers step up to the kiosks and have their faces scanned by the cameras. The image captured will then be matched against a gallery of images compiled from one of CBPs Automated Targeting System, ATS, the Unified Passenger Module, or UPAX.

The impact statement also notes that the passport and fingerprint method will remain as an option to anyone not willing to use the facial recognition program, and that should there be any technical issues with facial recognition, the kiosks will default to the passport and fingerprint method.

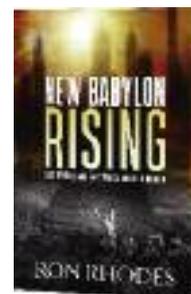
-findbiometrics.com, 17 January 2020

Commentary: Two words come to mind: security and control. The technology does exist, but will have to be implemented in increments until everyone agrees to this method of security and registration. While there are some opposing voices, it stands to reason that security registration will have the upper hand eventually.

All this is in preparation for the final government, a global authority that will guarantee peace, prosperity, and security—albeit temporarily.

7162

(See *New Babylon Rising*, Item #2359, \$16.99.)



 ISRAEL

Measuring Stone Found from Second Temple

A rare tabletop used for measuring liquids is among the finds uncovered by archaeologists at a site they believe may have been the location of a major town square en route to the Second Temple 2,000 years ago.

 Excavations in the City of David National Park by the Israel Antiquities Authority have brought to light dozens of stone measurement weights of various sizes, in addition to the tabletop, indicating that the site was once a bustling marketplace in what was known as Jerusalem's lower city.

The key find is a section of a "standard volume" table featuring two deep cavities, each with a drain hole at the bottom. The hole could easily be plugged, the cavity filled to the brim giving a standard volume, and the plug then removed to allow the liquid to drain into a container, said Prof. Ronny Reich, who is researching the find.



A portion of a 'standard volume' table, uncovered at the Pilgrimage Road archaeological site in Jerusalem
(photo credit: Israel Antiquities Authority)

"This is a rare find," he said. "Other stone artifacts were very popular in Jerusalem during the Second Temple [era]. However, so far, excavations in Jerusalem have only uncovered two similar tables that were used for measuring volume—one during the 1970s in the Jewish Quarter excavations, and another in the Shuafat excavations in northern Jerusalem."

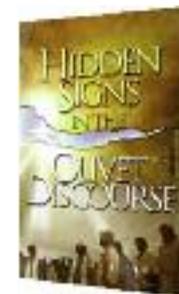
According to Reich, more than 90% of stone weights of this type date back to the Second Temple period, making them a unique Jerusalem phenomenon.

Meanwhile, Nahshon Szanton, Moran Hagbi and Meidad Shor of the Israel Antiquities Authority, who directed the excavations along the

Pilgrimage Road, have uncovered a large open paved area on the street that led up to the Second Temple. The area appears to have served as the main square of the lower city, which would likely have attracted tradespeople and customers alike.

-www.jpost.com, 6 January 2020

Commentary: The mighty temple, which stood on Mount Moriah during the times of Jesus, virtually disappeared. When one travels the Mediterranean countries or Europe, there are volumes of evidence clearly demonstrating the Roman Empire's power, might, and culture. But when it comes to Jerusalem, only tiny bits and fragments are being discovered; thus, precisely fulfilling the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "...See ye not all these things? verily I say unto



you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2).

7157

(See *Hidden Signs in the Olivet Discourse*, Item #1060, \$10.95.)

WORLD

Efforts to Ban Spanking

In a story published in October [2018], a study on spanking found a "fairly robust" association between corporal punishment and youth violence. Sweden was the first country to prohibit corporal punishment of children, in 1979. Since then, the number of nations that had banned the practice had risen to 54. What's the current status of the campaign to prohibit corporal punishment of children?

 [In 2019], two more countries made physical punishment of children illegal in all settings, including at home, with France and Kosovo bringing the total to 56.

Other countries are also moving toward prohibition, says Joan Durrant, professor of community health science at the University of Manitoba. A constitutional court in South Africa is weighing the legality of a current law that allows corporal punishment of children. Japan, Scotland, Wales and Italy are also moving in that direction, she says.

[A] UNICEF statement [said], "Contrary to the impression that the law encroaches on parents' right to discipline their child, this law seeks to promote positive discipline instead of corporal punishment—a severe form of violence against children."

"There have been at least 100 studies that show [corporal punishment] has no positive impact on children," says Durrant—only neg-

ative ones such as increased aggression, more mental health problems and damaged family relationships.

[A study found that] spanking occurred in 43% of the households, and those children who were spanked showed lower levels of emotional and social development and well-being than those who [were] not.

"Our findings suggest that spanking seems to be harmful on a global scale," says lead author Garrett Pace of the University of Michigan's School of Social Work, and the study adds to the empirical knowledge base about the negative impact of spanking on children. "There are some skeptics out there, but the majority of researchers think that the bans do matter."

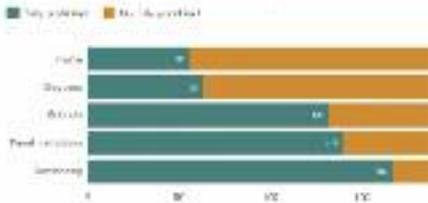
-www.npr.org, 3 September 2019

(continued next page)

Spanking (continued from page 28)

Corporal Punishment Of Children

This chart shows the number of countries that use corporal punishment on children, and the number of countries that do not use it.



Commentary: Needless to say, this non-spanking campaign is contrary to the fundamentals of Scripture. Proverbs 13:24 declares: “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” Chapter 22, verse 15 confirms: “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” However, a number of studies indicate that corporal punishment “has no positive impact on children.” Doubtless, this includes the misuse of authority by parents and educators. Many of us in the older generation still bear the scars of physical punishment. The other side of the coin, however, is the global tendency to reverse all Biblical foundations.

This writer has lived and worked on three continents, and has witnessed the progress being made globally. The brutality that occurred during childhood in those days is now virtually unimaginable. Today’s children—not all, but in general—are better behaved, less prone to violence, and academically way ahead of any previous generation.

Nevertheless, Christian parents who read the Holy Scripture and have fellowship with the Lord, know precisely what to do and what not to do. We re-emphasize that the

tendency of breaking, altering, and changing all Biblical principles is prophesied and will come to pass.

7173

(See *Why Believe the Bible?* Item #2292, **SALE \$10.**)



RUSSIA
Hypersonic Missiles Deployed

Russia’s first regiment of Avangard hypersonic missiles has been put into service, the defense ministry says.

President Vladimir Putin has said the nuclear-capable missiles can travel more than 20 times the speed of sound and put Russia ahead of other nations.

They have a “glide system” that affords great maneuverability and could make them impossible to defend against.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu confirmed the “Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle entered service at 10:00 Moscow time on 27 December,” calling it a “landmark event.”

Mr. Putin said the Avangard system could penetrate current and future missile defense systems, adding: “Not a single country possesses hypersonic weapons, let alone continental-range hypersonic weapons.”

Hypersonic missiles, as their name implies, fly very fast, at above Mach 5—i.e. at least five times the speed of sound.

They can be cruise-type missiles, powered throughout their flight. Or, they can be carried aloft on board a ballistic missile from which the hypersonic “glide vehicle” separates and then flies to its target.

It is not so much the speed of the hypersonic weapon alone that counts. It is its extraordinary maneuverability as it glides towards its target.

This poses a huge problem for existing anti-missile defense systems.

Indeed the glide vehicle’s trajectory, “surfing along the edge of the atmosphere” as one expert put it to me recently, presents any defensive system with additional problems.

Thus, if Russia’s claims are true, it has developed a long-range intercontinental missile system that may well be impossible to defend against.



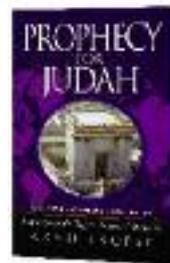
A still from the defense ministry video shows an Avangard warhead (computer simulation)

-www.bbc.com, 27 December 2019

Commentary: The nuclear arms race seems to be on again. With this dangerous weapon, missile defense systems seem to be out-manuevered. But that’s not the end, because other nations will also develop destructive weapons, with the clear intention to protect from an Avangard Hypersonic Missile. Here we are reminded of the words of the prophet Joel: “Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come

up: Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong” (Joel 3:9-10). 7166

(See *Prophecy for Judah*, Item #1084, \$17.50.)



ISRAEL
Biblical Town of Emmaus Found?

Archaeologists in Israel may have discovered the Biblical town of Emmaus, which is linked to Jesus’ resurrection and the Ark of the Covenant.

Haaretz reports that archaeologists have uncovered the remains of a 2,200-year-old fortification at Kiriath-Jearim, a hill on the outskirts of Abu Ghosh, a village near Jerusalem.

In Luke 24:13-35 Emmaus is described as being about 7 miles from Jerusalem. This cor-

(continued next page)

TURKEY

First Homemade Electric Car Unveiled

Turkey unveiled its first fully domestically-produced car, saying it aimed to eventually produce up to 175,000 a year of the electric vehicle in a project expected to cost 22 billion lira (\$3.7 billion) over 13 years.

 Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, Erdogan said Turkey aimed not only to sell the car domestically but also wanted it to become a global brand, starting with Europe.

Following his speech, a red SUV model of the car and another grey sedan one were raised onto the stage, sporting the TOGG label of the consortium that is building them.

Erdogan said the charging infrastructure for electric cars would be ready nationwide by 2022.

Turkey is already a big exporter to Europe of cars made domestically by firms such as Ford, Fiat Chrysler, Renault, Toyota and Hyundai.

The new project, launched in October, will receive state support such as tax breaks, and establish a production facility in the automotive hub of Bursa in northwest Turkey, according to a presidential decision in the country's Official Gazette.

Emmaus (continued from page 29)

responds with the distance between Kiriath-Jearim, Abu Ghosh and Jerusalem.

Kiriath-Jearim is also mentioned in the Bible as one of the places where the Ark of the Covenant stood. [In 2018 Tel Aviv University Professor Israel] Finkelstein and his fellow researchers reported that the site of Kiriath-Jearim is the hill on the outskirts of Abu Ghosh.

"The finds at Kiriath-Jearim hint at its long-term role as guarding the approach to Jerusalem," he explained, via email. "This can be seen in the Iron Age, Hellenistic and early Roman periods. The Hellenistic and Roman period remains shed light on the much-debated issue of the location of the New Testament's Emmaus."

Five models of the car will be produced, the statement said, adding the government had guaranteed to buy 30,000 of the vehicles by 2035.

In October, Volkswagen said it had postponed a final decision on whether to build a car plant in Turkey amid international criticism of an October Turkish military operation in Syria.

-www.reuters.com, 26 December 2019

Commentary: Here we see how the environmental issue is virtually forcing nations around the world to produce electric vehicles. Turkey's imports stand at \$225.1 billion, with \$166.2 billion in exports. Export partners are listed as: Germany 9.6%, UK 6.1%, UAE 5.9%, Iraq 5.8%, USA 5.5%, Italy 5.4%, France 4.2%, and Spain 4% for 2019. Turkey, a member of NATO, has caused displeasure and criticism throughout the western world. But, as these simple facts reveal, their economy and industry are well-integrated into the global system. Turkey was the first Muslim-majority country to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with Israel in March 1949, three months after the United States did.

Historically speaking, the Ottoman Turkish Empire controlled most of the southern Mediterranean countries and many of the European Balkan countries: nearly surrounding

The prominent Israeli archaeologist is renowned for taking an "evidence-based" approach to his research, which acknowledges the complexity of Biblical texts. "Reading the Bible, it is important to distinguish historical facts from the ideological/theological stances of the authors," he told Fox News in 2017.

-www.foxnews.com, 9 September 2019

Commentary: Indeed, "reading the Bible" is very important to understand archaeological discoveries. An article by CoralTours.org reads:

"Per a recent article in the *Times of Israel*, archaeologists plan to excavate the ancient site of Kiryat Ye'arim (transliterated Kiriath

the shores of the Black Sea. But the empire was reduced to its present borders after World War II.

When Jesus speaks about the end times, He makes a peculiar statement in Luke 21:29: "And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees." The fig tree, of course, represents Israel. Only Luke adds, "...and all the trees." Indeed, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, numerous other countries around the world gained their independence. That simply means the reawakening of ancient nations such as Turkey. This can also apply to China, India, and even to Britain, clearly exhibited by Brexit. It is the idea to go back to history, and make the nation "great" again. That, however, can no longer happen, because all the nations of the world are interconnected to such an extent that just a slight variance could upset the balance and cause global catastrophe.

Regarding Israel, the next verse reads: "When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand." We notice that it is not speaking of fruit, but as Mark clarifies, leaves: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near" (Mark 13:28). Indeed, we are in the end stages of the end times.

7154

(See *Jesus and the End Times*, Item #2356, SALE \$12.)

Jearim), one of the few biblical tells left in the Jerusalem hills which hasn't been systematically studied. Mentioned over a dozen times in the bible, Kiryat Ye'arim is located about 7 miles west of the Old City of Jerusalem. It is the site, according to the Bible, where the Ark of the Covenant rested for 2 decades after it was returned by the Philistines to the Israelites. Later, King David brought the Ark to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 13:5-8)."

7172

(See *Unveiling the Kings of Israel*, Item #2258, \$29.99)



 GERMANY

Town of Rungholt Vanishes

The exact location of Rungholt remains unclear. It is likely that Rungholt was situated on the island of Strand, which was overwhelmed by the Burchardi Flood of 1634, and of which the islets of Pellworm and Nordstrandischmoor and the Nordstrand peninsula are the only remaining fragments.



 One possible location is west of the Hallig Südfall, where in 1921 significant ruins were discovered: wells, trenches and part of a tidal lock. Another theory places Rungholt to the north of the Hallig Südfall.

Today it is widely accepted that Rungholt existed and was not just a local legend. Documents support this, although they mostly date from much later times (16th century). Archaeologists think Rungholt was an important town and port. It might have contained up to 500 houses, with about 3,000 people. Findings indicate trade in agricultural products and possibly amber. Supposed relics of the town have been found in the Wadden Sea, but shifting sediments make it hard to preserve them.

There definitely was a great storm known as the *Grote Mandrenke*, and sometimes also named after the saint Marcellus, on 15 or 16 January 1362. Estimates put the number of deaths at around 25,000. Possibly 30 settlements were destroyed, and the coastline shifted east, leaving formerly inhabited land in the tidal Wadden Sea.

-https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rungholt

Commentary: These findings seem to contradict the much-popularized global warming theory due to human activity. Super-storms with devastating tornados and great floods are historically proven.

Another article reports of the historic storm, *Grote Mandrenke*:

Saint Marcellus's flood or *Grote Mandrenke* (Low Saxon: "Great Drowning of Men") was an intense extratropical cyclone, coinciding with a new moon, which swept across the British Isles, the Netherlands, northern Germany, and Denmark (including Schleswig/Southern Jutland) around 16 January 1362, causing at least 25,000 deaths. The storm tide is also called the "Second St. Marcellus flood" because it peaked 16 January, the feast day of St. Marcellus. A previous "First St. Marcellus flood" drowned 36,000 people along the coasts of West Friesland and Groningen on 16 January 1219.

An immense storm tide of the North Sea swept far inland from England and the Netherlands to Denmark and the German coast, breaking up islands, making parts of the mainland into islands, and wiping out entire towns and districts such as: Rungholt, said to have been located on the island of Strand in North Frisia; Ravenser Odd in East Yorkshire; and, the harbour of Dunwich.

This storm tide, along with others of like size in the 13th century and 14th century, played a part in the formation of the Zuiderzee, and was characteristic of the unsettled and changeable weather in northern Europe at the beginning of the Little Ice Age.

-https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Marcellus's_flood

These are archeological facts, with dates and places recorded.

Furthermore, in Switzerland a discovery was made:

Dr. Christian Schlüchter's discovery of 4,000-year-old chunks of wood at the leading edge of a Swiss glacier was clearly not

cheered by many members of the global warming doom-and-gloom science orthodoxy.

This finding indicated that the Alps were pretty nearly glacier-free at that time, disproving accepted theories that they only began retreating after the end of the little ice age in the mid-19th century. As he concluded, the region had once been much warmer than today, with "a wild landscape and wide flowing river."

-wattsupwiththat.com, 8 August 2014

One more story:

Did Palm Trees Grow in the North Pole?

Palms grew in ice-free Arctic 50 million years ago: study ... The scientists, sampling sediments on a ridge on the seabed that was about 500 km (300 miles) from the North Pole 53.5 million years ago, found pollens of ancient palms as well as of conifers, oaks, pecans and other trees.

-www.reuters.com, 25 October 2009

Many scientists in this field come to vastly different conclusions, but one thing they all have in common is throwing around phenomenal timelines such as "53.5 million years ago." When reading the Bible, we have names, dates and places, thereby knowing that Creation took place around 6,000 years ago.

7177

(See You Can Understand the Book of Genesis, Item #2347, \$16.99.)

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Note: All letters will be answered by the Executive Editor, Arno Froese.

SAVED BY WATER... FAULTS OR SINS?... SPACE EXPLORATION

Saved by Water

Dear Brother Froese,

I, like most all readers of *Midnight Call*, look forward to and enjoy the magazine immensely. I really like “Letters to the Editor,” because you deal with people’s concerns. I ordered your book *Letters to the Editor*. I am writing regarding the Covington, KY letter (pages 127-128) entitled “Saved by Water?” I loved your response and agree with it 110%!

I’ve always been mystified by people’s misunderstanding of these Scriptures—“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit...” (John 3:5). Somehow, they always forget about verse 6. Jesus is clarifying that salvation is for mankind; we must be born of water (which, as verse 6 points out, is born of the flesh); then one has the opportunity to be born of the Spirit. Being born of the water in verse 5 speaks of the birth into this life; water baptism is symbolic of death to

this life of sin, and arising in newness of life because of your faith in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God! First John 5:6a helps to clarify: “This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” My hope is that this too will help make someone’s understanding a little easier, so their walk in this life will glorify God as your magazine does so well.

God bless and keep you on the path.

-J. Miller, CA

Answer: I appreciate your kind words and the additional interpretation regarding “saved by water.” Water in this case means the Word of God. Revelation 1:15b says: “his voice as the sound of many waters.” See also John 4:10, 14; 7:38; Ephesians 5:26. If the water means our physical life, then it is an unnecessary statement, because only a person who is born in the flesh is a candidate to be born again by hearing the Word of God. Upon receiving Jesus as Lord, one is baptized with the Holy Spirit, thus born again.



Faults or Sins?

Thank you for your article in the January *Midnight Call* (on “Sexual Immorality”). It is very effective in that it touches on things Christians don’t talk about.

Regarding the NIV quoted passage James 5:16 (on page 25), the KJV does not say sins, but faults. The Roman Catholics love it to get people into the confessional.

We confess our sins to God (as you know), and our faults for others to help us.

The only Bible the English-speaking people had for nearly 400 years was the King James Bible.

-K. Estes, FL

Answer: The word “faults” in the government translation (KJV) is the Greek word *paraptoma*, defined in *Strong’s Greek Dictionary* as “fall, fault, offence, sin, trespass.” Allow for the possibility of different translations using different words.

Space Exploration

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I write to say how much I enjoy *Midnight Call*, and in reference to something from the September 2019 issue. It was under “World Focus” and titled “Successful Moon Landing” (pages 31-32). You pose a question as to the purpose for India to be so involved in space exploration and putting a rover on the moon. You answer your question with, as you say, “one word: pride.” For those who set themselves a nest among the stars, declares the Lord through Obadiah, they shall be brought down. Still, I could not settle myself on the idea of condemning the Indian exploration as sin, i.e. pride, and letting it go at that. I think of God, the Creator mag-

nificent who takes great joy in His creation: all of it, man, animals, earth and space. God, in putting Job into a correct understanding of His greatness, asks, “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the chords of Orion? Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth?” (Job 38:31-32).

I believe God is quite pleased with His heavenly creation, and given a proper attitude by His human creation, He would welcome and has blessed our exploration of it. God proclaims in Genesis 1:14 of the heavens which separate the day and the night, “let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.” Men of Issachar could watch the heavens and thus understood the times (1 Chronicles 12:32).

Can we begin to know, even in these last days, what wondrous discoveries might lead to cures of human maladies, stop the suffering of children, or feed more poor than gleaning, all spun from a laboratory’s accelerator after exploration of space? More importantly, can we know another man’s heart? Can or should we ascribe guilt of sin to everyone attached to a nation’s space exploration program?

I am reminded of the poem by John Gillespie Magee Jr., the last lines which read, “while with silent, lifting mind I’ve trod, the high untrespassed sanctity of space, put out my hand and touched the face of God.” President Reagan quoted this poem after the Shuttle disaster many years ago. When it comes to space exploration, the heavens are a creation which reveals



Letters to the Editor

the very nature of our God. We should relish every touch we can have with it.

-R. Riggs, OK

Answer: May I be blunt? There is no such thing as space exploration. It's just fantasy. The distance to the nearest planet beyond the solar system is unknown; scientists have differences of opinion, since it is measured from the earth, and that differs depending on the time. Here Wikipedia states: "The nearest planet was then as close as 12 light-years away." Keep in mind that light travels 300,000 kilometers in one second, so one year would almost equal 10 trillion kilometers. The fastest airliner would take over 1 million years to fly this distance.

Incidentally, the outright blasphemy John Gillespie Magee Jr. uses is self-incriminating: "the high untrodden sanctity of space, put out my hand and touched the face of God." That is a clear expression of pride and—based on my humble opinion—is the motivating force behind so-called space exploration. We must note the signs of the times. Also, keep in mind that when reading Holy Scripture, the only one who is proud is the devil, as documented in Isaiah 14:13-15: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the

heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

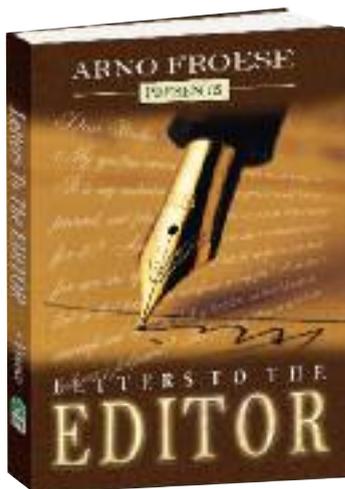
Gifts for Givers

I would like to know why Midnight Call Ministry does not send out appreciation tokens to customers who donate. Two other ministries that I donate to send out monthly newsletters, notepads, pens, calendars, coasters, stationery with Bible verses on them, etc. I didn't get anything in appreciation when Midnight Call had its 50th anniversary.

-B. Smith, GA

Answer: Your suggestion to send items to show our appreciation to those who donate to the ministry is quite complicated, and would actually require starting a new department; not to mention warehousing, inventory and shipping. However, what we have done in the past is send extra booklets, tracts, or calendars to those who have purchased from and donated to Midnight Call Ministry.

Incidentally, I can't recall whether we had any type of celebration except at the 25th anniversary. As days go by and I grow older, I find myself holding to the words of Paul: "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike" (Romans 14:5a). (MC)



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- Catholicism
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ITEM #1045

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 EGYPT

Missions Trip to the “Land of the Pharaohs”

From 31 August to 12 September in 2019, evangelist and our Egyptian coworker Elia Morise, his wife Ingeborg, my wife Elke, and I went on a missions trip to Egypt. A field report.

BY NORBERT LIETH

Our agenda included visits to various places, preaching in churches, attending a conference, meeting with local Christians, and sightseeing. The first stop was Cairo, the capital of the Nile, with over 20 million inhabitants. It's full of contrasts: rich and poor, modern and ancient, clean and dirty, religious and secular. The traffic is chaotic, but it works; the Egyptians are very friendly and like to laugh.

We visited a Coptic district. Much of the city's garbage is collected and sorted there, so, accordingly, the smell is in the air. The advantage for Coptic Christians is that they make a bit of money from it,

and extreme Muslims are reluctant to enter the area because it's impure for them. We saw biblical stories chiseled into the rock walls, and a large fish, the symbol of Christians, carved into stone on the road. We visited the head priest, an old, very faithful man. Then we were led to their meeting place. We couldn't believe our eyes: terraced benches with room for 17,000 people who gather once a week.

Within the next few days, invitations to visit with local families followed. The Christians there are cheerful, disciplined, diligent, and contribute a great deal to building the country and spreading the gospel. The government appears to be aware of this

▲ **“The pyramids, huge monuments to death. We remembered the God of life.”**
– Norbert Lieth



▲ **Some impressions from our trip to Egypt**

and is skirting around them to a certain extent under the current president. Nevertheless, believers must be on guard; there is always the danger of being targeted by extremists.

Various church services followed, as well as a beautiful wedding that Elia officiated. He's well-known in this country and is mobbed accordingly. His phone rings day and night, and he is tirelessly on the move; ready to help, advise, organize, and lead people to Jesus.

One church has a printing plant connected to it. As a ministry, we were able to finance a machine for them, which was proudly presented to us. For our part, we are grateful for the many donors who co-financed the project.

We visited the pyramids, huge monuments to death. We remembered the God of life, who sent Joseph into Egypt, who made the people of Israel prosper there, who called Moses, and even called His Son to Egypt. Life, in the midst of a world dominated by death and the attempt to overcome it; the ancient Egyptian art of embalming bears witness to this.

The Nile is a beautiful river, the sole lifeline in a nation surrounded by desert. It's easy to imagine how baby Moses drifted into the reeds in his little basket, and was discovered.

After a few days, we drove through the desert to Minya, an Islamic stronghold. We were monitored, interviewed, and accompanied by police accord-

ingly; partly for protection, and partly for observation. But the policemen were also very friendly.

We visited a different printing plant, which we had also been able to co-finance. Another, newer building was needed: we had been able to procure and deliver a Heidelberg printing press, as well as a cutting and folding machine. Sixteen young Christians have found work as a result, and are now able to look after their families. But, above all, the Word of God is being spread.

At the place where the conference was to take place, the ceiling had collapsed two days previously. It was good that a service hadn't been taking place at the time. We had to move to another building, but it turned out to be better because it was bigger and more modern. A few hundred people came, and a large youth group was present. Over 21,000 people watched over live stream. The topic that the organizers had asked me to cover was, "The Second Coming of Jesus, Illuminated by the Old Testament." I admittedly felt a little uneasy, since this couldn't be done without proclaiming Israel. Would Muslims be in the audience? How would the Christians react to Israel? I was able to get beyond my concerns and felt very free. Afterward, we only heard positive feedback regarding Israel. Once again, we were invited to visit local Christians, an architect who had sold us the building that houses the print shop. A very nice family; he owns property, with the firm intention of building a retirement home on it.



We continued to Ismailia, the city on the Suez Canal. On the way, we visited a family that runs a factory and does a lot for their country. In general, the Christians made an impression on us as very Spirit-filled, open-minded, and lively. They don't allow themselves to be thwarted, love Jesus and His message, and reach many outsiders with this love. At the door to one church's prayer room were the words, "Praying on your knees is more victorious than an army of marching soldiers."

Elia and his wife had lived and worked in Ismailia for many years. Their church was there, and we were allowed to conduct some services there. The meeting space is on the fourth floor of a house, which was impossible for the elderly or disabled to reach. That's why we decided to finance an elevator years ago. It's now in operation, and the church members are very grateful. We were also able to provide for a kitchen, and to equip an additional church hall on the fifth floor. It's wonderful that the Lord has opened doors for us in the Arab world, and that we

have an associate like Elia with so many contacts. And friends who support us in this work. To see how former Muslims have converted is fantastic.

Hope for people without hope. Completely veiled women who show no trace of skin, even wearing gloves in 40°C (104°F) heat, just because they are afraid of going to hell. And if

they get to paradise, they will only be made available to men there. Men and women without certainty. A common saying among the Muslims is, "God knows." Thus, they express their personal ignorance. "Have you been forgiven?" "I don't know, Allah knows."—"Are you loved by Allah? Are you going to paradise?" "I don't know, Allah knows." We want to convey the certainty of Jesus to these dear people. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

On the banks of the Nile, we saw a plaque which says, "You can't get to the other side of a river just by standing there and looking over longingly." We saw many Egyptian Christians who decided to do something: get in a boat, drive up, lend a hand. A great example, for us as well.

(MR1119)



"To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever" (Jude 25).

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“Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name” (Amos 5:8).

BY ARNO FROESE

The Creator of heaven and earth revealed Himself to the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and to the nation of Israel. The prophet Amos wrote the above words in approximately 787 BC, but the same God is inviting Israel—and through Israel the entire world—to “seek him.” What is the result when seeking Him? The answer is finding Him, for the Bible says, “seek, and ye shall find.” Whom do we find? The Creator of heaven and earth. John writes: “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3). But then the sad statement in verse 10: “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.”

There is an exception, and that is those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, who manifested Himself in the flesh. When we begin to realize this wonderful truth, we are transported to heavenly spheres, and the things of the world become insignificant.

On the other hand, if we ignore this eternal, incomprehensible fact, we will be deluded by the things of the world—primarily the products of man’s imagination.

While we are living in a very progressive era, where poverty is declining and riches are increasing, we as believers have entered the most dangerous time in all of history. When the Lord Jesus answers the disciples regarding the end, He makes this profound statement: “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4b).

What kind of deception is He speaking about? It is the deception that man is capable of solving all problems, with the aim of building a global, successful society marked by peace and prosperity. Today, we are living in that certain end-time dispensation.

Before Sodom and Gomorrah were judged, we read in Ezekiel 16:49: “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” The last

“Sodom and Gomorrah” is called “Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth” (Revelation 17:5b). She proudly testifies: “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow” (Revelation 18:7b). This level of pride and self-indulgence is also revealed in the church of Laodicea: “...I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17a). In summary, the future for the world is proclaimed to be glorious, albeit briefly.

An article was published in *The Jerusalem Post* headlined, “Israel unveils breakthrough laser to intercept missiles, aerial threats.” Here is an excerpt:

The Defense Ministry has made a technological breakthrough in the development of lasers that can intercept aerial threats, including rockets and anti-tank guided missiles, it announced.

Speaking about this new addition to the existing tools of war employed by Israel, Defense Minister Naftali Bennett said that “we will add a laser sword when dealing with threats from the North or the South.”

“This is a dramatic solution to rocket fire,” said Dubi Oster, head of the DDR&D Optronics Department. “We have been working on this for years. But it is challenging to get a good-quality beam to stay the size you need at the range you need... for example, a beam the diameter of a coin from here [in Tel Aviv] to Herzliya.”

According to Oster, the ministry was able to take several laser beams and, with an advanced algorithm, connect them to get one strong beam that is able to intercept and take down a variety of threats. Based on high-energy electric lasers rather than chemical laser technology, the robust system will complement the other layers of Israel’s aerial defenses and will be a strategic change in the defense capabilities of the state, the ministry said.

“During a war, missile interceptors will at one point run out, but with this system, as long as you have electricity, you have a never-ending supply,” said Brig-Gen. Yaniv Rotem.

"This is a weapon that you can't see or hear," Rotem said, adding that while it is not free since it runs on electricity, every interception will only cost a few dollars, as opposed to interceptor missiles that can run into the thousands.

"This technology enables the development of highly effective operational systems that will serve as an additional layer of defense to secure the State of Israel by air, land and sea," the ministry said.

-*www.jpost.com*, 9 January 2020

Israel exhibits confidence in its technological advantage over its potential enemies.

Also, something unusual happened at the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly, during voting on the special "Division for Palestinian Rights." The result was a surprise:

The resolution still passed by a whopping 87-23, with 54 abstentions. But what was significant was that 11 EU countries that abstained in the past this year joined Hungary—which broke ranks with the EU last year—and voted against the resolution.

Yinam Cohen, the director of the UN Political Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, said that the voting "marks a significant first step in the long way to change the bias against Israel in the UN."

According to Cohen, "for the first time, a major group of countries, many of which are EU member states, said enough is enough, and voted against a resolution that allocates UN budget and human resources to promote an anti-Israel agenda in the UN."

The resolution mandating a "Division for Palestinian Rights" is just one of a package of 20 annual anti-Israel resolutions that have passed in the UN General Assembly since the 1970s.

By contrast, there is only one General Assembly resolution at the UN dealing with Syria, one with Venezuela, and two dealing with the Russian-Ukrainian situation.

While the annual package of UN resolutions has not fundamentally changed anything on the ground, the resolutions do have an accumulative impact in that they shape the perception of Israel within the UN. Israel wants to be treated equally in the UN along with the other 193 countries, but the fact that there are so many resolutions against the Jewish state effectively sets the country apart in the world body.

As one official in Jerusalem dealing with the UN once put it: "We want to be seen as a normal country, but as long as these resolutions pass each year, we will not be a normal country"—at least not in the UN."

-*www.jpost.com*, 4 December 2019

Suddenly, Israel is being viewed from a different perspective; not only did some European nations vote no, but also a large number of Arab League countries abstained, who usually and automatically vote for any anti-Israel resolution. While we welcome this new development at the United Nations, we must keep in mind prophetic Scripture. Ezekiel proclaims: "...the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 13:16). Jeremiah states: "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14; cf. 8:11). For the Church of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul specifically identifies the time before the Lord's return with these words: "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3). ^{MC}

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“...You Shall Go Out in Joy and Be Led Forth in Peace” (Isaiah 55:12a).

By Amrei Garbe

(22, Germany)

After completing my training as a nurse in 2017, I had the opportunity to serve as a volunteer at Ebenezer Home.

I love my job as a registered nurse, and see it as a privilege to be able to work so closely with people. I find my job very rewarding and respect my patients very much, realizing that we carry a lot of responsibility with the intimate care of those who are sick and frail. In addition, the working conditions in many hospitals around the world are not optimal. This always presents me with a lot of challenges.

Shortly after completing my apprenticeship, I asked myself the question: If I were to volunteer at an elderly home, wouldn't I forget all that I had learned during my nursing studies? I was already afraid of starting work anyway, so I deliberately laid this question before the Lord and spent time seeking His direction. He clearly led me to the Ebenezer Home. At that time, I had no idea what to expect and, thank God, I had no choice but to trust Him completely. Today, I can say with astonishment, He knows me so much better than I know myself!

In the beginning, I decided to stay for six months, the minimum stay allowed. I quickly discovered how much more I could learn here. In fact, I can always draw parallels to my training back in Germany. Sometimes, it feels like this is just a progression with my learn-

ing. Even in things I was already familiar with, such as basic care, I have learned much more from the experiences I have had here. Many cultures come together, so for example, I was able to learn a lot from a nurse who is from the Faroe Islands. In addition, one of the special things I have loved about volunteering in the Ebenezer Home, is the amount of time we can spend with the residents.

One of our Holocaust survivors taught me a lot. This petite, elderly woman, had great difficulty trusting us. She often suspected that we wanted to “destroy” her. That's why she insisted and was determined, even though she had almost no strength left, to dictate every step of her care herself. In particular, she hardly accepted new employees who did not yet know her, and who were unaware of her care preferences.

The first time I looked after her alone, I spent a lot of time with her. I wanted to make it as pleasant as possible and go into complete detail on what I was going to do, to gain her trust. She looked me over and over for a long time. After what felt like an eternity, I finally decided to proceed with taking off her sweater. Suddenly, she stopped me and sternly asked, “Do you know how old I am?” A little surprised, I said I thought she was definitely very old. She said, “94. And how old are you?” I replied, “I'm in my early 20s...” Then she laughed briefly, and said very seriously again: “So who asks who here, before doing something!?” I had to smile inwardly, still very un-



sure of myself. How quickly these everyday, yet intimate things, become a matter of course for us...In the following months, we spent a lot of time together, and a deep friendship formed between us. Again and again, I realized what giving, but also taking care of someone, really is. Her heart softened, and in the end, she looked forward to my care, and trusted me. **One could visibly see she was completely content; not because of me or for me, but because of our Lord and for Him, Yeshua!** Finally, she was allowed to go home in complete peace.

This is just one of many stories I was able to witness, here at the Ebenezer Home. They all shaped me, and I will live on those experiences for a long time. But, apart from the area of care, my life has been greatly enriched. For example, I discovered new hobbies, while I continue to develop others. These hobbies

can also serve as compensation for my work. Above all, my faith was strengthened, which is a significant part of my job.

I have been living in Israel for nearly two years now. This is the maximum length of stay allowed, due to the type of visa. During this special time, I was able to grow closer to God's heart. Despite my initial fears, this stay has both strengthened and encouraged me. I have peace about working in a hospital back in Germany, and I look forward to learning more, growing in faith, and even the challenges that await me—because I know HE does all things well.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).



Note: Donations for the project by check/money order should be made out to Midnight Call, and specify Ebenezer Home in the memo line.

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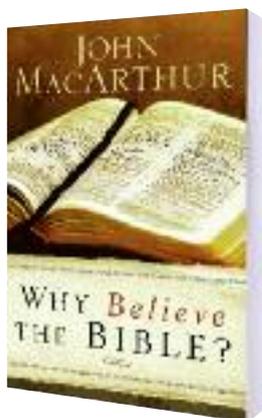
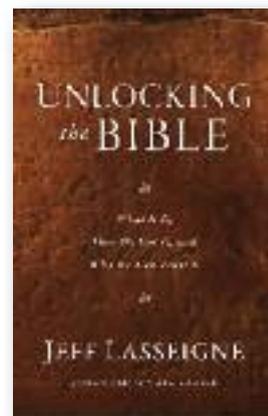
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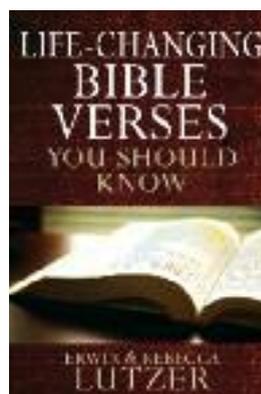
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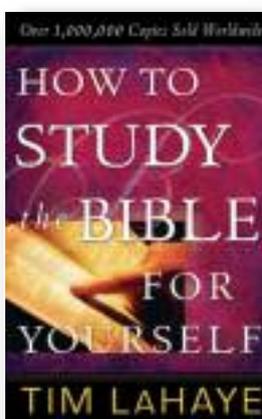
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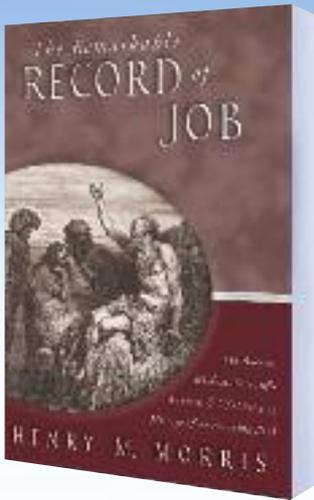
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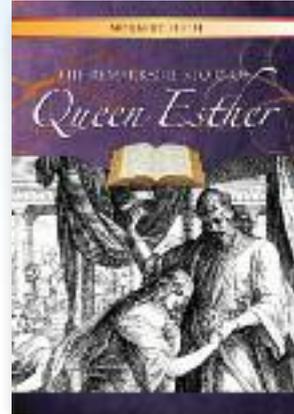
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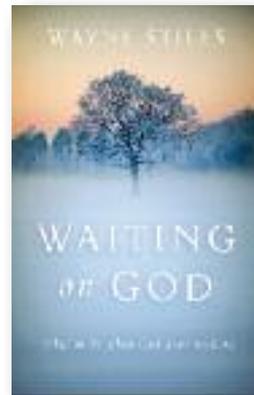
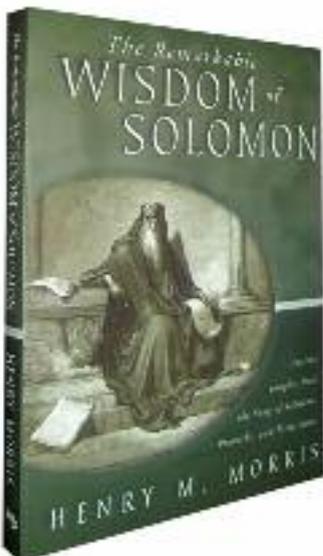


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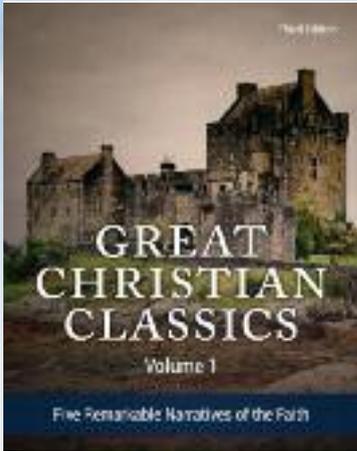
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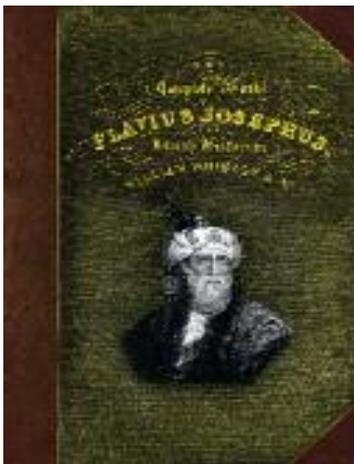
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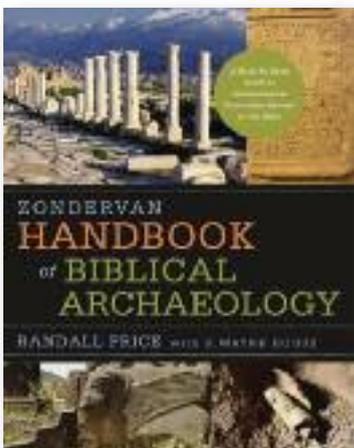
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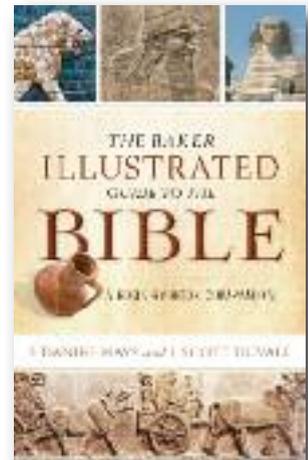


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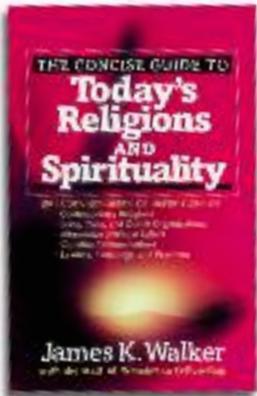
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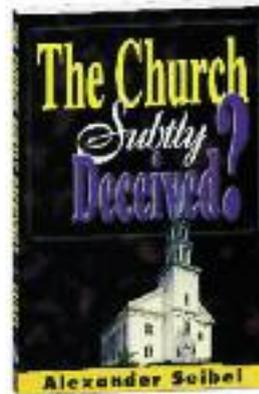
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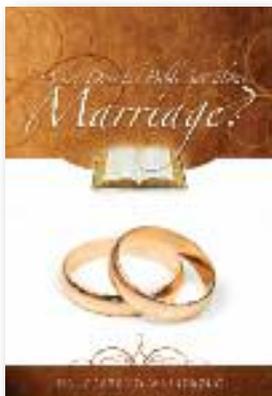


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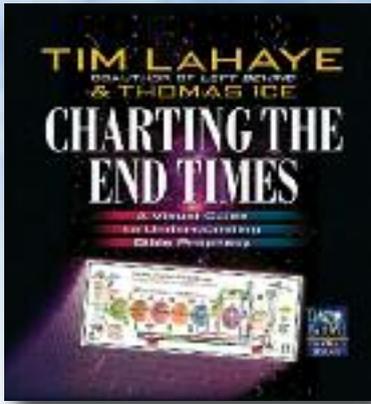
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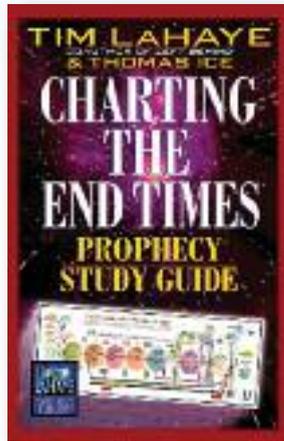
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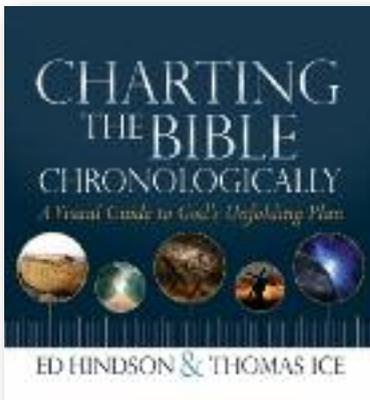
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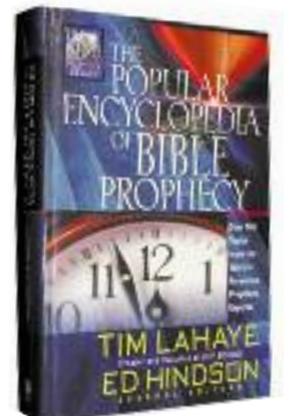
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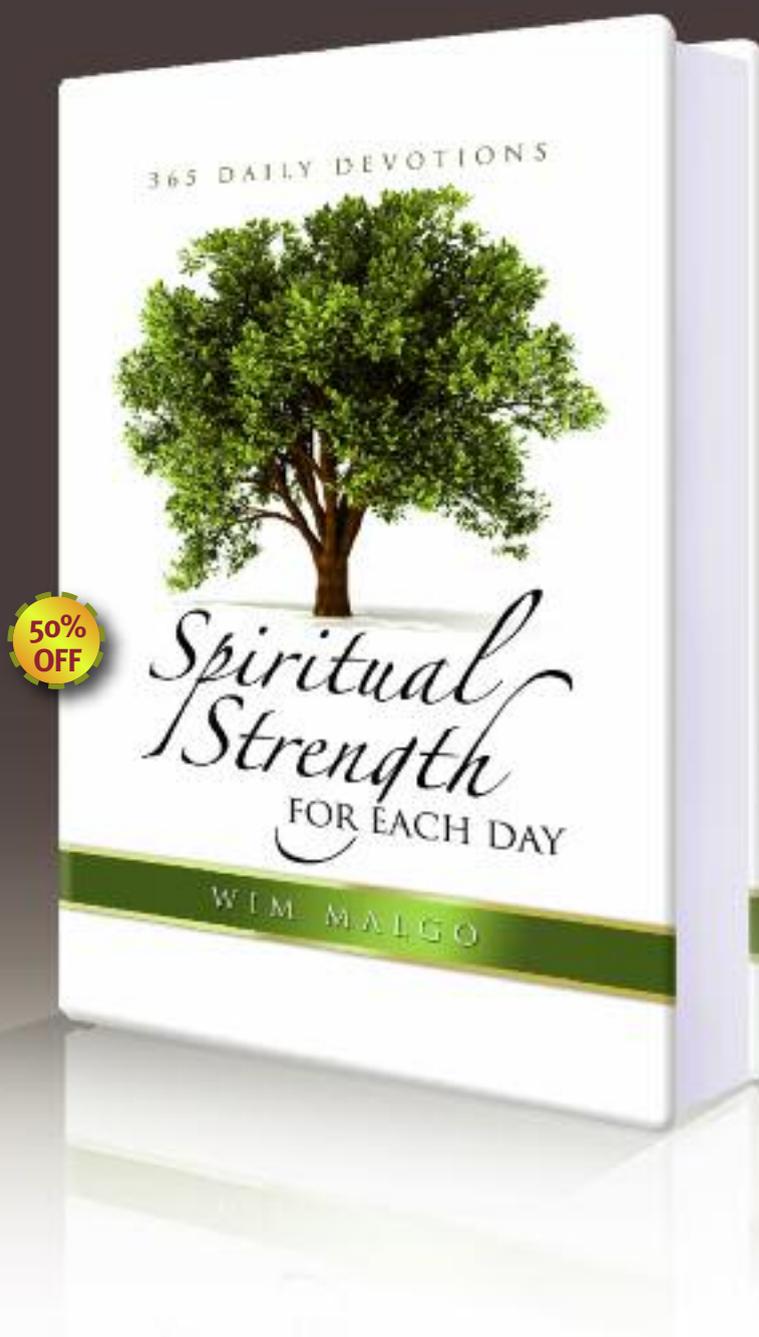
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