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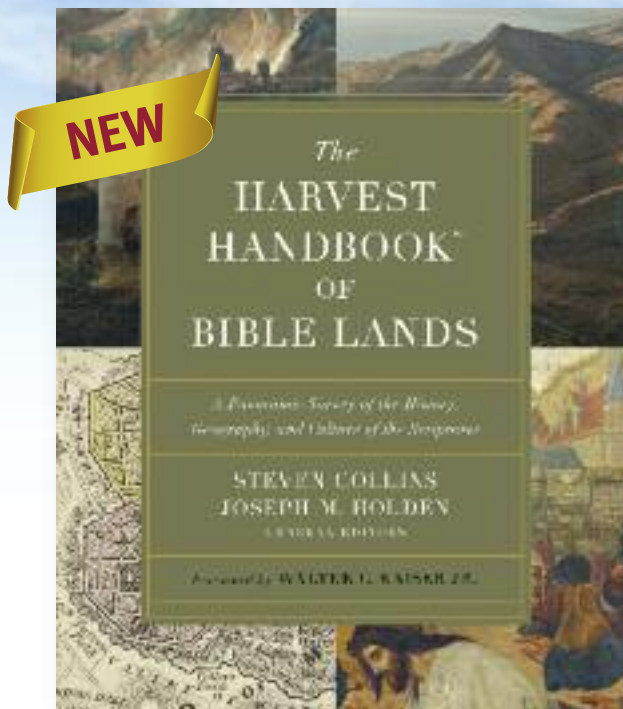
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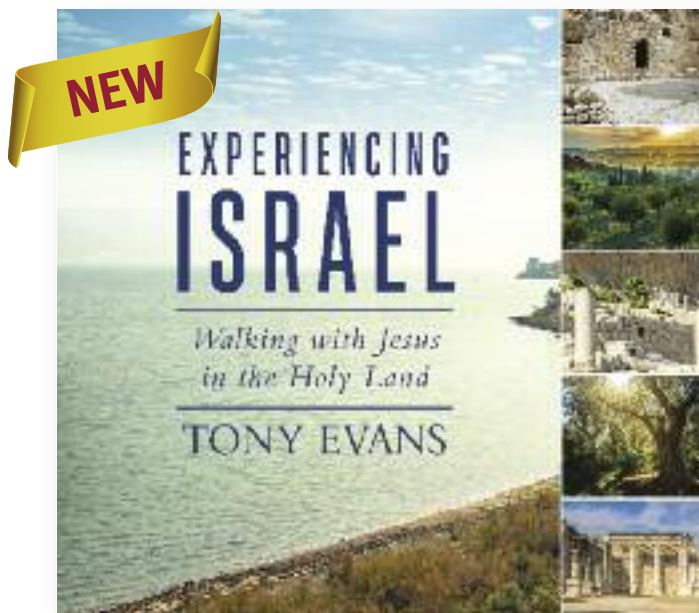
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Be a Lighthouse of Blessing...

By Govert Roos

Music Minister, Midnight Call International



During the past months of the coronavirus pandemic, a dear brother in the Lord has produced a number of short video messages. Each one closed with the invitation, “Be a lighthouse of blessing!” This spoke to me, and it corresponds to what the Lord Jesus appealed in the Sermon on the Mount:

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that

they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:14-16).

Until I was 18, I lived in Scheveningen. A former fishing village, it's now part of the city of The Hague in the Netherlands. A lighthouse towered just 150 meters from our home, right on the North Sea. We saw its searchlights quite a bit at night. A lighthouse is quite special, a very important tool for navigation. Nowadays, modern digital navigation aids diminish the relevance of lighthouses, but they can never completely replace the towers' light and their visual



Sunset in
Scheveningen,
Netherlands

EDITOR'S NOTE

navigation cues. Most notably, if GPS, electronics, or the power supply fail, lighthouses are an indispensable safeguard.

Scheveningen's lighthouse is 30 meters (nearly 100 feet) high, and its light reaches approximately 53 kilometers (33 miles). It shows the way, and thus the safe harbor, for people who are at sea. In thick fog, when the lighthouse's brightness doesn't radiate far enough, the penetrating tone of the fog horn sounds. Many people have certainly been saved by the lighthouse's brightness or the sound of the fog horn.

Just like a lighthouse, we want to be a light and give a clear signal in this dark world. Let's be used by our Lord and work for His cause. As our society becomes more godless, it needs such "lighthouses of blessing" more than ever. The mission field begins at our doorstep!

Paul says it this way: "That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15). And Jesus says: "You *are* the light of the world," not "Become the light of the world." We are already light. We don't have to strain to shine; we have to make sure that the light that is already shining within us isn't obscured, subdued, or hidden. The Lord grant me, and us, grace in this.

"Be a lighthouse of blessing!" (MC)

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OUR TASK

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WE BELIEVE in the divine inspiration of the whole Bible and there-
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WE BELIEVE Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was conceived of the
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WE BELIEVE in the pre-tribulational appearance of Jesus Christ for
the Rapture of His Church (all born again believers).

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bodies, and in the resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting
blessedness of the saved and the everlasting punishment of the lost.

COVID-19 and the Return of Jesus

Johannes Pflaum



The headline sounds sensational. But it isn't about revelations or speculations, but rather about examining the signs of the times in light of the Bible, and soberly categorizing them.

The Lord Jesus certainly asked the Pharisees and Sadducees to understand the signs of the times (Matt 16:1-4). The point is assessing developments in light of the prophetic Word (2 Pet 1:19). However, this is subordinate to an important basic biblical principle. Only the living God can direct history to its goal, according to His plan. Only He knows about the exact times (cf. Acts 1:7), and possible delays to or accelerations of end-time events.

The question arises: what does all of this have to do with the coronavirus pandemic? Wasn't there also the Spanish flu at the end of World War I, and the plague in the Middle Ages? Didn't people in those days think that events were taking place that suggested Jesus' return and the coming Judgment Day? It's true that these speculations have existed before. Nevertheless, it's worth taking a closer look at the current situation.

In Jesus' end-times discourse (Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 21), we can see various base-lines that are discernible in the events leading up to the Lord's return. Biblical interpreters have different insights into this end-times discourse. For example, some see the start of the labor pains prior to the Great Tribulation that Jesus had announced. For others, the events predicted only begin with the Tribulation. Regardless of how we think about it, the developments of redemptive history are always foreshadowed. We can also say that they announce themselves before their actual fulfillment comes to light. In this way, end-time lines emerge more and more clearly, until everything is finally fulfilled.

Scripture reveals another prominent indicator for evaluating the signs of the times; namely, Israel. In Deuteronomy 30:1-11, there is already talk of a future gathering of Israel and the fulfillment of the promises connected with it. In Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, as well as in other prophets, the coming judg-

ment on the nations and the establishment of God's visible rule (from a New Testament perspective: the return of Jesus) are also inseparable from the events surrounding the land and people of Israel. That's why the sprouting fig tree is therefore a symbol of the coming summer in Matthew 24:32-33. The fig tree is symbolic of the land and people of Israel (cf. Hos 9:10; Joel 1:7; et al.). In the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord Himself compares the coming judgment of Israel with the sterile fig tree (Matt 21:18-22). The signs of the last time are thus the events around the newly awakening and "sprouting fig tree" of Israel. From this benchmark, we can also classify the other signs that Jesus listed as forerunners of His coming.

There is one more thing to consider. The "labor pains" or signs of Jesus' approaching return, are global events. The character of Jesus' end-time discourse makes this clear. This is expressed literally in the global preaching of the Gospel (Matt 24:14), and the fearful anticipation and helplessness in the face of upcoming events that affect the whole world (Luke 21:25-26). The Book of Revelation also shows that the events prior to Jesus' return will be global; that is, worldwide. There is a clear difference from earlier times, when events were typically confined to specific regions, even if they were large or spanned more than one continent. In Matthew 24:7, we read of great wars, famines, epidemics, and earthquakes. I'd like to single out epidemics here, including pandemics.

One example I could give is the plague (1346-1353), which included the "Old World" (Europe, the Middle East, and northern Africa) but was not yet global. Interestingly, the attribute "worldwide" didn't appear in pandemic lists until the end of the 19th century. We see the term "worldwide" again and again in the pandemic lists

COVID-19 and the Return of Jesus

The “labor pains” or signs of Jesus’ approaching return, are global events.



of the 20th and 21st centuries. As mentioned, the nation of Israel is the chief sign of the end times. The first worldwide pandemic (influenza, 1889-1890) coincided with the time when the first waves of Jewish return migration began and Zionism emerged as a movement. In Matthew 24:7, we also read of nations and kingdoms rising up against each other. Arnold Fruchtenbaum points out that in the time of Christ, the expression “nation against nation” was the name for a world war that precedes the coming of the Messiah. The two World Wars were not the final great war the Bible speaks of. But the global dimensions of World War I—much more so in World War II—had never been seen in the whole of human history. And, between these two World Wars, we also see the worldwide Spanish flu with its 50-70 million deaths (some estimates reach up to 100 million victims). Although the number of victims was much lower, the Asian, Hong Kong, Russian, avian, and swine flus also fall under the “worldwide” label. Similarly, HIV infections have been cited as a global pandemic, with 36 million deaths to date since 1980. Additionally, there is worldwide information about epidemics or pandemics, which remained limited to certain regions, but rep-

resented a possible global threat (e.g. SARS, MERS, Ebola).

Currently, deaths from coronavirus have been significantly lower than other worldwide pandemics. Nevertheless, there are some features that distinguish this crisis from previous pandemics.

At one point, there was a global flood of information related to the SARS-CoV-2 virus like never before in a pandemic. Initially, at the beginning of the 20th century, information was provided by print media. Then radio was added, followed by television, as a broad means of communication. The internet was already present during the avian and swine flus. But the global flood of information about the coronavirus pandemic is breaking all records of media coverage of previous pandemics. In Matthew 24:6, Christ speaks of His disciples “hearing” of wars and rumors of war. The content of this “hearing” can also include the next verse, in which Christ elaborates on what has been said, complete with famines, epidemics, earthquakes, and more. The coronavirus has become the dominant topic in the news, as well as in many personal discussions, over the months.

Another prominent feature of COVID-19 is the speed at which the virus has spread worldwide. The spread of the Spanish flu has already been linked to the worldwide mobility which had developed as a result of the events of World War I. Both the viral spread rate and the infection rate—which was still light as far as the avian and swine flus were concerned—exploded with the coronavirus. A major contributing factor was constant, tightly packed international air and tourist travel. Within a few weeks, the virus had spread practically all over the world.

Another aspect is the growing fear and perplexity that comes with the pandemic. At the beginning, the emerging epidemic outside of China was still being downplayed by many governments. But, this attitude turned into hysterical panic and unprecedented activism within a few days. Politicians and health experts contradicted themselves within a few weeks, making statements and assessments that were in complete opposition to what they had said previously. One sign of the times in Luke 21:25-26 is global perplexity, and the associated fear and dread of coming events. From then on, the panic over climate change was replaced and overshadowed by fear of the coronavirus. The final days before Jesus' return will be a time of global, fearful expectation, regardless of whether those fears materialize.

With the SARS-CoV-2 virus, a completely unexpected event befell humanity. As a result, life changed suddenly, even in industrialized nations. Just a few months earlier, the sudden restrictions on personal freedoms, movement, and assembly had seemed extremely unlikely in democratic countries. Everything happened practically overnight—without long-running processes or developments. We should be shaken out of our false sense of security in this regard: the overall situation on earth, even in the West, can change quite rapidly. This doesn't just apply to freedom of belief, which we're still very grateful for right now. The last events before Jesus' return can start coming true within the blink of an eye.

Additionally, the coronavirus pandemic suddenly brought many countries on different continents into conformity. From Asia to Australia, some African countries, Europe to America, people are suddenly in the same boat with the same threats, problems, and measures. Regardless of the countries in which they live, people were ready to

cede their rights to certain freedoms in the fight against the pandemic. This also leads to global solidarity between peoples. I'm not concerned with the question of whether these measures are appropriate or excessive, but with the fact that we recognize the baseline: apparently, an unforeseen, threatening event can occur overnight, leading to a global state of emergency shared by everyone. In the future, such an event, even in other fields, could serve as a stepping-stone for the rise of the Antichrist (cf. Rev 13:1-3).

For years, we've already become aware of the monitoring options that come with digital communication. Due to coronavirus, various nations (Taiwan, Israel, etc.) have officially used this monitoring. This is also associated with a rapid acceleration in the capture and collection of digital data and profiles. Drones are systematically being deployed to monitor the population's compliance with rules about going out and social contact. It's understandable that this is serving the best of intentions—disrupting the routes of infection. But, at the same time, another barrier to electronic surveillance has officially been overstepped. As a result, we can firmly assume that governmental, digital, and electronic surveillance will also be much easier to use in other threat scenarios in the future. In view of health and the public good, a large part of the population is no longer concerned. This is also evident from the increasing willingness to disclose your own movement data through a coronavirus tracking app.

In this context, the coronavirus pandemic also fueled the discussion about abolishing cash. Doing so would avoid one possible "virus carrier" (cash) and eliminate the risk of infection for people directly involved in payment transactions. It is of secondary importance whether this is fueled by actual virological findings, or is only a

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The sprouting fig tree is therefore a symbol of the coming summer in Matthew 24:32-33. The fig tree is symbolic of the land and people of Israel.



pretext for the planned abolition of cash. It is more important to see that both the “friendship” with a completely cashless payment transaction and the associated increasing surveillance, are further developments that are paving the way for the future appearance of a “world problem solver”—the Antichrist (cf. Rev 13:16-17).

For the first time since World War II, the emergence of the coronavirus in Western democracies led to emergency ordinances that suddenly gave governments much more power to control their citizens’ lives very centrally. The legitimate concern remains that some of it will linger on, even after the possible pandemic waves have ended. On the one hand, it will be easier for democratically elected governments to issue emergency regulations in difficult situations in the future. On the other hand, individual regulations of varying intensity could also be maintained. Additionally, there are the economic consequences of COVID-19. They will lead to a global economic crisis, the depths of which can’t yet be foreseen. Such a recession can be the next step in further expanding the “coronavirus pandemic proven” state interventions and ordi-

nances. Possibly vital economic interventions by the state can be a further step toward mankind worldwide becoming accustomed to centralized forms of government. This whole scenario would then be a further precursor to the appearance of the Antichrist.

Now the “corona cuts” are affecting all citizens in the same way, completely regardless of their religion or other interests (e.g. sporting events). As the church of Jesus, it’s important that we support such emergency efforts and be subject to the state (cf. Romans 13:1-7), unless this leads to disobedience to God and His Word. This means that we have to keep a close eye on developments and analyze them, drawing the necessary conclusions. In this context, the question of whether the prohibition on the free practice of religion (worship services) corresponds to the basic constitutions of the individual Western democracies, is not insignificant. Taking Germany as an example, it becomes clear that constitutional lawyers have differing opinions. Mind you, I’m not concerned with the question of whether the church of Jesus should follow measures intended to slow the spread of coronavirus. As mentioned, this should be dis-

As the church of Jesus, it's important that we support such emergency efforts and be subject to the state (cf. Romans 13:1-7), unless this leads to disobedience to God and His Word.

cussed in connection with Romans 13. Rather, it's a matter of seeing the overall development; how certain fundamental rights can suddenly be restricted or suspended by an emergency, even without long upheavals or unrest. As the church of Jesus, this should save us from all false self-confidence regarding freedom of belief.

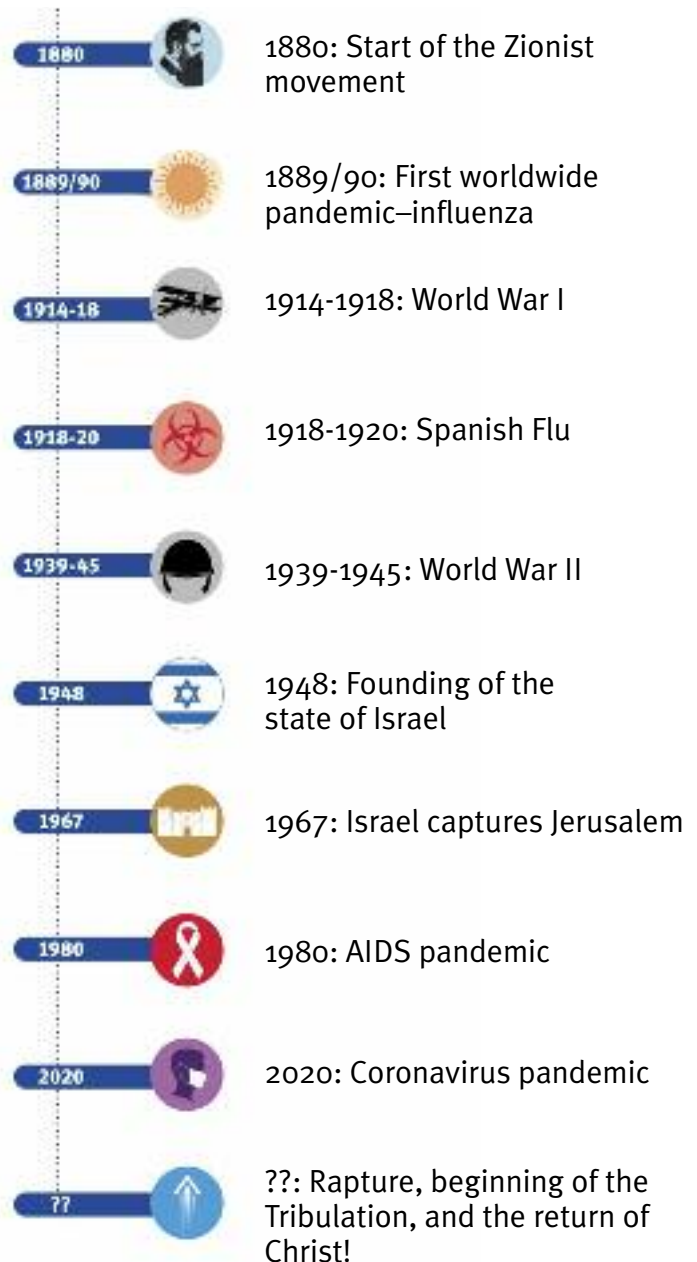
As mentioned at the beginning, it isn't a question of feeding religious sensationalism or starting speculation. But what is emerging in the wake of the COVID-19 scenario is undoubtedly further preparation for the final global events before Jesus' return. The coronavirus pandemic is a wake-up call for the church of Jesus in the West. The point is to wake up from our affluent Christianity, to see through our pious false security, and to consciously, internally prepare for Jesus' approaching return and the events to come. As the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 13:11-12: "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

We're not pleased with the looming perspective shown above regarding the coming upheavals and escalations. Even as Bible-believing Christians, we can fall into fear and dread ourselves. For this reason, our Lord encouraged His disciples at the end of His end-times discourse in Luke 21:18-19: "But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives." I'd like to conclude with, "Cheer up: our Lord is coming soon!"

(MR0720/1089)



Signs of the Times





THE RAPTURE CHRONICLES – PART I: THE HOLY ONES



Many people, Christians and non-believers alike, often pooh-pooh the notion of a Rapture. Apparently, they reason that an “up-up-and-away” is the easy way out ... leaving a messed-up world in abandonment behind them.

By Wilfred Hahn

But that is a gross mischaracterization of the environment of the earth at that time. The Bible says that faith will run cold in the last days (Matthew 24:12). This implies that there will be relatively few saved souls on earth at that time. (Disclosure: We do not subscribe to the Partial Rapture Theory.)

The last-day world is taken up with merriment, hedonism, humanism, wickedness, and self-determination. Believers will be persecuted. It will be a very difficult time for born-again Christians. Christ even asked rhetorically: “[...] when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). Thus, right up until the time of the Rapture (shortly or immediately followed by the Tribulation Period), these souls will be prepared and ready. They will not have succumbed to the lures of the world.

Of course, no one knows when the Tribulation will start. Without a doubt, it would indeed be all so much easier if the

Rapture were predictable. Waiting for the Rapture therefore requires much faith, separateness from the world, and perseverance. Later—once the Tribulation starts, of course—future events will no longer be secret ... readily observable by all earthdwellers at that time, according to Scripture. Many people will realize that God's wrath and the end is near.

Those that come to Christ during the Tribulation period, will be called to stand and overcome the pressures to worship the image of the first Beast. Those that accept Christ as their Savior will pay with their blood, to stand firm to the end. Before the Tribulation begins, all Spirit-filled souls will be raptured ... all of them undeserving of both salvation and a Pre-Tribulational Rapture.

The next several issues, we will examine a number of unusual controversial issues that involve the Rapture and the saints of the last days. To be sure, this raises conundrums, debated chronicles

Before the Tribulation begins, all Spirit-filled souls will be raptured ... all of them undeserving of both salvation and a Pre-Tribulational Rapture.



and, hopefully, some insights. We begin with the following conundrum: Why does God seemingly allow the “wicked” to triumph over His people?

Rapture Conundrum

Should we not expect to be delivered by our Lord, who says that our smallest care is His concern? Isn't He the one upon whom we are to “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7)?

Yes. Yet, we also read about a situation in the Bible where the “holy ones” are given over to be defeated by the Antichrist, also known as the “little horn.” This statement is found in the 7th chapter of Daniel. He tells us: “As I watched, this horn [the ‘little horn’] was waging war against the ‘holy ones’ and defeating them [...]” (verse 21). Again, not to miss this ... it says, “defeating them.” We may wonder why

this is allowed to happen to the “holy ones,” as it seems unjust.

Any doubt on this topic is quickly expelled, as this defeat of the “holy ones” is described at least five more times.

A few verses later (Daniel 7:25), it states that the Antichrist “will speak against the Most High and oppress his ‘holy ones’ [...] the ‘holy ones’ will be delivered into [the Antichrist’s] hands for a time, times and half a time.” Here we learn that this ordeal will last three and a half years in the Tribulation Period.

But that’s not all. There are yet additional and similar prophecies in the book of Daniel, which state that the “holy ones” would be overcome. A later vision that was interpreted by an angel, informs us that: “He [the Antichrist] will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he



We still grapple with this question: Why should the “holy ones” all become martyrs ... all be destroyed? We again come back to our earlier question at the outset: Why does God seemingly allow the “wicked” to triumph over His people?

does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the ‘holy ones’” (Daniel 8:24).

Lastly, in Daniel 12:7 it says: “It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the ‘holy ones’ has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.” Even though the “holy ones” are said to be “mighty,” they will be destroyed. These above-mentioned statements all align with prophecies written in the Book of Revelation. However, “[The Beast] was given power to wage war against God’s ‘holy ones’ and to conquer them” (Revelation 13:7).

And again: “The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God’s ‘holy ones’ and to conquer them” (Revelation 13:5-7).

Daniel and John the Revelator are in perfect alignment. The time period over which the defeat will take place is 42 months, and the Beast mentioned is the same ... the one that blasphemes and speaks against the Most High.

Given these confirming references from both Testaments, there can be no doubt. For a period of 3 1/2 years (in our interpretation, this being the first half of the Tribulation period), “holy ones” are going to fall prey to the Antichrist.

They will not only be defeated; the Bible also says that they will be de-

stroyed (Daniel 8:24). A plain interpretation would therefore suggest that ALL are destroyed.

We still grapple with this question: Why should the “holy ones” all become martyrs ... all be destroyed? We again come back to our earlier question at the outset: Why does God seemingly allow the “wicked” to triumph over His people?

We must first confirm the answer to this question: Just who are these “holy ones” that are being overcome in the previously quoted texts? The answer provides an important key.

We must note that the concept of the church was yet hidden at the time of Daniel and other OT prophets. The Messiah had not yet appeared nor had been rejected by the Jews.

However, the identity of the “holy ones” seems fairly clear, as it is referring to a future time when the “holy ones” would exist. We identify them as the Tribulation Christians. There is an iron-clad case supporting this conclusion, which we will show.

To re-phrase, all of the “holy ones” that are being shown as vanquished and destroyed in Scripture, are Tribulation Saints. This means those that have come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah and Savior once the seven-year Tribulation began ... in other words, after the Rapture has taken place.

None of the six, aforementioned prophecies apply to the saints of the Church Age. Post-Rapture saints have a much different timeline than the saints that are taken up in the Rapture.

The fact that there are people who will repent during the Tribulation has no direct connection to the Rapture. These references to “holy ones” found in Daniel and Revelation refer to those (earthdwellers) who become believers in Christ during the first half of the Tribulation.



Many misinterpret these accounts of saints being destroyed, as evidence that the Church-age Christians will not be raptured and therefore be required to go through the Tribulation. We believe this to be an incorrect conclusion on several accounts.

First, the proofs of the Rapture occurring stand on their own. Several New Testament texts confirm it. As well, the Rapture is an event that is entirely consistent with the character of God.

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Gloriously, there will be many ... a veritable multitude. The accounts of Daniel and Apostle John (the Revelator) are in alignment on this point.

Apostle John says that “[...] a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, [was] standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9). These were Tribulation Christians. How do we know this?

First, of course, this scene takes place in heaven before the throne at the time of the sixth seal. This event therefore occurs in the Tribulation Period. “They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands” (verse 9). The white robe signified that they had received salvation, and the palm branches represented victory. This could only apply to a Christian. Therefore, to again conclude: These “holy ones” are all Christians that come out of the Tribulation.

Second, this “multitude” that is identified at the time of the sixth seal is, in fact, the fulfillment of the prophecy given at the time when the fifth seal was



“They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” (Revelation 6:10). They were told to wait a while longer, “[...] until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been” (verse 11). Those that had been killed already upon earth were given a white robe.

opened (found in Revelation chapter 6). The slain saints at that time (shown under the altar in front of the great throne) are told to wait until the remainder of brethren on earth are killed and emerge “out of the Tribulation.” They are shown as the souls who had been slain, waiting under the altar in heaven. They had been killed in the Tribulation because of the Word of God and the testimony that they had maintained.

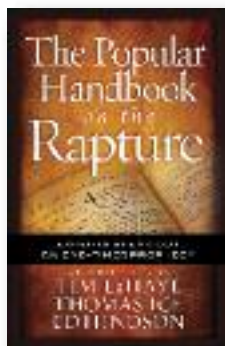
“They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” (Revelation 6:10). They were told to wait a while longer, “[...] until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been” (verse 11). Those that had been killed already upon earth were given a white robe.

Then later, after the sixth seal had been removed, the “multitude beyond count” are seen in heaven (Revelation 7:9), as already mentioned. “These are

they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14).

We can deduce here that many, many Christians were martyred from before the time of the fifth seal until after the sixth seal. Just as Daniel prophesies, they will all have been “destroyed” (martyred). This writer concludes that there will be no “fellow servants” remaining (these being the “holy ones” ... Tribulational saints) upon earth once the seventh seal is about to be removed. In the following sequel, we will review the evidence for this view, as well as its decisive implications for various Rapture theories.

In the next issues, we delve into yet more conundrums and chronicles. Why can the Rapture happen at no other time than Pre-Tribulation? Who passes through the Tribulation into the Millennium? Will all Christians die at the hands of the Antichrist? What are the most glorious promises to the Church? (MC)



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Time for

PAUSE

(Seven Letters to Seven Churches, Pt. 2)

Dr. Ron J. Bigalke

Warner Sallman (1892-1968) was a gifted American illustrator and painter from Chicago, best known for his works of Christian religious imagery. He is most associated with his sympathetic “Head of Christ,” of which more than 500 million copies have been sold and is used by multiple denominations, in addition to offering private devotional enjoyment. Sallman is also well known for his representation of the Lord in the painting “Christ at the Door,” a rendering of Revelation 3:20.

The symbolism of Christ’s words, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” is obvious. The luminance of Christ and the frame of the doorway produce a barely concealed heart, and thereby convey the Lord’s patience to rescue the soul ensnared by sin and the



darkness of willful ignorance. There is, however, an indication of hope, because there is an opening of grillwork in the door (revealing the darkness of sin within the human soul), allowing one to see Him, who is good and kind.

The absence of any outside knob or latch on the door is unlike anything in reality. Sallman understood Revelation 3:20 as the Lord knocking at the door to an individual’s life. Thus, one must open his or her heart to Christ, because He will not enter by force. Sallman’s understanding of Revelation 3:20 is popular among many, yet the Lord’s command was disciplinary, not evangelistic.

Nevertheless, the description of Christ standing at the door so He could meet with the assembly of believers, should cause one to ponder the implications.

Time for Pause

The living Lord is described as “He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David” (v. 7), meaning He is righteous and genuine, and has the ability to make progress even in the midst of impossible situations (v. 8).

The portrayal is disturbing, not encouraging. The final description of Christ in relation to one of His churches is that of seeking entry. Do you name Christ as Savior, yet exclude Him? The possibility of such indifference and self-sufficiency, demanding Christ’s discipline and rebuke, is certainly reason for pause.

Letter to Sardis

(Rev 3:1-6) Sardis was located approximately thirty miles south of Thyatira, and about fifty miles east of Smyrna. It was a proud city and capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia. The city developed into a two-part town, with the lower settlement having an east-west road as its axis, which connected the interior to the coast. Sardis was once considered to be impregnable, because the city was situated on a high plateau, surrounded by steep cliffs that were nearly impossible to scale. Therefore, only one narrow path of approach needed to be defended. Excessive confidence eventually led to ease in conquering the city.

The living Lord is revealed as “He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars” (v. 1a), meaning He is complete in wisdom and has entire control of the church leadership. He obviously knows their deeds (v. 1b). The situation with this particular church was so severe that unless remedied, it would die (vv. 1c-2). Indeed, the Lord made it evident that nothing was commendable within this church. While the church had a good reputation (v. 1c), the living Lord regarded these individuals as “dead,” and their deeds were not completed in the sight of God (v. 2).

They began many things, yet never completed them. Jesus once asked, “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?” (Luke 14:28). Novelty is the problem for those who begin well, yet do not finish. Bringing any task to completion requires perseverance. The fundamental problem is failing to “calculate the cost,” which is necessary prior to making any life changes. The living Lord admonished this church to remember

what they had “received and heard . . . and repent” (Rev 3:3).

The cause for this church’s near death was that many of the people were defiling themselves by compromising with sin (v. 4; 2 Cor 6:14-18; Jas 1:27). The blessings for the faithful minority were to motivate the others to repent. The promise made to the overcomers proves there was a godly remnant in Sardis, whose salvation was eternally secure (Rev 3:5). Only those faithful to Christ would enjoy intimate fellowship with Him. The living Lord knows those who are faithful, who are often not in agreement with the majority, yet have a good name with God.

Letter to Philadelphia

(Rev 3:7-13) Located approximately twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis was the agriculturally fertile city of Philadelphia. The region was in perpetual danger of earthquakes; it was destroyed and rebuilt in AD 17. As its name implies, Philadelphia was the “city of brotherly love.”

The living Lord is described as “He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David” (v. 7), meaning He is righteous and genuine, and has the ability to make progress even in the midst of impossible situations (v. 8). “No one can shut” the door God opens, yet it can be ignored or neglected. In the final analysis, God is the One providing opportunities for effective work; therefore, having “a little power” is never reason for discouragement.

In contrast to the letters given to Sardis and Laodicea, the church in Philadelphia received only commendations. The church was commended for using the opportunities granted her by means of “an open door.” Jesus praised her for having “kept [His] word” and not denying His name (v. 8). As a result of her faithfulness, God promised to vindicate this church before her enemies (v. 9; cf. 2:9) and to deliver her “from the hour of testing . . . to test those who dwell on the earth” (3:10; cf. the contrast in Phil 3:20-21, where a believer’s “citizenship is in heaven”). The return of the Lord Jesus will be without delay (Rev

Similar to the letter to Sardis, the message to Laodicea contains nothing except condemnation. The living Lord reprimanded them for being “neither cold nor hot” (vv. 15-16).

3:11), and He will honor those who overcome (v. 12). God will write His name upon the overcomers, which means they belong to Him in a special manner.

Of key interest in the letter to Philadelphia is the promise of being kept “from the hour of testing” (v. 10). The statement does not directly refer to a pre-tribulational rapture, yet does guarantee protection from the “hour of testing” when that period is in effect. The promise of safety for the faithful in Philadelphia is equally applicable to the faithful in all the churches (cf. v. 13), and assumes they will have been taken to heaven by means of the rapture at the beginning of that “hour of testing.” Therefore, the faithful in the first century were certain to be delivered from the “hour of testing” (or “tribulation”; cf. Matt 13:21; Mark 4:17; Luke 8:13) if it occurred then, yet the promise applies to the faithful in all the churches when the tribulation prophesied in the book of Revelation occurs.

The word “hour” (Gk. *hōra*) indicates deliverance not only from the “testing,” but also from the period of time in which it occurs (i.e. the historical time in which the testing will arrive). The assurance of deliverance is “from the hour of testing,” as opposed to preservation in that hour. The combination of the verb (“keep”) and the preposition (“from”) certainly means that Jesus will deliver them from the seven-year tribulation (Rev 6—19), as opposed to preserving them through it (posttribulationism) or removing them in the midst of it (midtribulationism).

Every generation of Christians is to live as if the Lord may return in their own lifetime and rescue them “from the wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:9-10) by means of the rapture (cf. 1 Thess 2:17-19; 3:13; 4:13—5:11; 2 Thess 2:1-12). Believers on earth will meet the living Lord in the air and thereby escape the “hour of testing.” The church in Philadelphia was given coveted promises from the Lord, yet the exhortation to “hold fast what you have” is applicable to all churches today. The suddenness (“I am coming quickly”) in which Jesus will return is an incentive for evangelism and holiness, so that Christians

should not be caught unaware when the Lord returns for His church.

Letter to Laodicea

(Rev 3:14-22) Laodicea was located approximately forty miles southeast of Philadelphia and ninety miles east of Ephesus. The city was highly commercial and wealthy. An earthquake destroyed Laodicea in AD 60, yet the people were resourceful and self-sufficient enough to restore their city rather than receive help from Rome. In addition to being a banking center, the city manufactured a medicinal eye salve. An independent spirit characterized Laodicea.

The living Lord is revealed as “the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God” (v. 14). He is depicted as the Amen who confirms all His words. He is faithful, in contrast to those who bear false witness. Jesus is entitled to all rights of the firstborn, having preeminence over all creation (cf. Col 1:15-18).

Similar to the letter to Sardis, the message to Laodicea contains nothing except condemnation. The living Lord reprimanded them for being “neither cold nor hot” (vv. 15-16). The city’s water supply was its only inadequacy, which was undrinkable in its lukewarm state. Jesus used this to illustrate Laodicea’s empty profession. Believing she had need of nothing, this church was self-deceived and thus unable to discern her own spiritual poverty (vv. 17-18).

The Lord’s counsel is faith and repentance (v. 19). Jesus promised true riches (“gold refined by fire”), unfeigned purity (“white garments”), and spiritual discernment to the person trusting in Him (vv. 18-20). Those who overcome are promised to reign with Christ in His kingdom (v. 21). The promise is the climax of all those given to overcomers (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21). The letters to the seven churches were given for all believers in all times: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (vv. 6, 13, 22).

(1087)



The First Letter from Heaven

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 14. Revelation 2:1-7.

Wim Malgo (1922–1992)

In the second and third chapters of Revelation, we find a very important part of the Holy Scriptures: the missives. The God-fearing Dr. Bengel used to particularly recommend these letters for preachers to study first and foremost. Like the parables, these letters consist exclusively of Christ's own words. They are the last ones we have directly from Him. They are perhaps the only one of His addresses that we are given in full. With their solemn introductions ("These things saith he...") and very direct salutations ("I know..."), they convey an impression of extraordinary grandeur. This impression is created not least due to the command repeated seven times: "He that

hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

There is no compelling reason why the seven letters should be addressed only to the seven local churches; rather, these local churches represent the whole church of Jesus. The number seven represents the fullness and divine perfection of the Church Age. This means that the exalted Christ's message to the seven churches in Asia Minor, applies to the whole church today—just as it was valid to the already-glorified church of past generations.

However, the seven letters aren't prophetic in the sense that each letter represents a certain epoch in church history. This type of interpretation has led to

◀ Ephesus was the ancient capital of Asia Minor, with about a half million inhabitants. It was a proud city, excellent for trading as well as the main site of Diana worship.

many arbitrary exegeses, speculations, and hypotheses. But just as with Nebuchadnezzar's image of the nations—where the declining external quality of generations of world powers was shown through various metals (gold, silver, copper, iron, clay)—there's no denying that the spiritual power of the church of Jesus has also steadily declined over the generations, through compromises and secularization. In this way, the end-time church of today is largely identical to that of Laodicea. But aren't the bright and dark side of all the churches, shown by the judging and exalted Lord, present in the church as a whole? So, we want to hear what the Spirit is saying today through the seven missives!

The first letter from heaven: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus, write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev 2:1-7).

Ephesus was the ancient capital of Asia Minor, with about a half million inhabitants. It was a proud city, excellent for trading as well as the main site of Diana worship, as we can see from Acts 19. It had a large, established Jewish community, which Paul met on his second journey (Acts 18:19-21). Apollos also preached there (Acts 18:24-28). Paul later lived

in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31). Through his work, the Lord founded His church from Jews and Gentiles. It was the elders of this church from whom Paul received such a moving farewell upon departing for his third missionary trip (Acts 20:17-38). Paul wrote his mighty letter to this church, in which we are given the deepest knowledge of the mystery of the church, the body of Jesus Christ. Tradition says that Ephesus was also the Apostle John's residence, and that he worked and died there. From that city, he supervised all of the churches in Asia Minor after Paul's death.

Between 630 and 640 AD, Ephesus fell into the hands of the Turks. The city itself was destroyed by Tamerlane in 1402 AD. The remaining rubble was called Ayasoluk, now called Selcuk. The name arose from *Agios Theologos*, meaning "holy theologian," which was given in memory of the Apostle John, who is said to be buried there.

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write" (Rev 2:1). A local church is receiving a personal letter from the Lord! "The angel of the church"—is it really an angelic being? Hardly. The word "angel" is often translated as "messenger." The most obvious explanation in this context, is that it's the church leaders being mentioned here. The seven churches of Asia Minor were located around the island of Patmos in the Mediterranean, where the Apostle John was exiled.

The seven angels, or elders, maintained the connection between John and the churches (Rev 1:19-20). They had a big responsibility. You can already notice this when reading the first verse: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write." What the Lord caused to be written to the elders of the church in Ephesus was for the whole church. We also have this responsibility, if we are servants of the Lord Jesus: to pass on what the Lord tells us. He's entrusted a great deal to us!

But there is also tremendous blessing in passing on what we've received. Incidentally, this was one of our Lord Jesus' greatest sources of strength. In His High-Priestly prayer, He testifies: "For I have given

The First Letter from Heaven

The seven churches of Asia Minor were located around the island of Patmos in the Mediterranean, where the Apostle John was exiled.



When the Lord introduces Himself—preventing any ambiguity about who wrote the letter—He also legitimizes His servants: “he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand.” This is reminiscent of Isaiah 42:1a: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold.” The Lord also mentions that He walks among the seven candlesticks, so He isn’t just standing there. He is active in their midst!

Consider the Lord Jesus on His triumphal journey from earth to heaven: three days after His death on the cross, He arose victoriously. Forty days later, He ascended into heaven in triumph and sat at the

unto them the words which thou gavest me” (John 17:8a). How poor and miserable are the churches that no longer have messengers who are putting their ears to the Bible, the heart of God!

And now the exalted Lord, the Author, speaks of Himself in Revelation 2:1. “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches” (Rev 1:20). So, it’s clear what the Lord means by the phrase, “he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand.” What consolation: He’s holding his servants in His hand! Are you God’s servant, God’s handmaid? Then this also applies to you! “They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:28b). These are the very words of the exalted Lord, who walks among the seven golden candlesticks, the seven churches. How great is the abundance of light in a church! Israel had only one lamp in the Old Testament, the menorah, which shone in the tabernacle and later in the temple. The seven churches represent the church as a whole, which has a sevenfold abundance of light. “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14a), said the Lord Jesus.

right hand of the majesty of God. But today, through the Holy Spirit, He is walking among the seven churches (that is, among the whole church). He is present, although we see Him sitting at the right hand of majesty nine times in the New Testament (four of which are in Hebrews). He is, “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph 1:21).

His exaltation is nothing less than the result of His resurrection. And here’s the wonderful thing: when Jesus went to heaven, it was like Abraham, who is said to have met Melchizedek and brought him bread and wine. When this happened, Levi was already in Abraham’s loins (that is, all of Israel, the priesthood: Heb 7:5). But it wasn’t yet apparent. And when Jesus Christ went to heaven, the entire church was already in Him. We weren’t yet visible, but we were there; we were, so to speak, in His loins, because He is the head and we are the limbs. We are the body of Jesus Christ, and thus His triumph. His ascension and sitting at the right hand of the majesty of God—is also our triumph! (cf. Eph 2:6).
(MR0520/1078)



Psalm 91: A Magic Bullet for Christians?

Nathanael Winkler

Psalm 91 speaks of divine protection from plague and deadly danger. What the promises mean to us today.

Christians like to quote Psalm 91 in times of hardship and distress, and for good reason. Even during the coronavirus pandemic, some have been reading the psalm and preaching about it. Some believe that this word from God gives them carte blanche for their lives, so that nothing can befall them as Christians any longer. Interestingly, Satan also quoted this psalm (vv. 11-12) to tempt Jesus (Matt 4:6). “For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler” (Ps 91:3-4). Because of this promise, some are

now preaching that nothing will happen to us believers. Is that really true?

In fact, Psalm 91 shows our dependence on God. He is our refuge. We find our security in Him. And He is faithful in every life circumstance. The psalm can be divided into three parts: 1. God is the believer’s fortress (vv. 1-2); 2. God is the defender from all danger (vv. 3-13); and 3. God gives His assurances (vv. 14-16). But, before we apply the psalm to ourselves, we have to ask some important questions. Who wrote this text, and under what circumstances and when? The promises that God gave to Israel can’t simply be to the church today on a one-to-one basis.

Psalm 91: A Magic Bullet for Christians?



Some believe that this word from God gives them carte blanche for their lives, so that nothing can befall them as Christians any longer. Because of this promise, some are now preaching that nothing will happen to us believers. Is that really true?

God promised blessings to His people in the Promised Land if they obeyed Him, but curses if they disobeyed (Deut 28). We need to keep this in mind when we consider Psalm 91.

It is generally believed that Moses was the psalm's author. His words might have been a heavenly answer to the situation in Egypt, or in the Israelite camp in the desert. It's also possible that the psalm was addressed to Joshua as the conqueror of Canaan. His entire generation had died in the desert, so only Caleb and he were permitted to move to the Promised Land with a new generation of Israelites. Joshua and the people would win their wars in Canaan if Israel was faithful. We also see a messianic dimension to Psalm 91 that will be fully accomplished in the Millennium.

It should be noted, however, that some of the Old Covenant saints experienced the preservation of Psalm 91, but hardly all. Hebrews 11 demonstrates this: "And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts

and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (vv. 32-40).

In the New Testament, we see that the Apostle Paul had to go through many illnesses and temptations. And Christ Himself tells us: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt 10:34-39).

In light of this, how should we understand and apply Psalm 91 to ourselves? On the one hand, God's greatness and our security in Him remain unchanged. On the other hand, we interpret this psalm's promises in light of the New Covenant, in which our promises aren't earthly, but "heavenly." Paul makes the meaning of this clear in Romans 8:28-39:

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified



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he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God will surely bring us to the heavenly goal, and we will see His salvation (Ps 91:16). But the way there can be through "tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword."

(MR0720/1090)

PSALM 91



He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot. "Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."





WORLD FOCUS

Neuralink says learning to use the device is 'like learning to touch type or play the piano' (photo: Neuralink)



USA

Neuralink Chip Streams Music Directly to Brain

Elon Musk's mysterious Neuralink startup is working on a brain-computer interface that will allow wearers to stream music directly to their brain, the technology entrepreneur has claimed.



Mr. Musk, who also heads SpaceX and Tesla, is set to reveal new information about the mysterious startup but has been slowly releasing details over Twitter.

Responding to computer scientist Austin Howard, Mr. Musk confirmed that Neuralink's technology would allow people to "listen to music directly from our chips."

Since its founding in 2016, Neuralink has only held one major public presentation about how the technology will work.

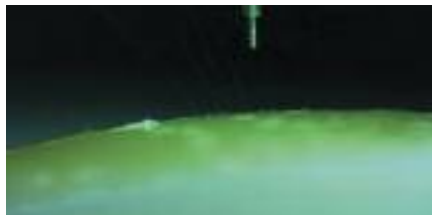
Speaking at the 2019 event, Mr. Musk said the firm was working on a "sewing machine-like" device that would provide a direct connection between a computer and a chip inserted within the brain.

Mr. Musk made a request for people with specific expertise in wearables.

"If you've solved hard problems with phones/wearables (sealing, signal processing, inductive charging, power management, etc.), please consider working at [Neuralink]," he tweeted.

-independent.co.uk, 21 July 2020

Commentary: South African national Elon Musk, with Canadian citizenship through his Canadian mother, obtained US citizenship in 2002. Doubtless, he is one of the super-successful people on planet earth. Incidentally, this shows internationalism is a



A robot designed by Neuralink would insert the 'threads' into the brain using a needle Neuralink

contributing factor to success in the global world.

The Neuralink chip connecting directly to one's brain is just another stepping-stone for technology to take dominion of mankind. That is nothing new, since sensational reports about progressive science and technology are constantly presented to the world through the news media, with much-hyped results.

Think about it: only a few decades ago, if someone wanted to research a certain subject, one had to consult the available printed resources such as encyclopedias, historical documents, scientific papers, etc. Today, this is all at our fingertips. On the internet, one can get information from literally all around the planet. Thus, we see the world has changed dramatically since the day when food was the decisive objective of man. Nourishment would guarantee existence, but that has become an unimportant sideline. Mankind has developed the technology to produce food in such abundance that a major portion of produce, for example, is being wasted in the field, in warehouses, retail stores, and at home.

Today's most important issue revolves around technology; in particular, communication. In many of the most primitive countries on planet earth, people are walking



Trials of Neuralink's fully implantable neural interface system will begin in 2021 Neuralink



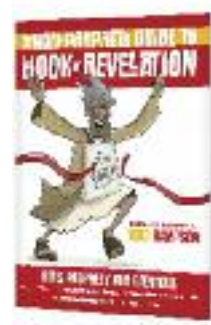
A fully implantable neural interface connects to the brain through tiny threads Neuralink

around with cell phones in their hands. In the most remote dwelling places, a TV antenna or satellite is seen crowning the residence. Technology has become king and, as previously stated in this column, technology will become man's self-made god. Revelation 9:20 has this to say: "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk." Note the words, "re-

pent not of the works of their hands." The product (merchandise) becomes the object of worship.

7303


(See *The Non-Prophet's Guide to the Book of Revelation*, Item #2361, \$16.99.)



WORLD

Global Crash in Children Being Born

Falling fertility rates mean nearly every country could have shrinking populations by the end of the century.

 And 23 nations—including Spain and Japan—are expected to see their populations halve by 2100.

Countries will also age dramatically, with as many people turning 80 as there are being born.

As a result, the researchers expect the number of people on the planet to peak at 9.7 billion around 2064, before falling down to 8.8 billion by the end of the century.

“That’s a pretty big thing; most of the world is transitioning into natural population decline,” researcher Prof Christopher Murray told the BBC.

“I think it’s incredibly hard to think this through and recognize how big a thing this is; it’s extraordinary, we’ll have to reorganize societies.”

Japan’s population is projected to fall from a peak of 128 million in 2017 to less than 53 million by the end of the century.



The world is ill-prepared for the global crash in children being born which is set to have a “jaw-dropping” impact on societies, say researchers.

Italy is expected to see an equally dramatic population crash from 61 million to 28 million over the same timeframe.

They are two of 23 countries—which also include Spain, Portugal, Thailand and South Korea—expected to see their population more than halve.

China, currently the most populous nation in the world, is expected to peak at 1.4 billion in four years’ time before nearly halving to 732 million by 2100. India will take its place.

The UK is predicted to peak at 75 million in 2063, and fall to 71 million by 2100.

-www.bbc.com, 15 July 2020

Commentary: Whether these predictions and statistics become true is a matter of “time will tell.” What we do know is that modern society requires women to be in the workforce; subsequently, time for children is substantially reduced.

This story is diametrically opposed to what the news media presented to us just a few decades ago, speaking continually of the world’s over-population. A similar thing is happening with the often-proclaimed global resource deficiency.

This is in contrast to what we read in Psalm 127:3-5: “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his

quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.”

7304


(See *What Does the Bible Say About Marriage?* Item #1076, \$2.50.)



UAE

Sends Spacecraft to Mars

A United Arab Emirates spacecraft rocketed into blue skies from a Japanese launch center at the start of a seven-month journey to Mars on the Arab world’s first interplanetary mission.

 At the space center in Dubai, people watching were transfixed by the liftoff, then cheered and clapped, with one woman offering a celebratory cry common for weddings.

Amal is set to reach Mars in February 2021, the year the UAE celebrates 50 years since the country’s formation. In September that year, Amal will start transmitting Martian



In this photo released by MHI, an H-IIA rocket with United Arab Emirates’ Mars orbiter Hope lifts off from Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima, southern Japan.

atmospheric data, which will be made available to the international scientific community, said Omran Sharaf, UAE Mars mission director.

At Mohammed bin Rashid Space Center in Dubai, Emirati men in their traditional white kandora robes and women in their black abayas watched the liftoff. As its stages separated, a cheer went out from men seated on the floor. They began clapping, one using his face mask, worn due to the coronavirus pandemic, to wipe away a tear.


Amal, about the size of a small car, carries three instruments to study the upper atmosphere and monitor climate change while circling the red planet for at least two years. It is set to follow up on NASA’s Maven orbiter sent to Mars in 2014 to study how the planet went from a warm, wet world that may have harbored microbial life during its first billion years, to the cold, barren place of today. Hope

(continued next page)

NETHERLANDS

Government Admits to Paying Terrorists

Dutch civil servants took a picture with one of the terrorists charged with killing 17-year-old Rina Schnerb, *The Jerusalem Post* has learned, despite their government's denial of any known connection between organizations they fund and terrorist groups.

 The photograph from 2017, which can be found on the Netherlands Representative Office in Ramallah's Facebook page, features Dutch officials, including Head of Cooperation in Ramallah Henny de Vries, and leaders of the Palestinian-run organization Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), to which the Dutch representative in Ramallah pledged nearly \$20 million in 2013-2021.

Among the UAWC officials in the photo—though not named in the Facebook post—is Abdul Razeq Farraj, the NGO's Finance and Administration director and who was indicted in

October 2019 on four counts, including aiding an attempt to cause death in the terrorist attack on the Shnerb family that year and holding a position in a terrorist organization.

Palestinian terrorists killed Shnerb on August 23, 2019, in a bombing attack at a spring near Dolev, injuring her father Rabbi Eitan Shnerb as well as her brother Dvir.

The commander of the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terror cell that prepared and detonated the bomb was Samer Arbid, an accountant for UAWC at the time of his 2019 arrest.

Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok and Development Minister Sigrid Kaag admitted to parliament that the Netherlands paid part of the salaries of terrorists involved in killing Shnerb last year.

In immediate response, the Netherlands suspended its donations to UAWC indefinitely, pending an investigation.

NGO Monitor said: "We sent letters to Dutch ministers of foreign affairs and development in late 2019 and in June this year, specifically about UAWC. The decision to freeze the funding and open an investigation is extremely important and

shows accountability, but we hope it will also set a precedent and serve as an example for others like the EU, Germany, France and Italy who all have supported or still support UAWC."

-www.jpost.com, 23 July 2020

Commentary: The Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) is headquartered in Ramallah. Wikipedia states that the "non-profit organization was established in 1986 to improve the performance and professionalism of Palestinian farmers." Yet, within this organization, as is evident, members of terrorist organizations are placed in high positions; thus, they are co-responsible for terrorist activity. Finally, Dutch foreign minister Blok admitted that part of the salary of terrorists originated with Dutch foreign aid to Palestinians. The issue is clear: Europe, the world's largest foreign aid contributor, rightfully supports the UAWC. But, as this article shows, closer investigation is essential when it comes to avoiding part of the aid going to terrorists.

7309

(See *The Palestinian Right to Israel*, Item #2256, \$19.99.)

Spacecraft (continued from page 27)

also plans to send back images of weather changes.

Japan has its own Mars mission planned in 2024. It plans to send spacecraft to the Martian moon Phobos to collect samples to bring back to Earth in 2029.

-apnews.com, 19 July 2020

Commentary: Based on space.com, the distance between earth and Mars is about 55 million kilometers. The speed of light is 300,000 kilometers per second. If there were a thing like a straight lane to Mars, it could be achieved in just 182 seconds at the speed of light. PopularMechanics.com displays live statistics, showing how the planets Mars, Venus, and Mercury constantly change their distance to earth.

While our position does not necessarily oppose or promote such gigantic undertakings—which, incidentally, would make no difference whatsoever—we do ask the question: what is the real reason for the nations of the world to go the moon, or now to Mars and other planets? There is one word: pride—national pride. Are there any benefits to this so-called space exploration? The answer is none. It does not bring man closer to God, but the opposite is true. In man's pride and arrogance, he is distancing himself from the Creator more and more. The origin is found in the fallen Morning Star, Lucifer, who proudly exclaims: "... I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14).

We may not fully realize how modern technology is racing toward man's imagination, spirited by the evil one: "I will be like God."

Space exploration is also uniting the world. An Arab nation foots the bill to send the rocket to Mars from Japan, in cooperation with the US, Europe, and other powers. The goal: reaching the planets.

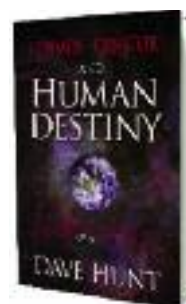
What we do know is that God's commandments have given us dominion over planet earth, not space. In the end, man will fail and God's righteousness will prevail, for the real "space exploration" is heaven. That's the destiny of those who believe in Jesus Christ, the

Son of the living God.

We, the believers, will experience real space travel to the real heavenly planet, which is our real hope based on Scripture.

7302

(See *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*, Item #2251, \$30.)





Bank-Backed Digital Currency to Come

"We are looking at the question of, should we create a Bank of England digital currency," governor Andrew Bailey said in a webinar event with students. "We'll go on looking at it, as it does have huge implications on the nature of payments and society."



"I think in a few years' time, we will be heading toward some sort of digital currency," he added.

The BOE is part of a group of major central banks teaming up to assess potentially developing their own digital currencies, acknowledging their role is being challenged by new technologies and private sector initiatives such as Facebook Inc.'s Libra.

It could be some time before the U.K. central bank is able to fully devote its attention to such a development, however.

"The digital currency issue will be a very big issue," Bailey said. "I hope it is, because that means Covid will be behind us."

-www.msn.com, 13 July 2020

Commentary: In practical terms, digital currency already exists. Paying cash with paper money is losing ground to credit/debit cards and other forms of electronic payment. This also is a welcome avenue because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, digital currency is practically an illusion outside the computer-fueled world.

Cash, incidentally, is in itself worthless; it's a piece of paper printed with numbers. You can't fuel your car with it or put it on a plate to eat. This vehicle of debt and payment exists purely based on the consumer's faith in the currency. Therefore, the long-proclaimed and expected cashless society is in the works and will dominate the financial and economic system of planet earth.

Ultimately, however, this type of remittance will be subject to the purchaser's per-



manent membership in the final global system, which we call the mark of the beast.

7299

(See *End-Times Super Trends*, Item #2342, \$15.99.)



ISRAEL

The Blooming Desert

It's been almost two decades since the government decided to move the IDF intelligence headquarters from Tel Aviv to the South.



Defense Minister Benny Gantz visits the Negev Desert ahead the IDF intelligence directorate's proposed move to the Negev
(photo credit: DEFENSE MINISTRY)



The decision was part of a mass transfer of IDF units from the geographical and social center of the country to the Negev—a wide, mostly uninhabited desert—intended to strengthen the South and its residents, while making room for more housing in the center, where the prices have skyrocketed over the past 15 years.

With the relocation, approximately 20,000 soldiers in the technology branch alone would serve in the South, and thousands more from other corps.

"We are building a national project whose first goal is to strengthen military intelligence," Defense Minister Benny Gantz said, adding the infrastructure that will be at its disposal and its capabilities will make it "a strong and leading corps."

But there's more in it than strengthening the intelligence units' new and advanced facilities; there is a statement in moving military units—including from Aman (the Hebrew acronym for Military Intelligence)—to the South.

It means that our leaders see value in promoting the Negev.

Carrying out this move brings with it thousands of work opportunities for the residents of Beersheba, Dimona and other communities in the area. Bringing jobs from the wealthy center to the deprived Negev is doing justice for people who were for years neglected by the government.

Above all are the words of Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion: "In the Negev shall be tested the people and the State of Israel."

Seeing the Negev as an integral part of the country is not only a technical issue, it is part of a vision. It can only help build this country in a place sorely in need of being built up.

-www.jpost.com, 7 July 2020

Commentary: This blooming desert—meaning more life, activity, industries with hospitals, schools, and synagogues—will indeed be a boon to the Negev residents, although mostly for technical and military reasons.

Yet, there is a promise: "He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings" (Psalm 107:35).

7308

(See *Miracle of Israel*, Item 2303, \$13.99.)

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FIJI

'Escape the Pandemic in Paradise'

Fiji's prime minister is urging billionaires to return to his country's shores for the first time since lockdown.



Fiji is a hotspot for tycoons and tourists from across the globe



Frank Bainimarama has called for the super rich to come back to the archipelago nation three months after it closed its borders.

On 25 March, its main airport in Nadi was shut six days after a cabin crew worker tested positive for COVID-19.

Now the South Pacific country is eager to get back on its feet and see the return of tourists.

In a tweet, he said: "So, say you're a billionaire looking to fly your own jet, rent your own island, and invest millions of dollars in Fiji in the process—if you've taken all the necessary health precautions and borne all associated costs, you may have a new home to escape the pandemic in paradise."

-news.sky.com, 29 June 2020

Commentary: The island nation of Fiji, with about a million inhabitants, lists 45% as Protestant, 10% Roman Catholic, with about 6% Muslim. Life expectancy stands at 73.7 years. Per capita GDP is about \$10,000. Exports are at \$910 million, with imports of \$1.9 billion.

Here the slogan applies: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," but in the reverse direc-

tion: "Give us the rich, those with virtually unlimited money supply, and we promise a paradise." Such is similar when one looks at the Caribbean islands and other tax havens. Quite obviously, that will divide the countries, consisting of about 300 islands, into the super-rich and the very poor.

This reminds us of the event reported in Matthew 19:21-22: "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." 7301

(See *The Remarkable Record of Job*, Item #2273, \$8.99.)



EU

Apple Wins Major Tax Battle

Apple Inc. won a major battle with the European Union when the bloc's second-highest court sided with the U.S. company over a €13 billion (\$14.8 billion) tax bill that EU antitrust officials had said the company owed to Ireland.



The decision was a rebuke to Margrethe Vestager, who is leading the charge at the European Commission to rein in alleged abuses by big tech companies including Apple, Alphabet Inc.'s Google, and Amazon.com Inc.

But [this] setback may at the same time embolden Ms. Vestager and other EU leaders in their push to create new regulations for tech companies, because they already argue that existing rules are insufficient to bring big tech companies to heel in areas ranging from competition to taxes.

The overturning of the Apple decision comes at a sensitive time in the battle over how much tax big tech companies should

pay—and where they should pay it. European countries and the U.S. are at an impasse in international talks on the topic, with Europeans pushing for rules that would make tech companies pay more levies where their customers are based, and Americans rejecting a system that doesn't apply to all companies.

A central issue in the Apple case was whether two Irish tax rulings granted to Apple in 1991 and 2007 gave a form of special treatment to the company, or whether they just reiterated an interpretation of Irish tax law as it was applied more generally.

Those rulings allowed two Irish-registered Apple units to attribute only a small sliver of some \$130 billion in profit to Ireland in an 11-year period. The commission said all that revenue should be attributed to Ireland, but the Irish government and Apple say they split the profit reasonably, given that almost all of Apple's intellectual property is developed in the U.S., not Ireland.

"On the issue of corporate taxation, this [Apple tax] ruling probably makes it more urgent and more clear, the need for corporate tax reform," said commission vice president in charge of economic affairs, Valdis Dombrovskis. "That will be something the commission will come forward [with] in our autumn package," he said.

-www.wsj.com, 15 July 2020

Commentary: The answer to this conflict is almost too simple: global law. That is a given. Although much has been written about international (global) law, real enforcement mechanisms barely exist. Progress toward more globalization is something no one can stop. The world must become one. Borders, tariffs, permits, and visas are likely to be eliminated in the not-too-distant future. They will be replaced with a global registration system, upon which the new elite can travel freely globally without any restrictions.

The Bible makes it clear that the Gentile world, regardless of political philosophy or religious adherence, will become one in op-

(continued next page)

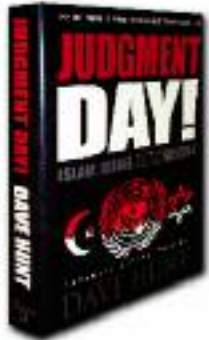
Tax Battle (continued from page 30)

position to one country: namely Israel, and the city of Jerusalem in particular. But Zechariah 12:6 declares: "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right

hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem."


7305

(See *Judgment Day!* Item #2211, \$21.99.)



TURKEY **Hagia Sofia Now a Mosque Again**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that the Hagia Sophia, one of the architectural wonders of the world, would be reopened for Muslim worship as a mosque, sparking fury in the Christian community and neighboring Greece.

 His declaration came after a top Turkish court revoked the sixth-century Byzantine monument's status as a museum, clearing the way for it to be turned back into a mosque.

"Like all our mosques, the doors of Hagia Sophia will be wide open to locals and foreigners, Muslims and non-Muslims," he said.

The UNESCO World Heritage site in historic Istanbul, a magnet for tourists worldwide, was first constructed as a cathedral in the Christian Byzantine Empire but was converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

"Greece condemns most firmly" the decision, said Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis,

saying it "does not only impact relations between Greece and Turkey but also the latter's relations with the European Union, UNESCO and the global community as a whole."

For Greek Culture Minister Lina Mendoni, "the nationalism displayed by Erdogan... takes his country back six centuries."

The Russian Orthodox Church was equally scathing.

"The concerns of millions of Christians were not heard," Church spokesman Vladimir Legoida told Interfax news agency.

UNESCO chief Audrey Azoulay said she "deeply regrets" the decision made without prior dialogue with the UN's cultural agency.

Erdogan urged everyone to respect Turkey's decision and said the issue of what purposes Hagia Sophia would serve "concerns Turkey's sovereign rights."

Hagia Sophia, which stands opposite the impressive Sultanahmet Mosque—often called the Blue Mosque—has been a museum since 1935 and open to believers of all faiths.

"It's been a dream since we were kids," said Erdal Gencler, an Istanbul resident.

"(Hagia Sophia) finds its true purpose again. We are very excited, proud, and hopeful that there will be beautiful services here," he added.

Fatma, a woman with tears in her eyes, said: "Of course I am crying. (Hagia Sophia) belongs to us."

-news.yahoo.com, 10 July 2020

Commentary: National religion and patriotism are twins; they refuse to listen to reason and voices of other nations or religious groups. The bottom line is always the same: we are right, they are wrong.

Turkey has a population of over 82 million people. Being 99.8% Sunni Muslim, the country seems solidly united and in appreciation of this decision by President Erdogan.



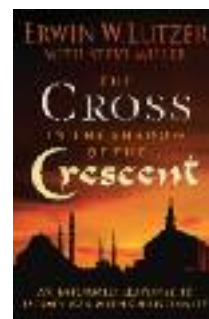
Hagia Sophia is a UNESCO World Heritage site
(Photo/Ozan KOSE)

As a side note, this is a beneficial development for Israel, who now can change the status quo of various buildings, monuments, and parcels of land. Of course, the difference between Turkey and Israel—and the rest of the world for that matter—is that Turkey does not have, nor does any other nation, the promise given to Israel exclusively.

It is of interest that the exalted Lord's message to the seven churches, is directed geographically to what is now Turkey. Today, less than 0.2% of its population are considered Christians or Jews. Nevertheless, Turkey's relationship to Europe is rather strong. The country first became a member of the Council of Europe in 1949, and an associate member of the Western European Union in 1992. In 1987, Turkey applied for membership to the then European Economic Community, and in 1997 became eligible to join the EU. But Europe is strongly divided on whether to accept Turkey into the EU; the majority says they are not located in Europe, nor are

they a Christian nation. Yet, it is our assumption that sooner or later Turkey will be part of an expanded EU. 7300

(See *The Cross in the Shadow of the Crescent*, Item #2300, \$14.99.)



“In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits” (Ezra 6:3).

BY ARNO FROESE

When reading the historic document of the Jews’ return to the Promised Land, we must note the words in chapter 1, verse 1, “the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia.” Thus, the originator of the plan to return the Jews from Babylonian captivity was God. He implements His plan, and He fulfills His prophetic Word. And it is He who stirred the spirit of the king.

We also take note that King Cyrus of Persia had global dominion: “The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth” (verse 2). What was the purpose, the aim, the goal? To send the Jews back to Jerusalem to build the temple on Mt. Moriah. This message was clearly given to the Jews dwelling in Persia, today’s Iran.

Quite obviously, today’s Persia (Iran) is being stirred by the god of this world, the one who opposes fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Thus, their repetitious call for the eradication of the Zionist State.

Reading the first six chapters of Ezra, we notice that, when they returned to Jerusalem to build the temple, the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin appeared. The end of chapter 4 reads: “Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem.”

The adversaries were dealing very smartly when they wrote to the king of Persia, accusing the Jews of building a city. Nothing was men-

tioned about the temple. Apparently, the enemies knew that the city, the temple, and the Jews were synonymous. You can’t divide one from the other. That, incidentally, is Israel’s challenge today. The Temple Mount is occupied by Arab Muslims. The city of Jerusalem as a whole is not recognized by the rest of the world as the capital of the State of Israel. Obviously, they reject Scripture’s outline of Israel’s territory.

In the story of Ezra’s records, we see that the Jews finally did what they were supposed to do: build the temple regardless of the opposition.

In today’s world, the enemies of Israel have isolated the word “Zion” and “Zionist” from the Jews. The *Times of Israel* reports:

When Iran speaks of wiping Israel off the map, it doesn’t mean the mass slaughter of the country’s Jews but rather eliminating the Jewish state’s “imposed regime,” Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said.

-www.timesofisrael.com, 15 November 2019

And the military leader makes it clear:

Four decades on from Iran’s Islamic revolution, “we have managed to obtain the capacity to destroy the impostor Zionist regime,” Major General Hossein Salami was quoted saying by the IRGC’s Sepah news site.

-www.timesofisrael.com, 30 September 2019

JewishPress.com, which reports on anti-Semitism in Canada, headlines an article, 'Zionists Not Welcome':

Foodbenders' social media posts have said "police brutality is an Israeli export" and "Zionists are Nazis," and included hashtags such as #intifada. Following complaints, Instagram shuttered the restaurant's account.

"By stating that Zionists are not welcome to its store, this business is basically stating that Jewish people are not welcome," Rabbi Meyer May, the center's executive director, said in a statement. "This is clear anti-Semitism, extremely discriminatory and unacceptable."

Taking legal action, the International Legal Forum (ILF) has filed a complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario charging that based on the guidelines of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism, Kimberly Hawkins, the owner, should be charged with anti-Semitic discrimination.

"IHRA acknowledges and incorporates the connection between Jews and Jewish national identity, and its fulfillment in the Jewish nation state, as a central expression of Jewish identity, similar to observance of Jewish holidays and religious practices such as dietary laws, Sabbath and other," the ILF stated.

Euphemistic manifestations of hatred, such as calls against Zionists instead of Jews, enable the rise in hateful expressions towards Jews and the increase in anti-Semitism, while supposedly evading violating modern norms against discrimination, violence or incitement on racial or religious grounds. IHRA bridges this gap, and links anti-Zionism to anti-Semitism, the lawfare organization explained.

9 July 2020

Canada—the world's second largest country, known for its peace-loving citizens—distinguishes itself from its southern neighbor, USA, as a peaceful and secure country with about one-third of the crime rate of the USA. But there too, anti-Semitism flourishes, hidden under the label of "anti-Zionism."

What will be the outcome? The fulfillment of Isaiah 65:17-19: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." (MC)


Action
for Israel



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bless thee..."
(Genesis 12:3).

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 **BOLIVIA**



An Adventurous Trip



Life is full of surprises. We aren't writing this letter from our mission station in Riberalta, but from Switzerland. How it came about.

BY OBED AND REBECCA HANISCH

▲ Thankful to have arrived in Switzerland

On April 19, 2020, we were asked the question that started it all. Rebecca was pregnant, and at that point, I (Obed) was already doing very limited work due to bilateral tendonitis in my arms. Additionally, my Achilles tendons on both sides had become inflamed, and I was hardly able to leave the house for three weeks.

During this time, the situation in Bolivia also changed: military curfews were imposed, schools were closed, travel was prohibited, and only members of selected professions were permitted to work. So, our

employees and boarding school children had to stay at home. Traveling to Cochabamba for the birth was also unthinkable at the time.

That Sunday, due to these changes, the mission leadership in Riberalta asked us if we wanted to try to travel to Switzerland for the birth and my medical evaluations.

After a lot of prayer and reflection, we decided to try. However, it turned out to be much more complicated and time-consuming than expected! We went through three very turbulent weeks, with lots of ups and



▼ En route to the airport—by motorcycle, since driving cars is prohibited in that region. Eberhard and Rosmarie Hanisch take on the role of “shuttle service.”



downs, sleepless nights, over 100 phone calls, countless emails, tons of paperwork (along with booking confirmations), medical certificates, long wait times—and above all, prayer. The following passage from Psalm 42 often comforted us during this time:

“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God” (Ps 42:5-6).

We often felt the Lord continually calming us, and were supported by many people’s prayers.

Impossible for Us—But Not for God

From a human perspective, it was utterly impossible to leave Riberalta. We had bought our tickets to Santa Cruz (Bolivia) the day before, as it was the departure point for the last repatriation flight from Bolivia. There we sat with our suitcases at the Riberalta airport, after learning that our flight was canceled...only a miracle could bring us to Santa Cruz, and from there to Switzerland.

Yes, and God helped wonderfully! We got two seats on another flight at the last minute, although we’d had to wait an hour and a half to buy them the night before. The plane was quite full. The next day, via Cochabamba, we landed in Santa Cruz in an almost empty plane, with just five other passengers. It was a wonder that this flight hadn’t been canceled! After a five-day trip, we finally arrived in Zurich. We can only marvel at God’s work and can hardly believe that we’re here now.

Current Situation in Bolivia

While the coronavirus pandemic is subsiding in Europe, the situation in Bolivia is only getting worse. Recently, there have been situations similar to Italy’s in Trinidad (Bolivia): the only doctor in the ICU gave notice because of overwork; face masks were sold out; the hospital hopelessly overcrowded; and many doctors were working despite being infected themselves. Pastor Alex, who lived with us on the premises for a long time, informed us of the dire situation: his father lives in Trinidad and is suffering from pneumonia, fever, and diabetes.



► Taking temperatures at the airport

► Practically alone on the plane from Cochabamba to Santa Cruz



The drugs he needs were sold out in the pharmacies; there wasn't even any aspirin left. The government has since brought in some medications and hospital beds by plane.

In Riberalta, the mission team has shrunk quite a bit, and the city now has its first coronavirus cases. Please pray that Riberalta won't degenerate like Trinidad, where the district has declared a state of medical emergency.

It's unknown how and when the boarding school will continue. While our employees aren't legally permitted to come to work, we're still obligated to continue paying their wages. Of course, there's still lots

of work to be done on the site. We're grateful that two of our employees live on-site and support us through maintenance work. The new boarding school is also currently at a standstill.

For the Time Being...

We don't know how the future will develop. Many of our plans were very different not too long ago. But we know that God will lead wonderfully.

We hope to take care of various office tasks from here until the baby is born (so far as health allows). God willing, we will return to Riberalta as soon as possible.

(MR0720)



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

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Needed: A New Van

By **David Phillips** *Project Manager*

A dozen pair of eyes eagerly watched me as I walked back from checking on the van, all with the same unspoken question: “Will we be able to go on our weekly beach walk excursion today?” I faced each one and broke the news to them, “I’m sorry, the van has broken down...again. This time it will take a day or two to get fixed. One of the sensors has gone out.” With great disappointment, these dear people realized that once again, this meant no beach walk for them. But, what could be done about it? For the staff, it also meant that we now couldn’t run the errands we greatly needed to.

Especially during this period of COVID-19, this is the residents’ only chance to leave Ebenezer and enjoy a walk and breathe fresh air, along with some of the team members. They must also remain in a tightly knit group, to prevent any stranger from approaching them—keeping them from the possibility of exposure to the coron-

▼ David with residents for an hour of fresh air at the sea promenade in Haifa



avirus. There was life before COVID-19, and there will be life during and after it. We have our daily routines, with or without corona. Often, we must use our own transportation. Right now, we are even more dependent upon our van, as it is the **only** vehicle the Ebenezer Home owns. But this is “my family”—my grandmas and grandpas in Yeshua. Ebenezer desperately needs a vehicle that does not break down on us every few months!



▲ Annie (88) enjoying a seaside walk



▲ Tsnua (98)



This is where you can help us make the needed change. It's for the benefit of the residents and Ebenezer family—**your** family.

During the corona emergency period, Israel has gone through times where there was no public transportation—due to risk of infection to the public. For a country which heavily depends upon public transportation, this becomes a real challenge. Ebenezer has to provide transportation for staff members, taking them back and forth from work. Many do not own a personal vehicle. As you can imagine, it becomes really problematic when the Home's only vehicle breaks down constantly.

You can help make a difference for both residents and staff, by helping us purchase a much-needed, new and reliable vehicle for the Home! With a new van, we will not have to constantly fix our old one, and will be able to drive safely with our residents and nursing staff. We have done the research and need to raise \$87,300 to

cover the costs. This includes heavy taxes in Israel, and special equipment needed. Incidentally, we have already collected just over \$2,800. Someone donated their old, neglected silverware, coin collections and jewelry, which we could in turn sell to help raise funds for the new vehicle we really need. That's one way to help.

Regular donations can be sent to Midnight Call Ministries (with Ebenezer specified in the Note line). Or, if you have a collection you wish to donate, please send them to:

Samantha LaGoy
c/o Ebenezer Home
4694 Platt Springs Rd
West Columbia, SC 29170

Please be sure to place items in a sealed plastic bag, and mail in a strong envelope or box via registered mail, UPS or FedEx. TODA RABA! (Thank you very much!)



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

CHRISTIAN NATION... CHURCH POWER... RISEN SAINTS

Christian Nation

Brother Froese,

So sad reading your book *Revelation 13: Satan's Last Victory*, especially pages 53-54, "Christian Nation." It sounds as if a revisionist wrote it. Have you forgotten about the Pilgrims, who landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, and put up a cross to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ! No tribute given to the Founding Fathers. In fact, much is incorrect! No credit given to historical documents. God is mentioned. Read the Declaration of Independence, especially the Preamble.

We are a sorry testament as far as what we have become. History again repeating itself—but our founding and its laws are Christian, which you dispute. I'm a lifetime subscriber and this is the first of your books that is offending. I do hope you will read the Declaration of Independence and see the times our Creator is mentioned.

-C. Watson, MI

Answer: The British Crown conquered territory and established 13 colonies. They built harbors, bridges, roads, government buildings, schools, churches, and provided military facilities; thus, a functioning, 13-colony country. The religion was Christian, as all other European nations adhered to. But note, it was the Christian *religion*, not the Church of Jesus Christ. Thus, the self-styled pilgrims were

adventurers looking to strike it rich. One source I just discovered proves that they did not share their faith with the Indians, for example. They had no relationship to the establishment of the United States.

Yes, I have read the Declaration of Independence many times. "All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." That was only applicable to the rich 10%, who received land grants from the Crown. The rest had no rights; they could not even vote. How about the Indians? They were slaughtered by the millions. And the blacks, did they have rights? None whatsoever.

As Christians, we need to be open and honest; we love our country, but so does everybody on planet earth. We must distinguish between the true nation—the Church created by God Himself—and other nations by whatever name, dominated by the god of this world.

Church Power

Dear Arno,

We are responsible for everything that happens in the earth politically. The condition of the world is supposed to be controlled by our prayers. The Church has been given the power to change things. We stand in a covenant. We have the armor of God and the "power of attorney" to use the name of Jesus and the power of His blood. Read what 1 Timothy 2:1-2 says.



The time has come to take our place. We are responsible. When God speaks, we are to listen and obey, and we need leaders who will do the same. Party affiliation is not what matters. The person God can use is the one with a willing heart, who will obey His voice.

In closing, don't miss your God-given opportunity to lift up your leaders in prayer and to vote when elections are held. Remember, you have authority and a responsibility to pray, listen and obey. You have a voice in the kingdom of God. So, let it be heard. May God give us leaders who have willing hearts to listen to His voice and follow His will.

-W. Rowley, MI

Answer: Note the purpose of prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." If the Founding Fathers would have practiced 1 Peter 2:13, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme," they would not have rebelled. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand followed the ordinance of the king.

Most important is to realize to which nation you belong. To the one created by Jesus Christ Himself, who stated, "I will build my church"? Or to the other nation, by whatever name, dominated by the god of this world?

The calling of the believer—who is a member of the Church through the rebirth—is to be concerned for the Church, the real nation, as documented in 1 Peter 2:9.

I am reminded of the late Dr. Vernon McGee, who once stated, "No one ever laid down their life for my freedom except Jesus Christ our Lord." It is your choice to fight, to work, to pray, to give, for the real nation or the one under the dominion of the god of this world.

Risen Saints

Dear Midnight Call,

I was settled in with the April issue of *News From Israel*, excited about Fredi Winkler's Editor's Note on the shadow prophecy of Leviticus 23. As I worked my way through to John 12:24 and Matthew 27:51-53, I read where he said, "The New Testament doesn't say anything about

what happened to these risen saints afterward." The Bible states in Matthew 27:53b: "after Jesus' resurrection [they] went into the holy city and appeared to many people." If these saints are appearing in Jerusalem after the resurrection, how can they be appearing before the Father with Jesus? Am I missing something? I really want to understand the Bible—especially in these times—and would appreciate your thoughts on this.

-J. Roehl, WI

Answer: Ephesians 4:8 states: "...When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." The saints who arose after the resurrection of Jesus and appeared unto many in Jerusalem, ascended with Him to heaven. That is what "captivity captive" means. Note Ephesians 6:12: "...against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The world—all of it—is subject to the god of this world: Satan and his cohorts. They encircle planet earth. But when Jesus ascended through these spheres of darkness—the territory of Satan—they could not touch Him, because He was and is the Victor. Thus, He led those saints "captivity captive" with Him into heavenly places.

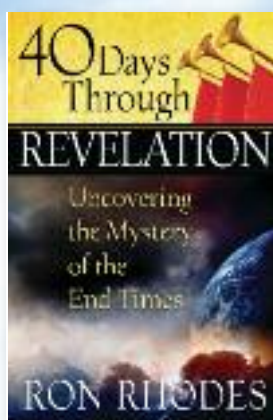
Signs in the Heavens

I believe the first two verses of Psalm 19 refer to signs in the heavens in preparation for the end times. For example, the total solar eclipse of 21 August 2017, and the one expected on 8 April 2024 over Niagara Falls, together form an "X" over the United States. Do you see any significance?

-M. Disney, CA

Answer: We are not looking for signs in the heavens or the stars, but for Jesus and His return. That can only occur when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in—when the spiritual temple, which is the Church, is completed. So, the USA—or any other country besides Israel—bears no significance. If we are still here, then the appearance of the eclipse on 8 April 2024 is not a sign for us. That's simply the rotation of the moon and the planets which, as we know, is ordained by God. (MC)

Midnight Call's September Resource Guide



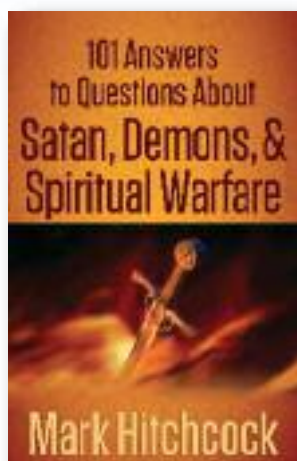
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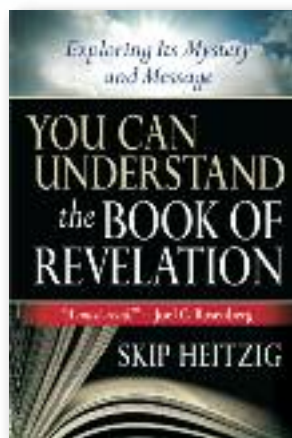
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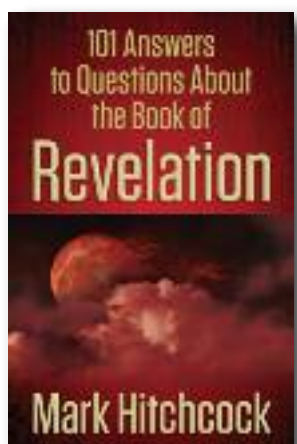
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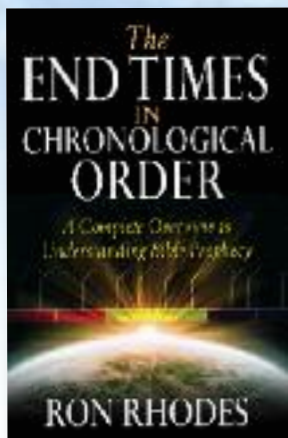
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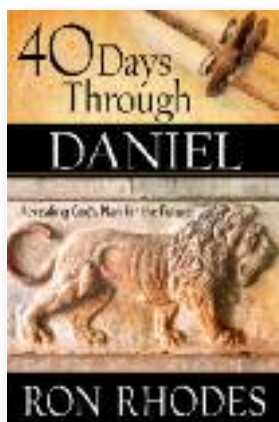
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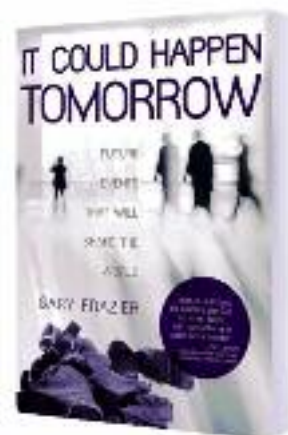
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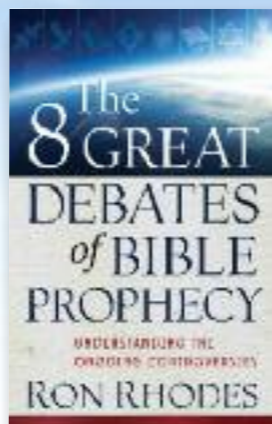
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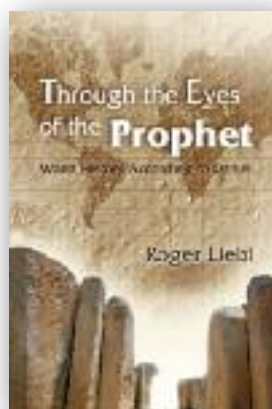
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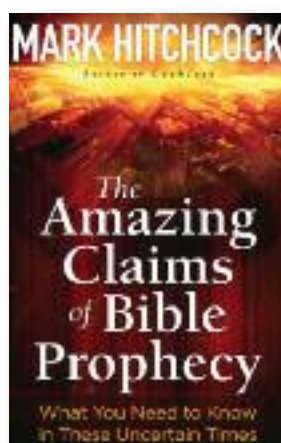
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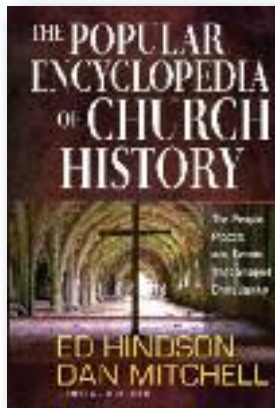
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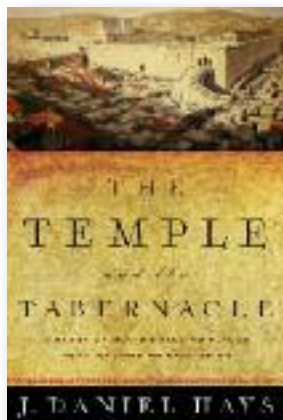
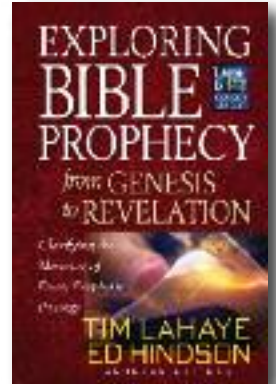
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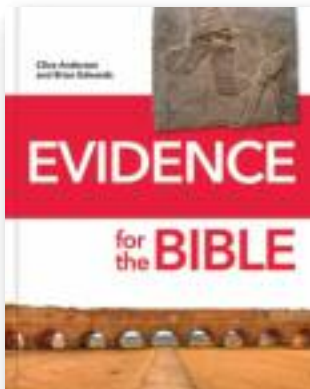
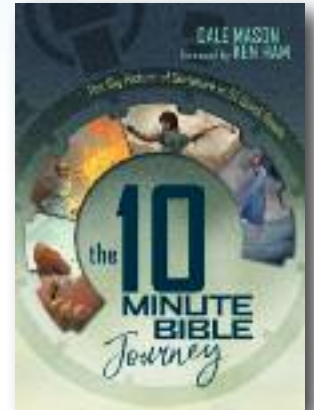
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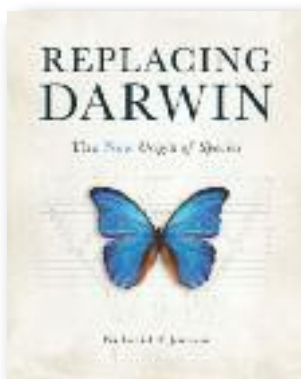
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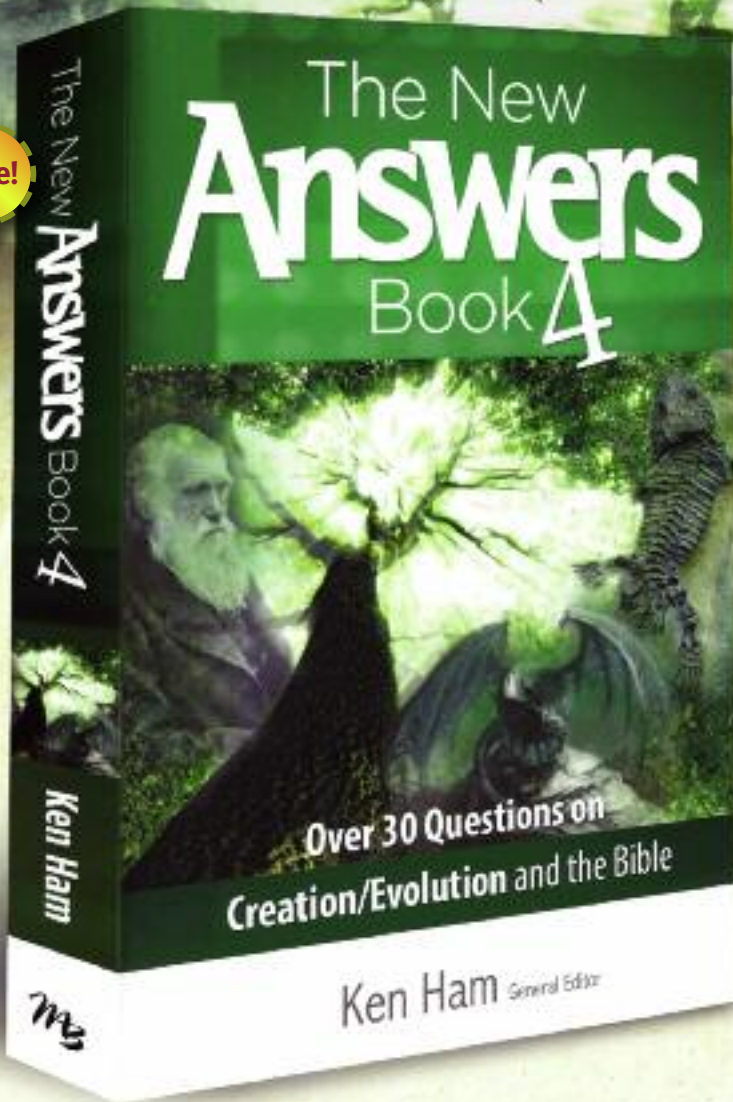
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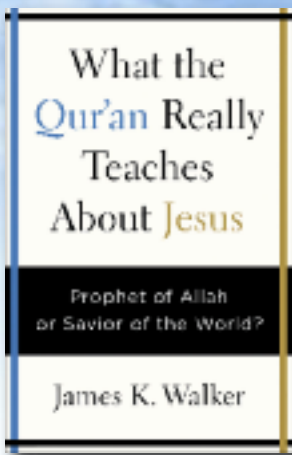
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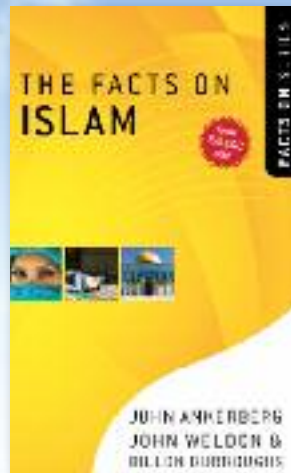
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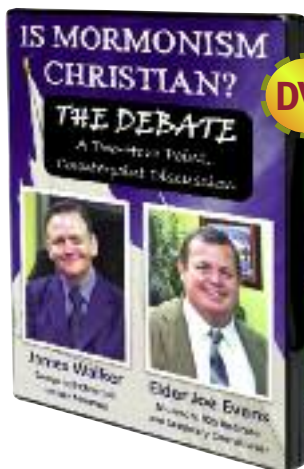
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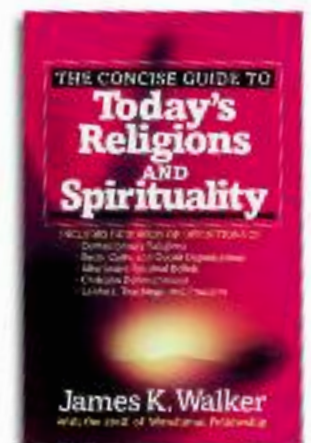
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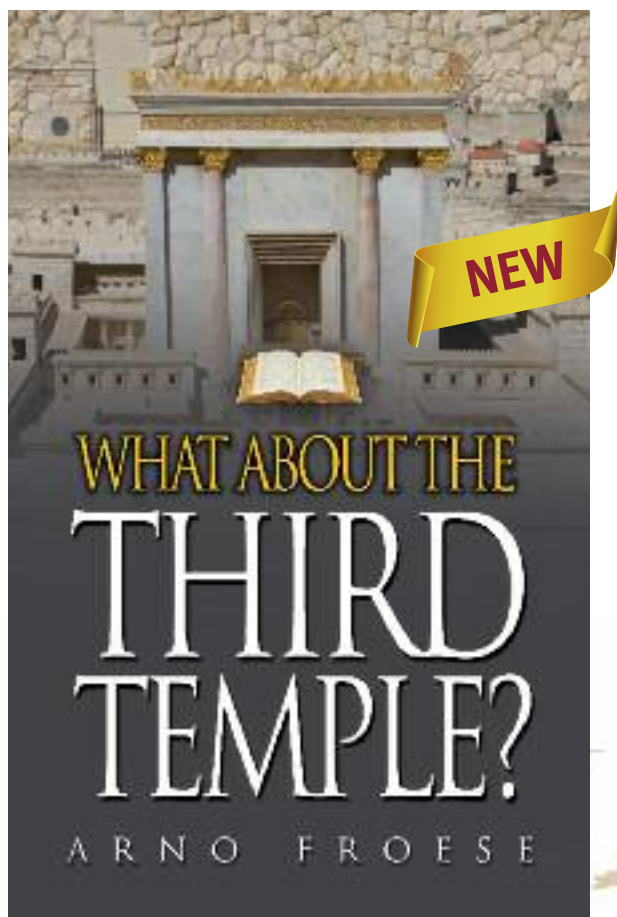
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