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Midnight Call

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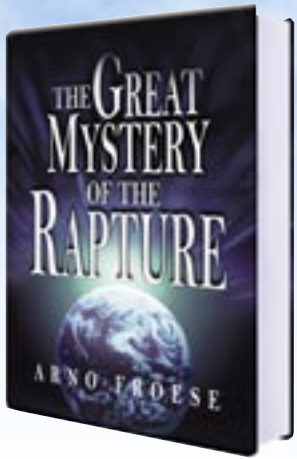
P. 34

Knowing God

P. 24

The Rapture

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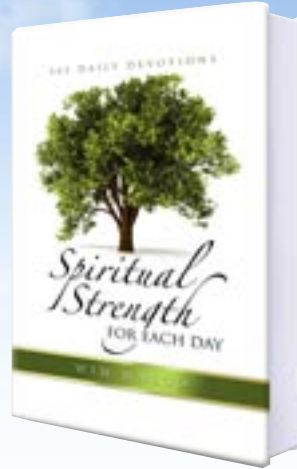
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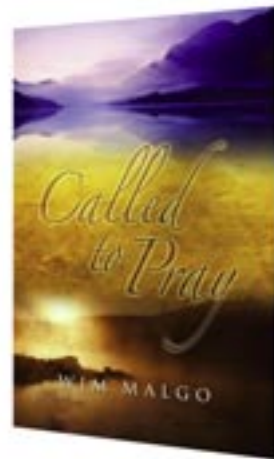
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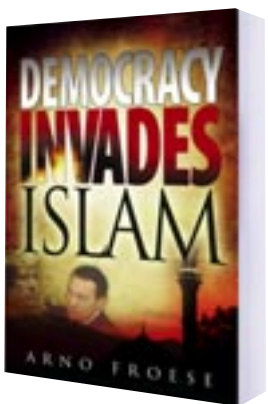
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6 COVER STORY The Rapture

By Barry Stagner

We can safely conclude the rapture is neither new nor a mere human invention. It is as sound a doctrine as any other in Scripture. The teaching that the church will experience a pre-tribulation rapture has a much deeper biblical base than some people are willing to acknowledge.



20 Money: Ends and Trends

Evangelicals: Stand Up for Jews! – Part 4

By Wilfred Hahn

24 Knowing God

By Dr. Ron J. Bigalke

38 Just For You!

The World Cup

By Peter Malgo

DEPARTMENTS

4 Editorial By Norbert Lieth

34 Letters to the Editor By Arno Froese
MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURE...PERFECT WORD...ADAM AND EVE

36 Action for Israel By Arno Froese

40 The Ebenezer Home – Haifa, Israel By David Phillips

42 Fellow Laborers By Eberhard and Rosemarie Hanisch



28 WORLD Doomsday Clock 90 Seconds to Midnight

29 NORTH KOREA Diplomacy with Iran

30 AFRICA Climate Change Responsible for Heat Wave?



31 UK 65% of Children Use Messaging Apps

31 FINLAND How to Eliminate Homelessness

33 GERMANY Decriminalization of Abortion Recommended



Silenced by God's Love and Self-Abasement

By Norbert Lieth

Director of Missions, Midnight Call International

I am always fascinated anew by the Incarnation of Jesus—and, as much as is possible, I want to be quiet and ponder about this miracle. It inspires amazement, worship, and gratitude. When we consider that Jesus, as the eternal Son of God, possessed glory before the foundation of the world was ever laid (John 17:5), and that He was willing to become man, then we see in this the true love of divine magnitude. It is simply beyond compare!

The first clothing that Jesus wore was diapers, and that was to be a sign for the shepherds (Luke 2:12). God meets us in Jesus as one of us, on equal footing. The Creator becomes a creature. God becomes human. He had to be held, carried, and given food (breastfed). He had to learn to walk and speak. The only and important difference was that He was born without sin.

Jesus knows what it is like to be human. He was tempted as we are. He knows the needs and excitements, the highs and lows, the dangers, sorrows, and joys—yet in all of it He remained sin-

less. If there is anyone who knows us, anyone who can help us, it is He. Can love reach down lower than it did in Jesus? Jesus' humiliation extended to death on Calvary and into the grave. But He also knew that He would be resurrected and return to heaven. Thus, He would pray to God the Father before His death on the Cross: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:4-5).

In Revelation 1, beginning at verse 12, we see the glorified Christ, before whom John could no longer remain standing. He, whose first clothing was diapers, now appears in a garment of glory.

- Jesus wears a robe that reaches down to His feet—He is the absolute worthy one. Kings, when appearing in public ceremonial events, usually wear long, festive garments.

- He wears a golden belt around His chest. This points to His high priesthood (Exodus 29:5) and divine righteousness.

EDITOR'S NOTE

He is the one man whom God has appointed to be judge over everything and everyone (Acts 17:31).

- His head and His hair are as white as wool and snow.—That symbolizes honor, wisdom, trustworthiness, and purity.
- His eyes are like flames—He sees through everything.
- His feet are like shining copper (brass).—The four horns of the altar of burnt offerings were made of copper (the altar of brass; see Exodus 27:2). These were later sprinkled with blood. His eternal redemption is unmistakably established.
- His voice is like the roaring of many waters—He drowns out everything else and has the last word; He is the standard of all truth.
- In His right hand He holds seven stars.—He holds all who are His own, and no one can snatch them out of His hand (John 10:28).
- Out of His mouth comes a two-edged sword.—He pronounces the final judgment. His word permeates all things (Hebrews 4:12). Heaven and earth will pass away, but not His words. With His word He will silence all nations (Rev 19:15).
- His face shines like the sun (Matthew 17:2).—He is the supreme authority that transcends all things.

It is good to become still ... to reflect on the self-abasement and love of God in Jesus, and to know He is the One to come. (MC)

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OUR TASK

Midnight Call Ministries is a nonprofit missionary organization, dedicated to proclaiming the entire Bible as the unfailing and eternal written Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the unerring guide for the Christian faith.

The object of Midnight Call is to call people everywhere to Christ, to proclaim the return of Christ, to prepare Christians for His coming, and to uphold the faith and warn of false doctrines. *Midnight Call* magazine is available in ten languages. All work done through radio, literature and missionaries is supported entirely by the gifts and free will offerings of God's people.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

WE BELIEVE in the divine inspiration of the whole Bible and therefore in the infallibility of the Holy Scripture, which is God's Word, and in the eternal Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

WE BELIEVE Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and shed His blood to save mankind. He died and arose bodily the third day, was seen by over 500, and later ascended into heaven.

WE BELIEVE that the Lord Jesus Christ died in the place of each individual sinner and that all who believe in Him as their personal Savior are justified through His shed blood and have become children of God.

WE BELIEVE that Israel is God's chosen people, and that the restoration of the Jews to their own land is the fulfillment of the Word of God.

WE BELIEVE in the imminent, pre-tribulational appearance of Jesus Christ for the Rapture of His Church (all born again believers).

WE BELIEVE in the immortality of our souls and the resurrection of our bodies; in the resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved and the everlasting punishment of the lost.

A dramatic sky with sunbeams and silhouettes of people with raised hands. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and long, radiating rays of light that fill the sky. The sky is a mix of deep blue and lighter, hazy tones. In the foreground, the silhouettes of many people's arms and hands are raised, some pointing upwards, against the bright light of the sun. The overall mood is one of awe and spiritual fervor.

The Rapture

Barry Stagner

As we consider the ways that the church has indulged in self-rule and a wholesale rejection of what makes the church what it is supposed to be, we need to keep in mind what Jesus said about the believer's responsibility and calling in this dark and delusional world.

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

MATTHEW 5:13-16

When good works are viewed as imposing on being saved by grace, and when the light has largely gone out in the church (with light being representative of truth), then the end result is that the church is overrun by the world and trampled underfoot by men. When this happens, the Lord is no longer able to use the church to receive glory for the good work of “truth bearing” to a lost and dying world. While Jesus’ statements in the Sermon on the Mount are not related to the time of the signs, they do make a relevant point. When the church no longer has a purifying and preserving influence on the world, and it is no longer bringing glory to God, then it seems safe to say the timing is right for the world to transition back to the 70 weeks of Daniel and to experience the fulfillment of the seventieth and final week, or the tribulation.

While the rapture of the church is taught as being imminent and the day and hour are unknown, there are many clues that tell us this event is imminent. Among these clues is the rebirth of the nation of Israel. Because the purpose of the regathering of the Jewish people is

to fulfill prophecy and complete the discipline of God’s chosen people, and because the church has no part in the seventieth week of Daniel, we can assume the rapture is getting closer.

We do not know the day or hour of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. But we do know that the purpose of the regathering of the Jews in their covenantal homeland is for God to afflict them and cause a believing remnant (Zechariah 12:10) to recognize the error of rejecting Christ. As Hosea 5:15 says, the Jews’ affliction will cause them to receive the Lord: “They will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”

The first and obvious thing for us to recognize is that for “all Israel [to] be saved” (Romans 11:26), there has to be an Israel. The fact that the nation exists today is not just happenstance or a prophetically irrelevant reality. It is a miraculous fulfillment of multiple prophecies.

The whole tribulation is a time of God’s wrath, and the church does not have an appointment with it. As 1 Thessalonians 5:9 says, “God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This necessitates the removal of the church before the tribulation, and Jesus directly promised this in the sixth letter of the seven He sent to the churches of Asia Minor in Revelation 2–3:

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

REVELATION 3:10

The Rapture

Thus, for the rapture to happen soon seems likely. We also need to remember that the day and hour has already been determined. The trends we just talked about won't cause the rapture, they are simply signs that indicate it is likely near.

The Greek preposition ἐκ, translated “from,” can also be translated “out of.” This eliminates the possibility of interpreting this as saying Jesus promised to keep the church “through” the tribulation, which is what will happen to the Jews who later look upon Him whom they pierced and mourn (Zechariah 12:10). The church will be kept out of the entire seven-year tribulation, not protected through it. What is the point of the church going through the tribulation and being protected during it? What benefit is there for the church to go through it yet not be impacted by it? Are we to be observers? Scripture does not mention the church as being among those who are witnesses during the tribulation, like the 144,000. It is not necessary for the church to go through this time to be purified, for to say that means the blood of Christ was not a sufficient sacrifice to cover our sins. To hold the view that the church will go through the tribulation is to say we are saved by grace *and* tribulation, or we are purified by trial.

None of that is true or biblically feasible!

Here's another reason we can assume the rapture is getting close—while it is a bit speculative, it makes logical sense. If the church has largely ceased being a purifying influence in the world (being salt) and has replaced the light



of God's truth with doctrines of demons and socially acceptable ideas, then what is the point of having the church remain on earth during the tribulation? Again, this is speculation, but it makes sense. The Jews are back in their national homeland, and the church has largely defected from the truth (though a faithful remnant remains). Thus, for the rapture to happen soon seems likely. We also need to remember that the day and hour has already been determined. The trends we just talked about won't cause the rapture, they are simply signs that indicate it is likely near.

Sadly, the truth that the church will be raptured has become a divisive subject in these last days instead of a glorious expectation. Some argue that the Bible presents no such doctrine, while others debate its timing. There are many

Hermeneutics is simply a fancy word for interpretation, and here's our hermeneutical question: Does the Bible actually teach the rapture? The short answer is yes.

today who view the subject of the rapture as *inciting* rather than *exciting*. They say inciting in the sense it elicits cries of heresy and sensationalism or escapism from a growing number of saints today.

In response to the growing number of people who deny the presence of the rapture in Scripture, we need to address the issue for two reasons and from two perspectives: proper hermeneutics and accurate eschatology. I would hazard a guess that because you are reading this, you have an interest in Bible prophecy, and you likely have views about this hotly debated topic. We are going to answer these questions: What is the timing of the rapture in terms of the end-times chronology? And, can the rapture be defended biblically?

Hermeneutics is simply a fancy word for interpretation, and here's our hermeneutical question: Does the Bible actually teach the rapture? The short answer is yes. And because the Bible clearly teaches the rapture, let's review all the verses in which the word *rapture* is used so we can arrive at an accurate eschatology. Yet there aren't any instances of the word *rapture* in Scripture, are there? Then how can a doctrine be valid when the word isn't even used?

Let's use that argument to make a point. We don't find the word *rapture* in our English Bibles. Are there any other major doctrines that we believe that aren't described by a specific word in the Bible? Yes—the Trinity or triunity of God is one example. The doctrine of the Trin-

ity is an essential that cannot be denied without compromising the principles of saving faith.

One passage that affirms the doctrine of the Trinity has to do with Jesus' baptism.

It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

MARK 1:9-11

We find in this scene the three distinct personages of the one eternal God, and yet the terms *Trinity* or *triunity* are not used. Still, all three members of the triune Godhead are simultaneously present.

We also find the Trinity mentioned in the creation narrative in Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2).

The word translated "God" is the Hebrew term *Elohim*, and it speaks of the plurality of God—not multiple Gods, but the one God manifested in a Trinity. The Father and the Spirit are present and active at creation, and then later in the narrative, we find the Son: "God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have

The Rapture

The Trinity is clearly present in Genesis and is confirmed in the Gospels. Just because a word used to describe a doctrine or precept is not found in Scripture does not mean that doctrine or precept is invalid.

dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (verse 26).

Colossians 1:15-16 says that Jesus is the “image” of the invisible God, and that all things were created through and for Him. Though we find the invisible God, the Holy Spirit, and the physical manifestation of God in the person of Jesus in Genesis, we don’t find the word *Trinity*.

So the argument that there is no such thing as the rapture because the word doesn’t appear in our English Bibles is nullified by the precedent set by the word *Trinity*. The Trinity is clearly present in Genesis and is confirmed in the Gospels. Just because a word used to describe a doctrine or precept is not found in Scripture does not mean that doctrine or precept is invalid.

Another common objection is that the doctrine of the rapture arrived late in church history—it is not part of ancient or accurate eschatology. The problem with this thinking is that if we can find the doctrine mentioned in the Bible (even though the word *rapture* itself isn’t used), then the doctrine of the rapture is as old as the Bible. There are three ways we can establish the rapture of the church as sound doctrine: Old Testament precedent or typology, New Testament clarity, and prophetic necessity. By prophetic necessity, I mean this: Does the absence of the doctrine of the rapture

leave holes in the prophetic narrative or time line?

If we can establish these three points, then we can safely conclude the rapture is neither new nor a mere human invention. It is as sound a doctrine as any other in Scripture. Before we dig in and respond to the claim that the doctrine of the rapture is recent, let’s start by looking at Daniel 12:4: “You, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

This passage tells us that those living closer to the end times will have more prophetic clarity than those further away. This is problematic for those who say belief in the rapture is false based on its recent development and popularity. Scripture clearly says some elements of the last days scenario will become knowable only to those living in those days. Even so, the teaching that the church will experience a pre-tribulation rapture has a much deeper biblical base than some people are willing to acknowledge. Our goal, then, is to be Bereans, and put this doctrine to the test and see if it holds up.

On to our first criterion: Do we find Old Testament precedents or typologies that validate the rapture as a doctrine taught cover to cover in Scripture? In search of our answer, let’s start with 1 Corinthians 15.

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the

“Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.” GENESIS 5:21-24

trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-52

If you're thinking, *First Corinthians is in the New Testament*, keep reading! The Greek word for “mystery” is *μυστήριον* (*mysterion*), and it means “not obvious to the understanding.” We will talk more about this verse in our second criterion, but the point here is that there are scriptural concepts in the Old Testament that were not obvious to the understanding of those who lived in the time of their writing, just as Daniel 12:4 states. For example: The full meanings of the statue in Daniel 2 and the four beasts in Daniel 7 were not obvious to readers when those passages were written. But as time marched on, the meaning of those passages became clearer. Now we can look back over history and see the successive world empires of the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, and the Greeks, who were named, and the Romans, who were not.

Can the mystery of the rapture be established by a foreshadowing of it in the Old Testament? First, we need to ask what exactly the rapture implies. As a doctrine, the rapture implies two things: an instantaneous translation of living human beings from this world to the next by means of a supernatural agent.



And second, a separation of God's people from His direct wrath on His enemies.

Let's first look for Old Testament precedents for an instant translation from this life to the next. Here's one:

Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked

The Rapture

Having tribulations in this life does not mean we will go through the seven-year tribulation that is clearly a time of God's wrath.

with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

GENESIS 5:21-24

The word “took” is key. The Hebrew word means “to fetch or catch away.” The Greek word *harpazo*, translated as “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, carries the same meaning: “to take up by force, to snatch away.”

Here's another Old Testament precedent:

Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

2 KINGS 2:11

Based on our findings in the Old Testament, we can say the first part of our criteria has been met. There is, in the Old Testament, a precedent that validates the possibility of an instantaneous translation from this life to the next by means of a supernatural agent—the translation of flesh-and-blood humans who pleased and served God.

There is another passage that helps us to refute any who would argue there are no Old Testament typologies of the New Testament rapture:

They themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

1 THESSALONIANS 1:9-10

We will deal with other New Testament scriptures that teach about our deliverance from God's direct wrath, but this will introduce the concept for us. There are those who say the church will go through the tribulation even as the saints of old have gone through tribulations. For support, they point to passages like John 16:33: “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

The word translated “tribulation” means “anguish, troubles, afflictions.” There is nothing that implies these troubles are initiated by the Lord or are a form of His wrath. Having tribulations in this life does not mean we will go through the seven-year tribulation that is clearly a time of God's wrath. In this life, we can expect troubling things to happen that will cause anguish and afflictions. But Christ has overcome this world, and these troubles are only temporary and are a normal part of the Christian life. They are not specific to a future seven-year time period.

With regard to Old Testament types of deliverance from God's wrath, we can note that Noah was delivered from God's wrath when the ark lifted him above the waters of the flood. Lot was delivered from God's judgment on Sodom

Noah was removed from the flood when the door of the ark was shut by God. Lot was removed from wrath when the angels met him and led him out of Sodom. Therefore, in the cases of Noah and Lot, we have a supernatural agent and a change of location that delivered them from God's wrath.

and Gomorrah when he was removed from the area. The Israelites were delivered from God's wrath when the last seven plagues pounded the Egyptians into submission to God's will for His people. There are some who argue that the Israelites were still on the planet when God poured out His wrath on the Egyptians, and they use this to claim the typology states the church will go through the tribulation and God will supernaturally protect it.

But that reasoning doesn't hold up. Israel is Israel, and the church is the church. The church has not replaced Israel, and God is not finished with His people. The only principles relating to Israel that we can apply to the church are those pertaining to the nature and character of God. Now pay close attention: Neither Noah nor Lot were Jews. And God moved both of them to prevent them from exposure to His wrath. Noah was lifted above the waters; Lot was removed from Sodom.

Let's look next at what happened with Israel:



In that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the land. I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be.

EXODUS 8:22-23

Israel remained in Egypt, which is a type of the world, during the time of the ten plagues. But the Jewish people were supernaturally protected by God during the last seven plagues. How long is the tribulation? Seven years. So,

The Rapture

Paul says that living believers will be caught up together with the dead saints to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever.

too, will the Jewish people remain on the earth and be supernaturally protected throughout the time of God's wrath.

However, Noah was removed from the flood when the door of the ark was shut by God. Lot was removed from wrath when the angels met him and led him out of Sodom. Therefore, in the cases of Noah and Lot, we have a supernatural agent and a change of location that delivered them from God's wrath. In Egypt, we have the divine protection of Jews during the time of God's wrath, just as will happen during the tribulation. Notice also that when the Lord spoke to Pharaoh, the separation of God's people from wrath was a sign to the world.

In these ways, Old Testament precedents for the rapture are clear and well defined.

What about New Testament clarity? Again, some say the word *rapture* isn't present in Scripture. How, then, is the mystery in the Old Testament made clear in the New? Are the words *gracias* or *bonjour* in the Bible? Yes, they are—just not in our English Bibles. Those words are translated “thanks” or “greetings.”

So is the word *rapture* in the Bible? Let's take a closer look.

This we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them

in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:15-17

The word translated as “caught up” is ἀρπάζω (*harpazo*). It means “to pluck, to pull, to catch up by force.” If you have a Latin Bible, you would see the word *rapturos* instead of ἀρπάζω, so yes, the word *rapture* is in the Bible—just not our English versions.

Paul says that living believers will be caught up together with the dead saints to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever. They will experience an instantaneous translation from this life to the next via a supernatural agent. For us to live eternally will require that we have a body able to do that. The bodies we currently dwell in cannot. So, for us to have bodies meant to exist eternally, we have to be changed at the rapture, and indeed, that's what will happen.

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-55

“Redemption” refers to a release effected by the payment of a ransom. We are waiting for our bodies to be redeemed after long having been confined to the expectancy of death. Romans 8 does not give details about the transition of our bodies into glorious ones like Christ’s, but it does say that’s what awaits us.

“Sleep” is an idiom for death, and Paul says we will not all die, but we will all be changed. Changed into what? Incorruptible, immortal beings capable of existing eternally. How quickly? In the twinkling of an eye. That is instantaneous! Where are we meeting the Lord? In the air. And how long will we be with Him? Forever. Will death continue to be a threat to us? No!

We have to ask: What would be the figurative meaning of such verses if there is no rapture? This can’t be a picture of salvation because we don’t get new bodies when we are saved. This can’t speak of the soul because the soul never dies—it is already immortal. So, what can 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 mean? Let’s look at some other passages for the answer.

Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21

Paul said we will not all die, which has to pertain to the human body, not the human soul, which doesn’t die. Our lowly and limited bodies are going to be transformed (also translated as transfigured) into their predestined form of the “image” (the Greek is εἰκών, *eikon*) of Christ.

We know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

ROMANS 8:22-25

“Redemption” refers to a release effected by the payment of a ransom. We are waiting for our bodies to be redeemed after long having been confined to the expectancy of death. Romans 8 does not give details about the transition of our bodies into glorious ones like Christ’s, but it does say that’s what awaits us.

First Corinthians 15:52 tells us about the speed of the transition: in the twinkling of an eye. And Philippians further explains we will become immortal and incorruptible. Our destination is glorious, Christlike bodies. The New Testament is clear about the mystery in the Old: We will someday be translated into bodies that are capable of existing eternally. There is no mistaking this.

We have established Old Testament types and precedence, and we have New Testament clarity. What about prophetic necessity? Will there be holes left in the prophetic narrative if there

The Rapture



Is there a biblical precedent in Scripture for the Lamb of God becoming a lion against His own bride and killing her along with evildoers without discrimination? Are there any times when the church has had to hide from God's wrath?



is no rapture of the church? Must *all* of the Bible's prophecies come to pass for Scripture to be reliable and trustworthy? Can unconditional and eternal promises be forfeited or applied to another group of people in the Bible, and Scripture still be a source of immutable or unchanging truth? The answer is no, because what was once true must always be true.

Next, let's address the matter of the church and God's wrath, starting with this passage in Revelation:

The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

REVELATION 6:15-17

The word translated "every" in John's day meant "every." What does it mean today? "Every." In other words, rich or poor, slave or

free, *every* person on the earth will try to hide from Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. Absolutely no one will be able to stand. We do not find the phrase "except the church" present anywhere in the text; thus, the church cannot be a part of this scene and is not present on the earth at the time of this event.

Is there a biblical precedent in Scripture for the Lamb of God becoming a lion against His own bride and killing her along with evildoers without discrimination? Are there any times when the church has had to hide from God's wrath? The apostle Paul said no:

God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:9-11

If the rapture is not a sound biblical doctrine, then there is a discrepancy between 1 Thessalonians 5:9-22 and Revelation 6:15-17, and

What is the end result of the rapture? The whole church is gathered in one place.

that opens up a plethora of problems. The Bible would not be trustworthy if verses contradict one another.

Even in the early church, there were some who spread confusion about the rapture. In response, Paul wrote,

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-8

There are some who see the phrase “falling away” as a reference to the rapture because the Greek word ἀποστασία, or *apostasia*, can be translated “departure.” The problem is that in Scripture, ἀποστασία is never used in the context of a physical departure. It is always used to refer to a departing from truth. The term is

used only one other time in the Bible, in Acts 21:21, and that context has the same meaning intended here: forsaking God’s Word.

I believe the rapture is found here in the phrase “gathering together,” which means “the complete assembly,” or “to assemble in one place.” What is the end result of the rapture? The whole church is gathered in one place. If ἀποστασία were pointing to the rapture, as some say, and “gathering together” is pointing to the rapture, then this text would say, “The rapture can’t happen unless the rapture happens first.” That is obviously redundant. Paul ways saying, “Don’t let the words or letters of others shake you up with regard to what I’ve taught about our gathering together to Him.” We shouldn’t let the words of today’s naysayers trouble us either.

The idea of being gathered together to Christ is consistent with what Jesus said to the eleven on the night of His betrayal and arrest. He said He was going to prepare a place for them, and that He would come again and receive them unto Himself so that where He is, they (and we) may be also (John 14:2-3).

What about the timing of the rapture? That’s another hotly debated subject in the church. While most acknowledge the day and hour is unknowable, is that day and hour *before* the tribulation, *during* the tribulation, or at the *end* of the tribulation? (These are the pre-, mid-, and post-tribulation rapture views.) Does not knowing the day or hour mean we can’t know anything about the timing of the rapture in relation to the tribulation? That depends on which

The Rapture

Can the true church be present on the earth and *not* be a restraining force by the power of the Holy Spirit? Can the true church cease from being salt and light? What is the solution to our question and prophetic dilemma? The rapture.



timing view you hold to. If you believe in a pre-tribulation rapture, then seeing things develop that will be fulfilled during the tribulation should stir up a sense of expectation and excitement because it could happen at any time. But if you are mid- or post-trib, then you know that because the tribulation has not yet begun, there is no expectation that the rapture could occur within the next three-and-a-half or seven years.

Not only has there been significant debate about the timing of the rapture, there are some who reject the idea of a rapture altogether:

Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the

heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

2 PETER 3:3-7

Sadly, there are a multitude of "rapture scoffers" with us today who are fulfilling Peter's warning. This is also consistent with Jesus stating that He would come at a time when He was not expected (Matthew 24:44). If you don't believe in the rapture, you certainly aren't going to be expecting it.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the next point Paul makes to the church is, "Let no one deceive you" about this (verse 3). Then he lists a progression of events that will initiate the march toward the destruction of the man of sin by the brightness of Jesus' second coming. Here is our point of interest: Lawlessness is already at work. That which is restraining the rise of the antichrist and his kingdom is going to be taken out of the way, and then—and *only* then—will the lawless one be revealed. What is the restraining force holding back utter lawlessness in the world today? The Holy Spirit. What is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit? In the saints who make up the church.

That means that if the restraining force holding back the rise of the antichrist is the Holy Spirit, and if He dwells in the saints or the church, then the church must be taken out of the way for the lawless one to rise to power. If there is no rapture, then this progression

If we can see events that are exclusive to the tribulation approaching, we can be sure the rapture of the church is near!

doesn't make sense. For how can the world's only source of salt and light be present at a time when there is no restraining force on the earth?

This leads to another question: Can the true church be present on the earth and *not* be a restraining force by the power of the Holy Spirit? Can the true church cease from being salt and light? What is the solution to our question and prophetic dilemma? The rapture.

Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

LUKE 21:34-36

The word "escape" means "to flee out of." Jesus described this time as one that no flesh would survive [if] He did not return to stop it, and He warned that it would be a time of global judgment. Where, then, do hundreds of millions of Christians "flee out of" in order to escape that judgment? What do those verses mean if the church goes through the tribulation?

What about a mid-tribulation or pre-wrath rapture? These views say we will miss God's wrath and be here for the first half of the tribulation. Those positions conflict with what 2 Thessalonians 2 says about the church

hindering the antichrist's rise to power, and the church's departure (the removal of the Holy Spirit) being the event that allows him to rise. The antichrist will be given power to reign during the first 42 months of the tribulation. We know this because the first of the four horsemen of the apocalypse in Revelation 6 is a man on a white horse who brings a pseudo-peace to the world through the seven-year covenant he establishes with Israel, as prophesied in Daniel 9:27.

In spite of scoffers and deniers, the doctrine of the rapture of the church is as sound as any other doctrine of Scripture. It is clear that God can protect the Jews from His wrath, and it is clear that on other occasions, He has changed the location of Gentiles to remove them from His wrath. The New Testament not only teaches the rapture, it requires it. The prophetic narrative and sequence of end-times events is completely disrupted without the supernatural removal of the church from the earth prior to the tribulation.

No man knows the day or the hour of the Lord's coming for His church. But if we can see events that are exclusive to the tribulation approaching, we can be sure the rapture of the church is near!

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EVANGELICALS: STAND UP FOR JEWS! – PART 4



JEWISH TIMELINE BECOMES INTERESTING

Following the seemingly miraculous re-founding of the land of Israel in 1948, the Jewish people have been in the process of returning to their land. The Aliyah (homecoming) is still underway, to be fully completed after “Jacob’s trouble.”

By Wilfred Hahn

Crucially, in this regard, for the first time in over 2,600 years, more “core” Jews (individuals that identify themselves as Jewish) are now living in Israel than in any other nation. Think of the significance of this for a moment.

This would be celebratory news, were it not for the reasons why “core” Jews are such a small group. Adding those that qualify as being eligible under Israel’s Law of Return (which can include non-Jewish household members), raises total world Jewry from 16.5 million to 25.5 million. Of these, 51% live in the United States and 30% in Israel (including the West Bank).

While the country of Israel is experiencing healthy natural population growth (now numbering 5.4

million Jews), Diaspora Jewry is declining; not for reasons of Aliyah, but more because of secularization and outmarriage (Jews marrying people who are not Jewish). According to one study, whereas outmarriage rates were generally below 5% for the majority of Diaspora populations in 1930, today, it is in excess of 45%.¹ In America, fewer Jews report having two parents of Jewish origin. Less than 40% of the 18–34-year age group who identify themselves as Jewish today, have two Jewish parents. In fact, a current major point of debate is the very definition of Jewish identity.

For this and other reasons, the Jew is becoming ever less numerous in the world. While the Jewish people represented 7.5 out of every 1000 people in the world in 1938,

Hopefully, the Messiah will come first and America will never be the handmaiden to another such atrocity and therefore suffer being uprooted. Time will tell. Of one thing we can be sure: When the Jew leaves America, it will be the harbinger of the downfall of the USA. For, to repeat, “I will bless those who bless you,” said Lord Jehovah (Genesis 12:3a).

today this figure is less than half—only 3.1 per 1000.

This declining trend will continue to worsen, according to some researchers. Others talk of the Hansen’s Principle phenomenon ... the apparently observed trend that “what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember.” But such a renaissance of Jewish culture in America seems unlikely, given that evidence indicates extremely high rates of unmarried cohabitation with non-Jewish partners. If that is the case, the assimilation of the North American Jew will rapidly continue.

But would it seem likely that more than one-half of “core” Jews in the world will remain outside of Israel? According to Scripture, it is certain that the Aliyah is not yet complete; this occurs only after the Tribulation. Could it be that American Jews will simply assimilate and eventually wither away? That seems doubtful. If history is any guide to the future, it has always been true that specifically in those countries where the largest population of Jews reached

prominence and contributed to a Golden Age, they eventually were persecuted and displaced.

Hopefully, the Messiah will come first and America will never be the handmaiden to another such atrocity and therefore suffer being uprooted. Time will tell. Of one thing we can be sure: When the Jew leaves America, it will be the harbinger of the downfall of the USA. For, to repeat, “I will bless those who bless you,” said Lord Jehovah (Genesis 12:3a).

The Coming Protocols of God

Ultimately, once the Jews repent and recognize their Messiah, they will be forgiven as well. “In those days, at that time,’ declares the LORD, ‘search will be made for Israel’s guilt, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare” (Jeremiah 50:20).

The next uppermost fact to realize is that the times of the Gentiles will end. In the not-too-distant future, the tables will be turned: The Israelites will reign on earth. Jesus Christ Himself will be in the seat of



“If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you” (Romans 11:17-18).



David, and justice and law will go out from Jerusalem.

In this seat of God-given power and wealth, will Israel be forgiving and non-retaliatory to the nations that have persecuted its people through the ages? Scripture is clear about the fate that will befall the nations. “This is what the LORD says: ‘As for all my wicked neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands and I will

uproot the house of Judah from among them. But after I uproot them, I will again have compassion and will bring each of them back to his own inheritance and his own country ... But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it,’ declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 12:14, 17).

At the end of the Tribulation, the Jews indeed will recognize their Messiah. Then will begin the Millennium—the seventh, final, and greatest period where Israel would again flourish unmolested and free of international interference in its own land.

Once the tribes of Jacob are restored, says the Lord, “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6b). “Once again he will choose Israel” (Isaiah 14:1).

Thoughts to Ponder

As Christians, we do not need to be apologists for the Jews, nor condone every action of the modern State of Israel. However, there are several things we must do: First, “If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot,

God will restore the Jews for the sake of His promises to the patriarchs (Romans 11:28).

have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you” (Romans 11:17-18).

Next, “Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either” (vv. 20b-21).

While a judgment and restoration has been set for the Jews, the Gentile best remember that judgment awaits them also. For the Christian, the Bema seat (and persecution) still lies ahead for us. Thanks to the Jew—Jesus Christ, in the flesh—we are spared eternal damnation (and so also the House of Jacob), but we do not escape judgment. That trembling time still lies ahead. Oh, may the severity that God has showed the Jew pass over us! Think of the countless times we have been disobedient, as were Israel and Judah, yet Jesus Christ has been faithful to forgive us.

According to the Prophet Hosea, this restoration surely draws near. Hosea was inspired to say, “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence” (6:2). As a “day is ... as a thousand years” (2 Peter 3:8; cf. Psalm 90:4), it is now well

into the second half of the third day for the Jews.

As God’s plan decrees, one day there will be a Jewish global confederacy. It will be the Millennium ... and not as the result of the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” or any other contrived conspiracy theory. Gentiles will then be thankful that Jews are not the evil they are often made out to be. “In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you’” (Zechariah 8:23).

God will restore the Jews for the sake of His promises to the patriarchs (Romans 11:28). This is such wonderful news for Jew and Christian alike. For if God is willing to go to such lengths to keep His promise for “David’s sake,” how much more so on behalf of Jesus Christ, His own Son? (MC)

This is part of a re-edited, four-part excerpt from the 2009 book, *Preserving True Riches in an Age of Deception and Trouble* (secondary title).

ENDNOTE

- 1 Serigo Della Pergola, “Jewish Out-Marriage: A Global Perspective,” International Roundtable on Inter-marriage, Brandeis University, December 18, 2003, Table 1.



Knowing God

DR. RON J. BIGALKE

Due to the advent of social media, how a person is “known” has changed remarkably. For instance, one can have a lucrative career simply from being “known” (famous) on Instagram. Most people are aware that Instagram is a photo and video sharing social network service.

Similar to other social media applications, a person can “follow” his or her favorite Instagrammers to view their latest posts, and they can do the same in return. The application tracks how many followers a person has. One is considered an Instagram influencer if he or she has a large following.

Professional Instagrammers are able to benefit from having a significant number of followers. Macro influencers have anywhere from 500,000

to 1 million followers, and companies often compensate them—based upon their audience size—to visit their businesses and post their thoughts. Some of these influencers can make anywhere from \$3,000-6,000 for a single post. Instagram is just one medium to become known (famous).

Of course, much work is expended for the photos and videos posted on Instagram. One must use optimal lighting, and everyone must

look great and everything be placed strategically without seeming artificial. Photos will be air-brushed and videos edited meticulously. Image is primary! Social media has created a culture that coerces one to promote the best possible image, and generally intensifies that compulsion by providing the platform for discriminating what images to share—including those that encourage jealousy as one “humbly” features the week’s best moments, and even carefully selected pictures of one’s meals.

The culture today allows for one to live with a caricature (image) of one’s true self, as opposed to character determining and reflecting a person’s identity. When image is more desirable and popular than character, life can become superficial in relation to others. To live in such a manner is to miss the opportunity to live in authentic community.

The psalmist declared, “O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*” (Ps 139:1). To be “known” by God is radically different than what occurs with social media. The sense in which God knows a person is experiential, intimate, and thorough; it is more complicated, even disorderly at times, yet that kind of vulnerability is more satisfying. To be known biblically does require transparency with others, letting them know your strengths *and* weaknesses.

Do you allow others to ask, “Is your soul well?” Do you either knowingly or instinctively give the impression that you are better than you are? The truthful answer to that question indicates whether a person is living hypocritically or with integrity. To be honest, the majority of people desire the type of community in which they are truly known.

The emphasis of Psalm 138 is a life of thanksgiving, both individually and communally. While it is vital for others to know our true character, Psalm 139 reveals that the omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent God knows the hearts and minds of people entirely. God knows His creatures thoroughly, even to how many hairs are on a person’s head (Matt 10:30; Luke 12:7). The truth that the Lord God is infinite yet intimate “is too wonderful” to comprehend (Ps 139:6a). Psalm 140 demonstrates the psalmist’s transparency in crying desperately for the Lord’s deliverance in a time of troubling affliction.

Ignorance of God’s nature and how to enjoy fellowship with Him, will always be the basis for a weakened spirituality. Psalms 138—140 show that the poet knew God vividly. Knowing God is certainly joyful, yet equally important are the challenges, disappointments, and self-denial involved in that knowledge (what may be regarded as cross-bearing; cf. Matt 16:24-26). While it is easy to respond to life’s “crosses” as disheartening and undesirable, Scripture exhorts the believer to “consider it all joy ... when you encounter various trials” (Jas 1:2). Truly knowing God is not thinking in terms of loss but gain. Paul could write: “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him ... that I may know Him...” (Phil 3:7-10). What was lost for the sake of Christ is rubbish and

Knowing God

The hymnist declares that “all the kings of the earth” will praise God (v. 4).

thus not worth consideration. What person contemplates refuse?

Knowledge of God is what brings contentment, joy, and satisfaction in life. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed the words of the Lord: “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me...” (Jer 9:23-24). Knowledge of God is the greatest pleasure. The psalmist demonstrates how to know God in terms of His provision, greatness, and deliverance.

KNOWING GOD’S PROVISION

(Ps 138) Psalm 138 is appropriately placed in the Psalter, because the previous hymn expressed the inability to sing “in a foreign land” (Ps 137:4). However, in Psalm 138, the hymnist declares that “all the kings of the earth” will praise God (v. 4). Psalm 137 expresses the need for silence before one’s tormentors, yet now in Psalm 138 the excellence of a bold testimony is highlighted. There is a time one does not cast “pearls before swine” (Matt 7:6), and another in which “woe” is declared for not speaking (1 Cor 9:16).

The psalmist had many reasons to express thanksgiving and used a repetition of verbs for praise: “I will give ... sing ... bow down ... give thanks.” David boldly declared to withhold nothing in his praise to God (“with all my heart”). In declaring his allegiance to God alone, David witnessed against the powerlessness of idols (“the gods,” Ps 138:1). His worship was



in accordance with God’s direction (“toward Your holy temple,” 2a). His “lovingkindness” and “truth” are reasons to praise God (v. 2b), who has magnified His “word” beyond His very “name,” His character (v. 2c). David’s practical reasons for praising and thanking God were that the Lord “answered” and strengthened him spiritually (v. 3).

When other kings (like David) would know the Lord’s greatness, they would also worship Him (vv. 4-5; cf. 1 Kgs 10:1-13). Scripture consistently testifies to the necessity for those in positions of authority to hear God’s saving truth (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-4), which requires sending someone faithful to proclaim that message (Rom 10:14-15). The psalmist expected these leaders

The Lord “knows” us perfectly. God is present everywhere, yet still involved personally in each individual’s life, down to the most infinitesimal level.

to humbly guide others in communal adoration, praise, and thanksgiving to the Lord (Ps 138:4-6). Earthly glory is nothing compared to God’s eternal splendor (vv. 6-8).

KNOWING GOD’S GREATNESS

(Ps 139) The Lord “knows” us perfectly. God is present everywhere, yet still involved personally in each individual’s life, down to the most infinitesimal level. He created life and presides over every aspect of each life. God knows every action, attitude, thought, and word (Ps 139:1-6). “Such knowledge is too wonderful” to comprehend (v. 6a), yet it is a comforting reality that God is infinite yet intimate.

God knows (Heb. *yadah*) the very depths of a person’s being (v. 1), which is both comforting and convicting, in addition to humbling. Not only was the psalmist overwhelmed with the fact that God is all-knowing (omniscient), but also that He is all-present (omnipresent) (vv. 7-12). The all-knowing, all-present God preciousy creates each person’s “inward parts.” He has the personal care and concern to form each child and know each person prior to birth, as a child (another person) conceived and developing in its “mother’s womb” (v. 13). Truly, every human being is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (v. 14). Even when little more than a physical being (“my frame”) in the womb and unborn (“made in secret”), God has intent for the undeveloped embryo (“unformed substance”) (vv. 15-16a). God’s omniscience is not limited to the past but extends to the future. He knows all a person’s “days” as if written in a book (v. 16b-d).

At the precious nature of God’s “thoughts”—the magnificence of His purposes—one can only respond with amazement and wonder (vv. 17-18). The psalmist is overwhelmed with God’s purposes, yet recognizes the destructive nature of those who scheme and rebel against God’s sovereignty (vv. 19-20). He longs for justice and righteousness in the earth (vv. 19-22). Humility is proper in response to God’s greatness (vv. 23-24).

KNOWING GOD’S DELIVERANCE

(Ps 140) During the Civil War, President Lincoln was purportedly asked whether he believed God was on the side of the Confederacy. Lincoln replied, “Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side. My greatest concern is to be on God’s side, for God is always right.” When the psalmist was falsely accused (Ps 140:1-5), he prayed for the Lord’s rescue because God is the righteous Judge (vv. 6-8, 12-13). David knew he was on God’s side, and could pray for the Lord to defeat the plans of his enemies and bring them to judgment (vv. 9-11).

David was confident that God would preserve him (vv. 6-8, 12-13). Scripture declares, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12). Always call upon God for deliverance when experiencing spiritual attack. God alone can comfort, deliver, and strengthen the one who trusts in Him. He will never forsake those who belong to Him (1 Kgs 8:57; Heb 13:5). (MC)

(1381)




WORLD FOCUS

WORLD

Doomsday Clock 90 Seconds to Midnight

The Doomsday Clock—which shows how symbolically close the world is to nuclear Armageddon—is to remain at 90 seconds to midnight.

 Scientists have listed reasons for keeping its hands the closest they have ever been to “Doomsday”—but stopped short of nudging it further forward.

The threat of a new nuclear arms race, the Ukraine war and climate change concerns were all factors, they said.

The clock is set annually by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

The Doomsday Clock was created in 1947 by J Robert Oppenheimer and fellow US scientists who had developed the atomic bomb.

Bulletin president Rachel Bronson told the BBC that “every major country, including the UK, is investing in their nuclear arsenal as if nuclear weapons are usable for a very long time. This is a very dangerous time... leaders are not acting responsibly.”

In 2021, the UK increased the cap on its warheads from 225 to 260, potentially 35 more warheads, and the country’s nuclear force is on high alert. Since the war in Ukraine began, there

Doomsday Clock – minutes to midnight



Source: Doomsday Clock (bulletin.btaa.org)

has been rhetoric from senior Russian figures suggesting Moscow’s nuclear weapons could be used against the UK.

Former Bulletin of Atomic Scientists member and Doomsday Clock adviser, Sig Hecker, has visited North Korea’s nuclear facilities seven times as part of a scientific research program and estimates it could have 50 to 60 nuclear warheads by now.

-www.bbc.com, 23 January 2024

Commentary: The Doomsday Clock originated in 1947 with a group of atomic scientists in Chicago. In 2024, the war in Ukraine and the develop-

ment of AI kept the clock at 90 seconds to midnight. At the end of the so-called Cold War in 1991, the clock showed 17 minutes to midnight.

The world is concerned, and rightly so, considering the developments in some African countries, in Haiti, Russia’s war against Ukraine, and the 7 October 2023 Hamas attack, upon which Israel subsequently declared war on Hamas. But when we go back in history, we find that there is much less chance for wars today than several centuries ago. When doing research, one finds not hundreds, but thousands of different wars listed, particularly on the European continent.

Today, it’s all but impossible to imagine war within the European Union; these nations are so deeply interconnected that there is no chance of a return to individual nationalism that could result in war. That can be said for the American continent as well. While there are flareups and military actions within the 35 sovereign nations on the continent (North and South), a full-fledged war is out of the question.

We notice the headline speaks about nuclear Armageddon. Quite obviously, there will be none. Armageddon is associated with supernatural, diabolical forces, as recorded in Rev-

(continued next page)

Doomsday (continued from page 28)

elation 16:14: “For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” The unity of the world is for a very specific purpose: “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them” (Revelation 17:14a). These are spiritual events taking place in the invisible world.

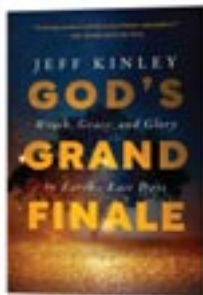
Later in Revelation, we read: “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army” (Revelation 19:19). There is no geopolitical power on planet earth that can “make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”

The world’s population will fully realize that Armageddon has come upon them, issued by God the Creator. We read in Revelation 6:16: “And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”

Chapter 9 ends: “Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts” (v. 21). People know the origin of Armageddon: “And blasphemed the God of

heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (Revelation 16:11).

How the battle of Armageddon unfolds is documented in Revelation 19:20. That is the end of Armageddon, the fulfillment of 2 Thessalonians 2:8: “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” No



need for nuclear bombs, fighter jets, tanks, guns, etc.

8199

(See *God's Grand Finale*,

Item #2408, \$16.99.)



NORTH KOREA

Diplomacy with Iran

A high-level North Korean economic delegation was on its way to Iran, the North’s state media said, for what would be the two countries’ first known talks since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Embracing the idea of a “new Cold War,” North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is pushing to build up cooperation with countries confronting the United States, as his intensified weapons tests prompted the U.S. and South Korea to expand their military drills.

Pyongyang and Tehran are among the few governments in the world that support Russian President Vladimir



In this photo provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, right, meets Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress of China, in Pyongyang, North Korea

Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, and both have been accused of providing Russia with military equipment.

North Korea has made efforts for months to boost the visibility of its ties with Russia and China as Kim attempts to break out of diplomatic isolation and join a united front against the U.S.

In 2023, Kim visited Russia’s Far East for a rare summit with Putin, which highlighted the countries’ expanding military cooperation, including the North’s alleged transfers of artillery shells, missiles, and other munitions to Russia.

Earlier, Kim hosted top Chinese official Zhao Leji, who heads the ceremonial parliament and ranks third in the ruling Communist Party hierarchy. It was the highest-level meeting between the countries in years.

-abcnews.go.com, 24 April 2024


Commentary: North Korea, one of the most isolated countries in the world, is now seeking friendship with nations deemed hostile to the West. As

(continued next page)

AFRICA

Climate Change Responsible for Heat Wave?

A number of countries in the Sahel region and across West Africa were hit by a strong heatwave that struck at the end of March and lasted into early April.

 The heat was most strongly felt in the southern regions of Mali and Burkina Faso.

In Bamako, the capital of Mali, the Gabriel Toure Hospital said it recorded 102 deaths in the first days of April.

Low rainfall saw crop failures in several countries leading to an estimated 20m people facing hunger. Water shortages in Zambia and Zimbabwe saw outbreaks of cholera with states of disaster declared in both countries as well as in neighboring Malawi.

Researchers looked at temperature and rainfall data to determine the causes of the drought.

They found that climate change did not have a significant influence on low

rainfall during the December–February period across the region.

Instead, they believe that the El Niño weather phenomenon was to blame.

This upwelling of warm water in the Pacific is linked to impacts on weather in many locations.

-*www.bbc.com*, 18 April 2024

Commentary: One often reads, “scientists say...,” “scientists believe...,” “scientists estimate...,” etc. But in reality, no reliable science is available showing weather patterns for the last 100–500 years. Subsequently, most is open to speculation.

What does the Bible say? For Israel, we read this: “Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26:4).

Jonah 1:4 reports: “But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be bro-



Many countries in southern Africa have experienced a prolonged dry period in the early part of this year GETTY IMAGES



ken.” And Jeremiah 10:12-13 testifies: “He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.” 8229

(See *The Remarkable Journey of Jonah*, Item #2272, \$12.99.)

Diplomacy (continued from page 29)

the US, South Korea, and Japan have formed a more united front in confronting North Korea’s military actions, leader Kim Jong Un has decided to beef up his resistance by engaging with Iran, as well as Russia and China.

Although at the moment, things seem tense—and occasionally brim

over into war, as in the case of Ukraine—the fact that even North Korea is slowly coming out of its shell bodes of a future in which economic and military partnership between countries will lead to all worshiping the Antichrist, while remaining sovereign nations. As Revelation 17:12 says, “And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten

kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.”

8231

-By K. Farmer

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





65% of Children Use Messaging Apps

In its annual study of children's relationship with the media and online worlds, Ofcom said the percentage of children aged between five and seven who used messaging services had risen from 59% to 65%.



Over half of children under 13 used social media, contrary to most of the big platforms' rules, and many admitted to lying to gain access to new apps and services.

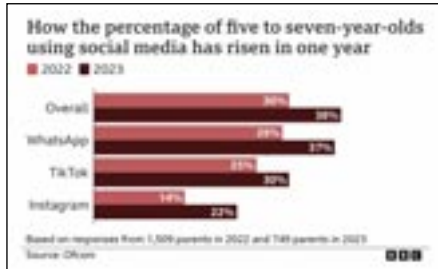
Parents who spoke to the BBC also cited peer pressure, saying it was a struggle to keep children off social media when all their friends were using an app. One parent said she felt "pushed into a corner."

Three in ten parents were willing to let a child aged 5-7 have a social media profile even if it was under the minimum age permitted for the apps, an increase compared to last year.

Parents may be "resigned" to not being able to control children's online lives, the new report notes.

Responding to the Ofcom report, Clare Fernyhough, of the Smartphone Free Childhood campaign, told the BBC that society had sleep-walked into "just assuming that we all need a smartphone—and now we're beginning to see the huge impact that that's having."

But Professor Sonia Livingstone, Director of the Digital Futures for Children center, said it was wrong to protect children by restricting their access to technology.



-www.bbc.com, 18 April 2024

Commentary: This is an end-time phenomenon—there is no precedent in history. The issue is communication; in that case, we know from experience it matters little what governments do or don't do. Information—the very building block of the universe—is now available in measures that just a century ago, would have been beyond imagination.

What does the future hold? We may simplify it with the word "globalism." No longer are we limited to our native language, for example, but virtually anyone at anytime from around the world can have a translation in their own language instantly.

We see this development as necessary in order to fulfill Bible prophecy. There is no other way to fulfill, for example, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Revelation 13:8a).

The other side of the story—the instruction Jesus gives to the Church—incorporates globalism for the Gospel: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19a). Note the words "all nations."

8230

(See *Jesus and the End Times*, Item #2356, \$15.99.)



How to Eliminate Homelessness

Whereas the number of homeless people has been skyrocketing in Europe in recent years, Finland is the only European Union member state to have almost completely eliminated the problem.



Only around 3,600 people in Finland are currently without a roof over their head, and the country is aiming to make long-term homelessness a thing of the past by 2027.

But how have the Finns managed to do it? And how does a society change when almost nobody has to live on the street any longer?

Harri Ollinen has a fair amount to say about it. A social worker, Ollinen is head of the residential area on the northeastern outskirts of Helsinki [...]. The estate is made up of 70 small apartments, previously home to university students, where formerly homeless people now live. There is a community hall and a sauna, but they come with clear rules: No violence, and no drugs or alcohol in community spaces.

Housing First is the name of the concept Finland is experimenting with—entrusting an apartment to people who, in many other cities, wouldn't even get a place to sleep in an emergency shelter.

"By giving people a home, we are creating structures," says Ollinen. "Once that is in place, we can talk about everything else."

(continued next page)

Homelessness (continued from page 31)

The residents of the housing estate have recently even been assigned an empathy consultant. She is the first of her kind in the entire world, says Enni-Kukka Tuomala. “Those living on the streets can’t afford to have feelings,” she says. “When you’re homeless,” says one of the men, “you don’t even tell your friends where you are sleeping.”

The program is also beneficial from an economic point of view, says Juha Kahila, of the foundation behind the Housing First program. Since the beginning of the program, Housing First has found an apartment for 60 percent of Finland’s homeless population. Since 2012, the state has calculated that it has saved almost 32 million euros annually as a result, with most of that savings coming in the healthcare sector.

Whereas in many other European countries, more and more people are living on the streets, in Finland, they are actively searching for them. Elisabet Erkkilä leads a team at Helsinki City Hall tasked with finding those who are still without a roof over their heads and providing them with support. Like most of those interviewed for this story, she, too, is a former social worker.

Her team has shrunk over the years, which is a product of its success. “At the same time, it must be said that there is still hidden homelessness. In Helsinki, there are very few people living on the streets, but many hide at friends’ places or frequently change shelters. Some con-

ceal for years the fact that they don’t have a place to live.”

-www.spiegel.de, 12 February 2024

Commentary: Whenever quality of life, longevity, or contentment is globally tabulated, the Scandinavian countries are mostly on top. For 2024, *Forbes* researched the happiest countries in the world and listed Finland first, followed by Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Australia. Socially-structured governments make it a primary goal to lower homelessness. Finland, according to Wikipedia, counts 7.9 persons per 10,000 as homeless; the USA 18, and Israel 4.

When it comes to happiness research, it is quite surprising that Israel is listed in fifth place. That seems all but impossible, since the country is threatened with terrorism from within and without, even by sovereign countries like Lebanon, Syria, and lately, Iran. Yet Israel is quite content and at peace as far as the population is concerned. We can’t help but quote Psalm 23:5: “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”

We also notice that religiously, Finland is 66.6% Lutheran, with a rather large percentage of 33.6% uncommitted, which often is a proxy for the number of deists and atheists. Cuba, for

example, lists 23.2% of its population as uncommitted, with 58.9% Christian.

One of the reasons for Finland’s low homelessness and high life expectancy is effective healthcare. For every 1,000 inhabitants, Finland has 4.6 physicians and 3.6 hospital beds; by comparison, the US has 2.6 physicians and 2.9 beds. Finland also has one of the lowest infant mortality rates at 2.2 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to the US’s 5.1.

“Housing First” is definitely a success in Finland, and is now being copied by several other nations globally.

For believers, we must take note of what Scripture says. In the KJV translation, the word “rich” appears 40 times in the New Testament, while the word “poor” appears 35 times. In an overwhelming number of cases, the rich are scolded, and in virtually all cases, the poor are comforted. While we may rightly say there is nothing wrong with being rich, it is a sin to reject, oppress, or deny the poor. James, the half-brother of Jesus, had this to say about the rich: “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you ... Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth” (James 5:1, 4).


8226

(See *One Day Nearer*, Item #2414, \$19.99.)

 GERMANY

Decriminalization of Abortion Recommended

Germany's progressive government coalition of Chancellor Olaf Scholz' Social Democrats, the Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats, had tasked the experts commission a year ago to look into the issue of abortion, which has been a hotly debated topic over decades.

 Germany's approach to abortion has been more restrictive than in many other European countries. Some German women have traveled to neighboring countries such as the Netherlands—especially during later phases of their pregnancies when abortion is considered completely illegal in Germany except for very grave cases—to have abortions there.

“Our recommendation is to move away from this illegality and to label abortion in the early stages of pregnancy as legal,” Frauke Brosius-Gersdorf, a law professor who is a member of the commission, told reporters in Berlin.

Currently, about 10% of physicians performing the medical intervention have faced criminal charges, though they are almost never found guilty.

The Catholic Church, one of the main opponents of liberalizing abortion regulations in Germany, quickly condemned the commission's recommendations.

“The commission is considering legalizing abortion in the early stages of pregnancy. This would mean the end of a clear concept of life protection,” said

Irme Stetter-Karp, the president of the powerful lay group Central Committee of German Catholics.

“Human dignity exists from the very beginning,” she added, calling the proposal “unacceptable.”

-*abcnews.go.com*, 15 April 2024

Commentary: A Google search states that Germany needs “400,000 skilled workers annually.” A chart published by the OECD shows the percentage of foreign born in 2019: Luxembourg tops the list with 47.3%, Switzerland 29.7%, Germany 16.1%, and the USA 13.6%.

Declining birth rates correlate to prosperity and luxury. Richer countries usually have less children per family. Germany, being one of them, will be incapacitated in future years due to the lack of population increase. Thus, the answer is migration.

A Google search reveals that during the last 25 years, 130,000-135,000 abortions were performed in Germany between 1996 and 2002. Since 2016, the abortion rate has stabilized at about 100,000 per year. What an irony: The Germans, just like any other nation, are proud of their country and only accept foreigners with reluctance, but facts and figures show that foreigners are needed more than ever.

Regarding abortion, our position is crystal clear: It's murder! A par-

ents.com article reports: “Babies are born with a complete sensory system, including sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. In the womb, babies spend most of their time sleeping, but when they are awake, they experience various sensations, such as hearing the muffled sounds of their gestational parent's heartbeat.”

It was David who wrote: “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were

fashioned, when as yet there was none of them” (Psalm 139:13-16).

8227

(See *Information: The Key to Life*, Item #2415, \$24.99.)



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

MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURE... PERFECT WORD... ADAM AND EVE

Mid-Tribulation Rapture

I think that anyone who states God is through with Israel would have to tear the pages out of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Zechariah, as well as Romans and Revelation.

But my whole point of writing is to suggest the rapture could possibly occur during the mid-tribulation period. The Scofield Bible relates Rev. 11 and Zech. 4 to the end times.

We read in 1 John 5:6b-8: “And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water (Word) and the blood (Atonement); and the three are in agreement.” I cannot accept that the church has been purified and would not need a wall of protection due to the writings of prophets and apostles of Christ. First Peter speaks of added graces in our spiritual growth, which for the most part in my testimony has come through spiritual brokenness. I believe that as we die to self, Christ is glorified. Jesus said we would be hated because He was hated (John 15:18).

-J. Nottingham, LA

Answer: Your statement, “I believe that as we die to self, Christ is glorified” is a sentence I give my Amen to. The Church has—and in some places still does—suffered persecution and hate. That will continue. However, it does not mean that each and every one of us has to go through the same experience. In the faith chapter of Hebrews 11, we see the difference. One example: verse 33, “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,” but verse 36 states, “And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.”

Relating to the Rapture, based on my understanding, we must stick to the instruction of waiting for Him; that means any time, no sign.

Perfect Word

Brother in Christ,

In the March 2024 *Midnight Call*, Letters to the Editor “Contradictions and Dinosaurs” answer, you stated: “the Bible is absolute, pure, perfect, and without contradiction.” Why do all these new translations disagree in so many areas: words missing and added, verses left out and questioned? God could inspire His Word through men, but cannot pre-



serve it through men? So if the Word is almost perfect, then man can only almost get saved from all these translations today. According to Psalm 12:6-7, God preserved His Word. Are you all still looking for the perfect Word?

-H. Dean, NY

Answer: Yes, the Bible is absolutely pure, perfect, and without contradiction. The issue is translations. Here an example: Many years, maybe decades ago, I heard a Bible translator testify that in the Arctic north—where winter, ice, and snow occur almost 12 months a year—whenever they came to the place in Scripture that mentions hellfire, the natives rejoiced. Why? They believe, “Fire is life; cold is death.” See the difficulty when it comes to translation?

For simple German words like *Feierabend*, *gemütlichkeit*, *krankfeiern*, *kaput*, or *angst*, there is no equivalent in English—mind you, English is a Germanic language. Think how much more difficult it is with languages like Hebrew and ancient Greek. That’s why it’s helpful to read various translations.

As for a handful of “missing verses” in newer versions, they’re mostly based on older manuscripts that were discovered in the last century (most notably, but not limited to the Dead Sea Scrolls). Many of these manuscripts don’t have those verses, or they’re only found in marginal notes.

Adam and Eve

Do we have an idea about how long Adam and Eve were in the Garden before they were put out for their sin? They evidently did not have time for procreation and Cain; the first-born was born outside the Garden with a sin nature. Since there was not any death in the Garden, it may be that none of the animals procreated, including man, while they were there. Part of the curse for Eve was that she would now experience pain in childbirth, but she had no experience otherwise. Can you shine any light on this question for me and your readers?

-G. McGhee, AZ

Answer: Your questions can only be answered by extended interpretation—that means not direct Scripture. Adam was destined to be a farmer. But after the Fall, God said, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19a). So, my interpretation is that before the Fall, he would be a caretaker of God’s created vegetation, without the ground being cursed, and without working up a sweat. The same goes for Eve; she would have had children, but would bear them without “sorrow.”

After Cain and Abel, Adam was 130 years old when the next named son, Seth, was born (Genesis 5:3). (MC)

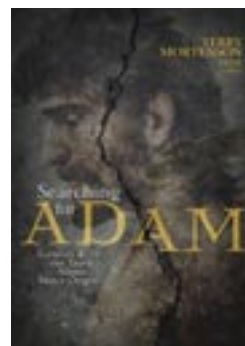


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Editor: Terry Mortenson

“For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel” (Jeremiah 31:7).

BY ARNO FROESE

This verse of Scripture does not seem appropriate for Israel at this difficult time. However, a closer examination reveals that this is addressed to the nations. When reading Jeremiah 31, we note that the entire chapter passes on the direct words of God, except verses 26 and 35, according to the Red-Letter Edition of the Bible.

Why should the nations rejoice with Israel? Because verse 8 exclaims: “Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.” In the margin of my Bible, it says this was written in 606 BC. So, on the surface this seems to refer to Israel’s return from Babylonian captivity. However, that cannot be the case because it clearly states, “gather them from the coasts of the earth.” That is a global event for the Jewish people.

A partial listing by JewishVirtualLibrary.org names 26 major countries from which Jews return to Israel. That qualifies for the interpretation, “gather them from the coasts of the earth.”

Again, in verse 10 we read the word “nations”: “Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.”

What is the reason for God leading with Israel, even today? Verse 3 gives us the answer: “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” The sentence, “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love,” would be difficult to interpret as anything else but indeed His everlasting love for His people.

We need not mention the seeming impossibility of the remnant of Jews declaring themselves a Jewish State in ancient Biblical territory on 14 May 1948. The well-established military forces of Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen attacked Israel, which had absolutely no chance of survival. The only weapons at their disposal were smuggled—outdated World War 2 weapons generously provided by the Soviet Union. The US and UK had an arms embargo on the Middle East. The approximately 650,000 Jews in the land of Israel were a diverse group, many not having yet learned to communicate in Hebrew. Actually, a significant portion of these Jews never spoke Hebrew; thus, communication was a nightmare. Most of us know the rest of the story. Over and again, Israel beat the odds and came out victorious. When one compares Israel today with the surrounding Arab nations, the facts are clear: Most Arab states are poor, while Israel is successful.

Though it is impossible to document every supernatural intervention on behalf of the Jews in Israel, comparing figures to figures, there is abundant evidence of God intervening on behalf of His people.

Gaza War

Let's go back to a specific date: 21 March 2024. *The Jerusalem Post* reports:

“The IDF announced that in its four-day operation in Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza, it has now killed around 140 terrorists from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as well as arrested around 650 additional terrorists.”

That seems all but impossible. The Hamas terrorists are hiding in buildings—in this case, a hospital—and are well-protected in underground tunnels found throughout Gaza. Israeli soldiers are an easy target, and yet Israel succeeds in their task of eliminating Hamas terrorists. One could list hundreds if not thousands of peculiar circumstances, in which Israeli soldiers came out of intense fighting virtually unharmed.

The Israeli embassy in the UK estimates that between 10,000 and 12,000 Hamas fighters have been killed. Way back in December of

2023, Sky News Australia reported that 8,000 Hamas fighters had been killed, based on intelligence, interrogation, and examination of satellite photographs.

We do not rejoice in the horrible destruction and death of terrorists, because they have families—parents, siblings, spouses, and children. Yet it seems needful to emphasize not only Israel's miraculous military success, but also when it comes to technology, industry, and agriculture, they are second to none. There are too many occasions where Israel's success can only be explained with one word: miracle!

In summary, we cannot explain it any other way than, “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3).

Let us continue to pray for Israel, and for the protection of our Lord's Church during these difficult times—in Israel, in Gaza, in Judea and Samaria—and for that matter, in all the Middle East and beyond. In the midst of chaos, the Church is being built. And we believe in the not-too-distant future, the Church will have fulfilled its task on earth. (MC)

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“I will bless them that
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(Genesis 12:3).

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THE WORLD CUP



By Peter Malgo

It was the big theme of the summer. Some of us Christians privately admitted that we also had our thoughts on football [soccer]. In and of itself, this is not a problem, so long as the games don't occupy our minds to the extent that life with our Lord Jesus falls by the wayside. For instance, if watching a given match takes priority over attending a prayer meeting or Bible study, then it becomes dangerous! Then we may soon be "offside."

Without a doubt, Paul was also interested in sports. Reading his letters, one notices the various comparisons to athletic pursuits. In the case of football [soccer], one identifies with a given team or its nation. That's when national pride really comes to the fore. Paul also knew this pride before his conversion. Because of his background, education, and position, he turned into a real zealot. He describes this in the letter to the Philippians: "Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the

righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil 3:4-6). Paul also had dual citizenship. He always made use of this whenever he was physically threatened in some way.

After Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, he spoke in Greek to the commander, who was greatly surprised (Acts 21:37). Defending himself, Paul then goes on to say that he was a Jew. When the commander finally wanted to interrogate him with whips, Paul played his last card. "...As they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, 'Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?'" (Acts 22:25). It is downright entertaining to read in the following verses how skillfully Paul used his background to escape an unpleasant situation. And yet, some-



thing was far more important to him than his origins. He writes to the Philippians: “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ” (3:7).

In subsequent verses, Paul then describes his ultimate goal; namely, Jesus Christ. We find a reference to sports in verses 13-14: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Paul was not a spectator like the millions who watched the World Cup matches; he went down into the arena himself to fight. He fought the good fight of faith in order to obtain the victory prize (verse 14).

During the World Cup, it was reported that the risk of accidents

among the spectators increased significantly when their own team was playing; by 30% when they won, and by 50% when they were losing. The accidents were mostly due to carelessness, usually resulting in cuts and sometimes broken bones. Spectators live dangerously—even in the Christian arena. And how many passive Christians there are! All they do is watch. And in doing so, they run the risk of “accidents” ... of falling into sin because they are not fighting the battle of faith. Spectators never receive a prize but lose their reward in eternity. Therefore, I encourage you: Go down into the arena and seek the heavenly calling, so that one day you will receive the battle prize and full reward.—And concerning national pride, do as Paul did when he wrote to the Philippians: “...Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (3:20). (MC)



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Leading Ebenezer Through War

By David Phillips (*Ebenezer's CEO*)

April 14, 2024 – A night one will not soon forget...

00:05 am Iranian cruise missiles and drones are on their way—we have 1 hour, 45 minutes before the first impact, if not intercepted.

01:30 am The last of the 13 Ebenezer team members have arrived at the Home and are ready to move all residents into the bomb shelters, in case of an air raid. The residents continue to sleep.

As I sat praying for wisdom, calculating the time before the first drones and missiles would arrive on Israeli territory if not intercepted, I knew I had to make a decision. As Ebenezer's CEO, the decision was mine. Should we wake all residents from their much-needed sleep and evacuate everyone to the bomb shelters? Or wait?

Having been an IDF commander for a number of years, and going through many wars and similar retaliations, I knew if the calculations were correct and we “only” had roughly 330 drones, cruise and ballistic missiles attacking us, they would be aimed at military targets and national “hot spots,” but who knows what your enemy is up to? The chances of them hitting Ebenezer would be very slim. But precautions have to be taken!

The team was here and at the ready. Knowing we had 13 sets of hands-on-deck, it would mean if the time came, each team member would only need to oversee getting two residents to safety. It was doable. We prayed and committed the Home, team, and residents into the hands of our Heavenly Father, and waited.

01:42 am Alarms began sounding throughout Israel. We watched. Waited. Listened. First the south, then the Golan, then the center. Haifa remained quiet and tense. We could only hear the explosions in the north as missiles and drones were intercepted; sometimes not just hearing, but feeling the blast on your chest. Which immediately brought back memories of going through different wars.

02:00 am All is quiet once more. The attack lasted about 17 minutes. Roughly 99% of all incoming projectiles were intercepted. We all breathed a big “thank you” to our Heavenly Father for His incredible protection!

“He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in Him I will trust’ ... He shall



cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day ... A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” (Psalm 91:1-2, 4-5, 7-12).

Yes, sleep was scarce that night for the team as we took watch, but we thank our Heavenly

Father that the residents had no idea what was taking place as they soundly slept.

If you were in my shoes, how would you have reacted? Leading a senior home through a war isn't easy. Honestly, I would have felt more comfortable being with my soldiers, as I once was. But God gave me a different company this time, a company of prayer-warrior seniors who trust me with their care. It is an incredible responsibility, and one must rely on our Heavenly Father for daily wisdom, guidance, and protection in every step. We know many of you were on your knees praying for us, and we can't thank you enough! Keep helping lift our arms in prayer, like Aaron and Hur did for Moses, as Joshua was fighting. Victory is ours through Yeshua our Lord!



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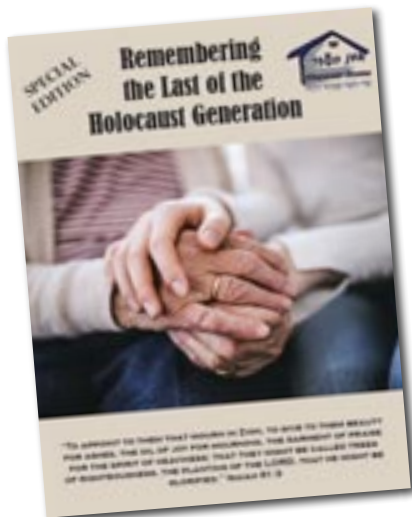
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 **BOLIVIA**

Two Special Anniversaries

Celebrating a long-standing milestone anniversary at our school, both officially and individually.

BY EBERHARD AND ROSMARIE HANISCH, RIBERALTA



Last year, we celebrated the founding of Elim School. Students, teachers, missionaries, local officials, and parents celebrated its 50th anniversary. The teachers identify deeply with the school, so it was a major event for them that required months of planning. Public officials were also invited, and there were sports events, a chess competition, exhibits, performances of all kinds, and an evening lantern procession through the streets.

Two celebrations were organized. One was just for students. At the second—which included parents, teachers, and local officials—Eberhard pro-

claimed God's Word. Most of all, it was important to us that we magnify God's consistent providence and give the Lord all the glory for it. The secular authorities may not see it the same way, but it is truly the grace and help of God that has enabled us to pass down His Word for so long, shaping our students in it. Boarding school students contributed a song to the festivities, other students performed a successful pantomime with a clear message, and individual children also performed.

Personally, we were able to look back on the 30 years that have passed since we first made



1



2



1 The school's director receiving a certificate of recognition from the mayor

2 Boarding school children performing an evangelistic pantomime



3 A student receiving an award



4 Retired teachers from our school

3

4

our home in the jungle town of Riberalta. We're very grateful to the Lord for all these years of service. At this time, we'd also like to express our deep gratitude for your financial support

and prayers—for every kind of encouragement. These things allow us to continue the work here in Bolivia.

(MR0124)



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

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Midnight Call's June Resource Guide

Moscow Is Furious—and Plotting Revenge

As Israel's elite fighting forces and the Mossad go undercover, they detect the Kremlin is planning a major attack against Israel. Hunting for clues, Mossad agents Nir Tavor and Nicole le Roux plunge themselves into the treacherous underworld of Russian oligarch money, power, and decadence.

In this electrifying thriller, hostilities explode as Tavor and le Roux fight to prevent a devastating conflict. Will they be able to outwit their enemies, or will their actions have catastrophic consequences? And how can Tavor's Kidon team possibly survive when forces beyond the Mossad's control step in and turn the whole operation upside down?

OUT OF THE FAR NORTH ITEM #2418

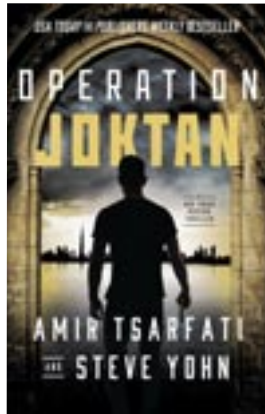
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Nuclear Deception

Inspired by real events, authors Amir Tsarfati and Steve Yohn reteam for this suspenseful follow-up to the bestselling *Operation Joktan*. Filled with danger, romance, and international intrigue, this Nir Tavor thriller reveals breathtaking true insights into the lives and duties of Mossad agents—and delivers a story that will have you on the edge of your seat.



“It was the perfect day—until the gunfire.”

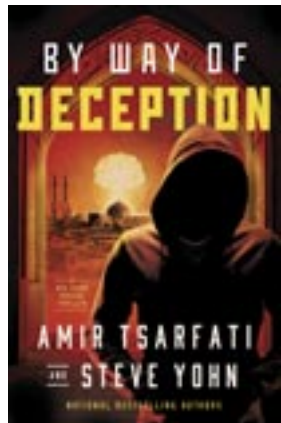
In this thrilling first book in the series, authors Amir Tsarfati and Steve Yohn draw on true events as well as tactical insights Amir learned from his time in the Israeli Defense Forces. For believers in God's life-changing promises, *Operation Joktan* is a suspense-filled page-turner that illuminates the blessing Israel is to the world.

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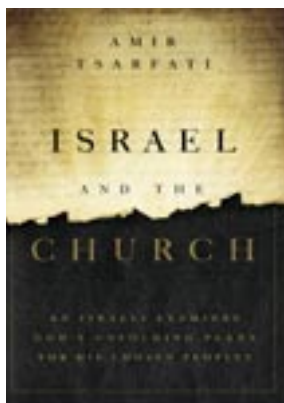
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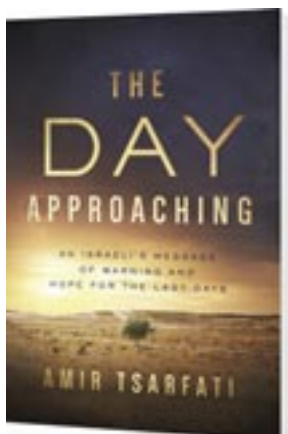
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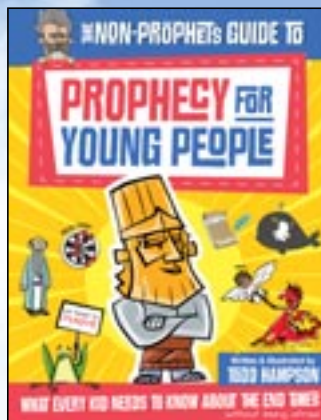
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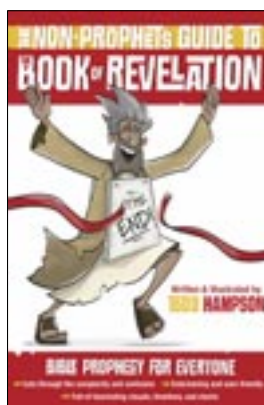
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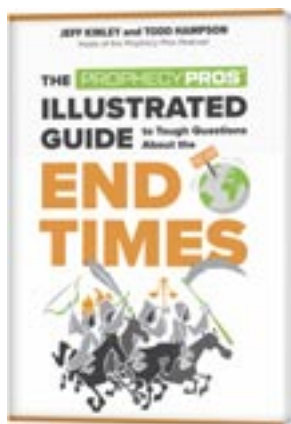
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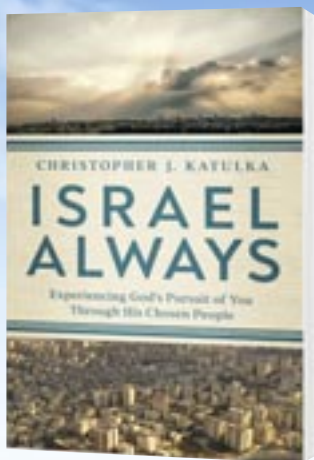
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Were Jacob's prophetic utterances true?



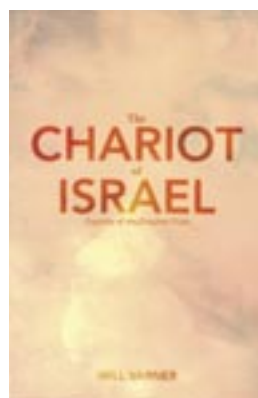
Have they been fulfilled? If so, how and when? Are some of Jacob's prophecies still awaiting final fulfillment? These questions are answered in this study of biblical history and the prophecies associated with each of the 12 tribes. Other fascinating subjects—such as the lost tribes of Israel and the role of the tribes in the end-times—are explored.

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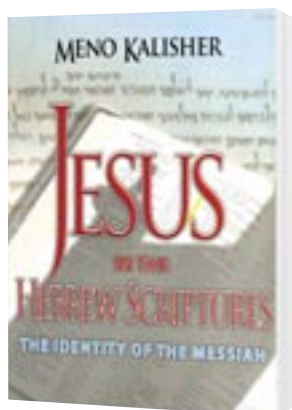


This study of Elijah's life will captivate you as it walks you through a pivotal period in Israel's history. When he was caught up to heaven, his disciple Elisha cried out, "the chariot of Israel, and its horsemen." Elisha was referring, not to the chariot but to the prophet. It was Elijah's intimate relationship with God that gave the prophet his title, and his amazing confrontation with the prophets of Baal endures as one of Scripture's most vivid accounts of how God demonstrated His awesome power before the unbelieving.

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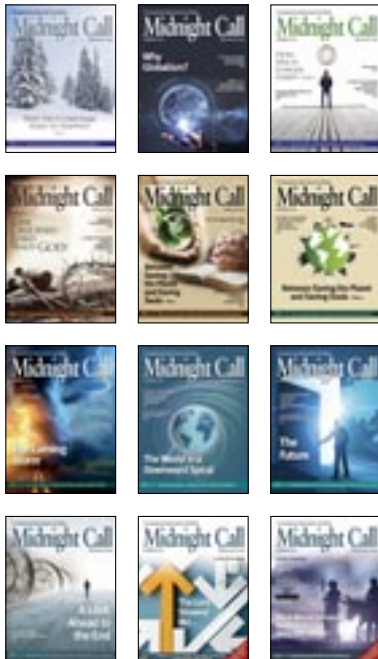


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It is a given that **reading** has drastically declined during the past few years, due to television and internet in particular. We all know the result: Hundreds of great Bible-based magazines have ceased publication over the decades. Slowly but surely, the words of our Lord, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy” (Revelation 1:3a), are being replaced with an additional word—“see.” Subsequently, reading receives a lower priority.

How does this relate to our **Automatic Subscription Renewal Program**? Here are a few facts: The English edition of *Midnight Call* magazine began in 1968. Since those days, subscription costs have gone up. In January 1995, a year’s subscription became \$28.95.

All of us have experienced increases in the cost of products we buy. An invoice dated 23 July 2019 lists the cost of a thousand sheets of 24 x 36 paper at \$86.87. Identical paper from the same supplier on 31 May 2023 costs us \$153.59. Thus, the question arises: How can we continue paying such high prices for paper, and still follow our Lord’s words, “the gospel must ... be published” (Mark 13:10)?

That’s where our **Automatic Subscription Renewal Program (ASRP)** comes in. Each renewal notice we send costs a little over a dollar. Needless to say, when five subscription renewals are sent out, the cost multiplies. Another cost is the Business Reply Envelope; we are charged \$0.75 for each envelope received. Additionally, there are labor costs: Envelopes must be opened and sorted, data entry done, checks deposited, etc.

But here is the good news: The cost of printing renewal notices, mailing, data entry, etc. can be eliminated, thus nearly **FREE!** How? Before your subscription expires, the **Automatic Subscription Renewal Program** will charge the amount from your card to the account of Midnight Call Ministries.

There is even more good news: By choosing this **ASRP** method, we can reduce the 12-month subscription rate for *Midnight Call* magazine to the low price of only \$19.95—this despite exorbitant cost increases.

See coupon above for how to authorize Midnight Call Ministries to deduct from your account annually, a one-year subscription for only \$19.95—a huge savings to you **and** Midnight Call Ministries!

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“What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” — Matthew 24:3

In *The Time of the Signs*, pastor Barry Stagner explores the events that will precede Christ's return. As he describes Earth's final days, he answers the many questions people ask, including

✓ Why is the rebirth of Israel the most significant sign that the end times are near?

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As you study the signs Jesus foretold, you'll see amazing evidence that we are living in the very time of these signs—and gain a clear understanding of what will happen, and when.

THE TIME OF THE SIGNS ITEM #2420

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\$16.99 New Author: Barry Stagner

