

The International Prophetic Voice for the Endtimes

Midnight Call

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Not an Easy Time



By Norbert Lieth

Director of Missions, Midnight Call International

Dear Friends,

It was not an easy time: Jesus was no longer among His disciples. At Pentecost, everything started well; many were converted, and miracles occurred. Then problems began to pile up. The resistance of the pious ruling class grew. Those who had seen to it that Jesus was crucified, now also turned against His disciples. There were persecutions, arrests, and interrogations. They had to justify themselves before the High Council; they were beaten, ended up in prison, and were forbidden to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Beyond that, it also came to internal arguments, lies, discontent, and other quarrels.

It was not an easy time. But what did the Lord's disciples do in the face of all the problems surrounding them? Acts 5:42, among other quotations, gives us the answer to this question: "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." They did not get caught up in the difficulties of their situation. They did not waste time to rail against those

in power. They did not incite one another to only pay attention to the problems. No, they focused on the essential reality...they reflected on their true spiritual calling and task. They did what was needed most to change the world: they did not discontinue, did not let themselves be stopped from proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And now is not an easy time. For years, everything went well. Churches were well attended; people were converted and could develop unhindered. There was singing, musical activities, preaching, teaching and baptism. But then, problems began to crop up. New regulations appeared, as well as obligations, restrictions, and prohibitions. Penalties were threatened if regulations were not observed. Internal problems also arose—many people resented the new measures and disagreed with each other. Grumbling and tensions increased.

No, it is not an easy time. And how are we dealing with it? We don't want to concentrate on the difficulties of our

time, allowing them to deter or stop us. We don't want to stir each other up by denouncing the problems. No, we want to focus on the essentials; namely, our God-given calling and mission. To do our part, which most surely will lead to change and hope for many. We do not want to cease teaching and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our publishing ministry is privileged to assist in this endeavor. Martin Luther is quoted as saying: "If you want to change the world, take a pen and write."

Let us not forget: the Gospel truly has transformative power, and is thus the best help for our world. Please support us in our mission to change people with your continued prayers. (M)

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OUR TASK

Midnight Call Ministries is a nonprofit missionary organization, dedicated to proclaiming the entire Bible as the unchanging 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 twelve languages. All work done through radio, literature and missionaries is supported entirely by the gifts and free will offerings of God's people.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

WE BELIEVE in the divine inspiration of the whole Bible and 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 and later ascended into heaven.

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

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

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

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

An old, worn book with a wooden cross resting on it. The book has a dark, textured cover and thick, aged pages. The cross is made of light-colored wood and is positioned diagonally across the book. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly wood.

Faith, Love, Suffering, and the Lord's Return: Part 1

Norbert Lieth

In a few words, the Apostle Paul shows the importance of lived faith and active love in the face of our suffering and the Lord's return. An interpretation and application for our personal life.

At the beginning of the second letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul writes: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure” (2 Thess 1:3-4).

Paul had already written in 1 Thessalonians: “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father” (1 Thess 1:2-3). In the meantime, their faith and love was confirmed, and had even grown so much that Paul felt obliged to give thanks: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (2 Thess 1:3).

Each of us has probably thanked someone at some point, but who among us has felt “bound” to do so? We’re familiar with guilty feelings due to missed opportunities, poor responses, improper behavior or sin. But few people are familiar with a feeling of obligation to thank God for others. “God, I owe it to You to thank You for my brothers and sisters, for my wife or husband, for our children, for my parents, for a particular mission field...” We owe thanks to God for the traits He puts into fellow believers that honor His name, bless others, or glorify Him. We owe thanks to God because other people honor Him, are obedient to Him, and present a good testimony.

This obligation to give thanks, which Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy experienced, had two causes: First, “because...your faith groweth exceedingly” (2 Thess 1:3). In his first letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle had written: “Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (1 Thess 3:10). In his second letter, he’s able to express his joy in the fact that their faith is growing “exceedingly.” When have we thanked God for our neigh-

bor’s faith? Or we could ask the reverse: could others thank God for our faith? What do others see in us? Do they find more faith, growing faith, faith growing exceedingly? Do they recognize changes in us that would cause others to be astonished and feel obligated to offer thanks?

It’s notable how much the Bible values growth: “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more” (1 Thess 4:1). “And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more” (v. 10).

Let’s ask ourselves a question here: can faith even grow? Isn’t our faith the greatest at conversion? What’s meant by faith that “groweth exceedingly”? That the dead will rise again? That mountains will move? That the impossible becomes possible? Can we believe more than we already do? Don’t we just either believe or not?

So, what’s meant by growing faith? The context makes it clear. It pertains to their “work of faith,” and their increasing steadfastness and faithfulness in all their persecutions and tribulations: “your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure” (2 Thess 1:4). “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...” (1 Thess 1:3).

Their faith was showing an increasing amount of fruit. It was proving itself more and more clearly in everyday life. Can we say the same of ourselves? Can we say that instead of declining over time, we are proving ourselves ever more steadfast?

Additionally, “the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (2 Thess 1:3). Not just their belief, but also their love increased and proved itself. Not just the love of the church as a whole, but the love of each individual. The Holy Spirit has an eye on every individual Christian. He sees both the love of our church and the love that we practice personally. This love applies to everyone without exception. Sympathy and antipathy are

“God, I owe it to You to thank You for my brothers and sisters, for my wife or husband, for our children, for my parents.”



ruled by love, not the other way around. Love is supreme. Jacques Prèvert once said, “There aren’t six or seven wonders of the world. There is no more than one: it is love.” This prompted Paul to offer thanks and glory.

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure” (2 Thess 1:4).

Paul boasted about the Thessalonians. Wasn’t that a little prideful? Possibly, but in a good and spiritual sense. It was part of Paul and his colleagues’ fruitful work, which God had validated. Just as parents can rejoice in obedient children, as a master can rejoice in an apprentice, a professor over his students, or a gardener over his ornamental plants, so Paul could rejoice in the Thessalonians (and even boast, in a way). This church was firm proof of the good work that the Spirit of God could achieve through Paul

and his colleagues. It was all certainly an undeserved grace, but nonetheless worthy of glory.

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you” (2 Thess 1:4-6). This not-so-simple text gives us insight into the purpose of suffering. While we often believe that suffering, persecution, and affliction are unjust, we’re taught otherwise here. They are a sign of God’s just judgment.

Of all the books of the Bible, it’s the final one, the book of judgment and the “Day of the Lord,” that presents the just ways and judgment of God. And the ones who witness it should know. The ones who overcome “sing the song of Moses the servant

of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest” (Rev 15:3-4). “And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus...And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments” (Rev 16:5, 7). A large crowd in heaven testifies: “For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand” (Rev 19:2). “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war” (Rev 19:11).

1. For believers: Suffering is a “token of the righteous judgment of God,” and serves the purpose of making us “counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (2 Thess 1:5). Don’t confuse this with justification by works. We know

that we are saved by grace alone, and that we reach the heavenly, glorious goal of living with God by grace alone. It is a fundamental and unshakeable truth.

“Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:5-9).

But suffering is a further sign of mercy. God allows it in the life of His church as another means of grace, a tool. Suffering for the kingdom of God serves to glorify and is “counted worthy of the kingdom of God” (2 Thess 1:5). The letter to the Romans sheds light on this: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:17-18).

As a gardener
rejoices over his
ornamental plants,
so Paul could rejoice
in the Thessalonians
(and even boast, in a
way).





We aren't saved so that we can be free of all suffering, but we are saved to suffer and to inherit the kingdom of heaven by grace. Therefore, these three things belong together:

- We have become joint-heirs.
- We suffer with Him.
- We are glorified with Him.

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet 5:10).

2. For the unbelievers: “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you” (2 Thess 1:6).

The church of Jesus was, and is, persecuted and oppressed by God's enemies. God will avenge the faithful on the unfaithful; it's absolutely just. That's why it is also written, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom 12:19). The just judgment of God

We aren't saved so that we can be free of all suffering, but we are saved to suffer and to inherit the kingdom of heaven by grace.

serves to perfect the believers and to retaliate against the godless. Both are absolutely fair and a just balance.

The time of revelation that is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, is the time of retribution, vengeance, and the wrath of God upon the children of unbelief. The church doesn't belong to this time. “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom 5:9).

God allows judgment of His children in the current age of salvation. This comes from those who are placed over them, despite not being in obedience to the faith themselves. Nonetheless, this serves the glory of the church. In the transition to the future age, however, unbelievers will be judged by those who are suffering now.

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels” (2 Thess 1:7). The revelation cited in our text is the unveiling of Jesus Christ, which is detailed in the Book of Revelation. The way I understand it, the church has already entered into its heavenly rest, because it is saved from the coming wrath (God's retribution) and does not have to go through the horror of the Great Tribulation (cf. 1 Thess 1:10; 4:13ff.; 5:9). So, the dead in Christ and the later martyrs are under the altar at that time, experiencing God's rest (cf. Rev 6:11; 14:13). Death by means of resurrection or rapture is the entrance into God's rest.

Afterward, the church will reappear from this triumphant rest at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, along with His apostles and the angels of His might. If the church were still on earth, we wouldn't be able to speak of it being at rest. But instead, the church experiences rest while judgment is rendered over the earth. (MR0320/1064)



ALLURING AND TANTALIZING: SUPERHUMANISM RISING



While the entire world is totally subsumed with the Covid-19 pandemic, it is likely oblivious to the continuing advance of one of the most identifiable characteristics of an endtime world—Superhumanism. We will explain further.

By Wilfred Hahn

Currently, most people are feeling bewildered, dazed and confused. They are focusing on the shrill news reporting of the here and now. Therefore, the long-term trends that define the future world will not be discernible to them. And that is not surprising, as it plays into the hands of policymakers and global elites, who will tend to regard crises opportunistically.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that various news media the world over, well know how to boost their profits. For the most part, the success of the news media is dependent on viewership. The more eyeballs and ears that they attract, the higher the advertising rates ... the greater the revenues.

Therefore, it is no surprise that in a Mammon-driven world, people's emotions of fear will be preyed upon. Deliberate fear-mongering and over-hyped speculation becomes rampant.

Wherever one looks, there are worrisome reports and speculations about Covid-19 and other developments. One cannot escape without unplugging the TV and the internet.

However, one future outcome (among others) can be assured: Mankind will eventually overcome Covid-19. In fact, the worst may be already behind us.

Surely, such a view will sound speculative, but not unfounded.

Modern Man has already overcome or controlled some of the world's most virulent plagues. Consider smallpox. It was a persistent disease for centuries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. It killed 3 out of 10 people who were infected. As of the 1500s, tragically, it killed as much as 90% of the indigenous populations in the New World.

Epidemiology, of course, didn't come into its own until centuries later. More recently, in 1980 the World Health Organization (WHO) finally announced that smallpox had been completely eradicated from earth.

There have been other major successes. The near eradication of polio is one such milestone this past century. Other killer diseases, while not eliminated entirely, have been controlled ... i.e., cholera, Ebola, SARs. As such, our optimism will not be misplaced.



Never in world history has attention been so centered on the financial and economic aspects of a pandemic.



However, there is one aspect of the Covid-19 pandemic that is new: While Covid-19 is not among the greatest killer plagues in the annals of human history, it probably has had the greatest psychological impact upon humanity of all. Its psychological footprint is global, spreading fears to the four corners of the globe.

Even more significant is this: Never in world history has attention been so centered on the financial and economic aspects of a pandemic.

Fears of economic collapse ... imploding stock markets ... bankruptcies of airlines ... etc. have been grave concerns among policymakers. Never have the economic aspects of a pandemic been so intensively analyzed and fought over.

Governments around the world pumped funds into financial markets and economies to provide income support to households ... as well as stock markets. It is estimated that worldwide, more than \$11 trillion in aid has been made available in various ways. How much is that? It would be equivalent to 13% of the size of the entire world economy ... a gargantuan amount beyond comprehension. But that is not all: The four major central banks also pumped in over \$10 trillion globally in 2020.

The result? Though economic challenges are far from over, a considerable portion of

the economic impact has been reversed. That, of course, will be seen as a success.

A New World Emerges from Quarantine

Now, as the world begins to emerge from quarantines and lockdowns, what do we see? Success is in grasp. As is well known, "Success has many fathers." There will be much to brag about for policymakers. Not only has a new virus been controlled, with death tolls now declining rapidly, but also economies are starting to surge. Already, there is a shortage of global shipping containers.

Most remarkable of all? Stock market and house prices in many regions are at new highs. Consider this statement again: The world emerges from the enormous losses of the Covid-19 pandemic, and financial markets are at all-time high levels.

How could this be? Actually, it is not surprising. We wrote an article on this exact same phenomenon in this column titled, "The Coming Glee of Great Catastrophe" (February 2006; available at eternalvalue.com). It showed the tremendous resourcefulness of a Mammon-commandeered world, that will always find a way to spin a positive and prosperous story for financial markets.

All the apparent problems of the world today—for example, global aging, collapse of fertility, over-indebtedness ... etc.—have contributed to booming financial markets, and not crashes as most have feared. We must not forget that God sends strong delusion upon the world in the last days. Humankind loves delusion if it leads to an appearance of prosperity (real or not). We definitely are witnessing this phenomenon today.

In this vein, another claimed father of success will be the new monetary tools employed. The new policies borne of the popularized

In our day, we are witnessing two parallel phenomena: the development of powerful technologies and globalist policies, and at the same time, soaring human arrogance and pride.

Modern Portfolio Theory (MPT) will win accolades from policymakers. Surely, MPT will be relied upon to generate prosperity in future as well ... at least until it has become overly implemented.

In the meantime, the world will become prouder.

In fact, mankind will even come to appear invincible.

The world will have survived the pandemic. It now intends to “build back better” ... as it sees fit.

Pride of Achievement

The Bible says that pride precedes the fall (Proverbs 16:18). Indeed, the fall will surely come. But, we think, not quite yet. Why? Superhumanism has yet to ripen fully.

In recent times, we have been writing about Ripening Trends upon earth (9 of these covered here to date). To us, they together provide a strong indication of the approaching Tribulation period. While the times cannot be accurately forecast, we surely can recognize the “season” of the times.

Superhumanism is in sympathy with all of these Ripening Trends that we have reviewed to date. It will be the successes and pride of Superhumanism that will eventually lead to the demise of mankind. God Himself will intervene ... in wrath.

However, until that time is reached, the successes that give rise to Superhumanism can be expected to lure the inhabitants of the world.

Herein lies the danger to all ... and perhaps, most of all to Christians. A world that makes it appear as if it is overcoming all its problems and producing ever-rising prosperity and financial wealth, will attract many devotees. With trends that go so swimmingly, why be shackled by God and His laws and promises



(Psalm 2:1-5)? Superhumanism will lure humans like flypaper to flies. Satan very well knows what humans like.

While stock market crashes and crises of various kinds, may provide convenient opportunities to drive the construction of a one-world rule, it is Superhumanism that will pull in many willing adherents.

Interestingly, and in parallel for some time, there have been a growing number of advocates of Transhumanism. It holds the view that mankind will continue to evolve and advance ... by employing new technologies, genetic engineering ... etc. Some of its tenets seem otherworldly. However, what is not to be taken lightly is the advance of Superhumanism, which is unfolding before our very eyes.

In our day, we are witnessing two parallel phenomena: the development of powerful technologies and globalist policies, and at the same time, soaring human arrogance and pride. Contrary to the incessant bleatings of the doomsters—who constantly have been predicting disasters—humanity in many



In fact, organized humanity no longer thinks it needs God. Worse, the notion of even believing in the Creator God is regarded as primitive.

ways is actually experiencing the best of times.

When the Demise of Superhumanism?

It is our belief that mankind's systems will be destroyed by the wrath-infused judgments and actions of God Himself, during the second half of the Tribulation period.

Mankind's systems are not likely to collapse before the second half of the Tribulation. They may become fragile and overextended—having relied much on human delusion and psychological innuendo to that point—but still function during periods of crisis.

We recall what God said: of the people of Babel: “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (Genesis 11:6).

The inhabitants further said: “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4).

What we see is that the people of Babel were indeed successful in building their city and their tower (though admittedly not as high as heaven).

Consider the “advanced-technology” that they employed in the construction of the Tower of Babel. The people of that era (living not long after the Flood) “[...] said to each other, ‘Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.”

As such, God Himself intervened in this case by confusing their language so they could not understand each other. God sought to frustrate the advances of mankind

that gave rise to pride and humanism—and to spread them out.

Points to Ponder

We see a human world of larger and larger cities, ever higher population density, and globalism—unified, smug, and intent upon constructing a world apart from God. The sins of Babel are today being replicated on a massive global scale.


In fact, organized humanity no longer thinks it needs God. Worse, the notion of even believing in the Creator God is regarded as primitive.

And so, just as God had to intervene in the days of Nimrod's Tower of Babel, so God will intervene once again. We note here the fact that their societal collapse was triggered by an external catalyst—God!

God therefore responds in wrath as prophesied: “The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled) [...] The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will totally disappear” (Isaiah 2:12, 17-18).

Christians, who have been given the Great Hope and are therefore saved from wrath, can be thankful for the advances and quality of life afforded today.

However, Mammon and Superhumanism are alluring. They will be difficult to resist ... eventually playing a role in causing faith to run cold. Many are likely to succumb.

However, technology (and humanism) is not our strong tower. Instead: “The name of the LORD is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs 18:10). “For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe” (Psalm 61:3). 

Justice versus Judgment



Everyone wants justice, and God announces that He will judge justly. How we can escape judgment and obtain justice.

Kurt Schenker

If we compare the two terms “just” and “judge,” we recognize that replacing just a few letters at the end can make a huge difference. We all want to be just, as well as to experience justice. To be just is even the principle behind governmental and social conduct, according to which every person should be granted equal rights. In interpersonal relationships, we expect to receive respect, appreciation, fairness, objectivity, integrity, impartiality, peacefulness, etc.

But since the fall of man, human history has proven that we never achieved it, and still haven't today. That's why God

says in the Bible that we are sinners, and therefore must die. We've been proving this fact for thousands of years, despite the resistance of famous atheist thinkers, philosophers, and scientists. Some of their teachings, like the theory of evolution, have done more harm with each subsequent generation. I don't want to be disrespectful by claiming that some achievements or topics of research are wrong or worthless, but humanity's ego and arrogance haven't done him any favors. After the Enlightenment in the 18th century, man's ego was pushed so much that people today consider every-

Justice versus Judgment

How are we humans, as sinners, able to speak of justice? How should we fairly judge people who are a “fallen creation”? Who can oppose the Bible, God’s Word, when it tells us in the letter to the Romans, “None is righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10)?

thing achievable and permissible. Unfortunately, much of it is sad, vulgar, and hopeless. Just consider peace and disarmament efforts. Corruption and lies can be found just as easily here as in every other part of our global community. Inhibitions that were once valued are torn down to make room for bottomless self-indulgence. Every day you can see and hear how this is developing in print and digital media. Everything that we ultimately recognize as crime and name as such, cries for justice. This call can be heard loud and clear worldwide. Cheated and battered persons from all peoples and nations demand justice. They hope for a clear-cut investigation of the situation and, if necessary, expect fair administration of justice from a competent court.

But how are we humans, as sinners, able to speak of justice? How should we fairly judge people who are a “fallen creation”? Who can oppose the Bible, God’s Word, when it tells us in the letter to the Romans, “None is righteous, no, not one” (Rom 3:10)? Of course, we can poke fun at this statement and scoff at it. But we can also continue reading (vv. 11-20) and find that these are exactly the conditions that exist in the world.

In this short passage it says, among other things, “so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God” (v. 19). This is speaking of the judgment that every person must face after death. Nobody can avoid it! The Judge on the Great White Throne is Jesus Christ. It is written: “And I saw the dead, great and

small, standing before the throne...And the dead were judged...” (Rev 20:12). At the divine judgment of the world, every obligation finds its true justice (Rev 20:10-15). The judgment will be absolutely correct and final.

It would be loveless to not show the way out of this eternal forsakenness. There is only one way for us as humans to avoid the final judgment. Jesus says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). For this truth, Jesus was crucified for us sinners, to make forgiveness of guilt and sin possible. He took this path out of love for us, and we humans killed Him for it. This brutal murder on Calvary became our salvation, because Jesus Christ arose and lives. This applies to those who claim this truth in faith, and recognize and confess their sinfulness before Him. The way to be saved requires your own admission of guilt. The Prodigal Son recognized this and said: “I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants’” (Luke 15:18-19). It comes down to this: knowledge of sins, confession of sins, real repentance, and reversal. The one who decides to do so has the promise: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

(MR0720/1092)



The Message of Nahum – Part 2

Dr. Ron J. Bigalke

Lions were prevalent in many aspects of Assyrian culture. Hunting lions was a favorite pastime of leaders, even considered a royal sport. By law, only the king was permitted to kill lions.

The lion hunt was an important symbol of royalty. Lions were symbols of violence in nature, and killing them was considered to be an indication of power over nature. Killing a lion was also regarded as symbolic because it was thought to demonstrate the king's ability to protect and fight for his people.

A pair of gigantic lions once stood at the entrance to an Assyrian temple dedicated to Ishtar, the goddess of fertility and warfare. The lions were carved in Alabaster stone, and each weighed 15 tons. The mouths of the lions were open as if they were roaring, and their expressions depicted fierceness and power. One lion was covered with a dedication in cuneiform, consisting of a prayer to Ishtar, followed by a record of King Ashurnasirpal's achievements. The temple was excavated in 1849.

Knowing the importance of lions to the Assyrian Empire, the question of Nahum 2:11—"Where is

the den of the lions"—could be understood as a taunt. Nahum's prophecy is a reversal of fortunes; the fearless were stricken with fear (v. 10), and the hunter became the hunted (v. 13). Culturally, such language was appropriate for emphasizing the significance of Nineveh's defeat. In terms of the ultimate message of Scripture, the supreme lion is "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah," the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 5:5).

The fall of Nineveh meant that God's words were true. The Nineveh of Jonah's time was in absolute contrast to the Assyria of Nahum's prophecy. The former was humble in view of God's mercy, while the latter persisted in defiance against the Lord. The devastators would be devastated (Nah 2:2) because God was against them (v. 13).

To oppose God is disastrous. James 4:4 asks, "Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?" Why would anyone be more de-

The Message of Nahum – Part 2

Perhaps you have been devastated by oppressive circumstances or as a result of poor (even sinful) choices, and have been praying earnestly for some kind of remedy. God’s Word offers encouragement of the Lord’s care for His own, especially when repentance is appropriate.



pendent upon human knowledge than the wisdom of God? How could anyone think human power is greater than the Lord’s sovereignty? The only answer would be foolishness and pride—sins that not only characterized Nineveh, but also were evident for a time in the life of Jonah.

THE OVERTHROW OF NINEVEH

(Nahum 2:1-7) Nahum’s oracle is one of deliverance and hope. His message is one of peace from external oppression, in addition to proclaiming a new kind of refreshing tranquility with God, the giver of all life. God loves His people, which is why He sent “one who scatters” (an attacker) against the oppressive Nineveh.

Nineveh fell because God is “jealous” (1:2) for His people and watches over them. What makes divine vengeance necessary is the moral attribute of jealousy. Nahum spoke sarcastically to the Ninevites; they were to “man the fortress, watch the road,” and “strengthen” themselves (2:1). However, none of those actions would succeed because God would overthrow the Assyrian Empire. Empires and nations based upon wickedness and tyranny will fall; thus, God’s people will be delivered.

Nahum’s message was declared in Jerusalem as opposed to Nineveh, because the intended recipients were those oppressed by Assyrian domination. God’s people would be encouraged by news of coming deliverance. For more than one hundred years, Assyria

had oppressed multiple nations. Now the Lord announced an invader coming against them.

Under their king Cyaxares, the Medes gained control of Assyria’s ancient capital, Assur. Nabopolassar brought his Babylonian army and joined the Medes once Assur fell. In 612 BC, the combined forces of the Medes and the Babylonians defeated Nineveh. Ultimately, the “one who scatters” was God, who sent these attackers. “Scatterer” is a common figure for a victorious king (cf. Ps 68:1; Isa 24:1; Jer 52:8). The declaration of divine judgment was stated with certainty in chapter 1, and those threats were fulfilled by a military coalition of the Babylonians and the Medes.

God made a comforting promise to His people. Nineveh enjoyed superb glory at the moment, yet would suffer devastation; whereas God’s people, who had experienced destruction, would know “splendor” (Nah 2:2). Perhaps you have been devastated by oppressive circumstances or as a result of poor (even sinful) choices, and have been praying earnestly for some kind of remedy. God’s Word offers encouragement of the Lord’s care for His own, especially when repentance is appropriate.

The remainder of Nahum’s prophecy gives depictions of Nineveh’s fall. Ancient Nineveh was approximately 1,800 acres, with an estimated population of 300,000 people. Nevertheless, invaders came to the gates of the proud city with “chariots . . . flashing” with “steel” (v. 3). The invading “chariots” raced “madly” through Nineveh’s “streets” and “squares.” They gleamed with red and steel like “torches” and “lightning” that dashed “to and fro” (v. 4).

The Assyrian king would call to “his nobles,” yet they would “stumble” in their haste to defend the city. Although they would “hurry” to protect the city “wall,” their efforts would prove to be unsuccessful (v. 5). Verse 6 describes the breach of the enemy into the city and how they reached the royal palace. The Tigris River flowed close to the walls of Nineveh, and two of its tributaries, the Khosr and Tebiltu, passed through the city. The “gates of the rivers” controlled the flow

of water into the city, and control of them could result in the dams being opened to flood the city.

Assyria took countless cities into exile, yet now God decreed the judgment of Nineveh. The city would be “stripped” of its treasures and their possessors “carried away.” Even the “handmaids” would beat “on their breasts” in distress (v. 7). The graphic language describes Nineveh’s defeat and plunder.

In addition to announcing the destruction of the Assyrian empire, Nahum intended to comfort God’s people, who endured that nation’s evil. The purpose of divine judgment was to demonstrate how God’s justice would repay great evil. God’s action is the reaction within His own holy nature against sin. The justice of God is the predominant theme of Nahum’s prophecy. Nineveh sowed, and thus she would reap (cf. Gal 6:7).

THE DEFEAT OF NINEVEH

(Nahum 2:8-13) Verse 10 describes the effect of God’s judgment upon the city and the people. The condition of the city is described graphically: “emptied,” “desolate and waste.” The proud city, which had “wealth from every kind of desirable object,” is regarded as a despoiled, lifeless desolation. The literal fulfillment of Nahum’s prophecy is a matter of history.

The condition of the people is also portrayed explicitly: “Hearts are melting and knees knocking!” (Nah 2:10). “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). God is “slow to anger” (Nah 1:3), yet when nations or people persist in wickedness despite the Lord’s patience, then “with an overflowing flood He will make a complete end of its site” (v. 8). The one who trusts in the Lord is given comfort and courage; however, the proud are doomed.

Nineveh’s riches came from looting nations they conquered. Now the invading Median and Babylonian soldiers would “plunder” Nineveh of its “silver,” “gold,” and accumulated wealth (Nah 2:9). Nineveh is compared to a ferocious lion that slaughtered its victims and “filled his lairs with prey” (vv. 11-12). The Assyrians “killed” countless enemies, not only to satisfy their needs but also for the mere pleasure of conquest. The question, “Where is the den of lions?”

(v. 11) alludes to the fact that Nineveh would be destroyed.

Nahum verbalized a terrible fate for Nineveh, since the “LORD of hosts” declared, “I am against you” (v. 13). Although human opponents may be overcome, the same is not true when God is against a nation, for then there is no escape. Nahum announced the certainty of Nineveh’s judgment because the holy, omnipotent Lord was against them. Nahum did not provide an exposition of God’s holiness per se, yet the prophet did prove the dreadful and inescapable effects that would occur when the Lord’s holiness causes Him to act in vengeance. God is love, yet His holy nature means He must judge sin. God’s love can never allow what His righteousness condemns!

God is merciful and willing to forgive, just as He relented in His judgment against Nineveh through Jonah’s preaching. The only means to escape divine judgment is repentance and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. For those who are persecuted, rejoice that God cares for His people, and know that He will provide deliverance some day and judge their tormentors. Assyria had completely annihilated the Northern Kingdom of Israel. More than 50,000 captives were taken from their homes to other lands. The Assyrians did not defeat the Southern Kingdom of Judah, yet God’s people still suffered for one hundred years under their domination. God now promised that their oppressor would be destroyed. Judah could rejoice because they would be freed from Assyria’s oppression.

Nahum’s message is that God both sees and judges sin. Everyone will some day give account to God for every deed, thought, and word (cf. Matt 12:35-37). Wisdom, therefore, is living with reverence for God (Prov 9:10). Scripture announces a day of judgment for all humanity; therefore, believers should be active in sharing the knowledge of God with those who do not know what it means to have reverence for the Lord. God is love, yet if sinners do not forsake their sin, they will receive God’s wrath (John 3:36). The Lord be praised for that joyous day in the future, when Christ will return to purge the earth of all oppression and sin.

(1144)



Poor, and Yet Rich

Wim Malgo (1922-1992)

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 19. Revelation 2:9.

The reason for the church in Smyrna's poverty must have been its testimony for Jesus, since the believers certainly would have been able to build a good existence for themselves in the large commercial city. Yet they accepted social disadvantage; it was the consequence of their discipleship. But it required absolute willingness to practice self-denial. That's an important point. Who is willing to accept economic disadvantage for Jesus' sake today? It's quite the opposite. People want to conform to today's social system, with all its crazy demands. But depending on financial, earthly things—on wealth—always results in spiritual poverty. It's hardly a badge of honor for us if we can flaunt a degree of prosperity.

Is it wrong to own things? Paul says, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound" (Phil 4:12a). But as soon as we become attached to our possessions; as soon as we become demanding, we accordingly become spiritually poor. Why aren't we suffering from external poverty? Because

Jesus' requirement that we make His experience our own and take up His cross in all its aspects, presupposes willingness to practice self-denial. But the Lord doesn't require it of everyone. So, whom does He ask to practice self-renunciation? Those He knows are willing. Are you willing? Willingness to practice self-denial is expressed in willingness to sacrifice. That's renunciation in action.

When the Lord says to the church in Smyrna, "I know thy...tribulation, and poverty" (Rev 2:9), He's saying that they have taken Jesus' poverty upon themselves. Second Corinthians 8:9 speaks of Jesus' poverty: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Does that mean that we all must become poor? No, it's not about righteousness by works. But it means to internally disentangle ourselves from our property. We're allowed to enjoy everything we've received with thanksgiving, but at the same time we should

People want to conform to today's social system, with all its crazy demands.

be laying it on the altar! In other words, ready to forego it at any time.

The church in Smyrna didn't have to walk this path of poverty and tribulation. But they willingly accepted every disadvantage, every postponement for Jesus' sake. Their poverty must have been great, because the Greek word used here for "poverty" is *ptocheia*. It was always used when picturing the stooped form of a beggar. That's how miserable the believers in Smyrna were. Yet because of their willingness to practice self-denial, the Lord immediately adds, "but thou art rich" (Rev 2:9). This contrasts with what He says to the Christians in Laodicea, who were neither cold nor warm, but tepid: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev 3:17).

The church of Laodicea was in deep spiritual poverty because it was clinging to its wealth. It is, as the Lord Jesus Himself said, "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt 19:24). Did he mean that we can't be rich? No, definitely not. But the rich person should consider himself the steward of his possessions. Woe to the one whose heart is attached to his property! So we have the rich poor of Smyrna and the poor rich of Laodicea before us.

This begs the question: how willing are you to practice self-denial for Jesus' sake? To what extent are you ready to draw nearer to the mind of Christ? He says, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). Maybe that's why He's passing you by with His complete demand: because you evade the real thing, and love your own life above all else. He doesn't force anyone to relinquish his life. But the divine principle is, "He that

loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world [for Jesus' sake] shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25).

This isn't an order; it's the communication of a divine principle. The church of Smyrna voluntarily accepted tribulation and self-denial, because they loved Jesus above all else. Smyrna is one of two churches that the Lord doesn't have to reprimand and call to repentance, such as the Ephesians, to whom He shouts: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev 2:4).

Again, I'd like to be emphatic that the Lord doesn't command us to love Him, because love is always voluntary. The church of Smyrna loved Him. That is why He encouraged them so profusely, as well as in view of the hardship that lay ahead of them: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days" (Rev 2:10). And then comes the incentive: "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The believers of Smyrna are in the "force field" of His wonderful abundance of promise! That made them happy: in the midst of their tribulation and poverty, in their trials and fears, in their trembling and apprehension, the Lord's promise outweighed any difficulty in their lives. Oh, that you would allow the Lord's promise to outweigh everything that is difficult in your life! Paul wanted to make the same thing clear when he said: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor 4:8-9).

He rejoiced in the assurance of victory, and that the Lord was with him.

(MR1020/1116)



What's Important Now

“Let brotherly love continue” (Heb 13:1). An appeal.

Sebastian Gruner

The old year is behind us, and we're now nearly halfway through a new one. What's so remarkable about that?

Under normal circumstances, nothing. But what's normal, anyway? The last year was certainly everything but. It will go down in history as a fateful year. In spite of divergent assessments of the events, at least everyone can agree on that.

But what does that mean for us as Christians? Believers cannot seriously say, “Whatever's going on in the world has nothing to do with us. We're keeping out of it.” This stance, which people naturally attempt to

justify with Bible verses, has long been the consensus in certain uber-pious circles. But it seems to be wavering at the moment. I myself had a similar mindset about ten years ago, and had to amend it. To be clear: I'm not at all talking about ideas and utopias that require Christians to transform the world for the better. Indeed, that's not our mission.

However, the current situation shows that we can't stay out of it all. Very practical questions that demand answers are arising for church life. Can we continue to meet as a body? How many can come? Should reservations be required? Can we sing together?

A livestream is no permanent replacement for a church or home fellowship. Fellowship is one of the four pillars of every church (Acts 2:42).

How much influence is the government permitted to exert on the church of Jesus? What is legal? And, most importantly, when does Acts 5:29 apply?

Churches have answered these questions very differently, and drew their conclusions accordingly. That's not something that should be assessed at this point. Every local congregation stands or falls before its Lord.

Unfortunately, there were also divisions as a result. However, an honest, fraternal debate within circles, while being true to the Bible, is inevitable. I also believe that we will have to deal with such questions more often in the future.

These preliminary remarks were necessary, if unpleasant. But the title of the article is "What's Important Now." So, let's get down to business.

I'm convinced that end-time developments have rapidly gained momentum, and I'd like to mention a few points that are particularly important this year (and, of course, beyond). These points are neither exhaustive nor sensational. They are absolute basics, and should help keep the essentials in view.

Faithfulness: In 1 Corinthians 4:2, it says that a steward is required to be found faithful. Faithfulness starts in the small things. It includes, for example, attending church gatherings regularly. The coronavirus has shown us that it's hardly a problem for some Christians to forego church services, or go without seeing their fellow believers for a long time. Naturally, online sermons can be a good option for a sick brother or sister. But a livestream is no permanent replacement for a church or home fellowship. Fellowship is one of the four pillars of every church (Acts 2:42).

Faithfulness is also shown through persistent prayer. It was often faithful, frail, and

inconspicuous dear mothers (including the mothers of well-known men of God) who brought about many blessings in the kingdom of God through their prayers.

Wisdom: The Bible teaches that we should be "wise as serpents" (Matt 10:16). We must not walk into traps. Therefore, we should also be well-informed about the current situation, in order to avoid unnecessary mistakes. In addition to wise decisions and procedures, vigilance is also important. We need to be particularly careful regarding our tongues (James 3). A wise attitude also includes knowing that we shouldn't expect much from an ungodly state. Ultimately, our wisdom is a person, namely the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:24, 30).

Patience: This is so often difficult, but so necessary! A word seldom used today is "endure." Many biblical passages even speak of a "patient endurance" (Rom 8:25; 2 Cor 6:4; Col 1:11; Heb 10:36; Rev 2:2, etc.). As Christians, we must simply endure certain situations. We know our Lord is returning soon. The wait will come to an end and be rewarded.


Love: In His end-time discourse, Jesus says that before His return, love will grow cold in many (Matt 24:12). By this he's not primarily referring to the world, but love among believers. This is very sad because, according to Colossians 3:14, love is the bond of perfection. I often notice that I'm in danger of letting brotherly love grow cold. To prevent this from happening, we must always go back to the source: the Lord Jesus. When we're connected with Him, we can love Him as well as those around us. (MR0321/1145)

WORLD FOCUS

BRAZIL

Worst Place on Earth for Covid-19

Cynthia Ribeiro is mayor of Palmas, capital of Tocantins, a small state wedged between the south-eastern edge of the Amazon rainforest and the Cerrado, South America's tropical savanna.

 The fresh wave of infections now racing across the landscape has reached her city, flooding hospitals with patients, and pushing intensive care unit occupancy rates up to 96%.

Brazil's registered COVID-19 deaths [rose] above 300,000—a toll exceeded only by the United States. Ribeiro bleakly remarks that this number is about the same as the population of [the] city.

There have been numerous reports in Brazilian media and on social media platforms of patients dying while waiting for beds, shortages of medicines and oxygen, and bodies being dumped in hospital corridors.

Once admired worldwide for its fast and efficient national immunization drives, Brazil has seen its COVID-19 vaccination program plagued by political infighting, bureaucratic blunders and supply problems.

Bolsonaro petitioned the Supreme Court to stop three governors from imposing nighttime curfews. Although they are usually lightly enforced in Brazil, he calls them “a state of siege.”

He no longer dismisses COVID-19 as “a little flu.” Yet he maintains lockdowns are more harmful than the virus because they create mass unemployment. That “leads to depression, violence, fights, deaths and chaos,” he warned his audience on Facebook Live.



Health workers care for COVID-19 patients in the emergency room of a hospital in Porto Alegre, Brazil, on March 11. In more than half of Brazil's 26 states, ICU occupancy rates have hit 90% or above during the pandemic.

Silvio Avila/AFP via Getty Images

Brazil's medical professionals and scientists are watching their president with disdain and alarm and worrying about what will happen next.

“Brazil now represents a threat to global public health,” said Dr. Pedro Hallal, coordinator of Epicovid-19, the largest epidemiological study into the coronavirus in Brazil.

“The virus is circulating so widely in Brazil that it is possible, and I would say likely, that new variants will appear in the near future. We need to stop that urgently,” he said.

-www.npr.org, 23 March 2021

Commentary: The president's former statement, “a little flu,” was found to be false and diametrically opposed to medical science.

Again, we point to this virus as a platform for the nations unifying. In Israel and Europe, there is much talk about an official green passport, which would be required for travel. Freedom of movement is at stake.

Furthermore, the international exchange of data regarding the coronavirus is a build-

ing block to further international cooperation and solidify globalism. Our generation is witnessing the unifying of the world more than any other time in history.

The preparation for the fulfillment of Daniel 7:23 is in progress: “Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse

from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.”

7476


(See *Daniel's Prophecies Made Easy*, Item #1057, \$12.)



ISRAEL

Electronic Bracelet Privacy Concerns

While electronic bracelets are a preferable alternative to enforced isolation in COVID-19 “hotels,” it is important to explicitly define the purpose for which these bracelets are to be used, to restrict access to the data they produce, and to maintain a high level of security regarding this sensitive personal information.

 Intelligent speed adaptation systems are also constantly monitoring our location, though the bracelets tend to be based on more accurate technology than that used for cellphone location monitoring, and as a result, are much more intrusive.

In the current case, infringement of the right to privacy is preferable to infringement of the right to freedom of movement.

(continued next page)

Electronic Bracelet *(continued from page 24)*



Passengers arriving from Frankfurt receive electronic bracelets for their quarantine period.

(photo credit: TOMER NEUBERG/FLASH90)

Like all the policy ideas that have been quickly cooked up in the course of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the use of electronic bracelets raises several questions that currently have no answers.

-*www.jpost.com*, 18 March 2021

Commentary: The issue is control by restrictions, while conveniently harvesting important personal data. Another sign of the end times.

Israel is the most successful country when it comes to immunizing its citizens, yet that is just the beginning. Several scientists have already prognosticated that other, presently unidentifiable viruses are on the way. Thus, the control of people based on gathered information is almost irreversible.

Bible students realize that this unifying of the people of the world is an imitation of the Church, who is already unified through God the Holy Spirit. When the last from among the Gentiles is added to this spiritual temple, this habitation of God, she will be

taken possession of by the Bridegroom and removed from planet earth. And then there will be utter darkness.

7477

(See *The Great Mystery of the Rapture*, Item #1038, \$18.99.)



USA

Church Membership in Freefall

Americans' membership in houses of worship continued to decline last year, dropping below 50% for the first time in Gallup's eight-decade trend. In 2020, 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque, down from 50% in 2018 and 70% in 1999.



Gallup asks Americans a battery of questions on their religious attitudes and practices twice each year. The following analysis of declines in church membership relies on three-year aggregates from 1998-2000 (when church membership averaged 69%), 2008-2010 (62%), and 2018-2020 (49%). The aggregates allow for reliable estimates by subgroup, with each three-year period consisting of data from more than 6,000 U.S. adults.

Since the turn of the century, there has been a near doubling in the percentage of traditionalists (from 4% to 7%), baby boomers (from 7% to 13%) and Gen Xers (11% to 20%) with no religious affiliation.

Currently, 31% of millennials have no religious affiliation, which is up from 22% a decade ago. Similarly, 33% of the portion of Generation Z that has reached adulthood have no religious preference.

-*news.gallup.com*, 29 March 2021

Commentary: America follows in the footsteps of most European nations. For example, from Germany's 83 million population, 23 million are Protestant, with 22 million Catholic, representing a church membership of only 53.2%. It continues to fall year after year.

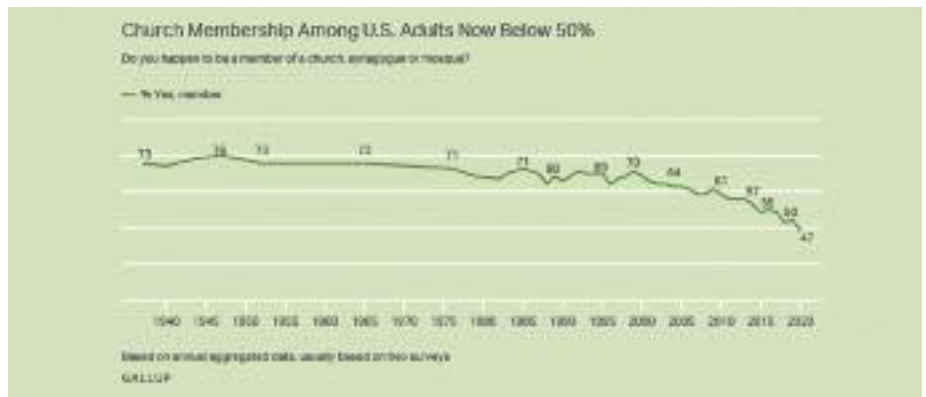
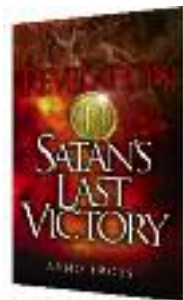
What are the ramifications of this development? A unified world religion.

We have an example in Daniel 3:1, where we read: "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon." All people, regardless of their religion, did as ordered in verse 7: "Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up." Such will be the case in the end stages of the end times, as recorded in Revelation 13:15: "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that

the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

7475

(See *Revelation 13: Satan's Last Victory*, Item #1067, \$11.95.)



CHINA

Biggest Filer of Patents Worldwide

China was the biggest source of applications for international patents in the world in 2020 for the second consecutive year and extended its lead over No. 2 filer the United States, the U.N. patent agency said.



The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), which oversees a system for countries to share recognition of patents, said China filed 68,720 applications last year while the United States filed 59,230.

The rate of increase was higher for China with a 16.1% year-on-year increase versus 3% for the United States, it added. China first knocked the United States from the top spot in 2019.



The headquarters of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is pictured in Geneva, Switzerland. REUTERS/Denis Balibouse/File Photo

The biggest single filer under this system last year was China's Huawei Technologies Co Ltd for the fourth consecutive year and second was South Korea's Samsung Electronics Co Ltd, WIPO said.

-www.reuters.com, 2 March 2021

Commentary: Communist China continues to surprise the rest of the world. She is no longer a backward country producing cheap plastic trinkets, but has reached the level of the leading nations in the world.

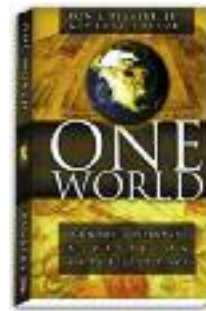
In a recent statement by China's president, he urged the Chinese people to be innovative: to not only learn from others, but also be creative. The article from Reuters seems to support that tendency.

Yes, Asia is awakening and will reach equivalency with the Western world. What

will be the result? One word: equality, or as the European Union motto states: "Unity through Diversity."

7471

(See *One World*, Item #2203, \$15.99.)



AUSTRALIA

Facebook to Control the World?

People in Australia, a democracy, woke up to find Facebook pages of local and international news sites unavailable, according to reports.



Australia has been trying to get social media giants, where most people go for news these days, to pay for the content on their platforms.

Social media giants appear to assume that because they have sponged up billions of users worldwide, they may now adjudicate what laws countries pass and what users may see.

Although these companies seek to avoid taxes and payments, and also claim that normal regulatory rules for publishers do not apply to them, they have aggregated traffic showing that they can route people to certain pages using algorithms. This is important be-



Facebook said it was making the change "with a heavy heart"

cause social media platforms like Facebook are not just a free-for-all, and they are not exactly a newsstand where users just go to find news.

Most countries regulate TV and radio broadcasting, but do not regulate social media. Countries like Australia have found that their power may have been eroded vis-à-vis these corporate giants. The response of Facebook to punish Australians and Australian media shows that a true contest has now developed that likely will determine whether Western democracies survive in this

century. Social media giants do not do this to totalitarian regimes.

They don't mind if Turkey, for instance, imprisons people for social media posts, and they often cater to dictatorships that want information on users.

Facebook declared war on a democracy. Australia is one of the key Five Eyes countries. However "people outside the country are also unable to read or access any Australian news publications on the platform," the BBC said.

-www.jpost.com, 18 February 2021

Commentary: In the meantime, a temporary truce has been negotiated, and *The Age*, a Melbourne source, has no more reports on the issue.

What's interesting is that this type of controversy, conflict, even potential danger of diminishing democracy, has never before been seen. Welcome to the new age, where communication is instant; not just in

(continued next page)

Facebook (continued from page 26)

one nation, but on all five continents. It's globalism in the making.

For Bible readers, this is not surprising. We read of the two witnesses being killed in Jerusalem, and Revelation 11:10 declares: "And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth." Note, "they that dwell upon the earth"—that's the whole world.

Although our forefathers who were Bible students could not grasp how this could take place, today it is a reality. 7468


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



GERMANY

Banks Say Take Deposits Elsewhere

Germany's biggest lenders, Deutsche Bank AG and Commerzbank AG, have told new customers since last year to pay a 0.5% annual rate to keep large sums of money with them. The banks say they can no longer absorb the negative interest rates the European Central Bank charges them. The more customer deposits banks have, the more they have to park with the central bank.

 That is creating an unusual incentive, where banks that usually want deposits as an inexpensive form of financing, are essentially telling customers to go away. Banks are even providing new online tools to help customers take their deposits elsewhere.

The pandemic has changed the equation. Savings rates skyrocketed with consumers at home. And huge relief programs from the ECB have flooded banks with excess deposits. Banks also have used the economic dislocation of the pandemic to make operational changes they have long resisted.

Alex Bierhaus, a managing director at a fintech company in Düsseldorf, received a letter from his bank, a unit of Commerzbank, last year saying it was going to start charging a 0.5% interest on deposits above €100,000, equivalent to \$121,000.

To avoid paying, Mr. Bierhaus, whose savings ballooned without trips to restaurants and vacations, shifted some €60,000 to a bank in Italy and one in Sweden through an online platform called Raisin, which allows customers to shop for better rates at banks across Europe.

Banks in Germany are particularly hit by negative rates because Germans are big savers. About 30% of all household deposits in the eurozone are in Germany, according to the ECB. Last year, deposits in the country rose 6% to a record €2.55 trillion as people became wary of spending under the pandemic or simply had nowhere to spend, with restaurants closed and travel restricted.

-www.usj.com, 1 March 2021

Commentary: The problem of having too much money is something many countries can only dream about. A contributing factor, the article states, is coronavirus. Thus, cash accumulates as never before; but, according to financial experts, this development could lead to a decline of Germany's economy. Will it? No one really knows.

From a Biblical perspective, we know that not only Germany's, but also the whole world's economy and financial system is built upon make-believe. Money is in reality worthless except for one's faith in it, and that is what all people in the world have. What will be the end? Revelation 18:17 proclaims: "For in one hour so great riches is




come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off." 7472

(See *Exposing Mystery Babylon Part 2*, Item #1080, \$4.50.)

USA

Bill Gates Said, 'At Least 3 Billion Need to Die?'

A video viewed thousands of times on social media attributes to Bill Gates a quote about "sterilization and population control." The clip shows a man saying: "In the words of Bill Gates, at least 3 billion people need to die." Reuters found no evidence Gates ever made such a statement.

 The viral clip does not feature Bill Gates, but a man identified as "Dr. Robert O. Young" who is allegedly quoting Gates during a panel entitled "International Tribunal for Natural Justice," a group that has spread conspiracy theories about the COVID-19 pandemic, news reports.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Gates has been a constant target of disinformation. In an interview with Reuters, he said he was taken aback by the volume of "crazy" and "evil" conspiracy theories about him spreading on social media during the pandemic and would like to explore what is behind them.

False. There is no evidence Bill Gates said, "at least 3 billion people need to die." The statement appears to be a misrepresentation of his view on slowing population growth through improving access to health-care, including vaccination and contraception.

This article was produced by the Reuters Fact Check team.

-www.reuters.com, 29 January 2021

(continued next page)

Bill Gates *(continued from page 27)*

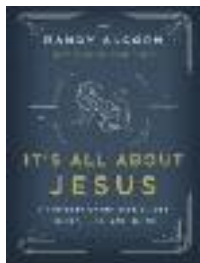
Commentary: The conspiracy theorists' statements are of no more value than gossip. We call attention to the danger of such imagination-based reports. Worse yet is that many respectable Christian leaders and organizations have not publicly opposed such outspoken lies—that is most alarming. We, the Church of Jesus Christ, are the light of the world, not darkness.

Jesus said: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Carefully note that we are not to show off our "good works," but when we shine His light by living our lives in truth and humility, people

will see our works and will "glorify [our] Father which is in heaven."

7462

(See *It's All About Jesus*, Item #2369, \$18.99.)



VATICAN

Priests Cannot Bless Same-Sex Marriages

The Catholic Church and its priests cannot bless same-sex unions because God "cannot bless sin," the Vatican said.



"The blessing of homosexual unions cannot be considered licit," the statement says, adding that "there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family."

"Homosexual people have the right to be in a family. They are children of God," [Pope] Francis said in a 2019 interview for the documentary "Francesco." "What we have to have is a civil union law. That way they are legally covered."

Legally covered, but not church-sanctioned. Francis made the comment during an interview with a Mexican broadcaster, Televisa. It was cut by the Vatican but later appeared in [the] documentary.

Catholics generally are among the more accepting sects of Christianity when it comes to same-sex unions. A Pew survey found that more than half of Catholics in the United States, along with Mainline Protestants and Orthodox Christians, support same-sex marriage.

But Francis also has repeatedly condemned same-sex marriage during his time as pope—emphasizing the Catholic dictum of marriage between a man and a woman in multiple statements.

"The declaration of the unlawfulness of blessings of unions between persons of the same sex is not ... intended to be a form of unjust discrimination," the statement says. "But rather a reminder of the truth of the liturgical rite."

-www.usatoday.com, 15 March 2021

Commentary: The Old Testament clearly states: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination" (Leviticus 18:22). The New Testament confirms: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves" (Romans 1:24). That's

the absolute authority for all Christians; simple, direct truth, and only the truth shall set us free.

7465

(See *We Will Not Be Silenced*, Item #2372, \$17.99.)



ISRAEL

Program for High-Tech Workers to Return

A new program initiated by the Israel Innovation Authority will try to bring back Israeli hi-tech workers living abroad to fill thousands of available positions.

Israel's hi-tech sector has long complained about the lack of available talent for science, development and technology positions. But the sector's massive growth in recent months and years has exacerbated the situation.

There are not enough qualified people in the country to fill the 18,500 positions existing in the hi-tech sector, according to Yotam Tzucker of CQ Global, which will manage the program.

Meanwhile, the coronavirus pandemic has encouraged many Israelis to return home. An estimated 600,000 Israelis currently live abroad, 10,000 of whom have a technological background.

The new program, Back2Tech, opens with an online meeting of Israeli hi-tech figures who will outline a variety of employment opportunities in companies and development centers operating in Israel. The goal of the program is to allow Israeli hi-tech workers and their families to return to Israel with a guaranteed job.

-www.jpost.com, 16 March 2021

Commentary: While some foreign countries may be attractive to Israelis, particularly those with high-tech qualifications and experience, Israel's near-phenomenal growth in the high-tech sector provides increasingly more opportunities for such employment at home; thus, for Jews to return.

Zechariah 8:8 proclaims, "And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness."


7467

(See *Experiencing Israel*, Item #2367, \$29.99.)

+ SWITZERLAND

Wealth Tax and Covid-19 Stokes Global Debate

Switzerland's wealth tax offers a rare real-world example of how a levy on assets can work, just as such ideas gain traction elsewhere in the wake of the coronavirus crisis.

 The measure forces residents in one of the world's richest nations to tally the value of their investments, real estate, cars, fine art, Bitcoin, and even beehives and cows. A percentage is then skimmed off by cantonal governments, varying in size and method depending on the canton. Switzerland, among only a handful of countries with the levy, can make a claim that it has the most effective one.

"It works for us," said Stefan Kaufmann, a farmer from Wetzikon in the canton of Zurich, who describes the policy as a good Swiss compromise. "The wealth tax isn't a lot. It doesn't hurt."

Switzerland's rationale is the constitutional principle of everyone paying according to their means. Inheritance tax is low, and there's no capital gains levy on movable property such as equities.

The measure also comes with safeguards. There's a formula to ensure people who are asset-rich but with low incomes can still afford it. In Kaufmann's case, the farmers' association sets the valuation of livestock annually to help keep filing simple.

The result is that Switzerland derives a bigger share of total tax revenue from the levy than any other industrialized country, according to OECD data.

That's not to say its effectiveness is unimpeachable. A study by University of Lausanne economics Professor Marius Bruehlhart found that a cut in the wealth tax rate in Lucerne was followed by a rise in declared assets, hinting at prior evasion.

Whatever the case, Switzerland appears comfortable with the policy.

"It takes some of the tension out of that political debate around tax between the haves and the have-nots," said David Wigersma, a Lausanne-based partner at Deloitte SA.

-*www.yahoo.com*, 16 February 2021

Commentary: Switzerland is considered the freest democratic country in the world. Whenever an issue arises, their people vote.

Who Rules Switzerland?

The Swiss Parliament (Federal Assembly) has a total of 246 members, who are directly elected by the people. Switzerland has a bicameral parliament: the National Council (200 members) and the Council of States (46 members).

15 political parties are represented in the Swiss Parliament. Those parties with the largest share of the popular vote are represented on the Federal Council.

-*www.eda.admin.ch*

Controversy about paying taxes is nothing new; it's an issue every country on planet earth deals with. But taxing the well-to-do seems to work positively for Switzerland. While they have one of the most expensive workforces in the world, they are still able to balance imports and exports.

According to the Conference Board, a renowned US-based economic research organization, average hourly compensation in 2016 was as follows:

- \$60.36 Switzerland
- \$50.96 Norway
- \$47.96 Belgium
- \$44.57 Denmark
- \$42.27 Germany
- \$39.03 United States

-*conference-board.org*

Of interest is that landlocked Switzerland is headquarters for the world's largest food distributor, Nestle. Also, the Swiss Mediterranean Shipping Company is the world's second largest shipping line in terms of container vessel capacity.

OECD data reveals how attractive countries are by the percentage of foreigners residing there:

- Luxembourg 47%
- Australia 30%
- Switzerland 30%
- New Zealand 27%
- Israel 22%
- USA 12.6%

-*OECD.org*

While Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, they practice open borders and freedom of movement within EU's Schengen Zone.

One thing seems clear: Switzerland can show the world how to pay their bills and still maintain a very low average of real poverty. In the end, however, there will be no difference between the rich and the poor. Revelation 6:17

reads: "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

7459

(See *101 Answers to Questions About the Book of Revelation*, Item #2295, \$15.99.)



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“Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Isaiah 66:8).

BY ARNO FROESE

Over 2,600 years ago, the prophet Isaiah wrote these words. The Old and New Testament red-letter edition of the Bible verifies these to be the direct words of God. An interesting fact is that the establishment of the State of Israel was birthed from Zionist philosophy, of which Theodor Herzl—the founder of the first Zionist Congress in Switzerland—was a self-proclaimed atheist. Also, of the 37 signers of the Declaration of Independence, virtually all were born, raised, and educated in countries dominated by Soviet communism.

Religion was a fiercely debated topic. Wikipedia documents:

A major issue was over the inclusion of God in the last section of the document, with the draft using the phrase “and placing our trust in the Almighty.” The two rabbis, Shapira and Yehuda Leib Maimon, argued for its inclusion, saying that it could not be omitted, with Shapira supporting the wording “God of Israel” or “the Almighty and Redeemer of Israel.” It was strongly opposed by Zisling, a member of the secularist Mapam. In the end the phrase “Rock of Israel” was used, which

could be interpreted as either referring to God or the land of Eretz Israel, Ben-Gurion saying, “Each of us, in his own way, believes in the ‘Rock of Israel’ as he conceives it.”

Excerpt from the Declaration:

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish State, Theodore Herzl, the First Zionist Congress convened and proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country.

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people—the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe—was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish peo-

Another point of interest is that Britain and the US had placed an arms embargo on the entire Middle East. Thus, the Jews were left standing with a meager weapons arsenal. Hence, the Soviet Union to the rescue!

ple the status of a fully privileged member of the community of nations.

On the 29th November, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their State is irrevocable.

Accordingly we, members of the People's Council, representatives of the Jewish Community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist Movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building-up of its State and to receive the State of Israel into the community of nations.

We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish peo-

ple settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding, and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream—the redemption of Israel.

Placing our trust in the Almighty, we affix our signatures to this proclamation at this session of the provisional Council of State, on the soil of the Homeland, in the city of Tel-Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the 5th day of Iyar, 5708 (14th May, 1948).

Only three days later, the Soviet Union was the first nation to fully recognize Israel on 17 May 1948, followed by Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Ireland, and South Africa. The United States extended official recognition of Israel on 31 January 1949.

Another point of interest is that Britain and the US had placed an arms embargo on the entire Middle East. Thus, the Jews were left standing with a meager weapons arsenal. Hence, the Soviet Union to the rescue!

Czechoslovakia also trained 81 pilots and 69 ground crew specialists, some of them later



Today, Israel has become one of the giants of high-tech. By all measurable statistics, Israel will probably become the leading nation in several fields.

forming the first fighter unit of the Israeli Air Force, and on Czechoslovakian soil a group of Jewish volunteers the size of approximately a brigade (about 1,300 men and women) were also trained, from August 20 until November 4, 1948. The Czechoslovak Armed Force's codename of the training (mainly) was «DI» (an abbreviation from "Důvěrné Israel," literally meaning "Classified, Israel"). A Moto-Mechanized Brigade Group of Jewish volunteers trained in Czechoslovakia didn't take part in the 1948 war.

-en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms_shipments_from_Czechoslovakia_to_Israel

Israel today—mostly a secular nation—has changed dramatically. During the early days, they depended on the communist agricultural industry—kibbutzim. Today, Israel has become one of the giants of high-tech. By all measurable statistics, Israel will probably become the leading nation in several fields.

But there is more, much more. Hosea 14:4 proclaims: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." The prophet Joel heralds: "The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more" (Joel 3:16-17).

Israel's future is guaranteed, and so is the future of the Church. All who have placed their trust in the already accomplished work of Jesus Christ on Calvary's Cross will be taken home to their permanent address: the presence of the Lord. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18). (MC)

**Action
for Israel**



MIDNIGHT CALL

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

Mail to: Midnight Call Ministries, PO Box 84309, Lexington, SC 29073

MC0521

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VENEZUELA

A Country in Crisis

BY ANDRÉ BEITZE

People boarding inner city public transportation amid transport unit shortages. Cumana, Venezuela

In Venezuela, the situation is becoming more and more precarious. Our brother in the Lord, Alberto Villamizar, has always distributed Midnight Call literature there. However, due to conditions in the country, he's hardly able to get out of his apartment. But he uses the time to read the Bible as well as other books, and to pray for us all. He has hip pain resulting from an operation, but he's grateful that he's able to make ends meet. We send him the medicine he needs with the magazines, because medicine is no longer available in Venezuela.

Alberto is very grateful for the literature he's received from us. He always prays for the missionary brothers and sisters in the faith, be it in Europe or in South America. And please pray for him too. He's advanced in years and doesn't have access to good nutrition. He often lacks even basic living supplies. Even bananas and papayas, which grow there, are in short supply.



In Venezuela, many children die from simple illnesses because they're malnourished. Gasoline has to be delivered from Iran—something unheard of—even though the state is sitting on petroleum. If someone wants to fill their gas tank, they have to stand in line for two or three days to get fuel. It really is a sad state of affairs, due to the government's delusion that the people are irrelevant. (MR0121)



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

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Part 4 of “A Request for Prayer” The Arabic Believing Community

By **David Phillips** *Project Manager*

“A Song of degrees of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1)



This time, we would like to have a look at the Arab community, where demographics are rapidly changing, creating many challenges with caring for the elderly.

In Israel, there is quite a large Arab Christian community, who is very much integrated into Israeli society. However, many of the elderly, who are not used to venturing out of the villages, still struggle with speaking Hebrew. Looking at the Arabic brothers and sisters, they fit

into the demographic changes nationwide.

While the Arab elderly (65+) are much younger than the Jewish elderly (65+), they are more disabled and therefore have greater medical and nursing needs. An extremely important measure of the need for formal services is an elderly person’s functional ability, especially the ability to live independently. The percentage of Arab elderly who are disabled and need help with activities of daily living, is twice as high as that of the Jewish elderly population. At present, 30% of the Arab elderly (39% of the women and 20% of the men), compared to 14% of Jewish elderly (17% of the women and 11% of the men), need help in at least one ADL (ADL = bathing, dressing, eating, mobility in the home, rising and sitting, getting in and out of bed) (Faisal Azaiza, 2003). This poses significant challenges for our Arabic brothers and sisters.

In modern times, with lower fertility rates; women having more responsibilities outside the home; fewer people around the home to help meet these rising demands; and people living longer,



many families can no longer care for their elderly loved ones. This often brings with it a sense of guilt and shame. For many generations, this was their cultural norm. It was expected that the family would care for their loved ones and treat them at home, even at the cost of less professional care.

With demographic changes and with disabilities increasing with age, caring for elderly family members at home is often no longer possible. Families aren't prepared for the challenges that come with caring for a loved one full-time, and thus cannot properly care for them in the way that is required. They struggle with understanding the combined professional, emotional, and spiritual care that is required, and hiring a 24/7 nurse at home is much more expensive and not always possible, either. This leaves many grappling with guilt and shame.

Our Arabic brothers and sisters have the same daily needs as the rest of us. Our goal is to help them continue to embrace and overcome these cultural challenges; namely, by helping these families

realize they are caring for their loved ones by seeking outside help and support when needed. There is no need to feel guilt or shame when extra assistance is required.

May the Lord help them overcome their cultural barriers and accept the support that the Ebenezer Home can offer. May they realize that their loved ones are being cared for in the most loving and tender way; being supported and surrounded by those of the same faith, while receiving the medical, physical, emotional, spiritual and professional help that they need.

It is a joy to watch both Jewish and Arab believers dwelling in harmony in the Lord at the Ebenezer Home, as the body of Christ. Yeshua paid the price for all and shed His blood for all. As I've expressed myself many times, "We cannot preach reconciliation; we live it." Once COVID-19 has passed and the borders open back up again, we invite you to come visit and experience this yourself.

Thank you for standing with us in prayer!



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

Mail to: Midnight Call Ministries, PO Box 84309, Lexington, SC 29073

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

VACCINE AND SUNDAY WORSHIP... BIBLE TRANSLATIONS... BILL GATES ALLEGATIONS

Vaccine and Sunday Worship

I am 80 years old and have been doing a lot of thinking about what will happen. I tested positive for Covid, yet am doing fine; not many symptoms.

My daughter lives close and helps take care of me. She has suggested that I take the vaccine. However, my son said that the vaccine is made from stem cells of aborted babies. Do you know anything about this?

Also, I grew up Pentecostal and have always gone to church on Sundays. Should I have gone to Saturday services instead? Have I broken one of the Commandments, and will I go to hell?

-S. Robertson, MO

Answer: Research proves the vaccine is not made from "stem cells of aborted babies." Obviously, fake news.

Most churches meet on Sunday, because Jesus arose on the first day of the week (see Mark 16:9), and the apostles came together on the

first day of the week (Acts 20:7). But the Bible gives liberty: "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). Colossians 2:16 confirms: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath..."

Bible Translations

Dear Arno Froese,

I am writing you about a letter in the *Midnight Call* February issue titled "KJV and Third Day," by R. Yates. He said that five of the guys who wrote other versions lost their voice, and that the guy who wrote the New American Standard Bible repented for writing it. Also, that the NIV was written from the Alexandrian manuscripts, which came from the Vatican.

First, about the five men who supposedly lost their voice: what does that have to do with the Word of God? Sec-



ond, regarding the man who repented for writing the NASB: I thought it was composed by a committee of men, not one person. Third, about the NIV being written from manuscripts from the Vatican: that's the location they were found—the Vatican didn't write them.

Last of all, he says that Mark 16:9 says that Jesus appeared to many on the first day of the week. Actually, Mark 16:9 says: "Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven demons." It says He appeared to Mary first. It seems to me that R. Yates is saying the KJV alone is the Word of God, and the other English translations are from corrupt manuscripts. Personally, I disagree.

-E.Chaney, MI

Answer: You're quite accurate in your analysis; R. Yates is of the mistaken assumption that the KJV is the only correct translation in the English language.

Many use the argument that words and sentences are deleted in the NIV, but that actually proves that the manuscript the NIV uses is older than the one the KJV is translated from. This can be vividly explained when translating one language to another, as often more words are used in another language. In German, for example, *feierabend*, *gemütlichkeit*, *krankfeiern* and *fahrvergnügen* are concepts that need more words in English to fully express what is meant.

Bill Gates Allegations

Dear Editor:

In your February cover article, "Our Mission in the Days of Coronavirus," the author criticized preachers for mak-

ing "highly controversial allegations" and saying "unproven things" about Bill Gates. However, there are legitimate concerns, not allegations, about his genetically modified organisms. Tinkering with the genetic code, and daring to incorporate those alterations into a vaccine that will change the human DNA, is a serious matter. Gates has also spoken publicly about his desire to reduce the world's population, and the Covid-19 vaccine has the potential to negatively affect fertility. Perhaps the author of your article has more homework to do because, as he says, we have an "obligation to the truth." I think a pastor might rather be at fault for failing to warn the uninformed of such an experimental, biological agent.

-L. Tallman, CA

Answer: "Tinkering with the genetic code... [changing] the human DNA" is happening in the scientific world. After all, Antichrist will have to create a near-perfect human image, which will be worshiped by the entire world.

The report by *The Sovereign Independent*—a "news source" that has published several articles promoting conspiracy theories—is punctuated with "mostly lies," according to India Today.in/fact-check. Incidentally, the paper no longer exists.

That these gossip-value-only stories are disseminated globally is not surprising. But the worst case is that Christians, born again of the Spirit of God, seemingly wholeheartedly, sometimes vehemently support these fake stories. What a terrible testimony for the Church in our days.

Whenever something extraordinary and sensational comes up, first check the news from the opposing side. Read the criticism; it will help to distinguish facts from fiction.



The Church Is Not Israel

Dear Arno Froese,

In Genesis 12:3, God made a promise to Abram that all families of the earth would be blessed in him, and that God would bless them that bless him, and curse him that curses him. In verse 7, God informed Abram that He would give the land to his seed; the very same seed promised in Genesis 3:15. We are instructed in the book of Hebrews that the Seed that God gave the land to is the Son of God, Yeshua, and that all members of God's kingdom shall inherit the land through Him. This promise necessitated the death of the landowner, that we may inherit the land through the landowner's death. Jesus is the landowner that fulfilled the promise that we inherit the kingdom of God, through the faith of Abraham in the Messiah, Yeshua/Jesus.

Just who all is the nation of Israel? Both the nation of Israel and God's church is Israel. God gave the nation of Israel the first chance to preach the worldwide gospel, but as a people they refused. So He gave it to another: the church that is part of Israel—expanded Israel.

Paul wrote in Romans 11 that the Gentiles are grafted into the nation of Israel. The Gentile church has carried the gospel worldwide, preaching salvation in the name of Jesus to enter God's kingdom. The nation of Israel plus the church are one nation of Israel, that all families of the earth may be blessed through the Seed of Abraham—Jesus Christ.

-M. Crist, FL

Answer: In Romans 11:25b-26a, we read: "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." Thus, two distinct groups: Israel and the Gentiles. When the fullness from among the Gentiles has been added to the Church, something amazing happens: the spiritual temple will be complete. Then God will take possession of it, just as He did when Solomon's temple was finished and dedicated. The rapture is also the coming of the Lord, but not to earth: "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

If anyone claims to be part of Israel today, then the Scripture applies: "blindness in part is happened to Israel."

Incidentally, the Gospel was preached by Israeli Jews beginning in Jerusalem, and from there to the rest of the world. (MC)

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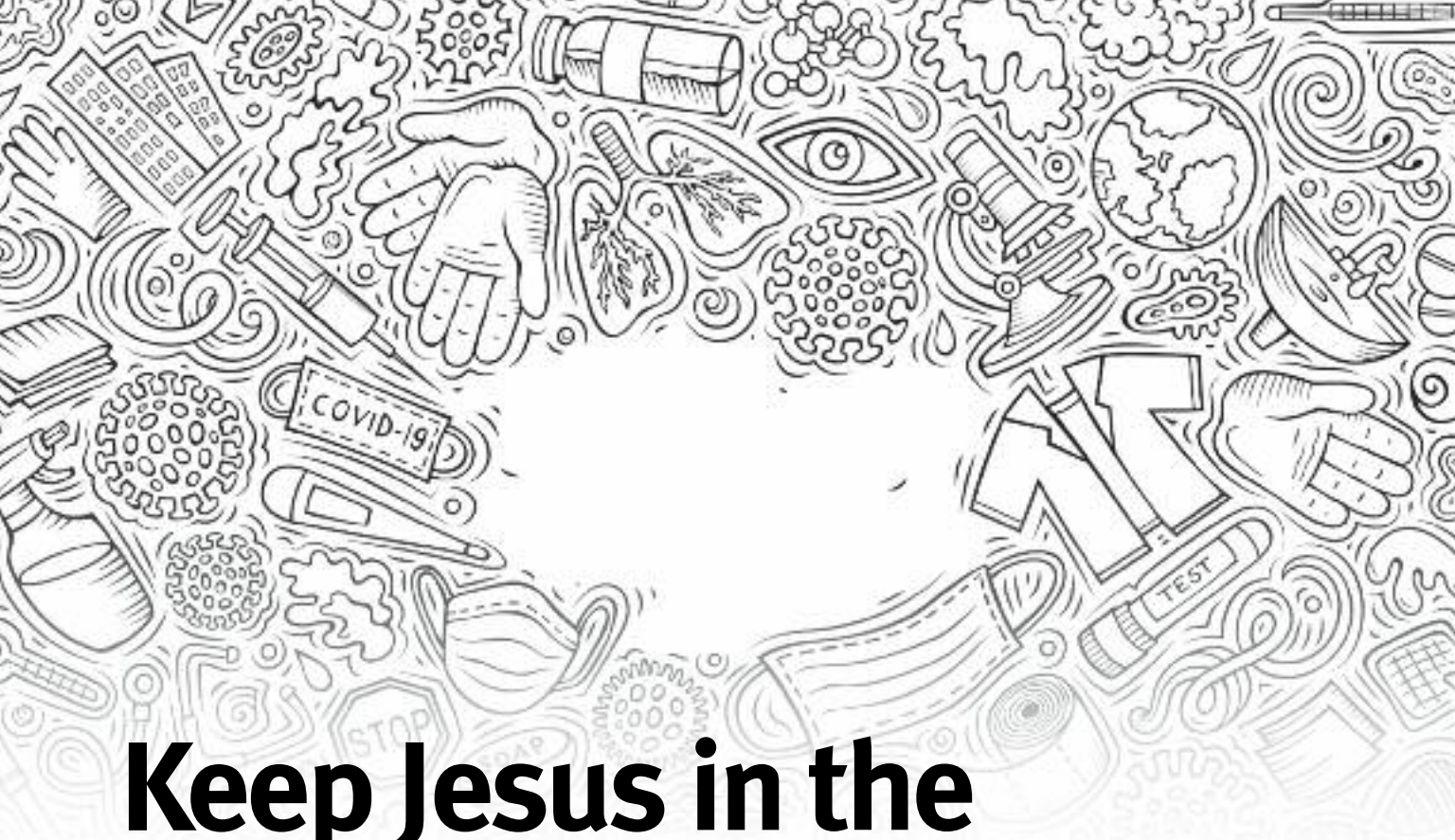
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Keep Jesus in the Center — Despite Coronavirus

By Michael Kotsch, Wilfried Plock, Matthias Swart, and Marco Vedder

A call to action.

Over the last few months, we've been watching the development in many Christian churches with great concern. While the church of Jesus is particularly challenged by state-imposed restrictions on gatherings, in addition to major pastoral and social tasks, marked tensions are arising due to the differing assessments of the medical and political implications of coronavirus. The unity of His followers, so precious to our Lord, is in danger. Love is threat-

ening to grow cold in conflict, and the witness of the church is beginning to suffer.

Therefore, we urge all believers to connect once again with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His Word, to keep the church away from further spiritual damage whenever possible. Related to this, we'd like to remind you of some of the fundamental statements from God's Word, which are of particular importance in the current situation.

Keep Jesus in the Center—Despite Coronavirus

Christians do not possess any more knowledge than the experts responsible for various issues.



1. God has the world, as well as our lives, firmly in His hand. The Bible leaves no doubt that only God establishes and removes governments (Prov 21:1; Dan 2:21; Rom 13:1). Satan can only influence the earth to the extent that God permits it. Christians know that God never loses control of a situation, and that He retains absolute victory in the end (Ps 118:16; 1 Tim 6:15). Ultimately, people don't die from illness or an accident, but according to the will or the approval of God. As Christians, we want to adopt this perspective, even amid possible coronavirus worries.

2. God calls on His children to submit to the respective authorities on principle (Rom 13:1-2; 1 Pet 2:13-17). According to the Bible, the church and the state are two separate domains belonging to God (cf. 1 Sam 13:8-14; Luke 20:25; John 18:36). Nevertheless, state regulations also apply to Christians and the church. Elders and other church leaders shouldn't engage in

party politics in their God-given office; Jesus and the apostles also renounced this. Politics has no authority in the interpretation of the Bible, or in the spiritual and ethical spheres of church life. In other domains, however (construction, labor law, security, finance law, criminal law, etc.), churches must also obey state rules.

3. The only limit to obedience to the government is direct conflict with a clear demand from God's Word. Christians are fundamentally loyal citizens, but believers must "obey God rather than men" (Acts 4:19; 5:29). When there is a direct conflict between a biblical command and a demand of the state, God's rules take precedent. Government laws that are ethically false or dubious, but which still allow Christians to act properly, do not have to be fought (e.g., divorce laws, government licenses for same-sex marriage, etc.; see endnote).

Resistance to the state is primarily about non-negotiable beliefs. It's not about questions of secondary importance or personal disadvantages (such as excessive taxes, etc.). In the event of a conflict, the Christian then must also be ready to bear the punishment imposed by the state (Dan 3; 1 Pet 3:14). Temporary ordinances on external conditions and forms of community events (e.g., masks, social distance, number of participants) are not fundamentally in violation of biblical commandments.

4. Since the situation is confusing, we should display an attitude of humility and readiness to amend our behavior. Christians do not possess any more knowledge than the experts responsible for various issues.

Beloved brothers and sisters, before beginning His path to the cross, our Lord prayed for the unity of His followers (John 17). Whatever our personal assessment of the current situation, we must not allow the enemy of God to destroy our unity over this issue.

Legal questions concerning coronavirus must ultimately be clarified by the government and the courts. Scientific questions regarding coronavirus must be developed through the lengthy process of serious research. Because doctors and politicians cannot claim any special biblical authority for their respective positions in this regard, Christians are allowed to decide whom to trust—missionary zeal is inappropriate here (Prov 17:27). In any case, the language that Christians use in public debates must conform to the commandments and example of our Lord and His Apostles.

5. Regular complaints against a government decision in court are possible in a democracy. If necessary, Christians are permitted to claim the rights granted in their country in the appropriate way (Acts 16:35-40; 25:10-12). It must be carefully considered in which cases such a path is necessary. Until the verdict is received, the government's decision applies. If the courts come to an undesirable result, this is to be accepted by the Christian as the will of the authorities.

6. The interactions between brothers and sisters in the church should always be characterized by love and sympathy (John 13:35). Especially in matters that are not codified in the Bible, believers must be concerned about the welfare of their fellow Christians. The latitude that may be obtained due to greater insight must not be used indulgently or egoistically against other believers, or asserted (1 Cor 8:9-11; Gal 5:13). The Lord teaches us to put our own interests aside out of love and consideration (Phil 2). What's more, during this time of the coronavirus pan-

demic, it's particularly important to accommodate brothers and sisters who are fearful or at greater risk, and to support those who are suffering in body, soul, and spirit during this difficult time.

7. Even throughout the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, spiritual goals should be the clear focus of church life (and not political or medical discussions). Specifically, this includes prayer for the government, the support of the weak, and the proclamation of biblical hope to all people who have been made insecure by the crisis (Mark 16:15; 1 Cor 9:19-27; 1 Tim 2:1-4; cf. Luke 6:45).

Beloved brothers and sisters, before beginning His path to the cross, our Lord prayed for the unity of His followers (John 17). Whatever our personal assessment of the current situation, we must not allow the enemy of God to destroy our unity over this issue. We therefore call on all the children of God: Let's join in the prayer of our Lord! Let's pray that our external testimony and our internal strength will not be further weakened! There is too much at stake.

(MR0121/1126)

Clarifying addition to thesis 3: By "do not have to be fought," we're not ruling out the fact that followers of Jesus are involved in democratically legitimate means and prudently advocate biblical values (e.g. protecting the weak in our society). Yet nowhere does the Bible declare it to be our duty to control the government or to oppose what we believe to be questionable decisions—except when Christians are forced to act against God's express command.

Midnight Call's **May Resource Guide**



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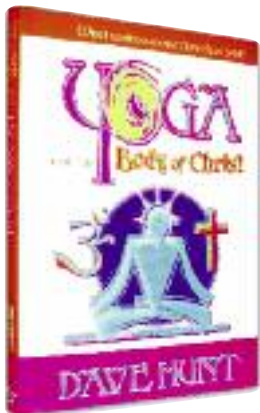
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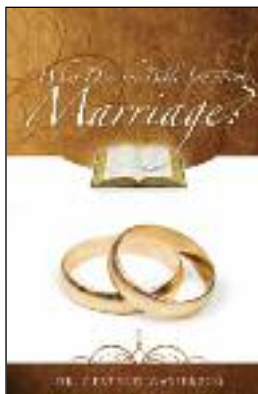
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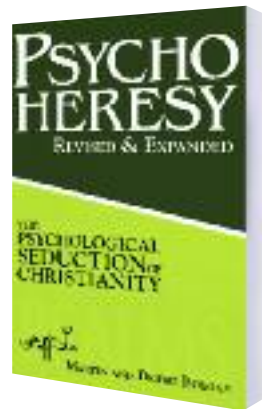
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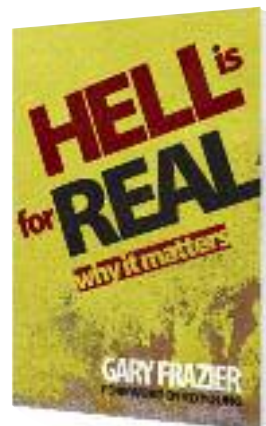
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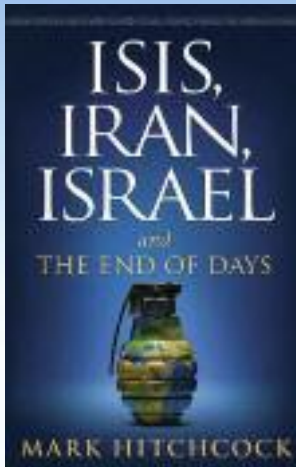
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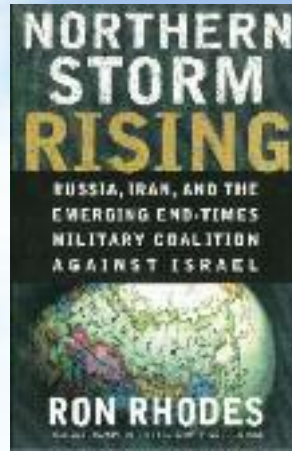
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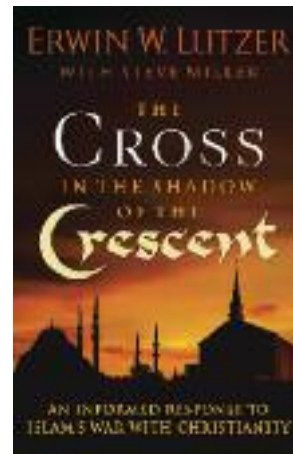
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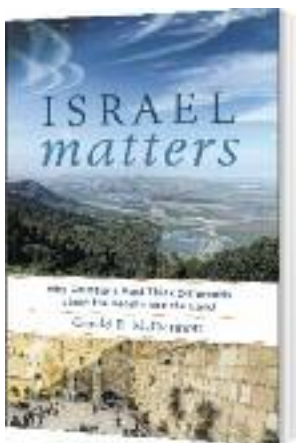
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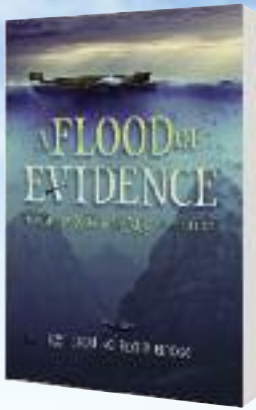
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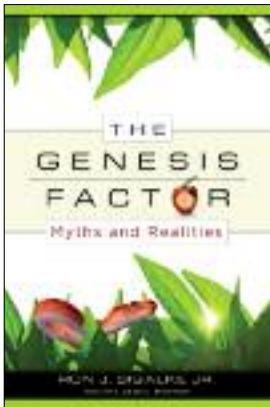


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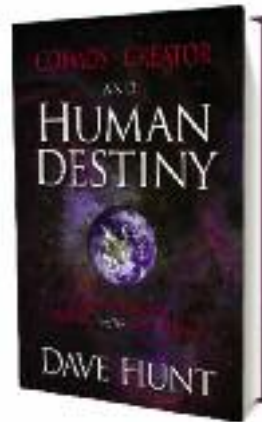
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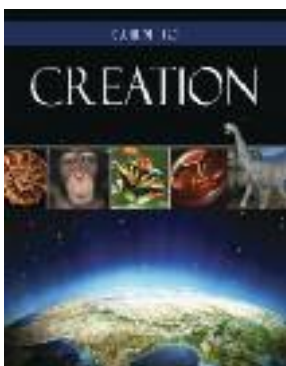
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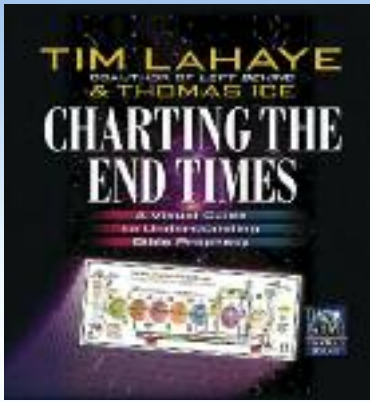
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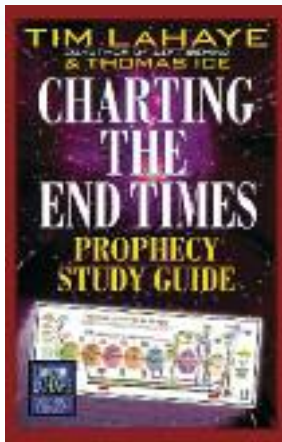
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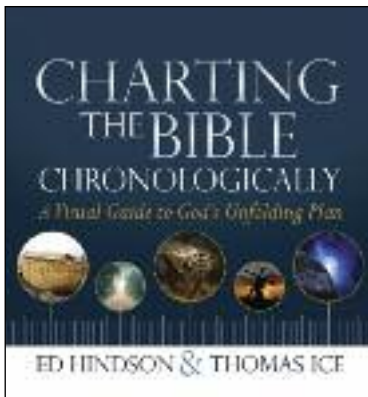
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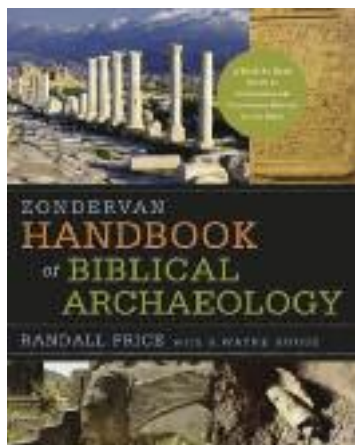
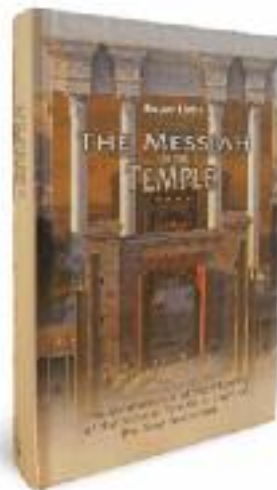
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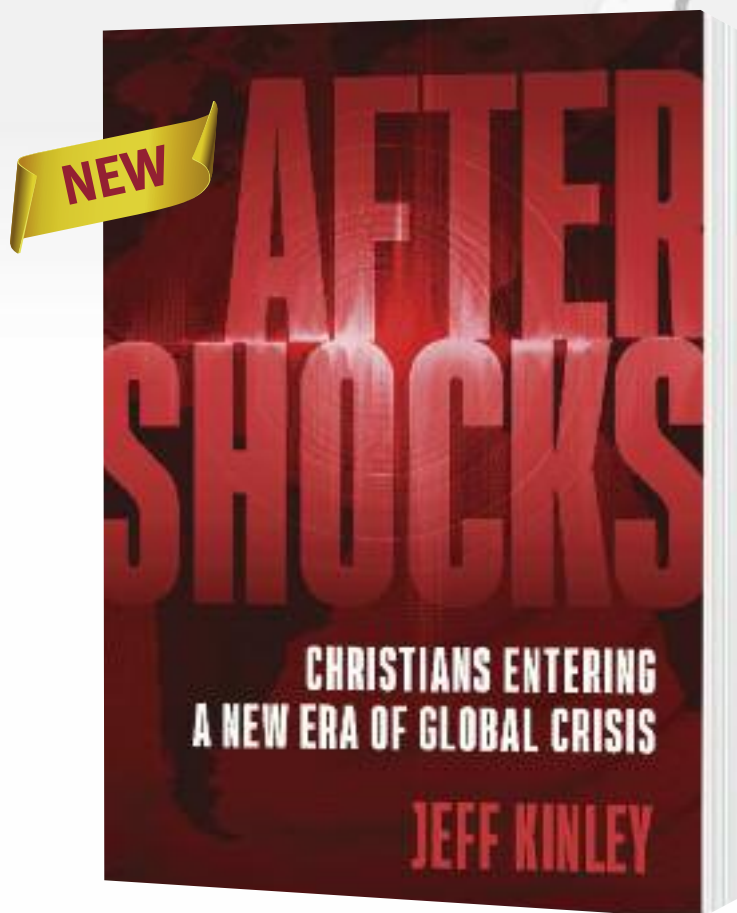
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