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Midnight Call

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**World Geopolitics by the Bible:
Prophecy and Podiatry – Part 6**
P. 10

Dual Citizenship
P. 14

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

- Obedience to the Government
- Can Jews Be Lost?
- Pray Always

P. 34

Who Will Unravel the Gordian Knot? Part 2

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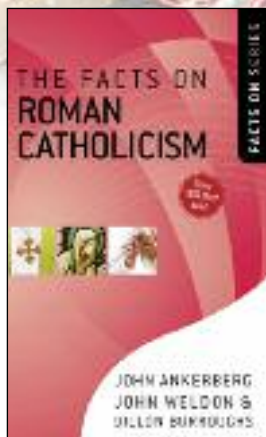
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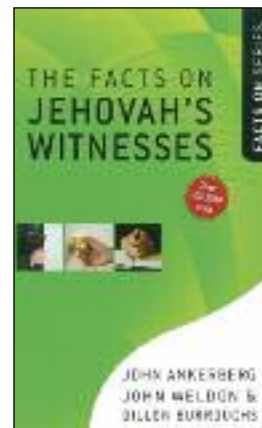
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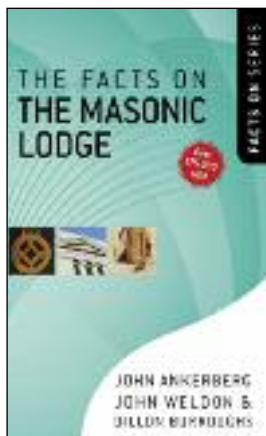
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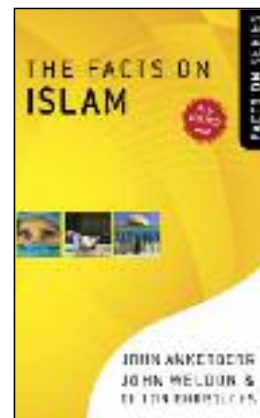
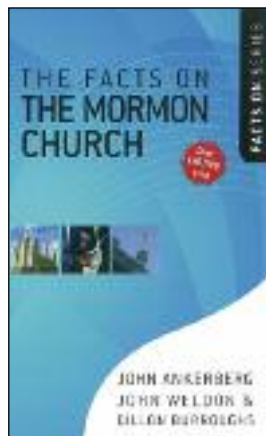
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6 COVER STORY

Who Will Unravel the Gordian Knot? Part 2

By Norbert Lieth

The world must recognize that there is an evil one and that if we rebel against God, we become all the more bound to that evil one. God allows chaos strategically, for spiritual reasons, so that the world will be convicted of its lost state apart from Him.



10 Money: Ends and Trends

World Geopolitics by the Bible: Prophecy and Podiatry – Part 6

By Wilfred Hahn

14 Dual Citizenship By Dr. Ron J. Bigalke

18 The Prince of Preachers

By Michael Kotsch

22 The Hidden Manna and White Stone By Wim Malgo

36 Salt That Has Lost Its Flavor

By Johannes Pflaum



DEPARTMENTS

4 Editorial By Norbert Lieth

30 Action for Israel By Arno Froese

32 The Ebenezer Home – Haifa, Israel By David Phillips

34 Letters to the Editor By Arno Froese

OBEDIENCE TO THE GOVERNMENT...CAN JEWS BE LOST?...PRAY ALWAYS

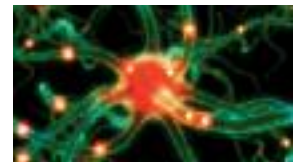


24 USA
Amazon
Launches
First Palm
Reader



24 UN
Repurposing Global
Agricultural Subsidies

25 ISRAEL



Artificial Neurons Mimic
Human Brain

26 GERMANY
Clerk Murdered for
Asking Customer to
Wear Mask

29 NEW ZEALAND
Best Place to Survive
Global Collapse



“Going Forward”



By Norbert Lieth

Director of Missions, Midnight Call International

Dear Friends,

This year is already coming to an end—what do we look back on? Is looking back even a good thing? Yes, if it moves us forward; no, if it slows us down. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14).

Paul consciously separated himself from the things of the past. His undoubtedly sincere religious efforts, the Jewish rituals and traditions, were behind him—as well as his sinful past. He considered the past without Jesus Christ as loss and filth. Now he looked forward to the goal—to that which is above, where Christ is—and thought of himself as a servant of the New Covenant (see 2 Cor 3:6).

Religiosity does not bring us forward, nor do the learned pious rituals and traditions: it is a person, Jesus Christ. I grew up with holy water, the sign of the Cross, and the confessional. After my conversion, I thought I should still hold onto these. Also, my past sins kept coming to my mind, and I questioned whether they

were really forgiven. But the more my gaze was drawn to Jesus’ work of salvation (through good pastoral advice and support), the more liberated and assured I became.

Jesus once warned His disciples: “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). The danger while ploughing was that, when one looked backward again and again, the furrows would get crooked. It was important to look only forward, thus getting straight furrows: working the field well and achieving a beautiful result. In this sense we, like Paul, must look toward the goal and the prize of our calling.

Lot and his family were explicitly told: “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee” (Gen 19:17). Later, in verse 26 we read: “But his wife looked back ... and she became a pillar of salt.” He who only lives in the past—who brings up old things in the present and rehashes what has been forgiven—is not ready to move ahead. Such a person can become stubborn, cold, hard and immobile ... like a pillar of salt. As we are told in Hebrews 12:1-2: “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with

EDITOR'S NOTE

patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..."

Every burden (worry, pressure) that wants to hinder us from moving forward, every sin that brings us to a standstill, we can only put behind us if we fix our eyes on Jesus. And to keep going forward is also only possible if we keep our Savior in constant view. Many Christians don't get ahead because they repeatedly look back on sins already confessed to the Lord, for fear that they may not have been forgiven. They are hampered by failures of the past—just as a runner, if held by a strong rubber band, cannot make progress regardless how hard he tries.

When Moses died, he was 120 years old. Until the hour of his death, Moses had always looked forward. His faith was firmly grounded on God's promises. Moses climbed to the top of Mount Nebo, and saw from there the land which God had promised to His people.

That is God's gift to us—since Calvary on Mount Moriah, we Christians may look forward to the Promised Land to which God has called us.

We want to learn from the past, but we must not get stuck there. Thus, in this month of November, we look to the New Year with confidence, and go forward in the knowledge and trust that Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our life and faith. (MC)

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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-tribulation 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.



Who Will Unravel the Gordian Knot? Part 2

Norbert Lieth

A beast (perhaps a world dictator) is described, which rises from the sea of nations. The dragon (Satan) gives this beast his power. He is the employer, pulling the strings.

This is how he finally achieves being worshiped himself: “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority [...] And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? [...] And all that dwell upon the

earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:1-2, 4, 8).

But whatever the devil is able to accomplish, he does so only with God’s permission. Ultimately, the Almighty will use everything to establish His Son’s kingdom. As it says in Psalm 119:91b, “all are thy servants.”

Before God does this, the world must recognize that there is an evil one and that if we rebel against God, we become all the more bound to that evil one. God allows chaos strategically, for spiritual reasons, so that the world will be convicted of its lost state apart from Him. Sin is the people’s ruin.

As previously mentioned, evil must mature. As such, it will be made apparent but ultimately rendered harmless. This happens in four phases:

In the first phase, the overall victory was achieved on Calvary—the devil was disarmed (Luke 11:21-22; Col 2:15; 1 John 3:8). The victory has already been legally accomplished there. Satan no longer has power over the children of God (Col 1:13), but he still has power over the world because it is ruled by him and his demons (Eph 6:12).

Therefore, in the second phase, Satan will be removed from heaven (Rev 12:7-10). The whole cosmos needs to be cleansed and come under Jesus’ rule. When God and the Son begin to take possession of their kingdom (Rev 11:15; 12:10), Satan will lose his territory in the heavenly realm of the air, and his power will be limited to earth. That’s why he is furious (Rev 12:12).

In the third phase, at the beginning of the Millennium, the devil will be bound and imprisoned in the bottomless pit (Rev 20:1-3).

And finally, in the last phase, Satan is thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10). Then his head will be definitively crushed.

The first three chapters of the Bible (Gen 1—3) tell us of the creation of heaven and earth, as well as the fall of man, which was instigated by Satan. The final three chapters of the Bible (Rev 20—22) tell us about Satan’s elimination, and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

THE KNOT OF FEAR

Fear, helplessness, and insecurity are increasing. In our society, reactions span the spectrum from hysteria, demonstrations, outbursts of anger and violence, all the way to resignation and despair. We must realize that this world with all its troubles cannot give us true justice, balance, or even rationality.

Rulers in the Roman Empire often referred to themselves as *sotere*, which means “savior.” They were celebrated and even worshipped as such. But they brought more harm than good. We can’t expect anything from this world—no golden age, no radical, long-term world improvement, no redemptive renewal of mankind. We don’t expect that from humans or from any earthly political system.

This world won’t be put in order by itself. It’s trapped, knotted, entangled, tied up, and cannot free itself. Only one Person can unravel this knot; namely, the Lord of justice, when He returns. Jesus is the *kyrius*, *sotere*, Savior, Liberator, and world Redeemer.

Knowledge of God’s plan is the only thing that can truly give peace and stability.

One day, all things will be subordinate to Him (1 Cor 15:27-28; Phil 3:21). As Christians, we don’t have to be terrified, because a thousand fears cannot destroy our hope. We already belong to a realm

Who Will Unravel the Gordian Knot? Part 2

We can't expect anything from this world—no golden age, no radical, long-term world improvement, no redemptive renewal of mankind.

that is indestructible. Christians can know that God uses the present for His future. As it says in various translations of Psalm 119:91, “all things are your servants” (ESV), “all things serve you” (NIV).

This means that everything is within the bounds of His control. Nothing gets out of hand. As Christians, we can even be grateful when God brings fluctuations into play, because He will thwart the godless plans of this world, destroy them, and carry out His plan. Every sunrise proclaims that darkness is always the loser. As we sing:

The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Savior He will stay.
I labor on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed.
To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley, He will lead.
Oh, the night has been won, and I shall overcome
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

As someone once said, “Everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, it's not the end.” And Protestant theologian Hans Joachim Eckstein once said, “It's not actually worth it to be an avowed pessimist if you believe in God's future with His people.”

GOD IS SETTING OUT: JESUS IS COMING!

His kingdom will outshine everything that has ever existed, and that's the final word. “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ;

and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

In this regard, Jesus' first coming offers us a vivid example. When He came into the world for the first time, there was a fair amount of chaos, and definite consternation for many. The whole known world at the time had to be registered (Luke 2:1ff.). The only thing that mattered was what the political powers demanded. The individual's situation and fate were irrelevant. But unnoticed by the lawgivers, God was making sure that His Word was fulfilled and that Jesus could be born on earth.

Something similar will happen again. Coming rulers will ensure that people from all over the world are registered (Rev 13). They won't care about the fate of the individual. But God will use this so that His Son will enter the world again.

“And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb 1:6).

When Jesus appears, everything will be unraveled. He will rule the world that already belongs to Him. The Bible says of this time: “And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful” (Isa 32:3-5).

In September 2020, Hartmut Jaeger wrote to work friends in light of the coronavirus: “How many times have we been asked over the last few weeks, ‘How are you doing? How are your businesses

Jesus releases you from your entanglements and binds you to His person.



doing?’ Let’s remember that C. S. Lewis was asked the same question in the 1950s, during the era of the atomic bomb. He replied logically, ‘If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things... [it] may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but it need not dominate our minds.’ What a great answer! The virus might harm us, but it must not control our minds! We want to do what we’ve always done: pass on the message of reconciliation.”

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1:8).

Bible scholar Dieter Landersheim comments: “To be Alpha and Omega means being the first and the last, the decisive one, the source and perfection [...] He is the all-powerful (the Father has conferred everything upon Him), the Almighty, who does and creates everything. He holds all of creation, which can also be translated as having the holding power. He holds everything firmly in His hand and supports everything.”

THE KNOT OF YOUR LIFE

Who will unravel the Gordian knot that is your life? Who will release you from the confusion, entanglements, and attachments to addiction, sin, and evil

thoughts? The Bible speaks of the sin that “so easily entangles us” (Heb 12:1, NASB).

Who can help ease the discord our relationships have become bogged down in? Who will help us out of our captivity to weakness, death, and insecurity? Who will release us from the hatred and hatefulness we’ve become ensnared in? Who will deliver us from the feelings of revenge and retaliation we’ve been possessed by?

A pastor reported on an encounter with a man who told him how his long and burdensome struggle took on a different, life-saving direction as soon as he dared to say, “I need help.”

As long as we think we can control our own fate, we will fail. It’s like a fly in a spider’s web: the more it moves, the more firmly it’s trapped and wrapped up by its mortal enemy. We shouldn’t just renovate the prison cell we’re in; we should accept the key that will free us. And that key is Jesus. He said of Himself that He was sent to proclaim “deliverance to the captives” (Luke 4:18).

Jesus releases you from your entanglements and binds you to His person. Mark Hitchcock wrote this fitting conclusion: “When we put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, God graciously transfers us from the road to Armageddon to the road to glory.”

(MR0321/1167)



WORLD GEOPOLITICS BY THE BIBLE: PROPHECY AND PODIATRY – PART 6



Scripture clearly indicates that a 10-king power coalition will take form near the start of the Tribulation period. At least five separate visions in the Bible depict these 10 kings.

By **Wilfred Hahn**

We find these in Daniel 2:41-42 in the form of 10 toes; and as 10 horns representing 10 kings in 7:7, 20, 24; Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 12. As already explained in previous parts, the Bible's use of the terms "kings" and "kingdoms" is equivalent to a male sovereign nation leader in our day.

Another important conclusion was that the 10 kings take form prior to the appearance of the Antichrist. This sequence is often ignored ... many still looking for the Antichrist first. As such, the emergence of a 10-nation coalition is one of the most important signs of the times, though the world will likely not know the exact configuration of these 10 kings until the Antichrist actually arrives.

A power coalition of the type prophesied here is a unique arrangement in world geopolitical history. Ten sovereign kings (nation rulers) will pool their power together and then agree to put it at the disposal of the Antichrist (Revelation 17:13).

The general pattern throughout world history has been that only one nation would dominate the known world or its regions. Even in our modern age this has been the case. It has been a long, long time

since the world has not been dominated by one prominent and powerful country.

That said, it also is true that much of the world remains heavily influenced by the Roman Empire. In fact, as demonstrated in previous parts of this series, the Bible considers our era a definite offshoot of the Roman Empire.

It has never before occurred that the entire world has been firmly ruled by a voluntary coalition of power-sharing countries. That is still not the case, though movement has clearly been in that direction.

Today, we have nation assemblies such as the European Union, NATO, the United Nations, and many other international agencies ... all coming into existence over the last 150 years or so. However, an obstacle to further collective globalism is that there are at least one or more geopolitical nation-states that are too powerful or independent to join such a coalition. These may be reluctant to cede their sovereignty to a smaller group of nations.

These mega-countries would have to recede in terms of influence, or be superseded in some way or outdistanced, before the 10-nation coalition can assume world-spanning power.

Viewed through the lens of current geopolitics, we see that there is one prophesied global political condition that does not yet exist. It is minilateralism.

Significance of 10 Toes

Let's again return to our laymen's podiatry—the study and treatment of feet. We recall that Daniel saw 10 toes in the prophetic image of Nebuchadnezzar's statue. As reviewed in previous parts of this series, we know that the 10 toes are a parallel symbol to that of the 10 horns, shown in both Daniel and Revelation.

As such, it is a prophecy through symbol. Symbols must have literal meanings, as is the case with all symbols in Scripture. This being so, we can then draw meaningful conclusions by simply looking at symbols.

Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a large human statue made of various materials (Daniel 2) contains a very important clue.

Studying this picture, one is likely to uncover an ill-fitting fact. Were Nebuchadnezzar's vision to apply to our day, we would note that the feet would be quite lopsided and deformed. Why? There would be a big, outsized toe if the United States were a member of this group.

Consider that a foot has one big toe and four progressively smaller ones. While there are size differences in our toes, none are so large that it is bigger than the foot itself, for instance. Proportionality must be observed.

Every indication that the Bible gives us about the final, last-day, 10-king power coalition is that each member is roughly proportionate in size. First, in Daniel 2 we are shown a normal set of 10 toes. In Daniel 7 as well as Revelation 12, 13 and 17, they are shown as 10 typical horns.

However, a little later—continuing the “horn” imagery—the 10 horns are implicitly compared to an emerging 11th horn, which is said to have been small and which then uproots three of the existing horns (Daniel 7:8).

As such, we are led to recognize that the final 10 kings will not be small in size, nor is there any indi-

cation that the size of the horns will not be normal. We can reasonably conclude that the visions do not allow for outsized toes and feet, nor any grotesquely enlarged horns. The size differences would be normal ... just as the big toe is bigger than the smallest of the toes.

But that is not what we would observe were Nebuchadnezzar's vision to apply to our era. Presently, significant size differences would be noted. Consider that only one, hugely outsized big toe would be visible. It certainly could not fit into the endtime glass slipper.

Viewed through the lens of current geopolitics, we see that there is one prophesied global political condition that does not yet exist. It is minilateralism. That arrangement will arrive when a small group of relatively powerful nations come together to form a world-ruling coalition.

These ten kings/nations will have global power. Grouped together, they will assuredly be more powerful than any other nation or group of nations.

Many national leaders look forward to the day when world affairs will not be so dominated by a select few ... and certainly not by any one superpower, as America still may be today.

What do these conditions imply for America in the future? Could the US therefore be a future member of the 10-nation coalition ... or not? Before we provide our viewpoints on these questions, we must first examine several other Bible prophecies that may play a role in endtime geopolitics. What does the Bible say about Asian countries such as China or Iran? As it happens, at this time relations between America and China are tense.

China vs. America: Who Will Prevail?

Today, there is a fast-growing counterweight to the United States globally. It is China. This country has already made some great advances in global influ-



Will China play a significant geopolitical role in the last days, perhaps being a key member of a final world order?



ence. Will its progression continue? Where will the growing geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China lead? Does the Bible have anything to say on this matter?

Will China leap-frog America ... or not? The Bible provides a partial answer.

Unlike America, the Bible does mention this nation in the last days by name. China is identified specifically as Sinim. In fact, Scripture also prophesies about China.

Consider this prophetic verse: “Behold, these shall come from far; and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim” (Isaiah 49:12, KJV).

Just what and where is Sinim?

Most sources agree that Sinim refers to the far eastern region of China today.¹ Things related to China are still referred to as “Sino.” For example, the word “sinology” means the study of China. Sinim is likely the most eastern nation mentioned in the Bible.

In the Arabic language, China is still referred to as “Sin.” The word “Sin” likely comes from the word Ch’in (or Tsin), as in the Ch’in Dynasty which ruled China between 221 and 206 BC. The word “Sinim” in Hebrew would therefore simply be the plural form of “Sin.”

Returning to the quoted verse, we can deduce from Isaiah’s words—written some 2,700 years

ago—that Sinim (China) will most certainly exist in the last days and will carry into the following Millennial period. Isaiah here speaks of the nations that will recognize Israel and worship the Lord.

Moreover, we can also reasonably deduce that China must be a substantial entity at that time, since it is actually named in the prophecy. Also, instead of naming the “east,” the prophet simply assumes that this is the direction of Sinim.

Isaiah indicates that the people of Sinim will also be in that number that will eventually go to worship in the new Israel during the 1,000-year Millennial Period.

What about the “kings of the east” that are mentioned in Revelation 16:12? What role might they have? Will China be counted in this group? This verse reads: “The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.”

This judgment occurs in the second half of the Tribulation Period. As a result, the “kings of the east” head west across the Euphrates. We can only speculate as to what their motives may be. Possibly (though this is sheer speculation), eastern nations may wish to get out from under the thumb of the Antichrist.

We must then turn to this crucial question: Will China play a significant geopolitical role in the last days, perhaps being a key member of a final world order? The answer, we believe, is both yes and no. Yes, in our opinion China (and some other select Asian nations) will play a prominent role in the last-day geopolitical developments mentioned in Revelation 16:12. An aggressive action of some kind seems to be suggested.

While that may be the case, the Bible at the same time also rules out any role for China in the post-globalism, unilateralism period of a “10-king” ruling order.

How can we be sure of this view? Scripture reveals the answer.

Revelation 17:12 supports an important deduction. It reads: “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.” Just how does this verse connect to China and some other Asian countries today?

The verse we have quoted from Revelation specifically refers to these last-day 10 kings and reveals a crucial clue. John the Revelator tells us here that these 10 kings “have not yet received a kingdom.” This means that neither the kings nor their kingdoms referred to in this verse had yet existed, either at or by the time the Apostle John wrote Revelation (approx. 90-95 AD).

As such, we can draw some clear conclusions from Revelation 17:12. Any nation today that existed at or prior to the time of John’s prophecy, therefore cannot qualify as one of the 10 final kings ... in other words, one of the final influential 10 nations.

If we apply this rule, it reveals that such nations as China, India, Iran (Persia) and others will not be part of the final, 10-king world power coalition. Why? Because they already had kingdoms by the time of John’s prophecies.

Consider that China already existed in New Testament times. According to historians, the Han Dynasty, a predecessor to modern-day China, was in power at the time of John’s prophecies.

The same may be concluded for the nation of Japan today. As already mentioned, the nation of “Hodu” (India) had already existed, as the Book of Esther confirms. Crucially, therefore, we discover here that none of these large and influential Asian nations will be part of the last-day rulership represented by the 10-king coalition.

What light could these perspectives possibly shed upon our times?

Beyond the certainty that these nations will not be part of the world ruling order at the time the Antichrist takes global control, we can only attempt a few additional speculative conclusions.

A scenario that appears plausible is that the formation of the final 10 kings may very well be a counterstrategy to the perceived threats or non-aligned perspectives of other global players, these

very possibly being the “kings of the east,” who are growing in power before the 10-king coalition emerges.

There is no doubt that China is strategically placed geographically, allowing it to become a naval and economic power that can control and coordinate much of Asia. A number of geographers and geo-strategists have long thought this to be the case. As it happens, China today has sharply increased its naval capabilities.

Thoughts to Ponder


We can deduce that China will not qualify as one of the 10 horns on the head of the 7th Ruler King. It will not be part of the world-ruling 10 kings. Nor is it likely to gain total dominance over the world.

What would these conclusions mean for the outcome of the China/America rivalry that we see today? As almost always, interpretations of Bible prophecy are often colored or biased by recency. Events or trends of our time tend to be read into the prophetic Scriptures. As such, the reader beware.

It seems reasonable to conclude that if both China and America (at this time, anyway) do not qualify to be part of the world’s last power structure, that therefore the China/American rivalry will move to backstage geopolitically.

For the time being, combative postures may continue. Aggressive actions may yet escalate. Time will tell.

A wonderful conclusion to this segment is the message of Isaiah 49:12 (quoted earlier). Despite the distrust and different values that the two nations may have, in the end, the supposedly “big, bad Red China” will acknowledge Jesus Christ and enter the Millennial period.

In the next issue—the last one of this series—we will outline the final conclusions about America’s geopolitical future in light of Scripture. Does God have America in His eye? Was this nation created for a purpose? 

ENDNOTE

- 1 James H. Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance*, p. 5515: “Sinim is a distant Oriental region.”

Romans 12:1 urges believers “by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” The language used is not trite; rather, it acknowledges an ever-present reality within the ancient Roman Empire, because emperors could take the life of anyone.

For example, Herod the Great attempted to take the life of the newborn king of Israel (Jesus), by decreeing murder for all male children who were two years old and younger in Bethlehem and its vicinity (Matt 2:16-18). Herod’s son, Herod Antipas, celebrated his birthday by ordering the beheading of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29). Even though Antipas enjoyed listening to John (Mark 6:20), he gave the order “because of his oaths and because of his dinner guests” (Mark 6:26). One’s life could be taken capriciously in the Roman Empire.

Caligula and Tiberius Gemellus were first appointed as co-emperors. When the Senate and the people later chose Caligula to be the sole

ruler, he murdered Gemellus. Caligula also murdered his relatives, tortured and killed people while eating, named his favorite horse as his counselor, declared himself to be a god, and dedicated sacrifices and temples to himself. Caligula was assassinated, and his uncle, Claudius I, became the next emperor. Claudius delegated his responsibilities to his wife, Messalina, whom he later murdered. He married his niece, Agrippina the Younger, who was responsible for his poisoning. Prior to his death, Claudius banished all the Jews from Rome, due to unrest from believers proclaiming the good news that God’s salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 18:2).

Dual Citizenship

DR. RON J. BIGALKE

The believer's citizenship means that Christians have unique spiritual responsibilities that are not obligatory for "every person." Nevertheless, such citizenship does not lessen responsibilities to the state.



Nero became emperor following Claudius' death. He was the "governing authority" when the Book of Romans was written (AD 57). Nero had his mother murdered (when he was age 22), and later divorced and murdered his wife. Nero instigated the great fire that consumed Rome in AD 64, yet he blamed the Christians. Consequently, he tortured and murdered Christians publicly, and eventually took the lives of the apostles Paul and Peter. When his policies were questioned, Nero killed himself in AD 68.

The relentless persecution of the church did not cease until Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in AD 313. Constantine believed that God granted him victory in battle. Consequently, he would later grant tremendous privilege and power to the church, which was not good because Christians adapted themselves to the paradigms of imperial governance. The relationship between the church and the state has provoked interesting discussion since this historical time.

The historical introduction to Romans 13 is necessary for understanding the challenging words for Christians, not only in the past but also in the present time. Verse 1 commands "every person ... to be in subjection to the governing authorities," because "those which exist are established by God." When one considers the experience of the early church, the difficulty of the biblical command is readily understood. One can imagine believers wondering how it is possible that

murderous rulers were "established by God," and then thinking why would they need "to be in subjection" to them. Could you also imagine the emotions and thoughts of the church when the "Christian" ruler (Constantine) became emperor?

Romans 13 is an important biblical passage for the church throughout the ages, as is all Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17). The commands therein were certainly relevant for a church that lived under the rule of murderous emperors. The instruction, however, is also necessary for understanding that "governing authorities" are not everlasting. Christians are destined for an eternal inheritance, which has no comparison to anything in this life. Therefore, believers are to submit to the authorities, love one another, and "behave properly."

Citizen of Earth: Obedience and Respect

(13:1-7) Romans 13 addresses the relationship of "every person" in regard to the state. "Subjection to the governing authorities" is especially applicable to the Christian, because he/she has a unique relationship to the state. Christians are both citizens of earth and citizens of heaven. Philippians 3:20-21 reminds the believer that his/her "citizenship is in heaven"; therefore, the Christian may appeal to the Savior, just as the Philippians could appeal to Rome for protection.

Dual Citizenship

The Christian cannot disobey what God has commanded, nor obey what would be contrary to Scripture.

The believer is also to live with anticipation and eagerness for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (which is the habitual perspective of the Christian, whose citizenship is in heaven). The believer's citizenship means that Christians have unique spiritual responsibilities that are not obligatory for "every person." Nevertheless, such citizenship does not lessen responsibilities to the state. The believer has solemn obligations to the state and the officials who govern the state. Verses 1-7 outline earthly responsibilities "to the governing authorities." Verses 8-14 reveal spiritual responsibilities that are obligatory for Christians.

The responsibilities that are stated in 13:1-7 regarding earthly rulers, are directly related to the admonitions immediately preceding it in 12:9-21, and subsequent to it in 13:8-14. In other words, the instruction in 13:1-7 is related to the broader context. With a word of endearment ("beloved"), Romans 12:9-21 commands Christian to "never take your own revenge." The reason is that Christians are to love "without hypocrisy" and to "bless and do not curse." The believer is not to repay "evil for evil to anyone"; rather, the Christian is to "overcome evil with good." Romans 13:8-14 resumes the theme of love, and teaches that the command to love one another is a perpetual debt for the believer.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 13:1-7 Citizen of Earth | 13:8-14 Citizen of Heaven |
| have obedience and respect | have love and proper behavior |

The biblical teaching regarding the state is given strategically, because two sections emphasizing the priority of love border it (12:9-21; 13:8-14). Consequently, the emphasis is that the state does not bear such love, yet the individual Christian does heed the principle of love. Government has both the entitlement and the obligation to employ vengeance, because the state "is a minister of God." The church is not entitled to avenge. What is illegitimate for the individual Christian, is entirely legitimate and essential for the state. If government does not avenge, chaos would result; then ordinary citizens would be subject to individual impulses and mob rule. The command "to be in subjection to the governing authorities" is an emphatic result of the fundamental principle of love.

The reason for subjection is, "there is no authority except from God." Authorities do not derive their power from the consent of the governed; rather, civil authority is derived from God (cf. Dan 2:21; John 19:10-11). Every human being is made in God's image and has God's "Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness" (Rom 2:15; cf. 13:5). Therefore, even non-Christian lawmakers can outlaw evil, without recognizing that their criterion "for good" is derived from God. The role of the state is to protect those who obey the law and to punish the lawless. Proverbs 20:26 states, "A wise king winnows the wicked, and drives the threshing wheel over them." Of course, there are rare times when Christians cannot submit to the state (e.g. Exod 1:15-22; Dan 6; Acts 4:19-20). The Christian cannot disobey what God has commanded, nor obey what would be contrary to Scripture.

Taxes and debts are legal obligations, and it is proper to reduce them as much as possible. However, the believer's spiritual obligation is to love others in such a manner that it is continually increasing. In this sense, love is the only debt that should never be regarded as paid "in full."

Citizen of Heaven: Love and Behavior

(13:8-14) The second half of Romans 13 explains the responsibilities that Christians have consequent to their relationship to God. Verses 8-10 reveal that the primary motivation for the Christian's behavior is love. The thought here resumes the discussion that concluded Romans 12. Christians are to "owe nothing to anyone except to love one another." This verse derives emphasis from the immediately preceding statement in verse 7, to pay "tax to whom tax is due."

Taxes and debts are legal obligations, and it is proper to reduce them as much as possible. However, the believer's spiritual obligation is to love others in such a manner that it is continually increasing. In this sense, love is the only debt that should never be regarded as paid "in full." The rule to love is the fundamental principle of Old Testament law. Christians are to love God and love their neighbor. Only when love is one's motivation can a person fulfill his or her responsibilities to God, to other believers, to society, and to the state.

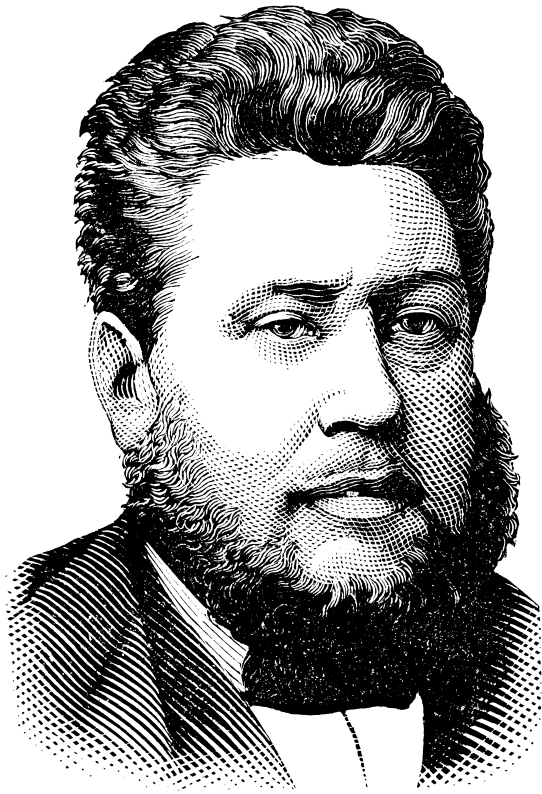
The final verses of Romans 13 provide an additional incentive for proper behavior: "The night is almost gone, and the day is near" (v. 12). Time of service upon this earth is brief at best. The consummation of "salvation is nearer to us than when we believed" (v. 11). Christians belong to "the day," while living among a world in spiritual darkness. Consequently, believers are to live with regard for the future. The Christian's responsibility is to have a mindset that anticipates life be-



yond the present. Each day, believers live among a world in spiritual darkness. Christians are to both demonstrate and testify with their behavior that they do not belong to this "darkness." The believer does not belong to this world; rather, the Christian's behavior is to characterize "the one to come" (Eph 1:21). Behavior as a Christian—who is saved by grace through faith/trust in Christ alone—should be a preview of the age "to come" among those with whom there is persistent contact.

One manner in which believers can live with regard for the future is to "lay aside the deeds of darkness" (13:12) that are listed in verse 13. When a Christian practices this command, he/she is able to live a life pleasing to God. Believers are to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts" (v. 14). When this command is heeded, the Christian will be victorious over temptation—sin will not have any prospect for establishing a foundational influence. Praise be to God for His provision through Christ Jesus!

(1178)



The Prince of Preachers

Michael Kotsch

More than ten thousand people attended his services, and he is considered one of the greatest preachers of all time: Charles Haddon Spurgeon. About his work and his primary focus.

Spurgeon's activity dates back to the time of the Third Great Awakening, a time of revival in Great Britain as well as in America. In 1866, Spurgeon explained what he meant by "revival" in an issue of his magazine *The Sword & the Trowel*: "The word 'revive' wears its meaning upon its forehead; it is from the Latin, and may be interpreted thus—to live again, to receive again a life which has almost expired ... The flickering lamp of life in dying men suddenly flames up with unusual brightness at intervals, and those who are watching around the sick bed say of the patient, 'he revives.'" Spurgeon articulately took a stand against the notion that revival could be brought about by any methodology, no matter how spiritual it sounded. For him, revival wasn't generated "by mere excitement, by crowded meetings, by the stamping of the foot, or by the knocking of the

pulpit cushion, or the delirious bawlings of ignorant zeal." Rather, it is the result of a divine work of God. The most Christians could do would be to create ideal conditions by preaching the full truth of the Bible. "The Holy Ghost must come into the living heart through living truth."

In *The Bible and the Newspaper* (1878), Spurgeon provided commentary on current events to display God's rule in history to his readers. Spurgeon used a storm surge in April 1878, which also flooded the Metropolitan Tabernacle's basement, to describe the unbridled power of spiritual awakening.

Spurgeon took an article in *The Daily News*—which featured the most modern battleship in the world: the *Dreadnought*—as an opportunity to criticize a widespread faith in technology. This belief was even reflected in the church. Just a few

Spurgeon took an article in *The Daily News*—which featured the most modern battleship in the world: the *Dreadnought*—as an opportunity to criticize a widespread faith in technology.

years after the God-wrought revival, Christians were beginning to develop systems and schemes that would ensure continued spiritual growth. “Are we not all in danger of trusting to religious machinery, and leaving the work of the Lord to be done by secretaries, committees, missionaries, and so forth, whom we half regard as substitutes for ourselves?” But true awakening cannot be organized, according to Spurgeon, and it was his deep wish that the divine life would “break forth everywhere ... We are far too ready to confine it to the channel of Sunday services and religious meetings; it deserves a broader floodway, and must have it if we are to see gladder times. It must burst out upon men who do not care for it, and invade chambers where it will be regarded as an intrusion; it must be seen by wayfaring men streaming down the places of traffic and concourse, hindering the progress of sinful trades, and surrounding all, whether they will or no.”

Social Engagement

For Spurgeon, spiritual renewal should always be visible in society. “It is much to be desired that the Christian church may yet have more power and influence all over the world for righteousness and peace ... also, of social reform, and moral progress.”

One way that Spurgeon demonstrated his social commitment was through the 1867 founding of the Stockwell Orphanage, where around 500 children were taken in. His church also ran several poorhouses, schools, and old people’s homes, all financed through voluntary donations.

Spurgeon was a political supporter of William Ewart Gladstone’s (1809-1898) Liberal Party. He repeatedly took up social causes, even when it disadvantaged him personally. In 1860, Spurgeon denounced American slavery in his sermons. This led to a significant decline in book and sermon sales. “I believe slavery to be a crime of crimes, a



soul-destroying iniquity which cries aloud for vengeance.”

In 1856, Spurgeon founded and began to teach at The Pastor’s College (later Spurgeon’s College). The training center was so popular that in 1911, 24% of all Baptist preachers received their training there. The curriculum was focused on proficiency in preaching and pastoral care. Those trained by Spurgeon founded numerous new churches, particularly in southeast England, which shaped the conservative Baptist faith throughout Great Britain. An extraordinarily large percentage of the preachers trained at the College later decided to work in world missions.

Spurgeon as Author

Spurgeon was never a passionate writer. “Writing is to me the work of a slave,” he wrote in the preface to his book *The Saint and His Savior*. He wrote only a few books as stand-alone works. In later years, he hired a secretary who selected material for publication from his speeches, addresses, and sermons.

Spurgeon’s speeches were received with enthusiasm by a wider audience than those who were able to attend in person. From 1855 to 1917, his sermons were published (first in *The New Park Street Pulpit*, and later in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*) and had a weekly circulation of

The Prince of Preachers

For Spurgeon, revival wasn't generated "by mere excitement, by crowded meetings, by the stamping of the foot, or by the knocking of the pulpit cushion, or the delirious bawlings of ignorant zeal." Rather, it is the result of a divine work of God.

25,000. Spurgeon's sermons have also been translated into more than 40 languages and are widely read to this day, especially in the United States. From 1865 until his death in 1892, Spurgeon published the very popular monthly theological magazine *The Sword & the Trowel*.

From among Spurgeon's numerous published works (around 200), his seven-volume commentary on Psalms (*The Treasury of David*) and his collection of thoughts and sayings (*John Plowman's Talk: or Plain Advice for Plain People*) stand out: a combined 400,000 copies had been sold by 1900.

Spurgeon's Theology

Although Spurgeon's exegesis was clearly shaped by Reformed theology, he didn't want to unreservedly join any theological school of thought, not even Calvinism.

Spurgeon repeatedly fought for a Bible-centered theology. In an 1864 sermon, he spoke in opposition of evangelical Anglicans, because they remained within the Church of England despite its teaching that regeneration occurs through baptism. Because the Evangelical Alliance was unclear on the matter, Spurgeon withdrew from the organization. In 1887, he turned his back on the Baptist Union, because it failed to oppose a liberal interpretation of the atonement of Jesus and biblical inspiration (known as the Downgrade Controversy). Spurgeon took a clear stance against any challenge to the infallibility of Scripture.

Spurgeon called his listeners to personal devotion to God and an exemplary lifestyle. Anyone who wants to achieve this needs to prepare for a fight: "Satan is sure to hinder us when we are earnest in prayer. He checks our importunity, and weakens our faith in order that, if possible, we may miss the blessing. Nor is Satan less vigilant in obstructing the Christian effort. There was

never a revival of religion without a revival of his opposition ... We are not alarmed because Satan hindereth us, for it is a proof that we are on the Lord's side, and are doing the Lord's work."

Time and again, Spurgeon's sermons were about grace and obedience. He emphasized both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. In church life, Spurgeon emphasized the importance of the Lord's Supper. Toward the end of his life, he wrote, "My entire theology can be condensed into four words: 'Jesus died for me.'"

Spurgeon as Preacher

The great popularity of Spurgeon's meetings cannot be attributed to entertainment value or an alignment with contemporary tastes. His ministry was characterized more by prayer and the teaching of the Word. Although he initially kept explaining the basics of the Gospel, he soon began to vividly address very different theological topics. For example, he preached about the attributes of God, or the doctrine of election (predestination), or simply interpreted a passage of Scripture. Using colorful, everyday language spiced with down-to-earth humor, Spurgeon's aim was for his hearers to understand Jesus Christ and the basics of biblical teaching. But he always spoke in concrete terms and challenged his listeners (sometimes even personally). Sometimes Spurgeon felt the Holy Spirit urging him to address people he barely knew: "There is a man sitting there who is a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open on Sundays; it was open last Sabbath morning. He took ninepence and there was fourpence profit on it; his soul is sold to Satan for fourpence." The audience was awed. People were converted at every meeting.

Spurgeon made his homiletic advice available to his students in *Lectures to My Students*, which still holds up today. In *The Treasury of David*,

Spurgeon supplemented his own interpretation of the text with comments from Puritan exegetes and *Hints to the Village Preacher*.

According to Spurgeon, preachers should always testify to what they have experienced with God. One basic requirement of this is personal conversion. “If we have not the Spirit which Jesus promised, we cannot perform the commission which Jesus gave.” Additionally, preachers must trust the Bible absolutely, and always align their statements with the Word of God. “One single drop of the essential tincture of the word of God is better than a sea full of our commenting and sermonizing.” Spurgeon also attached particular importance to the selection of suitable examples for illustrating the sermon’s assertions.

Spurgeon urged his students to speak clearly and believably, without using overly academic or theological language. “He who goes down amongst miners and colliers, with technical theological terms and drawing-room phrases, acts like an idiot. The confusion of tongues at Babel was more thorough than we imagine. It did not merely give different languages to great nations, but it made the speech of each class to vary from that of others.”

In *Lectures to My Students*, Spurgeon encouraged his students to not only thoroughly prepare for sermons, but also to pray intensely: “Your prayers will be your ablest assistants *while your discourses are yet upon the anvil* ... while our sermonizings being apart from prayer, were but hay and stubble ... The man who is mighty in prayer may be a wall of fire around his country ... We not only ought to pray more, but we *must*. The fact is, the secret of all ministerial success lies in prevalence at the mercy-seat.”

Private Life

In 1856, Spurgeon married Susannah Thompson, a woman from his congregation. They seem to have had a largely harmonious marriage. Their children, Charles and Thomas, later became Baptist preachers.

Spurgeon suffered for years with chronic kidney inflammation. He died on January 31, 1892 in Menton, France. Over 100,000 people attended his funeral procession through London. He is still known worldwide as an author and preacher. (MR0621/1169)

No Care!



“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:6-7).

No care, but all prayer. No anxiety, but much joyful communion with God. Carry your desires to the Lord of your life, the guardian of your soul. Go to Him with two portions of prayer and one of fragrant praise. Do not pray doubtfully, but thankfully. Consider that you have your petitions, and therefore thank God for his grace. He is giving you grace; give Him thanks. Hide nothing. Do not let any need lie festering inside you. “Let your requests be made known to God.” Do not run to man. Go only to your God, the Father of Jesus, who loves you in Him.

This will bring you God’s own peace. You will not be able to understand the peace that you will enjoy. It will surround you in its infinite embrace. Hearts and minds through Christ Jesus will be immersed in a sea of rest. Come life or death, poverty, pain, or slander, you will dwell in Jesus above every rolling wind or darkening cloud. Will you not obey this dear command?

Yes, Lord, I do believe You, but I plead with you to help my unbelief.

(From Spurgeon’s Faith’s Checkbook devotional)



The Hidden Manna and White Stone

Wim Malgo (1922-1992)

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 25. Revelation 2:14-17.

The Nicolaitans and the followers of Balaam, referred to in Revelation 2:14-15, were not two different groups. Rather, the Nicolaitans advocated Balaam's teaching. They emulated him and won other members of the church at Pergamos over to their apostate position. It's evident from these verses that the Nicolaitans and Balaamites are the same; the Lord's accusation is summarized in that statement, where it says, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate."

Isn't that the grave situation facing the Church of Jesus today? Uncompromising on the outside, but inwardly lazy and rotten? Biblically-oriented on the outside, but inwardly corrupt throughout? This is why the exalted Lord—who judges the enemies of the church with His sharp, two-edged sword—directs that same sword with relentless severity against the individual child of God, in order to separate him.

If Satan cannot bring down a child of God outwardly, he will do everything in his power to bring him down inwardly. The Lord Jesus presents the alternative to the church in Pergamos (and, by extension, us): "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven.”

The war, the divorce court, has already taken place in many hearts. If this passage applies to your life, your exile can be lifted by the judgment that took place on Calvary, through your repentance. Because if we judge ourselves, we will not be judged.

To those who repent, the promise for overcomers in verse 17 applies: “To him that overcometh will I [firstly] give to eat of the hidden manna”; that is, the bread of life that is the Lord Himself. Here the Lord is evoking Israel, to whom He gave manna from heaven every day in the desert for forty years. The Lord Jesus says: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:51).

Secondly, “...and will give him a white stone” (Rev 2:17). What is this white stone? It is Jesus, the stone “cut out without hands” (Dan 2:34); the precious cornerstone (1 Pet 2:6); the foundation stone: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3:11). Here in Revelation, He is called the “white stone,” a depiction of the glorified Christ.

Thirdly, “...and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” “In the stone” means carved into the stone. Isn’t that what the Lord promised Isaiah? “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands” (Is 49:16a).

The stone also evokes the high priest Aaron, who wore precious stones on his chest before the Lord. The Lord had commanded: “And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it.

Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes [...] And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually” (Ex 28:15-21, 29).

Now we understand the promise to overcomers in Revelation 2:17 much better: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

This promise to overcomers includes the most intimate fellowship with God through our high priest Jesus Christ, who bears our new name before the Father. He sits at the right hand of majesty on high and prays for us. And the overcomer, who has become one with Him in this way, experiences being drawn to God through the high priest Jesus Christ. As Paul says in Colossians 3:3: “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

Are you established on the foundation and carved into the precious white stone, or do you need to be judged by His sword?

(MR0421/1157)



WORLD FOCUS

USA

Amazon Launches First Palm Reader

Amazon's electronic palm reader technology, known as Amazon One, launched at the Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Denver, according to a press release from the retailing giant.

Concertgoers at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado will be able to sign up for the service, which will allow entry to the concert venue with a swipe of their hand. Red Rocks will have a kiosk for anyone who wants to sign up at the venue and Amazon One customers will also get a dedicated line for even faster entry, according to the company.

"The service is designed to be highly secure and uses custom-built algorithms and hardware to create a person's unique palm signature. Once enrolled, the service is contactless and



Amazon One, the palm reader technology, now rolling out to the Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Denver, Colorado.
Photo: Amazon

ticketholders can use their palm to enter AXS ticketed venues in less than a second or two.

Amazon has partnered with AXS, which handles ticketing for a high number of concert and sports venues in the U.S., including the Staples Center in Los Angeles and T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, among a host of others. So whether you like this idea or not—and privacy advocates are skeptical to say the least—you're probably going to be seeing it in a lot of new locations soon. Welcome to the biometric future.

-gizmodo.com, 14 September 2021

Commentary: When we read of these new technologies being developed, we quickly think of the often-repeated stories of a chip implanted under the skin. That, for all practical purposes, is stone-aged.

The uniqueness of the palm seems to be equivalent to fingerprints, and thus has the capability to create virtually 100% identification.

That is the key for the future. Identity, identity, identity. Who is who? Where is the person? What is his intention? In this case, it's to enter a concert.

Who is in charge? Merchandisers. From Biblical perspectives, we know that who



buys what, when, and where will be controlled by the image of the beast as recorded in Revelation 13. 7600 (See Revelation 13: Satan's Last Victory, Item #1067, **CLEARANCE \$4.**)

UN

Repurposing Global Agricultural Subsidies

The UN calls for a radical global re-think of agricultural subsidies in a new report, saying more than 80% of the government funds either distort prices, harm the environment, or feed inequality.

The report argues that \$470 billion (roughly €400 billion) of the \$540 billion spent on agriculture subsidies globally would need to be changed to be environmentally sustainable and fair.

Qu Dongyu, director-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), called the report a "wake-up call" for governments. He said prompt action would "contribute to the Four Betters: better nutrition, better production, better environment and a better life."

The UN also estimates a threefold increase in government spending on agriculture in the coming decade, saying the total could reach almost \$1.8 trillion by 2030, making rapid action more important.

It also noted how 811 million people faced chronic hunger in 2020, 2.37 billion lacked year-round access to adequate food, and 3 billion could not afford a healthy diet.

The report calls on developed countries to reconsider support "for an outsized meat and dairy industry, which accounts for 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions."

"By shifting to more nature-positive, equitable and efficient agricultural support, we can improve livelihoods, and at the same time cut emissions, protect and restore ecosystems, and reduce the use of agrochemicals," UNEP's executive director, Inger Andersen, said.

The UNDP's Achim Steiner recommended "rewarding good practices such as sustainable farming and climate-smart approaches."

-www.du.com, 15 September 2021

(continued next page)

Subsidies (continued from page 24)



The UN is calling for root and branch reform of agricultural subsidies, a form of public sector spending it expects to balloon in the coming years

Commentary: Agricultural subsidies have worked miracles the world over. While there are both pros and cons to the system, numbers do not lie. Today, more high-quality food products are on the market than ever before in human history.

Only a century ago, 60, 70, even 95 percent of the population was involved in agriculture. Today in the developed world, it's about 1-3%. Yet the amount of food these few workers produce using high technology, mechanized processes, is nothing short of mind-boggling. The key is subsidies.

According to ewg.org, "Subsidy payment to farmers ballooned from just \$4 billion in 2017 to \$20 billion in 2020." Who gets most of the subsidies? Very little trickles down to the small family farms, with the overwhelming amount going to large agricultural businesses. The USDA classifies 98% of all US farms as "family farms." However, "CFAP payments went disproportionately to the largest and richest farms rather than direct aid to hungry Americans," the article added.

This clearly shows that larger is better. Similar comparisons can be found in retail: "mom and pop stores" could not compete, especially after coronavirus re-

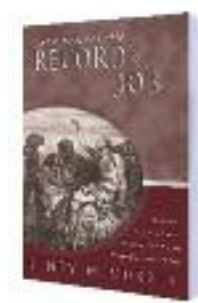
strictions were implemented. Now global corporations are taking over, yet one cannot deny they are offering the highest quality food at the lowest prices.

Today, the issue is cutting emissions, protecting ecosystems, and reducing the use of agri-chemicals. Will they succeed? There is little to no doubt.

Here we are reminded how humanity's inventiveness is detouring the fundamentals of God's ordained laws. The Bible has this to say: "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:17-19). The law of God is irrevocable, "...for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Man's independence from God is what we now call "self-reliance." This reminds us of the first Gentile superpower, ruled by King Nebuchadnezzar: "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30).

But one day, an echo from heaven to earth will be proclaimed: "Hitherto shalt



thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job 38:11). 7602 (See *The Remarkable Record of Job*, Item #2273, \$8.99.)


ISRAEL

Artificial Neurons Mimic Human Brain

New research at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is looking to understand the computing power of a neuron in order to improve our understanding of deep learning networks.



An active neuron (illustrative)
(photo credit: INGIIMAGE)

 Deep learning networks are based on the same principles that form the structure of our brain, and are composed of artificial nerve cells connected via artificial synapses.

Ph.D. student David Beniaguev, along with Profs. Michael London and Idan Segev at HU's Edmond and Lily Safra Center for Brain Science (ELSC) have published their findings in the peer-reviewed journal *Neuron*.

Their objective is to understand how individual nerve cells translate synaptic inputs to their electrical output. They hope to create a new kind of deep-learning artificial infrastructure that will act more like a human brain.

"Our approach is to use deep learning capabilities to create a computerized model that best replicates the I/O properties of individual neurons in the brain," Beniaguev explained.

"The end goal would be to create a computerized replica that mimics the functionality, ability and diversity of the brain," Segev said: "to create, in every way, true artificial intelligence."

-www.jpost.com, 7 September 2021

(continued next page)

Artificial Neurons (continued from page 25)

Commentary: What is the underlying motive of this scientific “deep learning”?

We seem to detect man’s inclination to create, like Professor Segev states: “to create, in every way, true artificial intelligence.” Why? The answer may be extremely complicated, but in simplistic terms: man does not want to be subject to the Creator, but rather intends to become a creator himself. What will be the result? The creation of a unifying spirit heretofore unknown, which follows the direction of Psalm 2:1: “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” What is their aim? “Let us break their bands asunder,

and cast away their cords from us” (verse 3). God’s fundamental laws will and must be rejected to put man on the throne. 7603


(See *Messianic Psalms*, Item #1074, \$14.95.)



SOUTH KOREA

Google Fined for Abusing Market Dominance

Korea’s antitrust regulator fined Google 207.4 billion won (\$177 million) for abusing its market dominance to prevent the market entry of competing operating system (OS) developers.

 The Korea Fair Trade Commission’s (KFTC) fine and corrective measure are the latest moves to curb alleged unfair practices by the U.S. tech giant, following the National Assembly passing a bill banning Google from requiring app developers on its app store use its payment system. Google’s requirement was devised to increase revenues from fees.

In the latest measure, Google has been ordered to allow electronic device makers to



Korea Fair Trade Commission Chairperson Joh Sung-wook speaks during a briefing in Sejong, outlining a 207 billion won fine on Google for its practice of blocking the market entry of competing operating system (OS) developers. Yonhap

use operating systems other than its Android OS. The watchdog said the multinational company had effectively prevented device manufacturers from developing products loaded with modified versions of the OS. The tech giant had also been forcing manufacturers to sign contracts under which the devices would have to incorporate Google’s own app market, Play Store.

Google initiated these measures in 2011, effectively increasing its hold over the global OS market. Google’s market share grew from 38 percent in 2010 to 87.4 percent in 2012, 93.2 percent in 2014 and 97.7 percent in 2019.

“The keyword in this case is platform. The network effect and resulting dominance in the platform sector makes it difficult for new players to enter the market,” KFTC Chairperson Joh Sung-wook told reporters in a briefing.

“By taking this serious measure against the practice of abusing a dominant status in the platform sector, we expect this to serve as a precedent to refer to in executing the law for platform-related cases.”

-www.koreatimes.co.kr, 14 September 2021

Commentary: Powerful economies in the global market—in this case, South Korea—are beginning to rein in the excesses of these monopolistic US firms. What they’re able to get away with on US soil doesn’t fly

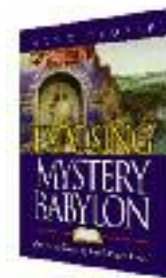
in other parts of the world. The article also mentions the European Commission taking similar action against Google in 2018.

This means that these huge corporations will need to be careful not to step on the toes of other nations, which are becoming on par with the US in regulatory power. And that aligns perfectly with Scripture, which says: “And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received

no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast” (Revelation 17:12).

(By K. Farmer) 7598


(See *Exposing Mystery Babylon* Part 1, Item #1078, \$4.50.)



GERMANY

Clerk Murdered for Asking Customer to Wear Mask

Senior politicians in Germany expressed shock over the killing of a young gas station clerk who asked a customer to wear a face mask, and they warned against the radicalization of people who oppose the country’s coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

 Authorities said the man told officers he acted “out of anger” after being refused service for not wearing a mask while trying to buy beer.

A requirement to wear masks in stores is among the measures in place in Germany to stop the spread of the virus.

The center-left Green party’s candidate to succeed German Chancellor Angela Merkel voiced dismay at the killing.

“I’m shaken by this terrible murder of a young man who merely asked that existing rules be followed,” Annalena Baerbock said in a tweet.

Baerbock also expressed concern about the radicalization of Germany’s Querdenken movement, which includes people who oppose

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Clerk Murdered (continued from page 26)

masks and vaccines, conspiracy theorists and some far-right and neo-Nazi extremists.

Facebook removed almost 150 accounts and pages linked to the Querdenken movement under a new policy focused on groups that spread misinformation or incite violence but which didn't fit into the platform's existing categories of bad actors.

-www.cbsnews.com, 21 September 2021

Commentary: Something new is happening on planet earth. It can be defined with one word: communication.

In olden days, it was the ruling class who would disseminate news to its citizens by various means, primarily the printed page. That was followed by radio, and later television. However, these types of communication platforms were strictly regulated by the government. That's true even in our days. The news site spj.org in the US, for example, stands for the Society of Professional Journalists. Virtually every civilized, functioning country has laws and regulations for ethical journalism. Anything and everything published is subject to public, private, and governmental oversight. In European countries, it is mandatory to have a license to be a journalist. The concept of "freedom of speech and press" is a known policy that most countries in Europe abide by.

Today, we are in a new world. Virtually anyone can write anything, and if it sounds convincing, it can spread like wildfire. Social journalism has become the latest craze, and in this case, a deadly danger. This is not only happening in Europe, but also literally around the world.

The fact that a number of Christian publications outright proclaim invented news is the most horrible danger, because it pollutes the image of the Church.

Here the Church is reminded by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:18: "But if ye be led of the



A police car is seen at a gas station in the city of Idar-Oberstein, in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany after an employee was fatally shot by a man who objected to the national face mask mandate.
THOMAS FREY/PICTURE ALLIANCE/GETTY


Spirit, ye are not under the law." Then it lists six times three characteristics of end-time Christianity: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). Again, the truth shall make us free, not lies. 7605

(See *Alive in the Spirit*, Item #2325, \$14.99.)

AUSTRALIA

Police Disperse Covid-19 Protesters

Police in Melbourne fired pepper balls and rubber pellets to disperse about 2,000 protesters who defied stay-at-home orders to damage property, block a busy freeway and injure three officers, leading to more than 60 arrests.

 During eight hours of downtown protests, demonstrators threw rocks, bottles and flares at police, as television and social media showed video of marchers chanting and attacking police cars, surrounded by mounted police and officers in riot gear.

Protesters included not only construction workers but opponents of mandatory vacci-

nations and Victoria's extended lockdown, who cursed the job, state premier Dan Andrews and the workers' union leader, who had backed vaccination for members.

"Acts of violence and disruption won't result in one less case of COVID—in fact it only helps the virus to spread," Andrews said in a statement.

The halt in building activities followed a protest against a vaccine mandate that turned violent. The state requires all construction workers to receive at least one vaccine dose.

Australia has locked down its largest cities of Sydney and Melbourne, as well as the capital, Canberra, to rein in an outbreak of the highly infectious Delta variant.

-news.trust.org, 21 September 2021

Commentary: Why are these protests occurring? Simply because of social media spreading false and dangerous information.

Australia is one of the few countries that has successfully fought the pandemic by enforcing strict rules and regulations.

Numbers don't lie; the following is published by statista.com and confirmed by other international sources:

Covid-19 deaths worldwide per 1 million population as of 22 September 2021:

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| USA | 2,056 |
| Israel | 835 |
| Australia | 46 |
| New Zealand | 5 |

Countries with the strictest rules and enforcement show the best results. Again, we point to Romans 13:1-2: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."


7606

(See *A Quick Reference Guide to the End Times*, Item #2371, \$6.99.)

 MEXICO

President Apologizes for Historic Abuse of Mayans

Mexico's President Andrés Manuel López Obrador gave a speech at an event in Quintana Roo marking the 500th anniversary of Spanish conquest and 200 years of Mexican independence from Spain.

 In the speech, he apologized to the indigenous Mayan people for the historic abuse they have undergone during the centuries since the Spanish conquest.

"We offer the most sincere apologies to the Mayan people for the terrible abuses committed by individuals and national and foreign authorities in the conquest, during three centuries of colonial domination and two centuries of an independent Mexico," López Obrador said, as reported *BBC News*.

López Obrador focused specifically on the period between 1847 and 1901, when the so-called Caste War revolt took place, claiming the lives of over 250,000 Mayans.



Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, his Guatemalan counterpart Alejandro Giammattei, and his Secretary of the Interior Olga Sanchez Cordero stand during the Appeal for Forgiveness for Grievances to the Mayan People ceremony in Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Quintana Roo State, Mexico [AFP]

The apology is a recognition of the suffering and slaughter of the Mayan people and will be an important milestone to Mayan leaders and those who are working on reconciliation efforts within communities.

-matadornetwork.com, 4 May 2021

Commentary: For a political leader to apologize for the mistreatment and wanton killing of the original inhabitants of the land, is heroic. On the continent (North and South America), Europeans established 35 sovereign countries. The most spoken language is Spanish, closely followed by English, with Portuguese third. There have been many heated debates and papers written about the historic impact of these conquests, both positive and negative. Sources

by authors who descended from the original inhabitants, have made bitter accusations regarding the conquerors.

What we do know, however, is that with the conquest of the continent, the precious Gospel was preached and continues to thrive in many countries. Thereby the Church is being built, fulfilling the prophetic words of Jesus: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). How long will the time be? Paul answers: "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25b).


7587

(See *Gospel Reset*, Item #2344, \$14.99.)

 USA

The Next Internet Revolution?

Imagine a world where you could sit on the same couch as a friend who lives thousands of miles away, or conjure up a virtual version of your workplace while at the beach.

 Welcome to the metaverse: a vision of the future that sounds fantastical, but which tech titans like Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg are betting on as the next great leap in the evolution of the internet.

The metaverse is, in fact, the stuff of science-fiction: the term was coined by Neal Stephenson in his 1992 novel "Snow Crash,"



Existing virtual reality headsets remain bulky © David Becker

in which people don virtual reality headsets to interact inside a game-like digital world.

The book has long enjoyed cult status among Silicon Valley entrepreneurs—but in recent months the metaverse has become one of the tech sector's hottest buzz-

words, with companies pouring millions of dollars into its development.

As with many tech buzzwords, the definition of the metaverse depends on whom you ask. But broadly, it involves blending the physical world with the digital one.

Metaverse enthusiasts are dreaming of a future in which the idea could be extended much further, allowing us to be transported to digital settings that feel real, such as a nightclub or a mountaintop.

Games in which players enter immersive digital worlds offer a glimpse into what the metaverse could eventually look like, blurring virtual entertainment with the real-world economy.

As far back as the early 2000s, the game Second Life allowed people to create digital avatars that could interact and shop with real money.

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Internet (continued from page 28)

Cathy Hackl, a tech consultant who advises companies on the metaverse, said the next generation was more comfortable with the idea of attaching real meaning to virtual experiences and objects.

Facebook has invested heavily in technology that allows people to feel like they are physically somewhere else, such as its Portal video-calling devices, Oculus headsets and its Horizon virtual reality platform.

-techxplore.com, 28 July 2021

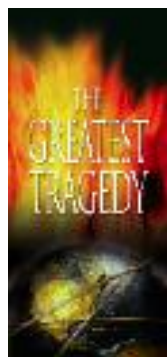
Commentary: This writer has little to no idea what this report is actually talking about, but suffice it to say: something heretofore unknown is being developed. In the 1900s, it was all but unthinkable that one could talk to someone across the ocean, face-to-face. That was science fiction; not so today.

We note the sentence: "...allowing us to be transported to digital settings that feel real, such as a nightclub or a mountaintop." But, such things are not real; they are fake. When I'm sitting at my desk, there's no way I can feel like I'm in a "nightclub" or on a "mountaintop."

These things belong to end-time developments, where mankind will believe the fake instead of the truth. We gather this from the book of Revelation. After the fifth vial is poured upon the earth, we read: "And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds" (Revelation

16:11). Why do they blaspheme God? Because they know the judgment comes from God, but the greatest tragedy is, "[They] repented not of their deeds." 7597


(See *The Greatest Tragedy*, Item #9101, \$3 per 100.)



NEW ZEALAND

Best Place to Survive Global Collapse

New Zealand, Iceland, the UK, Tasmania and Ireland are the places best suited to survive a global collapse of society, according to a study.

 The researchers said human civilization was "in a perilous state" due to the highly interconnected and energy-intensive society that had developed and the environmental damage this had caused.

A collapse could arise from shocks, such as a severe financial crisis, the impacts of the climate crisis, destruction of nature, an even worse pandemic than Covid-19 or a combination of these, the scientists said.

The researchers said their study highlighted the factors that nations must improve to increase resilience. They said that a globalized society that prized economic efficiency damaged resilience, and that spare capacity needed to exist in food and other vital sectors.

Billionaires have been reported to be buying land for bunkers in New Zealand in preparation for an apocalypse. "We weren't surprised New Zealand was on our list," said Prof Aled Jones at the Global Sustainability Institute, at Anglia Ruskin University in the UK.

The study also said that due to environmental destruction, limited resources, and population growth: "The [academic] literature paints a picture of human civilization that is in a perilous state, with large and growing risks developing in multiple spheres of the human endeavor."

New Zealand was found to have the greatest potential to survive relatively unscathed due to its geothermal and hydroelectric energy, abundant agricultural land and low human population density.

-www.theguardian.com, 28 July 2021



Bunker repurposed for a US 'doomsday' community. A study proposes that countries able to grow food for their populations, protect their borders from unwanted mass migration and maintain an electrical grid, are best placed to withstand severe shocks.

Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

Commentary: Words like "perilous state," "global collapse," and "preparation for an apocalypse" make one perk up and listen. *The Guardian's* article reminds us of prophetic Scripture as documented in Revelation 18. We read in verse 11: "And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more." That speaks of total collapse. It's Armageddon, and that's what the whole world is headed toward. The Bible makes it clear: there is a beginning and there is an end. The end is described as absolutely catastrophic, never before experienced in the history of humanity. Jesus said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). 7562 (See *Jesus and the End Times*, Item #2356, SALE \$12.)

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“And after this it came to pass that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Methegammah out of the hand of the Philistines. And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And

so the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought gifts. David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates” (2 Samuel 8:1-3).

BY ARNO FROESE

Methegammah means “bridle of the mother” or “mother city.” David took authority over the Philistines. That was the enemy in the west.

To the east, David conquered Moab, the country on the other side of the Dead Sea. The Moabites also became subject to David and had to pay the required tax.

Here we must note that Moab was not part of the original Promised Land. That was also the case with Ammon—not a part of the original Promised Land, as declared by God to Abraham.

We learn this from the last chapter in Deuteronomy, when Moses went up to Mount Nebo. From there he saw the Promised Land: “And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar” (Deuteronomy 34:1-3). But as we know, Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land: “I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither” (verse 4b). Thus, wherever Moses’ feet tread is not Promised Land.

The River Euphrates is the furthest extent of the Promised Land in the north. “In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18).

Modern Israel

When the United Nations voted for the partition of the Promised Land in 1947, they allocated three triangles to the Jews and three triangles to the Arabs. That virtually made it impossible for any type of defense. But, lo and behold, Israel accepted the United Nations’ decision. The Arabs did not.

Wikipedia writes: “The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was a proposal by the United Nations, which recommended a partition of Mandatory Palestine at the end of the British Mandate. On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted the Plan as Resolution 181 (II).” At the meeting, 33 nations voted yes, 13 voted against partition, and 10 abstained.

The United Nations was in turmoil. Wikipedia reports: “United States (Vote: For): President Truman later noted, ‘The facts were that not only were there pressure movements around the United Nations unlike anything that had been seen there be-

So, what is the real reason for the Middle East Conflict? Primarily, the division of the Promised Land by the nations.

fore, but that the White House, too, was subjected to a constant barrage. I do not think I ever had as much pressure and propaganda aimed at the White House as I had in this instance. The persistence of a few of the extreme Zionist leaders—actuated by political motives and engaging in political threats—disturbed and annoyed me.”

In the meantime, Israel fought eight recognized wars, and each time expanded its territory significantly. But, contrary to international tradition and laws, Israel was forced to surrender much of the territory they had conquered.

Two States

Only 40% of Israelis support a two-state resolution to the conflict with the Palestinians, even though it remains the most popular choice, according to a poll conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute.

Past polls on this topic by IDI show that support for a two-state resolution peaked at 70% in 2007 during the Annapolis peace process brokered by former president George W. Bush between former prime minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Israeli-Arabs were much more likely to support a two-state resolution than their Jewish peers.

The least popular option was a one-state idea. Participants were asked whether they would back a “one-state solution incorporating both Israeli and Palestinian territories in which Israelis and Palestinians are treated as equal citizens,” implying a country that was no longer intended to be an ethnic nationalist democracy for either Israelis or Palestinians.

That idea received only 21.1% support among Israelis and 64.2% opposition. Some 71.1% of Israeli

Jews found a one-state idea unacceptable, and only 14.1% found it acceptable.

People respond differently to concrete events as opposed to theoretical ones, said IDI researcher Or Anabi. Initial polls showed low support for a Sinai withdrawal, but the moment former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat landed in Israel, the attitudes changed.

-www.jpost.com, 4 August 2021

Indeed, the two-state solution seems to be a popular choice, but as Israelis and Palestinians have learned, it is all but impossible to implement.

So, what is the real reason for the Middle East Conflict? Primarily, the division of the Promised Land by the nations. Jews in Israel call the country “Eretz Israel,” which means the identity of the people with the land. They are inseparably connected.

Here we must add that Israel is not to be compared with any other nation. It is the name given by God: “And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Genesis 32:28). This is repeated later in Genesis 35:10: “And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.”

Quite obviously, politicians do not realize that they are mingling in the affairs of God when decisions are being made about the Jewish State. We reiterate, in closing, that the Middle East Conflict will not be settled until the Jews take possession of the Promised Land. (MC)





“For Zion’s Sake I Will Not Keep Silent” – Part 2

By David Phillips *Project Manager*



“The Gentiles [nations] shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name” (Isaiah 62:2).

We left off in the last issue with my sharing a special testimony about how God brought an Arab man to faith, and how because of that one Arab man’s faith in Yeshua, over 48 members of his household have since come to faith in Yeshua! Let’s continue...

Because of this verse, “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet,” they had to hear the gospel. Hearing and accepting the gospel, their hearts were changed, and the hatred they once had was replaced with His love and kindness. Why? Because now together we can say, “The Gentiles [nations] shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name” (Isaiah 62:2). Yes, these verses are meant for Israel, but they are also meant for the Gentiles, who do not belong to the people of Israel.

Through the testimony this young man gave—finding his Savior through people who worked with him—it became a chain reaction and many others, including Jews, have heard the gospel and have accepted their Messiah.

All because this one man would not remain quiet! He refused to keep silent to those who were seeking. Even Jews became believers because of this one Arab man’s testimony and faith in Yeshua! May we all learn from his willingness to not keep silent for His Lord.

Now it is time for all of us to help these people. As I shared last month, it is on Johnny’s as well as my heart to help this man’s family bring their aged aunt into the Ebenezer Home. She is an 87-year-old Arab lady, a faithful believer in Yeshua, who needs help—one piece of the fruit of this man’s testimony.

Right now, she is being cared for at her nephew’s home. They are not currently able to meet the entry fee for the Ebenezer Home, but their aunt needs to be in Ebenezer. When we heard they could not afford the entrance fee, this gave us a strong desire to bless this family and help raise the funds needed, so she could enter the Ebenezer Home and find the rest and care she now requires.

It is a witness of love; I can say from first-hand experience that I used to have hate in



my heart toward the other nations, the enemies of Israel. After this happened and this man came to faith, I begged Jehovah God to tear out the hatred in my own heart. He showed me that salvation was for the Arabs, for the nations, for Israel, for everyone. It is incumbent on us to not keep silent, but to share with all those around us. The Arabs—along with everyone else—need salvation! It took some years of being down on my knees, until God helped take the hatred from my heart and replace it with His love. Once re-

moved, the hatred never returned, praise the Lord, and it all happened because of this man coming to faith in Messiah and all that transpired afterwards. All circumstances DO work together, to the glory of Him who saved us and has given us new life! One day, He will give us all a new name.

Will you help us bring this elderly Arab sister into the Ebenezer Home? Will you help us bear this testimony as far as we can during these last days? We deeply appreciate your support!



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

MC1121
EH

Yes, I wish to support the Ebenezer Home Project.

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

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After prayerful consideration, I/we have decided to support "Action for Israel."

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

OBEDIENCE TO THE GOVERNMENT... CAN JEWS BE LOST?... PRAY ALWAYS

Obedience to the Government

Dear Arno Froese,

I noticed in the August issue of *Midnight Call*, there was an article saying that it was okay for David to eat the showbread from the temple because, in order to save lives, it's okay not to follow the law. However, you continually say that we must obey civil government law without exception. This means, according to you, it is wrong to support organizations that smuggle Bibles into countries whose laws forbid their citizens from possessing them. I would think that spiritual food (Bibles) is even more important than showbread. Please explain.

-M. Bosman, WA

Answer: My dear brother, it's not what I or Dr. Liebi says, but what the Bible says: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1). Or: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme" (1 Peter 2:13).

Smuggling Bibles—if that's your calling, do it, but be prepared for the consequences.

This reminds me of a brother who did not support the underground churches, but went to the regular church open to all in East Germany. They were not permitted to baptize, particularly children. This brother said: "We did secretly baptize children, but when we got caught, we had to pay the consequences for being disobedient to the government."

Can Jews Be Lost?

Mr. Froese,

I have been reading a very interesting book you wrote in 1999 called *The Great Mystery of the Rapture*. My question is this: I understand salvation is of the Jews. I take it that for the majority of Jews, salvation takes place during Jesus' second coming, when He comes back to Israel at the Mount of Olives. Maybe salvation then is for the 144,000 mentioned in the Scriptures, or maybe 144,000 refers to an elect group of holy Jews who are raptured? Since the time of Jesus and the interim, and for those Jews who don't



know Christ or who have willfully rejected Him, what happens to these Jews when they die (i.e., those Jews who aren't born again)? Do they go to hell? I'm concerned with the concept or idea that, through history and time, if the Jews have rejected their Messiah (Jesus), when they die, they are lost forever.

-R.Zendejas, CA

Answer: My simplified answer is John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Pray Always

Dear Midnight Call,

Regarding "pushing" the "19" experimental drug:

We met the Lord as Savior in 1973, and one thing we learned early on was to pray about everything.

James 1:5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

We prayed annually on whether we should take the current flu vaccine. Some years, "yes," and other years, "no." Two years ago, I was to take the vaccine and my wife wasn't.

We are amazed and disappointed that ministers are not telling people to pray about whether they should receive the current vaccines. Only the Lord knows the correct answer for each individual.

When we are asked about the vaccine/drug, we cite James 1:5 and tell the person to pray about whether they should take the vaccine. If they are, to pray about which of the three. Again, only the Lord knows the correct answer.

-G.Gribble, VA

Answer: On the evening of 16 June 2015, my wife Ruth experienced a stroke. First, I called my son, an MD, who urged me to get to the hospital. Arriving there, after the initial diagnosis, several doctors explained what they could do. I did not ask what type of medication they used, where it comes

from, how it was manufactured, etc. I trusted the doctors to follow strict medical rules established by science. I did not pray about whether to say yes or no; I trusted the doctors' decisions, which were backed up by several others. Did I pray? Yes, for 40 days, and on the 26 of July 2015, Ruth went home.

If I go to a doctor and he diagnoses me with having cancer, I pray—I always pray—but in the meantime, I let medical science take care of me. What if I'm involved in a serious car accident? Am I to pray which hospital, which doctor, which medicine? No, I trust medical science, just as I trust flying in an airplane, of which I have little to no knowledge how it all works. There are many things we do on a daily basis because of our faith in technology.

Iron or Bronze?

Dear Brethren,

Concerning the lead article in the August 2021 issue of *News From Israel*, I was puzzled by the declaration that the altar of sacrifice was "covered with sheet iron" (page 9). The quotation from Exodus 27, which is at the head of the article, reads: "you shall overlay it with bronze." Is that an error, or is bronze in God's Word really iron?

I receive the monthly magazine from a member of the local church. I generally enjoy reading the articles, and especially like the news items in "On the Horizon."

-L.Vnasdale, OH

Answer: The author of the article is a Swiss citizen using the German language, in which the word is "erz" (in English "ore"). The Hebrew word *n'chôsheth* indicates an inferior product when compared with silver and gold. Usually from ore, you expect iron.

René Malgo has shared the following regarding this discrepancy: "I guess this is due to different possible translations. In German, it's either translated as 'ore' or 'bronze.' The author, Samuel Rindlisbacher, spoke of pieces of iron (not necessarily sheet iron), but this might be the wrong interpretation and, indeed, bronze would be the correct one."

I noticed several translations use different definitions, but it's still the same: inferior to gold and silver, and a mixture of iron with other components.

The Word of God is perfect, but translations can vary. (MC)



Salt That Has Lost Its Flavor

Johannes Pflaum

Do we even register what's going on around us in society anymore? Or have we withdrawn into a sort of spiritual shell? On discerning our position.

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord was teaching His disciples. In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus speaks of the salt of the earth. It is well-known that salt both adds flavor and prevents decay. Practical following of Jesus has the same effect. We are to shine in this world like heavenly lights in the midst of a twisted and perverted generation (cf. Phil 2:15). Practical discipleship involves witnessing in our community. The

Lord warns that flavorless salt should be thrown out and trampled underfoot; it's incapable of having an impact. We can also relate this to discipleship and our responsibility to society. In this sense, I will never forget a statement from my ethics professor Heiko Krimmer:

“Much of the Church of Jesus’ current powerlessness can be linked to its silence on the issue of abortion.”

That knocks the breath out of me. We're often so preoccupied with ourselves and our supposed spirituality that we no longer notice what's happening around us. Particularly when it comes to abortion, many devout Catholics are way ahead of us. I don't say this to gloss over our spiritual differences, but because we who want to be true to the Bible ought to be deeply ashamed. The same is true of many other ethical issues we could mention. There's nothing wrong with emphasizing our spiritual life and doctrine; always making it our first priority to preach the Gospel and build the Church of Jesus. But it becomes dangerous when we stop perceiving and recognizing our social responsibility in following Jesus. In light of this, I'm quoting Walter Lüthi's commentary on Romans 13:

"Even if this old world is a sinking ship, we children of God have no right to be the rats fleeing it. We must remain at our post as long as the ship is sailing, as long as it is still floating."

From 2 Thessalonians 2:3, we know that the great apostasy from God and His statutes will come, ultimately leading to the appearance of the Antichrist. Matthew 24:12 speaks of the prevalence of lawlessness (the Greek *anomia* can also be translated as "dissolution of divine will") and of love growing cold. We can't prevent these developments before Jesus' return. I'm convinced that we're in the midst of them. But it would be fundamentally spiritually wrong to withdraw from responsibility, on the grounds that this is the way things were ordained to happen. To fall into pious lethargy or fatalism that leads to passivity would be disobedience.

We're also held responsible today. We could even ask, self-critically, whether developments are proceeding so rapidly be-

cause the salt has become flavorless and lost its strength. Consider King Josiah in the Old Testament. He was told through the prophetess Huldah that after his lifetime, God's judgment would fall relentlessly on Jerusalem and Judah (see 2 Kings 22; 2 Chron 34). At that time, Josiah had already carried out reforms, so this announcement could have prompted him to fold his hands in his lap. But that's precisely what he *didn't* do. Although he knew from the prophetic announcement that judgment would come after his death, he pursued spiritual renewal with wholehearted dedication.

Knowing that Jesus' return is approaching doesn't release us from social responsibility as His followers. Nor is the argument that we couldn't accomplish anything anyway. To make a harsh comparison, what could Paul Schneider, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, or Wilhelm Busch achieve externally? Of course, they did have a large impact in their time. But let's focus on their external circumstances. No one was able to prevent or stop the mass murders, or put an end to the terror regime. Even Paul Schneider's sermons in Buchenwald—loudly calling out injustice through the bars of his detention cell—did nothing to change the brutality and murder in the concentration camp. He had already been murdered when World War II began to recede. Bonhoeffer was also executed. And Pastor Wilhelm Busch was unable to prevent the course of events with his courageous sermons and testimony. Yet these men saw their obligation to God and the Gospel, and they took their responsibility seriously. Even then, they helped many Christians distinguish between lies and truth in the face of ideological confusion.

We, however, sometimes try to justify our passivity and withdrawal from ethical issues by using the fact that the Lord is

Salt That Has Lost Its Flavor

We're often so preoccupied with ourselves and our supposed spirituality that we no longer notice what's happening around us.



coming soon anyway and all things need to be fulfilled. It's not necessary to share all of Bonhoeffer's theological views, but it should give us food for thought that Bonhoeffer criticized the day's pharisaical piety as "pious selfishness." What did he mean by that?

Some believers were only concerned with spiritual questions and didn't want to adopt social responsibility. To revisit Matthew 5: a whole portion of the Church of Jesus had lost its salty flavor. In the post-war period, many confessions of guilt were due.

Bonhoeffer also made an important distinction between the last and the next-to-last. It shows a clear separation from transformational theology. For him, the "last thing" was always the coming kingdom of God, which God alone will create. Nevertheless, he wanted to assume his responsibility for the "next-to-last thing," especially with respect to society.

This perspective can also be applied to our priorities. The last and most important thing is always the preaching of the Gospel

and the building of the Church of Jesus—the salvation of people. Nevertheless, today we want to help shape events as we trust in the Lord, taking responsibility to the extent that it's possible. In 2 Thessalonians 2:7, we read that the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who is still restraining it must first be removed. A number of biblical interpreters attribute this event as the Rapture of the Church or the removal of the Holy Spirit. It could also simply be the power of God doing the restraining. We can't say with absolute certainty exactly what this restraining force is. If we see the Church in this restrainer, it's even possible to justify passivity and withdrawal from responsibility as the salt of the earth; in other words, in order for society to decay properly, the salt preserving it—that is, we—must first be removed.

Yes, it could truly be that decay is advancing so quickly because the salt has lost its strength. Consider the coronavirus, a topic that is very complex and difficult—even within the Church, due to its many connections and effects. Followers of Jesus can come to different insights and conclusions, but amid the struggle we must concern ourselves with maintaining spiritual unity. As far as the relevant policies are concerned, we as the Church of Jesus are called to have a very careful and well-reasoned response. We also want to be grateful when we are still able to exercise our basic right to religious freedom mostly unimpeded. Nevertheless, the Church of Jesus should always make full use of the opportunities it is given, and not feel compelled to shine as particularly "loyal to the state" through hasty obedience. The question then arises as to whether we truly have to accept every measure silently, as opposed to

Yes, it could truly be that decay is advancing so quickly because the salt has lost its strength.

raising our voices on pertinent issues, or exhausting the legal avenues at our disposal.

Just think of the isolation of the dying and elderly: this is intolerable from a Christian ethics perspective. Or the many cases of depression, or instances of suicide caused by the stress of the current situation. For example, midwives are warning about increasing cases of postpartum depression because of contact restrictions. And what about domestic violence, or the consequences of social isolation for children in this context? From the standpoint of Christian ethics, these questions can't simply be pushed aside.

How can freedom of belief, assembly, and worship, and biblical instruction to sing God's praises, be reconciled? This question isn't meant to prompt us to neglect safety guidelines. But, have we adjusted over time, so that it no longer concerns us and we fail to raise our voices? What will happen if Christian events, church attendance, or participating in the Lord's Supper are dependent on vaccination status? Seen in this light, it's already attention-grabbing how our "spiritual positioning system" is beginning to shift, even in churches that are faithful to the Bible. With reference to Romans 13, some people consider government guidelines and restrictions to be the highest precepts, and no longer concern themselves with what the Bible is telling us across the board regarding the nature of the Church of Jesus.

The coronavirus must be taken seriously. Every death and every serious illness is grave and should not be downplayed. But from the perspective of Christian

ethics, we must also consider proportionality, especially since the state sets completely different standards for the protection of life in other areas—abortion and euthanasia, for example. We also experience constant, semiconscious panic and one-sided reporting, in addition to an increasing refusal to enter into discourse with proven experts, who evaluate some of the facts differently than the government and point out other ways of handling the situation. As early as May 2020, Professor Siegfried Scherer was calling for an open scientific debate. The informant culture and mutual observation that was sparked by all the ordinances, is also extremely worrisome.

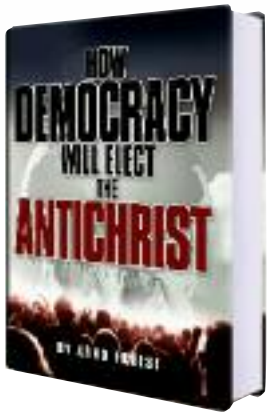
We shouldn't disobey regulations, behave obnoxiously, or spread wild speculations or theories on a whim. But the Church of Jesus certainly has a mandate to raise its voice where measures are causing consequential human damage from an ethical standpoint. Not only are there material economic consequences, but also it is leading to many lives being lost and human tragedy: not just in the West, but especially in poorer nations. The restrictions will also leave a deep impression on the professing Church of Jesus, the extent of which we can't even estimate today. For some, the spiritual lockdown will come after the societal lockdown.

And while we're on the subject of panic: every serious case of the coronavirus and every death is tragic. Nobody should assume that they are automatically protected. But are we being carried away by the spirit of fear, or can the people around us see that we have a living and eternal hope, and that we are in the hand of almighty God? (MR0821/1182)

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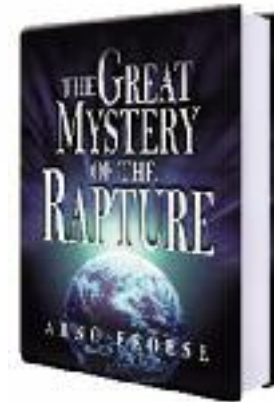
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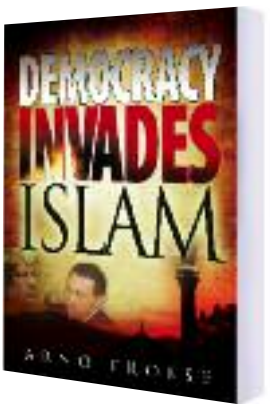
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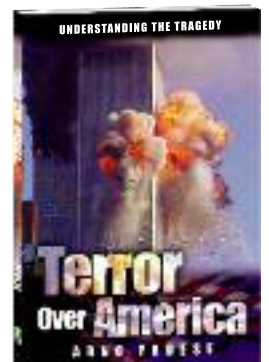
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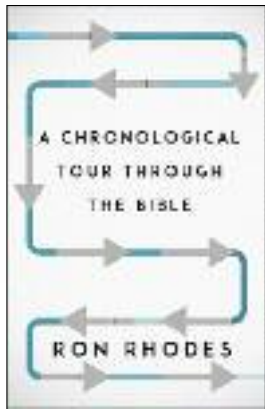
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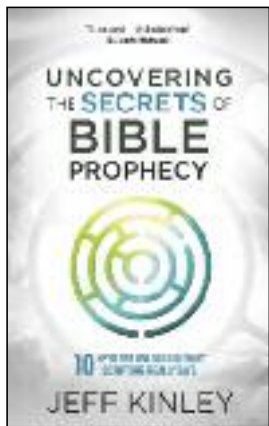
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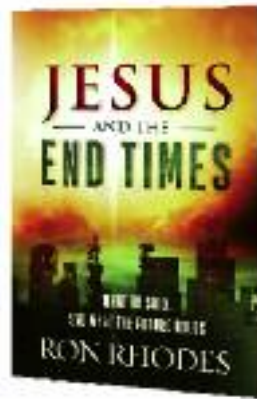
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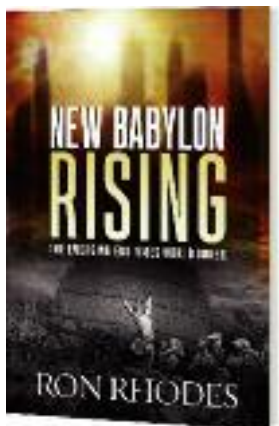
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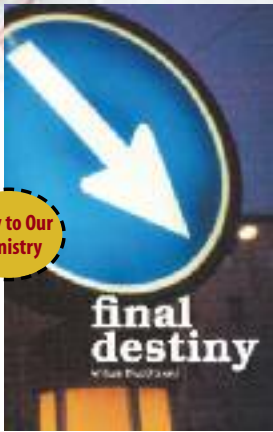


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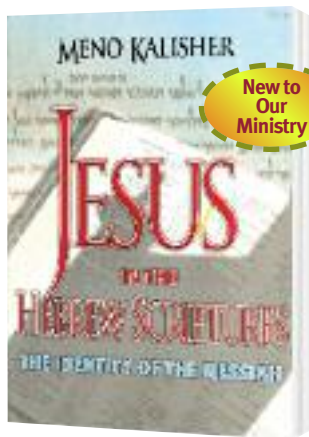
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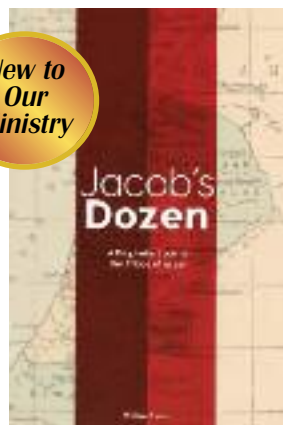
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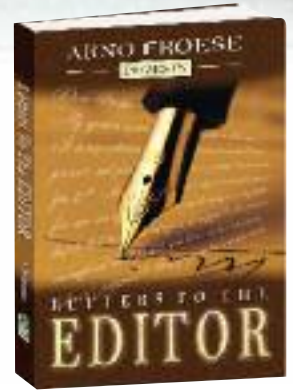
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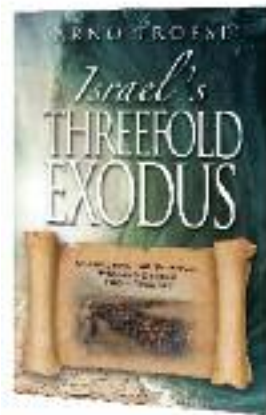
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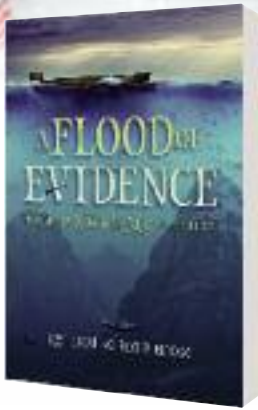
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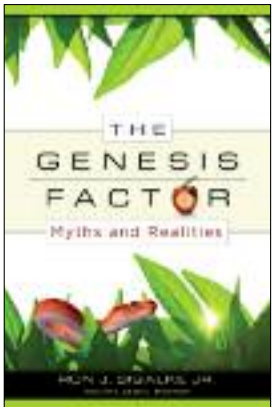


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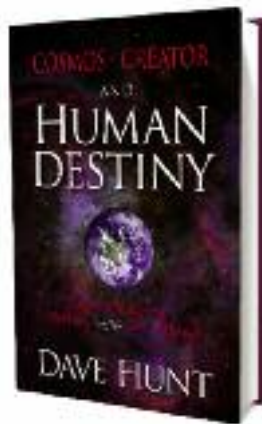


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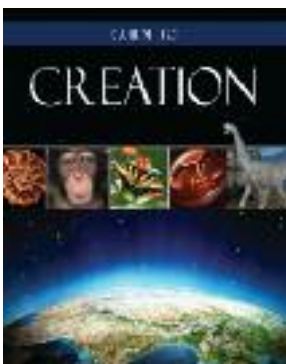
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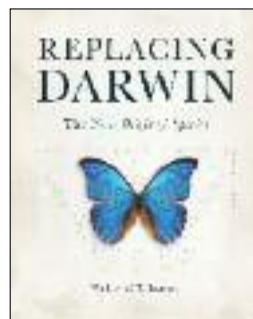
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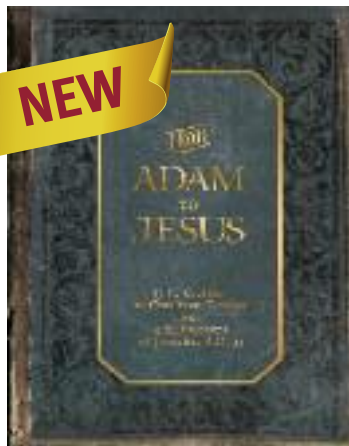
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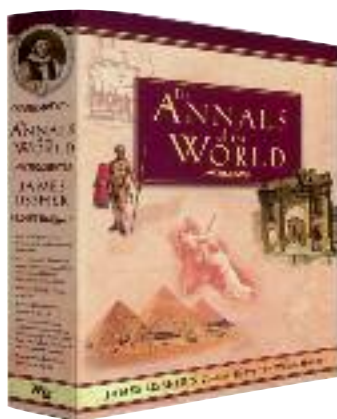
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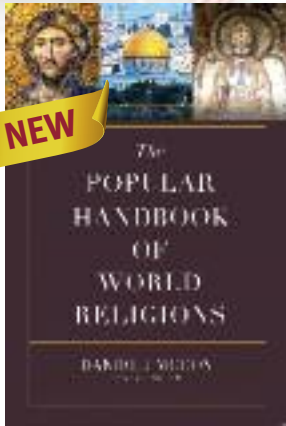
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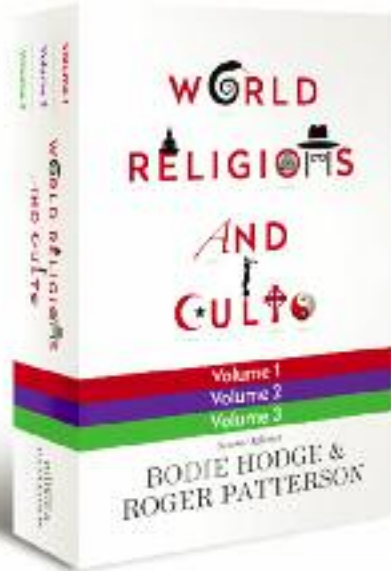
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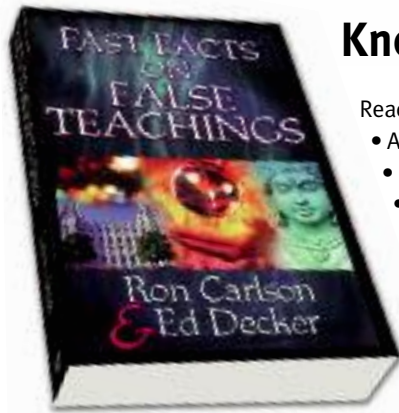
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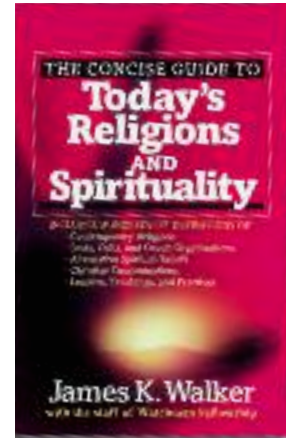
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