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Midnight Call

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WHY DID CHRISTMAS HAVE TO HAPPEN?

PART 1

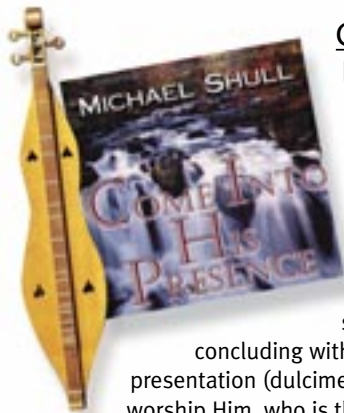
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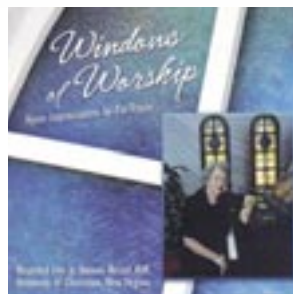
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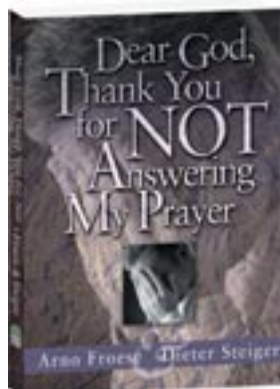
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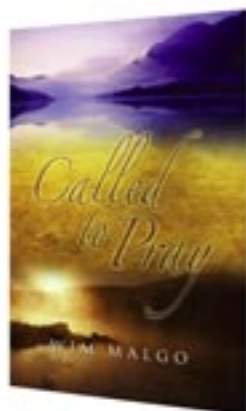
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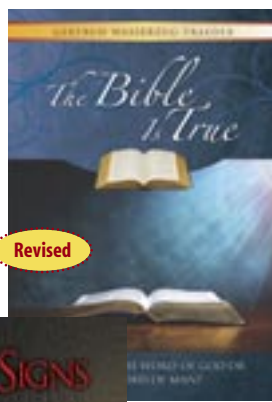
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By Johannes Pflaum

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THE BLOOD OF JESUS...EZEKIEL 38 WAR...THE SECOND COMING



A Man Like No Other!



By Norbert Lieth

Director of Missions, Midnight Call International

The miracle of Jesus' birth amazes us again and again; It is humanly incomprehensible, exceeding our capacity to understand. Eternity comes into our time.

The Bible states that all things come from God the Father, and that everything continues through Jesus: "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Cor 8:6). Jesus is the One through whom everything was created: "...all things were created by him, and for him" (Col 1:16b).

The visible and invisible parts of all worlds—the total creation in heaven and on earth and all angelic beings—were created through Jesus Christ. He maintains all things by the power of His word (Col 1:15-19; Hebrews 1:2-3). It is the same with salvation. The plan of salvation comes from God the Father in accordance with God the Son (Hebrews 10:7-9). But the actual work of redemption was carried out by the Son here on earth (John 17:4; 19:28, 30).

Adam, which means "man," was created by Jesus. He was created in the image of God, which makes him different from all other creatures and

gives his life a correspondingly different purpose. He is to serve God, follow His will, and rule over the created world. He stands above all other earthly creatures and is, so to speak, God's representative on earth.

But Adam, the human being, fell into sin and ruined the image of God in which he was created. It is told how Adam and Eve heard God's voice in the cool of the evening and went to hide among the trees ... because they had become aware of their nakedness. That is an apt description of what guilt does. Sin always causes a guilty conscience and wants to be hidden. One wants to cover it up, downplay it, or trivialize it. But then God speaks: "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). Sooner or later, sin must be exposed.

Since the Fall, God has been following and asking after man. Finally, in order to save him, the Creator Himself became a creature. The Lord becomes a human being (1Cor 15:45, 47) and thus takes on the image of man, but without the sin. Now God speaks to us as man, face to face. One moment He was in all His heavenly, all-powerful and divine glory, and now suddenly He is a

EDITOR'S NOTE

helpless human baby lying in a manger, wrapped in diapers and depending on motherly care. In Jesus Christ we meet the one true man who bears God's image as He had intended it, in order to recapture this image for us (Col 1:15; 1 John 3:2).

Man killed his Creator, killed the One who gave him life. Through this, however, God brought a path of forgiveness and redemption. With the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Creator can give eternal life to the "dead" man. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11).

The history of mankind could hardly be more dramatic. We can remember this during the Advent and Christmas season, as well as in our everyday life. As Sophie Scholl once said: "When dealing with other people, one should always keep in mind that God became man for their sake." ^(MC)

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OUR TASK

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

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

STATEMENT OF FAITH

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

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

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

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

WE BELIEVE in the imminent, pre-tribulation appearance of Je-
sus 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.



WHY DID CHRISTMAS HAVE TO HAPPEN? PART 1

Johannes Pflaum

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The days of Advent and Christmas have a special appeal. The ambient lights, especially in the middle of the darkest season, can warm your heart. And when you add snow, the atmosphere becomes even more beautiful. If it snows

in the weeks around the holiday, we can see wonderful winter landscapes that make us marvel at the beauty of God’s creation.

Of course, Christmastime isn’t the only time that special places and events appeal

The Greek word *kosmos* is actually used in some places to mean the beauty of creation.

to us; consider the mountains, or the seaside in the summer. Even on the plains, spring or autumn has a unique beauty. That's why people travel to desirable places at different times of the year. People are willing to pay to spend their holidays someplace special if possible, and sometimes we secretly wish that we could live there year-round. There are so many attractive and pleasant places on earth. And for many people, their own home is one of those special and endearing places.

In John 3:16, we find the familiar passage about God's vast love for the world. When we consider the earth and its many beautiful places, it's easy to assume that God would obviously love it. Whether it's a fairytale snow-covered mountain range in winter, or a breathtaking sunset at the beach, we love it too. After all, this world is God's creation that He made. Doesn't He have every reason to love it, just as a master carpenter loves his masterpiece? Yet if we're thinking along these lines, we're missing the true essence of the Christmas event.

If we consider this verse carefully, it becomes clear that God's incredible love for the world is anything but inevitable. The love that John 3:16 is speaking of isn't related to magnificent landscapes, or to any of the inventions or achievements that humans take pride in. Rather, it is an incredible miracle, a love so immense that

we neither understand nor deserve it. Just why did Christmas have to happen? For the salvation of the world. I'd like to examine this subject using three Christmas miracles.

The First Christmas Miracle: God Loves the World

To recognize the miracle, let's first ask ourselves what the Bible means by "world" in this context. The Greek word *kosmos* is actually used in some places to mean the beauty of creation. The word "cosmetics" comes from this root. "World" can therefore refer to creation in its God-given and -ordered beauty. (Think again about certain places that you particularly love, such as a dreamlike winter landscape.) When "world" is used in this context, the transience of the fallen creation also resonates along with it, rightly filling us with nostalgia.

However, the Gospel of John also uses the term "world" with a different focus, one that doesn't refer to beautiful landscapes or fascinating natural ambiance. In these cases, "world" means humanity as a whole, and thus each individual human being: the true state of mankind from God's perspective. And it is anything but good, despite the beautiful mountain ranges and sunsets. It is the opposite of good and orderly. Humanity is in a catastrophic state from the divine perspective.

WHY DID CHRISTMAS HAVE TO HAPPEN? – PART 1

If it snows in the weeks around the holiday, we can see wonderful winter landscapes that make us marvel at the beauty of God’s creation.



In our part of the world, Christmas falls during the darkest part of the year. This makes us love the corresponding romantic meaning all the more. But this darkness can also be very depressing. In the Bible, the prophet Isaiah describes our human condition this way: “For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people” (Isa 60:2a). This isn’t a visual of how a storm can cause momentary darkness. Rather, this spiritual darkness pervades human history through the millennia. Great inventions or outward prosperity cannot hide it. This catastrophic state began with the great catastrophe that befell the first two humans, Adam and Eve. And it was no random event or supposed act of nature, that humans were powerless to oppose. It was caused and triggered by us humans.

The Bible calls this catastrophe the Fall: secession from God, inextricably linked with rebellion against Him. Adam and Eve believed Satan’s lie that they could be like God, knowing good and evil indepen-

dently of Him. In doing so, they not only plunged humanity into ruin, but also all of creation as well.

The Bible tells us that death entered the world through sin. All of creation has been subject to mortality since the Fall. We see this in the plant world, the animals, all the way up to humans. And it’s more than just a physical death; we are alienated from the life of God. As Paul explains, man is separated from God and dead in sin (Eph 2:1ff.). Even if you feel great, are enjoying the best of health, or are successful in all you do, it doesn’t change this fact. To be dead in sin means a life apart from God. It will end in God’s judgment, eternally separated from Him.

We humans are unfit for fellowship with God due to the Fall. Since that catastrophe, human history has been one long saga of humanity asserting himself against the living God. This can manifest itself in different ways. One way this happens is mankind openly rebels against God and His will: “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Ps 2:3). Man wants to throw off the Lord, His will, and His commandments.

On the flip side of the coin, humanity rejects God’s incorruptible judgment by trying to prove how good and noble he is; perhaps even by living a religious, outwardly Christian lifestyle. But the Apostle Paul says: “Therefore thou art inexcusable,

Adam and Eve believed Satan's lie that they could be like God, knowing good and evil independently of Him.

O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Rom 2:1).

This is reality as God sees it. Even outwardly good actions won't change the heart's evil thoughts, whether those actions are motivated by hatred and jealousy, or arrogance and pride. Either way, the rebellion against God is always the same.

"For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." This is the sad reality of human history through the millennia. Looking back, the history of humanity is one of pride, selfishness, and arrogance. It is a tale of conflict, war, blood and tears, full of collapses and setbacks. All the markers of external progress and prosperity can't change that. And when man thinks he can gain freedom by rebelling against God and His will, he destroys himself. An example: 100 years ago, English ethnologist J. D. Unwin used examples from history to show that free and limitless sexual expression, ultimately led to the decline of advanced civilizations.

Eleonore Fürstin von Reuss expressed what a life far from God is like in her song, "I Went Through the World":

I've watched the people,
They search morning and night,
They labor, they come and go,
And their life is work and toil!

They're seeking what can't be found
In love and honor and happiness,
And they return,
Burdened by sin and unsatisfied.

Since the catastrophic Fall of man, he has continually tried to rid himself of God. Human history has in large part been, not only a story of our flight from God, but also of rebellion against Him. We don't want to see ourselves as God does. We don't want to agree with His incorruptible verdict. Our lost condition is so profound, that even God's judgment doesn't bring about repentance.

The very first pages of the Bible make this clear. Even when mankind was in its infancy, it was so full of iniquity that God sent the great Flood as judgment. Only eight people were saved in the Ark. You'd think that mankind would have caught on. But what was the result? Renewed rebellion against God in the Tower of Babel. Humanity wanted to create paradise on earth himself, without God. And once again, God had to intervene.

It wasn't any different after two catastrophic world wars. Despite catchy slogans like, "We can do it!" and, "The sky's the limit!" anything we think we can achieve without or against the living God, will only lead to the next catastrophe eventually. God's verdict is upon all of it: "For, behold, the darkness shall cover

He loved you and me that much, even when we were utterly indifferent to Him and brushed Him off.

the earth, and gross darkness the people.”

History concretely shows that mankind learns nothing from his past. The Gospel of John summarizes the whole tragedy in a way that could also apply to individual lives: “And men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19b).

This is the world, humanity, as God sees it. Not dreamy winter landscapes, sentimental Christmas traditions, or vivid sunsets. He sees a world that turns its back on its Creator, that flees from Him, that doesn’t want to know anything about Him. The humanity that rebels against Him in repeated surges, like wave after wave pounding the shore of a stormy sea. This gives just a glimpse of the miracle that is God’s love for the world. He doesn’t love a humanity that obeys Him or wants Him. To the contrary: God so loved separated-from-Him humanity ... We could also say that God so loved repeatedly-rebelling-against-Him humanity.

He loved you and me that much, even when we were utterly indifferent to Him and brushed Him off. Your rebellion and resistance, and mine, can’t change anything about His love. And that brings us to the second miracle of Christmas: God gives His Son!

The Second Christmas Miracle: God Gives His Son

Many people confuse love with specific feelings or a certain emotional state. When the feelings evaporate, love is gone as well. There’s no question that love involves feelings. But it’s about much more than that.

What this world and humanity deserves for his detachment from God, is His just judgment. But when we look at John 3:16’s second Christmas miracle, God’s incomprehensible love becomes clear: He gave His only begotten Son. He sent Him “into the world” (v. 17). This giving includes the broader aspect of sending, although the two are inseparable. First, let’s delve into the sending.

The heart of the Christmas event is the sending of the Son. That’s when God the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world. Jesus Christ appeared on earth as a small, helpless infant. He entered a humanity that hadn’t been expecting or pleading for Him, but instead turned their backs on Him and treated Him with hostility, thereby rejecting God.

“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:10-11).

Two aspects resonate from “world.” The first is creation as a whole. It was made by Him (that is, by Jesus; cf. Col 1:15-17). God brought all of creation into existence

Only eight people were saved in the Ark. You'd think that mankind would have taken the hint. But what was the result? Renewed rebellion against God in the Tower of Babel.

through Him. Everything exists through Him. We are now, for example, able to describe certain natural laws (such as the gravitational forces that keep the planets and other celestial bodies in motion), but we don't know where they come from or why they work. The Bible says that all of this is only in Christ, through Christ, and to Christ. All of creation is His property. And fallen man and Satan try to challenge His supremacy over it.

On the other hand, "world" also means a mankind that has been detached from God. God created man as the crown of creation, in His own image. But, as already mentioned, mankind has turned his back on God since the Fall. This means that Christmas is about God's Son being sent to a humanity that is hostile to Him.

When He sent His only begotten Son, God the Father wasn't nurturing any false expectations that were disappointed in the end, as we sometimes do. He knew that His property—mankind—would overwhelmingly reject and eventually kill His Son. And yet He sent Him anyway. Even back when Jesus was on earth, this sentiment was expressed in the cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14b).

That hasn't changed to this day. People want to decide for themselves what they think is right and follow their own gut feel-



ings. Whether spirituality, religiosity, agnosticism, or atheism, everything is simply a tool for self-determination. And when terrible catastrophes recur, disasters that humanity himself has caused, then mankind screams out against God and accuses Him. We fail to see that all of this is just a result of our separation from and rebellion against God. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was ready to walk this path out of God's glory and into our godless world. He knew what awaited Him. As the true God, He had every divine privilege with His Father. And yet He wanted to become human, to leave behind all of His divine privileges and enter a humanity that was dark, rejecting, and opposed to God. His only concern was honoring His heavenly Father. He did this out of love for those who were hostile to Him.

(MR1221/1206)

(Continued next month.)



MIND CHANGERS: DRIVING HUMAN ACTIONS ONTO THE SHOALS



This writer's secular career has been influenced by the Austrian School of Economics. One of the best and most known scholars from this school was Ludwig von Mises. (He was one of its main founders.) Particularly influential was his work *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (first published in 1940).

By Wilfred Hahn

Economists are sometimes venerated, but of course, no economist—good or bad—can predict the future with any durable accuracy. But economic clairvoyance is not why we reference the Austrian School. We are more interested in theory ... the questions that explain the impact that human actions have on economies and world trends.

An esteemed friend and mentor—the late Dr. Kurt Richebächer, one of the first jet-setting “global market economists”—taught this analyst about the necessity to understand economic theory. He was a devotee of the Austrian School. Rather than relying solely upon quantitative modeling, his reasoning was that if you cannot explain the causality behind the statistic—in other words, the theory—then

it can be very dangerous to rely on that economic statistic.

Most other economics schools do not bother much with such theory, but rather focus on the surface mathematics. Yes, math is useful, but the motivations of mankind cannot be modeled with numbers and formulas. Why? The human is much too complex and inconsistent. As Dr. Mises emphasized, human action is the outcome of values, beliefs, expectations, and their changes. There need be no rhyme or logical reason. Humans can change their minds on a dime ... capriciously and quixotically.

In fact, humans are perpetually prone to change their mind about beliefs and values (and anything else, for that matter). This is a key characteristic that distinguishes God from

Global warming advocates continue to push their agenda very aggressively. This should not be a surprise, as “climate change” is potentially lucrative ... at many levels. Also, it must not be overlooked that “global warming” actions give rise to oppressive controls, both domestically and globally.

man. Says the Bible: “God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” (Numbers 23:19; cf. 1 Samuel 15:29; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). God does not change; humans do.

And lately, humanity has been collectively changing values and views on an epic scale as never before. Mankind has been radically changing his mind with respect to his values and beliefs (the existence of God, families, morals ... etc.). In our view, such changes have been quite sudden. It is just as this popular saying implies: “Make your own reality.” Changes in views can be driven by nothing more than whimsy ... having no foundation. Yet in turn, this drives human actions.

Some observers today make the case that mankind has entered the Anthropocene Age, where human actions are thought to actually impact the universe itself. That claim may be over-reaching, but not so the changes in human beliefs. They indeed have become overarching.

We will discuss three such changes in values and show their impact on “human actions.”



1. Global Financial Fascism (Global Climate Change Actions)

Readers will recognize that concerns about global warming have struck fear into the hearts of many people. It is a concern that has swept the world in recent decades. According to a Pew Research Center survey, climate change is the top global threat in the public’s mind across 19 developed countries.

There have been world-sweeping initiatives to convince all people on earth that they are witnessing an unfolding global “climate change” crisis. This growing human belief—also considered an agenda, correct or not—is powerfully driving huge “human actions.”

But why would this be considered a change of views or values? For several reasons.



For one, it is partly a “manufactured” viewpoint that has emerged relatively recently ... only several decades ago or so. Yet to date, there is no scientific proof as to the impact of rising emissions, nor the assurance that all anti-carbon initiatives being proposed today will actually make a difference in the future. There is no proven theory. And, even while there are no such proofs, it is claimed that a “scientific consensus” exists on these issues by those who promote fears of climate change. It goes without saying that those who disagree are therefore not allowed to be part of the consensus. Instead, they are ostracized ... just as is the case with Creationists.

However, to be truthful, the world’s response to theories of climate change remains unsettled. Globally, emissions (mainly CO₂ and methane) in the atmosphere are indeed rising.

Yet, global warming advocates continue to push their agenda very aggressively. This should not be a surprise, as “climate change” is potentially lucrative ... at many levels. Also, it must not be overlooked that “global warming” actions give rise to oppressive controls, both domestically and globally.

Also, it would be true to say that the “global warming” proponents are not above brutal tactics in shutting down any opposition to their initiatives, scientific or otherwise. These measures in many cases border on financial fascism.

That said, some backlash is emerging. Certain major corporations and banks are protesting the massive “anti-carbon” regulations being introduced.

We come back to our main point. Virtually the entire world has changed its view to align with a global warming crisis ... and all its threatening attendant impacts. Yet, it is not a proven matter.

2. Change in Familialism: Declining Fertility

It is an earth-shaking development ... a fast-emerging post-familial world. It reflects a massive change in human values that will have an alarming world impact in the future. In fact, that future is already here.

Just what is unfolding today that demographic trends reveal? In short, there are two main contributing trends—one good, the other bad. First, human longevity (length of life) has continued to increase for much of the world ... to the continued surprise of actuaries. This trend is largely the outcome of advancing medical technology and prosperity. Its main impact is revealed in the aging of the population.

Traditionally, lengthening longevity has been considered a beneficial development. People are living longer than ever before. A “good old age” was once considered a blessing, according to the Bible. But sadly, today, a long life has begun to be regarded as a curse. To understand this, we must also connect

Increasingly, households are deciding not to have children—let alone starting up households at all. This is partly attributable to post- or anti-familialism. More and more, people are choosing not to marry or have children. Families are under siege.

another demographic trend—plunging fertility. It is a highly malignant factor that will continue to accelerate worldwide.

It boils down to this: Humanity has made an about-face and simply changed its mind on having offspring. Children are no longer considered to be a blessing from the Lord (see Psalm 127:3).

Increasingly, households are deciding not to have children—let alone starting up households at all. This is partly attributable to post- or anti-familialism. More and more, people are choosing not to marry or have children. Families are under siege.

Shockingly, not only are female fertility rates at new lows, but also male fertility is decaying rapidly. In the case of males, we must point out that the decline in fertility is not entirely the result of human choice. For some (still unexplained) reason, sperm counts have declined at a steep pace over recent decades.

Lengthening longevity and post-familialism are the major cause of the aging of the world's population. Critically, these factors are accelerating. Today, the future has arrived . . . the chickens having come home to roost.

And so, the time has come where the human values shift (declining house-



holds with children) has caused alarming demographic trends. This has unleashed desperate responses . . . these also an extension of the endtime maelstrom of changes.

People are clamoring to save for their retirement years and to find sufficient future financial income. A very large cohort of older people will experience difficult retirement years. They will not be able to afford a comfortable retirement as they may once have anticipated.

3. End of a Unipolar World

A recent G20 meeting shows that the world is no longer cow-towing to the US and other high-income countries. Even Vladimir Putin had been invited to attend.

Major countries openly refuse to align their policies with that of the US. The world is therefore bifurcating into



two competing orbs. Included here are China, India, and others.

It is key to understand that this is a raw rift which will likely become much more protracted in the future. The world is becoming more polarized, broadly, into two factions—America plus EU (Anglo-Saxon), versus Rest-of-World. (The former group are essentially all of Roman influence or Roman offshoots.)

Consider the sweeping sanctions that the US and Europe have imposed on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine, which have triggered countermeasures. A form of financial fascism (weaponizing) appears to have taken place.

In the cause of fighting Russia's actions (whether right or wrong), everything became allowable. Centralized world trade and financial systems were marshaled to shut down an entire country. We can now count on the rest of the world to never allow themselves to be held hostage by the Western Bloc of nations. If Russia can be singled out for sanctions (deserved or not), then why not any other country?

The bottom line? It is a new world. Values have changed. The Roman-type countries are to be deposed as de facto world rulers. From this point forward, the globe must be seen as two opposing factions ... shifting into global rivalry between two orbs. This ushers in major change and volatility ahead. Again, such monumental shifts of global scale align with endtime agendas.

Thoughts to Ponder

Changes in human actions have had explosive impacts upon political economy and financial trends in recent decades. Changes of this type have truly been monumental ... indeed, unprecedented in recent decades.

Where is this all leading? What definitely can be concluded is that changes in views and values of epic scale are unfolding in these days. It is key to see that these massive changes in views are of human nature ... matters of the heart and mind.

We have no reason to expect that these changes in "human views" will lead to a better world. Quite the opposite. The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). We expect the opposite and see these changes as being emblematic of an endtime world. According to the Bible, changes are to come in as a flood (Daniel 9:26). It would not be unreasonable to identify the values and moral changes that we see today, as a defining part of this endtime maelstrom.

"The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5). The world today is again at a similar nexus point. ^(MC)



Pursuing Generosity

DR. RON J. BIGALKE

Perhaps you are being confronted with a difficult situation, such as intending to accomplish the will of God and to follow the Lord faithfully, yet that path has become more intricate than you could have imagined.

Perhaps you are wondering how to avoid a prior commitment, bypass some challenge, or partially obey a direct teaching of Scripture. Second Corinthians will encourage you to finish what you started. Doing so will result in joy, and the heavenly Father will be pleased when you are true to your commitments. The best way to fulfill good intentions is to accomplish them.

Being faithful to one's commitments—especially regarding the purpose and will of God—means doing so freely, not simply out of

compulsion. Nevertheless, it is not inappropriate to state reasons why one should bring a commitment to fulfillment, even when it may sometimes constitute significant urging. An impetus based on honest and truthful reasons is always legitimate, even though it should not be stated as a command. Second Corinthians 8—9 address this very issue.

HONORING COMMITMENTS

Second Corinthians 8—9 refer to generosity that is enabled and motivated by God (vv. 1-4; cf. vv.

Pursuing Generosity

Scripture provides an example of the greatest redistribution of wealth that will ever occur.

12-14). The expression “beyond their ability” (v. 3) is somewhat hyperbolic for beyond normal expectation. Personal interests do not interfere with giving what is not essential, which is why the Bible refers to it as a “gracious work” (vv. 6-7) or divine enablement. Being generous requires consecration “to the Lord” and to His servants, in addition to regarding all one possesses as God’s (v. 5). “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above” (Jas 1:17a); therefore, one is a steward (not master) of his or her possessions. The primary duty of a steward is faithfulness (1 Cor 4:2), which God rewards (Luke 16:10-12).

Defined as the transfer of income and wealth from some individuals to others, redistribution of wealth is a polarizing issue. Scripture, however, provides an example of the greatest redistribution of wealth that will ever occur. Second Corinthians 8:9 declares, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” Of course, verse 9 is not referring to monetary wealth; rather, Jesus is the eternal God, and as such owns everything by virtue of His authority and power. He “became poor” (by humbling himself as a bond-servant, and becoming obedient to a substitutionary death on a cross: Phil 2:5-8) encompasses the glorious truth of the gospel. Jesus “became poor,” even though the riches of His glory as God the Son are infinite. Jesus is the great example for being generous, and the gospel is the basis and motivation for godly living. Being a generous person is modeled after Christ’s

example. Considering the cheerfulness, desire, and willingness of Jesus Christ to give all for those who trust in Him, is reason to be generous (2 Cor 8:8-9).

Paul could have stated a command based upon individuals being among “the first” to take the lead in wanting to help others, even having “a desire” to do so (v. 10). The commitment and desire to help meant taking the lead in doing that. Fulfilling one’s commitment is to correspond with actions consistent with that originally expressed desire (v. 11). When eager to help those in need, it is only appropriate to give what is possible. The standard by which God judges a person’s generosity is how much is given in proportion “to what a person has, not according to what he does not have” (v. 12; cf. Mark 12:41-44). God does not expect a person to give what he or she “does not have” (though sacrificial giving is appropriate at certain times); rather, generosity arises from proper motivation and earnestness to fulfill one’s promises. The right attitude is more important than the sacrifice (cf. Gen 4:4; 1 Sam 15:22).

The objective in view (“equality”) is giving according to means, so that no one is afflicted “for the ease of others” (2 Cor 8:13). Present help is given because a time may arise in the future when it is another’s person opportunity to receive. Believers in Jesus Christ are viewed as brothers and sisters constituting a large family, and each has responsibility to care for one another. Scripture avoids the injustice that occurs from condemning economic goods or private property, and recognizes that material assets may be the blessing of God and can

God has always desired that the needs of His people are satisfied, and for them to share cheerfully and voluntarily with those who have less (2 Cor 8:15).



most certainly be used for His glory. The act of voluntarily giving to help those in need considers the universal bond of believers. Those in need are commanded “to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands. . .” (1 Thess 4:11).

Scripture does not command equality, though it does appeal for all God’s people to have what is needed for the coming day. God has always desired that the needs of His people are satisfied, and for them to share cheerfully and voluntarily with those who have less (2 Cor 8:15). “Thanks be to God” when fellow believers share an excitement, interest, and love for one another’s well-being (vv. 16-17a). What a great blessing also when someone serves of his or her own accord, as opposed to being coerced (v. 17b)!

Where sensitive matters are concerned (especially finances), it is always best to involve those persons who are well-known to have the respect of others, are “tested and found diligent,” and who are honorable (vv. 18-19, 22-23). “Readiness” to help those in need is a wonderful opportunity to promote “the glory of the Lord” (v. 19; cf. Matt

22:37-39). Heeding every “precaution” to avoid mismanagement of any project, is wise. Leaders should be advised to not only do what is proper, but also be certain that everyone regards such actions as honest and reputable (2 Cor 8:20-21). Scripture exhorts believers to demonstrate proof of love toward those who are called to spiritual leadership, in addition to all the other “churches.”

Someone is always watching to see whether faith in Jesus Christ truly manifests in a changed and empowered life. The public demonstration of authentic faith will dispel any doubts otherwise (v. 24). Roman statesman Cicero once remarked, “The greatest privilege of wealth is, beyond all peradventure, the opportunity it affords for doing good. . . .” He advised, “But the chief thing in all public administration and public service is to avoid even the slightest suspicion of self-seeking. . . . There is, then, . . . no vice more offensive than avarice, especially in men who stand foremost and hold the helm of state. For to exploit . . . for selfish profit is not only immoral; it is criminal, infamous” [*de Officiis* 2.64, 75, 77].

HONORING CHRIST

The previous discussion regarding “ministry to the [needs of the] saints,” persists in the ninth chapter with continued attention upon not bringing criticism toward the ministry of Christ (v. 1). Zealousness to be generous in meeting the needs of others, is an example to the majority (v. 2). Great embarrassment occurs when boasting is made on behalf of others’ commitment to do something, yet they do not follow through on it (vv. 3-

Pursuing Generosity

4). Hence, Scripture encourages generosity—“not affected by covetousness”—toward the work of the Lord (v. 5).

One of the great truths of Scripture is that God endows people in proportion to how they bless others (v. 6; Gen 12:1-3; Matt 25:29). Seeking to be a blessing to others is like sowing seed; it will eventually yield a harvest of the same kind. There is a direct correspondence between having “treasures in heaven” (eternal rewards) with investing talents, time, and treasure in the work of the Lord (cf. Matt 6:19-21). There are inevitable consequences of one’s actions that should motivate a person to do what is proper. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ ought to make one “a cheerful giver,” for thereby one receives God’s loving approval (2 Cor 9:7).

God demonstrates His love for those who are a blessing to others by giving them “all grace” and “all sufficiency in everything.” Whatever the Lord supplies is more than enough for one to have “sufficiency in everything” and to abound in “every good deed” (v. 8). God is gracious—providing His enablement—to those who are givers. The Lord rewards those who live sacrificially for His sake with blessings in the present life, in addition to an eternal reward (i.e., a person’s “righteousness endures forever”: v. 9). God multiplies His favor toward those who are keen to bestow grace on others.

God promises an abundant harvest for those who live seeking to be a blessing to others. He never forgets or overlooks righteous actions. God’s blessing is “seed to the sower,” which is having the opportunity and resources for greater investment of good deeds (v. 10). His provision is not primarily material blessing, but is more

the blessings of the Holy Spirit, who is the pledge on the inheritance of riches with the return (Second Coming) of Jesus. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to fill and indwell believers (cf. Isa 44:3; Luke 24:49; John 14:15-17; Acts 2; Eph 1:13; 5:18; 1 Cor 12:13; 1 Thess 5:19), they are “enriched in everything” (2 Cor 9:11).

Scripture indicates that as the Lord is “fully supplying the needs” of His people, this results in “overflowing through many thanksgivings to God” (v. 12). The abundance of divine grace overflows into the lives of many others. Being a blessing to others not only glorifies the Lord, but also demonstrates the reality of one’s “confession of the gospel of Christ,” and hence a spirit of “liberality.” The Greek word *koinōnia* (κοινωνία), translated “contribution” (v. 13), is the same word used for notions of communion and fellowship. *Koinōnia* indicates a sharing of things in common (communion) as the result of a spiritual fellowship.

The “surpassing grace of God” at work in the lives of His people, resulted in the prayers of other believers. Being encouraged by God’s presence in their lives would result in other believers interceding on their behalf. How wonderful to know that one’s faithfulness to God may result in the prayers of believers throughout the world (v. 14)! All that has been affirmed in 2 Corinthians 9 is because of God’s “indefinable gift” (v. 15), which is that He did not spare His only begotten Son, but freely gave Jesus for the sake of His elect (cf. John 3:16-17; Rom 8:28-32). For this reason, all thanksgiving is directed to God for His blessings, which is evident in attitudes of concern and love for brothers and sisters in fellowship with Christ. (1261)



A Candle's Message

Norbert Lieth

Jesus says, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). What does it mean when we contemplate the candles during Advent?

Lights are shining everywhere during Advent. They create a pleasant, soothing atmosphere. We light candles in our homes, which are especially cozy now. But what does the image of a glowing candle convey to us?

A Candle Burns Silently

God came into the world quietly. Not into a royal palace where everyone was awaiting a monarch's birth, but a quiet place. Because there was no room in the inn, Jesus was born in a stable. There were hardly any guests at the birth.

Jesus kept to the background for about 30 years (Luke 3:23). It was quiet around Him. He learned in silence and grew up in silence. The

evangelist Matthew takes up one of Isaiah's prophecies, which Jesus fulfilled: "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets" (Matt 12:19). This mainly applies to the streets of Jerusalem.

He appeared and acted humble and meek, with no political aspirations. His demeanor was that of a lamb, not a lion. He was no rabble-rouser, and went about his business without shouting out His message on the streets of Jerusalem. Jesus did not grasp at power by force. He frequently withdrew, sought solitude, and did not want to be made king (Luke 5:16; 9:10; John 6:15). He entered synagogues and spoke there (Mark 1:21; 3:1; 6:2; Luke 4:15-16; 6:6; John 6:59). He preached by the sea and in the

A Candle's Message

God came into the world quietly. Not into a royal palace where everyone was awaiting a monarch's birth, but a quiet place.

fields of Galilee. He spoke to individuals, to His disciples, or to specific groups. And that's how it is to this day: Where much in this world screams, bales, and calls out, God's love penetrates our hearts calmly and serenely.

Here is a prophetic example from the Old Testament: "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11-13).

The Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake or the fire, but in the soft, small whisper. In the same way, Jesus did not appear in the stormy wind of judgment; not in an earthquake's might or a destructive fire, but in the gentle breeze of love and gentleness.

We don't have to shout; we can shine softly where we've been placed.

The Flame Is Small...

...and yet it can illuminate the darkness of a large room.



Jesus was born in the night as a small human child and placed in a manger. It is He who illuminated the dark night of this world, and that of countless hearts.

The wise men saw the light from afar and allowed themselves to be drawn to it.

Nobody else has achieved what He has. His words are as relevant today as if they were spoken yesterday. His work of redemption is just as valid today as it was 2,000 years ago. His person gives light and life forever. Everyone who calls upon Him becomes illuminated. Jesus was able to say, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

There are candles of every size, from large ones down to small tea lights, depending on their purpose. It doesn't matter which you are, only that you shine in your place and for your purpose. God will not ask how big a candle you were, but whether you shone.



A Candle's Flame Is Constantly Flickering

A candle's light is always moving, always taking on new forms. God brings movement into our lives. His Holy Spirit is not motionless. He urges, leads, applies brakes, drives, grants burdens and spiritual visions. The Lord is always good for a surprise! Things never get boring with Him.

When you read the Gospels, you'll find that the disciples could scarcely keep up with the Lord and were constantly amazed. Something new was always going on, and there were surprises. He was always someplace new. His words turned everything on its head. Jesus comforted and rebuffed. He established and tore down traditions. He encouraged and disappointed. He drew and cast out. When His disciples wanted to stay, He moved ahead. Where they didn't even want to enter, He remained.

The disciples cried out in amazement, "What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him" (Luke 8:25b). The people asked, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" (Luke 7:49b).

God will not ask how big a candle you were, but whether you shone.

When Jesus wanted to return to Judea, the disciples interjected, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" (John 11:8). When Paul and his companions later wanted to go to Asia, the Spirit prevented them and urged them to travel to Macedonia instead (Acts 16:6-10). Life is adventurous with Jesus.

Are you letting yourself be moved and carried along?

A Candle Sacrifices Itself

It gives light through this self-sacrifice. It burns to give itself away. Jesus came as the light of the world. He sacrificed His entire life, up to and including the Cross of Calvary, so that we could have eternal life. In Philippians 2:6-8 we see that Jesus' descent was sevenfold, like a candle that burns further and further down:

"(1) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (2) But made himself of no reputation [alienated; emptied; from God's throne to a manger], (3) and took upon him the form of a servant, (4) and was made in the likeness of men [God wanted to be human]: And being found in fashion as a man, (5) he humbled himself [He bowed to authority, took on all the hardships although He was almighty], (6) and became obedient unto death [His whole life was a way of death], (7) even the death of the cross."

Have you dedicated your life and your body, all you possess, to the point of self-sacrifice?

A Candle's Message

The Flame Points Upwards

Jesus says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Jesus brought the light of God to us. He glorified the Father and centered the world on God. Jesus shows us the way to God. He steers our hearts upward now, and in the resurrection we will be brought upward.

German theologian Hans-Joachim Eckstein writes: "We are still on the way to Him and have not yet arrived at our destination; but Christ Himself has long since reached out to us, so at His side we can set out with Him toward the great goal of final heavenly communion with Him."

The Flame Gives Warmth

Warmth does us good. It helps us relax. Warm-hearted people are comforting. You can let your guard down around them. Why did Jesus attract so many people? It wasn't just the miracles; it was His welcoming warmth. He radiated warmth like no one else. The scribes and Pharisees were cold. They were frightening and kept their distance. With Jesus it was the other way around, and that's how we should also be. We should transmit warmth the same way it radiates from a candle. "Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near" (Phil 4:5, CSB).

A Candle Has a Wick at Its Center

The wick is what burns to produce the flame. This is a beautiful illustration of the Holy Spirit's desire to burn within us. Jesus was a man full of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost..." (Acts 2:4a). That's why Paul writes, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18b); and, "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19).

All the Candles in the World Can't Illuminate a Darkened Heart!

Let there be light, and be a light yourself! Are you someone who points the way? Who radiates spiritual warmth? Who burns brightly for Jesus and His Gospel? Who is being consumed for the kingdom of God? Are you someone whose testimony is silent but clear?

When you blow out a candle, the wick still glows a little. This is where the Lord intervenes. He says of Himself, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matt 12:20; Isa 42:3).

The Apostle Paul writes, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). The divine power, which is light in and of itself and created the light to illuminate the earth; which said at the beginning of creation, "Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen 1:3), this same divine power also let light shine in our hearts when Jesus entered our lives. Our darkened hearts were illuminated by the rebirth.

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8). God created the sun to illuminate the earth and allow creation to flourish. And the Lord created us to be light, so that we would shine as children of light: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt 5:16).

Our transformation and good works point upward! This is the message of a lit candle.

(MR1221/1208)




WORLD FOCUS

 CANADA

Complete Freeze on Handgun Ownership

Canada should introduce a total ban on the buying and selling of all handguns, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said.

 His government is proposing a new law that would freeze private ownership of all short-barreled firearms.

The legislation would not ban the ownership of handguns outright—but would make it illegal to buy them.

Mr. Trudeau's proposal comes days after a deadly shooting at a Texas primary school, in the neighboring US, killed 21 people.

The bill, which was presented to Canada's parliament, makes it impossible to buy, sell, transfer or import handguns anywhere in the country.

Canada already has stricter rules on gun ownership than its southern neighbor and records fewer firearm incidents every year.

For example, all guns must be kept locked and unloaded and anyone wishing to buy a firearm must undergo extensive background checks.

But there have been calls in recent years to tighten gun legislation there even further, especially following a number of deadly shootings.

In April 2020, a gunman posing as a police officer killed 22 people during a shoot-



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks at the NATO summit in Hertford, England. He announced a national freeze on the sale, purchase, and transfer of handguns. Chris J Ratcliffe/Getty Images

ing spree in Nova Scotia—the deadliest in Canada's history.

-www.bbc.com, 30 May 2022

Commentary: Regarding this abbreviated article, we do not intend to be pro or con, but simply to show that the Scripture is true: “Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matthew 26:52).

In Christian circles, this has caused much controversy and debate. The bottom line is, should Christians defend themselves physically? Do we find defense forces organized by Christians in the New Testament? The answer is a resounding no. Some will point to Luke 22:35-38, particularly the phrase, “and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.” Jesus knew what would happen in the next few

hours—the horrible event of Gethsemane. He also knew that His disciples would fulfill Zechariah 13:7: “...smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered...” He realized they would be on their own—no Lord, no Holy Spirit.

In Gethsemane, He prayed: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). Generally, this is interpreted as meaning Christ prayed to avoid the cross. Not so: Hebrews 5:7 gives us the answer: “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” Jesus did not die in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the devil loaded the world's sin upon Him. He was in agony, “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (verse 44b). He had to go to the cross to exclaim, “It is finished!” His life was spared; the Father saved Him “from death.”


Now to the mysterious instruction, “he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.” What we do know is that Peter used the sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus. Interestingly, Jesus did not tell Peter to get rid of the sword,

(continued next page)

 USA

Scientists Grow Human Brain Cells in Rats

Scientists have transplanted human brain cells into the brains of baby rats, where the cells grew and formed connections.

 It's part of an effort to better study human brain development and diseases affecting this most complex of organs, which makes us who we are but has long been shrouded in mystery.

The research builds upon the team's previous work creating brain "organoids," tiny structures resembling human organs that have also been made to represent others such as livers, kidneys, prostates, or key parts of them.

Scientists transplanted those organoids into rat pups 2 to 3 days old, a stage when brain connections are still forming. The organoids grew so that they eventually occupied a third of the hemisphere of the rat's brain where they were implanted. Neurons from the organoids formed working connections with circuits in the brain.

Researchers, whose study was funded partly by the National Institutes of Health, said they could do the same sorts of experiments using organoids made from the cells of people with disorders such as autism or schizophrenia—and potentially learn new things about how these conditions affect the brain, too.

Such experiments in animals raise ethical concerns. For example, Dr. Sergiu Pasca said he and his team are cognizant of the rats' well-being and whether they still behave normally with the organoids inside them, which he says they do. Still, Pasca does not believe this should be tried in primates. Ethicists also wonder about the possibility of brain organoids in the future attaining something like human consciousness, which experts say is extremely unlikely now.

-apnews.com, 12 October 2022

Commentary: This experiment reminds one of the Scripture, "Now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Genesis

11:6b). The article further mentions a statement by Dr. Sergiu Pasca, senior author of the study, saying: "This is the first time these organoids have been placed into early rat brains, creating 'the most advanced human brain circuitry ever built from human skin cells...'" We notice that these scientists are only able to "create" brain-like structures from human skin cells that already exist. Thus, man is attempting to play God by using His already created materials.

Another notable quote is: "Ethicists also wonder about the possibility of brain organoids in the future attaining something like human consciousness..." We know that the image of the beast in Revelation will "speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (13:15b). Sounds like the Tribulation is nearly at our doorstep. 7873

(By K. Farmer)

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

Handgun Ownership (continued from page 25)

but: "Put up thy sword into the sheath" (John 18:11). In plain words, you may have a sword (gun), but you are forbidden to use it.

Charles Spurgeon had this to say about self-defense: "The great crime of war can never promote the religion of peace. The battle, and the garment rolled in blood, are not a fitting prelude to 'peace on earth, goodwill to

men.' And I do firmly hold, that the slaughter of men, that bayonets, and swords, and guns, have never yet been, and never can be, promoters of the gospel. The gospel will proceed without them, but never through them." About defense, Oswald Chambers said: "We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense."

Regarding guns, the result is very obvious. Firearm deaths per 100,000 in Canada stand at 2.28; in the UK (with very strict gun laws) it's 0.24, and the USA 10.95. When it comes to crime, the statistics clearly show that Canada is a very prosperous, safe, and secure country.

7869

(See *Spiritual Warfare in the End Times*, Item #2370, \$15.99.)



No Tories Defending Brexit

After six years of English rightwing politicians and journalists pitting scorn at France, especially Macron, this was quite a U-turn. Brexit Conservatives have devoted a great deal of energy to attacking Macron and rubbishing France.



France was perceived as the principal counter-force to Brexit but the mood in London in ruling political, financial, and opinion forming circles is that the steam is going out of the Brexit balloon. Brexit is now seen as a bore, replete with negatives for economic, scientific and civil society.

It is impossible to find a minister who will defend Brexit.

There is a complete code of 'omerta' [silence] in business outfits like the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) or the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) as well as the City of London, and big foreign owned companies on talking about the negative impact on business from Brexit.

There was evidence [of] this in Prague where Truss declared Macron to be a "friend" of her government and agreed that Paris and London would jointly take over the Sizewell C nuclear plant and step up cooperation in energy policy and combatting illegal crossings of the straits of Dover by undocumented refugees and immigrants.

Inch-by-inch Britain is reconnecting with Europe.

-eobserver.com, 10 October 2022



Liz Truss and Emmanuel Macron in Prague. Inch-by-inch Britain is reconnecting with Europe.

(Photo: 10 Downing Street)

Commentary: In the meantime, Rishi Sunak has succeeded Liz Truss as Prime Minister, as she resigned after only 50 days in office.

The UK has already paid dearly for Brexit. Open borders, freedom of movement, rights to employment, education, and healthcare are now limited for the UK. That has been made painfully aware among the Tories. Wikipedia explains: "The Conservative Party (informally as the Tory Party) is the main right-wing political party in the United Kingdom. Their policies usually promote conservatism and in recent years libertarianism. They are the largest party in the House of Commons after the 2019 United Kingdom general election, with 365 out of a possible 650 seats."

We may ask, what is the UK's future? Quite obviously, a degree of isolationism in the first place; and secondly, more dependence on the EU, but without having a vote.

We can use this political development as an illustration for the Church. We are extremely diverse when it comes to geography, language, culture, etc. Yet 1 Corinthians 12:12 declares:

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." While the geopolitical developments in many parts of the world pique our interest, that must always remain secondary to the real unity found in Scripture.

The world is uniting and will continue to unite, but such must only be viewed from prophetic perspectives; namely, the great imitation of the god of this world, mimicking the perfect unity



of the Church in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7871

(See *Progressive Globalism*, Item #1092, \$5.50.)



Study Shows Christianity Diminishing

A new report by Pew Research Center and the General Social Survey found a surge of adults leaving Christianity to become atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular." It predicted that if the number of Christians under 30 abandoning their faith accelerates beyond the current pace, adherents of the historically dominant religion of the U.S. could become a minority by 2045.



Noting how approximately 90% of Americans identified as Christians in the early 1990s, the study ob-

(continued next page)

Christianity Diminishing

(continued from page 27)



Image of an empty church sanctuary with stained-glass windows. (Monashee Frantz via Getty Images)


served that number, which includes children, had fallen to only 64% by 2020. The number of people in the U.S. who identify as religiously unaffiliated, meanwhile, skyrocketed from 16% in 2007 to 29% in 2020, the research showed.

The study's data showed that while more older Americans are remaining identified with Christianity, many younger adults are increasingly switching to "nones."

FRANCE

Big Business Takes Over Farming

Despite media concern about foreign companies acquiring farmland in France, it's mainly French food firms that are buying up the countryside and taking to agribusiness.

 They want complete control of their production chains, as small farmers call it a day.

This is happening against a background of what may prove a decisive clash over the future of agricultural land ownership. International conglomer-

"If the pace of switching before the age of 30 were to speed up throughout the projection period without any brakes, Christians would no longer be a majority by 2045," Pew researchers noted.

In such a scenario, the number of religiously unaffiliated would stand at 52% and the number of Christians dip to 35% by 2070.

-www.foxnews.com, 15 September 2022

Commentary: We recognize that the decline in church membership may not necessarily represent fulfillment of Bible prophecy, such as "...there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3b). However, the tendency toward non-religion is definitely evident. People never had it so good as today when it

comes to material possessions, quality of life, communication and transportation, just to name a few, which all lead to the self-confidence of mankind and the decrease in need for the divine.

Here we must quote 2 Timothy 3:1-5: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." 7844

(See *Christians in a Cancel Culture*, Item #2383, \$15.99.)



Nathan Laine • Bloomberg • Getty

ates, seeking advantage over producers, are getting involved in agriculture in the hope of securing control of entire production chains, not just the retail link. According to agronomists Geneviève Nguyen and François Purseigle, this dates back to the 2010s, when

farms started to become just 'one entity among others within industrial groups.'

Nguyen and Purseigle were among the first researchers to examine the phenomenon of vertical concentration, 'from farm to fork,' at a time when it was still regarded as less significant than horizontal concentration, agglomerating distinct sectors.

-mondediplo.com, March 2022

Commentary: According to world atlas.com, the top five wheat-producing countries in millions of tons are

(continued next page)

Farming

(continued from page 28)

1) China: 134; 2) India: 98; 3) Russia: 85; 4) USA: 47; and 5) France: 37. What these top-producing countries have in common is that major production is in the hands of international corporations. The family farm, unless it's incorporated into one of these giants, no longer has a future.

Is it good or bad? The good is that with modern agricultural equipment and science-based techniques, today's farmland globally produces more than ever before—a significant increase in high-quality crops. The bad is that old-fashioned family farms are on the way out. Welcome to globalism!

Those of age remember the many headlines throughout the decades, warning of the world's over-population and that there would not be enough food to feed the masses. This has all been proven wrong. Most industrialized countries the world over are experiencing a decrease in new births.

AgriMarketing.com reports: "In 1991, corn and soybeans accounted for 41% of the acres in field crops. This percentage has been increasing at a steady rate over time, reaching 55% in 2016." Asking Google about corn yields per acre in 1922, it was 26 bushels; in 2021, 177.

We are reminded here of Genesis 1:11-12, documenting God's work on

the third day: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose



seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good." 7868

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



SPAIN

Israel Boycott Is Discrimination

Over the past several years, dozens of Spanish courts have rejected Israel boycotts by nonprofits, municipalities and other groups. Now, the country's top court has ruled that the movement to boycott Israel represents "discrimination" that "infringes on basic rights."



ACOM, a Spanish pro-Israel nonprofit that has sued multiple entities for discriminating against Israel, claimed the ruling as a major win. Spain was once a hotbed of efforts by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel, known as BDS. A slew of lower-court rulings in Spain had curtailed that trend, but they had pertained only to individual cases and thus had a limited impact, the group said, but the Sept. 20 ruling will function as a legal

precedent applicable to all cases going forward.

This judicial policy is similar to the one practiced in France, where attempts to boycott Israel resulted in the 2003 adoption of a law that declares any attempt to single out countries discriminatory and unconstitutional.

-www.jpost.com, 7 October 2022

Commentary: The top court considers boycotting Israel to be discrimination that "infringes on basic rights." This decision was welcomed by Spanish pro-Israel nonprofit organizations, who stand against the various BDS organizations and their activities.

What Arab Palestinians apparently don't consider is that a secure, free, and prosperous Israel is in their best interest. They can't lean on their cousins in the east, Jordan; nor in the north, Lebanon and Syria; and in the south, Israel has cooperation agreements with Egypt for both countries' security infrastructure, primarily to fight drug-smuggling and terrorism.

Here we are reminded of Joseph, who was sold by his brothers to Egypt. Yet it turned out quite different: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20). 7865

(See *Democracy Invades Islam*, Item #1072, \$12.95.)

 GERMANY

Immigrants Welcome

Perhaps Friederich Merz thought he was being clever. The head of Germany's main opposition party recently claimed on television that many of the 1m Ukrainians who flooded into Germany this year came not as refugees but as what he called "social tourists," to take advantage of government benefits. He should have known better.

 A pair of surveys in the second quarter of this year illustrate the trend. The Institute for Employment Research, a government agency, estimated job vacancies in Germany at a record 1.93m, 66% more than last year. Meanwhile IFO, a think-tank in Munich, found that 49.7% of German companies cannot secure enough skilled workers, up from 30% in 2019 and the highest level since the surveys started in 2009.

The current left-of-center coalition recognizes the challenge. It has floated the idea of creating a Canadian-style points system to assess immigrants, easing rules on professional qualifications, and letting skilled immigrants hunt for jobs in Germany rather than insist they seal job contracts first.

Germany is not the only rich country to have more people retiring than entering the workforce.

Can imported labor fill the gap? Marcus Winter is sure it can. Of the 750 staff in the local outsourcing and services firm he runs in the prosperous

southern state of Baden-Württemberg, three-quarters are already foreign-born.

Mr. Winter would be happy to hire more immigrants. But workers from the poorer fringes of the European Union, who can enter Germany visa-free, are increasingly needed at home. Skilled would-be immigrants from countries such as Brazil or Bangladesh still face hurdles despite immigration reforms, introduced in 2000, that were meant to make Germany a talent magnet like Canada or Australia.

-www.economist.com, 8 October 2022

Commentary: Something strange and unexpected is presently occupying the minds of those who concern themselves with the economy, workforce, unemployment, and compensation. It's nearly 2023; no longer oppressed by the 2019 coronavirus epidemic, economies the world over have restarted. But suddenly, there are not enough workers to fill the vacant positions—not just in low-level jobs such as janitors, of which already 51% are foreign-born.

This urgent need for more foreign workers has somewhat changed the minds of right-wing philosophy in Germany. Particularly in former East Germany, fears were raised in 2015 because of the many refugees from the Middle East, ringing alarm bells about *Überfremdung* (getting overwhelmed by foreigners). Slowly but surely, things are changing.

Successful, industrial nations are being increasingly internationalized. WorldPopulationReview.com lists countries by foreign-born percentage: Australia 30.1%, Switzerland 28.7%, Israel 22.5%, Germany 18.8%. This tendency shows that success, prosperity, and security are preeminent in countries that draw large foreign-born populations.

What does it mean? Simply that the world is becoming more internationalized than ever.

This is the reverse progression from the Tower of Babel. Genesis 11:6a states: "...the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language." We know the result; He "[confounded] their language, that they [could] not understand one another's speech" (verse 7b). Now, in the end stages of the end times, the nations—dispersed all over the world, divided by language—are coming together to form a new, New World Order where all live in peace, prosperity, and security. But, we add, it is only temporary. 7872

(See How Democracy Will Elect the Antichrist, Item #1064, \$17.95.)

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ARGENTINA

Blessings, Intensive Ministry—and Ravioli

BY STEPHAN BEITZE, BUENOS AIRES

Our preservation on a journey of many kilometers, the blessings of modern media, and conversions with the help of surplus ravioli.



Brief vacation after intensive ministry: Stephan Beitze with his wife Carina, son-in-law Simon, and daughter Annie

In the spring we had a short and very intensive period of service at home. We only made it to Germany and Switzerland a month after we'd planned to, due to the critical state of Carina's father's health. In these two and a half months, we were able to carry out 35 services. There were also a series of visits, studio recordings, pastoral conversations, and more.

One of the first ministries was a multi-day crusade in the church in Dübendorf. God granted that people made decisions for Him every day. The Lord even granted fruit in Thailand, where a man was converted after being

sent a link to the livestream of the messages. That's the upside of modern media.

During our preaching journey through Germany and Switzerland—on the topic, “Watch out that no one deceives you”—the Lord protected us over the thousands of kilometers that we covered. Carina also led several women's meetings, and the Lord gave them much grace.



Back in Argentina

We'd hardly arrived back in Buenos Aires when we resumed our preaching and teaching services in various congregations and Bible schools, as well as with other work that had accumulated in our absence. It's a great privilege to be able to share the Word of God with many students from different provinces, and even from abroad in some cases. Thanks to direct donations, some students who didn't have the money to pay to attend the school could also be given this opportunity.

Two weeks after our arrival, a multi-day conference was announced in Patagonia, in the far south. On the first evening, a couple in their sixties caught my eye. The man had been paralyzed from a series of seizures and was in a wheelchair. You could see the couple's oppression and hopelessness. They knew nothing of the true God. After the meeting there were two packages of ravioli leftover from the dinner, and they were raffled off. This couple received one of them. Since they came from very poor backgrounds, they were especially glad. The next day they were back. When I went up to greet them again after the meeting, I asked whether they'd eaten the ravioli. They said they'd eat it tomorrow (the last day of the conference). But in their case, that meant that they wouldn't be at church, and they'd miss the evangelistic sermon that would end the conference. So I suggested they come again in the morning, since a church luncheon had been announced. They agreed.

The next day, after the Gospel message, I closed by asking who would accept Jesus as their Savior, and I saw the woman's hand. After the meeting I spoke with the couple, and the



man said, "This is the happiest day of my life, because now I've accepted Jesus as my Savior. But I was afraid you wouldn't see me because I can only raise my arm a few inches." We were so joyful. Both made the decision for Jesus and can now have true and lasting hope, despite their difficult circumstances. They're now being led through a discipleship course.

Virtual Conference

In May, Midnight Call International held a special event: a virtual conference conducted with the various Spanish-speaking branches of the ministry. We'd made the arrangements when people were unable to gather in person due to the coronavirus. The conference opened completely new doors for us. The topic was, "The Use and Abuse of Biblical Prophecy," and it sparked a great deal of interest. About 2,500 people from 20 countries watched the conference live. And because of the different time zones, several thousand more watched the recordings overnight. We're very grateful to the Lord for these opportunities. A second online conference is scheduled to take place.

(MR0922)



“Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And

he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow” (2 Samuel 23:1-5).

BY ARNO FROESE

For clarity’s sake, let’s read verse 5 in the *Tanakh*: “Is not my House established before God? For He has granted me an eternal pact, drawn up in full and secured. Will He not cause all my success and [my] every desire to blossom?” We note that the last sentence is to be understood in a positive way, because it falls in line with the previous one: “Is not my House established before God?” Thus, the following sentence is confirmed: “Will He not cause all my success and [my] every desire to blossom?” Luther uses these words: “All my salvation and all my desires, he will cause [them] to grow.”

The name David is found no less than 1,130 times in the Bible. Interestingly, the first time his name is mentioned is in the book of Ruth, who was not an Israelite but a Moabite: “And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David” (Ruth 4:17).

Reading the four chapters of the book of Ruth, one immediately senses God’s desire to integrate

the Gentiles into His plan of salvation. We are reminded here of the words of Jesus: “But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6). Later, Jesus specifically emphasizes that He has been sent to Israel: “But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

The angel Gabriel proclaimed to Mary: “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:31-32). Here again, the exclusiveness of Israel is emphasized: “He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever” (verse 33a). That’s not the end, for it continues: “and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

More than six centuries before Jesus was born, this vision was revealed unto God’s faithful servant Daniel: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and

consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Daniel 2:44). That, incidentally, reveals the future of your country (or any country): there is none. But what God establishes is eternally valid.

With reasonable assurance, we can identify this special group of people. The sentence in the *Tanakh* reads: “A kingdom that shall not be transferred to another people.”

As we saw in the beginning, prophecy clearly indicates that Gentiles will be added to this kingdom. Here the words of the Apostle Paul are helpful: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). It is often overlooked that the Bible calls us believers, no matter who we are, “strangers and foreigners.” It matters not what passport I have; it’s only of very temporary value.

One more thing that needs to be emphasized is the unity between these two groups of people; namely, Israel and the Church: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). The apostles represent the New Testament, the prophets the Old Testament. What an immense and virtually incomprehensible privilege it is, to have become heavenly citizens through Christ Jesus our Lord!

Back to Bethlehem: when Jacob/Israel returned to the Promised Land from his uncle Laban, his beloved wife Rachel was ready to deliver Jacob’s twelfth son, Benjamin. “And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem” (Genesis 35:18-19).

Benjamin is the only son born in the Promised Land. Here Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin; the town is Bethlehem.

Many years later, when Jesus was born, another horrific tragedy befell Bethlehem. The wise men came to Jerusalem seeking the newborn King: “Where is he that is born king of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2a). Alarm bells went off in the mind of King Herod. When the wise men did not return to report the place of Jesus’ birth, Herod ordered the mass killing of children two years old and under. Matthew reports: “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not” (verses 17-18).

Bethlehem Today


It is not coincidental that Bethlehem is no longer considered a Jewish city, but an Arab-Muslim one. In 1948, when the Jewish State was proclaimed, Bethlehem was 85% Christian, mostly Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic. In 2006, the Palestinian Center for Research and Cultural Dialog determined that 90% of the population of Bethlehem was either Muslim or had Muslim friends.

What a mighty panorama we see highlighted on the horizon. The source of salvation, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, is now occupied by foreigners. To visit Bethlehem from Israel today is rather difficult. Israeli vehicles are not allowed to enter Bethlehem; thus, at the border, passengers need to change from Israeli transportation to Palestinian vehicles, and on the return likewise. Rachel’s

Tomb, also outside Bethlehem, is made accessible from Jerusalem under the strictest rules.

Bethlehem's Future

When considering Bethlehem's future, we must understand that according to our Lord—who is the Creator of heaven and earth—all the nations of the world are insignificant in comparison to Israel. When reading about

David, who was born in Bethlehem, Revelation 22:16-17 proclaims: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." 



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WAS JESUS REALLY BORN IN A STABLE?



“...Because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7b). These few words tell us in a startling way the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus at that long ago time.

By Peter Malgo

It would have been a traumatic experience for any pregnant woman having to deliver her first child in a stable. Just think of the hygienic conditions prevailing in such a place! Yet this is part of the Christmas story. A certain romantic element of Christmas would be absent without that crib in the stable. We know several carols that speak about the stable in Bethlehem.

However, the question must be asked: Was Jesus really born in a stable? The fact is, even in the Gospel of Luke—the most detailed description of the Christmas story—the word “stable” is not mentioned ... only that the newborn was laid in a “manger.” Possibly, the birth of our Lord Jesus took place in a cave or in the open air. No room for Jesus, no place for the Son of God! God could easily have arranged it quite differently ... could have let Jesus come into this world in a manner worthy of Him. But in the way He chose, He seemed to be saying, “I want to come into the confined space of your heart, where there is no room.” In John 14:23b, Jesus reveals His Father’s deepest intent: “We

will come unto him [to the one who loves Him], and make our abode with him.”

Now what is this abode, our heart, really like? Could God really move in; can He live there? Or do we only have a small area reserved for Him, a cramped place that is only open on Sundays ... while we use the rest of the available space for our own needs. We spend a lot of time on our hobbies, our family, and our personal interests. The Lord Jesus is not given priority—He may be left out altogether. We hardly have a true encounter with our Lord anymore. A time of silence, moments of contact with God, have become very rare indeed.


No room for Jesus, no time for Jesus! We worry much about our health, but care of our inner man often falls by the wayside. The space for our Lord has grown very small. Paul takes up this theme when writing to the Corinthians: “In everything commending ourselves as servants of God ... our heart is opened wide ... Now, in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide to us also” (2 Cor 6:4, 11-12, NASB). Closed hearts toward fellow

No room for Jesus, no time for Jesus! We worry much about our health, but care of our inner man often falls by the wayside. The space for our Lord has grown very small.

children of God, usually indicates that the Lord Himself has only a narrow space.

Paul then compares the heart to the temple in which God wants to dwell. It seems clear that the Corinthians allotted a very small space for God's Spirit, while allowing a lot of refuse to enter in: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor 6:14-16). This message

from God through Paul is also meant for each one of us.

Titus 2:11 is often cited at Christmas time: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." But Paul warns us: "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor 6:1). May these coming Christmas days serve to establish new room in our hearts for our Lord. He wants to reach and fill our hearts with His glory, His grace, and His light. That may mean that dark areas then become illuminated. Let us not hesitate a bit, but do what Paul says: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1). 

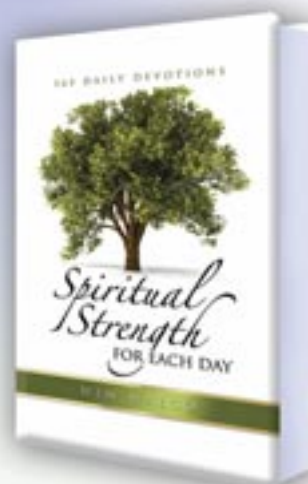
Powerful Daily Devotional

Spiritual Strength for Each Day serves as a guideline for believers who seek a deeper and closer relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord. This book is intended to remind the reader throughout the year that life as we know it is temporary, and the ultimate goal of our lives should be to prepare for eternity...desiring to hear the words from our Lord, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH FOR EACH DAY ITEM #1062

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Thus Far the Lord Has Helped Us!

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4).

By David Phillips *COO (Chief Operating Officer)*

Arno Froese and board members visiting the Home



It seems almost impossible and far from reality that we are getting ready to enter 2023; and yet, here we are at the year's end. Looking back over this past year and all it entailed, makes us realize once again just how our Heavenly Father has carried us through and provided for our every need! How He has blessed us, brought us through all the ups and downs, joys and sorrows, and provided for our every need. And He used each of you, our dear Ebenezer family, in a very special way to accomplish just this! Thank you all for always upholding us in your prayers and blessing us in the many ways you have this past year! It means so much to each one of us to know that

we have you standing by our side and encouraging us on, through all the challenges and difficulties we've faced.

Although we realize January isn't the Biblical new year, there is great significance in each year's number. I look at the year's change and ask myself, "How much closer are we now, to the 2000-year anniversary of Yeshua dying for us on the cross, shedding His blood in atonement, resurrecting from the dead, and ascending to heaven? When will we join Him, our Savior, who is preparing a place for us with Him in the presence of the Father?" No doubt with each year's passing, we're that much closer to the great wedding feast—the day we all so wait and long for! With great anticipation and excitement, we ask ourselves, "Will this be the year He gathers His children to Himself?" We can only wait and see!

With the New Year around the corner, our dear residents asked me to please send you all their greetings, thoughts of peace, and prayers for 2023.

For most of them, the journey here on earth is not easy. Maybe similar to yourself, they



often struggle with pain and sorrow, illness and aches, trying to overcome thoughts and worries, praying for relatives to come to faith... The list seems endless and the days can be very quiet, often accompanied by feelings of loneliness. They long for and await the time that they too will go to their heavenly rest. BUT as they (and each one of us) wait for this joyful day, we are all deeply encouraged to know He is right here and closer to us than ever before!


We can be assured that Yeshua—the One who sees and knows everything about us—is present through all and will be with us through the New Year to come as well. It is impossible for the Good Shepherd to forget one of His sheep. Pay close attention to the introductory verse and be encouraged through God’s Word, which He has left us for this exact time in history. He wrote this verse because He knew that our life here on earth would be accompanied by tears, sorrow, and pain. He promises us that He Himself will wipe away

every tear—what a day that will be! May this verse go with us and be a special reminder throughout this next year, that He sees and knows—and one day, all pain and sorrow will be no more!

May we all be encouraged through the presence of the Holy One of Israel—who never sleeps nor rests, but takes care of those who belong to Him—both here at the Ebenezer Home in Haifa and wherever you are right now! “Look up ... for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28)!

In the next article, we have a surprise and special announcement for you that is worth waiting for ... so be sure not to miss it! Until then, may God bless you and be with you all!

Thank you, Mr. Froese, for blessing and visiting us at the Ebenezer Home! Having you visit us was definitely an honor and the highlight of the end of the year for us. We love and appreciate you very much! May our Father continue to bless you and keep you, as you continue serving Him in what you do!



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

THE BLOOD OF JESUS... EZEKIEL 38 WAR... THE SECOND COMING

The Blood of Jesus

Dear Arno Froese,

Thank you for your ministry throughout these many years.

Why is it that pastors today speak of the blood of Christ, but don't tell the unique factors about it? The blood of Jesus Christ is different than Mary's blood. M. R. DeHaan, both a minister and a physician, in his book *The Chemistry of the Blood* brings this out very aptly. Our hymnal reads, "What can make me whole again, nothing but the blood of Jesus," and other hymns refer to the blood. However, not one drop of Adamic blood is given to the developing embryo in the womb by the mother. This is not being taught today by the church. Mary was born with Adamic blood the same as all other humans. Jesus Christ was born of the Holy Spirit with pure blood that comes from God the Father.

M. R. DeHaan says the mother provides the unborn developing infant with nutritious elements for the building of that little body in the secret of her bosom, but all the

blood in that tiny body is formed in the embryo itself. From the time of conception to the time of birth of the infant, not one single drop of blood ever passes from mother to child. The placenta—that mass of temporary tissue known better as after-birth—which forms the union between mother and child, is so constructed that although all the soluble nutritious elements such as proteins, fats, carbohydrates, salts, minerals and even antibodies pass freely from mother to child, and the waste products of the child's metabolism are passed back to the mother's circulation, no actual interchange of a single drop of blood ever occurs. All the blood that is in that child is produced within the child itself, as a result of the introduction of the male sperm. The mother contributes no blood at all. One drop of Adamic blood would nullify the precious blood of Christ. We Christians, of course, hold Mary to be the most favored of God to bring the Messiah in the flesh into the world.

-K. Estes, FL



Answer: I am familiar with the writings of M. R. DeHaan regarding the blood of Jesus. Quite fascinating and to the point. Thank you for refreshing my memory on this important issue.

Ezekiel 38 War

Dear Sir,

I've read many books on prophecy written by men that I fully respect and have confidence in. All of them seem to believe the Ezekiel 38 War will take place at one of three stages in the end times scenario: 1) just before the Tribulation and Rapture; 2) just after the Rapture; or 3) as part of the final conflict in the second half of the Tribulation. I wonder why none of them consider or even mention Revelation 20:7-9. It seems clear these verses place the Gog-Magog War at the end of the millennial kingdom. Please explain why so many place that war somewhere else.

-N. Scialabba, SC

Answer: Many scholars differ on the timeline of the events recorded in Ezekiel 38. My simple answer is, I don't know.

Revelation 20, however, has no relationship to Ezekiel 38. Why not? Because in the Ezekiel 38 event, it gives the reason, "To take a spoil, and to take a prey" (v. 12a). That's very physical. The event in Revelation 20 is the release of diabolical forces, "they went up on the breadth of the earth" (Revelation 20:9a). They come out of the earth. The purpose? Their last stand against the saints and the holy city, "the beloved city."

The end? "Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." This is a spiritual mat-

ter, because no one can fight against "the saints." Note also Revelation 17; it's the battle of Armageddon, but who is involved? "These shall make war with the Lamb." No earthly power can do that. This is a diabolical event taking place in the spiritual world.

The Second Coming

Dear Mr. Froese,

Please explain the prophecy in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.

-J. Dalton, IL

Answer: Verse 1 reveals two events: "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," and "our gathering together unto him." "The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" is identical with the "day of Christ" in verse 2, while "our gathering together unto him" is the Rapture. Verse 3 highlights, "that day [meaning the 'day of Christ'] shall not come, except there come a falling away first." The Good News Translation states, "the Day will not come until the final Rebellion takes place" against God. When will that happen? At the time of the Great Tribulation. Then in verse 7, "until he be taken out of the way." The NIV reads, "but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way."

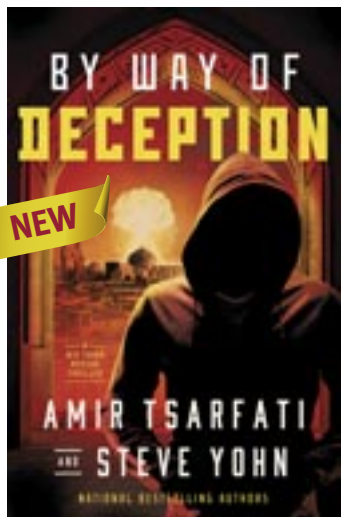
Who or what is hindering the full development of Satan's masterpiece, Antichrist? The light and the salt—that is, the Church. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church, but it will be taken out of the way. Then, total darkness will prevail on earth, so that we read in verse 11: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." (MC)

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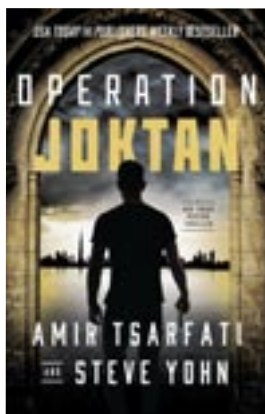
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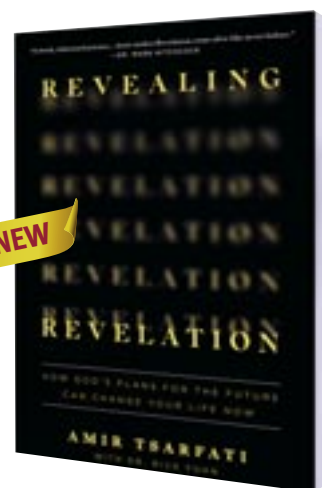
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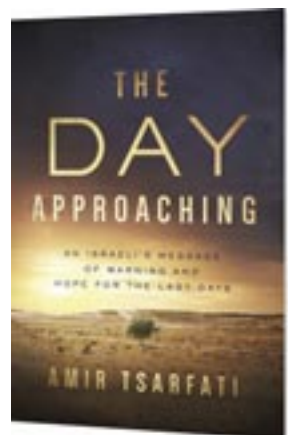
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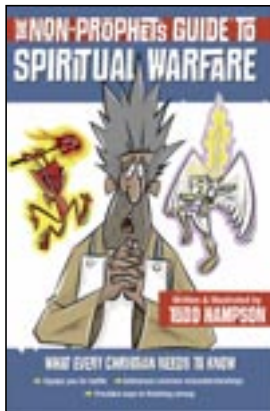
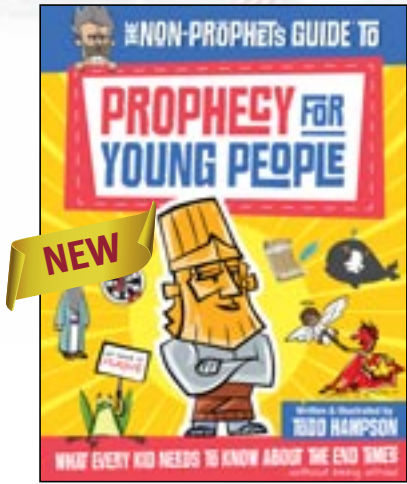
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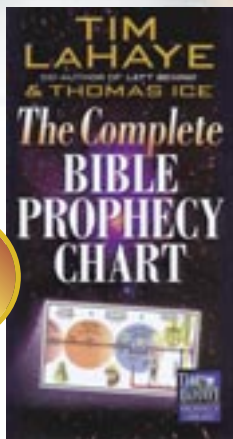
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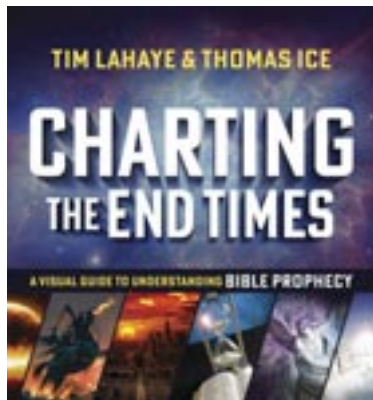
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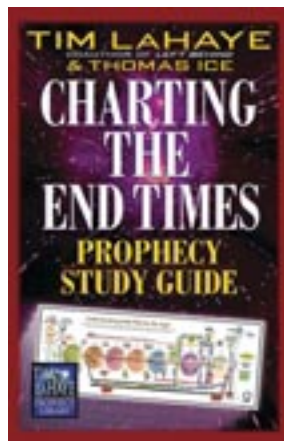
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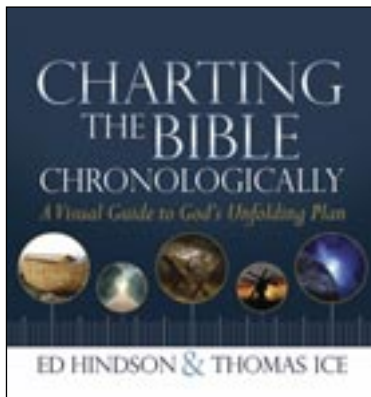
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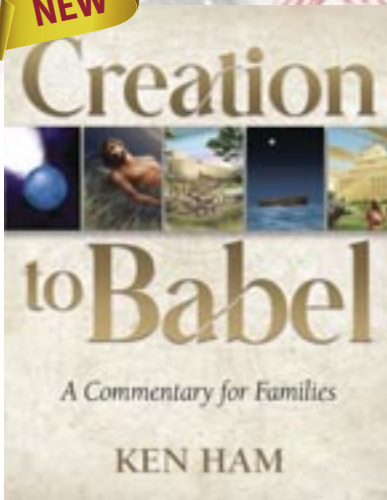
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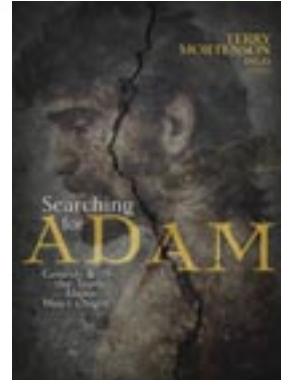


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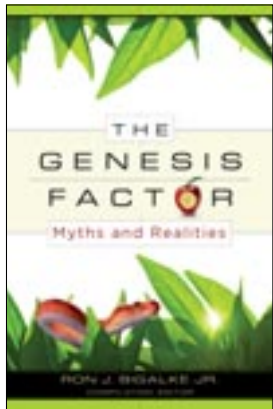
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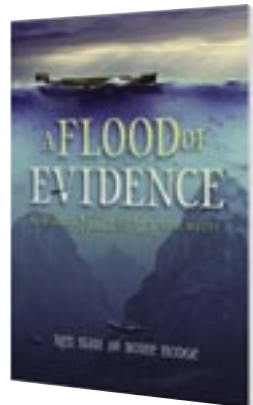
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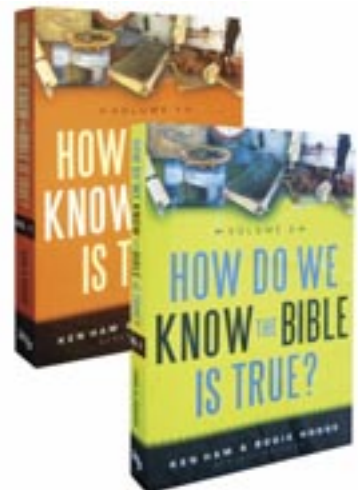
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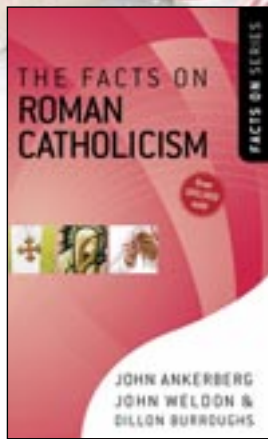
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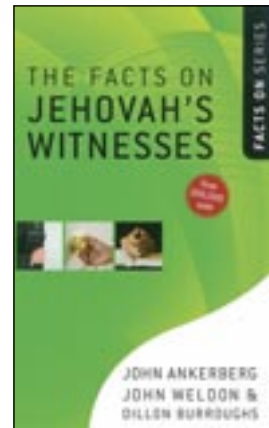
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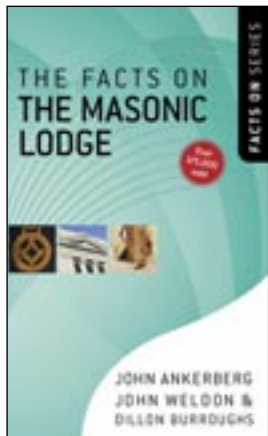
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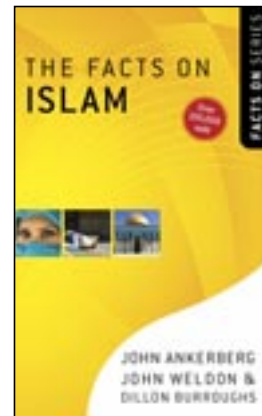
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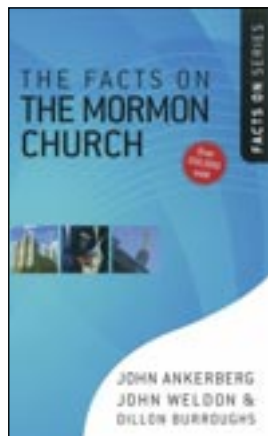
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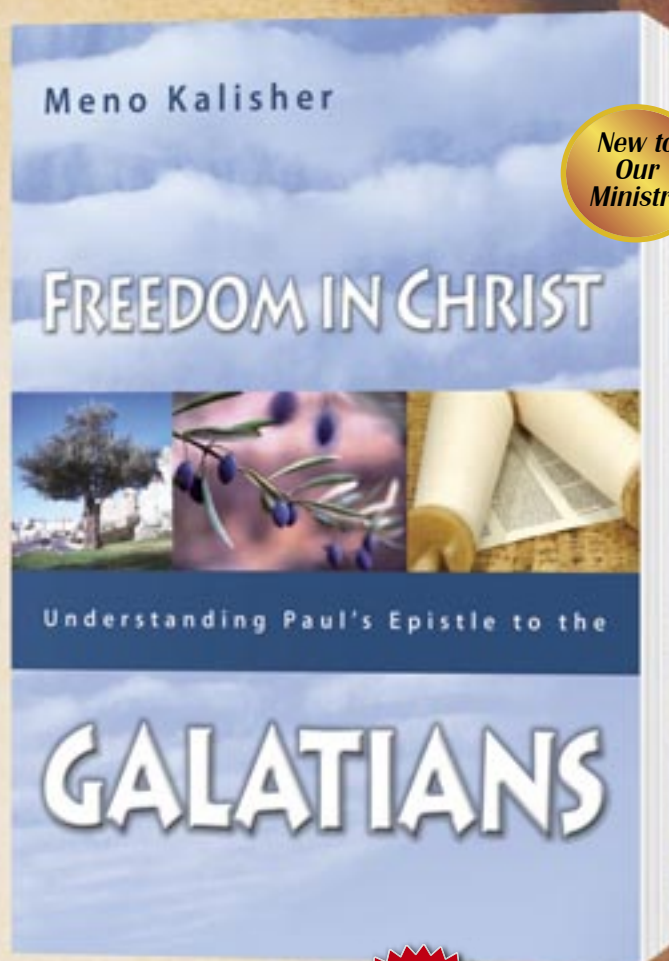
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