

The International Prophetic Voice for the Endtimes

Midnight Call

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Characteristic of Christ
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Part 1

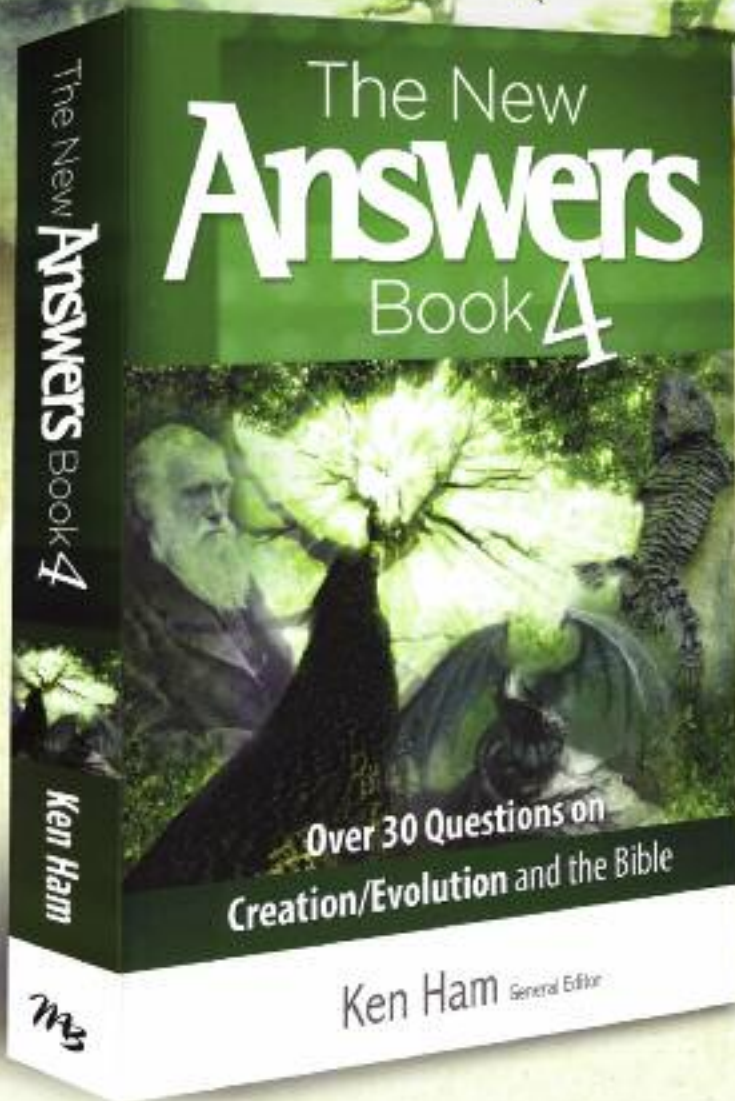
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“Canceled?”



By Samuel Rindlisbacher

Pastor at Midnight Call International

“Canceled due to Covid” has been a much heard, read, and quoted phrase of late. How many events, appointments, services and prayer meetings have been canceled or held on a limited scale. Some highways are empty; so are some restaurants, and work-from-home is the current practice. Private gatherings are kept to a minimum; funerals are limited to family members; and weddings are postponed to some point in the future. All this reminds me of a song often heard in the past:

The market deserted, no traffic on the street;

construction has ceased, harvest workers don't meet.

No housewife is busy, court cases must wait,

all work is suspended, for the King's at the gate!

Oh, the King is coming, the King is coming!

The Bible tells us that we know neither the day nor the hour when Jesus will return (Matt 25:13). Nevertheless, we should turn

our hearts toward Him: He is coming! His return has not been canceled; the Rapture has not been postponed or relegated to the distant future because of Covid. Rather, Jesus Christ will return at the point in time determined by the Father: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matt 24:36).

All of a sudden, Jesus Christ will return! I can well imagine that all that is happening now is merely the calm before the storm. The quiet before the hurricane. The retreat of the sea before a tsunami. Or the unusual behavior of animals before an earthquake. Sometimes it seems to me that God is once again speaking. Not loudly, but softly. Not powerfully, but all the more intently. Another, perhaps even the last, speaking of God before the Rapture.

Wasn't it similar before the Flood? Suddenly, the sawing and hammering stopped. Work on the Ark was finished, and silence returned: the eerie quiet before the storm.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Wasn't it the same also at the Cross of Calvary? Suddenly, there was silence: the oppressive silence of an eerie dark night. "And the sun was darkened (Luke 23:45a). "It was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour" (v. 44). A terrible thing had happened. The Son of God had been rejected. Man had rejected the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The people had said "no" to their Redeemer. And so the darkness fell, up until the loud cry: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (v. 46).

In view of the above, a question presents itself: Will our present silence—the moral and ethical night which engulfs us—elicit the next "cry of world history"? "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matt 25:6).

Whatever the case, are we ready if Jesus came today? Let us be ready! This edition of the *Midnight Call* once again wants to focus primarily on this: Maranatha—our Lord, come! Let us expect Him daily, but may we not allow the darkness of this world to overwhelm our senses and thoughts; yes, our very hearts. We have the light; we have Jesus. Let us live in this light, bear witness to the light, and be ready should He appear today.

Wishing you God's richest blessings with all my heart. (MC)

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OUR TASK

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

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

STATEMENT OF FAITH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Courage for Tomorrow!

Being a Christian
in Strong
Headwinds

Part 1



Johannes Pflaum

Our Lord says, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b). An appeal.

In hindsight, we know that despite numerous warnings, the *Titanic* plowed ahead with undiminished speed on that fateful night.



The word used by the Lord Jesus in John 16:33 for “tribulation” can also be translated as “distress,” “hardship,” “fear,” or “pressure.” And with the word “world,” he isn’t thinking of a picturesque sunset in the Bahamas, or the dreamlike snowy peaks of the Swiss Alps. Rather, it means fallen creation; and, most of all, mankind in its rebellion against God. Satan is the god of this world.

The Lord Jesus doesn’t tell the disciples, “In the world you may have tribulation,” or “Sometimes there might be tribulation.” No, He announces point-blank to His disciples: In a humanity divorced from God, you will experience “distress” or “hardship.” It’s unavoidably linked to discipleship. The term used here is the same used in Revelation for the Great Tribulation. That should keep you from seeing it through rose-colored glasses, even if you believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture.

The sinking of the *Titanic* still moves us. Numerous books have been written and films made. In this context, one could quote the sarcastic phrase, “It’s like rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*.”

The floating entertainment palace was regarded as a marvel of technology, and was rumored to be unsinkable. Of course, there were poor and miserable people in the lower decks. There were also Christian believers on board, and people came to believe in Jesus Christ through that horrific night of destruction.

In hindsight, we know that despite numerous warnings, the *Titanic* plowed ahead with undiminished speed on that fateful night. The ship had received warnings about ice, hours before the accident. The sharply plummeting air temperature also indicated that pack ice and icebergs were close by. Regardless of all of this, the dancing and gaiety on board continued until disaster struck. The sinking of the *Titanic* serves as a cautionary example of what can happen if you ignore signs just because you’re doing well, are comfortable, or want to paint everything in the best possible light.

I don’t want to connect this example to society or world events (even if that might be justified), but to us as the church of Jesus Christ, still enjoying free-

Courage for Tomorrow! - Part 1

Freedom of belief isn't the normal state of things for the church of Jesus, but the exception—even though it has lasted a long time in the West. However, the signs are intensifying that our freedom of belief is diminishing, and that we have to prepare ourselves for a sharp headwind that can increase to the point of strong pressure and distress.



dom of belief here in the West. It's clear what founding principle the Lord Jesus foretold to His disciples. Freedom of belief isn't the normal state of things for the church of Jesus, but the exception—even though it has lasted a long time in the West. However, the signs are intensifying that our freedom of belief is diminishing, and that we have to prepare ourselves for a sharp headwind that can increase to the point of strong pressure and distress. My concern is that we believers are similar to how the people were back on the *Titanic*. We'd rather ignore the facts and convince ourselves that everything will work out, instead of facing reality.

This article's title is taken from a book that was published forty years ago and has long been out of print. Werner Stoy wrote under the title (and on the topic) *Courage for Tomorrow: Christians in the West Prior to Persecution*. Although some of the configurations have changed due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the content of the book remains current. Stoy makes it clear how much the Bible speaks of suffering and distress, and that this topic is largely ignored in dogmatics (teaching), ecclesiology (study of the church), and ethics (practical life as a Christian).

We aren't nearly conscious enough of the tremendous societal shifts in recent decades. First, Christian values were consciously rejected, and hostility to the Bible and the Gospel increased. Instead of confessing our faith in the face of these developments and being refined through discipleship, we've begun to "pussyfoot" around our faith in order to increasingly adapt to secular society. Of course, there are still very missionary-minded people and followers of Christ. But this overall impression is having an effect. For example:

Thirty years ago, faithful churches and their members were strongly pro-evangelization. Posters were hung—some of which already contained a clear message—and invitations were issued from house to house, even though the doors were often slammed shut in response in those days. In the 1970s, believers were increasingly wearing buttons and pins showing a clear profession of faith. Many cars were not only decorated with "Jesus fish," but also had bumper stickers with a clear message. There were street and hospital missions, as well as other actions to share the faith with the public. It's true that some of these are no longer possible; however, I'm concerned that we will increasingly allow ourselves to be blocked by the headwind, instead of courageously opposing the developments.

In his book, Werner Stoy points out that persecutors always try to prevent public mission work and evangelism. He gives the example of the former Soviet Union, where persecution increased as soon as missionaries were openly working and the country was being evangelized. On the other hand, belief within your own four walls or within your church is permissible. I'm afraid that we'll promote possible future developments through our very withdrawal

As long as the sheep are fluffy and cozy, we don't have any objection. But we don't like to be compared with sheep for slaughter.

from the public sphere and our encouragement of these social adjustments.

What does the New Testament teach us about suffering for Christ's sake? I'll take the Gospel of John out of the four, for example. The term "world" occurs most frequently there: On the one hand, as the good world created by God, and on the other, mainly as a description of humanity in opposition to God. We read at the very beginning in John 1:5, how the darkness tried to overcome or extinguish the light; and in verse 10, how the world didn't recognize Him. John 7:7 explains that the world hates Jesus because He testifies that their works are evil (cf. John 3:19-20). In John 15:18-21, the Lord reveals that this hatred also affects His disciples: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me."

Our Lord has summarized our entirely selfish nature—in addition to the hatred and hostility, which can reach extremes—in this doctrine of discipleship: "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:25). It's already a problem for us today, if we could lose our reputation or social standing for Christ's sake.

In the book of Acts, we like to read that the early church in Jerusalem initially had "favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47). However, this favor didn't prevent the persecution that followed soon afterward. In this context, we read something in Acts 5:41, which contradicts not only our human nature, but also our attitude toward life today: "Then they left



the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name."

Outwardly, the outbreak of persecution fractured the life of the early church. But the icy headwind made its testimony for Jesus all the stronger. Acts 8:4 states that those who were dispersed by persecution proclaimed the Word of God. It's also interesting what the church prayed about, when the apostles came under pressure from the great persecution. They didn't ask for the situation to change, but for frankness in their testimony (Acts 4:29-31). While James lost his life for the Lord, Peter was set free (Acts 12). The church had prayed for this as well. However, the pressure didn't go away.

Chapter 9 begins with Paul. The first thing he is told after his conversion is how much he must suffer for Jesus' sake (v. 16). Mind you, this didn't refer to suffering in general—which can also be severe—but about pressure, tribulation, fear, and persecution for the sake of Jesus. This concept pervades the book of Acts with varying degrees of intensity, until chapter 28. In Acts 14:22, we read of how Paul and Barnabas strengthened the young churches over the course of the first missionary journey: "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

In the Epistles of the Apostle Paul himself, we nearly always find the subject of persecution and af-

Courage for Tomorrow! - Part 1

Baptism is a confession. Anyone who is baptized is baptized into the death of Christ before the new life comes. This death doesn't just concern the sinful former life, but also affirms suffering for Christ's sake.



fliction (whether directly or indirectly). Romans 8 is well known to us, because it says that nothing and nobody can separate us from the love of Christ—the great hymn of the certainty of salvation, according to some. We easily overlook the fact that the entire section is in the context of tribulation for Christ's sake. In verse 36, Paul even compares himself (and us) “as sheep to be slaughtered.” As long as the sheep are fluffy and cozy, we don't have any objection. But we don't like to be compared with sheep for slaughter.

In Second Corinthians 11, from verse 16 onward, Paul cracks open the door to give us a glimpse into his various sufferings for Christ's sake. We shouldn't forget that Paul didn't write Second Corinthians at the end of his life, but around three years before his first captivity, and 9-10 years before the end of his life. And in one of his first letters—the letter to the Galatians—Paul says that, regarding the matter of circumcision, he bears the markings of Christ (Gal 6:17). He doesn't mean this in a Roman Catholic/mystical sense, but rather, he's saying that he was tortured and suffered physically for the sake of the Gospel.

In his three captivity epistles, the Apostle also spoke, directly or indirectly, on the subject of suffer-

ing. These epistles include Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, which he wrote together with Philemon. Only one passage from Philippians should be singled out: In Philippians 3, Paul speaks of the overwhelming knowledge of Christ, the reason he regards everything that was formerly of importance to him as worthless. His only concern now is to “win Christ, and be found in him” (vv. 8-9, KJV). “That I may know him and

the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (vv. 10-12).

Can we say the same? Not in a “spiritualized” way, but in one that is very practical in terms of our willingness to suffer. One note about this: Baptism is a confession. Anyone who is baptized is baptized into the death of Christ before the new life comes. This death doesn't just concern the sinful former life, but also affirms suffering for Christ's sake. In today's baptism classes, this is largely ignored. In Islamic countries, for example, every candidate for baptism knows what it means for him, and the high price that is attached.

First and Second Thessalonians were written to a young church in the midst of persecution. They specifically cover the topics of pressure and distress. Incidentally, we can see from these two letters that a church experiencing persecution isn't automatically equipped against temptation. Rather, the two can go hand in hand.

Paul's final epistle is Second Timothy, which he wrote before his execution. In it, he once again em-

Regardless of what we think about the Rapture (whether pre-, post-, or mid-Tribulation), the book of Revelation also teaches us that testimony for Christ is associated with suffering.

phasizes the willingness to suffer as an important prerequisite to discipleship and service: “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God” (2 Tim 1:8).

Persecution also plays a role in the letter to the Hebrews. The Hebrews even happily accepted the seizure of their property for the sake of the faith, and suffered as prisoners (Heb 10:34). But we also read that we must not forget the persecuted brothers and sisters: “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body” (Heb 13:3). We’re criminally guilty of neglecting this. No worship or prayer service should overlook praying for the persecuted church. Stoy makes it clear that this intercession by the Confessing Church under the Third Reich, was an integral part of the services. But so often, we’re only concerned with our own problems and minor ailments.

The Apostle Peter also wrote to the scattered and persecuted church. His second epistle in particular shows us that persecution doesn’t automatically prevent temptation. Peter encourages believers to endure and stand firm under external pressures. He explains the promises that are involved, and how the Lord uses suffering and pressure to cleanse and change His children. These are two topics we have completely lost focus on today. We live in a society where the only issue is how to prevent suffering at all levels. We also belong to a Christianity that believes that discipleship has something to do with spiritual “numbing,” with the aim of floating through this life in a bubble of spiritual well-being.

None of us wants to suffer. We can also pray that the Lord will take away or alleviate suffering. But today’s aversion to suffering of any kind also makes us averse to suffering when it comes to the Gospel. And we overlook how many promises have been made regarding suffering for Jesus’ sake. To quote First Peter 1:6-9, “In this you re-

joice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

Regardless of what we think about the Rapture (whether pre-, post-, or mid-Tribulation), the book of Revelation also teaches us that testimony for Christ is associated with suffering. The last book in the Bible has always been a book of consolation for the persecuted church. In the seven letters, we find the sufferings of various churches, up to and including martyrdom. In spite of all the suffering and challenges, Revelation keeps drawing attention to God’s greatness. As already mentioned, if the pre-tribulation Rapture should occur, it must not obscure our perspective on affliction for Christ’s sake.

A brother told me the following about Christians in China: A revival occurred there before the Cultural Revolution. Three people whom the Lord undoubtedly used, and who are still great spiritual role models today, emphasized the pre-Tribulation Rapture. When the Cultural Revolution broke out and persecution began, some Christians said that they had been cheated because they were now suffering terribly for their faith, and the Great Tribulation couldn’t possibly be worse. It even went so far that several fell away from the faith. We can learn from this how much we have to be careful not to emphasize things incorrectly, or even to combine belief in the pre-Tribulation Rapture with our reluctance to suffer.

(MR0120/1052)



RIPENING TIMES #9

GLOBAL DEBT OPPRESSION

PROPHESIED – PART 2



Over the decades, I have been to countless conferences (some of these prophecy conferences ... others secular economics meetings) where at least one speaker will fire-up the audience with many charts showing soaring debts. A frequent representation has always been a picture showing stacks of \$100 bills reaching the moon ... and so on.

By **Wilfred Hahn**

Catastrophe is always just around the corner according to these speakers ... some even claiming that certain “insiders” have told them that a monetary collapse is just weeks away. But here we are, some half a century and more later, and outstanding debts are accelerating anew as perhaps never before in history.

These speakers (and we mean no personal harm when we say this) almost always miss the essential point. For one, we must not overlook that every penny of debt in the entire world is owned by someone or some entity somewhere. If debt is increasing overall (and we will not burden readers with reams of statistics), the heaping of wealth must also increase. Of course, there are many underlying processes at work that bring about such extreme wealth imbalances.

Why Was the Levitical System Needed?

Since time immemorial, there has always been a human tendency to produce a rich class. In part, it is the outcome of the innate human penchants (these being the greatest weaknesses of human beings) of the love of money and economic security. Wealth would heap itself up (see James 5).

Over time, left to its natural course, the majority of wealth will most always be held by a small minority. Here we again recall that debt imbalances almost always go hand in hand with the heaping up of wealth. Many economists overlook this flipside relationship, as mentioned.

Extreme debt levels lead to a destruction of benevolent governance, resulting in oligarchy and plutocracy. Why? Because, as already pointed out, the more debt that exists, the more concentrated wealth will become over time. The wealthy become wealthier.

There is a tendency then to become oppressors ... not allowing the debt captivity of the populaces to be reversed. Arnold Toynbee was one of the very few modern economists who understood that the role of debt would lead to concentration of wealth. This is exactly the process unfolding today ... worldwide.

Therefore, the emergence of an oppressive, entrenched rich class was always a threat to societies—to a greater or lesser extent. (Rest assured, this is not a diatribe against the rich. These are statements about natural, innate human behaviors.)

God commanded the Hebrews to follow the Levitical system ... not one like the Roman system. Un-

Debt clean slates were a wise policy. It had a healthful impact on many households and overall economic activity. The rise of plutocrats (a super rich class that dominated everything, including rulers) was held at bay by doing so.

der the Levitical system, there still existed plenty of reward and opportunity for entrepreneurs and industrious workers.

Crucially, the Levitical laws prohibited (and prevented) chronic economic slavery and a perpetual poor class. We may call it the Ancient Monetary Theory. It stands in direct contrast to the new Modern Monetary Theory, as well as Roman philosophy, which upheld the sanctity of debt, not its cancellation.

Ancient Wisdom of Debt Forgiveness

In ancient agrarian societies, the burden of debt tended to expand until it exceeded the ability of the debtors to repay. One drought was often enough to force farmers into deep indebtedness. Often, they would need to borrow in order to pay their taxes. At the very least, farmers would need to buy their seed to be able to plant the next year's crops.

Readers may be familiar with Hammurabi (who wrote the famous Code of Laws). He announced one or more debt Jubilees. (As an interesting time reference, he may actually have been a contemporary of Abraham of the Bible.) As part of a Jubilee (also referred to as a debt amnesty or clean slate), debts were written off or canceled.

Debt clean slates were a wise policy. It had a healthful impact on many households and overall economic activity. The rise of plutocrats (a super rich class that dominated everything, including rulers) was held at bay by doing so.

The Levitical 7- and 50-year debt cycles of the Hebrews were very similar in effect. The Hebrews were mandated by God to flatten all debts every 7th and 50th year. In the latter cycle, labor contracts would be canceled, and property ownership return to its original familial owners.

A leading researcher of Middle East cultures in this field has been Dr. Michael Hudson. His most recent book, ...*And Forgive Them Their Debts: Lend-*



ing, Foreclosure and Redemption from Bronze Age Finance to the Jubilee Year (Dresden: ISLET-Verlag, 2018) lays out the history of these practices.

Of course, the status quo has not been quick to endorse his work. Much to the contrary. Why? Because, as mentioned, we today live in the Roman era, which pursues a much more oppressive treatment of debt. The Roman-style creditor system is supreme and powerful today and has no intention of redistributing the wealth of its prosperous elites to the poor.

Given that the current-day systems are so entrenched and oppressive ... holding captives ... for this system to be overturned on earth, requires a “deliverer.” Thankfully, the Bible says that there will be one such person.

That is the reason why the Lord Jesus Christ said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19; cf. Isaiah 61:1-2).

For the world systems, a great global Jubilee is prophesied, and it is identified with “the acceptable day of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).



Crucially, the Bible does directly indicate that a worldwide debt explosion plays a key role in the Last Days.

Still Living in the Roman Era

There can be no doubt that we are still living in the Roman Era today. The Bible verifies this view. As such, it only follows that the creditor/debtor relations that prevail today are also of Roman origin.

According to the book of Revelation, the Roman Era is identified as the sixth king. We quote Apostle John, who said: “They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while” (Revelation 17:10).

The one “that is” (existing now) is most certainly the sixth and Roman king. Given the pace of acceleration in debt growth, however, we would not be surprised if the 7th king were at the very door. Whenever the rule of the 7th king emerges, it will be only for a short while. Clearly, it serves as a prelude to great disaster (The Great Tribulation).

Eight for Eight Reasons

We consider rising world indebtedness as one of the “signs of the ripening times.” In summary, what are the grounds for our case?

At the very beginning of this Ripening Times series, we laid out 8 qualifying criteria with which to screen end-time factors of significance. Above all, each “ripening” development must be supported Biblically. Crucially, the Bible does directly indicate that a worldwide debt explosion plays a key role in the Last Days. In addition, our screen of 7 other indicators also validates debt as a “ripening factor.” We will list them briefly.

1. Acceleration: Any “accelerating” trend, particularly so beginning after 1948 (this being the point in which God’s timepiece, Israel, again became a sovereign entity in its original land) and/or post 1880s (the beginning of Zionism). If the Lord sees fit to clearly alert us to such momentous time points in His plan, then we would be wise to expect other indicators to emerge as well.

2. Recency: While the “recency effect” (meaning, that one tends to be biased by what is seen



presently) is the bane of all secular forecasters and interpreters of Biblical signs alike, a “recently accelerating trend” is much more notable than one having begun a long time ago. Why? Because the Bible frequently tells us that last day events will come “quickly.” “The great day of the LORD is near—near and coming quickly” (Zephaniah 1:14). Pre-Rapture Christians should be able to discern increasing intensity in world affairs, and the convergence of the signs of the times to final events.

3. Improbability: We find ourselves asking “why” regarding the unlikely emergence of a factor... and “why now and not at some other time in history.” Why would policymakers respond with policies that are directly contrary to historical knowledge? The very improbability and inexplicability of such emerging trends qualifies as a possible sign.

4. Global Scope: Trends that have a worldwide influence (not just applying locally or to North America) are an indicative criterion... i.e., identifying them as a potential “significant” trend. After all, end-time Bible prophecy is global in scope. For example, the Tribulation ... the world’s leaders conspiring to unshackle their chains (Psalm 2:3) ... etc. are all global fulfillments. Therefore, we are particularly alert for “global” trends.

5. Interconnection: Any trend that has confluence or interconnection with another accelerating trend of “significance”—interweaving and reinforcing each other—likely qualifies as also being a “significant” trend. In this case, for example, global debt

What is the Bible’s view on debt forgiveness? It is the same as with sin. Both are to be forgiven. Both sinners and debtors are captives.

dynamics are interrelated to “heaping up of wealth” ...another ripening sign of the times.

6. Suddenness: A tell-tale key identifying a “significant trend” is its suddenness and rapidity. The entire global rise of the credit/debtor situation that we witness today has unfolded in less than a century.

7. Godlessness: We have stated that significant “signs” are also likely to be in the service of Mammon, humanism, greed and immorality. It would not be incongruous if they cater to political and economic expediency. Godlessness is rife.

All seven characteristics validate an end-time debt explosion as a qualifying candidate trend of prophetic significance. While we will not want to engage in speculation on the near-term timing of the world’s debt explosion, we nevertheless can identify a clear-cut ripening trend of prophetic significance.

These “ripening signs” of the end times are indeed well underway, as we have shown in this series.

Points to Ponder

The Creator deliberately designed the universe to comprise dualities ... good and bad, hot and cold ... etc. But the major overriding duality of all consists of these two realms that oppose each other: God and Mammon. God created it as such that one must willingly continue (choose) to love Him completely.

It is not possible to love Mammon and to love God at the same time. And, God foreknew of course that Mammon—this being Satan’s realm of influence over humanity—would entirely mislead and corrupt the world. A Roman-style credit and debt system is a key part of this program.

Massive indebtedness is therefore a sign of the ripening times.

All of the above is not to say that God intended all to be equal ... everything to be egalitarian. Far from it. The Bible recognizes that everyone has special giftings; that everyone is different. At the same time, people who do not work do not merit to eat: “[...]

we gave you this rule: ‘The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat’” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

It surely will not be overlooked that rising debt (in real and per capita terms) carries with it severe consequences “eventually.” The time point will arrive ... as it must ... where the debt piles implode upon themselves.

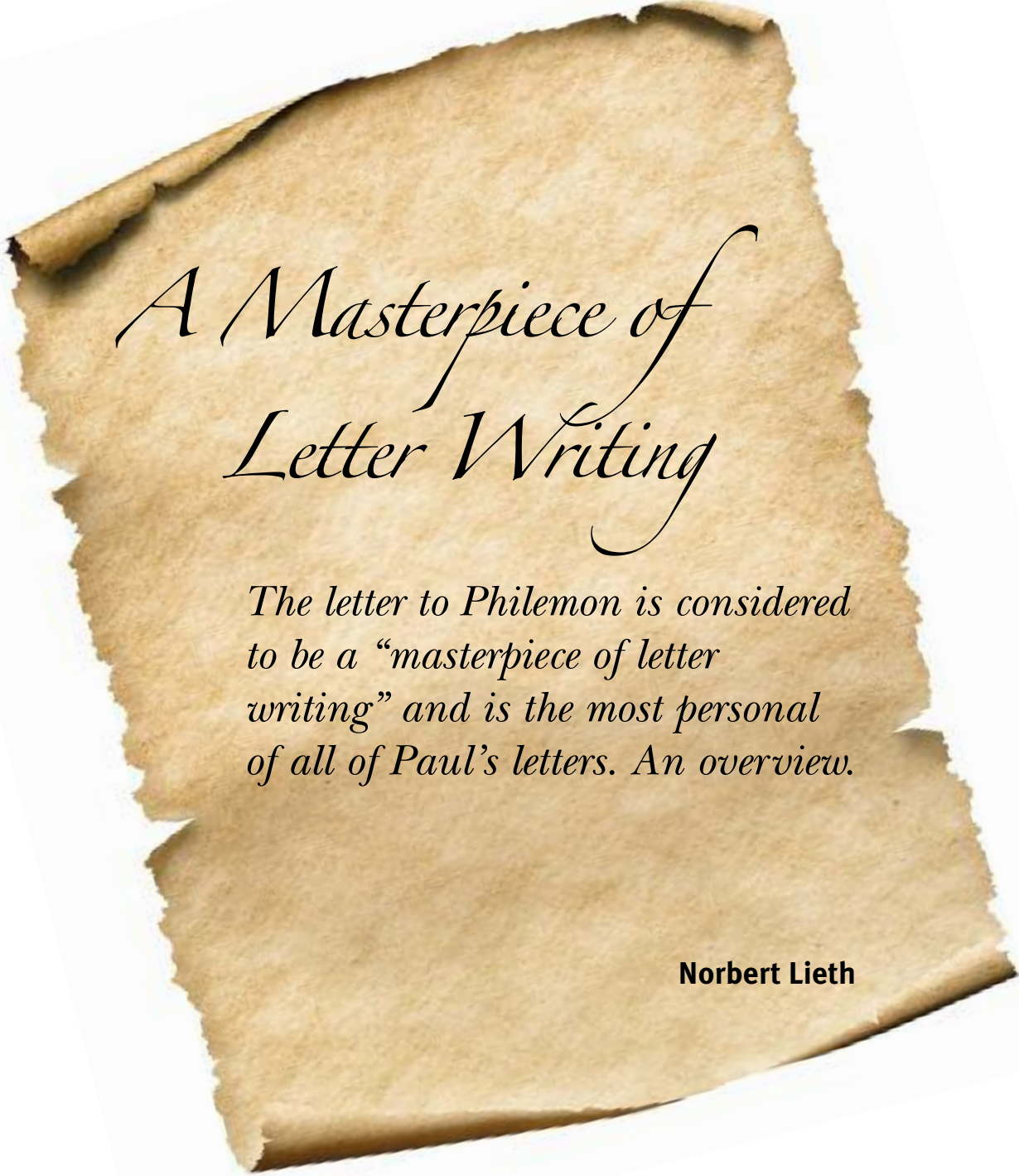
As the situation exists now, with global debt levels already at all-time highs, the world finds itself reliant (addicted) upon continued borrowed economic growth. Why? Because there really is no possibility of reversal. The world has embarked upon a path of no return. As we have said, this alone suggests prophetic significance: There exists today a record amount of debt globally, causing the world to be on an irreversible trajectory. Its final impact can only be of Biblical proportions, as described in Bible prophecy.

And, as we have shown, 8 of the 8 criteria that we use to confirm “ripening trends of prophetic significance” unanimously apply in the case of global indebtedness.

Complicating this situation is the fact that the world’s population continues to age. For now, these dynamics are contributing to elevated financial markets (for the short-term) ...being deceptively and dangerously alluring. This delusive state of affairs could last some time yet, because policymakers and individual citizens “want to believe.”

Why? “[...] Wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). This is the aspect that many long-time, “doom and gloom” forecasters have overlooked. While they may be correct in their theoretical diagnosis, they have failed to recognize the human capacity for self-deception. People will believe what they want to hear.

What is the Bible’s view on debt forgiveness? It is the same as with sin. Both are to be forgiven. Both sinners and debtors are captives. A great Jubilee is coming ... a great resetting of the world’s systems. How wonderful are the words, “Forgive us our debts [...]” (Matthew 6:12) to, “Forgive us our sins [...]” (Luke 11:4). (MC)



A Masterpiece of Letter Writing

The letter to Philemon is considered to be a “masterpiece of letter writing” and is the most personal of all of Paul’s letters. An overview.

Norbert Lieth

Because of the warmth and love expressed in the letter to Philemon, the letter has been compared to the Old Testament book of Ruth. It’s lines from a cell; that is, a letter written by the Apostle Paul while imprisoned in Rome, to his rich friend Philemon, who apparently lived in Colossae (Colossians 4:7-10). There he was, working alongside Archippus, a fellow church elder, and making his house available for the church to meet (Phile-

mon 2). Paul wrote this letter around AD 62. The Scofield Bible names its theme as “love exemplified.” William MacDonald comments, “This little missive shows the courtesy, tact—with a dash of humor—and the loving heart of Paul.”

This letter concerns the Apostle’s struggle for a slave named Onesimus. Onesimus had been employed in Philemon’s house, and had probably robbed his mas-

“This epistle gives us a masterful and tender illustration of Christian love. For here we see how St. Paul takes the part of poor Onesimus and, to the best of his ability, advocates his cause with his master.”
– Martin Luther



ter (v. 18). Due to his flight to Rome, he had somehow ended up in prison there. He met Paul among the prisoners, and was converted. Now Paul was sending him back, along with a coworker named Tychicus, who took a letter from the Apostle to the Colossians and one to Philemon (Col 4:7-10). In the letter to Philemon, we see the love of the Savior exhibited through Paul toward a man who was caught in sin, even in the midst of his own captivity. Paul had a heart for kings, governors, princes, soldiers, and slaves alike. Paul reached both the rich Philemon and the poor slave Onesimus with the Gospel. It's noteworthy how Paul assumes the position of a lawyer dedicated to his client, and represents him. The great Apostle fights, wrestles, and vouches for Onesimus, who was “only” a slave.

We also see that the Holy Spirit's work cannot be bound.

Despite captivity, Paul was free. The Lord can also use the most unfavorable circumstances in our lives and make something of them, to proclaim His glorious name. So, the Lord doesn't just use large, well-organized gatherings to save people around us, but also our everyday lives and the situation we're in. Paul could just as easily preach the Gospel to kings, synagogues, Areopagus in Athens, or in prison. He could be used anywhere, and didn't make his condition an obstacle to testifying of his Lord.

The letter to Philemon also shows us how the Gospel can change people. For one thing, in the relationship of a sinner to God; but apart from that, within interpersonal relationships as well. We see how important it is to remedy the wrongs we've committed, despite being forgiven. Onesimus is sent back to his master. Forgiveness is emphasized

here, but the wrongs committed must also be corrected and sorted out in front of others.

From the Apostle's letter, we further learn how wisdom prevails. Paul acts wisely; deliberately not as an apostle, but as a friend and brother, and even with a certain deference to Philemon. As a result, he wins this beloved brother again to his cause. “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment” (Psalm 37:30). And, “he that winneth souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30b).

In the letter to Philemon, the Holy Spirit turns out to be the One who possesses and conveys tact. The Scofield Bible remarks, “[The letter] is of priceless value as instruction in practical righteousness; Christian brotherhood; Christian courtesy; and the law of love.”

Martin Luther wrote: “This epistle gives us a masterful and tender illustration of Christian love. For here we see how St. Paul takes the part of poor Onesimus and, to the best of his ability, advocates his cause with his master. He acts exactly as if he were himself Onesimus, who had done wrong. Yet he does this not with force or compulsion, as lay within his rights; but he empties himself of his rights in order to compel Philemon also to waive his rights. What Christ has done for us with God the Father, that St. Paul does also for Onesimus with Philemon. For we are all His Onesimuses if we believe.”

Last but not least, we learn that if each of us saw ourselves as an Onesimus, yet stood up for brothers and sisters as a Paul, things would be well in the kingdom of God and we would have no brotherly difficulties.

(MR0220/1060)



The Message of Jonah – Part 4

Dr. Ron J. Bigalke

One of the worst atrocities in world history was the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in the small central African country of Rwanda. At least 800,000 or more people were massacred by thousands of Hutus in 100 days. Rwanda was approximately 90 percent “Christian” at the time, and the notion that such mass violence would ever occur was unthinkable.

The contributing factor to the genocide was rampant tribalism. Rwanda has two primary ethnic groups: Hutu (they were the farmers) and Tutsi (they were cattle farmers). Trouble began with these groups referring to themselves ethnically and tribally rather than as Rwandans. The country became divided, with each group dehumanizing the other; the Hutu believed the Tutsi lacked any positive qualities, and vice versa. Hatred toward one another became acceptable, and that animosity eventually manifested itself brutally.

The same will occur in America without recognition that all people are created equally in

the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27). “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Certainly, “the world” includes all ethnic and racial groups.

Hatred and prejudice will always result in disregard for God’s loving plan of salvation, with destruction and vengeance being the outcome. The book of Jonah depicts what occurs when a person fails to represent God’s love, and instead allows personal desires and prejudices to become all-consuming. Jonah allowed hatred and intolerance to devour his life, which brought him to the

Jonah's great displeasure was actually evil. He felt more than anger; he was irritated and vexed by God's actions.

verge of death. God, however, loves the world so much that "whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom 10:13). Salvation in Christ makes it possible for "we, who are many," to live as "one body" (Rom 12:5), and even to love one's enemies and pray for them (Matt 5:44).

JONAH'S ANGER VS. GOD'S COMPASSION

(Jonah 4:1-11) Based upon Nineveh's repentance (ch. 3), one might conclude that the book of Jonah would end there. The fact that another chapter remains indicates that God's deliverance of the Ninevites from imminent destruction is not the climax of the book. What is most important to learn from Jonah is God's compassion toward His people.

Jonah was "greatly displeased"—even "angry"—with Nineveh's repentance, because it led to God withholding judgment (4:1). Although the Assyrian Empire was in decline at the time of Jonah, the prophet still sought destruction of the capital city, since the nation could regain its former sovereignty and would then rival Israel. Jonah hoped the Ninevites would not repent and God's judgment would ensue. Obviously, the prophet's heart was not right before God. Jonah did the right thing by going to Nineveh, yet he did so with the wrong mindset. The fact that God is as concerned with motives as He is with our actions is the emphasis of the closing chapter.

Jonah's great displeasure was actually evil. He felt more than anger; he was irritated and vexed by God's actions. "Evil" (Heb. *re'eh*) had described the Ninevites previously, but now it characterized Jonah. He was now "evil" in the estimation of God, and thus in need of judgment like the people of Nineveh (cf. Rom 2:1). Yet the Lord would be compassionate to Jonah, as He was with the Ninevites. When the Lord turned from His indignation (3:9-10), Jonah welcomed sinful anger into his life. The conjunction "but"

(4:1) emphasizes the immeasurable contrast between God's compassion and Jonah's displeasure.

Jonah's behavior was similar to that of the unforgiving servant parable (Matt 18:21-35), and the older brother in the Prodigal Son parable. His attitude was in evident contrast to that of the Apostle Paul, who had "great sorrow and unceasing grief" in his heart concerning those "separated from Christ" (Rom 9:2-3; cf. Exod 32:30-35). Paul expressed great exultation and joy with his own experience (Rom 8:38-39), yet sincerely desired the salvation of others, and even sacrificed much in that regard (Phil 3:8).

Jonah's prayer indicates why he would rather flee to Tarshish than proclaim imminent judgment to Nineveh, in addition to why he would rather die than obey God (4:3). He knew that God is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity." Jonah knew his Bible, since he quoted Exodus 34:6-7. He disliked the notion that God might have compassion on Nineveh. Jonah apparently expected God to violate His own character to demonstrate mercy. The prophet did not merely fail to have compassion toward the Ninevites; he was displeased with God's attributes. Yet the Lord's mercy is inseparable from His justice. He is immutable, infinite, and unfailing in His mercy.

Jonah had earlier celebrated God's deliverance (Jon 2), yet now had become like the "wicked slave" who was forgiven and would not express mercy toward his "fellow slave" (Matt 18:21-35). Perhaps he was also angry because the announcement of judgment failed to materialize, which might provoke questions regarding his authenticity as a true prophet (cf. Deut 18:21-22). Oddly enough, Jonah actually hoped for the failure of his ministry.

Another translation of the words "greatly displeased" (v. 1) could be, "it was evil to Jonah, a great evil." The pronoun "it" refers to God's actions, which meant that Jonah vehemently dis-

The Message of Jonah – Part 4

No sinner deserves the saving mercy of God. All sinners are born dead in “trespasses and sins,” and are thus “by nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:1, 3c).

agreed with the Lord demonstrating mercy toward Israel’s enemies. The immense corruption of attitudes and values is evident in that Jonah believed saving Nineveh was evil, and his death would be good. He attacked God’s action by stating that the Ninevites did not deserve to receive the Lord’s grace and mercy. The truth is that no person deserves God’s compassion (cf. Rom 3:10-12)!

God’s mercy is always undeserved. All genuine compassion from the Lord must be unconditional, because deserved mercy is a misnomer for justice. No sinner deserves the saving mercy of God. All sinners are born dead in “trespasses and sins,” and are thus “by nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:1, 3c). If all of fallen humanity were condemned at once to eternal retribution, every person would have justly merited the damnation.

Sovereign grace alone is the cause for any sinner to be delivered from divine wrath, for there is nothing within the sinner to merit salvation. “For He says...‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy” (Rom 9:15-16). There would be no hope of redemption apart from the mercy of God. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23); and, “the wages of sin is death” (6:23a). Repentant sinners do not receive what they deserve, solely because of divine mercy.

The Hebrew adjective *rachum*, translated “compassionate” (Jon 4:2), means “merciful” (in the sense of saving or sparing). The noun *rechem* means “womb” in Hebrew, indicating that God’s compassion is comparable to the depths of love a mother has for her child. Jonah had compassion for the plant that shaded him from the sun (v. 6), but none for the people of Nineveh. Jonah’s problem is all too common. People often have “compassion” for people or things that have intrinsic benefit or value to them personally, yet are entirely lacking in that mercy toward what

does not (in their eyes). Nevertheless, the Lord God is gracious and compassionate, and this is not based upon some benefit He may gain. Therefore, the book of Jonah instructs people of all ages in compassion.

God’s compassionate nature is again evident in how he confronted Jonah kindly by asking him questions (vv. 4, 9, 11; cf. Job 38—39). Jonah condemned God for relenting in His anger, and the Lord challenged the prophet for his fury. The Lord then confronted Jonah with his sinful attitude (Jon 4:5-9). Jonah did not reply and departed petulantly (v. 5). God had “appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah” (1:17), and now the Lord “appointed a plant” to deliver the prophet “from his evil” (the Hebrew word *ra’*, “bad, evil,” is translated “discomfort” in the NASB).

God’s sovereignty is evident again in that He next “appointed a worm” (4:7) and “scorching east wind” (v. 8) to discipline His prophet and teach him a lesson. For the first time since verse 4, God spoke again with the exact same question (v. 9a). Jonah answered the rhetorical question wrongly (v. 9b). The repeated question (vv. 4, 9) is certainly fundamental to God’s intended message. The climax of the book of Jonah is not the Ninevites’ repentance; rather, it is God challenging Jonah to recognize the immense error of his bitter nationalism, and how proper it was for the Lord to express His compassion toward the Assyrians in Nineveh.

“Compassion” (vv. 10-11) is the fundamental attitude. God’s compassion extends not just to plants, but even more so toward people. Jonah’s knowledge of a gracious, compassionate, and sovereign God should have made him more responsive to God’s will—which meant being compassionate toward people who lacked such knowledge and a relationship with the Lord (cf. Matt 20:1-16; Luke 15:25-32). When a person neglects God’s love for others and becomes consumed with personal desires and prejudices, life becomes self-centered rather than God-focused.

(1123)

What It Means to Eat from the Tree of Life

Wim Malgo (1922-1992)

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 17.
Revelation 2:5-7.



The Lord Jesus is searching for us and calls to us, “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev 2:5). Then it grows dark. Do you notice how the lights are going out around you? Do you see how it’s growing dark? Repent and do the first works!

The imperative to repent is expressed in this first missive and in the subsequent ones using the words, “He that hath an

ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (vv. 7, 11, 17, 29). That means: whoever—as a born again person, as a member of Jesus’ body—has the inner ability or disposition to hear what the Lord says, should truly hear. In other words, he has the responsibility to follow what he has heard and understood.

Immediately afterwards, the Lord makes this first promise of overcoming: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (v. 7b).

What It Means to Eat from the Tree of Life

So, eating from the tree of life means: eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why it is so important that we overcome.



This first promise to the overcomer takes us back to paradise and the tree of life. After Adam had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he was driven out of paradise so that he wouldn't eat from the tree of life: "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen 3:22-24).

From this, we see that this shielded/hidden tree of life is the source, the primordial fountain of eternal life. The fruits of this tree nourish eternal life. So that Adam should not eat of it after his fall and live forever on earth, God drove him out of paradise, because death was the payment for sin. Here the overcomers are now told that they will eat from the tree of life. In other words, you will have "eternal life abiding in" you (1 John 3:15).

Isn't the phrase "eternal life" sufficiently clear that it is an endless life? Without a doubt! Here, however, we are directed toward the tree of life. It's mentioned three times in Revelation (2:7; 22:2, 14). If the overcomer is promised that the Lord will give him food from the tree of life that is in God's paradise, and that he will have eternal life in Him, we must note the following: eternal life is called "eternal" because it stretches from eternity past to eternity future; it is the life of God that has been revealed in Jesus Christ, who *is* God (John 1:4; 5:26; 1 John 1:1-2). This eternal life of God, which was revealed in Christ, is given to everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus through the rebirth. The person who is born again acquires it because of the Word of God through the Holy Spirit.

In order to grasp this overcomer's promise even better, we have to distinguish that this eternal life that the believer receives is not a new life, but only new in the sense that it is possessed by man. It is life that was "in the beginning." And this life of God that the born-again one receives is an inseparable part of the life that was in Christ Jesus from eternity, and is eternal. This is what the Lord meant when He said: "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:5); or through Paul: Christ is the head, and we are the body (Eph 1:22-23; 4:16).

So, eating from the tree of life means: eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why it is so important that we overcome. This is the only way we will one day be allowed to eat from the tree of life. Then we will live from eternity to eternity before God and the Lamb. The cross of Calvary, on which the Lord Jesus poured out His blood, has become the tree of life for us!

(MR0820/1097)




WORLD FOCUS

WORLD

Covid-19 Prompts Re-think of Mass Tourism

The coronavirus pandemic has forced famous tourist destinations to question their business model, though economic realities are likely to stand in the way of major changes.

 Nature has quickly replaced hordes of visitors at sites like Machu Picchu in Peru, where sightings of elusive Andean bears have caused a buzz among conservationists.

And in Thailand, which has seen a drop in arrivals of more than 83 percent, marine fauna including dugongs, turtles and whale sharks are enjoying a rebound.

The Thai government has decided to close more than 150 national parks for an average of three months a year and to limit access so that animal and plant life can flourish.

"From now on, we want quality tourism, we don't want a mass tourist influx into our national parks," said Varawut Silpa-archa, minister of natural resources and the environment.

Access to Machu Picchu has also been curbed, and Peruvian authorities are mulling ways to develop a more exclusive model.

Officials in Dubrovnik, Croatia, which typifies the effects of excessive tourism, want to attract tourists to places outside the walls of the cramped medieval city.

In Tunisia, where it accounts for 14 percent of gross domestic product, the number of visitors to the island of Djerba has plunged by 80 percent.

In Barcelona, Spain, most restaurants near the iconic Sagrada Familia basilica or along the well-trodden thoroughfare of Las Ramblas



have closed or are struggling to make ends meet without tourists.

"It's true that mass tourism is sometimes a problem in Venice, but no tourism at all is worse," said Claudio Scarpa, head of the local hotel association.

-news.yahoo.com, 14 January 2021

Commentary: Coronavirus dictates action by governments to avoid catastrophes. That in turn will lead to stricter and more reliable control of all travelers globally. The day is not too far off when any traveler's entire history, with private information, is revealed to the authorities.


The god of this world mimics the perfect unity of the body of Christ, for the world to accept the great leader: Antichrist. When one thinks on these matters, it becomes clear that this is a shadow of things to come for the Church—but in a positive way. Meaning it is not long before Jesus comes to take His bride. 7421

(See Antichrist Rising, Item #2226, \$10.99.)

USA

Digital Covid-19 Vaccination Passport

A coalition of health and technology organizations are working to develop a digital COVID-19 vaccination passport to allow businesses, airlines and countries to check if people have received the vaccine.

 The organization hopes the technology will allow people to "demonstrate their health status to safely return to travel, work, school and life while protecting their data privacy."

The coalition is reportedly in discussions with several governments to create a program requiring either negative tests or proof of vaccination to enter, Paul Meyer, the chief executive of The Commons Project, told the *Times*.

"We are committed to working collectively with the technology and medical communities, as well as global governments, to ensure people will have secure access to this information where and when they need it," he added.

The project is also developing as new strains of COVID-19 are popping up worldwide, including the spread of the variant believed to be more contagious that was discovered in the United Kingdom.

-thehill.com, 14 January 2021


Commentary: Covid-19 creates a platform to unite the nations of the world. "Working collectively with the technology and medical communities, as well as global governments" is a well-meaning movement for the benefit of people everywhere. TheCommonsProject.org lists six principles all should share:

(continued next page)

WORLD

Israel Ranks Poorly on Global Corruption Index

For the second straight year, Israel placed 35th out of 180 countries on a global corruption index.

 Israel was graded 60 out of 100, just nine points above the redline of corrupt countries, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) stated.

"Israel's low place in the corruption index is particularly severe in 2020, when the plague is raging among us," said retired judge Nili Arad, chairwoman of the Israel International Transparency Association—Shvil, which represents Israel in Transparency International.

Since it started in 1995, the Berlin-based CPI has been one of the world's leading indicators of corruption trends, with 100 chapters worldwide.

Denmark and New Zealand ranked first for the second year in a row with a score of 88,

compared to a score of 87 last year. They are followed by Finland, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland, which scored 85. Norway scored 84 and the Netherlands 82, followed by Germany and Luxembourg, which both received a grade of 80.

The United States scored 67, falling to 25th place in the index, its fourth consecutive year of decline.

At the lowest spots on the index are South Sudan and Somalia with scores of 12, followed by Syria at 14 and Yemen and Venezuela with 15.

-www.jpost.com, 28 January 2021

Commentary: Except for New Zealand and Singapore, the highest numbers—indicating the least corruption—are in Europe. What does it mean? Trust in governmental democracy. The lowest scores were received by South Sudan and Somalia, where civil wars continue to rage.

The CPI is one of multiple global movements and organizations that attempt to hand out behavioral report cards to the various nations of the world. Such work definitely contributes to the implementation of a more organized world, according to the prophetic Word.

In the last book of the Bible, in Revelation 20, verse 8 we read of "the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth." That's global. And the end thereof? "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the

beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (verse 9). 7429

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



Covid-19 Passport (continued from page 23)

1. We believe all people should enjoy the benefits of technology and data to improve their lives.

2. We believe that great technology products can be built and sustained in ways that respect individual privacy.

3. We believe people have the right to control and benefit from their personal information.

4. We believe in transparency and accountability.

5. We believe in equity and inclusivity.

6. We believe we are stronger together.

It's not some hidden conspiracy by so-called globalists, but a normal, progressive development toward peace, security, and prosperity. There are hundreds, maybe thousands of organizations and movements whose goal is the wellbeing of world citizens. This is a must, because no country can exist totally independent of others anymore.

The amount of traveling "to and fro" is unprecedented in history. TravelTalkMag.com.au confirms: "On a normal day, at any given moment, FlightRadar24.com would be tracking anywhere from 8,000 to 20,000 planes mid-flight." The article continues, "a normal day in late March would be about 180,000 flights." This type of traveling to and fro is absolutely essential for virtually any country to function. Needless to

say, certain laws and understanding must be established even more closely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Working together more and more is an irreversible trend of the modern day.

Here we are reminded of the prophecy by Daniel: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). That sealed book was opened when the Messiah came to Israel; God was manifested in the flesh. Knowledge is increasing faster than ever, and more people travel globally more than ever. Welcome to the global world!

7420


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



EU

The Golden Passport

Two dozen letters have been exchanged between the European Commission and Bulgaria, Cyprus and Malta over their controversial ‘Golden Passport’ schemes, by which rich foreigners can gain EU citizenship for large sums of money.

 The issue has recently landed Cyprus and Malta with the possibility of facing the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg over the passport sales, which critics say attract people with criminal backgrounds.

An Al Jazeera investigation revealed senior Cypriot officials discussing ways to provide citizenship to a convicted criminal.

The media network published 1,400 leaked documents showing how Cyprus allowed fugitives to obtain Cypriot—and thus EU—citizenship.

Of the three, Bulgaria was to first launch its scheme in 2005, offering people citizenship in exchange for a €1m investment.

The commission says the schemes undermine the integrity of the status of EU citizenship and free movement.

It also allows people, who had no links to



The European Commission has launched infringement procedures against Cyprus and Malta over the issue of selling citizenship in return for investments
(Photo: ec.europa.eu)

the European Union prior to sometimes paying out millions of euros for the passports, the right to vote.

Justice commissioner Didier Reynders in October said the schemes were still being used in such countries to attract investors through their privileged partnership agreements, or various accession bids with the EU.

-*euobserver.com*, 24 November 2020

Commentary: Passports of EU member countries are called the “Golden Passport,” the most sought after in the world. Why? Because all 27 EU member countries are immediately open to indefinite stay by the

holders of these passports. But in this case, the sale of “Golden Passports” seems uncontrolled and provides possibilities for criminals to receive this desirable citizenship.

To buy citizenship is nothing new. An article by *immi-usa.com* reports:

To become a United States citizen through investment, a foreign national will first need to apply for the investor program visa. Previously, the EB-5 immigrant visa was granted to foreign investors who are ready and able to invest \$500,000 or \$1 million in the U.S. economy.

-*www.immi-usa.com*, 3 September 2019

Many other countries also offer citizenship in exchange for financial investment or various other requirements. Thus, the bottom

line is merchandise and money. The rich can literally do anything, while those with lesser means cannot.

7406


(See *New Babylon Rising*, Item #2359, \$16.99.)



ISRAEL

Leads the World in Coronavirus Lockdowns

Israel, leading the world in coronavirus vaccinations, is also the leader in the amount of time spent in coronavirus lockdowns, as well as among the highest-ranking in the stringency of its response to the pandemic.

 The country scored 86.28—higher than any other country—on the Containment and Health Index developed by the Oxford Coronavirus Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT) project.



Stores in Jerusalem's Mamilla mall are seen closed amid the ongoing coronavirus lockdown (photo credit: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM)

The index is based on school closures, workplace closures, cancellation of public events, restrictions of public gatherings, closures of public transportation, stay-at-home requirements, public information cam-

paigns, restrictions on internal movements, international travel controls, testing policy, the extent of contact tracing, requirements to wear face coverings, and policies pertaining to vaccine rollout.

The highest score possible is 100, with higher scores indicating stricter responses.

Tourism Minister Orit Farkash-Hacohen expressed outrage that Israel has been in lockdown for 139 days since the beginning of the pandemic, longer than any other country. By comparison, Germany has been in lockdown for a total of 88 days, the UK for 79 days and Spain for 67 days.


-*www.jpost.com*, 28 January 2021

(continued next page)

 USA

Astronomers Wrong About Number of Galaxies

Can astronomers be so wrong about the number of galaxies in the universe?

 What if the universe is a little darker than expected, counting way less galaxies than previously estimated for years?

It seems so, according to new data harvested by NASA's New Horizon spacecraft.

Leaving the illuminated inner solar system is the best way to determine just how many galaxies may exist in the unseen distance—which is exactly what New Horizons did.

Indeed, a previous measurement by the Hubble Space Telescope suggested there were 2 trillion galaxies spread across the universe.

But the latest discovery counts only hundreds of billions of galaxies instead.

The new NASA mission estimated the number of galaxies to be half of what had previously been estimated for years, in a new study published in *The Astrophysical*



Hubble mosaic image of the Sombrero galaxy (photo credit: REUTERS)

Journal and presented at the 237th meeting of the American Astronomical Society, this one virtual.

"Take all the galaxies Hubble can see, double that number, and that's what we see—but nothing more," said lead study author Tod Lauer, an astronomer at the National Science Foundation's National Optical-Infrared Astronomy Research Laboratory, in a statement.

-www.jpost.com, 14 January 2021

Commentary: When speaking of science, it should be absolute. But quite apparently, it is not; it's just temporary. As Tod Lauer

says, "And that's what we see—but nothing more." Sometime down the road, something new will come up that is presented as scientifically true, but again will be proven wrong.

The apostle Paul advises his spiritual son with these words: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Timothy 6:20). When it comes to the universe, there is much more than any scientist will ever discover. The Lord God, the Creator of heaven and earth, asks these questions to Job: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?" (Job 38:31-33).



7423
(See *The Remarkable Record of Job*, Item #2273, \$8.99.)

Lockdowns (continued from page 25)

Commentary: Israel's success in fighting coronavirus is noteworthy. They implemented the first lockdown at the beginning of March 2020. The result was impressive, so that the coronavirus seemed to be under control—but not for long. Israel failed to lock down air travel, particularly from the US, where the ultra-Orthodox often ignored any instructions from the government. Recently, violent riots were instigated against the police by ultra-Orthodox groups:

A grim and somber atmosphere prevailed over the ultra-Orthodox Jerusalem neighborhood of Mea She'arim following a bout of severe violence amid its warren of narrow alleyways and cramped streets.

-www.jpost.com, 28 January 2021

In 2020, we reported of coronavirus outbreaks particularly due to religious violations of government health instructions.

An article by *Reuters* reports:

South Korean authorities were scrambling to rein in coronavirus outbreaks centered on Christian schools as the country reported a jump in infections, dampening hopes of a speedy exit from a third wave of the pandemic.

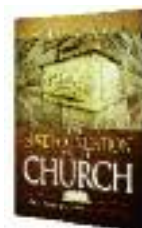
The health authorities said the Daejeon mission school outbreak appeared to have been spreading for some time before it was detected.

The Christian organization responsible for the facilities, International Mission, was ordered to test everyone linked to 32 of its 40 schools and churches around the country.

South Korea had managed to keep the virus under control thanks to aggressive testing and contact-tracing, but a third wave that broke out late last year has proven more difficult to contain.

-www.reuters.com, 26 January 2021

Again, we need to emphasize: the Church is not an organization, but an organism to be found all over the world. Wherever Christians reside, the respective government is responsible for the civilized functioning of that nation. Religious people must obey the law.




7430
(See *The Sure Foundation of the Church*, Item #1066, \$18.50.)


IRAN

The Growing Church

Local pastors report hundreds of secret churches attracting hundreds of thousands of worshippers. Evangelicals claim Christianity is growing faster in Iran than in any other country.



 The spiritual gap between Iran's Shia ayatollahs and the people they rule is widening. The strictures of the theocracy and the doctrine of Shia supremacy alienate many. So growing numbers of Iranians seem to be leaving religion or experimenting with alternatives to Shiism. Christians, Zoroastrians and Bahais all report soaring interest. Leaders of other forms of Islam speak of popular revivals. "There's a loyalty change," says Yaser Mirdamadi, a Shia cleric in exile. "Iranians are turning to other religions because they no longer find satisfaction in the official faith."

Formally, the ayatollahs recognize other monotheistic religions, as long as they pre-date Islam. The constitution allocates non-Muslim "peoples of the book"—Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians—five of the 290 seats in parliament. They have their own schools (with Muslim headmasters) and places of worship. Iran hosts the Muslim world's largest Jewish community.

Repression isn't working. The state says over 99.5% of Iran's 82m people are Muslim. But its numbers are not reliable. A poll of more than 50,000 Iranians (about 90% of whom live in Iran) conducted online by Gamaan, a Dutch research group, found a country in religious

flux. About half of the respondents said they had lost or changed their religion. Less than a third identified as Shia. If these numbers are even close to correct, Iran is much more diverse than its official census shows.

Many Christian converts like the fact that women may take part in services alongside men. Some draw parallels between the martyrdom of Shia imams and Christ. But some new members of Iran's minority religions may also be attracted by certain non-spiritual benefits. For example, they can apply for refugee status in America as persecuted minorities, usually leading to quicker approval.

-*www.economist.com*, 23 January 2021

Commentary: There is little doubt that in the long run, Iran will be unsuccessful in the establishment of a theocracy.

The country of almost 60 million people, according to Iranian statistics, is 98% Muslim. That, however, has been disputed globally. The *CIA World Factbook* records that while 58% speak Persian, 26% are Turkic speakers and 9% Kurdish. Thus, a division is self-evident.

Life expectancy stands at about 72 years, and per capita GDP at \$12,800 (2008). Seventy-seven percent of the population is literate.

Iran's insistence on developing nuclear technology, ostensibly for peaceful purposes, is vehemently opposed by Israel.

Refugees are an issue. The following excerpt reads:

At the end of 2005, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated there were 111,684 refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other persons of concern from Iran. The countries hosting the largest populations of Iranian refugees were Germany (39,904), the United States (20,541), Iraq (9,500), the United Kingdom (8,044), the Netherlands (6,597), and Canada (6,508).

-*www.migrationpolicy.org*, 1 September 2006

Iran, formerly known as Persia, is listed as the second Gentile world empire after Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Some 2,600 years ago, the Persians acted differently than today: "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up" (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).

7428


(See *ISIS, Iran, Israel and the End of Days*, Item #2283, \$15.99.)



JAPAN

Fastest Supercomputer Tackling World's Biggest Problems

Japan's Fugaku supercomputer—which in June ranked first in the global Top500 list of such machines, the first time for a Japanese machine in about nine years—was surprisingly not created with the aim of excelling in numerical benchmarks, unlike some of its rivals.

 As the director of Riken's Center for Computational Science, Satoshi Matsuoka and his team have set out nine application areas for Fugaku to work on that are of importance to society, such as medicine, pharmacology, disaster prediction and prevention, environmental sustainability and energy.

Fugaku, set to be officially launched in 2021 at Riken's facility in Kobe, won interna-

(continued next page)

Supercomputer (continued from page 27)

tional acclaim for becoming the world's first supercomputer to grab the top spot in all four Top500 categories—raw computational speed, big data processing, deep learning with artificial intelligence and practical simulation calculations. It was developed jointly by the state-backed Riken research institute and Fujitsu Ltd. over a decade at a cost of ¥130 billion.

Fugaku conducted more than 442 quadrillion calculations per second in the Top500 benchmark test, which computes the machine's raw speed. That's nearly three times faster than the second-ranked Summit system, developed by Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the United States. Fugaku again topped the list in November.

-www.japantimes.co.jp, 7 January 2021

Commentary: When it comes to supercomputers, there is no end in sight to its limits. In this case, the key goals are addressing the environment, sustainability, and energy.

Doubtless, when the Covid-19 headlines subside, the environment is expected to occupy the main agenda and attention of the world. While it is not our intention to express our pro or con regarding the much-proclaimed environmental catastrophe due to man's contribution, we have made our position clear several times. Those whose call it is to protect the environment have definitely contributed to a much cleaner world than it was just a century ago. Then, any and all industrial nations discharged their pollutants into the air and water without much opposition. That has now changed. Some sources claim that our air is cleaner than ever, and that also goes for our lakes and rivers. But such statements garner much opposition.

An article found on Wikipedia caused this writer to be somewhat stunned:

Skegness is an English seaside town on the North Sea coast of Lincolnshire with 19,579 residents. The original Skegness was situated farther east but much of it was lost to the sea in the 1520s after the natural sea defenses which protected its medieval harbor eroded.

We note the words, "lost to the sea in the 1520s." The town Skegness was swallowed by the North Sea. Yet, during the 15th and 16th centuries, there was little to no industry. What made the waters rise? This fact immediately caused this writer to recall a visit to his birthplace, Windenburg in formerly East Prussia, now Lithuania. The old fishing village that existed many centuries ago is also under water. Again, no industry, yet the water swallowed ancient Windenburg (today Vente).

When that question is asked, there are innumerable theories given, of which some sound rather scientific. But that's exactly the problem; we do not have true science, supported by accurate temperature readings, water level records, precipitation, melting of snow and ice, etc. from way back to the 1500s. That's one of the reasons why we are not greatly alarmed about the much-heralded global warming and environmental catastrophe.


As believers, we point to Isaiah 54:9: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." 7413

(See *A Flood of Evidence*, Item #2345, \$15.99.)

FRANCE

Anti-Vaxxers Face Public Transport Ban

People who fail to get a Covid-19 vaccination could be banned from using public transport in France, according to a draft law sparking angry protests from opposition politicians.

 According to the text, which will now be submitted to parliament, a negative Covid test or proof of a "preventative treatment, including the administration of a vaccine" could be required for people to be granted "access to transport or to some locations, as well as certain activities."

A recent poll by the *Journal du Dimanche* newspaper found that 59 percent of respon-



French Prime Minister Jean Castex (L) and Minister for Transformation and Public Services Amélie de Montchalin are pictured after attending the weekly cabinet meeting in Paris © Ludovic Marin, AFP

dents said they would not get a Covid shot, one of the highest rates in the European Union.

Centrist senator Nathalie Goulet said the draft was "an attack on public freedoms," while the far-left deputy Alexis Corbiere said "we could at least have a collective discussion if the idea is to limit our public liberties."

The EU gave the green light for a Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine.

-www.barrons.com,
22 December 2020

Commentary: Much ado is being made about personal freedom and liberty, yet in reality these definitions are more symbolic than real.

Example: a day consists of 24 hours. I have total freedom during 8-hour sleep, but the next 8 hours I must share with my family. There are duties and responsibilities, and the final 8 hours are at one's place of work. The boss takes my freedom away.

Covid-19 vaccination has been medically proven to be very effective. Thus, a purportedly successful means to control the spread of this feared virus. In France, it is proposed that those who refuse will not be able to use public transport—punishment. Yet how to enforce such measures remains to be seen.

7414


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



CHINA

World's Largest Radio Telescope

Nestled among the mountains in southwest China, the world's largest radio telescope signals Beijing's ambitions as a global center for scientific research.

 The Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope (FAST)—the only significant instrument of its kind after the collapse of another telescope in Puerto Rico—is about to open its doors for foreign astronomers to use, hoping to attract the world's top scientific talent.

Wang Qiming, chief inspector of FAST's operations and development center, said during a rare visit by the foreign press that he had visited the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico.

"We drew a lot of inspiration from its structure, which we gradually improved to build our telescope," he said.

The 500-meter giant satellite dish is easily the world's largest—covering the area of 30 football pitches [soccer fields]—and cost 1.1 billion yuan (\$175 million) to build, as well as displacing thousands of villagers to make room for it.

China has been rapidly boosting its scientific credentials to become less reliant on foreign technology.

The world's most populous country has so far only won one scientific Nobel Prize—awarded in 2015 to chemist Tu Youyou.

But in the past two decades, China has built the largest high-speed train network in the world, finalized its Beidou geolocation system—a competitor of the American GPS—and is now in the process of bringing lunar samples back to Earth.

"China is certainly a global center for scientific research, at the same level as North America or Western Europe," said John Dickey, professor of physics at the University of Tasmania in Australia. "The community of researchers is as advanced, as creative, and



A handout photograph shows the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope (FAST) in China's Guizhou province. NATIONAL ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORIES OF THE CHINESE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (NAOC) / VIA AFP

as well organized as in any advanced nation in the world."

"More and more discretion and intellectual freedom have been given to the scientific and engineering community to explore new ideas and take bigger risks in the research environment," said Denis Simon, an expert on Chinese science policy. "The risk-averse culture that was once predominant has given way to a more entrepreneurial culture."

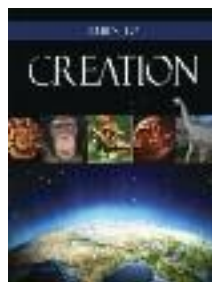
"In many ways, the competition between China and the U.S. is about a race for talent—and this race promises to build momentum as the competition between the two countries heats up," he added.

-www.japantimes.co.jp,
17 December 2020

Commentary: The Chinese Communist Party is targeting its attention toward high-tech. They are making great strides in the race to become the world leader in science and technology.

Is such an aim unrealistic? We think not. We must remem-

ber that a few decades ago, China was considered a backward country—not quite third world, but definitely second-rate. That is in the process of changing. Why? Because the world must become united. The



words of the US Constitution are quite prophetic: "All men are created equal."

7422

(See *Guide to Creation*, Item #2310, \$19.99.)

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Action for Israel



MIDNIGHT CALL

“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people” (Isaiah 62:10).

BY ARNO FROESE

We notice the double emphasis, “go through, go through” and, “cast up, cast up.” This is a prophecy for the people of Israel to prepare for the return to the land.

When we read Israel’s recent history, we quickly learn of the many difficulties put in the path of those who wanted to return to Zion. Books have been written documenting the travails of Jews being expelled from many countries.

We know of the Crusaders destroying Jewish communities throughout Europe and the Middle East. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, Jews were expelled from France. In 1290, King Edward I of England ordered the expulsion of all Jews from England. The year 1392 saw the Jews expelled from Bern, Switzerland. In 1492, Ferdinand II and Isabella I signed a decree for all Jews to be expelled from Spain. Between 1744 and the 1790s, Frederick II, Joseph II, and Maria Theresa sent impoverished Jews to the East. In 1791, Katerina the Great of Russia restricted Jews to the Western part of the Empire by means of deportation. In 1862, Jews were expelled from Kentucky within 24 hours, by Ulysses S. Grant through General Orders No. 11.

The most horrible and diabolical act against the Jews was committed between 1933-1945 by Nazi Germany. The Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem documents some 6 million Jews being cold-bloodedly murdered during the Second World War.

Furthermore, from 1947 to 1972, about 900,000 Jews were displaced from Arab and Muslim countries.

The prophet Isaiah in chapter 40 declares: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (verse 3). We know this has been fulfilled; the Lord did come to Israel. He fulfilled the

various prophecies spoken about Him in the Old Testament. But the previous two verses speak of our days and the future: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” How do we know?

Note that they had “received of the Lord’s hand **double** for all her sins.” That has never happened biblically speaking. When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, the prophet Ezra confesses: “And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this” (Ezra 9:13). But Isaiah also has this to say: “For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them” (Isaiah 61:7).

Therefore, Isaiah 40:1-2 speaks to the Gentiles. It is our task to take heed of the doubly emphasized: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.” That’s what our Action for Israel program is all about. And with us, hundreds of thousands, even millions of Christians around the world pray for Israel, for the Jewish people, and for the day when they shall experience the fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

Coronavirus

Israel has developed into an extremely successful nation. The meager population of about 600,000 Jews in 1947 has grown to almost 7 million individuals today. Yet another 4 to 5 million are still in the Diaspora. Due to anti-Semitism and acts of terrorism in Europe, a relatively large number have left for Israel, but there are more to come. Here an article by Hannah Brown in the *Jerusalem Post*:

The coronavirus crisis has accomplished what decades of government ad campaigns did not do—it has brought hundreds of thousands of Israelis back from abroad and made the country more enticing as a home for American Jews.

As of July [2020], more than 190,000 Israelis had returned to Israel from abroad, including more than 6,000 who had been away from the country for over half a year, according to data released by the Foreign Ministry. Many of those who returned early in the pandemic had been Israelis working in China, where the effects of the virus were first felt. Israeli embassies and consulates abroad have issued approximately 10,000 travel documents, including issuing new passports (often for children of Israelis born abroad who had not been in Israel yet) and renewing and extending passports for Israelis planning to come back since the beginning of the pandemic.

While Israel has had its challenges handling the pandemic, it still has a notably lower mortality rate from the disease than many countries around the world where Israelis tend to live, notably the US, which has had over 1,000 deaths per every million of

the population, as opposed to Israel, with 370 deaths per million. Areas where many Israelis live, including such cities as New York, have been hit particularly hard. For example, there have been over 7,700 deaths in the borough of Brooklyn alone since the pandemic began, many of them in the Jewish community.

And now, with the vaccination campaign in Israel bringing the Pfizer vaccine to more than one million Israelis in less than two weeks, Israel is looking more attractive than ever as a place to live, both to Israelis who have been living abroad and American Jews who are thinking of moving to Israel.

-*www.jpost.com*, 3 January 2021

Most interesting is the fact that the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine was developed by husband-and-wife team Dr. Uğur Şahin and Dr. Özlem Türeci. He was born in Turkey, and moved with his parents at the age of four to Germany, where his father worked at the Ford factory in Cologne. Özlem Türeci was born in Germany to Turkish immigrant parents, and naturally adhered to the Islamic religion. Quite strikingly, an article published by the *New York Times* concludes: “On the day they were married, Dr. Şahin and Dr. Türeci returned to the lab after the ceremony.” That shows total dedication.

But it also emphasizes the importance of globalism. Muslim immigrants developed the most popular Covid-19 vaccine for the Western world.

For Israel and the rest of the globe, the Muslim-developed BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine is a gigantic step toward the control and even eradication of Covid-19. (MC)

Action
for **Israel**



MIDNIGHT CALL

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

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

MC0321

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

monthly one time \$ _____

Name: _____

With credit card
ready, call:
800-845-2420

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Credit Card #: _____ Exp: _____

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Email: _____

Web:
midnightcall.com/
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Healing Lessons from the Corona Crisis

How the team in Uruguay adapted to the pandemic, and what they learned from it.

BY JAN AND ISABELLE EISSES, MONTEVIDEO

We've learned a lot in this time of lockdowns, but we've also had to painfully discover our limits and failures. ZOOM work sessions taught us (the Llamada team) to plan succinctly, specifically, and therefore more effectively—completely “un-South American.” Together with the Midnight Call teams from Guatemala, Bolivia, and Argentina, we've

been preparing a virtual conference on the topic, “What Must Happen in the Near Future.” This brought us closer together. It's good to get to see and speak to our fellow workers in different countries, even when there are connectivity problems, the camera stops working, or our speech gets distorted! We're encouraged because we're more conscious and united in our efforts to all pull



together. Over 900 screens were following the conference. We can only guess how many were watching behind them, but the response was extremely positive.

Church

In church, we're trying to keep in touch with all our brothers and sisters over the phone and through prayer groups. Food packages are regularly distributed among the families of Sunday School children in four poor neighborhoods around the church. Since there are no children's services in the church yet, their lessons are being held in the neighborhoods. This results in much more contact with the children's parents. There are mothers who have started doing their chil-

dren's "homework" with them, and memorizing the Bible verses!

With donations from the women's group, baskets of toiletries were prepared for women and young girls in the church with no income. Each received a book (from our publisher). There were tears of joy while receiving them! Even more than the material help, the women were touched by the love they felt behind the gift.

Unfortunately, we're also witnessing that psychosis is taking hold of brothers and sisters with psychological problems. They're isolating themselves to the extent that they can hardly be reached. But we're continuing to pray, because God is a miracle worker.

(MR1120)



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

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

MC0321

After prayerful consideration, I/we have decided to support "Fellow Laborers."

monthly one time \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Credit Card #: _____ Exp: _____

Security Code: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

With credit card ready, call: 800-845-2420

Web: midnightcall.com/fl



At a Crossroads...

Thank you for standing with us in prayer, as we asked in the last article, “A Request for Prayer.”

By **David Phillips** *Project Manager*

VOLUNTEERING

We at the Ebenezer Home have faced many challenges recently. Not only concerning the project, but also in running and managing the Home itself. As with other ministries here in Israel, our volunteers' program has been delayed by the government. We are deeply thankful that we still have one very faithful volunteer from the USA, but she too will probably have to leave sometime mid-2021. The government has changed all volunteering conditions; we continue working out the details so we can resume our volunteers' program, but it looks like it won't happen until sometime after Pesach (Passover). More than ever before, this has made us realize the absolute need to become independent, as we must increasingly rely upon hiring Israelis, which is quite taxing on our non-profit ministry budget.

ENLARGEMENT PROJECT

As mentioned in the previous article, Ebenezer was approved to add an additional floor with a 12-bed nursing ward, on top of the existing building. But what we soon realized is, this minor change in the additional nursing ward beds would leave us very vulnerable. The reason is that we would still have to rely heavily on donations and support; not to mention that there still wouldn't be sufficient beds to meet the ever-growing needs. But with a larger

number of nursing wards, we could become much more self-sufficient financially.

During this pandemic, we found ourselves standing at a crossroads. Many ministries worldwide are facing financial issues. As believers, we have been asking ourselves, “What will the future hold?” as we cannot see the end of the current pandemic anytime soon. But we always have hope. We are encouraged by our Lord Yeshua; He warned us that these things would come, yet His promises stand forever. We know that He cares for His children, those who belong to Him.

At the crossroads, we are presented with four options:

1. As you already know, a 12-bed nursing ward added to the top of the existing Ebenezer Home.
2. Acquiring a new lot of land and building a new home. This would mean leaving our beloved spot in Haifa.
3. Purchasing an existing home and renovating it.
4. Tearing down the existing facility and rebuilding it from scratch, into a new 3 to 4 nursing ward home, with 36 beds each.

The greater extension will be an expense we need to take into consideration, but once completed, the government will pay for each occupied bed and the



“Without your prayers—bringing us new hope each day in this time of quarantine and lockdown—we would not know how to face tomorrow.”

nursing care of the residents! This would mean we would be self-supporting.

The demand is growing for more nursing wards, especially for believers who want to spend their last days in a home with Christian and biblical values. The Ministry of Health is encouraging us to not only extend the Home by just one nursing ward, but to go ahead and extend it by 3 to 4 nursing wards. They are looking toward a future where these needs must be met. That would be best for Israel.

Ebenezer has the vision to serve the elderly who have been serving the community of believers; to help the very last of the Holocaust survivors still living, a generation that is almost gone. We also see the need to minister and care for the second generation of Holocaust survivors, some of whom are deeply traumatized by their Holocaust-surviving parents. This second generation of Holocaust survivors are now in their 70s (or older) and will soon need to enter a senior citizens' home.

Presently, we prefer option #4: tearing down the current facility and rebuilding it into a 7-8 story building. This would mean that we could use the

same property where we are located without moving, while allowing us to add 3-4 nursing wards to the home. We have presented this idea to the municipality, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, government tax offices, etc., for their approval. We pray for a positive answer. Please stand with us in prayer as we await their response!

This vision from God, we shall follow. We shall go on until He takes us Home to the place He has prepared.

The residents and the team at Ebenezer greet you all, thank you, and want you to know that we love you! Without your prayers—bringing us new hope each day in this time of quarantine and lockdown—we would not know how to face tomorrow.

I leave you with part of this hymn, “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow” by Ira Stanphill:

“I don't know about tomorrow, I just live from day to day...I don't worry o'er the future, For I know what Jesus said. And today I'll walk beside Him, For He knows what lies ahead. Many things about tomorrow I don't seem to understand, But I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hand...”



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

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

USA DONE?... CIVIL UNIONS... POPE INFALLIBLE?

USA Done?

I believe [former] President Donald Trump was God's choice, not the world's choice.

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris seem to be anti-Jewish, and maybe will be the ones who turn against Israel. The Bible says it will happen. Will it be by them?

What do you think is going to happen to the United States now?

Is the United States done for? Our national sins are many.

-C. Cartisser, OR

Answer: Incidentally, Kamala Harris' husband is Jewish.

The United States is not "done," as you write, but will continue functioning in a civilized manner like virtually all other countries of the world.

One thing is clear: during the last few decades, the power structure of Europe and Asia has on many levels surpassed the US, and that tendency will continue. Compared with other successful nations, the US is now second rate.

What will be the end? The same as all other nations of the world; see Daniel 2:44.

Civil Unions

Dear Sir:

Saw the World Focus article in your December 2020 edition, about the pope calling for civil unions for same-sex couples. I'm not surprised by man wanting to pass legislation to legalize same-sex unions, because man has been trying to change God's law for thousands of years. Fortunately, nothing we do will change His Word; it is the same back then as now. We are taught to love the person but hate the sin; that doesn't mean we accept their way of life. It is their choice to live in a sinful manner; all we can do is pray for them to change.

In speaking with these individuals, they claim that God made a mistake, and they feel uncomfortable living a lie. In their mind, they are correcting God's



error. We realize they are totally wrong in their concept or reasoning, because a true believer knows that God doesn't make mistakes. We are made in His likeness.

We should pray for and try to convert lost people to Christ, even though in their mind they are not lost, but we are. Yet there comes a time when you realize you are wasting your breath, and you must place it in God's hands.

The church may find itself in federal court over the preaching of the Word, and you know without a doubt who will win that lawsuit. One single person destroyed the school system in America, because she was offended by prayer; now it is a jungle controlled by kids.

-D. Elvington, SC

Answer: There is no question about the accuracy of Holy Scripture; it is the last word for all humanity, regardless of condition or position.

If a church finds itself in federal court, then I pity the church. The true Church has no relation to any political identity. The body of Christ is global; we are in this world but not of this world. The Church is described by the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:9. Planet earth is ruled by the god of this world. So, whatever the pope, the Supreme Court, or anyone else in the world says or does, has no direct relationship to the true Church of Jesus Christ. Keep the two identities separate.

Pope Infallible?

I thank you for your response to my previous letter about the book *Shocked by the Bible*. I don't expect a response to this letter.

I'm Catholic, and unlike most Catholics, I pray only to God, not Mary and the saints. I don't believe in purga-

tory or praying for someone who is already dead. Yet, there is a misconception about Catholics.

I've never once heard a priest say that the pope is infallible.

-M. Parr, TX

Answer: Here an excerpt from Britannica.com about the claim of the pope's infallibility:

The statement on the pope's authority was approved only after long and heated debate both preceding and during the council. The decree states that the true successor of St. Peter has full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole church; that he has the right of free communication with the pastors of the whole church and with their flocks; and that his primacy includes the supreme teaching power to which Jesus Christ added the prerogative of papal infallibility, whereby the pope is preserved free from error when he teaches definitively that a doctrine concerning faith or morals is to be believed by the whole church. The original schema had not included a statement of papal infallibility, but the majority of the council fathers, urged on by Pius IX, overrode vociferous opposition from those who argued that a formal definition was inopportune and gave their approval to the dogmatic definition.

-www.britannica.com/event/First-Vatican-Council

Due to its supposed infallibility, the Catholic Church has added many manmade doctrines not compatible with Scripture. Space does not permit me to list details. Glad to read that you pray to God, not to Mary or saints, and reject the purgatory assumption. Keep yourself to Scripture: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). There is only one way to heaven: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).



Pretribulation

Dear Brother Froese,

Great rapture article by brother Hahn (December issue). I agree with all except the timing of the rapture.

I have shared this with several pre-trib and pre-wrath brothers, and have not received a single reply. Perhaps you will be the first.

Second Thessalonians 1:7-8 says that Jesus comes in flaming fire, gives “rest” to the church, and then punishes those who don’t obey God with everlasting destruction. Is “rest” the rapture? If so, it comes at the end of the tribulation.

Also, “Death is swallowed up” in First Corinthians 15:54. This is the last verse of the passage about the rapture. How can the rapture be pre-trib if Christians will die during the tribulation? Some say the pre-trib rapture ends the church age, and saints who die after that are not part of the church.

Perhaps my analysis and understanding are flawed, and I could hope that is so for obvious reasons. But how can

these passages be reconciled with a pre-trib rapture?

-J. Black, FL

Answer: To Timothy, Paul writes, “rightly dividing the word of truth.” If you attempt to read the Bible chronologically, you will have some difficulties in understanding. For example, Isaiah 9:6; it definitely speaks of Jesus, but “government shall be upon his shoulder” has not been fulfilled, nor is He the Prince of Peace on earth at this time. The prince of darkness rules planet earth.

At the birth of John the Baptist, Zacharias says, “God...hath raised up an horn of salvation for us...That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us” (Luke 1:68-69, 71). Part of it was fulfilled, but Israel still has many enemies and many that hate them. Thus, it’s yet to be fulfilled.

You must deal with 1 Corinthians 15 in a similar manner. It is addressed to the Church. When the “corruptible shall have put on incorruption,” then for the Church, verse 55 is fulfilled: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (MC)



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Fury and Panic: Chief Characteristic of Christ Followers?

René Malgo

The “mystery of lawlessness” seems rife in our society. Many Christians are reacting with fury, fear, and panic. But there’s a better way.



Anyone putting on a face mask is like someone who denies the faith and takes the number 666. A pastor from Montana came to this extreme conclusion, when faced with the mask mandate imposed by authorities due to the coronavirus. Millions read his thoughts online. His words gain much wider circulation, as something passed down by the supposed spokesmen and leaders of American evangelicalism. Fear spreads, along with its counterparts panic and anger. Twitter is full of them. I regularly receive newsletters condemning society and the church for growing more and more godless, and warning against everything we’re in for (and that we should arm ourselves against). Many of the conclusions drawn by believers are justified. I’ve even warned against a possible time of persecution in this very magazine. And yet...

As I read the many scathing reports (mostly via email); as I followed the battles between right-wing Christians and everyone else on Twitter and blogs,

it occurred to me that I was looking into a mirror. And I didn’t like what I saw. “Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?” *Definitely not me!* The sustained barrage from my fellow Christians repulsed me, although I was usually in agreement with them. But the (often shrill) tone and the (conscious or unconscious) indignation leveled against anyone unlike us was, and is, demoralizing. There’s certainly a great deal of ardor, but where is the light? Our Lord Jesus says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). I hope the sympathetic reader will forgive me the following observation: If we consider the flood of words rushing around the World Wide Web in the name of Jesus, it seems like we need to undertake a sad adjustment: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you spread panic, fury, and fear among one another.”

I was *convicted* by the mirror my (undoubtedly sincere) brothers and sisters in Christ were holding

Fury and Panic: Chief Characteristic of Christ Followers?

The Apostles commanded the Christians to submit themselves to the authorities (the Roman “one world government”!) and to pray for them, so that they could live quiet and peaceful lives in all respectability and godliness.

up to me. Do I want to be publicly perceived as someone who stands for fear and terror? If I’m reluctant to wring my hands along with those I’m actually in agreement with, what must it be like for people who see things differently or who are still lost? What must it be like for those who are overwhelmed by the religious vocabulary and interpret it to mean, “These Christians hate and condemn me, and everything that I care about”—even if that’s not what is meant?

Fear sells. Whoever screams the loudest and sticks his neck out the furthest will certainly be disdained by the “elite” of the Christian world, but he’ll gain numerous followers, fans, readers, and supporters. The ordinary man on the street has had enough of embellishments: of lies, lies, and more lies. So when someone comes who doesn’t mince words and “says it like it is,” people run to him like a thirsty man in the desert, who has finally found a spring that isn’t poisoned or plugged. And yet...why does the God they claim to represent look more like Nemesis, the Greek goddess of anger and retribution, and not like the Father who longingly searches for the prodigal son, running toward him when he returns in repentance?

So, I undertook a task...something I’d like to pass on at this time: I will no longer engage with the darkness, only with the light. I won’t worry about the things that arouse evil passions in me; namely, anger, rage, fear, shouting, and panic. Instead, I’ll ponder the things that are true, good, and beautiful (namely, everything that is unified in Jesus Christ Himself). Admonishers like to say that it’s necessary to point out how unrighteousness and wickedness are getting out of hand in society. But I like to say with Gregory the Great (the Bishop of Rome, who even Calvin esteemed): “True righteousness has no indignation toward sinners, only compassion.”

We Christians can so quickly get on the wrong track with theories and speculations. We warn against “one world government” and “one world religion.” We misuse the Book of Revelation to sup-

port our political opinions and predictions. We get off-track in the most complicated ideas about the end times, and in so doing we lose sight of the most important thing: Jesus, who died for the salvation of the entire world, and will return soon. “Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thess 4:18). The Apostles didn’t spread panic, anger, and fear in their letters.

In the world the Apostles knew, there was already a Roman “one world” government and something like a Greco-Roman unified religion. And yet Peter, Paul, and John didn’t write endless letters about the “mystery of lawlessness,” to decode it to the last detail. Quite the contrary. Their attitude was rather relaxed. So relaxed that the admonishers of our time could accuse them of an unworldly naïveté, if they were writing today. The Apostles commanded the Christians to submit themselves to the authorities (the Roman “one world government”!) and to pray for them, so that they could live quiet and peaceful lives in all respectability and godliness. As far as it was possible for Christians, they were to live in peace with all people and conduct themselves with gentleness. And when the authorities took up the sword to persecute Christians, they were to rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Lord.—Yes, that’s a tall order, and I’m not presuming to say that I’ve completely internalized this deepest of spiritual attitudes myself.

This doesn’t mean that the Apostles didn’t talk about the evil times. They did, but analogously, attached to appeals such as, “Don’t lose your heads! Steer clear of idle gossip! Jesus is the Victor! Be faithful, and now even more so!” The gloomy words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-8, regarding the wicked times of the last days, are often referenced. We read his prophecies and cry out, “That’s just like today!” But in our panic over the world that Christ has long since overcome, we forget to read on. Paul says of the wicked in verse 9, “But they will not get very far...” In other words, “They will have

We definitely must not know so much about the darkness that it can profane us and cool the love inside of us.

little success.” The gates of hell truly cannot overcome the church of the living God.

Therefore, I must “be transformed by the renewal of [my] mind,” as the Apostle Paul put it (Rom 12:2). For the sake of my soul’s salvation, I no longer want to direct my attention to things I can’t control or fully know anyway, but to the things that make God’s love for all people great. That’s exactly what our troubled society needs today!

In the Beatitudes, our Lord didn’t say, “Blessed are the ones who have deciphered the mystery of lawlessness and are fully aware of all wickedness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!” No: He spoke of the kingdom of heaven to the humble, the simple, and the serving souls; those who were spiritually poor (poor before God: Matt 5:3). There is an ancient Christian prayer that is attributed to the great missionary St. Patrick. In it, he asks God to protect him from knowledge that corrupts. I find that remarkable, and it is certainly a much healthier attitude for our soul. We definitely must not know so much about the darkness that it can profane us and cool the love inside of us. We only need to love God and our neighbors. Because, “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:7).

Paul calls us to “put on compassionate hearts” (Col 3:12). Compassion shouldn’t just be a part of us; it should engulf us. It should be as visible on us as our clothing. Often, I fear, we sincerely want to be like Christ—but when He cleansed the temple with a whip. We like this story. But we forget about all the other accounts in the Gospel: where Jesus has compassion on prostitutes, tax collectors, adulterers, sinners, and common people. His typical reaction to the people around Him was what he told His disciples: “I have compassion on the crowd...” (Matt 15:32). What do we feel when we look out into this world? Compassion, pity, and love, or anger, fear, and panic?

When Paul urges us to be imitators of God in Ephesians 5:1-2, he certainly didn’t mean that we are to be holy and just judges like God, and show

society who’s boss. No, he says, “Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

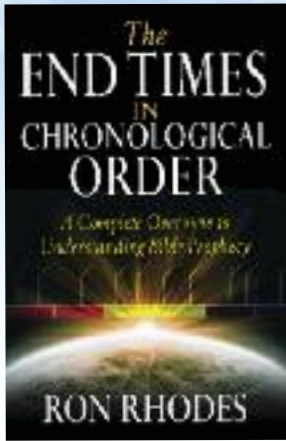
This is how we should be imitators of God. “The Lord is compassionate and merciful” (James 5:11b). This attitude should be among us (Phil 2). Christ outright urges us, “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). That’s important. If we want to prove ourselves as true children of God our Father in heaven, we’re not called upon to imitate His holy omnipotence, His holy omniscience, His holy sovereignty, or His holy wrath, which we certainly couldn’t. Instead, we’re to imitate His holy compassion, goodness, and love. We can and should do this, out of love through the Holy Spirit, which is in us. And in my opinion, that makes any discussion of what we should focus on in this godless world completely unnecessary. As Gregory the Great also said, “False righteousness has no compassion, only indignation.”

Therefore, I’m making the prognosis: True righteousness and true holiness aren’t found where people scream the loudest, where the most fear and terror is spread, or where the “mystery of lawlessness” is speculated about the most intensely, but where the most compassion is practiced. Compassion is goodness made visible. Compassion is the beauty of heaven in practice. Compassion is truly the affirmation of the highest command: to love God with one’s whole heart, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself.

God speaks: “I desire mercy...” (Matt 9:13; cf. Hos 6:6). And we should go and learn what that means, says our Lord Jesus. That gives us more than enough to do with the rest of our lives, without feeling compelled to concern ourselves with the knowledge that corrupts. I’ll undertake this and choose it for myself. No longer the darkness, but the light. Because “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18)—in every way.

“True righteousness has no indignation toward sinners, only compassion.”—Maranatha: our Lord, come!
(MR1020/1112)

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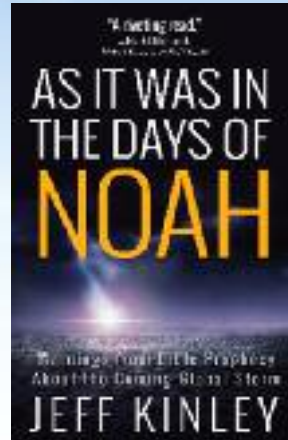
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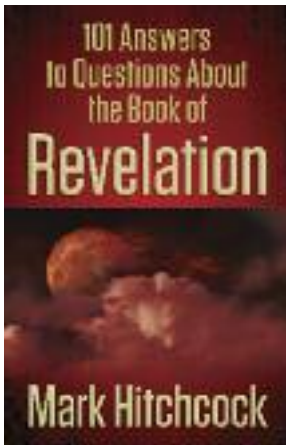
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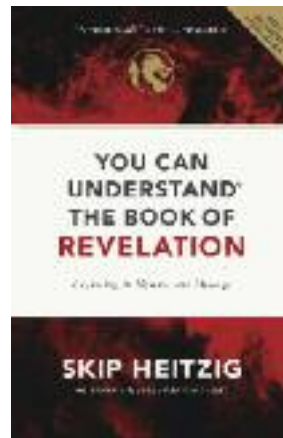
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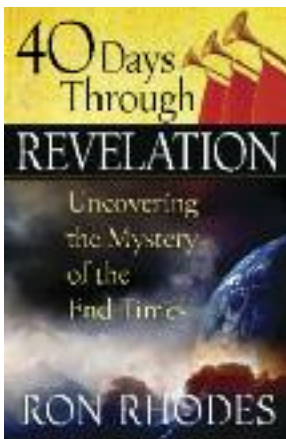
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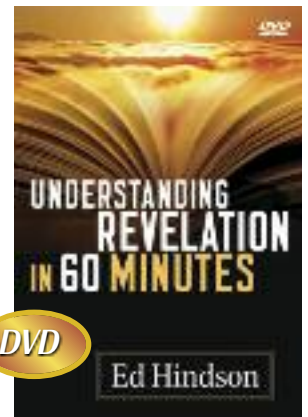
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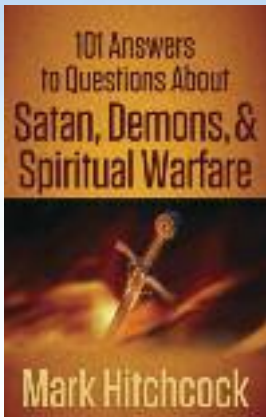
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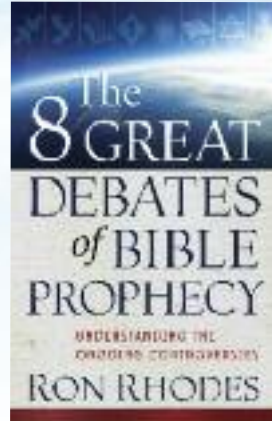
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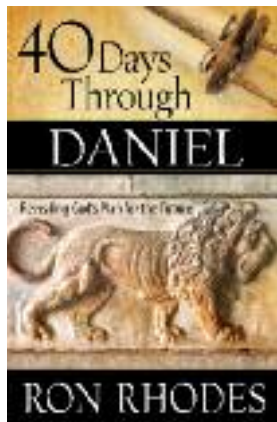
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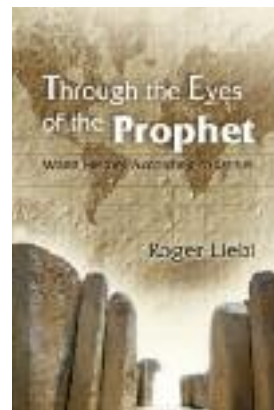
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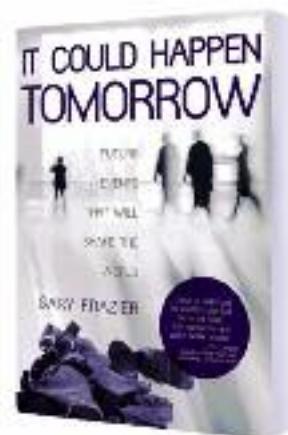
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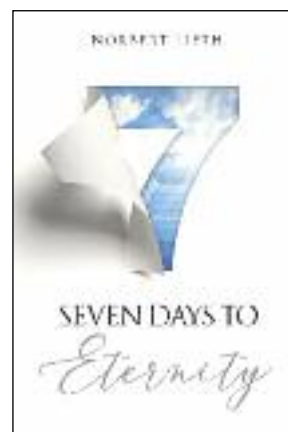
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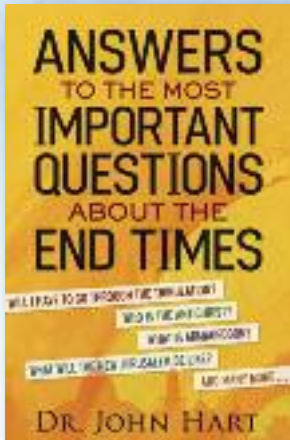
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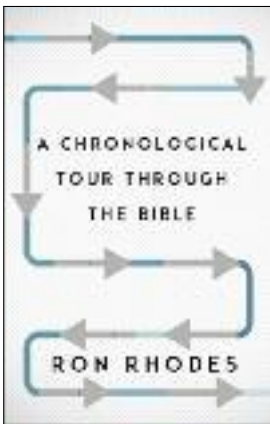
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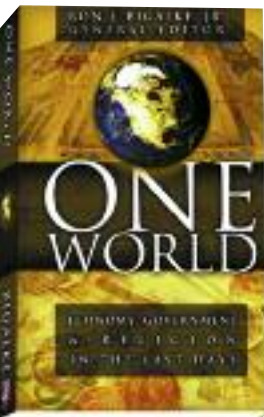
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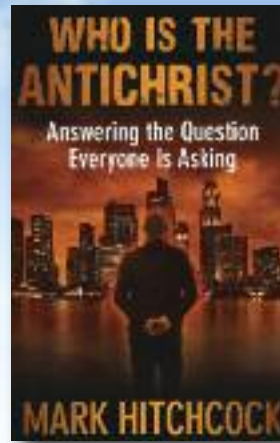
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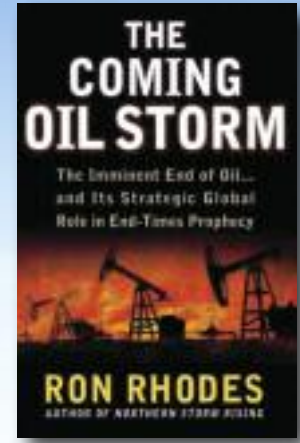
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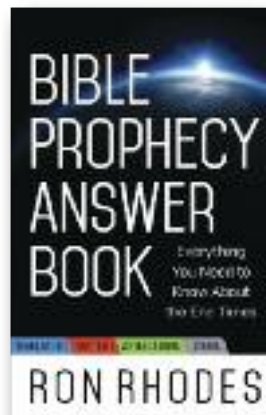
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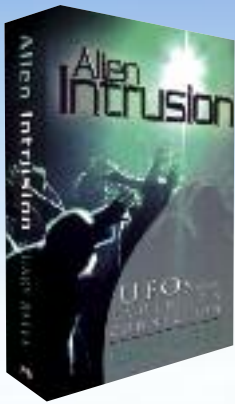
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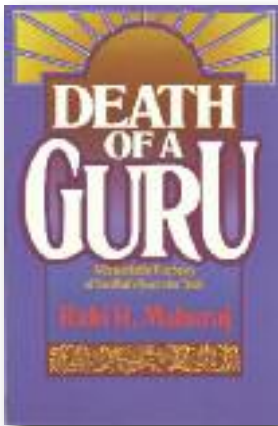
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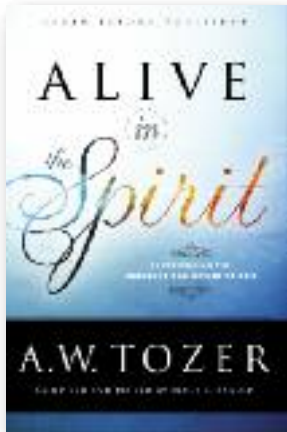
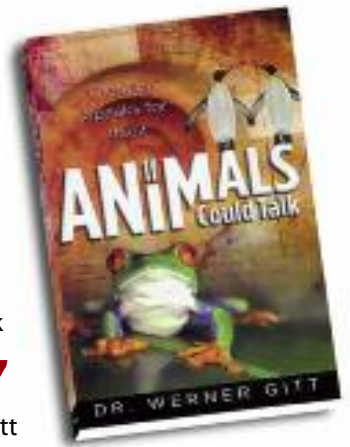
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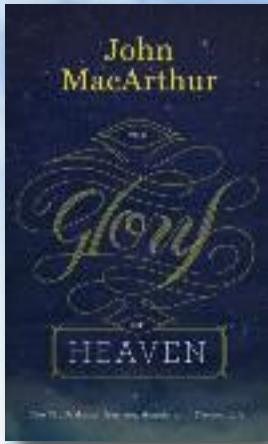
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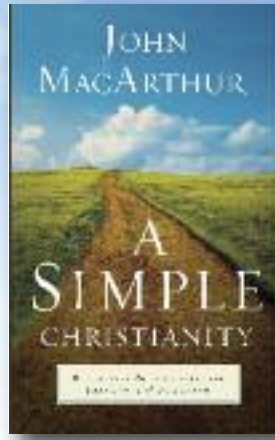
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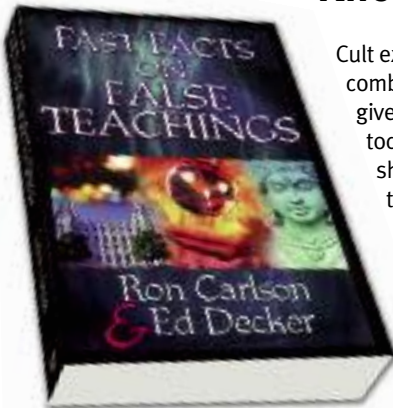
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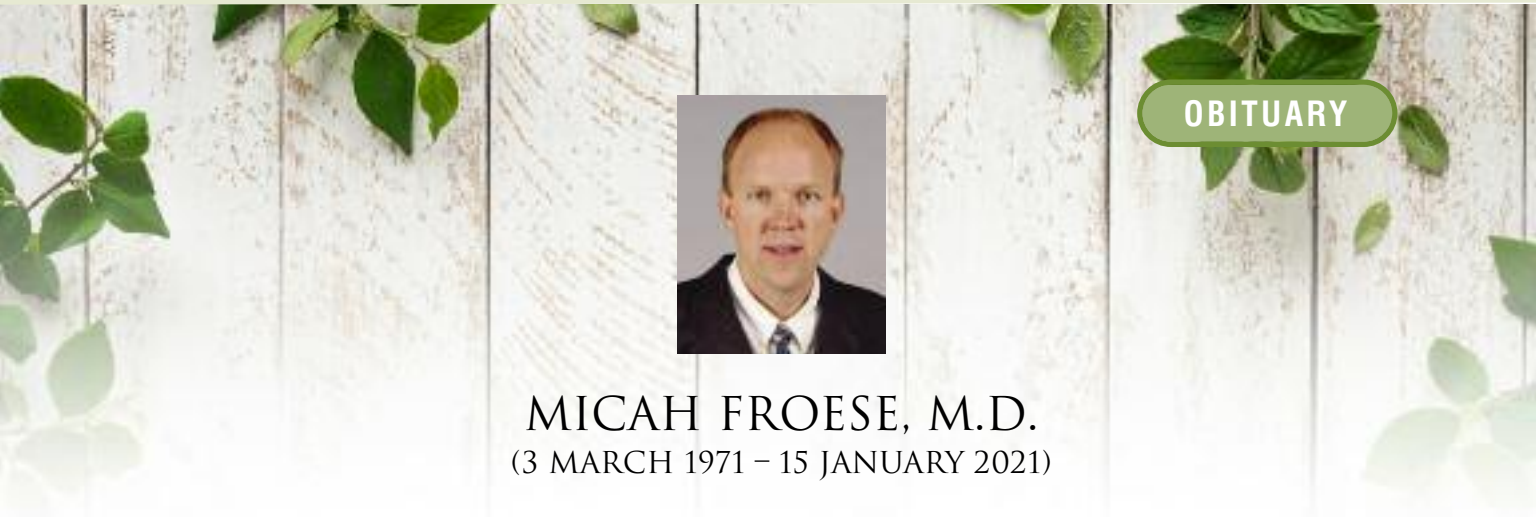
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OBITUARY



MICAH FROESE, M.D.
(3 MARCH 1971 – 15 JANUARY 2021)

Our son, Micah Froese, has unexpectedly departed.

At the early age of 13, Micah was given a tabletop AB Dick offset printing press. The challenge: make it work. He did, and from that point on, he was the brainstorm that eventually led to a full-fledged, state-of-the-art printing plant, producing millions of copies of Gospel material for Midnight Call.

In 2006, along with his wife Debbie (a nurse anesthetist), he joined Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse medical staff on a mission trip to Kenya. During those days, the doctors and surgeons recognized his talent and urged him to study medicine. He did, beginning med-

ical school in 2009 and graduating in 2013. He then practiced medicine until his death in 2021.

His heart failed. Deeply saddened, we buried him 20 January 2021 at the Dust-to-Dust Green Cemetery in Swansea, South Carolina.

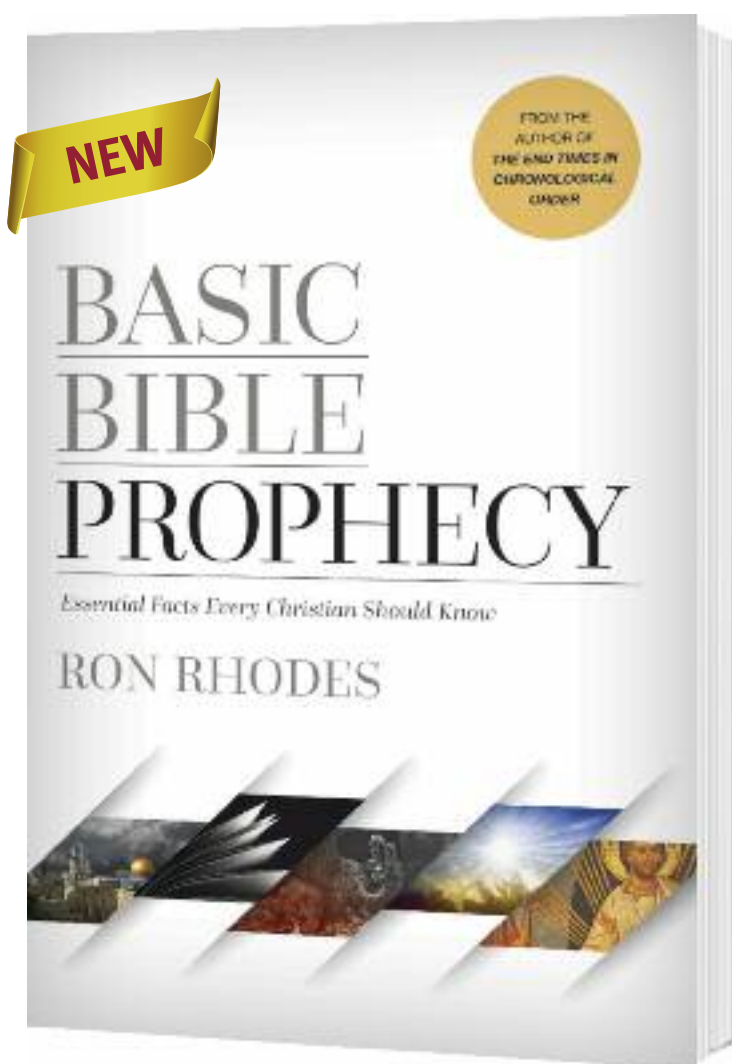
Micah left behind his wife Debbie and four daughters: Jordan (13), Jenna (12), Ava (9), and Amy (8).

“The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21b).

The family asks for your prayers. Please: no cards, flowers, or phone calls.

-Arno Froese

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