

The International Prophetic Voice for the Endtimes

Midnight Call

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

- How Close Is the Tribulation?
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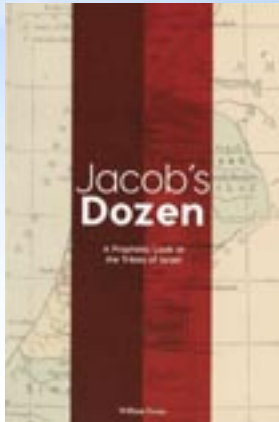
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CHRISTIANS AND HALLOWEEN



Christians Using
Science Badly: Part 1
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Were Jacob's prophetic utterances true?



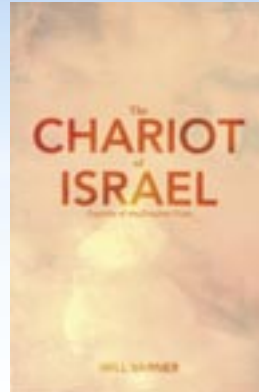
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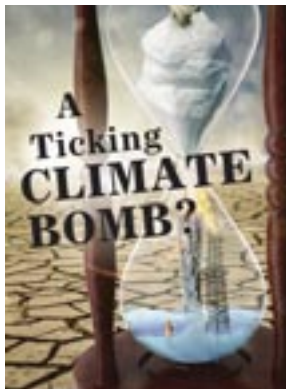


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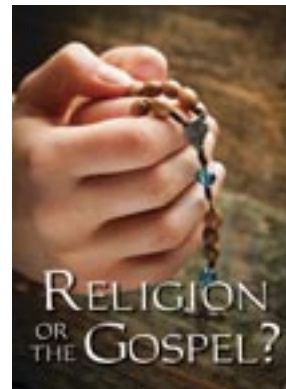


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Christians and Halloween

By Michael Kotsch

The originally intended commemoration of deceased believers is unrecognizable in modern Halloween celebrations. Instead, along with occult aspects from popular culture, neo-pagan interpretations are increasingly prevalent. Christians reject this with good reason.



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How Far Can You See?



By Norbert Lieth

Director of Missions, Midnight Call International

The above title does not mean I am thinking of far- or nearsightedness of our eyes, nor of glaucoma or cataracts that interfere with our vision. Here I am concerned about spiritual nearsightedness, which all of us suffer from to some degree. Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard wrote: “Just as a physician would have to say that there probably is no human being with perfect health, so one would have to say (...) that there is no person alive who has not felt a degree of desperation, an inner restlessness, a lack of peace and harmony; a fear of the unknown, a threat to one’s existence, even a fear of oneself.” What we need in such alarming moments is a long-distance view.

Job went through unimaginable suffering. His story can help us look to the finish line. At first, he could no longer understand God, the world, or his own affliction. He found no answers; nobody could help him, and he began to despair.

Then, when God met him, He surprisingly drew Job’s attention to a bird. The Lord spoke of the eagle and said: “its eyes detect ... from afar” (Job 39:29b). In doing so, the Almighty wanted to give him a spiritual lesson.

The eagle’s vision is eight times sharper than a human’s: he can see a mouse from a distance of 3 kilometers (1.9 miles). In human terms, that would be the ability to read newspaper print from a distance of 100 meters (109 yards). God told Job back then and says to us today: “You need a new perspective; you are too shortsighted. You have to look into the distance, to the end, to my underlying goal for everything.”

God gives orientation to migratory birds; He guides them to their destination. Finally, after thousands of kilometers, they arrive at the preordained location. Do we trust the Almighty to bring us to the goal He has set for us?

EDITOR'S NOTE

Even if the path is at times painful and uncertain? Do we have this broader vision? Job later confessed: "My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:5).

The Bible tells us: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

If we only focus on the distress, we are being shortsighted. God's Word testifies that it passes by quickly. Yet, how is that supposed to be understood by someone who has suffered the same pain and limitations for 50 years? It can only happen with the farsighted view of the infinite glory He has in store for us.

That is why we are called to not just look at what is visible and temporary, but what is yet unseen, because it is eternal. The so-called dark months will soon be upon us, when the days are shorter. Let us look to the sun that never sets: Jesus Christ. (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, was seen by over 500, and later ascended into heaven.

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

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

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

OCTOBER 2022

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CHRISTIANS AND HALLOWEEN

Michael Kotsch

How should Christians navigate this increasingly popular holiday? And what is its true background? Some answers from a historical and biblical foundation.

John Carpenter's *Halloween* is a world-famous horror film from 1978. It's about the fictional Michael Myers, who dons a Halloween mask and ambushes his victims in order to stab them to death. As the story in the film goes, six-year-old Michael had killed his seventeen-year-old sister Judith with a chef's knife. He was sent to a sanitarium for the next few years, but his condition proved to be untreat-
able. He managed to escape on October 30, 1978, and since then Myers has been looking for people to hunt down and brutally kill. In the feature film and its seven sequels (shot through 2002), Michael Myers is "evil personified," which preys on others but cannot be killed itself. A real cult following developed around the series.

The basis for the film is, of course, the American traditions surrounding

The custom of putting out carved pumpkins (turnips, originally) at Halloween comes from Ireland.

Halloween. Houses are decorated with Jack-o-lanterns, lit from within by candles. Children dress up in costumes and roam their neighborhoods, calling “Trick or treat!” at each door. They are usually rewarded with candy or other small goodies.

The Background of Halloween

Halloween’s actual starting point is the Catholic All Saints’ Day, which is currently celebrated on November 1st. In the 2nd century, the Church began to hold a memorial service on the anniversary of the deaths of Christian martyrs, to commemorate their courageous sacrifice and to honor the strength of their faith as a model for other Christians. As centuries passed, the increasing number of these “saints” made it difficult to remember each and every one through a separate festival. So, in the Eastern Orthodox Church during the 4th century, the numerous martyr memorial days were combined to form a shared All Saints’ Day festival. It was celebrated the Sunday after Pentecost. This singled out the martyrs as the “spiritual elite” of the Christian church.

On May 13, 609 AD, Pope Boniface IV consecrated the Pantheon in Rome as a memorial for all Christian martyrs. The Friday after Easter was established as their official holiday, in order to make

use of the proximity to Jesus’ death. Ireland—which had long been Christianized—moved the festival to November 1st in the 8th century, the beginning of the Celtic year and winter. This date underscored parallels between the deceased martyrs and the dying of nature. It was hoped that the visible death in nature would contrast with the eternal spiritual realm of believers. In 835, Pope Gregory IV designated November 1st to be an official day of remembrance for all Christian martyrs and saints for the entire Catholic church. At the end of the 10th century, Benedictine monks at the monastery in Cluny, France also introduced the festival of All Souls’ Day. On this day, Christians were meant to reflect on all those who had already died and, according to Catholic interpretation, would now have to suffer in purgatory. The faithful were to plead through prayer for the welfare of these souls, especially on this day.

Halloween (All Hallows’ Eve) is the night before All Saints’ Day. Due to the various customs that prevail, it’s assumed that we especially remember death and the deceased at this time. Of course, such an occasion attracted many to numerous ghoulish customs and various forms of divination. After all, it was believed that people have a

Halloween's actual starting point is the Catholic All Saints' Day, which is currently celebrated on November 1st.

special closeness to the otherwise inaccessible hereafter on that day. That's why some, especially the young, disguise themselves as the grim reaper, a skeleton, corpse, witch, or other person believed to have a close connection to the afterlife. Some people also love to scare or even harass acquaintances or passers-by with scary masks.

Technically, until the 19th century, Halloween was celebrated almost exclusively in the British Isles, particularly in Ireland. Halloween came to the United States later with Irish immigrants. Then in the 1990s, the increasingly commercialized celebration found its way to Europe.

The custom of putting out carved pumpkins (turnips, originally) at Halloween also comes from Ireland. According to legend, there was once a villain known as Stingy Jack. He is said to have lured the devil into a trap, releasing him only after securing a promise that the devil would leave him alone forever. But because Jack had become involved with the occult, he wasn't welcome in heaven after his death. And because of his bad experience with Jack, the devil didn't want him in hell either. So, according to legend, Jack's spirit has wandered the world with a hollowed-out turnip for a lantern ever since. Only in the United

States has the turnip morphed into a pumpkin. Since then, a grimacing pumpkin, illuminated by a candle and placed in front of the house, is supposed to keep the devil and evil spirits away.

Because of its innate proximity to death and the devil, Halloween is one of Satanism's most important holidays. In the United States, the concept of Halloween also became blended with Día de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead), which is celebrated at the same time. The idea of the dead coming to visit from the afterlife and happily reuniting with the living once a year—complete with music, dancing, and feasting—comes from the pre-Christian time of the Aztecs. Today, to mark this occasion (particularly in Mexico), homes and shops are decorated with stylized skeletons and fake skulls. Small skulls or bones made from sugar or marzipan as a children's treat, as well as the "bread of the dead" (a sweet biscuit flavored with anise and decorated with skulls), are popular. Food and drinks, flowers and personal mementos, candles and incense, are placed before small home altars in honor of the dead. On this day, it's important to be on good terms with the deceased and invite them to eat and drink. The idea is that at midnight, the

Today, Halloween is mainly about consumption: buying costumes, candy, and decorations.

dead have to say goodbye and return to the afterlife.

Against the backdrop of the Irish/Celtic renaissance in the second half of the 19th century, there were efforts to trace many Christian traditions back to their pagan or Celtic roots. During that time, when some were turning away from a generally Christian self-image, people were searching for older, (allegedly) more authentic traditions. These ideologically motivated efforts often led to speculations that lacked a genuine historical basis. Throughout Europe, it became fashionable to establish a purported continuity with the ancient Celts, Teutons, or Romans. After Ireland's forced unification with England in 1800, there was also a strong nationalistic interest there. During the ancient Irish festival of Samhain, people could gain access to the "other world." People were advised to stay home on that day to avoid encountering the mythological heroes of the past, or the underworld god Cenn Crúach ("the bloody head"). To appease this god, a solemn blood sacrifice was made. Samhain also commemorated the Second Battle of Mag Tuired, in which two Irish tribes fought each other, supported by magic, curses, and rape. It is alleged that as early as 700 BC, the Druid priest would light a



sacred bonfire at Samhain, from which every person would carry a flame to relight their own hearth.

The widely promoted concept of an Irish renaissance, boiled down to Halloween being viewed as a superficially Christianized Samhain festival. However, extensive historical and archaeological research over the past few decades, has cast doubt on this conclusion. In ancient Ireland, Samhain wasn't at all intended to commemorate the dead. Additionally, there is no evidence of the supposed victims of the gods of the underworld, or mementos of famous battles in a Halloween context. We should also remember that All Saints' Day (and, by extension, Halloween) was originally invented in Italy, not Ireland. Also, Ireland was Christianized so thoroughly and early (the 5th century) that there was no reason to adapt pagan rites later on. Very little

Reformation Day, also celebrated on October 31, has unfortunately been largely suppressed by Halloween.

of Halloween custom resembles the old Irish Samhain, beyond superficial similarities such as light used as symbolism, which is to be expected in a festival during a dark season. As a result, researchers currently regard attempts to establish continuity between the two festivals to be historically unfounded speculation. The same applies to attempts (also dating from the 19th century) to link Halloween/All Saints' Day with old Germanic traditions.

Recently, neo-paganism has sparked an increased interest in claiming much Christian symbolism and church custom as its own. That's why false claims, like the ones of the Irish renaissance, are made so often. Contrary to historical record, both the ancient Irish Samhain and Catholic Halloween are interpreted as celebrations of meetings between the living and the dead. A counterpoint to the spring festival of Beltane, Samhain is claimed to emphasize darkness and the proximity of this world to the hereafter. However, this is just an unhistorical reinterpretation, primarily for reasons of self-promotion. Those who represent neo-paganism can't even agree on the exact symbolism of light, pumpkins, and roaming children. Some of them want to celebrate the supposedly ancient Irish or Germanic festival on November 1st; others

evoke the Irish lunar calendar and calculate a different date entirely.

Should Modern Christians Celebrate Halloween?

1. It's rather unfortunate that Halloween has almost completely displaced the traditional St. Martin's Day in central Europe. This day, observed on November 10th and 11th, traditionally commemorates the 4th century Christian missionary Martin von Tours, as well as the Reformer Martin Luther. On this day, children would go from house to house with lanterns, singing Christian songs, and were given sweets and fruit. Reformation Day, also celebrated on October 31, has unfortunately been largely suppressed by Halloween.

2. Today, Halloween is mainly about consumption: buying costumes, candy, and decorations. Generally, Christians shouldn't support this kind of holiday commercialization.

3. Halloween is commonly celebrated in a context of magic, horror, and fortune telling. These are aspects that Christians reject as occult practices, according to the Bible.

4. Halloween is closely related to All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, which are

Halloween is commonly celebrated in a context of magic, horror, and fortune telling.

customarily Catholic holidays. Since Jesus and the apostles taught nothing about the veneration of the “saints” or about the punishment of the dead in purgatory, modern Christians are critical of these concepts from Catholic theology.



5. The originally intended commemoration of deceased believers, is unrecognizable in modern Halloween celebrations. Instead, along with occult aspects from popular culture, neo-pagan interpretations are increasingly prevalent. Christians reject this with good reason.

6. According to the Bible, there is generally no connection between the worlds of the living and the dead. On the contrary, God even makes a clear distinction. Jesus and the apostles firmly reject attempts to establish contact with the afterlife or the realm of the dead (Deut 18:10-11; Luke 16:26ff.).

7. Of course, Christians can and should remember the faithful who came before them (2 Tim 3:14-15; Heb 12:1). After all, they also belong to the Church of Jesus, which stretches beyond all borders and ages. Their lives help Christians come to better know God’s actions and gain an awareness of their own historical influences. We are absolutely permitted to dedicate a special day to remembering

the exemplary believers of the past. It’s the aspect most worthy of consideration, but Halloween fails to achieve this.

Therefore, Christians are advised to stay as far away from Halloween as possible. But since most people are content to enjoy Halloween’s simple amusements, and its spiritual roots have largely fallen to the wayside, Christians don’t need to present themselves as the celebration’s committed enemies either. That would inspire some people to curiosity about its assumed occult roots, or even to try them out. Of course, it’s also possible to use this day as an opportunity to emphasize the reality of a life after earthly death or God’s coming judgment, through tracts or conversations. After all, these significant aspects played an important role in Halloween’s historical development. If a greater number of people are willing to think about death and the afterlife because of Halloween, it can serve as a welcome occasion for Christians to talk about these important spiritual connections.

(MR1021/1189)



CHRISTIANS USING SCIENCE BADLY: PART 1



In recent times, most everyone seems to agree that we are living in a distressing and worrisome era ... not just in America, but the entire world. The evidence is all around us, it is claimed. The same is perceived in religion.

By Wilfred Hahn

Perhaps the reader will have had discussions recently with Christians about world geopolitical affairs and cataclysmic developments as of late. Very likely, the discussion will have ventured into the general topic of the "signs of the times." Acquaintances of this writer ventured the conclusion that "end-time" phenomena are being witnessed today. (To be correct, according to our understanding, the end times started with the Church Age.) But yes, some end-time signs can be seen as unfolding in our day.

Most certainly, fearsome news is being hyped as rarely before. However, we note much confusion with respect to the "signs" that Christ said would occur.

As a brief foretaste, consider the increase in "rumors of wars" that was prophesied by Christ in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24). The trend may well be observed today (pre-Tribulation).

The reader should note that in this writer's interpretation of this prophecy, it also refers to the increase in "rumors"—not specifically just the increase in "wars," which is mentioned separately in Matthew 24.

The increase in "rumors of wars" speaks to the explosion of global media and its torrential manufacturing of hyped rumors in our day.

However, as far as this global media is concerned, the miscasting of their "rumors" is of no great concern. Why? Because the more fear-mongering, the more alarmism and exaggeration of the news, the better for newspaper subscriptions and the profitability of the media industry in general. That is not to say that the dispersion of misinformation is driven purely by greed. As we will yet opine, there are other agendas as well ... i.e., the histrionic global warming advocates.

We must ask this question: Seen in the overall, are the media's "rumors" and the end-time

We conclude that the Bible does not make any statements about a global climate warming crisis. Therefore, obviously, the Bible does not prophesy global warming.

speculations of Christians today valid? Just what does science say? What does the Bible say?

Finding Truthful Facts

The reader will be surprised to learn that we are first addressing Christian commentators who are spreading falsehoods about the end times. Indeed, some of them may be doing so innocently. But, nonetheless, if we demand that scientists such as “climate change experts” and others, rely on valid proofs and facts before publishing their hyped-up reports, then we must demand the same from fearmongering Christians. (Actually, this fear should not be happening at all, because Christ expressly exhorted his followers “[...] see to it that you are not alarmed”: Matthew 24:6.)

Incorrect interpretations of Biblical prophecy and the gross exaggeration of the “global warming scares,” go together in a sense. If literal Bible interpretation and proper hermeneutics are of no value, then it is likely that these teachers will be deceived about global climate agendas. They will more easily buy into the perspective that “global warming” is validated as a prophetic “sign of the times.”

Consider this question: In the case of global warming, if something globally destructive and cataclysmic is to occur, as believed by the global warming alarmists, then why would this not be mentioned in Bible prophecy? Listening to the



alarmists, we are asked to believe that the entire planet is headed for destruction ... that the eradication of mankind is nigh. Again, we ask: Given the purported earth-wide impact of global warming, why would Christ not have mentioned this development in the Olivet Discourse?

We conclude that the Bible does not make any statements about a global climate warming crisis. Therefore, obviously, the Bible does not prophesy global warming. Also, as we will show, the scientific facts are not conclusive for global warming.

We don't wish to be cantankerous sticklers for no apparent reason. Nevertheless, Scripture is the Word of God, and we should therefore strive to divide it correctly. Anything less and we are likely to be misled.

And misreporting is unfolding today: We discover that many prophecy commentators make speculative statements about “global warming” ... contriving a prophetic connection into certain Bible verses—reading into the Bible what is not there.

For example, a recent article in *Christianity Today* agrees that there is no specific mention in the Bible about global warming. But then it states that that the world will be burned up, citing 2 Peter 3:10: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by



Not only do some Christians hype erroneous, last-day “signs of the times,” but also, they then swallow the global warming hype as authentic ... and not only that, even see it as a specific end-time sign.

fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”¹

However, careful readers will note that this verse would be taken far out of context if it were used to support the global warming crisis today. The verse refers to the time post-Millennium, when all is renewed and the New Jerusalem descends from on high. There is no over-heating of crisis proportions revealed in the pre-Tribulational period (the time in which we live today) other than bad science and theology.

Not only do some Christians hype erroneous, last-day “signs of the times,” but also, they then swallow the global warming hype as authentic ... and not only that, even see it as a specific end-time sign. (Note: While the Roman Catholic Church does not recognize literal pre-millennial eschatology, it is a major supporter of global responses to counteract climate change.)

Bad Trends Everywhere

Just what other purported crisis events and trends are identified, giving rise to fearsome end-time scares? Apparently, it is a long list. Consider the following six:

1. Wildfire outbreaks around the world. Notable ones in 2021 that have been widely reported were in Siberia and California (not to mention many other smaller ones).
2. Increasing incidence of droughts.
3. Rising sea levels and forecasts of further rapid increase ... some predicting a rise of 60 feet by the year 2100.

4. Increasing hurricanes (including tornados, typhoons, & cyclones).

5. Rising flood activity.

6. Extreme precipitation perils (rain, snow).

Readers no doubt will have heard reports of these feared developments in the general media.

But consider this: Not one of the six perils listed above is explicitly recorded in Bible prophecy, though it may today be hyped by the media.

On the other hand, as mentioned in the Olivet Discourse, end-time developments are indeed prophesied—i.e., pestilence, famine, earthquakes, wars, and others.

But what does science say about some of these trends that the media wishes to broadcast? Surely, the general media will have quoted the views of science accurately.

Let’s check the facts. Doing so, we draw much info from an important book authored recently by Dr. Steven Koonin, a prominent climate scientist, entitled *Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn’t, and Why It Matters*. In it, he presents a firmly scientific and balanced view on “climate change.” He notes many falsehoods and biases that are playing out in this field.

We here present a few snippets of Dr. Koonin’s counterarguments to the populist fearmongering. (Note: The numbers in parentheses refer to the page numbers of Dr. Koonin’s book.)

#1 Storms

Alarmist Prediction: It is claimed that storms are becoming more common and more intense, and rising greenhouse gas emissions are going to make it all a lot worse.

Counter Evidence: “There has been no significant trend in the global number of tropical cyclones nor has any trend been identified in the number of US land-falling hurricanes. [...] There have been periods before 1949 that were relatively active compared to the post-1995 era of heightened activity. In other words, there have been times before human influences became significant that were at least as active as today” (p. 117). “As for the media, pointing to hurricanes as an example of the ravages of human-caused climate change is at best unconvincing, and at worst plainly dishonest” (p. 121).

Consider that “annual US deaths from tornadoes have fallen by more than a factor of ten since 1875 (currently about 0.02 per 100,000 people), largely due to improved radar warnings [...] The best we can say is that, if anything, US tornadoes have become more benign as the globe has warmed over the past seventy-five years, and we have no credible method for projecting future changes” (p. 126).

#2 Precipitation Perils (rain, snow)

Alarmist Prediction: Extreme weather trends have been caused by Global Warming.

Counter Evidence: “There is no evidence of increase in precipitation at the global scale in response to the observed global warming” (p. 132). “The modest changes in US rainfall during the past

century haven’t changed the average incidence of floods. However, trends in flooding vary across the country, with some locations experiencing increases and some decreases” (p. 137).

#3 Droughts and Dryness

Alarmist Prediction: This is claimed to lead to wildfire and low agricultural yields.


Counter Evidence: A study, [the AR5] says that they find “low confidence in a global-scale trend in drought or dryness since the middle of the 20th century” (p. 138). “These data reveal that some droughts in the past have been more severe and longer lasting than any experienced in the last 100 years” (p. 140).

#4 Fires

Alarmist Prediction: The incidence of wildfire is increasing ... and is predicted to expand uncontrollably due to global warming.

Counter Evidence: “Despite the very destructive wildfires in 2020, that year was among the least active globally since 2003” (p. 142). “[The] global area burned by fires each year has declined by 25% since observations began in 1998” (p. 11).

Reviewing the above-mentioned claims, we note the hyperbole ... and downright dishonesty in some instances. Why is there such bias?

Next issue, we continue with Part 2. 

ENDNOTE

- 1 <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-life/what-does-the-bible-say-about-climate-change.html>



Jacob's Prophecies Concerning His Sons

DR. RON J. BIGALKE

The final moments of Jacob's life reveal him to be physically weak as he approached death. However, instead of focusing upon his own weakness, he was able to give a blessing to those around him. He became an instrument of the Lord's blessings for future generations.

God promised Jacob: "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes" (Gen 46:4). The blessings of Abraham are in the land of Canaan, not Egypt. The result of the Egyptian bondage (Exod 1:8-14) was that the people of God dwelt in Egypt rather than in Canaan. Therefore, when he was near death, Jacob demanded a promise from his son Joseph: to bury him in Canaan. "Please, if I have found favor in your sight," he said to his son, "place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness . . . carry me out of Egypt and bury me in [my fathers'] burial place" (Gen 47:29-30).

Joseph promised that he would not bury his father in Egypt, yet Jacob insisted, "Swear to me" (v. 31). The placing of one's hand under another's thigh was a way of making an oath. The same was witnessed when Abraham required an oath from his servant, who was sent to Haran to find a wife for Isaac (24:9). Jacob wanted to be certain that circumstances would not prevent Joseph from leaving Egypt, so he insisted that his son make an oath that would bind him. Later, Joseph went to Pharaoh and said, "My father made me swear" (50:5a). Thus, Pharaoh allowed Joseph to leave the country and bury his father in Canaan.

Jacob worshiped God, realizing that He would fulfill His promise through Joseph. God's promise

of the land was important to him, even though it was only (for the moment) his final resting place (1 Chron 16:13-18). Jacob called for his sons, sensing he was near death, and the twelve of them gathered around his bed. “Assemble yourselves,” said Jacob, “that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come” (Gen 49:1). He then prophesied concerning his twelve sons.

Reuben (49:3-4) was the firstborn. By virtue of his position as Jacob’s firstborn, he should have had preeminence over his brothers and the double portion of the inheritance that was given to Joseph (48:5-6, 22; 1 Chron 5:1-2). But those were taken from Reuben because of his precariousness. He lost his birthright and place of honor because he committed incest with Jacob’s concubine. One does not read of an immediate punishment at the time when the sin originally occurred (Gen 35:22). However, the sin did have progressive consequences, not only for Reuben but also for his descendants. As a result, Reuben would not have the character to lead the tribes.

Simeon and Levi were addressed next. Anger and cruelty were their legacy. As a result of their character, they would be scattered. The tribe of Simeon was eventually unified into the tribe of Judah, but the tribe of Levi was never given their own land. They were given cities to occupy, which were scattered throughout the land of Israel. Their inheritance is the tithe rather than land (Numb 18:22-23).

The most extensive prophecies given by Jacob involve Judah and Joseph. They were the two leaders among the brothers, and the sons whose tribes—Judah and Ephraim—were destined to be the dominant tribes in the Promised Land. Ephraim would be prominent in the north and

would become the Northern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom fell into idolatry, and God’s judgment of their sin was exile by Assyria. Following the reign of Solomon, the Northern Kingdom had a total of 20 kings; not one of them was credited as being a godly man.

The Southern Kingdom, Judah, witnessed periods of apostasy and revival; from its 20 kings, only approximately half of them were said to have “done right before the Lord.” Even among the half of the 20 kings, there was a serious deterioration as their reign progressed, and an apostasy from the Lord in their latter years. What is not evident is whether those men were really children of God, or if they simply did right in obeying the law of God in the first part of their reign, and then manifested their apostate character later in life. God judged the Southern Kingdom also through exile to Babylon. After the Babylonian Captivity, the Southern Kingdom returned to their land to rebuild the temple.

Judah was characterized as a lion’s cub; that is, a lioness who crouches (“who dares rouse him up?”). His was a powerful tribe. Judah would not only rule over his brothers in the days to come, but also would overcome his enemies (Gen 49:8). His military might was compared to the strength of a lion (v. 9). The preeminence that was taken from Reuben was given to his younger brother, Judah.

Genesis 49:10 (“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples”) has been a difficult passage to translate. For instance, the King James Version translated the third line, “until Shiloh come.” The New American Standard translated it

Jacob's Prophecies Concerning His Sons

Joseph was given the longest prophecy. There are images of fruitful vines and steady bows, drawing upon “the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), from the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you.”

in the same manner. There is good reason to render the verse as the New International Version did, “until he comes to whom it belongs.” Victor P. Hamilton noted this problem of translation: “This line has provoked more difference of opinion among Hebraists than perhaps any other in the entire book of Genesis” (*Genesis 18-50* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995] 654). Hamilton translated it, “until he possesses that which belongs to him.” The meaning of Genesis 49:10 seems to be that the kingship will remain in Judah’s clan until the king comes who can rightfully claim it. Obviously, many interpret the rightful king to be none other than “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (Rev 5:5). “Shiloh” can refer to a specific place, as it is elsewhere in the Old Testament (cf. Josh 18:1, 8-9; 1 Sam 1:3). In the Genesis passage, it is best to understand it as being a faint hint of the person of the Messiah. The *Targum Onkelos* offered the following interpretation: “until the Messiah comes, whose is the kingdom, and him shall the nations obey.”

Zebulun was promised a seaborne trade. His tribe would border the Mediterranean Sea and the city of Sidon. Issachar’s tribe would be characterized by forced labor. Instead of using his ability to work for himself, Issachar would work for food and rest among the Canaanites, which was the opposite of what the relationship should have been. Dan was to help the other tribes against their enemies. He was “a serpent in the way.” The image is of his vindication. He would be one of the

smaller tribes, but would be a victorious tribe over others.

Jacob was now halfway through the prophecies concerning his sons. Having prophesied concerning Dan, the patriarch declared, “For Your salvation I wait, O LORD” (Gen 49:18). Obviously, his declaration was an expression that the hope of the nation did not reside in his sons; rather, hope was in the God who had borne him throughout his sojourn. The substance of Jacob’s words was that salvation certainly would not come from his sons, but from God.

Marauding bands would raid Gad, but he would “overcome at the last” (KJV). Asher would be very productive and fruitful in his labors. He would take his abundance and deliver it to the court, thus indicating that the food was more of a delicacy than common food. Naphtali would be swift in battle. His tribe would be a mountainous people. The prophecy of Naphtali’s future is one of unhindered freedom and increase. While the New American Standard translated verse 21 to read “words” in the second line, it seems preferable to render it more naturally as “fawns.”

Joseph was given the longest prophecy. There are images of fruitful vines and steady bows, drawing upon “the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), from the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you” (vv. 24b-25a). “May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers” (v.

All the prophecies of Jacob concerning his sons, were either fulfilled or will be fulfilled in the future plan of God for Israel.

26b). The final verse acknowledged Joseph as the leader and the one who was preeminent among his brothers.

Benjamin received the twelfth blessing: he was “a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the spoil” (v. 27). He was prophesied to have success that he would divide with others. Jacob then gave final instructions concerning his burial place. “When Jacob finished charging his sons,” Scripture records, “he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people” (v. 33). He who had been blessed by God, had now finished blessing his twelve sons, who were with him at the end of his life.

All the sons of Jacob were blessed, in that they were to be a part of the nation of Israel. All of Jacob’s sons would enter the land of Canaan and have an inheritance there. According to the prophecies, some would certainly receive a greater blessing than others would. However, even those who were rebuked by Jacob were blessed. The application is obvious: One’s future is not independent of the past, but is a direct extension of it.

The quality of the blessing for Reuben, Simeon, and Levi was based upon the sins they had committed in the past. Joseph was betrayed by his brethren, yet remained faithful to his Lord (vv. 23-24). Some of the sons found their blessings related to the name they had been given at birth. For instance, Judah’s name was derived from the Hebrew root “to praise” (29:35). His brothers would praise him (49:8). Dan, whose name has the meaning “to judge” (30:6), was foretold that

he would “judge his people” (v. 16). Biblical prophecy is not isolated from history, but is a direct extension of it and continues into the future.

For the twelve sons of Jacob, their character would not only affect their own future, but also the generations after them. The sons of Jacob would learn the same lesson that Jacob learned. Truly, present actions have an impact on the future. For example, Jacob’s cunning was witnessed in his two sons, Simeon and Levi. The prophecies of Jacob reminded his sons that the life they led would affect the nation for years to come. If they lived godly lives, this would be a blessing to coming generations. If they forsook God, then the nation would experience the Lord’s judgment (a pattern exemplified in the blessing and cursing of Deut 28—30).

All the prophecies of Jacob concerning his sons, were either fulfilled or will be fulfilled in the future plan of God for Israel. The prophecies of God for the nation will be fulfilled in a literal manner, just as they were given to the original recipients. To the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob, the prophecies were both a warning against forsaking God, and an expression of hope in faithfulness to God. The words of warning and hope find significance only through the grace that God provided, which would keep them from sin as they sought to honor Him. The warning of sin and its consequences should compel humanity from sin to the Messiah, for it is only in Him that salvation would come. The sons of Jacob (like the patriarch himself) must declare, “For Your salvation I wait, O LORD.” (1252)



“Do Whatever He Tells You”

Ernst Kraft

Seven Lessons from the Wedding in Cana

Invite Jesus

“Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples” (John 2:2).

It’s a wonderful thing to invite Jesus into our lives—into our everyday lives—so He can take part in what we’re experiencing. The problem is, we’ve developed a mindset that needs correcting. We think that if we’ve invited Jesus into our lives, then everything should be smooth sailing from now on. There’s a pervasive assumption that once we accept Jesus, He will end all our suffering. But that’s not what the Bible teaches.

A storm once arose while Jesus was in a boat with the disciples. The waves sweeping over them

were so strong that water poured into the boat. The disciples cried out in despair, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4:38b). In Psalm 73, the psalmist laments that the wicked seem to prosper while he suffers trials daily.

The Bible makes it clear that we won’t be preserved from difficulties, trials, problems, or even suffering. But those who have invited Jesus into their lives will never be disappointed. Instead, they will experience that Jesus is our help and becomes the consolation that no one else could be. Paul refers to Him as “he who is blessed forever” (2 Cor 11:31), in response to all the troubles the Lord has helped him through.

“Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim” (John 2:7).



Mary's Example

“When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine’” (John 2:3).

We can learn a lot from Mary's actions at the wedding in Cana. She wasn't indifferent to what was happening at the wedding of her friends or relatives. She could have reacted like Cain, who said, “Am I my brother's keeper?”—Why should I care whether or not there's enough wine?

Mary acted on the principle of Philippians 2:4: “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Being concerned with one another's problems and sharing burdens is the true character of a Christian: “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2).

The next thing we can learn from her is that she immediately went to Jesus with the problem at hand. Where are we going with our problems? Peter also followed this example: “Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her” (Mark 1:30).

Tell Jesus about your problems, when something is missing and your needs are pressing. He understands them. He's the one who can help. That's why we want to (and should!) act according

to Hebrews 4:16 at all times: “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

His Hour Is Not Ours

“And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come’” (John 2:4).

Jesus always acted according to His Father's wishes. Maintaining his dignity or false motives didn't determine His actions the way it often is with us. It's possible that Mary's wishes were based on human reasoning. She may have wanted to fix the situation, to save those responsible from embarrassment due to their miscalculation or stinginess, etc.

Jesus acted with a single motive: to glorify the Father. We also see that in the story of Lazarus in John 11. Jesus' “hour” was not the hour of Mary and Martha. By their understanding, the Lord had come too late. And yet it was the right hour when Jesus appeared, because He said, “and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe...” (John 11:15).

Jesus' actions had a goal and served a purpose. His hour is not ours, but it is always the right one. You can also believe that His hour will come and that He will intervene at the right time, even if you think He's too late. If things seem drawn out, believe that He will make them right. Our Lord knows what is good and proper, even now in this hour of your life.

“Do Whatever He Tells You”

The more we fill our lives with God’s Word, the more glorious the result will be.



He Will Make It Right

“His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’” (John 2:5).

When Mary brought her request to Jesus (that is, surrendered it to Him), His response was hardly encouraging: “And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come’” (v. 4).

How do we react when our prayers go unanswered? Do we give up in disappointment and let it drop, or do we react like Mary? She accepted the situation, left it to Him and said, “Do whatever he tells you.”

She submitted to Him completely. How often do we find ourselves telling God what He needs to do, and how and when. We must learn that He is the Lord, and He is the one to decide—not us. Mary submitted herself completely to Him, though she didn’t understand.

He will make it right. Mary reacted in the same way at the Annunciation, even though she couldn’t explain or understand any of it: “And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word’” (Luke 1:38).

Zechariah wasn’t able to act that way. He remained so tangled up in his own mind that it got in the way of his faith. But God’s Word says: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Prov 3:5-6).

Nothing Happens Without Empty Vessels

“Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim” (John 2:7).

There were six water jugs in the house where the wedding at Cana took place. The number six indicates humanity. When we read 2 Corinthians 4:7, there is another reference to vessels: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”

We are like the empty vessel. When we fill our lives with water, it glorifies Jesus. The water is a depiction of the Word of God. Whoever fills his life with God’s Word (as it says, “They filled them up to the brim”) is glorifying Jesus.

The more we fill our lives with God’s Word, the more glorious the result will be. Others enjoyed the fruit, and Jesus received the glory. It is the same in our life. If we are empty vessels and let God’s Word fill us, others will marvel and acknowledge that we give off the sweet aroma of Jesus Christ.

Let’s do as He tells us and present ourselves as empty vessels, ready to be filled with water so the glory of Jesus can be seen in us. The question remains: are we empty vessels that want to be filled with God’s Word? Then we will marvel at

If you're in a phase of life right now where you don't know how to proceed, or if you're asking yourself why things are happening to you, then tell Jesus about it.

what Jesus does through us. Our job is to do what we're able to, and He will do the rest. But without empty vessels, nothing can happen.

The Way to Produce the Best Wine

“When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, ‘Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now’” (John 2:9-10).

Running out of wine led to the glorious experience of the miracle. If we cooperate with Jesus in our own lives as the servants did—that is, if we do what He says—then we will receive new blessings out of our difficulties, tribulations, and trials.

Any hardship you may be in the midst of, serves the purpose of increasing your blessings. The wine that Jesus makes is better than the wine that people produce. What we accomplish with Jesus goes beyond all human intelligence and ability. What matters is that we're working together with Jesus. That's how the best wine is produced—namely, the best fruit.

It's just a question of whether we're working and living in harmony with Jesus during times of adversity and difficulty. Sometimes we do the opposite: we rebel, grumble, and blame God for the lack of wine. We think to ourselves, “God shouldn't have allowed that to happen!”

But if we submit to His Word and authority and do our duty as servants, then we will enjoy the best wine and praise Him for His miracles in our lives.

The Best Is Yet to Come

“Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now” (John 2:10).

In this first miracle, which Jesus performed at the wedding in Cana, we see a biblical principle that can greatly encourage us: The better wine came at the end. We could also say it this way: The best is yet to come.

This principle still applies to us as believers. After the disappointment of the wine running out, came the unexpected surprise of a better vintage, brought about by Jesus' miracle. It's the same for us: After humiliation comes exaltation. After tribulation, expansion and deliverance.

If you're in a phase of life right now where you don't know how to proceed, or if you're asking yourself why things are happening to you, then tell Jesus about it. He will change your situation for the better. He has the last word, and what's coming will be more glorious than what exists now. We're waiting for the best.

Those who have invited Jesus into their lives, should know that the best is yet to come. It will be so wonderful that it will amaze us all. So, count on Jesus and what He can do.

(MR0322/1223)




WORLD FOCUS

 USA

Obsessing Over News Can Make You Sick

Keeping up with the latest news can be very bad for your health, according to a new study. Researchers at Texas Tech University found that Americans who obsessively follow the news are more likely to suffer from both physical and mental health problems, including anxiety and stress.

 This can start interfering with people's personal lives, leaving them feeling powerless and distressed about global events including the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and climate change.

"Witnessing these events unfold in the news can bring about a constant state of high alert in some people, kicking their surveillance motives into overdrive and making the world seem like a dark and dangerous place," says Bryan McLaughlin, associate professor of advertising at the College of Media and Communication at Texas Tech University, in a media release.

"For example, previous research has shown that individuals who became aware of and concerned about the adverse effects that their constant attention to sensationalized coverage of COVID-19 was having on their mental

health reported making the conscious decision to tune out."

The researchers say media literacy campaigns are necessary to help people develop a healthier relationship with the news. They also want more discussion about how "the news industry may be fueling the problem."

"The economic pressures facing outlets, coupled with technological advances and the 24-hour news cycle have encouraged journalists to focus on selecting 'newsworthy' stories that will grab news consumers' attention," McLaughlin explains.

-studyfinds.org, 24 August 2022

Commentary: After reading the article, one is reminded of Acts 17:21: "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing." Some 2,000 years ago, at the birthplace of democracy, these Athenians desired "to tell, or to hear some new thing." That is applicable to today.

It continues: "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this



Man holding a remote watching the news
Photo credit Getty Images/Tero Vesalainen

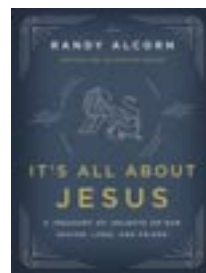
inscription, To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" (verses 22-23). Interestingly, the apostle Paul did not condemn the idol of the "Unknown God," but used the opportunity to declare the real news, the good news, the Gospel.

What was the result? "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter" (verse 32). The truth of the Gospel penetrated some: "Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (verse 34).

7825

(See *It's All About Jesus*,


Item #2369, \$18.99.)



CHINA

Chemicals to Generate Rain

The hottest, driest summer since the government began recording rainfall and temperature 61 years ago has wilted crops and left reservoirs at half their normal water level. Factories in Sichuan province were shut down to save power for homes as air conditioning demand surged, with temperatures as high as 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit).

 Authorities will “try to increase rain” by seeding clouds with chemicals and spraying crops with a “water retaining agent” to limit evaporation, [the agriculture] ministry said on its website. It gave no details of where that would be done.

Sichuan has been hardest hit by drought because it gets 80% of its power from hydroelectric dams. The provincial government says reservoirs are at half of normal water levels. It earlier called on manufacturers to “leave power for the people.”

Flooding in the northwestern province of Qinghai killed at least 26 people and left five missing, state television reported, citing local authorities.

-www.npr.org, 21 August 2022

Commentary: The quest goes on for man to control the climate; in this case, rain where there is no rain. WebMD.com explains: “[Cloud seeding] started in 1946 by scientists at the General Electric Research Laboratory. They discov-



A farmer stands above a deep crack in the dried mud of an earthen embankment in his rice fields near Chongqing, China. The government says it will try to protect China's grain harvest from record-setting drought by using chemicals to generate rain. Mark Schiefelbein/AP

ered that they could use silver iodide—an inorganic compound—and dry ice to improve the creation of ice crystals in clouds. Today, cloud seeding still involves silver iodide and dry ice. But in the last 60 years, experts have learned a lot more about this method. This has since boosted the understanding of rain and snow processes and improved seeding methods.”


Communist China, just like all other countries in the world, experiences drought and floods, heat and cold. Among the 84 questions God challenged Job with, we read in chapter 38, verses 25-26: “Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man.” We are also reminded of the words of Jesus, “...and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45b). 7826

(See *The Heavens*, Item #2391, \$19.99.)

MEXICO

Influx of Americans Anger Locals

[A] *Los Angeles Times* report outlined how some Mexican locals are “fed up” with the growing number of Americans, many from California, moving to and visiting the country, which has contributed to a rise in rent and a shift from Spanish to English in some places.

 English is also reportedly becoming more prevalent as more Americans are moving to and visiting Mexico City to take advantage of lower rent and the ability to stay in Mexico for six months without a visa.

While the *Los Angeles Times* report insisted that the “vast majority” of Mexico City locals are “unwaveringly kind” to visitors, there remains a “friction beneath the surface” of what gentrification means to the area.

“There’s a distinction between people who want to learn about the place they are in and those who just like it because it’s cheap,” said 31-year-old Hugo Van der Merwe, a man who grew up in Florida and Namibia who has been working remotely in Mexico City. “I’ve met a number of people who don’t really care that they’re in Mexico, they just care that it’s cheap.”

The *Los Angeles Times* says that in the first four months of this year, 1.2 million foreign visitors arrived at Mexico City’s airport.


-www.foxnews.com, 28 July 2022

(continued next page)

 SINGAPORE

Decriminalizes Sex Between Men

Singapore announced it will decriminalize sex between men by repealing a colonial-era law while protecting the city-state's traditional norms and its definition of marriage.

 During his speech at the annual National Day Rally, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said he believed it is the "right thing to do now" as most Singaporeans will now accept it.

Lee vowed the repeal will be limited and not shake Singapore's traditional family and societal norms including how marriage is defined, what children are taught in schools, what is shown on television and general public conduct.

Section 377A of the Penal Code was introduced under British colonial rule in the 1930s. British rule over the island ended in 1963 when Singapore became a state of Malaysia. It became independent two years later but retained

the Penal Code, which made sex between men punishable by up to two years in jail.

"All groups should exercise restraint, because that is the only way we can move forward as a nation together," he said. "I hope the new balance will enable Singapore to remain a tolerant and inclusive society for many years to come."

In 2018, India decriminalized gay sex after its Supreme Court in a historic ruling struck down Section 377 that punished gay sex by up to 10 years in prison. Some Asian countries have also moved to legalize gay marriage, with Taiwan as the first in 2019. Thailand also recently approved plans allowing same-sex unions.

-*www.npr.org*, 21 August 2022

Commentary: What does the Bible say? "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination" (Leviticus 18:22). The New Testament explains: "For this

cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet" (Romans 1:26-27).

Jesus states: "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:29-30). Note that Sodom is mentioned as an end-time sign.

The laws laid down in Scripture will continue to be replaced with new laws, based on man's own imagination. But the Bible says, "the truth shall set you free" — nothing else.

7824

(See *As It Was in the Days of Noah*, Item #2286, \$14.99.)

Americans (continued from page 25)

Commentary: Here again, money rules. Those from richer countries can find bargains in poorer ones. But as this article indicates, the locals are protective of their own culture and especially language. At this time, Spanish is the most spoken language on the American continent (North and South), with English a close second. Realizing that Central and South American countries have a

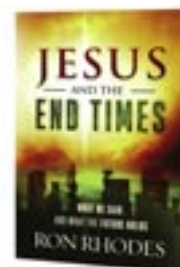
higher birth rate than the US, for example, how does the future look? The balance would tilt toward the Spanish language.

Pew Research notes that the number of Catholics in Latin America decreased from 94% in 1910, to 69% in 2014. While Protestants made up only 1% of the Latin American population in 1910, they have now reached the 19% mark. This research shows that

the message of the gospel, the good news, is being preached in fulfillment of Jesus' words in Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness

unto all nations; and then shall the end come." 7830


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



WORLD

Ten Best Cities to Live In

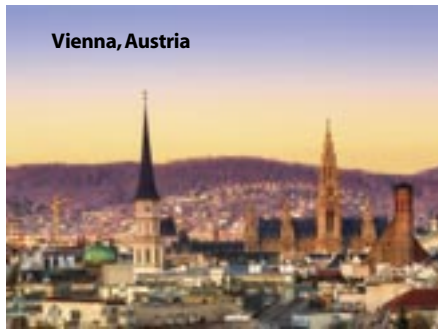
The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) released their Global Liveability Index ranking of the top 10 best and 10 worst places to live in the world in 2022. The index scored 172 cities in five categories: culture, health care, education, infrastructure, and entertainment.

 Cities in Scandinavia dominate the list of Most Liveable Cities thanks to the stability and good infrastructure in the region. These cities' inhabitants are supported by good healthcare and numerous opportunities for culture and entertainment, according to the index. Year after year, cities in Austria and Switzerland tend to rank high among quality of life lists thanks to their well-developed social market economy.

1. Vienna, Austria
2. Copenhagen, Denmark
3. Zurich, Switzerland
4. Calgary, Canada
5. Vancouver, Canada
6. Geneva, Switzerland
7. Frankfurt, Germany
8. Toronto, Canada
9. Amsterdam, Netherlands
10. Osaka, Japan and Melbourne, Australia (tie)

-*www.cnn.com*, 7 August 2022

Commentary: It is of interest that three cities in Canada have attained the title, “Top 10 Most Livable Cities,” but Europe still dominates. The list is not surprising, as it is due to their stability,



Vienna, Austria

healthcare, culture, environment, education, and infrastructure.

One must keep in mind that, based on written history, Europe has been the most violent continent on earth: they fought two World Wars, among many others. Then there was the founding of the European Union in 1951, which was originally called the European Coal and Steel Community. Today, Europe prides itself on being the continent of peace, prosperity, and security. Yet that apparently does not apply to the present conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The former was invited to become a member of the EU.

One of the major reasons holding other cities back is corruption. World PopulationReview.com lists the top 10 least corrupt countries: Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Germany.

These things are of interest as we see a pattern developing, which corresponds to the prophetic Word.

The Bible recognizes four global power structures: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. When the prophet Daniel receives his vision about

the end times, he occupies himself more with the fourth one than the other three. That empire is Rome; it is the Iron Empire, which had dominated most of Europe, and still does when it comes to business, civilized laws, and merchandise. Most of the 50 Asian countries were once ruled by European colonial powers, and the same is true in Africa. America (North and South), with its 35 countries, was established by Europeans. It communicates in European languages, practices its laws, and to a degree, its culture. The fifth continent, Australia, made it extremely difficult for Asians or Africans to migrate there. This has changed in recent years; data shows that since 2016, large numbers have been admitted to enter the country/continent.

Why peace in Europe? Because peace is a prerequisite for the Antichrist to begin rulership of planet earth. No significant wars are taking place in Asia and Africa, and that can also be said about America (North and South). Slowly but surely, peace will envelope planet earth.


Daniel saw the development and writes: “Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces” (Daniel 7:23). Peace, prosperity, and security will be established—albeit temporarily. 7821

(See *Through the Eyes of the Prophet*, Item #2297, \$10.50)

 FRANCE

UN Denounces Headscarf Ban

France violated an international rights treaty when it banned a woman from wearing a headscarf while she studied at a school, a UN committee has ruled.

 Its decision follows a complaint filed in 2016 by a French national born in 1977, whose lawyer does not wish her name to be published.

The woman was on a professional training course for adults in 2010, and had passed an interview and entrance test.

But the headmaster of Langevin Wallon high school in the southeastern suburbs of Paris refused to let her enter because of a ban on wearing religious symbols in public educational establishments.

The UN committee said, “prohibiting her from participating in her education course while wearing a headscarf constitutes a restriction on her freedom of religion in violation of the treaty.”

“This is an important decision which shows that France has work to do in terms of human rights and in particular on the issue of respect for religious minorities, and more particularly the Muslim community,” her lawyer Sefen Guez Guez told AFP.

-*www.timesofisrael.com*, 3 August 2022

Commentary: The issue is religion. As the world becomes more and more international, for a civilized society to



A woman, wearing a hijab and a protective face mask, walks at Trocadero Square near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. (Reuters File Photo)

function, laws to protect individuals are created. France, the UN says, violated that law.

Much can be said about Muslim countries that openly discriminate against Christians, but that is another issue.

We read George Washington’s words speaking of Muslims, written in March 1784: “If they are good workmen, they may be of Asia, Africa, or Europe. They may be Mahometans [Mohammedans/Muslims], Jews, or Christians of any Sect, or they may be Atheists” (www.mountvernon.org). This was based on the Declaration of Independence, which reads, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The problem is that this statement was only applicable to the rich white landowners. The original inhabitants, the Indians, had no rights, nor blacks or Asians. That is “undeniable truth.”

Today, all this has changed dramatically. Why? Globalism’s progress. The statement of the Declaration of Independence can be considered prophetic. Yet many millions have died in the meantime, or were persecuted severely—not to mention enslaved.

In summary, religion is the issue. Economically, the world is already one global society; it’s like a giant factory where everyone works on the assembly line. No matter the race, whether religious or non-religious, all are subject to the inescapable dominance of the world economy.

While the best is yet to come, so is the worst. The best for the blood-bought saints, but the worst for those who refuse: “And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory” (Revelation 16:9).

7822

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



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The Lord's Fivefold Command to Sleeping Christians

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 33.
Revelation 3:1-6.

Wim Malgo (1922-1992)

The Lord doesn't end with His devastating verdict: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." No, He wants to save, for He says, "because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19b). He also wants to impart His eternal life to us who are spiritually dead. His Spirit is calling into our often indifferent, cold, and proud hearts. It is a fivefold categorical command.

The first command is, "Be watchful" (Rev 3:2), which other translations render as, "Wake up!" Whoever Jesus Christ awakens from the sleep of death is capable of getting up! The mighty call "back to life" was heard by Lazarus, who had been in the grave for four days and had already begun to decompose. When the stone was at last rolled away from the tomb, the Lord Jesus, after thanking the Father, cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). And the dead man rose up, his hands and feet bound with graveclothes, and his face covered with a head cloth (v. 44).

The Lord is also calling this message out to you: "Wake up!" Isn't it a terrible affront to Him, who poured out His life's blood on Calvary's Cross, to

have to again awaken us from the sleep of death when we fall asleep? And at this point in redemptive history, when He could return at any moment! Jesus' disciples were sleeping at that other point in redemptive history, when the Lord was sweating blood and agonizing over death in the Garden of Gethsemane before going to Calvary. When He found His disciples sleeping, he lamented, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Matt 26:40b). Wake up.

The second command: "And strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God" (Rev 3:2). It's distressing how many are slowly slipping into apostasy today. Ezekiel was commissioned by the Lord to be the watchman over all the house of Israel (cf. Ezek 3:17-19; 33:7-9). The Church of Jesus has exactly the same task. According to Revelation 1:1, the Church has been entrusted with the prophetic Word, and should be warning the world and nominal Christianity of the approaching judgment: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass..." We're on guard duty!

The Lord's Fivefold Command to Sleeping Christians

The Church in Sardis was asleep. Of course we're supporting missionaries, of course we're somehow functioning, but aren't we still sleeping? Sardis was sleeping and allowed itself to remain asleep—allowed itself to die. Hence, the Lord's call to “strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.” In other words, “When you wake up from dead works and all of your useless activity, from sham Christianity, begin to strengthen the other things that are on the verge of death immediately!”

People are constantly dying all around us. They would have liked to have heard about Jesus and accepted Him, but they heard nothing because the Church is asleep. The effects of death are streaming from her instead of streams of life. Hear the Lord's penetrating call: “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.” Stop the spiritual death within and around you!

“For I have not found thy works perfect before God.” Christ's works are always the Father's works. The Lord Jesus always speaks from a place of unity with the Father. He has the seven spirits, the Holy Spirit, and speaks the words and does the works of the Father, the triune God. When the Lord says to Sardis, “I have not found thy works perfect,” it means that their works are predominantly dead. Hebrews 9 teaches us that we are cleansed from dead works by the blood of Jesus.

So, what are dead works? Anything that is oriented toward the world (self-promotion, all attachments and passions such as greed, stinginess, pride, idle chatter, as well as wasting precious time). Specifically, dead works are everything not oriented toward the Lord. “I have not found thy works perfect before God.”

The lazy servant buried his talent, and some of us are doing that as well. As a result, much of our worship consists of attending Sunday morning ser-

vice, listening attentively, and then getting on with our lives. Everything more or less revolves around ourselves and our own well-being. “For I have not found thy works perfect before God.”

The Lord's third command is, “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard” (Rev 3:3a). The awakened person is able to think normally again (spiritually). A sleeping person can't be expected to think clearly and discern, since they're unable to perceive reality. But as soon as he's awake, he's able to think. “Remember therefore,” says the Lord, “how thou hast received and heard.”

Perhaps God's “lost” words need to be extracted from the dark corners of your heart. Anyone who does this by sincerely allowing the precious Word of God to stir his heart anew and listens to it, will be led to a saving and liberating repentance. Many fail to repent because they're unwilling to respond to what they've heard. But for the ones who are willing, the path to true change opens up before them.

This was also true of Peter. He was a truly pious man, who was self-righteously full of himself. He was also very self-aware of what he was achieving for the kingdom of God. He was always the first and the most zealous before the Lord. But then it came to light that it had all been an illusion. When he was put to the test, he denied the Lord.

When did he become able to repent? When he remembered the words of the Lord, after denying Him and swearing an oath that he didn't even know Him, as Luke 22:61 so poignantly describes: “And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”

Then “Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (v. 62). This is true repentance! The Word of God is like a hammer that shatters stone (Jer 23:29). The church

So, what are dead works? Anything that is oriented toward the world (self-promotion, all attachments and passions such as greed, stinginess, pride, idle chatter, as well as wasting precious time).

in Sardis was denying the Lord and His wonderful redemptive power, only keeping His name alive. What about you? Consider the Word you've heard so often. Don't just bear the name or appearance of Christ, but become an epistle of Christ for others to read. Remember what Paul says of people in the end times: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim 3:5).

The fourth command: "and hold fast" (Rev 3:3). What should Sardis—and we—keep? The Word! We must shed our fleeting, superficial nature and go deeper. May the Lord not have to lament over us as He did through Jeremiah: "Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up" (Jer 18:14-15). Therefore, hold fast to the Word!

The fifth command: "and repent" (Rev 3:3). When reading the Bible prayerfully and attentively, it's noticeable that the call to repentance doesn't ring out immediately as in the letters to the other churches, but instead comes after the various commands. This is because no one is able to repent while asleep (spiritually dead). Jesus Christ only enlightens us to repentance for salvation if we heed His wake-up call. In this context, it's worth remembering Ephesians 5:14, which says, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

When you awaken and arise, Christ will draw you into His light. Then He will shine into your being, right down into the furthest and darkest corners of your soul, so that you're able to repent wholeheartedly from all deception.—Whether about the fact that Jesus Christ was in your life in the past, but is not currently a living presence, or by humbling yourself under His mighty hand, because you're inwardly frozen after a promising beginning.

Finally, the Lord issues another threat in Revelation 3:3 by saying, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee..." It's strange that He didn't say, "If you don't repent" as he did for the other churches but, "if thou shalt not watch." He knows that when they awaken, they will repent.

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." This is the Lord's warning to us as well: If you don't wake up, you'll be caught by surprise when I return. Then, when that great moment suddenly comes, you'll be like the five foolish virgins who hadn't brought oil with them. They weren't ready, so they couldn't go with the bridegroom and attend his wedding. It's in this sense that the Lord speaks of a thief, whose presence is only noticed after he's already gone. The opportunity to prepare is stolen away. When Jesus comes, everything will be decided. So, listen to the Holy Spirit, who is calling to prepared hearts, "Come!"—"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come" (Rev 22:17a).

(MR0522/1232)



GUATEMALA

“Good morning, we’re here from the prosecutor’s office and the police department with a search warrant from the judge.”

BY ANDRÉ AND INGRID BEITZE, GUATEMALA CITY

Yes, you read that right! A while ago, we had a knock on the door at 6 am. The following is a report on what we experienced.

Ingrid and I were just doing our morning prayers when the doorbell rang—an unusual occurrence for that time of day. An official from the prosecutor’s office was at the door with a police escort. We had no idea why they had come. After some back and forth, we were permitted to read the document that the judge had signed, but the official wasn’t allowed to tell us why our home was being searched. We’d have to go to the prosecutor’s office to find out for ourselves.

We had no choice but to let them into the house. This included two others with the official, and three police officers (there was also a police officer stationed both inside and outside the door). We were allowed to pray with the officers before they began, and then they got to work.

We’d just had work done on our plumbing, and the floor was still open in places. As a result, a lot of our things were still in boxes, which had to be shuffled around as the floor panels were laid. The search proceeded quietly, but the officials were amazed to find so many books.

We later learned from other brothers and sisters in Christ that the news had reported that 15 homes across the region had been searched at the same time. Near the end of the search in our house, the person in charge mentioned that her associates had found what they were looking for elsewhere. We had to accompany the officials during their visit, so there was an opportunity to speak about Jesus and the assurance of salvation in Him.

When the search was over, they all apologized to us. We were able to give everyone some pamphlets, which they gratefully accepted. One of the police officers said, “El que nada debe, nada teme”—a common saying here in Guatemala. It means, “If you’ve got nothing to hide, you’ve got nothing to fear.”

This surprising incident taught us that we truly need to be ready to bear witness at all times—even at the most unexpected moments. We were able to say to the group from the prosecutor’s office, “At some point, you’ll also be standing before the judge’s throne. Do you know what your verdict will be?”

The official was carrying a file with her throughout the search. When the search was completed, she read it to us, along with the conclusion, “The search was negative.”



“If you’ve got nothing to hide, you’ve got nothing to fear.”

We thanked the Lord that everything had gone so smoothly, because searches like this are often staged in order to rob the homeowners or to plant evidence. A friend of mine who is a judge, also told me that false addresses are sometimes purposely given in order to cover up the real perpetrators. The Lord gave us grace to bear witness to Him in the midst of this situation.

One day, we will be unexpectedly taken away, just as unexpectedly as the prosecutor’s knock at our door. Whether it be through the Rapture, or when our life here on earth has come to an end, we will then stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of our lives. Are we prepared for that inevitable encounter? What will we bring Him? “Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw” (1 Cor 3:12)?

We’re also very grateful to the Lord that the repairs in our house were finally completed. There are still a few things here and there for us to do ourselves, but the biggest part is done. We gave pamphlets to everyone who came to the house, either to work or to unload supplies. We also had a short conversation with most and testified to Jesus. Some of them were very touched. We pray that the Lord would do His perfect work in each one.

I recently had the opportunity to do a presentation on the state of the world in light of Bible prophecy, in our own church and others. I spoke about Ezekiel 38—39, and Israel and Russia in the prophetic Word. We’re very grateful to the Lord for all the opportunities He is still granting us to magnify His Word.

We’re always in God’s hands, and He has carried us through till now. We continue to trust in His faithfulness and goodness.

(MR0722)



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FORGIVEN AND FORGIVING



Each year Israel celebrates Yom Kippur, the “Day of Reconciliation with God.” It is a day of repentance and renewal of the covenant with the Most High. This day was ordained by God Himself: “For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord ... It shall be ... a statute for ever” (Lev 16:30-31).

By Peter Malgo

We are sustained by forgiveness and need it daily. However, it is important to realize what it means when the Holy God designates such a special day of atonement. This does not just apply to Israel: forgiveness, reconciliation with the Lord, is the central anchoring point that lends stability to everything else in our lives. We read in the letter to the Corinthians: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ...” (2 Cor 5:17-18).

When someone claims he has found God, but nothing in his life has changed, a serious question arises as to whether reconciliation between him and the liv-

ing God has really taken place. For instance, let's say that after many years, you come across a friend of your youth. After a long conversation, he comments: “You haven't changed a bit! You are just as I remember you.” The world applauds that: young at heart! But in God's eyes, you may be an unregenerated and unreconciled person ... one who is still mired in the old ways.

This sad circumstance is often rooted in a lack of being forgiven, and thus an inevitable unwillingness to reconcile with our brother or neighbor. The Lord Jesus taught us to pray: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt 6:12). Then in verse 14, He emphasizes: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” We find the same message in Luke 6:37, “Judge not, and ye shall



Just for You!

not be judged ... forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

Irreconcilability, an unwillingness to forgive, is not merely a personality flaw. Scripture classifies it as an abomination of the end times (see 2 Tim 3:1-3). Unforgiveness is a sin which separates us from God. People who don't have the Spirit of Christ, "God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done" (Rom 1:28b, NIV). They are "filled with every kind of wickedness" (v. 29), as well as having "no love, no mercy" (v. 31). Sustained irreconcilability separates families, divides congregations, disturbs friendships, and can even destroy an entire gospel ministry.

These days, how much time and energy are devoted to defending one's own point of view! The fact that forgiveness and reconciliation fall by the wayside is ignored. First and foremost, we must change ourselves, not the other person. Extending the hand of reconcil-

iation to our brother is the first step. Those who do that will experience forgiveness and change.

Whoever practices forgiveness, views his brother or sister in the faith as a person in whom "all things [have] become new." Forgiveness moves God to forgive us. Forgiveness leads one to no longer focus on the past. Forgiveness bonds. Forgiveness heals. The power of forgiveness is not only in the initial action, but also in holding on to it: "all things have become new!" Forgiveness is not merely an act of the moment, but an ongoing state of mind. A life of forgiveness is a life of victory. Giving up one's position leaves room for forgiveness and reconciliation. When there is no longer forgiveness or reconciliation, the Lord withdraws. Then darkness obscures our view. That is why we are urged in Ephesians 4:32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (MC)

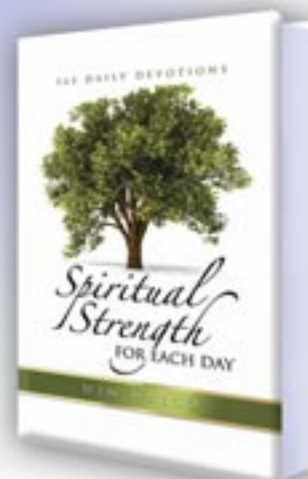
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Part 2: The Testimony of Rivka (Rebekah) Lazarocici

*I wrote this testimony in Rivka's words: please understand that her native language is not English.

By David Phillips COO (Chief Operating Officer)

God Answers Prayer in Mysterious Ways

Later, I received a great blessing when the Lord worked in a miraculous way, through the government demolishing our house (as we didn't own it, it was the property of the state). They gave us another house to live in ... and guess what? The very family I had been searching for lived right next to our new place! The Lord moved us right next door to them!

Meanwhile, after I returned from Bucharest, my parents noticed that something had changed within me. I didn't have a Bible, but I had the brochures the believers in Bucharest had given me with the Gospel of John. So, I read those and memorized about 10 chapters, because that's all I had. Anyway, my parents soon caught me with the brochures and threw them away; they now understood that something was indeed "wrong" with me. When I had first come home from



Bucharest, I explained to them that this family were believers, but they didn't do anything. It wasn't until they saw I had changed, that they started to check on me and the trouble began. They would examine the letters that I wrote to the believing girl in Bucharest, Adriana, and things became very bad for me.

Persecution from My Family Begins

On Sundays when I didn't have studies, I would attend the meetings when my mother wasn't home. One Sunday, I went to this family to read a little from the Bible. As they were preparing to go



to the meeting, they asked me to come with them. I wanted to go, but I was afraid, so I went back home. When I came home, my mother knew where I had been, so she started beating me. This is only a small example of what believing Jews have to go through, when their family doesn't understand them accepting Yeshua the Messiah ... yet it's quite normal that they don't understand.

It's a long story and I won't go into all the details, but it was very difficult for me, as I no longer had the possibility to go to the meetings.

Making Aliyah (Immigrating) to Israel

One day, my parents decided to immigrate to Israel, so they fulfilled all the requirements and completed all the forms. We had to wait 6 years before we received approval to go to Israel. My parents thought, "Finally, all this rubbish will disappear; she will be in Israel, and everyone there is Jewish." "Nobody there," they thought, "believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, so it was going to be alright with me."

But, as we know so well, the Lord is everywhere—especially in Israel—and He had a special gift waiting for me when I arrived. He performed many, many miracles to preserve me along the way; one being that I had to attend a school in Haifa to study Hebrew, which

meant that I had to leave my parents' home.

When I left Romania, I had memorized the address of one couple: Jewish believers who came from Romania and were now living in Israel. After arriving in Haifa, I wrote this couple and explained that I was living near Haifa. I was looking for other believers to fellowship with, so they asked some Jewish believers in Haifa to come visit me. This couple took me to the assembly in Haifa, and on August 29, 1964, I was baptized.

Jewish Believers in Israel

In Israel, our assembly meets on Shabbat (Saturday), and I was baptized in the Sea of Galilee in Tiberias. Because this was a public beach, many people were there to swim, including a journalist. He was a very serious journalist in Israel, and wrote an article about my baptism that Shabbat. To this day, I still have a copy of this article from 1964. In the article, he shared that the Messianic Jews living in Israel were about 250 total. Thank God, now in 2022, we estimate that the Messianic Jews number about 35,000-40,000 people. I say this is the estimation, because often when a Jew accepts Yeshua, they are completely excommunicated from their family, so some keep their faith a secret. But these secret believers are



estimated to be in the thousands. This is why it's really hard to know just how many Jews have accepted Yeshua here in Israel.

Toda LaEl (thank God) I no longer know all the believers in Israel: I'm very glad about that, because in 1964, I knew nearly all the believers ... This is the best proof of multiplication.

I thank the Lord that He was and is very, very faithful. I wasn't so faithful, but He held my hand through it all. I am privileged to belong to a Bible-believing assembly and to be able to live here in the Ebenezer Home. I am looking forward to and awaiting His soon coming!

Rivka is considered a Holocaust survivor by the German government (even though she was born 6 months before

the end of the war). Her father was the only one in her family required to work in the camps, and survived. She went on to share much more.

I would like to close with Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

* Our sister Rivka has given us permission to ask you all to uphold her in prayer, as she is facing some very challenging health issues and must decide soon which treatment options, if any, she will accept. So, please keep her in your prayers, especially during these coming days, weeks, and months.

Correction: In last month's issue, we mistakenly listed the year of Rivka's birth as 1940, but it is 1944.



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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“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old” (Amos 9:11).

BY ARNO FROESE

When reading the 12 Minor Prophets, we notice the repeated threat of judgment upon Israel due to their idolatry. Amos exposes Israel as a sinful kingdom, in danger of being destroyed from the face of the earth. But that’s not the end. The last 12 words of verse 8 declare, “I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord.”

Restoration is the key, based on God’s mercy, longsuffering, patience, and kindness. It arises from His deep love for His people, so that in the last verse we read: “And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God” (Amos 9:15).

An interesting headline in a past issue of *Foreign Policy* caught our attention: “The Million Missing Israelis.” Here is how the article begins: “Over more than six decades of statehood, successive Israeli governments have repeatedly stressed the centrality of Jewish immigration and the Law of Return of all Jews to Israel for the well-being, security, and survival of the nation. Yet while much is published on Jewish immigration to Israel, considerably less information is available about Jewish emigration from Israel” (foreignpolicy.com, 5 July 2011).

Of all the reasons for Israelis to emigrate, there is one that stands out: opportunity. Having a European passport, for example, literally opens the world to you. With a US passport, Israelis can mingle with almost as many Jews in the US as in Israel.

The article continues: “One survey found close to 60 percent of Israelis had approached or were intending to approach a foreign embassy to ask for citizenship and a passport. An estimated 100,000 Israelis have German passports, while more are applying for passports based on their German ancestry. And a large number of Israelis have dual nationality, including an estimated 500,000 Israelis holding U.S. passports (with close to a quarter-million pending applications).”

The other, more important reason is Israel’s calling. Deuteronomy 7:6 reads: “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” Note the words, “above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” That puts the Israelis in the leading position on planet earth.

Deuteronomy 15:6 adds, “For the Lord thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.” The desire of many Israelis to go overseas, quite naturally prepares them to deal with those nations in the future. They will actually “lend unto many nations.” That’s when the world economy will not be dominated by China or the USA, but Israel.

This gives us a wonderful picture of the Church of Jesus Christ, which was commanded by the Lord to go out to foreign lands: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). The purpose? To preach the Jewish gospel, thereby preparing a people as willing ambassadors for Jesus—all in order to build a new nation on planet earth: the Church of the living Christ. Note, however, we are not above the nations. We are in this world, but we are not of this world.

The Israelis, however, are testing the ground, so to speak. They will one day have to deal with the nations; thus, this is part of the preparation to have Israeli Jews literally going into all the world.

Israelis are truly an international people. They have been gathered from all five continents—from virtually all the nations of the world—to the land of Israel. But there is an unspoken problem: once an immigrant arrives in the new country, they are often deeply disappointed, because they miss the “flesh pots of Egypt.” They are quick to focus on the negative aspects of the new country, thinking that things were better in their country of origin. This natural tendency can only be fully comprehended by those who have experienced leaving behind one’s country, family, relatives, and friends—often businesses and property as well. In olden days, however, there was no alternative; once you left your country for overseas, you rarely if ever had a chance to

return. This was quite evident in Europe, when after the Second World War, millions upon millions of foreign workers landed in Germany, making money helping to rebuild the country. But, according to research, the overwhelming majority returned to their home country. In most cases, it was a matter of simply driving or buying a train ticket.

Back to Israel: the most obvious reason for the return to the country of origin or to a third country can be summarized with the words, “opportunity beckons.” However, in the end, it is the Spirit of God who draws His people to Israel. It is also the Spirit of God that sends Israelis all over the world in preparation for what is to come.

In conclusion, Revelation 7 speaks of the sealing of twelve tribes of Israel, numbering a total of 144,000. That’s the time when they will recognize the Messiah. Being sealed, they are untouchable for the enemy. It is of interest that after Benjamin was sealed, apparently a great global revival takes place: “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (verses 9-10). ^(MC)

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

HOW CLOSE IS THE TRIBULATION?... BOOK OF LIFE... THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

How Close Is the Tribulation?

Dear Mr. Froese:

I consider myself pre-trib/premillennial. The current Russo-Ukraine war, as well as the imminent Russo-Iranian coalition, appears to be the unfolding of Ezekiel 38. Many scholars have correlated Revelation with Daniel and 1 Thessalonians 4 with 1 Corinthians 15, but I can't find the correlation between Isaiah 17 (destruction of Damascus), Ezekiel 38—39, and the Great Tribulation. If either the destruction of Damascus or the Russo-Israel war should begin, how close might the Tribulation follow?

-G. Goff, KS

Answer: War, in most cases, is unpredictable; a great military leader once said, "War is the continuation of failed diplomacy."

Does Russia's invasion of Ukraine cast any shadows of Ezekiel 38? I personally don't think so. We must keep in mind that this war has been going on for over 8 years, and there does not seem to be a clear-cut right or wrong side. There are many Ukrainians fighting on the Russian side, and many Russians fighting on the Ukrainian side. My assump-

tion is that there will be some compromise that results in a cease-fire, but that's only my speculation.

Regarding Damascus, that was fulfilled long ago. As a matter of fact, archaeologists have been faced with utmost difficulty in identifying any remnant of the Damascus that existed some 2,700 years ago.

Book of Life

Letter to the Editor:

The Calvinist doctrine is false. Revelation 3:5: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." So, how do you get your name in the Book of Life? Repentance. How do you get your name blotted out? Going back to sin. Read Galatians 5:17-21. These are sins that will keep you out of heaven.

Your walk with God is like your walk with your wife: you can walk with her till death do you part, or you can walk away anytime. You can walk with God to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, or you can walk away anytime.

-R. Yates, WA



Letters to the Editor

Answer: In Revelation 3, the exalted Lord is addressing the Church of Sardis, which “art dead” and their works not perfect before God. Then in verses 4-5, the overcomers are mentioned, who have not defiled their garments and will not be blotted out from the Book of Life. Otherwise, Jesus’ promises are not true, such as His guarantee in John 10:28: “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (cf. v. 29).

The Book of Life represents our physical life on earth; the Book of the Lamb is for believers for all eternity. Those in Sardis who did not repent and did not watch, had their names taken out of the Book of Life: they physically died before their allotted time, without being able to fulfill the task God had given them.

A commentary states, “If we did not become Christians by good works, we cannot become non-Christians again by bad works.”

The Millennial Kingdom

Dear Mr. Froese,

I would like to know what the “Kingdom of God” proclaimed by our blessed Savior, Jesus Christ, would have looked like had He been accepted as the head of that kingdom, in real time in Israel, and in

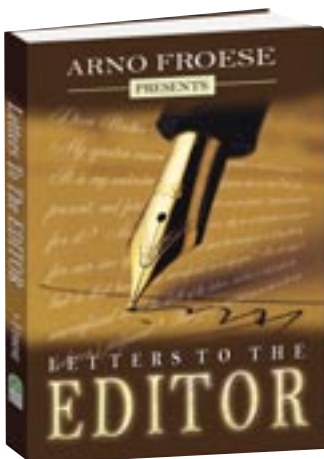
actual practical administration. Would His “Kingdom of God” have been a practical day-to-day administration, or would it have been a spiritual concept only ... something thought of rather than actually practiced? Would it have been a “true governmental process,” naturally (or supernaturally) implemented?

I guess what I’m trying to say is, if He, as Messiah, had been recognized as such, what would have happened next? Or was it meant to be a future government?

-J. Gutowski, NV

Answer: What would have happened if the Jews had originally accepted Jesus as their Messiah? Bible prophecy would not have been fulfilled. God’s Word is based on His foreknowledge, as He is omniscient (see Matthew 5:17). He had to fulfill, to the finest detail, all the prophecies spoken of Him of old (cf. Isaiah 53; Psalm 22).

However, to answer your theoretical question, I assume the 1000-year Kingdom of Peace would have been established. But then, as I have mentioned, prophecy would not be fulfilled, and God would not have been the Author and Finisher of eternal salvation. (MC)



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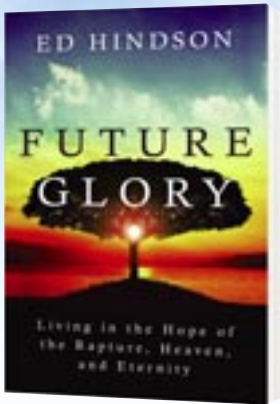
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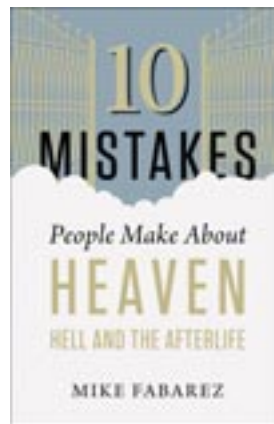
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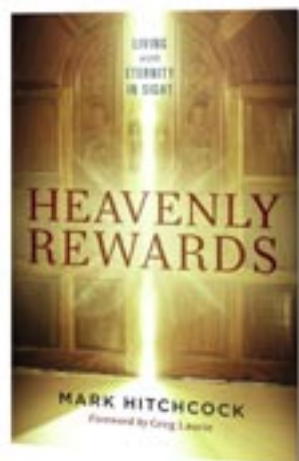
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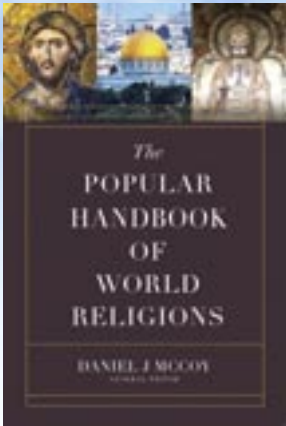
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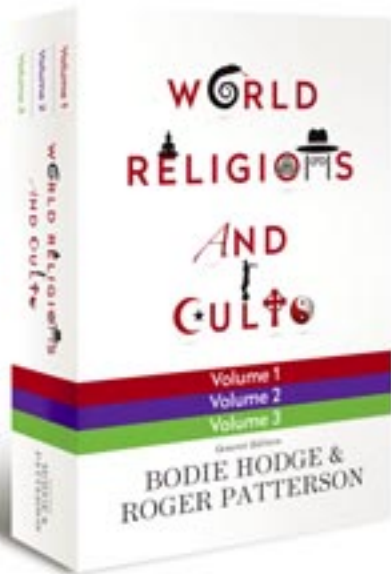
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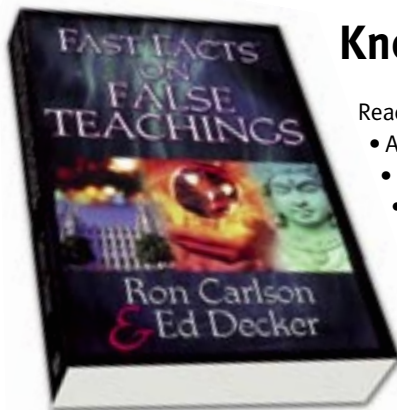
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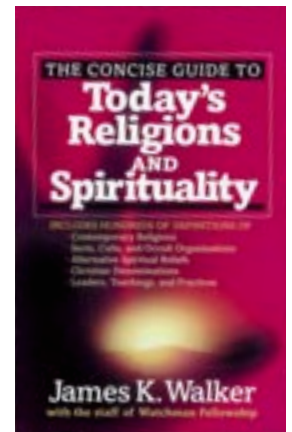
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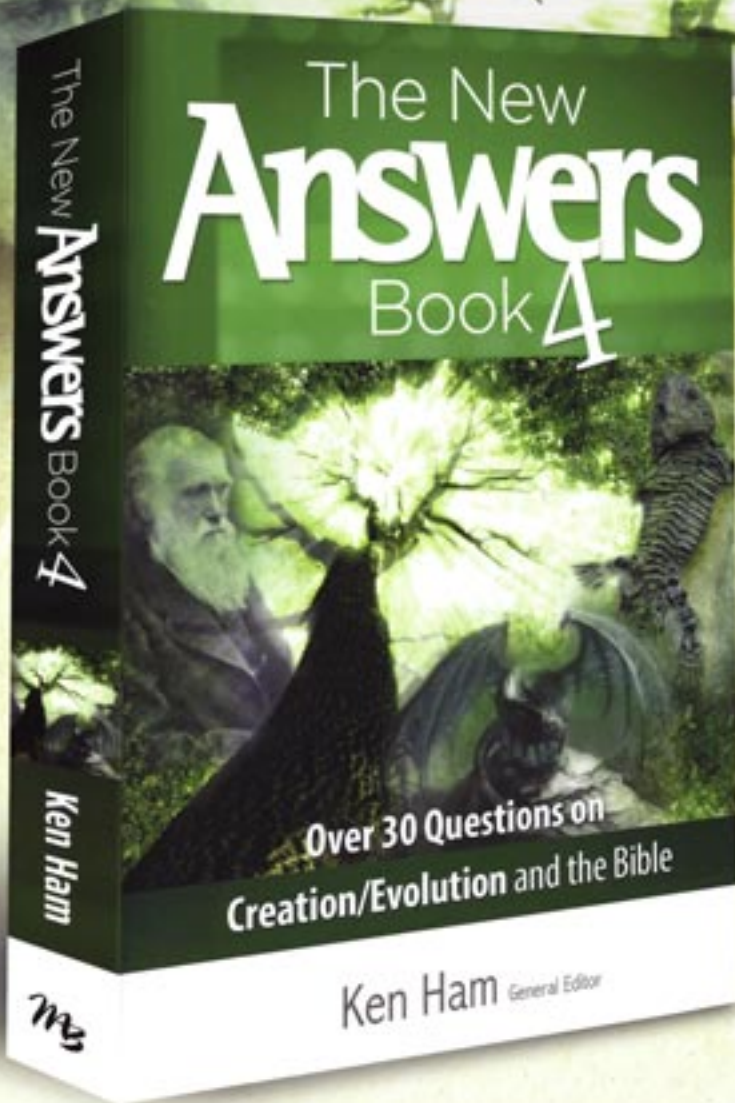
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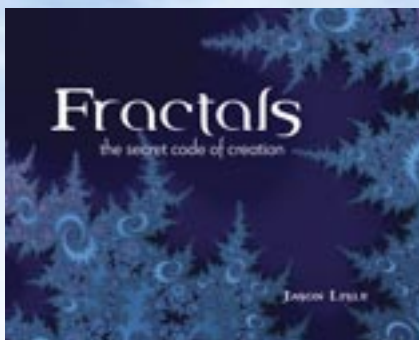
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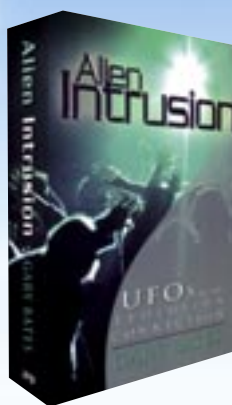
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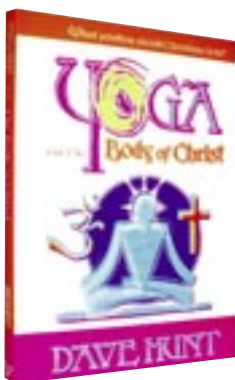
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