

The International Prophetic Voice for the Endtimes

Midnight Call

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Timely Tracts for Gospel Outreach



Be Ready at Any Time

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God is in control of it all: storm, ship, crew. Right when man has lost all control, the Lord is using things for His purpose. Mankind needs an anchor fixed in heaven, in God Himself, and we have one! Everyone who believes in Jesus and is anchored to Him will reach the goal.



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Let's Stick with the Bible!

By Norbert Lieth

Director of Missions, Midnight Call International

Why don't we just stick to the Bible? Martin Luther once said: "No other study has pleased me like the study of the Holy Scripture. I read it eagerly and meditate on it. Often, one important point stays in my thoughts throughout the whole day."

Again and again, we are presented with stories of so-called near-death experiences. There are books and Christian writings that describe how people "died," glided through a dark tunnel, and then came into a bright light. There, they were supposedly confronted by Jesus and then sent back again, to convey a heavenly message to their fellow human beings. John Burke, for example, in his book *What's after Life?* tells it this way: "Do you want to go back or stay here in heaven?" Jesus asked ... He is also a Gentleman. He never forced me but gave me the freedom to choose. As I told him my choice—that I wanted to go back... 'All right, see you soon,' He said."

What are we to make of this? I do not think much of such reports, and

am content with the statements concerning time and eternity in God's Word. Jesus is Savior and the only way to heaven. He died and rose again, and was seen by more than 500 people (1 Cor 15:6). He returned to heaven, and from there gave us His eternal, perfect Word. That is sufficient. It is not without reason that the Bible's last page ends with a clear prohibition against adding to, or subtracting anything from, these words:


"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

This disqualifies everything that emerged as alleged truth after the conclusion of the Bible—be it other "revelations," extra-biblical pseudo-gospels, the Koran, or others.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Why don't we just stick to the Bible? It has all-encompassing information about heaven and earth, about the past, present and future. It tells us everything regarding forgiveness, salvation and the eternal life of those who believe in Christ—but also about the lost condition of those who do not believe. The Bible is full of encouragement and admonition to become a changed person, a testimony to others. One doesn't have to be taken up to heaven for that. Those who don't believe God's Word, will not believe someone who returns from the dead. Jesus' account of the death of the rich man and poor Lazarus makes this clear. The rich man in Hades says: "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent" (Luke 16:30). Abraham's answer is unambiguous: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (v. 31).

Why don't we just stick with the Bible? It proclaims to us in a clear and unequivocal way that repentance—that is, turning from one's own wrong way of life to faith to Jesus—brings salvation. We don't need visitors from heaven to gain this certainty. The Holy Spirit, who has been given to us and who inspired the Word, is totally all-sufficient.

Let's stick to the Bible! 

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a necessary monthly magazine that will keep you updated on breaking developments throughout the Middle East. *News From Israel* uncovers hidden information the news media leaves out!



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OUR TASK

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

The object of Midnight Call is to call people everywhere to Christ, to proclaim the return of Christ, to prepare Christians for His 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-tribulational appearance of Jesus Christ for the Rapture of His Church (all born again believers).

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



The Coming Storm

Norbert Lieth

What the events of Acts 27 and 28 teach us about the Church, and what they say about the future, both prophetically and symbolically.

The Church exists in the middle of the sea of the world. That's why it has also been referred to as a ship. The Latin word for ship has become our word for the main body of the church building: the nave. The metaphor has also continued in song lyrics; for example:

You know, this ship's been through
battles before
The storms and the tempests and all
the rocks on the shore
Though the hull may be battered
Inside it's safe and dry
It's gonna carry its cargo to the port
in the sky

(Bill and Gloria Gaither,
"The Church Triumphant")

In light of this, it's worth observing that Jesus is reported to have traveled quite often by boat.

This imagery is well suited to current circumstances. We're noticing that skies are becoming overcast, and the waves are roaring around the world. Someone once said that we don't have to imagine end-time scenarios; they've long been a sad reality caused by human hands! It's true that there's a storm coming, and very few are prepared.

The Apostle Paul is the Apostle to the Nations and to the body of Christ. His story is, to some degree, analogous to that of the Church itself. The Acts of the Apostles tells us of his conversion, his mission, and his eventual arrival in Rome, where the book ends. In chapters 27 and 28, we read of his arrest and his journey to Rome to stand trial

before Caesar. It is disputed whether he was actually released again, or whether he was placed on death row after two years.

The events at sea and rescue on land described in Acts 27 and 28, can now shed a symbolic-prophetic light on redemptive history and underscore its results. So, let's take a journey with Paul.

The Prisoners

"And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band" (Acts 27:1).

What kind of prisoners were they? They were probably people who were being brought to Rome to die in the arenas. Aren't they like the people of this world? The devil's prisoners, prisoners of sin, bondage, and wickedness, but also helpless and greatly afflicted. "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter" (Prov 24:11, ESV).

The prisoners traveling with Paul were all saved from the storm. We read how the Apostle was able to tell them, "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (Acts 27:22-24).

Paul wasn't traveling with the others; they were traveling with *him*. In a way, they became his prisoners! To apply this to us today, I believe that everyone who believes the Gospel

The Coming Storm



An economic crisis is looming, and inflation is increasing. Groceries are more expensive, harvests are failing, and there are supply chain bottlenecks.

of the Apostle to the Gentiles and who walks with Jesus, will be saved. The ship is sinking, and church buildings, traditions, and denominations will go down with it. But the true believers within the body of Christ are saved.

The special Gospel of the Apostle Paul is based on the Gospel of Jesus, but carried further into perfect grace. Paul's Gospel was given to him by Jesus and complements the other Apostles' letters. There is no question that Paul's Gospel is supreme. We're not ignoring the other letters; it's that the revelations that God gave Paul for the Church in particular, are the ones that strengthen us in the assurance of salvation. For anyone who travels with Paul has:

Calm Before the Final Storm

“And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea” (Acts 27:8).

The journey there was slow; headwinds made it difficult for the ship to move forward. This symbolizes the long period of grace: a fair haven, up until the Great Tribulation. The wind of the Spirit blows during this time; sometimes more strongly, sometimes less so. Sometimes the ship of the Church doesn't seem to be moving, and other times there are

revivals and reformations. This has occurred often enough in Church history, as well as in our personal life.

Entry into the Last Stage

“Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them” (Acts 27:9).

A great deal of time has gone by since then; it's now 2023. Suddenly, times have become uncertain. Since World War II, those of us here in the West have experienced a “fair haven” almost exclusively. Economic boom, everyone owns a car, there is plenty of food and clean water. Most of us can afford what we need. We are socially secure, and medical care is at its peak. But suddenly, everything is becoming uncertain, as if the entire system is on its last leg. The whole world is unsettled.

An economic crisis is looming, and inflation is increasing. Groceries are gradually becoming more expensive, harvests are failing, and there are supply chain bottlenecks. Warnings of blackouts, and the fear associated with that, are increasing. The autonomy of the individual citizen is being chipped away bit by bit. Factions and divisions have

There is talk of a new world and economic order. First, the old has to be dismantled, and then the new assembled.



emerged, which go all the way down to the community and family level. And then there are the waves of migrants. Nobody knows where all this is headed. There is talk of a new world and economic order. First, the old has to be dismantled, and then the new assembled.

The end-time events foretold in Revelation are taking shape. We have never before been so reminded of the future events in Revelation as in the last few years.

The Saving Power of Prophecy

“And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul” (Acts 27:10-11).

That’s precisely the problem we have today. God’s immovable, prophetic Word warns us and this world. It gives us insight into circum-

stances, and points to the new earth that will come about through Jesus’ return. The Bible offers us the most reliable statements about the future. And it tells us where salvation is to be found, namely in Jesus. But the Word of God is being believed less and less. “Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.”

The captain and master of the ship were the ones who set the course. They represent today’s rulers and economic leaders. And who was Paul, this prisoner? They had knowledge, experience, and their own plans. They had the best of intentions; they had their own concerns, and wanted to reach their destination as soon as they could. But they didn’t rely on the Word of God. And because they didn’t look to Him for direction, they received no guidance. In the same way, everyone who doesn’t orient himself to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus is in mortal danger. Our age needs the firm prophetic Word, even if we are laughed at. It needs Spirit-bearers like Paul, heralds who call into time, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh!”

In Acts 27, Paul then offers prophecy, encouragement, and consolation. He lives out what he preaches. He trusts, prays, and eats. As Christians, are we people that others can lean on? Do we have something to say? Do we speak truth and consolation? Are we courageous, living out what we preach?

In the absence of true meaning—life in Christ—humanity is fearful. But those who

The Coming Storm

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belong to Jesus, rest in the certainty of His future. As Paul says elsewhere, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor 4:17).

But Paul wasn’t believed when he spoke. So, what happened?

The Storm Erupts

“But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon” (Acts 27:14).

The term *Euroclydon* is composed of “Euros,” meaning the southeast wind, and “Klydon,” meaning the waves of the sea. In other words, a surging, southeasterly wind. It was a real hurricane. It’s amusing that this word contains “Euro”; who knows what mighty storm is about to break out over that continent? As the Swiss magazine *Weltwoche* (“World Week”) states, “Our heyday is behind us. We may as well enjoy the colorful sunset [...] Europe’s night has long since begun.”

The storm caused the ship’s crew to lose complete control (vv. 14-21). There was no rescue in sight. The sailors were frantically searching for help, and wanted to gird the ship to keep it intact. Eventually, they threw the cargo overboard. They couldn’t see the sun or the stars ... not a glimmer of hope until they finally gave up all hope of rescue.

This in turn reminds us of our Lord’s prophecy: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon

the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Luke 21:25-26). A somewhat looser translation reads: “Strange things will happen to the sun, moon, and stars. The nations on earth will be afraid of the roaring sea and tides, and they won’t know what to do. People will be so frightened that they will faint because of what is happening to the world. Every power in the sky will be shaken.”

Whoever lacks firm ground throughout the storms of life is literally groundless. Psychotherapists testify that patients have been flocking to see them. But Jesus gives us the support we need. We can withstand the storms of time with His help.

The Encouragement

“But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even

The captain and master of the ship were the ones who set the course. They represent today's rulers and economic leaders.

as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country" (Acts 27:21-27).

Yes, they should have heeded "biblical prophecy" (Paul's words), the Lord's admonishing message. But they completely ruled it out, content with the communication from the captain and the ship's owner. But in the end, God's Word will always be right. And even in their situation, the Lord proved merciful.

God is in control of it all: storm, ship, crew. Right when man has lost all control, the Lord is using things for His purpose. In the midst of Paul's story, an angel appears. In the current Church Age, angels don't deliver messages to the Church. But it will happen again during the Great Tribulation. Related to this, it's interesting that midnight is mentioned in our passage. Are we likewise headed for midnight? Are the contours of new land in sight? Is Jesus' return imminent?

The Anchors of This World, and God's Anchor

"Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day" (Acts 27:29).



Even today, people are longing for a different, better time, when there will once again be light in this world and in our personal lives. But nobody can achieve it on their own. Four anchors are thrown into the sea, representing the four ends of the earth. People are looking for stability in the great ocean of the world. We try to help ourselves, but our helplessness increases. A "Yes, we can!" attitude quickly wears thin and proves ineffective.

Organizations, political policies, and church buildings all pass away. The four anchors are useless, and the ship is damaged (v. 41). At that, the captives should be put to death (v. 42). But God promised Paul that everyone with him would be saved, and so it happens. All 276 people from the ship reach shore safely (vv. 37, 44).

Paul had another anchor, the anchor of faith. He said, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25).

In these difficult times, it's so important to trust God's promises. That's why holding tightly to God's Word can be likened to navigation. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb 2:1). Mankind needs an anchor

The Coming Storm



The sand viper can grow up to 90 cm (35 in) and is the most venomous snake in Europe.

fixed in heaven, in God Himself, and we have one! “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb 6:18-20).

The “two immutable things” are God’s promise to Abraham to bless him abundantly, and the additional affirmation of the oath God swore by Himself. For us, this means that God cannot lie. Therefore, everyone who believes in Jesus and is anchored to Him will reach the goal.

Christ, the sure and steady anchor
In the fury of the storm
When the winds of doubt blow through me
And my sails have all been torn.
In the suff’ring, in the sorrow,
When my sinking hopes are few,
I will hold fast to the anchor;
It shall never be removed.

So, Paul received the promise that he was going to Rome, and that nothing could prevent him from getting there. His confidence was rock solid. Not the judges in charge in Caesarea ... not the devout Jews from Jerusalem, who wanted to kill him ... not the arbitrary soldiers, who wanted to kill the

prisoners ... not the wind and waves of the storm ... not the shipwreck off Melita ... not the venomous snake that followed—nothing could stop him. The whole journey led to the fulfillment of God’s route. For, “Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters” (Isa 43:16).

Uncharted Territory

“And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita [possibly Malta or the western Greek island of Cephalonia]” (Acts 28:1).

Verse 2 tells how those who were shipwrecked were kindly received by the islanders. “And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand” (Acts 28:3). This snake was probably the sand viper, which can grow up to 90 cm (35 in) long and is the most venomous snake in Europe. “And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm” (v. 5). “And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed” (vv. 8-9).

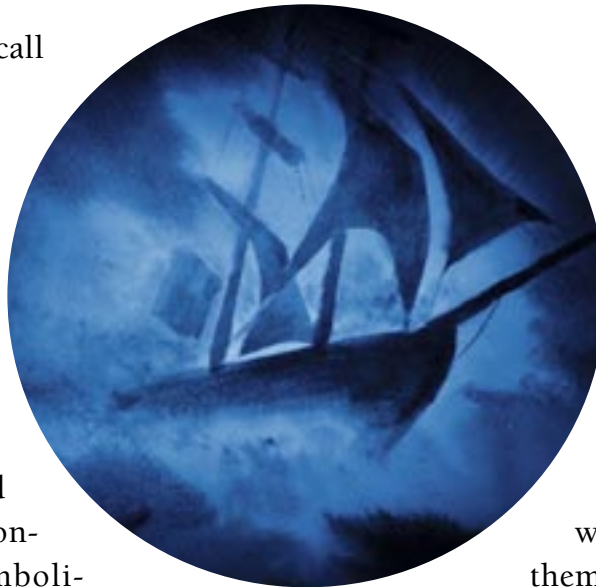
These connections are a prophetic and redemptive-historical reminder of the time to come, and point to the great necessity of Jesus’ return. His coming brings a new day. More

Today, it's becoming more and more clear that we are heading into the night. The Church Age is approaching its goal, and the Lord Jesus is coming again soon for His Bride.

details in Acts 28:1ff. recall the messianic kingdom.

At midnight, new land was within view. After the shipwreck and a long night at sea, came the new day and the new land, Melita (which means "Honey River"). The 276 people on board were all rescued. If we consider this number symbolically, then we find that 276 days correspond to nine months. That is the normal length of a pregnancy, before the labor pains and delivery of a new birth occur. So, we can say that these 276 people were pushed out through the storm to something new. In the same way, the world will go through a period of labor pains before rebirth (Matt 19:28).

The serpent that is thrown into the fire and which couldn't harm Paul (cf. Mark 16:17-18) symbolizes Satan, who cannot harm the Church. He may bite it, but he can't really injure it. His end will be the lake of fire. The islanders' friendliness foreshadows peace on earth. And the miracles (signs and wonders) show "the powers of the world to come" (Heb 6:5b). When Paul finally arrives in Rome, he proclaims Israel's messianic hope (Acts 28:20).



Moreover, in Acts 28, we no longer see any distinction between the three groups: the military, the ship's crew, and the prisoners. Nothing is said of the fate of the prisoners, who were en route to their deaths in Rome. Even when Paul arrived there, we learn nothing about them. It's possible to conclude that these doomed men actually found life. It's hard to imagine that they were rescued from the sea, only to be thrown to the lions after all. In this respect, the ship of the Church is full of the doomed who were formerly in bondage, sinners who have come to believe the Gospel. And they are all saved.

Today, it's becoming more and more clear that we are heading into the night. The Church Age is approaching its goal, and the Lord Jesus is coming again soon for His Bride. The mystery of the Rapture had not yet been proclaimed in Acts. But Paul says later on that we do not belong to the night (1 Thess 5:5). Our path leads us through every hardship toward the kingdom of God. That's why we don't want to let our courage slip.

Let's grab onto the anchor of God! And if you haven't already, put your trust in Him. You won't be disappointed. (MR0322/1219)



HIGH ON THE SCRIPTURES



In recent issues, we have been reviewing major “human actions” that are affecting our world today. We continue here, commenting on four. Some of these are new and urgent ... others we have touched upon previously.

By Wilfred Hahn

To begin, we may wish to better understand the global disruptions of the past few years—geopolitically, economically, monetarily, and humanitarian-wise. For the most part, the narrative is quite simple.

There are three main impulses (among numerous others that we could cite) that are playing an overarching impact. In no particular order, a virus named Covid-19 erupted upon the world without warning. Policymakers around the world did everything they could—and more—to stabilize economies. They injected far too much monetary stimulus and subsidies into economies. The IMF estimated this support to have amounted to some \$11 trillion by the end of 2022. For perspective, consider that this amount is equivalent to 10.8% of global nominal GDP, the latter an approximation of the size of the world economy (\$101.6 trillion).

Were one to also add the direct fiscal support to households and businesses, total Covid-related stimulus would be equivalent

to a staggering 17% of world GDP. Seeing actions of such magnitude worldwide, we can begin to understand how inflations of the scope prophesied in the Bible could come about. “And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine” (Revelation 6:6).

Recent actions of policymakers may have been the largest intervention since 30—32 AD, when Roman Emperor Tiberias was called upon to clean up a world financial mess. (The Global Financial Crisis of late 2008-09 was virtually a carbon copy.) Yes, there is nothing new under the sun.

It is not possible that such a large sum—equivalent to 17% of world GDP at \$101.6 trillion—would not trigger enormous inflationary pressures. This has indeed happened and should not be a surprise. Terrible repercussions have followed. (Consider retirees depending upon their fixed pensions.) What happens next

To reiterate, all of these psychotropic substances target mood, stress and depression management. Some are legally dispensed with a doctor's prescription. Cross-counter and illegal mood enhancers are booming as well.

lies in the hands of the central banks and global policymakers.

Next, we cite two other great “human actions” that play a major role at this time. Firstly, without a doubt, a new global contender is presenting itself at the door. China openly reveals that it intends to surpass—and greatly distinguish itself from—the US. This initiative can be expected to lead to a complete redefinition of the entire world. To be sure, this is and will continue to breed disruption. An indication of the possible ruthlessness of this rivalry is shown by US actions to date. It is playing tough. Without doubt, these movements raise tremors globally.

We must mention climate change issues as the third in our abbreviated list of three key “human actions.” This ushers in great change with a wide range of impacts. It is certainly injecting much volatility into energy markets.

Looking ahead, we are sure to face further disruptions ... some, if not all, may be unfore-castable. Even the usually august WEF (World Economic Forum) describes the current global era as one defined by disruption.

Psychotropic Consumption Trends

We next turn to our fourth “human action” that we wish to discuss here. It is quite an alarming trend, affecting the entire world. It is the consumption of mood-altering pharmaceutical medications and psychotropics. This



is a global phenomenon ... however, much accentuated in North America and other high-income nations.

What is a psychotropic substance? Quoting healthline.com: “A psychotropic describes any drug that affects behavior, mood, thoughts, or perception. It’s an umbrella term for a lot of different drugs, including prescription drugs and commonly misused substances.”

To reiterate, all of these psychotropic substances target mood, stress and depression management. Some are legally dispensed with a doctor's prescription. Cross-counter and illegal mood enhancers are booming as well.

There are five main types of psychotropic medications: antidepressants, anti-anxiety medications, stimulants, antipsychotics, and mood stabilizers. It represents a vast and profitable business. (Have you ever wondered why so many TV commercials are promoting pharmaceuticals of various kinds?)



A recent national survey on Drug Use and Mental Health, found that nearly 20 percent of the adult population suffers from some type of mental illness. This compares to just 18.1 percent a few years ago.

Consider some of the trends in psychotropic drug usage and mental ailments that are already entrenched around the globe.

In 2019, 1 in every 8 people, or 970 million people around the world, were living with a mental disorder, anxiety and depressive disorders being the most common.

In 2020, the number of people living with anxiety and depressive disorders rose significantly because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Initial estimates show a 26 and 28% increase respectively for anxiety and major depressive disorders in just one year.

About 20% of respondents in the 2020 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) reported taking psychotropic drugs.

A study published earlier this year in the journal *Psychiatric Services*, found that more Americans than ever before suffer from serious psychological distress (SPD). The researchers concluded that 3.4 percent of the US population (more than 8.3 million adult Americans) suffer from SPD.

A recent national survey on Drug Use and Mental Health, found that nearly 20 percent of the adult population suffers from some type of mental illness. This compares to just 18.1 percent a few years ago.

We could continue presenting many more statistics on mental health trends and other phenomena (for example, approximately 100,000



people in the US die from oxycontin abuse every year! ... more on this shortly).

Most alarming is the statement from the World Health Organization (WHO) that mental issues are a global epidemic.

The statistics we have mentioned allow little room for any optimism. These trends are not likely to reverse. The phenomena are clear. And their impact upon societies, economies, and financial markets is also clear. How so?

We quote an insightful report from Gavekal Research (to which this writer is a subscriber). It provides examples of the impact of various health deterioration trends.

“Drug legalization and gig jobs: an important societal shift in recent years has been the legalization, or at the very least decriminalization, of drugs across most Western countries. This has helped remove the social stigma toward substance abuse. At the same time, young people not overly concerned about developing a career have been given the option to forego having a nine to five job, and instead work on their own schedules doing things like driving an Uber or delivering Doordash. This combination has meant that finding workers for entry level

The Bible clearly indicates that we should not seek to escape reality, but should be living with a clear mind. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). This verse couldn’t be clearer: We have been given a “sound mind” ... assuming we wish to avail ourselves.

jobs at retailers, fast food operators, restaurants and the like has become far harder. Opioids: even before Covid, the US was losing about 70,000 people a year—mostly young males—to opioid drug overdoses—roughly the equivalent of the whole Vietnam War. Moreover, locking people down, while also sending them into a health panic, made a bad opioid situation far worse. During the pandemic, overdose deaths jumped up to 110,000 a year (The US fentanyl epidemic is so bad that the US is one of the few Western countries to see falling life expectancy in peace time. In fact, for the first time in modern history, life expectancy at birth is now lower in the US than in China. And, if 110,000 Americans die every year from drug overdoses, that means that millions are probably regular users, and thus not able to perform tasks like handling heavy machinery or doing health care work.” (“Aging, Productivity and Inflation,” February 24, 2023)

Thoughts to Ponder

We have reviewed another “human action” that is potentially destructive for mankind. Indeed, some psychotropic drugs are intended as medications. This writer is most certainly not qualified to judge what serves as a legitimate medicinal prescription or not.

Yet it cannot be denied that the boom in psychotropic drug consumption has occurred in

recent decades. It tragically suggests that many people are wishing to escape reality. They are medicating their depressions ... and again, it must be added, in record numbers.


It represents another attack on the human mind. (See “Endtime Stratagem: Super-Jamming the Mind” from the June issue.)

The Bible clearly indicates that we should not seek to escape reality, but should be living with a clear mind. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). This verse couldn’t be clearer: We have been given a “sound mind” ... assuming we wish to avail ourselves.

And if we were to find ourselves “conformed to the pattern of this world,” we are to renew our mind. “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

We can only imagine how many depressions could be avoided, were humans to align their minds to the Bible.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” (Luke 10:27). Expending all one’s strength to love the Lord our God is sure to transform one’s mind. (MC)



Beautiful scenery of a field near
Mount Tabor in Galilee, Israel

“Coming in His Kingdom” – The Transfiguration

(Sites of the Bible Series)

DR. RON J. BIGALKE

Mount Tabor is a notable mountain, rising 1,400 feet from the Plain of Jezreel, to 1,994 feet above sea level. It demarcated the boundary of three tribes: Zebulun on the west (Josh 19:12), Issachar on the south (v. 22), and Naphtali on the north (v. 34).

Tabor is isolated from other mountains, standing majestic like a sentinel. It is the most prominent feature on the landscape for miles ongoing, dominating the region’s horizon. Mount Tabor is considered admirable in comparison with Mount Hermon, which is the highest summit in all the Promised Land, rising 9,230 feet above sea level. Psalm 89:12 declares of God,

“The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name.”

Some believe Tabor was the holy mountain mentioned in the blessing of Moses, where an early sanctuary was to be located (Deut 33:19). Mount Tabor is first mentioned by name at the time when the Promised Land was divided among the twelve tribes (Josh

19:12-22). Mount Tabor was fortified by Israel under Barak, who gathered “ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun” to engage Sisera, captain of the Canaanite army of King Jabin of Hazor, near Megiddo (Judg 4:6, 12, 14). The brothers of Gideon were slain by Zebah and Zalmunna at Tabor (Judg 8:18). In the time of the prophets (Hos 5:1-3), the priests were called to appear and defend themselves for ensnaring the Israelites and the house of the king to practice idolatry at Mount Tabor. The prophet Jeremiah (46:18) described Tabor as exceptional among mountains, comparing it to Mount Carmel by the sea.

Tabor was often fortified. In 218 BC, Antiochus III the Great lured the Ptolemaic garrison from its summit, captured a town there, and afterwards fortified it. As a Jewish general during the First Jewish Revolt (AD 66), Josephus encircled the summit with a wall, thereby adding a defensive rampart to the fortress. In AD 1113, Muslims from Damascus plundered the monastery and murdered the monks. The Islamic leader Saladin made an unsuccessful attack against Mount Tabor in 1183. However, four years later in 1187, he devastated Tabor following the rout of the Latin Crusaders at the Battle of the Horns of Hattin.

Although not mentioned by name, early church fathers believed Mount Tabor was the location for Jesus’ transfiguration, based upon the Synoptics (Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28), which mention that Jesus took three of His disciples—Peter, James, and John—“up on a high mountain.” Origen (AD



Basilica of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor



The Mosaic of Transfiguration

184-253) was the first to identify Tabor as such. Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 313-86) and Jerome (ca. 342-420) both agreed with his assertion.

Mount Tabor has been a popular pilgrimage site since the fourth century. By the sixth century, three churches were built on the mountain; and, by the eleventh century, another church was erected, in addition to a

“Coming in His Kingdom” – The Transfiguration

Credit: R. Bigalke



The Northern Chapel, Dedicated to Moses

Credit: R. Bigalke



The Southern Chapel, Dedicated to Elijah

monastery. The Basilica of the Transfiguration, which Franciscans built on Mount Tabor's summit in the 1920s, is one of the most popular visitor attractions. The fact that a town occupied the peak of Tabor in the first century, means it is unlikely to be the site of the Transfiguration. Additionally, the region of Caesarea Philippi, where Peter made his confession of Christ and Jesus prophesied He would build His church (Matt 16:13-20), is quite a distance from Mount Tabor. What is more likely is that Mount Hermon is the site of the Transfiguration, since it is much closer to Caesarea Philippi, where the previous events of Matthew 16 occurred.

Jesus previously hinted at His impending death (Matt 9:15; 10:38; 12:40). Opposition to the Lord began when He forgave sins (9:1-8), and increased when He associated with many tax collectors and sinners (vv. 9-13). Matthew 12 indicates that the religious leaders' hostility toward Jesus intensified, because He did not observe their legalistic traditions. Sometimes the opposition was

expressed directly against the Lord (cf. 12:9-14), and other times at His disciples (vv. 1-8). Matthew 12:14 indicates that the Pharisees conspired against Jesus “*as to how they might destroy Him.*” The official rejection of Jesus as Messiah reached its climax with their conspiracy. The leaders' repudiation of Jesus would become unpardonable (vv. 30-32).

Jesus' demeanor confirmed Him to be the Suffering Servant of the Lord (Isa 42:1-4). Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would “*not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street*” (v. 2; Matt 12:19). In other words, He would be gentle and humble (cf. Matt 11:29), not presenting Himself in a boastful or impudent manner. He would be compassionate to accept those whom the world regarded with low expectations (Isa 42:3; Matt 11:28; 12:20). He would take His message of hope, not only to Israel but also to all nations. Nevertheless, the servant characteristics of Jesus resulted in the Jews concluding that He was not the Son of David

(Matt 12:22-24). Considering the nation's rejection, Matthew 12:17-21 proves how Jesus is the prophesied Suffering Servant.

Jesus needed to prepare His disciples for His death, as a result of Israel's rejection and the disciples' affirmation of Him as Messiah. "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day" (Matt 16:21). Jesus had to fulfill prophecy, so He prepared His disciples for that by foretelling His death, thereby declaring that God ordained for Him to suffer, be killed, and ultimately rise victoriously. In response to the Lord's declaration, Peter unwittingly opposed Jesus by rebuking Him: "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You" (v. 22). "Never happen" is the same as saying, "No, Lord."

An oxymoron is defined as a "figure of speech in which two ideas of opposite meaning are combined to form an expressive phrase or epithet." If an oxymoron is combining two ideas (or words) that should not be combined, then the ultimate contradiction would be, "No, Lord." Never do the words "no" and "Lord" belong together. The Holy Spirit sets His desire "against the flesh" (Gal 5:16-17), and thereby compels the believer to accomplish God's will (Rom 8:4-11; Gal 5:16). Scripture commands the believer to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18-21), which means to be controlled or influenced by the Lord God. Therefore, whenever a child of God does not exhibit Christlike character (Rom 12:1-2), speaks

impure words (Eph 4:29; Col 3:8) or demonstrates negative attitudes (Phil 2:3-4), it is the equivalent of saying, "No, Lord."

Certainly, the unbeliever says "no" to the Lord God when he does not trust in Jesus Christ as the Savior and Redeemer of his soul. Those who are told that they are sinners and estranged from God (Ps 51:5; Rom 3:23; Eph 2:1-3), and that God calls all people everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ Jesus to be saved (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21; Rom 10:9-10), yet ignore that message or persist in attempting to merit the favor of God . . . or even seek to help the Lord by supplementing the once-for-all sacrificial work of Christ Jesus, are essentially taking God aside and rebuking Him, saying, "Never, Lord."

Jesus reprimanded Peter for not setting his "mind on God's interests, but man's" (Matt 16:23). He then proceeded to announce the coming of His kingdom, to strengthen the faith of His disciples in preparation for the trying events that lay ahead for Him and them. Jesus said that some of His disciples would "not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (v. 28). The Lord, of course, did not mean that He established the prophesied kingdom of the Old Testament during their lifetime, because that most certainly did not occur. Nor did it mean that it was already inaugurated, for this would be contrary to Jesus' prediction of future events. Nor did Jesus speak of His kingdom in a heavenly sense, for that would contradict the earthly sense in which the single, unified, mediatorial kingdom existed

“Coming in His Kingdom” – The Transfiguration

historically under the Mosaic Covenant, which the Old Testament prophets promised would be restored in its former glory with the coming of Messiah.

There are other aspects of God’s kingdom revealed in Scripture. Scripture testifies to a universal kingdom of God, which is His all-encompassing, sovereign rule of history from creation throughout eternity (1 Chron 29:11; Ps 96:13; 103:19; 145:9-13; Dan 2:37). The universal kingdom cannot be equated with the millennial, earthly rule of God at Messiah’s second coming (nor is the millennium “already” heavenly but “not yet” earthly). That would not introduce anything new, since the former exists throughout eternity. Jesus also was not speaking in regard to the Day of Pentecost, because the Son of Man did not come then; rather, the Holy Spirit (John 16:7; Acts 2:1-4), which was the beginning of the church (cf. Matt 16:18; Acts 1:4-5; 2:32-33; 11:15-17; 1 Cor 12:13). The church is a new entity that came into existence at Pentecost, and is founded upon the New Testament apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone (Eph 2:20). The church is not the kingdom.

Jesus prophesied that He would grant a preview to Peter, James, and John of what it would be like when He comes “in His kingdom,” which is the Transfiguration (Matt 17:1-8). Each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) includes the Transfiguration immediately after Jesus’ prophecy (cf. Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:27-36). Matthew and Mark both used the Greek

connective *kai*, translated “and” (which is not all that unusual for Mark, since immediacy in his gospel is emphasized frequently, as evident in 410 of his 678 verses in the original Greek beginning with *kai*, rendered “and”). However, the fact that Luke wrote “and it came to pass” (9:28, KJV; Gk. *egeneto de* / lit. “it occurred”)—in comparison to the original Greek of Matthew and Mark having *kai* prior to the time reference of “six days later” (or “eight days after” in Luke)—indicates the relationship between Jesus’ prediction and its fulfillment in the Transfiguration. Peter indicated that the Transfiguration—to which he and the apostles bore witness—is reason to expect Jesus’ second coming (2 Pet 1:16-18).

Jesus’ prediction of His death and the witness of His majesty, seemed to be irreconcilable. Nevertheless, the Lord revealed both so that His Transfiguration would provide the needed strength for His self-sacrificial death. The certainty of the coming kingdom would fortify the faith of Jesus’ followers, to live sacrificially in following Christ as Lord God and Savior (cf. Matt 16:24-26). The harsh reality of self-sacrifice can be endured with the promise of glory (cf. 1 Pet 1:11), enabling Christ’s followers to persevere in faith and to deny selfish ambition. “Take up his cross and follow” Him today, knowing the coming glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who first bore the cross for those who would believe in Him (cf. 1 Pet 2:24).

(1308)

The Remedy for Laodicean Christianity

Wim Malgo (1922-1992)

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 39. Revelation 3:14-22.

This is the last of the exalted Lord's letters to His churches. Prophetically, it is addressed specifically to the Church of the last days, and thus to the believers of today. As a result, this letter contains a message from the Lord that is extremely timely.

Laodicea is the one church of the seven that has completely fallen away from its

Lord. It is also the only one that contradicts Him in its self-righteousness. The Lord invokes her own statement: "...thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (v. 17a).

This is the testimonial that Laodicea gives of itself, glorifying and fawning over itself. This shows us that the end-time Church has been fatally infected with the

The Remedy for Laodicean Christianity

spirit of Babylon. Babylon boasted of itself. Even Nebuchadnezzar did the same in his pride: “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan 4:30). Babylon the Great will be restored in the last days in the form of the Roman world empire. Its leader will be the Antichrist, who will boast about himself and exalt himself as God (2 Thess 2:4). Babylon also says in Revelation, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow” (Rev 18:7b). Self-glorification and self-deception are the hallmarks of Babylon.

There is much more of a difference between the churches of Laodicea and Philadelphia than there is between those of, say, Thyatira and Sardis. In Thyatira and Sardis, the Lord found a faithful remnant to comfort, encourage, and strengthen. And while the Lord doesn't rebuke Philadelphia as a whole church, but praises it, He accuses Laodicea of apostasy. He introduces Himself, “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God,” but then immediately follows with, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot” (vv. 14-15).

These words are an accusation and a lament. The accusation: “thou art neither cold nor hot.” The complaint: “I would thou wert cold or hot.” In other words, “If only you were a nonbeliever or an ardent believer! Either one or the

other. If only the lines were clearly drawn!”

The worst thing about this congregation of self-righteous people, is that the Lord isn't dwelling in the midst of it (as with the Ephesians) but is standing outside! He says emphatically in verse 20a, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.”

How appalling: Jesus is on the outside of a Christian church! It may seem to have everything: Bibles, confirmation, baptism, services, and everything else you'd expect to see. Except the Lord of the Church is no longer there. But they're not even aware. They are like God's servant Samson, of whom it is written, “And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him” (Judg 16:20b).

Smyrna is promised the crown of life (Rev 2:10); Thyatira is admonished to hold fast to what she has until the Lord comes (Rev 2:25); believers in Sardis are warned to keep watch, so as not to be caught unawares when the Lord comes (Rev 3:3); and the church of Philadelphia receives the wonderful promise that they will be saved from the Great Tribulation, which is soon to come (Rev 3:10-11). But the Laodicean church, on the other hand, is threatened that the Lord will spit them out: “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (v. 16). So, while the true believers are being raptured by the Lord, “Laodicean Christians,” unconverted and unrepentant, are left behind.

From the very beginning, the devil questioned God's Word: "Did God really say...?" And the devil is seducing people to question God to this day.

The Church of Jesus is on a knife's edge today. We're living in the midst of the end times, the era when Babylon will rise again; the era of self-righteousness, of materialism and prosperity. We are rich and need nothing. But in verses 15-16 of Revelation 3, we see how the Lord abhors, and is even disgusted by, this self-assured indifference.

The Laodicean church isn't living in grave sin like the church of Thyatira (the Lord mentions none), but in a negative condition. She is lukewarm. This state is difficult to diagnose or put in concrete terms. "Not cold" means not in disbelief. "Not hot" means not burning with first love for Him, the Lord. Unlike other churches, Laodicea has no heresies. It is experiencing none of Smyrna's satanic temptations, for example. But its lukewarm state is terrible in the Lord's eyes, because lukewarmness toward the Lord no longer takes anything seriously, not even sin. It's a state of both/and, of saying "yes" to Jesus and the things of this world, to sin. But halfway following the Lord and halfway following the world, is entirely following the devil. The Lord detests straddling the fence.

In our passage, the Lord is speaking to a church that lived in the middle of a city known for commerce, banking, and industry ... like our society. Laodicea was mainly known for its great medical school

and wool trade. It's a church that not only had externally adopted the lifestyle of bankers and industrialists, but also had been able to live a sort of inner Christian bourgeois life, due to the wealth of its possessions, biblical knowledge, and solid morals. And they did so in the midst of an equally rich and elegant pagan world. This society wasn't fanatical, but actually accepted the Christian church ... possibly even showing an interest in it (and the hundreds of other organizations meant to satisfy religious needs). There is no opposition, because the church is sharing the local spirit of materialism. And we're shocked to discover: this is our present-day Church!

Their fatal ignorance of their true condition is shocking: "thou ... knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev 3:17).

It's no different today. Many Christians fail to see that despite their material wealth and religious knowledge, they are miserably poor, naked, and blind. The Lord judges ignorance in and of itself very mildly. There are many who are blind, and the Lord loves them and seeks them. He pursues the lost sheep that doesn't know the right way. But He doesn't tolerate the lack of self-awareness that arises from being lukewarm.

The church of Laodicea is like society in Noah's day, buying and selling. Now the

The Remedy for Laodicean Christianity

THE SEVENTH LETTER FROM HEAVEN

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev 3:14-22).

Lord stands between them and worldly riches, and speaks to this rich and yet very poor Church: “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich...” (Rev 3:18a).

What, then, is this gold refined by fire? The answer is both simple and wonderful: It is nothing other than the very glory of God. We see His glory in Jesus Christ, purified in the fiery furnace of His suffering on Calvary. Revelation 21:23 says, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Jesus Christ, who bought even this church with His blood, doesn't command but counsels. He woos His Church, which has drifted from the Way of the Lamb and is caught up in the earthly gold rush. And what is the cost of the gold she will buy from Him? The Bible's answer is paradoxical, and yet so divinely harmonious: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy ... without money and without price” (Isa 55:1).

For anyone who wants to buy this refined gold, who wants to put on the glory of the Lamb and take possession of Him, the price has already been paid. But it costs the old life, giving up first place—it costs everything! When Jesus advises us to buy divine gold from Him, it is so that we may become rich; namely, that we will have white robes to cover our shame and earthly nakedness.

In Matthew 13:45-46, the Lord says of the merchant in search of good pearls, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” This is Jesus' advice for total surrender ... for the singular, precious gold refined in Calvary's fire. For the Laodicean church then and “Laodicean Christians” today, it is the last chance to be saved from being spat out.

Don't hesitate to put on His glory!

(MR0123/1321)



WORLD FOCUS

USA

Does God Exist? Half Say No

Not quite 50 percent of Americans say they have no doubt about the existence of God, according to the 2022 survey, released by NORC, the University of Chicago research organization. As recently as 2008, the share of sure-believers topped 60 percent.

Another new report, from the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), said that 27 percent of Americans claimed no religion in 2022, up from 19 percent in 2012 and 16 percent in 2006.

Religious scholars consider NORC the gold standard of surveys on faith. The General Social Survey found 29 percent of Americans claiming no religion in 2021, up from 23 percent in 2018 and 5 percent in 1972.

During the pandemic 2020, the share of Americans who belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque dipped below half for possibly the first time in American history. Gallup polling had measured church membership since the Depression, when more than 70 percent of Americans belonged to some house of worship.

Mainline Protestantism, the backbone of faith in many American communities, is “collapsing,” wrote Ryan Burge in a recent article on the decline of Baptists,

Methodists and other denominations.

Since the 1970s, the share of Americans who identify with Protestant denominations has declined from nearly 1 in 3 to around 1 in 10.

Despite the steady decline in religiosity, the United States remains “a very religious country by world standards,” said Mark Chaves, Professor of Sociology at Duke University.

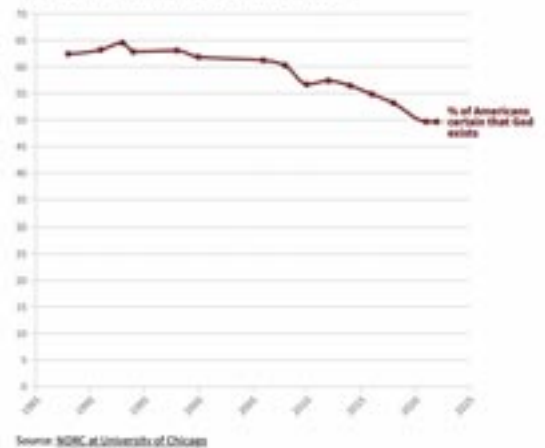
In one global comparison, Pew Research found 19 percent of Americans claimed no religion. The figure was higher in Germany (26 percent), Britain (31 percent), France (32 percent), China (52 percent) and Japan (60 percent), but lower in Russia (15 percent), Italy (13 percent) and India (less than 1 percent).

-thehill.com, 22 May 2023

Commentary: Church attendance or membership does not identify faith in God the Creator. Nevertheless, believing in a higher power is definitely decreasing the world over (although the exception seems to be India, a super religious nation).

It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the exact number of church attendants, but one source on the inter-

The decline of Americans' belief in God



net answers the question, “What percent of Americans were religious in 1776?” with: “Finke and Stark conducted a statistical analysis of the official census data after 1850, and Atlas for 1776, to estimate the number of Americans who were adherents to a specific denomination. In 1776 their estimate is 17%.”

In general, religious freedom in the colonial and early US republic was only intended for white, European Christians. WorldHistory.org writes: “Jews and Catholics were the minority and were periodically persecuted for their faith, accused of witchcraft, and blamed for bad harvests and bad luck in general. By c. 1700, Native American religious practices had been condemned as satanic and were observed in secret or, at least, not widely advertised by participants.

(continued next page)

Does God Exist? (continued from page 27)

Atheism was not tolerated, and belief systems such as deism did not develop until the 18th century.” The allegedly persecuted became the persecutors—not surprisingly, as soon as religion took on political forms.

Of interest to the Church is the fact that the European world (Europe, North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) is following the trend of no God, no Creator; subsequently, no salvation. Non-religious adherents will more easily accept a new religion based on possessions, self-esteem and, above all, merchandise. We take notice of Revelation 18; humanity is not bewailing the destruction due to God’s judgment, but the loss of merchandise: “And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her;

for no man buyeth their merchandise any more” (Revelation 18:11).


8004

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



CHINA World’s Top Car Exporter

China says it has become the world’s biggest exporter of cars after overtaking Japan in the first three months of the year.

 Last year, China overtook Germany to become the world’s second largest car exporter.



China’s car exports were boosted by demand for electric vehicles and sales to Russia

According to China’s General Administration of Customs, China exported 3.2 million vehicles in 2022, compared to Germany’s 2.6 million vehicle exports.

Elon Musk’s electric carmaker has a huge manufacturing plant in Shanghai which exports to regions including Japan and Europe.

Tesla’s ‘Gigafactory’ is currently capable of producing 1.25 million vehicles a year, and the company is planning to further increase capacity.

China has also seen exports to Russia surge since the start of the Ukraine war, as Western countries imposed trade sanctions on Moscow.

-www.bbc.com, 19 May 2023

Commentary: China is well on its way to being the world’s largest economy. When it comes to international rankings in agriculture, Wikipedia lists 39 agricultural products that China is the number one producer of. Looking at communications, including internet users, wired phone lines, mobile phone users, etc., they have shot past

all nations in the world and have taken the number one place. China’s labor force stands at almost 800 million people. Their GDP is on top with \$33 trillion, followed by the US at \$26.9 trillion, with India a distant third at \$13 trillion.

According to Wikipedia, New Zealand leads the world in per capita vehicle ownership, with 884 vehicles per 1,000 population, followed by the US at 831; Canada takes third place with 790. China, however, has only 226 vehicles per 1,000 people. That simply means the manufacturing of motor vehicles will literally skyrocket.

How important is this report for us as Christians? Not of great significance; whatever happens in the world is divided into two camps, the Church of Jesus Christ and the rest of the world. China is quite obviously going to be the powerhouse of the world. In the not-too-distant future, it will not have to take much notice of what the West says or does. Officially, only 2.6% of the population identifies with the Christian religion. Yet there is ample evidence that the percentage is much higher. Wikipedia writes under “Christianity in China,” that 3.9% adhere to the Christian religion. Another important issue is house churches: those who do not practice their religion in recognized churches. Several reliable news sources estimate

(continued next page)

Car Exporter (continued from page 28)

that the number of Christians is far above 100 million.

The Economist featured an article in 2020 titled, “Protestant Christianity is Booming in China,” stating that it went from virtually zero to over 3% of the population, and growing rapidly.

We see that despite restrictions by the government against religion, growth is occurring nonetheless. Here we are reminded of our Lord’s words, “I will build my church.” He is doing so. We can be assured that the fullness of the Gentiles will come in—maybe sooner than we think. This will result in the removal of the

Church, the spiritual temple of God, from earth.

8002


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



IRAN

Dangerous Decline in Birth Rate

Iran is facing declining birth rates. This has been an increasing issue in the last several years and one which the Iranian regime is keenly focused on.

 In many Western societies and also in places like China, South Korea and Japan, this trend is already clear. However, for [Iran], a theocratic regime, the issue of increasing the number of children is important.

The article at *Fars News* says that the aging crisis in Iran leads to many types of harm across society “because the development and progress of any society requires young manpower.” No young manpower, no more fast boats, missiles, and drones, for instance. The article argues that “three-person families,” by which they mean two parents and one child, will splinter society and lead to a spiral of decline.

Iran is pushing a multi-year plan to increase the number of births. Considering the fact that most societies that attempted plans like this have failed, Iran has little chance of success under the current regime. If a religious theocracy can’t get people to have kids ... despite endless propaganda, it’s unclear how any society would succeed in its stead, without improving the quality of life or prospects of the people.

-www.jpost.com, 22 May 2023

Commentary: Decline in birth rate is not only a Western symptom of materialistic tendencies, but also self-evident across Asia as well.

An article by GlobalRCG.com lists the ten best countries in the world for raising kids: 1) Denmark; 2) Sweden; 3) Norway; 4) Finland; 5) Australia; 6) New Zealand; 7) Switzerland; 8) Canada; 9) Netherlands; 10) Austria. These countries have generous policies with subsidies for families. Business.org shows top paid maternity leave as: Greece, 26.6 days; Slovakia,



An Iranian soldier stands guard near Iranian Navy helicopter carrier Kharg at Port Sudan at the Red Sea State (photo credit: MOHAMED NURELDIN DALLAH/REUTERS)

25.5 days; Estonia, Poland, and Luxembourg, 20. However, these nations also register a decline in birth rate.

So much for a population explosion, which was popularly and frightfully proclaimed only a few decades ago.

Regarding Iran, the article concludes: “The birthrate issue is only one part of the larger battle, and the regime is being very candid about its challenges.”

Thus, it’s not only the Christianized world, but the Islamic and atheistic world are affected as well.

What does the Bible say? “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psalm 127:3-5).

8003

(See *What Does the Bible Say About Marriage?* Item #1076, \$2.50.)



 DENMARK

America Can Learn on Debt Ceiling

The high-wire drama of raising the US debt ceiling is making headlines again. Is there a better way? Perhaps Denmark has the answer.

 Only one other industrialized nation—Denmark—has a formal debt ceiling, but it is handled without the drama and brinkmanship often seen in Washington.

In fact, the Danes' debt ceiling is rarely ever talked about, because it's never even come close to being broken.

The Danish threshold is set at DKK 2 trillion (\$284bn, £237.7bn). For a small country that's relatively high, and means there's scope to take out state loans without repeatedly hitting it.

The ceiling has only been lifted once, when it was doubled in 2010. This followed the 2008 financial crisis and the move was widely backed by Danish political parties.

In comparison, the American ceiling has been raised on 78 separate occasions since 1960—49 times under a Republican president and 29 times under a Democrat.

One major way in which Denmark's scenario differs from the US, is that its debt has generally been shrinking. The government ended 2022 with a budget surplus, and used the money to pay down a large chunk of its borrowing.

-www.bbc.com, 19 April 2023

Commentary: Common sense teaches that when you have one dollar, you can only

spend 99 cents—that's good business. If you spend more, you go into debt, and that in general accumulates even more debt. Nevertheless, today's economists will argue that debt is good ... that it reinforces growth and keeps the workforce bound to their obligations. Most successful countries in the world register a surplus, albeit sometimes very small. Statista.com lists China as having the highest trade surplus for 2021, followed by Germany, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Netherlands, UAE, Ireland, Taiwan, and Norway: they comprise the world's ten leading nations.

What does the Bible say? Deuteronomy 8:18 proclaims: "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day." Leviticus 19:13 adds: "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour; neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning." Psalm 112:5 says: "A good man showeth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion." But, most important is what Jesus said: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). In simple terms, the world's economy—its riches, prosperity, and future—is totally insignificant when compared to the words of our Lord: "...and lose his own soul."


8007

(See *Bankruptcy of Our Nation*, Item #2244, \$14.99.)

 RUSSIA

More Russian Jews Leaving

[The] synagogue, the only Moscow shul to operate uninterrupted throughout totalitarianism, once a top target of KGB surveillance, was then a symbol of a Jewish revival. Alas, today it has resumed its historical role as a barometer: for Vladimir Putin's wreckage of it all.

 Nothing captures this better than what happened to Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt. Having dedicated his life to rebuilding Russian Judaism, the Swiss-born Chief Rabbi of Moscow of some 30 years fled the country after the community leadership was pressured to issue a statement supporting the war in Ukraine. He refused. Now he has warned that Russian Jews should leave while they still have the chance; like so many times before in Russian history, he said, the Kremlin would inevitably "redirect the anger" that comes from error and failure towards the Jews.

Russian Jews are already feeling the chill of the far darker and more authoritarian state that has come of the war. Some think it was not an accident that Evan Gershkovich, the jailed *Wall Street Journal* reporter, whose parents emigrated from the USSR, is Jewish. Others see a pattern in the subsequent arrest of prominent Russian theatre director Evgenia Berkovich, who is also Jewish. Many also point to the rise of anti-semitism on state television.

-www.thejc.com, 18 May 2023

(continued next page)

Russian Jews *(continued from page 30)*



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chief Rabbi Berel Lazar

(Credit: YURI KADOBNOV/AFP via Getty Images)

Commentary: It is interesting that over the long arch of Russian history—from monarchy under the tsars through Soviet communism, and now again an authoritarian government—antisemitism seems to be the one constant. Depending on how we count it, we could consider this the sixth wave of emigration of Russian and Soviet Jews to the Promised Land: the traditional first, second, third, and fourth Aliyah, then the mass migration after the fall of communism in 1990, and now again as Russia retrenches. Although we decry the antisemitism that leads to this migration, we rejoice in the fulfillment of Isaiah 11:12: “And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” 8008

—By J. Froese

(See *The Case for Zionism*, Item

#2327, \$14.99.)

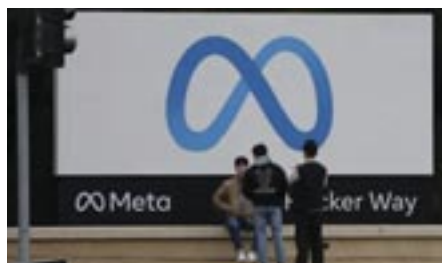


EU Privacy Regulator Fines Meta \$1.3 Billion

Meta has been fined a record 1.2 billion euro (\$1.3 billion) by European privacy regulators over the transfer of European Union user data to the U.S.



The decision links back to a case brought by Austrian privacy campaigner Max Schrems who argued that the framework for transferring EU citizen data to America did not protect Europeans from U.S. surveillance.



Visitors take photos in front of the Meta sign at its headquarters in Menlo Park, California
Tayfun Coskun | Anadolu Agency | Getty Images

The 1.2 billion euro punishment for Meta is the highest any company has ever been fined for breaching GDPR. The previous largest fine was a 746 million euros charge for e-commerce giant Amazon for breaching GDPR in 2021.

—*www.nbcnews.com*, 22 May 2023

Commentary: Meta Platform Inc., formerly Facebook Inc., is an American multinational technology conglomerate headquartered in Menlo Park, California. Based on Census.gov, exports from the EU were \$141,385,700,000, while exports to the EU amounted to \$95,044,700,000. Thus, trade between

the EU and the US is significant and must continue. Each entity will scrutinize the other to see if all laws and regulations are being properly implemented. In this case, it’s regarding information, where the US is the undisputed world leader. Yet, as this report shows, there are many so-called data privacy watchdogs, who uncover details often hidden from the public.

When reading such and other related articles, one quickly realizes that something previously unknown is in the making. Just a few decades ago, communication was somewhat limited to the printed page. It wasn’t until 1895 that the Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi sent the first radio signal. Today, the world is covered with electronic signals. Billions and billions of phone and internet communications are transmitting information across the globe. Much of the information is being used for security purposes, such as airline travel, but also for marketing. Each nation is responsible for its citizens. Here again, we quote part of Daniel’s prophecy, “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4b). 8011

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

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“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh” (Matthew 24:32).

BY ARNO FROESE

Contemplating about what to write in this column, I was opening the office around 7:00 am and was struck by the gorgeous, large leaves of our fig tree that grows on the west side of the building. Thus, the above Scripture.

The fig tree is a symbol of Israel in Scripture. The prophet Micah wrote about Israel's future over 2,700 years ago: “But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it” (Micah 4:4). One must realize that this prophecy does not depend on Israel's behavior, but on the resolute will of the Lord Himself. The chapter ends with this sentence: “...and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth” (verse 13b). Of course, we know that the fulfillment will be implemented in the Millennium. Israel will experience God's unfathomable grace, just like any one of us who has been pardoned by the Lord ... washed in the blood of the Lamb ... redeemed for all eternity.

In our introductory verse, Jesus points to the fig tree as a sign of the end stages of the

end times. We note that in Matthew 24, the word “shall” is repeated 59 times. Jesus' detailed answer was in response to the disciples' question, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (verse 3b). This leads to verse 32, “the fig tree ... putteth forth leaves.” He is not speaking of the fruit of the fig tree, but rather its leaves. That reminds us of Genesis 3:7: “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” The issue here is Adam and Eve covering their sins. From that point on, mankind kept hiding his sins ... covering them up.

After about 2,000 years, which we may call a dispensation without the law, came another 2,000 years of dispensation under the law, as God gave His commandments to Moses for the people of Israel. Some 2,000 years later, Jesus appeared. He did not come to cover sins but to take them away. Hebrews 10:4 states: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

During Jesus' ministry, we read of another remarkable event: “And seeing a fig tree afar

off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it” (Mark 11:13-14). Prophetically, the fig tree represents Israel under the law. But the law did not make man perfect and did not bear fruit.

Interestingly, we read, “for the time of figs was not yet.” It seemed unreasonable for the Lord to expect fruit when it was not the time for fruit to be developed, only leaves. With this statement, the Lord Jesus clearly demonstrates the surprise element. The fig tree—the law—was not God’s final answer to mankind, for the Bible says: “the law made nothing perfect” (Hebrews 7:19a).

There is little to no doubt that most Bible scholars recognize the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel as the great end-time sign.

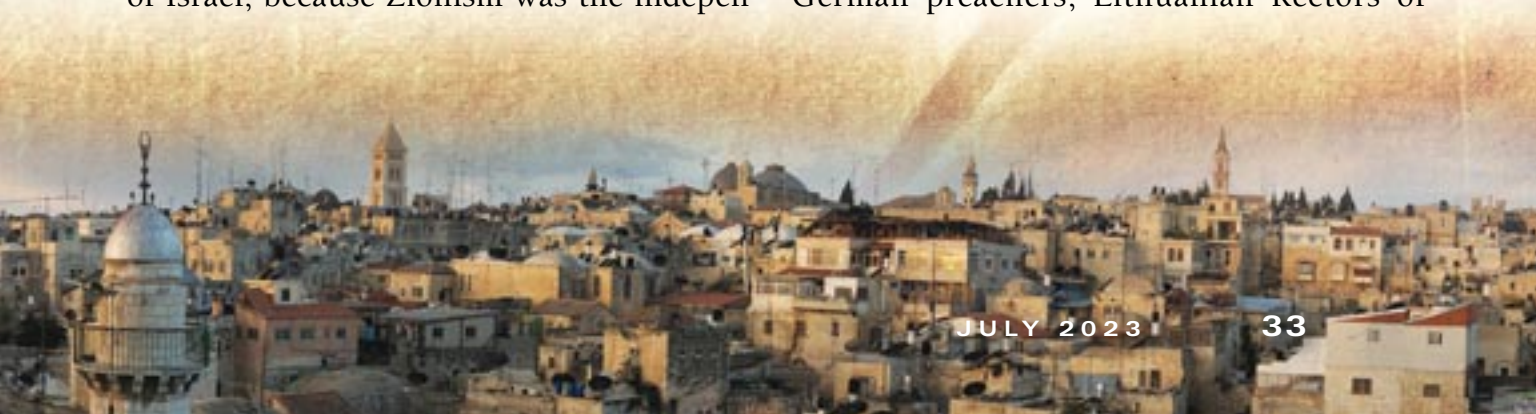
When we occupy ourselves with recent history relating to Israel, we notice it was not religiously motivated Jews but the opposite: communists—that means atheists. Often called the father of modern Zionism, Theodor Herzl was an atheist. *Yom Ha’atzmaut*, which literally means “stands by itself,” is generally translated in English as “Day of Independence.” This is not applicable to the founding of Israel, because Zionism was the indepen-

dence of Jews. It really means “by themselves.”

Britannica writes: “Zionism, Jewish nationalist movement that has had as its goal the creation and support of a Jewish national state in Palestine, the ancient homeland of the Jews (Hebrew: *Eretz Yisra’el*, ‘the Land of Israel’).” Thus, Independence Day is a rather weak translation and definition of *Yom Ha’atzmaut*.

Another issue is “Founding Fathers.” Again, not applicable for Israel. Two women signed: Rachel Cohen-Kagan and Golda Myerson. They were members of the *Moetzet HaAm*, which means “The People’s Council.” The overwhelming majority of the 37 signatories were born and educated within the Soviet Union. Interestingly, a majority of 9 representatives came from Ukraine, where today a war is raging.

One contemporary report describes the 208 delegates who had gathered in Basel, Switzerland on 29 August 1887 for the first Zionist Congress: “Rabbis and University professors, medical men and engineers, lawyers and littérateurs. Mathematicians, chemists, bankers, merchants, tradesmen, University students, agriculturists, book-keepers, clerks—all professions and occupations. Orthodox Jews, moderate Conservatives, Chassidim, reformers, freethinkers, Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Galician Straimlech, and Parisian top-hats, German preachers, Lithuanian Rectors of



Yeshiboth, Capitalists and Socialists, philanthropists and *Bettelstudenten*, from Polish plains and Swiss mountains, from Lithuanian *Ghetti* and Vienna ‘Rings,’ speaking Russian, Polish, German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Hungarian, Arabic, Dutch, Bulgarian, Serbian, Danish, Yiddish and Hebrew, all had come there united by one will, unfurling one banner.”

They all had one aim: the founding of the Jewish State in the land of Israel. Actually, Theodor Herzl declared on 3 September 1897: “At Basel I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, everyone will perceive it.” Precisely 50 years later, on 29 November 1947, the United Nations presented Resolution 181, which called for the partitioning of *Eretz Yisrael*, to divide the British Mandate territory into two states: one Jewish, and one Arab. The Arabs rejected the resolution, but the Jews greeted it with great jubilation.

The Message

Again, the fig tree is putting forth leaves. Spiritually speaking, there is no fruit. Yet from reliable sources, we hear that true believers in the Messiah are greatly multiplying in the land of Israel. It is on the basis of Scripture and not the news media, that God will fulfill His plan in His time and His ways. This, incidentally, is a message for the Church of Jesus Christ—His body, the spiritual temple on earth. At any given moment, we will be taken out of this world, from multiple nations into the presence of Jesus, who has bought us with His own blood.

Israel being a vibrant and strong nation shows that we are in the end stages of the end times. We, the Church of Jesus Christ, are not waiting for better times or certain political developments; we are waiting for our Lord. Just as those Jews in Basel, although diverse, had one goal: the establishment of the Jewish State in the land of *Eretz Yisrael*. (MC)

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A Testimony from an Ebenezer Resident: Part 2

By Esther Meyer

Hans was born on Carmel in Israel. He told me the story of how he and his two siblings rode together on a donkey's back to school. At the time I came, we made the same journey on foot to attend church meetings, go on shopping trips, and so on.

They had already welcomed me into their family, and as the Lord had planned through my marriage to Hans, I would really get to be a part of them.

On the 17th of November 1965, we got engaged, and on the 27th of February 1966, we celebrated our wedding, together with the opening of the new center. That was the time my parents also arrived in Israel, to begin their service at the Beth Shalom House.

Through my marriage, I got a temporary permit to stay for a year, and after that, a permanent visa. Because my parents were only on a tourist visa, they had to leave after some months.

After Hans and I had worked together for three years at Beth Shalom, the Lord led us on a different path.

Hans' older brother, who lived in Switzerland, made it possible for their parents to enter a Christian retirement home in Switzerland, which made our own situation easier.

First, Hans worked for a short time as a self-employed electrician. In 1970, he worked partly

for the Beit Eliahu Church and partly for the magazine of the Bible Society, led by Pastor Solheim's wife (founders of the Ebenezer Home).

During the years 1966-1972, the Lord gifted us with four children: one son and three daughters.

From 1978-1980, they built the new conference center Beth Yedidia on the Meyers' property, which would serve believers in Yeshua. They asked Hans to do the electrical work, and he started working full-time. The Bible Society had moved to Jerusalem, thus freeing Hans up to do the work.

We continued living in the old house (which would need to be demolished to complete the building of Beit Yedidia) until our new apartment at the center was finished. The two of us were now working for Beit Yedidia: Hans as manager of the house and garden, and me managing and overseeing the cleaning, laundry, and cooking, as well as the shopping during conferences. For six years, we served there together, until Hans retired at 65. He and his brother received the funds for the property they built the conference center on.

This made it possible for us to purchase and move into our own apartment. From there, Hans could still serve the Lord with several tasks. The Lord gave us 25 years together in that apartment.

During some days of rest at Beth Shalom, Hans had a heart attack and had to be hospitalized for a week. I knew I couldn't take Hans back to the 83



stairs that we needed to climb in order to reach our apartment.

After some inquiries, we were able to rent two rooms in the Ebenezer Home. This was at the end of January 2011. We joyfully accepted and moved. As we could also take our meals at Ebenezer, I was free to care for Hans. Thanks to the Lord, he recovered well, and at the end of April, we celebrated his 90th birthday. We felt at ease in the Home, and one day Hans said to me: “We are going to stay here!” As Hans had made his desire clear, I felt encouraged to speak to the manager, to see if there was a possibility for us to enter the Ebenezer Home as residents. We got the approval, and so in 2012, we changed our status from renters to residents—only on paper, as we already lived there.

We made a change, though. Hans now spent his nights on the first floor, where he could be cared for. During the day, he stayed with me on the third floor. The Lord gave us almost three more years together, until he took Hans home to His heavenly glory. We parted in peace because Hans was ready to meet his Savior. I had put him into the Lord’s hands some weeks

before. Hans asked me not to cry on the day of his parting to be with the Lord. Because I knew he was in a much better place now, the Lord gave me the strength to be happy for him. Of course, there was a void in my heart, but the joy that he had reached his destination was greater.

Until now, the Lord has given me nine more years which I could spend here at the Ebenezer Home, where He still uses me. For example, together with a sister in Christ in the Home, we meet daily in my room to bring all the important things in prayer before the Lord. Together, we listen to sermons on the internet and receive new strength.

With our Lord, there is no retirement. He can use us even though we are advanced in age. We just need to give ourselves to Him and be willing to serve. This brings new joy to each day.

On the one hand, we are ready to meet Him; but on the other hand, we give ourselves over to Him daily, to be used until He comes back!

“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”



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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Letters to the Editor

Address letters for publication to: Letters to the Editor, Midnight Call, PO Box 84309, Lexington, SC 29073. Include full name, address, and daytime phone number or email. Without name and address, letters will be discarded unread. All material is subject to editing. Midnight Call assumes all publishing rights on letters sent to the Editor.

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

HEALING... EQUALITY... TONGUES

Healing

Dear Brother Arno Froese,

What does the Bible say about physical healing? Is healing in the atonement? When Jesus died on the cross, did He die for our healing of body? What about calling people—those who are sick or have aches and pains—to come to the front of the church, anoint them with oil, and pray for their healing?

-R. Meers, OH

Answer: The simple answer is Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Our body is temporary, but it is the residence of our newborn spirit, which is the work of God. Philippians 2:27 speaks of Epaphroditus, who was sick unto death. In 1 Timothy 5:23, regarding Timothy's stomach ailment, Paul advised a little wine. Second Timothy

4:20 tells us that Paul's 7-year companion, Trophimus, "...have I left at Miletum sick."

You write, "What about calling people...?" That's wrong; read James 5:14: "...let him call for the elders of the church..."

Equality

Dear Editor,

In your April 2023 edition, you said: "We cannot deny that the spirit of globalism is a liberating philosophy; for example, 'all men are created equal.' Equality is the key word in these end times."

I hate to say this, but you are wrong. The word of the day is not equality but equity. Equality is about being equal. Equity is about fairness. For example, on the news they said that New York City is going to change the way they fine drivers who are speeding. The rich will



pay more, the disenfranchised will pay less.

-J. Kessler, OH

Answer: My usage of the word “equality” is based on Revelation 17:13. The nations of the world are interdependent. China needs the USA as much as the USA needs China. Under the banner of globalism, progress will continue until the Scripture is fulfilled, “These have one mind...”

Tongues

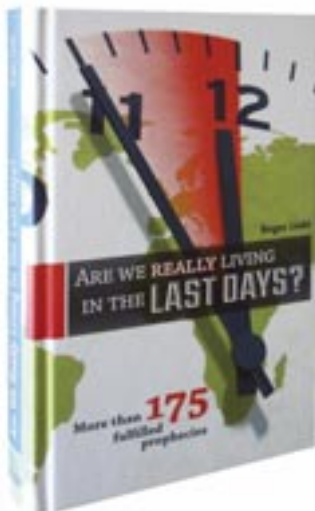
I believe I purchased the book *Are We Really Living in the Last Days?* by Roger Liebi from this ministry. I was wondering if you have read the book. Although I believe it to be a good reference book as far as history (which I’m very interested in) and his references to the Old Testament, the tone and authority seem to falter when he refers to the New Testament. On pages 299-304, under the heading “False Prophets, Signs and Won-

ders,” he meshes together things that are Christian/Biblical with those that are non-Christian, lumping them into the same criticism. He flatly denounces with the ungodly machinations, Biblical, doctrinal, New Testament truths such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

The devil always tries to counterfeit what God does. People are quite frequently prone to excess when excited about something or persecuted for it by people such as Dr. Liebi, and become defensive.

-P. Darling, KS

Answer: Your statement, “Biblical, doctrinal, New Testament truths such as the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues,” is unbiblical. In 1 Corinthians 12:29-30, seven questions are asked, all categorically answered with “no.” The teaching insisting that a believer speak in tongues is contrary to Scripture. (MC)



What does it really mean, the last days?

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BOLIVIA

A Great Miracle, a Thief, and Shoes to Fill

BY OBED HANISCH, RIBERALTA

How a pastor experienced the Lord's grace in a tragedy, and how Christians aren't immune to sin.

June 18, 2022. Pastor Jorge's life changed radically on that day. While repairing the roof of the church, he lost his footing and fell four meters (13 feet). Unfortunately, it's common for passers-by to post photos of things like this online, so all of Riberalta knew in no time. It's a great miracle that he even survived the fall, with fractures to his head, spine, and shoulder, as well as limited medical care. He also had to undergo several operations in Brazil.

Pastor Jorge and his wife have long had a strong connection with Midnight Call in Bolivia, having attended our Bible school over 20 years ago, and having ministered at a local church for many years as well. After his return from the hospital, Carmen appeared at our door and asked Rebekka if she could help with her husband's therapy. Rebekka and I went to their house the next day, not knowing what to expect.

The paralyzed man lay on his sagging mattress in the sparsely furnished room ... weak, emaciated, and still. It quickly became clear that there was a lot of work to do. The dirt floor needed to be cemented, to make it more wheelchair accessible. A wider bed frame and a new mattress were needed, so that Jorge



Rebekka and Pastor Jorge

could be turned in bed. Family would need to practice positioning him in bed, and transferring him to and from a wheelchair. And there was so much more. But looking back on it, the bottom line is that the Lord Jesus granted a lot of grace!

Now we visit them twice a week. A smiling Jorge awaits in his wheelchair and greets us with, "What's new?" He's been preaching in his church every Sunday for some time now. In December, he even went on a mission trip to a jungle village. Incidentally, Rebekka originally met him while volunteering on one of these mission trips in 2013.

Farewells

In recent years, whenever we saw one of our employees riding away quickly on his motor-



With the Schäfer family at the airport

bike and carrying a black bag, we tended to ask ourselves, “What’s in there? What’s going to be missing from the workshop tomorrow?” It’s sad, and we don’t like to catch ourselves being so suspicious. But when things repeatedly go missing, you can’t help but ask yourself who might be behind it. All of our longtime employees are believers. Some host devotions, and we pray together ... but none of us is immune to sin.

Unfortunately, our suspicions were confirmed, and we had to dismiss a long-time

employee and brother in the Lord, because of repeated thefts. It wasn’t easy, for him or for us. He leaves a void behind him, and we’re praying for a new, suitable employee for hands-on work, as well as for leading devotions at the school and boarding school.

At the end of 2022, we also said goodbye to our volunteers Eden and Maria, as well as to the Schäfers, who have been actively supporting us over the last year. They’re also leaving big shoes to fill. We’re praying for two new volunteers and more missionaries to join our team.

In Switzerland

Rebekka’s second pregnancy is going well so far, and her due date is July 10th. Like her first due date, this one also falls during our scheduled ministry in our home country of Switzerland. We’re planning to go home for the birth. We’re glad to visit home churches and congregations, to report on our work abroad.

(MR0323)



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

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THE WAY TO THE CROSS



By Peter Malgo

One who usually drives is sometime a bit helpless when it comes to using the public transport system. It begins when one stands in front of the ticket dispenser to buy one.

That's what happened to me before I boarded a Zurich tram (streetcar). There were a few passengers sitting scattered in the car. Suddenly, a man's loud voice rang out from the street: "What number is this tram?" The man shouted this particular question several times. None of the passengers on the inside answered him. And neither did I, because I myself was insecure, occupied mentally with the question of where I should get off. And also, maybe this was again an unpleasant fellow, such as had been on the last tram: a drunken person who made himself loudly known, and then harassed the other passengers with rude and indecent language.

But that was not the case in this instance! No longer asking for the number of the tram, the man boarded, bitterly complaining: "Is there no one here who can talk, no one who wants

to help me?" He no longer understood the world. And now I also saw why: using a white cane, he felt his way to a seat, continuing to growl: "Why is nobody helping me?" He was blind—and I was ashamed that I had not answered him either.

This incident made me think of the train of life, in which all of us are traveling. At some point, we will arrive at the destination. Will it really be the correct terminal? Are we using the right tram, the right number?

There was something else worth mentioning here: after three stops, the tram I took arrived at a location called *Kreuzplatz* ("Cross Place"). Didn't the path of life for us Christians also lead to the "Place of the Cross," Calvary, where we became partakers of salvation?

Jesus was on the way from Jericho to Jerusalem. It was the last stretch of road leading to Calvary, where His



Cross would stand. He encountered some helpless people at the side of the road: “And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him” (Matt 20:30-34).

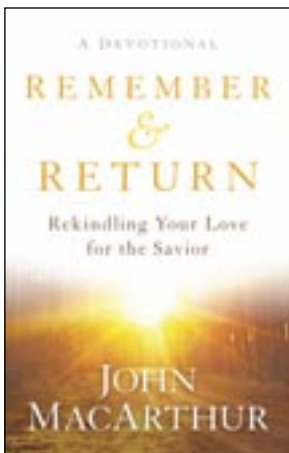
Instantly, this reaction of Jesus reminded me of my experience on the tram in Zurich. That blind man wanted to know whether this streetcar was the right one for him to take. Not knowing is a symbol for a humanity that does not yet know Jesus ... that is

blind but looking for help to reach the right goal. We as Christians have the important task to keep our eyes and ears open, to perceive the hidden or loud cries for help. Otherwise, these people will accuse us one day in eternity: “Why didn’t you tell me that there is a way to the Cross, to redemption and salvation?”

We are responsible for enabling people to have an encounter with Jesus. The tram of our life passes by many stations. People get on and off. There are those who accompany us for a while. Maybe it is our coworker or a neighbor. Do these people notice that Jesus dwells in us?

Let us never tire of making the way to the Cross visible to others by our lives. Whether their eyes are finally opened is the work of our Lord Jesus. He alone has the power to draw them to faith.

I still hear that voice: “Is there no one who can talk, no one who wants to help me?” ^{MC}



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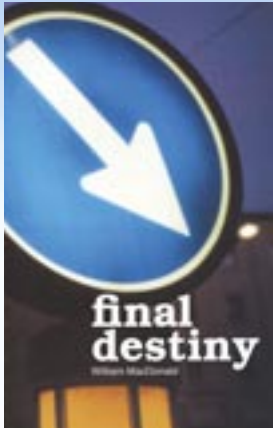
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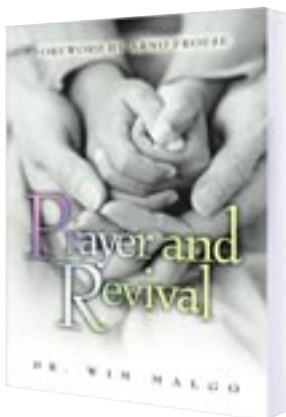
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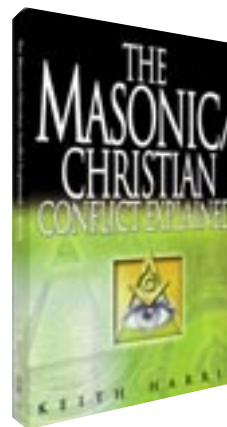
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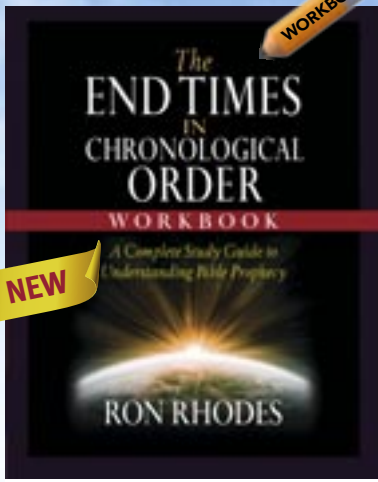
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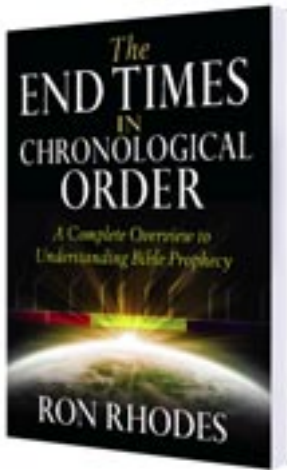


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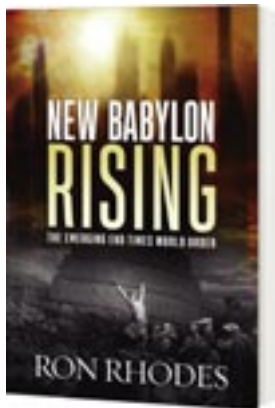
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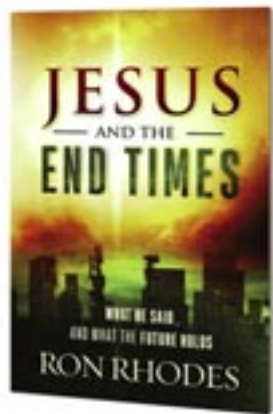
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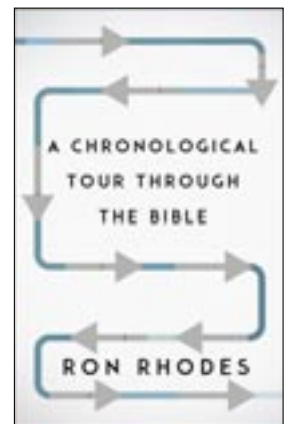
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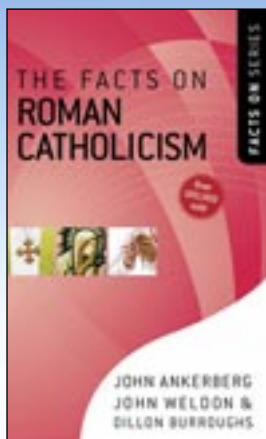
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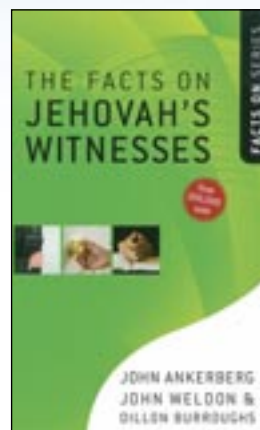
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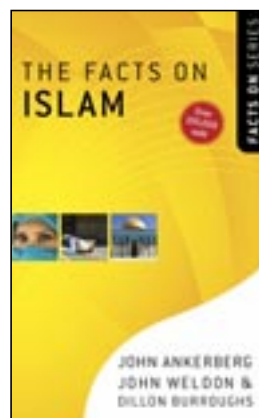
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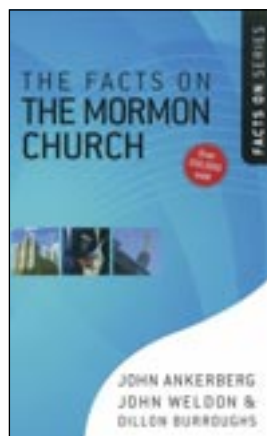
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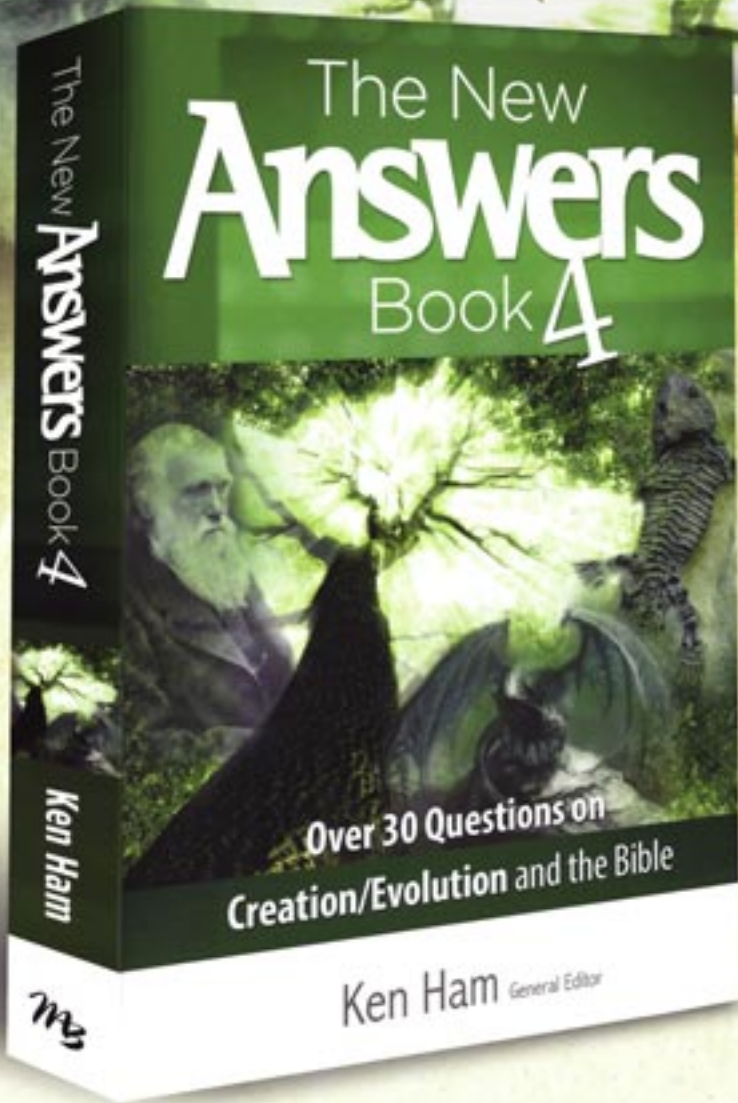
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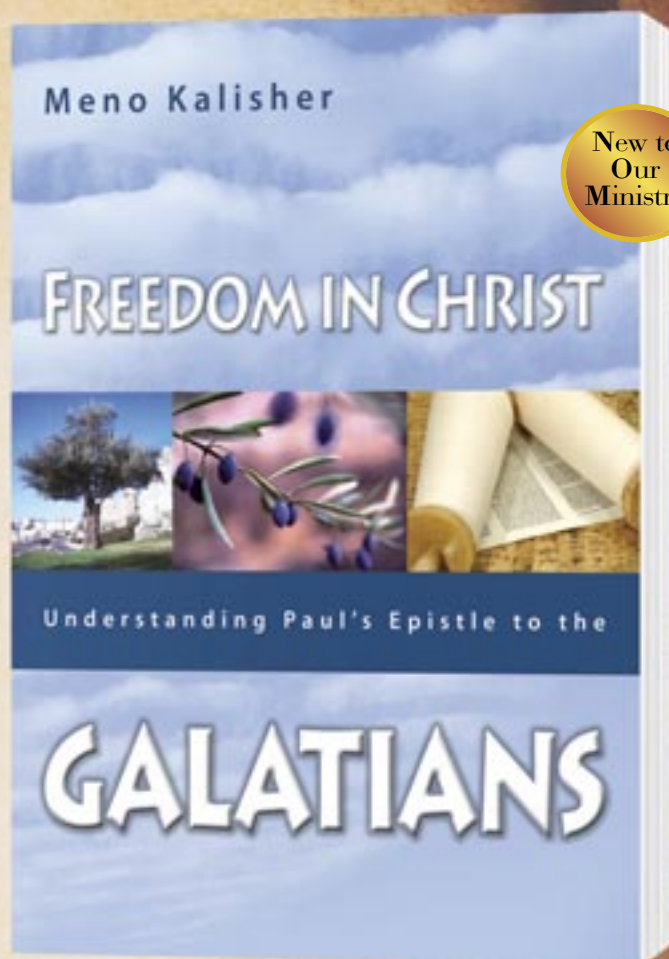
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