

The International Prophetic Voice for the Endtimes

Midnight Call

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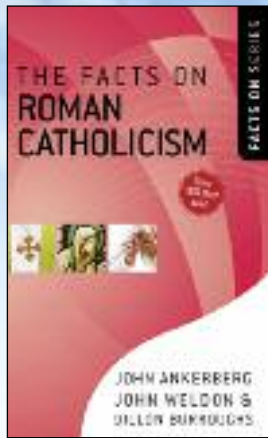
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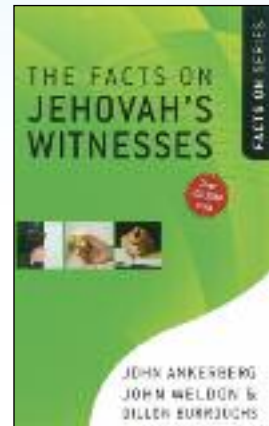
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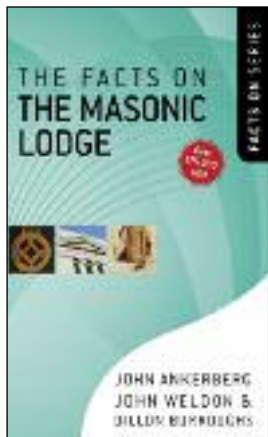
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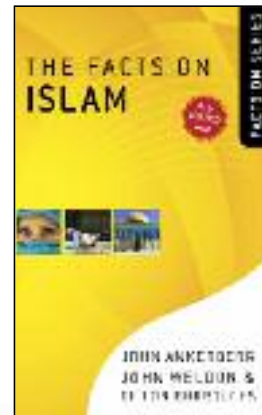
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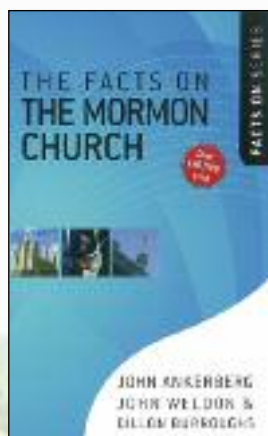
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Everything Is Different with God



By Norbert Lieth

Director of Missions, Midnight Call International

Former German Bishop of Hannover, Dr. Hans Lilje, tells of his trip to India. In a large hall, he saw pictures of the four great religious founders: Buddha, Mohammed, Zoroaster and Christ. The guide asked the tour participants if they saw the difference between these four figures. Three of them were portrayed in deep meditation; only Christ was shown as a Good Shepherd, bending over a sheep to free it from its anguish. The tour guide commented: “You see, He is the only one not thinking about Himself.” The many examples and parables of Jesus dealing with sinners, shows us that He stands out from all others; He is different. While all religions make demands on man, Jesus—who is God in human form—gives everything to mankind.

Jesus has been invited to dinner by an eminent, pious Pharisee. He accepts the invitation. Then there appeared a woman (known around town for her sinful life) who had heard that Jesus would be at this house. She has an alabaster bottle filled with anointing oil, and in front of everyone, pours the oil

over His feet and weeps. With her hair, she dries the feet of the Lord, massaging and kissing them. Inwardly, all who see this cry out: “Doesn’t He know that she is a great sinner?” (see Luke 7:36-50).

The father of the Prodigal Son embraces him before the young man can even say anything. After the son voices his confession, to his surprise a great celebration ensues. The Lord leaves 99 sheep to look for the lost one. When found, He rejoices with unbridled joy (Luke 15).

Jesus is not about allowing sin. He always remained without sin and doesn’t downplay sinning. But through these examples, He reveals to us that He likes to forgive sin. He does not reject us, rather draws us close. Jesus shows us that God is approachable...He does not distance Himself, but can be found by everyone.

The psychotherapist and former lecturer of psychology, Reinhold Ruthe, once said of the Almighty: “With God, everything is different...With God, we are not written off, not left to ourselves,

EDITOR'S NOTE

not put aside. We are His children" ("Daily Audience with God," May 9).

Nobody should be surprised that there is no other name under heaven that can save us (Acts 4:12), because there is no one under heaven who has done what Jesus did.

Wishing you a blessed Easter season, in gratitude. (MC)

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OUR TASK

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

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

STATEMENT OF FAITH

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

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

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

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

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

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

A man in a dark suit and orange tie stands on a red umbrella that is being used as a makeshift boat. He is holding a telescope in his right hand and shielding his eyes with his left hand. The background is a dark, stormy sea with white-capped waves and a lightning bolt in the sky.

Courage for Tomorrow!

Being a Christian in Strong Headwinds

Part 2

Johannes Pflaum

When we see the headwind increasing, the question arises of what to do today. Our Lord has promised that we don't need to be afraid of interrogations, and that He will give us the words to say (Mark 13:11). That's the first point.

On the downside, in the same chapter, Jesus speaks of afflictions, temptation, and persecution: “But be on guard: I have told you all things beforehand” (verse 23). He says these things so that we’re not hit unprepared, regardless of when the Rapture will occur. First Thessalonians and 1 Peter make it clear that times of pressure are not surefire spiritual successes. So, it’s right that we’re properly preparing for such times.

We must accomplish today what will no longer be possible under persecution. Werner Stoy gives the catalyst in his book. We should make much more use of unimpeded evangelism, whether in person or as a church. Our freedom of belief should have accelerated this cause. But, unfortunately, the opposite has happened. We’ve become sluggish and comfortable. In hindsight, we may bitterly regret this. The same applies to the matter of world missions. The persecuted church cannot send and support missionaries, and its financial resources are very limited. We have every opportunity to do this, but so often we focus on our own concerns and ministry, so that God’s worldwide mission is placed in the background.

As the church of Jesus today, we can hear God’s Word and cultivate fellowship unrestricted. [Editor’s note: this was written before coronavirus restrictions.] Yet, this is often no longer a top priority for us, but must be somehow adapted or subordinated to our other interests and activities. In this regard, we’re also strongly influenced by individualism and leisure opportunities. Under persecution, it becomes very difficult for pious lone wolves. Brothers and sisters in the faith will long for fellowship under God’s Word and with each other. This is why the Soviets tried to disrupt and outlaw church gatherings. Also in this respect, we might look back sadly on our wrong priorities under a free society.

The Bible is always forbidden under persecution, because God’s Word is divine and powerful. Today, we have every freedom to interact with God’s Word personally. Yet, we make use of it too little, because other things are much more important to us. Anyone can study the Bible, anywhere, without any consequences...at most a few foolish looks or com-

ments. We can read the Bible at home, on the airplane, on a park bench, in a deck chair on the beach, or anywhere else. Now, I’m not saying that all we need to do is read the Bible all over the place. But there may come a time when we will be punished for reading the Bible and pay a high price. And we may think back wistfully to our superficial handling of God’s Word.

During my Bible college days, brothers shared their experiences in the Soviet Union and the prison camps. At that time, persecution was still occurring. Of course, the question arose of how we can prepare for something like that. I’ll never forget the answer. It was as follows: “Live faithfully and in obedience to the Lord today. He will carry you through if everything turns out differently.”

The point is that we’re being faithful to where the Lord has placed us *now*; that we’re being obedient to His Word and living in dependence on Him *at this moment*. If you think that you can make compromises today and take it easy, you won’t be able to stand when the pressure increases. In the parable of the four soils, we read of what was sown on the rocky ground and then withered (Matt 13:21). These are the people of the moment, who have euphoria but no deep roots. That’s why they fall off when the pressure comes.

This faithfulness also includes the courage of one’s convictions; namely, being clear about Christ and the Gospel today, even if it’s no longer wanted or we experience exclusion or rejection. Otherwise, how can we possibly expect to have courage at other times, when we’ve already lost this? This includes our practical life, the way we deal with other people and serve them, and how we are involved in our local church.

In all things, our primary concern should be to grow in the knowledge of our Lord. This was one of Paul and Peter’s great concerns for the churches (Eph 1:15-23; Col 1:10; 2 Pet 3:18; et. al.). Growth in the knowledge of God increases our trust in Him. This isn’t just some theoretical knowledge. Biblical truths develop their strength when they come into play in practical life—if we

Courage for Tomorrow! - Part 2

There is still an opportunity to become thoroughly familiar with God's Word and to learn it by heart. In the digital age, this no longer seems necessary. But what if we no longer had a Bible?



trust the Lord for His sake, even if some things work out differently than we think they should.

At the end of his life, Paul made it clear how important knowledge of God is in the face of pressure and persecution. Detained as a state criminal in a damp, stinking, and cold prison dungeon, with execution clearly before him, he's able to write, "But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me" (2 Tim 1:12).

On the other hand, it's about biblical self-knowledge. Peter denied his Lord because he had too high a spiritual opinion of himself. He put his trust in his own piety and strength, instead of believing Jesus' words. Those who believe that they have everything under control and are spiritually strong, aren't able to stand under pressure. On the contrary, those who have recognized their complete dependence on Christ and are aware of their own weakness, are able to stand. They cast it all onto the Lord.

There is still an opportunity to become thoroughly familiar with God's Word and to learn it by heart. In the digital age, this no longer seems necessary. But what if we no longer had a Bible? In John 16:13, we read that the Spirit of God wants to guide

us into the whole truth. In verse 14, the Lord Jesus says that the Spirit will take what is His. And in John 14:26, we read that He will remind the disciples of everything the Lord has told them. It doesn't say that the Holy Spirit suddenly gives new revelations; it recalls what Jesus said. This presupposes that we absorb God's Word into ourselves. Incidentally, this is also a promise for everyone who has trouble memorizing and yet practices anyway. As long as it is today, we should use the time to learn Bible verses and memorize them. What a help it would be to memorize verses, or even entire chapters. Every psalm is a chapter. The power of God's Word unfolds, even when we're no longer able to read it. This can already be practiced in childhood and with children.

For that matter, this also applies to good spiritual songs. Saying verses to yourself or praying them can also be a great help, not just in persecution. Even in the dark night hours, in hospital rooms, or in the ditch after a car accident. Several times during my internship, I held prayer services in a retirement home. The method was determined by the condition of the listeners. One service took place only among residents with dementia. Just as little ones are told Bible stories, I shared them there as well, in the hope that something would stick. Whenever we started singing old, well-known spiritual songs, they suddenly sang along. Something emerged that had been learned in childhood. I especially remember the song and chorus:

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,
His child, and forever, I am.

The appropriate training can also contribute to a life rooted in the Bible, so that we're able to grasp the doctrinal and salvation-related interconnec-

tions. In this context, Werner Stoy uses history to show how, in addition to persecution, temptation can come from within. That is why it's so important to know the correlations and fundamental lines of Scripture. This is often neglected today as well, because we prefer to use the time for ourselves and other things.

Both are found in Scripture: On the one hand, the Lord wants to alleviate our suffering, and we can pray for that. On the other hand, He also pursues His own intentions and goals through suffering. We tend to strive for pain-free discipleship as the ultimate goal. This is due to our immense prosperity and the feel-good mentality associated with it. It starts in our personal life and extends to the church.

As soon as difficult phases arrive in church life, some simply vanish in a puff of smoke. And then they seek the pious wellness zone elsewhere. Paul, on the other hand, presupposes a willingness to suffer as a spiritual foundation for service and discipleship (cf. 2 Timothy). Mind you, the point isn't to suffer as a means of self-redemption, or out of a sense of romanticism. It's about suffering for Christ and the Gospel in a fallen, hostile, and fleeting world. This can include our lifestyle, hardships, and difficulties of all kinds. Because, although we

can always pray for relief, God can also glorify Himself in a special way and change us for His glory through it. An old song expresses it particularly well:

Now the crucible is breaking;
Now my faith its seal is taking;
Molten gold, unhurt by fire,
Only thus, 'tis ever given,
Up to joys of highest heaven,
For God's children to aspire.

Sorrow makes our faith abiding,
Lowly, childlike, and confiding;
Sorrow! who can speak thy grace?
Earth may name the tribulation,
Heaven has nobler appellation;
Not thus honored all our race.

This is in stark contrast to our current philosophy of life and the Prosperity Gospel, which often intersect to a certain extent. The Bible doesn't call for asceticism, but it does encourage a grateful and frugal lifestyle. Paul could say, "I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need" (Phil 4:12).

We can gratefully accept every good thing that comes from the Lord's hand. Whether it's a good meal, a pleasant vacation, a home, or a car. But Scripture begs the question of what is most important to us, and what our heart is bound to.



Courage for Tomorrow! - Part 2

The Lord clearly told His disciples that they will feel constricted. But Christ and His Gospel are worth it. Suffering isn't the end, because in the end there is indescribable glory.

If we're being honest with ourselves, we have to admit that it's usually easy for us to enjoy abundance. We don't really suffer shortages anymore. We can gratefully accept every good thing that comes from the Lord's hand. Whether it's a good meal, a pleasant vacation, a home, or a car. But Scripture begs the question of what is most important to us, and what our heart is bound to. Whether we can also succumb to ego-consumerism, or let ourselves be satisfied without having to own everything possible. This includes considering how we can support missionary work and the movement of the Gospel.

The entire consumer economy surrounding us is designed to constantly arouse new desires. A frugal lifestyle already honors the Lord, and is also helpful in the event that we have to do without some of the things that we currently have.

Werner Stoy also states that the persecuted church has always valued training and equipping new preachers, although it's very difficult under persecution. Of course, persecution always affects the brothers in the faith who have spiritual responsibility and who preach the Word. This is one reason why it's important to equip workers. When the first line is removed, the second and third are ready.

Courage for tomorrow: suffering for the sake of Jesus isn't meaningless. We don't want to glorify suffering in and of itself. Pressure, distress, and tribulation always hurt. Therefore, the Lord clearly told His disciples that they will feel constricted. But Christ and His Gospel are worth it. Suffering isn't the end, because in the end there is indescribable glory. It's also encouraging that the Word of God unfolds its strength precisely when there is pressure. The Lord often uses what is directed against Him to glorify Himself in a special way. The number of Christians in China has multiplied during harsh persecution.

This topic comes with an enormous challenge for us. We have to keep a close eye on developments in the West, and we can't live in a spiritual dream world any longer. That should spur us on to do today what we will one day no longer be able to. In this regard, a well-known mission song was particularly memorable to me as a child, in a time when missions reports with photos or videos were shown in the evenings in the large, white, tent hall at the "Pentecost Mission Festival." This was before Daylight Savings Time, and dawn and dark were needed for these lectures so it wasn't too bright. At the beginning or end of the event, we often sang:

Work, for the night is coming,
Work through the morning hours;
Work while the dew is sparkling,
Work 'mid springing flowers;
Work when the day grows brighter,
Work in the glowing sun;
Work, for the night is coming,
When man's work is done.

Work, for the night is coming,
Work through the sunny noon;
Fill brightest hours with labor,
Rest comes sure and soon.
Give every flying minute,
Something to keep in store;
Work, for the night is coming,
When man works no more.

Work, for the night is coming,
Under the sunset skies;
While their bright tints are glowing,
Work, for daylight flies.
Work till the last beam fadeth,
Fadeth to shine no more;
Work, while the night is darkening,
When man's work is o'er.

(MR0120/1053)



PROPHECY WEATHER REPORT: CLEARLY CLOUDY



Revealingly, clouds are often mentioned in the Bible. The word cloud and its plural form are cited 149 times. We see that the Bible holds a fascination for them, repeatedly noting the critical and crucial roles that they play in life on earth and prophecy. They are wondrous. Marvels Job: "Do you know how the clouds hang poised?" (Job 37:16a).

By Wilfred Hahn

As well, the use of clouds as literal imagery is expansive in the Bible. For example, "[...] he is coming with the clouds,' and 'every eye will see him, even those who pierced him'; and all peoples on earth 'will mourn because of him [...]" (Revelation 1:7). Or consider 1 Thessalonians 4:17a: "After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." Yes, "[...] you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).

Querying the specter he sees of Jews migrating to Israel in the last days, Isaiah asks: "Who are these that fly along like clouds, like doves to their nests?" (Isaiah 60:8).

To be balanced, we must also mention that clouds are frequently used to symbolize gloomy occasions. These refer to both punishment and blessing ... especially so

in apocalyptic verses that have yet to be fulfilled.

For example, Zephaniah says: "That day will be a day of wrath—a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness" (1:15). And so, the types of clouds that waft across the endtime world during the Tribulation period are of a less auspicious sort.

Head in the Clouds

Looking ahead at global affairs, not only is the outlook cloudy, but also mankind has become totally clouded in his thinking. Mankind increasingly has his "head in the clouds." In the very last days, humanity is smitten with delusion and fanciful thinking ... without foundation ... rejecting the very Creator of clouds.

Today, we would agree with the opinion that the entirety of humanity has their collective "head in the clouds" as never before



Today, the world “cloud” has been borrowed by the field of IT technology—applying to digital data and computer networks.



in history. We will yet provide a few examples of this being the case.

Of course, the reader will know that this phrase is a type of criticism ... being accused of not being realistic or rational. Christians may very well have their eyes cast toward the clouds—“[...] stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28)—yet we remain unclouded in our doctrines, with our feet firmly on the ground.

Not so the world. Instead, their doctrines are malleable and made of mist.

A New Type of Cloud

Perhaps not coincidentally, the meaning of the word “cloud” has gone through a modernization in our day. It’s taken on new meanings. It is a similar shift as applied to the word “gay.” Where once this word had idyllic meanings, today it has been hijacked as a descriptor for sexual orientation.

Today, the world “cloud” has been borrowed by the field of IT technology—applying to digital data and computer networks. You can have your data in “the cloud” (also called the iCloud). As such, this phrase (“the cloud”) has become an important marker of our age. Consider that “cloud” technologies today have been a major driver of “global interconnectedness” and the digital capture of

mankind’s activities. People no longer find it extraordinary that we now “live in the cloud.”

As the case may be, there are many movements “driven by clouds” these days. We are referring here to mankind’s space travel to Mars; or the fanciful dreams of Tesla’s founder, Elon Musk, who believes that humans will someday populate other planets.

Most prominently, we think of trends that involve a belief in unlimited technology that may foster futuristic dreams and altered realities. Here we refer to such theories as transhumanism¹ (see endnote) and “dematerialization.” There is no lack of delusion here. Consider also the ideology of Cosmism (a Russian variant). We will not discuss these notions, apart from saying that those who engage in such certainly have their “heads in the clouds.”

Not surprisingly, these theories go hand in hand with occult belief systems and those that wish to entirely nullify God. Instead, they conspire to take full power and authority for humanity. They want to “do what they wilt” (this the cry of occultists) without any consequences or limitation. This is “clouded thinking,” of course, as the created world has its boundaries and limits. Everyone must acknowledge this.

It is a sign of the times, we believe: There is a broad abandonment of common sense and facts, instead believing in the ridiculous. We identify many recent trends and developments that ultimately will give “birth to wind” (Isaiah 26:18). There are an accelerating number of beliefs, values, and future expectations for mankind worldwide that are entirely decoupled from foundations, evidence, and sustainability.

Humanity is intent on making his own reality ... his own future. This is a choice of mankind that the Bible foretells. The nations

Human fertility rates continue to decline rapidly around the globe. These are at a record low in many countries.

wish to rebel. They want to go their own way (Psalm 2:3). And the chief adversary is pursuing the same objective. He says: “I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14).

In that sense, the “foot loose and fancy-free” rebellion that we are witnessing today is a “sign of the times.” Let’s consider a few such examples of collective global humanity having their heads in the clouds.

1. Modern Monetary Theory: We have written about this newish theory several times in the past (most recently, in the January issue). It is not a new idea ... just an old one in new garb. One of the most licentious tenets of this new policy is the idea that debt (government debt, primarily) can be increased virtually without limit (given certain conditions). Politicians and policymakers will be eager to boost spending and budget deficits. But who would doubt that debt increases will have consequences? To think otherwise is to be clouded. This writer would not be surprised if a massive inflationary spiral unfolds in the Tribulation period, which leads to the conditions of exorbitant wine prices and basic items of sustenance (barley) becoming unaffordable (Revelation 6:6).

2. Ex Nihilo—Cryptocurrencies: This new form of currency has become all the rage among speculating investors. Little more than a decade ago, this digital currency type did not exist. Bitcoin, the best known crypto, was the first to launch in 2009. Just what are these cryptocurrencies comprised of, really? What purpose do they serve? Most will be stumped to find an answer ... including financial professionals. Cryptocur-

rencies do not exist in physical form (like paper money). Many have no connection to a bank account, and typically are not issued by a central authority.

In this writer’s view, cryptocurrencies and their various derivations are basically speculative vehicles that should not be called currencies. Nevertheless, their value has boomed on crypto exchanges far beyond comprehension. Recently, the *Financial Times*² reported that the value of outstanding digital securities reached 1,000 times the estimated value of the entire world’s wealth. Is this real? Hardly. Speculators have their heads in a cloud.

3. Financial Wealth at All Time High. Primarily due to the massive monetary interventions of the world’s major central banks (due to sluggish economic growth worldwide and the negative economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic), interest rates around the world have tumbled to all-time lows. In fact, most of the world’s government bonds yield a negative interest rate. This in turn has led to soaring stock markets ... and somewhat more selectively, real estate prices are also rising to the surprise of many. Valuations are now probably the most extreme in modern financial history. There are no foundations or stable reference points to be found. They are all floating in the clouds somewhere.

4. Falling Fertility Rates. As is well known, human fertility rates continue to decline rapidly around the globe. These are at a record low in many countries. It is the new wisdom that population growth must decline to save the world. With respect to declining population growth, few are worried. Why? They believe that financial markets



“[...] Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1).



will miraculously yield enough investment income and gains, so that pensions and personal savings will be sufficient to maintain reasonable lifestyles for the world's future retirees. This is unlikely, of course. All the natural laws of creation would first need to be repealed before this can happen.

Nonetheless, policymakers wish to defer this grim outcome if at all possible. To do so, a Ponzi-like program must be pursued. Here again we have an example of a belief of mankind which leads to a great, self-driven disaster. Again, it reveals an instance where mankind believes that he can slip the bounds of creation. Put simply, if humans stop having children, there can be no such thing as a comfortable retirement for all. It is impossible. All the same, policymakers are inflating financial asset values to hoodwink and delay the ultimate outcomes. This is already unfolding. Nevertheless, there will come a point where the clouds will lift, and policymakers will realize that real wealth cannot be found in the clouds.

Thoughts to Ponder

We have only scratched the surface in our list of “clouded” and “head in the clouds” thinking. With respect to clouds, just what is the weather forecast?

The world may think it is on Cloud Nine today. But in reality, it is unhinged and without moorings. While the world constructs its “cloud in the sky” of global data and electronic networks, we are to keep watching for our Lord, who is coming in the clouds.

According to Isaiah 55:8-9, humanity's thoughts are not God's thoughts: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”

While the world continues to unfetter its chains and deny the Creator, what are we commanded to do? “[...] Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1).

We have the blessed hope.

Says Apostle Paul: “[...] we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). ^{MC}

ENDNOTES

- 1 The belief or theory that the human race can evolve beyond its current physical and mental limitations, especially by means of science and technology.
- 2 “Crypto finally becomes bigger than ... the world.” *The Financial Times*, January 15, 2021.



Life Depends on... Toilet Paper?

What the toilet paper hoarding can tell us about eternal life.

Norbert Lieth

The woman ahead of me in line at the supermarket checkout has a lot of toilet paper in her shopping cart. The cashier tells her that she can't buy this much. She has to leave half of it behind.

At the beginning of the pandemic, people were panic buying toilet paper and hoarding it as if their lives depended on it. There were times it led to arguing. One person would refuse to give way to another. Some tore rolls from their neighbors' hands so as not to miss out.

Researchers explain this from a psychological perspective, believing that toilet paper hoarding depicts a symbol of security. Another explanation is that it provides a sense of control during the coronavirus pandemic, but on a limited budget. Farasat Bokhari, health economist and associate professor at the University of East Anglia in Great Britain, thinks so. "So we go buy something that

is cheap, that we can store easily, and we know at the back of our minds that we are going to use anyway" (UEA Eco Blog).

I don't mean to poke fun at people who do this, but rather, to take their need for security as an opportunity to bring up something much more serious. When *aren't* people looking for something to hold onto? We all know that life doesn't depend on toilet paper, but it always hangs by a "thread." In the devotional book *Life Is More*, I read that British comedian Paul Barbieri entertained his audience and joked about his own death. Then he sat down in a chair and didn't get up again. The audience assumed it to be another joke, but it was dead serious: the comedian had died (devotion from December 14, 2020).

This is certainly an extreme example, but we're constantly hearing about and seeing death all around us [especially

Life Depends on...Toilet Paper?

Jesus offers us a security and stability that is comparable to an anchor. It connects us to heaven. It is fixed there, and there we find a permanent, eternal hold.



now with the coronavirus]. A 40-year-old woman fell under a streetcar and died at the scene of the accident, almost on our doorstep here in Switzerland. From that moment on, she was torn from life. In this respect, toilet paper can serve as a symbol that shows us how easily a life can be cut off.

Our life is dependent on Him who is the origin of all life; namely, the God of life. Not only will life be lost here on earth, but there is so much more to it... we can be lost to eternal life. Jesus said it Himself: “But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him” (Luke 12:5).

This true God doesn't want anyone to be lost. That is why Jesus came into the world and says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Elsewhere He says, “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

We don't need Jesus sometime; we need Him now in order to truly live and survive—especially into eternal life. Life isn't defined by duration or health. A person could live half a millennium, and that would still be too short. The cabaret artist Andreas Thiel once put it this way: “If you plan to live forever, your death is just the beginning!” (*factum* 6/2020, p. 16).

There is more at stake; namely, a divinely fulfilled life. That is the only true life. There are three lives:

1. **The natural life**, in which we are born of a mother. That is a miracle. God gave it to us because He wanted us. But sin brought death into the world, and because we are all sinners, we must all die.

2. **The spiritual, reborn life**. That is the life in which a person receives Jesus through faith and trust and is spiritually born again. In this way, a person possesses life from God. All sins are completely forgiven, and death only has the penultimate word.

3. **Eternal life**. After death, it continues to a resurrection and transformation for those who believed in Jesus. Jesus has the last word, and He will call people to life.

Jesus offers us a security and stability that is comparable to an anchor. It connects us to heaven. It is fixed there, and there we find a permanent, eternal hold. It is strange but true that anchors are often in the shape of a cross.

“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Heb 6:19). The anchor of life, which Jesus is to us, extends into heaven. It is anchored there. We should definitely reach for this.

(MR0121/1127)



The Message of Nahum – Part 1

Dr. Ron J. Bigalke

Nahum’s prophecy both complements and parallels the book of Jonah. His prophecy corresponds to Jonah, since the latter celebrated God’s mercy, while Nahum proclaimed the worldwide judgment of God against sin.

Jonah’s ministry emphasized the love of God; Nahum’s message proclaims the justice of God. Recognizing that the messages of Jonah and Nahum correspond to one another, it is appropriate to examine them together, as in this series of articles that considers both prophetic ministries.

The prophet Nahum wrote to comfort God’s people and to give assurance of victory over their tormentors. The prevailing theme of Nahum’s prophecy is deliverance for God’s people, as a result of the righteous vengeance of the Lord. American poet and critic James Russell Lowell (1819-91) could have composed his “The Present Crisis” as a summary of the prophecy of Nahum:

Careless seems the great Avenger;
history’s pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness
‘twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold,
wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
keeping watch above his own.

Second Kings 6 records a war between Israel and Syria (Aram). The king of Israel was able to elude the Syrian king, because the prophet El-

The Message of Nahum – Part 1

Nahum demonstrates that every generation is responsible for its own moral and spiritual decisions (Ezek 18:20-24).

Elisha warned him as to the method of attack. The king of Syria was enraged that Israel eluded him, and decided to capture Elisha. The king besieged Elisha's house, yet the prophet did not fear because he knew God had surrounded the Syrians.

With the Syrian host surrounding Elisha, the prophet's attendant trembled in asking, "What shall we do?" Elisha "answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed...And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (vv. 15-17).

Sometimes it appears the darkness is certain to succeed, when the forces of wickedness (cf. Eph 6:12) assemble themselves against the good. When the apostles suffered contempt and threats, the believers sought the Lord in prayer. God answered with boldness and courage granted to His servants (Acts 4:23-31). Will you have the eyes to see "so that you will know what is the hope of His calling" (Eph 4:18)?

GOD IS GREAT, GOD IS GOOD

(Nahum 1:1-8) Nahum's ministry occurred following the destruction of the Egyptian city of Thebes in 663 BC (3:8). The prophet predicted the fall of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, which occurred in 612 BC. He likely ministered during the reign of the wicked king Manasseh of Judah (697-42 BC). His message primarily concerned Nineveh, yet he was a Jewish prophet and thus his proclamation was for the Jewish people.

Nahum's prophecy is designated an "oracle," which is a message from God that announces judgment. Sometimes the "oracle" is termed a "burden," because it frequently contained an intense message. The vision that Nahum the Elkoshite received was from the Lord. The book of Nahum is not a narrative like Jonah; rather, it resembles other books that have a prophetic message.

Nahum's prophecy concerned Nineveh, the principal city of the Assyrian Empire at the time. Nahum likely prophesied around 650 BC. Jonah's message is dated to 780 BC. More than one hundred years earlier,

God sent a reluctant prophet to a "great city" that He declared as wicked (Jon 1:2). God announced, through the prophet Jonah, that he was going to overthrow the city. Nineveh experienced one of the greatest revivals in response to that message, as the king and "the people of Nineveh believed in God" (3:5).

Nahum demonstrates that every generation is responsible for its own moral and spiritual decisions (Ezek 18:20-24). In the time of Jonah, the Ninevites repented in response to the proclamation of God's Word. However, in the time of Nahum, the people of Nineveh made different choices; for this reason, they were guilty before the Lord. God announced judgment on Nineveh for her cruelty, idolatry, oppression, and wickedness. While exceptional leadership in the past is a blessing, it can never replace one's faithful responsibility in the present.

The love of God will never allow what His righteousness condemns. God simply cannot excuse or ignore sin. The truth of this assertion should cause rejoicing in divine justice and judgment, because it represents the triumph of holiness.

Verses 2-3 establish the tone for Nahum's entire message. Nineveh was in trouble with God. Despite the good work of the reluctant prophet Jonah, the city returned to its wickedness. The Ninevites oppressed other countries, performed cruel acts, and worshiped idols. "The Lord is slow to anger" (v. 3a), as evident in His "relenting concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon [Nineveh]" (Jon 3:10). Now the Lord decreed His verdict through the prophet Nahum: this time, He would not relent.

What was the benefit for God's people to know that Nineveh was to experience judgment? The answer is, it is important to know that the Lord is all-powerful and can be trusted to care for His people, even as He brings justice to those who oppose Him (vv. 3-6). In contrast to those who "endure the burning of His anger" (v. 6b) is God's promise to "those who take refuge in Him" (v. 7c).

God is great, and He is good. Without His greatness to maintain order, the universe would unravel; yet without His goodness, evil despots would rule the

God provides comfort, help, and refuge for those who trust in Him; yet He must outpour judgment upon those who disobey His Word, because He is holy and just. When you obey and trust God, you will enjoy the comfort of His refuge, even in distressing times.



world. God uses His greatness for salvation, and His goodness to draw people to Himself.

God provides comfort, help, and refuge for those who trust in Him; yet He must outpour judgment upon those who disobey His Word, because He is holy and just. When you obey and trust God, you will enjoy the comfort of His refuge, even in distressing times. Cushing's hymn "Hiding in Thee" (1876) expresses such truths:

How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe,
I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe.
How often when trials like sea billows roll
Have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul.

The goodness of God does not mean He will not bring "His enemies" (and His people's foes) to justice. Verse 8 returns to the wrathful aspect of God's character, because His anger toward brutality, pride, and wickedness is a focus of Nahum's oracle. God is too good not to punish sin. God is so holy and just that He cannot excuse or ignore unrepentant sin. The Lord is angry with those who abuse others, and will bring them to "a complete end."

GOD IS INVINCIBLE, GOD IS SALVATION

(Nahum 1:9-15) To resist God is futile, because He is invincible. Whereas verses 2-8 emphasized the character of God, verses 9-15 focus more directly

upon Nineveh. Whatever a person devises "against the LORD" will fail (cf. Ps 2:1-5). The Assyrians besieged Jerusalem once (2 Kgs 18), but would not do so again (Nah 1:9). To oppose God's people is truly opposition to the Lord Himself, and He will not permit those plans to succeed.

Three images depict Nineveh's complete destruction: "thorns," drunkenness, and "stubble" (v. 10). Nineveh was in trouble because the Lord will overcome any plots against Him or His people (v. 11). Even though the Assyrians were "at full *strength* and likewise many, even so, they [would] be cut off and pass away" (v. 12). Nineveh's defeat would be a blessing to God's people, because they would be freed from Assyrian oppression (v. 13). Nahum emphasized that his message was not a personal verdict for the Lord had spoken (v. 12a), thereby guaranteeing the fulfillment.

Nineveh boasted that its gods were invincible, and even claimed to be more powerful than God Himself (Isa 36:18-20; 37:10-13). Yet the Lord would cast those false deities upon the trash heap and empty their temples. When the Assyrians conquered other nations, they would take their idols to demonstrate the superiority of the Assyrian gods in contrast to those of the nation being defeated. God would prepare the grave—in great humiliation—for Nineveh and its idols (Nah 1:14).

In response to Nineveh's fall, the people of God would "celebrate" (v. 15). The celebration was not that of revenge; rather, it was rejoicing because justice was accomplished and their oppression had come to an end. The omnipotent God is able to deliver His people and to defeat their oppressors, regardless of how powerful they may appear. Beware of anyone who would encourage your trust in someone (or something) other than the true God of the Holy Bible. The Lord is good and the Refuge for His people.

(1124)

Through Suffering to Glory

Wim Malgo (1922-1992)

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 18. Revelation 2:8-11.

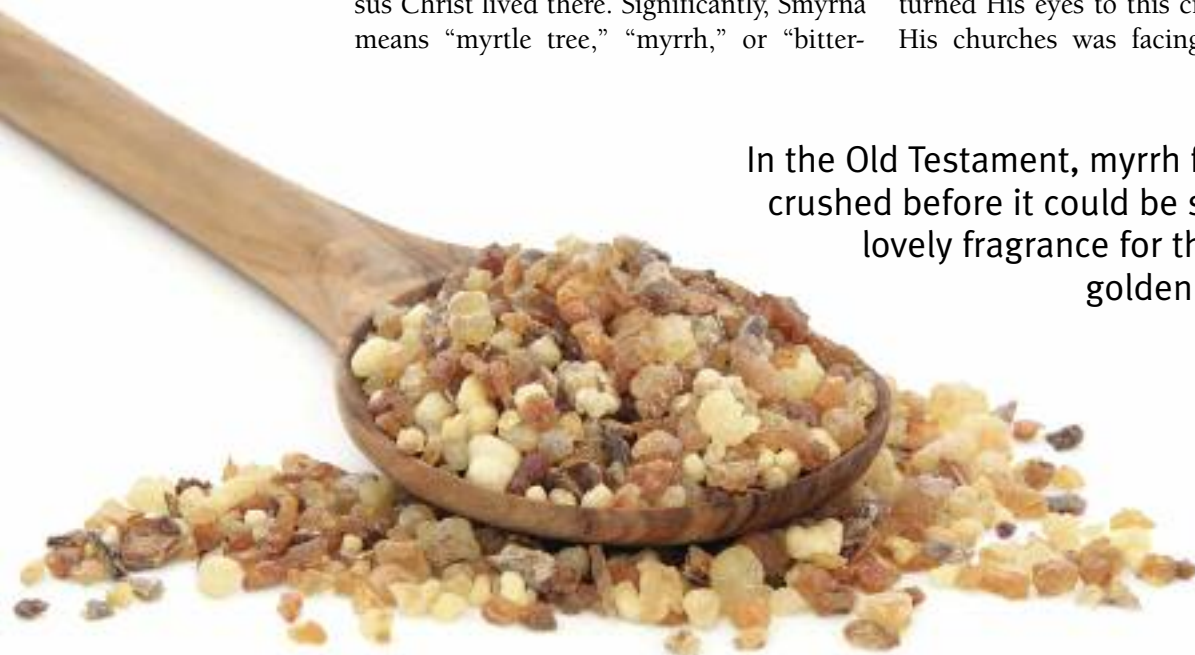
“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev 2:8-11).

Founded by Alexander the Great, the Smyrna of that time was a beautiful, affluent, commercial city in Asia Minor. A poor, harassed church of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ lived there. Significantly, Smyrna means “myrtle tree,” “myrrh,” or “bitter-

ness.” The children of God experienced many bitter and difficult things there.

In the Old Testament, myrrh first had to be crushed before it could be smoked into a lovely fragrance for the Lord on the golden incense altar. In the same way the church in Smyrna (and we too, like those believers) must be pounded, broken, and crushed. This way our prayer may be, in essence, an offering of ourselves: becoming a lovely fragrance to the Lord. Smyrna was the city of martyrs. The church father Polycarp would later be burned on the slope of the hill Paganus there. In the same place, the ground was soaked with the blood of 1,500 witnesses of Jesus who were simultaneously executed, and another 800 later. The Lord turned His eyes to this city, because one of His churches was facing great challenges

In the Old Testament, myrrh first had to be crushed before it could be smoked into a lovely fragrance for the Lord on the golden incense altar.



Founded by Alexander the Great, the Smyrna of that time was a beautiful, affluent, commercial city in Asia Minor.



The Agora, the marketplace and civic center, was one of the most important parts of the ancient city of Smyrna.

there during the time when John was on Patmos.

First, the Lord lets this church know, “I know thy works...” Strangely enough, He doesn’t summarize these works. This contrasts with the letter to the church in Ephesus, in which He wrote, “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted” (vv. 2-3).

Our God sees through the quantitative achievements to what’s essential. Although the Lord said to Smyrna, “I know thy works,” it doesn’t seem to be doing anything. The opponents of the church in Smyrna seem to be taking the initiative in this regard, and the church is suffering from what they’re doing to it. But this is precisely where their highest activity lies! It is in resemblance to the Lord Jesus, who did the greatest work by leaving the action to the enemy.

When the Lord Jesus began His greatest work, He attested to His disciples: “This is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53b). He stretched out His hands and allowed Himself to be bound. He said to Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:11a). So, Pilate got the initiative so that Jesus could do the very greatest thing.

Yield the initiative, the ability to act, so that the Lord can act through you and do great things through you!

“I know thy works, and tribulation.” The Lord knows about everything—including your trials and tribulations. But isn’t that precisely the reason that he describes Himself as “the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive” in the introduction to this letter? He’s saying to His intimidated little flock, “I was in great distress before you. Your affliction is my affliction. But the enemy who is harassing you never has the last word. I am the first and the last. If you collapse, I’ll spread my arms and be with you. I died and, behold, I’m alive. And you

Through Suffering to Glory

Through suffering one arrives at glory. Yes, the measure of your suffering for Jesus' sake determines the measure of your future glory.

have to partake of my death so that you can live.”

“I know thy works, and tribulation.” The Lord valued the invisible works of Smyrna's suffering believers so highly! He measures His own by completely different standards than we do. He told the wonderfully active church in Ephesus with great seriousness, “Repent . . . or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev 2:5).

The church in Ephesus was in mortal danger, spiritually speaking, because it was about to leave its first love. We too are in the greatest danger of death when spiritual complacency creeps in. Smyrna was in need; Ephesus was not. Our need is that we have no need. The Lord wasn't worried about the poor and suffering church in Smyrna, although it probably consisted only of people from the lower classes of the rich, industrial city. Believers were intimidated and ridiculed. They were severely challenged by false teaching, and their lives were threatened by the authorities. They looked toward the things to come with great fear. This is precisely the reason that the Lord didn't reprimand this church on the verge of collapse, but prepared promises and wonderful comforts for it. Isn't it perfectly poignant that the exalted Lord of verse 9 tends to every need with tender care, yes, and overlooks/forgets nothing? “I know thy works, and tribulation.”

The works were tribulation for Jesus' sake. Their souls were working for Jesus' sake. How close you are to Jesus when you suffer for His sake; when you willingly allow yourself to be led into the fellowship of His sufferings! Then He bends down to you and says, “I know thy works, and tribulation.” Who could know better than He? He experienced the hours of silence before the people, and being nailed to the cross. When He hung upon the cross, he

was unable to move His hands to place them on anyone. But I repeat: It was there that He did His greatest work! Adolf Pohl rightly said, “What action in the Passion!”

Therefore, it must have been like balm to the church in Smyrna to hear Him say, “I know thy works, and tribulation.” Likewise, when He said, “which was dead, and is alive.” He is speaking from the glory that He came to after His suffering. And, because of this, He calls out to the church in Smyrna, “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer” (v. 10a). Through suffering one arrives at glory. Yes, the measure of your suffering for Jesus' sake determines the measure of your future glory. This is how Paul puts it: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:17-18).

It is moving that the Lord Himself determines the degree of tribulation the church in Smyrna experiences, and also says to them, “behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days” (Rev 2:10). So, it's measured precisely; the Lord doesn't let the measure overflow (cf. 1 Cor 10:13), but ensures that His children don't despair. It says, “that ye may be tried.” Peter also means the same thing when he says in his first letter, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:6-7).

(MR0920/1103)




WORLD FOCUS

SWEDEN

Face Mask Skepticism Fades

Authorities in Stockholm and a number of other regions across Sweden are abandoning their earlier skepticism and advising people to rely more on face masks, as the country braces for a third wave of coronavirus infections.

 The number of new coronavirus cases rose 27% in the Swedish capital, which not that long ago saw its intensive-care resources pushed to the brink. The relentlessness of the virus has driven Sweden's government to reconsider its hands-off approach, and parliament enacted legislation to allow tougher pandemic restrictions.

Sweden's Public Health Agency has long questioned the science behind face masks as an effective tool during a pandemic, and warned that such coverings risk creating a false sense of security that might lead people to grow complacent on social-distancing guidelines. But that view has come under fire from critics, including Sweden's Royal Academy of Sciences, which published a report to support the use of face masks as a meaningful way to stop transmission.

-*www.bloomberg.com*, 23 February 2021

Commentary: Coronavirus, known as Covid-19, is extremely contagious, often leading to severe illness—sometimes death.

It is of interest that countries whose leaders failed to take this virus seriously are now waking up to a horrible reality. Based on Statistica.com, coronavirus deaths per 1 million population as of 24 February 2021 are as follows:



- UK 1,811
- USA 1,524
- Sweden 1,230
- Brazil 1,177

Countries with strict enforcement present a better report card:

- Israel 622
- Australia 35.8
- New Zealand 5.3

Covid-19 is a virus detected throughout the globe. This forces all nations to share their knowledge on how to decrease the number infected, in order to take control thereof. This is not the making of some conspiracy, but simply an end-time sign. This vehicle and many others are contributing to global unity, which is absolutely necessary for the spirit of Antichrist to solidify the three groups of people: Gentiles, Jews, and Christians.

Based on Bible prophecy, the Church of Jesus Christ—that is, all born-again believers—will be taken out of the way when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Then, total darkness and total deception will take place on planet earth.

7454

(See *101 Answers to Questions About Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare*, Item #2289, \$15.99.)




ARGENTINA

Millionaires Taxed for Virus Relief

A one-off tax on Argentina's richest people to help pay for medical supplies and relief for small businesses battered by the global coronavirus pandemic entered into force.



Those people in Argentina whose assets exceed 200 million pesos (about \$2.3 million) are now being taxed to help pay for pandemic relief. (AFP)

 A law passed by the Senate in December by a vote of 42-26 approved the levy on people whose assets exceed 200 million pesos (about \$2.3 million).

The center-left government of President Alberto Fernandez hopes to raise about \$3 billion from taxing the richest 12,000 of Argentina's 44 million inhabitants.

Under the law, those who are taxable will pay up to 3.5 percent on assets declared within the country, and up to 5.25 percent on assets held abroad.

The pandemic has exacerbated the already high poverty rate in a country which has been in recession since 2018, and has an unemployment rate of 11.7 percent.

In its annual report on economic inequality, Oxfam said the world's 1,000 richest people had recouped their coronavirus-related losses

(continued next page)


 **SOUTH KOREA**

Religious Group Raided for Breaching Virus Rules

Police raided the headquarters of a local Christian missionary group over suspected violations of antivirus protocols that led to a large outbreak of the coronavirus.



Officials from Daejeon Metropolitan Police Agency get ready to enter the International Mission headquarters with boxes for articles of evidence

 The International Mission has been blamed for more than 400 cases of the coronavirus at its facilities, including at the IEM School in Daejeon.

Millionaires Taxed (continued from page 23)

within nine months, while it could take the world's poorest more than a decade to recover from the impacts of the global health crisis.

"The world's 10 richest men have seen their combined wealth increase by half a trillion dollars since the pandemic began—more than enough to pay for a Covid-19 vaccine for everyone and to ensure no one is pushed into poverty by the pandemic," it said.

Oxfam said "progressive taxation" of the rich is key to any equitable recovery from the crisis, and said Argentina had "showed the way" with its temporary solidarity wealth tax.

-www.msn.com, 29 January 2021

Commentary: Decades ago, Argentina was considered one of the most successful

The city government earlier filed a complaint with the police, accusing the leaders of IM and IEM School of violating the law on infectious disease prevention and control.

The school held in-person worship services when only virtual services were allowed, and ignored a 20-percent seating cap during a period of eased social distancing, according to city officials.

The city education office requested the investigation, saying it suspects the facility violated education laws by calling itself a school and teaching classes for teenage students for more than 30 days without proper accreditation.

IM's leader, a missionary named Michael Jo, will be called in for questioning as a suspect, according to the police.

-www.koreatimes.co.kr, 15 February 2021

Commentary: Midnight Call has written much about Covid-19, emphasizing our responsibility as citizens toward government regulations. Needless to say, there was much opposition from those who were instructed by some religious leaders to oppose government regulations, based on the misuse of Scripture: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts

5:29b). When one reads this chapter, or better yet, the entire book of Acts, it becomes quite evident that we are subject to any and all governments on planet earth. The Scripture cited deals with religious opposition. The high priest asked the violators, "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28). They were forbidden to preach the Gospel in the name of Jesus, and to that they opposed and said, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

The Bible does speak of persecution of believers. Jesus stated in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Mathew 5:11). Note the word "falsely." That is when we suffer persecution for Jesus' sake. In this case, it is the opposite. Those who rebel against government restrictions have been falsely informed, endangering the well-being of fellow citizens.

7446

(See *The Remarkable Story of Queen Esther*, Item #1087, \$2.50.)

countries on the South American countries. Today, they are battling to survive economically. Yet, as the article indicates, the rich apparently have it all. Here the old saying, "The rich get richer, while the poor get poorer," is applicable.

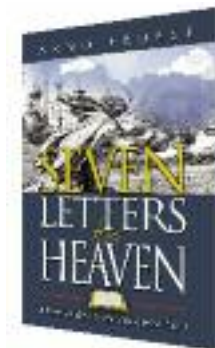
As in virtually all countries, there are multiple reasons for the rise and decline, but we must emphasize that in the end, there will be no difference between the successful, developed nations and the secondary, under-developed ones. When judgment comes after the sixth seal is opened, we read: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the

dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:15-16).

Incidentally, in the New Testament we read the word "rich" 64 times, and 39 times it is in a negative context; while the word "poor" appears 35 times, and they are comforted 33 times.

7440

(See *Seven Letters from Heaven*, Item #1081, \$4.50.)



CHINA

Global Leader in Foreign Investment

China has overtaken the US as the world's top destination for new foreign direct investment, according to UN figures.

 New investments into America from overseas companies fell by almost half last year, leading to the loss of its number one status.

In contrast, UN figures show direct investment into Chinese firms climbed 4%, putting it number one globally.

The top ranking shows China's growing influence on the world economic stage.

China had \$163bn (£119bn) in inflows last year, compared to \$134bn attracted by the US, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said in its report.

In 2019, the US received \$251bn in new foreign direct investment while China received \$140bn.

China, currently involved in a trade war with the US, has been predicted to leapfrog it to the number one position by 2028, according to the UK-based Center for Economics and Business Research (CEBR).

Foreign investment in the US peaked in 2016 at \$472bn, when foreign investment in China was \$134 billion.

Since then, investment in China has continued to rise, while in the US it has fallen each year since 2017.

-www.bbc.com, 25 January 2021

Commentary: We continue to emphasize the dramatic changes taking place in the world with the ascension of communist China. Why? The answer is simple, and is expressed in one word—equality. The nations are racing ahead under the banner of globalism, which quite naturally will result in a richer, freer, and more prosperous world.

Nations with a lower level of economic prosperity, experience military conflict



more than those that are successful. Europe, for example, in the past had more wars than any other continent. But today, the European Union operates under the motto, "Unity through diversity." It is the continent where freedom, prosperity, and security are exhibited to the utmost.

The awakening of China, and with it Southeast Asia, heralds the end-time progress toward ultimate globalism.

7441

(Listen to *Progressive Globalism*, Item


#3341, \$7.)



USA

Conspiracy Theories Exposed

The post, from Nov. 10, includes a photo of a person holding up the front page of the June 2011 edition of *The Sovereign Independent*, a newspaper consisting of opinion pieces about well-known conspiracy theories. It has since folded.

 On the front of the June 2011 edition, there is a teaser for a four-page spread about 9/11, which promises it will be "exposing the explosive [World Trade Center] evidence." Below this, is an anti-vaccination headline: "Depopulation through forced vaccination: The zero carbon solution!" A picture of Bill Gates sits alongside, with his quote: "The world today has 6.8 billion people. That's

headed up to about nine billion. Now, if we do a really great job on new vaccines, health care, reproductive health services, we could lower that by, perhaps, 10 or 15 percent." The paper then refers to the billionaire businessman as "Billy 'the kid killer' Gates."

Meanwhile, the quote from Bill Gates alongside the headline about depopulating the earth is one that has been repeatedly taken out of context. Gates made the comment during a TED talk in 2010 about reducing the world's carbon emissions to zero and was not suggesting the global population should be killed off using vaccines. In fact, his stance is the opposite.

-www.reuters.com, 17 November 2020

Commentary: The news agency Reuters employs reliable journalists, editors, and fact-checkers to establish their reputation. Interestingly, the newspaper *The Sovereign Independent*, which published these sensational claims, no longer exists.

Here is our reason for such warnings: increasingly, well-respected ministries and ministers of the Gospel have been caught in the web of illogical claims. We, the Church of Jesus Christ, consisting of born-again believers, must fulfill our task to be lights in this dark world. Light always exposes darkness; truth will always expose lies. Furthermore, we Christians—while subject to our respective governments the world over—in reality constitute a spiritual nation, not established by weapons of war; not having borders, walls, gates, and fences. We are a spiritual entity described by the apostle Peter: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). That is who we are; that is our calling, nothing more, nothing less.


7451

(See *Seven Days to Eternity*, Item #1089, \$4.50.)

 **USA**

Dog Inherits \$5 Million in Owner's Will

Late last year, 84-year-old Bill Dorris, an unmarried, successful businessman, died.

 His will named Lulu and left her money enough to pay for more kibble than any dog could possibly imagine.

Exactly how much did Dorris leave?

The will reads: "\$5,000,000 will be transferred to a trust to be formed upon my death for the care of my border collie Lulu."

The trust will be handled by a conservator who will approve and reimburse Martha Burton, Lulu's caretaker, for expenses to care for Lulu. It's not clear what will happen to any money left in the trust when Lulu, who is 8 years old, someday passes away.



WTVF

-www.newschannel5.com, 11 February 2021

Commentary: This is a sign of the times, when animals are afforded luxuries above and beyond the average person. A quick search online reveals:

"The American Pet Products Association (APPA) released their annual report on pet spending, and it shows that Americans

spent a record-breaking \$72.56 billion in 2018. That's an increase of more than \$3 billion over 2017, when they spent a then-record-breaking \$69.51 billion."

While we love our pets and treat them humanely, think of the financial resources that could be better spent on missions and spreading the Gospel, not to mention helping humans in need. But priorities are shifting from what is important biblically to what indulges man's proclivities. As it says in Romans 1:25, "Who changed the truth of God into a




lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." (By K. Farmer) 7442
(See *If Animals Could Talk*, Item #2209, \$9.99.)

 **PERU**

At a Disadvantage for Covid Vaccines

Peru is classified by the World Bank as "upper middle-income."

 So it has some money to spend on vaccines but not nearly the financial resources of the U.S., the European Union or even wealthier neighbors like Brazil or Chile. But it's not poor enough to qualify for free doses from COVAX, the global program aimed at assuring equitable access to vaccines.

"Peru has been trying to negotiate with almost all the main vaccine producers," says Ernesto Ortiz, a senior manager with the Duke Global Health Innovation Center. "But for different reasons, some of those negotiations have been more difficult than others." Ortiz, who grew up in Peru, visited the country in January.

Political instability has also complicated things. In November when other countries were signing deals for vaccines that might be



Due to the increased demand for oxygen for COVID patients, supplies have run low. Hospitals ask the friends and family of patients to wait in line to refill tanks. Above: an oxygen tank line in Lima.

Raul Sifuentes/Getty Images



At the front of Peru's Medical Council Headquarters in Lima, a memorial has been set up for the more than 270 physicians who died caring for COVID-19 patients.

Ernesto J Ortiz, MD, MPH for NPR

coming down the pipeline, Peru had three different presidents over the course of one week.

The stakes are high because of Peru's current COVID outlook. "Right now, the transmission in the community is very, very high," says Cesar Ugarte, an assistant professor of medicine at the Universidad Peruana Cayetano in Lima. "The ICU beds are now totally full. The oxygen in some facilities has run out. We are starting to see a situa-

tion like in May, June, July when the last peaks were here."

And so far the only COVID vaccines that have arrived in the country have been for clinical trials. The first shipment of doses purchased for general distribution is expected to arrive from the Chinese-government backed pharmaceutical company Sinopharm. The shipment of 1 million doses will be used for health-care and other essential workers but is a tiny portion of what the

(continued next page)

Covid Vaccines (continued from page 26)



Worshippers pray in the streets of Lima. A government lockdown has shut down churches as well as businesses to try to stop the spread of the virus.

Ernesto Benavides/AFP via Getty Images

country of 33 million people will need to contain the virus.

As President Sagasti said, Peruvians have lost more than just loved ones and jobs to the pandemic. “We have also lost the freedom to hug each other, to hold hands, to visit our friends and family,” the president said. “It’s difficult, I admit it.” He promised that Peru will get the vaccines it needs to immunize its entire population by the end of 2021. His ability to keep that promise could depend on companies outside of Peru and forces outside of Peru’s control.

-www.npr.org, 4 February 2021

Commentary: The country of about 30 million people, with a life expectancy of 70.7 years, has a very low per-capita GDP of \$8,500 (2008).

One of the difficult issues is political instability. As the article indicates, “Peru had three different presidents over the course of one week.”

Religiously, the *CIA Factbook* lists Peru as 81.3% Roman Catholic, with 12.5% Evangelical Christians.

It is of interest that potatoes, a staple for the Western world, originated in Peru. So did our well-beloved tomatoes, for which lands of origin are listed as Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. Maize (corn) also

comes from the Andes. Yet these blessings have not helped the people in the countries of the Andes. Life without potatoes, corn, and tomatoes is almost unthinkable in the Western world.

What is Peru’s future? They too will have to be integrated into the successful system of globalism. That means modernizing everything according to Western standards and technology, with political principles based on Roman law. At the very end, though, all nations of the world will be obliterated, as recorded in 2 Peter 3:12: “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” However, those who are believers have this promise: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (verse 13). 7435

(See A Woman Rides the Beast, Item #2296, \$17.99.)

TAIWAN

World’s Longest Coronavirus-Free Streak

Authorities in Taiwan, which has led the world in Covid-19 containment, said they would roll back foreign flights and tighten quarantine requirements for crew members after identifying the first locally transmitted coronavirus case since April [2020], stemming from a cargo pilot who flew routes abroad, including to the United States.



The reports of a single new case and its particulars—the pilot, a New Zealander, was said to have been coughing during his last flight but did not wear a mask at all times—immediately sparked public consternation as they snapped the island’s record without a domestic transmission. The

253-day streak had been a point of pride for Taiwan’s 23 million people and its leaders.

“Wear your masks well and let’s not fumble this now, especially when we’re in a period with a mutation that’s transmitting fast,” Taiwanese Health Minister Chen Shih-chung said, showing a flash of frustration. “We need to have stricter controls for pilots. Our measures weren’t actually being implemented.”

The pilot was fined about \$10,000 for “covering up symptoms, contacts, and places visited while sick,” the spokeswoman for President Tsai Ing-wen said on Twitter. “The mood is alert, serious. Personal accountability is key.”

Since the start of the pandemic, Taiwan has reported 771 cases and seven deaths.

-www.washingtonpost.com, 22 December 2020

Commentary: One more item of proof to adhere to instructions as given by medical science.

From our staff in Switzerland, we received word that services in the approximately 800-seat auditorium can only be occupied by less than 100, and reservations are necessary.

Granted, many of the precautions seem exaggerated (and probably are), but one cannot argue in the face of the extreme success in nearly eradicating Covid-19 in countries such as Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and several others that strictly abide by the rule of law.

The Scripture’s admonition, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,” is answered by the Lord’s promise: “For where two or three are gathered together in my

name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

7412

(Listen to Coronavirus Prophetically, Item #3338,


\$7.)



 **PORTUGAL**

Won't Move Jerusalem Embassy Until Two States

Portugal would relocate its embassy to Jerusalem only when the city is the capital of both the State of Israel and the state of Palestine, Portuguese Foreign Minister Santos Silva told *The Jerusalem Post* during his two-day visit.

 His country has no plans to follow the United States on this issue, he said as he sat on the veranda of Jerusalem's King David Hotel, located in the western part of the city.

Portugal would contemplate such a move, he said, only on "the day when I can put the two embassies in Jerusalem, the embassy of Portugal in Israel and the embassy of Portugal in Palestine."

When asked if he considered that the location where he sat was part of Israel, he said, "I think it is a matter of fact."

But when it came to the question of whether he considered Jerusalem to be Israel's capital, he said carefully, "You know the Portuguese Embassy is in Tel Aviv."

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Muhammed Shtayyeh and PA Foreign Minister Riyad

Malki both asked that Portugal unilaterally recognize Palestinian statehood. It's a request that Portugal has rebuffed because it believes that such a step should only be taken by consensus with the entire European Union, and at present the bloc is divided on the issue.

The Portuguese parliament has called on its government to recognize Palestinian statehood; But to date the EU and the Portuguese government hold that Palestinian statehood recognition could only come upon completion of a final status agreement for a two-state resolution to the conflict.

-www.jpost.com, 22 December 2020

Commentary: Will there ever be a Palestinian state? The various answers are diverse, with no end in sight for the near future.

We know that the prophet Zechariah proclaims that Jerusalem will be a burdensome stone for "all the people of the earth."

Wikipedia documents:

"From 1517 until the First World War, Jerusalem was part of the Ottoman Empire. It was part of the Damascus eyalet (province) until, as a result of widespread administrative reform in the mid 1800s, it became an independent sanjak (district) in 1872. Since the 1860s, Jews have formed the largest religious

group in the city, and since around 1887, with the beginning of expansion outside the old city walls, Jews have been in the majority."

Israel took possession of Jerusalem during the 1967 war, liberating the city from Jordanian occupation. But the world at large considers the conflict not solved.

It was 17 May 1948 when the Soviet Union recognized Israel, followed by Nicaragua, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Poland. Eight months later, the United States recognized Israel on 31 January 1949. It is of interest that Russia recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in April 2017, and again—eight months later—the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital on 6 December 2017.

One thing we do know is that Zechariah 8:3 will be fulfilled in due time: "Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and

Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain."

7408


(See *Why Jerusalem Is Jewish*, Item #1070, \$2.)



 **USA**

Skin Patch to Monitor Health

Scientists have developed a new skin patch that can provide all-in-one health monitoring capabilities.

 The thin, flexible patch, worn on the neck, can track the wearer's heart rate and blood pressure, as well as glucose levels.

The technology, described in the journal *Nature Biomedical Engineering*, can even measure the amount of lactate, alcohol or caffeine in the wearer's blood.

"This type of wearable would be very helpful for people with underlying medical conditions to monitor their own health on a regular



basis," co-first author of the study Lu Yin said in a news release.

"We can collect so much information with this one wearable and do so in a non-invasive way, without causing discomfort or interruptions to daily activity," said Joseph Wang, a professor of nano-engineering at UCSD.

"We are fortunate to have this great collaboration between our lab and Professor Wang's lab. It has been so fun working together with them on this project," said Lin, also nano-engineering doctoral student at UCSD.

-www.upi.com, 15 February 2021

Commentary: With each new invention, we are coming closer to the finality of instituting total control.

No one can argue against the benefits of such "skin patches," particularly for those who have underlying medical conditions. Doubtless, it could save lives—actually, it only extends life, or we may call it postponing death. Nevertheless, the advantages are undeniable, and will provide the impetus to continue the quest for the final identification system—which we as Bible believers know is the mark of the beast.

7447

(See *End-Times Super Trends*, Item #2342, \$15.99.)

ISRAEL

Quantum Apocalypse?

Surprise: One of the largest revolutions that will remake our planet in the near future is a technology you may not have heard of.

In layman's terms, computer scientists and other scientists are taking quantum mechanics, which the superhero Avengers famously used in the movie *End Game* to travel through time, in order to create a super computer that will make today's fastest computers look like a typewriter.

Incidentally, in October 2019, Google declared that it had achieved "quantum supremacy." But Bob Blakley, operating partner at the leading global venture group, Team8, explained that the quantum computer they achieved was an intermediate stage, still a good deal short of the game-changer stage. Amazon, IBM, Honeywell, IonQ, Cambridge Quantum Computing, Rigetti and others are also major players in the quantum race.

"Almost all of the technology which we cannot live without has been made in the West. This is because that is where people have freedom of thought and creativity... The culture in the West has a major advantage over the competition," said former IDF Maj.-Gen. (res.) Yitzhak Ben Israel.

How does Israel fit into this much bigger game of the world's greatest powers?

Ben Israel said, "Israel is very strong in quantum mechanics. Some of the biggest developments have come from Israeli researchers. [Israeli physicist specializing in quantum physics] Yakir Aharonov is in his 80s," noting that US president Barack Obama gave him a medal in 2010.

"In the 1950s, Israelis were already working on quantum mechanics," and now have two generations of students, he noted.

Despite Israel's theoretical strength, its investment and expertise is uneven in some practical areas. To date, it has been mostly working on applications and software to hop on the bandwagon of quantum computers



One of Google's Quantum Computers in the Santa Barbara lab (photo credit: GOOGLE/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS)

from the US and elsewhere, hooking up to them via the cloud. It only very recently started investing in aspects of its own quantum computing projects.

Ben Israel observed, "We need to invest more in quantum in the areas of academics, industry and technology—and in the future in quantum computers" themselves.

To be ready for all of this, Blakley gives a lecture with a seven-point plan of quantum readiness.

Pressed that it will be hard for companies to get ready for something that has not hit them yet and they do not yet fully understand, he said, "Sure, we did all of that for the Y2K problem over the course of a decade and we actually solved the problem."

Some of the military implications for the US, Israel and the West could be far more serious than a seemingly innocuous wireless router. An August 2018 US Army report and a 2019 US Defense Department report both expressed concern about the military implications of ongoing Chinese technological advances.

The army said, "A global race has ensued to exploit and operationalize quantum technologies for the use of military effects. The race to conquer the quantum domain is among the most fiercely competitive in today's world of technology."

Founder and president of industry analyst firm Inside Quantum Technology Lawrence Gasman predicted, "Commercially, I see quantum technology leading to an entirely new cycle of highly secure networks. People are already talking about the quantum Internet replacing the original Internet."

-www.jpost.com, 29 January 2021

Commentary: We are only publishing small excerpts from the article to clearly show that technology and science have no borders. In this case, it's mainly concerned with competition from Asia—in particular communist China. But we believe the reality is on a much higher level. It is an issue that transpires in the invisible world.

Here we are reminded of another war; it's also global but goes much further, including all of the universe. The apostle Paul urges the believers, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). Then he reveals the real battle that is going on in the invisible world: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (verse 12).

7437

(See *As It Was in the Days of Noah*, Item #2286, \$15.99.)

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“He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them...Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!” (Number 23:21, 23).

BY ARNO FROESE

The one who utters these blessings is a Gentile prophet by the name of Balaam. This figure has confused many, who have attempted to disassociate him with the God of Israel.

Chapter 22 contains the story in detail.

Checking with rabbinical authorities, we receive diverse answers regarding Balaam. He is vilified in the Midrash. Nechama Leibowitz wrote a study called “Prophet or Sorcerer?” And Rabbi Jacob Milgrom titled his article, “Balaam: Saint or Sinner?”

The late Dr. J. Vernon McGee wrote in his commentary: “Did you know that there is more said in Scripture about Balaam than there is about Mary, the mother of Jesus? More is said about Balaam than about any of the apostles. The New Testament mentions him three times, and each time it is in connection with apostasy.”

We are safe to say he was a prophet of God, for chapter 22:12a reads: “And God said unto Balaam...”

It is of interest that the prophet Balaam had knowledge, connection and, quite apparently, access to the God of Israel. But he makes a very strange determination about Israel: no iniquity, no perverseness, no enchantment, no divination. We quickly learn

that while he is a prophet of God, he is not allowed to look into the family of God: the nation Israel.

Back in chapter 14, verse 22, we read the direct words of God: “Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice.”

At the end of Moses’ life, he makes this declaration: “For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death?” (Deuteronomy 31:27).

Even at the very beginning, when Israel moved out of Egypt toward the Promised Land, we see their rebellion: “And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness” (Exodus 14:11-12).

Here we learn the difference between Israel's **position** and their **condition**.

Israel's position is based on God's oath: "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

What a mighty message for the Church! Romans 5:8 exclaims: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What happens when we as sinners come in repentance to God through Jesus Christ? Ephesians 1:4 is fulfilled: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." God chose us; it was the work of God the Holy Spirit. That's our irrevocable position, but our condition is our responsibility: "holy and without blame before him in love."

During my 53 years of work in the ministry, the question, "Why the Jews?" has been asked innumerable times. The answer is still the same: God chose Israel, regardless of their condition, just as the Church. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

In recent months, some have taken it upon themselves to point to the often negative and extremely liberal tendencies of the Jews. Indeed, much can be said, but still it does not change one iota of what is written in Zechariah 2:8b: "for he that toucheth you [Jews] toucheth the apple of his [God's] eye."

A practical example may help. If I observe my neighbor's children misbehaving, I do not have the right to punish them; it's not my family. I am interfering in an office not appointed to me. My neighbor's children are subject to the authority of their parents.

Is Israel perfect today? Far from it, yet their **condition** does not invalidate their **position**. In the end, Israel will be victorious. In the not-too-distant future, when the last one from among the Gentiles is added to the Church, Romans 11:26a will be fulfilled: "And so all Israel shall be saved." (MC)

Action for Israel



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GUATEMALA

Stormy Times in Central America

The situation isn't easy, but God is faithful. A field report.

BY ANDRÉ BEITZE, GUATEMALA CITY

Hurricane Eta wreaked havoc in large parts of Central America. The name that was chosen for it is interesting; namely, that of a terrorist organization. And it lived up to its name; the hurricane was one of the most devastating of recent years. Large parts of cities and farmland were underwater.

A city in an area of the highlands that had been settled by Germans was also badly affected. Ingrid and I visited the city, Cobán, for the first time at the end of 2019. This was after we'd already been here in Guatemala for more than 20 years. When the hurricane hit, if we had been where we were as we enjoyed coffee from a German-born manufacturer, the water would have been over our heads.

In one of the mountain villages not too far from Cobán, there was a landslide that covered large parts of the village with tons of earth and rock. It all happened so quickly that, unfortunately, many people were unable to get to safety.

Here in Guatemala, two branches of the church that we help in the vicinity of the Atlantic coast, were cut off from the outside world because of the large amount of water. The road leading there is damaged and isn't yet drivable. Aid will be brought there as soon as possible.

From Work

Although not many customers have visited our bookstore in the last few months, we're grateful for anything



Books for a school in the rain-forest



Large parts of the country were under-water.

that we are able to send out. Many people couldn't come at all because there was scarcely any transportation available. What little transportation there was came at a significantly higher cost because, due to the risk of infection, fewer passengers are permitted to ride. No more brothers and sisters in the faith are coming from the surrounding countries (Mexico, El Salvador, and Honduras), because border security was tight at first. And now a coronavirus test, which is only valid for 72 hours, must be obtained. At \$150-\$180, the expense is too high for a trip.

However, there is also good news in the midst of this situation. These days, the person responsible for three schools in the area of the Petén rainforest got in touch with us and passed on the list of books that the students will need in the coming year. Although the students

cannot come to school for the time being, they will take the literature home and work on it there.

We've learned from other bookstores that we're in touch with that they've had to lay off some of their employees. One of them, Manuel, went into business for himself. He got books, tracts, and calendars from us, and went home to offer them to various friends and former customers. This helps him earn a bit of income, and it helps us disseminate literature in places we can't get to ourselves.

One fellow believer, who has contact with a school in the highlands, was looking for devotional books for 300 students for the next year. Through this, we're able to sow God's Word in various ways, and help others earn much-needed income to support their families.

(MR0121)



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

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

MC0421

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

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Part 3 of “A Request for Prayer” One More Milestone...

By **David Phillips** *Project Manager*



On this earthly journey, we have met you, our dear Ebenezer family, who know us and read our articles. We thank you for standing with us at this crossroads, praying that we’ll receive wisdom as to which road the Lord would have us take. For those who are new to the Ebenezer family, and for those who have been traveling with us for a while, we thank you for going the extra mile with us, realizing it isn’t just “an extra mile”—it’s a lifelong journey we’re on until we meet before His throne.

WHY IS THE EBENEZER HOME SO IMPORTANT?

Many turn to Ebenezer for help, understanding that physical care is only one aspect of their care; just as important is their need to be supported emotionally and spiritually. But what many don’t realize is that,

right now in Israel, the Ebenezer Home is the only senior citizens’ home where both residents and staff are believers in Yeshua! This is very special, but it’s also a tremendous responsibility. The Home continually strives to meet the ever-growing needs of the believing community—which, praise the Lord, is growing by the day!

IF NOT EBENEZER, THEN WHO?

If Ebenezer does not step up and fulfill this growing need for the elderly believers in Israel, then who will? Where will the last of the older, fragile, surviving Holocaust believers go? Who will care for the second-generation Holocaust survivors, who have been traumatized by all that their parents went through? What about the other non-Jewish Christians and Christian Arabs? If not Ebenezer, who will care for them? It would mean placing these older Christian believers in a home that is not supportive of their faith. What then? The result: they become depressed, disheartened, and discouraged, feeling alone and isolated during a time when they are vulnerable and need support the most. (In one of the next upcoming issues, we will write about the elderly Arabic Christian community.)

WHY DOES EBENEZER NEED TO UPGRADE THEIR FACILITY?

Presently, Ebenezer is licensed only as an assisted living facility, which means by Israeli law, we’re not allowed to accept elderly believers who already require nursing care. This poses an enormous problem for those who suddenly find themselves in



What about the other non-Jewish Christians and Christian Arabs? If not Ebenezer, who will care for them?

need of nursing care, or whose families can no longer care for them. Although Ebenezer has the needed doctor and nurses on staff, until we upgrade our facility to meet the nursing ward/home requirements, we can only have up to 10% of residents requiring nursing, unless the Ministry of Health grants us special permission. Upgrading from an assisted living facility to a nursing ward/home, would ensure we could always accept and care for the aging believers, regardless of their medical needs.

Another reason we must upgrade our facility is that the Israeli Ministry of Health, Ministry of Welfare, Fire Safety Department, and Municipality have ordered that all facilities meet new standards and safety regulations. We must reinforce buildings against earthquakes and comply with new medical service standards. ALL elderly-care homes in Israel must undergo this procedure. Therefore, we MUST upgrade our facility, as our current facility does not meet these new standards, having been built in the 1970s. All facilities which don't comply with the new standards will be shut down.

WEIGHING ALL POSSIBILITIES

Right now, as the project manager along with the management team, we are weighing all the possibilities that are open to us to expand the Home and build the nursing ward. It's important for us to share this with you, because every time we take a step, we do it with faith, knowing you stand with us in prayer. We are guided by the prayers you lay before the throne of mercy.

We have another nice option located in the Galilee region, and have a meeting planned with the owners of the property. We are searching out this option, as the land is pre-planned and ready to build a nursing home, which would make building much easier. Please stand with us in prayer as we go to these first meetings, and also as we go and speak with other land and building owners for different sites.

During this time of COVID-19 isolation, we have seen and understood more fully what it truly means to be a family in Messiah, supporting and praying for each other. Thank you again for being part of the Ebenezer family!



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

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

MC0421

Yes, I wish to support the Ebenezer Home Project.

monthly one time \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Web: midnightcall.com/ebenezer



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.

FRIDAY CRUCIFIXION... CHRISTIANS AND CORONAVIRUS... FIGHTING A LOSING WAR

Friday Crucifixion

Arno,

You've got a heart big as a washtub for your personal letter responses.

OK, here goes: Jesus was crucified on good Friday?!

Nisan 14: the Lord's Passover (Israel's Passover Preparation Day)

Tuesday, Nisan 14, 6 pm (1st watch): Jesus' Last Supper, no lamb on the menu. Jesus was the Lamb, with "the 12" in the Upper Room.

9 pm (2nd watch): Jesus arrested in Gethsemane Garden and taken to Caiaphas.

12 midnight (3rd watch): Jesus judged guilty by Sanhedrin illegally at night for blasphemy.

Wednesday, 6 am, 1st hour: Jesus taken to Pilate at Antonia's Fortress to be judged and sentenced.

9 am: Jesus nailed to the Cross.

12 noon: Darkness over the earth till the 9th hour or 3 pm.

3 pm: Jesus is dead, gives up the ghost.
Nisan 15: Israel's Passover Day—1st Day of Unleavened Bread.

Wednesday, 6 pm: Jesus "buried," placed in the tomb.

From Wednesday, 6 pm to Thursday, 6 pm: in the tomb 24 hours, 1 day.

Nisan 16: 2nd Day of Unleavened Bread.

Thursday, 6 pm to Friday, 6 pm: 48 hours, 2 days.

Nisan 17: 3rd Day of Unleavened Bread.

Friday, 6 pm to 6 pm Saturday: 72 hours, 3 days.

6 pm, at the end of the Saturday Sabbath, the ladies were free to "work" by going to the tomb, and find out upon their early Sunday arrival that He had risen. No sunrise services here. Sundown Saturday maybe.

Matthew 12:40: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights..."

-J. Goltz, MN



Answer: The Bible states He was crucified “the day before the Sabbath”; that’s Friday. He arose on the first day; that’s Sunday. “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week” (Mark 16:9a). On that same day, two disciples on the way to Emmaus make this statement, “...today is the third day since these things were done” (Luke 24:21b). Note the sentence structure of Jesus’ words, “For as Jonas was three days and three nights...” Biblical days start with nights (see Genesis 1:5). “Day and night” indicates judgment. “And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:12).

I realize that there are different opinions; several of my good friends do not believe in a Friday crucifixion. But they do believe—just as you and I do—that He was crucified; that He precisely fulfilled the requirements of the law, giving up His life. That He took it back, and so became “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20b). Who is right and who is wrong? I guess we will have to wait for our Lord, because He is the answer.

Christians and Coronavirus

I was saddened when I saw the article “Christians and Coronavirus.” As you know, we Christians need to meet together in a building, even if it means in our homes. Like many countries of the world, Christians risk their lives to meet together. You mentioned Romans 13: many churches quote that Scripture. But the churches were only closed in the tyrannical states like California and New York. The governing authorities in these states did not pass laws, only mandates and guidelines. Governors, as you know, cannot pass laws; only the legislative branch can. So, why quote Romans 13? Not sure why Christians do, because we as the USA have the Constitution, and the First Amendment allows us to have freedom to meet together. Even the Supreme Court ruled against churches

being closed, rightly so. It is a very sad day in America. Jesus spoke about these days.

—J. Waldraff, NY

Answer: The Church of Jesus Christ is global. Government, whatever it be, is responsible for the civilized functioning of a nation. Thus, education, transportation, communication, healthcare etc. are immensely important; it’s simply an issue of protecting the health of its citizens. We must seek reliable sources of medical institutions to get scientific verification. They all agree: no mass meetings, keeping social distance, and wearing masks in public.

It is of interest that much opposition comes from religious people and organizations, such as in South Korea, India, Germany, and even in Israel, where the hotspot of coronavirus infection was sourced in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups. A headline in the *Jerusalem Post* proclaimed, “Anarchy in Bnei Brak as ultra-Orthodox vandals run riot.”

Incidentally, all nations have their constitutions.

Fighting a Losing War

I have read your *Midnight Call* magazine for many years, and I agree with everything that was written in them except January 2021.

What right has René Malgo to put anything against President Trump in his article, “When Christians Wage a Losing War”? He should have written things of the Bible, but he has to quote what other people say against President Trump, like he is clean of anything said. This is the first time in reading you magazine that I could not read all of it, because of a Christian teacher saying things against President Trump in a message, as he did.

The disciples and Jesus had trouble with Christians saying things they should not have said.



This is the first time I had anything to say about your magazine.

-R. Snyder, PA

Answer: After having carefully read the article before publication, I noticed René Malgo's biblical stand, which in short is: preach and testify the gospel, not politics. If there are certain combinations of words or sentences that you object to, please identify them so I can take a position.

Besides, your support of a politician indicates that your time is invested in politics. Neither Jesus nor the apostles opposed the prevailing foreign rulership (Rome). We must follow them.

Jewish Influence on Culture

Dear Mr. Froese:

I look forward each month to receiving *Midnight Call*, and thank you for your ministry. My question/concern is regarding Jewish people today and the Biblical attitude I should take toward them. On the one hand, they are the ones chosen by God in the Old Testament, and through them we have our Messiah. On the other hand, they also have a record of disobedience, leading up to the crucifixion of the Messiah. I pray for Israel and the Jewish people, and want them to accept Jesus as the Messiah. I also send financial support to a well-known organization witnessing to the Jewish people.

However, while they have accomplished many great and positive things, I see more and more that it is Jewish people who lead the way in negatively influencing the culture. Their influence is inordinate in relation to their population, especially in the areas of politics, media, entertainment, and education. I wouldn't otherwise have an issue with this, but their positions generally tend

to be immoral and intent on destruction of Biblical guidance and standards. So often when I read some absolutely anti-Christian or hateful diatribe against a Christian position on a moral issue, it is from a Jewish person or an organization headed and largely influenced by Jews. If one were to point this out, he or she would be open to criticism and abuse for being anti-Semitic. This seems to be the strategy of the most liberal movements and the cancel culture. How do I reconcile this, while supporting Israel and God's end-time plan for Jerusalem and the Jews?

-J. Steen, IA

Answer: It was many decades ago when our late founder, Wim Malgo, made a profound statement: "Salvation is of the Jew, but so is judgment." Think of Soviet communism or the nuclear threat; the originators were Jewish. Your statement that the liberal agenda is supported by the Jews is quite true. Based on JewishVirtualLibrary.org, in the 2020 election, 76% of the Jewish vote went to Biden.

Here is the biblical issue: carefully read Numbers 23—24. It's about the Gentile prophet, Balaam, who was supposed to curse Israel. Bible readers know that the children of Israel were a stiff-necked, hardheaded, stubborn, and extremely rebellious people. Yet, Balaam says exactly the opposite in Numbers 23:8-9, 21, and 23. Why? Because he was not permitted to look into the family of Israel. That was none of his business.

I cannot come to your house and correct your children; that would be totally unacceptable. Your children are your responsibility. God speaks in Zechariah 2:8b: "for he that toucheth you [Jews] toucheth the apple of his eye." So, the bottom line still is: "Salvation is of the Jew."

For more details, see "Action for Israel" in this issue. (MC)



What the Coronavirus Is Making of Us

Thomas Lange

I've observed a few things about us Christians. Some of them make me reflect. Others are cause for joy. One thing is now clear: The past year has done something to us and our churches, and may still be doing it. Coronavirus has left deep marks. I'd like to briefly outline these observations here.

Observation 1: The uncertainty is visible. Many men and women in the churches don't know what to make of the constant news of impending danger, infection rates, restrictions, etc. What is true, and what is false? The large amount of information quickly becomes overwhelming. They prefer to remain at home, uncertain, and just wait. One week, and then another, passes this way.

You see fear. Although fear is a poor advisor, many are accepting it as a (supposedly) safe anchor right now. This has brought spiritual freedom and joy to a standstill in some churches. Fear paralyzes and eventually leads to numbness. The freedom we have in Christ gives way to a kind of bondage to the fear of what might happen.

You see withdrawal. A consequence of the previous point. Quite a few brothers and sisters have withdrawn into their shells. They stay at home all the time and are satisfied within their own four walls. Contact with other members of their church family has been severed. We've become accustomed to this state of affairs so quickly! Withdrawal is fairly quick, but revival and advance against it are much slower. There's a genuine danger that the shell will become accepted for so long that this becomes a new habit.

You see discouragement. Discouragement starts with negative thoughts. Brooding over circumstances, health department guidelines, etc., quickly gets us into trouble. Numerous activities or partly finished projects had to be put on hold. Will we ever be able to

What the Coronavirus Is Making of Us

Aligning our minds with Christ will change our view of the circumstances, and help us keep them from dominating us.

continue them? A great deal of missionary work vanished into thin air within a few weeks. The hard-won people are staying away and not returning, even when restrictions are relaxed. Many activities must be started from scratch.

You see disunity. Church leaders and elders are facing an enormous challenge to balance the government's requirements and compliance with the Holy Scripture's requirements. With ten people at the table, there are often twelve opinions. There are offensive and defensive views. Suddenly, the main thing (our mission as a local church) is marginalized, and the virus becomes the central topic of long deliberations. There is often no consensus on how to put something into practice in church life that satisfies everybody.

You see the danger of divisions. There's no need to hide the fact that this is an extremely challenging and burdensome time for the churches. The risk of rifts has increased enormously. Not least, the mental tension and different perspectives on the whole matter are driving us into a corner. Additionally, we often rely far too much on our emotions when we negotiate these issues; thus, it's all too easy for the confused to become combative.

Preliminary conclusion: Coronavirus has the potential to overwhelm our thinking. It unsettles us, frightens and discourages us, and seems to be forcing us to our knees. There's no doubt that this virus and the changes it has caused have left deep fissures in our churches.

Let's pause for a moment. Let's clear our minds and recall what the Holy Scriptures tell us. Doesn't God remain God despite this global crisis? "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose'" (Isa 46:9-10). Most of the observations above take place in our minds. Thoughts are always the preliminary stage of our action or inaction (Prov 23:7).

Who is bigger: the living God or a virus? Romans 8:38-39 gives us the answer. Who is more powerful: the living God or a virus? Matthew 28:18 gives us the answer. Who is more to be feared: the living God or a virus? Luke 12:5 gives us the answer. Let's remember the greatness and omnipotence of our God, who became man in Jesus. Let's remember the sole sovereignty that He has.

For months, our thinking has been directed toward one thing: a tiny, invisible virus. It's drawn our thoughts away from Christ, the infinitely great, invisible God. So, let's remember 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

At the end of the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul mentions an enormously important thing: If we divert our momentarily disoriented thinking from the current circumstances around the coronavirus, and reorient it to Jesus Christ and the words of the Bible, we capture these gloomy thoughts, not allowing them to rule us. We replace thoughts of fear, doubt, brooding, worry, and withdrawal, with thoughts that Jesus shows us through the Holy Spirit in the form of Bible verses.

Aligning our minds with Christ will change our view of the circumstances, and help us keep them from dominating us.

Observation 2: The following things can be seen in Christians who try to comply with Paul's encouragement (which I also quietly observed, and which made me very grateful):

You can see self-assured men and women of God. They can be neither intimidated nor unsettled. They serve as guides and lend support to others in this confusing time. Not because they're especially smart or well-trained, but because they're resting firmly in the knowledge that God is in control. They trust in Jesus Christ, despite the enormously challenging events.

We can decide whether coronavirus will define us, or whether we will make the best of the situation, using the opportunities in the midst of the pandemic.

You can see sobriety. The current situation isn't being downplayed, but neither is it overstated. These men and women put events in their context and understand that we're only in yet another phase of God's story. Instead of grasping at straws, they stay level-headed about what the Scriptures say.

You can see brothers and sisters leading the way. Men and women who can actually see the opportunities in such a crisis. They take advantage of them and proceed courageously, thereby positively influencing and involving others. They understand that every crisis has different possibilities. They don't complain about the bad times, but look ahead bravely and get going.

You can see understanding. Not everyone is the same. We're all different, and yet we belong together. I've seen this understanding way of dealing with one another in lots of places. Mutual consideration; paying attention to someone else's feelings and how they're dealing emotionally with this crisis, is extremely important. Many brothers and sisters are aware that this is an emotionally volatile time, and are treating each other accordingly. It's wonderful.

You see initiatives. New opportunities for spreading the Word of God are being recognized and implemented. Work domains that had been paused are beginning to revive. The "there's no point" mentality is being shed. Instead, people are considering how to obey the Bible's guidelines despite restrictions, and without getting into legal difficulties. Many are now displaying their God-given creativity. New fields of work are arising.

You see care. More and more members of the church family are picking up the phone to find out what their elderly brothers and sisters are doing. They speak courage or just listen. They get in the car and visit lonely and elderly Christians. Home groups are coming to life again, where warm fellowship abounds.



You see courage instead of fear. Brave people are those who have given their fear to Jesus! They're aware of the dangers of the virus, and still don't allow themselves to be imprisoned by it. Instead, they take risks for Jesus.

You can see unity among brothers and sisters, who are aware of the negative potential in each and every one of us. They know that the coronavirus isn't worth parting over, and instead choose to be together. Because there will be a time after the coronavirus.

Conclusion: Christ has called us to freedom. We are slaves to no one but Jesus Christ. We can decide whether coronavirus will define us, or whether we will make the best of the situation, using the opportunities in the midst of the pandemic. Those who are—and remain—steadfast in a crisis, will ultimately emerge from it enormously strengthened. Through it all, we must be aware that coronavirus isn't worth wearing ourselves out over, being broken down, or being divided over.

Two perspectives. Which to choose? Everyone has to decide for themselves, including you.

Finally, let's allow ourselves to be encouraged by our Lord Himself:

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Prov 3:5-6).

(MR0121/1125)

Midnight Call's April Resource Guide



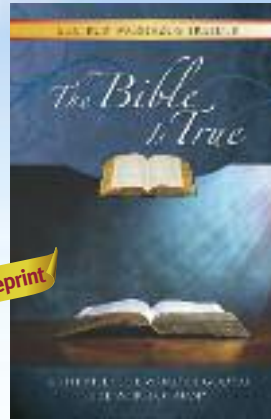
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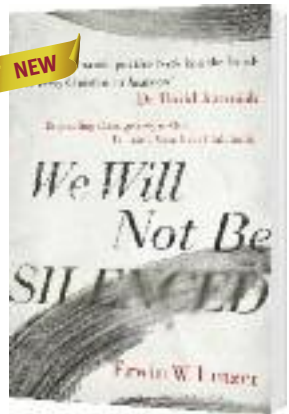
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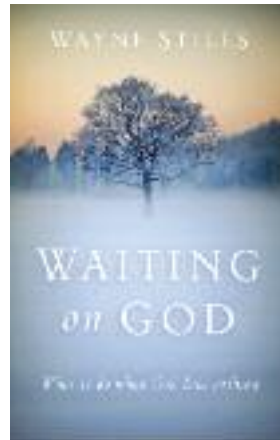
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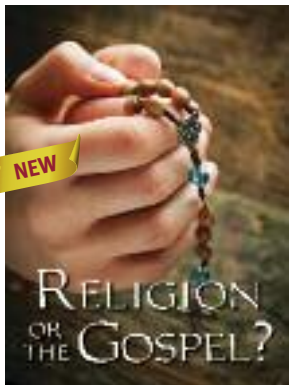
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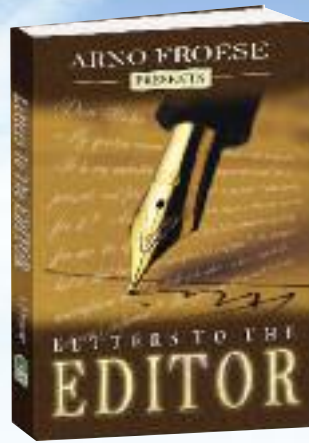


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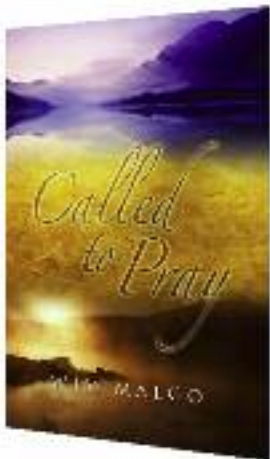


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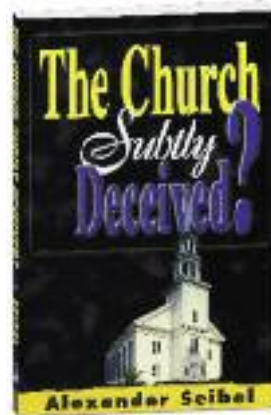


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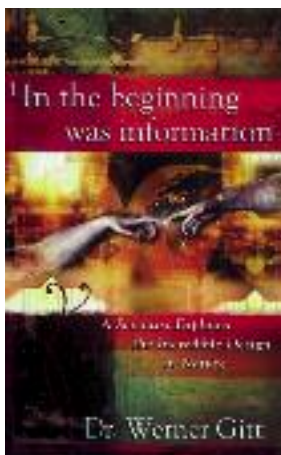


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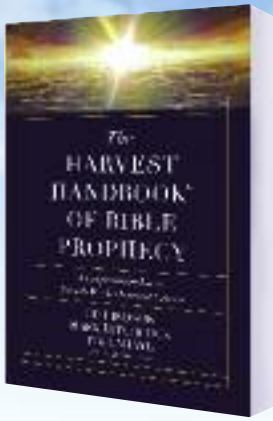
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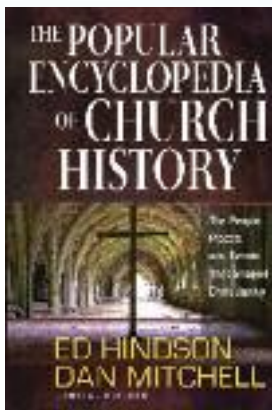
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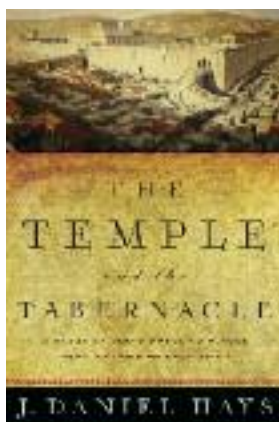
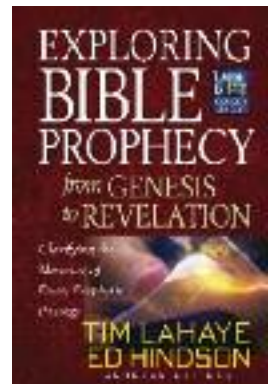
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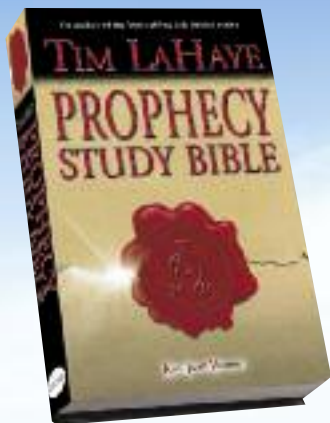
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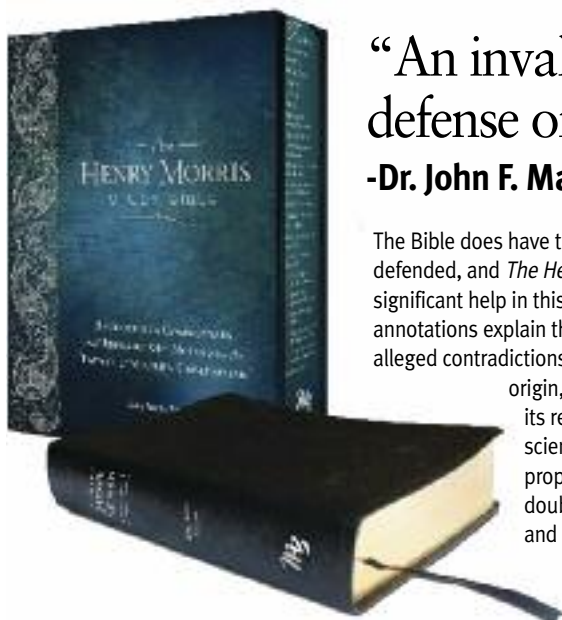
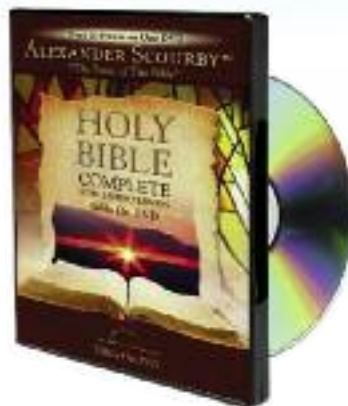
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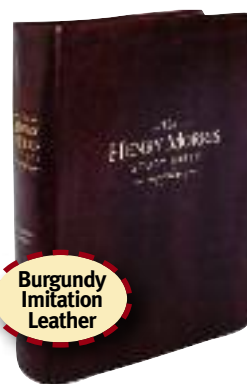
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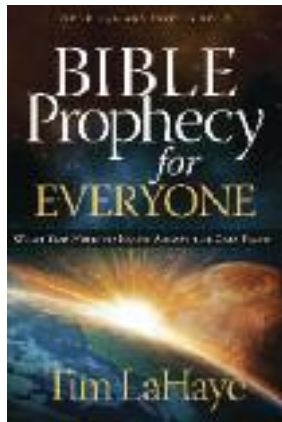
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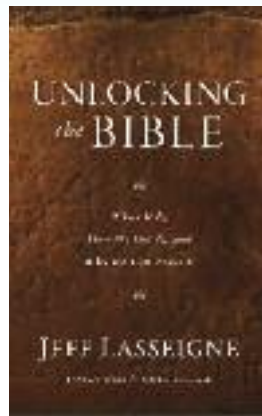
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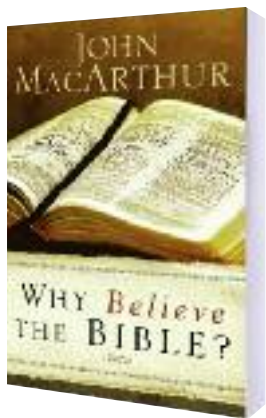
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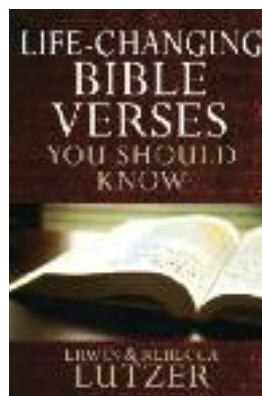
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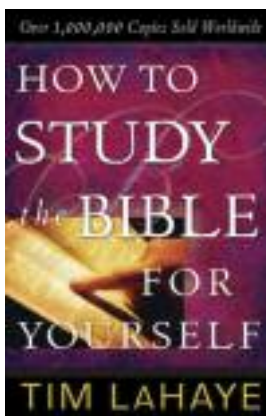
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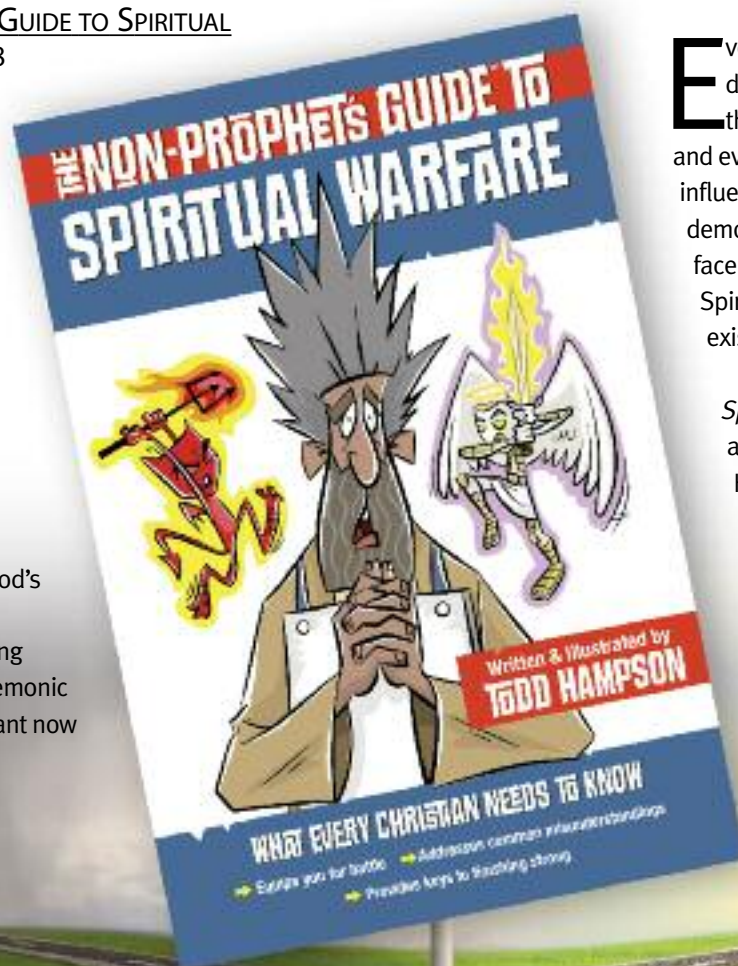
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