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# Midnight Call

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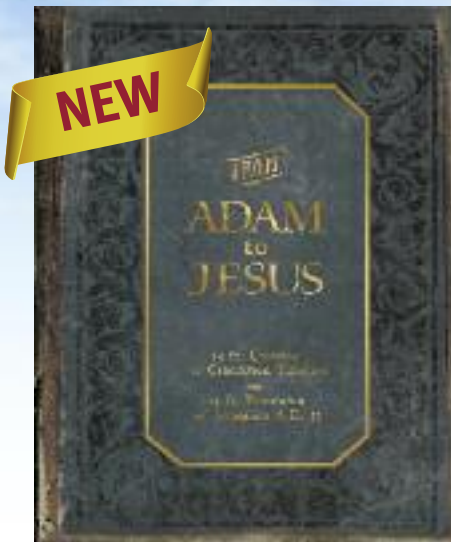
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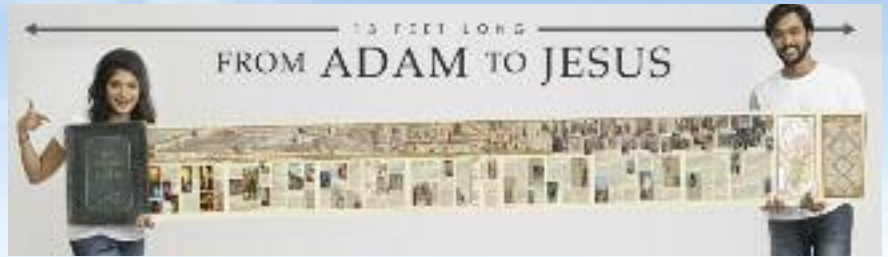
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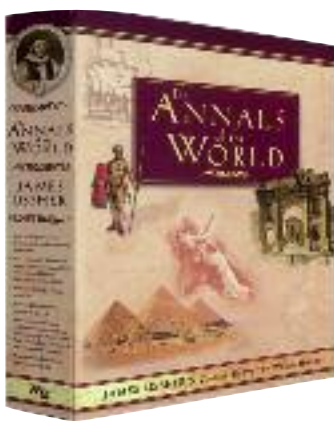
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# “The Greatest of These Is...”



**By Norbert Lieth**

*Director of Missions, Midnight Call International*

Dear Friends,

In May of this year, there was a terrible cable car accident at Mount Motarone, Italy. The brakes failed and the train plunged into the valley at 120 kilometers (75 miles) per hour. Fourteen people died. A five-year old Israeli boy was the only one to survive, with several broken bones. Doctors assumed that his father hugged him tightly and thus offered the child protection with his body.

Love embraces. Jesus saved our lives with His body, which He offered up in death. On the cross, He stretched out His arms to embrace the world with His love. Of faith, hope and love, love is the greatest (1 Cor 13:13). Love never passes away (1 Cor 13:8), and we are to strive for it (1 Cor 14:1). Love embraces; it must be the starting point and the goal of all our actions. Love is the foundation and the roof of our life's house, because only love imparts value to all our actions. That is why we read: “Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Cor 16:14).

Not that love approves of everything—certainly not sin. But love seeks the path of loving openness, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said: “A life has as much value as it has love.” Former television commentator Andy Rooney stated: “It is love, not time, that heals wounds.” Church father Augustine gave the following advice: “If you are silent, be silent out of love; when you speak, speak out of love; if you rebuke, rebuke out of love; if you spare someone, do it out of love.” And John MacArthur maintains: “As the essence of God, love is constant and indestructible. Love outlasts all failure.”

A pastor once related in a sermon that, during a long hospital stay, he set about to read through the whole Bible. In doing so, he got a new sense of the Bible being a true love story; namely, the story of God's love for humanity. People may not pay much attention, but God remains true to His love. They give Him the cold shoulder, and still He pursues them like a lover. The pastor then enumerated all the means which God has used to express His love. He cited Isaiah 49:16, “Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.” He went on to explain that in ancient Israel, when a young man was in love with a girl, he would write her name on the palm of his hand. Then, anytime he sat down or was headed some-

## EDITOR'S NOTE

where, he could open his hand and look at the name of his beloved. It was as if the sun had arisen while he dreamily thought of his love. And thus she was ever present before him.

The greatest proof of God's love for us is the gift of His Son: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). That is a clear challenge to us. John, the Apostle of Love, sums it up: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

Sometimes I ask myself whether we have really ever understood the high value of love. Why is love so seldom shown in today's Christian lives? Self-righteousness, cold judgment, selfish practices, envy, spite, and an unforgiving spirit seem to stand out more than love. Instead of embracing, we repel.

Yet love is the greatest of all Christian virtues! It is the strongest, most unifying, and most capable of bringing about change. For my part, I want to learn to be more under the influence of God's love through Christ—will you join me? (MC)

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### OUR TASK

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

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

### STATEMENT OF FAITH

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

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

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

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

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

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



# The Most Important Word in World History: Part 2

**Stephan Beitze**

Our Lord's shout on the cross, *Tetelestai!* or, "It is finished!" is the most important word in world history. But what does it actually mean?

**Revelation also comes from and is about Jesus**, as He Himself testifies: "I am the Alpha and the Omega... who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1:8). At the conclusion of Revelation, the Lord testifies to us again by saying, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon'" (Rev 22:20).

So, we can say that all of Holy Scripture found its completion in Jesus Himself because, "It is finished!"

On the Cross, He also fulfilled the Father's commission. In John 17:4, Jesus prayed, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do." On the Cross, he completely fulfilled the Father's will. He had described His commission in Matthew 20:28: "even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

In Gethsemane, He pled through tears not to have to go through this hour that would separate Him

from His Father for the first time. He who had never sinned knew that as a sacrificial lamb on the Cross, He would be laden with the sin of the world. That meant judgment, and separation from God. But at the same moment, he consciously said, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). He was ready to drink this bitter cup with its consequences to the last drop, until He could exclaim, “It is finished!” When He bowed His head and surrendered His spirit, He had done His job. The path that began in Bethlehem ended there on the Cross. He had reached His destination.

With His, “It is finished!” Christ also carried out His love to the end. In John 13:1 we read, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”

**Jesus’ love finds its perfection on the Cross.** Even before that, not a loveless word passed through His lips. He addressed His traitor as “friend”; his denier was given a loving, sad look. He forgave the soldiers who crucified Him. This love can be seen even in the last minutes of His life. Although He was suffering unbearable physical, mental, and above all spiritual pain, He still thought of His mother by commending her to His disciple and placing him by her side. I am convinced that John, who doesn’t name himself here, fulfilled this commission with all love, because he had just witnessed the greatest act of love in world history.

Only someone who has personally experienced the love of Christ can truly love. John wrote down these words of Jesus: “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). It is also John who enthusiastically exclaimed, “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1). And how is God’s love shown most clearly? We again find our answer in John: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). If ever there was anyone who we could say loved, it is the Lord. And the phrase, “It is finished!” underscores His love. Have you already recognized

and accepted this love? And if so, do you love others with this love?

**Salvation itself was fulfilled on the Cross.** After everything we’ve considered so far, it should go without saying, but of course salvation was also accomplished! Man is lost by nature, far from God. But everyone who believes in Jesus, asks His forgiveness for their sins, and accepts Him into their life, is then and forever redeemed from their burden of sin. Nothing more needs to be added to it.

It is very revealing that our understanding of the word *tetelestai* (“It is finished”) is confirmed by archaeology. Not so long ago, during the excavation of a tax office from that era, a pile of ancient invoices was found with *tetelestai* written over them in large print. It meant, “Paid in full.” We have a much better understanding of this word’s meaning. Sin’s debt is paid, sin’s power is broken, and our sins are forgiven forever if we belong to Jesus. The thousands of sacrifices were like a small and incomplete down payment. But thanks to Jesus’ death, our life’s promissory note reads, “Paid in full.” Therefore, we can say with the Apostle Paul, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (Rom 8:33-34).

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews affirms that Jesus came once and for all, “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26). We don’t have to add anything to it. We no longer have to perform any works, adhere to any religion, or fear for our eternal salvation. Whoever avails himself of Jesus’ sacrifice is eternally forgiven, his guilt erased forever, and his redemption absolutely secured, because Jesus cried, “It is finished!”

“Finished” also means victory over sin, death, and the devil. Paul writes, “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere” (2 Cor 2:14). Now we too can live in this victory in our everyday life. At the end of our lives, we can confidently dare to take the step

## The Most Important Word in World History: Part 2

A great many others try to forget their hopelessness in festivals, holidays, friendships, or even alcohol and drugs. But there is only one life buoy: Jesus Christ.



into eternity. We take it with Him who said, “It is finished!” and then went to be with the Father.

**How can we apply, “It is finished!” in our everyday life?** First, by accepting salvation if we haven’t yet done so. After everything we’ve reviewed, all that remains for me to do is to offer an invitation and a warning. The invitation is, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion” (Heb 3:15). How long have you been hearing God’s voice? How many times has He invited you to come to Him? Please, don’t harden your heart any longer! And the warning is, “How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?” (Heb 2:3).

Some time ago, the engine of a fishing boat failed upstream from the mighty Niagara Falls. The boat was being carried away by the current, so the two fishermen jumped into the water and swam for shore with all their might. But the current was so strong that they would never make it. Onlookers called the rescue service, and it arrived and waited just ahead of the waterfall. The rescuers threw a life buoy on a rope to the drowning people, and it landed between them. One grasped it immediately, but the other grabbed a huge tree trunk floating past and held onto it. It’s easy to imagine how this story ends: one man was saved, and the other died.

Unfortunately, it’s similar in the spiritual realm. So many people think that they can manage on their own. They believe that they can find security, peace, and hope in good works, ideologies, philosophies, or even religions. A great many others try to forget their hopelessness in festivals, holidays, friendships, or even alcohol and drugs. But there is only one life buoy: Jesus Christ.

He Himself says, clearly and unequivocally, that there are only two options: “Whoever believes in

the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (John 3:36). Take hold of the Savior’s outstretched hand in faith! God calls out with love, “My son, give me your heart” (Prov 23:26a). It is as if Christ were there on the Cross with His arms outstretched and pointing heavenward, calling us by name and inviting us, “Come to the Father! I love you; I gave my life for you. Believe in Me, and God will be your Father!”

We believers apply, “It is finished!” in everyday life by remembering this event. Those who have been saved can’t help but remember this work with gratitude, always being thankful to the Savior.

The fire department was once called to a burning house. When the firefighters arrived, they saw the neighbors having to restrain a couple to keep them from rushing back into the burning house. Their baby was still lying in her bed. A firefighter risked his life and saved the little one just before the house collapsed behind him. The baby got out with just some burns on her face. Of course, the firefighter was invited to every birthday. Even after he retired, he was invited to her graduation ceremony. When she received her diploma, she went to the microphone and asked her rescuer to join her on the stage. There she handed him her diploma, while tears of gratitude ran down the scars on her face...

It shouldn’t be any different with us as believers. The Lord saved us for all eternity. We should thank the Lord over and over again, and repeatedly praise Him. One of the ways we do this is by partaking in the Lord’s Supper. We remember what He did for us in a special way. The Lord’s command is, “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:24). Let’s continue to worship the Lord Jesus for what He has done!



Then the victorious call from Calvary will surely ring out for all eternity: “It is finished!” What will it be like when we can look in the eyes of the Lord Jesus for the first time?

**We apply, “It is finished!” in practice by obeying His Word.** Just as Jesus was careful to do the will of the Father in everything, so it should be with us too. This is the best proof that we love Him, because the Lord Himself says, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

We also apply, “It is finished!” by living in the victory that Jesus won. The victory over sin, death, and the devil is now our victory. We can claim it for ourselves. As Paul says, “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 15:57).

We apply, “It is finished!” by living out the love of the Lord Jesus as well. Jesus’ love for us—which cost Him His life—gives us a deep sense of security even in the midst of the worst events. The Apostle Paul joyfully wrote that nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:39). Because we have such a mighty example of love, the words of James 2:8 should also be fulfilled in us: “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well.”

We further apply, “It is finished!” by doing the Lord’s commission. The Apostle Paul could say at the end of his life, that he had fought the good fight, kept the faith, and completed his course (2 Tim 4:7). Will we also be able to say that one day? Are we concerned about doing the works that God has prepared for us to walk in (Eph 2:10)? We will only have a full life when we are in the place and doing the works that the Lord has planned for us.

We also use, “It is finished!” in proclaiming this message. If, like John and the other disciples, we are moved by Jesus’ work, we cannot help but say with them, “we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). Tell your family what Jesus



means to you. Confess to friends, acquaintances, and neighbors that Jesus is your Savior and that He wants to save them too. Do as Paul did and don’t be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16). The Lord was not ashamed to suffer and die for you and me!

Additionally, we apply, “It is finished!” by waiting for the Lord. The words of Hebrews 9:28 remind us of something else besides the work of redemption. It is our blessed hope and expectation: “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

**The Lord died to accomplish our salvation.** But I believe that He longs for the moment when He can bring His children to their eternal home, to the Father’s dwelling, because then redemption is complete in all its scope! Then the victorious call from Calvary will surely ring out for all eternity: “It is finished!” What will it be like when we can look in the eyes of the Lord Jesus for the first time? How will it be to see the wounds in His hands? Then we will praise the Lord forever, as it is written in Revelation: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (Rev 5:13).

The Lord cried, “It is finished!” (MR0420/1131)



# WORLD GEOPOLITICS BY THE BIBLE: WHITHER AMERICA? – PART 3



We continue our quest for the identities of the 7 Ruler Kings, which represent the geopolitical history of the world in that they circumnavigate the fate of the Hebrews. Why are we pursuing this study? For one, it allows us to determine the times and the seasons. There can be no doubt: We are living in an interesting era, as some major prophetic events are at the very door. These will have an enormous impact upon the world ... expressly so also upon America.

**By Wilfred Hahn**

In that vein, we must be sure of our interpretations of Scripture. Correct foundations and facts are key, as we pointed out in the previous part of this series. Errant interpretations down through history have been disastrous for the reputation of Bible prophecy. We continue our quest for the identities of the 7 heads of the beasts shown in Revelation 12, 13 and 17.

### Importance of Correct Interpretation

But why should the true identity of the 7 heads even matter? Aren't the visions of the prophets too imprecise and vague to allow for any specific meaning? If we were to argue over their identity, would it not be, as Apostle Paul says, "to devote [oneself] to myths and endless genealogies"? Is it not true that things like these "[...] promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work" (1 Timothy 1:4)?

Of course, we should not "promote controversial speculations." However, we should be advancing God's work by rightly dividing the Word. This we want to do, and there is great profit in doing so. Everything in the Bible has been written for a reason. As Paul says, all of it "is useful for teaching [and] correcting" (2 Timothy 3:16) or, "as examples [...] written down as warnings for us" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Also, an incorrect interpretation of the Bible is never without consequence. Most certainly, an incorrect eschatology has lured much of Christendom onto the slippery slopes of Reconstructionism, Social Gospel, Amillennialism, Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism, Relativism, etc. (to name a few distortions).

We offer at least three reasons why it is beneficial to study the meaning behind the "beast images" and the various heads and horns found throughout Scripture. For one, this study definitely speaks to end time geopolitical trends. These images give Bible-studying Christians—even more so the Jews—an ability to accurately determine the "season" of the world.

For example, were Jews to study Daniel and accept Revelation also as inspired Scripture, they would not be so susceptible to being deceived by the False Messiah when he comes. An understanding of this topic better prepares the Christian to identify the prophetic "season."

Secondly, a proper understanding of the beasts provides a bulwark against deception. Our enemy is the father of lies and deception (John 8:44). The Last Days are repeatedly characterized as deceptive and a trap ... all instigated by the Dragon (Satan). This time is truly treacherous.

Mammon was enjoined by religion as it is today. God and Mammon are worshipped simultaneously, though Christ clearly said this was not possible as they represent two opposite masters.

“The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). We are persuaded that those deceptive times are already upon us today.

And thirdly, the visions of the world’s 7 Ruler Kings extend to today. How so? All the ones that Daniel sees will be in existence and on the world scene during the Last Days. The prophet Daniel says that it will be “in the time of those kings [that] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44).

### Common Characteristics of World Geopolitical Rulers

Are there any commonalities among the 7 Ruler Kings (RKs)? We note at least seven common characteristics shared by all.

1. First, all the Ruler nations are only of primary significance as they have a role in relation to the history of Israel. All of them suppressed Israel and/or Judah.

Said Isaiah: “Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us. Lord our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us” (26:12-13). Israel was often under the thumb of neighboring countries. However, these were small, and their occupations were relatively short.

Regarding Assyria and Egypt’s role, the Bible says this: “O my people who live in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrians, who beat you with a rod and lift up a club against you, as Egypt did [...]” (see Isaiah 10:24-27).

Further, also referring to Babylon, the Bible states: “Israel is a scattered flock that lions have chased away. The first to devour them was the king of Assyria; the last to crush their bones was Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon” (Jeremiah 50:17).



In conclusion, all the original 7 Kings (depicted as heads, plus also the 8th who is the Antichrist) have or yet will intersect with the descendants of Hebrews. All of them will find at least part of their kingdoms geographically and politically extending into the Middle East at one time or another.

2. All seven societies of these Ruler Kings were/are essentially pagan. They are part of an “unreasoning” beast that will perish. Many scholars have produced reliably documented works that connect the pagan religions that underlay all seven kingdoms (including that of our day!). This provides evidence that the same “scarlet whore” (signifying spiritual harlotry and paganism) was common to all kingdoms.

3. The collective times of the 7 RK rule, show a Man/Satan conspiratorial insurrection against God. Satan and his “princes” (aka demons or fallen angels) conspire to mislead mankind.

4. All these 7 kingdoms are noted in the Bible for their pride and over-confidence...even rising up to heaven. They are all symbolized as mountains and tall, lofty trees on one or more occasions in the Old Testament.

5. Each successive RK kingdom supersedes the prior RK—each time expanding the realm and influence of the previous kingdom (except, of course, Egypt, which was the first).

6. All seven of the world kingdoms show a merging of religion with prosperity and fertility worship (materialism). All these kingdoms therefore merged materialism with religion. Mammon was enjoined by religion as it is today. God and Mammon are worshipped simultaneously, though Christ clearly said this



Research shows that Babylon was the mother of modern-day commercialism and its preoccupation with wealth. Babylon represented the first “gilded age”—after all, it was shown as the head of gold in Daniel’s vision of the tall statue (Daniel 2).

was not possible as they represent two opposite masters.

7. All seven kingdoms have left legacies and influences that are still visible in our time today. Readers will be interested to explore this last point further. Just what legacies have the Ruler Kings left to posterity?

We will explore this answer next.

### Prophetic Modernity

The Bible indicates that the ruling world regime of the Last Days bears the characteristics of at least four world empires. Revelation 13 presents a beast that is a composite of the four previous world kingdoms—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

These are the same four world kingdoms that Daniel saw represented in animal/beast form—the lion, bear, leopard, and the terrible creature. Here in the New Testament, they are shown together in one beastly body (see Daniel 7).

Why are all four shown together as one animal in Revelation 13? There are at least two reasons. First, the prophet Daniel says that it will be “in the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44). These are the very same Ruler Kings that Daniel saw both as beasts and parts of the statue headed by Nebuchadnezzar. It is these four RKs only that are shown as part of the beast of Revelation 13.

It only follows that if these historical Ruler Kings are still in existence today, then it would not be surprising that they will have left their influence upon the world. Indeed, this is the case, as we will show.

### The Modern-Day Legacies of Past Kingdoms

Our pagan ancestors remain with us under many guises. Accomplished historians, no doubt, will see many more connections than this writer can present. We will review at least one aligning Scripture verse.

Starting with the earliest kingdom that Daniel saw, here are some possible connections. Just what things or conventions do we encounter in our lives today that are of Babylonian origin? These are so imbedded into our daily lives, no doubt we no longer notice them anymore.

Research shows that Babylon was the mother of modern-day commercialism and its preoccupation with wealth. Babylon represented the first “gilded age.” After all, it was shown as the head of gold in Daniel’s vision of the tall statue (Daniel 2). Nearly all the documents recovered from that early Babylonian era refer to commerce.

The concepts of banking, compound interest, promissory notes, and even mutual funds derive from that time. Its numerical system is based on the number 60 (the sexagesimal system, which extends back to earlier Sumerian cultures) and is still deeply imbedded in our society.

We still count 360 degrees in a circle and in trigonometry. Until not too long ago, a 360-day cycle was still considered the financial year for purposes of calculating interest. The word “dozen” is the Babylonian word for “a fifth,” meaning one-fifth of sixty.

Twelve is a prominent number, probably because it was based upon the 12 moon cycles per year. We still count 60 minutes to the hour, 60 seconds to the minute. From these and other connections, we see that the lion remains the head of gold today. The same “commercial culture” will be (and is) the hallmark of the last-day global society (Zechariah 5:5-11; Revelation 18).

In the next part, we will continue our quest to prove the identities of the 7 Ruler Kings shown in Revelation 12, 13, and 17. As already mentioned, the reign of these heads strikes right into our times.

Just what attributes of ancient Medo-Persia are evident in our modern societies today? (MC)



# Is Hell Eternal?

## – Part 2

**Dr. Ron J. Bigalke**

Against various forms of annihilationism, Part I of this series affirmed the witness of Scripture that unbelievers will suffer eternally in hell. All people will live forever somewhere, yet the destinies of the lost and the saved are vastly different.

**W**hile the unbeliever is confined to *hadēs*, the believer is immediately united with Christ in a place of bliss, known as heaven or paradise. Presently, if a believer dies, he or she will experience what is termed the intermediate state, which is a person's condition between physical death and the resurrection of the body. The death of the unbeliever confines his or her immaterial being to *hadēs*. Hell is the eternal and final place of future punishment of those lost without Christ; it should not be confused with the location of the intermediate state of the wicked dead.

### **The Old Testament Concept of Death**

The New Testament provides greater revelation with regard to the concept of death, both for believers and unbelievers. *Sheol* is the word used most frequently to sig-

nify the grave and the location of disembodied souls/spirits, both good and bad. The general meaning of *sheol* is the place of the dead. The Old Testament does not distinguish between the place where believers and unbelievers go after death. All depart to *sheol* without any moral distinctions, because the grave is the common destiny. There is no indication of punishment in *sheol*, because that would be unsuitable in reference to the grave. Yet certainly, the Old Testament does reveal that unbelievers will be punished (cf. Job 21:30; 24:19-20).

Judaism traditionally affirms that death is not the cessation of human existence. The body is placed in the grave after death, and the disembodied spirit is judged before God. Only the righteous enters the place of spiritual reward directly (Heb. *Gan Eden*, “the Garden of Eden”),

## Is Hell Eternal? – Part 2

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Some Jews regard *Gehinnom* as a place of punishment and torture, a hell of brimstone and fire. Others understand *Gehinnom* as a place of retrospection, wherein one recognizes harmful actions and wasted opportunities, thus resulting in remorse.



while the average person descends to a place of punishment and/or purification known as *Gehinnom* (*Gehenna* in the New Testament), but sometimes as *sheol*. The name *Gehinnom* is derived from a deep, narrow valley (*hinnōm*, the “Valley of Hinnom”) to the south of Jerusalem, where children were sacrificed to Molech by the pagan Canaanite nations (Josh 15:8; 2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 2:23; 7:31-32; 19:6, 13-14).

Some Jews regard *Gehinnom* as a place of punishment and torture, a hell of brimstone and fire. Others understand *Gehinnom* as a place of retrospection, wherein one recognizes harmful actions and wasted opportunities, thus resulting in remorse. The repentant souls in *Gehinnom* are punished for a maximum time of 12 months (*Yud Bet Chodesh*, “the year of mourning”), and then ascend to *Gan Eden*. Disagreements exist as to the destiny of those who remain wicked; some Jews believe the wicked are annihilated, while others think the soul remains in a perpetual state of conscious remorse.

An antiquated view equates *sheol* with the New Testament Greek term *hadēs*, and affirms that *sheol* had two compartments prior to the cross (until Christ freed the

righteous in *hadēs* and took them to heaven at His ascension). *Sheol* is typically located as “down” in the Old Testament, and was thus perceived as a subterranean and gloomy place such as the Babylonian underworld or the *Hadēs* of Greek myths. Another view is that *sheol* is the place for the bodies of the deceased; that is, the grave. Unlike the present world, *sheol* is a place of silence (Ps 94:17; 115:17) where there is no praise of God (6:5; 30:9; 88:10-12; 115:17; Isa 38:18). It is a place of inactivity (Eccl 9:6, 10) and sorrows (2 Sam 22:6; Ps 18:5; 116:3), which is not proof of “soul sleep” but rather the lifelessness of the body in the grave. Other verses refer to *sheol* enlarging its throat, because the grave is where maggots and worms cover the body (Job 21:26; Isa 14:11) and it decays (Ps 49:14). *Sheol* is unavoidable (Ps 49:9; 89:48). Several verses depict *sheol* as “beneath” (Isa 14:9); that is, in the lower parts of the earth (Deut 32:22; Isa 14:15). The grave is contrasted with the highest heaven (Job 11:8), probably because ancient burial shafts for the tomb were frequently deep in the earth (yet this is not any indication of a large subterranean underworld).

Several verses in Scripture are important for understanding the destiny of the righteous in death. Psalm 16:10 declares, “For You will not abandon my soul to *Sheol*; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” The King James Version of the Bible translates *sheol* as “hell,” though the term does not mean hell in the sense in which it is commonly understood (as in the domain of the wicked or the abode of punishment); rather, it refers to the grave. The idea is that the body would not remain in the grave,

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The believer has two prospects of hope awaiting him or her: (1) the resurrection of the body should death occur; or, (2) translation from corruption to incorruption if alive at the coming of the Lord.

but would rise again to life and light. Furthermore, the language does not prove the words used in the *Apostles' Creed* that Christ “descended into hell” (cf. Eph 4:8-9), nor does it mean that Jesus personally went to hell for the purpose of preaching to spirits in prison (1 Pet 3:19). For truly at the time of His death, the Lord entered into Paradise (Luke 23:43).

The great chasm that separates Paradise (or “Abraham’s bosom”) from the place of torment in *hadēs* is likely the heavens themselves. *Sheol* is best understood as the grave because it refers to the place of the dead. The precise location (heaven or hell) depends upon whether a text refers to believers or unbelievers. Luke 16:19-31 simply indicates that Abraham’s bosom and *hadēs* are very distinct places. Jesus referred to the rich man only as being in *hadēs*, whereas Abraham was seen “far away.” The Lord said that “a great chasm” was fixed between the two, so that for one to be transferred to the other location would be impossible. Abraham and Lazarus are seen in comfort, while the rich man in *hadēs* is “in agony” and requested water to cool his tongue. The dreadful conditions described in Luke 16 are the intrinsic consequences of being confined to *hadēs*.

The prophetic implications are unmistakable: Lazarus was experiencing the joy of everlasting life (Abraham’s bosom) as a result of his faith, while the wealth of the man who died in unbelief would not protect him from suffering the eternal torments of hell. Luke 16 says nothing regarding the doctrine of *limbus patrum* or purgatory, where souls are supposed to go when separated from the body prior to their abode in either heaven or hell. Roman Catholicism teaches that *limbus patrum* is located in the confines of hell, and

is said to somewhat resemble Abraham’s bosom. Yet Scripture describes the latter as a place of comfort, which is vastly different from the teaching of either *limbus patrum* or purgatory. The *limbus patrum* of Catholic doctrine borders hell, yet Scripture declares that a great chasm separated Abraham’s bosom.

The notion that Old Testament saints were captives in *limbus patrum* until the Lord’s resurrection, is not conclusive. According to this teaching, when Christ died on Calvary’s cross, He descended into a distinct compartment of hell, released those saints who were captive there, and carried them with Him in triumph to heaven. First Peter 3:18-20 is one of the primary passages quoted in defense of the doctrine of *limbus patrum* or purgatory, and for those who affirm particular beliefs regarding the circumstances of the dead in the intermediate state.

Peter referred to “disobedient” persons whose “spirits” are “now in prison.” The “spirits” were the antediluvian unbelievers in the time of Noah, who disobeyed God. They were sinners of a most incorrigible type, and manifested their disobedience by rejecting Noah’s preaching. Presently, they are “spirits” because they died long ago and *their bodies* have not yet experienced resurrection. The spirits of those unbelievers are “now in prison” awaiting resurrection and judgment by God. One could rightly say that Jesus proclaimed a message to Noah’s unbelieving contemporaries in His spirit through Noah (i.e., His spiritual state of life prior to the incarnation). Noah preached a message that God revealed to him, and in this sense, Christ Jesus spoke through him.

## Is Hell Eternal? – Part 2

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Yet all people will live forever in either heaven or hell, and this destiny is based upon their relationship or lack thereof with the Lord Jesus Christ.



When Peter wrote his epistle, it was as if Jesus was speaking to their unbelieving persecutors, as the church bore witness for the Lord amid a hostile world. Noah experienced the same type of opposition in his day as Peter's original recipients did in their time, and as the church does in the present era.

First Peter 3:18-20 cannot by any possibility refer to a “prison” for Old Testament saints, because the antediluvians of Noah's time were reprobates, not believers. The “prison” cannot be purgatory, because the Council of Trent refers to it as the place where “the souls of just men are cleansed by a temporary punishment, in order to be admitted into their eternal country, ‘into which nothing defiled entereth’” (*The Catechism of The Council of Trent*, trans. Jeremiah Donovan [Baltimore: Lucas Brothers, 1829] 51). The antediluvian sinners were not just; rather, they were hardened in their unbelief. They are the only ones to whom Christ preached.

### Conclusion

What Christ declared is that—upon death—the ultimate destiny of a person

is either heaven or hell. For the believer, the place of blessing is where Abraham is, while the unbeliever will enter the place of torment. The Old Testament frequently indicates the truth of eternal spiritual punishment by fire (cf. Lev 10:2; Deut 32:22; Ps 18:8; 50:3; 97:3; Isa 30:27, 30, 33; Dan 7:10). The concept herein, in addition to the divine pronouncement of “calamity” upon the “valley of Ben-hinnom” for its evil (Jer 19), is the basis for the dreaded name “Gehenna.” The final sentencing of the lost to *Gehenna* (hell) will not occur until the end of the thousand-year millennium at the “Great White Throne” judgment (Rev 20).

Jesus referred to *Gehenna* as a place of future punishment (Matt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 18:8-9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:42-48; Luke 12:5), and the New Testament is emphatic that such judgment is eternal (Matt 25:46; Mark 9:47-48; Rev 14:11). The book of Revelation refers to *Gehenna* as “the lake of fire” (19:20; 20:10, 14-15; 21:8). The testimony of Scripture is that saints and sinners will continue to exist forever (Eccl 12:7; Matt 25:46; Rom 2:8-10; Rev 14:11; 20:10). The doctrine of annihilation (either of one's being or consciousness) is contrary to the biblical witness. Furthermore, annihilation is unfitting to be called punishment, since the judgment implies consciousness of one's doom and torment. Many people who have become weary of life welcome the concept of annihilation as something desirable. Yet all people will live forever in either heaven or hell, and this destiny is based upon their relationship or lack thereof with the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1159)



A photograph of a person sitting on a large rock in the foreground, looking up at a massive waterfall cascading down a rocky cliff face. The scene is misty and atmospheric, with the water creating a white spray at the base. The overall tone is serene and majestic.

# Why We Can Have Assurance of Salvation

**Johannes Pflaum**

A believer's assurance of salvation is a controversial biblical teaching. There are three reasons why it is justifiable as encouragement for the reborn.

**F**irst: The assurance of salvation has no basis, no starting point, in myself or my life. There is a false assurance of salvation—or, rather an apparent satisfaction when people believe that they've been saved because of their own life, according to the motto, "God must be pleased with me."

Even if a person lived in complete devotion to his Lord every hour of his life for

## Why We Can Have Assurance of Salvation

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But our own emulation and piety can't give assurance of salvation. Assurance of salvation has no starting point or basis in our own performance or life.

a hundred years, it can't save him or give assurance of forgiveness of sins. Our lost condition is far too great. That is why Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

A few years ago, a woman told me about her late mother. She had faithfully attended a local church and served there. When the mother was dying, she was plagued by doubts regarding her own salvation. It made me so sad to hear how her daughter had tried to comfort her. She pointed out that her mother had always attended services and served. The mother was reminded that she had never gone dancing and had avoided every sinful pleasure. The lists then led to the imploring statement, "If anyone is saved, then you are."

But our own emulation and piety can't give assurance of salvation. Assurance of salvation has no starting point or basis in our own performance or life. For this reason, Romans 3:23 says, "...and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

**Second:** Assurance of salvation presupposes knowledge of one's own lost condition. In the letter to the Romans, we have a New Testament book which uniquely expands on salvation solely through faith and by grace. In its eighth chapter, we find the "Song of Assurance of Salvation." It's remarkable how the Apostle Paul thoroughly unfolds this "good news." From the structure of the letter to the Romans, we can recognize the way to salvation through faith, and the assurance of forgiveness of sins.

According to his introductory words, Paul doesn't begin this letter with God's love and mercy for all people. The first three chapters mention four completely different thunderbolts. First, in Romans 1, starting in verse 18, God's righteous anger and judgment are revealed against the unbelief and sins of the nations far from God. Man, in his rebellion against the Creator, is involved in the sin and godlessness connected with it and therefore falls under God's righteous judgment.

Now the moral, religious, and exemplary person might get worked up about the godlessness of the nations in chapter 1. That's why Paul uses the first 17 verses of chapter 2, to show that even the religious and externally moral zealot has also fallen under God's judgment. No matter how exemplary a life a person may appear to live, his lack of repentance before God and refusal to recognize the divine verdict upon his life, makes his sin and selfishness clear. It places him under God's judgment.

In the second part of chapter 2, the apostle makes it clear that even a Jew—belonging to God's chosen people Israel and who, in contrast to the nations, knows God's law and even tries to keep it—is not saved by the law, but condemned.

This brings Paul to the fourth thunderbolt in chapter 3, beginning in verse 9. Because we are in danger of seeing ourselves in too positive a light despite everything that has been said, he shows once again how lost we are. All people—whether Gentile or Jew; whether wallowing in the filth of sin or straining toward moral zealousness; whether religiously Christian or of another persuasion—are under the judgment of God: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God" (Rom 3:10-11).

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Paul made it clear that all people—whether Gentile or Jew; whether wallowing in the filth of sin or straining toward moral zealousness; whether religiously Christian or of another persuasion—are under the judgment of God.



The realization of one's own lost condition—not having the slightest speck of good in oneself; unable to produce anything that could please God in the slightest—is the critical background from which genuine assurance of salvation can arise. It makes a huge difference whether I intellectually affirm the statement in Romans 7:18; whether I have truly discerned my whole being in light of the Bible, and see myself as God sees me: “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh...”

It's astonishing how much “Christian humanism” is still practiced and preached, even in circles faithful to the Bible. In theory, it's agreed that man is a lost sinner. But at the same time, people are still trying to earn God's favor somewhere, and do something to save them-

selves. The idea of merit is innate to us all. As long as this striving and mindset persist, the person in question doesn't break through to genuine assurance of salvation.

The structure of the letter to the Romans makes it clear that the only way to be certain of salvation is to know that we are lost. Theologian Martin Kähler once put it this way: “Assurance of salvation can only blossom where there had previously been assurance of disaster.”

**Third:** assurance of salvation is based solely on Christ and His work. As we have seen, there is no point of contact in ourselves, according to Scripture. The assurance of salvation and forgiveness of sins is anchored only in Christ and His

## Why We Can Have Assurance of Salvation

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perfect work. The reason for my assurance of salvation lies outside of myself. As Johann Andreas Rothe (1688-1758) wrote in a song:

Now I have found the firm foundation  
Which holds mine anchor ever sure;  
'Twas laid before the world's creation  
In Christ my Savior's wounds secure;  
Foundation which unmoved shall stay  
When Heav'n and earth will pass away.

It is that mercy never ending  
Which human wisdom far transcends  
Of Him who, loving arms extending,  
To wretched sinners condescends;  
Whose heart with pity still doth break  
Whether we seek Him or forsake.

O Love, Thou bottomless abyss,  
My sins are swallowed up in Thee!  
Covered is my unrighteousness,  
Nor spot of guilt remains on me,  
While Jesus' blood, through earth and  
skies,  
Mercy, free, boundless mercy, cries.

Though I be robbed of every pleasure  
That makes my soul and body glad  
And be deprived of earthly treasure  
And be forsaken, lone, and sad,  
Though my desire for help seem vain,  
His mercy shall with me remain.

When all my deeds I am reviewing,  
The deeds that I admire the most,  
I find in all my thought and doing  
That there is naught whereof to boast.  
Yet this sweet comfort shall abide—  
In mercy I can still confide.

I'll stand upon this firm foundation  
As long as I on earth remain;  
This shall engage my meditation  
While I the breath of life retain;  
And then, when face to face with Thee,  
I'll sing of mercy, great and free.

The letter to the Hebrews uniquely shows us the importance of the Lord Jesus and His perfect work for our salvation. The following verse also makes it clear that the anchor of our hope and salvation is outside of us. It is found in Christ and His atonement, which He made in the heavenly sanctuary: “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain” (Heb 6:19).

Because the anchor of my salvation lies outside of myself, it remains completely independent of all subjective feelings. For this reason, the Apostle Paul begins the letter to the Ephesians with praise to God:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight” (Eph 1:3-8).

As one of Jesus' disciples, Peter remained convinced of his own emulation and devotion for three years. That's why he was always quick to make suggestions or interrupt his Master. He was certain that he loved the Lord a little bit more than the other disciples, perhaps even just a hairsbreadth more (John 13:37). His denial left all of that in a heap of ruins. Peter had to learn that his Lord wasn't dependent on His disciple's love and loyalty, but that he, Peter, was solely and exclusively dependent on the loyalty

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“My entire theology can be condensed into four words: ‘Jesus died for me.’”  
– Charles H. Spurgeon

and love of his Lord. The apostle recognized that the reason for his salvation wasn't in himself, but solely in Christ. This finding was wonderfully reflected at the beginning of Peter's first letter:

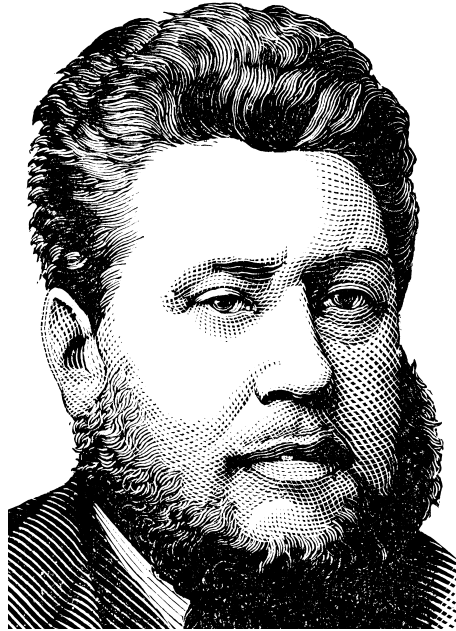
“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Pet 1:3-4).

Earlier, I mentioned the importance of the letter to the Hebrews. This certainty, based solely on the perfect work of the Lord Jesus, is also reflected elsewhere in that letter:

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful” (Heb 10:19-23).

Christ lived flawlessly and fulfilled the righteousness that God demands of me. He paid with His blood on the cross for all my sins, as the perfect, sacrificial Lamb. That's why biblical faith is based exclusively on what Christ did. The believer is saved only for Christ's sake!

It's believed that Spurgeon once said, “My entire theology can be condensed into four words: ‘Jesus died for me.’”



Martin Luther expressed his trust, which was based solely on the Lord Jesus' perfect work, in the following words:

“Up until now I have not been able to satisfy the demands of God because of an innate evil and weakness. If I wasn't allowed to believe that God for the sake of Christ forgives me this daily lamented shortfall, then it would be all over with me. I must despair. But that I will not. I must hang myself on a tree like Judas. But that too I will not do. I will hang myself around the neck or on the foot of Christ like the sinner. Even though I am worse than her I will hold on to my Lord. And then he will speak to the Father: this little appendage must also go through. He has never kept anything and all your commands he has transgressed. But Father, he hanged himself on me. Nothing to be done! I died also for him. Let him slip through. That shall be my faith.”

(MR0520/1076)



# Congregational Singing— Forbidden? Part 2

Roger Liebi gives his view on the question of how we as Christians and churches should respond to a ban on congregational singing. The biblical principles are derived from corresponding passages on submission to authorities, examined in connection with principles from Old Testament law and its interpretation in the Gospels. A timely topic for our current discussions about the coronavirus.

## Higher Commandments

Now, someone could say that we are nevertheless called to sing by Ephesians 5, and the biblical command takes precedence over the state ban. This is again a mistake, because there is a hierarchy in the commandments. For example, the Sabbath commandment was the most important and essential under the Law, as a sign of God's covenant with Israel (see Exodus 31). Neverthe-

less, the Lord Jesus makes it clear that the commandment to save life is higher than the Sabbath commandment. Therefore, He explained in Matthew 12 that although David was not a priest, he and his fellow soldiers could eat the showbread.

The command was clear: only priests could eat the showbread. Even so, the high priest gave it to David and his men because they were starving.

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The hungry David was permitted to eat these loaves of bread as an exception. The Sabbath was a very high commandment. Even so, the Lord explained here (Matthew 12:5) that priests were allowed to break the Sabbath commandment every Sabbath to perform sacrifices. The reason is that priestly ministry and offering sacrifices were higher than the Sabbath.

So, the commandment to preserve life was higher than the prohibition against eating the showbread. The Lord Jesus makes it clear in the Gospels that the commandment to save, preserve, and perpetuate life is higher than the Sabbath commandment.

The ban on singing is a measure to diminish a pandemic; the goal is to save lives. So, it is higher than the commandment to sing in church.

### **“But the Coronavirus Pandemic Doesn’t Even Exist...?”**

Of course, someone could always say, “I know, I know, but Covid isn’t really that bad.” Well, that’s a personal assessment. Those who have seen how bad it can be will have a different response. Anyone who has ever experienced a genuine, choking cough and has felt how terrible a coronavirus infection can be in individual cases, will assess things differently. But it remains a human assessment. It’s not up to us, but the state. We must acknowledge that.

### **And What If It Were Ebola?**

Just imagine for a moment what things would be like if it weren’t the coronavirus that was spreading, but Ebola. I think we would have no problem at all with such measures as a ban on singing. When seven out of ten infected people die, it suddenly becomes clear: of course, the state is permitted to enforce restrictions. But because the coronavirus isn’t as bad as Ebola, different views and appraisals come into play. However, in order to not promote anarchy, we must insist that the government has the final word on the matter, and not us. Otherwise, we should have run for office sooner.

### **Evaluating the Commands**

The principle that one command can be valued as higher than another is a very important one. Leviticus 24:8-9 clearly states that the showbread must only be eaten by the priests:

“Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron’s and his sons’; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute.”

Nevertheless, the Lord says the following in Matthew 12:3-6 (referring to the incident reported in 1 Samuel 21, in which David and his men came to the priest Ahimelech in Nob, who gave them the showbread because there was no other bread):

“But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.”

The hungry David was permitted to eat these loaves of bread as an exception. The Sabbath was a very high commandment. Even so, the Lord explained here (Matthew 12:5) that priests were allowed to break the Sabbath commandment every Sabbath to perform sacrifices. The reason is that priestly ministry and offering sacrifices were higher than the Sabbath.

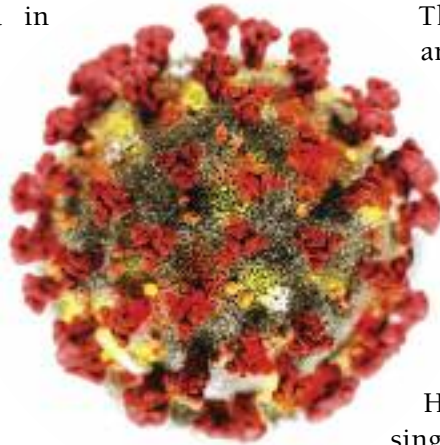
## Congregational Singing—Forbidden? Part 2

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The ban on singing is a measure to diminish a pandemic; the goal is to save lives. So, it is higher than the commandment to sing in church.

These sacrifices are outlined in Numbers 28:9-10:

“And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: This is the burnt offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.”



### No Undermining of Moral Commandments

But there is another very important point to be made. With these commandments, which God is exalting above others, it must be noted that the command being superseded is not a moral command. This means that eating bread is not a bad thing in and of itself. The point is that David was allowed to eat bread because there was no other way—the only available bread was what was for the priests.

But it's never a matter of, say, murder suddenly being acceptable due to a higher commandment, or lies, or fornication. One cannot and must not abuse this by using a higher commandment as an excuse for sin. No; one commandment taking precedence over another always concerns a “lesser” command that does not involve a moral sin. Not singing in and of itself is not morally evil; that is why the commandment to save lives can be placed above the commandment to sing.

In the 2nd century, at the time of the Maccabees, there was a huge problem. The Syrians were slaughtering Jews on the Sabbath, and the Jews didn't resist because they thought it was forbidden to work on the Sabbath. Eventually, the matter was reconsidered, and it was found that the Bible values saving lives more highly than the Sabbath commandment. As a result, the Jews began to defend themselves on the Sabbath too.

That is the reason that the Israeli army still fights on the Sabbath today. It's a matter of saving lives. Even the Orthodox are no exception. They too must break the Sabbath if it is a matter of safeguarding human lives in the nation of Israel.

### Practical Advice for the Singing Ban

How can you deal with a ban on singing? In our local church, we do it this way: a brother reads the first verse of the song in question. Then the piano plays all of the suggested stanzas, and the congregation sings those verses internally, in time with the music. As a result, we can actually sing inwardly in our hearts, as Ephesians 5 expressly says. Even when singing out loud, what's happening in the heart should have a very high priority. But while we're unable to sing out loud, we can concentrate even better on the text internally. Something positive can still be gained from this sad limitation; namely, that you can be more consciously aware of the lyrics than if your singing were distracting you from their meaning.

In Psalm 65:1 (NASB), we find a prophetic word about the coming temple in Jerusalem:

“There will be silence before You, and praise in Zion, God, And the vow will be fulfilled for You.”

During the Great Tribulation, a time will come when worship is no longer possible, because the Antichrist has polluted the temple. Then, this part of the verse will be fulfilled: “There will be silence before You.” Thus, there will be a future time when God takes away the believer's opportunity to sing. But the believer's song of praise waits and waits, until the moment when it is possible to sing again—in the correct and full measure!

(MR0421/1158)





Pergamos was the official residence of the Roman governor at that time. It was also the center of divine imperial worship.

# The Lord Knows Where We Dwell

**Wim Malgo (1922-1992)**

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 22. Revelation 2:12.

**P**ergamos means “stronghold.” The church in Pergamos was in great danger. Pergamos was the official residence of the Roman governor at that time. It was also the center of divine imperial worship. There was, among other things, a large tem-

ple dedicated to the pagan goddess Roma, in which the emperor Augustus was to be worshiped. As a result, the small church came into great difficulties.

The Lord knew that His church in Pergamos was very endangered, because it lived within Satan’s

## The Lord Knows Where We Dwell

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In our day we're seeing how peoples, churches, and organizations are increasingly coming under the power of evil. All professional specialties are being increasingly infiltrated by the spirit of the Antichrist.

sphere of influence: "I know...where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." The word "dwell" is used a second time: when He speaks of His faithful witness Antipas, He says once more, "where Satan dwelleth." Shared accommodation with the devil; how awful! When it says, "where Satan's seat is," it means that the prince of darkness in Pergamos was endowed with a special abundance of power, be it through a spiritualist cult, through the Roman governor, or through visual aspect. We know from history that there was a 300-meter-high altar in honor of Zeus in Pergamos. Additionally, there was a well-known and famous snake-healing cult in Pergamos. People sought cure from their torments in a temple where snakes were kept. The top serpent was even called "savior." Many people worshiped and believed in her—Satan's throne. This evokes associations with Paradise and the evil Old Serpent.

When the Lord calls out to those purchased by His blood: "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is," He proves that He's not missing the negative power of circumstances and the atmosphere, and passing judgment. He also knows exactly where you live, and what circumstances you are in: in which neighborhood, in which family, in which workplace. He knows the satanic forces raging around you in everyday life, almost causing you to lose the ability to breathe. What is the soul's breathing? Prayer!

Jesus knows everything, including everything about you. He'd never allow us to be tested beyond hope and sink into despair. For example, He allowed Satan to touch his servant Job. Not only were Job's ten children killed in an accident on a single day and all of his property stolen, but his own wife even said to him: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). But Job had a rock-solid certainty, a knowl-

edge of God, and said: "I know that my redeemer liveth" (Job 19:25a). This word of comfort applies to us all in this eschatological night.

The following is also revealing about Pergamos. The Lord doesn't say: "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat stands," but rather: "where Satan's seat is." Satan's throne is there, but it doesn't "stand"; it doesn't last! There is only one throne that stands, and that is the throne of the living God and the Lamb. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and also in eternity.

We're repeatedly confronted with the question of who is stronger, who is the victor. Is it Satan, who harasses me inwardly and outwardly, or is it Jesus Christ? Of course it is Jesus Christ! "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:57). We are threatened, shaken, and sifted by the power of Satan in a thousand different ways, but the Lord knows where we dwell. The church of Jesus isn't opposed by people, but by powers. Thus, our fight isn't against flesh and blood, but against principalities and forces of darkness (Eph 6:12).

In our day we're seeing how peoples, churches, and organizations are increasingly coming under the power of evil. All professional specialties are being increasingly infiltrated by the spirit of the Antichrist. As back then in Pergamos, the people and powers that are physically and spiritually possessed by the spirit of the adversary, are striking ever more threateningly. Against who? Spiritually, against the church of Jesus, and physically, against Israel. How can we even survive? Or as the disciples put it, "Who then can be saved?" (Matt 19:25b). The Bible says, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11). (MR0121/1129)



# WORLD FOCUS

 CHINA

## Carbon Neutral By 2060?

Last year, China committed to going carbon-neutral by 2060, an ambitious undertaking for a country that still relies on coal for more than half its energy needs.

 The country has invested heavily in solar, wind and nuclear energy. Yet coal-fired heavy industry still made up about 37% of all its economic activity last year, and some provinces are even planning to increase coal-fired power generation.

Coal mining began in Datong as early as 1,500 years ago, when people began excavating shallow deposits, using crude, handheld tools and lowering canaries to detect hazardous gases. They burned coal for heat. Industrial mining took off after China's economic reforms in the late 1970s, and by the 1990s, the city had 287 mines in production.

But mining has exacted a massive environmental cost. Until the mid-2000s, Shanxi had some of China's most polluted cities. Residents burned chunks of coal in the open air to keep warm during frigid winters.

"China will strictly control coal-fired power generation projects and limit the increase in coal consumption," China's President Xi Jinping said at an online climate summit convened by President Biden earlier this year. But he shied away from giving a more detailed energy pledge.

"One narrative is generated by high-level political announcements to achieve zero carbon within the next four decades," says Li Shuo of Greenpeace East Asia. "The other narrative is that we will still need to use coal because it en-

► A processing facility at the former Jinhua Coal Mine, one of the smaller mines merged to form a state holding company last year in a bid to rescue the province's ailing coal sector.

Emily Feng/NPR



The Xinyuan Coal Mine operated by Yangquan Coal Industry Group Co. in Jinzhong, Shanxi province. Qilai Shen/Bloomberg via Getty Images

sure energy security. Which one of these two narratives prevail in the end?"

In Datong, the mixed legacy of coal mining suggests coal will be ever present in China's near future, albeit in limited quantities.

-www.npr.org, 14 June 2021

**Commentary:** While coal was once king, it seems it still is, specifically for China.

According to Statistica.com, China operates over 1,000 coal mines, India 281, and the USA has 252 mines in operation.

Difficulties in achieving China's goal of carbon neutral status by 2060 include the lack of natural gas and oil, which also are considered contributors to environmental pollution. However, China has a great report card, having reached many of their goals during the last three decades. An analysis of China's economic criteria reveals it's now the world's largest economy.

Will China become carbon neutral by 2060? Only time will tell.

What we do know and understand is that the nations will be forced to cooperate, dia-

log, and compromise, for the world has already become one to a degree. There seems to be no turning back.

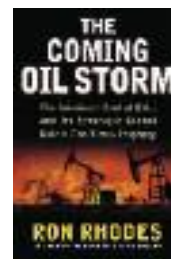
Pollution is definitely a problem that is not limited to a country, but affects the whole world. Subsequently, closer cooperation is essential.

Here we are reminded of the perfect global unity: namely, the Church, the body of Christ. We are not a political organization or movement, nor do we have a home country, headquarters, or capital city. But the Church is perfectly united. Jesus states: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world

may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:22-23).

7537


(See *The Coming Oil Storm*, Item #2248, \$13.99.)



 U K

## Market Knows What You Think

Traditional market research, based on clipboards and questions, has a glaring weakness, according to Carl Wong, who has worked in the industry for more than 20 years.

 He says people cannot answer some questions honestly because they are not aware of their own deep underlying motives.

“We are all influenced by things we’re not able, or willing, to reflect on at the time a purchasing decision is taken or when we answer a survey question,” says Mr. Wong.

That gap in our understanding is being filled by a data-rich world that generates masses of information about our inner desires through tracking cookies and a host of other clues we leave behind as we trek across websites that pique our interest.

Jason Brownlee researches consumer behavior on a grand scale, fueled by the social media data explosion and the resulting caches of big data.

The founder of Colourtext, a data analysis and consumer insights specialist, is based in a village in the Lake District. But he can follow all our movements from his rural idyll. “People leave digital footprints behind them,” he says.

He has studied news consumption patterns, using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cloud computing to peer into the trail people left as they viewed 100,000 news articles online.

This produced startling insights into how figures such as Boris Johnson and Meghan Markle are really perceived. The power of big data has broken down traditional categories that the market research industry used to define our taste.

Market researchers can understand human behavior as never before by trawling through this trove of data.



Carl Wong (left) and fellow founder of Living Lens, David Woods

Facial expressions can now be put under a data analysis microscope for first time, says Mr. Wong, who works for US analytics software house Medallia after selling them his Merseyside-based consumer insights business, Living Lens.

His technology measures a face at multiple points with different patterns emerging depending on the emotions it expresses. These patterns alter with age, sex and race. Show AI software enough examples of these patterns and it can begin to establish what a person is feeling.

By plunging into the cloud with its own software, consumer research giant Kantar confirmed that we are incapable of being truthful to market researchers trying to establish what really floats our boat.

“Talking to a camera is a very effective tool, but what people say is often miles apart from what they feel, there are so many unconscious factors at play,” says Jon Puleston of Kantar.

Kantar applies AI to a bank of human emotions recorded on film and assembled in the cloud and demystifies our real sentiments. This unlocks the ingredients of a Hollywood crowd-pleaser.

Market researchers may have given up knocking on our front doors with their clipboards, but technology is allowing them to get inside our heads.

-[www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com), 18 June 2021



Insights about how public figures like the Duchess of Sussex are perceived can be gleaned from big data analysis

**Commentary:** What is all this research about? We may answer with one word: merchandise. What people’s flaws are, what they fear, and what they feel are essential to marketing.

We remember decades ago at one of our prophecy conferences, Peter Lalonde spoke about “invisible advertising.” During a movie—unbeknownst to the public watching—split-second inserts were made about popcorn, which went unnoticed by most. The result? During the intermission, popcorn was quickly sold out. Today, technology is a million miles ahead, and it determines what you think and buy.

This development is part of the great deception, which the Bible calls “signs and lying wonders.” We know from Scripture that the mourning and lamenting are about lost merchandise: “And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is

thy judgment come” (Revelation 18:9-10).

7541


(See *The Prophecy Pros’ Illustrated Guide to Tough Questions About the End Times*, Item #2379, \$17.99.)



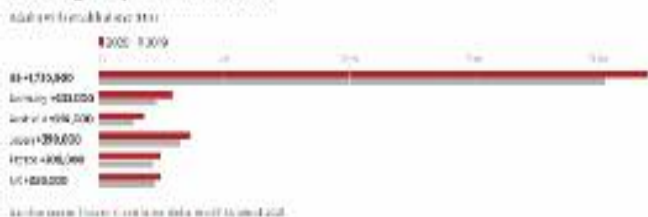
**+** SWITZERLAND

## World Gained 5.2m Millionaires During Pandemic

The global wealth gap widened during the Covid pandemic, swelling the ranks of the world's millionaires by 5.2 million as the rich cashed in on surging stock and house prices.

 The figures, detailed in the annual Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report, capture how emergency interest rate cuts and government stimulus measures often benefited those least in need of state support, helping their assets grow in value despite the economic downturn.

The world gained 5.2m millionaires in 2020



“The rise in wealth inequality was likely not caused by the pandemic itself, nor its direct economic impacts, but was instead a consequence of actions undertaken to mitigate its impact, primarily lower interest rates,” the report’s authors said.

Meanwhile, the wealthiest, already sitting on large holdings of stocks and properties, were relatively unaffected by the economic downturn. Share prices, which collapsed in the first half of 2020, recovered in the later months of the year, increasing the wealth of men, middle-aged people and wealthier individuals in general.

Homeowners in most markets also benefited from rising house prices, which increased by an average of 5.6% in 2020, according to a separate report by the Knight Frank global house price index which tracks prices across 56 countries. That was the fastest pace of growth for three years.

Global wealth is expected to rise a further 39% over the next five years to reach \$583tn by 2025, while the number of millionaires is forecast to jump by nearly 50% to 84 million individuals. The group rich enough to be counted as ultra-high net worth is also expected to expand by nearly 60% to reach 344,000 people.

-*www.theguardian.com*, 22 June 2021

**Commentary:** Prognosticators warned of great catastrophe, economic collapse, and starvation. It did not happen. While the pandemic has caused economic harm, not to mention the loss of millions of lives, the global economy—particularly in the industrialized world—grew by an amazing 7.4%. The future too looks quite promising. One news article from Canada highlighted, “Canadians have billions in their pockets saved during the pandemic, ready to spend.”

Why do we highlight these things? Answer: pride comes before the fall. The prophet Ezekiel proclaims: “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49).

In the New Testament, we read of the church of Laodicea: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).



7542  
(See *Seven Letters from Heaven*, Item #1081, \$4.50)

**🇧🇷 BRAZIL**

## Cyber Attack: The New Warfare

A cyberattack on JBS SA, the largest meat producer globally, forced the shutdown of some of the world's largest slaughterhouses, and there are signs that closures are spreading.

 JBS's five biggest beef plants in the U.S.—which altogether handle 22,500 cattle a day—halted processing following a weekend attack on the Brazilian company's computer networks, according to JBS posts on Facebook, labor unions and employees. Those outages wiped out nearly a fifth of America's production. Slaughter operations across Australia were also down, according to a trade group, and one of Canada's largest beef plants was idled.

It's unclear exactly how many plants globally have been affected by the ransomware attack as Sao Paulo-based JBS has yet to release those details. The prospect of more extensive shutdowns worldwide is already upending agricultural markets and raising concerns about food security as hackers increasingly target critical infrastructure. Livestock futures slumped while pork prices rose.

Hackers now have the commodities industry in their crosshairs with the JBS attack coming just three weeks after Colonial Pipeline Co., operator of the biggest U.S. gasoline pipeline, was targeted in a ransomware attack. It also happened as the global meat industry battles lingering Covid-19 absenteeism after recovering from outbreaks last year that saw plants shut and supplies disrupted.

There have been more than 40 publicly reported ransomware attacks against food companies since May 2020, said Allan Liska, senior security architect at cybersecurity analytics firm Recorded Future.

-*finance.yahoo.com*, 1 June 2021

**Commentary:** Something new is in the works. It's no longer one nation against another,

(continued next page)

## Cyber Attack (continued from page 29)

one propaganda system against another, which has led to horrible destruction, suffering, and millions of lives lost. The new warfare is virtually invisible. It comes unexpectedly; it totally ignores national boundaries, geographic locations, cultures, and languages. It is becoming the new, number one world enemy.

According to Google, JBS USA Holdings is an American food processing company and a wholly owned subsidiary of JBS S.A., a Brazilian company, the world's largest processor of fresh beef and pork.

While we realize that news media reports are mostly exaggerated and fueled by a sensation-hungry public, there is no denying that global corporations have paid millions upon millions in order to restart their operations.

It also shows that the industrial aspect—the animals on the way to the slaughterhouse, the machinery, the operators—is of less importance than the computer. Without information dispensed by computer technology, production stands still.

There is little doubt in our minds that computer engineers and scientists will build stronger walls of protection to avoid being hacked in the future. But there is always the chance of the exception; nothing, absolutely nothing, is 100% sure.

Just image a cyber-attack that would successfully disable the functionality of a nation's electrical grid. That would be catastrophic; virtually every business would close. Without electricity, banks, grocery stores, fuel supply systems, etc. would cease operation.

Where is this all leading? One word: globalization. In order to effectively fight these criminals, the world of nations must work together more closely than ever before. And that's just another step to solidify globalism politically, economically and, ultimately, religiously. That is yet to come.

7529

(See *Cyber Meltdown*, Item #2253, \$13.99.)

## WORLD

### Ten Most Livable Cities

As the world continues to grapple with the coronavirus pandemic, the metropolitan city of Auckland in New Zealand has been named the most livable city globally by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).



That's largely due to the country's successful handling of Covid-19 which allowed schools, theaters, restaurants and other cultural attractions to remain open during the survey period from Feb. 22 to March 21, 2021, according to the EIU.

New Zealand implemented a strict nationwide lockdown for several weeks last year to slow the spread of the virus. It also shut its international borders to most travelers.

Asia-Pacific cities dominated the top 10 rankings this year, even as the pandemic caused overall livability around the world to decline.

The top 10 most livable cities in the world, and their scores according to The Global Liveability Index 2021, are:

- Auckland, New Zealand (96.0)
- Osaka, Japan (94.2)
- Adelaide, Australia (94.0)
- Wellington, New Zealand (93.7)
- Tokyo, Japan (93.7)
- Perth, Australia (93.3)
- Zurich, Switzerland (92.8)
- Geneva, Switzerland (92.5)
- Melbourne, Australia (92.5)
- Brisbane, Australia (92.4)

The livability index ranks cities based on more than 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: stability, health care, culture and environment, education and infrastructure.

-www.cnn.com, 8 June 2021

**Commentary:** Interestingly, only two cities in Europe—located in Switzerland—made it



**A general nighttime view of the Auckland skyline as seen from the new Park Hyatt hotel in the Viaduct Basin area of the city in Auckland, New Zealand.**

James D.Morgan | Getty Images News | Getty Images

into the top ten for 2021. Australia is the clear winner, with four cities. It looks like the old saying, "Go West, young man" is being replaced with, "Go East, young man."

One of the strong indicators relating to the well-being of those cities and people is the significantly low rate of crime and poverty. Here we are reminded of Proverbs 14:34: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

7530

(See *Remember & Return*, Item #2317, \$14.99.)

## FRANCE

### Google Fined for Abusing Online Advertising

Google has been fined €220m (£189m) by French competition regulators for abusing its dominance in the online advertising market in a landmark settlement that could rebalance the relationship between tech giants and digital publishers.



"Google used its vertically integrated business model in display advertising to gain an advantage over other competitors," said Isabelle de Silva, the president of the authority. "This is the first investigation in the world that examines the display advertising space where Google is dominant, and the first time Google has agreed to a settlement with engagements."

(continued next page)

## Google Fined (continued from page 30)

This case will be of interest to other regulators who are looking at the online ad market and technologies.”

The French regulator said its decision could open the way for publishers who felt disadvantaged to seek damages from Google. “The decision to sanction Google is of particular significance because it’s the first decision in the world focusing on the complex algorithmic auction processes on which the online ad business relies,” said de Silva.

Google, which is owned by its parent firm Alphabet, has a history of breaching European advertising rules. In 2019, the company was fined €1.5bn by the EU for blocking rival online search advertisers. In 2018, the EU competition authority fined the company a record €4.3bn for using its Android mobile operating system to block rivals. A year earlier, Google was hit with a €2.4bn fine for hindering rival shopping comparison websites.

*-www.theguardian.com, 7 June 2021*

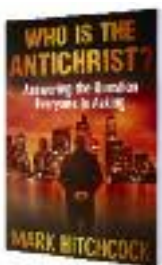
**Commentary:** This article exemplifies how globalism is not a conspiracy, but a must for a democratic, civilized world of nations to function.

Obviously, this is only the beginning, which will ultimately lead to global, international law and its necessary mechanisms of enforcement. When will that take place? To a certain degree it’s already functioning, as these individual, sovereign nations can slap fines on international corporations such as USA’s Google.

Is there a way out? Absolutely not. The world right now is so closely intertwined that it has become all but impossible for conflicts to

be solved except by international authorities. One can almost hear the footsteps of the final authority (albeit temporary): Antichrist. 7531

(See *Who Is the Antichrist?*, Item #2254, \$13.99.)




## USA

### Balloon Flights into Space

Let go of a balloon, and it will float up into the air, ascending higher and further away until it’s eventually out of sight. And maybe—if it’s a very special balloon—it will reach the stratosphere.



 That’s the simple, underlying idea behind the latest space travel venture. Space Perspective aims to use giant “space balloons” to bring eight people at a time to a 19-mile-high (30.6-km-high), pitch-black lookout for \$125,000 views of the planet Earth.

The company’s co-founders, Jane Poynter and Taber MacCallum, met while taking part in Biosphere 2—the famed, failed experiment of the early ’90s that explored the viability of human life in outer space. For two years in the Arizona desert, they lived with six others in a glorified greenhouse set up for completely self-sustained living, modeling what it would be like to set up a commune on Mars, for instance.

“Imagine, if you have eventually millions of people who have experienced seeing our planet in space, it could have a huge impact on our society,” Poynter says. “Look at astronauts’ behavior before and after going to space: Most, if not all, get more involved in

social and environmental causes after going, because they feel so much more connected to the human family after that experience. There could be a huge ripple effect.”

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

**Commentary:** Even if one would travel multiple trillions of kilometers away from earth (30 km looks like a joke), it does not answer anything. The article concludes by stating that astro-

nauts “get more involved in social and environmental causes after going, because they feel so much more connected to the human family after that experience.” In other words, this will improve mankind.

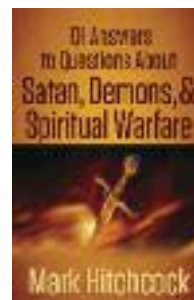
Not so, the Bible says. Isaiah 64:6 proclaims: “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses

are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” We sense that the real reason behind this fake space travel lies in the hidden desire of man to be magnificent, to reach for the stars. Here we are reminded of Isaiah 14:12-14: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the

north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.”

7539


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



 ISRAEL

## First Country to Ban Fur Clothing

The Israeli government has banned the sale of fur in the fashion industry, becoming the first country to outlaw the controversial clothing material that opponents say leads to the slaughter of millions of animals each year.

 Israel's fur ban includes several carve-outs, including one for educational reasons and another that permits residents to buy skins and pelts for religious purposes.

That means that married, ultra-Orthodox Jewish men will still be able to buy rounded fur hats known as shtreimels. (The vast majority of ultra-Orthodox Jewish men wear head coverings, the Pew Research Center found.)

A shtreimel is typically made of the fur from the tails of the Canadian or Russian sable, the stone marten, the baum marten or the Ameri-



**Minks in a cage at a mink farm in Pushkino, Russia, more than 20 miles from Moscow.**  
Yuri Tutov/AFP via Getty Images

can gray fox, according to the Jewish Virtual Library.

The United Kingdom banned fur farming in the early 2000s, and other European countries including the Netherlands, Belgium and the Czech Republic have also taken steps to end the practice, according to Humane Society International.

In 2019, California became the first U.S. state to enact a law banning the sale of fur products, which takes effect in 2023.

About 100 million animals are bred and killed each year to supply fur to the fashion

sector, Humane Society International estimates.

-[www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org), 14 June 2021

**Commentary:** Animal protection movements and agencies are global. Sooner or later, all countries will have to comply, at least to a certain degree.

It is of interest that the first clothing was manufactured with rather environmentally friendly material: "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3:7). But then we read in verse 21, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." Obviously, an animal had to die to temporarily cover the sins of Adam and Eve.




7538

(See *Bloodline*, Item #2355, \$16.99)

 USA

## Wage Theft Rampant in America

Since assuming office in Philadelphia, Larry Krasner has earned a national reputation as a radical new kind of district attorney. He created a task force focused on crimes against workers.

 One of the primary crimes this task force will focus on is wage theft. At the absolute simplest, wage theft is as it sounds—[workers don't] get fully paid for the work they've done. Often employers pull this off by paying for less than the number of hours worked, not paying for legally required overtime, or stealing tips. That's money that workers are legally enti-



**Is Your Employer Stealing From You?**  
Gearstd/Getty Images

tled to and that their bosses find some way of pocketing.

Wage theft isn't one of the crimes most prosecutors and politicians refer to when they talk about getting "tough on crime," but it represents a massive chunk of all theft committed in the U.S.A. A 2017 study by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) found that in the ten most populous states, an estimated 2.4 million people lose a

combined \$8 billion in income every year to theft by their employers. That's nearly half as much as all other property theft combined—\$16.4 billion according to the FBI. And again, EPI's findings are only for ten states. According to the institute, the typical worker victimized by minimum-wage violations is underpaid by \$64 per week, totaling \$3,300 per year. If its figures are representative of a national phenomenon, then EPI estimates that the yearly total for American wage theft is closer to \$15 billion.

There are some overt ways that employers rob their workers, like taking money directly out of their paychecks, but wage theft can take more complicated and subtler forms. Deliberately mislabeling workers as independent contractors in order to

(continued next page)



## Wage Theft (continued from page 32)

avoid paying higher wages for the same responsibilities as regular employees, for example, or asking employees to work while off the clock, or denying meal breaks, all technically fall under wage theft.

-[www.gq.com](http://www.gq.com), 8 November 2019

**Commentary:** It is interesting that the Bible has much to say about wage theft, although it is not often discussed in Christian circles. We may remember James 5:4: “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.” And Deuteronomy 25:4: “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” There are many other passages in the Bible about treating workers fairly: Deuteronomy 24:14-15, Leviticus 19:13, Malachi 3:5, Jeremiah 22:13, Luke 10:7, and 1 Corinthians 9:7-9, for example.

For employers, the application is clear: pay your workers what they have (or should have) earned. For the rest of us, it is useful to remember these verses when tipping servers in restaurants. Generosity is a wonderful Christian witness, especially when you are dressed in your Sunday best. In the United States, that means a minimum of 15%, even if—and probably especially if—the server is clearly having a bad day. Unfortunately,


over the years many servers have told us that they often see the worst tips on Sunday afternoon.

(By J. Froese) 7535  
(See *Heavenly Rewards*, Item #2357, \$14.99.)



## **RUSSIA** **Removes Dollar from Holdings**

Russia said it will eliminate the dollar from its oil fund to reduce vulnerability to Western sanctions.

 The National Wellbeing Fund will shift its dollar holdings into euros, yuan and gold, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said.

The transfer will take place within the central bank’s huge reserves. It affects about \$119 billion in liquid assets, of which about a third is held in dollars.

The move marks another milestone in the Russian leader’s drive to reduce his country’s dependence on the dollar after years of steadily increasing U.S. restrictions.

Russia’s wealth fund currently holds 35% of its liquid assets in dollars, worth about \$41.5 billion, with the same amount in euros and the rest spread across yuan, gold, yen and pounds.

After the change, the fund’s assets will be held 40% in euros, 30% in yuan, 20% in gold and 5% each in yen and pounds, Siluanov said.

The wealth fund holds savings from Russia’s oil revenues above a cutoff price and is used to help offset shortfalls when the market falls below that level. Together with illiquid assets, its total value is \$185.9 billion. With the economy recovering faster than expected, the budget deficit will be 1% of gross domestic product this year, Siluanov said, narrower than the 2.4% initially planned.

-[uk.finance.yahoo.com](http://uk.finance.yahoo.com), 3 June 2021

**Commentary:** The days when the US could hold economic leverage over most other

world powers through the dominance of the dollar, are fading. Another article we reported on recently revealed how China plans to use digital currency to bypass the dollar.

One also notices how the euro is the dominant currency in the pool of funds Russia is maintaining, with the Chinese yuan second. That is in line with Bible prophecy, with the continued dominance of Rome (the West), as seen in the fourth beast of Daniel, “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns” (Daniel 7:7). As often mentioned in our columns, the EU’s motto is “United in Diversity.” That sums up the trajectory the entire world is on, not just Europe. This is all to fulfill, “These have one mind, and

shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Revelation 17:13).

(By K. Farmer) 7523  
(See *Revelation 13: Satan’s Last Victory*, Item #1067, \$11.95.)



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# Action for Israel



MIDNIGHT CALL

“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes”  
(Judges 21:25).

BY ARNO FROESE

These are the last words in the book of Judges. Why was there no king? Because the Lord God was Israel’s king, their ultimate authority, their guidance and protection. But as we know, Israel rejected God from ruling over them.

When the prophet Samuel grew old, his sons “turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment” (1 Samuel 8:3b). The leaders of Israel united to express their desire to Samuel: “Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (verse 5).

The nation that was called by His name—the nation that was His people, segregated from all the nations of the world; a people destined to be above all the nations—now requests to be just like all the other nations.

What a message to us believers today! Looking at Churchianity, one quickly recognizes that the desire of the Church is to be like “the nations”; that is, the world. The Bible says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). Yes, we live in this world, but we must always keep careful guard not to be of this world.

Israel in olden days rejected the Lord as their king, desiring an earthly king they could admire. They wanted to be just like the other nations of the world.

After Samuel carefully enumerated all the disadvantages of a king ruling over Israel, we read the determination of the people: “Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 8:19-20).

This tendency of Israel—desiring to be equal to the nations of the world—is self-evident when one reads Jewish history. Equality was their goal, but for about 2,000 years, they were bitterly disappointed and repeatedly experienced brutal segregation instead.

It’s quite ironic that an atheist by the name of Theodor Herzl became the spokesman for the Jewish desire to have their own homeland—to live, work, and exist just as all other nations on planet earth. His vision, as the modern founder of the Zionist movement, was expressed in his book published in 1896 titled *Der Judenstaat* (“The Jewish State”).

It was in Switzerland on 28 August 1897, that about 208 delegates and 26 press correspondents attended this event called the first Zionist Congress. It was convened by Theodor Herzl.

Political Zionism was led by Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau in Russia. Later, Zionism developed into Practical Zionism, Synthetic Zionism, Labor Zionism, Revisionist Zionism, Cultural Zionism, Revolutionary Zionism, and Religious Zionism.

Another important person in the development was Nathan Birnbaum, who published political periodicals such as *Self-Emancipation!* He espoused “the idea of a Jewish renaissance and the resettlement of Palestine” ([jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org)). None of these founders and early thinkers saw the birth of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948. Theodor Herzl was born in Budapest, Hungary on 2 May 1860; he died only 44 years later, on 3 July 1904 in Austria.

Religious Zionism played a lesser part, since the overwhelming majority were Jews driven by the communist ideology expressed in the founding of kibbutzim, which they instituted in as many places as possible in the land of Israel.

Communist kibbutzim have in the meantime undergone a drastic change. While the early leaders of the nation used their experience from the Russian kolkhoz (kibbutz) system to till the land and grow food, the new kibbutzim are centers of high-tech knowledge. An article on nocamels.com reports how kibbutzim became global powerhouses:

A kibbutz, by definition, is a collective community in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture. But a century after the establishment of the first kibbutz, farming is no longer the main economic branch at some of Israel's 200 kibbutzim (the plural form of kibbutz). In fact, some kibbutzim have come up with such successful technologies and products, that their members—once socialist farmers—have become quite wealthy.

Founded in 1944, the pastoral Kibbutz Shamir, located in the Galilee, has traditionally relied on agriculture, like most kibbutzim. But in 1972 the Kibbutz founded Shamir Optical, which manufactures lenses for eyeglasses. It's now one of the world's only manufacturers of multifocal lenses, a multi-billion-dollar industry, thanks to its groundbreaking technology.

In 2010, French optics giant Essilor acquired half of Shamir optics for \$130 million.

Netafim—which currently employs 4,000 employees around the world—opened two additional plants in Israeli kibbutzim Magal and Yiftah, as well as 13 international manufacturing facilities in 11 countries, with representative offices in 110 countries.

In 2011, the majority stake in Netafim was sold to German investment group Permira, a deal that valued the drip irrigation giant at almost \$1 billion.

The uniqueness of this lies in the Jewish capacity to quickly change and adapt to present circumstances. That, incidentally, is what communist China does so well. They successfully operate a communist-socialist-capitalist system, capable of changing quickly.

Interestingly, Israel's leadership has been in limbo for the last few years, which has become quite visible in recent months. Four national elections took place in just two years. Israel's parliament, the Knesset, consists of 120 seats. The March 2021 election gave Likud 24.19% of the vote, or 30 seats. Sixty-one are required to form a government; thus, only a multi-party coalition can establish a government. [In the meantime, a razor-thin coalition deal was reached, in which Naftali Bennett will serve as prime minister for two years.]

According to the Jewish Virtual Library, "at least 110 parties have won representation in government throughout Israel's history." This really drives home the last sentence of the book of Judges: "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." And, in Israel's present circumstances, each party's own opinions must be bent or compromised in order to present a functioning, democratic government.

However, Israel is different; they have the Lord's unconditional covenant: "I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you" (Judges 2:1). <sup>MC</sup>

Action  
for Israel



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

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 FRANCE



# How a Single Piece of Mail Can Change Everything

A Muslim who is interested in the Christian faith receives a shipment of literature from the ministry. He says that what happens next is a miracle of God.

BY ELIA MORISE

**A** while back, I received an email from a Moroccan named Youssef. He lives in France and expressed an interest in the Christian faith. I sent a reply that same evening, because I noticed that he was very open to the Christian life, but knew little about Christ Himself.

He told me that his wife comes from a very radical and fanatical family, and that affected his freedom to watch Christian programming. He also wished he had a Bible that he could read outside the home. He gave me an address where I could send an Arabic Bible, literature, and CDs.

I received a thank-you email from him a week later. Our package had arrived, and he had started reading

the literature on his lunch breaks at work. He wrote: “The shipment with the Bible and CDs that I received through Midnight Call Ministries just spoke to my circumstances. I don’t know how to pass this good news along to my wife; do you have any good ideas?”

During my quiet time, I asked the Lord to open the wife’s heart. God led me to an Arab couple who lives an hour’s drive from Youssef in France. But what reason could there be for an Egyptian, Christian couple to visit a Moroccan, Muslim family?

I wrote to Youssef to see what he thought of the idea. He said things couldn’t get any worse than they were now. On the contrary, perhaps contact with an-



other Arabic-speaking woman in the country would do the trick.

So I called the couple in France, who were glad of the opportunity. We agreed that the three of us would fast and pray for a time beforehand. Youssef spoke to his wife, and then wrote to tell me that she had accepted the visit, which seemed like a miracle to him. The couple arrived at Youssef's at the agreed-upon time, and three days later Youssef wrote to me. His note brought great joy to my heart:

"Dear Brother Elia Morise, Thank you very much for your willingness to help—through New Hope Radio, the Bible, and the material that the ministry sent me. When the couple came to visit, I saw the answer to my prayer in my wife's behavior. I don't remember how the conversation started. My wife began with a lot of questions. During the visit, I discovered that she already knew a lot about the Christian faith from YouTube. God put the visiting wife to very good use. She answered my wife's questions with a great deal of wisdom and genuine love.

"When our visit was over, my wife actually invited our guests to stay for dinner. After we had eaten, the husband politely asked if he could read a story from the Bible. To my amazement, my wife answered before I could: Yes, please! After reading, he asked if anyone had prayer requests. My wife said that she was looking for work and was having trouble sleeping. The man and his wife then prayed with us.

"Dear Brother Morise, I'm getting goosebumps while writing this, but my wife got a good job the very next morning. Just today, we were able to buy a small car, and since that prayer my wife has been sleeping through the night. As I write to you, she's listening to spiritual songs and says that she feels an inner calm that she doesn't have when she hears the words of the Koran. That only caused fear in her, like the weight of a mountain on her head. My wife is very open right now. She asked me to forgive her. We are reading the Bible together and trying to learn how to pray from the tract your ministry sent. I'm asking that you and your ministry team continue to pray for us, that we will remain steadfast in the faith and grow. Also pray for protection from our nearby relatives, that they won't negatively influence my wife. Greetings to the whole Midnight Call Ministries team. May the Lord bless you, and bring much fruit to all of your activities and ministries."

Dear readers, on behalf of the Midnight Call team, I'd like to thank everyone who supports the Arabic-language missionary work through prayer and gifts. Since we order the literature in Egypt and send it out at no cost, there is a considerable expense. But this testimony is a fruit of these efforts, which would be impossible without our ministry supporters. Many thanks! (MR0521)



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

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# Thank You!

By **David Phillips** *Project Manager*

“All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen” (Titus 3:15).

A special *Toda Raba* (thank you very much) from the Ebenezer Home’s residents and staff to the Midnight Call Ministries team. You have helped make all of this possible by blessing our ministry as you have done these past years! We truly appreciate and love each one of you!

We also wanted to take a moment to thank you, our extended Ebenezer family, for going the extra mile with us ... and many miles since! It is with astonishment and a humble heart that we look back at what you all have accomplished. What an amazing gift and blessing to see the family of God pull together! We truly couldn’t have accomplished this without each one of you. We do not take these gifts for granted; we realize this is the kind provision of our Heavenly Father for His people in Israel. “I will bless those who bless you” is a promise from God to Abraham, that whoever blesses His offspring, He will bless. I am assured that our Lord will reward each one in a special way for your daily support, help, and prayers, as we continue to care for the elderly believers in Israel.

May He continue to encourage each one of you.

Stay tuned until next month, when we will share a special testimony with you all.



**Arno Froese presents David Phillips and Samantha LaGoy of the Ebenezer Senior Citizens’ Home in Haifa with a ceremonial check\* for the first \$656,000 collected by Midnight Call Ministries since July 2017, for the expansion of the home and the special projects mentioned monthly in the articles (\*actual transfer by periodic international wires).**



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

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

## EMPTY EARTH?... INSIDIOUS REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY... ISRAEL'S BORDERS

### Empty Earth?

Dear Mr. Froese,

[In an older copy of *Midnight Call*,] I read the Letter to the Editor titled "Millennium Sinners?" I have some concerns regarding your answer to the question of who will occupy the earth during those 1,000 years. You stated that "the earth will be repopulated (so) there must be a remnant of non-believers who enter the millennium." With that, I must disagree. As I read the Scriptures, it seems very clear that no one will populate the earth during those 1,000 years.

First of all, 2 Peter 3:10 states that "the Lord will come as a thief in the night (His second coming); in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." All the righteous will have been taken to heaven, where they live and reign with Christ for those 1,000 years in the mansions prepared for them. (As Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.") That leaves the earth empty and uninhabited; even by the lost/non-believers, who have all been destroyed.

During those 1,000 years, the earth will lie empty and have its "Sabbath rest," just as stated in Leviticus 25:1-5, 26:33-35, and in 2 Chronicles 36:20-21. Then, at the end of the millennium, as it says in Revelation 20:11-13, the dead are revived and judged in

the "Great White Throne Judgment." Next, death and hades are cast into the "lake of fire...the second death" (Revelation 20:14). And finally, heaven and earth are made new (Revelation 21:1).

-O.Snyder, CA

**Answer:** Based on Isaiah 11, there is to be a period on earth with totally changed conditions; in particular, the relationship between man and animal. That has not occurred and is yet future.

When? I believe it will begin after judgment has been executed upon planet earth, and only a remnant remains alive. Satan will be locked in the bottomless pit, and the earth will experience the rulership of Jesus Christ our Lord. He shall rule with a rod of iron; punishment will be instant. After the millennium, the final judgment (Great White Throne) will take place. Following that event, your quotation of 2 Peter 3 will be fulfilled. Leviticus 25—26 and 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 refer strictly to the land and people of Israel, with no relationship to the changed world.

I see no evidence in Scripture that we should reign with Christ a thousand years over an empty earth.

### Insidious Replacement Theology

To the Editor:

Even if I believe in the "Insidious Replacement Theology," why should that make me antisemitic? I love them as much as you do. I love and search the Scriptures as deeply and desperately as I believe you



do. I would love to believe like you as a fellow Christian, but I wonder if I could or would feel good to ask God to “preserve” me or my interpretation of Scripture from your honestly held belief. I read your commentary with interest and respect, even if the light doesn’t go on for me. I hope you can love me as a person despite my “Insidious Replacement” views, as I do despite your sincerely held “Physical Israel” views.

-W.Byler, ID

**Answer:** Replacement Theology is anti-Semitic and insidious because it requires Israel’s non-existence.

Replacement Theology claims that the Church is the continuation of Israel, yet Scripture highlights the distinct difference. If I claim to be Israel, I am still blind, as written in Romans 11:25, “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Israel has a promise distinctly separate from that of the Church. Remember Jesus’ words, “Salvation is of the Jews.” Reading Jeremiah 31, we notice that Israel’s existence as a nation is based on the existence of the universe (see verses 35-36). I find it most difficult to apply that to the Church.

### Israel’s Borders

Brother Froese,

My question is, what are the boundaries of the Promised Land that God has given His people Israel? I think I have a pretty good idea what the parameters are, on the west the River Egypt, on the east the River Euphrates, and Lebanon in the north and Arabia in the south. But what I’d really like is a map of the entire Promised Land that God gave Abraham and his descendants. Perhaps you could include one in a future issue of *Midnight Call*. Thank you for your help and especially your prayers. Be blessed, my brother, as we eagerly await His snatching away of His bride, of which we are part.

-J.Conti, CT

**Answer:** The borders are outlined to Abraham in Genesis 15:18. In the south, it’s the River of Egypt. In the north, the River Euphrates. The actual borders should run along the Jordan, but the 2½ tribes requested additional territory and it was granted.

My understanding of the borders, particularly in the south and east, is God’s declaration to Moses in Deuteronomy 32:49-52. That means, wherever the sole of the foot of Moses stepped was not Promised Land. Thus, although the map we often see indicates part of Edom and Moab, they are not original Promised Land.

### Falling Away

Dear Midnight Call,

Letters to the Editor is usually my first look, and often I wonder about the answers. In “Losing Salvation,” page 37 of the June issue, the answer is a bit confusing to me. My mind went to Hebrews 6:4-6: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” Hebrews 10:38: “Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” Hebrews 12:17: “For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.” Wonder how this compares with your answer. I think that one can lose salvation, even though some churches claim, “Once saved, always saved,” which is not biblical.

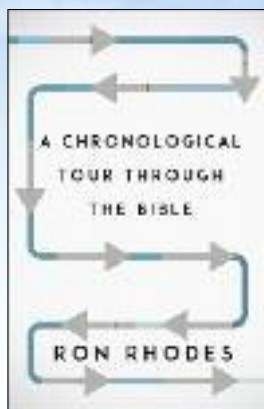
-K.Klater, MO

**Answer:** The distinction must be made between the flesh and blood person, and the new person, the spiritual one born of God (1 John 3:9 and 1 Peter 1:23). That new spirit cannot be lost; it belongs to God.

Hebrews 6:4-6 confirms that it is impossible to be saved, lost, and saved again: “to renew them again unto repentance.” That means Christ would have had to be crucified again. Hebrews 10:38 is answered by verse 39, which speaks of the born-again believer. Hebrews 12:16-17 reveals Esau, a “fornicator” and “profane person.” Esau hated Jacob (Genesis 27:41); therefore, the Lord says: “I hated Esau” (Malachi 1:2). The born-again believer can lose his reward—yes, even “suffer loss”—but not lose salvation (see 1 Corinthians 3:15). (MC)



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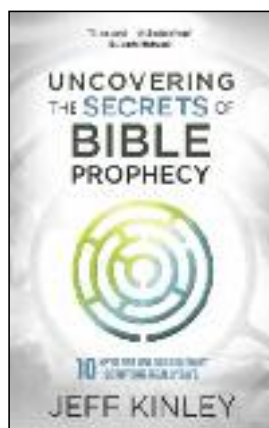
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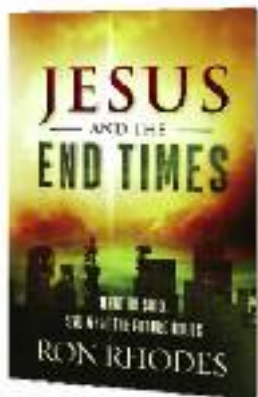
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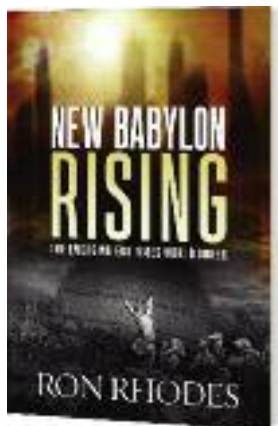
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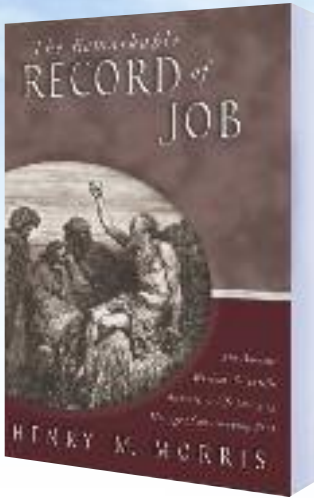


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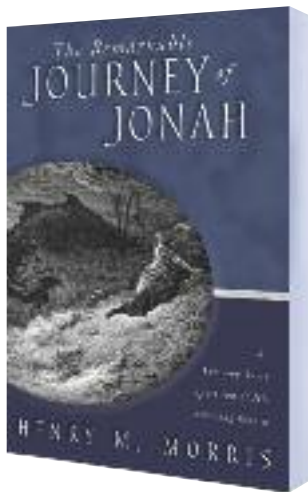
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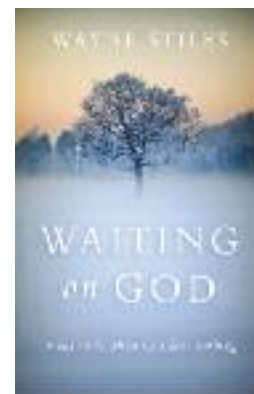
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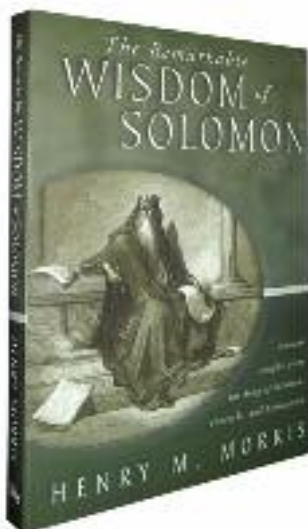


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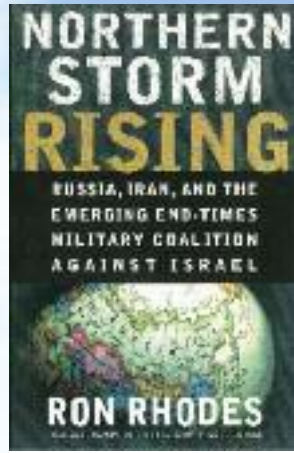
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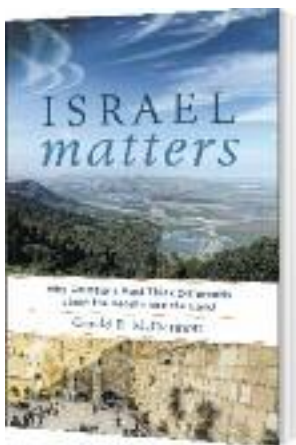
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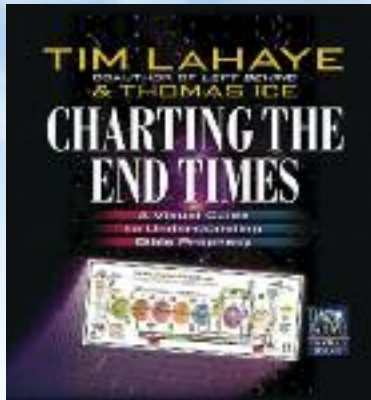
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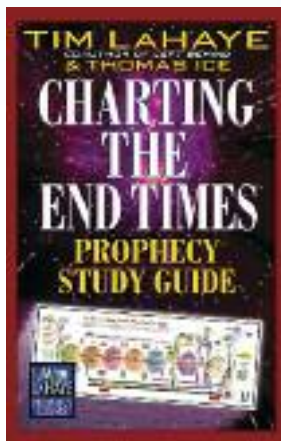
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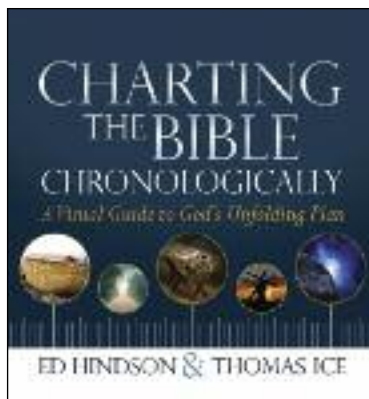
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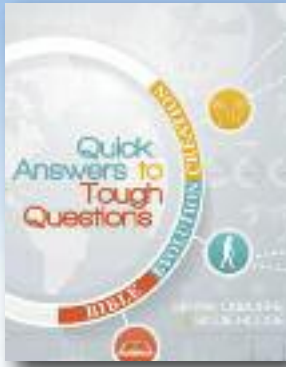
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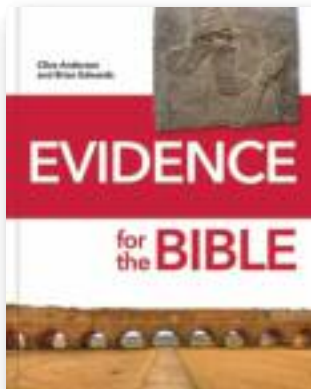
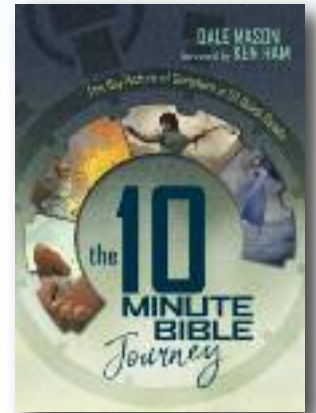
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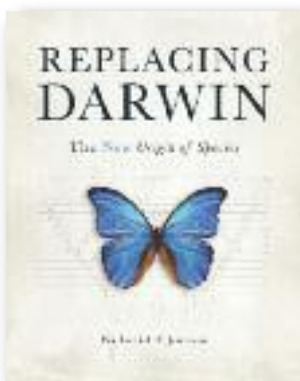
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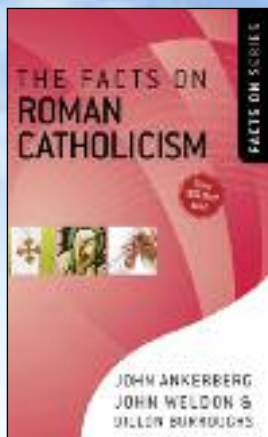
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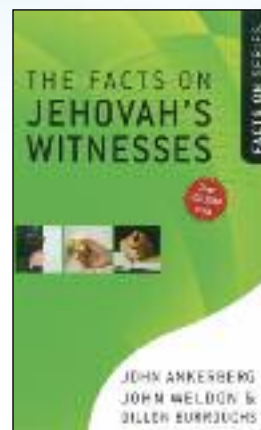
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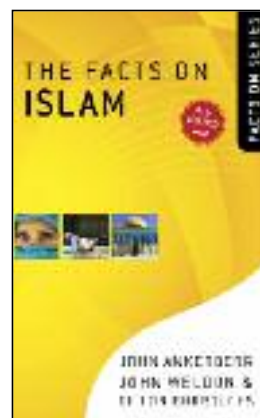
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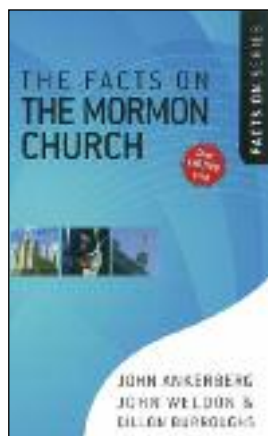
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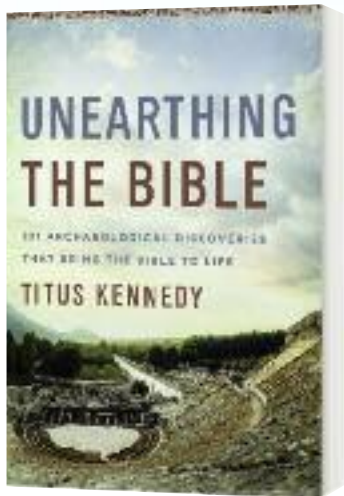
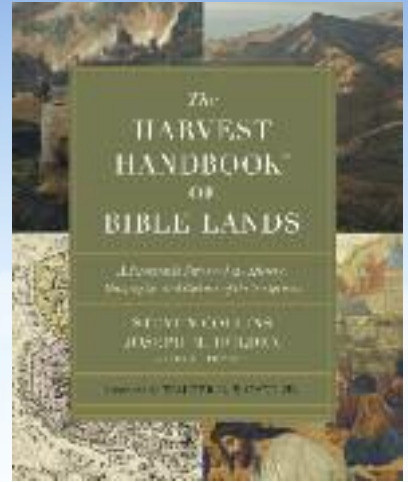
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