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Midnight Call

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Who Is the Biggest Villain of All?
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**Between
Saving
the Planet
and Saving
Souls** –Part 1

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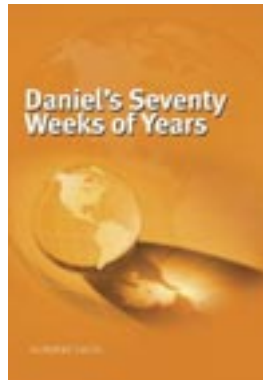
THE COMING MUSLIM INVASION?

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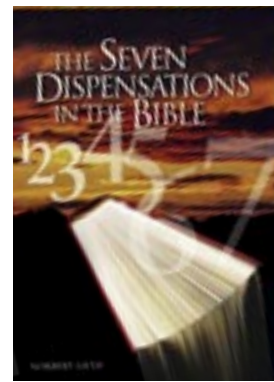
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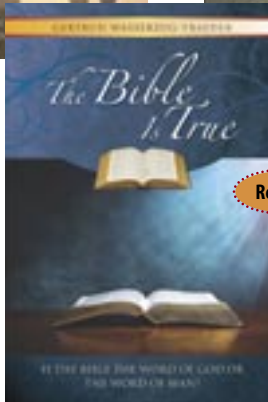
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By Hartmut Jaeger

This earth has known an even greater crisis, which was the cause of every subsequent crisis: the Fall. Because people overlook this worst of crises, this legitimate concern—to deal responsibly with Creation—becomes an ideology, a worldview. In fact, environmentalism is now being spoken of as a religion.



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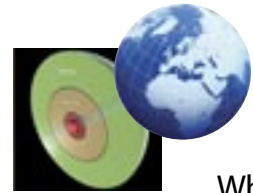
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The Four Seasons



By Norbert Lieth

Director of Missions, Midnight Call International

Once again, we are in the midst of spring. Aren't the four seasons we enjoy a beautiful picture of life itself? Man is born into the world, grows, develops, and thrives as it does in spring. Early childhood is like a delicate plant that needs special care and protection. Then kindergarten, school, puberty, and entry into the adult world of work. This is roughly how the spring of life goes.

Summer symbolizes man in full bloom. This is the time of his life in which he is most productive. He has attained independence and enjoys the power of these years. He is full of energy and momentum ... he has a job, a family, and mostly his own property. The summer of his life seems to offer him all things. He enjoys the sun-filled existence and is relatively carefree.

But then the autumn begins. Retirement age has come, the time when one starts to look visibly older. One becomes more vulnerable and weak; doctor's appointments increase; the cells no longer regenerate. Hair has long turned gray or

has fallen out altogether. One's appearance clearly changes. The beginning of autumn can still be very beautiful, sunny, colorful, and golden. This is also what the early retirement years are called: "the golden years." But then things change quickly.

The winter of life arrives. It gets gray, cold, and dark very early. One hardly ventures outdoors anymore. The whole body has become less mobile. And, just as trees enter a vegetative rest and many plants die off, so also for us, life comes to an end. Finally, one is placed into the earth and rests from one's labors (Rev 14:13). The soul and spirit of the believer, however, are in the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13).

Considering then this flow of life, how true are the words from Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years drawn nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

But then, it happens! Suddenly, after the wintertime in which everything was dead, new life erupts—resurrection, a

EDITOR'S NOTE

miracle! With the sun getting stronger, nature awakens again. Light is again absorbed. Water is transported from the roots of the trees with new force—to counter the gravitational pull of the earth—up to the highest branches. Buds emerge, then new and fresh green leaves appear. A landscaper explained to me that there are seven control mechanisms for the process of water absorption. In addition, there are “infinite other mechanisms such as respiration, photosynthesis, nutrient dynamics in the soil, and general growth factors of the environment, which make up the overall water balance in the vegetation world and are perfectly coordinated. Growth, flowering, fruit, would not be possible without water. Here we can only get a tiny glimpse of how wonderful God’s plan of creation is.”

Jesus is the rising sun. His appearance is certain and brings new life (Hosea 6:3). He is also the living water of life. When He enters into a life, natural laws are abolished. He is the guarantee of a resurrection. “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

Give thanks to God for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, and enjoy the spring with “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27b). ©

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OUR TASK

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

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

STATEMENT OF FAITH

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

WE BELIEVE Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, and shed His blood to save mankind. He died and arose bodily the third day, was seen by over 500, and later ascended into heaven.

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

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

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

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



Between Saving the Planet and Saving Souls –Part 1

Hartmut Jaeger

Where should a Christian's emphasis be in conversations about the climate? And how should believers be treating Creation? Commentary from a biblical perspective.

There is so much uncertainty, and there are so many radical claims. Climate protesters are gluing themselves to floors and works of art, or even blocking highways by sliding down ropes secured to overpasses. They're creating traffic jams, obstructing ambulances, and offering up their profession of faith: "The world is ending!" These climate activists are calling themselves the "last generation." Their name points to their perception that they're the final generation of humanity. What they mean is that they're the last ones who can avert the worst-case scenario, and they're breaking laws and resorting to coercive tactics to achieve this objective. Yet the traffic jams they cause are resulting in countless CO2 emissions, detours, and more waste... Security guards have to step up their efforts to carefully unstick the activists from their targets. As you can well imagine, all of this is enormously costly, contributes to pollution, and makes people angry. What can be done?

In his commentary on Psalm 46, Spurgeon wrote, "When it is very dark with us, let brave spirits say, 'Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm!' 'A fortress firm, and steadfast rock, Is God in time of danger.'" Psalm 46 says:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its

swelling. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. 'Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!' The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

What does this nearly 3,000-year-old Psalm have to do with the subject at hand?

This song of battle and fortresses probably emerged around 700 BC, while Jerusalem was under siege by Sennacherib, King of Assyria (cf. Isa 8; 36–37). The Psalmist is describing changes that relate to our topic: the earth trembles, mountains sink, floods rage, peoples rage (for example, the Russian invasion of Ukraine), the earth melts. There have actually always been tremendous changes in nature. There have been ice ages and "warm ages"—hot spells. There have always been earthquakes and floods.

When the previous German Chancellor visited the affected parts of the Ahr Valley after the 2021 "Flood of the Century," she pointed out how important it is to combat

Between Saving the Planet and Saving Souls: Part 1

God has promised to basically maintain the ecosystem. The visible proof that God is standing by this declaration is the rainbow.



climate change in this moment. Then local mayor Helmut Lussi asked to be permitted to speak. He explained matter-of-factly that in the annals of that locale, a comparable tidal wave was recorded as early as 1790, which couldn't have had anything to do with climate change (since there was simply no industrialization at that time). I can imagine the Chancellor wasn't too enthusiastic about this mayor's objection. Instead of saving the climate, disaster response could have been the order of the day.

Oh, how I wish for an approach to the problems of our time that's free from ideology!

Back to Psalm 46. Through every change, the Psalmist emphasizes the stability that comes thanks to God alone:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ... God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved ... The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

God can be relied upon. His Word is true. What He foretells will come to pass. And God has promised to basically maintain the ecosystem. The visible proof that God is standing by this declaration is the rainbow (Gen 9:12). “And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and win-

When crossing the Red Sea, “The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent” (Ex 14:14). “In quietness and in trust shall be your strength” (Isa 30:15b). That was the recommendation when Israel was seeking help as Egypt was overtaking them.

ter, day and night, shall not cease” (Gen 8:21-22).

How do we respond to change, in the context of the stability we have in and through God? Consider Psalm 46’s imperatives: “Come, behold the works of the LORD” (v. 8). “Be still, and know that I am God” (v. 10).

Calm resignation. This is the holy serenity of a godly man. If we have a deep connection to Him, then our troubled souls will find peace, even when faced with climate debate. There is power in silence. We read of how the Israelites reacted to the Assyrians’ threats: “But they were silent and answered him not a word” (Isa 36:21a).

This is an important principle: When crossing the Red Sea, “The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent” (Ex 14:14). “In quietness and in trust shall be your strength” (Isa 30:15b). That was the recommendation when Israel was seeking help as Egypt was overtaking them. I wish we would have this serenity. And who can we learn the most from? Who lived in an unjust system and didn’t bend, even when the behavior and demands of the rulers and the masses were absurd? And at the same time, shaped humanity more positively than anyone else?

Jesus Christ.

We learn from Him. Jesus came to save people. In the house of Zaccheus, the tax collector, He said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

His mission is to save people. In 2019, the government of Germany adopted a climate action program. It “supports people taking action to protect our climate.” Greta Thunberg said at the 2018 World Climate Conference, “What I hope we achieve at this conference is that we realize that we are facing an existential threat. This is the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced. First we have to realize this and then as fast as possible do something to stop the emissions and try to save what we can save.”

And in 2019, on the trip from Stockholm to Davos she said, “I want you to panic.”

Fear is the best way to manipulate people. It’s the same old song and dance that gets people to go along with anything, no matter how far-fetched.

“Climate rescue”—it’s a noble goal, but yet an illusory one. However, we all agree on one point: We must treat Creation responsibly. We have a mandate, and we take it seriously: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the gar-

Between Saving the Planet and Saving Souls: Part 1

Nearly every political decision today is being made in light of climate goals. Climate, climate, climate... The “climate” has been made into a god to whom everything else is sacrificed.



den of Eden to work it and keep it” (Gen 2:15).

One aspect of conservation: Please don’t pollute the environment! When I see all the things that are discarded in our forests, it’s clear that this mandate is being disregarded millions of times per day. In other words, we shouldn’t rob others’ access to a clean, livable environment. Our task is also to protect every life—including the unborn!

We have to ask ourselves whether Greta’s analysis is correct. Is this really “the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced”? Isn’t this someone who doesn’t have her eye on history at all—let alone redemptive history? This earth has known an even greater crisis, which was the cause of every subsequent crisis: the Fall. Because people overlook this worst of crises, this legitimate concern—to deal responsibly with Creation—

becomes an ideology, a worldview. In fact, environmentalism is now being spoken of as a religion. A hallmark of religion is pressure, even to the point of forced conversion. Unfortunately, that is how I have to describe the behavior of some climate activists. But this contradicts the Gospel of the Bible. God never forces anyone to act in their own best interests. The solution isn’t coercion, but a voluntary decision born from love.

Nearly every political decision today is being made in light of climate goals. Climate, climate, climate... The “climate” has been made into a god to whom everything else is sacrificed. Writer Cara Swan penned an article entitled “Childfree by Choice—World Childfree Day.” In it, she discusses how many of the world’s problems—and especially climate woes—could be

Proper acknowledgement of God and His gifts are key to properly engaging with each other and Creation.

remedied simply through voluntarily foregoing reproduction, limiting the population. “As the world increasingly groans under the overwhelming weight of too many human beings, we hear nothing but dire news from politicians about the problems, and ridiculous rhetoric about ‘maintaining the status quo’ regardless of how we have to damage the earth’s environment to do so. Our energy supply is becoming inadequate, gas prices soar, gridlock on the metropolitan highways, and yet no politician dares speak about the one aspect that would help curb these growing problems: Limit the population by incentives not to reproduce.”

For me, such absurd excesses of wanting to protect nature in every circumstance, no matter the cost, are the result of an evolutionist worldview. A wrong worldview sets wrong priorities. When nature is declared the supreme principle, priorities shift absurdly.

Instead, I’d prefer to heed what wise Solomon said: “Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day” (Prov 23:17). Let’s briefly review some recent history: after a time of domination by distant rulers, the authors of the US Declaration of Independence wrote that “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are

endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Acknowledgement of our Creator and His blessings can help us rightly address the day’s problems. In fact, every US state constitution makes reference to God (four of them using another term for the concept). When we remove God from the framework of our society, everything collapses.

Proper acknowledgement of God and His gifts are key to properly engaging with each other and Creation. As Solomon says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 9:10a). Wise choices require reverence and respect for God. Ernst Albrecht, former Prime Minister of Lower Saxony (Germany), once said, “The problem of our time isn’t the atomic bomb, but separation from God. When we solve this problem, we’ll also solve the other problems.”

That applies to the climate problem as well. We won’t be able to solve it in our separation from God! Our efforts will fail. I’ve asked myself how it could be that intelligent people can be so naïve as to believe that they can change the climate, saving the world. Ultimately, all of this is the fruit of having turned away from God and His Word.

(MR1122/1299)



WHO IS THE BIGGEST VILLAIN OF ALL?



Have you ever felt foolish when admitting to your Christian beliefs ... or in sharing the reasons you feel support your faith? As it is, most non-believers (i.e., atheists and skeptics of all kinds) intuitively know where the chinks and weak spots are in the Christian believer's armor. As such, skeptics can be quick to cast ridicule when hearing our feeble justifications.

By Wilfred Hahn

They may question: "Do you actually believe the children's story of Noah's ark ... Is this not laughable?" Or: "How could you believe the claim that a god created all things? Isn't this also a fairy-tale, specifically given that so many scholars believe evolution is an established fact. With as much as 90% of academics in some countries believing evolutionism to be true, how can Creationism be true? Surely, with so much pedigree, does this not rule out Creationism?"

Bible-believing Christians may find themselves discredited and humiliated. Indeed, we may identify with Jeremiah, who said: "I am ridiculed all day long; everybody mocks me [...] the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long" (Jeremiah 20:7b-8b).

What about the claim of the Bible-reader that the Christian God is benev-

olent and loving? Atheists, on the other hand, vociferously insist that God is dispassionate and bloodthirsty. The infamous question in their quiver of poisonous arrows is this: "If your God allows so much human suffering, how could He be benevolent?" Usually, this question serves as the winning coup de grâce ... cutting off all further discussion.

Unfortunately, many Christians are not ready to provide convincing refutation to these attacks. However, we must be ready to counter-argue the views of the unbelieving world. The Bible says: "I [...] urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people" (Jude 1:3b).

Next, then, let's contend for the truth of God and His character. We begin by examining the position that God is unjust, allowing many humans to suffer and die.

Preparing Counter-Arguments

Why does God allow geophysical disasters, causing many casualties and deaths? Given the high-profile nature of geophysical catastrophes (quakes, volcanoes, floods . . . etc.), this is a question that most will have pondered at some point in their lives.

As mentioned, many people refuse to believe in God because they reason He is unjust to allow so much death and suffering through geophysical forces and otherwise.

While one hears this question often, the reality is that this view is easily debunked. We need only ask one question: Who or what is the cause of most unnatural deaths?

As the reader will see, the answer we propose is an apologist “stopper.” It lays flat the view that there is no such person as a benevolent God. Before proceeding with our argument, we ponder the nature of God.

Who Can Stand Before God?

Most people who cast allegations against God, likely have no concept of the identity, character, and infinity of the Judeo-Christian Living God—Jehovah. The only god that many people will accept is one that they themselves can control and understand.

By presuming to judge and condemn things far above their understanding, they have implicitly placed themselves above God. What that means is they are actually

worshiping a very small and imperfect “god.” They fail to realize that their god is really themselves; thus, one that is capricious, inconsistent, and powerless.

The question to put to people that fault God is to ask them to define what the term “god” means to them. And, assuming they do not believe in God, they must also answer the question as to why evolutionary forces have given rise to so much human suffering around the world. The One and Only God, on the other hand, clearly states His position relative to humans: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9).

Moreover, the Bible says that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of [all] wisdom” (Psalm 111:10a), and that He is “changeless” (James 1:17). It should be obvious to all that He created all (Romans 1:20), and has proven Himself to mankind by accurately foretelling the future and resurrecting His Son.

Failing to recognize these truths, they remain blinded. Others may volitionally and spitefully choose not to believe in God . . . expressly defying Him. They are likely to be offended by the notion that there are answers “higher” than them, though they are made of flesh that returns to dust.

The Price of Choice

Let us return to our core questions: Why has God left natural systems and physi-



Up to the time of the Flood, the average lifespan was 930 years according to the Bible. Thereafter, a “longevity collapse” ensued.

cal phenomena to operate independently and to allow much human suffering? One reason we can point to is because God gave dominion over the earth to mankind, as well as the freedom of choice (the ability to voluntarily love God and to be obedient to His statutes).

Here in the 21st century, we live in a fallen age. Post the Great Flood, the physical properties of the earth changed. After the Great Flood-induced “reset,” human lifespans started to shorten significantly for those born after the Flood. Up to the time of the Flood, the average lifespan was 930 years according to the Bible. Thereafter, a “longevity collapse” ensued.

This had a major consequence in the post-Flood era. Abraham himself only lived to the age of 175 years, that being only 20% of the pre-Flood longevity average. At the time of the Flood, it is thought that weather patterns changed significantly. Genetic deterioration also began to occur, it is theorized. This led to health declines.

All of the above-mentioned happened as a result of the punishment of God . . . what mankind brought upon himself. The point we wish to highlight here is that human suffering increased in the post-Flood era. That is only part of the answer as to why human suffering is allowed in our world today.

Causes of Human Death

Natural disasters affect millions of people every year. According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), there were roughly 7,250 disasters in the world between 1998 and 2017, killing over 1.3 million people. Of those, flooding and storms account for the greatest number of disasters, while earthquakes caused the largest number of deaths. Close to 750,000 people died from earthquakes during that period.

Can God be blamed for all of these disasters?

Let us briefly look at humanity’s record of killing and villainy. In comparison, consider the decimation and disasters that have been caused by humans—actions for which they alone have been responsible.

Let’s review the record of human wars. WWI alone was responsible for the lives of some 50 million. WWII claimed another 20 million. Politically motivated deaths in the 20th century worldwide are estimated to be in the hundreds of millions (estimates vary significantly).

Zbigniew Brzezinski (former National Security Advisor in the Johnson and Carter administrations), in his book, *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the 21st Century* (1993), estimates that “politically motivated carnage” accounts for some 167 to 175 million deaths in

By far, the human is the biggest voluntary killer on the planet.

the 20th century. That equates to one casualty out of roughly every 90 people that lived during that period. That mortality rate is more than 50 times that of earthquakes and volcanoes combined—yes, 50 times greater.

What other causes of death are there, and who to blame? Consider suicide. Suicide is tragic. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the *Global Burden of Disease* study estimate that almost 800,000 people die from suicide every year. That's one person every 40 seconds.

What about homicides?

UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) reported a global average homicide rate of 6.1 per 100,000 population for 2019 (in their report titled “Global Study on Homicide”).

If one assumes the same homicide rate applied over the period 1900 to 2014, some 50 million people would have been murdered. That is a mortality rate more than 20 times that attributable to earthquake activity.

Still other statistics involving death and suffering could be considered. Nevertheless, we can firmly conclude the question of who the biggest villain of all is.

By far, the human is the biggest voluntary killer on the planet.

To the atheists, this is a devastating fact. Their god of “evolutionary forces”



must therefore be the most brutal of all. To the evolutionist's theory, not only has their god caused incalculable and pointless death and destruction, but also this has been committed by their supposed crowning product—the *Homo sapien*.

Thoughts to Ponder

Considering the casualties of all geophysical forces, has apparently earned God the title of “The Ultimate Supervillain” of all time (as presented on the website of the rabid atheist Richard Dawkins' Foundation for Reason and Science).

It certainly is strange that God should suffer such an epithet ... by humans no less.

After all, aren't *Homo sapiens* the biggest killers and villains of all time? (MC)



The Mount of Olives

(Sites of the Bible Series)

DR. RON J. BIGALKE

East of the city of Jerusalem are three (or perhaps four) limestone hills that form a mile-long ridge stretching in a north-south direction. Collectively, they are known as “the Mount of Olives”; yet popularly, that nomenclature refers only to the central pair of the hills directly east of the Temple Mount, a site that has tremendous significance for all three monotheistic faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

The prophet Zechariah referred to “the Mount of Olives” as “in front of Jerusalem on the east” (14:4). The Mount of Olives dominates the eastern horizon of Jerusalem just across the Kidron Valley, and one simply cannot miss its impressive outline. The mountain is mentioned in many biblical events and narratives; its archaeology

is intriguing, the history is plenteous, and religious enthusiasm for the site is unending.

Mount Scopus is the northernmost of the hills; it is the site of the city of Nob, where David ate the holy bread (1 Sam 21:1-9). The Mount of Offense (or Corruption) is the southernmost hill; it is the place where Solomon built three pagan temples to the

gods of Ammon, Edom, and Moab (1 Kgs 11:7-8; 2 Kgs 23:13), which Josiah later destroyed in his reforms (2 Kgs 23:13-14). The two principal hills have a slight dip between them and reach a height of 2,723 feet above the Mediterranean. Based upon the name, Mount of Olives, it is inferred that the slopes were thickly wooded in Jesus' time and abundant in the olives that determined its name, which would have provided oil for the Temple. The slopes are presently eroded and rocky, having been denuded of trees from the siege of Jerusalem by Titus and the Roman

armies, in addition to two world wars that also led to massive deforestation.

The majority of those who presently live on the Mount of Olives are of Arab descent (whether Christian or Muslim), yet the largest and oldest Jewish cemetery extends across the eastern, southern, and western slopes of the mountain. It is estimated that more than 120,000 people are buried there, including the traditional tombs of Haggai and Zechariah (and possibly Malachi also), and modern graves such as that of Menachem Begin (sixth prime minister of Israel). Centuries prior to the Lord's first coming, the Jewish people believed that the final resurrection would begin at the Mount of Olives, based upon their interpretation of Zechariah 14:4. The glory of the Lord departed from Israel at the Mount of Olives (Ezek 10:18; 11:23), and thus the Jewish people believed Messiah would enter Jerusalem by way of the mountain. Certainly, it was significant that Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives (Matt 21:1-11).



The Mount of Olives

The Mount of Olives in the Old Testament

The Old Testament does not reference the Mount of Olives with any degree of frequency. The first mention is in relation to David's flight from Absalom. David's son had wrested control of the holy city, so David and "his servants who were with him at Jerusalem" (2 Sam 15:14) fled by means of an eastern route: "And David went up the ascent of the *Mount of Olives*, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went" (2 Sam 15:30).

As already mentioned, Solomon used the Mount of Olives for idolatry: "Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon" (1 Kgs 11:7). This is very likely the reason why one summit was named the Mount of Offense. Prior to Jerusalem becoming the capital city, the Mount of Olives served as the eastern border, thus creating a natural barrier between it and the Judean desert. This may explain why the name Zion is used in reference to Jerusalem. The name Zion is interpreted as the city on the edge of the wilderness (the Judean desert), because it is derived from the Hebrew *ziya*, meaning "parched desert." Throughout the first and second Temple periods, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount were the focus of Israel's cultural, religious, and social life, and thus considerably influenced the prominence of the Mount of Olives. With the mountain close in proximity to the Temple Mount, it was given much religious significance and was important for cele-

bration of the High Holidays, for the coronation of Israel's kings during the united kingdom, and those of the southern kingdom when the nation was divided.

The Jewish calendar regulated the religious life of the Jewish people. Every aspect of their worship is based upon the timetable beginning on the correct day. Consequently, the Jewish calendar is based upon a series of monthly lunar cycles. This means the Feasts of the New Moon (*Rosh Chodesh* in Exod 12:1-2), Passover (Heb. *Korban Pesach*), and the High Holidays are based upon the beginning of each month. The appearance of each new moon was fundamental to the religious life of the nation, and the rabbinical court (*beit din*, "house of law") was responsible for announcing it with a fire signal from the Mount of Olives in times of antiquity. Prior to astronomical calculations being mathematically precise, the Jewish people watched the sky for the advent of the new moon. In ancient times, the Jewish court announced the new moon only after two credible witnesses testified. The New Moon is now determined by a preset calendar.

The proclamation to "go out to the hills, and bring olive branches and wild olive branches, myrtle branches, palm branches and branches of *other* leafy trees" (Neh 8:15) indicates that the mountain, in addition to the valley at its base, was plenteous in various kinds of trees. The prophet Ezekiel saw the departure of God's presence from Jerusalem and how it "stood over the mountain which is east of the city" (Ezek 11:23). In the future, Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives at the time of His second coming and the campaign of Armageddon,

thereby splitting the mountain in two as He stands on it (Zech 14:1-5).

The Mount of Olives in the New Testament

Jesus frequently traversed across the Mount of Olives as He entered and exited the city of Jerusalem. The Lord often visited Lazarus, Mary, and Martha—whose home was on the Mount of Olives—because the village of Bethany was located on the eastern slope. The trees were still plenteous in Jesus’ time (Matt 21:8). Jesus regularly visited the Mount of Olives, often as a place of retreat, in addition to the olive grove (Garden of Gethsemane) on the western slope of the mountain. One can easily see the city of Jerusalem from the mountain, and as Jesus did so, He denounced the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, who had the appearance of good yet lacked authentic spirituality (Matt 23:1—24:2). Jesus expressed indignation and grief for Jerusalem; and then, in His Olivet Discourse (24:3—25:46; Mark 13:3-37; Luke 21:5-36), pronounced impending judgment upon the city for its rejection of Him.

Scripture records three visits by Jesus to the Mount of Olives during the last week of His earthly life. The first was the triumphal entry, on the road winding around the south of the highest part of the Mount of Olives, from Bethany to Jerusalem (Matt 21:1). Jesus “approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mount that is called Olivet” (Luke 19:29). He wept as “He approached *Jerusalem*” and pronounced its judgment (vv. 41-44).

Jesus’ second visit during the week of His Passion was to deliver His Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:3—25:46), which was His response

to the disciples’ question, “When will these things happen, and what *will* be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” The content of His teaching is the prophesied destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and events related to the eschatological Tribulation, culminating in His second coming (24:4-41; 25:31-46). The Discourse also includes parables that exhort readiness for the Lord’s return, such as the faithful and sensible slave (24:42-51), the five wise virgins (25:1-13), and the good and faithful slave (vv. 14-30). The Lord’s final visit was on the evening He was betrayed. The night began with the institution of the Lord’s Supper in Jerusalem, from which Jesus “went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron” (John 18:1), “out to the Mount of Olives” (Matt 26:30), and then to the garden called Gethsemane.

Jesus ascended into heaven at the Mount of Olives, where He will return (Acts 1:6-12; cf. Zech 14:4). The significance of His ascension from that location is due to it being the place where the Jewish court signaled God’s people for worship. God has signaled all people worldwide to faith and repentance in Jesus, the Light of the world. For this reason, the two angels asked and declared, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). In other words, the angels urged the disciples (and now, with application to the church today) to signal the good news that Jesus Christ has ascended and will return again.

(1297)

The Ukraine War

The Great Disillusionment and the Reliability of Biblical Prophecy



Johannes Pflaum

Ukrainian soldiers in defensive position in the east of the country

What current developments can teach us about our personal lives, Bible prophecy, and the future.

With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a dream world that had formed around years of apparent prosperity and peace, collapsed for large parts of the Western world. Even some professing Christians were suddenly confronted with the harsh reality of a fallen humanity, which until that point had been hiding in the haze of the mainstream and feel-good background noise. There were already plenty of terrible, troubled spots on our planet before the Ukraine war, and still are. Yet despite the various terrorist attacks and tremors in recent years, many nearby events nonetheless seemed so far away. Even as Christ followers, we were in danger of being lost in the spiritual fog of a material and ideological “peace pipe.” By contrast, God’s Word

Without speculating on how it will play out, the events in Ukraine are also a wake-up call for those of us in the Western world to reorient our lives toward Christ and His coming.

always calls for sobriety, especially concerning the last stretch before Jesus' return. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom 13:10-14).

Paul is contrasting spiritual alertness with a sleepy dream state. He makes it clear how this plays out in practical life. He calls on followers of Jesus to understand the times. The day being close at hand should mean that we're letting our lives be determined from that point. Without speculating on how it will play out, the events in Ukraine are also a wake-up call for those of us in the Western world, to reorient our lives toward Christ and His coming.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, and the Iron Curtain with it, many Bible-

faithful Christians saw it as the initiation of the final developments before Jesus' return. Just prior to that, conflict in and around Israel had taken on a new dimension with the first Intifada. As a result of the first Iraq war, Israel's airspace was under control for the moment. But then things went in a direction that Jesus' followers hadn't been expecting: for about three decades, everything seemed to progress smoothly and harmoniously. The prosperity and the wellness boom continued in spite of every “hiccup” and horror (the second Iraq war, 9/11, stock market turbulence). With the fall of the Iron Curtain, Europe enjoyed a freedom of belief that is likely unique in all of history. It lulled people into a dangerous spiritual sleepiness. And yet, everything seemed to go well somehow. There was tension in the Middle East and Israel and a series of terrible attacks and military conflicts, but everything calmed down again for the most part. After the end of World War II and the founding of the State of Israel, well-meaning end-time forecasts sometimes overshot the mark and the opposite actually came true. Jesus is coming back, certainly, but maybe a few hundred or even thousand years from now. Who can tell? In the end, everything seemed to be going well. The danger grew that true imminent expectation would give way to more of

The Ukraine War

Our gratitude for this unique time of religious freedom and prosperity, must always be combined with a critical self-examination of our failure as Bible-believing Christians.

a theoretical, theological thought experiment. It was a bit like philosophizing about the distant Arctic from a cozy South Sea beach.

A charismatic church congress took place in Nuremberg, Germany in 1991. I can still vividly remember how Peter Wagner said at the time that a new wave of revival would wash over Europe in the wake of Germany's reunification. I recall how his enthusiastic statement was greeted with euphoric applause. The external attitude toward life in recent decades has probably led to the growing spread of transformational theology among evangelicals. Instead of placing their hope in Jesus' imminent return, many are now more concerned with changing society, culture, even world population—all under the banner of the "Kingdom of God." A social gospel also began to spread, at the expense of the uncompromising message of heaven and hell. Three decades after that Nuremberg conference, there has been no revival originating in Germany. Instead, Germany has set the pace and pioneered the destruction of the last Judeo-Christian values that remained in Europe. Precisely the opposite of what was "prophesied" at Nuremberg came true. Using sober observation, it's clear that apostasy from God and His truth (2 Thess 2:3)—which precedes the appearance of the Antichrist

and Jesus' return—has become tangible at all levels.

I will also never forget how the USSR's collapse, which resulted in the democratization of much of eastern Europe, pushed a prophetic and eschatological perspective even further off the radar, even for Christians faithful to the Bible. Russia's presumed major role in end-time events seemed to have ended with the empire's collapse. As I mentioned before, there have been numerous cruel conflicts in this world over the years. But for those of us in the Western world, they seemed far away, just like Jesus' return. At the same time, there was a decline in the spiritual "vision" needed to fully appreciate how neo-Marxist ideology was creeping into Western society. There were occasional mentions of a resulting degradation of ethics, but it wasn't seen as anything serious. After all, there was still personal freedom and prosperity.

When the coronavirus pandemic broke out in the spring of 2020, it suddenly became clear how fragile our "safe" conditions truly are. Nevertheless, many were hoping and thinking that it would only be temporary, and then everything would return to the way it had been. For many, the abrupt dismantling of constitutional liberties, as well as increased surveillance, has been eclipsed by the systematic scaremongering and

Interestingly, the war in Ukraine has also created new tensions between Russia and Israel.

concerns about personal health. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February 2022 also caught many by surprise. Although the process had begun as early as 2014, people simply didn't want to see the reality. Politicians have been talking about a turning point ever since.

But from a biblical perspective, we're not experiencing a turning point at all. Instead, we're simply living through the continuation of the history of humanity, far away from God. It includes the constant interplay of war and peace, relative calm and violence, hate and tolerance, from small to large. Continuing the thought from the introductory Bible verses, it's like being disenchanted out of our dream state. Put another way, "Welcome to the reality of fallen humanity." Are we aware of this as Bible-believing Christians, or are we happy to fall back into our drowsy reverie after a momentary flinch?

We should be grateful for all the years of apparent peace and freedom of belief in the Western world. As I said before, this is a unique epoch in history. But at the same time, the sad reality behind the smoke screen of external circumstances must not be forgotten. I present the legalized killing of the unborn in the womb as a representative example of this reality. Hundreds of thousands are killed in this way each year in the United States, and

I could mention a whole range of other ethical issues here. So, our gratitude for this unique time of religious freedom and prosperity, must always be combined with a critical self-examination of our failure as Bible-believing Christians.

The developments of the past few years and the open eruption of the Ukraine war made it clear that interpretations of biblical prophecy pointing to Russia's very probable eschatological significance (cf. Ezek 38—39)—which some had discarded—are still relevant. Biblical prophecy speaks of a prince and country from the extreme north in connection with Israel. Interestingly, the war in Ukraine has also created new tensions between Russia and Israel. This is one example of how quickly the stars can align, and biblical predictions no longer considered "up-to-date" appear to be completely current. Unfortunately, there was also some speculation about Russia's role in prophecy that should be rejected. However, this needs to be clearly differentiated from the basic course of biblical prophecy and its meaning. As a result of the developments of the past few decades, there are parts of the evangelical movement that are increasingly divesting of an eschatology based on the history of salvation, succumbing to the same mistake that "eccentric end-time prophets" were often accused of: want-

ing to understand the Bible solely on the basis of current events.

From a perspective of Bible prophecy, it had been clear since the end of the Cold War that European disarmament would only be an interlude. Discord and strife (cf. Rom 3:15-17) are among the hallmarks of a humanity detached from God. Only the coming Lord will bring true peace (cf. Is 9:6). Only then—and not before—will God’s visible kingdom begin and swords be beaten into plowshares (Mic 4:3). Additionally, biblical prophecy says that the time preceding Jesus’ return will be shaken by increasing war, armed conflict, and terror (cf. Matt 24:7; Luke 21:11; Rev 6:2, 4, 8, etc.). The future phase of the Antichrist’s sham peace will also end in an unprecedented rearmament. The prophet Joel tells us that in the end, the nations will beat even their plowshares into swords (Joel 3:10). Today, we can see both how reliable the prophetic Word is and how certain circumstances can seemingly change overnight. The latest end-time developments are casting their shadow.

Another prophecy is also casting its shadow over recent developments and the situation in Ukraine. First Thessalonians 5:3 says, “While people are saying, ‘There is peace and security,’ then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”

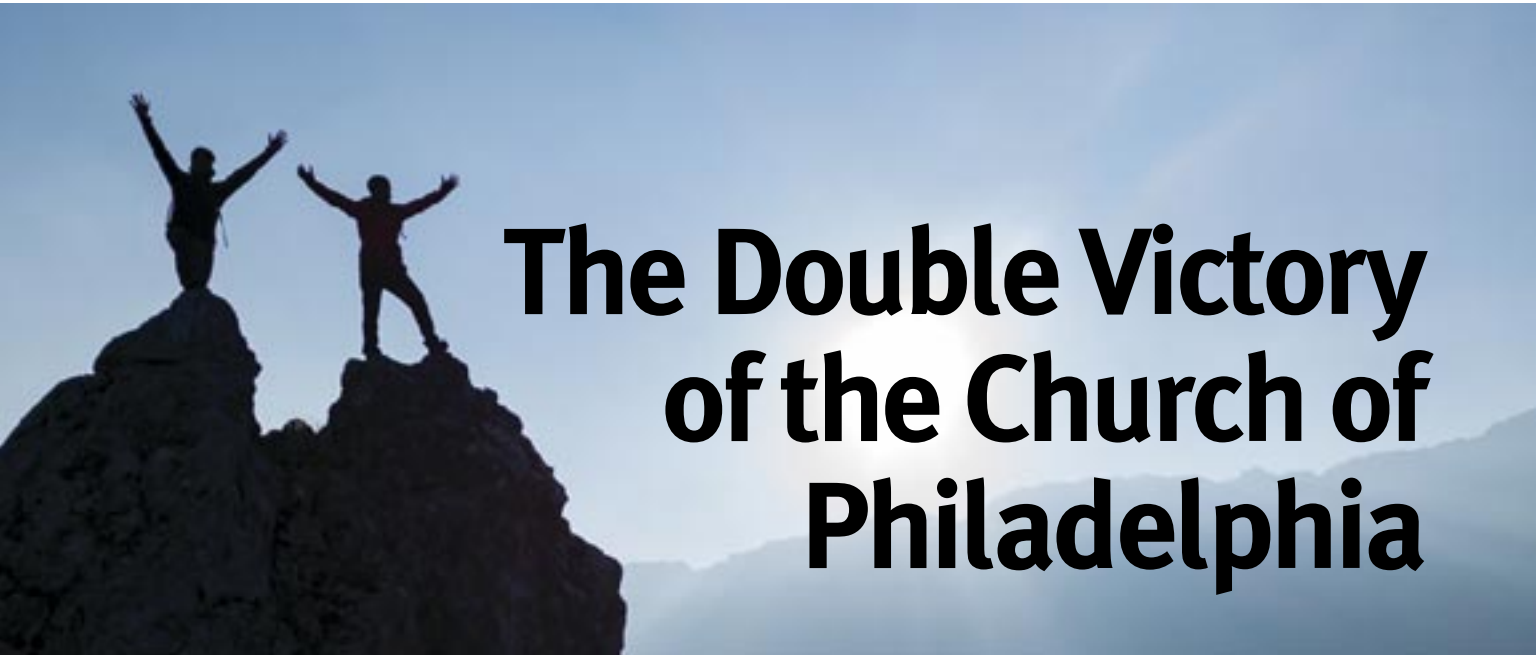
Many countries in western Europe were caught off guard when war broke

out. In no time at all, after years of disarmament, a new armament spiral is emerging. It’s also very thought-provoking how apparent pacifists became armament advocates overnight. The same will happen before Jesus returns. We may be much closer to that time than we think.

This is why the situation around Ukraine is a wake-up call to the Church of Jesus. There’s a high probability that we’ll experience even more surprising and far-reaching events in the near future. We can be thankful for all of the external possessions that we still have. Even in the midst of painful cutbacks in our prosperity, we’re still doing undeservedly well in comparison with much of the world. But we shouldn’t allow ourselves to be dazzled or taken in by the developments around us. Everything points toward world events being on the home stretch toward Jesus’ return, as incidents are accelerating rapidly.

Waking up from sleep also means that our life is being shaped anew by Christ, and that we’re living in awareness of His imminent return. Our Lord is coming soon! It isn’t a matter of speculating or calculating times, but of a difference in our practical life (also spoken of by Paul in our passage from Romans). If the night was already advanced in his time and the day was near, how much nearer must it be now?

(MR1122/1303)



The Double Victory of the Church of Philadelphia

An interpretation of the last book of the Bible. Part 37. Revelation 3:8-9.

Wim Malgo (1922-1992)

The Lord states a twofold reason for giving the church of Philadelphia an incredible open door: “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength...” (Rev 3:8).

This is a message of hope for everyone who is hopelessly weak! Equip yourself with the Spirit’s authority for compelling testimony. It is the way God glorifies Himself in weakness. “He weakened my strength in the way...,” says Psalm 102:23. Why? Paul gives the answer: “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor 1:27-29).

He later adds, “...When I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor 12:10), because the Lord had told him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (v. 9). As a result, he could testify, “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor 2:4).

As to the second reason for the open door that the Lord granted, we have to look back at the rest of verse 8: “...and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” The church of Philadelphia had the courage of their conviction to be holy radicals for Jesus. They took—and this should be emphasized again—the *whole* Word seriously. The believers in this church weren’t appeased by the vapid argument, “You don’t need to be so strict; you don’t need to be so rigid,” and they didn’t allow themselves to be intimidated. They held fast to the Word

The Double Victory of the Church of Philadelphia

of steadfast endurance, in defiance of all trends of their day.

The great difficulty is that many people want both the Lord and the world—and have neither. They're like flies that go from dung to cake and back again. But the Lord said, "...Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

The second struggle of faith in Philadelphia was to oppose the religious world: "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (Rev 3:9).

Pergamos had to contend with the throne of Satan—that is, his cruel dominion (Rev 2:13). Smyrna (Rev 2:9) and Philadelphia, on the other hand, were confronted with the "synagogue" ("Satan's school" in the Luther Bible)—religion without Jesus Christ. This means bitter enmity with the true Church of Jesus. This struggle full of confrontations continues today and is increasing in intensity, since religion without Christ at the center (whether Jewish, as here, or even nominally Christian) always ends in anti-Christianity.

The front lines of true, sanctified children of God are clear to the world—"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal 6:14). But the "synagogue of Satan" is religious satanic seduction personified. We read about this in 2 Corinthians 11:14: "...Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." If anyone allows himself to be religiously deceived, accepting the Christian religion without the Cross and without wholehearted devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, then he is in Satan's claws.

In those days, it was Jews who were vehemently denying salvation in Christ to the faithful of Philadelphia and asserting, "We have the only correct belief; we have righteousness before God." But the Lord says they were lying: "which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie" (Rev 3:9). Today, it is "Christians" without Christ whose leaders address them as "dear church," who despise and scorn the present-day "church of Philadelphia." Anyone who is wholeheartedly following Jesus Christ is familiar with this atrocious struggle with the religious world, with the "Christians" without Christ arguing, "We've been baptized and confirmed. We 'do right and shy from no one,' so everything's just as it should be." But the Lord Jesus made this wonderful promise to the church in Philadelphia: "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (Rev 3:9).

This means nothing other than: People will rush out of the "synagogue of Satan," out of sham Christianity because of your faithful, powerful testimony. They will justify you by accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior. They have recognized that there is a living communion between the Lord and His own, instead of a dead form of belief: "...to know that I have loved thee."

It's easier to lead a prostitute, a murderer, a thief, or any criminal to Jesus than it is to lead a "Christian" without Christ. But the Lord promises that this too will happen. And it has! Countless times to this day, the miracle has happened that "...a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

(MR0922/1285)




WORLD FOCUS

WORLD

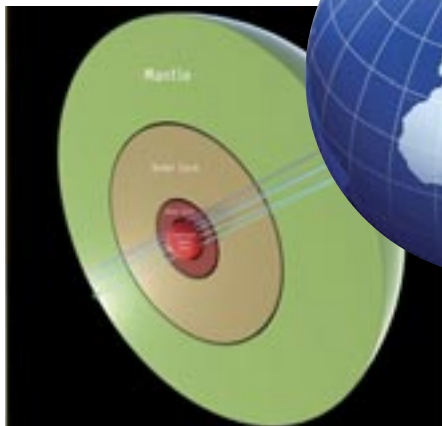
What's at the Center of Earth?

Geoscientists first suggested that the Earth's core might have an additional, imperceptible layer about 20 years ago, according to a news release. Now, using new data sets collected by measuring the seismic waves of earthquakes as they passed through the Earth's center, researchers have finally detected that innermost core, the new study said.

 "In this study, for the first time, we report observations of seismic waves originating from powerful earthquakes traveling back and forth from one side of the globe to the other up to five times like a ricochet," study coauthor Dr. Thanh-Son Pham, a seismologist and postdoctoral fellow at the Research School of Earth Sciences at the Australian National University in Canberra, in an email.

When it came to assessing the Earth's core, researchers looked at how fast seismic waves traveled through it in different directions, and they found the innermost inner core changed the speed of those waves in a different way than the layer above it, the center core's outer shell.

The new finding also "gives us a glimpse of what might have happened with other planets," Pham



Drew Whitehouse/Son Pham/Hrvoj

said. "Take Mars as an example. We don't understand yet why (Mars' magnetic field) ceased to exist in the past."

-www.cnn.com, 21 February 2023

Commentary: Wikipedia reveals: "In terms of depth below the surface, the Kola Superdeep Borehole SG-3 retains the world record at 12,262 meters (40,230 ft) reached in 1989 and is still the deepest artificial point on Earth." Sounds impressive, but when compared to the earth's diameter of 12,756 kilometers (7,917.5 mi.), it's barely scratching the very surface of the earth.

Doubtless, as time goes by, there will be more discoveries. Where will it lead? In plain words, nowhere. Finding out what lies at



the center of earth is just as impossible as the much acclaimed and admired space re-

search program. From the eight planets in our solar system, Mercury is closest, and it is some 38 million miles from earth. It is estimated that the temperature during the day on Mercury is 430° C (806 F), and the temperature at night is -180° C (-292 F). Anyone game to visit?

Our interest lies in the reason man seeks the unknown. It is simply his refusal to accept the Genesis record. Before man discovered the earth was round, Job declared more than 3,500 years ago: "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). Chapter 28:28 concludes: "And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the

Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

7965


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



 **A U S T R A L I A**

UN Blocked from Inspecting Detention Sites

A United Nations body committed to preventing torture has terminated its review of Australian places of detention after authorities in some states refused to let them in—joining Rwanda as the only other country where a visit has been terminated.

 Australia is one of 91 signatories to the agreement, which allows inspectors to make unannounced visits to all places of detention, including police stations, immigration detention centers and social care institutions. The UN and human rights groups have long criticized Australia’s treatment of detainees, particularly refugees and asylum seekers who are subject to long periods of offshore detention if they arrive in the country by boat.

In partial findings published in November, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) said it was concerned about the mandatory detention of people who arrive in Australia without a valid visa, including children, and that there was no maximum time for their detention.

The SPT also urged Australia to stop using physical restraints to discipline children in supervision and end the practice of solitary confinement for children.

Australia’s Human Rights Commissioner Lorraine Finlay said Australia still had a “long way to go” to meet its min-



A UN prevention of torture committee has canceled a visit to Australian places of detention citing "obstacles" imposed in some states.

imum obligations, and was at risk of being named as a country of “significant concern.”

-www.cnn.com, 21 February 2023

Commentary: When it comes to freedom and human rights, particularly regarding illegal immigrants, Australia has an excellent record compared to most other countries in that part of the world. Yet Senior Australian researcher with Human Rights Watch Sofie McNeill concludes: “Failing to cooperate with UN experts in providing unrestricted access to sites of detention sets a terrible example to other governments in this region who don’t need more excuses to defy the UN.”

This subject is unpleasant, not only for Australia but also for most countries in the world. The mistreatment of poor people seeking refuge is well documented. Even in Europe, which claims to be the freest and most prosperous continent on earth, there is much evidence of negligence in implementing human dignity and

compassion. Statista.com showed that over 5,100 people drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in 2016, and 2,367 in 2022.


Our concern as believers lies in supporting the weak, the rejected, the hopeless. From several sources in Europe, we gather that a relatively large number of newcomers—whether from Africa, Asia, or the Middle East—make up the largest percentage of those who break through to a living faith in Jesus, thus building His Church. Let us continue to remind ourselves to pray that many of these poor and desperate people will find the liberating light of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and be added to the citizenship of heaven. 7966

(See Heavenly Rewards, Item #2357, \$14.99.)

 **G E R M A N Y**

Struggling to Find Skilled Immigrants

Germany faces a fundamental migration dilemma. Refugees from poor and war-torn countries flock to it as a haven while skilled professionals from outside of the European Union—workers the German economy sorely needs—tend to shun it.

 Think tanks forecast that the German labor market could be short as many as 7 million workers by 2035. “We need labor and skilled worker immigration from third countries,” Vanessa Ahuja of the German Federal Employment Agency told German media, referring to non-EU countries. Her office’s goal: 400,000 new professionals a year.

(continued next page)

Skilled Immigrants

(continued from page 28)

In a U-turn from a decade ago or so, Germany has realized that it needs prodigious labor reinforcement from abroad to plug the gaps and has sent out word that they are welcome. And, in fact, there has been a positive response—mostly though from professionals within the EU. Romanians, Poles, Spaniards, Italians, and Bulgarians above all flock to Germany, which the EU's freedom of movement principle makes relatively easy for a fellow EU citizen.

But since all of the EU's 27 members are currently experiencing more deaths than births—Germany's fertility rate of 1.58 children per woman as of 2021 may be a hair above the EU average of 1.53 that same year, but it is still far from the 2.1 birth rate necessary for a population to grow—the entire continent is waking up to the fact that their economies will require ever more foreign workers as populations age and the downward demographic curve steepens. In Spain and Poland, people are having even fewer babies than Germans. This means that in the near future, Germany will not be so free to draw from the European pot as it does now.

“The Polish labor market needs workers today,” Ulrich Kober, a migration expert at Bertelsmann Stiftung, a German research institute, told *Foreign Policy*. “I fear that the inner EU labor migration that Germany has benefited from so much is coming quickly to an end. We've got to find another solution.”

And the predicament is more dire by the year: The number of Germans at retirement age will rise from 16 million people today to at least 20 million people by the mid-2030s. In the 2040s, the number of people aged 80 or over will increase and with them, their need for long-term care. Meanwhile, the number of working-age people will drop by between 1.6 million and 4.8 million people in the next 15 years, according to the Federal Statistical Office.

-foreignpolicy.com, 22 March 2023

Commentary: This is a problem felt throughout Europe and, in fact, most of the industrialized world. There are just not enough working-age people to fill all the jobs. This issue has long been predicted but has become especially critical in recent years. The cause is clear: average family size must include at least 2.1 children to maintain a nation's population, and this has not been the case in almost all European countries for decades now. Pro-family policies such as generous maternity and paternity leave help but are unable to reverse the trend in Europe (as well as in Asia).

The only other temporary solution to declining population is immigration, despite how politically unpalatable it often is. However, as the article states, the influx of workers from Eastern Europe (made possible by open borders within the European Union) has nearly dried up as the economies of these countries have improved (again, thanks in large part to the EU). There is an

even more dire population crisis in the East. The article also reported that during a trip to Ghana, West Africa, German Finance Minister Christian Lindner asked an auditorium full of college students, “Who would consider working in Germany?” Shockingly, not a single hand was raised.

Although *Foreign Policy* points to unwelcoming policies, bureaucracy, and a difficult language (German), the often-overlooked fact is that the economy of Ghana and a number of other African countries is rapidly improving. Outside of active war zones, famine, and other dire situations, the motivation for migration is declining throughout the world. Quite frankly, the material benefits of the global economy are available in nearly every city of the world these days.

Young people are clearly a vital resource that countries will be increasingly clamoring for in coming years. It is no wonder the Bible states: “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed when they speak with

their enemies in the gate” (Psalm 127:3-5, NASB). 7969

-By J. Froese


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



 CHINA

2,400-Year-Old Flush Toilet

Archeologists in China have found the remains of what may be the world's oldest known flush toilet.

 Broken parts of the 2,400-year-old lavatory, as well as a bent flush pipe, were unearthed last summer by a research team among ancient palace ruins in the Yueyang archaeological site in the central city of Xi'an, according to Chinese state media.

Liu Rui, a researcher at the Institute of Archeology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who was part of the excavation team, told state media the toilet would have likely been reserved for high-ranking officials during the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) and the later Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). He added that servants would likely have poured water into the toilet bowl every time it was used.

"The flush toilet is concrete proof of the importance the ancient Chinese attached to sanitation," Liu said, adding that there were very few records of indoor toilets in ancient times.

Prior to the newly announced discovery, the invention of the first flush toilet was widely credited to English courtier John Harington, who supposedly installed one for Queen Elizabeth in the 16th century, though 4,000-year-old drainage systems that might have been connected with toilets have been found in northwest India.



The ruins from Yueyang, the former capital of Qin State and later the first capital of the Han Dynasty, were discovered in the 1980s. The recent find is part of a broader effort to understand ancient Chinese dynasties, including how people lived and how their cities were constructed, the Institute said in a statement announcing the discoveries.

-www.cnn.com, 21 February 2023

Commentary: It seems unpopular to say or publish anything positive about China. Readers sometimes take offense at such reports. Why? Quite obviously, it is due to the sources they prefer to enlist in their arguments. What is our interest? It is not geopolitical, for we, as children of God, are in this world but not of this world. It makes no difference which country we live in or to which political philosophy we adhere; the bottom line is still, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

From prophetic perspectives, we see China as a rising power in oppo-

sition to the Western-dominated powers. The result? The East having equal powers to the West, thus preparing the way for true globalism. Incidentally, globalism has already been practiced for several decades on an economic level. The West depends on the East as much as the East depends on the West. Yet in the end, what is written in Revelation 17:13 shall be fulfilled: "These have one




mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." 7968

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

 ISRAEL

4th Happiest People in the World

Israelis are the happiest they've been in over a decade, the World Happiness rankings revealed, though the findings predated the widespread social upheaval over the government's judicial overhaul program and therefore could not take it into account.

 Israel's 2023 fourth-place ranking, up from ninth last year, is its highest position since the UN-sponsored index began publication in 2012.

The list crowned Finland as the world's happiest country for the sixth year running, with Afghanistan again the unhappiest, closely succeeded by Lebanon.

(continued next page)

4th Happiest People

(continued from page 30)



Israelis enjoy the beach in Tel Aviv on a hot winter day. (Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)

The World Happiness Report, now in its 11th year, is based on residents of 137 countries' own assessment of their situation, as well as economic and social data.

Anat Fanti, a social science researcher at Bar Ilan University, said that if the survey had been conducted after the judicial overhaul was revealed, "its results would be different and Israel's ranking would have been harmed."

She told the Ynet news outlet that the ranking could be explained by a strong economic recovery following the coronavirus pandemic, as well as "the level of hope and optimism among some populations as a result of the broad unity government" led by former prime ministers Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, though that government was despised by many in the right wing.

-www.timesofisrael.com, 20 March 2023

Commentary: This survey seems to stand diametrically opposed to most news media claims about present day

Israel. However, it does not determine individual contentment and happiness.

This report reveals an important issue for Christians who, like the waves of the sea, are being blown back and forth in their opinions ... all based on prevailing news sources, which cannot and do not reveal the full picture of people residing in certain countries.

Of course, for Israel this is a great benefit because it is the home of the Jewish people. Positive results are a good sign for those who are still residing in the Diaspora to return to the land of their ancient forefathers.

Another statistic to emphasize is life expectancy, revealing the health of the nation's population. According to Worldometers.info, some of the top countries are:

- Japan 85.0 years
(along with Hong Kong, leads the world)
- Israel 83.5 years
- Norway 82.9 years
- Finland 82.5 years
- Denmark 81.4 years

Yet we must point out that all life expectancy comes to an end, for the Bible declares: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). 7967

(See *When Death Comes*, Item #1056, \$12.99.)




RUSSIA Policy to End Western Monopoly

Russian state media reported that President Vladimir Putin was set to approve a new foreign policy, as relations with the West sink to historic lows over the war in Ukraine and subsequent Western sanctions.



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov delivering a speech during the celebration of the Diplomats' Day in Moscow. (Handout / Russian Foreign Ministry / AFP)

 "The Anglo-Saxons—and the rest of the collective West, unquestioningly submitting to them—seek to impose their dictates on world affairs at any cost," Lavrov told lawmakers in Russia's State Duma.

"Our renewed foreign policy concept will focus on the need to end the West's monopoly on shaping the framework of international life, which in the future must be determined not in its egoistic interests but on a fair, universal balance of interests."

The Kremlin has often accused Western countries, led by the "Anglo-Saxon" United States and Britain, of trying to dominate global politics and meddle in others' af-

(continued next page)

Western Monopoly

(continued from page 31)

fair, while seeking to suppress rising powers in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

-*english.aawsat.com*, 15 February 2023

Commentary: This is the news behind the news; it is the other side of the Russia-Ukraine war, which seems to upset the world. While global chaos has not happened—and most likely will not—the direction the world is heading becomes clearer as time goes by. It’s no longer nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom, but gigantic agglomerations of nations; in this case, two—the West and the East. What can we expect? Learning from history, the conflict will end in negotiation toward compromise, or as Russia’s foreign minister Lavrov stated, “a fair, universal balance of interests.”

To summarize, the god of this world—who rules both camps—will have to reveal himself one day. He will claim to be the savior of the world, the messiah of Israel, the global benevolent leader. Second Thessalonians 2:4 describes him and his goal: “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

7975

(See *Northern Storm Rising*, Item


#2294, \$15.99.)



JAPAN

\$5.5 Billion in Ukraine Aid

“Japan is in a position to lead the world’s efforts to support Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression and to uphold a free and open international order based on the rule of law,” Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said.

 “Russia’s aggression against Ukraine is not just a European matter, but a challenge to the rules and principles of the entire international community,” he said.

He added that Japan faces its “most severe” security environment since World War II, citing North Korea’s growing nuclear missile program and “attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force in the East and South China Seas.”

“Due to Russia’s actions, the world now faces a real threat from nuclear weapons,” Kishida said. “It is important to convey the reality of the atomic bombings to the world, including the G7 leaders, as the starting point for all efforts toward nuclear disarmament.”

-*www.cnn.com*, 20 February 2023

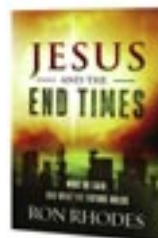
Commentary: With Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, we are increasingly reminded of the words of Jesus: “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Luke 21:10). Japan has aligned itself solidly with the West, whose media voices declare in unison that Russia is the aggressor. Yet when reading

sources from the East, there is quite a difference of opinion. Just recently, the United Nations condemned the brutality of the Ukrainian military forces as well as the Russian. Of course, we all know the worst-case scenario would be nuclear warfare. Will that happen? Wars are always unpredictable; thus, forecasts of such are only speculation. What we do know with absolute certainty is that peace is, was, and always will be absent from planet earth until the Prince of Peace arrives in Israel. He will abolish all weapons of war, as documented in Micah 4:3: “And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

7970

(See *Jesus and the End Times*, Item

#2356, \$15.99.)



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NETHERLANDS

An Open Door to Belgium

BY RAPHAEL ROOS, DOORN

When God grants new opportunities, He also blesses them. A report.

Last September, we were able to hold our first conference with a guest speaker in Genk (Belgium). It focused on the theme of the Rapture. After a lot of on-site advertising had been done and invitations sent, we were curious to see how many visitors would actually come. After the sessions, we felt nothing but simple gratitude. The hall was well-filled with about 100 visitors.

First, we briefly introduced our ministry. It was clear that many of those present were unfamiliar with us. The visitors took home numerous magazines after the sessions, and book table sales were in full swing.

It's important to us that we extend our borders and gain new subscribers to our maga-

zines. This new open door in Belgium confirms once again that the work is God's, not ours. He is the one who opens and closes doors. May we always live in dependence on Him.

We also noticed how great a hunger for the prophetic Word there is in Genk and how gladly it is received. It's timely and shows what a wonderful future is coming for those who believe in Jesus—just as Peter says in his second letter (ch. 1:19).

As I mentioned earlier, it was our first visit to Belgium. But if the Lord wills, it's quite possible we'll hold a conference there every year.

(MR1122)



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

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ASSISTED DYING



By Peter Malgo

The physician has started the intravenous infusion. It is Tuesday, 11:30 am. The seriously ill man himself opens the flow through the tubing to let the potentially deadly IV solution enter his body.

Just a few days earlier, conversations between the bedridden man and the euthanasia organization had taken place. That Tuesday had then been set as the day of death. This event took place in our immediate surroundings. A coworker was aware of the suicide intent and had tried in vain several times to point to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. But even at the end, when death had been decided upon, access to this man's heart was rebuffed: "I don't want any religion." With this attitude, he went into eternity. After just an hour, the police arrived, as is customary when someone meets with an unnatural death. And only a few hours later, the hearse pulled up.

What an awakening it must have been for the one arriving in eternity ... lost forever. He thought that suicide would free him from his great suffering; instead, eternal agony was begin-

ning. That sounds harsh and is harsh, but that is what the Bible tells us. This particular case, which affected us greatly, demonstrates the great responsibility that has been placed upon us Christians: to warn our fellow human beings, who we know that without Jesus, are heading toward a Christless eternity. Ezekiel 3:18 clearly states that the blood of such a person will be required of our hands if we did not warn him.

Liberal laws in Switzerland allow for assisted suicide. In recent times, euthanasia organizations in this country have become quite a topic of discussion. In the above-described case, the suicide took place at home. Many foreigners travel to Switzerland specifically to end their lives there. And so it happens that such desperate people will be "accompanied to their deaths," as the euphemism puts it, in all sorts of places—sometimes even their own car in a parking lot.

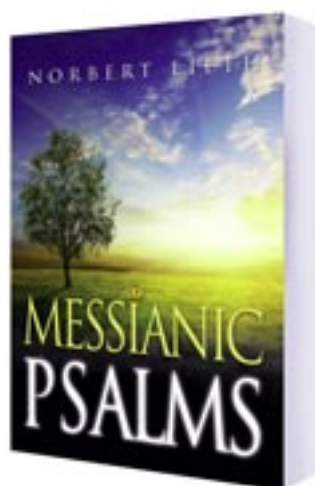
Since 2009, physician-assisted suicide has been legal in Luxembourg. It is worse in the Netherlands, where euthanasia has been practiced legally for a long time. Presently, even children from the age of twelve can be killed at their own request. That creates a “right to euthanasia.”

It started with abortion, which was called “birth control.” Voluntary euthanasia then was an extension of the same program. But even involuntary euthanasia is no longer taboo. One could call it “death control.” As early as 1990, out of 20,000 cases of euthanasia, only 7,000 were at the patient’s request. The law protects the physician performing euthanasia, but not the patient. A patient who does not want to die may no longer be safe under certain circumstances.

How does all of this look from a Christian perspective? Abortion is

murder, involuntary euthanasia is murder, and a voluntary ending of life is suicide. Murder is, and always will be, sin. It should not be left unsaid that also Christians are often in danger of ending their lives and thus committing a sin, a sin on their own bodies. Hopelessness, a desperate situation, depression, or a serious illness may lead people to this decision. Above all, a life far from God can bring one to this. The Bible speaks of suicide four times: Saul, Ahithophel, Zimri, and Judas ended their lives in various ways. In all four cases, sin and a godless life led to it.

Therefore, let us remain very close to our Lord Jesus, for then we will be protected from such thoughts and actions. “Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust ... Thou wilt show me the path of life” (Psalm 16:1, 11). ^{MC}



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“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes”
(Judges 17:6).

BY ARNO FROESE

The last three chapters of the book of Judges describe a dark time in the land of Israel. The Hebrews had forgotten that a few centuries ago, they received the Ten Commandments through Moses: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Chapter 17 reports of a man named Micah, who stole 1,100 shekels of silver from his mother, but then returned the money to her. What did they do with the money?

“Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah” (Judges 17:4). Idolatry was prevalent; Israel had forgotten that the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob had promised they would be a great nation who would bless all nations on planet earth.

In the next book, 1 Samuel, Israel collectively expresses their desire not to be special; rather, to be equal to all other nations: “...Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:5b). Other translations read: “They have rejected me as their king.”

More than 3,000 years later, we read of the rejection in Luke 23:37-38: “...If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscrip-

tion also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This Is The King Of The Jews.”

These few verses paint a mighty prophetic panorama, clearly showing Israel’s election on the one hand, and their rejection on the other. Nevertheless, we must quickly add that God’s prophetic Word is not bound to circumstances; it does not depend on Israel’s behavior, whether good or evil, or their faith in the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, we read these words in Genesis 18:18: “Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”

Israel’s past, as well as their present situation and condition, in no way invalidates God’s eternal promises.

14 May 1948

Most of us are familiar with the various events which led to the declaration of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948. However, we must take careful notice that the proclamation of the State of Israel would have been impossible without the first, second, third, and fourth Aliyah (return of Jews to the Promised Land).

What is significant to point out is that God deals with today's Israel in the opposite direction, as He did in the beginning: "And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:1-2). Repeatedly, God intervened on Israel's behalf supernaturally. He judged Egypt and led the nation through the wilderness for 40 years. During those years, Israel experienced—physically and literally—God's direct, miraculous intervention on their behalf. Exodus 19:4 testifies: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."

Israel's high point and glory was experienced under David's son, King Solomon. Yet as we know from Scripture, Israel fell back into idolatry, which resulted in the destruction of the nation and the temple in 586 BC by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

Almost 600 years later, Jesus made this prophecy about the second temple: "...See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). That was fulfilled in 70 AD, when Roman forces destroyed Jerusalem and literally erased the temple on the Temple Mount. Literally not "one stone upon another" was left.

The return of the Jews to the land of Israel in modern times goes back to the 1800s. Here we must mention 29 August 1879, when 208 delegates and 26 press correspondents attended

the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Here, Theodore Herzl proclaimed: "If I had to sum up the Basel congress in one word—which I shall not do openly—it would be this: at Basel, I founded the Jewish state. If I were to say this today, I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in 50 years, everyone will see it." Theodore Herzl did not see the fulfillment; he died 3 July 1904.

1st Aliyah (1882—1903)

About 35,000 Jews arrived in Israel, but almost half left the country within several years. The rest, some 15,000, established rural settlements primarily based on the communist principle of "kolkhoz" or kibbutz.

2nd Aliyah (1904—1914)

Another 35,000-40,000 Jews immigrated to Israel. Most of the arrivals were young people inspired by socialist ideas, who established the first kibbutz, Degania, in 1909. The majority originated from Eastern European nations.

3rd Aliyah (1919—1923)

Again, most arrivals during the 3rd Aliyah were young pioneers from Eastern Europe, numbering about 90,000 by the end of that period.

4th Aliyah (1924—1929)

Some 82,000 Jews arrived, mainly from the Soviet Union. Yet over 20,000 left for other countries. Incidentally, in 1929 Wall Street collapsed. That same year, the British "White Paper" restricted Jews from coming to Israel.



5th Aliyah (1929—1939)

In the period of 1933—1936, some 174,000 Jews settled in the country. By 1940, some 250,000 Jews had arrived, boosting the population to 450,000 in the land.

Moetzet HaAm

During the early years, political parties developed, of which 37 members were chosen by the Moezet HaAm (People’s Council). Virtually all were born, raised, and educated under communism in the former Soviet Union. Not surprisingly, the USSR was first to recognize the State of Israel on 17 May 1948. The United States followed with their de jure recognition, after the first Israeli election on 1 January 1949.

Israel Today

While Israel is the only functioning democracy in the Middle East, the present situation is all but chaotic. One reason is the numerous

political parties that make up a coalition. While the present governing coalition consists of six main parties, there are a total of twelve different parties with seats in the Knesset (parliament). Israel is one of five nations without a constitution, the others being Canada, the UK, Saudi Arabia, and New Zealand.

If we analyze Israel’s situation based on media sources, it seems there is little hope for the country. However, that is not decisive; we as Bible-believers realize that God’s eternal resolution and His promises will stand, regardless of circumstance. The prophet Amos concludes his book with this verse: “And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God” (9:15). Finally, the King will be coming to Israel: “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east...” (Zechariah 14:4a). ^{MC}



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

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Remembering the Holocaust: How Can We Make a Difference?

By **David Phillips** *CEO (Chief Executive Officer)*

Did you know that according to *The Times of Israel*, last year there were 161,400 Holocaust survivors living in Israel? This number includes those who were victims of antisemitism during the Holocaust period. The average age of Holocaust survivors is 85.5, with 31,500 over the age of 90, and over 1,000 who have lived for over a century. During 2021-22, there were 15,553 survivors who passed away **in Israel alone**: an average of over **42 a day!**

It won't be much longer till this generation will no longer be with us. Sadly, some are claiming the Holocaust never happened, and try to ignore the facts and witnesses still living.

At the Ebenezer Home, we have six Holocaust survivors living with us, the oldest being 95. I have had many conversations with them, and most have told me, "It was as if we went

through hell." Thankfully, those living at the Home are saved through faith in Yeshua.

Ebenezer still deals with the aftermath of what these dear residents suffered. Some have overcome the past through the love and forgiveness in their hearts. Others still struggle with bitterness over what they went through and won't speak about it, their eyes just filling with tears whenever asked.

"Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" (Psalm 56:8).

The same holds true for the second generation, many of whom are still grappling with the bitterness and grief of what they went through. Imagine just getting out of the work camps, having lost everything and everyone, not knowing how to function or survive.

How does one cope with such a traumatic experience? Many of these survivors married



other survivors ... trying to survive and carry on. Shortly after marrying, children were added to this equation. The stories of what these children often faced—many being born during those first years after the Holocaust—is heartbreaking. To say it was distressing is an understatement.

Our heart's desire is not just to minister to the first-generation survivors but also the second-generation, who battle with bitterness and anger over what they had to endure as children.

As we surround them with prayer, love, care, and guidance through the Word of God, many experience deliverance and healing of the soul before entering their eternal rest.



Please keep us in your prayers as we minister to our beloved ones and their families, when the scars of all they endured and memories of their lost loved ones fill their hearts. This remains even after so many years.

With your support, you enable us to continue reaching out and tending to these pre-

cious elderly brothers and sisters, helping them experience the true deliverance and healing that only Yeshua can provide.

On a personal note, I grew up hearing firsthand stories from my grandparents and mother, who fought in the Netherlands Underground Resistance to the Nazi Regime during 1939-45. I met those who hid in the tunnels under their house ... Jews, resistance group members, people from the US, UK, and Canada, who were shot down and yet made it out alive. This inspired me and my family to always open our home to those in need, whatever the circumstances may be. It motivated me all the more as I served in the IDF and police, with the goal of protecting the remnant who barely made it through the Holocaust and who now live here among us in Israel and at the Ebenezer Home.

May the Holy One of Israel keep you as you seek to also encourage and support those around you going through difficult times.

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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.

PREDESTINATION... CATHOLICISM... WEATHER A SIGN?

Predestination

Dear Mr. Froese,

Romans 8:29-30 in the Living Bible says: “For from the very beginning God decided that those who came to him—and all along he knew who would—should become like his Son, so that his Son would be the First, with many brothers. And having chosen us, he called us to come to him; and when we came, he declared us ‘not guilty,’ filled us with Christ’s goodness, gave us right standing with himself, and promised us his glory.”

A person can’t come to Jesus; the Holy Spirit leads that person to Jesus, as I experienced on September 23, 1968. God knew that was the day I would be led by the Holy Spirit to Him.

So, where is the free choice for a person to be saved?

-T. Payne, NY

Answer: Adam and Eve had to choose to take the fruit or not. “...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31). The jailer had a free choice.

I have a free choice to build my faith on gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble. Oswald Chambers writes: “It is absurd to say it is foreordained for you to have so many buttons on your tunic, and if that is not foreordained, then nothing is. If things were foreordained, there would be no sense of responsibility at all” (*Daily Thoughts for Disciples*, Nov. 7 entry).

If we have no free will and everything is predestined, then God *deliberately* created billions of people for the destiny of hell. That contradicts Scripture: “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4; cf. 2 Peter 3:9). For these and many other reasons, I must reject automatic salvation based on God’s predestination, ignoring the free will of man.



Catholicism

Dear Midnight Call:

I think Midnight Call should always expose the Roman Catholic Antichrist system and its horrible activity in the realm of “Christianity” over the centuries. I think MC has overlooked this, which includes the Inquisition, whereby over 10 million souls (Revelation 18:13b) lost their lives over a 400-year period.

God loves Roman Catholics as He does all sinners and cult members. They simply need a warning about their eternal destiny if they do not “come out of her, my people” (Revelation 18:4).

-E. Sather, CA

Answer: Yes, horrible deeds have been committed throughout history by the Vatican while they ruled politically. That is true of Protestantism as well when it usurped political power. Indigenous people from former colonies can testify to that fact: millions have been killed. We also cannot deny that the United States has committed horrible injustice to the original inhabitants of this land—murdered by the millions.

It is an error to isolate the Catholic Church as the Antichrist system, because the whole world is the Antichrist system, as 1 John 5:19 documents: “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world li-

eth in wickedness.” Or Galatians 1:4: “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” We live on a sinful, evil, and rebellious planet, under the dominion of the god of this world. The Bible says, “He who sins is of the devil”; and, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” There is only one escape: faith in the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Weather a Sign?

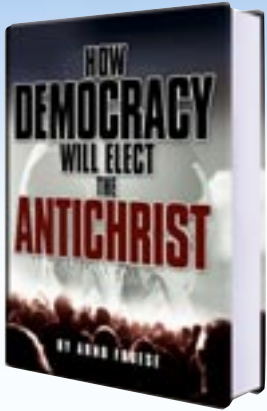
Here in South Carolina, we have noticed that the weather in February (2023) has been exceptionally warm. Just wondering if the changing weathers patterns are related to the coming of the Lord and the end times.

-M. Walker, SC

Answer: TheState.com says, “[It] was the warmest February on record for Columbia; average temperature [was] 59.8 degrees.” In 2022, it was 55.4; in 1990, 58.4; and 1949, 55.9. What the temperature was like hundreds of years ago, we don’t know, so the entire global warming theory is based on short-term measurements only.

Based on my knowledge of Scripture, weather patterns do not indicate end-time events (see Luke 17:26-29). Normal day-to-day activity continued in the days of Noah and Sodom; so it does today. The Bible’s message is simple: be ready at any time. (MC)

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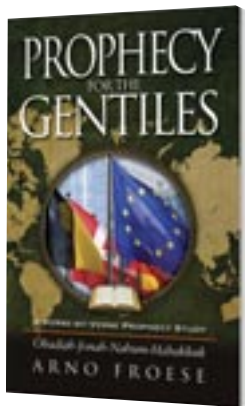
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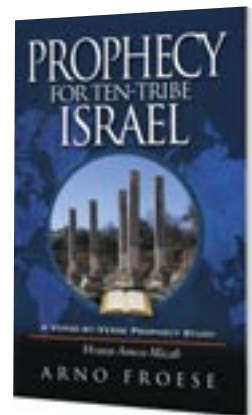
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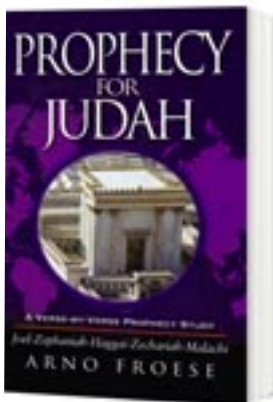
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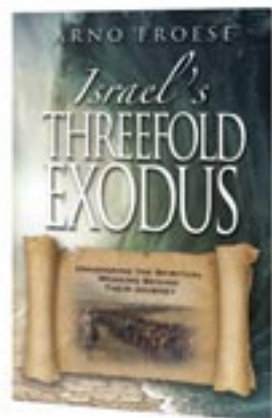
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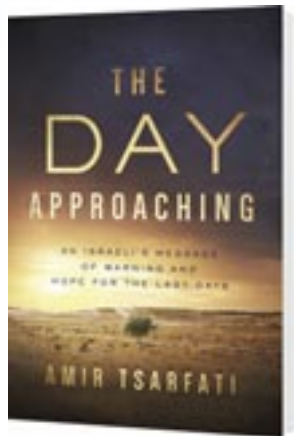
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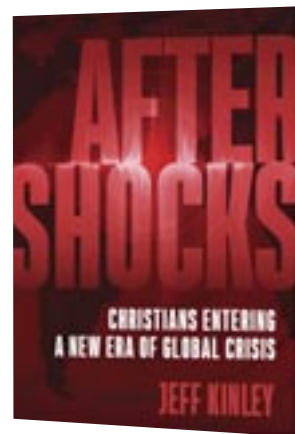
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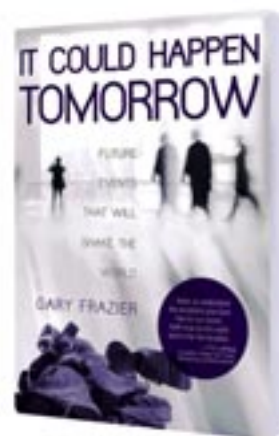
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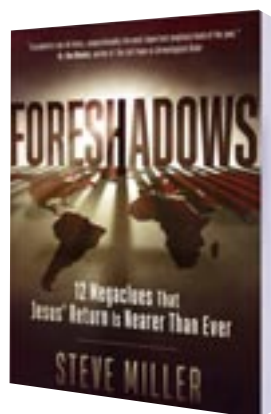
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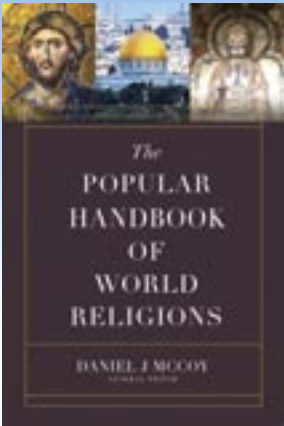
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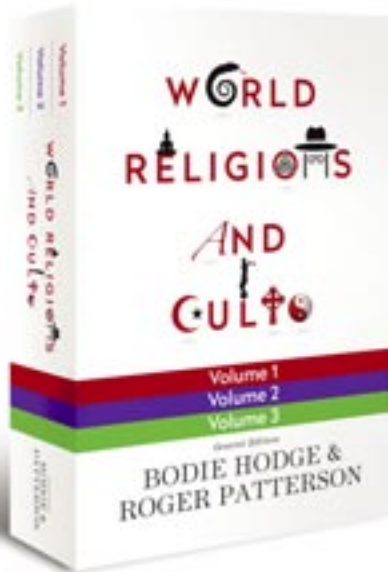
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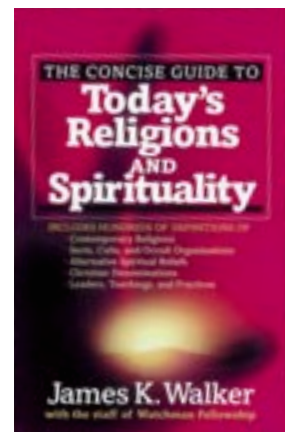
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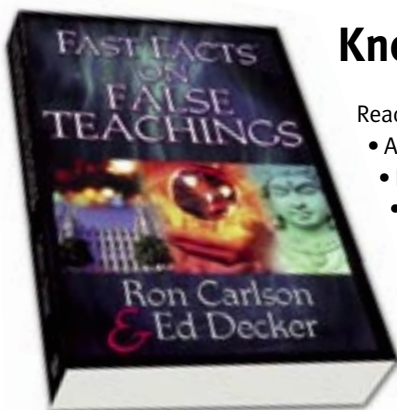


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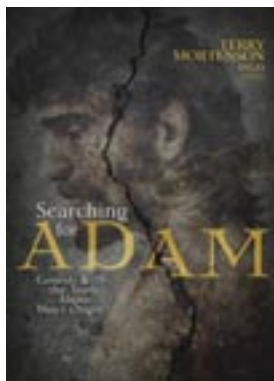
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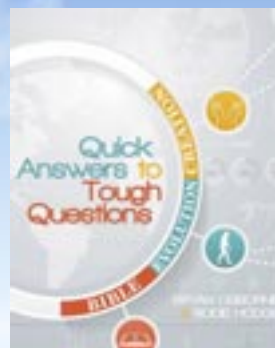
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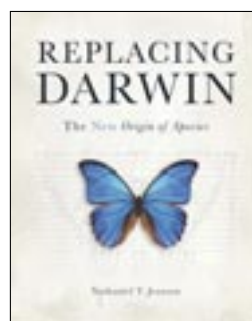
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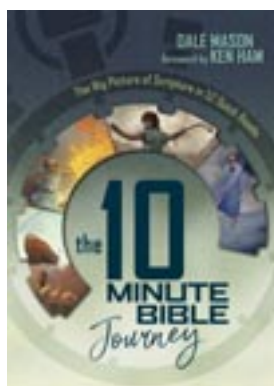
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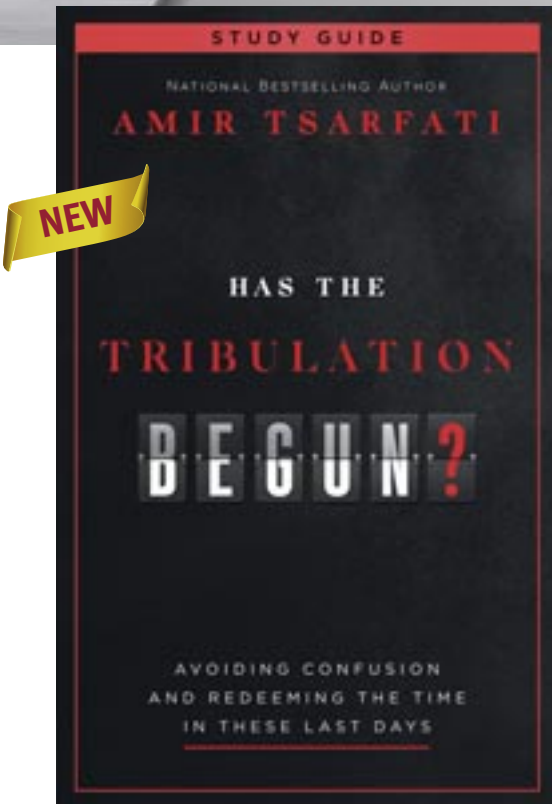
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