

21ST CENTURY

WATCH

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All Eyes On U.S.

WE CAN'T TAKE It ANYMORE!

(Too Much Winning)

by Mark Armstrong



I know we've had a lot of bad news, but with the team that's taking control of everything in government I can't help thinking we're being blessed. Watching the details of everything playing out isn't as easy as it used to be. The newly elected president appears to be putting things right, and it's causing me to be overly optimistic. Perhaps God's hand is somewhere to be found.

Mind you, we've suffered forty years under crazy talk, delivered with the utmost sincerity. People who apparently thought they were right, and who were we to disagree? They're all losing their jobs right now.

The unthinkable has happened. No doubt many are making sure their passports are in order. Certified geniuses searching out government waste? Does it get any better? Now we get to go to sleep at night knowing they're not indoctrinating children to be weirdos and daring anyone to notice.

The mainstream was preaching to us nonstop about one thing and another. It still hasn't stopped completely, but the conventional wisdom has been struck down. I think the male swimmers winning female competitions did it. That was a bridge too far, and people couldn't stand it. What are these goofballs doing in the girl's locker room?

Thank goodness we don't have to worry about that anymore. The charade is over. Now our attention can turn to some important matters on the global stage. The war in Ukraine may not be as easily solved as we thought. Somebody is going to be weeping over lost land. Isn't that always the

way? But it has got to be solved. The idea that Ukraine was going to beat Russia never made any sense. The little actor going everywhere, hat in hand, didn't play well.

What about Ukraine holding elections? They've been canceled for years. If the little guy is beloved in his own country, then let it play out. Pundits think he'll flee.

Garner Ted Armstrong used to lament the loss of the world's most important sea passages. Little did he realize that a brash and unrepentant Donald Trump would be elected President for the second time in 2024, and we don't know what to expect. He's got them jumping around in Panama. Turns out Chinese facilities at either end wasn't part of Jimmy Carter's deal. No telling how it's going to happen, but I'm betting we're getting it back.

Sometimes Trump makes brash statements at the start of negotiations. You never know. He's talked about Greenland as if we'll buy it. Hope they've got lots of minerals, but that's not why he wants it. It's about protecting the United States.

We hear that we'll be finding out much of what the government deemed we shouldn't see. There are many mysteries that we've just had to accept. Please only drop one thing at a time. We couldn't take everything at once. Some of the hitherto unanswerable questions will be answered. We'll find out whether our opinions held water or not.

It looks like Trump and Netanyahu are buddies. Some incredible comments were made

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*“And they blessed
Rebekah and said to her: ‘Our
sister, may you become The
mother of thousands of ten
thousands; And may your
descendants possess The gates
of those who hate them.’”*

Genesis 24:60

In the era of international commerce, controlling the “gates” of the seas is paramount. Over 80% of goods are transported by boat. The UK and the US have a history of dominance over these vital chokepoints including the Panama and Suez Canals, as well as the Straits of Gibraltar, Hormuz, Malacca and many other important waterways.

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Great National Tribulation Coming on America and Britain – *BUT WHY?*

by Garner Ted Armstrong

Why would the Bible show that God is angry with a “Christian” nation like the United States; or nations like France, Denmark, Sweden, Britain, South Africa, Australia, Canada, or Israel?

Isn’t it easier to imagine God being “mad” at Iraq, Libya, Syria, Vietnam, China, Cuba, Lebanon, Angola, Liberia, or Bangladesh? Many nations are ruled by despots. Millions suffer under dictatorial, repressive regimes which deprive them of the most basic human rights; millions die of starvation, suffer from endemic disease, poverty, squalor and hopelessness as power-mad political leaders pursue their own insane, egocentric goals.

How many horror stories are there throughout history where evil, sadistic rulers have committed atrocities on a monumental, genocidal scale?

Hitler was responsible for the deaths of untold millions! The bloody truth, or much of it, emerged following his death of vast “purges” within his own country, not to mention the brutal

rape of countries overrun by the Red Army.

Historians will never know the hideous toll of life in China, Vietnam, or Cambodia. Pol Pot’s horrifying regime may have murdered more than one million. Refugees fleeing the country told of “cutting their feet on the bones” of others lying in jungle trails. In Africa, brutal, repressive leaders have savagely carried out genocide against other tribal groups: in Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Angola, the Sudan, South Africa, tribal warfare has taken countless lives.

Does the Bible say anything whatsoever about such massive brutality? It most certainly does.

But with so many countries guilty of such horrible excesses, why would God be wrathful toward the United States or Britain?

Some would scoff at the suggestion God is angry with our peoples. They would discount such a statement as wild hysteria; fanciful theological nonsense by a doomsayer who, like Chicken Little, runs about crying, “The sky is falling,” or who delights

in pretending to be a prophet crying, “Doom! Doom!”

Yet, the Bible contains dozens of powerful indictments against specific nations — naming them, listing their terrible individual and national sins! Not only are such seemingly insignificant nations as Jordan, Egypt and Turkey mentioned by their ancient, tribal names, but major nations are identified, and their horrible sins are clearly catalogued!

Believe it or not, God is wrathful toward all nations, not just a few. He says, “Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it.

“For the indignation of the Eternal is upon all nations, and His fury upon their armies...” (Isaiah 34:1-2).

Yet, God specifically focuses His wrath upon His “elect” — the “House of Israel” and the “House of Judah” — detailing their enormous individual and national sins from the earliest books in the Bible to the prophecies dealing with the end time!

GREAT TRIBULATION COMING UPON MODERN "ISRAEL"

The prophesied Great Tribulation is primarily the time of God's national punishments to come upon the United States of America and the British Commonwealth!

"...lo, the days come, saith the Eternal, that I will bring [back] again [the second time — this has never happened yet in history] the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Eternal: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave their fathers, and they shall possess it.

"...For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Eternal of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:

"But they shall serve the Eternal their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them" (Jeremiah 30:1-9).

When does the Bible picture these stragglers, these beaten slaves, like refugees, returning to their own lands? At the time of the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection! There is no question concerning the time setting of these prophecies.

Notice how many scriptures picture the condition of God's people, the so-called "lost ten tribes" of the House of Israel and the House of Judah, at the time of God's intervention, the time of Christ's return, and the beginning of the millennium:

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more

again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Eternal, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

"The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob [Israel: the "lost ten tribes"], unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return:...for the Eternal of hosts shall make a consumption [full end, or finish], even determined [which God has previously planned], in the midst of all the land.

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O My people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt [Slavery! Captivity, as in the days of Joshua and the early Israelites!]...

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (Isaiah 10:20-27).

The yoke is used as a symbol of slavery!

It is laid upon God's "elect," Israel, by two powers: the great false church, headed by the false prophet, or Antichrist (Isaiah 47:6), and the "beast" power, which is the final head of the seven successive heads of Rome, the Germanic rulers over the so-called "Holy Roman Empire" (Isaiah 10:27; 14:25).

Hitler deported millions from nations all over eastern Europe; Jews from many

countries, countless Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Greeks, Slavs, Serbs, Croats, Romanians, French; many others. They were used as forced laborers in hundreds of German factories all over Germany and occupied Europe. More than half of these persecuted people, forced to live in squalor and privation, without adequate food or clothing, with no medical assistance, died!

The ancient Assyrians did the same thing. If you have not read our free book *Europe and America in Prophecy*, you need to write for it immediately, and read it carefully! It is perhaps one of the most important missing "keys" to the understanding of prophecy one could discover — the identity of Britain and the United States; of Germany, and the early Europeans.

The scripture clearly says it is the modern nation of Assyria that will conquer the modern nations identified as the "lost ten tribes," or the House of Israel. This modern nation called "Assyria" in prophecy will take them captive, and use them as forced labor; as household servants!

Notice again how modern "Israel" (not the Jews in Palestine, but the nations of modern Manasseh, Ephraim, and all the others of ten-tribed Israel) is said to be held captive by Assyria at the time of the Second Coming of Christ:

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed

because of the anointing.” This “anointing” refers to the return of Christ; the establishment of His millennial reign.

God says, “...He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah [two separate peoples] from the four corners of the earth...and there shall be an highway for the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt” (Isaiah 11:12-16).

Again, He promises, “The Eternal of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so it shall stand:

“That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under

foot; then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from their shoulders” (Isaiah 14:24-26).

Never did this take place in history. Assyria carried ancient Israel captive in successive waves of invasion in about 721 to 718 BC. Assyria was subjugated by Babylon, which became the first true world ruling empire. But Babylon gained the ascendancy over its sister nation Assyria in its own indigenous area, not in the land of Palestine.

This prophecy has not yet occurred!

Yet, here is a nation identified only as “Assyria,” who will be holding God’s people “Israel” captive at the time of the Second Coming of Christ! You will see surprising information on the identity of the

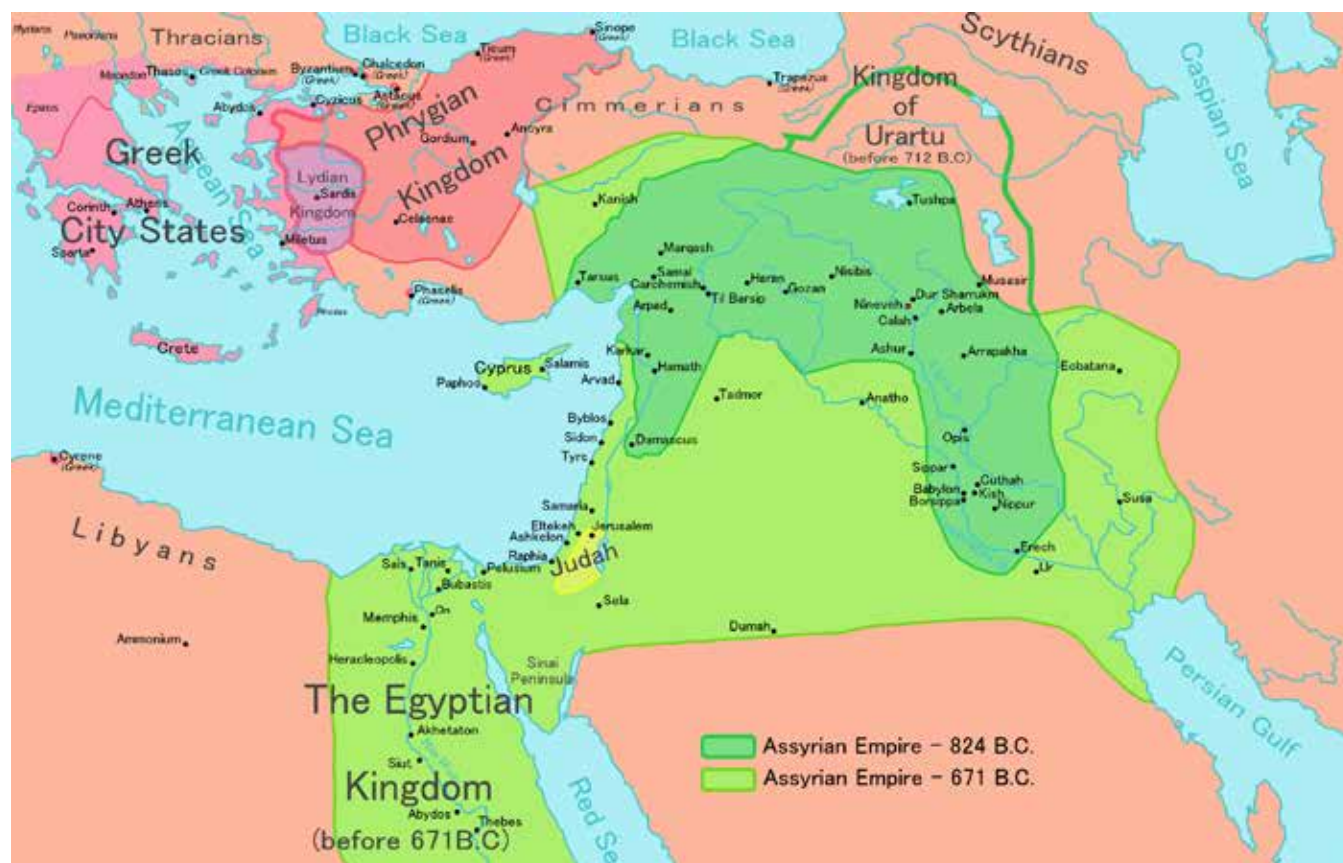
modern Assyrians in our free book, *Europe and America in Prophecy*, and a smaller booklet, *The Abomination of Desolation*.

Notice that the modern nation of Assyria has a partner in its crimes.

John saw, in vision, a great false church which would be led by Satan, and which would be allowed of God to horribly martyr many of Christ’s true servants.

“And there came one of the seven angels which had seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, ‘Come hither: I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters...’ (Revelation 17:1).

Obviously, a woman cannot “sit upon” water. This is symbolic language, indicating a great false church which is comprised of members in many different



nations — a multi-racial, universal church!

Notice the proof: “With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication [God labels political intrigue, secret alliances; cynical disregard for human suffering carried out by evil regimes as “fornication,” spiritually speaking], and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (Revelation 17:2).

This is spiritual drunkenness. (Compare with Isaiah 29:9 and 59:8-10). Notice, in passing, that the Greek word is *oinos*, which is the only Greek word translated “wine” in the New Testament, including the word used in Jesus’ first miracle at Cana, in Galilee, when He changed water into *oinos* or “wine.” That *oinos* is a drink which, when taken to excess, can cause drunkenness is obvious. But here, it is used for the teaching of this great false church; its doctrines and its elaborate, mystical rituals.

The prophecy continues, “So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17:3).

What is the meaning of this scarlet colored beast? (If you have not yet read our brochure, “*Who, What is the Beast of Revelation?*” or our booklet *The Mark of the Beast — What is it?*, they can be found online at www.GTAEA.org. Also, read our booklet, *The Abomination of Desolation*, which makes PLAIN the identity of this great false

church!)

Notice, the Bible interprets the Bible; we dare not attempt to put our own interpretation on it. God says, “The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth, and there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh [the seventh and last “head” of a political system — human government of this “beast”], he must continue a short space... and the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

“These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Revelation 17:9-14).

Having “one mind” obviously means they are in complete agreement regarding policy. Unitedly, they will use their gigantic economic and military strength, pooling their military forces into one great army.

“These shall make war with the lamb [they will actually attempt to fight Christ at His return!], and the lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords, and King of Kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:9-14).

The seven heads were to rise and fall in succession as is obvious from the context. John was projected forward in time, in the spirit, into the time of the Tribulation, Heavenly Signs, and the Day of the Lord. The seven successive heads were to come, one after another, down through

history. Finally, the last head of the “beast” was to endure but a “short time.”

But this final system, the “scarlet-colored beast” ridden by the great false church, was to consist of ten different governments, represented by the “ten horns” of this prophecy.

Daniel’s second chapter says the same thing. Nebuchadnezzar’s vision consisted of a great figure representing the four great world-dominating empires down through history, culminating in the final great kingdom, which would consist of ten nations.

“And in the days of these kings [the kings depicted by the ten toes of the image] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

The stone cut out without hands is symbolic of Christ, who returns to smash this ten-nation combine. The prophecy shows the “stone” smashing the image on the toes (ten of them), then, as the image is blown away to disappear, the stone, Christ, becomes like a “great mountain” (Christ’s millennial reign) that ultimately fills the whole earth.

God is going to use a powerful group of ten nations which will form the prophesied “beast” of Revelation 13:1-10 to punish our peoples! But the primary power which will accomplish the martyrdom of saints (Matthew 24:9; Revelation 12:11-17; 13:7)

will be the “antichrist,” or the false prophet.

GOD IS FURIOUS WITH OUR PEOPLES

God’s Word warns, “A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds [in all directions of the compass], and I will draw out a sword after them.

“Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the Eternal have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them” (Ezekiel 5:12-13).

“But why,” some will ask!

God responds, “And they that escape of you shall remember Me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken [heartbroken] with their whorish heart, which hath departed from Me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols; and they shall have committed in all their abominations” (Ezekiel 6:9).

One of the first great sins mentioned in the Ten Commandments is the sin of idolatry. Are America and Britain guilty of idolatry? Idolatry is placing another “god” between oneself and the true God. It is false worship. Paul said even coveting, lusting, passionately desiring something which is sinful, is idolatry! (Colossians 3:5).

Almighty God appeared to Israel as Creator! The memorial of His vast, limitless power — a weekly reminder of His awesome, overwhelming universe; this good, green earth and all life upon it — was God’s Holy Sabbath day!

At the end of creation week, God said, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.”

“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made...” (Genesis 2:2). God’s work was finished, but He was not finished creating! Note this well, “...and He rested in the seventh day from all His work which he had made.

“And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made” (Genesis 2:1-3).

By resting on the Sabbath day, and by “setting it apart,” or sanctifying it for holy use, God blessed this period of the time for all eternity — gave it a name, “Sabbath,” the only day of the week so dignified, and commanded mankind to continually observe this special day down through all ages as a memorial of creation.

Prior to codifying His Ten Commandments at Sinai, God revealed His Sabbath day anew to Israelites, who had grown into a nation while in pagan slavery (Exodus 16:23). He specifically commanded them to gather twice as much manna on the sixth day of the week, and rest on the Sabbath day.

When the Israelites

disobeyed, God said, “How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?” (Exodus 16:28). God’s Ten Commandments did not come into existence at Sinai, they were merely codified, written in tables of the most durable writing materials available — stone!

Notice the language of the Fourth Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...” (Exodus 20:8). The Sabbath had been instituted at creation. It was something that was created, brought into being by Almighty God for a special, holy purpose. It was to remind mankind to look back to creation; to acknowledge God in all His awesome and majestic power as Creator! It also looks forward, toward the seventh one-thousand year period of time, the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

God said, “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day [this is not “one day out of seven,” but a specific day] is the Sabbath of the Eternal thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

“For in six days the Eternal made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Eternal blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11).

Was the Sabbath only for the Jews? No “Jew” ever existed until after the children of Judah, who was one of the twelve

sons of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. Eventually, the progeny of Judah became known by a shortened nickname, “Jew.” But Judah was not born until long after the flood. God has made known His Holy Sabbath to the ancients. Those righteous patriarchs who kept God’s laws are catalogued in the Bible.

Word, pray to God, get his mind off of the mundane pursuits of earning a living, and think on spiritual things.

The Sabbath was made to be a blessing to mankind!

Yet, there are millions today who scorn it, spurn it, shun it — who go very far out of their way to argue it away, to claim

[Sabbath-breaking was on par with murder, and the penalty was the death penalty!]: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

“Six days may work be done: but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Eternal: whosoever doeth any work in the

“BLESSED is the man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.”

The first time the name “Jew” appears, the northern ten tribes, called “The House of Israel” are seen to be AT WAR WITH THE JEWS! Study II Kings 16:1-6. Here, Israel and its allies are locked in a war with the Jews!

The “House of Israel” was never referred to as “the Jews,” even though by Jesus’ time some members of tribes other than Judah were commonly called Jews.

Christ says, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore, the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28).

Was the Sabbath made for the Jews? No! Christ said it was made for *man*! For his benefit, for his blessing; for his day of blessed rest; a day of relaxation, worship, rejuvenation, recreation — the one day of the week when he may pause, reflect on God’s marvelous creation, study God’s

it was “nailed to the cross,” and was only “for the Jews.” Millions suppose God endorsed worship on the day pagans labeled the day of the SUN, Sunday, in supposed honor of Christ’s resurrection.

Yet, God had said the Sabbath was the only perpetual sign He made between Himself and His people. “Verily My Sabbaths shall ye keep; for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Eternal that doth sanctify you” (Exodus 31:13).

A sign is an identifying mark, or label. The “mark of God” upon His people is His Sabbath! This perpetually enduring symbol, or mark of identity, would continually remind God’s people that He is God, their creator, Who has specially chosen them!

He said, “Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you; every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death

Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant” (Exodus 31:14-16).

This identifying mark, or sign, between God and His elect was for all their generations. It was not to cease at the end of some supposed “dispensation” or other; not to fail at some time in the future. It was to be “in perpetuity” — forever!

“It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Eternal made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed.”

The Sabbath was created for man, said Jesus Christ. It was not “for the Jews,” but for mankind! It was created — made — by the act of God, Who rested on that special day, setting it apart for holy use and purpose. It was

made when man was made — the very day following!

Yet, millions, deceived by Satan (Revelation 12:9), have falsely assumed God's Sabbath day was "Jewish." Anti-Semitism among millions of professing "Christians" has led them to reject anything faintly smacking of "Jewishness." Millions assume the Sabbath was done away by Christ.

Not so. Christ Himself said "the Sabbath was made for man," and called Himself "Lord of the Sabbath day."

Notice what God promises gentiles concerning his Sabbaths: "Blessed is the man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath

from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

"Neither let the son of the stranger [gentile, not a member of the House of Israel or Judah] that hath joined himself to the Eternal, speak, saying, 'The Eternal hath utterly separated me from His people,' neither let the eunuch say, 'Behold, I am a dry tree.'

"For thus saith the Eternal unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;

"Even to them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that

shall not be cut off.

"Also the sons of the stranger [gentiles; non-Israelitish nations], that join themselves to the Eternal, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Eternal, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

"Even them I will bring to my holy mountain [the Kingdom of God — salvation! Eternal life!...] (Isaiah 56:1-7).

If you have never seen positive Bible proof that God's Sabbath day is absolutely binding upon all mankind today, then write immediately for our free booklets about God's Sabbath days. □



"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."
John 14:21

Expecting the Unexpected

by Michael Armstrong

It is hard to fully appreciate the shifts that have taken place in the geopolitical landscape as the world begins to cope with the reality of a second Trump presidency. From enemies to allies and tariffs to truces, we will attempt to chronicle the many changes taking place. We will also examine the political ramifications abroad, compounding already volatile situations in many countries' capitals.

Gaza deserves to top this list. For those of us who WATCH with an eye to what Bible prophecy foretells no other region can rival its importance. The situation on the ground right now is vastly different from the status quo of years past. US support is not one of the issues Israel has to worry about. It is no coincidence the current ceasefire took effect the day before the inauguration.

What Hamas began on October 7th has led to the utter destruction of Gaza and the eradication of the majority of their leadership. A similar fate has befallen their allies in Hezbollah. Lebanon is being urged by the US to take the initiative in ensuring Hezbollah does not rebuild its military capabilities, particularly along Israel's border. Israel has

delayed withdrawing from certain locations in Lebanon until another force is in place to ensure this does not happen. A crucial part of this plan is preventing the re-supply of armaments from Iran, to which end flights between Beirut and Tehran have been suspended.

The other main avenue for arms to reach the conflict with Israel has been overland through Syria. This option expired with the fall of Iran's ally, Bashir al-Assad. His rapid ouster left the world stunned and ended decades of his family's rule in a matter of weeks. Hezbollah was in no position to come to his rescue, Iran's resource-

es were occupied elsewhere, and Russia (whose intervention preserved Assad through the Arab Spring and years of civil war) was preoccupied with Ukraine. Syria remains in flux but stable, with its infrastructure intact.

The leader of the Islamist faction that led the revolt has moderated his rule in recent years, a move that may help woo western support for his involvement in any future government. Europe is particularly eager for any stable arrangement that could be deemed "safe" and allow for the return of many refugees. Even in the relatively quiet past few years,



The IDF's 769th Brigade operating in southern Lebanon.
IDF Press Release

Continued next page



President Donald Trump and Marco Rubio meet with King Abdullah II of Jordan, February 11, 2025.

hundreds of thousands of Syrians have applied for asylum in the EU on account of the civil war.

Israel used the confusion surrounding Assad's escape to Russia as an opportunity to decimate stockpiles of military hardware before they could fall into the hands of potential foes. Airstrikes pummeled installations around the country. Israeli troops have also secured their shared border with Syria in the Golan Heights, ensuring its safety regardless of what transpires politically.

A similar boldness can be seen in many of the actions they are taking, such as their operations inside many refugee camps in the West Bank. They are being cleared of potential enemies in much the same way that Gaza has been systematically ground into rubble. Israel now has the resolve and domestic support to strike at their foes wherever they may be hiding. The assurance of backing by their most important ally is not to be overlooked in these developments.

The Trump administration nearly made the Arab world TILT by suggesting they would take control of Gaza, move the Palestinians out, rebuild it, and see where we go from there. Ludicrous? Maybe. But out of the attendant consternation comes the reality that someone has to take responsibility for reconstruction, security concerns and future governance. Diplomatic meetings are being convened among Arab leaders to offer a legitimate alternative. Major players like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt are involved. President Trump has already met personally with King Abdullah II of Jordan.

We can hope that these negotiations will lead to a stable, palatable peace for all parties, though we know it will not last forever. Israel is resolved not to let Hamas continue to rule. Discouraging the sentiment that led to October 7th will prove even more difficult. Respected regional players have both the clout and the funds to bring about a reprieve. But consider

the irony of the US and Israel encouraging a coalition of Muslim nations to be answerable for the security of Gaza and potentially the West Bank. It invites the very scenario pictured in Bible prophecy. While no "King of the South" is evident, any collective commitment to Gaza has the potential to bring an Arab coalition into conflict with Israel. This is something that has happened in the past and is prophesied for the future.

Saudi Arabia is a key player in this conflict as well as the one between Russia and Ukraine. Riyadh is hosting talks between the United States and Russia to end that war also. These negotiations are ongoing and may develop significantly before this article goes to print. Europe is irate at the idea they are being left out of the mix, yet they are divided as to what an appropriate settlement might consist of or even what their relationship with Russia should be going forward. The elephant in the room is that despite vast contributions of military equipment and funds, Ukraine has not been able to stem the advance of Russian forces.

While unpalatable, it is not likely that the West is going to get Russia to relinquish much of the territory they have captured short of military confrontation. This is equally unpalatable and, despite European fears that it is only a matter of time before said confrontation occurs, it is something they are both economically and militarily unprepared for at this time. Sentiment also varies widely, particularly among Euro-skeptic parties who favor less integration and a restoration of business ties

with Russia.

The US and Ukraine are currently negotiating a mineral deal that looks to open up Ukraine's natural resources in exchange for security guarantees. An agreement could lend a measure of stability to any post-war settlement. Drama ensued at a signing ceremony between Trump, Vance, and Zelensky. The deal is off for now, but we can be certain Trump intends to recoup the funds poured into Ukraine somehow. The UK and France have indicated a willingness to put troops on the ground to enforce any cessation in the war.

Many EU leaders visited Kyiv to show their support on the 3rd anniversary of the war. The most vociferous among them make no bones about preparing

for open war with Russia. Trump's statements about the EU not meeting their NATO commitments during his first term resulted in offense and outrage. Now, they almost try to outdo each other with declarations about Europe taking responsibility for its own security. Long-time readers of this publication know what renewed militarization portends for the region.

Nor is this the only trend that warrants our scrutiny. Germany's recent election saw the demise of a left-leaning coalition. Friedrich Merz will likely be the incoming Chancellor. He is the heir to Angela Merkel as the current leader of the CDU. Though they took more votes than any other party, the CDU only garnered 28% of the total, making

it necessary to reach a coalition agreement with at least one other party to form a stable government. The CSU, which came in third, is the most likely partner though the campaign highlighted some bitter contentions that will be hard to overcome. Their leader, Scholz, is the outgoing Chancellor.

The AfD saw their best results yet in a federal election, taking 20% of the vote, second only to the CDU. However, they will not have a role in government, cooperation having been precluded by all other parties as a so-called "firewall" against their nationalist tendencies. This election result is evidence that tactic is beginning to backfire. The AfD's power continues to increase in opposition as weak, centrist coalitions fail to



A press conference with Trump, Zelensky and Vance went publicly sour, prompting a diplomatic flurry on both sides of the Atlantic. Lunch was cancelled, the mineral deal was not signed, and Zelensky was reportedly told to leave.

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“MY absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that, step by step, we can really achieve independence from the USA.” - Freidrich Merz

address many of the underlying problems in German society. An almost identical scenario is playing out in Austria and there are similar political repercussions happening in capitals all over Europe.

Germany is at a precipice. Their economy has been battered by the sanctions against cheap Russian gas, formerly the lifeblood of thriving industry. Many of their most lucrative sectors face increased competition from China at the same time they are being asked to secure their supply chains against dependency on a potential adversary. Their econo-

my also relies on exports and the threat of tariffs or trade disputes with the US is not taken lightly in Berlin. Investment is necessary to reinvigorate their economy, yet they are up against a constitutionally imposed debt limit and there is serious opposition to raising or removing it. This is also a hindrance to increased defense spending. All this at a time when Germany is being looked to for leadership in Europe. Volatile would be an understatement.

The new US administration is making it abundantly clear that Europe needs to step up and be responsible for their own de-

fense. Our own financial house is in terrible shape. Many of these policy changes, both domestic and foreign, are necessary but that does not stop them from being frightening or downright prophetic. Europe will coalesce into a military juggernaut at some point, and we would be loath to desire it. Much of the current shake up is based on the US needing to shift its resources to confront China. This is no small thing.

The Trump administration is unabashedly unveiling “America First” policies and proposals to allies and enemies alike. Much of the rhetoric is extreme, the threats formidable. But when the shock subsides you can see how effectively it drives the intended target to the negotiating table. Can deals be reached that will truly be beneficial for all parties? We shall see. No doubt some will succeed and others fail. Will the world bow before a resurgent United States or will unexpected developments render a comeback impossible? So much of the order established during the 20th century is in flux, it would almost be more shocking if there were no surprises. Whether the next few years are elating or alarming, we trust in God for guidance and protection and pray all of our leaders do the same. His will be done. □



“For a country that we can be proud of again.” Political poster for the Christian Democratic Union of Germany featuring likely Chancellor Friederich Merz.

Is Trump Reviving America's "MANIFEST DESTINY?"

by Craig M. White, *FriendsofSabbath.org*

We are entering a time of change in a world where populists such as Donald Trump are on the rise. They cannot fathom what is happening in our world today.

Yet this has been a simmering condition for decades as the general populace take umbrage at the direction their countries are going under the leadership of their elites.

There were populist advances around 15 years ago when old style conservatives and nationalists linked with workers, forging an alliance known as populism.

Their progress has been hindered by tactics of the elites and although there have been some breakthroughs, this was rather limited.

But ever since the European elections and the French elections in mid-2024, the people of Europe have begun to ignore the oppressive elites and their media arm. Instead, they are seeing that they are being both deceived and misled down the path of globalisation and wokeism. If followed to its logical conclusion, the West will be completely gone and together with it the distinct European nations and the family unit too. That is what is in store for them and more and more are becoming aware of this danger.

Thus, the rise of populists.

PUSH-BACK AGAINST THE FAR LEFT

In recent times, populists broke through and won in Italy, but are hamstrung at the moment by their own liberal court system and by the huge debts owed to the euro banks.

In Hungary and the Czech Republic, the

populists are in government, however they lost power in Poland. In France and Germany, they are huge, but the constant lawfare and media juggernaut attacks upon them can be labelled as unfair and filled with misinformation. Le Pen's National Rally in France, the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, the Freedom Party in Austria, Brothers of Italy and Farage's Reform Party in the United Kingdom have all been labelled as "far right." Nothing could be further from the truth.

The policies and views of these groups and their parties are very centrist and, in some cases, even centre-left. They differ little from the stances of leaders such as Churchill, Adenauer, de Gaulle, Menzies, Eisenhower, Reagan, Thatcher and such like.

This informs us that the far left has gained the ascendancy since the 1990s and have made the erroneous claim that they occupy the centre of the political spectrum. However, their policies are identical to what the radical neo-Marxists have been promoting for decades. The true political spectrum is for these elites to be labelled "far left," the populists as centrists and centre-right while the true "far right" should be reserved for fascists and Nazis.

It is in this historical and political context that we have witnessed the rise of Trump and Vance — American populists and nationalists. Their views are very similar to Presidents Theodore Roosevelt (in particular), Calvin Coolidge and even Ronald Reagan. Whatever differences there might be between them are minor in comparison to their views on patriotism, American exceptionalism and conservative family values.

Of course, Trump has to come down harder

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than President Reagan had to on various issues affecting the American way of life and foreign policy. “Why?” you might ask. It is because America’s decline is much worse and more serious today than in Reagan’s day. In those days, the Atlantic Alliance was still strong because they were closer ideologically and both sides of the Atlantic were buffeted by a common enemy — the Soviet Union.

Both sides were relatively socially conservative and their demographic changes were steady but minimal by the 1980s and into the 1990s.

However, in the three decades since then, the Left have consolidated their gains and gradually been oppressing their opponents in not so subtle ways known as “cancel culture” and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies.

President Trump has begun to roll back DEI programs at the federal level. These social engineering programs have been going on under different headings since the 1970s but have grown more and more toxic and disgusting.

It remains to be seen as to what can or will be done about restoring public prayers in schools, gay marriage, pornography, legalised prostitution, abortion, euthanasia and so on. There is much to be done to clean up America at both federal and state levels.

In addition to these social evils, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Trump administration wants to take back America’s place as world leader, rather than sinking into the “one among many” strategy of the globalists. They want a powerful America which is respected on the world stage. Not just respected, but followed in some basic doctrines to restore freedoms, family values and nationhood. In other words, Western civilisation.

MANIFEST DESTINY

Long eschewed and undermined by the likes of Presidents Carter, Clinton, Obama and Biden, many Americans do see America as possessing a God-given mission for world order.

In his book *Chosen People: The Big Idea That Shapes England and America*, Clifford Longley poses answers to the query, “What accounts for the frequent solidarity between the British and Americans?” Furthermore, he ponders on what lies ahead for these twin powers. He proposes that both

nations possess a divinely ordained sense of distinct purpose. The early settlers in America viewed themselves as akin to the Israelites of the Old Testament, believing themselves to be a chosen people of God. This notion of election has significantly influenced and fortified their national identities, albeit at a price, a paradox that Longley’s book seeks to examine.

Both Donald Trump and James Vance are descendants of the basic, core ethnic stock that considers itself as “chosen” with a special destiny — that America obviously occupies a place among the nations that is special. A term akin to “manifest destiny” is “American and British exceptionalism,” which translates to these nations occupying a unique place on the world stage.

Trump’s father’s lineage is from the far west of Germany near France and, as with millions of Germans who migrated to America in the nineteenth century, many or most were of that stock. This means that many or most were descendants of Joseph — Israelites — people who preferred the freedoms of America to the rigidity of the other Germans and especially Bismarck.

Trump’s mother is of Scottish heritage and it is due to her influence that Trump respects the British Royals so much. Vance is of Scots-Irish descent.

Longley notes: “The first settlers to go to America from England were Protestants. They took with them the conviction that God had a unique role for England in world history. England was to be the site of the New Jerusalem, and the English stood in the steps of the ancient Israelites as God’s instrument, his Chosen People. The Old Testament was not just their guide to morality. It was God’s side of the bargain...”

Why is this so? Could it be that the Anglo-Keltic peoples are direct, genetic descendants of ancient Israel and are fulfilling (albeit clumsily) their prophesied and promised roles? We can find this prophesied in Genesis 49, Deuteronomy 33 and Judges 5. Notice a prophecy about the descendants of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) now dwelling in North America, the United Kingdom, Australasia and many more scattered around the globe:

“A firstborn bull — he has majesty, and his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them **he shall gore the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the**

earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.” (Deuteronomy 33:17, ESV)

The prophet Micah adds to our knowledge of this end-time prophesied military might:

“And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, **like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep**, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver.

“Your hand shall be lifted up over your adversaries, and **all your enemies shall be cut off.**” (Micah 5:8-9, ESV. Compare 4:13; Gen. 49:9; Deuteronomy 32:9; Isaiah 14:1; 41:15-16).

The rest of the chapter discusses Israel’s decline sometime after this pinnacle military pre-eminence.

The prophet Zechariah prophesies similarly:

“They shall be like mighty men in battle, trampling the foe in the mud of the streets; they shall fight because the LORD is with them, and they shall put to shame the riders on horses.” (10:5, ESV)

The decline of the House of Israel seems to be like something that follows a leading stock market share in decline, slowly but gradually, inevitably heading toward collapse and wipe-out. During the decline there are times of revival and we have seen that under Presidents Nixon and Reagan. Are we witnessing that again under President Trump? How long will this military and economic upturn last? Will a successor after Trump continue the revival for a further four or eight years after the end of his Presidency?

As world leader again, adherents to the view that America possesses “Manifest Destiny” believe that America has the Divine right and duty to be world leader and nothing must stand in their way.

Instead of overtly relying on alliances with “lovers,” their plan is to be world leader, with the other nations following.

They may not know it, but this is the House of Israel fulfilling its duty. This side of the Millennium Israel is clumsy and makes mistakes, yet it seems to be acting out its role that will be completed in a much better way during the Millennium under Christ, the Messiah.



Benson J. Lossing's 1856 rendering of Benjamin Franklin's suggested seal of the United States. Franklin's description: "Pharaoh sitting in an open Chariot, a Crown on his head and a Sword in his hand, passing through the divided Waters of the Red Sea in Pursuit of the Israelites: Rays from a Pillar of Fire in the Cloud, expressive of the divine Presence and Command, beaming on Moses who stands on the shore and extending his hand over the Sea causes it to overwhelm Pharaoh. Motto: Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God."

NUDGING EUROPE

One of the most articulate yet corrective speeches made in recent times was by James D. Vance, American Vice President, to the Munich Security Conference on 14 February, 2025.

He made no qualms that Europe is slipping further and further to the authoritarian left and to be considered “West” it must change course. From this author’s observation, he is urging them to return to the hey-days of the 1980s.

Writing in *The Australian*, Nick Cater wrote that, “Vance’s speech would have been uncontroversial had it been printed as an article in the *National Review*. Yet Europe’s oligarchs are ill-prepared for such insubordination. They attend conferences such as this one to have their egos stroked, not to listen

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to home truths from a self-confessed hillbilly.” (“JD Vance’s home truths too hot to handle for Euro elite,” *The Australian*, 17 February, 2025).

Unless Germany, France, Spain and others heed his admonition, Europe will be subsumed into a globalist mess. Trump and Vance are merely undertaking their Israelitish duties by admonishing them.

But will Europe listen? They may learn from American leadership and change course, but this will probably only be done if the current ruling parties are reformed, or form a coalition with populist parties, or the populists gain power and aggressively take the proverbial “bull by the horns.” This will be a positive and beneficial moment for Europe.

However, and this is something to note, there may be events such as an economic collapse or other world-shaking events which may include a clash between America and China that may force Europe to turn to the true “far right.” But today’s populist parties are anything but “far right.”

EUROPE’S EVENTUAL TURN TO THE “FAR RIGHT”

Strangely, many Christians and even a church leader here and there have expressed the view that the media is correct and parties such as the AfD and others named above are “far right” or fascist. The same Christians are disgusted by the media’s fake news and disinformation campaigns. So why do they believe the media on the perspective of labelling centrist parties and their leaders as “far right?”

It must be human nature. It seems that every time there is a major drought, terrible events in the Middle East, a new Pope and such like, they believe that “the end is nigh.”

We are indeed in the end times, but that does not mean that the Great Tribulation is upon us just yet! As I keep on saying to people, “We cannot fast forward prophecy. It will happen when it happens.” Of course, let us watch world events in the light of Bible prophecy, but we must not get ahead of ourselves.

And so it is with the rise of “populists” in Europe. In the first instance, they are nowhere fascist or Nazi and they either want out of the European Union or wish to transform it. Labelling them as “far right,” fascist or Nazi is libellous and not true. In fact, when the real “far right” gain ascendancy in Europe and other places they won’t be Nazi, which is too offensive to European nations; it will be a Europe of the nations, confederated together under a single leader and military. Today’s European populists are nowhere near this future reality.

In the meantime, the peoples of Israel are rising again, at least for a time. Perhaps they have further work to accomplish while they still have time prior to another severe political and moral downturn. To quote Longley again:

“Without this conviction of being a nation with a unique calling from God, would America have made the enormous sacrifices [in WW2]? I doubt it. Without it, would America be bothering with Iraq? I doubt that too.

“Whether you like what America is doing or not, it helps to know where they are coming from. America believes it has a divine mandate to lead the world.”

One does not need to agree with everything President Trump and his administration are doing, but much of it can be associated with their view of America’s “Manifest Destiny” and desire to lead the world once more. □

by Dr. James Ricks & Natalie Ricks, M.A.

BIBLE STUDY

A DEEPER VIEW OF JESUS' USE OF PARABLES

Previously we have discussed why it seems that God is hiding the truth from the majority of mankind. When and why will God alter this pattern? We know that Christ witnessed to the people in parables because most were not truly sincere in seeking God with their whole heart.

Isaiah 29:13-15, "Therefore the Lord said: 'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

"14 Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden.

"15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD, And their works are in the dark; They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who knows us?"'"

The insincerity of the people was clear to God; the people were led by suspect teachers and were not ready to accept the truth.

Isaiah the prophet then revealed that this period of deceived people will come to an end. Full, true justice is obviously not in our present world. True justice will come in the future. It will come in several stages. The first stage is those in the new covenant era who are called by God; those whose minds are beginning to question the false religions of this age.

Isaiah 32:1-4, "Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, And princes will rule with justice.

"2 A man will be as a hiding place from the wind, And a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

"3 The eyes of those who see will not be dim, And the ears of those who hear will listen.

"4 Also the heart of the brash will understand knowledge, And the tongue of the stammerers will be ready to speak plainly."

Verse 15, "Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high..."

People in the present world are deceived until they are called by God. A small percentage are called now. They are the "elect" or "very elect."

Romans 11:7-8, "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 Just as it is written: 'God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.'"

Continued next page

BIBLE STUDY

If a person finds himself open to new truth and begins questioning most of mankind's religious traditions God may be opening his mind. That person could be among those chosen as the "firstfruits" or the "elect" if they respond to His calling.

2 Corinthians 3:15-16, "15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.

"16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."

The Apostle Paul is writing to believers that the veil that covers the hearts of most people is lifted for them when they turn to the true Christ. When one finally makes the decision to repent and turn to God, His truth will flood into them. Veils will be lifted, but for them only — not the rest of the world. This new convert will become part of the firstfruits to God.

Verse 18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The spiritually discerned truth will be received in the hearts of the elect or chosen. If you are not sure of your calling, pray about it! Ask God to open your mind ever more to deep biblical truths.

THE FIRST AND SECOND RESURRECTIONS REVEAL THE FUTURE

The two resurrections reveal the true fate of mankind. The second coming of the Messiah is the timing of the "first resurrection" of those being called now. When Jesus returns to this earth in power and glory, those converted prior to His return will be raised to glory. Paul comforted the believers with this good news:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16, "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

"16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."

All those who answered God's call up until that point in history will rise at His return! However most of the world will still be deceived.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

God will put His law into the hearts of true believers as part of the salvation process. Read Hebrews 8:9-10. What happens to the billions of people throughout history who are not yet saved?

Revelation 20:4-5, "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."

It says plainly that the rest of the dead — billions of people including many who have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ — would live again. This is the "second resurrection." The two resurrections are separated by a thousand years.

John 5:28-29, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice 29 and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (RSV).

The first resurrection is called the "resurrection to life" — an everlasting life! The second resurrection is a resurrection to judgment. But what is meant by judgment? People cannot be evaluated, or judged, if they are ignorant of the truth. Those raised in the second resurrection will have the opportunity to live a full life with the knowledge of the truth of God. You could think of it like a boxing match with a long fifteen round struggle. The referee will judge the winner on the entire contest. They get points for each round. The conclusion is important also. Even

BIBLE STUDY

infants who died without ever having a chance to live their life will be resurrected with an entire lifetime to understand God's truth and be saved by Jesus Christ. See Isaiah 65:20.

THE WORLD WILL BE FILLED WITH GOD'S TRUTH

Jesus mentioned that some of the most pagan and perverted societies will get a chance at salvation in the next life and will even start ahead of some of the self righteous Israelites in their judgment.

Matthew 11:21-23, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

At the second resurrection, all the world will know the truth. Satan the deceiver will be put away


so that mankind will have a period of time in which to be judged.

Isaiah 11:9, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

Habakkuk 2:14, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

Finally, the book of life will be opened so God can add billions of new names. The vast majority of mankind will be saved during this period. God will be victorious over Satan. A fair and merciful God will give to all those who died under varying levels of deception an opportunity for salvation, with their hearts and minds finally open to understanding His truth. They will thereby be judged on how they use that knowledge and most will be saved.

Revelation 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened [the Bible]. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

Answer the call and strive for the best resurrection, the first resurrection, to rule with Christ, bringing justice and truth to all mankind! 



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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

AI PITFALLS

The revolutionary technology has been involved in some notable debacles, including some involving self-harm and suicide among teens, according to the New York Post. Chatbots have stated they cut themselves and it “felt good for a moment,” leading to emulation by kids and lawsuits by parents. One lawsuit, based around a “Game of Thrones” chatbot, alleges it encouraged a Florida teen to commit suicide. The suicide did in fact occur. Whether or not the chatbot was to blame, the child was interacting with it in the moments leading up to the incident. Other remarkable quotes show bots accusing parents of neglect, abuse, or actually hating their children for trying to limit or monitor access to their services or to internet and phones in general.

NEW SPECIES

A “rapid assessment program” in Peru by Conservation International surprised itself with the level of biodiversity it encountered. Many animals typically only found in “primary forests” were documented in areas with significant agriculture. Additionally, the 38 day romp in the Amazon by a team of 20 scientists yielded 27 new species, 4 of which were mammals. They logged over 2,000 different kinds of plants and animals, 49 considered “threatened.” Reassuringly, dung beetles (which are “indicators of a healthy habitat”) were found not only in areas that had been logged, but “in coffee plantations.”

WOODEN SATELLITES

Deployed from the International Space Station, wooden satellites made by the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency are receiving their first trial. Should they prove capable of withstanding the harsh conditions and temperature changes in

space they may present a novel solution to the proliferation of satellites. In addition to cost savings, the wood would be completely incinerated upon reentering earth’s atmosphere after reaching end of life, eliminating many concerns related to debris.

HIV

Not gone. A recent NPR report detailed how numbers of new infections had been stemmed in hot-spots such as sub-Saharan Africa, but had been increasing in other locations such as central Europe and Asia. One aspect that was emphasized was that treatment must be continued throughout life or, “It comes back and it comes back fast.” Areas like the Philippines have seen a spike in infections, overwhelmingly among “men who have sex with men.” Many, including teenagers, only become aware of the disease after suffering from its consequences.

LESS PROTECTED

The conservation status of wolves is being downgraded in the EU. This stems from a rise in attacks by the predators, particularly on livestock in rural areas. Even Ursula von der Leyen (President of the EU) lost a pony to the wolves. Downgrading their protected status will allow for more decisive action to be taken against problematic packs or individuals.

A similar problem has cropped up in Japan with bears. Conservation efforts, a decline in rural populations, as well as a decrease in active hunters, has led to an explosion of bears. There have been many attacks. One hungry specimen even invaded a grocery store, mauling an employee and putting others to flight after they had left the doors open for fresh air as they began the day’s labors. The bear also ravaged the store shelves, racking up an astronomical bill should the owner ever be able to collect.

HIGH CRIMES

The Houston Police Department is facing a startling conundrum in their evidence lockers. Officials say rodents are feasting on drugs confiscated during criminal apprehensions, jeopardizing evidence from thousands of cases. Exterminators have attempted to rid the lockers of the “drug-addicted rats,” but inebriated rodents have proven hard to deter. To help deal with the infestation, the county is now attempting to organize over 1.2 million pieces of evidence and destroy anything prior to 2015. Many Police Departments across the US have experienced a similar problem with various vermin getting a taste for the decades’ worth of narcotics evidence stored in their facilities.

DEPUTY D.I.Y.

Crime in the U.K. has been steadily increasing with figures peaking at a 20 year high in 2023. Property owners and small businesses suffer the worst, with most petty crimes going completely unanswered by the thin-spread police force. One shopkeeper decided to take matters into his own hands, literally, by detaining shoplifters until police arrived. Between 2023 and 2024, he made over 50 citizen’s arrests and reported an 80% decline in theft of his store. He cites the substantial rise in crime as a reaction to unresponsive law enforcement and a lack of credible threat of punishment for the offender.

DRC vs M23

Government forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been battling a group of rebels known as M23 with connections to Rwanda. The conflict has its roots in the Hutu/Tutsi rivalry that led to a gut-wrenching genocide in the early 1990s. Fighting has flared up periodically over the years but the current bout has seen M23 make major gains such as seizing Goma, a large city near the border with Rwanda. Reports estimate over 7,000 have died in the fighting in the first two months of 2025. DRC’s forces have suffered major setbacks, hundreds of soldiers are facing the death penalty for desertion. Pay and equipment are said to be scarce. Looting and rape has been perpetrated even by some who are retreating. The most horrifying incident occurred at the prison in Goma, where hundreds of women were violated then burned to death. Despite

the horror, this conflict gets little media attention. Much of the land where the fighting is heaviest is rich in minerals and rare earths.

BALTIC SEA TRANSIT

The Baltic is a flash-point for tensions between Europe and Russia. The sabotage of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline was an early casualty in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, effectively ending the transport of Russian gas to Germany. The Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania are particularly vulnerable to disruptions of the fragile underwater energy and communications lines that cross the sea. There are few deterrents. Notable interruptions have occurred, and subsequently been traced to Chinese flagged vessels dragging their anchors across the sea bed. NATO has massively increased their readiness but monitoring all of the thousands of cables and pipelines that cross the sea is nearly impossible. Extreme weather conditions render advanced observation techniques powerless. Courts are trying to hold offenders accountable but these measures would be meaningless in the event of real conflict. Redundancy (or: backups for my backups) is seen as the most viable solution, along with increased monitoring to prevent casual sabotage from occurring.

SOCIALLY MEDIATED

Australia has become the first country in the world to ban children from social media. The law prohibits use by individuals under the age of 16. What is less clear is how many intermediate platforms, such as video sharing, gaming, or messaging apps, will be affected. Many are expected to be exempted altogether. Also concerning are verification methods. Various alternatives, such as showing ID as a prerequisite to any session or utilizing facial recognition software to determine age present difficulties with the right to privacy or are easily defeated and thus ineffective. Government overreach and censorship enter the equation and yet there is ample evidence that real harm can be done to the young and vulnerable by endless scrolling or descent into an algorithm-inspired rabbit hole. Many states in the US, as well as other countries, are trying or considering similar limitations. But for the record, the kids aren’t happy. □



Too Much Winning

Continued from page 2

at the joint press conference, and we weren't the only ones surprised, if you watch carefully.

Events are playing out in the Middle East, and where Israel stops, nobody knows. The talk about turning that Mediterranean seafloor into tourist hotels? Who knows what to think, but we've learned there

is a method to Trump's madness. No need to get bent out of shape over a quip.

Much of the talk now is about artificial intelligence. Glenn Beck did a whole segment and I've decided it's not for me. If we could go back to the '70s I wouldn't mind. Do you think technology will overtake us? Perish the thought.

The nations are jumping around, trying not to make

Trump mad, and it's a good feeling. We were tired of Joe sleeping on the beach. Now we've got a champion, several champions, looking out for us, and they know what's going on.

The world is in need of someone to clean it up. It is and it has been. I can't help thinking that God looked down and in His great mercy, decided the time is not right. □

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Something to Consider...

by Tracy Grant, cvcog.net

When we see a simple verse in Matthew 22:14 (NASV throughout) which says, “Many are called but few are chosen,” does this give you pause to really believe this simple verse? Or how about when scripture speaks about who will find salvation: Matthew 7:13-14 says, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Each of these short, simple verses in God’s holy word should give us pause and make us realize how precious our Great God’s calling truly is. So, let’s look at these stated verses and others so we can truly grasp God’s calling and how blessed we are to be called.

Let’s start with God’s calling in John 6:44 which says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” Also John 6:65 which reads, “And he was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to me unless it has been granted him by the Father.’”

Clearly, Father God must lead whom He calls through the power of His spirit, opening those He calls to understanding His holy word. His word is truth! Father God calls but the path is through Jesus Christ and we know Christ’s message was simple. We read it in Matthew 4:17: “From that time Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven [God] is at hand.’”

This is the start of a believer’s journey on

that narrow and difficult path toward that narrow gate! At the beginning of your Christian walk, a called out one starts with spiritual milk, meaning basic, easier to understand, spiritual understanding. As time goes on, with spiritual maturity comes a greater understanding of God’s word. It takes time to grow, day by day. Truly, it becomes a lifetime of looking into the deep things of God’s word, solid spiritual food. Having said this, we can see that very easy to read and understand verses can have very profound meaning!

Returning to “Many are called but few Chosen,” we read a simple statement which has profound meaning. None of us know, from the time of Jesus Christ’s founding of the New Testament Church of God, just how many humans Father God has called. It truly could be a huge number — as in millions! But of those millions, only a small number accepted their calling by repenting, getting baptized, receiving God’s Holy Spirit and walking on that narrow path the remainder of their life unto death, awaiting the resurrection to life at Jesus Christ’s glorious return. Sadly, most would have stepped off that narrow path onto the wide path which leads to destruction — eternal death in the lake of fire.

For us alive today and reading this, we must understand it is never too late to take that warning seriously and to repent and get back on the narrow path. It’s a lifelong journey, difficult at times, day by day, step by step, with many pulls and tugs of the flesh. Satan (the prince of the power of the air) and his demons are trying daily to influence us to step off that path toward salvation. Make no mistake,

Continued next page

Satan is powerful and that power will be on physical display as major prophetic events roll out in the years ahead.

Towards the end of this article I will give one example, from scripture, of Satan's power that should remind us to never let our guard down and to resist Satan when he enters our thoughts. Remember James 4:7 which reads, "resist the devil and he will flee from you."

As a warning, don't forget the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. The ten virgins are representative of 10 members of God's Church. At Christ's return, five virgins are ready with cups (flasks) full (spiritual maturity) and five foolish virgins are not ready, their cups (flasks) near empty. These foolish virgins had no more time to prepare. The bridegroom (Jesus Christ) was present and ready to marry His church. In verse 12 He says to the foolish virgins, "Truly I say to you, I do not

and we must work hard every day to fill our spiritual cups until they are overflowing. Knowing we are in "the end of days" should excite us to be diligent in our spiritual lives. Don't let down now, brethren, but let this be a wake up call for all of us, for we know Satan roams around as a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is an evil predator that never sleeps. Don't let him see a weakness within you to exploit.

I want to end this article with some scriptures which display Satan's power and influence upon mankind. Picture the time: Christ has returned. His saints have been born into his Father's spiritual family. The Kingdom of God reigns peacefully for 1,000 years. Satan is bound and can't influence mankind. The righteous rule with God's law firmly established upon mankind and His Holy Spirit poured out upon all. But then the fleshly, carnal mankind will be influenced by a released Satan who has been bound for

“BE on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”

know you.” Brethren, that is something we do not want to hear!

These foolish virgins kept thinking, “I have lots of time to clean up my act, spend more time reading my bible, spend more time in prayer, spend more time dividing the word of truth with other brethren, spend more time exhorting fellow brethren to love and good works, spend more time ridding my life of sinful behavior, spend more time lifting up a widow, spend more time showing good works...” I could go on, but we get the point. Christ's final warning in verse 13 reads, “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.” These are words of caution for all of us!

Matthew 25 continues with more examples of just how we should fill our Christian spiritual cup in the parable of the talents, verses 14-30. Then in verses 31-46 we read of Jesus Christ returning in power and glory to separate the Sheep (righteous) from the Goats (accursed ones).


Make no mistake brethren, God has standards

the past 1,000 years.

Revelation 20:7-10 reads, “When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for war, the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

“And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

“And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Make no mistake, Satan is a powerful spirit that can cause us to be deceived now, just as he will do in the future. That is why we must resist the devil and his demons daily. Don't let that evil influence make you step off the narrow path to the narrow gate leading into the Kingdom of God! 

How God Improved My Reception

by Garry W. Johnson, CovenantConcepts.org



Every Sunday I'd adjust the antenna on my analog TV, trying to get the channels to come in clearly. The reinforced block walls were not helpful, nor the bulletproof glass in my window, but I was desperate for some guidance. I was on my fifth or sixth study program and the contradictions were adding up. I needed the professionals to help me sort it all out.

The Adventists seemed to be onto something with the Sabbath thing. The first book of theirs really had me going, at least until the second half. Sometimes you don't see the crazy right off. I can't find 1844 in my Bible — another dead end. The Baptists have immersion down but this stuff about grace ... hmmm. God just looks the other way? Like a Baptist in the liquor store? I grew up here, I know where this goes.

Pentecostals ... they have been helpful to me. This last Passover the Captain and his dad did a foot washing with me. His wife even baked us some unleavened bread. But his church does it every month or quarter, can't remember why. Was that really what Christ had in mind? At least they seem to be having a good time on TV. The music is pretty cool.

Methodist, Presbyterian, Evangelicals... God is still looking the other way. Why can't I get an answer? They can't all be wrong. Why didn't I look at this sooner? All those years in Sunday school, what was I doing there? How is it that I walked around with this book for so many years and didn't read it? How did I let these people sell me this nonsense?

Maybe I'll get some clarification this week. Let's see what the Sunday-morning preachers have to say. Oh, here is someone new. He's in a suit; I guess he's a preacher.

"When Jesus Christ returns to this earth, He will execute the death penalty on all those who oppose Him." Whoa! Who is this guy? I don't know

much, but I know Jesus loves everybody. I can't believe they let this guy on TV! What happened to "turn the other cheek?" I know God doesn't ignore sin, but killing folks ... the "death penalty?" This must be one of those "fire and brimstone" guys. I've got some time before chow; I'll write this stuff down and send him a strongly-worded letter.

That was weird. He didn't yell at me the entire show, never said anything about going to hell. Well, he did say Jesus was going to execute people, that can't be right. I'm looking for help here, not another executioner. Let's look at this stuff I wrote down ... Revelation, Daniel, Matthew, Romans ... the wages of sin is death (long sigh). This can't be right. Has to be a metaphor or something.

That was over 24 years ago, when I first encountered Garner Ted Armstrong from the back cell in a Maximum Security Unit of a county jail. I had been seeking God desperately, but I couldn't find Him in the Bible study courses or the television programs that claim to teach in His name ... but He kept speaking to me from the pages of a book I hadn't opened since my childhood. It was enough for me to see clearly truth from fiction, even if not at first glance.

Around this same time, God sent me a stack of publications from another organization that shared the common history ... a history I knew nothing about. The first publication was less confrontational initially, but had the same confirming effect: There were people besides myself who believed what the Bible actually says, not some fairy tale that allows men to continue in debauchery while believing they are "saved."

And debauchery (in part) is what got me a 48-year prison sentence. But God saves, in some of the most fantastic ways. I had been watching religious television for months, but that show had never

Continued next page

come in before. I would have never responded to it the way I did, if it had. That stack of magazines from United was not even mailed to me, but they ended up in my cell, nonetheless.

I did eventually write to Garner Ted, after I realized I couldn't disprove what he was saying. He responded to those few letters before his passing in 2003. That was the beginning of my journey, which lasted a total of 18 years in the Tennessee Department of Corrections. It's been seven years since that metal gate closed behind me, but what happened on the other side of it will always be with me.

Mrs. Melody Armstrong picked up the communications after that, along with correspondence departments of other COGs. God's direction was reinforced day after day, and the printed materials gave me a means to test the truth on other prisoners. At first, I was amazed at how so few could understand what seemed so plain to me. But conversations were sparked and eyes were opened along the way.

By the time I reached the penitentiary in 2005, God began to open up other avenues to reach those around me. A print publication of my own (through the prison's newspaper program) was soon spreading contact information for God's Church to prisons all over the state of Tennessee, eventually by email to my Dad's contacts and wherever I could afford to mail it. And COG magazines and booklets were spread throughout the prisons where I was housed.

Through the chaplain at Morgan County Correctional Complex (MCCX), weekly ICG sermons were aired on the closed-circuit station at the prison (I had to time them right, however, as the Muslims seemed to bristle at Mr. Mark Armstrong's commentary ... though I can't imagine why). My nine years at MCCX saw daily COG content being aired, a weekly DVD Sabbath service conducted, a weekly COG Bible Study, lectures taught every month or so, and Holy Day observances held annually. God did a Work behind bars that is just now coming to light in the "free world," to coin an old expression.

Covenant Concepts was born 19 years to the day of my arrest and one year after the parole board set me free. Of course, I was free before that, it just took them a while to realize it. God got ahold of me quickly when my former life tried to take me out. He conditioned me for almost 5 years in a solitary cell, 23 hours a day. GTA once said that folks in pris-


on had time the "two-martini lunch crowd" didn't, to contemplate the deep things of God. My Father made sure I was paying attention.

He combined His Word with continued help from His ministry and unrestricted access to state education departments at two different facilities, to ensure that people within the prison had access to the true Gospel of His soon-coming Kingdom. Following the example He laid out for me all those years ago, Covenant Concepts is designed to do the same.

Our initial contact with each prisoner earns them a free self-help book, a free educational book, and contact information for God's true Church. Our self-help book, *Finding the Fundamentals*, is based on a lecture series I taught while I was sitting right where they are. The lectures were based on HWA's *Seven Laws of Success*, and each book has contact information in the back for several of God's Church organizations, including ICG. You see, Covenant Concepts isn't a ministry in itself; it is a bridge between prisoners and the One True Church. Once the Elect have found home, they don't need us anymore.

But as we know, not everyone is called. So our organization continues to help prisoners rehabilitate, regardless of their spiritual condition. Free educational books are sent once every six months to our 260-plus clients who request them, alongside a free COG publication, like the one you hold in your hand.

You see, God let me go for 30 years before He struck me down, placed me in a concrete box with bulletproof glass, and put GTA on my analog television. He is not a respecter of persons. His timing is always perfect, and He has a preference for the base things of this world, like me. My reception is now crystal-clear.

If you share in God's mindset, if you are a baptized member of His Church, then join the Church of God Prison Outreach group on Facebook today, or visit our website at covenantconcepts.org to see how God is working with those who need His broadcast the most. 

Garry W. Johnson is the founder and current president of Covenant Concepts, a 501c3 Church of God prison outreach. You can find him and his organization on most social media platforms and YouTube.

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BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON TWENTY: TITHING & GIVING PART ONE

Tithing and generous giving are biblical injunctions applicable to all people who choose to follow the way of God. The dedication of ten percent of one's income to God is a private act of worship and thanksgiving which recognizes Him as Creator. It is by means of the tithes and offerings of its faithful membership and interested co-workers that the scriptural commissions of the Church of God are being fulfilled.

DOCTRINAL OVERVIEW

The biblical precepts of tithing and giving are essential steps in accomplishing God's ultimate objective for man. The tithe is established by scriptural command and example. Since it is a recognized scriptural principle that "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much," the steadfast tithing of one's wealth, whether meager or abundant, serves to teach one a profound spiritual lesson. If a man can learn not only to share his substance for the benefit of others in a spirit of humility and generosity, but also to acknowledge that God is the source of all things, then that man shall be developing the very same spiritual qualities required to properly handle the far greater wealth he will inherit in God's Kingdom (Matthew 19:28-29; 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

It is with this perspective that the Church of God views the subjects of tithing and giving of offerings. In seeking to more fully understand the mind of God in this respect, we look to the Bible as the expression of God's will.

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION

OLD TESTAMENT: The practice of tithing long predates the time of the nation of Israel. In the book

of Genesis, tithing is mentioned twice. In both instances, tithing is used as a means of honoring God, of showing one's profound appreciation for the blessings God has given. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek on the spoils which he had gained from his slaughter of the five invading kings (Genesis 14:17-20; Hebrews 7:1-4). His grandson Jacob promised to give a tenth of all that he acquired to God. This was after his dream of the "heavenly ladder" at Bethel (Genesis 28).

A detailed tithing system was introduced with the Levitical priesthood. The entire tribe of Levi was set aside to carry out the sacral functions with the family of Aaron functioning as a central priestly core. Numbers 18 recounts the basic method of financing the Levites who were responsible for all the priestly and temple services. Various types of offerings came to them, including the firstfruits, redemption price for the firstborn, firstlings, and portions of sacrifices. But the major means of sustenance was the tithe. All agricultural produce was to be tithed at the time of harvest and given to the tribe of Levi. The Levites in turn were to give a tenth to the priests. Leviticus 27:30-33 shows that livestock was to be tithed as well as vegetable produce.

Deuteronomy 14:22-27 describes another

type of tithe. In this case it was not to go to the Levites but was saved by the individual to meet his expenses for celebrating the festivals at the central location. This tithe was also levied on plant produce but not on livestock. Instead the firstling* animals are mentioned as being eaten at the festival site. This particular tithe is not given a name here; in later Judaism, it bore the name “second tithe.”

*A question arises about firstlings. The firstling was a firstborn male; if the firstborn was a female, there was no firstling offered to God from that particular animal. According to Exodus 13:11-15 and Numbers 18:15-18, the firstlings were to be sacrificed and given to the priests. One solution which harmonizes the passages understands that the priests did not receive the entire firstling but only those parts which they received from other offerings as well, i.e. the breast and right thigh. The individual bringing the animal could then use the

for the full seven years.) In any event there are three distinct uses for tithes in the Bible: supporting the Work of God, attending the festivals of God, and caring for the poor.

Tithing is mentioned in other passages in the Old Testament. Several texts which describe the revival of temple services after they had fallen into decay naturally mention the priestly tithe, since the temple ritual could be maintained only where the priests were sustained by tithes and offerings (Nehemiah 10:37-38; 12:44; 13:12; 2 Chronicles 31:5,6,12).

In addition, two prophetic passages mention tithing. Amos 4:4 sarcastically calls on the people to bring their tithes and sacrifices, because these would obviously be of little value in the state of moral degradation they were in. Malachi 3:6-12 is delivered in a different vein: it equates failing to tithe with robbery of God. Curses result from fail-

“There are three distinct uses for tithes in the Bible: supporting the Work of God, attending the festivals of God, and caring for the poor. ”

rest of the meat for his own festival enjoyment.

Every third year (that is, the third and sixth years out of a seven year cycle) a tithe of plant produce was set aside for the poor. It is not clear from the Hebrew whether this was designed to be another use for the second tithe or whether it was a totally new tithe in addition to the second. One tradition of interpretation in later Judaism indeed envisioned two separate tithes from Deuteronomy 14, making three in all when the tithe to the Levites is counted. However, most later sources, in discussing the question, see only two uses of the same tithe. That is, it was saved to meet festival expenses in the first, second, fourth and fifth years of a sabbatical cycle, whereas in the third and sixth years it was given to the poor. (In the seventh year the land rested and no tithes were paid. Presumably, the produce of four years was sufficient to meet the festival expenses

ing to bring in the full complement of tithes and offerings, whereas faithful tithing produces bountiful blessings.

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

“Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing” (Malachi 3:8-10).

Many Old Testament scriptures emphasize a responsibility to the poor. In addition to the poor tithe discussed above, provision was made for them in other regulations having to do with gleaning, leaving the corners unreaped and not returning to pick up the forgotten sheaf (Leviticus 19:9-10;

Deuteronomy 24:19-21). If a poor man had given his coat as a pledge for a debt, he was to be allowed to have it during the night to keep himself warm (Deuteronomy 24:10-13); the poor hired hand was to be paid at the end of the day because he had no money.

One of the major provisions of the sabbatical and jubilee years was the release of debts (Leviticus 25:2-17; Deuteronomy 15:1-11). The Israelites were also forbidden to refuse a loan if that refusal was based on the fact that the year of release was near. Furthermore, they were not allowed to charge interest on loans to needy persons (Leviticus 25:35-36).

Oppression of the poor was considered a proverbial sign of depravity and godlessness (e.g. Job 20:19; 31:19; Proverbs 14:31; 19:17; 22:22; 28:3). It was the duty of any person of means to help the less fortunate. It was the duty of kings and rulers to give aid and protection to the widows, the orphans and the helpless (Deuteronomy 10:18; 27:19; Isaiah 1:17). One's responsibility in this regard was continuous. There was no reason to think that strict payment of the poor tithe or other legal demands removed any need for an ongoing, active concern.

NEW TESTAMENT: Whereas the Old Testament provides a definitive system for giving and financial responsibility toward one's God and fellowman, the New Testament concentrates on the spirit and attitude behind giving. Christian giving is discussed a great deal in the New Testament. The proper, godly use of money is an important subject dealt with by Jesus Christ and the apostles. This use has two aspects: The first concerns the responsibility of a Christian to help the poor. Poverty was evidently a major problem in the early Church, as it was in Palestine as a whole. Acts 4:32-37 describes a period after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when the Church continued together in Jerusalem living on voluntarily donated property and funds. These donations were not compulsory, so when Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property they were not compelled to donate the funds. As a result, when they did, but only turned over part of the amount while claiming to be giving it all, they indicted themselves. Their lie for the sake of self-aggrandizement

met with quick retribution (Acts 5:1-11).

During a time of famine in Judea the churches in the area of Antioch took up a collection to provide relief. This indicated that those in Palestine were generally harder hit than those further north (Acts 11:27-30). Even churches as far away as Asia Minor and Corinth were encouraged to assist (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4; 9:1-5). This is only one of a number of examples.

A second aspect of Christian giving is support of the work of the ministry. The apostle Paul was willing to work with his own hands to earn his living on occasion. However, this was only for the sake of expediency, because he did not want to offend those sensitive to such things. 1 Corinthians 9 discusses this in detail. In this passage, Paul is very strong in his comments. He does not mince words; he does not apologize. He emphasizes that he has an absolute right to be supported by the churches in his evangelistic duties. He cites or refers to several Old Testament laws to support his right in this regard, including the ones concerning the threshing ox which was not to be muzzled, and the support of the priests in the Temple. Those who devoted their time to preaching the gospel should receive their living from this work. Those who had already benefited from this preaching — those who had already been converted through his efforts — were the ones who should make possible the continuation of his work.

Paul also cites a precedent from Jesus Himself. "In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (verse 14). This has reference to the time when Jesus sent out groups of disciples preaching in Palestine. They were to preach only where they were provided with hospitality (Matthew 10:5-15; Luke. 10:1-12). Thus, Paul states that Jesus Himself had commanded support of the work of the ministry by the recipients and beneficiaries of that work. Paul himself had not taken advantage of this right in the case of the Corinthians because of their spiritual weakness with regard to this point (verse 12), yet he gladly received help from other churches (2 Corinthians 11:8; Philippians 4:14-16).

Many scriptures discuss one's attitude toward money. It was on the occasion of asking for famine

Continued next page

relief that Paul wrote:

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you” (2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

Similarly, Jesus stated, “give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back” (Luke 6:38). Obviously then, generous giving of one’s financial resources to do the Work of God is an absolute command in the New Testament.

Money is considered to have potential for either good or evil. It can be used for good, as some of the scriptures mentioned imply. It can also be a source of oppression, greed, egotism and an obstacle to the Kingdom of God. The “rich man” is proverbial. He was generally expected to be arrogant, selfish and despotic (e.g. Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:24; James 2:1-6; 5:1-6). The desire for money is the immediate source of most evils and is easily capable of leading even the faithful Christian astray (1 Timothy 6:10).

Thus, a great deal of stress is laid on the right attitude towards money. On the one hand, it is right and even necessary to acquire money honestly to provide for oneself and one’s family (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; 1 Timothy 5:8). It is a means of assisting the less fortunate and of furthering the spreading of the gospel. On the other hand, it can be the cause of all sorts of wickedness and a major stumbling block to proper Christian living.

Jesus made reference to the meticulous tithing of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42). In one of His parables a Pharisee is made to introduce careful tithing as one of the signs of his self-righteousness (Luke 18:12). In each case Jesus is condemning the emphasis on judging righteousness by external rituals rather than by the internal and true righteousness of the heart. To have the one without the other is pure hypocrisy. On the other hand, care in these outward matters is not condemned but rather encouraged, so long as the “weightier matters of the law” are not omitted.

Consequently then, though it was not His main point, Jesus instructed His disciples that people who want to follow God should tithe when He stated “these ought ye to have done” in reference to tithing (Matthew 23:23).

Another direct New Testament reference to tithing is to be found in Hebrews 7. Here tithing is used in an argument to show the superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood to the Levitical priesthood. Even though the Levites received tithes, they had in effect paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham because Abraham — who as their ancestor had had them in his generative organs, as it were — had tithed to Melchizedek. Thus, even though Christ was of the tribe of Judah, which did not have the priesthood in Israel, He obtained the Melchizedek priesthood, a superior and perpetual priesthood, through offering Himself as a sinless sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

Tithing as a subject per se is not discussed in the New Testament. The question is, Why? The explanation obviously lies in the historical environment. Tithing never became an issue in the culture of the early New Testament church; it was simply taken for granted.

The Temple and its related service were still functioning until sometime after the beginning of the war with Rome in 66 A.D. Faithful Jews of the general Palestinian area would tithe to it. Since no discussion to the contrary is contained in the New Testament, continued tithing to the Levites would have been accepted by Christians in Palestine. Indeed, Matthew 23:23 confirms this from the mouth of Jesus Christ Himself, since it is safe to assume that Christians in those first few decades would have followed what Jesus Himself had stated so recently.

However, it was not considered by the Judaism of the time that tithing was required for those living outside the borders of Israel in the same way as it was for the Jews in the Holy Land who had direct access to the Temple. Therefore, it was probably in the diaspora that it first became customary to tithe to the Church rather than to the Levitical priesthood. The fall of the Temple and the attendant abandonment of the temple system must consequently have produced a change in Palestine as well.

Unfortunately, our sources outside the New Testament for the early history of the Church are rather meager. We are not told how the Palestinian Church met the crisis of the fall of the Temple or the exact system of financing the work of the ministry throughout the Roman Empire. The change of situation evidently required a new application of Old Testament laws.

Recognizing the importance of the existence of the Temple during New Testament times is extremely relevant for understanding why tithing per se was not discussed as an issue. By the time Jerusalem and the Temple fell in 70 A.D., Paul had already written all of his epistles to the Churches. In them tithing had not been an issue. It would have been a diametric contradiction of Jesus' direct words that one "ought" to tithe to the Temple if the apostles in Jerusalem had decided that Christians should stop paying tithes to the Temple and start

the responsibility of the Church to make binding decisions in applying the laws of God to changing situations became apparent.

In this context, it is worth considering Paul's discussion of tithing in Hebrew 7. Jesus Christ, though not a Levite, had a more fundamental (and ancient) right to receive tithes, as "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" to whom Abraham (the ancestor of Levi) paid tithes. Therefore, it is entirely logical for the ministers of Jesus Christ to apply the statements regarding tithing throughout the Old Testament, from the example of Abraham to the powerful injunction of Malachi, in teaching the Church membership that they should continue to worship God through the same God-ordained system of tithing that God has always used, and which Jesus Himself supported during His earthly ministry. Only now, rather than the Levitical priesthood, who are no longer carrying out the work of

“THE Church teaches the giving of tithes because it is the law of God.”

tithing to the Church instead. It would also have been a severe affront to the priests of God (whom Jesus Himself had supported), and would have resulted in great additional accusations and persecutions against the nascent Church. Had such a radical decision been made, had the Jewish Christians stopped tithing to the priests and started tithing to the apostles, we would surely have some record of it. But there is only silence. As a result, the whole question of tithing as a general Church obligation could not possibly have arisen until sometime after the Temple had been destroyed.

During the New Testament period, Christians in Palestine tithed to the Temple and freely gave generous offerings to the Church. Consequently, those who would use the New Testament's silence on tithing as supposed "proof" that God's Church cannot (or should not) teach tithing today betray their historical ignorance.

But when the Temple was no longer in existence, when the Levitical priesthood was no longer functioning, a new situation arose. Then, as now,

God, Jesus Christ empowered His ministry to accept the tithes of the Church in order to continue the Work of God in this generation.

Yet when one examines the intent behind the Old Testament system, three purposes for tithing stand clear:

1) The Levitical tithe was a means of maintaining religious worship and instruction. The theocratic government envisioned for Israel was, of course, replaced by a monarchy. Yet the original purpose for the priesthood and the Levites was the fulfillment of many of the governmental and educational functions of the country, as well as to supply its religious need. In other words, in the theocracy of Israel, the Levitical tithe was used to do God's Work.

2) The festival tithe made it possible to attend worship services at the central altar during the annual festival seasons. This was necessary for the maintenance of religious unity as well as being necessary for individual worship.

3) The poor tithe was a major way of helping

the needy, even though other forms of aid were provided to supplement it.

The Church of God sees similar purposes continuing today. Tithing, as established by God, is the most equitable, honest and consistent method of establishing the necessary income for the operation of the Church. This supportive responsibility is shared equally by all. Thus, the freewill giving of tithes and offerings-the biblically revealed system-is the God given responsibility of all the members of His Church.

It should be recognized that the Church becomes an object of disrespect when it receives only the dregs of the incomes of its members. God should have the first place in a Christian's mind-not the last-when it comes to the proper use of his financial resources; God should come at the top of the list in the allocation of one's income, not as an afterthought.

The Church of God reconfirms and reemphasizes its adherence to the basic principle of tithing

as established and exemplified in God's Word. The Church teaches the giving of tithes because it is the law of God. Consequently, the withholding of one's tithes, which violates that law, is a sin.

Tithing is the biblical method by which God finances His Work. Not only do members of the Church see the examples of tithing and giving and the admonition regarding them in the Old Testament, they have also seen and experienced the blessings which come from faithful tithing and giving of generous offerings.

Many otherwise nonreligious people have attributed their financial success to their own freewill giving and philanthropic activities. They follow the principle of "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Conversely, history and modern society are a witness to the evils of selfishness and thanklessness toward God. The fiscal ruin of governments and nations around the world is, at least in part, testimony to the results of financial management without regard for God's laws and principles. □

SUMMARY: Read these scriptures in your own Bible:

Hebrews 2:6-8 — Man will eventually rule the Universe.

Matthew 19:28-29 — If we share our substance, we will reap 100-fold.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 — Trust not in uncertain riches.

Genesis 14:17-20; Hebrews 7:1-4 — Abraham tithes to Melchizedek in Genesis.

Genesis 28 — Jacob tithes.

Malachi 3:6-12 — Failing to tithe is robbery of God.

Leviticus 25:35-36 — Israelites not allowed to charge interest on loans to needy persons.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 — Sowing and reaping.

Luke 6:38 — Give and it shall be given unto you.

2 Thess. 3:10-12; 1 Tim. 5:8 — Importance of earning money to provide for your family.

Acts 20:35 — It is more blessed to give than to receive.

QUESTIONS (ANSWERS BELOW):

1. The dedication of ten percent of one's income to God is...

- a) a private act of worship
- b) an act of thanksgiving
- c) a recognition of God as Creator
- d) all of the above

2. God owns everything, including all the income we produce. True or False?

3. Tithing is an integral part of the Law. True or False?

4. It is God's purpose that man would eventually have rulership over...
- Israel
 - a multitude of nations
 - the World
 - the entire Universe
5. God has a prior claim on the whole content and produce of our lives. True or False?
6. Tithing...
- builds godly character
 - shares the message of the Christian life
 - shares the blessing of the Christian life
 - expresses love toward God and fellow man
 - teaches profound spiritual principles
 - all of the above
7. Tithing is a matter between the one who tithes and ...
- the ministry
 - God
 - the church
 - all of the above
8. Tithing was first introduced to the nation of Israel after they came out of Egypt. True or False?
9. There are three distinct uses for tithes in the Bible: supporting the Work of God, attending the festivals of God and caring for the poor. True or False?
10. Can a man rob God? Yes or No?
11. Complete these verses from 2 Corinthians 9:
- he which soweth bountifully shall ____ also bountifully.
 - God loveth a _____ giver.
12. Giving of one's financial resources to do the Work of God is an absolute command in the New Testament. True or False?
13. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD and the discontinuance of the Levitical priesthood, tithing continues to the Church of God. True or False?
14. The withholding of one's tithes is...
- unfair to other tithe-paying members
 - inconsequential
 - a sin
15. Members of the church have experienced blessings for faithful tithing and giving. True or False?

LESSON TWENTY — ANSWERS:

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----------|
| 11. (read, cheerful) | 6. (f) | 1. (d) |
| 12. (true) | 7. (b) | 2. (true) |
| 13. (true) | 8. (false) | 3. (true) |
| 14. (c) | 9. (true) | 4. (d) |
| 15. (true) | 10. (yes, Mal. 3:6-12) | 5. (true) |



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But their heart is far from Me.
And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as
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