

JUNE-JULY 2015

THE

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REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



EARTHQUAKES AND VOLCANOES *in Prophecy!*

Tomorrow's Cities
Solving the Urban Problem

A European Army
Has the Time Come?

Making America
Better

Dating
in the 21st Century

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VOL. XIII | NO. 4 | JUNE-JULY 2015

A R T I C L E S

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■ **GRIEF-STRICKEN:** A man in shock is comforted after his brother was killed in a reported barrel bomb attack by Syrian government forces in the rebel-held Ansari district of Aleppo, Syria (April 25, 2015).

PHOTO: KARAM AL-MASRI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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FRONT COVER: The Tungurahua volcano, which is one of the most active in South America and has been erupting since 1999, is seen from Banos, Ecuador.

PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

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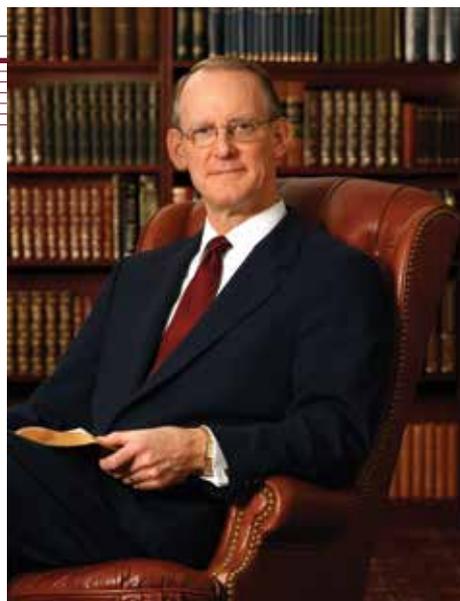
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Earthquakes and Volcanoes in Prophecy!

EARTHQUAKES AND volcanic activity have become *regular* in the news—and there is a reason. While most take Earth’s surface for granted, danger lies within its thin and fragile crust.

Throughout history, God has used earthquakes to serve His purpose. The Bible prophesies that the greatest period of earthquake activity in history lies just ahead. In fact, earthquakes and volcanoes will soon affect the security and stability of the whole world—including *your life*.

God’s Word is plain. If you read this entire Personal, you will learn things no one else is telling you!

The Scientific Perspective

In the past 500 years, earthquakes of every size have claimed millions of lives. The danger is now greater than ever—since the population has dramatically increased during the last two centuries, and some of the world’s most earthquake-prone regions have become the most densely populated.

Before thoroughly examining what God reveals about earthquakes—and volcanoes—past and present!—here are some facts.

The Pacific Rim has long been the most volatile region. It accounts for 90 percent of the world’s earthquakes. Several thousand small to moderate quakes occur annually around the west coasts of North and South America to the eastern Pacific Rim. Southeastern Asian countries and many island nations are also experiencing heightened activity. Each year, Japan alone is shaken by more than 1,500 tremors—over four every day (*The World Factbook*).

Earthquakes occur when tension in the tectonic plates of Earth’s crust exceeds the strength of resistant rock at the edge of the affected plates. Some plates may move only an inch in a given year. But periods of *no* movement mean danger because energy is being stored and increased.

A worldwide network of seismographs detects about a million small earthquakes annually. According to records since 1900, the U.S. Geological Survey expects about 18 major earthquakes (7.0- to 7.9-magnitude) and one great earthquake (8.0 or higher) every year.

Some examples of recent devastating earthquakes: May 2008—a 7.9-magnitude quake struck China, killing 69,000 people. Then came the January 2010 Haitian earthquake that destroyed much of the capital and killed about 230,000. There was also the immense and destructive 8.8-magnitude Chilean quake in February 2010—the

fifth-largest since 1900. In February also came a 7.0 Japanese quake and resultant tsunami. More recently, a 7.8-magnitude earthquake occurred in Nepal on April 25, 2015, which killed over 7,000 and caused avalanches on Mount Everest.

Beyond death and destruction, earthquakes invite famine and disease, with displaced people forced to go without food and sanitation. And this says nothing about the incredible economic hardship caused by earthquakes, including joblessness—that costs from millions to billions of dollars in damage overall.

Are earthquakes and volcanic activity on the rise—and if so, *why*? This is a subject of debate among scientists. Some assert that earthquakes are not increasing. One geologist, J. Ramon Arrowsmith, hedged, “From our human perspective with our relatively short and incomplete memories and better and better communications around the world, we hear about more earthquakes and it seems like they are more frequent...But this is probably not any indication of a global change in earthquake rate of significance” (*LiveScience*).

Another scientist, Bob Holdsworth, an expert in tectonics, said nothing strange is happening, declaring, “I can definitely tell you the world is not coming to an end” (*The Associated Press*).

Other scientists say earthquakes *are* increasing. One geophysicist, Stephen S. Gao, stated that “relative to the 20-year period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, the Earth has been more active over the past 15 or so years... We still do not know the reason for this...” (*LiveScience*).

Which side is right? How can you *know*—and what does God say?

Jesus warned in Matthew 24 of signs that would precede His Return. The fifth trend He listed was that “there shall be...earthquakes, in diverse [various] places” (vs. 7). This says earthquakes would be scattered here and there—but also means they would increase in both *frequency* and *intensity* as His Second Coming drew near. (Read Mark 13:8 and Luke 21:11.)

Think. Since earthquakes have existed throughout history, their mere *ongoing presence* could not indicate the time of the end. By all honest accounts, earthquakes are coming more often, and are more severe—and this *will* worsen. As we proceed, you will be left to believe scientists or God.

Since the Garden of Eden, a rebellious humanity has rejected the Creator’s instructions. God has patiently allowed this for His own great Purpose. However, this is about to change. God will soon involve Himself in the affairs of this world in a way He has *never* done before. Earthquakes will play a major role in what is coming.

Link Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes

Volcanoes are *related* to earthquakes—both geologically and in Scripture. Their forces are shared and their effects are similar, with the devastation of both beyond comparison to anything in nature. When earthquakes are mentioned in prophecy, volcanoes are sometimes referenced.

A volcano is a crack, or vent, in the surface of the Earth—its crust. Beneath the crack is a cavity. Over time, melted rock—magma—fills this area, called a magma chamber or reservoir, and causes pressure to build. The volcano, which may form over thousands of years or very suddenly, then becomes a path for magma to push its way to the surface. An eruption is the releasing of pressure.

Scientists state that over 3,000 volcanoes have erupted in just the last 50 years. Around 50 to 70 are active each year. Some are slowly spewing lava, while others are quietly building, or rebuilding, pressure. Actually, if a volcano is leaking slowly, it is considered “safe.” The danger arises when pressure builds enough to erupt violently. Depending on internal construction, eruptions vary from slow flows to massive explosions.

The 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens in the western U.S. was one of the largest in modern times. The first explosion had the force of 24 megatons

of thermal energy and flattened 230 square miles. Six-foot-thick trees 15 miles away were mowed like grass!

Sometimes following the initial explosion, which can consist of steam, gas or magma, volcanoes spew what are called pyroclastic flows. Larger volcanoes, like St. Helens, also experience pyroclastic *surges*. Both consist of hot ash, rock fragments, and gas that can reach temperatures of 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit, and travel at an astonishing 150 miles per hour! Surges carry more energy and are mostly rock fragments and superheated gas. They move faster than flows, but both bring similar devastation. St. Helens generated a series of pyroclastic flows that completely sterilized the soil for six square miles.

Flows are generally followed by lahars. These combine water, rock, sand and mud, which rush down valleys away from volcanoes. They move like rivers, and sometimes have enough force to uproot trees, and rip houses from foundations and bridges from their supports. A lahar after the Mount St. Helens eruption destroyed 27 bridges, 200 homes, 185 miles of roadway, and 15 miles of railway.

Earthquakes also cause landslides. The one that followed the St. Helens eruption was the largest ever recorded. Some areas were buried in up to *600 feet* of mud and debris!

The final fallout from an eruption is the ash cloud. A volcano can spew ash over 12 miles above the opening in just 10 minutes. The ash from St. Helens landed over 20,000 square miles. If a volcano is near a city, the weight of the particles can collapse buildings.

The danger and destruction of volcanoes becomes evident.

Detection of volcanoes is done by checking the “heaving” of the land. This shows how much pressure is building in the magma chamber. An additional method is to record the earthquakes around a volcano. As their frequency and intensity increase, a volcano is destabilized, making conditions ripe for eruption.

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I
THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS
BEFORE ME
II
THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY
GRAVEN IMAGE
III
THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF
THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN.
IV
SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP

VI
THOU SHALT NOT KILL
VII
THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY
VIII
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL
IX
THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS
AGAINST THY NEIGH

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Making America Better

How can the United States move forward when it cannot agree on which path to take?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON, Lincoln and Roosevelt. These four men have been memorialized, lionized, *mountainized* in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

At Mount Rushmore, these presidents' faces stand 60 feet tall, carved into granite, and they loom just as large in the minds of Americans. George Washington is known as The Father of His Nation. Thomas Jefferson is the Apostle of Democracy and Man of the People. Abraham Lincoln is Honest Abe and the Great Emancipator. Theodore Roosevelt

is the Hero of San Juan Hill and simply The Lion.

The actions of these men are the stuff of legend: Washington crossed the Delaware River and set the example for presidents after him by leaving office after two terms. Jefferson's words in the Declaration of Independence are burned into the national psyche, "We hold these truths to be self evident..." and he secured the Louisiana Purchase from France. Lincoln led the country through its darkest hour, the Civil War, and ended slavery with the Emancipation Proclamation and 13th Amendment. Roosevelt did more to preserve the nation's natural wonders than any other president and oversaw the con-

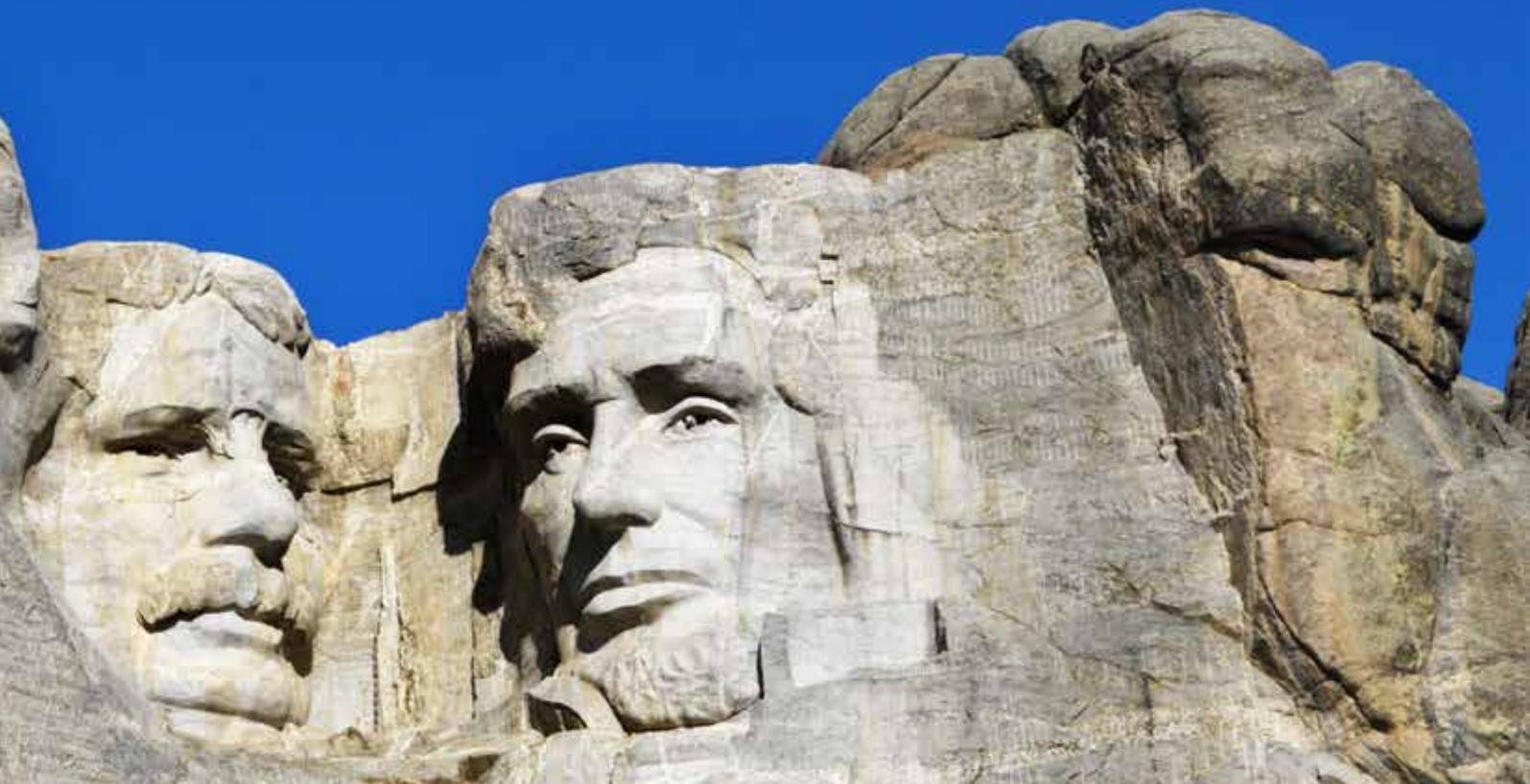
struction of the Panama Canal. The list could go on.

Yet what tends to be glossed over in all of this is the fact that these presidents were also politicians. This means they disagreed with other legislators on what was best for the United States—and how to make the nation better.

Clashes even occurred among the Founding Fathers. *The Wall Street Journal* reported: "In the American imagination, the founding era shimmers as the golden age of political discourse, a time when philosopher-kings strode the public stage, dispensing wisdom with gentle civility. We prefer to believe that these courtly figures, with their powdered hair and buckled shoes, showed impeccable manners in their political dealings."

In reality, the article stated, it was a time of "verbal savagery."

The bitter relationship between Washington and Jefferson is a prime example. Jefferson frequently attacked President Washington in conversations and letters and characterized him "as a



monarchist bent on destroying the rule of the people” (Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association).

He refused to attend Washington’s memorial service and felt that “the ‘republican spirit’ in the nation might revive now that Washington was dead and the Federalists [the opposition party] could no longer hide behind his heroic image” (ibid.).

Similarly, Alexander Hamilton and John Adams did not agree with Jefferson’s political ideas. Jefferson wrote that Adams hated Benjamin Franklin. In addition, Franklin loathed Adams’ bullying style of diplomacy.

For Americans, it is hard to think of the Founding Fathers in such a light. We want to think that there was a time when politics were conducted civilly—where the nation moved forward in locked step.

Yet it was not the case then, and it is not now. In fact, political vitriol is more rampant than ever before—and *worsening*. A Santa Fe Institute study published in research journal *PLOS*

One found that “partisanship or non-cooperation in the U.S. Congress has been increasing exponentially for over 60 years with no sign of abating or reversing.”

Each side is vehement that their way of improving America is right.

But it does not stop with politicians. The Internet allows *EVERYONE* to voice their opinions and pick political fights. Contrast this with fledgling America: the only way to widely spread a message would have been through newspapers—and few had such access.

No one wants to see the United States so disunited. Rather, most want the idealized version of the nation: where everyone moves forward *together* to tackle economic problems, discrimination, national security, and so on.

Americans should especially yearn for this during national holidays such as the Fourth of July. Independence Day should be a time when families and friends come together to discuss the many blessings afforded them—

and openly talk about what the future will bring. Yet fear of ideological cat-fights all too often causes us to bite our tongues and quietly consume our hamburgers.

Today, everyone has an opinion, from politician to pundit to private citizen. Each is certain he is right. While everyone wants to make America better, how can this occur among the deafening roar of competing ideas?

Everyone Is Entitled

Another way to word this question can be found in the biblical book of Amos: “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (3:3).

America today is a living answer to this rhetorical question. There is precious little agreement, and it makes walking together increasingly impossible.

This even happens *within* a political party, as evidenced by the ramping up of the 2016 presidential campaign. During this election cycle, it appears the fiercest fighting will happen on

the Republican side. There are more potential candidates than ever before—all backed by millions of dollars.

A mid-April Republican gathering in New Hampshire was especially telling. A *National Public Radio* report of the event showed everyone carving out their niche and advocating their vision for the nation. There was one vying to be “most conservative,” another “trying to broaden the base of the party” and advocating standing “up for every amendment in the Bill of Rights,” and still another working to assure voters that he has a conservative record and is not a RINO (Republican in name only). Still another, the son of immigrants, feels the American Dream can only be preserved “if the country steers towards more conservative principles of government.”

Yes, these all are Republicans. Yet all have different views for what the country needs. To put it bluntly, each thinks the answer is *himself*.

While the Democratic field is sparser, the same principle applies. Each politician has a different set of views—and each absolutely believes he or she is right.

For average citizens, political opinions are becoming increasingly myopic. Most tend to watch news networks, listen to radio programs, and read news only from sources that cater to their political leanings. The longer people marinate in their own ideas, the less likely they are to consider opposing views.

This is even true on social media sites such as Facebook.

“With the presidential race heating up,” *The New York Times* reported, “a torrent of politically charged commentary has flooded Facebook, the world’s largest social networking site, with some users deploying their ‘unfollow’ buttons like a television remote to silence distasteful political views. Coupled with the algorithm now powering Facebook’s news feed, the unfollowing is creating a more homogenized political experience of like-minded users, resulting in the kind of polarization more often associated with MSNBC or Fox News. And it may

ultimately deflate a central promise of the Internet: Instead of offering people a diverse marketplace of challenging ideas, the web is becoming just another self-perpetuating echo chamber.”

The comment sections of Internet news sites overflow with the results of this “self-perpetuating echo chamber”: endless, pointless bickering, with neither side giving an inch.

Such political clashes derive from the start of the nation. Many of the Founding Fathers ascribed to the Enlightenment movement. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* stated: “Central to Enlightenment thought were the *use and celebration of reason*, the power by which humans understand the universe and improve their own condition. The goals of rational humanity were considered to be knowledge, freedom, and happiness.”

The Age of Enlightenment espoused a deep optimism toward human reason. Herein lies the problem.

Flawed Thinking

Many will say that the U.S. was founded squarely on Judeo-Christian values. While some of our laws are adapted from the Bible, much of our foundation is human reasoning stemming from Enlightenment thinking.

The problem with man’s reasoning is that it is a mixed bag. It is why there are so many differing opinions in the U.S. today—and so much disagreement.

If Americans actually looked at what the Bible says, they would see the problem with relying on manmade ideas. For example, Proverbs 14:12 states, “There is a way which *seems* right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

When you allow everyone to decide what they think is right to them, you end up with a wide variety of conflicting answers—and some of them can even *seem* logical.

Proverbs 16:2 adds to this concept: “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes...” To each individual, his way of life makes sense.

The deathblow for human reasoning can be found in Jeremiah 10: “O

LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (vs. 23).

Man CANNOT direct his own steps. He cannot simply peer within himself to understand his place in the universe or how to rule himself.

Be honest! Such a system does not work. Human reasoning has been behind *every* form of government man has concocted. None have succeeded in the long run.

In fact, proving human reasoning does not work is a major theme of the Bible. This starts from the beginning in the Garden of Eden when the first humans ate from the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17). Eating the fruit from this symbolic tree meant that human beings would decide for themselves what was right and wrong instead of relying on God’s direction.

Again, the tragic results of this are obvious throughout the record of history.

In order for Americans to walk together in agreement—to truly make the nation better—we must first admit that man cannot govern himself. Each citizen must consider that his ideas could be wrong—and that they almost certainly *are* wrong.

Right in Own Eyes

The Bible contains a cautionary tale of what happens if a nation relies on its own ideas rather than God’s. This point is so important that it takes up much of the Old Testament.

The story is that of the ancient Israelites. They were given great blessings by God. They had access to His Word, which shows His mind on subjects. He gave them His laws and statutes so that they could be a model nation.

Over and over, however, the Israelites tried their own ways. Over and over, they refused to stop and consider if they were headed down the wrong path. Over and over, they failed miserably.

This pattern played out so many times that God repeatedly called the

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A EUROPEAN ARMY

Has the Time Come?

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

For decades, there has been talk of a unified European army. We may be close to the time when it finally occurs.

“NO ARMY CAN withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come.” This paraphrased quote from Victor Hugo speaks to the power of innovation and contemporary thought. But for European Union Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, the *army* itself is the idea that is becoming increasingly difficult to withstand.

During a March 2015 interview with German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag*, Mr. Juncker, a longtime advocate of a unified European army, articulated his vision.

“A common European army would show the world that there will never again be war between the countries of the EU. Such an army would help us to shape a common foreign and security policy, and take up Europe’s leadership in the world. With its own army, Europe would be able to react credibly to any threat to peace in a country abutting on a member state of the European Union.”

The statement brimmed with implications—including a reference to Russia’s annexation of Crimea in neighboring Ukraine.

When asked if an integrated fighting force would impact the dispute, the former Prime Minister of Luxemburg con-

tinued with a measured yet pointed response—even mentioning Russia by name.

“Military answers are always the wrong answers,” he said. “They are an admission that diplomacy and politics have failed. A European army would not exist for the purpose of being deployed immediately. But a common army of Europeans would convey a clear impression to Russia that we are serious about defending European values.”

Reactions to Mr. Juncker’s comments were varied. To some, they amounted to political posturing prior to critical defense policy discussions at a June EU summit. Both Mr. Juncker and Donald Tusk, his counterpart over the European Council, are looking to make their own marks on EU foreign policy.

Russian officials were likewise dubious of the remarks. Deputy Foreign Minister Alexey Meshkov told Russia’s *ITAR-TASS News Agency*: “It would be great to understand what they [EU officials] are talking about because European politicians have touched upon the subject at different levels over the last 30 years...It is hard for us to guess what Jean-Claude Juncker meant this time.”

To Russians and other skeptics, these statements are just more bloviating about forming a wholly European army that never seems to materialize.

■ **EUROPEAN UNITY:** Left, EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker gives a joint press conference with EU Council President Donald Tusk (March 20, 2015). Right, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande inspect a military honor guard in front of the Chancellery in Berlin, Germany (March 31, 2015).

PHOTOS: JOHN THYS/ (LEFT); ALAIN JOCARD/ (RIGHT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Yet proponents of a combined military believe “this time” circumstances are different. They see that the European Union has emerged over the last 10 or so years with growing economic power and immense political influence. For them, the next natural step in the coalition’s development is the formation of a single fighting force—not an assortment of national armies operating under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, known commonly as NATO.

Cries for military unification have also been boosted because Europe is not only facing a resurgent Russia, but they now must cope with a destabilized Middle East, hostilities from extremists inside and outside their borders, a frail global economy, and an increasingly reticent U.S.

Europeans more and more are starting to believe that their future—some go as far as saying their existence—lies within them taking defense matters into their own hands.

Mr. Juncker’s selection as EU Commission President, the position in charge of the EU’s government, sends a strong message that Europeans may be ready to see his vision of a joint army materialize.

“Ring of Fire”

A unified army is what EU founders had in mind in the early 1950s with the plan for a so-called European Defence Community. They wanted a pan-European military force following World War II to unify Europe and protect the region from a powerful Soviet Union.

The idea, however, never fully took hold due to national sovereignty concerns and the fading Soviet threat. While the concept of a single army never fully dissipated, it was significantly reduced in priority.

Today, conflict and destabilization in the area are causing troubles to spill over into EU territory. Unity and security are once again being pushed to the fore. The region’s hand is being forced due to a convergence of inside as well as outside threats.

“Extremism in the neighborhood and radicalization at home are blurring

the difference between what is internal or external to the EU,” *The Wall Street Journal* reported. “Rather than being surrounded by a ring of friends, the EU is surrounded by a ring of fire stretching from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa, through the Middle East, the Caucasus and up to the new frontlines in Eastern Europe. No other global player is facing so much mayhem in its strategic neighborhood.”

Unlike people living in an actual neighborhood, moving is not an option for Europe. It cannot simply pick up and leave. The collection of nations is forced to coexist among hostile neighbors not of their choosing.

Consider Russia, with whom European nations share a continent. While three-quarters of Russia’s landmass lies on the Asian side of the Ural Mountains, nearly 78 percent of its population is on the European side. Its two largest cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, are in Europe and alone account for 12 percent of the nation’s population and 25 percent of the country’s GDP (*The Globalist*).

Russia is also the EU’s third largest trading partner and a large supplier of oil and gas to the energy-deficient region. Whenever Russia asserts itself, Europe is forced to react.

Moscow says making them the catalyst for an EU army is “extremely suspect” and they are adamant that “all threats to European security, without exception, are external in nature rather than internal.” Yet EU officials cannot help but view Russian encroachment, even against non-EU member-states such as Ukraine, as an affront to the region’s overall security.

Russia’s comments about “external” threats to Europe’s security are not completely without merit. Dangers from neighbors to the south and further east are equally if not more troubling. Many of them do not even pretend they are a non-threat to European safety.

Acts of violence such as the Charlie Hebdo massacre in France by Islamic extremists or the beheading of Christians by ISIS, staged specifically on the coast of northern Africa so their blood would flow into the Mediterranean Sea toward

Europe, were direct provocations against EU nations. Conflicts in nations such as Syria and Libya are also causing trouble to drift into European territory.

While Europe is being forced to deal with these issues, *The Wall Street Journal* article showed that security and defense are the “weakest links” in the entire European Union venture. This is despite the fact that the Lisbon Treaty, the document which binds the union, actually allows for greater unified security and defense activities. On top of this, the majority of the European public, 70 percent, are consistently in favor of a “broad European defense project,” the article maintains.

So why has the EU been unable to consistently come together when it comes to defending itself? It has generally been because of disagreements among its nations on matters such as which outside nations should be considered an enemy to the power bloc, how would a common defense project be structured, and which EU nation should take the lead.

The enclosing ring of fire, however, is causing Europe to more seriously entertain the idea of a single army.

Current European Defense

For decades, the status quo defense strategy for Europe was seen as adequate by the majority. But, with dissatisfaction increasing, the idea of an EU army has become more favorable.

Presently, EU member-nations rely heavily on NATO for protection. The 28-country alliance, formed in 1949, was developed to safeguard the freedom and security of its members by either political or military means. NATO, a combination of nations from Europe and North America, represents the world’s premier military coalition.

An opinion piece in *The Irish Times* bolstered sentiments that a move away from NATO and toward a unified EU army is unnecessary: “...with 22 of the EU’s 28 member states already belonging to [NATO], and happy to rely on it to provide a collective defence shield, and with firm neutrals such as Ireland, Austria and Sweden unwilling to contemplate commitment to mutual

defence obligations, Mr. Juncker will have difficulty demonstrating what added value a European army could bring and finding a consensus for his project. He would have some support in Germany, France and Italy, precious little elsewhere and strong hostility from states that would see such a project undermining [NATO].”

NATO’s most dominant member is the United States, whose vast political influence and powerful military do a great deal to support the coalition.

According to NATO’s 2013 annual report, America was responsible for 73 percent of its defense expenditures.

But the fact that Europe’s primary defender is an alliance led by a non-European nation is what troubles proponents of an all-EU army. Mr. Juncker reiterated that NATO’s membership is an inherent part of the problem, noting that the organization “cannot fully cover the tasks of protecting European values” because “not all the region’s countries belong to it.”

Currently, the use of what are known as battlegroups is the closest thing Europe has to a standing army. These small military units, consisting of about 1,500 soldiers, are usually from multiple EU nations. They are under the direct control of the Council of the European Union and are responsible for ad-hoc EU military missions. These units generally fill defense gaps

within the region left by NATO, which by its very nature focuses beyond the shores of Europe.

While these battlegroups are generally inadequate for larger missions, they remain a product of EU cooperation and prove that the success of European coordinated military efforts is not just a theory.

Another current form of European defense collaboration is the European Defense Agency (EDA). Instead of pooling troops, however, the EDA pools other assets.

Founded in 2004 and based in Brussels, Belgium, the EDA seeks to provide the EU’s national armed forces and its battlegroups with the best capabilities in the most cost effective manner. Its 27 members merge their resources including money, research and training. This allows them to avoid unnecessary duplication and therefore realize cost-savings.

By combining finances, members can leverage funds far beyond what



■ **EUROPEAN MILITARIES:** Top, armored vehicles take part in a NATO exercise at a military shooting range in Romania (April 21, 2015). Middle, French tanks are unloaded from a train in Drawsko Pomorskie, Poland (April 28, 2015). Right, soldiers from the Defence Forces of Ireland run near a Blackhawk helicopter at Hagshult Airbase near Malmo, Sweden (Nov. 6, 2014).

PHOTOS: DANIEL MIHAILESCU/ (TOP); JANEK SKARZYNSKI/ (MIDDLE); JONATHAN NACKSTRAND/ (RIGHT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES



would be possible with their individual national budgets. This is critical as an increasingly cash-strapped America is pushing its European allies to step up in spending and influence. The EDA is a lean organization with very little red tape. It has the ability to make high-level decisions on defense with agreement from as few as two participating EU members.

A strong case can be made that between the assortment of soldiers provided by multiple nations under the EU battlegroups program and the provision of military equipment and funding by the combined efforts of EDA members, that a unified EU army is technically already in place. What remains for full implementation is to combine the capabilities of each program into a single entity.

Reaction to Announcement

While the EU has been flirting with the idea of a unified army for some time, has the time come for an official European Army?

Mr. Juncker certainly seems to think so. Yet the rest of Europe must sign on. The response to Mr. Juncker's comments from various nations show many are interested in the idea. The major exception is the United Kingdom.

■ **United Kingdom:** "Jean-Claude Juncker's suggestion that the EU should create an army 'to defend the continent from Russian aggression' ignores the existence of [NATO], which was formed for that very purpose.

"The fact that such a force, powerful enough to defeat Russia's army, would take time to recruit, train and equip; that it would be superfluous to [NATO]; and that it would cost untold billions of euros, makes it not only nonsense, but dangerous nonsense, since it only serves to increase existing tensions" (*The Sunday Telegraph*).

"Nick Clegg Deputy Prime Minister of UK has branded Jean-Claude Juncker a 'dangerous fantasist' over his suggestion that an EU army should be created. The Liberal Democrat leader insisted on his LBC

radio show that the force was 'not going to happen'—but called for more military cooperation between France and Britain" (*The Independent*).

"Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission, says that the EU needs its own army. It doesn't. He says it would not compete with Nato. It would. He adds that it would show Vladimir Putin that the EU means business. It wouldn't. So, instead of daydreaming about such folies de grandeur, Mr. Juncker could better spend his time getting to grips with the regulatory burdens that continue to stifle business across the growth-starved EU and which the Commission he appointed promised to bring under control" (*The Daily Telegraph*).

■ **France:** "Among America's European allies, only the British can match France's ability to project significant military force overseas. However, not even they have much experience operating in the string of former French colonies across North and West Africa—where the recent rise of Islamist groups is posing the international community's latest security threat.

"French troops have deployed in more than a dozen African missions during the past two decades. French and British planes took the lead in NATO's air campaign over Libya in 2011, when French forces also successfully intervened to halt a civil war in Ivory Coast. Three years earlier, they spearheaded a European operation to prevent Sudan's conflict from spilling over into Chad.

"Despite their confidence, however, the French are aware that a prolonged conflict against well-armed and well-motivated Islamic opponents could stretch their forces and their finances. Like other European countries, France has been cutting defense budgets as it grapples with staving off economic crisis. 'We've got a pocket-sized army of great quality, but ultimately vulnerable,' said a senate report published last year... Although the French government has been quick to thank allies for such

support, there's resentment that other European countries haven't been more forthcoming with help.

"'Europe cannot always give responsibility to one member state,' Arnaud Danjean, a French politician who chairs the European Parliament's subcommittee on security and defense, said... Even though European countries agree the threat from Islamists in Africa's Sahel region concerns them all, he complained, none have offered combat troops, leaving France to singlehandedly serve as Europe's army.

"French officials have long complained that efforts to give the European Union a defense role have floundered because members have lacked either the resources or the political will to send troops into the world's hotspots.

"'France has intervened because the problem in the Sahel threatens to blow up into a serious threat to Europe. It has gone in alone because the other Europeans have shirked their responsibility,' the Germany daily *Suddeutsche Zeitung* wrote last week. 'That says a lot about the state of the common European security and defense policy. And none of it is good'" (*GlobalPost*).

■ **Latvia:** *Baltic News Service* summarized Latvian Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma's comments on European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's idea by stating that "this is an idea how to protect Europe and European values, but that it is still subject to discussion and that member states' response to the proposal has been mixed."

He stated: "It is necessary to assess whether this [project] might be doubling NATO. There are countries that are not NATO members, but this is certainly not a matter of the next year or the year after the next. This is an issue of a more distant perspective. As far as I know, member states have mixed attitudes. For us in Latvia, it is important to be a NATO member and to provide 2 percent of GDP for NATO's needs."

■ **Germany:** Politicians who shape Germany's defense policy are sup-

portive of a combined force. The nation's defense minister noted: "Our future as Europeans will at some point be with a European army." He added its formation would "strengthen European security." The German head of the parliament's foreign policy committee said an EU army "is a European vision whose time has come" (*Baltic News Service*).

"Germany's Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen called for the creation of a European army that is capable of swift reaction anywhere in the world."

"As reported by the UK's Daily Express newspaper, the German minister discussed the matter with her Dutch counterpart, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, who also backs the idea.

"The German minister said crises like the outbreak of Ebola in Africa and the advances made by Islamic State in Syria and Iraq require a joint military response by the EU" (*New Europe*).

■ **Italy:** A *BBC* commentary described the wholesale changes necessary for a European alliance to be effective: "EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's proposal for a European army has hardly been debated at all in Italy when in fact the issue deserves far greater attention."

"The 28-strong EU is incapable of having a strategic vision of its objectives, not only on account of the constitutional differences such as neutrality and of the differences in defence policy...but because a shared concept of the EU's common political identity, above and beyond the modicum of technocratic integration that has been so laboriously implemented to date, is missing at the very root of the whole thing.

"If the European blueprint is to survive, it is going to have to reinvent itself in political terms, and that is not going to happen at the current 28-strong level. We shall have to achieve a breakdown of the present Union capable...of identifying different paths of integration and different levels of sovereignty. The euro is a trailblazer in that sense: Without a

quantum leap forward towards true monetary union, the common currency's fate will be sealed for a long time to come.

"And what applies to the common currency applies even more strongly to defence. Talking about a common army will become realistic once the group of those prepared to pool their sovereignty in order to achieve greater overall power and efficiency has been defined."

■ **Estonia:** Estonian Foreign Minister Keit Pentus-Rosimannus says that the "European Union should be more ambitious in its neighborhood," which would send "an important message from the EU" (*Baltic News Service*).

When it comes to establishing a greater regional presence, the article continued: "When speaking about the relationship between Africa and the EU, the minister said that the EU contributes to improving the African security situation through different military and civilian missions, and by financing the military missions of the African Union through a fund."

He stated, "At present Estonia is taking part in the EU and UN missions in Mali...This year Estonia is to increase its contribution in the composition of the EU military training mission EUTM Mali as well as the UN peacekeeping mission MINUSMA."

■ **Finland:** Finnish officials support an EU army: "Finnish President Sauli Niinisto...backed the concept of developing a European Union army."

"Niinisto told Finland's STT news agency it would be good for Finland to support the idea put forward by the European Commission president and described the proposal as very interesting.

"The European Union is founded upon peace, which is a key value, and it is strange that there is no support behind this to provide assurance, said Niinisto.

"Niinisto said that as head of state he has been consistent in advocating this kind of idea. The president also said he hadn't heard about the proposal before it became public.

"It would be good for Finland to support this. It would be a serious and

genuine expression of the EU defending its values," said Niinisto" (*Baltic News Service*).

While there are lingering disagreements on exactly what are the next steps for Europe's defense, signs are pointing to eventual EU military collaboration. This final piece is considered the missing link to true European dominance on the world stage. Once it comes to pass, the world will not be the same.

This reality describes world conditions just over the horizon. Yet it should come as no surprise because this subject was addressed long ago.

Sign of the Times

Over two thousand years ago, a group of men presented a seemingly simple question. Their inquiry opened a window into the future—a look into our present time.

When asked by His disciples what they should look for to know whether His Return was approaching, Jesus Christ, after warning of possible deception concerning the matter, painted a crystal-clear picture of the type of world that would come at the end of the present age. Among the litany of descriptions, He detailed a world filled with conflict, a world where "wars and rumors of wars" would be prevalent, and one in which "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Mark 13:4, 7-8; Luke 21:7, 9-10).

The entire world is undeniably in a time of war and peoples and nations are coming against each other. This environment is forcing Europe to unite against very real threats to its existence. Currently, the EU is relevant, but for it to truly become a force to be reckoned with, it must not only dominate economically and politically, but it also must address the world as a unified military power.

Despite doubts that remain about whether EU nations will be able to ultimately put aside their individual differences and come together militarily, world conditions seem to leave them with little real choice.

All signs point to a soon-coming EU army. Bible prophecy confirms that it is simply a matter of *when*. □

THE MIDDLE EAST

Unrest is occurring throughout the Middle East. Its nations' borders are changing as people of different ethnic and religious identities fight for control of the area. Other countries are entangled in proxy and political wars. What follows is a brief profile of some Middle Eastern nations that are facing such issues.

SAUDI ARABIA

The nation launched a military operation after Yemeni president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi was ousted by Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Saudi jets conducted airstrikes on the area while troops gathered on the border to prepare for a ground invasion.

The New York Times reported: "Fueling these interventions is a prevailing sense among Saudi leaders that the United States, its longtime ally and security guarantor, has withdrawn from the region, leaving a vacuum that Iran has exploited. The Obama administration's focus on reaching a deal with Iran on its nuclear program has only increased this sense of neglect, Saudis say."

The bombings have sparked tensions with Iran, which has considered retaliating against Saudi Arabia.

IRAQ

Iraq's borders continue to fluctuate as ISIS, an extremist Sunni group, battles with the Shia-led Iraqi government for territory.

In April, tens of thousands of Iraqis fled Anbar province after ISIS captured its capital, Ramadi. Despite Iraq's attempts to take the province, Islamic militants still control most of the region. Yet the Iraqi government is hesitant to provide weapons to the large number of Shiite citizens there, fearing this might alienate Sunnis, who could then sympathize with and join ISIS.

The April offensive contradicted the notion that ISIS had been weakened to the point it could not continue making territorial gains.

IRAN

The Islamic Republic agreed to reduce the number of centrifuges at nuclear facilities, cut back on its stockpile of enriched uranium, and convert one of its reactors into a research facility in a framework created to halt its nuclear program. In exchange, crippling economic sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran will be dropped.

Meanwhile, Iran continued engaging in proxy wars throughout the Middle East, seeking to undermine areas of American influence. Although prohibited by international law, Iran has shipped weapons and military trainers to Houthi fighters in Yemen.



■ **ISRAEL-SYRIA BORDER:** An Israeli army mobile artillery cannon is deployed near the border with Syria in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights (April 27, 2015).

PHOTO: JALAA MAREY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



■ **REGIONAL ARMY:** Army chiefs from Arab League nations meet to start work on the establishment of a region-wide military force (April 22, 2015).

PHOTO: MOHAMED EL-SHAHED/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



ST AT A GLANCE



Graphic: TNS

SYRIA

Syrian anti-government rebels have been fighting against ISIS militants and Bashar al-Assad's regime. The Islamic State cut off trade routes to contain the rebel forces, while the Syrian government conducted airstrikes on the rebels in response to their shelling of government-owned cities.

The civil war has put civilians in peril. UNICEF estimates that 14 million civilians have been affected, with 6.5 million internally displaced and 3 million having fled to neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

YEMEN

The Houthis, an extremist, anti-West faction of Shia Islam, have gained control of large portions of Yemen since 2014. In September 2014, Houthi fighters captured the capital, Sanaa, forcing President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to flee to Saudi Arabia. Threatened by the advance of the group near their border, Saudis began bombing Houthi-controlled areas in March 2015, killing over 1,000 by the end of April.

The rebel group is stopping truck convoys from entering government-controlled areas in Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, while Saudi naval patrols are checking ships for weapons. The blockades have stopped necessary food aid from arriving to a country in which half of its population is on the verge of starvation, according to the United Nations.

AFGHANISTAN

Taliban militants launched a major offensive against Afghan security forces in April near Kunduz, a major city in the northern part of the country, in an effort to overthrow the government.

ISIS militants have also established a presence in the nation. Early in the year, the group bombed several urban areas in Afghanistan, killing dozens of civilians.

LEBANON

Lebanon has the highest concentration of refugees per citizen in the world—one in every four—most of whom escaped violence in Syria. The influx of Syrian refugees has strained Lebanon's resources, scared tourists from visiting, and reduced the number of available jobs for citizens.

Various political factions inside the nation, which has not had a president or main leader since May 2014, are struggling to come to terms with how to run the country amid the refugee crisis. The majority of Lebanon's parliament, including members of the Iran-backed Hezbollah party, refuse to attend the sessions necessary to select a presidential candidate, despite urging from the UN to conduct them. □



■ **IRAQ CONFLICT:** Iraqi soldiers fire their weapons toward Islamic State positions west of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad (April 26, 2015).

PHOTO: AHMAD AL-RUBAYE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



■ **UPHEAVAL IN YEMEN:** Yemenis walk on a damaged street following a raid by Saudi-led coalition warplanes on a missile depot in the capital city of Sanaa (April 20, 2015).

PHOTO: MOHAMMED HUWAISS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Dating in the 21st Century



Dating has drastically changed over the decades.
How can you be sure your dating will lead to true love?

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE AND STACEY L. PALM

IMAGINE A SIMPLER TIME: A well-dressed single gentleman pulls up to the front of a single lady's home in the early evening, steps out of his car, and approaches her front door. The two of them were introduced to one another by a mutual friend at a social function some weeks prior.

It is their first date.

As she steps outside, he offers an umbrella to shield her from rain showers, walks with her to the passenger side of the car, and opens the door for her. She notices the interior of the car is spotless.

The pair takes a scenic route to a special destination: a reserved table

at an elegant restaurant. Conversation flows naturally for a couple hours, with each beginning to learn about the background and interests of the other.

After dessert, the gentleman pays for the meal and then drives the lady home. Accompanying her to her door, he thanks her with a warm smile and departs.

This may be repeated on a regular basis, and could eventually lead to courtship and marriage as the two get to know one another through hours of conversation, spread over months.

To older readers, the scenario above may have at least a vague, distant familiarity. But to younger readers, it may be utterly foreign, antiquated and unrealistic—like viewing a scene from an old black-and-white film in a world

accustomed to the rapid-fire images of a high-definition action movie.

Instead, in the 21st century, technology is *the* way to date. Ask any 20-something and he or she has probably signed up for any number of smartphone apps or online dating sites.

Older adults are also applying by the millions for online matchmaking sites or participating in speed-dating sessions. According to the Pew Research Center, one in every 10 American adults has used an online dating site or a mobile dating app.

“...the use of *online dating sites* has become steadily more prevalent in recent years. In 2008 just 3% of all Americans said that they had used an online dating site; by 2009 that figure had risen to 6% of all Americans, and

today 9% of the adult population has used an online dating site.”

Being able to connect with so many possible matches at the touch of a button should have simplified the already difficult process and made it even easier to find a “soul mate.” Yet it has instead complicated it, resulting in less solid relationships than ever before.

“Traditional courtship—picking up the telephone and asking someone on a date—required courage, strategic planning and a considerable investment of ego (by telephone, rejection stings),” *The New York Times* reported in the article “The End of Courtship?” “Not so with texting, e-mail, Twitter or other forms of ‘asynchronous communication,’ as techies call it. In the context of dating, it removes much of the need for charm; it’s more like dropping a line in the water and hoping for a nibble.”

The article further states: “Online dating services, which have gained mainstream acceptance, reinforce the hyper-casual approach by greatly expanding the number of potential dates. Faced with a never-ending stream of singles to choose from, many feel a sense of ‘FOMO’ (fear of missing out), so they opt for a speed-dating approach—cycle through lots of suitors quickly.

“That also means that suitors need to keep dates cheap and casual. A fancy dinner? You’re lucky to get a drink.

“It’s like online job applications, you can target many people simultaneously—it’s like darts on a dart board, eventually one will stick,” said [a 26-year-old] branding coordinator in Manhattan, describing the attitudes of many singles in their 20s. The mass-mailer approach necessitates ‘cost-cutting, going to bars, meeting for coffee the first time,’ he added, ‘because you only want to invest in a mate you’re going to get more out of.’”

Many genuinely want to find someone special and while they are using every means to meet someone—whether online or in person—they know something is wrong with the current dating landscape. That said, they are unsure of how to address the root of the problem.

Step back for a moment and ask: Is modern dating truly normal? Is it healthy? Is there a better way? Or must all single people settle for this path?

New “Normal”

Dating has a long and varied history. Over the decades in the Western world, traditional dating was gradually overtaken by the high school “going steady/boyfriend-girlfriend” approach. Those who did not find a romantic counterpart in this way would then often be initiated into the bar/nightclub scene, where they could hope to find someone who may want to hook-up—meaning anything from kissing to having sex—which could eventually lead to the two parties becoming friends with benefits, boyfriend and girlfriend, or possibly even lead to marriage years down the road.

With the rise of the hook-up culture has come a change in the overall mentality behind dating. The focus in the 21st century is less about finding someone to date, court and marry than finding someone who can be fun “for the moment.”

“Raised in the age of so-called ‘hookup culture,’ millennials—who are reaching an age where they are starting to think about settling down—are subverting the rules of courtship,” *The New York Times* reported.

“Instead of dinner-and-a-movie, which seems as obsolete as a rotary phone, they rendezvous over phone texts, Facebook posts, instant messages and other ‘non-dates’ that are leaving a generation confused about how to land a boyfriend or girlfriend.

“‘The new date is “hanging out,”’ said [a 24-year-old] associate television producer in Manhattan, who is currently developing a show about this frustrating new romantic landscape. As one male friend recently told her: ‘I don’t like to take girls out. I like to have them join in on what I’m doing—going to an event, a concert.’”

For the average 20- or 30-year-old, a traditional date includes using a smartphone app to locate someone of the opposite sex whose physical appearance is appealing, texting him

or her, meeting in a bar, mumbling through conversation with the person in between texting friends, and then possibly returning to the other’s apartment for a late-night tryst.

If there is any type of connection, the two may decide to text each other later to “hang out” or “hook up” again. This could lead to them getting to know each other better and potentially moving in together. After a few months or years pass, this could also lead to them getting married or (more likely) splitting up to find someone else with whom to start the whole process again.

Those in their mid-30s and up often fare little better. While many of them understand the concept of dating and most have been in serious, long-term relationships, the hook-up culture often plays a role in the expectations of the other party, even someone who had previously been married or is looking to remarry.

Ken Solin, who wrote *The Boomer Guide to Finding True Love Online*, detailed his experience in a self-authored column titled “Dating Over 50: Going Slow Instead of with the Flow”: “Online dating profiles don’t really explain a person, and chemistry requires a face-to-face, so online dating has its limitations. Then there’s the issue of dating etiquette, which doesn’t appear to exist at all, and since there aren’t any rules, dating behavior ranges from polite to rude...But trying to go slow in a dating world that operates at supersonic speed is difficult, because it’s really easy to get caught up in the partnering race. There’s enormous pressure, both self-imposed and societal, to be in a relationship. But rushing to fall in love makes falling in love impossible for me, because the pressure to commit doesn’t allow my feelings to develop naturally. In truth, falling in love is hard to resist in midlife.”

Any thinking man or woman eventually reaches the conclusion that the practices above do not work. But how far must dating deteriorate before things change for the better? And what will be the lowest common denominator?

Please see **DATING**, page 24

TOMORROW'S CITIES

Solving the Urban Problem

Today's cities are awash with unending issues.
How can they be fixed?

BY ANDREW J. HOLCOMBE

CRYSTAL SPIRES AND earthquake-proof mega-rises pierce the sky above the evolving Los Angeles skyline. Snaking around the massive structures, the elevated metro-tube transports millions of people to work daily. Traffic jams are obsolete and smog non-existent given that self-driving electric cars have replaced gas-guzzling automobiles.

LA has become a world hub for technology, business and industry. Successful redevelopment plans have eliminated slums and homelessness.

Urban problems of the past have been eradicated. Los Angeles stands as a beacon of light to cities across the world.

While this description sounds as though it is a picture of the city's future, it actually comes from a 1988 article in *Los Angeles Times Magazine* that theorized what the year 2013 might look like.

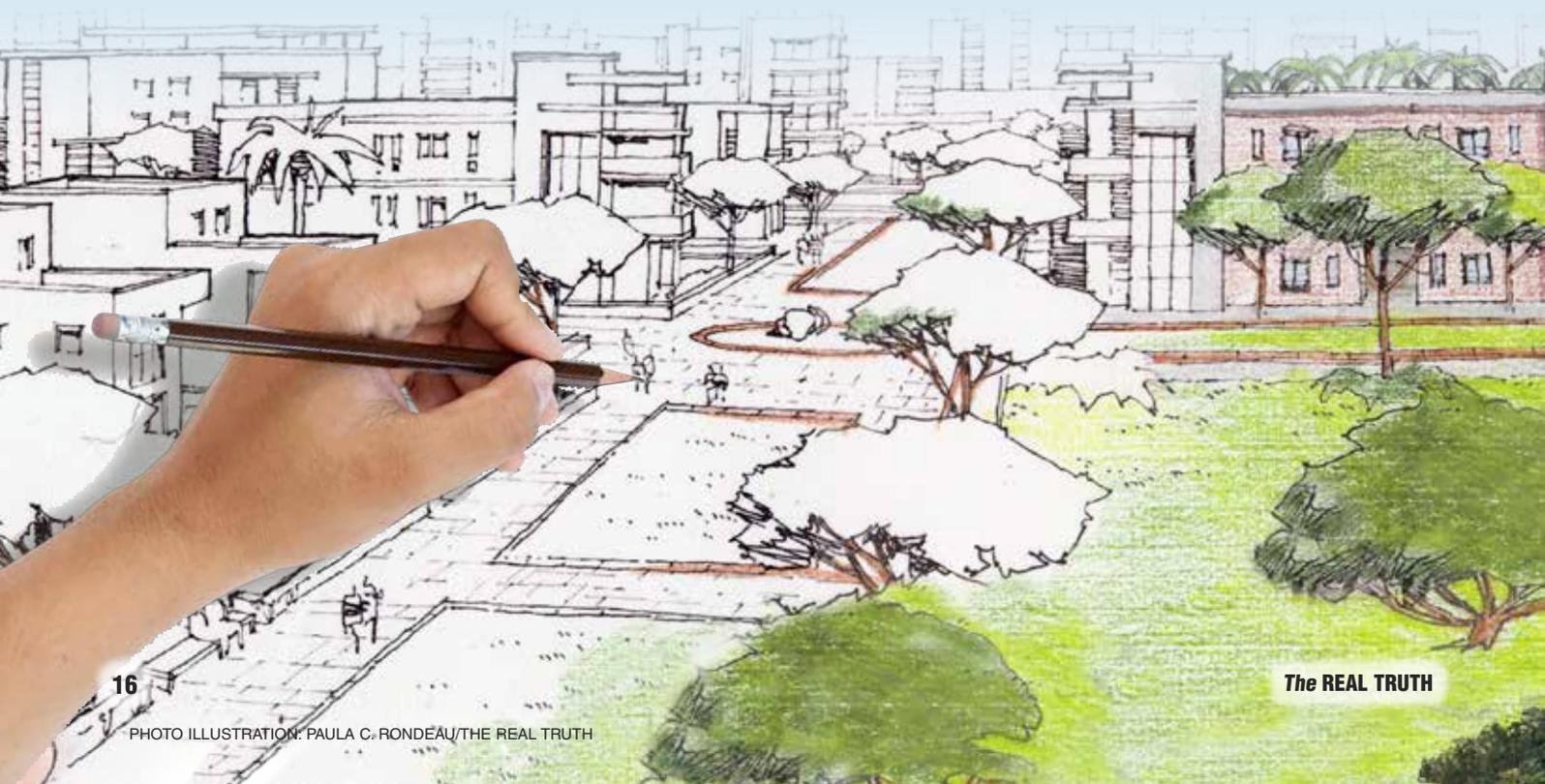
Obviously, these estimates were woefully inaccurate.

The Los Angeles in which I live today is a vastly different place from what the *LA Times* pictured: the few electric cars that exist are stuck in traffic alongside nearly 1.4 million other commuters. Mega-structures are non-

existent (the tallest building has just 73 stories) and townships-grown-large blend together into one continuous concrete super-metropolis.

Passing through downtown, 82,000 homeless people blanket the city. This contributes to growing sanitation and trash removal problems. Instead of the bright future forecasted in 1988, Los Angeles exemplifies the persistent and growing struggles of a city affected by overpopulation.

Globally, over 200,000 people move into cities every day—72.8 million people every year. This is equivalent to nearly *double* the number of people that live in Tokyo, the world's largest metropolitan area.



The pace of growth is set to continue for the next 30 years, with much of this urban influx happening in Asia.

A report by Prudential Investment Management used a Chinese city to demonstrate the rapid pace of growth: “Just three decades ago, Shenzhen was a modest fishing village of 30,000 people on the south coast of China. Today, it is a booming metropolis of 10 million inhabitants, boasting modern skyscrapers, packed shopping malls, and a state-of-the-art transportation system. The breathtaking speed at which Shenzhen became one of the world’s largest cities typifies the ‘prime time’ of urbanization that is now upon us. The growth of cities is a well-told story. But never before has the pace of urbanization been so rapid...”

Despite being a young city, Shenzhen still grapples with the same problems as metropolitan areas such as LA: there is pollution, poverty and crime.

The global urban explosion brings with it countless weighty problems. The Prudential report stated that “the unparalleled pace of urbanization means that by 2030, about 200 cities worldwide are likely to join the ranks of metropolitan areas with at least one million people. As the rate of urbanization ramps up, global infrastructure needs are projected to top \$50 trillion through 2030, with heavy spending

required in both developed and emerging-market cities.”

Unbelievably, the report states: “... the world may need to produce about 50% to 70% more food by 2050, thanks in large part to the swelling ranks of middle-class city dwellers.”

Put this all together: 200 new million-plus cities, \$50 trillion in infrastructure costs, an up to 70 percent increase in food production. All of this is on top of long-standing problems in existing cities!

Urban planners desperately want to bring about gleaming, futuristic metropolises. And, despite the troubles gripping cities, people continue to flock to them. In metropolitan areas, they see more opportunities, a better chance to earn a living, and the potential for a more prosperous life.

To make these dreams a reality, however, mankind MUST solve the urban problem.

Ballooning Troubles

In defense of the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, it offered a caveat to its 1988 vision for 2013: “Twenty-five years from now Los Angeles might well be an amazing place to live—a technological utopia, an economic giant, a true world city, a harmonious melding of cultures and races. But that will only happen if we develop

strategies to solve a host of problems ranging from crime to pollution to overcrowding.”

Today, crime, pollution and overcrowding remain towering concerns for modern metropolises.

An obvious symptom of overcrowding is traffic congestion. For example, during the workweek in San Francisco, traffic on the Bay Bridge is stop-and-go from 1:25 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.—a seven-hour rush hour!

Congestion is more than a nuisance. There is wasted time for motorists, more instances of road rage, less time spent with family, increases in automobile accidents, and wasted fuel, which means more pollution.

Pollution’s health effects are troubling. In China, millions of commuters in Beijing have intensified the smog problem to the point that the city is “not suitable for living,” as Mayor Wang Anshun told *BBC*. As a result, lung cancer cases have risen more than 50 percent over the past decade.

India’s Centre for Science and Environment estimated the amount of air pollutants in New Delhi to be 60 times higher than the level considered safe. According to *Time*, air pollution is the fifth largest killer in India. Further, low visibility frequently causes delays in plane flights and traffic jams on major highways.



Overcrowding puts a tremendous burden on cities' infrastructure. According to *The Atlantic* magazine, in New York City, the average age of the 6,400 miles of sewage mains is 84 years old. The annual increase of around 77,000 residents taxes the already deteriorating system. It is only a matter of time before it literally crumbles beneath the city's streets.

Infrastructure includes highways, roads, sewer and water systems, dams and bridges. Most of these are "out of sight, out of mind" until sudden catastrophic failure. (Think of the levees that broke in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.)

The American Society of Civil Engineers analyzed U.S. infrastructure in 2013 and gave it an overall grade of a D-plus (barely passing). They estimated it would take approximately \$3.6 trillion to repair the crumbling infrastructure by the year 2020.

A \$3.6 trillion price tag is the same as 20 percent of the \$18 trillion America already holds in debt!

Another tragic consequence of urban boom is poverty, which usually manifests itself in slums.

This is abundantly evident in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The rural exodus from the nation's countryside to urban areas has many families crammed into *favelas*, vast expanses of unplanned housing. These impoverished areas house an estimated 1.3 million people.

Favela homes built into the mountainside consist of stacks of crumbling bricks and rusted corrugated-metal sheets. Offering shelter to families of five or six, these makeshift structures have minimal plumbing and electricity. Narrow stairways weave haphazardly between the masses of decrepit buildings, which have been built by poverty-stricken residents.

Encyclopaedia Britannica explained the results: "The lack of infrastructure gives rise to improvised and jerry-rigged plumbing and electrical wiring. Often water must be ported great distances, and rudimentary methods of waste disposal pose health hazards. As a result of the crowding, unsanitary conditions, poor nutrition, and pollution, disease is rampant in the poorer favelas, and infant mortality rates are high."

Favelas—and all impoverished areas around the globe—are also breeding grounds for violent criminal activity.

Crime and violence are natural byproducts of cities with impoverished areas. A 2014 study by the *British Journal of Psychiatry* revealed a critical link between poverty and criminal conduct. According to the research, teenagers whose family income was in the bottom 20 percent were *seven times* more likely to use drugs or commit violent crimes.

With the continued urban explosion, all cities—from Shenzhen to New York to Rio de Janeiro—face increased overcrowding, pollution and crime. These urgent problems demand new and innovative solutions.

Man's Best Attempts

Architects and engineers are looking to technological solutions for today's urban problems. Techno-utopias were the vision for the future in 1988 with the *LA Times*, and they continue to be today. *BBC* reported: "The time is ripe, say experts, to start designing smarter urban environments, both new cities needed to sustain an ever-growing population, and retro-fits on the ones that we have lived in for centuries."

Another *BBC* article described one vision of the future as a "city that acts



■ **CURRENT CITIES:** Left, high rise buildings are seen in a high density urban area of Hong Kong. Right, the interchange at U.S. Route 95 and Rainbow Boulevard known as the Rainbow Curve is seen in an aerial view of Las Vegas, Nevada (Feb. 20, 2014).

PHOTOS: PHILIPPE LOPEZ/AFP/ (LEFT); ETHAN MILLER/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES

more like a living organism, a city that can respond to your needs. In the future everything in a city, from the electricity grid, to the sewer pipes to roads, buildings and cars will be connected to the network. Buildings will turn off the lights for you, self-driving cars will find you that sought-after parking space, even the rubbish bins will be smart.”

Such technological amenities sound appealing and could somewhat alleviate problems such as traffic congestion and pollution, but they do little to address poverty and overcrowding. Likewise, environmentally friendly green architecture—while having many promising benefits—suffers from the same problems.

Smart technologies and green solutions seem to have loads of promise. Yet there have been promising ideas before for cities, which always fail to pan out. In fact, many of today’s urban problems are the result, though unintended, of past attempted solutions.

In the early 20th century, modernist architecture was heralded as the solution to the problem of the day—overcrowding in urban slums. By the 1930s, as much as 15 percent of city dwellers lived in poverty.

The Industrial Revolution of the 19th century caused a massive migration of workers into cities. The conventional urban design of the time was not suited to accommodate the population influx. As a result, shoddy tenements had to be quickly developed. Workers and their families flocked into these slum areas, which became overcrowded and subsequently disease-ridden, polluted, unsanitary and centers of criminal activity. Housing units developed too quickly to put basic utilities into place. In some areas, entire neighborhoods shared a single water faucet.

In an article for Failed Architecture, an online platform that discusses city problems, Daryl Mulvihill, an urban designer based in Amsterdam, wrote: “The alternative to this city was found in the design of high-rise estates and suburban new towns connected by new road networks...The slums were real. Poverty, dilapidated buildings and inner-city overcrowding were genuine

urban problems that had to be dealt with. There was no simple solution and in the spirit of the times those solutions favoured held firm to the belief that design would solve all problems.”

City planners believed that by relocating workers to residential areas outside of the city and making cars the primary mode of transportation, the effects of overcrowding could be eliminated. The design of modern, beautiful buildings and facilities would fix issues such as poverty, crime and overcrowding.

Yet unforeseen consequences developed. Moving residents away from cities opened up more urban space for homeless and the ultra-poor, who flocked to these areas. Pollution from traffic spread everywhere roads did. Moving people away from the city did not move them away from poverty, pollution or crime.

In his article, Mr. Mulvihill summarized that “suburban sprawl exacerbated rather than solved the problems of the American inner-city, which suffered for decades, resulting from the flight to the suburbs and the associated motorway building programmes.

“This is the real narrative to be derived from [20th-century] urbanism, which was repeated in numerous locations around the world, and has become all too familiar. Problem slums are cleared and replaced with a poorly executed version of a modernist utopia...This is an improvement at first and welcomed by residents, but it then in turn becomes a problem, the real social ills remaining the same.”

Core Problem

The reason mankind’s solutions to urban problems always fail stems from the motivation for cities in the first place.

Ancient Rome is a perfect example. It was located on the Tiber River amid the Alban Hills, strategically placed for trade. Trafficking goods to and from the city was possible due to this extensive waterway. Rome’s economic and regional success came from a focus on money, which enticed more people to come.

Economics have been a main motivation for almost every city throughout

history. Prior to Rome, the cities of Nineveh, Babylon and Jericho grew for the same reasons. Reaching back even further in history, the first city, Enoch, was also built on the desire to acquire wealth.

The Bible describes this urban development in Genesis 4. It was constructed by Cain, son of Adam and Eve, after he killed his brother Abel. Verse 17 states: “And Cain...built a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.”

While the Bible does not say much about the city itself, we can learn a lot about it by looking at Cain’s personality. Famed Jewish historian Flavius Josephus described what drove Cain’s thinking in *The Antiquities of the Jews*: “For he only aimed to procure everything that was for *his own bodily pleasure*, though it obliged him to be injurious to his neighbors. He augmented his household substance with *much wealth*, by rapine and violence.”

The city of Enoch was built on this same, selfish foundation. Josephus continued, “He [Cain] first of all set boundaries about lands; he built a city, and fortified it with walls, and he compelled his family to come together to it.”

These walls were constructed for the same reason Rome, Babylon, Nineveh and Jericho built them: selfishness and self-sufficiency. The walls were to protect what they *had* from those who wanted to *take* it.

Clearly, not all cities have been built by murderers in which the selfish motivation to *get* was obvious.

The greatest achievements of all time have only been possible through urban centers: the Pyramids at Giza, symphony orchestras, sending a man to the moon. All of these required man to live together. Yet all cities today still have money as their main motivation, which carries with it the ever-present problems of overcrowding, pollution and crime.

Better Blueprint

Unknown to almost all, the Bible has much to say about the urban problem.

In fact, the words “city” and “cities” are used 1,316 times throughout the Book’s pages. But it does not just address the fundamental problems with cities, it also offers urban solutions for the future.

While the Bible states that future cities will be spread across the globe, its most detailed descriptions are of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. As you read, look at the principles laid out—and how they would drastically improve cities as we know them.

The book of Zechariah paints this picture: “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein” (2:4). Chapter 14 adds more: “And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be *safely inhabited*” (vs. 2).

This clearly describes a city as it states that a “multitude of men” live there.

Such cities will be built following biblical principles. All points of urban planning and construction will be done “decently and in order” (I Cor. 14:40). Accounting for population, infrastructure, climate and location, each city’s plan will be unique in its design approach.

Following Isaiah 5:8, the Bible’s plan for future cities eliminates wall-to-wall houses and buildings. In addition, all will adhere to the command to not destroy the Earth (Rev. 11:18). Also, everyone will be required to grow much of their own food: “And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them” (Isa. 65:21).

Yet trade will still exist. A major highway will connect Egypt to Israel to Germany. This roadway described in Isaiah 19:23-25 reveals the beginnings of worldwide unity, connectivity and development.

These clues and principles can be used to paint a picture of what it could be like during that time.

While cities will likely be centers of business and industry, they will not be forced to support massive populations. People will have greater access to habitable land and will have better

access to sunlight, the natural environment, and clean water.

Urban areas will work with the natural environment in a sustainable way. Buildings will be well-planned from initial design phases, taking into consideration their inhabitants’ well-being. While efficiencies in all systems will be stressed, city and building design will not be solely dependent on monetary concerns, where developers are encouraged to cut costs at the expense of the occupants or the environment.

City streets will no longer be lined with skyscrapers. Instead, open spaces will be the norm. Inefficient buildings will be replaced with environmentally friendly structures. Advancements in technology will help builders create pollution-free architecture. The damaging effects of smog will be replaced with crystal-clear skies and fresh air.

The city will be a vibrant center for culture, adding life and excitement to the streets through art, music and dance. Social connectivity and face-to-face interaction will be a large part of the urban fabric.

Community gardens and places for recreation will encourage healthy lifestyles as well as beautify the urban landscape. These public spaces may become the thread tying the city center to the residential areas surrounding it.

Infrastructure within the city will be built in accordance to the population’s needs. Highways, roads and bridges will not be crowded or crumple from overuse.

In short, overpopulation, crime and pollution will be gone!

While these ideas can seem impossible, the Bible describes how this vision of the future will be brought about.

Coming Solution

The blueprint for tomorrow’s cities can only be implemented through the guidance of a coming world SUPER-GOVERNMENT, which the Bible calls “the kingdom of God.” This is the gospel—the good news—that God’s Word discusses constantly.

The word kingdom is synonymous to the word government. Just as there are governments set up today ruling over people within a nation or territory, God too has a government—a kingdom—that He will soon bring to Earth.

God’s government will be “established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it” (Isa. 2:2). It will cut through the bureaucracy and inefficiency of today’s divided governmental systems.

Long-sought-after solutions to urban problems will be found. The glistening future city that seems impossible today will soon become a reality worldwide. Homelessness will be gone, pollution will be eradicated, and problems of overpopulation will be solved.

David C. Pack described the impact and necessity of this coming world government in his book *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!*

“For all these things to be possible, the world would require one supergovernment to enforce them. The nearly 200 sovereign, disagreeing, competing, warring, and fighting governments of this society—in their numerous different forms and shapes—could never bring this to pass. If they could, it would have happened by now...When fully implemented, the government of God will be a picture of harmony and unity, with all those in administration being the right choice for each job—perfectly qualified for the tasks they face.”

As a result, “The cities of the world to come will present a far different—and infinitely better and more beautiful—picture than the cities of today.”

The Bible reveals a most exciting preview of tomorrow’s cities. Yet cities are just one aspect of how society as a whole will be changed for the better. If you would like to learn more about these coming transformations, read *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* at rcg.org/tww. □



The Key to Happiness Revealed!

Here is how to achieve true, lasting happiness in your life.

BY JUSTIN T. PALM

ALL HUMAN BEINGS seek happiness. Some find it, then lose it. Others are able to hold onto it. Still others believe that a life of joy and contentment is an impossible dream.

Many never attain the level of happiness they expect in their lives, resigning themselves to a mediocre life of “just getting by.” They take on the attitude that people are all just “putting in their time,” and that, with life’s many ups and downs, there are seemingly more downs. They pass their days surfing the Internet, traveling, or watching television and movies. Then, after giving up on the pursuit of happiness, they come to actually “enjoy” their sadness!

What causes happiness? Simply being satisfied in life? Or does it come through achieving success? Riches? A stable family life?

According to the U.S. Constitution, the pursuit of happiness is an unalienable right. If that is true, then why is lasting joy so hard to achieve?

The Science of Happiness

Science has only recently begun to explore what brings happiness, including how to measure levels of it. But what most at least agree on is this: To be happy, basic necessities must be in place, such as food, water, shelter, family, etc. Beyond this, many factors play a part—where one lives—whether one is married or single—if one has a large or small family—how much money one makes—one’s career—and one’s health.

Some scientists and researchers propose that instead of one key element, happiness is comprised of a “cocktail” of different ingredients, and that these vary for everyone. (We will see later that this theory is false.)

In his book *The Geography of Bliss*, Eric Weiner found that Iceland and

Switzerland were some of the happiest places on Earth, with the eastern European country of Moldova among the saddest.

What are some of the factors that make up a joy-filled life?

Family, Friends and Purpose

Health and career play a role in a person’s level of happiness. Research also reveals that the number of friends a person has is more important to his or her overall well-being than how much money he or she might possess.

In addition, marriage brings a level of contentment (of course, with a certain normal amount of stress) and satisfaction from sharing your life with someone special. Research shows that married people live longer. According to an extensive study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, married men live eight to 17 years longer than single men, and married women seven to 15 years longer than single women.

“Those who are active generally enjoy life much more than those who wait for life to come to them.”



Working toward goals with a purpose is also a key element of happiness. W. Beran Wolfe, a 20th century author, stated in his book, *How to Be Happy Though Human*: “If you observe a really happy man you will find him building a boat, writing a symphony, educating his son, growing double dahlias in his garden. He will not be searching for happiness as if it were a collar button that has rolled under the radiator.”

There is much truth in this statement. Those who are active generally enjoy life much more than those who wait for life to come to them.

Another cause of happiness is how much one gives to others. A study published in *The Wall Street Journal* found, “The paradox of money is that although earning more of it tends to enhance our well-being, we become happier by giving it away than by spending it on ourselves.”

But the all-important question many ask—and most assume they know the answer to—is this: “Does wealth bring happiness?”

Wealth and Happiness

Although some may find it hard to believe, wealth is not as connected to being happy as one might think. Findings reveal that as one’s standard of living increases, happiness does not go up. In some cases, it even declines!

In a *BBC* report, Professor Daniel Kahneman, a psychologist at Princeton University, stated, “Standard of living has increased dramatically and happiness has increased not at all, and in some cases has diminished slightly.”

He continued, “There is a lot of evidence that being richer...isn’t making us happier.”

Why do citizens of the West, with their increasing amounts of wealth, lead such discontented lives? Why are

they not able to obtain lasting happiness?

For one, people tend to adapt to material possessions and grow tired of them. Human beings also have a problem with making comparisons. We are satisfied with something we have (e.g., a car, house, spouse) until we see something someone else has that *seems* better.

No lasting sense of well-being and contentment comes from material possessions. Materialism often distracts us from life’s important goals, and can hurt our contentment rather than help it.

If wealth and material possessions do not bring about true and lasting contentment and joy, then what does?

God’s Word Reveals Path to Happiness!

Billions around the world profess to be Christian, and turn to various

forms of traditional Christianity in search of life's answers. They are either told that they must wait until the "afterlife" to achieve happiness—or they may experience an emotional high through fervent religious experiences that quickly fades away. Few understand what the Bible teaches—that you can experience happiness in this lifetime and in the soon-coming kingdom of God. (To know more, read the booklet *What Is the Kingdom of God?* at rcg.org/witkog.)

Notice this verse in Proverbs, keeping in mind the principle of cause and effect: "...he that keeps the law, happy is he" (29:18).

Let this verse sink in. If you keep God's Law, the Bible reveals that you will be happy! As simple as this may seem, this is what your Bible states is the key to happiness!

Next, notice Jesus Christ's words in John 13: "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them" (vs. 17). Here, He is speaking about keeping the Law of God.

The churches of this world teach that God's Law is "done away" and portray it as a great burden—but the Bible states otherwise: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3).

Also notice this passage found in the Psalms: "Blessed is every one that fears [obeys] the LORD; that walks in His ways. For you shall eat the labor of your hands: *happy shall you be, and it shall be well with you.* Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house: your children like olive plants round about your table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that fears the LORD" (Psa. 128:1-4). (Also see Psalm 146:5 and the last part of Proverbs 16:20.)

Keeping the laws of God—the key to being truly happy—is a way of life, which can be summed up in one word: GIVE! It is the way of "give," of outgoing concern for others, that leads to true and lasting joy, personal fulfillment, and peace of mind. This involves diligently striving to keep God's Law. It is far more rewarding to live a life devoted to giving, helping and sharing with others than to be self-centered and caught up in one's own problems, cares and concerns.

All-important Ingredient

Living the way of GIVE, as opposed to the way of GET, involves a number of different factors that make up a recipe involving family life, purpose, religion, contentment, health, career, etc. Keeping God's holy, righteous Law

(Rom. 7:14), however, is the key factor—the all-important INGREDIENT—that brings the joy all seek.

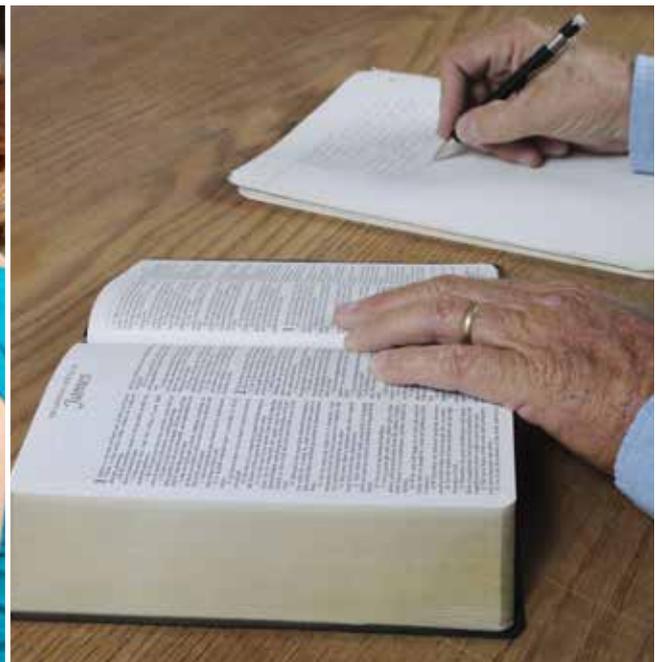
Here is why: "The statutes of the LORD are right, *rejoicing the heart*: the commandment of the LORD is pure, *enlightening the eyes*. The fear of the LORD is clean, *enduring forever*: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Your servant WARNED: and in keeping of them there is GREAT REWARD" (Psa. 19:8-11).

Keeping God's Law brings understanding (111:10) and wisdom (119:98). It serves as a "lamp" and "light" of instruction (Prov. 6:23), directing our paths in a world growing ever darker.

The Bible reveals that it is possible to be truly happy. Happiness is the *effect* of obeying God and living according to His Word—the *cause*!

Do not wait for life's circumstances to come together to provide you the perfect life you always dreamed of living. Take your happiness into your own hands, and begin living God's Way!

If you want to lead a more interesting, full and happy life, read the article "You Can Live the Abundant Life!" at rcg.org/ycltal. □



DATING

Continued from page 15

Many see recent changes as progress—but do the results support this view?

Unhappy and Unfulfilled

While some have met with success online, one of the problems with most relationships in the 21st century is that they often come without definition, as explained by *Elite Daily* staff writer Paul Hudson. In an article titled “8 Modern Dating Struggles That No Other Generation Has Had to Deal With,” he writes that years ago most people dated to develop long-lasting relationships.

“Because most of our relationships start with sex before they turn into something substantial, it can be rather

difficult figuring out where exactly that line between the two is located. Are you dating? Or are you just having sex, you’re hanging out as well. But are you sure you’re not friends with benefits?...Are you together or are you officially together? Apparently there is now a difference—exclusivity isn’t always promised. With all these different levels of togetherness that we’ve invented, it’s no surprise that many times we’ll find ourselves with a person and not know how to introduce him or her to friends or family.”

A lack of defining what is and is not happening has caused great confusion and emotional turmoil from singles in their 20s up to their 60s and 70s.

In her book, *The End of Sex: How Hookup Culture Is Leaving a Generation Unhappy, Sexually Unfulfilled and Confused About*

Intimacy, author Donna Freitas explained how those who participate in the hook-up culture see relationships as merely self-gratification and become apathetic to those with whom they are involved. This leads to them forming dysfunctional relationships later in their lives.

“The sheer amount of repression and suppression of emotion required for living in the context of hookup culture teaches young adults (or tries to teach them) not to feel at all,” she stated.

In addition, the constant searching, spending time with a person, becoming intimate with them, finding it does not work out, and then moving on to the next person, leaves a void in both men and women’s lives, and in many cases, makes them unable to be vulnerable with another person and trust him or her, which is key to a relationship.

“About a third of men (32%) and women (34%) say they are not sure whether they should marry when or if they find themselves in a committed, exclusive relationship,” an American Association of Retired Persons study on habits of singles between the ages of 40 and 69 stated. “Another third of men (34%) say they would cohabit, compared to about a fifth (21%) of women. Almost a third of women (31%) say they would get married versus one in four (25%) men.”

Think. This means that only approximately one-fourth to one-third of singles are dating to find a spouse. And this number is even less among those in their 20s and 30s. It would make sense then that since older adults are unwilling to fully define why they are starting a relationship in the first place that those who are now their *children* would have even more difficulty.

But step back even further. The inability to develop a true relationship starts with the inability to define it. Instead of asking why modern dating has so many problems, it should start with the questions: What is a date in the first place? And what is the purpose for it?

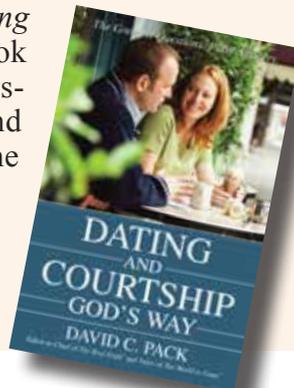
You Can Avoid Heartbreak!

A terrible downside to modern relationships is that they almost invariably end with broken hearts. This can be a boyfriend-girlfriend couple of a few months to a husband and wife of many years.

Yet this need not be! The Bible outlines principles that clearly show how to have a successful relationship—without all the pain and suffering that so many endure.

These principles are outlined in *Dating and Courtship – God’s Way*. This book has already helped many couples successfully navigate the dating landscape and progress to happy marriages. It can do the same for you.

Visit rcg.org/aadac to order your free copy today!



Why Date

In his book, *Dating and Courtship – God’s Way, Real Truth* editor-in-chief, David Pack writes, “The world is ignorant of almost every RIGHT VALUE that produces the RIGHT RESULTS all people seek. While everyone wants to be happy—and assumes that following the established norm is the right way to achieve happiness—most remain miserable and never know why. This is especially true in the world of modern dating.

“Dating, followed by courtship, is supposed to lead to a happy marriage. But marriage cannot be happy if it is not built on the RIGHT FOUNDATION. Most couples have no idea that the foundation of a successful marriage begins long before the wedding day. In addition, a direct by-product of the wrong foundation is that most people have no idea how to select the right mate.

“Just what is dating? A sampling of opinions reveals a variety of definitions, with seemingly no two alike. In the simplest form, a date is merely a set time agreed upon by two people to engage in an activity. The most commonly recognized definition is ‘an appointment for a specified time; especially a social engagement between two persons of opposite sex’ (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*).

“What about courtship? Most know little or nothing of this lost art, and many no longer know—let alone use—the term. Those few who do, know virtually nothing about the principles of courtship—or its true PURPOSE. As a result, if two people are ‘dating,’ this could mean they have dated only twice, yet have become interested in pursuing marriage. Even if both were serious, and technically courting from this point (this is often the case today after just two dates), most would still refer to this as dating.

“In fact, there is no common understanding of just what dating and courtship are, or the plain difference between the two—and there is a BIG difference!

“Also, because it sounds too ‘official’ and ‘old-fashioned,’ teenagers today rarely even use the term ‘dating.’ The idea of a date—when a man formally asks a woman, for instance, if she would accept an engagement for dinner—is nearly non-existent. Many simply slip or tumble into dating situations, seemingly not caring how this happens, or even what happens. Instead, they seem more concerned with ‘going with the flow.’

“Yet, you should care! Too much is at stake not to. There are many important principles behind dating that one must consider in order to successfully date—and be able to eventually move on to the more serious courtship and pursuit of marriage. You must have a means of knowing if or when you have found that special person. There are specific processes involved in proper dating that will help lead you down the right path.”

Wrong Thinking

It has been observed that most people simply continue in the traditions, behaviors and mindsets learned from family, without question. They are content to be a product of their environment, with little desire or motivation to exercise judgment, examining *why* they do what they do.

For many younger people, weak family bonds, absent or otherwise pre-occupied parents, and a lifestyle in which daily interaction with father and mother is far outstripped by time with others their own age (in person, by computer or by phone), has led to the same “follower” mentality—but with the examples set by peers. The result is the same: everyone goes along to get along, following the crowd into the next trend, unconcerned with the consequences.

Consider for a moment: Choosing a mate, the potential mother or father of your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, is one of life’s most important decisions. As recently as a few generations ago, dating was commonly viewed in the West as the first step toward a potential marriage. Dating and courtship once often

involved families who were familiar with one another in a town or neighborhood.

Today, it can involve nothing more than two people and two computers. Standards have gradually lowered over the decades, but the speed down the slippery slope has accelerated.

What now passes for dating may be the most tragic example of the shallowness of the modern age. This unthinking approach to relationships allows almost no time for real human interaction, the shared experiences on which a commitment to another human being is built. And it speaks of a profound lack of commitment.

The rushed building process could be likened to spending mere minutes constructing the foundation of a house, when many hours or days are required.

Women are arguably the biggest losers in this situation. They have by and large been fooled into thinking that casual sex carries no consequences. (Most men seem to have accepted this assumption.) However, studies show that the release of oxytocin (sometimes called the “bonding hormone” or “cuddle chemical”) during sexual activity promotes emotional attachment within the female, regardless of whether she intends to become attached to anyone.

Unlike what is believed and practiced now, however, there is a better way!

If you are single, you do not have to fall into the pattern that society has set for you. You can go against the grain and date in a way that will lead to a happy, fulfilling and long-lasting relationship.

The book *Dating and Courtship – God’s Way*, available for free at rcg.org/aadac, will show you how. Within it, you will learn the reason dating widely is important and the proper way to do so, the basics of courtship, how to know the difference between love and lust, how to develop date ideas, and so much more.

Do not become stuck in the dating confusion of this world. Recapture true values and establish the right foundation for your next relationship by learning to date and court properly! □

AMERICA

Continued from page 6

nation *stiffnecked*, which means stubborn, obstinate and impudent.

An early example of this is found in Exodus 32, after the Israelites built a golden calf and rejected the true God. In verses 8-9, God states: “They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto...And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.”

Consider the level of stubbornness here. God had miraculously taken this

nation out of slavery—and repeatedly demonstrated His awesome power—and they still chose to rebel.

The lesson behind this? Even a nation with incredible blessings with the God of the Bible backing it up can reject Him and His way.

For Israel, rebellions especially happened when there was no strong leader in the nation. Notice: “And it came to pass, when the judge [that oversaw Israel] was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers...they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way” (Judg. 2:19).

Israel utterly refused to listen to godly reason. Their stubbornness weakened the nation to the point that it

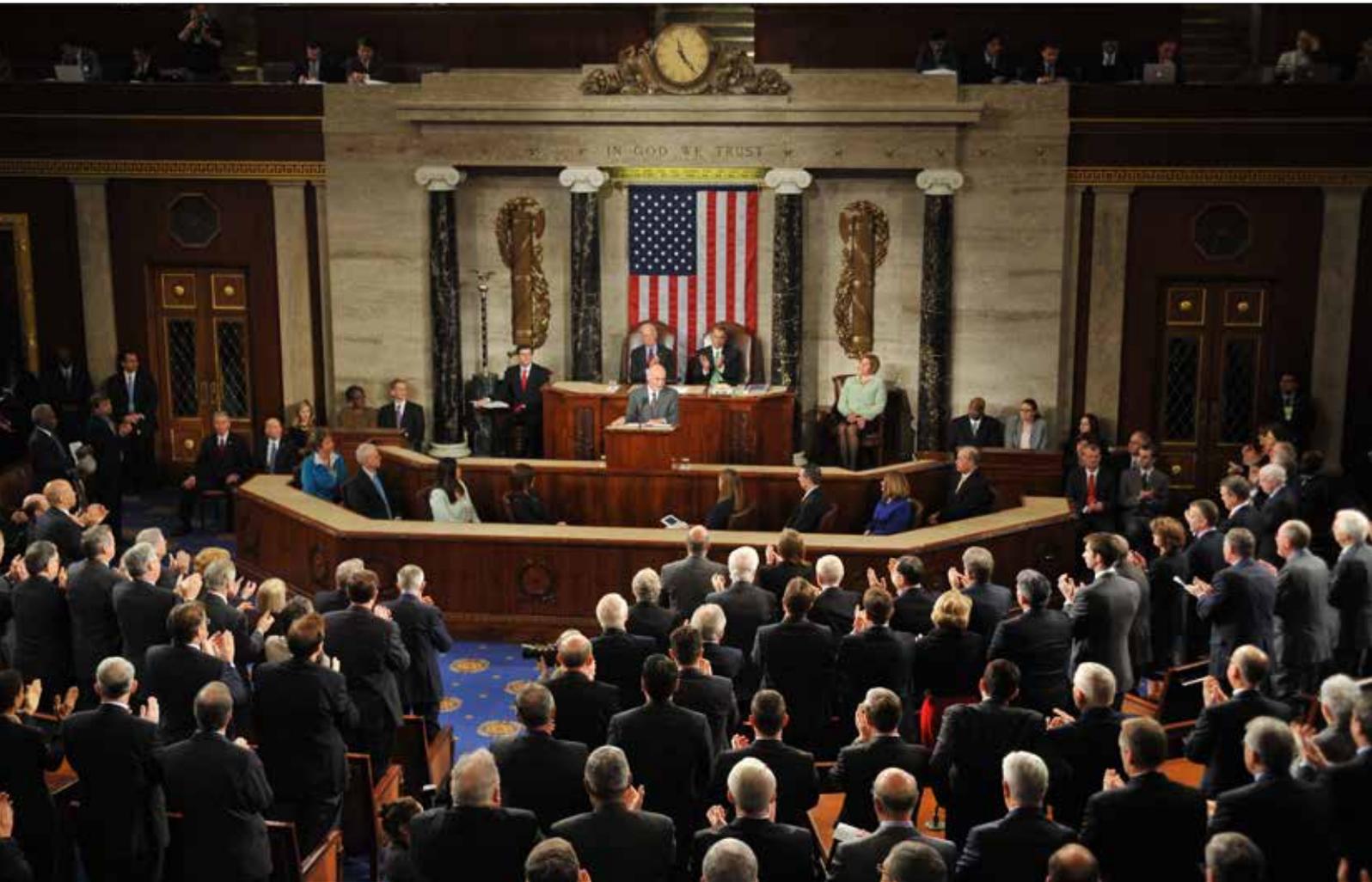
was overrun and its people were carted off to captivity.

Isaiah 48 summarizes the astonishing level of this stubbornness. God tells Israel it is “obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass” (vs. 4).

America today is approaching this same level of stiffnecked thinking in the political arena. Few recognize the seriousness of the situation.

Hyper-partisanship

Re-read the quote mentioned earlier from the Santa Fe Institute about partisan politics: “We find that despite short-term fluctuations, partisanship or non-cooperation in the U.S. Congress has been increasing exponentially for



■ **CONGRESSIONAL SESSION:** Afghan President Ashraf Ghani receives a standing ovation as he addresses a joint session of Congress at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. (March 25, 2015).

PHOTO: NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

over 60 years with no sign of abating or reversing.”

Notice that the researchers did not say linear growth. It is EXPONENTIAL growth.

Exponential growth is difficult for the human mind to grasp because it starts out slowly and then quickly jumps forward. The classic grade school example of this is that if you had a penny and doubled it every day you would have \$10.7 million dollars in just 30 days. Realize that on the 15th day, you would still have only \$327.67, and on day 25, \$335,544.31. Most of the growth would occur in the final days.

While partisanship is not doubling every year, exponential growth is still set to increase by 5 percent every year. In the penny analogy, 5 percent growth every day would make you a millionaire in a little over a year.

The researchers stated what this means for the U.S.: “Americans today are represented by political figures who struggle to cooperate across party lines at an unprecedented rate, resulting in high profile fiscal and policy battles, government shutdowns, and an inability to resolve problems or enact legislation that guides the nation’s domestic and foreign policy.”

In summary, they stated: “Not surprisingly, partisanship correlates with failure to introduce and pass legislation. The number of bills introduced, bills passed, and the percentage of introduced bills that pass fall exponentially over time.”

The level of non-cooperation has reached the point of hyper-partisanship, and this bleeds into how the two parties speak about one another in interviews and campaign speeches. The level of name-calling and belittling is astonishing—and it stems from stiffnecked thinking that “my way is right, and yours is dead wrong.”

A *Wall Street Journal* article investigated this trend, with its writer voicing fears that there is no “middle” in politics any more. The article stated: “Up until the mid-1980s, the typical American held the view that partisans on the other side operated with good

intentions. But that has changed in dramatic fashion, as a study published...by Stanford and Princeton researchers demonstrates.

“It has long been agreed that race is the deepest divide in American society. But that is no longer true, say Shanto Iyengar and Sean Westwood, the academics who led the study. Using a variety of social science methods (for example, having study participants review resumes of people that make both their race and party affiliation clear), they document that ‘the level of partisan animus in the American public exceeds racial hostility.’”

Partisanship exceeding racial hostility. At first, such an assertion can seem impossible. Yet think of how Democrats treat Republicans and vice versa. In public, they berate the other side as “ignorant,” “lunatics” and every other demeaning name under the sun. They are able to do this on national television. If a politician went in front of news cameras and said such things about any race, he or she would quickly be out of a job.

Hyper-partisanship—being politically “stiffnecked”—also affects the general public. *The Wall Street Journal* article continued: “Americans now discriminate more on the basis of party than on race, gender or any of the other divides we typically think of—and that discrimination extends beyond politics into personal relationships and non-political behaviors. Americans increasingly live in neighborhoods with like-minded partisans, marry fellow partisans and disapprove of their children marrying mates from the other party, and they are more likely to choose partners based on partisanship than physical or personality attributes.”

As stiffnecked thinking grows in the U.S., people have dug in their heels harder. They think they alone hold the way to make America better. They refuse to ever

stop and consider that they could be wrong.

Proper Perspective

Another passage from the Old Testament is instructive. In Hosea 5:3-4, God says that He sees Israel and it is “defiled.” He declares: “They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God...”

The principle here can apply to ancient Israel, but it definitely fits with America today. As a collective nation, we will not stop and take a serious look at ourselves. We will not frame our doings or put them in proper perspective.

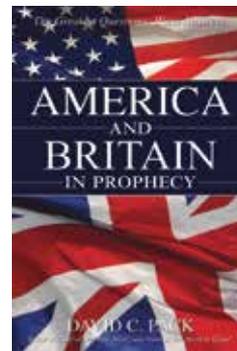
Yet this verse has a twofold meaning. It can also mean that a nation’s actions will not allow it to turn back to God. For the U.S., this can be seen in its stiffnecked, hyper-partisanship thinking. Each side, whether liberal or conservative, thinks the other is dead wrong, which makes their viewpoint seem right.

This clouds the issue because BOTH are wrong. Both sides—and any manmade ideology—is subject to Jeremiah 17:9. Man cannot “direct his steps”—he cannot govern himself!

Without drastic action, the U.S. will wallow in the cycle of hyper-partisanship, which will continue to grow exponentially worse. There will be more political gridlock. More verbal battles in Internet comment sections. And simply MORE disagreement.

Yet all hope is not lost. The Bible does not just explain where mankind has gone off course. It also reveals the right way for individuals to live and how to properly operate a nation.

God’s Word also has a lot to say *specifically* about the U.S. today. It shows *exactly* where it is off track and how it can make itself better. The book *America and Britain in Prophecy* uses clear biblical proof to show what the coming years hold for the U.S.—and its ultimate bright, better future! □



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PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

This explains why earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are so connected. While the most powerful quakes are not caused by volcanoes, all eruptions cause a series of smaller earthquakes.

With St. Helens, a large earthquake triggered an already sensitive volcano to erupt. This is the danger in many volcano-sensitive areas throughout the world. Volcanoes sit silently building pressure until a nearby earthquake becomes the catalyst for eruption.

Another common type of volcano is underwater. The floor of the ocean is littered with them. The Hawaiian Islands are a direct result of underwater eruptions. Tsunamis pose the greatest danger with these, and can move at speeds of up to 500 miles per hour. Both earthquakes and volcanoes

can create these devastating waves. Tsunamis can result from underwater mudslides that follow the eruption. One of the most devastating tsunamis in history was in 2004 in Indonesia. Caused by an earthquake, almost 300,000 people perished.

Following the eruption of the Indonesian volcano Tambora in 1815, normally temperate areas experienced snow every month for a year, resulting in poor crop yields in places as far away as New England. Many believe Tambora brought the Irish Potato Famine.

The 1883 explosion of Krakatau, also in Indonesia, was heard over 2,000 miles away! The eruption spewed ash 50 miles high, with the dust cloud repeatedly circling the Earth. The surrounding region experienced darkness for over two days.

In the Philippines, Mt. Pinatubo erupted in June 1991, displacing millions of people and destroying much

farmland. Pinatubo's ash cloud lowered the average world temperature by almost 2 degrees Fahrenheit!

An awesome volcanic eruption in Iceland occurred in March 2010. It caused tremendous floods, and created a plume of ash that disrupted air travel in Europe for days.

Soon we will see more powerful earthquakes. They will awaken giant volcanoes. These will be the largest eruptions of all time. But earthquakes and volcanoes will not just alter the face of single mountains. They will alter the face of the whole Earth.

How God Has Used Earthquakes

Now let's understand why God has used earthquakes through history. The Bible shows they reveal His presence, His deliverance, His wrath, and His power. God will also use them to announce Christ's Return, to accompany prophetic events, and to reshape the Earth's surface.



■ **POWERFUL ERUPTIONS:** Left, lava and ash shoot out of the Calbuco volcano near Puerto Varas, Chile (April 23, 2015). Right, Mount Sinabung spews smoke near Tiga Pancur village in North Sumatra, Indonesia. Intermittent eruptions from the volcano, which had been dormant for over 400 years, killed 15 people and forced hundreds to flee their homes (Oct. 13, 2014).

PHOTOS: DAVID CORTES SEREY/AFP/ (LEFT); ULET IFANSASTI/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES

The Bible reveals that just God's presence can cause Earth to shake. Notice: "Tremble, you earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob" (Psa. 114:7). Volcanoes can be triggered: "The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt [lava-producing volcanoes]" (Nah. 1:5), and "He looks on the earth, and it trembles: He touches the hills, and they smoke" (Psa. 104:32).

There was thunderous trembling when God gave the 10 Commandments: "And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off" (Ex. 20:18). Now this: "And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly" (19:18). God's presence generated an earthquake, and

likely volcanic activity, to get Israel's attention.

On another occasion, the faith and courage of David's friend Jonathan, and his armor bearer, moved God. Here is what happened: "And there was *trembling* in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth *quaked*: so it was a *very great trembling*" (I Sam. 14:15). The terrorized Philistines then turned on each other, with thousands dying. Another earthquake, in Numbers 16, involved 250 Israelite leaders under Korah who rebelled against Moses.

The result? "The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up..." (vs. 32)—with their wives and children. Again, thousands died.

Other earthquakes occurred just after the New Testament Church began. Here is one, with Peter and John both speaking and praying: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant

unto Your servants, that with all boldness they may speak Your Word, by stretching forth Your hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of...Jesus. And when they had prayed, *the place was shaken where they were assembled together*; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:29-31). The quake proved God had heard.

Another earthquake occurred involving the apostle Paul and Silas in Philippi. They had been beaten and imprisoned. But God delivered them: "And suddenly there was a *great earthquake*, so that the foundations of the prison were *shaken*: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (16:26).

Earthquakes at Past Events in God's Plan

While theologians usually dismiss such miracles in Scripture, earthquakes



■ **DESTRUCTION:** Left, Nepalese women and children stand in line for supplies at a tent camp in Kathmandu for those left homeless after an earthquake struck the area (May 5, 2015). Right, a man stands on top of debris from collapsed buildings in Bhaktapur, Nepal (April 26, 2015).

PHOTOS: ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP/ (LEFT); OMAR HAVANA/ (RIGHT); GETTY IMAGES

have accompanied great events such as Jesus' crucifixion: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did *quake*, and the *rocks rent*" (Matt. 27:51).

What happened next? "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God" (vs. 54).

Another great earthquake accompanied Christ's Resurrection: "And, behold, there was a *great earthquake*: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it" (28:2).

Again, earthquakes can also reflect God's wrath. Let's read: "Then the earth *shook* and *trembled*; the foundations also of the hills *moved* and were *shaken*, because *He was wroth*" (Psa. 18:7). Also, "But the LORD is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King: *at His wrath* the earth shall *tremble*, and the nations shall not be able to abide His *indignation*" (Jer. 10:10).

Many prophesied end-time earthquakes will carry this message. These primarily involve great quakes listed in the book of Revelation. They will convey God's wrath to a world that refuses to heed His warnings and correction.

Great Earthquakes to Precede Christ's Return

A probably smaller earthquake is referenced in Revelation 12, and involves the miraculous escape of God's Church to a Place of Safety as the Great Tribulation begins. An army pursuing the Church is destroyed. Notice similar wording to Numbers 16: "And the earth helped the woman [God's Church], and... opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood [obviously an army—like the Egyptian army pursuing Israel until the Red Sea swallowed it] which the dragon [the devil] cast out of his mouth" (Rev. 12:16).

The book of Revelation foretells five specific powerful earthquakes

preceding and surrounding Christ's Return. Each is unique, and occurs at a particular juncture of God's final prophetic timeline.

First is Revelation 6:12: "And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood."

This earthquake occurs after the fifth seal, as the sixth is opened. The terrible fifth seal involves the military invasion and the captivity of the modern-day descendants of Israel. (My book *America and Britain in Prophecy* explains the identity of these modern descendants of Israel, and much more about them. It can be read at rcg.org/aabibp.) This involves two and a half years of unparalleled suffering—the worst in all history—to be brought upon *this* generation. This earthquake's timing proclaims the end of the tribulation and beginning of powerful signs that appear in the heavens.

Jesus also spoke of this in Matthew: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be *shaken*" (24:29). And in Luke: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the *sea and the waves roaring* [including tsunamis]; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be *shaken*" (21:25-26).

The context of Revelation 6 reveals more: "...and every mountain and island were moved out of their places" (vs. 14).

Now Isaiah's description of this time: "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty, *when He arises to shake terribly the earth*" (2:20-21).

This description parallels Revelation 6:15-16. Physical possessions will be of no use to anyone not truly serving God.

Second is Revelation 8:5. As the seventh seal is opened, seven angels stand before God and receive seven trumpets. Another angel took a censer "...and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an *earthquake*." This earthquake represents the beginning of the seven trumpet plagues and begins fulfillment of the seventh seal and Day of the Lord.

Certain scriptures speak of the solemn gravity and horror of this time: "Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come" (Joel 1:15).

The prophet Joel shows the precise timing of this event: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, *before* the great and terrible day of the LORD come" (2:31). This matches the sequence in Revelation, as the heavenly signs immediately precede the Day of the Lord—the day of God's wrath.

Third is Revelation 11:12-13: "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them [the two witnesses], Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a *great earthquake*, and the tenth part of the city [Jerusalem] fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven."

This earthquake occurs after the final two special prophets (the two witnesses) are resurrected—prior to the seventh trumpet and the First Resurrection of I Corinthians 15:51 and I Thessalonians 4:16. It appears to be mainly in Jerusalem, but could still be worldwide in scope. It cannot be the same one described in Zechariah 14:4 because all nations will not yet have gathered at Armageddon.

This earthquake precedes and announces the most pivotal event in human history—Jesus Christ's Return!

Fourth is Revelation 11:19: “And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

This earthquake occurs immediately *after* Christ’s Return and the First Resurrection, and marks the fulfillment of these events: “...and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and *He shall reign forever and ever*” (vs. 15).

Jesus’ Return makes every following event possible. Earthquakes before and after it underscore its momentous importance in God’s Plan. No other event bears such distinction. This earthquake directly results from the *presence* of God. Christ is *present* as King—assuming rulership in glory over all nations.

The final earthquake is in Revelation 16:17-18: “And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, *such as was not since men were upon the earth*, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”

This last earthquake will be the most powerful to occur since Creation. The remainder of Earth’s topography changes. Notice: “And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (vs. 20).

This earthquake appears to complete the process begun by the one in Revelation 6, in which “...every mountain and island were moved out of their places” (vs. 14). This is the earthquake mentioned in Zechariah 14 that follows all nations gathering at Armageddon, and it coincides with the sixth vial of God’s wrath (Rev. 16:12-15).

Zechariah 14 states, “And His [Christ’s] feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the

mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half...toward the south” (vs. 4), and “the LORD shall be King over all the earth...” (vs. 9).

The prophets also spoke about the earthquakes of Revelation, especially the final, great one preceding Christ’s Return.

Isaiah 13: “I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger” (vs. 13).

Isaiah 24: “The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage...” (vs. 19-20).

Ezekiel 38: “...all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at My presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground” (vs. 20).

Joel 3: “The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake...” (vs. 16).

Haggai 2: “For thus says the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations [Jesus Christ] shall come...” (vs. 6-7).

Earthquakes Used to Reshape the Surface of the Earth

Beyond the immediate purpose of the five Revelation earthquakes, these will also serve to reshape Earth’s surface. The same God who formed the hills and mountains will *reform* them and *reshape* the planet. (Read Amos 4:13 and Psalms 90:2.) Notice: “Every valley shall be exalted, and every moun-

tain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed...” (Isa. 40:4-5).

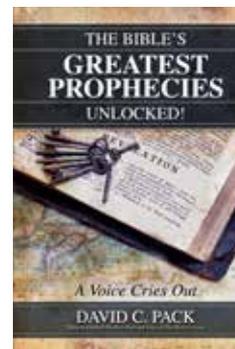
This speaks of dramatic changes. Vast mountain ranges will disappear. A few remaining mountains and hills will be used for God’s specially appointed purpose. Other verses show this.

The renewal of Earth’s surface will accommodate the vast number of human beings who will exist by the later stages of Christ’s millennial rule, but also the many billions who will come up later in the general resurrection, called the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11. A much larger population is possible once more usable land becomes available for farming and living.

More land will be reclaimed from the deserts and oceans, with the oceans scheduled to be *purified*. (Read Ezekiel 47:8-10.) All of this will bring favorable weather, replacing the harsh destructive weather patterns felt throughout history. Without droughts and floods, and the terrible extremes of temperature, precipitation and destruction from other elements in nature, farming will be more productive.

There is a purpose for every aspect of God’s Creation. We have seen that earthquakes have long served God’s Plan, and in numerous ways.

To grasp the bigger, grander and truly astonishing message from the Bible about the future, read *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out* at rcg.org/tbgpu. The good news beyond today’s depressing trends and statistics, and human tragedy, is that earthquakes will play a major role in a transition that ends in peace, security and fulfillment for all. While the world knows nothing of it, an incredible age of peace and abundance is coming soon! □



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■ **UNDER THREAT:** Workers of a power plant run by Korea Hydro participate in an anti-cyberattack exercise in Gyeongju, South Korea (Dec. 22, 2014). The extra measures were taken after the plant's computer data was hacked and posted to the Internet.

PHOTO: KOREA HYDRO AND NUCLEAR POWER CO. VIA GETTY IMAGES

Threat of Cyberattacks

Cyberattacks have the potential to inflict more damage than conventional terrorist attacks, security experts have warned. “Computer hackers have begun targeting electric and nuclear power plants and other critical operations around the world in audacious and continuous efforts to take control of them,” said Dr. Gabi Siboni, director of the Cyber Security Program at Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies (*The Jerusalem Post*). Also at risk are air control systems, which cyber terrorists could infiltrate and cause aircraft disasters. □



PHOTO: NASA; ESA; L. BRADLEY (JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY); R. BOUWENS (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ); H. FORD (JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY); AND G. ILLINGWORTH (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ)

Unusual Galaxy Discovery

Astronomers discovered a young galaxy at the edge of the observable universe. Unlike other such galaxies, it is filled with dust particles—carbon, oxygen, iron, silicon and magnesium. These elements were thought to only exist in older galaxies, such as the Milky Way, which is an estimated 13.2 billion years old. This finding has baffled proponents of the big bang theory who once believed only hydrogen and helium could have existed during that time and that other elements would have had to develop over billions of years. □

Unsettled Citizens

At least six immigrants were killed and 300 native South African citizens were arrested after a wave of xenophobic violence rattled the nation in April. Native South Africans were angry that foreigners were taking local jobs in the country, which suffers from 24 percent unemployment. □



Poor Food Sanitation

The consumption of contaminated food caused over 350,000 deaths in 2010, according to the most recent data released by the World Health Organization. The industrialization of food production has resulted in more instances of meat, fruit and vegetables being contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemicals. □

Changing Economics

The United States dollar has risen in trade value since 2014, which has had mixed effects on the global economy. Companies relying on operations in countries outside the U.S. have seen decreasing profits as foreign currency is worth less than the dollar. Other markets such as Japan, India and the eurozone have benefited from spending less on U.S. imports. □



Mosquito Super Species

A new breed of mosquito resistant to malaria-fighting insecticides sprayed on nets, which have been responsible for halting the spread of the disease, has been discovered in Mali. Malaria deaths decreased by nearly 50 percent since 2000 as a result of the nets, but health officials are now concerned that the new breed could cause a resurgence of the disease. □



■ **HAZY SKYLINE:** Air pollution blankets Shenzhen, China (April 23, 2015).
PHOTO: FRED DUFOUR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Pollution-weary Population

Hundreds of residents in Heyuan City, China, took to the streets to protest the expansion of a coal power plant in the city. Ever since the plant was built in 2008, the city's residents have complained of smog. Protests about pollution in other parts of the nation have also been on the rise as only eight of 74 cities across China meet air-quality standards set by the government's Ministry of Environmental Protection. □

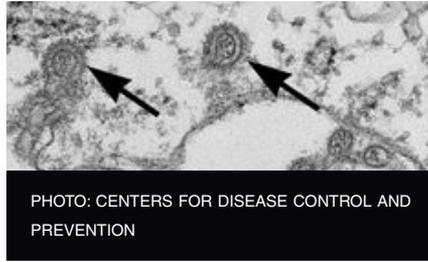


PHOTO: CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

Virus Discovery

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention discovered a deadly virus that is spreading through tick and insect bites. The virus, named Bourbon after the county in Kansas in which it first infected a human, can cause nausea, weakness, fever, headaches, shortness of breath, organ failure, and even death. □

Record Income Gap

The difference in earnings between rich and middle-class families in the United States is the widest on record. Pew Research Center revealed that in 2013, high-income families had a median income 6.6 times greater than middle-income families—up from 4.5 times in 2007. □

Health Data Breaches

According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 29 million medical records were stolen or hacked from databases between 2010 and 2013. Despite continued risk, little is being done to prevent the hacking of this information. □



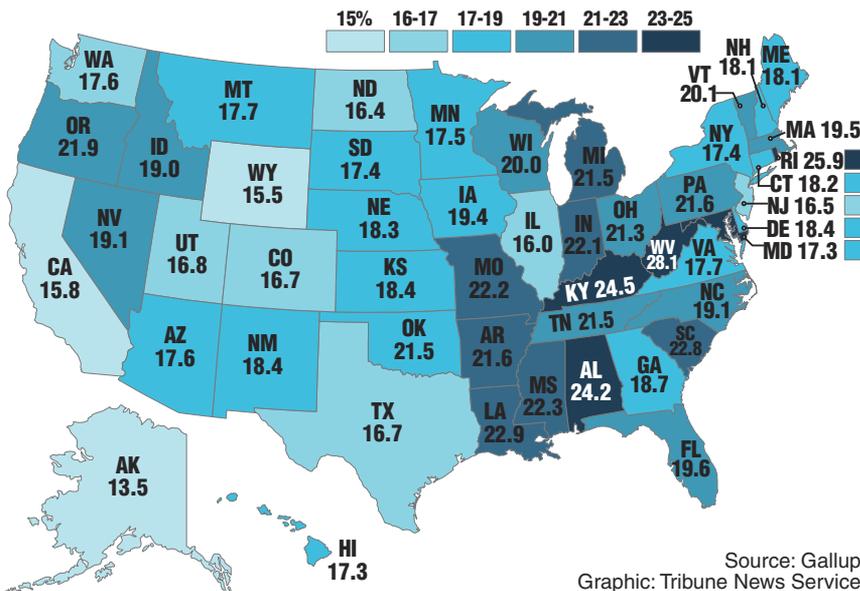
Effect of Pornography

Pornography is now considered a public health crisis, according to many psychologists and medical experts in the United States. *The Washington Times* reported on a study that showed that men who regularly watch pornography are more likely to depend on it and are less likely to be satisfied with their partners. Health officials are hopeful these findings will spur more action by the government. □

Prescription Drug Poll

Researchers asked at least 450 residents in each state: How often do you use drugs or medications that affect your mood and help you relax?

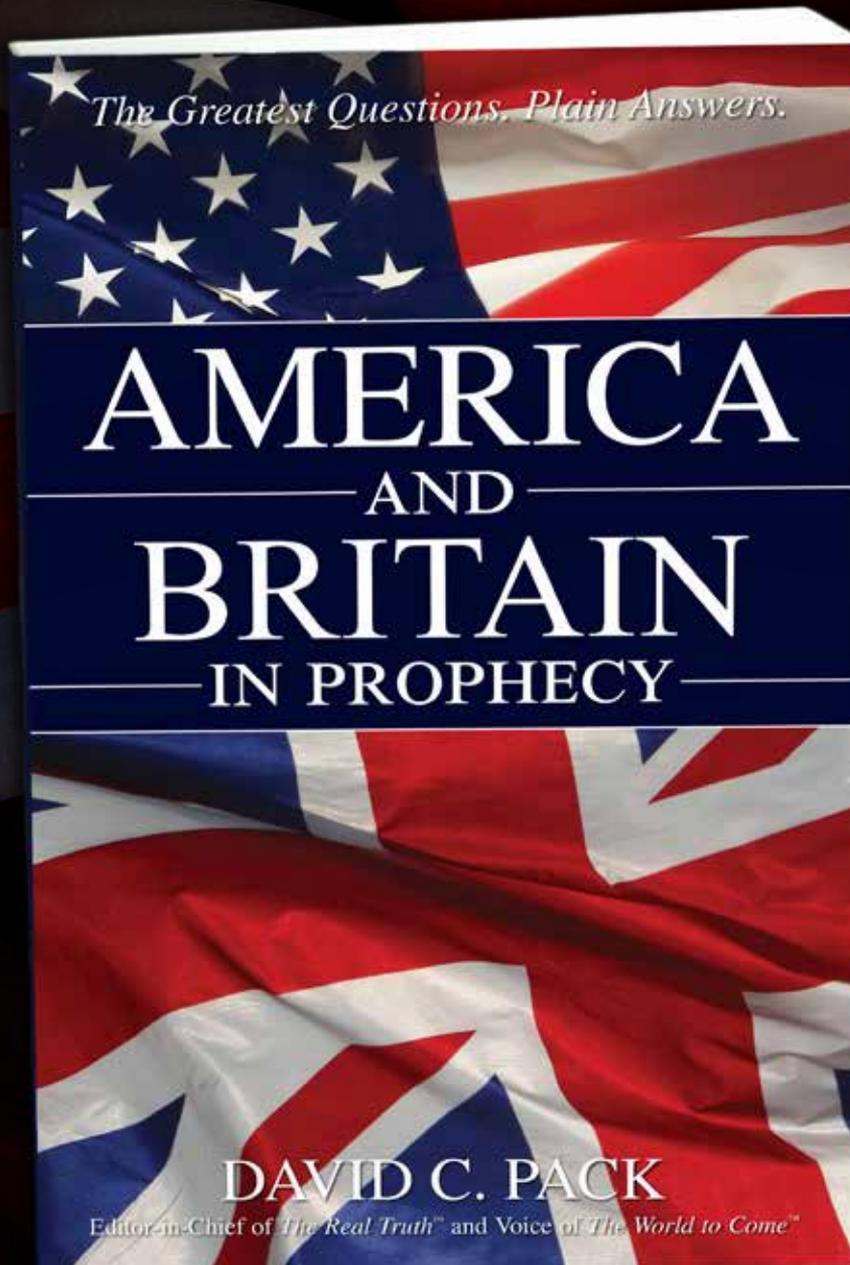
Percent in each state who answered "almost every day"



Disease Becoming Common

Cases of whooping cough in California are at the highest level since the 1940s. Public health officials expect outbreaks to become more frequent in the state as the year progresses. □

What Does the Future Hold?



The most prosperous and influential civilizations have come and gone with no exceptions. Will America and Britain's future be the same? The answer to this question is key to understanding what the world will look like in just the next few years.

Unknown to most, the Bible speaks volumes about these two nations. Using history and prophecy as a guide, the book *America and Britain in Prophecy* explains exactly what is in store for these two superpowers. Order your free copy at rcg.org/aabibp.