

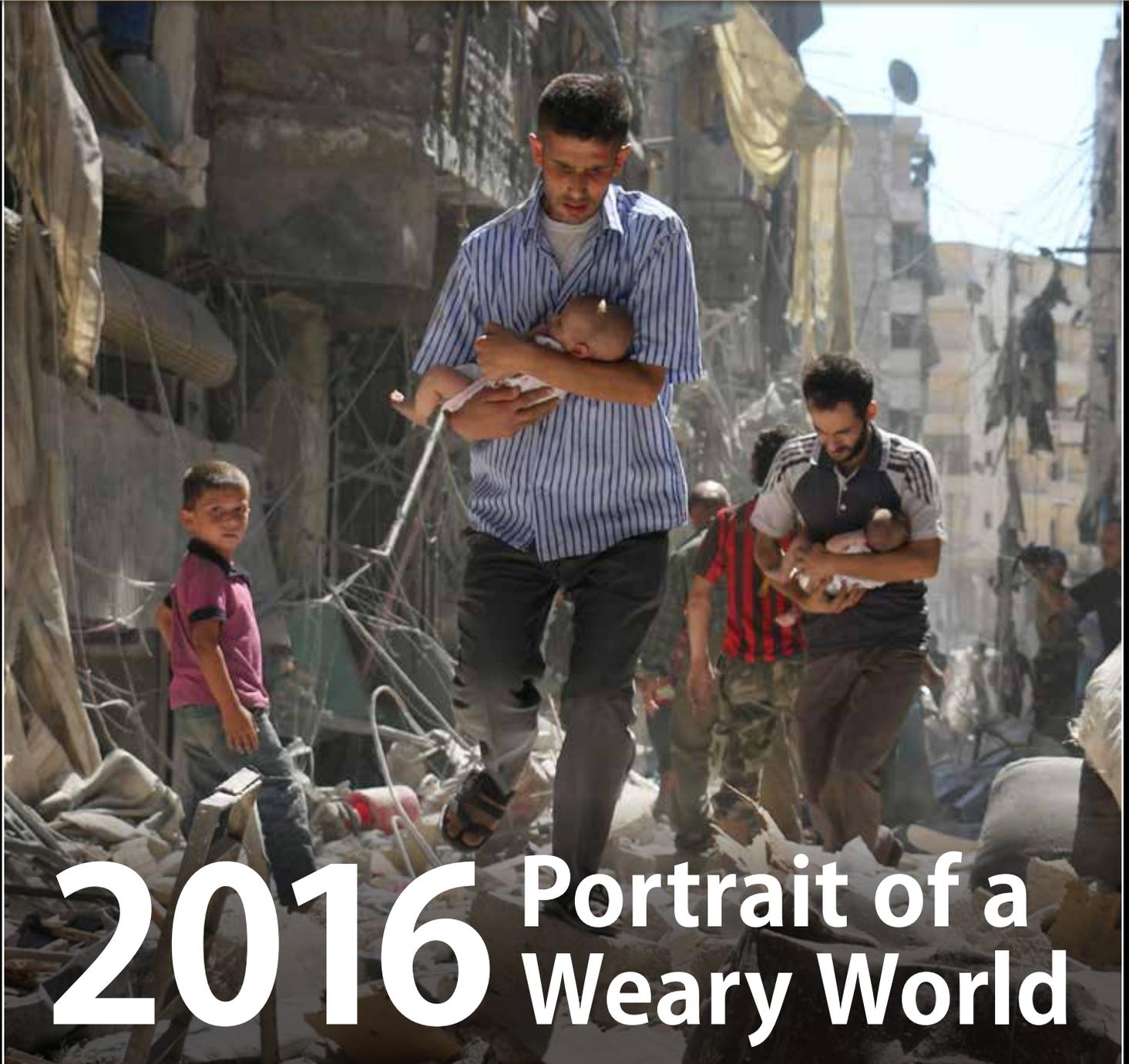
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2017

THE

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# REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



## 2016 Portrait of a Weary World

**What Is Russia's  
Endgame?**

Seeing Clearly  
*The Story of the Human Eye*

**Defining  
Generation Z**

10 Bible Verses  
Christendom Ignores

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**REAL TRUTH**<sup>™</sup>  
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A R T I C L E S

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■ **GRAND SETTING:** Russian President Vladimir Putin leads members of the Council for Civil Society and Human Rights during a session at the Kremlin in Moscow (Dec. 8, 2016).

PHOTO: SERGEI KARPUKHIN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## What Is Russia's Endgame?

While the Eurasian nation has long befuddled the West, it wants what it always has: an *idealized* state that plays a powerful and prominent role on the world stage.  
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**FRONT COVER:** Syrian men carry infants through the rubble of buildings following an airstrike in Aleppo, Syria (Sept. 11, 2016).

PHOTO: AMEER ALHALBI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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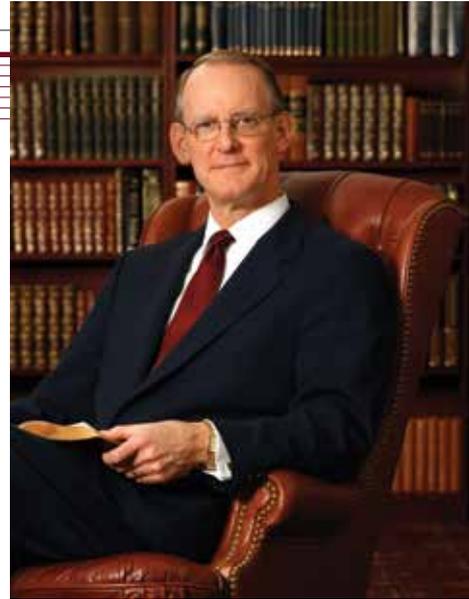
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## PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



# 10 Bible Verses Christendom Ignores

**E**VERY SUNDAY, hundreds of millions who profess to be Christian assume they are being correctly taught—and that they understand and believe—the *truth* of the Bible. In reality, almost no one knows even the most basic teachings of God’s Word—or of Jesus Christ. Almost all worship Jesus according to what is commonly believed, without the slightest proof from their Bibles. Thus, the *true* doctrines of the Bible are *unknown to Christianity*—and so is the meaning of nearly everything Jesus taught!

This Personal covers 10 verses that virtually the whole of Christendom either misunderstands, ignores or rejects outright. Prepare to learn the truth—and to be *shocked* at what you thought you knew!

Over 100 million Bibles are sold or given away each year, with more than 90 percent of American households having one. Such statistics show it is the world’s best-seller—yet, ironically, it is also the world’s least understood book.

All the verses you are about to see are ignored and rejected by professing Christianity. Ministers and experi-

enced Bible students know of these passages, but choose to explain them away or never speak of them.

Most religious leaders have chosen to disregard what the Bible teaches. It is as though many fear the truth, or to tell the truth! They fear being fired for teaching it—and they fear their members will leave if they do. In all cases, they fear what *men* may say or do, and give little or no thought to what *God* declares in His Word!

### How the Deceit Works

The majority of ministers appear to be of God. They profess to believe God wrote the Bible. Yet, not understanding it, they twist verses to fit preconceived ideas. In fact, theological institutes and seminaries of this world have developed a systematic way—and this can be done consciously or unconsciously—of spinning or dismissing God’s *plain words* and plain meaning in favor of making passages appear to say what they need them to say. These theologians and religionists sell false teachings through use of specific verses—wrongly understood and often taken out of context—that purportedly support their ideas. This permits them to have a supposed Bible authority for beliefs. And it helps them to much more easily snare the unwitting and unwary.

If one is properly trained and sufficiently grounded in the truth of the Bible, it is quite easy to see through and expose the deceptive logic misapplied to a verse, and to correctly explain it. The apostle Paul warned of “dishonest” people who “[handle] the word of God *deceitfully*” (II Cor. 4:2), because they, like listeners willing to believe them, “received not the love of the *truth*” (II Thes. 2:10). *True* ministers never, under *any* circumstances, follow these practices!

What follows is simple, and the verses quoted are clearly not open to human interpretation. While the Bible is a long and sometimes complex Book, the verses we will cover can be easily understood. The truths they bring will be impossible to miss!

But understand. We only have space in most cases for the briefest explanations, yet these are enough to show the error involved. Much more, however, could be added.

Some background is necessary to introduce all that follows. Blame for deception cannot be laid solely at the feet of modern Christendom. There is another source that drives the thinking of the whole world. It is key to understanding why basic truths of the Bible remain hidden.

### (1) Revelation 12:9

This sets up the first verse Christianity just leaves out—Revelation 12:9. This passage requires a little longer explanation. Let’s read it: “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the *devil*, and *Satan*, which *deceives the whole world*...”

This verse is completely ignored by professing Christianity. Have you ever heard it from the pulpit of your church? As the one who deceives all nations, including ministers, Satan holds ultimate responsibility. His deception is extremely subtle. But of course God also holds people accountable.

Ephesians references the devil’s worldwide influence: “...in time past [the apostle Paul wrote] you walked according to the course of this world, according to the *prince of the power*

*of the air*, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience” (2:2).

Grasp this! Satan uses the air to broadcast—through his spirit—an attitude of *disobedience*! His spirit sends moods, feelings and attitudes of hostility into people’s minds. These “work” to bring disobedience. This “airwave control” gives the devil tremendous power, allowing him to send thoughts of deceit, anger, pride, hatred, vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, envy and confusion into people’s minds!

The devil is much more powerful than most realize. Look at the position he holds, and what this permits him

“If one is properly trained and sufficiently grounded in the truth of the Bible, it is quite easy to see through and expose the deceptive logic misapplied to a verse, and to correctly explain it.”

to do: “...the *god of this world* has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine unto them” (II Cor. 4:4). Satan blinds and deceives on a staggering scale. The result is a world filled with disobedience—or lawlessness! His cunning has been so seductive he has even been able to convince many that he *does not exist*!

As with Christians guided by God’s Spirit, the children of disobedience are also inspired and guided by a spirit—that of this world’s god. Satan broadcasts a spirit of rebellion *against*—and disobedience *to*—God’s Law.

But the devil portrays his ministers as though they represent God and teach His truth. Notice: “...Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness...” (II Cor. 11:14-15).

A deceived world is blissfully ignorant of this understanding, and pays the price! (Request a free copy of my booklet *Who Is the Devil?* at [rcg.org/witd](http://rcg.org/witd) to understand how.)

### (2) Isaiah 59:2

The second verse—Isaiah 59:2—is related to Revelation 12:9. Let’s read it: “...your *iniquities* have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will *not* hear.” Mankind is cut off from God because of its sin. Adding Jeremiah 5:25 makes this clearer.

Grasp the implications: this is *not* God’s world! It is *cut off* from Him—held captive by an unseen kidnapper. All of humanity has been deceived into believing the soothing words of this great captor, thinking themselves better off under his care and leadership.

Six thousand years ago, the devil first captured Adam and Eve, and, as a result, all inhabitants of Earth ever after! However, the world has remained a willing captive ever since—and remains cut off from God. (To learn more about this subject, order the free booklet *A World in Captivity* at [rcg.org/awic](http://rcg.org/awic).)

### (3) I John 3:4

The third verse Christianity disregards is the definition of sin. I John 3:4 states: “Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for *sin is the transgression of the law*.” This is one of the greatest points in the Bible: the difference between what God approves and what He does not. There have been endless ideas about the definition of sin—what it is and is not. Yet the Bible defines it with

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# WHAT IS RUSSIA'S ENDGAME?

While the Eurasian nation has long befuddled the West, it wants what it always has: an *idealized* state that plays a powerful and prominent role on the world stage.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

**A**RMED WITH shovels and metal detectors, a group of young Russians dig in the flat-open plains outside the town of Rossoschka—about 30 miles from Volgograd, formerly known as Stalingrad. The children are assisting with a program to unearth and properly bury soldiers who lost their lives during World War II.

Nearly everywhere they sink shovels into dirt they find human skulls in rusted helmets, as well as rib cages, femurs and finger bones. Within a few hours, the small group has found the skeletal remains of about a dozen combatants from the Eastern Front—Russians and Germans alike.

A *History Channel* special detailed this scene. Just under the surface of the plains in this region lie thousands upon thousands of bodies that have remained there since 1943.

In the winter of that year, frozen corpses made a macabre blanket far and wide across the area, sometimes three bodies deep. Today, the bone fields echo what took place nearly 70 years ago.

A documentary based on the book *Aftermath: The Remnants of War* featured an interview with a Russian man who has made it his life's work to unearth the remains of the fallen and identify them. He described the scene around Stalingrad after the battle's conclusion: "You would not have been able to walk through this field.

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■ **CALLING IN:** Russian President Vladimir Putin listens to a question during his annual phone-in question-and-answer session in Moscow, Russia (April 16, 2015).

PHOTO: PNIKHAIL KLIMENTYEV/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

It was full of rotting, stinking corpses. Unburied. Why? Let me tell you. There simply weren't enough people. They were all cleaning up Stalingrad. Then these fields were full of mines that had to be removed. The crows had a feast here."

The Battle of Stalingrad reveals an important lesson about the Russians: never underestimate them.

After Hitler captured much of Europe in a matter of months, he smugly declared of the USSR, "We have only to kick in the door, and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down" (*The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*).

Instead, Stalingrad became a major turning point in the war between Germany and Russia. The battle is sometimes touted as *the* catalyst event that began the downfall of the Third Reich. From that point forward during WWII, the Soviets slowly drove back Hitler's armies until they marched into Berlin in April 1945.

What the Germans found most unexpected—which serves as another lesson from this operation—was the fortitude of the Soviets. Frequently, Russians would fight to the last man, and the last bullet, in the face of overwhelming defeat.

Over and over, history's greatest military forces have failed to understand the Russians. The Vikings, Mongols and the army of Napoleon Bonaparte were all stymied by the Russian will to win.

Russia has always baffled Western powers. Discussing the nation during World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill stated, "I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma..." (The Churchill Society).

Writing about the collapse of the USSR, *The Economist* said the West figured Russia "would embrace Western values and join the civilised world." Yet, the magazine continued, the U.S. and its allies failed to take into account "the country's ruined economy, depleted and exhausted human capital and the mental and moral dent made by 70 years of Soviet rule. Nobody knew what kind of country would succeed the Soviet Union, or what being Russian really meant."

Even today, Moscow's foreign policy decisions always seem to confuse the West. In Syria's civil war, Russia backs President Bashar al-Assad, while America and its allies support various rebel groups. Russia is also quick to take Iran's side in geopolitical squabbles and is the odd man out in ongoing conflicts in eastern Ukraine.

Such actions lead to a question: What is Russia's end goal?

Those in Europe and the U.S. also have a hard time understanding the appeal of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Yet, at home, he maintains an 80-plus percent approval rating. He has held the position for 16 years and has a path to remain in power until 2024.

No matter who is in charge of Russia, whether today's president of a controlled democracy, the iron fist of the

Soviets, the czars, or warlords before them, the nation has remained virtually the same at its core.

Therefore, a key to understanding Russia's future is found in examples of its national character—both past and present.

### National Idealism

Idealism has long been deeply ingrained in the Russian national psyche. Historian Albert Jeremiah Beveridge noted this characteristic in his 1903 book *The Russian Advance*: "No matter how casual his observation, every traveller through Russia will run across evidences of Russian idealism. On the other hand, men who have given their lives to the study of this curious people declare that the Russian is, first of all, an idealist."

Beveridge especially saw this idealism in the nation's literary works from Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Turgeneff, and Maxim Gorky, which all contain the "characteristic of ideality in spite of their realism."

In the end, he concluded that Russians believe it is their duty to preserve "order, form, and authority in civil affairs" and then "to restore to the confused, hopeless, struggling peoples of the earth those forms of social order and political authority which the [Russian] thinks are, after all, the foundation-stones of civilization."

Put another way, Russians want to export/expand the Russian empire to spread their ideals.

The same mindset persists today. In his 2001 book *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* Henry Kissinger wrote: "Both Russia and the United States have historically asserted a global vocation for their societies. But while America's idealism derives from the concept of liberty, Russia's developed from a sense of shared suffering and common submission to authority. Everyone is eligible to share in America's values; Russia's have been reserved for the Russian nation, excluding even the subject nationalities of the empire. American idealism tempts isolationism; Russian idealism has prompted expansionism and nationalism."

Mr. Kissinger quoted what Mr. Putin wrote the day before taking on the responsibilities of Russia's presidency in early 2000: "It will not happen, if it ever happens at all, that Russia will become the second edition of, say, the United States or Great Britain...For Russians, a strong state is not an anomaly, which should be got rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a guarantor of order and the initiator and the main driving force of any change."

In *Letters from Russia*, French traveler and nobleman Astolphe de Custine wrote that a person could journey the entire country and "return home without having surveyed anything but a series of facades." Custine believed that *on the surface* Russia appeared to be much like any European nation. Yet he felt that whenever he looked past these outward shows, he invariably found something entirely different—something uniquely *Russian*.

A similar statement could be applied to any period in Russia's history. At its heart, the nation does not change.

Its people are ready to sacrifice and suffer inconvenience for “the greater good.”

This formula has time and again bred success for the country. As a united nation backing one ruler, Russia has repeatedly expelled and repelled military advances from formidable foes. It continues to maintain a firm stance on certain global issues, even when opposed, and has vehemently defended its borders.

### Russian Warriors

When Hitler decided to redirect efforts on the Eastern Front to the oil-rich Caucasus Mountain region, the Soviets held their own. This move essentially became a case study in Russian will.

The Nazi Wehrmacht pounded Stalingrad with 1,000 tons of artillery from the ground and bombs from the air. When this attack was in full swing, historian James Burns wrote that flames from the city were so bright “that a newspaper could be read at night forty miles away” (*Roosevelt: Soldier of Freedom*).

After four months of being ruthlessly pummeled, the Soviets seemed far from demoralized. They secretly amassed a *one million man* army designed to encircle the overstretched German and Romanian Axis forces in the region.

In November 1942, Red Army forces moved to secure a 100-mile perimeter around Stalingrad. Assisted by well-placed Soviet artillery and thousands of infantrymen and cavalry, the operation, codenamed Uranus, successfully shifted the tide of battle. On January 31, the Germans surrendered—marking the first major defeat of the Axis powers.

This would be the beginning of the end of perhaps the most brutally effective army the world had ever seen. No battle has surpassed the incredible carnage of Stalingrad. By some estimates, three million fought there, and only one million lived to tell about it.

Throughout their time on the Eastern Front, the Germans learned to have a healthy respect—and in some cases, fear—for Russian sol-

diers. In *The Greatest Battle: Stalin, Hitler, and the Desperate Struggle for Moscow That Changed the Course of World War II*, author Andrew Nagorski quoted an eye-witness account that demonstrates Russia’s grit.

“A German soldier who was sent to the Eastern front in August 1941 described his shock in discovering that the Red Army was employing the same kind of human wave tactics that were used in World War I. The Soviet assaults ‘were carried out by masses of men who made no real attempt at concealment but trusted in sheer weight of numbers to overwhelm us,’ he wrote.”

“Describing the vision before him as ‘an unbelievable sight, a machine gunner’s dream target,’ he added, ‘It was rumored that the [Russian] commissars worked out the number of machine guns which we had, multiplied that number by the number of rounds per minute that we could fire, calculated how many minutes it would take a body of soldiers to cross the area and added to the final total a couple of thousand men. Thus some men would get through our line...’”

The Nazi soldier continued: “‘At 600 meters we opened fire and whole sections of the first wave just vanished, leaving here and there an odd survivor still walking stolidly forward,’ he recalled. ‘It was uncanny, unbelievable, inhuman. No soldier of ours would have continued to advance alone.’ As German machine guns overheated from the continual firing, the Soviet side kept sending in more waves of troops. ‘The Ivans,’ as he called them, kept up their attacks for three days, and he never saw a stretcher-bearer during the entire time.”

In addition to using “human waves,” Russian forces favored tactical retreats—using the vastness of their country to their advantage. In this way, the Soviets could direct where battles would be fought, and could use their familiarity and preparation for the harsh weather to their advantage. German military planners knew this before entering the Eurasian nation and even intended to stop this

maneuver. However, the immense size of Russia and the extreme swings in weather were still formidable assets for the Red Army.

The Soviets also bolstered their fighting forces by tapping into a demographic other nations refused to even consider: women. Females made superb snipers in the defense of Stalingrad, and some women aviators were so effective in their nighttime harassment bombing raids that Germans infamously dubbed them the *Nachthexen*, or Night Witches.

Using female soldiers on the front line meant Stalin could increase the size of his standing army up to 40 percent. This fact, along with tactical retreats, the people’s willingness to sacrifice, and the ability to survive harsh weather, gave Russia a fighting chance against Germany.

### Land of Superlatives

Another feature unique to Russia is its size. The nation stretches 5,600 miles from east to west, and about 2,000 miles north to south—covering an area of 6.3 million square miles. That is nearly twice the size of the United States. Because of this, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* dubbed it the “land of superlatives.”

“By far the world’s largest country...It extends across the whole of northern Asia and the eastern third of Europe, spanning nine time zones and incorporating a great range of environments and landforms, from deserts to semiarid steppes to deep forests and Arctic tundra.”

This means the nation shares borders with Poland, Lithuania, North Korea, China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia and Estonia, as well as Finland and Norway. Such a wide variety of next-door neighbors complicates the nation’s foreign policy.

“Russia contains Europe’s longest river, the Volga, and its largest lake, Ladoga. Russia also is home to the world’s deepest lake, Baikal, and the country recorded the world’s lowest temperature outside the North and South poles” (*ibid.*).

These unsurpassed landholdings come with an added benefit: natural resources. The CIA's *World Factbook* states that Russia has a "complete range of mining and extractive industries producing coal, oil, gas, chemicals, and metals." The nation supplies a substantial portion of energy to Western Europe and increasingly to China, which is Russia's largest trading partner and second-largest export destination.

### Families Grown Large

Russia's national characteristics and problems today are often traced exclusively to the policies of the communist USSR. While this explains some of the current conditions, many of the nation's attributes have deeper historical roots.

Metalworking has long been a trade associated with Russian excellence. Before the 1917 Red Revolution, Russia's abundance of natural resources allowed it to hone the skill.

"In [Southern] Russia...a very vigorous metallurgical industry has grown up since 1860 in conjunction with the iron and coal mining," the 1911 edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* stated.

Blacksmiths in the nation did produce practical pieces, such as iron tools, but they also created works of beauty, such as intricately designed keys, and ornamented lanterns and lighting stands.

Women were also used in the armed forces before the Soviets took power. According to the book *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, females fought for the country in the first world war: "Exact numbers are impossible to ascertain; but even if they were only a few dozen, the phenomenon of women soldiers in battle does not seem to have occurred in any other country during World War I (except for a Scottish woman who fought in the ranks of the Serbian army with great distinction)."

The book also mentions a Russian women's military company during

the reign of Catherine II, a woman who fought in the cavalry in the Napoleonic Wars and rose to the rank of captain, and reports of women fighting in the Crimean War.

In addition, tactical retreats have long been used by Russia throughout history. When Napoleon invaded the country in the early 1800s, he hoped to winter in Moscow. Yet the czar's forces burned the city to the ground before abandoning it to leave the French conqueror with few options to survive the cold.

Moreover, mounted cavalry troops have always been an earmark of Russian military defense. So-called Cossack horsemen were effective against Hitler's forces because of the speed at which they could patrol areas and report to commanders.

In all of this, there was a much older culture at work than what was born in the minds of communist leaders such as Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin. This should have been especially known to Stalin, who was of the Ossetians—a people who hold to the traditions of the ancient Scythians.

Some Scythians (a broad term for a number of tribes who lived north of the Caspian Sea) had similar earmarks to Russian culture as seen during the Soviet era and today. Other branches of Scythians, from a different stock, migrated to Europe and the British Isles. (Read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at [rcg.org/aabibp](http://rcg.org/aabibp) to learn more.)

The Russian Scythians were a horse-riding people who had substantial skill in creating intricately decorated metal objects. These warriors stymied foreign conquerors by using tactical retreats, and are thought to have pioneered this maneuver. They were known to poison wells and set plains on fire to gain the upper hand against enemies.

The tribe also allowed women to fight in battle. Burial mounds found in Eastern Europe and southwestern Russia contain remains of women dressed in armor.

The modern-day nation of Georgia, which borders Russia's North Ossetia

region, claims ties to a tribe similar to the Scythians—the Meskhetians—who also lived between the Black and Caspian seas. This people has been variously called Meskhi or Moschi throughout history.

Bible historians almost unanimously believe that Moschi equates with Meshech, a tribe mentioned throughout the Old Testament. In the Bible, nations, which are merely families grown large, are named after their ancestors. Meshech slowly moved north, along with his brother Tubal's descendants, until they settled in modern Russia.

Notice Genesis 10: "The sons of Japheth"—one of Noah's three sons—"Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras" (vs. 2). Interestingly, Tubal (sometimes spelled Tabal) and Meshech (Moschi) are phonetically similar to the modern-day Russian cities of Tobolsk and Moscow.

These brother nations were renowned for their "vessels of brass" (Ezek. 27:13), and the Bible calls to mind human-wave military tactics when mentioning, "Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude" (32:26).

### Climactic Events

Yet the Bible is not merely a history book, from which can be gleaned only a few interesting tidbits of information. A full one-third of it contains prophecy, which can be likened to history written in advance. It lays out events yet to happen. This includes Russia's future.

Some of the most momentous events coming soon will be epic clashes in and around the Middle East. These military battles will include many nations of Earth.

Daniel 11:44 references coming tensions between two power blocs. A unified Europe will be ruled by a figure known variously as the "king of the north" (vs. 40) and the "prince of Tyre" (Ezek. 28:2). A Russian-led confederacy will be headed by a figure called "Gog" who is also "the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal."

The European military leader will eventually move his forces to the

Holy Land (Dan. 11:45). After a time, Gog's advancing forces will catch the Prince of Tyre's attention. Notice: "But news from the east and the north shall trouble him [the leader of Europe]; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many" (vs. 44, *New King James Version*).

Russia is north and east of Jerusalem, the city God uses as a starting point from which to reference the location of other geographic regions mentioned in Bible prophecy.

So, Russia and its allies will fight against Europe.

According to the prophet Ezekiel, some time later, this same military force returns to attack Israel: "And I [God] will turn you back, and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you forth, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armor, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords...and you shall come from your place out of the north parts, you, and many people with you, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army" (38:4, 15).

"Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: and I will turn you back, and leave but the sixth part of you, and will cause you to come up from the north parts, and will bring you upon the mountains of Israel" (Ezek. 39:1-2).

God declares to the army that He will "smite your bow out of your left hand, and will cause your arrows to fall out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you, and all your bands, and the people that is with you: I will give you unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, says the Lord GOD" (vs. 3-5).

Of this immense army, only a "sixth part" (vs. 2), or one-sixth, will remain alive. Similar to the aftermath of Stalingrad, a new bone field will have to be cleaned up by the locals

in Israel: "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years" (vs. 9).

The passage continues: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it the valley of Hamongog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land" (39:11-12).

### The End?

God punishes nations so He can get their attention. Ultimately, He wants all peoples to be part of His Kingdom and to help bring an end to all of the world's ills.

God's purpose aligns with a main desire of the Russians. Recall the quote from *The Russian Advance*. Russians believe it is their duty "to restore to the confused, hopeless, struggling peoples of the earth those forms of social order and political authority."

The Creator is "no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), and He desires "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4). God sees all human beings as potential sons and daughters, and wants everyone to learn to lead lives of prosperity and happiness.

God will give all men—everyone who has ever lived—a chance for salvation. This includes Russia and its people.

A prophecy in Ezekiel 37 helps depict how this will happen, and it involves the bones of the dead. In this biblical account, God takes the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel—in a vision of the future—and sets him "down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones" (vs. 1).

Ezekiel walks through this area in verse 2 and finds there "were very

many [skeletal remains] in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry."

God then declares, "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you [the bones], and you shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD" (vs. 5-6).

The account continues, "...there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone...the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above...and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army" (vs. 7-8, 10).

The Eternal God tells Ezekiel that the bones "are the whole house of Israel" (vs. 11). But this physical resurrection of Israel is an example of what will ultimately happen to all of mankind—recall that God wants "all men to be saved."

God will "lay sinews," "bring flesh upon," "cover with skin," and "put breath in" countless billions, including those who lay in the bone fields of the battle of Stalingrad and those buried in the valley of Hamongog.

By this time, a SUPERGOVERNMENT led by God will have long been established and will be teaching all nations a way that leads to peace and prosperity. Under this perfect system, Russia's national trait of uniting to support a common cause will be fully realized.

This system is the Kingdom of God. Daniel 7:14 describes it: "And there was given Him [Jesus Christ] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Under the Kingdom, Russia will finally be part of a perfect government that encircles the globe—and they will help fulfill their long-held national desire to ensure order and peace in the world. □



# 2016

## Portrait of a Weary World

After a year of bad news, how can the world realize the peace and prosperity it so desperately desires?

**J**ESUS CHRIST told His followers to pray, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10). With 2016 now behind us, the Kingdom Christ referred to could not be more needed.

Today, half of the Earth’s 7.4 billion people live in abject poverty—on less than \$2.50 per day. They desperately *need* a world in which “they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid” (Mic. 4:4).

Millions are trapped in one of the many dozens of spiraling conflicts occurring, including drug wars in Central America, ongoing civil wars in the Middle East, and continued genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan. Also, the threat of terror looms large for those who experienced or witnessed the spate of attacks on college campuses, transportation systems, and streets of the United States, Belgium and France.

For them, a time when Christ will “judge among the nations...and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa. 2:4) seems but a pipe dream.

And for those in the South American nations of Brazil, Bolivia and Venezuela, as well as African nations grappling with their worst droughts in decades, a world in which “the desert shall...blossom as the rose” (35:1) would be welcomed with open arms.

The list of horrific events from this year could go on. At times, it seemed easier to turn a blind eye to the grim reality of what was occurring than to face the news media’s blaring sirens of each day’s “crisis of the century.”

Photos from the events of 2016 provide a deeper look at the problems mankind faces. It reveals *why* the Kingdom Christ proclaimed during His ministry on Earth must come—and soon.



## TRAPPED IN THE CROSSFIRE

Five years of vicious gun battles, airstrikes and use of chemical weapons between forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and anti-government protesters have left the nation in shambles. Since the civil war began in 2011, over 400,000 have lost their lives and more than 11 million have fled their homes to escape the carnage and food shortages. Over the months, there has also been increased involvement from the Islamic State terror group. Those who choose to remain in the country face lives of constant fear among the rubble of ruined cities.

Though government forces closed in on insurgents in the capital city of Aleppo, the war is expected to drag on. *Reuters* stated that “even if government forces take Aleppo, they will still not be able to end the conflict, as long as millions of Syrians see the government as a brutal enemy.”

■ Top left, refugees from Aleppo, Syria, wait in freezing conditions to cross the border into Turkey (Feb. 6, 2016). Bottom left, residents respond to the site of a bombing by the Islamic State terror group that killed at least 44 people in Qamishli, Syria (July 27, 2016). Right, Syrian government forces walk through heavy destruction in Aleppo (Nov. 28, 2016).

PHOTOS: BULENT KILIC/ (TOP LEFT); DELIL SOULEIMAN/ (BOTTOM LEFT); GEORGE OURFALIAN/ (RIGHT); AFP/GETTY IMAGES







## RESURFACING TENSION

Progress in race relations made over the last 50 years seemed to all but evaporate during a year filled with racially charged altercations. According to a Pew Research study released in June, 45 percent of whites, 61 percent of blacks, and 58 percent of Hispanics believe “race relations in America are generally bad.” The same study revealed that 41 percent of whites, 22 percent of blacks, and 25 percent of Hispanics think “too much attention [is] paid to racial issues.”

■ Top, police officers pray during a vigil for the victims of shootings in Dallas, Texas (July 10, 2016). Middle, a man holds a poster during a protest in New York City against racial inequality (July 9, 2016). Bottom, protesters face off with police in riot gear in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (July 8, 2016).

PHOTOS: SPENCER PLATT/ (TOP); KENA BETANCUR/AFP/ (MIDDLE); MARK WALLHEISER/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES





## FLIGHT TO FREEDOM

Migrant fatalities in 2016 more than doubled compared to last year. Out of the six million who fled worsening conflicts in the Middle East and northern Africa, over 10,000 lost their lives.

■ Top left, refugees scuffle for firewood at a makeshift camp as they wait to cross the Greece-Macedonia border (March 6, 2016). Top right, a Syrian child endures life in a temporary refugee camp in Syria (Nov. 10, 2016). Bottom, refugees are rescued from the Mediterranean Sea off the Libyan coast (Nov. 3, 2016).

PHOTOS: DIMITAR DILKOFF/ (TOP LEFT); DELIL SOULEIMAN/ (TOP RIGHT); ANDREAS SOLARO/ (BOTTOM); AFP/GETTY IMAGES





## DEVASTATING WEATHER

The Atlantic experienced its deadliest hurricane season in 10 years. Most notably, Hurricane Matthew carved a destructive path through the Caribbean in late September. It became a Category 5 storm with 160 mile-per-hour winds before plowing through Haiti, Cuba, the Bahamas, and finally dumping record amounts of rain and record-high storm surges on the United States coast from Georgia to South Carolina. In Haiti, where a Category 4 storm had not hit since 1964, at least 1,000 were killed. The United States lost 46 people.

Several other deadly natural events occurred worldwide, including an August earthquake in central Italy—which killed over 300 and leveled entire towns—wildfires in the southeastern U.S., and intense droughts in Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia and Zimbabwe.

■ Top, buildings destroyed by Hurricane Matthew are seen in Jeremie, Haiti (Oct. 7, 2016). Bottom, a Haitian woman sits in the rubble of her home that was destroyed by Hurricane Matthew in Jeremie, Haiti (Oct. 7, 2016).

PHOTOS: NICOLAS GARCIA/ (TOP); HECTOR RETAMAL/ (BOTTOM); AFP/GETTY IMAGES





## SPECTACLE AND SQUALOR

Wearied by the burden of constant bad news, the world yearned for a reprieve. It found it in the Olympic Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Fans reveled in Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt's third gold medal victory in the 100-meter dash, becoming the first man in history to do so.

Yet the Games in Brazil revealed the paradox of man's incredible achievements paired with his appalling troubles. The global population paid little attention to the fact that 1.4 million residents of Rio—over one-fifth of the city's population—continued to live in impoverished slum areas known as favelas. From January to October, city murders increased 18 percent over the previous year.

Though the Games were intended to jumpstart Brazil's ailing economy, the nation continued to wallow in its worst recession in more than 100 years.

■ Top, a resident of Rio de Janeiro rests on the street by the city's poverty-stricken favelas (June 17, 2016). Bottom, fireworks explode over Maracana stadium during the Olympic opening ceremonies, with a favela community in the foreground, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Aug. 5, 2016).

PHOTOS: MARIO TAMA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES







## LIVING WITH TERROR

A number of high-profile attacks occurred in Europe such as the Brussels airport bombing that left 32 dead and over 300 injured and the Bastille Day truck attack in Nice, France, that killed 86 and injured 434. America experienced its deadliest mass shooting at a club in Orlando, Florida.

Yet these prominent events may have caused the world to forget equally disastrous attacks earlier in the year. On the first day of 2016, over 300 migrants were rounded up by the Islamic State terror group and executed in Tripoli, Libya. It would be the first of 15 mass killings—an incident in which at least 20 were killed—in January alone.

Throughout the rest of the year, terror groups continued to use more brutal methods of inciting fear, most notably by taking thousands of young prisoners for sexual exploitation.

■ A boy passes an oil field near Mosul, Iraq, that was set on fire by retreating Islamic State terror group fighters before Iraqi forces launched an offensive on the city (Oct. 21, 2016).

PHOTO: CARL COURT/GETTY IMAGES

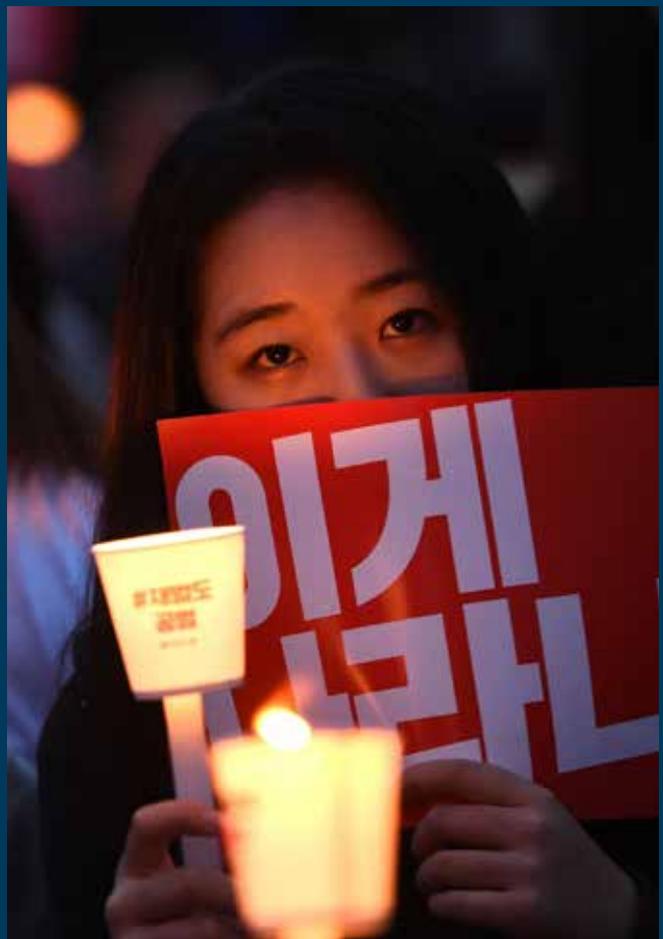


## THE PEOPLE SPEAK

Donald Trump's unexpected victory in the race to the U.S. presidency ended a year that saw a larger international move toward populism. In the narrow outcome of the Brexit vote, the United Kingdom began the process of severing its 44-year membership with the European Union. Contenders from populist parties in European countries Italy, Austria, France and Germany gained influence as citizens faced greater unemployment, threats of terror attacks, and immigration problems. Late in the year, after weeks of protests, South Korea impeached its president due to corruption charges.

■ Top left, a man holds a bouquet of flowers and a torch as he faces riot police during a demonstration against the government's planned labor reform in Lyon, France (May 26, 2016). Top right, a man carrying an anti-EU, pro-Brexit placard shouts in protest of pro-EU marchers in London, United Kingdom (Sept. 3, 2016). Middle right, supporters of Donald Trump attend a rally in Canton, Ohio (Sept. 14, 2016). Bottom left, a protester holds a sign calling for the resignation of South Korea's president in Seoul, South Korea (Nov. 19, 2016). Bottom right, a protester demonstrates in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, following Mr. Trump's election (Nov. 19, 2016).

PHOTOS: JEAN-PHILIPPE KSIAZEK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (TOP LEFT); JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (TOP RIGHT); STACEY L. PALM/THE REAL TRUTH (MIDDLE RIGHT); JUNG YEON-JE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM LEFT); MARK MAKELA/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM RIGHT)





## BEYOND 2016

The frenzied pace of disheartening news from around the world—updated death toll figures from natural disasters, feature stories recounting gruesome details in war-torn cities, red-alert developments of crises escalating out of control—can make just about anyone feel helpless.

The wearied watcher of events usually settles on what seems his only option: tune out. Yet turning a blind eye means a news reader will miss the big picture.

Recall Jesus' instruction to pray, "Thy kingdom come." It begs the question: Why is Christ not bringing it now when we need it most?

The big picture involves a Master Plan that God is working out. He has a very important reason for the events and trends occurring today. Understanding this will help you maintain proper perspective as news stories continue to transpire.

Keeping in mind the big picture will also help you see the end goal. Ultimately, God's Plan involves the **BEST NEWS** for a weary world.

In the little-read prophetic book of Haggai, it states that "the desire of all nations shall come" (2:7). The word "desire," translated from the original Hebrew language, means "delight," according to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. The same Hebrew word is also translated "goodly," "pleasant" and "precious" throughout the Bible. Other verses prove that this "desire" is Jesus Christ Himself.

Realize that two things are being said here: (1) The entire world will desire Jesus Christ, and (2) Christ will bring delight to all nations!

Notice this summary statement of what Christ will do when He brings His Kingdom to the Earth: "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:7).

Christ will bring the very Kingdom that He instructed men to seek and pray for. This government *is* coming and will bring peace—with no end—established with judgment and justice. Clearly, these are qualities all nations desire! *This* is the picture that billions should desire to replace the grim portrait of 2016.

"The plight of all nations today stands in stark contrast to the world that is coming," *Real Truth* editor-in-chief David C. Pack states in his book *Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!* He continues, "An artistic masterpiece soon to be unveiled, a fantastic future—truly incredible!—lies ahead for every nation of the world!"

Looking around the world now, it can seem that the desire of all nations will never be fulfilled. Yet Mr. Pack writes that Christ will "usher in peace, happiness, unity, abundance, and prosperity for every human being and every country on Earth. While such a vision may seem impossible, it *will* happen—and in your lifetime!"

Again, this will not occur automatically. God must fulfill His intricate Master Plan, which involves events today as well as ushering in a new, better world order.

Read the rest of Mr. Pack's book at [reg.org/tww](http://reg.org/tww). It will allow you see a portrait of a wonderful world *beyond* 2016. □

# Defining Gen·er·a·tion Z

*noun:* **1** The generation born between 1996 and 2010. **2** Grew up when the internet and digital devices were integral parts of everyday life. **3** Not to be confused with Millennials. **4** Also known as the iGeneration, Founders, Plurals or the Homeland Generation. **5** Seemingly impossible to understand...

**S**HORTLY AFTER the U.S. presidential election, a caller to a popular radio talk show presented a problem she was grappling with in her home. The single mother was rearing three young people, the oldest of whom was 24 years and the other two were teenagers. The woman described her problem of having to explain to “these Millennials” (her words) the validity of the electoral college in selecting candidates to the seat of the U.S. president.

Feeling disgruntled, alarmed and even frightened by the results of the recent presidential race, college students and high schoolers like hers had emotional meltdowns. Youth throughout America protested the outcome of a well-established, yet to them foreign, electoral system.

The popular assumption, as the caller revealed, is that people in their 20s and younger are all Millennials. This is partially true. Millennials are typically classified as those who are now in their mid- to late-20s and 30s who brought in the new century.

As Millennials emerged, their generation was blamed for many ills. They were labeled spoiled brats living in a fantasy world of no losers, where everyone earns a trophy merely for

showing up. The adverse reaction to the outcome of the recent presidential campaign seems to support this. While these dissenters were indeed comprised of Millennials, another group was mixed in—Generation Z. This post-Millennial group is today’s teens, the oldest of whom have now entered adulthood.

Generation Z, born after 1996, is coming of age and gaining distinction. Older generations such as Baby Boomers and Generation Xers think Gen Zers are simply teenage versions of their Millennial counterparts. Increasing evidence, however, is showing them to be quite different. The convenient assumption—that this latest generation can simply be pegged as lazy, unmotivated, entitled, privileged, spoiled, unwilling to “pay their dues” for their career path to success, and unteachable—does not fit.

More than any previous generation, this emerging group is truly the internet generation—this technology having been available their entire existence. Exposure to a worldwide web of facts, figures and opinions has shaped their outlook and perspective.

Social media and other forms of digital communication allow for a staggering flow of ideas and thoughts. The assortment of attitudes and viewpoints that now bombard young minds is near limitless in size and scope. Peer pressure is no longer confined to a given schoolyard or neighborhood.

The sphere of influence is now global—allowing Gen Zers to find a fit anywhere within a tsunami of views and perspectives.

This reality makes the task for market researchers and demographic experts, whose job is to identify and label groups within populations, that much more difficult. How do you effectively brand a group for whom being different is not only okay, but encouraged? Steeped in the ideals of diversity and extreme tolerance, Generation Z appears to be a living embodiment of the “do your own thing” philosophy.

## Shaping a Generation

Each generation—from Baby Boomers to Generation X, followed by Millennials and now Generation Z—begins in a messy mixture of the previous one. It is thus easier to identify generations by their unique behavior instead of simply counting in 20-year increments.

Generational behavior and perspective is typically shaped by the world events of the time. Baby Boomers, for instance, experienced the assassinations of high-profile leaders such as John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as the political corruption of Watergate. Gen Xers saw the Berlin Wall collapse, quickly followed by the demise of the Soviet Union, officially ending the Cold War. Millennials saw the advent of the

internet, the tragic events of 9/11, and the tough economic times of the late-2000s and early 2010s.

For Gen Zers, these significant events are nothing more than history—in some cases ancient history! Nonetheless, the results of these past events—distrust of government, globalism, advanced technology, hypersecurity and fear of terrorism, as well as financial concerns—are their norm.

In a recent *Inc.* article titled “Gen Z Is Anxious, Distrustful, and Often Downright Miserable,” the amalgamation of these viewpoints became clear. Members from Generation Z were surveyed and it was revealed that they:

- Are pessimistic about their career and financial prospects—79 percent worry about getting a job and 72 percent worry about debt.

- Are anxious—70 percent worry about terrorism.

- Are deeply distrustful of the government—only 10 percent trust the government to do the right thing (this number was 20 percent for Millennials).

- Are deeply distrustful of business—only 6 percent trust corporations to do the right thing.

- Think the system is rigged based on race, gender, economic status, and social standing.

Having seen their parents endure economic difficulties, a nation at war, terrorism and the perils of technology (e.g., cyberbullying), Zers appear more hardened to life than the generation who came before them.

In today’s post-9/11 world, most of Generation Z cannot remember flying on a commercial airline without undergoing strict security checks. Tragedies such as the Boston Marathon bombings, the Orlando nightclub shooting, the attacks in Paris, and other acts of terrorism have presented a world filled with violence and mayhem. This generation routinely witnesses, through the internet, dead bodies lying in the streets. Such events and images alter a young person’s psyche.



■ **GROWING UP:** Top, middle school students use smartphones during a visit by U.S. President Obama in Mooresville, North Carolina (June 6, 2013). Middle left, a teen relaxes on a ferry in New York City (Oct. 18, 2016). Middle right, college students cast votes during the 2016 primaries in Conway, Arkansas (March 1, 2016). Bottom, high school students stage a political protest inside the Massachusetts State House after a school walk-out in Boston, Massachusetts (Dec. 5, 2016).

PHOTOS: JEWEL SAMAD/ (TOP); SPENCER PLATT/ (MIDDLE LEFT); MICHAEL B. THOMAS/ (MIDDLE RIGHT); RYAN MCBRIDE/ (BOTTOM); AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Also, Generation Z possesses digital know-how. They seamlessly maneuver laptop computers, tablets, smartphones, social media, etc. Because of this heavy exposure to technology, they are skilled in accessing information very quickly and getting results *immediately*—if not yesterday. While beneficial, this also has consequences.

Zers are said to possess a goldfish-like, eight-second attention span. They expect short, frequent conversations, instead of long, drawn out interactions. Long one-on-one discussions on any one topic are generally boring for them. It is reported that as much as 11 percent of Generation Z has been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), having spent up to 27 percent of their time staring into screens (leading to the label *screen-agers*).

They are also exposed to the best and the worst of what the internet offers. Information is a click or a swipe away. Whether shopping online or “sexting,” their young minds are free to travel every virtual marketplace, corner, alley and confidential rendezvous the internet provides.

The result is palpable pessimism and a negative mindset, which can lead to discouragement and depression.

### Perception Versus Reality

Marketers and business forecasters seeking success and profitability in the next decade or so know that they must tap into Generation Z—a group that currently makes up 18 percent of the population and will soon comprise the largest portion of the buying market.

This is easier said than done.

A *New York Times* article, “How to Spot a Member of Generation Z,” cited a report called “Meet the Centennials,” released by global marketing firm Futures Company. The news outlet reported that just “47 percent of the youths...surveyed (ages 12 to 17) say they ‘care a lot about whether their clothes are in style,’ compared to 65 percent of millennials surveyed in 1999.”

Quoting a Futures Company director, the article continued, “Young people feel much more emboldened to express their own sense of style rather than mimicking a peer-accepted uniform or dress code compared to previous generations.”

This “you do you” approach is making the group nearly impossible to pin down. Experts are feverishly throwing names at the varied clothing styles in an attempt to stay ahead of the curve. Names such as “gender neutral” (a trend that rejects traditional gender-based clothing), “neo-rave” (a throwback to the rave-party look of the

““The current generation of young people continues to prove they are notably different from their predecessors.””

1990s), “rocker redux” (a punk rocker style with plaid shirts, leather jackets, and dyed hair), and “normcore” (best described as the “laundry-day look” with oversized sweaters, baseball caps, and jogging pants) represent their best efforts.

The current generation of young people continues to prove they are notably different from their predecessors.

Generation Z seems more practical and pragmatic especially concerning their life goals. They have seen parents lose their jobs, homes and cars during the 2008 recession. Because of this, there are signs that they are more fiscally conservative than their predecessors. They are “really laser-focused on the financial consequences of their decisions” said a researcher from the financial firm Goldman Sachs (*The Atlantic*).

With a disdain for being identified as Millennials, these future leaders are

now entering colleges and universities. They are distinguished by their entrepreneurial spirit, exposure to higher education, desire to communicate early and often, and hardworking drive.

According to the consulting firm Millennial Branding, 72 percent of high school students want to start a business one day (compared to 64 percent of college students). Sixty-one percent of high schoolers want to be an entrepreneur (compared to 43 percent of college students). While one-in-three Millennials and one-in-four Gen Xers are university educated, one-in-two Gen Zers—HALF—are expected to attend college.

With 10,000 Baby Boomers reaching retirement age every day, employers want to attract, engage and retain the best and brightest of Generation Z. The staffing organization Randstad asked Generation X and Baby Boomer employers what they expected Gen Z to want from the workplace. They assumed that Generation Z would want to work from home, maintain contact via email and text, and be motivated by making money. Some even assumed they would be lazy, entitled and detached from the “real world.”

But Randstad’s study of 16- to 20-year-olds revealed something much different. They said:

- They want to work in an office, believing that working from home would be inefficient due to distractions.

- They prefer face-to-face conversations (53 percent, compared to 19 percent for email and 10 percent for instant messaging) early and often.

- They are motivated by what kind of value or personal opportunities a job offers.

- They prefer to be happy with what they do rather than earn more income.

- They described themselves as hardworking, determined, creative, helpful, devoted, team-oriented and motivated.

While it may be too soon to determine how entrenched this mindset is in Generation Z as a whole, it is a sign of a shift.

Generation Z is showing evidence of being more altruistic than anticipated. Ninety-two percent in the *Inc.* survey believe that helping others is important and 70 percent say inequality worries them greatly—almost certainly a result of coming of age in a time when tolerance is being universally promoted and championed. This reaction to prejudices and injustices has in many ways defined them.

The push for tolerance and acceptance at all costs has changed long-standing societal norms. Gen Zers have been exposed to terms such as cisgender, transgender, bigender, gender fluid, gender dysphoria, binary, nonbinary and pansexual, among others. Political correctness and the extremes of avoiding offensiveness has morphed their world into one filled with “safe spaces,” where they are protected from “trigger warnings” and where coloring books are a path to stress relief.

### Fruit of the Tree

Clearly, Generation Z is a mixed bag. These future leaders possess characteristics that inspire confidence due to their practicality and pragmatism. Yet given their rising level of depression, anxiety and lack of patience, there is cause for concern.

This hybrid mindset seems to be yielding a more conservative generation than those of recent history. Some speculate Generation Z will be the most conservative since World War II. Studies are also predicting that Generation Z will attend church more regularly. One wonders if this is a result of exposure to so much negativity in the world, thus pushing them to search for answers to life’s problems.

Mankind has always to some degree looked to a “higher power” or a force outside themselves to understand their ultimate purpose.

From the beginning, God built a desire in man to seek Him. Yet with this natural desire He also presented man the power to choose. God did not want to create beings that would serve Him because they were simply programmed to do so—similar to instincts

in animals. He wanted beings who would *choose* His way of life.

The ultimate manifestation of this choice were the two trees placed in the Garden of Eden. Concerning these two trees, God gave the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, plain instructions: “And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; *the tree of life* also in the midst of the garden, and *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*...Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:9, 16-17).

The two trees represented two distinct ways of life. Eating from the Tree of Life symbolized consciously choosing to follow God’s will, allowing Him to determine how we as human beings should live. Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented man attempting to figure things out on his own without help and guidance from God.

Notice that God called this second tree “the tree of the knowledge of good *and evil*.”

The fruit of this tree is a mixture. There are good, well-meaning, perhaps even noble parts mixed with bad, malicious, corrupt parts. When man decides for himself what is right and what is wrong, the results vary greatly: including everything from incredible success to terrible failure.

Man naturally relies upon the five basic physical senses—sight, sound, touch, smell, taste—to identify and analyze the world around him. Yet we were also born with a *spiritual* element that allows us to have superior intellect over animals: “For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?” (I Cor. 2:11).

Human beings possess this “spirit in man,” which

enables us to reason and comprehend the physical matters of our world.

But God’s Word reveals that man was made spiritually incomplete. He needs *another* spirit—God’s Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God working within our minds, converting our thinking, guiding our behavior so that we make life decisions according to our Creator’s will, we are incomplete. In this state, we will continue to fall far short of solving the world’s problems and attaining our awesome human potential.

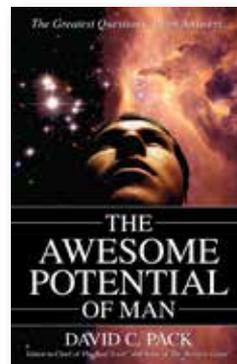
Anyone with eyes can see the ills of our world. Generation Z is the latest to try tackling what is just ahead. Yes, they are well-informed, socially aware, pragmatic in decision-making, and entrepreneurial—yet at the same time they are depressed, cynical, distrustful and impatient. They see the confusion and selfishness in the world, but are near powerless to make any real impact.

This latest generation is a microcosm of what mankind has endured over the thousands of years it has been on Earth. After millennia of developing their own societies, generations of men and women have eaten from the same tree of the knowledge of good and evil from which Adam and Eve ate. The consequences of their decisions echo through today’s generation.

But with guidance things can be different. Instead of choosing a mixture of good and bad, man can choose the pure fruit of the Tree of Life.

As in the Garden of Eden, it begins with a choice. God has an objective for mankind—a purpose for every human being. He does not intend for the world to be as we see it today. He has something much different in mind.

To learn more about what God wants for your future and the future of Generation Z, order the life-changing book, *The Awesome Potential of Man* at [rcg.org/tapom](http://rcg.org/tapom). It reveals the amazing truth of the life God wants YOU to live. □



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# SEEING CLEARLY

## *The Story of the Human Eye*

The human eye is one of the most complex systems in existence and its origin is among the least understood. Learn why evolutionary theories become blurry where the eye is concerned.

BY BRADFORD G. SCHLEIFER

**W**HAT ALLOWS you to read the articles in this magazine? Obviously, at a more complex level, you have to understand the English language. But before you even begin to decipher *what* is written, you must see it. In fact, an amazingly complex series of actions takes place between your eyes and your brain for you to see what is written on this page.

Your eyes are responsible for 80 percent of the information your brain receives. This makes it by far the most vital of your sensory inputs!

From how the inner eye functions, to how light becomes a picture in your mind, science has studied the human eye in such detail it is astounding. But while the *function* of the eye is crystal clear, its origin seems clouded in mystery.

What is really only the *theory* of evolution is assumed to be *fact*.

Children are taught it in school and most scientists subscribe to its tenets. Yet surely evolution at least attempts to open the window into the origin of the eye. If so, there must be creatures from which our eyes evolved.

The story of this fascinating organ is both inspiring and, pardon the pun, eye-opening!

### **How It Works**

Before looking at the eye in the light of evolution, we must first understand how the eye functions and what sys-

tems are in place to allow photons to become an image. But you may wonder: what is a photon?

The whole universe is made up of tiny, microscopic (or even smaller) particles. The combination of these particles is what constitutes matter—the universe in which we live. One of these basic “particles” is a photon. Photons originate in the sun and are what we perceive as light. Without photons, there is no light!

The way different objects reflect photons determines how colors, textures and surfaces are perceived. Everything we see is based on how substances absorb and reflect photons.

An easy example of this process is to look at two extremes: (1) a mirror and (2) a black surface. If you shine a light into a mirror, it will *reflect* light back to you.

On the other hand, if you shine a light at a black surface, very little will reflect back at you. How the surface reacts with light determines if you see color. While this is a very simplified explanation of how photons react to produce differences in what we see, it helps explain how the eye plays a part in this procedure.

When light reflects off an object, it changes the makeup of that light, which then enters your eye. Imagine photons as the tiny ammunition in pellet guns; this will help you visualize their path through your eye and into your brain.

### Complex Details

We have not yet addressed how the brain interacts with the eye, or any of the corrective measures the eye undertakes when it detects a problem. But before going into that, the following is a detailed representation of what *really* happens when a “pellet” comes in contact with the surface of the retina.

“When light first strikes the retina, a photon interacts with a molecule called 11-cis-retinal, which rearranges within picoseconds to trans-retinal. The change in the shape of [11-cis-] retinal forces a change in the shape of the protein, rhodopsin, to which

the retinal is tightly bound. The protein’s metamorphosis alters its behavior, making it stick to another protein called transducin. Before bumping into activated rhodopsin, transducin had tightly bound a small molecule called GDP. But when transducin interacts with activated rhodopsin, the GDP falls off and a molecule called GTP binds to transducin. (GTP is closely related to, but critically different from, GDP.)

“GTP-transducin-activated rhodopsin now binds to a protein called phosphodiesterase, located in the inner membrane of the cell. When attached to activated rhodopsin and its entourage, the phosphodiesterase acquires the ability to chemically cut a molecule called cGMP (a chemical relative of both GDP and GTP). Initially there are a lot of cGMP molecules in the cell, but the phosphodiesterase lowers its concentration, like a pulled plug lowers the water level in a bathtub.

“Another membrane protein that binds cGMP is called an ion channel. It acts as a gateway that regulates the number of sodium ions in the cell. Normally the ion channel allows sodium ions to flow into the cell, while a separate protein actively pumps them out again. The dual action of the ion channel and pump keeps the level of sodium ions in the cell within a narrow range. When the amount of cGMP is reduced because of cleavage by the phosphodiesterase, the ion channel closes, causing the cellular concentration of positively charged sodium ions to be reduced. This causes an imbalance of charge across the cell membrane which, finally, causes a current to be transmitted down the optic nerve to the brain. The result, when interpreted by the brain, is vision” (“Evidence for Intelligent Design from Biochemistry”).

It is not necessary to fully understand what takes place to cause those electrical impulses to fire into your brain, but it is necessary to identify the extreme complexity required for the process to take place. Are you

beginning to understand why the concept of evolution becomes impossible when applied to your eyes?

### Hardware Requires Software

The makeup of an eye—lens, iris, retina, etc.—are the nuts and bolts that send the electrical pulse into your brain. But how does a brain know what to do with those signals when they are received?

Imagine a computer, with all its parts and pieces, many of which are too complicated for most people to understand. No matter how intricate and complicated the equipment is, without software, it can do *nothing*. Your computer will not even turn on without some form of software telling the hardware—the actual physical pieces of the computer—what to do.

It is the same with the eye. All the movements that take place in the eye are controlled by your brain. The brain moves your eye to center on something, adjusts the lens to focus, and opens or closes the iris to allow the right amount of focused light on the retina.

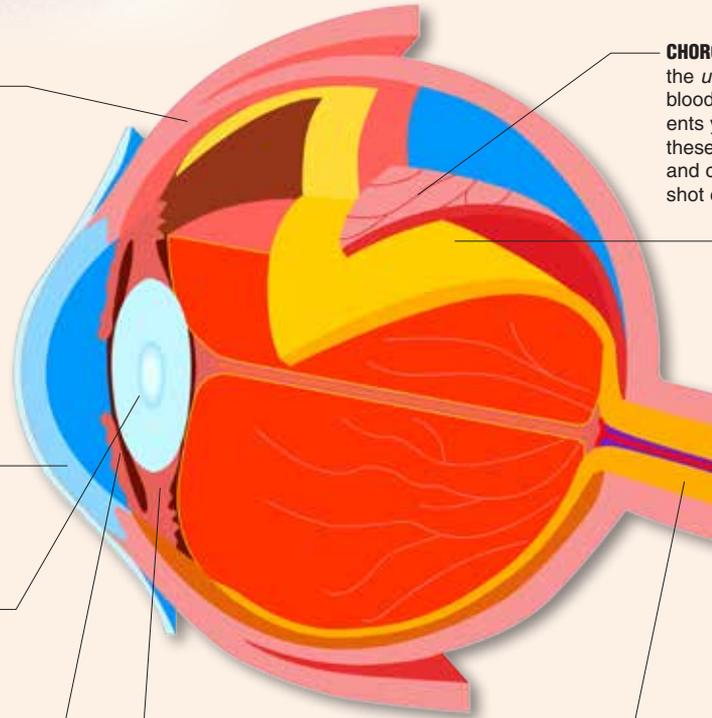
Now that you understand the basics of how an eye operates, try this simple experiment to witness how much interaction actually takes place between the brain and eye. While you are reading these words, look at something far away. While you do this, visualize that you had to move the muscles in your eye, change the iris, and adjust your lens to get the object in focus.

This leads to the final part in understanding how eyes work. How does the brain “know” how to transform the more than 100 million impulses into what we see? If your brain did not know how to put together the photon “pellets” and then balance what each eye sees, there would be no comprehensible picture defined as *vision*.

Another amazing process takes place in regard to this. In any single lens system (such as our eyes), the image received is inverted. So, not only does your brain put together those millions of photons, it also *knows* to invert the image!



# Inside the Eye



**SCLERA:** The sclera maintains your eye's shape and acts as its frame. Muscles are attached to it, which are responsible for moving your eye. Interestingly, while only four muscles are needed, the eye has two extra muscles. This provides additional stability.

**CORNEA:** Inside the sclera is the cornea, the clear surface that light must pass through.

**LENS:** Most standard eye problems are related to the degeneration of the lens. Over time, this muscle begins to settle in a fixed position, thus creating farsightedness.

**IRIS:** One's eye color is based on the pigment found in the iris. The more pigment your eyes have, the closer they will be to brown. Some people have brilliant blue eyes, due to a complete lack of pigment.

Pigment is also responsible for blocking "light noise" from getting into the inner eye. This explains why people with light-colored eyes can have problems with bright lights—their inner eye is receiving too much stimuli.

The iris is an adjustable diaphragm that controls the amount of light entering the inner eye. It does this by changing the size of your pupil. Everything you see reflects much more light than is needed to create a clear picture of that object. In fact, too much will overload the eye—such as looking at a bright light. Even after you have turned away, that bright light leaves an impression—a spot—on your vision until the nerves recover.

Source: HowStuffWorks

**CHOROID:** Sometimes referred to as the *uveal tract*, this layer contains blood vessels and supplies the nutrients your eye needs. When irritated, these tiny blood vessels can rupture and cause what is known as blood-shot eyes.

**RETINA:** This part of the eye is responsible for reacting to the light that has entered through the lens and pupil. The retina is made up of two types of light-sensing cells—rods and cones.

How the retina responds to light hitting its surface depends on lighting conditions and color. In regular light, the cones are responsible for most of what we see. While everything you look at has some degree of black in it, most objects are made up of color.

As the brightness decreases, the rods begin to take over. Rods are not capable of seeing color, so when lighting gets too dark for your cones to function, everything you see is in black and white.

That is why you do not see color very well in a dark room!

The brain interprets the on-and-off responses of the cones and rods, and creates a picture. It then balances that picture with your other eye. The result is what you see. Amazingly, this entire process happens 500 times per second.

**CILIARY BODY:** This is a muscular structure responsible for changing the shape of the lens. It can either widen or flatten the lens to allow you to focus on objects.

**OPTIC NERVE:** When photons interact with cones and rods, various chemical reactions begin to take place. These reactions create tiny electrical impulses that travel to the *optic nerve*. Interestingly, the optic nerve is not part of the eye at all. It is actually an extension of your brain. This nerve extends from your brain into your eye and carries back those tiny electrical impulses of the 137 million rods and cones—delivering those pulses at 300 miles per hour!

## Rods and Cones

In most parts of the retina, cones and rods are interspersed. But one part of the retina—the macula—is made up entirely of cones. This region is responsible for seeing extremely fine detail. You may have heard of the disease called macular degeneration. Failure in this region is responsible for that condition.

**ROD CELLS:** Numbering as many as 130 million, they are responsible for seeing black and white, and are extremely light-sensitive, so they function well in low light.



**CONE CELLS:** Numbering approximately 7 million, these cells are responsible for seeing color and fine detail. Partly because of their much lower number, they are not very effective in low light.



As with computer software, the brain has to be programmed with all the information needed to interpret this data. It has to know what colors are represented by what type of light, and how the whole picture fits together.

If you really think about it, what you see with your eyes is nothing more than a picture that your mind has created. Put another way, it is the vivid version of what you can visualize with your eyes closed.

The human brain truly is the most amazing organ ever created!

Again, while it sounds impossible for the eye to have evolved, what are the odds of both the software *and* hardware appearing *at the same time*?

It is simply impossible!

Think for a moment on the complexity required to form the first eye. Or what caused a cell to become

sensitive to light. Or why trilobites and their eyes disappeared. (See the inset “Trilobite’s Eye: Evolution Reversed?”)

Such questions are never addressed!

Even more amazing, there has never been any attempt to explain the process by which an eye could have possibly evolved from a simpler form.

But is it really that amazing? When you cannot explain the process by evolution, there is *only* one other option—it was designed! And that is an option most scientists refuse to entertain.

King David stated, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa. 139:14). The human eye is a perfect example of something wonderfully *made*.

In light of the complexity displayed in the human eye—just one organ of one living creature—you can

see why God states, “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God” (Psa. 14:1).

God understands that physical people need physical proof. For those willing to look, there *is* evidence: “For the *invisible things* of Him from the creation of the world are *clearly seen*, being understood by the things that are *made*, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

These proofs also point to the real origin behind the eye—and the whole universe—the God of the Bible! For more fascinating details proving the existence of a divine Creator, watch our five-part *World to Come* broadcast series titled “Does God Exist?—Many *Absolute Proofs!*” at [worldto-come.org](http://worldto-come.org).

The proofs of His existence have always been there—if people would only clearly look! □

## Trilobite’s Eye: Evolution Reversed?

The crux of the theory of evolution is that all living animals have evolved from simpler creatures. They all started from a small puddle of living matter, which evolved into more complex and diverse creatures, and then animals.

This whole concept is based on the assumption that, over time, all organisms improve by natural selection—survival of the fittest. While that concept is riddled with holes, let’s assume it is true for a moment.

As time passes, you would expect to find that the fossil record shows more and more complicated creatures. This would be especially true in vision systems. Because vision, in even the simplest of creatures, is very complex, you would expect it to take millions of years for any “advanced” vision system to appear.

Anything complex that appears too quickly, or appears without any prior organism being its precursor, would be an embarrassment to proponents of evolution.

This introduces the trilobite. These extinct invertebrates existed in vast numbers throughout the world’s oceans, and date back to the Cambrian period—approximately 400-500 million years ago.

What is most amazing about these creatures is that they had remarkably complex vision systems.

So complex were their eyes that no invertebrates—or even many *vertebrates*—possess anything comparable today! Also, these creatures seem to have appeared suddenly, with no fossil record of anything of the like before them.

Professor Richard Fortey, a researcher at the Natural History Museum in London, stated in *Natural History*: “We know that the first trilobites already had a well-developed visual system. Indeed, the large eyes found in the genus *Fallotaspis*, from Morocco, prove that sophisticated vision goes back at least 540 million years to the Cambrian period.”

Of the *Phacops* trilobite genus, he stated, “Clearly a very sophisticated structure (even more so than the [usual] hexagonal-lensed trilobite eye), *Phacops*’s crystal eye is a sports coupe in the age of the boneshaker.”

With such statements from a world-renowned paleobiologist, it is quite obvious that another leg “supporting” the theory of evolution is



nothing more than smoke and mirrors. Without a complex brain appearing at the same time as the eyes, they would be completely useless! □

## PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

surprising simplicity. When someone transgresses or breaks “the law,” he has sinned.

When one breaks man’s laws, he earns a penalty, such as a fine, jail time, or worse for capital offenses. Likewise, when we violate the laws of God, the Bible says we earn a penalty: “...the wages of sin is death...” (Rom. 6:23).

Wages are something you earn as a payment for what you have done. If you sin—break God’s Law—you will die *eternally*. Suddenly, knowing what constitutes His Law is of extreme importance!

The subject of what *is* God’s Law has been twisted and mangled. Greater Churchianity, as it has been called, has blurred this concept beyond recognition. However, it need not be complicated. This leads us to the next few verses that Christianity just blows off.

### (4) Matthew 5:17

The fourth verse never talked about in Christendom is Matthew 5:17, where Jesus said, “Think *not* that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to *fulfill*.”

The word “fulfill” means to “verify...fully preach, perfect...fill (up)... (make) full” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*). In other words, Jesus came to *verify* and *perfect* the Ten Commandments—to expand their meaning.

Matthew 5 is filled with examples of how the Ten Commandments have been made even more binding today. For instance, Jesus said, “...it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill...but I say...That whosoever is *angry* with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment...” (vs. 21-22). Instead of abolishing the commandments, Jesus *magnified* them (Isa. 42:21).

Ministers of this world twist these and other scriptures to sidestep and reject Jesus’ plain meaning about the importance of keeping God’s Law. They dismiss clear verses, such as Paul’s

statement, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yes, we *establish* the law” (Rom. 3:31).

### (5) I John 5:3

This leads to the fifth overlooked verse—and it is crucial. I John 5:3: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous [burdensome].”

Many who claim to have love believe the commandments *are* grievous. God declares otherwise! Paul called the Law “holy,” “just,” “good” and “spiritual” (Rom. 7:12, 14). The Psalms say it is “perfect,” “sure,” “right” and “pure” (19:7-8).

Blessings flow from keeping God’s commands. Ancient Israel was instructed to keep them, because—as with the whole Bible—they form His Instruction Manual on how to live. God’s Word reveals the only way to achieve a truly successful, happy and abundant life!

### (6) Romans 13:10

The sixth verse takes this connection further. Romans 13:10: “Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Understand. The Bible defines love as *obedience* to God’s Law. It is that simple. There is no ambiguity or confusion! Yet most are ignorant of the true definition of love. Ministers everywhere speak endlessly about God’s love, while completely missing all of the vital scriptures that define it.

Jesus also said, “If you love Me, *keep My commandments*” (John 14:15). Nowhere does Jesus say, “He who professes to love Me—yet breaks My commandments—still loves Me.” If you are among the two billion who profess to be Christian, and someone asked you whether you love Jesus Christ, you would surely answer *yes*. But how would you prove it? What *evidence* could you provide?

To most, love is little more than a vague idea that cannot be defined. Ask 100 people to define love, and you will get 100 different responses—everything from a “feeling in the heart” to “just doing good.” A wide range of ideas exist because few consult the only

Source that provides an absolute definition.

The first four commandments—not serving false gods, not making or worshipping images (idols) of God, not taking God’s name in vain, and observing the Sabbath—reveal how to love God. The remaining six—honor father and mother, do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, and do not covet—reveal how to love other human beings. When one obeys God’s Law, he *automatically* practices love—toward God and others. Love is easily demonstrated because action is required.

When one obeys any of the last six commandments, he—knowingly or not—is outwardly indicating love toward his fellow man.

Consider adultery. Though vast numbers break the Seventh Commandment, most would agree adultery is not showing love toward one’s spouse. Think of the devastation that results: broken trust, marriages, homes, relationships with children, and more. Conversely, by faithfulness, spouses show love toward each other.

Similarly, obeying the first four commands shows love toward God. Sadly, most do not even know these laws—and thus do not truly love God, despite what they may proclaim.

### (7) Mark 7:6-9

The seventh passage that most outright reject is Mark 7:6-9. As you read, ask if you have ever heard it quoted by a minister. Jesus said to the Pharisees: “...Isaiah prophesied of you *hypocrites*, as it is written, This people honor Me with their lips, but their *heart* is far from Me. Howbeit *in vain* do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the *commandments of men*” (vs. 6-7).

He added: “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the *tradition of men*, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things you do...Full well you *reject* the commandment of God, that you may keep your *own tradition*” (vs. 8-9).

This is a strong indictment of the religious elite of that time! Jesus stated

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that the Pharisees professed to worship God, but inside they were far from Him. The context was that they sought opportunity to accuse Christ and His disciples of breaking their tradition—the “commandments of men”—merely because they did not wash their hands when they ate. The disciples were not breaking any laws of God. Jesus labeled the Pharisees’ worship “vain,” meaning to no purpose, fruitless.

Think. Jesus said the Pharisees’ worship was pointless! They certainly believed they were worshipping God, but Jesus revealed otherwise. The Pharisees obeyed religious laws of *men* rather than *God’s* Law. They were hypocrites—appearing to be pious while being inwardly “full of dead men’s bones” (Matt. 23:27).

While God does authorize use of traditions (II Thes. 2:15), they never supplant or contradict His laws. The Pharisees, like so many today, claimed to know God. But the apostle John wrote, “He that says, I know Him, and *keeps not His commandments*, is a *liar*, and the truth is not in him” (I John 2:4).

Today’s religious elite reject God’s instructions and instead teach and hold to popular traditions: Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Sunday-keeping, a false trinitarian god, a false gospel about Jesus instead of the Kingdom of God, the fictions that God’s Law was “nailed to the cross,” tithing was “done away,” the saved go to heaven, and a host of other beliefs. In fact, virtually all the teachings of orthodox Christianity are *manmade*!

To learn more, request the following free books and booklets all found at [rcg.org/books](http://rcg.org/books). They present the *truth* of men’s holidays, and that of many other doctrines. You will be astounded by the Bible’s clear teachings on a host of topics: *The Ten Commandments – “Nailed to the Cross” or Required for Salvation?*; *The Trinity – Is God Three-in-One?*; *Saturday or Sunday – Which Is the Sabbath?*; *God’s Holy Days or Pagan Holidays*; *Which Is the True Gospel?*; *Do the Saved Go to Heaven?*; and *End All Your Financial Worries*.

As with the Pharisees, the world’s ministers preach false doctrines and lead people away from God. If Jesus were here today, He would indict these ministers in the same manner! Ask yourself whether *you* are worshipping Jesus Christ in vain. Do not assume His warning only applies to others. Assume it could mean YOU! Investigate why you believe as you do—why you observe popular traditions.

### **(8) James 2**

The eighth passage rarely even mentioned by ministers is in James 2. First, understand that some assert keeping the Ten Commandments is “legalistic” merely because salvation is by grace. How do grace and *obedience to God* connect to salvation? And does obeying the Law—your works—mean you are trying to earn salvation?

Read James: “Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone... You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith *by* my works... But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (vs. 17-18, 20).

In regard to the Old Testament patriarch Abraham, verse 22 states, “See you how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?”

Most assume that grace and works are mutually exclusive. The Bible says no such thing. In fact, God’s Word demonstrates *both* are required.

Think of salvation in this way. A wealthy father approaches his son heading off to college with this offer: “Son, upon graduation, I will give you one million dollars if you maintain a B average, never get drunk, and never cut classes.”

Ask: if the young man meets these conditions, will he receive the million dollars? Yes! Has his conduct earned him the money? No! Of course not. He merely did what all young men should do at college. Yet he would not receive the million dollars if he did not meet the preconditions—the *qualifiers*!

Salvation is the same. Of course God offers far more than a million dol-

lars, but only those who obey Him—who qualify—may receive His offer. Why cannot millions of Christians understand such basic logic?

There is nothing one can do to earn salvation. It is completely a gift from God. No amount of commandment-keeping can atone for violating God’s Law. Only Jesus’ blood can do this. However, your reward in the next life, after receiving salvation, is determined by your works. The commandments describe personal responsibility—what you must do. Yet, when fully understood, obedience is not you doing it, but rather Christ in you keeping the same commandments He did when in the flesh 2,000 years ago!

Do not accept the reasoning of men. Examine the pages of your Bible.

Another passage clarifies grace and works: “But God...is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us [Paul wrote], even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ...and has raised us up together...For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”

He continues, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God has before ordained that we should *walk in them*” (Eph. 2:4-6, 8-10).

All of James 2 discusses how faith and works go hand-in-hand toward achieving salvation and eternal reward. Christians demonstrate faith in God by doing good works and keeping His Law. Yet it requires Christ’s faith working in them to succeed.

### **(9) Matthew 4:4**

The ninth verse is Matthew 4:4: “... Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Most Christians do not study their Bibles, never mind diligently. They do not use God’s Word as an Instruction Manual for mankind. They do not live the Bible. They do not “study to show [themselves] approved unto God” or “rightly divide the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15). If they did, especially this

world's ministers, articles like this would be unnecessary. Everyone would already understand all these verses.

Fifty years ago, a newspaper article exposed Christians' ignorance of the Bible. Since then, however, this has worsened.

The article stated: "Some months ago, a Protestant pastor administered a Bible quiz to the members of his congregation. The questions were very simple. Anyone with a general knowledge of the Bible should have been able to answer all of them easily. The results staggered the pastor. Only five percent of his flock made a commendable grade on the test. Fifteen percent failed to give a single correct answer. Sixty percent were unable to name the four Gospels. Seventy-five percent could not identify Calvary (Golgotha) as the place where Jesus was crucified."

"The vast majority of Americans today are Bible illiterates. They simply have never read the book which they profess to regard as the 'Word of God'" (*United Press International*).

So sadly true!

The reporter concluded, "A great many people have turned away from the Bible because when they do try to read it, they find they cannot understand it...To the modern reader, it has a remote and antiquarian flavor. It is likely to leave him with the impression the Bible is an ancient history book that has no real relevance to his life here and now" (*ibid.*).

Society almost considers biblical knowledge irrelevant. J.B. Phillips, of the Phillips Bible translation, wrote: "It is one of the curious phenomena of modern times that it is considered perfectly respectable to be abysmally ignorant of the Christian faith. Men and women who would be deeply ashamed of having their ignorance exposed in matters of poetry, music, or painting, for example, are not in the least perturbed to be found ignorant of the New Testament" (*The Young Church in Action*).

I would add they are even more ignorant of the Old Testament.

A true Christian does not let his Bible gather dust on a shelf. He daily

studies it—every word from God's mouth. (To learn *how* to study, order the free article "The Rules of Effective Bible Study" at [rcg.org/troebbs](http://rcg.org/troebbs).)

### (10) Matthew 24:4-5

The 10th passage that is ignored by virtually every professing Christian relates to this entire article. In Matthew 24:4-5, Jesus warned: "Take heed that no man *deceive* you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall *deceive many*."

The first "many" here involves thought-to-be Christian ministers who proclaim Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, but who do not believe or teach what He taught. Neither do they come with His authority.

Six verses later, Jesus added, "... *many* false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (vs. 11). Not only would false prophets deceive the great majority, they would also infiltrate the true Church, Christ warned, causing many true Christians to fall away. During the last days, false prophets were foretold to increase in number and in their power to deceive. Here is Jesus' chilling warning: "For there shall arise *false Christs*, and *false prophets*, and shall show great signs and wonders..." (vs. 24).

You must understand the power, influence and grave danger presented by false prophets and false teachers—and grasp what it means for you. There are many deceivers at work today and there will also be others in the near future. But how many are taking heed, as Jesus said? How many are doing their homework on something so vital? How many are carefully examining those *claiming to represent God*?

The Bible says prophets fall into one of two categories—true or false. All—past, present or future—are one or the other. They cannot be both, and they cannot be in-between. Within the category of *false* prophets are two types: those who claim to be prophets, but falsely foretell events, not being inspired by the true God—and those who do not necessarily claim to be prophets, but who teach falsely about prophecy—and for that matter any other aspect of God's Word. The latter would include false

teachers and false ministers. As with false prophets, false teachers assert they are vested with God's authority. Rather than falsely prophesying future events, they teach false doctrines supposedly from the Bible. Therefore, Jesus' warnings also apply to false teachers, who work in the same way.

Understand. On the surface, false prophets rarely appear to be what they are. They are incredibly seductive and seem to be men of God. We have seen that effective deceivers have the ability to almost miraculously transform themselves into something they are not. This is how they are able to deceive so many.

Think of popular televangelists and religious personalities. The most famous are invariably the smoothest in style, tone, emphasis, body language, and word choice. These men come off as sincere and believable. The result is that thousands sit in stadiums mesmerized by these religious actors. In fact, some could win Academy Awards if they *were* actors.

The New Testament describes how false ministers and false prophets attempt to confuse even God's people. Therefore, God must show exactly how to distinguish the true from the false—the genuine from the impostors. Many verses do this. God allows no room for doubt or confusion. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). If such men *appeared* as vicious wolves, who would follow them? Because they can portray themselves as men of God—some *masterfully*—fooling many is easier than taking candy from a baby.

*Do not let them fool you!*

We have examined 10 verses that should now be impossible to misunderstand. While the Christian world either rejects, never discusses, or spiritualizes away their true meaning, you should not.

For more information on Bible verses often ignored or misunderstood by the masses, read my free book *The Bible's Difficult Scriptures Explained!* at [rcg.org/tbdse](http://rcg.org/tbdse). □

## HEALTH ISSUES

## New Antibiotic-resistant Bacteria Found in Farm Animals Could Spread to Humans

**B**acteria resistant to carbapenem, a last-resort antibiotic used to treat severe infections, have been discovered in farm animals and have the potential to spread to humans, according to a study published in the journal *Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy*.

Researchers from Ohio State University first made the discovery while collecting environmental samples from a pig farm. The findings suggest that the antibiotic—which is illegal to use on animals—was used on or somehow transferred to livestock there.

The carbapenem-resistant organisms have been discovered in

European and Asian livestock, however, this is the first time the bacteria has been found in the United States.

Though researchers “found no evidence that these organisms were entering the food supply,” lead author of the study Thomas Wittum stated that there is a major concern that the genetic mutation “could happen on this or other farms” and pork infected by carbapenem-resistant bacteria could end up on the market and infect humans.

The discovery supports experts’ belief that the wider trend of antibiotic misuse on animals is contributing to the rise of more powerful superbugs.

Dr. Wittum stated: “The spread of this particular resistant strain on this farm may be related to antibiotics used to treat sick pigs, for the same reason that resistant bacteria like these are present in human hospitals because of the way we treat sick people with antibiotics.”

According to *Time*, many “experts estimate that in 2050, 10 million people will die from infections that are resistant to antibiotics each year. The use of antibiotics in livestock animals contributes to the problem, as does the inappropriate—but common—over-prescribing of antibiotics.” □

## EUROPE

## EU Pushes for European Army



■ **DISCUSSIONS:** NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg (far right) and European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini (second from left) chair a defense meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium (Oct. 27, 2016).

PHOTO: THIERRY CHARLIER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**E**uropean Union leaders are actively pursuing “the creation of EU military structures and possibly European nuclear armed forces,” *German Foreign Policy* reported.

In November, the European Parliament adopted a resolution urging “the EU to establish ‘multinational armed forces,’ in which ‘all member

states’ should participate in one way or another” (ibid.). The combined military force would be “capable of independently waging wars” and would act on the interests of the EU instead of NATO.

According to German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, adopting the resolution could prompt Germany to develop an arsenal of nuclear weapons

as “the French and British arsenals... would be insufficient” to meet the EU’s needs.

“Europeans need to come up with a strategy of their own,” Wolfgang Ischinger, chairman of the Munich Security Conference and former German ambassador to the United States, wrote in an article he contributed to *The New York Times*. “The challenges are tremendous—and it is in Europe’s self-interest to speak with one voice, and to be a more credible and capable actor in regional and global crisis management. For that, Europe needs to invest more in civilian and military capabilities, and to start pooling and sharing defense assets more comprehensively.”

During a speech in Brussels on future NATO-EU relations, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini promoted the resolution by stating that the power bloc “can only succeed in providing security to our citizens if we work together as a true union, with the full potential of a super power, in the field of security and defence.” □

## UN Warns of Genocide in South Sudan



■ **RELAYING CONCERN:** Yasime Sooka, a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, talks to community leaders in Juba, South Sudan, to report on violent conditions in the nation (Nov. 28, 2016).

PHOTO: ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Investigators from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights have reported signs of ethnic cleansing ramping up in South Sudan.

The nation, which consists of 64 ethnic groups each with its own language and beliefs, has been in a state of civil war since it gained independence in 2013. Ongoing clashes between various factions over land and resources have led to tens of thousands of civilian deaths and atrocities.

In a statement released in December, the UN commission stated that although inter-ethnic fighting is expected to increase over

the next few months when the weather is better in the area, “There is already a steady process of ethnic cleansing underway” as individual groups are using “starvation, gang rape and the burning of villages” against one another.

The government’s armed forces also have targeted civilians in retribution for attacks from rebel militia groups scattered across the nation. According to *Foreign Policy* magazine, “armed forces linked to the government...have reportedly carried out a brutal campaign of rapes, extrajudicial killings, abductions, torture, looting, and the burning of homes.”

Based on her observations in South Sudan, Chairperson of the UN Commission Yasmin Sooka believes that “the stage is being set for a repeat of what happened in Rwanda”—where a genocide in 1994 resulted in the deaths of 800,000 people. □

## EDUCATION

### Report: Australia’s School Standards in Decline

The math, science and reading scores of Australian 15-year-olds in all school sectors—public, private and Catholic—have dropped significantly since 2012, according to a report from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

PISA compared test scores with students from 73 countries, including 14,000 Australian children. In these particular assessments, students were challenged “with questions they are likely to meet in the workforce and in every day life,” *The Australian Financial Review* reported.

While Australia’s scores ranked slightly above the global average in all three subjects, they confirmed a steep decline in scores over the past three years.

This occurred despite increased educational funding during the same period. According to Australian Senator

Simon Birmingham, “Commonwealth funding for schools has increased by 50 per cent since 2003 while our results are going backwards.”

He further stated that “Australia ranks as spending the fifth highest amount on education [of nations in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] and once you get to that level there is little value in just increasing spending.”

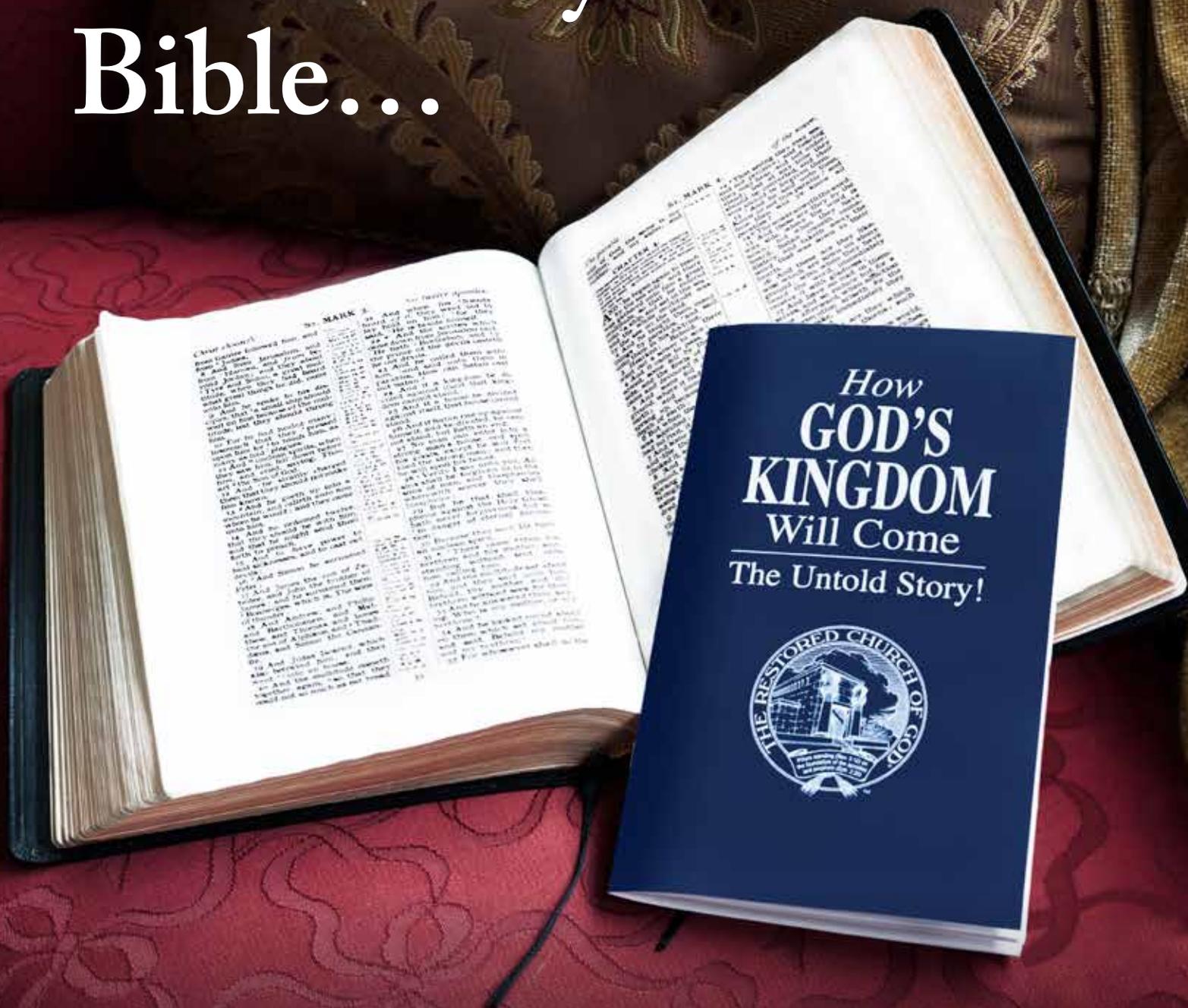
Experts have blamed a shortage of math and science teachers, despite a surplus of teacher graduates in the nation. For instance, in 2001, “Australia’s most populous state, New South Wales, dropped the requirement for students to study maths or science to graduate from senior high school,” *BBC* reported. “Three others among the eight states and territories mirrored that step, while the rest require very minimal study of the two subjects compared with other countries.”

Other research suggests that student underperformance is having a negative impact on the economy. The Fairfax-Lateral Economics Index of Australia’s Wellbeing, which rates the connection between test scores and graduates’ productivity in the job market, determined that \$15 billion had been lost from the nation’s economy since 2012 due to the educational standards slipping.

Overall, the decline is fueling fears that the nation “is steaming towards an education crisis, which could leave future Australians lagging behind the rest of the world,” the *BBC* reported.

According to Rachel Wilson, a senior lecturer at the University of Sydney: “...that’s frightening, because [math, science and reading] skills are fundamental in the modern world. Unfortunately in Australia there seems to be a lot of resistance to the realities of the new world.” □

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