

FEBRUARY 2008

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



BELGIUM'S IDENTITY **CRISIS**

*A Sign of Things to Come
for the European Union?*

THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. VI | NO. 2 | FEBRUARY 2008

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Kenya's Darkest Days – A Nation Beset With Violence

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ABOUT OUR COVER: Belgium's government is in political gridlock, threatening to split the nation in two.

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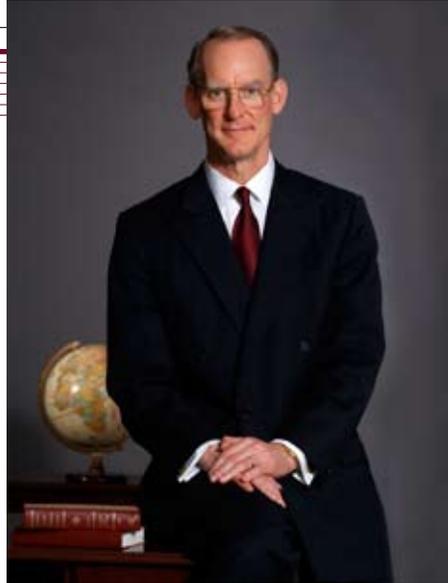
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Is World Peace Possible?

THE WORLD is filled with war, terrorism, turmoil and confusion. While men have created many amazing technological inventions, they cannot “create” peace. Scientists have unleashed the power of the atom but are powerless to “unleash” peace upon earth. Astronomers have discovered much about the size, majesty and precision of the universe, but they cannot “discover” the way to peace. They can find galaxies far away throughout the universe, but they cannot “find” peace here on earth.

War has been the primary means by which nations have settled disputes throughout history. It has been considered a natural state of equilibrium, while peace has been considered a period of recuperation from the previous campaign, during which preparations are made for the next venture or conquest. A quote by Georges Clemenceau, the French statesman during WWI, accurately reflects this state of affairs: “I don’t know whether war is an interlude during peace, or peace is an interlude during war.”

General Douglas MacArthur eloquently stated mankind’s current dilemma: “We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater or more equitable system...Armageddon will be at our door” (April 19, 1951, speech to Congress).

One World Government?

In 1966, as God began to call me into His truth, I had the opportunity to meet with my United States

Congressman from Ohio. I had applied to attend the United States Naval Academy and all applicants were required to have a personal interview with their Congressman in the final stages prior to acceptance. At the end of the interview, he asked me if I wished to ask him any questions. Here was a highly respected, long-time member of Congress giving me the opportunity to ask him any question on my mind.

I had only one.

I was learning about the soon-coming, world-ruling, supernatural government to be established at the Return of Jesus Christ. With this on my mind, I asked the Congressman his opinion of one world government, if it were in the hands of men. His answer was immediate and emphatic, “I do not believe it would work, but if I did, I would shout it from the housetops.” He went on to express various concerns.

This made a lasting impression. I have never forgotten my conversation with this congressman of over thirty years’ experience in the federal government.

Since that time, many have suggested that *one world government* is the only way to world peace and stability. But many questions arise. *Who* would bring it? *How* would it be phased in? *What laws* would it administer? How would they be *enforced*? Would sovereign nations relinquish their authority to it? Would it succeed, or would it eventually oppress and enslave all mankind? These questions always stop thinkers, planners, leaders and scientists in their tracks!

Therefore, world peace remains as elusive as ever. Seemingly everyone yearns for it, but no one knows how to obtain it. Why? Why cannot the experienced leaders and intelligent thinkers of our time find the

way to peace? Why do people understand that the only solution that could bring peace is one world government yet, at the same time, acknowledge that this is utterly impossible if left in the hands of men? If men are not capable of governing their own individual lives, how could they govern the entire world?

WHY Men Cannot Find Peace

Mankind, in its rebellion against God, likes to present his own versions of civilization in the best possible light. In like manner, the false prophets of Israel, as Ezekiel prophesied of our time, are to declare, "Peace; and there was [is] no peace" (13:10). God shows that peace will be elusive to those who forsake His ways.

It has been said that all nations are either preparing for war, at war or recovering from war. It has also been noted that history has recorded over 14,600 wars. And this figure was derived in the mid-1960s. Men seem to invariably go to war in search of peace. But, the outcome of war usually involves a truce, but always fails to yield permanent peace. This is because men cannot, and never will, find the way to peace *on their own* without outside help. In reality, they have *no chance* to achieve world peace. Here is *why*.

As part of an extensive prophecy about world conditions in our time, the prophet Isaiah answers this question: "The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goes there shall not know peace" (59:8). The solutions of men always lead to more wars, ruin, misery, death and destruction. The apostle Paul wrote, quoting Isaiah, "And the way of peace have they NOT KNOWN" (Rom. 3:17).

How true!

The governments of men sim-

ply do not work. They have *never* succeeded in finding permanent solutions to what are, for them, insoluble problems. They do not have the answers to mankind's biggest questions. It has not been given to men to understand the path to peace—or, for that matter, the way to abundance, happiness, health and prosperity. No wonder the greatest thinkers, leaders, educators and scientists have failed miserably in their quest for peace on earth! God has not yet *revealed* to the vast majority of mankind the solution to its unending wars, and world troubles.

What is the Gospel?

Jesus stated, "Repent you, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). But just what *is* the gospel? Most never concern themselves with this question. The truth of the gospel has remained hidden from view to the vast majority of professing Christians. Ever since the first century there has been a conspiracy to deceive would-be Christians about the meaning of the gospel. Shocking as it seems, this has happened.

Most believe that the gospel is about the *Person* of Jesus Christ. Certainly, Christ's role *is* enormous, but He is *not* the gospel. The Bible shows that Jesus Christ is preached in conjunction *with* the gospel.

Others proclaim a "gospel of salvation" or "gospel of grace." Still others believe a "gospel of miracles" or a "social gospel" or a "gospel of foods" or of "healing" or "faith." There are also those who merely think of "gospel *music*" when the word *gospel* comes to mind. These are all man-made ideas that are not what the BIBLE says!

Notice Mark's account once again! "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the *kingdom of God*." That is the gospel Jesus preached. It was in this

context that He had said, "Repent you, and *believe the gospel*." What gospel?—of the "KINGDOM OF GOD." Verse one refers to this very message when it says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." The gospel of Jesus Christ was about the KINGDOM OF GOD—not something else! One must believe and understand *that* gospel to be saved—not a counterfeit or substitute.

Strong Warning Not to Pervert Gospel

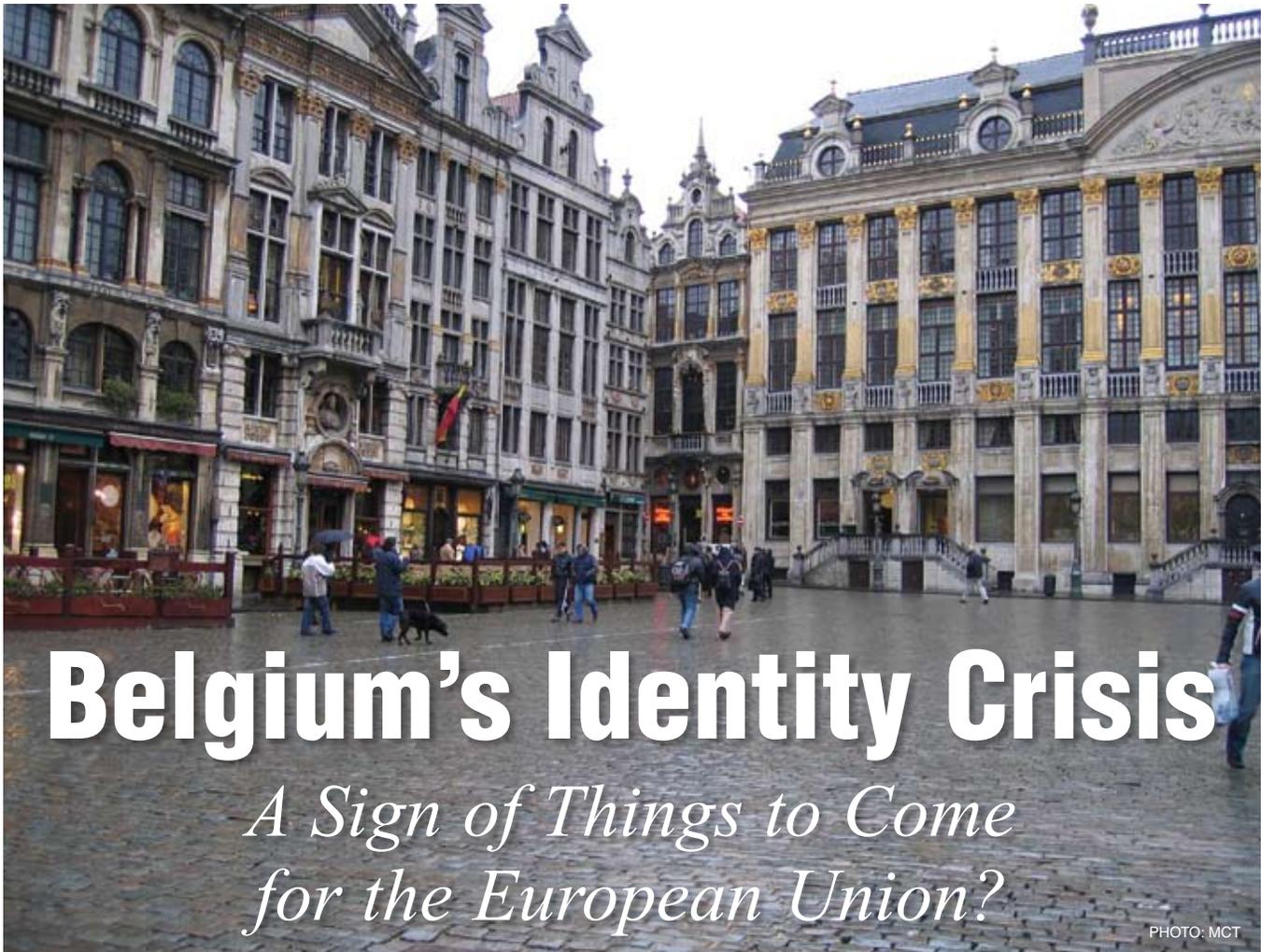
The truth of this subject is so important that God inspired Paul to warn the Galatians then—and us today: "I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel*: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would *pervert* the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach *any other gospel* unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be *accursed*. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach *any other gospel* unto you than that you have received, let him be *accursed*" (Gal. 1:6-9).

This is a very strong statement! In the next chapter (2:5), Paul went on to stress the hope "that the *truth* of the gospel might continue with you." So there is the *true* gospel, with all others false.

Plainly, Paul never taught a different or additional gospel, as some allege. Ironically, God used him to be the one to warn against ever allowing such false teaching. He even pronounces a curse (1:8) on any man, angel or even apostle—"But though *we* [apostles]...preach any other gospel"—who chooses to violate this command. What a powerful scripture!

Paul further explained that the apostles were *entrusted* by God to

Please see **PERSONAL**, page 25



Belgium's Identity Crisis

*A Sign of Things to Come
for the European Union?*

PHOTO: MCT

Belgium, a model of European democracy, is experiencing a long, arduous political crisis that raises the question: Will the European Union face similar impasses?

BY RYAN P. DENEE

ADRIVE THROUGH the countryside of Belgium is a unique and relaxing experience not soon forgotten. The scenic tree-lined roads, with trunks sometimes inches from the pavement, are an expression of order and natural beauty. The branches springing from opposing sides of the road intertwine to form a comforting tunnel of lush foliage.

Beyond the roadside are vibrant green meadows, another facet of the country's beauty. Fields dotted with grazing cows and wildflowers are pleasing to the eye. A walk through the serene, mature forests provides the opportunity for quiet contemplation.

The villages and towns are also welcoming. The narrow, cobbled roads wind by small yet practical and pleasant homes. The cafés offer the chance to sit and relax with a sandwich and

a glass of locally-brewed ale while watching passersby.

A stroll through bustling downtown Brussels, the nation's capital, which is lined with a variety of shops and stylish boutiques, is also a memorable experience. In particular, chocolate shops provide a treat that is world-renowned. The center of the city, like many of Europe's great cities, offers visitors an open square, with beautiful, old and intricate architecture on every side, four to five stories high. The famous Brussels waffles (known as Belgian waffles in North America) are sold from small stands, offering pedestrians the unmatched taste of crisp yet soft dough smothered in rich whipped cream.

This is Belgium.

Yet this seemingly idyllic, peaceful country has just experienced an unprecedented political crisis.

Government Breakdown

From the national elections in June 2007 through late December, the country was without a government. For more than six months, disagreeing politicians and parties were unable to form a coalition to lead Belgium.

On December 19th, the king of Belgium intervened to help create an interim government that will serve the country for three months. In effect, the parties that were elected by the people of Belgium on June 10, 2007, remain unable to form a coalition.

A country with over 10.5 million people is sorely divided—to the point that the government has become paralyzed. A highly developed, modern country and democracy has been unable to produce leadership for the nation for almost 200 days.

This tiny land, nestled between France to the south, the Netherlands to the north, and Luxembourg and Germany to the east, has garnered international attention because of this crisis. Many cannot believe this is happening. Others wonder why it is taking place. Some, understanding the country's differing peoples, suggest that Belgium should be dissolved. Others fear this possibility.

Why has this happened in such a seemingly tranquil country? *How* could this happen in a stable Western democracy in the developed world? *What* can be learned from such a high-profile social/political experiment that has led to a sovereign nation being without a government for half a year?

And what does this mean for the rest of Europe?

A Brief History

Belgium was created by Britain in the 1830s. The northern Flemish region (predominantly Dutch-speaking) was combined with the southern Walloon region (largely French-speaking). Arguably, this was beneficial to the region at large, but not without consequences for the people living within its borders.

In the 19th century, the Walloon region had many natural resources.

As a result, the Walloons were the wealthy people of the land. In effect, they dominated the country at the time, with many looking down on the Flemish with an air of superiority. In fact, it was not until well over 100 years later that Dutch became an official language.

In the latter half of the 1800s, as a fledgling nation, the Belgian government had to quickly gain the loyalty of its diverse citizenry. This happened through massive public work schemes, trade unions, nationalized industries and social security networks. Quickly, the entire government became a mechanism to reallocate wealth—in effect, buying the support of the people.

Over time, this caused the Flemish to become more prosperous. When some of the resources ran out in the French-speaking south, the north quickly became the wealthier region. Today, the Walloon region produces only 24% of the GDP, while representing 33% of the population. This change in economic strength, among other factors, has fueled a significant level of division between these two groups.

Consider the layers of government necessary to appease two distinct groups of people who would not agree—who would not put the other's interests ahead of their own. In many regards, the government structure became a tangled, monolithic bureaucracy.

The current federal government is comprised of no less than 11 political parties. But these are regional, not national. In a nation where voting is mandatory, people tend to vote along linguistic boundaries. There are several parties with differing political platforms represented in Fleming, and there are several in Walloon, also with differing platforms. This means that a majority government is almost impossible. Coalitions must be established, in an attempt to “fairly” represent these two disagreeing groups of people. This has ultimately led to a tremendous stalemate—the recent inability of the government to form over a period of six months is a case in point.

One of the basic elements of the latest dispute is that the Flemish no longer want to subsidize the southern Walloon region. They are seeking a larger voice on how their money is spent. Those in the Walloon region do not see a need to change the status quo, leaving the opposing sides in uncompromising positions.

In summary: two peoples—two languages—and one struggling, crippled government.

This has led many to wonder if the country should split. Some have suggested that the Dutch-speaking region merge with the Netherlands and the French-speaking with France. Certain separatists have loudly cried for independence, but polls indicate that the majority of Belgians do not want to divide.

As mentioned, the political crisis forced Belgium's King Albert II to assist in creating a temporary government. The European Commission reported the national economy was affected because of this latest “grande” stalemate.

The very country that also holds the capital of the European Union is struggling to combine differing peoples, cultures and languages. Could this be a sign of things to come for the EU?

A Laboratory Experiment

The leader of Belgium's French-speaking Christian Democrats, Joëlle Milquet, stated, “The future of democracies belongs to federalism because this model makes it possible to gather people of different languages, cultures and traditions behind a joint project.”

She added, “Belgium is, from this point of view, a laboratory. If 10 million people in a developed country do not manage to build a collective project, that would signal the bankruptcy of what one tries to build at the European and even international level” (*Telegraph*).

Belgium is trying with all its might to create a federal system that works with several cultures and languages. But the country remains divided. As stated above by Ms. Milquet, Belgium is just a small laboratory experiment—

Can This Marriage Be Saved?

Belgium, a state of 10.5 million, was established by foreign powers in 1830-1831. Now Dutch-speaking residents of the north and French-speaking residents of the south are questioning the viability of their political union.



About Belgium

 Flanders		Wallonia 
6 million	Population	4.5 million
Dutch	Primary language	French
Roman Catholic	Religion	Roman Catholic
Chemicals, technology, services	Leading industries	Coal, steel
Right-leaning	Politics	Left-leaning
About half	Favoring separation	Fraction
Peter Paul Rubens, painter; Audrey Hepburn, actress	Famous people	Justine Henin, tennis champion

About the flag

- Modeled after France's flag
- Black, yellow and red taken from the arms of Brabant, a province in the Low Countries

About Brussels

If Belgium disintegrates, one of the principle questions will be what to do with Brussels, the national capital and administrative center of the European Union

Founded

Officially 979, but likely 6th century

Status

Federal administrative city

Language

Officially bilingual, but largely French

Population

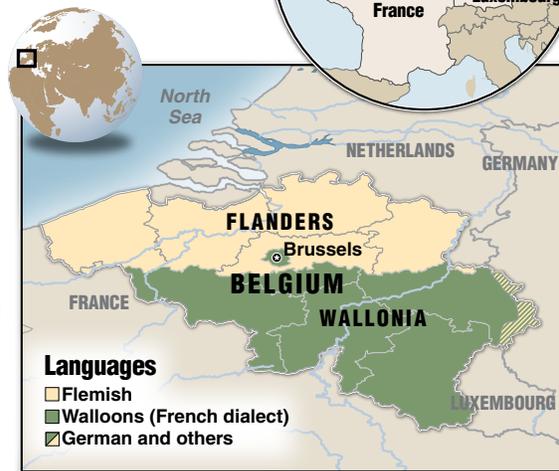
1.04 million

Part of

Brussels-Capital Region

Headquarters

NATO, European Union



Source: ESRI, "Belgium: The End is not Nigh" by Gwynne Dyer, Brussels Journal, International Herald Tribune, Belgian Tourist Office

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that unite them: their king, their national soccer team and their beer. While somewhat humorous, there are elements of truth to the statement. Belgians *do* have some things in common. In comparison, how much do all the peoples of the EU have in common? Will just the ideals and plans of certain political architects be enough to bind differing groups?

Belgium, at least for a time, has reached a significant impasse—so much so that a governing head is not in place and there is fear of the nation splitting. In a far more complex situation, will the European Union face impasses in the years to come? Will the treaty fail to be ratified by nations and turned down? Will there be talks of nations leaving the Union because their interests are not heard?

People in Flanders consider themselves Flemish before they consider themselves Belgian. Also, those in the French-speaking south consider themselves Walloons above their Belgian identity. One of the challenges the government of Belgium faces is that they continue to emphasize the importance of the country as a whole. The EU faces a similar problem. Will people consider themselves European above their own country? Likely not. Nationalistic feelings will be something the EU will have to overcome.

Transfer of wealth in Belgium created problems in the past, and continues to raise problems today. Similarly, as the EU attempts to transfer wealth in the future, will some countries protest such action?

To have 27 nations agree on even simple things—butter, cheese and chocolate—enormous bureaucracies have been created. But these are only the “unimportant” issues of diplomacy. Bureaucratic layers of committees are used to define and control everything that occurs in the EU. However, these large and growing institutions of the EU cannot appease every faction; compromise has found its limits time after time.

The situation in Belgium leaves one to wonder if a far more complex scenario—the European Union—will ever succeed on its current path.

an attempt to unify varied groups of people under one government. The continued development and creation of the European Union will be the true test case. As the *National Review* wrote, “Belgium’s crisis today is the EU’s crisis tomorrow.”

This is a pivotal time in Europe’s history. In December 2007, after years of attempting to agree upon a constitution, all 27 European countries signed the Lisbon treaty. The treaty is a less aggressive, stripped-down version of the 2005 European constitution, which was shelved after France and the Netherlands rejected it. But because it carries the name *treaty* rather than constitution, it can be approved without individual national referendums. This treaty shows that the European powers are determined to move forward.

Parallels With the EU

Many parallels exist between the political situation in Belgium and the environment of the European Union.

Again, Belgium is comprised of two distinct peoples—French-speaking and Dutch-speaking. Yet consider the number of differences found within the European Union: scores of languages, 27 countries, ethnic groups within countries, cultures, etc.

Belgium has created an intricate bureaucracy to deal with only two groups. How much more complex will the institutions of the European Union need to be and will they be able to be more stable?

Belgian politician Yves Leterme infamously stated that his nation is an “accident of history.” He also said that Belgians have a few things in common

What will unite a more diverse Europe?

An Identity Crisis

Belgium is struggling with an identity crisis. Individual groups are more loyal to themselves than to the collective group. At this point, the people and governments of Belgium are unwilling to fully pull together and retain a strong, clear national identity.

As the leaders of this system strive to make the European Union a more powerful governing body with its own clear identity, the individual groups within the EU will resist. An identity crisis will ensue.

What Lies Ahead?

Belgium faces a rough road ahead. The temporary government will not likely solve the nation's fundamental problems. But it seems, for now, that the country will remain intact. It will continue to limp forward. Yet there seems to be no real, lasting solution in sight.

If Belgium, with only a few cultures and languages, cannot correctly and fully function, what about the EU? Will it become the next "accident of history"?

Each faction inside Belgium is independently strong—as with each nation of Europe. However, the individual identities of the nations of Europe and the groups inside Belgium will only unify to a certain point. Eventually, the strength of their diversity will become an inherent weakness.

The story of Belgium underscores the reality that the EU faces a tough road ahead. The number of differences within these 27 countries will create tremendous political crises. When these crises come to a head, Europe will be at a crossroads. They will need a solution—something to unite them.

The world's bestseller of all time, the Bible, foretells that the European Union will not collapse in the near future. However, it does explain that ten nations (or groups of nations) will ultimately emerge from this union, and strong decisive leadership will

direct these peoples. The Bible reveals that this group will be a big player on the world scene. To learn more, con-

tinue to read the articles within this magazine, and on our website (updated semi-daily): www.realtruth.org. □

BELGIUM THROUGH TIME

57 BC: Julius Caesar extends power of Rome into region of Europe that is now Belgium

751 AD: Pepin founds the Carolingian Dynasty, named for his son Charlemagne

979: Charles, Duke of Lorraine, builds fortress that becomes modern Brussels

1000: Viking raids end; Flanders begins to emerge as powerful trading center

1477: Region is brought under rule of Austria, later Spain

1648: Spain recognizes independence of Netherlands, which includes Belgium

1800: Age of Napoleon, French influence over region grows

1830: Following defeat of Napoleon, Allies decide Belgium will again become part of Netherlands; revolution in Brussels follows

1914: Germany invades, occupies Belgium during World War I

1918: Germany forced to pay reparations to Belgium

1940: Nazi Germany invades Belgium, occupying it until 1944

1990: Belgian economy falls; tensions rise among ethnic Flemish and Walloons

2006: General election fails to produce coalition government

Source: ESRI, "Belgium: The End is not Nigh" by Gwynne Dyer, Brussels Journal, International Herald Tribune, Belgian Tourist Office
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14 STATEMENTS of JESUS

ALMOST NO ONE BELIEVES
And Your Minister Doesn't Want You to Understand!

BY GABRIEL N. LISCHAK

In this three-part series, similar in style to our “Seven Questions” articles, we will analyze 14 statements made by Jesus Christ, found in the Bible. Some are well-known; others are overlooked. Hundreds of millions who claim to be Christian assume they understand and therefore accept—believe!—these statements, but the reality is that virtually no one does.

Do not allow yourself to discount this series or any of its explanations simply because you are accustomed to a particular belief system, even one you have held your entire life. And do not permit your minister to use shallow assertions or smooth “answers” (or non-answers) to dismiss this series. Instead, diligently investigate in the pages of your own Bible what is stated herein, and ask God for understanding. Throw aside all preconceived ideas. Be like the Bereans in the book of Acts, who “received the word [Paul’s preaching] with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Recognize that a three-article series cannot address every conceivable issue pertaining to each of these 14 statements. To gain a fuller picture of each, it is imperative you study the referenced literature. This material will expound upon each subject in thorough detail.

In our “Seven Questions” series, we addressed 14 *questions* ministers do not want to be asked. Based upon numerous letters we received from our readers, we have found that many, including ministers, hastily jump to conclusions before thoroughly reading a particular explanation in its entirety, with some assuming their church agrees with our positions, when this is *not* the case. It is evident that few took the time to study the literature referenced in both articles—or even to read each article closely.

Again, do not draw conclusions before (1) reading an entire explanation with an open Bible—and open mind—and (2) studying the referenced material. Otherwise you will do yourself a great disservice.

CONSIDER. Millions call Jesus “Lord,” which means “Master.” But how many truly view Him as their Master?

Millions worship Jesus according to what is commonly taught, without thoroughly proving it from their Bibles. But what did Christ say about “traditions of men”?

Millions observe Sunday, believing it to be “the Lord’s Day.” But what did Jesus say about the Sabbath?

Millions believe Christians are not to judge. Did Jesus say otherwise? If so, how are they to judge?

And millions believe they are “born again”—but are they? Or is one born again later, at another time?

Be prepared to learn things **VERY FEW** ministers accurately teach and **VERY FEW** people truly understand!

LUKE 6:46 — **1** WHY CALL YOU ME, LORD, LORD, AND DO NOT THE THINGS WHICH I SAY?

Jesus asked this question near the conclusion of His well-known Sermon on the Mount. Have you ever deeply considered it? Have you ever asked yourself whether Jesus is talking directly to

YOU? Or do you assume He is talking to *others*?

More than two billion people refer to Jesus as Lord, and many more have done so throughout the past 2,000 years. By calling Jesus Lord, they are saying He is their Master, whether knowingly or not. Here are the implications: The Greek word translated Lord is *kurios*, and it means “supreme in authority, controller, master.” Jesus is to have complete control over Christians. He is to be the supreme authority in their lives. He is to be their Master! Just as a servant is subject to his master or a child to his parents, Christians are subject to Christ. As servants (John 13:16), they are not permitted to choose to obey commands that are convenient for them, and disregard the rest. They are to obey His commands—all of them!

Countless numbers profess Jesus to be their Master, yet the reality is that *almost none* treat Him as One having authority over their lives. (This article will explain the many commandments of God that people disobey.) Few yield to His commands—few really *obey* Him. Though millions call Jesus their Lord, their actions demonstrate He is not. Most do little more than pay lip service to Christ. (More on this later.)

This is why Jesus asked, “Why call you Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). He is asking why individuals profess Him to be their Master, and as such accept His authority over their lives, but do not *do*—OBEY—BELIEVE—His words. They fail to properly acknowledge Him as their Master by doing what He says.

In verses 47-48, Christ explains the wisdom in hearing His words and *doing* them. (Keep in mind that these verses immediately follow Jesus asking why people call Him Master but do not obey Him.) “Whosoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings, and *does* them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock [Jesus Christ].”

In verse 49, however, Jesus shows the folly of hearing His words and *not* doing them. “But he that hears, and does not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”

Not believing—or obeying—Christ is likened to foolishly building a house on shifting sand: Eventually, the disobedient, like the house, will fall. When storms (trials and temptations) come, they will not stand.

Sadly, most people are building their houses upon sand. They neither believe nor obey Jesus Christ. What about you? Are you obedient to the words of Christ? Are you sure?

To learn more about why obedience is necessary, read *Should You Obey the Ten Commandments?* and *What is True Conversion?*

MARK 7:7 – “HOWBEIT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.”

Just prior to this statement, in verses 1-5, the Pharisees noticed Jesus’ disciples eating food with unwashed hands. They, seemingly innocently, asked, “Why walk not Your disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?” (7:5).

The Pharisees were extremely meticulous in regard to washing items used in consuming food, such as their hands, cups, bowls, pots, utensils, etc. Over the years, they added numerous regulations—traditions—to God’s commandments, statutes and precepts. These traditions sometimes even superseded the laws of God, though He never authorized this.

Cutting to the heart of the matter, Jesus responded, “Well has Esaias [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*” (7:6-7).

This is quite an indictment of the religious elite! Jesus stated that the Pharisees professed to worship God with their lips, but inside they were FAR from Him. He realized they were not looking for an explanation. Instead, they sought an opportunity to accuse Him and His disciples of breaking tradition—or “commandments of men.” Christ’s disciples were not breaking any laws of God, yet the Pharisees acted as if this were the case. As such, Jesus labeled their worship *vain*, which means “to no purpose, fruitlessly.”

Do you grasp this? Christ said the Pharisees worship was POINTLESS! They may have *believed* they were worshipping God, but Jesus revealed otherwise. Their worship was FRUITLESS because they obeyed laws of *men* rather than laws of *God*. They were hypocrites because they *appeared* to be holy men who obeyed God. The “religious authorities” had an outward appearance of religious holiness. But inwardly, they were “full of dead men’s bones” (Matt. 23:27).

Jesus further elaborated, saying, “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” (Mark 7:8-9).

The Pharisees made the laws of God of no effect by establishing and following man-made traditions. (While God does authorize the use of traditions [II Thes. 2:15], they are never to supplant, or contradict, God’s laws.) Even more so, they *rejected* God’s commandments. Take a moment to read Mark 7:10-13, in which Jesus gives an example of the Pharisees nullifying the Law of God.

Like these of Christ’s time, today’s “religious elite” reject God’s laws and instead hold to and teach the traditions of men: the trinity, Easter, Christmas, Sunday-keeping, the fallacy that God’s Law has been “nailed to the cross,” tithing is “done away,” among a host of others too numerous to mention. In fact, most of the teachings of orthodox Christianity are man-made! The min-

isters of this world preach false doctrines and lead people away from God, just like the Pharisees did. If Jesus were on earth today, He would indict these ministers in the same manner as the Pharisees!

Ask yourself whether YOU are worshipping Christ in vain. Do not assume this statement applies to others. Start with the assumption that it applies to YOU! Investigate *why* you believe as you do—*why* you perhaps observe traditions of men, rather than laws of God.

To learn more about common traditions of men, be sure to investigate the extensive website of The Restored Church of God, www.thercg.org. There, throughout the vast library of material, you will begin to learn the truth of God and what He truly desires. Perhaps begin with *God's Holy Days or Pagan Holidays* to learn the truth of popular religious holidays. Also, you will want to read an article addressing vain worship that will appear in the next issue of *The Real Truth*.

MARK 2:27-28 — “THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, AND NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH: THEREFORE THE SON OF MAN IS LORD ALSO OF THE SABBATH.”

Other than perhaps the trinity, no other doctrine is as widely accepted and staunchly defended in the world of traditional Christianity than Sunday-keeping. Though few who profess to be Christian can agree on biblical teachings, they almost always agree that the Saturday Sabbath has been superseded by Sunday worship. To be accepted as a “mainstream Christian,” one generally must keep Sunday, to one degree or another.

If asked which day is the Christian Sabbath, most will answer, “Sunday.” Perhaps they will add, “Sunday is the New Testament Sabbath because Jesus rose from the dead that day. By observing this day, we honor Jesus.” They might even say, “The New Testament speaks of Christians going to Church on Sunday or Revelation 1:10 speaks

of the apostle John being in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, which is a reference to Sunday.”

Numerous clever arguments exist as to why Sunday is supposedly the day Christians are to assemble together and worship God. This unbiblical practice has been in effect so long—over 1,600 years—and is so common that few are able—or willing—to recognize clear scriptures that reveal the *true* Sabbath day, and its permanence. Most start with Sunday as the “Christian Sabbath” and then search for verses to support this idea—if they study at all—rather than beginning with an *open mind* and searching for clear passages on the subject, of which there are many. Even a quick study of the topic, with an open mind, will reveal the truth of the matter. Sadly, however, most are too steeped in this popular “tradition of men” to leave its grasp.

For those who read the Bible, how many times have you glossed over Mark 2:27-28? Or perhaps, with the Sunday fallacy as your basis, you have erroneously assumed this statement means that since He is Lord (or Master) of the Sabbath, Jesus must have changed it from Saturday to Sunday. Be honest with yourself.

Jesus’ statement that He is “Lord of the Sabbath” is simple to understand when one considers who created the Sabbath day. As the Creator of all things (Col. 1:16), *Jesus* sanctified the Sabbath after re-creating the earth, as seen in the book of Genesis: “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work” (2:2-3).

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath because He *created it*, and set it aside as a day of rest! No scripture even hints that He set aside Sunday, which is why He did not say He is “Lord of Sunday”—or any other day.

Do not allow shallow arguments to persuade you that the Sabbath was “only for the Jews” or that Christ “did away with it”! It has been in effect—as

holy time—since the foundation of the world. Man does not have the authority to establish or take away time that God has set aside as holy.

Many will argue that they keep the Sabbath “in their hearts” or “in Jesus.” Similar to other physical realities, such as the kingdom of God, they spiritualize away the Sabbath.

Considering that the Sabbath is a day of rest, ask yourself, how is it possible to keep the Sabbath, even “in the heart,” while performing daily duties? Can you keep the Sabbath while running a marathon? While building a home? Or while performing any other activity? Of course not. Read Exodus 20:8-11. This human reasoning allows a person to obey the Sabbath as he or she sees fit—rather than as *God commands!* What He desires is not part of their thinking. They make the Law of God of no effect—just like the Pharisees!

Some might cite the account in Matthew 12 (a parallel account of Mark 2:23-28) as proof that Jesus did away with the Sabbath. Yet Christ was trying to make clear that it is lawful for a person to satisfy immediate hunger on the Sabbath, as David did, even though it was not lawful for anyone other than the Levites to eat the showbread (I Sam. 21:1-6).

The Pharisees concocted numerous man-made regulations governing the Sabbath that made it a *burden* on people rather than a *blessing*. This is what Christ condemned, not the day itself. How do we know? Because “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” In other words, Christ created the Sabbath day for man to enjoy. He did not create man for the Sabbath to enjoy. The Sabbath is to serve man, not the other way around! However, the Pharisees—who were not authorized to amend God’s laws—made the Sabbath into a day for man to serve; thus it became a burden.

This is yet another example of Mark 7:7-9. The only difference today is that, rather than making the Sabbath a burden, false ministers have made the Sabbath of no effect! They have jumped to the other extreme.

To gain a complete understanding of the Sabbath, we recommend you thoroughly study the book *Saturday or Sunday – Which is the Sabbath?* You will be surprised from where the practice of Sunday-keeping originated and who authorized it.

JOHN 7:24 – “JUDGE NOT ACCORDING TO THE APPEARANCE, BUT JUDGE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT.”

Some will quote Matthew 7:1—“Judge not, lest you be judged”—to claim that it is “unchristian” to identify people’s sins or those that plague a society. How many times have you heard someone say, “Don’t judge me” or “Christians are not to judge others”?

Ask yourself, how can a Christian be expected to stay away from people of bad character, as the Bible commands (I Cor. 5:1-5; I Tim. 6:3-6), if he is not allowed to judge their actions—in other words, identify their inappropriate behavior? Also, how could Paul instruct Christians to “mark” and “avoid” divisive people (Rom. 16:7) unless the conduct of such people be examined—unless judgments were made?

The word “judge” in Matthew 7:1 comes from the Greek word *krino*, which can mean “to try, condemn, punish” or “to distinguish, decide.” The context depends upon how the word is used.

The apostle John wrote, “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn [krino] the world; but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). Yet, Paul used this same Greek word to teach that true Christians are in training to judge the whole world—including angels: “Do you not know that the saints shall judge [krinos] the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know you not that we shall judge [krinos] angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?” (I Cor. 6:2-3). Four chapters later, he added, “I speak as to wise men; judge [krinos] you what I say”

(I Cor. 10:15). Obviously, Paul did not intend for the Corinthians to condemn his words, but rather to judge—“decide”—whether he was teaching sound doctrine.

When Jesus said, “Judge not, lest you be judged,” He meant that you can sometimes avoid judgment coming upon yourself by avoiding judging others. This does not mean that Christians are *never* to judge. Rather, in certain situations, it is better to avoid rendering a judgment—a decision about, an evaluation of, conduct or behavior—lest you bring judgment upon yourself. If you decide to judge, be careful, as whatever standard you use to render a decision will be used on yourself: “For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matt. 7:2).

Consider. If Jesus had meant Christians should never judge, period, then He would have contradicted Himself when He said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge [krinos] righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Christ clearly stated that Christians are to judge others. However, we are to use *righteous judgment*. If a person judges righteously, he will avoid judgment coming upon himself.

Most overlook John 7:24 and focus only on Matthew 7:1. They fail to put all of the pieces of the puzzle together, thus they stumble and are snared (Isa. 28:13).

The key to understanding John 7:24 is found beginning three verses earlier. Referring to His healing a man on the Sabbath day, to which the Pharisees vehemently objected, “Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and you all marvel.” According to the Pharisees, healing on the Sabbath was considered work, so they accused Him of breaking the Sabbath.

In verses 22-23, Jesus continues His discourse: “Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision...and you on the Sabbath day circumcise a man. [According to the Law of Moses, a male child was to be circumcised eight days after being born, which would

sometimes fall on the Sabbath.] If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are you angry at Me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day?”

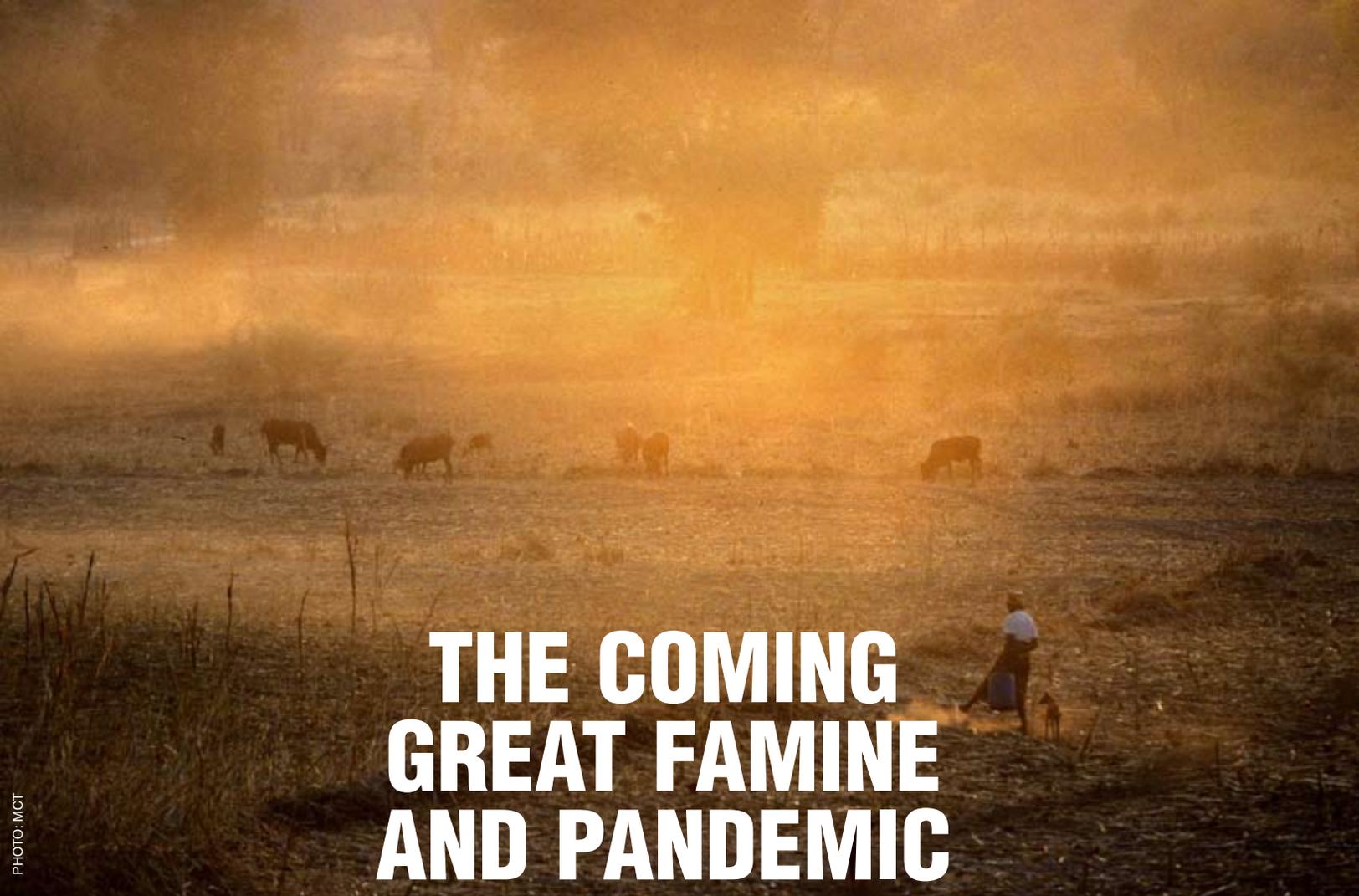
The Pharisees constantly accused Christ of deviating from the Law of Moses. They claimed to uphold this law down to the last jot and tittle. Jesus used this to His advantage and asked them why they considered it lawful to circumcise a child on the Sabbath, but unlawful to make “a man every whit whole”? Christ pointed out the hypocrisy of such “logic.” (Recall the example we examined earlier concerning Mark 2:27-28.)

This brings us to verse 24: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” Jesus said this to the Pharisees in this context because they were judging his actions according to *sight*, and not by *God’s Law*. In other words, they used human reasoning rather than God’s standard of righteousness, defined by His Law! Thus, they brought judgment upon themselves!

While Jesus was in the flesh, He too had to rely on God to judge righteously: “I can of My own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; *because I seek not My own will*, but the will of the Father which has sent Me” (John 5:30). Since the Pharisees were not seeking the will of God and were not obeying His commandments, they could not judge correctly.

Finally, consider Christ’s statement in John 8: “You judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, My judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me” (vs. 15-16). These verses reveal that Jesus did not judge *after the flesh* or according to sight. Instead, He judged *righteously*, because He relied on the Father, just as Christians are to do. The Father did the judging through Jesus. But this occurred only because Jesus sought the Father’s will and obeyed Him, as Christians are to do.

Please see **14 STATEMENTS**, page 18



THE COMING GREAT FAMINE AND PANDEMIC

Why Unsuspecting Millions Will Be Affected

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

WAR, STRIFE, corruption, poverty, illiteracy, disease—the world is filled with problems. Civic leaders, administrators, educators, pundits and others grasp for solutions, yet they focus on addressing the physical effects while ignoring the true cause, which is *spiritual* in nature.

Every issue of *The Real Truth* magazine analyzes world events, trends, conditions and ills—problems that cannot be solved through human reasoning, opinion or theory. Just as there are physical laws (gravity, inertia, etc.) that people must heed to survive, there also exist *spiritual* laws, which govern human behavior. Obeying them yields a multitude of benefits; breaking them brings ongoing misery and suffering, as evident in the deteriorating state of marriages, families, governments and other institutions and systems throughout all cultures and societies.

Mankind is helpless—fundamentally ignorant of the foundational knowledge that can bring about the universal peace, prosperity, equity and abundance all long for. Remarkably, such true understanding cannot be found in the halls of higher learning. Or in the speeches and policies of presidents, prime ministers and lawmakers. Or in the judicial renderings of the courts. Or in the editorial pages of opinion writers. Not even in the assemblies of this world's religions.

Thus, every issue of *The Real Truth* points to the one government—the one system—the one way of life—that will end all wars, poverty, injustices and other troubles plaguing humanity. That government is the KINGDOM OF GOD, which Jesus Christ will establish on the earth at His triumphant Return. This message of hope is themed throughout our growing archive of articles (freely accessible at www.realtruth.org).

Yet there is another message this magazine brings, a dire warning specifically for the modern-day descendants of ancient Israel.

Unlocking the Keys

Most people—even the vast majority of those who profess to be Christian—are unaware that about one-third of Scripture is prophecy, of which 90% pertains to the “end time” or “last days”—this modern age—and to “the world to come” (Mark 10:30), a time when God’s government will rule over all nations.

The Holy Bible is a coded book, especially in regard to prophecy, which speaks in terms of symbols, keys and types. To understand any biblical teaching, you must apply Isaiah 28: “Whom shall [God] teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine?...For *precept must be upon precept*, precept upon precept; *line upon line*, line upon line; *here a little*, and *there a little*” (Isa. 28:9-10). This means taking verses and passages scattered throughout Scripture and putting them together to gain the full view of any particular doctrine, tradition or prophecy.

To recognize and understand the events foretold to occur in your lifetime, you must know the PROPHEPIC KEY identifying the nations, peoples and sequences symbolized in God’s Word.

Material Blessings Given, Not Earned

The book *America and Britain in Prophecy*, written by David C. Pack, publisher/editor-in-chief of *The Real Truth* and presenter of *The World to Come* program, reveals—in stunning detail—that the British and American peoples, along with France, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and other nations, are descended from the “lost” 10 tribes of the ancient house of Israel. (Not to be confused with the house of Judah, from which come the modern Jews.)

The book shows that God promised the patriarch Jacob (whom He renamed Israel) that “a nation and a company of nations shall be of you, and kings shall come out of your loins” (Gen. 35:10-12). Many have understood this “company of nations” refers to the British Empire and/or the

Commonwealth of Nations (formerly the British Commonwealth).

Britain and America—prophetically called “Ephraim” and “Manasseh,” respectively—are the birthright nations, the main recipients of the national blessings God promised for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Prophecy also refers to the American and British peoples collectively as “Jacob,” as well as “Joseph.”

It is no accident that the territorial boundaries of the British Empire (foretold to be “a company of nations” headed by “kings”) once spanned the globe. By 1919, there was never a moment the empire went without daylight somewhere in its vast realm. Yet that same global power began to shrink almost as soon as it reached its zenith.

It is no coincidence that as Britain’s influence waned the United States of America emerged as the single greatest nation in history. Yet—as with the former British Empire—its worldwide dominance is crumbling. Why?

The national blessings God has bestowed—first to ancient Israel, then to her modern descendants—come with a special responsibility: “Behold, I [Moses] have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land where you go to possess it. KEEP therefore and DO them; *for this is your wisdom and your understanding* in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (Deut. 4:5-6).

God intended ancient Israel to be a model nation, to faithfully observe His Law and set the right example of conduct before all other nations. But the Israelites failed miserably. They rejected God and His ways time and again. They eventually split into two nations: the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

As divine punishment for their rebellion against Him, God sent each house into national captivity. Judah was allowed to return. Israel faded into the pages of history, becoming the “lost 10 tribes.” But their contemporary identity is *not* lost to those who

understand the prophetic keys found in the Bible.

Today the descendants of Israel believe they are Gentiles, not understanding that the unique friendship between the U.S., the United Kingdom and the Jewish state of Israel is rooted in a common past.

This is but one of the many reasons God declares, “The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider [understand]” (Isa. 1:3). In an age when the Bible continues to be the world’s best-selling book, biblical ignorance is the norm, especially in the U.S. According to the book *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn’t*, 60% of Americans cannot name five of the Ten Commandments, and 50% of high school seniors think Sodom and Gomorrah were married (*USA Today*).

Such profound ignorance comes with a price: “Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel: for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, NOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD in the land...*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you” (Hos. 4:1, 6).

Britain and America have enjoyed almost limitless national blessings—abundance of food, seaports, military triumphs, strong economies, etc. But they have taken these for granted, using their “civil liberties” in the pursuit of all things perverse.

God says of their civic leaders, “Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in you to their power to shed blood...Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravaging the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain” (Ezek. 22:6, 27).

He declares of today’s family unit, “In you have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of you have they dealt by oppression with the stranger [alien]: in you have they vexed the fatherless and the widow...In you have they discovered their fathers’ nakedness: in you have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And



■ **STARVATION AND PANDEMIC TO COME:** Left, a listless child who was among many kwashiorkor cases found in Nigerian relief camps during the Nigerian-Biafran war. This child's symptoms include edema of legs and feet, light-colored and thin hair, anemia, pot belly and shiny skin. Right, an undated photograph provided by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology shows the Emergency hospital at Camp Funston, Kansas, during the 1918 influenza epidemic.

PHOTOS: PUBLIC HEALTH IMAGE LIBRARY

one has committed abomination with his neighbor's wife; and another has lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in you has humbled his sister, his father's daughter" (vs. 7, 10-11).

God even has choice words for today's religious leaders: "There is a conspiracy of her prophets [false ministers] in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned My holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them...And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus says the Lord GOD, when the LORD has not spoken" (vs. 25-26, 28).

And of His people in general, God states, "Then say you, Thus says the Lord GOD, The city sheds blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and makes idols against herself to defile herself...In you have they taken gifts to shed blood; you have taken usury and increase, and you have greedily gained of your neighbors by extortion, and have forgotten Me, says the Lord God...The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yes, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully" (vs. 3, 12, 29).

Since He cannot find a man among them "that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it" (vs. 30), God has come to a conclusion: "Therefore have I poured out My indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads" (vs. 31).

This divine wrath is coming in three waves: "[1] *A third part of you shall die* with the PESTILENCE, and with FAMINE shall they be consumed in the midst of you: [2] and *a third part shall fall* by the sword round about you [military invasion]; [3] and I will *scatter a third part* into all the winds [national captivity and deportation to foreign lands], and I will draw out a sword after them" (Ezek. 5:12).

Special Punishment Foretold

It all begins with massive crop failure (Lev. 26:20), resulting from ongoing drought (vs. 19), excessive flooding and raging wildfires (Deut. 28:22), and insects (vs. 38, 42). From this will come food shortages, mass starvation (Lev. 26:26), pestilence (vs. 16, 21)—all leading to the unthinkable: "And you shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall you eat" (vs. 29).

Please see **FAMINE**, page 26



KENYA'S *DARKEST DAYS*

A NATION BESET WITH VIOLENCE

PHOTOS: MCT



14



The REAL TRUTH

How could a poorly handled democratic election quickly plunge this relatively peaceful nation into chaos? What does this reveal about Kenya—Africa—and mankind as a whole?

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

ELECTION DAY in Kenya, Dec. 27, 2007. Long lines of citizens patiently wait to pick up a ballot, mark off the candidates of their choosing, and drop the completed form into the ballot box. More than 30,000 local and international, accredited election observers scrutinize each phase of the process, working to ensure the vote is free and fair, even watching as each ballot is hand-counted.

The International Republican Institute, a nonprofit nonpartisan organization who monitored the election, initially commended Kenya in a press statement for “the peaceful manner in which Election Day was carried out.”

“However,” it stated, “voting is only one part of the process. The vote count and the acceptance of the results by the people are equally important.”

During the following hours and days, mobs armed with machetes and clubs roamed the streets, hacking and beating those who held opposing political views, and pillaging the areas they destroyed. Smoke from fires set by rioters mixed with retaliatory tear gas. Throngs of police wielding white batons and gray metal shields attempted to quell the unrest, firing live rounds, and beating rioters, onlookers or anyone loitering outside their homes.

The mobs left charred black frames teetering where villages once stood. A church was leveled in a fire, started after more than 50 people fled to it for safety, then were locked inside and burned alive.

The violence, which has been churning for over a month, has left over 850

people dead and displaced more than 300,000. The United Nations has stated that about 500,000 require urgent help. Many fear that Kenya will never



■ **DISTRIBUTING FOOD:** Kenyans displaced by election violence receive food from the Kenyan Red Cross, while police help maintain order, in the Kuresoi district, December, 2007. Kenyans in this area are split along ethnic lines, with smaller tribes rejecting Kikuyu control of political and economic life.

PHOTO: MCT

acquire the relative peace that it once knew.

Blame for the violence has been pinned on a rigged election, stubborn politicians and ethnic tensions.

Opposing Sides

In only a matter of days, Kenya suffered a national meltdown. Held up as an example of a peaceful, developing African nation, this country has entered what have been called the “darkest days” since its 1963 liberation from Britain.

As the election drew near, Raila Odinga, the prominent contender against the current president, began to pull ahead in the polls. On the day of the vote, early reports declared Mr. Odinga the winner, but the offi-

cial count declared that the incumbent, President Mwai Kibaki, had won by a mere 230,000 votes.

Mr. Kibaki, who was sworn in for a second term less than an hour following his electoral victory, was dismissed by Mr. Odinga, who asserts the election was a fraud.

International groups also question the results. The European Union and members of the African Union have expressed serious concerns about the nature of the election after reports

surfaced that there were instances of voter inconsistencies in several large voting constituencies across Kenya. After meeting with both sides of the opposition, the United States envoy to Africa told the *Associated Press*, “Yes, there was rigging. I mean there were problems with the vote counting process...both the parties could have rigged.”

Both Mr. Odinga and President Kibaki refuse to budge on how they view the results. It took the better part of a month for the two leaders to discuss the election-related violence. However, most saw this meeting as fruitless—a mere handshake and a photo opportunity. Still, Mr. Odinga refuses to accept his rival’s victory, demanding another trip to the polls. President Kibaki holds

that the election was fair and there is no need for a revote.

There is another obstacle complicating Kenya's move forward: Mr. Odinga's party won 95 parliament seats, while Mr. Kibaki's party won only 43. Kenya will be hard-pressed to make any political progress unless these two parties can reach a consensus on the election results and how to end internal turmoil.

However, this is not merely a political problem. Bands of young men brandishing bows and arrows and machetes—who feel Mr. Odinga should have won—roam the countryside terrorizing villagers who largely supported President Kibaki. Boys carrying sticks attempt to block main roads, crying, "If the election fails, violence prevails."

These problems run deeper than politics. The election has brought long-held ethnic tensions to the surface. Mr. Odinga is a member of the Luo tribe, as are many of his supporters. President Kibaki is a member of the Luos' long-time rival, the Kikuyu tribe.

Kenya has a long history of tribal tensions. In 2007, 300 people were murdered due to inter-clan violence, prior to the presidential election flash-point.

The Root Cause

It may be difficult for those in Western nations to understand nationwide unbridled acts of human nature resulting from one botched election. The blessings the West enjoys ensure that riotous violence rarely rears its head in such a complete way, making what is occurring in Kenya seem strange. However, it should not be.

News organizations and experts generally point to the political reasons and continuing tribal tensions as the source of Kenya's current crisis. But this is not the case.

To best grasp the true cause of the crisis, we must look beyond the web of political wrangling and long-held inter-tribal grievances, and examine the very nature of human beings themselves.

One only has to look to Hollywood and literature to see what characteristics are inherent to the human condition—lust, greed, revenge and hatred, often lashing out with some degree of physical aggression. These bursts of violence drive nearly every plot ever written. And just as these fictional violent acts fill movie theatre screens, real violence fills the pages of newspapers and news websites from the world over.

The real life scenes in Kenya's mob-ridden streets, still playing out daily more than a month after the election, illustrate this dark fact of humankind:

■ A group of young Luo men set fire to a bus they believed was owned by Kikuyus, in response to an incident the day before, when Kikuyus trapped 19 Luos, including 11 children, inside a house and burned them to death.

■ Hospitals have seen rape cases double—with doctors knowing well that the crime generally goes untreated and unreported.

KENYA: Troubled Nation in a Troubled Region

Main Ethnic Groups and Leaders

Opposition leader
RAILA ODINGA

Age: 62

Tribe: Luo, the third largest of Kenya's 42 tribes, has never had a president and feels it has not gotten its due



President
MWAI KIBAKI

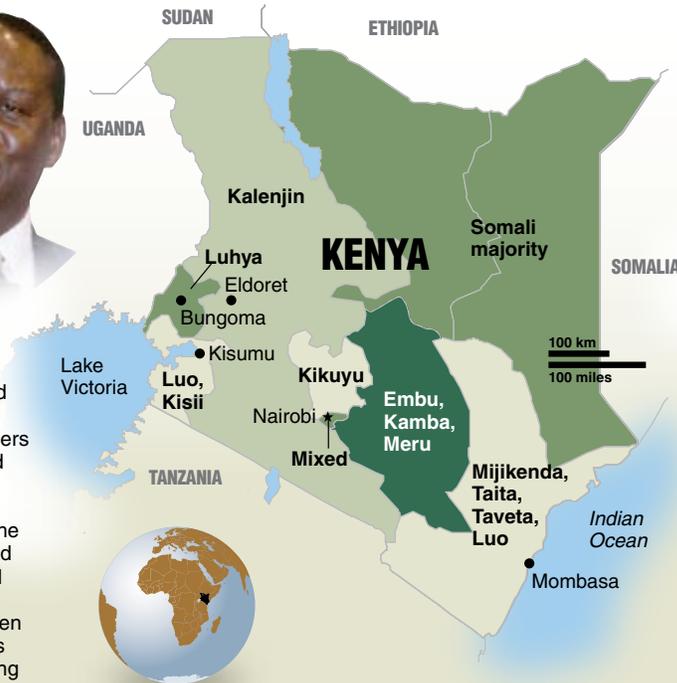
Age: 76

Tribe: Kikuyu, Kenya's dominant ethnic group, also controls top cabinet posts: defense, justice, finance and internal security



About the Luo

Pushed by other tribes toward Lake Victoria and the Indian Ocean, the Luo became farmers and fishermen. Since they did not live in the highlands, they were not displaced by British colonialists. They impressed the colonial governors, who forced English "schooling, dress and hygiene" on them. Since independence, Kenya has been ruled by the Kikuyu, and Luos largely have been the opposing group.



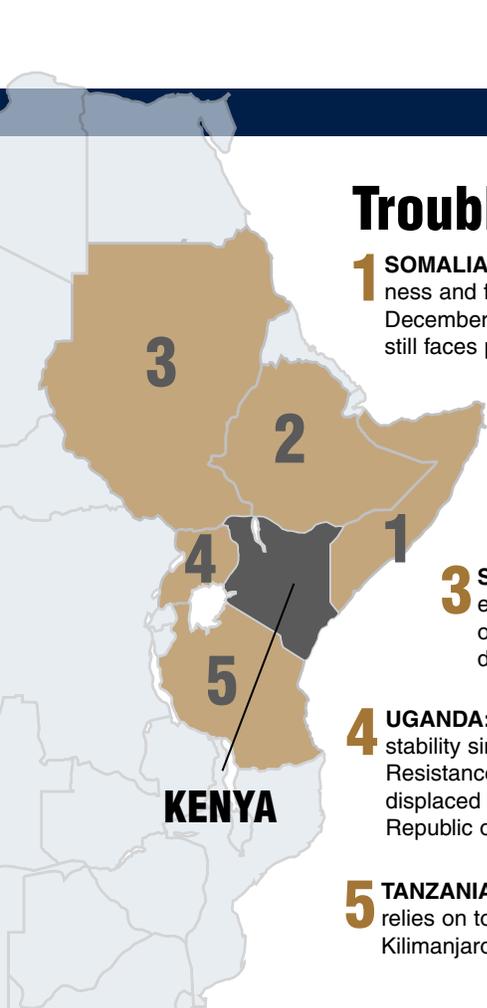
About the Kikuyu

Traditionally farmers in the fertile central highlands, the Kikuyu were driven from their land by the British, and many were confined to a small reserve. They became leaders in the Mau Mau uprising that started Kenya on the road to independence. Many moved to cities where they ran businesses. Today, the corruption that riddles the Kikuyu elite has stirred public anger, and many lost their seats in parliament in the last election.

Source: Red Cross, Guardian, ESRI, BBC News Country Profiles, The New York Times, Time magazine, MCT Photo Service

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Troubled Neighbors

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- 1 SOMALIA:** The overthrow of the central government in 1991, the rise of warlordism, subsequent lawlessness and famine have led to an estimated one million deaths, with many more becoming refugees. In December 2006, a weak government, backed by Ethiopian troops, drove out powerful Islamic militias, but it still faces political opposition and insurgency.
- 2 ETHIOPIA:** One of Africa's poorest countries, Ethiopia has been plagued by drought, famine and war. In 1974, long-time Emperor Haile Selassie was tossed out by a Marxist junta, which killed thousands of its opponents. In 1991, the junta was overthrown, followed by low-level armed conflict. Border wars with Eritrea, which gained independence in 1993, an insurgency in the Ogaden region and instability in Somalia also threaten the country.
- 3 SUDAN:** In 2005, a 21-year civil war between the mainly Muslim north and the Christian south ended after 1.5 million lost their lives. In 2003, fighting between Arab militias and non-Arabs broke out in the western region of Darfur; more than 200,000 have been killed and more than two million displaced. Uneasy relations with neighboring Chad have sparked fears of a wider regional conflict.
- 4 UGANDA:** After decades of abuse under dictators Idi Amin and Milton Obote, Uganda has seen relative stability since 1986 under President Yoweri Museveni. In 2006, the government and the cult-like Lord's Resistance Army signed a truce to end nearly two decades of violence that killed tens of thousands and displaced more than 1.6 million. Uganda has been criticized for its active involvement in The Democratic Republic of Congo's civil war.
- 5 TANZANIA:** While it has been spared from civil conflict, its elections have been contentious. Tanzania relies on tourism as an important revenue source; attractions include Africa's highest mountain, Kilimanjaro, and wildlife national parks, such as the Serengeti.

■ Men set up blockades to rob approaching cars or pull passengers out of vehicles and hack them to death with machetes.

■ Police were forced to stand between 400 youths from one ethnic group and 500 from another in an attempt to extinguish an all out battle.

Violence is filling Kenya to the brim, with no end in sight.

History also is rife with examples showing violence is intrinsic to mankind. The last century was filled with such acts—the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, Tiananmen Square protests, genocide in Rwanda, etc. This list would be endless if one were to look back into the millennia mankind has existed. One such account recorded in the Bible shows that during the days of Noah, the entire “earth was filled with violence” (Gen. 6:11).

Scripture also reveals that mankind's governments are leading humanity into the earth's darkest days, that thousands of years of man ruling as he sees fit would result in a time that would be “as the days of Noah”

(Matt. 24:37)—that in these days the earth would be “corrupt before God” (Gen. 6:11) and again would be filled with acts of violence—just like Kenya has become.

Human nature is defined in the Scriptures, detailing the reason for man's long history of violence. The book of Romans explains, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10)—and reveals that mankind's “feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes” (vs. 15-18).

Said plainly, the capacity for violence and murder lies within all human beings! While this may seem a stretch for those in nations blessed with relative peace, it takes only one controversial law being passed, the killing of a citizen by a police officer or a natural disaster for riotous violence to surface even in these countries. In bleak times, violence boils over.

This human nature is a characteristic that no government system now in place can outlaw, or deter with tear

gas, plastic shields or batons.

While recognizing mankind's violent nature is helpful, as it identifies the cause of the problem, it is not a solution. Again, periods of lawlessness and violence have been seen throughout history and without a way to change man's nature, these gruesome acts will continue to grow worse.

God's solution for the times of Noah—which, again, typify the times in which we are now living—was to wipe out mankind, save a few. While He has promised to never completely do this again (Gen. 8:21), Jesus Christ will soon return to wipe out the governments of men, which are based upon human nature and have brought forth these dark times and the foreboding future. With these systems removed, a flawless government will be set in place. Coinciding with this monumental event, man's violent nature will be changed, allowing peace, joy, equity and prosperity to flourish.

Quite a stark contrast to the present. □

14 STATEMENTS

Continued from page 10

Like so many of the Bible's teachings, the subject of judging is widely misunderstood. This is because the majority focuses only on Matthew 7:1 and does not take into account the numerous other verses on the subject. Again, most fail to put all of the pieces of the large biblical puzzle together (Isa. 28:10).

JOHN 3:6 – "THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE FLESH IS FLESH; AND THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT IS SPIRIT."

It is widely taught and believed that, to be a true Christian, one must be "born again" by the Holy Spirit. Millions of professing Christians define themselves as having experienced this "spiritual rebirth," claiming it occurs when an individual accepts Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior. Being born again is reduced to a spiritual *feeling* that supposedly occurs at conversion, rather than an actual "real life" birth. A series of statements spoken by Jesus in the book of John is used to support this popular teaching.

In an exchange with Nicodemus, a Pharisee, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). It is clear that for a person to see God's kingdom, he *must* be born again. There is no other way.

This idea of being born again confused Nicodemus. He could not understand how a human being could experience a second birth, as verse 4 indicates: "Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (vs. 4).

This is certainly a fair question, one that would naturally come to mind when learning that a person must be born a second time.

In verse 5, Jesus responded, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be

born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Here, Jesus begins to expound upon His statement in verse 3. Rather than merely saying that one must be born again to enter the kingdom of God, He explains that a person must be born of water and of the Spirit.

The mention of water in this statement applies to baptism—being fully immersed in water. Baptism symbolizes a person's old self being buried in a "watery grave." The person is then raised from the water a new individual and is to live the remainder of his life in obedience to the Father and Jesus Christ. In effect, such a person is "born of water."

The mention of the Spirit references the moment of being born again, or born of the Spirit. Most people believe this occurs when one supposedly accepts Jesus into his heart. They believe it is possible to be born again and remain a flesh and blood human being.

But notice Jesus' statement in verse 6: "That which is *born of the flesh is flesh*; and that which is *born of the Spirit is spirit*." How clear! This means it is IMPOSSIBLE for anyone who is a human being—flesh and blood—to have been born again. Those who are born of the flesh, or of a woman, are flesh—period! But those who are born of the Holy Spirit are Spirit. It is that simple.

To remove all doubt, in verses 7 and 8, Jesus elaborates, "Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again. The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and where it goes: *so is every one that is born of the Spirit*."

You need not marvel at these words. Jesus compared those who are born again to the wind. We can see and feel the effects of wind—trees swaying, debris being tossed through the air, etc.—but cannot see wind itself. Likewise, when an individual is born of the Spirit, other human beings will not be able to see him, because he will be composed of spirit—not flesh and blood. God is a Spirit and can-

not be seen; the same will be true of Christians at the resurrection.

We must ask: Of those who claim to be born again, do you see anyone who is a spirit being? No. They are still flesh! Yet they erroneously assume they are born again, despite Jesus' plain teaching.

When is one truly born again? At the resurrection of the dead, when Christ returns in full power and glory! "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's *at His coming*" (I Cor. 15:22-23).

Christians are born again "at His coming"—not before!

Now here is what happens at the resurrection: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump [the moment of Christ's Return]: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [body from human birth] must put on immortality [divine body at spirit birth]" (vs. 51-53).

Just one verse prior, Paul stated, "Now this I say, brethren, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*" (vs. 50). Paul clearly revealed that those who believe they are born again and in the kingdom of God now, while in the flesh, are in error. Human beings CANNOT inherit the kingdom of God before they have been changed—born again!—into spirit beings.

Will you believe your Bible? Or will you cling to traditions of men?

To learn more on this subject, you will want to read *What Does "Born Again" Mean?* This extensive booklet thoroughly addresses every vital question you may have about this subject.

In the April issue of *The Real Truth*, we will look at five more statements from Jesus. We will see what He said about tithing, love, the gift of eternal life versus perishing, how long He would be dead in the grave, and when salvation is achieved. You do not want to miss it! □

What is “Armstrongism”?

BY BRUCE A. RITTER

THE FINEST, most effective schools, corporations, nonprofit organizations, relief agencies, government administrations and their leaders share one thing in common: Despite all their successes, despite all the accolades they have received, *someone* will always criticize them.

Most historians, scholars, statesmen and other thinkers consider Abraham Lincoln the greatest president ever to lead the United States. Most believe Sir Winston Churchill was the most inspiring and dynamic leader of Britain during the 20th century. Yet Lincoln and Churchill, courageous leaders in their own right, had detractors in their day. Even today, long after their deaths, both men still have their share of critics.

This grim reality exists for all leaders and organizations, including religious groups and those who lead, guide and instruct them.

Detractors are increasing the volume and rate of their criticism through the Internet, a medium that enables even the most sophomoric rant to garner instant exposure and some credibility before a worldwide audience. Even worse, those so inclined can spew lies, half-truths, salacious rumors and malicious gossip with near impunity—and once something is posted to the Internet, it never goes away.

But, you might ask, what does this have to do with “Armstrongism”?

“Armstrongism” is a derogatory term used by detractors to describe those who observe and teach the plain understanding of the Bible, and its spiritual application to mankind’s problems, as taught by Herbert W. Armstrong.

For more than half a century, Mr. Armstrong was the presenter of *The World Tomorrow* program (first radio, then television), the publisher and editor-in-chief of *The Plain Truth* magazine, founder and chancellor of Ambassador College (three campuses), and Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God.

From 1970 until his death in 1986, Mr. Armstrong had personal audiences with more than one-third of the world’s heads of state. Among them were India’s Indira Ghandi, Israeli prime ministers Golda Meir and Menachem Begin, Jordan’s King Hussein, Prince Mikasa of Japan, Egyptian presidents Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak, United Kingdom Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and numerous other leaders and dignitaries.

Mr. Armstrong came to be viewed as “an ambassador without portfolio,” a representative of world peace. Unlike most religious leaders, he possessed a unique and extraordinary gift for explaining the truths of the Bible in simple, easy-to-understand language.

Instead of pleading with kings, presidents and prime ministers to “just accept Jesus,” Mr. Armstrong presented Christ’s gospel message in clear, concise and practical terms. He taught the difference between the

way of GIVE (symbolized by the “tree of life” in the Garden of Eden) and the way of GET (symbolized by the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”). He explained that the only way humanity will achieve universal peace, security, harmony, prosperity and happiness is through practicing the way of giving, helping and cooperating with others.

What Herbert W. Armstrong taught so plainly from the pages of God’s Word refuted nearly every belief and tradition commonly taught by the churches and denominations of traditional Christianity.

Subsequently, critics and defamers—especially religionists who had a personal stake in keeping their adherents content with non-biblical teachings—attacked through written word and speech, inventing the derogatory term “Armstrongism.”

Today, more than two decades after his death, the attacks and gross distortions continue.

Five Basic Doctrines

Mr. Armstrong wrote numerous articles, booklets and books, and gave countless messages, explaining the truths of the Bible. He proved from Scripture that the churches, denominations and religious movements of this world base their teachings on manmade dogma—the “traditions and commandments of men,” as Jesus Christ described in Mark 7:5-9.

Here are five basic beliefs that scoffers reduce to or attack as “Armstrongism”:

■ **The True Gospel:** Ministers, pastors, missionaries and countless other religionists preach a gospel

about Jesus (in reality, “another gospel” about “another Jesus” – II Cor. 11:4).

But what gospel message did Christ Himself actually preach? “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, *preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God*, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). Christ’s gospel was *not* about Himself. It was about the soon-coming kingdom of God—the Family of God ruling over humanity through the government of God. And that world-ruling government will be established upon the earth at Jesus Christ’s triumphant Return (Isa. 9:6-7).

■ **The Church:** Most professing Christians believe God’s Church is scattered, and comprised of differing, divided and competing faiths, denominations and movements.

However, as Mr. Armstrong taught throughout his 52-year ministry, the New Testament speaks of the Church of God as being the same as the Body of Christ. The apostle Paul wrote that the Church has many separate members (brethren), yet is like various parts of the human body, in that these members were connected. Notice: “For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that *one body*, being many, are *one body*: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into *one body*...For the body is not one member, but many” (I Cor. 12:12-14).

When one is converted—has repented, been baptized and received the Holy Spirit—this verse reveals that he has actually been placed into the Body of Christ as well as into the Church of God.

Chapter 12 of I Corinthians uses the analogy of hands, feet, eyes, ears and the mouth to show how different parts of a human body are connected within the same person.

Paul continues, “But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but **ONE BODY**” (vs. 18-20).

The “Christian” world teaches that the Body of Christ—Jesus’ Church—consists of many denominations, fellowships or “communities of believers,” said to all be connected by the “Holy Spirit” working in believers wherever they are affiliated.

But this thinking is contrary to what the Bible teaches. This substitute—counterfeit!—idea asserts, in effect, that Christ and His Body are divided among many groups or organizations—which is simply false.

I Corinthians 12 cannot be “spiritualized away” by human reasoning. It does not describe an amorphous, disconnected, “spiritual” body of disagreeing people and organizations throughout professing Christianity. Any foot, eye or ear that is removed from a human body dies! No severed body part can live for very long without blood supply and the connective tissue necessary to secure it to the body. God created the human body, so He obviously understands the analogy that He inspired.

The Bible definition of the Body of Christ is the Church! They are the same. Notice: “And He [Christ] is the head of the body, the Church” (Col. 1:18). Also read Ephesians 1: “...and gave Him [Christ] to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body” (vs. 22-23).

The Church of God is a type of Christ’s own Body. As its Head, Jesus governs, directs, builds and adds to His Body. Passages describe it as being unified in both doctrinal truth and love, and demonstrate that the entire Church (“whole body” and “every part”) must walk together in complete doctrinal agreement under Jesus Christ’s authority. And He works through His true ministers to keep the Church from drifting into “every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:11-16).

■ **God:** In the very beginning of the Bible, where it records God preparing to create the first human being, He says, “Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness” (Gen. 1:26). Clearly, more than one personage was involved in the creation of man. The Hebrew word translated “God” is *Elohim*, a

uniplural term like team, group, family or church.

Now read John 1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God” (vs. 1). God is one Family—one God—composed of two Beings: God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, who was the Word (John 1:14).

God and Christ enjoy perfect harmony and agreement in everything they do, reflecting perfect outgoing concern, love and cooperation. Scripture reveals that the Father is the supreme leader of a Family that both He and Christ (the Word) have chosen to expand by adding future members!

Traditional Christianity has long been ignorant of this truth, believing instead that God is a trinity—a closed off three-in-one Being who cannot be expanded to include other members. History shows that the trinity concept thrived in ancient pagan religions that existed thousands of years before Jesus Christ built His Church on Pentecost, AD 31. Historical records also prove that this ancient “three-in-one” idea, along with other pagan teachings, was grafted into the visible face of professing Christianity.

■ **Mankind’s Potential:** Billions have been falsely taught that human beings possess immortal souls, and after they die their souls will spend eternity in either one of two places: (A) in heaven “dancing with Jesus” or “staring into the brilliance of God’s face” or (B) wallowing in endless suffering and misery in hell.

Total fiction! God’s Word teaches no such thing!

Genesis 2:7 states, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man *became* a living soul.” Man is physical, finite. He was not *given* a soul—he “*became* a living soul.”

When people sin—when they break God’s Law (I John 3:4)—they earn the *wages* of sin: DEATH! Not eternal torture in hell. “*For the wages of sin is death*; but the GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Here, the Greek for “death”

means just that—death—not “being separated from God,” as false ministers teach. Mankind is *already* cut off from God, here in *this* lifetime: “But your iniquities have SEPARATED between you and your God, and your sins have *hid His face from you*, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:2).

Multiple verses, in both Old and New testaments, refute the “immortal soul” doctrine, with verses such as “the dead know not any thing” (Ecc. 9:5)—are oblivious to the living—and “the soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4, 20).

But what *does* await humanity in the next life? A future so vast, so mind-boggling, so amazing, it makes the dream of spending eternity “staring up at God” pale in comparison. Read our book *The Awesome Potential of Man*, written by David C. Pack, to learn more.

■ **Salvation:** Even today, false ministers claim Mr. Armstrong taught that one can “earn salvation through works”—despite the countless times he said the opposite! Religionists of traditional Christianity believe that God’s Law was nullified through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They teach millions that “Christ kept the Law for you,” and, in effect, they give license to sin.

But time and again Mr. Armstrong showed millions of his readers, viewers and listeners plain biblical verses—from Genesis to Revelation—instructing all who claim to be Christians to obey God. In other words, to stop sinning—breaking His Law (I John 3:4)—and start putting the Way of God into action. However, Mr. Armstrong also stressed that keeping the laws of God does NOT earn one salvation! Eternal life is a gift, freely given; it cannot be earned through works. Yet obedience is

NECESSARY for building holy, righteous, godly character.

“What is perfect character?” Mr. Armstrong wrote in *The Incredible Human Potential*. “It is the ability, in a separate entity with free moral agency, to come to the KNOWLEDGE of the right from the wrong—the true from the false—and to choose the right, and possess the WILL to enforce self-discipline to DO the right and resist the wrong.”

Over a lifetime of overcoming sins, faults and weaknesses in the flesh and building God’s divine nature within oneself—through faithful obedience to God by the power of His Spirit, walking in the way of outgoing concern for others and “love [which] is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10)—a Christian can *qualify*—that is, meet God’s standard of approval—to receive salvation and rule under Christ in God’s kingdom.

These five doctrinal teachings are among the hundreds that critics and naysayers denigrate as “Armstrongism.” Yet when people with open minds look into their own Bibles and let God’s Word interpret itself, the teachings of modern “Christianity” are clearly revealed for what they are—false!

A 2,000-Year Struggle

If what you have read thus far is unlike anything you have heard from televangelists and the pulpits of Sunday services, this should not be. Jesus Christ and His disciples taught these truths, and they are recorded in the Bible.

But as the first century closed, the majority of those who called themselves Christian began to mix truth with error. Some, for example, still observed the seventh-day Sabbath, but began to keep Easter, a pagan holiday formerly

known as Ishtar. By the end of the first century, nearly all of the original apostles were dead. Only John was left, and even he was kept from entering the Church at Jerusalem, for a false leader named Diotrephes (III John 9-10) had risen to leadership in John’s absence and seduced most believers away from the true doctrines and traditions.

As the second century was ushered in, a veil fell upon the religious landscape. Historical records during the next 100 years—called “the lost century”—are spotty at best. By the time the veil lifted, history revealed a much different “Church” from the one that Christ built. This new body of believers no longer kept the Passover or God’s annual Holy Days, or even the Sabbath. They worshipped on Sunday instead. They stopped observing the laws of clean and unclean meats. They changed works (diligent obedience to God, developing His righteous character and qualifying for His kingdom) into penance (earning salvation) and transformed God’s grace into license to sin.

Over the past 2,000 years, the Church of God remained small as a counterfeit church calling itself Christian came to preeminence on the world scene, influencing civil governments and the course of nations. The true Church suffered persecution and setbacks, but never died out—just as Jesus had promised (Matt. 16:18). Down through the years, persecutors invented derogatory names to describe those faithful few who held fast to the truth, without compromise. They were called different names: “Nazarenes”—“Paulicians”—“Waldensians”—“Armstrongites.”

But God and Jesus Christ have always known them as *Christians*. □

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Does Revelation 3:14 mean that Christ was created by God?

The phrase “the beginning of the creation of God” means the *beginner* of all creation (see Colossians 1:15-17). Christ is the King of creation. The Bible plainly states that Christ (known as Melchizedek in Old Testament times) had “neither beginning of days, nor end of life” (Heb. 7:1-3).

Some cite Proverbs 8:22-25 as proof that Christ was created. However, this scripture is clearly a personification of wisdom (note verse 1), not a reference to God. It shows that God possessed wisdom from the beginning and used it in fashioning the universe.

Christ has always existed. He was with the Father from the beginning (John 1:1-3, 14). He was not created, but was the direct Creator of all things (Col. 1:16).



Wipe Away the Winter Blues!

Frigid temperatures and dreary skies often do not spark excitement, but with proper planning and a positive attitude, wintertime can be enjoyable for you and your family.

THE LOCAL FORECAST on television announces another imminent cold front. Staring out a frost-covered window watching snowflakes slowly accumulate on the ground, a heavy feeling squelches any sense of motivation you might have: The winter blues have officially settled in.

It is obvious your children feel them, too. Cooped up in the house, they become restless and soon find themselves getting into mischief. It seems their attention spans have contracted as much as your desire to do anything.

While some experts classify the depressed feeling which accompanies the change in seasons as “Seasonal Affective Disorder” or specifically “winter depression,” both children and adults experience some degree of melancholy as daylight hours diminish and normally lush landscapes whirl into a blank page of white. Feeling trapped inside their homes, they blame the lack of sunlight for their moodiness, disinterest in normal activities, weight gain and constant drowsiness.

According to statistics, “winter depression” affects approximately 6% of the United States population—about 1 in every 16—who feel “inexplicably” dispirited five months of the year. Similarly, the “disorder” is said to attack 1 in 50 people in Britain. Even if the feeling is not enough to be classified as outright depression, between 10 to 20% of the U.S. population experiences some form of “cabin fever.”

But with all the other worries that threaten to alter our attitudes—relationships, sick children, financial problems, etc.—must we let something as fickle as the *weather* dictate our mood?

Though it is true that serotonin and melatonin levels vary more drastically during the winter months, we must ensure to not over-elevate the feelings we experience. Winter is a time to be enjoyed with family and friends, if we take advantage of all it has to offer. Though it *is* scientifically proven that a bright, warm, sunny day can cause us to be more chipper, the *attitude* with which we approach the gray, icy days of winter will determine whether we continue to be productive. This same

positive attitude will wear off on our children as well.

During the winter, the earth rejuvenates itself and prepares to spring anew. Animals enter hibernation, permitting other species of flora and fauna to regenerate. Instead of being disheartened by the frosty forecast, be excited about the coming of this important time—look forward to the landscape’s re-coloration.

But just because nature goes into hibernation does not mean you have to as well! We were created to be active, and must continue that way throughout the year—whether the day is sunny or dreary. There are plenty of ways to keep our minds and bodies active during the wintertime—effectively warding off the winter blues that threaten to dampen our moods and limit productivity.

Get Outside

Snow can be a pleasure to play in with your family! Taking the time to properly bundle for the cold will open a whole new world of fun to you and your children. Wearing the correct mittens, scarf, hat and thermal undergarments will make all the difference and prevent frostbite.

Imagine your children’s delight while watching you roll a small ball of snow that eventually turns into a full snowman, complete with charcoal eyes and a carrot nose. Or their excitement as you sled down a hill

together. Other winter sports options include skiing, ice skating, ice fishing, snowboarding or building snow forts. If you and your children do not enjoy any of the above activities, create your own games and invite your children's friends to participate. Although the activities invented may be silly or you may have other tasks you need to accomplish, your children will appreciate the *time* you spend with them. Given that our children are the greatest stewardship entrusted to us, we must always prioritize time with them.

If you do not have children, organize a skiing or sledding outing with friends to recapture your youth. Experts agree that spending time outdoors with friends can elevate your mood.

Aside from the fun factor, most health experts also recommend fresh air to help build strong muscles and bones in children and to help relieve stress in adults.

Be Proactive

Contrary to popular belief, winter should *not* be a time for laziness. Though gym memberships drop off industry-wide for three months during winter, you do not have to be a part of that statistic!

Of course, if icy roads pose safety risks, stay at home, but do not be inactive—this can lead to lethargy. Even if you are unable to go to the gym, doing an exercise video or lifting free weights is a viable option.

Remember, your children will follow your example. If they see you sitting at home depressed about the weather, they will assume it is acceptable behavior. On the other hand, if you maintain the same energy level during the winter, the season's arrival will not faze them.

If you have children or younger siblings, build a pillow fort with them or teach them a dance they can later perform for relatives. If you are not athletically inclined, crafts are a great way to occupy young minds and keep

them continually learning. Use these crafts to teach your children to think of others and express their creativity. The Internet is rife with ideas for children's indoor activities.

Being proactive also means organizing and prioritizing what you need to accomplish during the winter months. View winter as a time to catch up on all those indoor activities you could not bring yourself to do when the sun was shining brightly outside. What about those pictures from last year's family get-together that have been sitting in a box for the past year? Or that drawer of items you are not sure what to do with? Now is the perfect time to sort out the clutter that has accrued since summertime.

If you have children, be sure to include them while organizing. Showing them the importance of order will help them manage their own lives later. Also, teaching them to be tidy will save you from having to clean up after them.

Whatever you do indoors, do not let the television trap you into thinking that winter is a good excuse for a continual date with the couch! Statistics show that children spend more time—44.5 hours per week!—in front of a screen than any other activity other than sleeping. This equates to just under 6.5 hours of media use per day—more hours than a five-day workweek!

In addition, researchers discovered that obesity in children and adults actually *increases* the more hours they watch television.

Winter can also be a time to show others that you care and to teach your children to do the same. Cooking a hot meal for an elderly couple or offering to shovel their driveway can be a great way to help them ward off winter's biting chill. The slick ice often makes it difficult for the elderly to move about.

Even if you do not have children, but are young and healthy, take a moment to think of others. Doing so will help

eradicate the “woe is me” attitude that the winter blues can bring and give you a positive winter outlook.

Dive Into a Book

Just as it is important to be physically active, it is equally imperative to exercise your mind. New statistics from the National Endowment for the Arts show that reading improves quality of life and gives “children a better future, makes us more useful in the workforce, and encourages us to build our communities.” Along with making you a more efficient employee, reading builds confidence, and strengthens your comprehension and analytical skills. Studies have even shown that those who read regularly land higher paying jobs.

In this fast-paced world, less people are reading for enjoyment than ever before. What better way to travel to a new destination, augment your grammar skills and become more cultured than by reading a good book? Though television can show you new places, it does not expand your mind like a book.

If you are a parent, turn off the TV and read to your children. Explain how snow is formed and its many benefits for the earth. This will help them (and you!) to appreciate the beauty of the crystalline prisms that cover the ground during winter.

Eat Healthfully

Of course, none of the above activities can be accomplished without exercising proper eating habits. Given that winter is the time of high heating bills and increased auto expenses, we tend to lean toward cheaper processed foods that give us warmth, but have less vegetable content: heavy stews, casseroles, spaghetti, mashed potatoes—foods that pack on the pounds! Depending on where you live, vegetables may be difficult or expensive to obtain during winter. However, this does not diminish their importance!



READER COMMENTS

From online subscribers of our weekly news updates

ARGENTINA

■ "I am very interested in your publications. I am a high school teacher."

BOLIVIA

■ "Congratulations to *The Real Truth*. The articles are really interesting...I send them to my friends"

CANADA

■ "I was searching for the truth about pagan Christmas. I found what I was looking for, and more."

ETHIOPIA

■ "It is an interesting magazine. I like to know more. Thank you."

MALAWI

■ "I need to be updated on the truth of our faith. I have read about tithing, which is more controversial in most Churches...And most teachings you have put free on the Internet are very helpful. Keep up the good work."

MALAYSIA

■ "I subscribed to *The Plain Truth* magazine in the 70s...Recently, I recalled how I enjoyed reading the magazines then, and found the information and studies published quite interesting and mindboggling at times. With new technology, I clicked on a search engine and was so happy to discover this website."

MEXICO

■ "I found your site while I was watching videos with my daughter. We both read a big part of your article posted there about God's existence and scientific proofs [Editor's note: "The Existence of God – Logically Proven!"]. We loved it and I would very much like to receive more of your writings."

NEW ZEALAND

■ "I loved what I read from an email forwarded by a friend. I tend to use what I've read or heard to share with others and am looking forward in learning more. Thank you."

NIGERIA

■ "I read your article "Innocence Lost – The Sexualization of Youth." I appreciate

it being a pastor in a teenagers' church."

PHILIPPINES

■ "I thank God for giving me the opportunity to know more about Him. This site is very informative and spiritual uplifting, especially for me who has a very limited time to read books. I look forward to know more about the real truth."

SOUTH AFRICA

■ "Thank you for providing all the information and courses on your website. They will truly help me to become more understanding of God's Word and close in relationship to Him. Thank you."

TANZANIA

■ "I enjoy news explained in biblical perspective which is the biggest truth, and in fact this is how we are required to view things."

UNITED KINGDOM

■ "I have heard too much information relating to evolution. I don't believe it but wanted to be reassured by the evidence of the truths in the Bible."

[Editor's note: We recommend you read our extensive booklet *Evolution – Facts, Fallacies and Implications.*]

■ "I did not understand predestination until I read your article [Editor's note: "Has Your Life Been Predetermined?"]. Thank you for bringing me a greater understanding on this subject, much appreciated."

UNITED STATES

■ "I am new to your site and so far have found it most uplifting and eye-opening. Thanks for the in-depth information and verse-by-verse location for "reproving and setting things straight."

■ "Interesting articles that give me something worthy to ponder."

■ "I especially enjoyed your article "The Seven Signs of a Failing Nation."

■ "As a young man, I used to receive and read *The Plain Truth* magazine. Over time, I lost all contact when I immigrated to the United States. For some odd reason, I was thinking about it today and I said to myself, let me see what I can find about it on the Internet. Here I am."

Consuming excessive portions of carbohydrates without adequate amounts of vegetables can lead to weight gain.

The British Heart Foundation recommends that adults consume at least 400g, or five portions, of fruits and vegetables each day. However, just 13% of men and 15% of women in the United Kingdom consume this much. Equally, of young adults (ages 19-24) surveyed, 0% of men and 4% of women ate the recommended daily portion!

To combat the urge to eat for comfort, experiment with cooking different kinds of vegetables that may be cheaper to buy in the winter. Sweet potatoes can substitute starchy white potatoes, and are an excellent source of vitamin A and C, and antioxidants, which help prevent sickness. If you have children, spend time instructing them how to maintain a healthy diet. Teaching them to eat correctly when they are young will guarantee them a lifetime of good health.

The Most Active Time

Above all, never forget that winter is a time for fun and an opportunity to spend quality time with friends and family—regardless of the weather! Whether enjoying the chilly weather outdoors or doing activities indoors with loved ones, you will both build wintertime memories you will cherish for years to come.

Next time you find yourself staring out the window watching snow sprinkle like salt from the lamp-posts, expressionless and full of self pity, think about the treasures of the snow and all that winter has to offer. Organize and prioritize your life indoors so that when the sunny weather comes, you and your children will be able to take advantage of summer's lovely rays.

Soon you will be thinking about all the things you have yet to do during the winter months, wishing that summer was not such a short time away. And if the weatherman predicts snow, you and your little ones will be ready to combat the coldness and beat the winter blues with an active approach to life. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 2

preserve the true gospel. Notice I Thessalonians 2:4: “But as *we* were allowed of God to be *put in trust with the gospel*, even so *we* speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which tries our hearts.” This is a responsibility not to be taken lightly. True ministers always teach what God commands, not what “pleases men” or Bible “scholars.” So any idea that Paul taught another gospel (usually thought to be *about Christ*) is silly. He would have been literally pronouncing a curse on *himself*!

All who preach a false gospel automatically pronounce a curse on themselves. Why do men not fear to do this? Why are so many willing to teach any one of a variety of false gospels? The churches of mainstream Christianity cannot agree on what the gospel is.

Why?

Since Christ said the gospel was about the kingdom of God, and men do not know what the kingdom of God is, they have concluded that the kingdom may be a particular church denomination or Christianity collectively.

Others reduce it to a “warm feeling” in the “hearts of people.” Still others believe that it is the “millennium” or even the “British Empire.” Some have even concluded that the gospel of the kingdom of God is not for mankind today!

What incredible ignorance!

The masses are deceived (Rev. 12:9) by the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), who uses his ministers as instruments to spread the most popular false gospel, about the Person of Christ, instead of the message of the kingdom of God, which Christ brought.

Notice II Corinthians 11:13-15, where Paul wrote, “For such are *false* apostles, *deceitful* workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for 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...”

This is a blunt, shocking scripture. Yet it is true that Satan has ministers who *appear* to be the ministers of God.

The following verses continue Paul’s description of the work of false ministers.

Notice: “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes [speaking of false preachers] preaches *another Jesus*...or if you receive *another spirit*...or *another gospel*, which you have not accepted...” (vs. 3-4). If Christ IS the gospel, then why are “another *Jesus*” and “another *gospel*” listed as *two* separate problems?

People need to wake up to the deception—the mass delusion—of a supposed Christianity that denies virtually all the PLAIN TRUTHS of the Bible! God’s plan for mankind is staggering—incomparable to anything human beings have devised to replace what He says. The world ignores plain, clear, unmistakable scriptures found throughout the Bible about the kingdom of God.

Christ’s Message—An Advance Announcement

Like a newscaster far ahead of his time, Christ came to make an announcement about a complete change in the way the world would one day be governed. With this change would come unprecedented world peace, and happiness, harmony, universal health and prosperity.

Everywhere He went, Christ spoke about the kingdom of God. It was the subject of most of His parables. When He commissioned His twelve apostles and sent them to preach, the instruction was to preach about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2). When He later sent out His seventy disciples (Luke 10:1), He also commanded them to

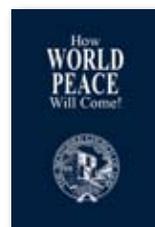
preach the kingdom of God (vs. 9). Paul preached this same “kingdom of God” message everywhere he went (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

The terms *kingdom* and *kingdom of God* are found scores of times throughout the New Testament. Yet, it is absolutely astonishing how nearly everyone has lost the knowledge and true meaning of what this kingdom *is*!

The word “gospel” is an old English word meaning “god spell” or *good news*. The word “kingdom” is also an old English term simply meaning *government*. In other words, Christ preached “the good news of the *government* of God.” The coming of world peace, happiness, health and abundance *will* certainly be good news for a mankind that has not known it for 6,000 years.

Christ’s disciples asked Him what the SIGN of His Coming and the end of the age would be (Matt. 24:3). He warned the disciples of deception from many who would come “in His Name,” saying, “Christ was Christ” (vs. 5). He meant that they would put an emphasis on the PERSON of Christ instead of the MESSAGE He brought. But, He also prophesied that “this gospel of the *kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and *then* shall the END come” (vs. 14).

We are NOW in the time of the end. Remember, if the kingdom of God had been preached through the centuries, from the time of Christ to the present, proclaiming it today could not be a sign that the world has reached the end of the age. Impostors and false leaders suppressed the preaching of the true gospel to the world until the 20th century. Starting in 1934, Herbert W. Armstrong began the fulfillment of this prophecy. It continues today—The Restored Church of God is preaching *this* gospel. (To learn more about how peace will arrive, read my booklet *How World Peace Will Come!*) □



FAMINE

Continued from page 13

Famine. Disease. One-third dead. And these will be just the beginning, for the birthright nations will scoff and refuse to listen, because “they are impudent children and stiff-hearted... a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me” (Ezek. 2:4, 3).

Meanwhile, the peoples who have long enjoyed unprecedented national blessings are unwittingly conditioning themselves to be in the worst state—physically, mentally and emotionally—for when the greatest calamities in history will one day arrive.

Poor Lifestyle Choices

In late 2007, the *Evening Standard* published an article titled “Modern Living to Blame for Cancer Epidemic,” which reported on statistics by Cancer Research UK about the “deadly consequences of increasingly hedonistic modern lifestyles” of Britons.

■ **Smoking and Binge Drinking:** “Cases of mouth cancer, which is associated with smoking and drinking, have increased by almost a quarter.”

■ **Sunbathing:** “Malignant melanoma—the most dangerous form of skin cancer—is up by 43% in ten years as warnings to stay out of the sun are ignored.”

■ **Overeating:** “Kidney cancer, which is much more common in smokers and the overweight, is also on the rise, the report shows. Rates of another disease linked to obesity, womb cancer, went up by a fifth.”

As untold millions in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world struggle to gather food for themselves and family members, obesity in the West is being increasingly embraced as a “lifestyle choice.”

“Obesity is a natural extension of an advancing economy,” health economist Eric Finkelstein told *AFP*. “As you become a First World economy and you get all these labor-saving devices and low-cost, easily accessible food, people are going to eat more and exercise less.”

Dr. Finkelstein and Laurie Zuckerman authored the book *The Fattening of America: How the Economy Makes Us Fat, If It Matters, and What to Do About It*. “There are simply many more incentives to gain weight than to lose it,” Dr. Finkelstein said. “We are, in fact, victims of our success as a nation. Unfortunately, the prize is diabetes, stroke and an increased likelihood of disabilities.”

American citizens are living longer, more materially abundant lives—yet needlessly suffer from a lifetime of poor health choices.

In the U.S., 31% of adults and 17% of children are obese. Obesity can cause multiple health complications, including cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, heart attacks, strokes, sleep apnea—and ultimately an early death!

America is not the only First World nation guilty of overindulging in food consumption. In Australia, 1 in 10 children ages 12-17 regularly eat chocolate, ice cream, hamburgers, instant noodles or potato chips for breakfast.

Those who maintain junk food diets risk severely impairing their bodies’ natural immune system, which fights off toxins and diseased cells. As a result, these cells can become cancerous.

Research from the University of Queensland’s School of Population Health (Brisbane, Australia) revealed that the negative effects of type 2 diabetes among Australians will more than double in the next 15 years. Type 2 diabetes (formerly called non-insulin-dependent diabetes, obesity-related diabetes or adult-onset diabetes) is a metabolic disorder that is characterized by insulin resistance and hyperglycemia. The disease, which had been more common in adults over age 45, is now increasingly seen in children and adolescents. This is linked to poor eating habits and high obesity rates.

Substance Abuse

All too often, parents adopt the child-rearing philosophy of “Do as I say, not as I do.” They try to impress upon their children the serious adverse

effects of certain behavior—yet display such behavior themselves. This sends a confusing message to children, which many translate into a license to do whatever feels good or gains them peer acceptance.

In 1992, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that “75% of all teenagers who smoke have parents who smoke.” Each day, between 4,500 and 5,000 11- to 17-year-olds smoke for the first time, of which about 2,000 will regularly smoke from that point forward. That translates into almost 750,000 new habitual smokers each year.

About 40% of fifth-graders across the U.S. have tried alcohol. By the time they finish eighth grade, 56% will have tried alcohol. Even more alarming, 15% reported heavy drinking—binge drinking five or more times in the previous 30 days. By high school graduation, 80% of students have tried alcohol and over a quarter report heavy drinking. They also report alcohol-related health problems. Nearly one in five teenagers report “blackout” spells, not remembering some or any of the previous night.

The statistical pattern of alcohol abuse grows even worse during the college years: 1,400 students die in bouts of severe drinking! Since 1993, colleges have seen a 125% increase in binge drinking by women. Sororities report that 80% of their members are binge drinkers. This has not come without consequences. A 2001 Syracuse study reported that twice as many women (as men) were rushed to hospitals with alcohol poisoning.

Then there is Canada, whose Senate recommended legalizing marijuana, stating that it is no more harmful than alcohol and tobacco, and it does not lead to stronger drugs. Federal studies show that 30% of 15- to 17-year-olds and 47% of 18- to 19-year-olds used marijuana in the past year.

Even legal drugs are routinely abused. From 1999-2002, the average number of Americans using at least one prescription drug in the past month was 45%. About 1.6 billion drugs were ordered or provided during physician

office visits in 2003, and 1.7 drugs were ordered or provided per physician office visit in that same year. By 2004, one in six people—almost 17% of the population—took three or more medications.

Our Toxic Environment

To live, human beings must drink clean, fresh water. Yet generations have left behind a toxic legacy of disrupting the ecosystems of the world's waterways with chemical pollutants. Massive ocean "dead zones" now exist, watery regions where animals cannot survive.

This is having an economic impact on the fishing industry, as well as suffocating marine life at risk. It has created numerous diseases and deformities in fish, crabs and other marine animals. The most famous of these dead zones is in the Gulf of Mexico, which spreads from the mouth of the Mississippi to other rivers along the coast, where fertilizers and other chemicals are deposited.

And then there are landfills and smog, which contribute to transforming nutrient-rich soil and fresh, breathable air into poisonous wastelands.

Leaders and Family

Gone are the days when children were expected to be held responsible for their actions. Parents and educators today proudly *encourage* teenagers to "experiment" with sex. Hetero-, bi-, homosexuality—young minds must "find their true sexual selves," the thinking goes. Instead of feeling shameful for their sexual indiscretions—and the unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases that often follow—teens are made to feel ashamed for holding on to their virginity!

Such is the rotten fruit yielded from a society whose basic building block—the family unit—is crumbling away. Broken families, shattered marriages, splintered lives, with each individual devoted to doing what "seems good," what "feels good," to himself.

The *Annals of Internal Medicine* published a study stating that sexually active homosexual men are 13 times more likely to contract a new strain

of antibiotic-resistant staph infection known as MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*). The new strain of the Staph bacteria—known as the multi-drug resistant MRSA USA300—continues to develop resistance to frontline antibiotics, moving to communities where the disease can be spread by casual contact. Recent studies have documented outbreaks in both athletes and military personnel.

What other deadly perils exist, waiting to be spread by man's desire to break every law of God ten times over?

Millions of parents, grandparents and great-grandparents recall growing up during the Great Depression, followed by the Second World War. In those years of economic turmoil and uncertainty, they learned to sacrifice—to do without personal wants, even many needs. They learned to work together, to put the needs of others ahead of themselves. They learned to aspire to greatness.

The days of yesteryear were far from perfect, but at least innocence, chastity and spiritual reverence were publicly and widely encouraged.

But not today. A new generation has emerged, a nation of watchers, not doers. They ignore most things worthwhile, such as books (unless their pages are filled with tales of witchcraft, sex and demons), and fill their impressionable minds with visual junk. Valueless television shows—mind-numbing Internet social sites—pointless video games—and texting, instant messaging and cellphones. When does the chatter end?

Today's youth—and not just teens, but those in their twenties, thirties and into their forties—"curses their father, and does not bless their mother" (Prov. 30:11). They "are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (vs. 12). With their "lofty eyes" and "lifted eyelids" (vs. 13), their "teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men" (vs. 14).

Such are pampered, catered to, spoiled and self-indulgent. Everything

is always "about *them*"—how *they* feel, what *they* think, how *they* view their world. Such indolent people would have failed miserably during the Depression and World War years, yet they somehow see themselves as superior to previous generations.

Little do they understand that a calamity far, far worse than the 1930s and 40s is scheduled for arrival: "For thus says the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even *the time of Jacob's trouble*" (Jer. 30:5-7).

The first wave of God's punishment will arrive. As with 2005's Hurricane Katrina, hope in governments and institutions to come to the rescue will be met with futility. Every man, woman and child will be left to fend for themselves. A society of overweight, overstressed, oversexed, overmedicated and overly proud citizens will face barren food shelves. Restaurants gone out of business. Empty stomachs. Stress, despair. Desperate actions driven by extreme hunger. Lack of necessary nutrients and vitamins; weakened immune systems. Out-of-control diseases spreading from house to house, city to city. One-third—200 million—dead.

And then will come two more waves of punishment.

But once the peoples descended from Israel learn to seek the One who gave them their national greatness—once they collectively set their minds to become the model nation God had intended—they will enter into an amazing and glorious future. It all begins with a change in thinking and living. If only the birthright nations were not too stubborn and defiant to do this, and escape the punishment to come.

But the good news is that individuals *can* decide to change—and if they repent, God will give them a way of escape. □

HEALTH ISSUES

Study: Type 2 Diabetes in Australia to Double

Research from the University of Queensland's School of Population Health (Brisbane, Australia) reveals that the negative effects of type 2 diabetes among Australians will more than double in the next 15 years.

Type 2 diabetes (formerly called non-insulin-dependent diabetes, obesity-related diabetes or adult-onset diabetes) is a metabolic disorder that is characterized by insulin resistance and hyperglycemia. The disease, which had been more common in adults over age 45, is now increasingly seen in children and adolescents. This is linked to poor eating habits and high obesity rates.

The study found that junk food consumption by children accelerated the condition. The availability of fast food even in hospitals has come under scrutiny. Boyd Swinburn, Professor of Population Health at Deakin

University's Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research, said the government had failed to "walk the walk" and that it was projecting a mixed message regarding health issues (*The Herald Sun*).

Thousands of staff members, visitors and day patients no longer receive catered meals. Cardiovascular problems are on the rise due to unhealthy habits and are the biggest cause of health problems in Australia.

Individuals diagnosed with type 2 diabetes double their risk of having a stroke. Tests have shown individuals are likely to suffer a stroke within 10 years of diagnosis, and that a stringent diet coupled with an exercise program must be followed to counter this risk.

The report highlighted that to prevent the disease, the education process must begin with parents. Thousands of schoolchildren feast on junk food and

soda for breakfast. A study has shown that 1 in 10 children ages 12-17 regularly eat chocolate, ice cream, burgers, instant noodles or potato chips as their first meal of the day. Research has shown that youngsters who skip breakfast are more likely to overeat later in the day.

A report by Dr. Tim Crowe, also from Deakin, found that the vast majority of overweight children carry their extra weight into adulthood, setting themselves up for a lifetime of health issues.

Dr. Crowe stated in his report, "In families that don't eat together and don't have good cohesiveness, there is an increased likelihood that the kids will be eating junk food. With the breaking down of the family structure due to parents working longer hours, the effects can be seen in children's eating habits." □

New Staph Bacteria 13x More Likely in Homosexual Men

Sexually active homosexual men are 13 times more likely to contract a new strain of antibiotic-resistant staph infection known as MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*), according to a study to be published in the February issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

This new strain of the Staph bacteria—specifically known as multi-drug resistant MRSA USA300, which was once confined to hospitals—continues to develop resistance to frontline antibiotics and has moved to communities where the disease can be spread by casual contact. (Recent studies have documented outbreaks in both athletes and military personnel.)

Early symptoms of MRSA are mild skin infections and abscesses. If not diagnosed early, the disease can eat away at the infected region, poison the blood, and cause inflammation of the heart valves and pneumonia.

The researchers randomly chose patients from numerous hospitals and

Staphylococcus aureus

Antibiotic-resistant staph infections are more common and much deadlier than previously believed, causing about 94,000 life-threatening infections and 19,000 deaths in the U.S. in 2005.

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus

- Resistant to penicillin-related antibiotics; can be treated with other drugs, but health officials fear resistance to those, too
- Bacteria lives on skin or in nose; can be carried by healthy people



Source: Journal of the American Medical Association, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

of whether they are HIV-positive.

The study also revealed that one in 588 citizens in San Francisco's Castro District—a neighborhood with the highest concentration of homosexuals in the United States—are infected with the new MRSA bacteria.

Though not the focus of the study, the scientists suspect that use of methamphetamines and illicit drugs, multiple partners, history of sexually transmitted infections and other high-risk sexual behaviors play a significant role in the spread of infections.

"These multi-drug resistant infections often affect gay men at body sites in which skin-to-skin contact occurs during sexual activities," said the lead author of the study, Dr. Binh Diep, a postdoctoral scientist at San Francisco General Hospital Medical Center.

"But because the bacteria can be spread by more casual contact, we are also very concerned about a potential spread of this strain into the general population." □

GEOPOLITICS

South/Central American Alliance Against U.S.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez last week called for a NATO-like alliance of various South and Central American countries, as a bulwark against what he perceives to be the imperialism of the United States.

The anti-U.S. leader said that Nicaragua, Bolivia, Cuba and Dominica should create a united military alliance: "If the U.S. threatens one of us, it threatens all of us. We will respond as one" (*BBC*).

The five countries are already part of the trade alliance known as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, named after South America's independence leader, Simon Bolivar.

Mr. Chavez insists the U.S. poses a serious threat to the region. He recently accused Washington of attempting to



destabilize the region via closer ties with Columbia. He even also suggested that the United States and Colombia were cohorts in an attempt to assassinate him, and/or initiate a military confrontation with Venezuela.

At the same conference, Mr. Chavez suggested that the countries in the region should remove their billions of dollars of international reserves from U.S. banks, suggesting that the collapse of the U.S. dollar and economy was imminent.

"We should start to bring our reserves here," Mr. Chavez said. "Why does that money have to be in the north? You can't put all your eggs in one basket" (*International Herald Tribune*).

According to the Central Intelligence

Agency's *World Factbook*, Venezuela ranks 34th in reserves of foreign exchange and gold, ahead of such countries as Denmark, the United Arab Emirates and the Netherlands. (Other nations in the potential trade alliance are well down the list and would not likely have a great impact.)

Trade alliances created to "compete," "counter" or "balance" the U.S. are not new. Yet these are increasingly popular and powerful.

Consider for example the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN (and its extension to "ASEAN-plus three" or the "East Asia Summit"). Underneath any trade-alliance is the possibility or opportunity for a military alliance.

Mr. Chavez for the moment appears to be the most vocal for such in the South/Central American region. □

WEATHER

Thousands Displaced by Bolivian Floods

More than 35 people were declared dead or missing after torrential rains pummeled seven of nine departments throughout Bolivia, resulting in flooding and mudslides that uprooted at least 32,000 families. The downpours caused an estimated \$30 million in damages, which included 10,000 hectares of crops.

According to the U.S. Agency for International Development, "rising waters of the Ichilo and Grande rivers in Santa Cruz Department and the Bermejo River in Tarija Department have obstructed roads, destroyed houses and crops and led to evacuations."

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that several towns were completely submerged in the Department of Cochabamba and large portions of highway collapsed.

In addition, newspapers across

Bolivia reported several rivers that overflowed their banks, which inundated the homes of several hundred Bolivians, forcing them to seek shelter elsewhere.

Others around the country were left without safe drinking water from the continuing storms. The World Health Organization warned about a Dengue Fever outbreak in Cochabamba and an outbreak of the Hanta virus, which has already killed two people.

Although aid was promised to the small nation, it was slow to arrive. A little less than a week after Bolivian President Evo Morales declared the country a national emergency, Brazil, Chile and Venezuela donated helicopters and planes to help deliver food and supplies to stranded citizens.

According to official numbers, this year's floods are worse than those that occurred around the same time last year,

which left more than 13 people dead and displaced over 30,000 families.

Even though flooding is an annual occurrence, government officials reported that the rainy season this year has been exacerbated by the climatic phenomenon known as La Niña. This weather pattern brings heavy rains and flooding due to decreased ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific.

In a statement by ABI, the Bolivian Information Agency, Mr. Morales blamed the capitalist system for contaminating the planet and the natural disasters that have resulted.

"Mother Earth (or the Pachamama according to native Aymara tradition) is injured to death because of these policies of over industrialization," he said in the Bolivian newspaper *Los Tiempos*.

Heavy rains are expected to linger as Bolivian officials continue their search for victims. □

