

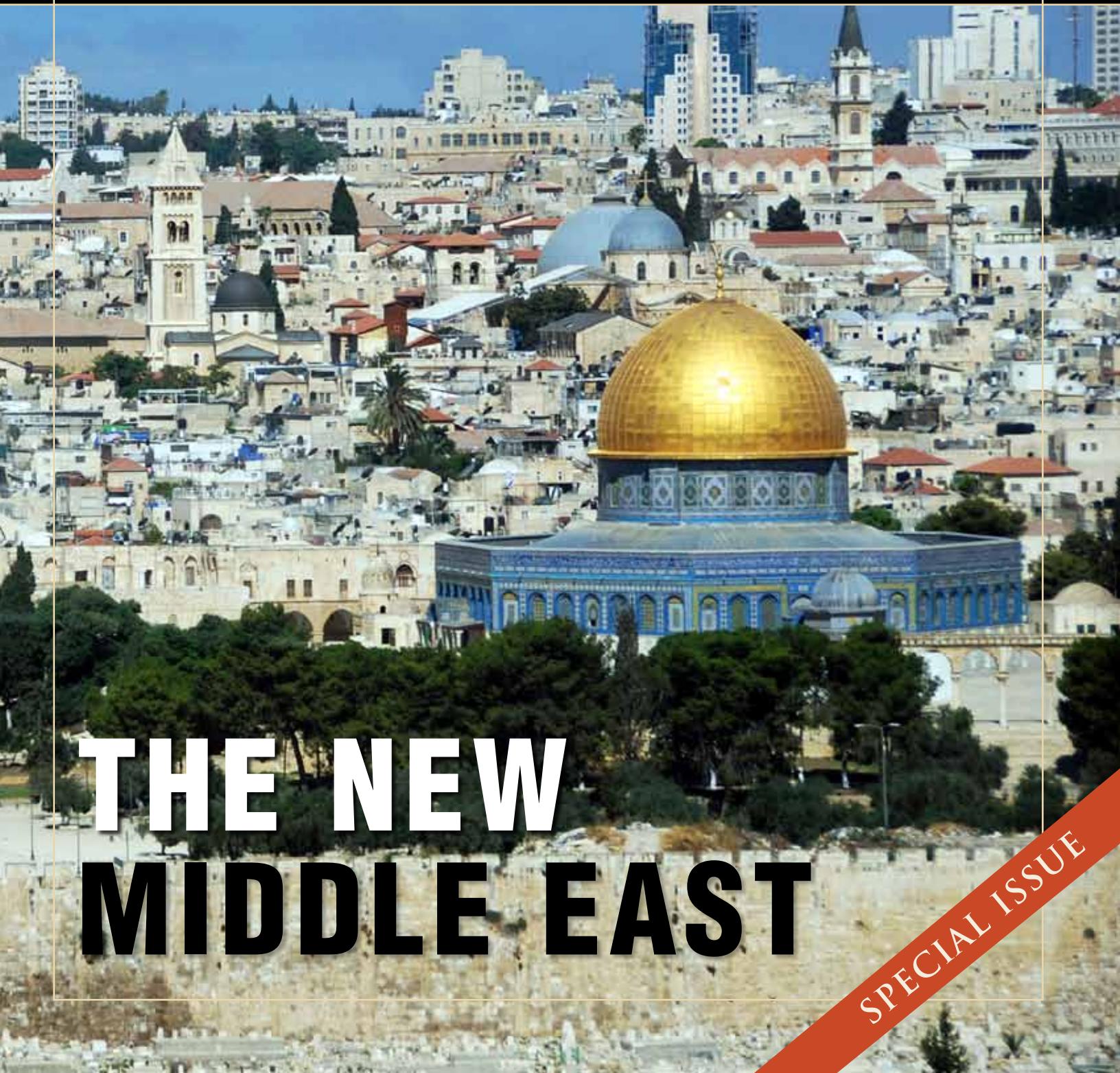
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2011

THE

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REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



THE NEW MIDDLE EAST

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE REAL TRUTH

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

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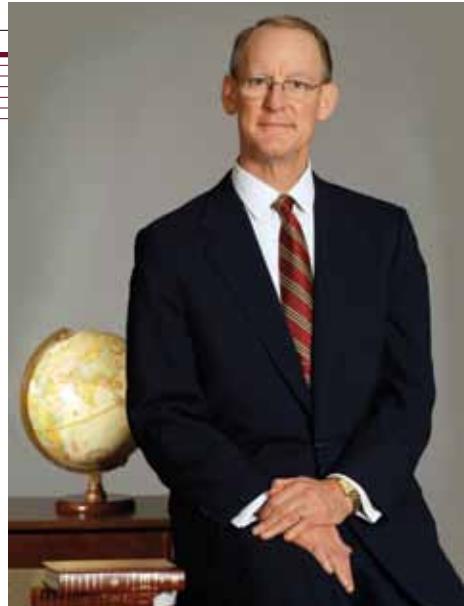
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Pack



13 More End-time Prophetic Events— in Exact Sequence

JESUS FORETOLD that powerful prophecies would slam into an unsuspecting and *unprepared* world. He warned, “Take heed...lest...that day come upon you *unawares*. For as a *snares* shall it come on *all* them that dwell on the face of the *whole* earth” (Luke 21:34-35). Most are unconcerned with conditions and events prophesied to affect everyone—the entire planet—“*all* them that dwell on the face of the *whole* earth”—and that these things will come without warning, like a snare.

This Personal is the second part of a two-part article series explaining the correct sequence—the *exact* order—of prophetic events before Christ’s Return. I have already covered 13 events (of about 70 total), and will conclude with 13 more that will happen soon.

But understand. When these 13 *final* events arrive, it will already be too late for you to heed Christ’s words.

Before examining more events, three critical end-time periods must be noted. They are the 1,335 days,

1,290 days and 1,260 days. These time frames begin with different events, but end with the same one—Christ’s Return! Each will become clear as we proceed.

Remember, the purpose of this article series is to provide brief summaries of events, not the detailed explanations serious Bible students will pursue.

NUMBER 14: God’s two-fold Work ends

The Bible foretells a second, different kind of famine when the “night”—final terrible darkness—will have come and, the Bible says, “no man can work” (John 9:4). This includes the Church’s Work of (1) announcing God’s coming kingdom and (2) warning the world’s greatest nations before special punishment comes!

The prophet Amos recorded a stunning prophecy. He wrote, “The days come, says the Lord GOD, that I will send a *famine* in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of *hearing the words of the LORD*” (8:11). How do the masses react? “They shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and *shall not find it*” (vs. 12). This will be a shocking moment for frantic millions who can no longer

hear what God has been declaring through His Church. The verse implies these vast millions will have grown accustomed to hearing God's Word. Do not miss this! These Personals will not continue forever!

Once God's open door to His Church is closed, *the famine of hearing God's Word* will suddenly settle over all nations. The fulfillment of Matthew 24:14 and Ezekiel 33:7-9 will be finished! May God help you heed now!

NUMBER 15: True Christians are taken and gathered

The same day God's Work ends, His people are taken from harm's way and gathered for flight to a designated Place of Safety.

Jesus' admonition is: "Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to ESCAPE all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). The phrase "all these things" means all end-time events—those just before Christ's Return. Remember, Jesus said, "As a snare shall it [these things] come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (vs. 35). But God's purpose is that some be spared—that they ESCAPE—global calamity.

The arrival of this critical moment is something that will only be known to those in God's one, undivided Church. His people will plainly understand. Luke 17:30-37 introduces *what* the Church is awaiting, and *how* it escapes. No rapture is coming!

Daniel prefixes the 1,335-day period with "blessed is he that waits" (12:12). This is the specific time for which the Church has patiently waited to be "taken" to safety (Matt. 24:13; 10:22; Luke 21:19; Rev. 14:12). Realize you can *escape* what lies ahead. You need not fear—if you do exactly what God instructs.

NUMBER 16: Armies surround Jerusalem

We are now ready to examine two prophecies occurring in and around Jerusalem. The next two events are closely related. Follow carefully. The first, the abomination of desolation, is introduced in Daniel. Notice: "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days" (Dan. 12:11). So then, 45 days after the Church is taken, at 1,290 days before Jesus returns, this "abomination" appears.

Here is Jesus' first clue about this: "When you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the *desolation* thereof is [near]" (Luke 21:20). If something is *near*, it has not happened yet. The armies in fact carry this out 30 days later.

NUMBER 17: The abomination of desolation appears

Jesus reveals in Matthew the related event to look for beside armies around Jerusalem. Let's read: "When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, whoso reads, let him understand" (24:15). Mark adds this: "When you shall see the abomination of desolation...standing where it ought not [meaning, in the holy place]" (13:14). This involves some kind of "standing" abomination "desolating the holy place."

Now, what exactly *is* this holy place? The context makes plain that it is not figurative, but refers to a *literal* place—a religious site. Recognize, however, that this place cannot be a *pagan* religious site. It must be a location that God considers, or once considered, holy, with something foreign and blasphemous put there. History and other scriptures outside the gospels reveal this will be a statue placed inside an

at least partially rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem.

Understand. For the twice-daily sacrifices (morning and evening)—outlined in the Old Testament (Ex. 29:39-42; Num. 28:4-6)—to stop, they must first be restarted. There must come at least a temporary restoration of these Old Covenant sacrifices in Jerusalem at the Temple Mount under the direction of a restored priesthood. While a *full* temple is not needed, something must be built.

When Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, and the False Prophet and Beast put an idolatrous statue at the site of the re-established sacrifices, the abomination will officially "stand in the holy place"!

NUMBER 18: God's people flee to safety

The appearance of the armies and the abomination—events 16 and 17—are the *signals*. We saw that God promises escape to safety for His servants. He is explicit, telling them, "Because you have kept the word of My patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation [or trial, meaning the Great Tribulation], which shall come upon all the world, to try [test] them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10). This is the "snare" of Luke 21:35.

Revelation 12 briefly overviews the 2,000-year history of the true Church. The woman it describes symbolizes both the Old Testament Church that was first ancient Israel, but later the New Testament Church.

Verse 9 states, "The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the *whole world*: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Notice: "When the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [now spiritual Israel, the Church]" (vs. 13).

Please see PERSONAL, page 29



David C Pack

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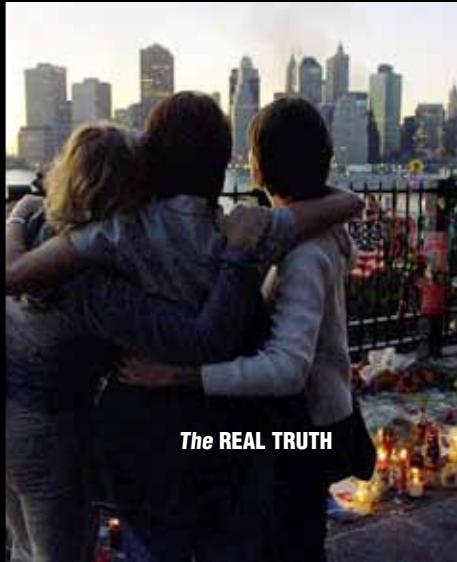


A DECADE AFTER 9/11

—WHAT SHOULD WE REMEMBER?—

While memories of September 11 elicit a flood of emotions, the lessons of that historic day should never be forgotten.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER



WE ALL watched. First, the north tower of the World Trade Center, just after the initial jet ripped into it—a gash spewing black smoke and sending flaming debris spiraling to the street below.

When another plane struck the south tower, the horror deepened. We knew we were under attack.

On that day, a group crowding under the Jumbotron in Times Square exhibited a wide range of emotional responses: New Yorkers trading every bit of news, trying to allay confusion. A woman with her hand to her face in disbelief, tears streaming down her cheeks. A man with his arms folded trying to process what he had just learned. A woman making the sign of the cross and crying out to God. And many watching in stunned silence.

Then, another plane crashed into the Pentagon, and the hijacked United Airlines Flight 93 went down near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Across the nation, we watched, crowding radios and television sets. Confusion turned to panic: *How could this happen?* Then to anger: *Who would dare do this to America?*

As the buildings crumbled into a heap in lower Manhattan and sent a towering plume of ash and pulverized concrete over the island, all most of us could do was keep watching.

What we witnessed that day was immediately seared into our collective consciousness: office workers tumbling hundreds of feet after jumping from a jet-fuel inferno. An endless whirlwind of papers streaming across a cloudless blue sky. Three firemen somberly raising a flag at Ground Zero with the ghastly rubble piled in the background. All air traffic grounded in a matter of hours.

■ **AMERICA ATTACKED:** Top, hijacked United Airlines Flight 175 from Boston crashes into the south tower of the World Trade Center at 9:03 a.m. in New York City (Sept. 11, 2001). Bottom left, a volunteer fireman stands in Manhattan's Union Square Park at a memorial for victims of the World Trade Center attack (Sept. 16, 2001). Bottom middle, mourners hug during a moment of silence in Chicago in memory of the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Sept. 14, 2001). Bottom right, three women embrace while looking at the hazy New York City skyline (Sept. 16, 2001).

PHOTOS: SPENCER PLATT/ (TOP); JEFF HAYNES/AFP/ (BOTTOM LEFT); JOHN ZICH/AFP/ (BOTTOM MIDDLE); DOUG KANTER/AFP/ (BOTTOM RIGHT) GETTY IMAGES

We watched helplessly as symbols of economic and military power burned. Even the United States president, the most powerful man in the world, later stated he felt “powerless” as he watched men and women leaping from burning buildings.

Video footage soon after the towers fell revealed what seemed an alien world. The sun blotted out. Everything covered in dust. An eerie desolate silence.

Indeed, we had entered a strange new world, ushered in by 19 men who hijacked four planes. The event changed everything: how we traveled, how wars were fought—how we lived.

Ten years on, images of September 11, 2001 still stop us cold. No matter the number of times we watch appalling footage of one of the airplanes striking the World Trade Center, our stomachs still churn.

The events of 9/11 caused America to promise, “We will never forget.” This meant to never forget the 3,000 victims of mass murder. To never forget the heroic actions of emergency personnel and average citizens. To never forget how that day felt, to ensure a similar event would never happen again.

President George W. Bush set the tone for “remembering” on the evening of September 11 in his speech from the Oval Office: “This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time.

“None of us will ever forget this day, yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.”

And in the wake of a collective tragedy, Americans did unite.

One Nation

As workers and inhabitants made their way back to Manhattan after September 11, the smell of rubble and melted plastic mingled with the stench of decaying bodies. The horror of that day lingered, but something else did as well. New Yorkers felt increased camaraderie after surviving the disaster, often asking each other, “Where were you on 9/11?” Strangers would recount their stories to one another.

Hints of a feeling of togetherness began on September 11 itself. In Washington Square Park, a few began holding hands, with passersby quietly joining. People from varied backgrounds soon added to the number, and the circle quickly grew. It was consoling to know they were not alone.

A similar feeling of solidarity swept the country, starting with candlelight vigils and memorial services in states across the union. It was seen in a sea of waving American flags, then in pins, T-shirts and bumper stickers.

The entire nation shared a unified sense of purpose. They backed the president almost unanimously. A Gallup poll showed 90 percent approved of his performance on September 21-22, including 89 percent of Democrats.

In the face of losing the freedoms and prosperity they had long enjoyed, Americans better appreciated them, and were prepared to work hard to ensure their continued existence. Those in New York City volunteered for clean up at Ground Zero. Elsewhere, individuals began volunteering, both for 9/11-related charities and local causes. Thousands returned to the churches of their childhood, trying to make sense of what happened. By some estimates, nearly half of adults attended a religious service the Sunday following 9/11. Charitable donations went up as well, with Americans giving about \$2.8 billion to help those affected by the terror attacks.

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ISRAEL'S NEW REALITY

The Mid-East democratic nation is evaluating its position in a fast-changing region.

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE



■ KNESSET MEETING: MK Dr. Einat Wilf and Mr. David C. Pack discuss conditions in the Middle East.

PHOTO: MOO-V GROUP

THE HISTORY OF the modern nation called Israel is a story of adversity, controversy and prevailing against overwhelming opposition. When it declared independence after the British Mandate for Palestine ended following World War II, surrounding countries immediately declared war on the emerging state. The outcome—victory for Israel against steep odds—is still called *al-nakba* (“the catastrophe”) by many Arabs.

A number of military engagements followed. The Suez Crisis (1956), the Six-Day War (1967), the Yom Kippur War (1973), a number of conflicts with Lebanon, the Intifadas, and others—each one demonstrated Israelis’ resolve to hold on to what many of them consider their ancestral homeland, as documented in the Old Testament.

Over these decades, Israel has maintained or gained control of two areas that some view as belonging to others: the West Bank, home base of

the Palestinian Fatah movement, and the Golan Heights, once part of Syria.

Now Israel, having never had broad international support, faces weakening ties with existing allies and a renewed round of challenges to the legitimacy of its current borders, carved out in the aftermath of the Six-Day and Yom Kippur wars. Meanwhile, many of its Mid-East neighbors are in the midst of upheavals, toppling iconic leaders who have been in office for decades.

What will the months ahead, in a new Middle East, hold for the state of Israel?

Palestinian Statehood

Israel's Mid-East relations range from a longstanding truce with Jordan to openly hostile rhetoric from Iran. But its closest "foreign" neighbors, the Palestinians, are within its own post-1967 borders.

Many Palestinians also view control of Jerusalem and the West Bank as their birthright. For some, this territory encompasses *all* of Israel. As a result, September 2011 will likely see a push for Palestinian statehood through a United Nations resolution.

In an exclusive interview with *Real Truth* Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack at the Knesset, MK Dr. Einat Wilf discussed her view of the implications: "The Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, of which I am a member, has been throughout the last few months carrying out quite a few discussions about September with numerous experts of legal and international law, just to understand what this could mean for Israel."

Dr. Wilf explained that Israel is approaching the prospect of Palestinian statehood by trying to prevent it completely, which appears unlikely. She said that while the nation already has support from Canada and the U.S., it is now undertaking the more difficult task of convincing Europe. Backed by these nations, she stated, Israel will be in a better position to oppose the measure.

"We can appreciate that the United States does not want to be stuck alone at a moment where there's a sense that the world supports a Palestinian state. There's great desire for both sides to negotiate. Right now the sense is that the government is generally passive. [Some argue] that this is intentional, this passivity—that the prime minister realizes that if any breakthrough is ever going to happen, it has to happen through a sense of being coerced into it rather than having initiated it... In general, I think both Israelis and Palestinians prefer their leaders not to go into the negotiations too enthusiastic. If they go into them 'kicking and screaming,' I think we have a greater

sense of trust that they represent our interest."

Dr. Wilf referenced a 2011 speech by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the U.S. Congress, in which he explained that the core of the issue "has never been the existence of a Palestinian state, it has always been about the existence of a Jewish state." She explained that there is "still a fundamental denial and willingness to accept that the Jewish people have a historical connection to this place" and "they have the right to self-determination by virtue of this bond in this land. This is still completely denied and rejected by our neighbors. Even when they're willing to come to terms with us, [it's] because we exist, because we are strong, not because they acknowledge the historical bond."

"So the efforts to undermine Israel, to annihilate Israel, over the years took numerous forms. Military, terrorism, economic strangulation through the Arab boycott, and all of these have failed. Israel was able to ultimately defeat all the militaries and make it clear that conventional war is not going to be the way to defeat Israel."

It has been able to contain terrorism to the point that the Israeli public is no longer terrorized and even in terms of economic strangulation, Israel has been able to make itself into an island.

"If you look at the trade patterns of most countries, they tend to trade with the countries around them. If you look at the trading patterns of Israel, it would be an island in the middle of the Atlantic, between Europe and then North America. Even though recently we started to trade more with China and India, Israel has been able to build this strong, innovative, export-based economy that has nothing to do with the region—actually annul[ing] the effects of the Arab boycott."

"What we're seeing is that the efforts to undermine Israel do not end every time that Israel wins. They just move somewhere else. 'If it's not the military, we'll try terrorism. If it's not terrorism, we'll try economics. If it's not economics, let's go to the international legal arena where we have automatic majorities, where the language of human rights has been subverted pretty much to single out Israel for anything.' What we're seeing is that



■ IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION: Mr. Pack meets with Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Naomi Tsur to talk about some of the challenges facing the city.

PHOTO: THE REAL TRUTH

the conflict in recent years has been moving more and more into this arena, I call it, of the media, of consciousness, of images. But the conflict continues. It's non-violent, which is good. But it's still very fierce and it takes place in NGOs and supermarkets and academia and international bodies and criminal courts. I think the notion is that for those who continue to reject Israel, they feel that this is a place where they have at least a level playing field, if not a strong advantage. So I think really by going to the UN in September, the Palestinians will be getting the legal basis for which to continue to attack Israel with numerous legal and international forums.

"I think September will mark a key point, and the process has been going on for a while, in the transference of the arena of conflict from the military, terrorist, violent, economic one to one of international law, images, media, human rights law. This is really what it's all about...What they will be getting is the ability to continue the conflict in an arena where they feel strong."

Contested Capital

The Israel/Palestine quandary has the nation's capital divided by lines, zones, ethnicities and ideologies. In an interview with *The Real Truth*, Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Naomi Tsur described the diverse mix of her city's residents: "The Arab community, the Jewish community...you have immigrants, people that came from the former Soviet bloc...you have the Ethiopian community. A real melting pot and gathering of exiles to form this wonderful mosaic which is Jerusalem, and that brings with it tremendous economic challenges..."

"We have a city with about 800,000 residents and when we analyze it in terms of a modern city to run, we have tremendous challenges...a city within this complex and diverse population in the eye of a geopolitical storm—which

was already going on in King David's time and which is unlikely to calm soon...[there has been an] awful lot of suffering. It's layer upon layer of building and destruction. A city that has been destroyed countless times, which has always reemerged with a new strength, and which has a beauty that has [endured]."

Economic challenges are not the only kind that Israel faces. Terrorist attacks from radical elements in the



■ **MUNICIPAL CONCERN:** Benny Kashriel is mayor of Ma'ale Adumim, a town of about 37,000 that was established in the Judean desert in 1991 but is now prohibited from building additional structures.

PHOTO: THE REAL TRUTH

Gaza Strip and the West Bank led the nation to erect over 300 miles of security fence, which in a few years became a wall in certain sections. While this fence is controversial, it is hard to dispute the results: Israeli deaths by terror attacks have been reduced to a small fraction of what they had been.

Ms. Tsur went on to discuss the human side of Jerusalem's security challenge: "People from Palestinian territories [coming] into Israel are checked very thoroughly...and it's one of the

saddest moments of the day for many of us. Because I would love not to have to be checked very thoroughly. I would like to have free movement. I remember when [former Israeli Foreign Minister] Moshe Dayan had the idea of opening up the passage from Israel through the Palestinian territories to Jordan, and it was a wonderful vision of a new Middle East where everyone could live together. But we can't allow that.

"It's not that [Palestinians] can't come through. They have to be checked before they come through. We have too many tragic cases in the past that show that we need to keep up this security fence, which we would all like to pull down, because good fences don't make good neighbors. These are some of the stark realities of our time and our area."

Expansion Frozen

The disputed status of the West Bank has led to intense international pressure on Israel to halt any new construction in this area. This in turn has housing in short supply—no small problem in a society that, according to a 2006 Gallup poll, considers about four children per family the ideal number. The cost of housing there has dramatically increased, sparking widespread demonstrations by young Israelis.

This dynamic is embodied in Ma'ale Adumim, a town of about 37,000 established in the Judean desert in 1991. In a tour and meeting hosted by Mayor Benny Kashriel, Mr. Pack and several *Real Truth* writers took in the beauty of what is referred to as a settlement. Its immaculate residences, parks, greenery, roads and commercial areas could pass for an affluent suburb of Los Angeles or Miami. This is made all the more remarkable by the fact that it was built on scrub desert terrain—almost a humanly engineered

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Unrest Continues in the Arab World

Will democratic uprisings bring lasting peace—or continued bloodshed?

BY NESTOR A. TORO

THE HEADLINES paint a picture of turbulence, often grim, sometimes shocking. Men and women burned to death, protesters flooding streets, countless killed by snipers, and many more hurt by stray bullets. Rapes are common. Tanks patrol cities, attacking civilians. Buildings are set ablaze. Reports describe stonings, beatings, innumerable arrests, torture, hangings, beheadings and mass graves.

“A new Middle East is emerging...” Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad proudly declared on the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in a *Telegraph* article. Albeit, he said, “without the Zionist regime and US interference...”

Almost two months prior to this speech, a Tunisian man set himself ablaze, sparking protests that forced the nation’s president to resign—a 28-day struggle that triggered the revolutionary fire still raging across the Arab world.

After the Tunisian regime’s defeat, it took just another 18 days to oust Egypt’s long-time president, Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled for 30 years.

This prompts the question: could Arab democracy be part of the “emerging new Middle East” Iran’s president and others talk about? If so, would it serve to harm or help the stability of the region?

Libyan Overthrow

The unrest that shook Tunisia and Egypt continues to spread. So far in 2011, anti-government protests have rocked the streets of Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Syria, and Iraq, among others.

The so-called “Arab Spring” has segued into an “Arab Summer,” bringing with it chaos and violence. Yet the violence has not affected all Middle Eastern countries. Certain wealthy Arab nations have seemingly been able to find a way to “work things out” temporarily.

The Hindu reported that the “Emir of Kuwait simply handed out bonuses of 1,000 dinars (about \$3,000) trans-

ferred to every bank account, the Saudi Arabian King Abdullah injected \$37 billion in pay rises and grants to students,” and “many Gulf countries have raised oil and fuel subsidies...”

In Libya’s case, the uprising took a different turn. There, the arrest of a lawyer and human rights activist sparked a “Day of Rage” against the nation’s government and its leader, Moammar Gadhafi.

“Libyan state media maintained a news blackout, but opposition groups used Facebook, Twitter and other social media networks to send out reports and images of demonstrations and clashes,” *Guardian* reported.

The government showed zero tolerance for the rebellion. The nation’s military attacked civilians—something the Egyptian military refused to do earlier this year. Soon the conflict escalated into civil war with military and financial repercussions for Libya—which is ranked 11th in oil exports.

■ **DOWNED:** Rebels inspect an airplane destroyed by a NATO air strike at the Bir Durfan military base near Bani Walid, Libya (Sept. 4, 2011).

PHOTO: CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GTET IMAGES

By mid-March, the UN Security Council imposed a no-fly zone on Libyan airspace. Soon after, NATO airstrikes began.

After seven months of rebel “pick-up truck warfare,” paired with international military intervention, the battle reached a turning point, and NATO-supported rebel forces seized control of the capital, Tripoli.

“It’s absolutely horrific,” a nurse at Tripoli told *BBC News*, adding, “There is a bridge about 20m from where I am in the hospital, and one side of the bridge is pro-Gaddafi and one side of the bridge is anti. They’re chucking rocks and everything at each other, and it’s just awful. Last night there were massive rocket-propelled grenades and heavy arms fire, small arms fire, and that went on for about three to four hours. The patients are absolutely petrified. And the staff are petrified. We had rebels inside our compound last night and they said they were trying to protect us but they were actually trying to gain a better vantage point at some snipers across the road.”

Only a few days from the 42nd anniversary of the military coup that placed him in power, Mr. Gadhafi became a fugitive.

“When Gadhafi marked 40 years, he put his picture everywhere—images of him as a brash young army officer, the self-styled philosopher, the king of all African kings,” *Voice of America* stated. “Today, those posters are still here, only they are on the street, stepped and stomped on by the people he once led. Back in 2009, there were fireworks. Now, tracer bullets light the sky of a Tripoli in blackout.”

Internet videos showed rebels in pickup trucks celebrating by firing automatic machine guns skyward.

“The mood was festive,” *Guardian* stated. “The crowd included women in hijabs wearing rebel shawls, an elderly man in a dapper suit and a group of traffic policemen sporting their white, colonial-style uniforms. After Friday prayers several hundred people poured out on to the marble steps of the Jamal Abdul Nasser mosque, Tripoli’s big-

gest. And then the chanting began. First: ‘God is great.’ Next: ‘Death to Gaddafi.’ Then: ‘All Libyans are brothers.’ Then, once more: ‘Death to Gaddafi.’”

Libya is the third country to attempt to oust its leader. But the fighting is not over, as Mr. Gadhafi’s loyalist supporters continue to fight for him in a few cities, including his hometown of Sirte.

Since Tripoli’s fall, more than 40 countries, including the Arab League, have recognized Libya’s new temporary political leadership, the National Transitional Council (NTC). Yet professor Daniel Serwer of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington believes a different entity should take the lead: Europe.

“Europe, because of Europe’s vital interests, oil and gas supplies, the question of migration which Europe would like to avoid; but at the same time, I think it would be important for the UN Security Council to lay out some goals that the Libyans and the international community can share: a more democratic Libya, a unified Libya, one that can govern itself, and one that treats all its citizens correctly. But you’ve got tribal divisions, east-west divisions, you’ve got secular/religious divisions, you’ve got a continuing resistance effort by Gaddafi’s forces, these are troublesome at best, catastrophic at worst.”

Syrian Unrest

Elsewhere, in Syria, the “Arab-spring-turned-summer” has not been tolerated either, with government forces firing on protesters.

Syrian dissidents, however, have taken a different path: “Syria’s opposition movement is adamant that it will remain nonviolent, saying that peaceful methods hold the best prospect of overthrowing [Syrian President Bashar] Assad’s regime and building a unified, prosperous nation afterward,” *Los Angeles Times* stated.

“Taking up arms is not an option,” a member of the Local Coordination Committee opposition coalition told the newspaper.

Amnesty International released a report regarding treatment of arrested protesters: “The accounts of torture we have received are horrific,” the organization’s researcher on Syria stated.

Based on the report, *Guardian* said, “The majority of victims were tortured or ill-treated, with injuries ranging from beatings, burns and blunt-force traumas to whipping marks, electrocution, slashes...” and other abuses.

At least 1,800 protest-related deaths in Syria have been reported since March.

The violence has prompted tens of thousands of Syrians to flee, and has been widely condemned internationally.

Regional Implications

The waves of unrest in the Arab World have sent ripple effects across the globe, particularly in the price of oil.

“Attempts to avert the spread of popular unrest that has swept neighbouring countries have led oil-producing countries to pour billions of additional dollars into social spending, raising the oil price that they need to cover this expenditure,” the Centre for Global Energy Studies reported.

But what about the millions living in a transformed Middle East?

For millennia, whether under democracy or dictatorship, pursued through conflict or non-violent demonstrations, man’s attempts to bring about, or prevent, political change nearly always result in poverty, misery, despair—and bloodshed.

The most recent developments in the Middle East are another terrible example. Democracy has never been popular there, nor has it persisted for long as *any* nation’s form of government in the grand scheme of things.

Although the area’s residents are optimistic about the kind of life a change in government will bring now, much more than man’s efforts are required to bring about the kind of change so many desire...

To learn about how such change will come—and the future of the region—watch *The World to Come* program “The Middle East in Prophecy—Today’s Unrest.” □



Hurricane Irene: 2011's *Tenth* Billion- dollar Disaster

While the storm dissipated above the North Atlantic Ocean, its real impact on the nation had only just begun.

AS RAYS of sunshine appeared over New York City—an area broadsided by a massive storm system just hours earlier—sighs of relief were overshadowed by complaints that Hurricane Irene's impact had been grossly exaggerated.

There were *no* 100-mph winds, *no* complete submerging of the subway system, *no* shutdown of all electrical circuits. Tens of thousands of residents were *not* trapped in high-rise buildings—buses and ambulances *were* able to travel streets *not* completely inundated with water. Schools and hospitals were *not* shuttered indefinitely, and millions of residents were *not* told to stay home from work for weeks.

Instead of being overcome by waist-high water, New York City's Times Square was filled with revelers sliding headfirst through six-inch puddles and boasting about “survival kits” they compiled consisting largely of vodka and cookies. Cheering crowds gathered in the streets as a visiting hockey team pulled out their sticks and began playing in an intersection.

The mass evacuations and emergency precautions seemed to be for nothing—mere scare tactics by a government determined to cover itself.

“Some New Yorkers complained that the hurricane—actually a tropical storm when it reached the city—had been overblown, but many others praised [Mayor Michael] Bloomberg,” *Forbes* reported.

After the storm, many felt the city would spring back to life with minimal traffic delays. Instead of being concerned, people thought: *Why all the fuss?*

The title of a *Telegraph* article summed up a prevalent attitude: “Perfect Storm of Hype: Politicians, the media and the Hurricane Irene apocalypse that never was.”

“With all the preparations and all the hoopla on TV, it was all for naught,” one

■ **WASHED OUT:** A section of Highway 12 is swept away by Hurricane Irene near Rodanthe, North Carolina (Aug. 30, 2011).

PHOTO: CHRIS SEWARD/RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER/MCT

city resident told *The New York Times*. “I feel embarrassed that we made such a to-do.”

The thought of the world’s financial capital suffering a catastrophic deluge caused journalists and newscasters to flock there. This meant that when Irene did not deliver its “worst-case scenario” for New York City, many media outlets reported the storm had been overhyped.

Yet this was only one area hit along the United States East Coast. Others that received less coverage did not fare as well.

Path of Destruction

For residents elsewhere, warnings came too little, too late: “It never became the big-city nightmare forecasters and public officials had warned about, but it caused the worst flooding in a century in Vermont,” *USA Today* reported.

The storm affected more than 65 million people in 12 states, pummeled several major metropolitan hubs, resulting in at least 40 deaths, 2.4 million evacuees, 9,000 canceled flights, approximately six million homes and businesses without power, and an estimated \$7 billion in overall losses plus \$3 billion in insurance coverage.

From North Carolina to Maine, terrible stories caused by the storm filled headlines:

- New Jersey firefighters battled a house fire from a boat and rescued survivors left clinging to trees hours after their car floated away.

- More than 15 heating-oil trucks were swept into a swollen New York river—spilling fuel everywhere.

- A North Carolina highway broke in five points, stranding thousands.

- A Massachusetts man was killed after being electrocuted by a utility pole that fell onto his roof.

- In Virginia, falling trees killed at least four people, including an 11-year-old boy.

As residents started clean-up efforts across the 1,100-mile disaster zone of toppled trees, washed-out roads, and scattered debris, many came to the realization that although the storm was

not as powerful as originally feared, the damage it left behind was more significant than they thought.

Officials cautioned the country should not yet feel it had “dodged a bullet.”

Unpredictable Conditions

While people may scoff now, the dire predictions for New York City and other areas were founded on solid evidence.

“In the annals of natural disasters, it doesn’t get much worse than a major hurricane directly striking New York City and Long Island,” *Reuters* stated, adding, “People still talk about the Long Island Express of 1938, a Category 3 storm that the U.S. government has said would cause \$40 billion in damage if it hit today.”

New York state’s infrastructure is in need of a serious overhaul: 46 percent of major roads are in poor condition, 45 percent of major urban highways are congested, and 42 percent of bridges are structurally deficient, according to an American Society of Civil Engineers report.

Even with the tropical storm status, Irene caused 100-year floods, historic evacuations, and shredded entire houses. What would have happened with a Category 2—let alone a Category 3?

With its complex underground systems and more than eight million people, New York City would certainly experience a flooding catastrophe. A *Popular Mechanics* article detailed a worst-case scenario: “As the eye of the storm passes over Staten Island, the 100-mph counterclockwise winds shove 500 million tons of seawater directly into the harbor...By the time the storm surge washes over the shores of Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan, it towers 11 to 15 feet high.

“Water flows through New York’s financial district and reaches 2 miles into southern Brooklyn and Queens, flooding 2900 miles of roads...In Manhattan, the lower levels of Penn Station and Grand Central fill with water...Three of the four automobile tunnels linking Manhattan to the outer boroughs and New Jersey also flood,

submerging hundreds of cars stranded in traffic jams during evacuation...”

Does this seem unbelievable?

The nation’s crumbling infrastructure systems also worsened damage to areas hit hard by Hurricane Irene. Consider Vermont’s washed-out highways, North Carolina’s destroyed piers, and the sewage that seeped into Virginia’s water systems.

Just because *this* storm did not cause the level of damage anticipated *this time* does not mean Long Island can withstand another hurricane. If anything, after being battered by high winds and flooding from Irene, New York and the East Coast are worse-off, and have even more weakened bridges, roadways and dams.

With this in mind, was the concern about Hurricane Irene really unwarranted?

Looking Ahead

While meteorologists can understand the *conditions* for specific weather patterns, they cannot forecast a *certain* outcome.

Hurricane Irene was no different. While experts almost perfectly determined Irene’s path, their calculations about the storm’s intensity were off. Instead of roaring into Manhattan as a Category 2, it lost strength and was downgraded to a tropical storm.

Yet this should not downplay the very real casualties left in Irene’s wake. Death and destruction should always make a person stop and consider: “Where did we go wrong?” “What could we have done differently?”

More important, “What about *next* time?”

In reality, Tropical Storm Irene is really a tiny piece of a larger picture.

Consider what has happened just this past summer: a 5.8 earthquake near Washington, D.C.—800 tornadoes across the Bible Belt—a historic drought in Texas—wildfires across Arizona—the Mississippi River floods—the list could go on.

While weather disasters have always occurred, can you remember when such events occurred in rapid succession?



■ STORM DEVASTATION: Top, a panoramic photo shows the extent of damage from Hurricane Irene at the north end of Rodanthe, North Carolina (Aug. 30, 2011). Bottom left, a downed tree crushes a vehicle after the storm passed through Catonsville, Maryland (Aug. 28, 2011). Bottom right, rescue workers search for stranded people in flood waters from the Passaic River in Paterson, New Jersey (Aug. 30, 2011).

PHOTOS: CHUCK LIDDY/RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER/ (TOP); JEFFREY F. BILL/BALTIMORE SUN/ (BOTTOM LEFT) MCT; MICHAEL NAGLE/GETTY IMAGES (BOTTOM RIGHT)

“According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. has so far experienced nine separate disasters, each with an economic cost of \$1 billion or more—tying a record set in 2008. (Usually, the U.S. experiences three to four billion-dollar weather events a year.),” *Time* magazine reported. “Beyond the cost—which adds up to about \$35 billion so far—at least 589 people have died in those events...”

Read that again: 2011 has had “nine separate disasters, each with an economic cost of \$1 billion or more”—Hurricane Irene makes 10.

Scientists and journalists have also noticed something strange is occurring. “This is the first time an earthquake and a hurricane in the same week has forced east coast residents to evacuate buildings,” *Discovery News* stated.

But, as with pinpointing what determines the path and intensity of a hurricane, experts and media outlets cannot explain *why* there are such turbulent conditions across the globe.

Searching for Answers

Most naturally want to know what is coming. They look to meteorologists for weather forecasts, seismologists for

an idea of when the next sizable earthquake will occur, and economists to know their financial futures. Others look to psychics, seers and “prophets”—but always with poor results.

Yet something is *definitely* wrong.

People also look to Bible prophecy to attach meaning to events, but with results every bit as poor as psychic readings and horoscopes. Here is why: most mangle what the Book says, inserting *their own* ideas, rather than believing what the Bible *actually* states.

Due to errors of so-called prophecy experts, the future remains hazy—as does the meaning behind Hurricane Irene ravaging the East Coast. Yet, by allowing the Bible to interpret *itself*, you can understand what is occurring.

In the book *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out*, David C. Pack offers a detailed explanation—backed by Scripture—of why certain news events and weather conditions are taking place:

“With world trends and conditions growing more frightening by the day, millions are searching—wondering about the course of events, and whether the world is on the brink of destruction.

“Jesus’ disciples wondered the same thing almost 2,000 years ago, and asked Him about the ‘end of the [age]’ (Matt. 24:3)...the prophet Daniel spoke of ‘the time of the end’ (Dan. 11:40; 12:9). The apostle Peter foretold, ‘There shall come in the *last days* scoffers’ (II Pet. 3:4)... Paul warned, ‘In the *last days* perilous times shall come’ (II Tim. 3:1). The last verse makes the subject more serious.

“Has this final interval in world history arrived? Can you be sure? You can—in fact, God expects you to know!”

“Let’s pull back and look at the big picture. It has become painfully obvious that this world is in terrible trouble. Mankind is overwhelmed with every kind of trouble, evil and ill—war, terrorism, violence of every kind, famine, disease, pollution, overpopulation, political upheaval, religious confusion and tremendous economic turmoil and decline, which...is threatening to make the Great Depression look like child’s play. Then there are the hundreds of millions who live in abject poverty, ignorance and oppression. Now add rampant and worsening immorality and perversion in every Western nation—

Please see **HURRICANE**, page 28

The Nation-state of Israel

Understanding Its True Biblical Identity

BY KEVIN D. DENEE

ISRAEL. A land of conflict. A Middle East flash point. A pilgrim's destination. Home of many ancient sites and cities, including Jerusalem—where three world religions converge.

But what exactly is Israel? There are a number of answers.

A modern-day nation? Yes.

This is probably the first answer that comes to mind when most hear the word "Israel." With a population of 7,473,052 (*CIA World Factbook*), the Middle Eastern nation primarily consists of persons of Jewish descent. It is the location of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The prospects of peace seem perpetually afar off. A real solution to the modern-day nation's problems remains elusive.

A man? Yes.

Thousands of years ago, Abraham had a son, Isaac, who had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Notice: "And [God] said unto [Jacob], What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel [meaning prevailer with God]: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Gen. 32:27-28). From that point forward Jacob's name was Israel.

An ancient nation of tribes? Yes.

Israel had 12 sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulon, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin. These sons' families grew into a nation: "And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in

the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly" (Gen. 47:27). While in Egypt for nearly two and a half centuries, the tribes of Israel grew vastly in number. The birth-right (something of great importance, but not the subject of this article) was passed from Jacob (or Israel) to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Israel effectively became 13 tribes.

A kingdom that became divided from Judah? Yes.

After the time of King Solomon, Israel split into two nations: Judah to the south and *Israel* to the north. Judah consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, as well as the majority of Levi. These peoples became known as Jews.

A people lost to history and the world at large? Yes.

The northern 10 tribes of Israel were taken captive by the Assyrians in 721-718 BC and became known as the "lost 10 tribes of Israel." The Jews remained in the land of Judah (later Judea). Then, the Assyrians placed the Samaritans (transplanted from a region near Babylon) in the land formerly inhabited by the 10 tribes.

Around 586 BC, the Jews were taken captive by the Babylonians. While a remnant of them returned approximately 70 years later, the vast majority of the Jews remained dispersed among other nations after the captivity.

Undoubtedly, Israel has many different meanings and applications. So which meanings apply today?

Israel Today = Israel of Yesterday?

The prevailing thought is that Israel today (along with its people) is simply the same as Israel of old. In recent years, many professing Christians (particularly evangelicals) make a point of standing with Israel, thinking that any reference to Israel in the Bible is an exact equation to Israel today. Yet this cannot be! Again, much of the Israelitish people were taken into captivity, never to return.

This begs a number of questions: What is the nation of Israel today? How should one read all the references to Israel in the Old Testament? Are they all one and the same? Would the author of the Bible, who claims to not be an "author of confusion" (I Cor. 14:33), leave such an important subject blurred and confusing?

When taking into account all the scriptural and biblical proof, it becomes clear that the tribe of Judah (along with portions of Simeon and Levi) is the nation of Israel today. This brief article cannot provide all the extensive documentation that proves this beyond a doubt. All of the proof is found in David C. Pack's book *America and Britain in Prophecy*.

In that book, within the context of Sabbath-keeping, Mr. Pack provides more detail on this subject, under the subhead "Why Tribes Now 'Lost'" :

"Remember this critical point, now lost to the world. The Jews are only one twelfth of the tribes of Israel. They sprang from Jacob's son Judah. There were eleven other sons.

"Therefore, the Sabbath is still binding on the LOST TRIBES of Israel. God's identifying sign was to be kept by *these* nations. But they have refused to keep it, believing themselves to be Gentiles, and have assigned the Sabbath obligation to 'the Jewish people.'

"The true story behind Israel's loss of identity is astonishing, and known to almost none for many centuries. Yet, these modern nations need never have lost sight of their true identity. A choice they made caused this to happen.

"While people denigrate and sneer at the Sabbath as merely 'Jewish,' it is binding on far more people than the relatively small number of Israelites who have descended from the tribe of Judah.

"We must take time to carefully recap, from a different perspective, certain previous points known to almost none. This is vital background to what we will now study. Understanding God's SPECIAL COVENANT springs directly from this review!

"The Bible speaks of the term 'Jew.' Of course, most think this term is synonymous with *all* the tribes of Israel, because they never investigate what the Bible actually says!

"Recall that the very first place in the entire Bible in which the term 'Jews' is found describes a war occurring *between* the JEWS and ISRAEL! Let's read it: 'Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath' (II Kgs. 16:5-6).

"This was not Jews fighting Jews. Most people have no idea that the nation of Israel had become divided—into two different nations, with two separate kingdoms."

"...when Solomon died, Israel rebelled against the oppressive tax rates he had imposed. The price of Solomon's luxurious lifestyle came on the backs of the Israelites he overtaxed. His son Rehoboam ignored the wise counsel of those who advised

him that reducing taxes would stop a revolt developing under a high-ranking leader named Jeroboam, appointed by Solomon. Instead, Rehoboam listened to younger men who told him to actually raise taxes.

"The result? Ten tribes rebelled, leaving only Judah and Benjamin still loyal to Rehoboam. These tribes pulled away from Jerusalem as their capital, much like the Old South seceded from the American Union in 1861. Two separate kingdoms—the KINGDOM OF ISRAEL and the KINGDOM OF JUDAH—emerged, with two separate capitals, Samaria (Israel) and Jerusalem (Judah)."

Under the subhead "Joseph's Sons Receive Israel's Name," Mr. Pack adds more:

"In the next passage, to signify explicitly that God's blessing was to be passed to Ephraim *above* firstborn Manasseh, Jacob crossed his hands. Let's read: 'And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth' (Gen. 48:14-16).

"This will be shown to be an absolutely astounding prophecy, carrying truly staggering implications for all the nations of the world. We have just witnessed, directly from the pages of the Bible, God's original promise to Abraham being passed directly to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh! Jacob said, 'let my name be named on them' and 'let them grow into a multitude.'

"Absolutely nothing in this account says anything about Judah. He was neither included nor apparently even present during the proceedings! Why then do countless millions of people

who read the Bible not see this—and acknowledge it?

"Jacob specifically asked God, with hands on both grandsons, to 'Bless the lads.' This was a joint blessing, conferred on both young boys—now get this—having *nothing* to do with Judah or any of his children. Together, the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh were promised—actually prophesied—to expand into a great multitude, consisting of the 'nation and company of nations' of Genesis 35:11.

"I repeatedly urge readers, 'Do not believe me unless you can see it in your Bible!' I tell you that now. These verses are most plain!

"This account requires no interpretation from me. It contains no symbolism, holding mystery to all but the trained eye. Israel's name was to be placed on, carried by, the sons of Joseph—not JUDAH!

"Put another way, we now ask: Who does GOD—not MEN!—identify as the people who are Israel (nationally and ethnically) today? Again, the answer is Ephraim and Manasseh, not Judah! The modern nation of Israel, home to the Jews who call themselves 'Israelis,' is not the nation God has told us actually carries Israel's name. Yet, the world and virtually all Bible students remain deceived on this point.

"The theologians, churchmen, religionists and supposed Bible scholars *could* know what you have just learned. They could set aside their prejudice and tradition, pick up their Bibles and read these plain verses. But these 'leaders' refuse to do this and thereby reject knowledge available to them, with countless millions following them like the 'blind leading the blind.'

"This need not include you!"

This article only begins to open the door to the understanding of who and what is Israel. Great prophecies are about to unfold on the nations descended from the lost Israelite tribes and the modern-day nation of Israel.

To learn much more, request the free book *America and Britain in Prophecy*—or read it online at [www.thercg.org](http://thercg.org). □



David C. Pack Visits



IN JULY/AUGUST, David C. Pack, Editor-in-Chief of *The Real Truth* magazine, voice of *The World to Come* program and Pastor General of The Restored Church of God, traveled to Israel and Jordan, accompanied by *Real Truth* writers and a film crew.

During the 11-day trip, Mr. Pack and the delegation met with government officials, toured historical and biblical sites, filmed a number of “on location” *World to Come* broadcasts, and were given a deeper understanding of the challenges the region faces today.

Although Mr. Pack visited Israel for three weeks in 1988, much has changed since that time. This visit provided another extraordinary journey through the Mid-East nation. (The interested reader may wish to read the account of the 1988 trip, which can be found in Volume Two of *The Authorized Biography of David C. Pack*.)

Itinerary

Senior leaders in The Restored Church of God had the opportunity to see an abundance of historic places, including some at which Jesus Christ was present during His earthly ministry. Sites visited included the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, the ruins of Gomorrah, Masada National Park, the ancient port city of Jaffa, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Garden Tomb (where Jesus was buried and resurrected), Golgotha (where He was crucified), Megiddo, Carmel (where the prophet Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal), the Arab-controlled Temple Mount, the Western Wall, Capernaum (where Jesus grew up and attended syna-

■ **INTERNATIONAL TRIP:** Page 16 – Top left, graves cover the Mount of Olives, where the Bible states Christ will return. Middle left, view from the Mount of Beatitudes next to the Sea of Galilee where Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount. Bottom left, the Dead Sea forms part of the Jordanian-Israeli border. Bottom middle, Mr. Pack meets with former Ambassador to Turkey, Uri Bar-Ner. Top right, Mr. Pack films a *World to Come* broadcast in front of the Garden Tomb. Bottom right, a view of the tomb where Christ was likely placed after His crucifixion. Page 17 – Top, caves line Petra. Middle left, the treasury building in ancient Petra is the first thing visitors see after walking out of the narrow canyon. Middle right, a Bedouin boy displays necklaces he is selling. Bottom, a view of Israel from the top of Mount Carmel, where the Bible records the Old Testament prophet Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal.

PHOTOS: THE REAL TRUTH

Visits Israel and Jordan

gogue), Caesarea Philippi (the site at which Christ said He would build His Church), Tel Aviv, the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna), and the Valley of Elah, where David slew Goliath. The group also visited the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Jordan River, and the Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba) at Eilat, which features a view into Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

The tour ended with a visit to Jordan to see the ancient city of Petra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site featuring elaborate structures carved into red stone valley walls.

Many soon-to-be-fulfilled biblical prophecies will take place in Israel, and Mr. Pack took the opportunity to deliver seven “on location” *World to Come* segments at notable locations there. These broadcasts will be posted on www.worldtocome.org.

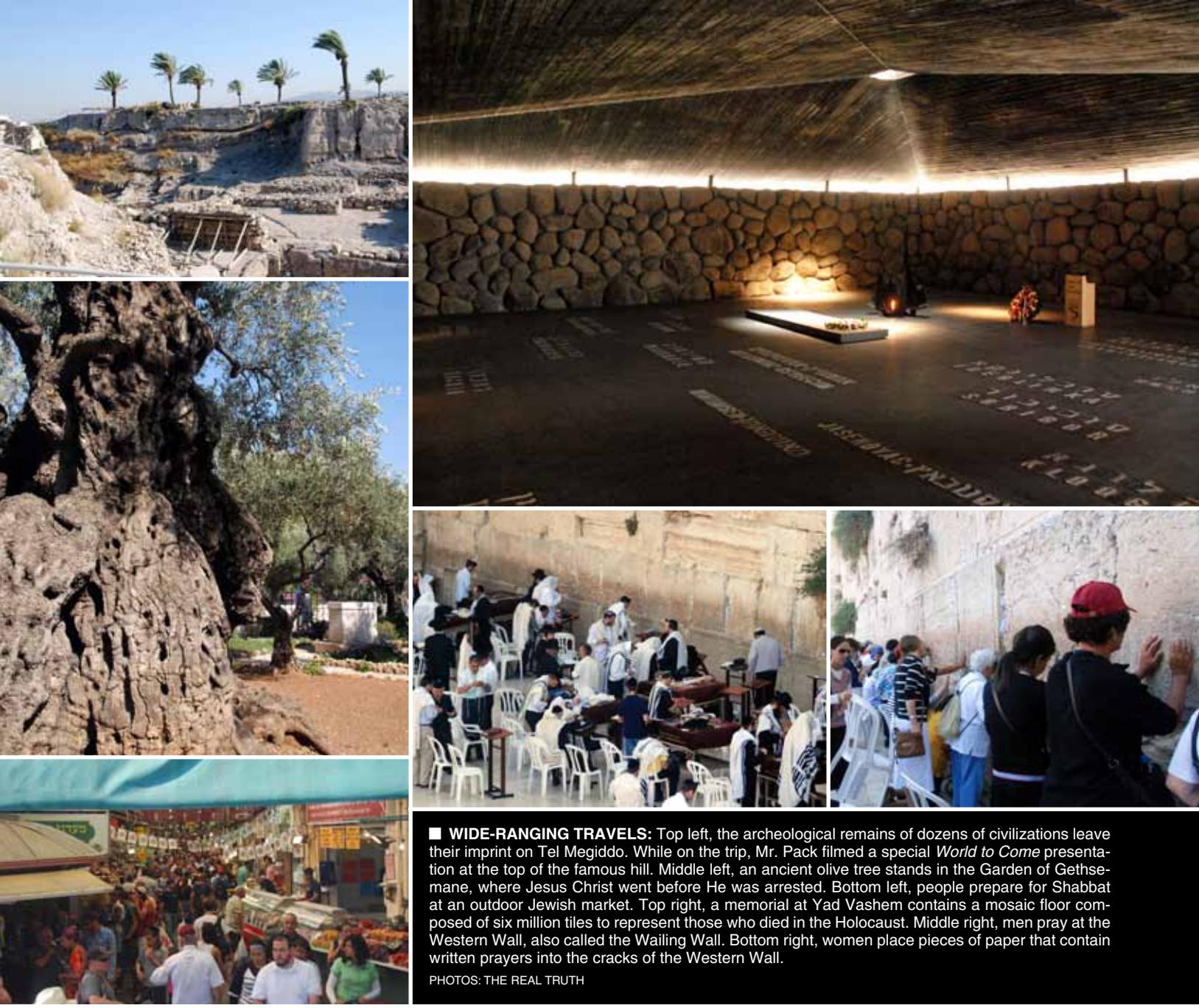




■ **VARIED LANDSCAPES:** Page 18 – Top, a view of Syria from the Golan Heights in northern Israel. Middle left, an Orthodox Jew walks on the outskirts of the Temple Mount. Middle center, a boat is stationed on the Red Sea off the coast of Jordan. Middle right, two Israeli guards holding machine guns stand along the Jordan river at the thought-to-be spot of Christ's baptism. Bottom left, a woman wearing a veil walks on the top of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Bottom center, the Jordanian-Israeli border area near the Jordan River (where Christ is thought to have been baptized) was recently cleared of landmines so that tourists could pass through. Bottom right, a machine-gun monument stands on the top of a mountain in honor of Israelis who fought in the country's numerous wars. Page 19 – Top left, a building stands in Jaffa, one of the oldest cities in the world, located on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Top middle left, a sign is posted on a barbed-wire fence warning of nearby landmines. Bottom middle left, cars drive by an older residential building in Tel Aviv. Bottom left, the base of several pillars stand in the synagogue at Capernaum, a town Christ frequented in northern Israel. Top right, a view from the Temple Mount. Center, Caesarea Maritima, an ancient harbor, is located on the Mediterranean Sea. Middle right, a new housing development is situated on a hillside in the town of Ma'ale Adumim. Bottom right, Masada National Park is home to a palace fortress built by Herod the Great.

PHOTOS: THE REAL TRUTH





■ **WIDE-RANGING TRAVELS:** Top left, the archeological remains of dozens of civilizations leave their imprint on Tel Megiddo. While on the trip, Mr. Pack filmed a special *World to Come* presentation at the top of the famous hill. Middle left, an ancient olive tree stands in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus Christ went before He was arrested. Bottom left, people prepare for Shabbat at an outdoor Jewish market. Top right, a memorial at Yad Vashem contains a mosaic floor composed of six million tiles to represent those who died in the Holocaust. Middle right, men pray at the Western Wall, also called the Wailing Wall. Bottom right, women place pieces of paper that contain written prayers into the cracks of the Western Wall.

PHOTOS: THE REAL TRUTH

Received by Officials in Jerusalem

Another element of the trip was meeting with a number of Israeli national and municipal leaders who, when they learned that Mr. Pack would be in their country, expressed interest in meeting with him.

Mr. Pack's VIP welcome in Jerusalem included a private tour of the Knesset arranged by his host, M.K. Dr. Einat Wilf, a member of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense, Education and House committees. The two then met for an in-depth discussion of conditions in the Middle East and surrounding regions.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Pack spoke with Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Naomi Tsur. She arranged for Mr. Pack to visit the City Council Chambers, where he was treated to a unique

view of the Old City and Mount of Olives. The previous evening, Mr. Pack was hosted for dinner by Amb. Uri Bar-Ner, Israel's former Ambassador to Turkey.

Mr. Pack also visited Ma'ale Adumim, a growing municipality seven kilometers (4.5 miles) east of Jerusalem, as the guest of the city's mayor, Benny Kashriel. The city's central location is geographically significant, linking the Jordan Valley and Judean Desert to the nation's capital. Mayor Kashriel and Mr. Pack discussed many issues relating to the strategic security value of the city, and the mayor arranged a special tour for Mr. Pack with the City Spokesman Hizki Zisman as his guide.

The trip provided insight into many of the conflicts confronting the area now, and the issues the region will soon face. □

JORDAN

Old Meets New

Surrounded by clashing religious ideologies, unstable governments, and ongoing protests, the nation seems to stand steadfast in a tumultuous area.

AT FIRST GLANCE, Jordan appears exactly as a first-time visitor might picture a Middle Eastern desert nation: dry, hot and desolate. Rolling hills of sandy soil stretch for miles, with barely a shrub able to thrive in its parched landscape. An occasional jutting palm tree, triad stone marker, or paved highway are often the only signs the rough terrain is populated.

In between vast expanses of desert, whitewashed stucco homes huddle at the foot of crimson mountains, which reach deep into a cloudless azure sky. Red, green, black and white Jordanian flags flap over government buildings and pictures of the nation's leader dressed in military garb are posted on roadside billboards.

Yet a closer look into Jordan's policies reveals a nation different from its neighbors. Situated in an area rocked by centuries-long conflicts, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a nation torn between its loyalty to surrounding nations and its desire to

broker peace. It is one of only two countries other than Egypt that maintains relations with Israel and almost all of its Arab neighbors, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, while enjoying close ties with the United States, Britain and other European nations.

Long considered a key piece of the Middle Eastern peace puzzle, Jordan's bilateral ties uniquely position it as a regional mediator. This gives the country unusual insight into the kinds of problems that continually confront the area.

Visionary Leadership

Jordan is ruled by King Abdullah II, the son of the late beloved King Hussein, who reigned from 1953 to 1999. Because King Abdullah's mother was a Briton who converted to Islam to marry his father, the young monarch spent his junior and high school years at a United States boarding school. After high school, he attended the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in Britain. In all, he spent 15 years away from Jordan.

After returning home and serving in the Jordanian forces for several years, King Abdullah married Queen Rania in 1993, a Kuwaiti-Palestinian

whose family fled to Jordan at the start of the Gulf War.

King Abdullah's international experience, thirst for adventure, and tutelage from his well-known father gave him a unique perspective on world events. From an early age, he learned to speak impeccable English and how to fit in with Western culture while still embracing his own heritage.

Because of the king's demonstrated leadership, Jordan is also one of the only countries other than Saudi Arabia that has not been significantly affected by the riots that have set the Middle East ablaze during the past year.

According to the *CIA World Factbook*, "Beginning in January 2011 in the wake of unrest in Tunisia and Egypt, several thousand Jordanians staged weekly demonstrations and marches in Amman and other cities throughout Jordan to protest government corruption, rising prices, rampant poverty, and high unemployment. In response, King Abdullah replaced his prime minister and formed a National Dialogue Commission with a reform mandate. Some opposition groups also called for sweeping political and constitutional reforms, particularly on a controversial election law."

"The demonstrators in Jordan did not call for King Abdullah's removal; they called for better governance, economic reform, and the removal of Prime Minister Samir Rifai, who is blamed for rising commodity prices and political stagnation," an article by the Council of Foreign Relations stated. "Even demonstrating Islamists remain loyal to the monarchy. They want policy changes, not regime change."

Ancient and Modern

In certain ways, Jordan has been an example for other Middle Eastern nations. For decades, the country has enjoyed relative peace under a stable monarchy and has gradually experienced an increased standard of living due to a tourism boom. The nation's service industry accounts for over 60 percent of its GDP.

Jordan boasts four UNESCO World Heritage sites, Petra (also one of the new seven wonders of the world), Quseir Amra, Um er-Rasas and the Wadi Rum Protected Area. One of the most visited is Petra, an ancient city hidden in the soaring 250-foot-high crags of a gorge.

Hundreds of years ago, the city was populated by more than 30,000 Nabateans, a pagan people who mastered the art of irrigation and gained great wealth from their city's location along a trade route. Once the needs of traders changed, however, Petra lost its importance and vanished from history for 1,000 years.

According to local tradition and historical accounts, the Biblical patriarch Moses brought the children of Israel to the area surrounding Petra before entering into the Promised Land after fleeing Egypt. The valley is

named Wadi Musa ("valley or river of Moses") for this reason. A mosque on an adjacent mountain marks the spot where Moses' brother Aaron is said to be buried.

On a recent trip to the Middle East, Editor-in-Chief David C. Pack and several news writers had the opportunity to visit the archeological remains of Petra and the surrounding Wadi Musa area to learn the history of its varied past and explore the region's many caves.

A visit to Jordan reveals that it is a land where old meets new.

During the past 30 years, the mountainous area surrounding the old city of Petra has been transformed from a dusty wasteland, where Bedouin herders took shelter among the cracks of the rocks, into a thriving city. As opposed to decades earlier, complex self-sustaining irrigation systems dot



■ **RICH HISTORY:** Top left, two Bedouin men ride horses outside of the town of Wadi Musa and the old city of Petra. Top right, a Jordanian weaves wool in a small shop. Bottom left, a 12-year-old Bedouin girl sells postcards in the ancient city of Petra. Middle, a picture of Jordanian King Abdullah II is posted at the crossing between Jordan and Israel. Bottom right, the city of Aqaba sits at the foot of the mountains on the shore of the Red Sea.

PHOTOS: THE REAL TRUTH



the landscape, allowing for agricultural farming throughout the dusty area. The region also boasts six five-star hotels and numerous lavish restaurants. Most of the residents living around Petra proper are Bedouin villagers that were resettled into hillside homes and now make their living from local tourism.

Other areas around Jordan have also been developed into desert oases. Towering skyscrapers line the horizon of the country's capital, Amman, and Aqaba, located on the Red Sea, is a coveted destination spot for scuba divers.

While Jordan's people continue to advance, many parts of the nation are still surprisingly remote. Policemen patrol the desert on camels and many Bedouin still prefer to live in goat hair tents without modern necessities, using only what they can glean from their own flocks to survive.

In addition, water is still scarce in many parts of the country: "Available yearly per capita share of fresh water in Jordan is among the lowest in the world estimated at about 160 [cubic meters]," U.S. Agency for International Development reported. "This share is continuously decreasing and is forecasted to go down to 90 [cubic meters] by 2020."

Many areas also remain impoverished.

"Poverty stands at 13.3% and there are 32 registered pockets of poverty in different areas of the country," a United Nations Development Program report stated. "Furthermore, with the potential impact of the global economic crisis, there is a risk that the unemployment rate, estimated at 12.2%, may increase."

Atypical Stance

Despite its population being 98 percent Arab, Jordan is one of the only Middle Eastern nations to oppose the Palestinian Authority's September bid to gain United Nations acceptance as a state.

According to Israeli newspaper *Arutz Sheva*, "Jordan is continuing its efforts to convince the Palestinian Authority leadership to abandon its

attempt to secure membership as a new country at the United Nations this September."

The paper paraphrases *al-Medinah*, a Saudi Arabian newspaper as saying that "Jordan views the move as dangerous, and 'advised' PA Chairman and Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas to abandon the attempt via Arab diplomatic channels..."

In addition, the paper stated that Jordan noted that "such a bid carries the additional risk of ruining the Palestinian Authority's ability to fight for the 'right of return'..."

The "right of return" is a claim by over five million foreign Arabs, descended from those who abandoned their homes as a result of Israeli warfare since 1948, that they should have the ability to return to their original lands in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem.

According to *The Jerusalem Post*, "Many Palestinians...voiced hope that Jordan and Egypt, the only Arab countries that have peace treaties with Israel, would follow the Turkish example and cut off all relations with Israel."

Yet Jordan is not only concerned with the effect such a move will have on the almost two million Palestinian refugees that reside within its borders, but also that the bid has the potential to destabilize the region.

"The PA's unilateral move is perceived as highly premature and detrimental to the peace process by many in the international community and particularly by Washington, which has already declared it will oppose the move," *Ynet News* reported.

Looking Ahead

In 2010, King Abdullah published a treatise on the future of the area titled *Our Last Best Chance: The Pursuit of Peace*, which discusses what he believes is the only way for the region to achieve peace: a two-state solution with compromises on both sides. He writes that if this cannot occur, then he believes peace is impossible.

In the preface of his book, he states, "Many in the West, when they look at our region, view it as a series

of separate challenges: Iranian expansionism, radical terrorism, sectarian tensions in Iraq and Lebanon, and a long-festering conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. But the truth is that all of these are interconnected. The threat that links them is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

The king writes that during the 11 years of his reign, he has "seen five conflicts: the Al Aqsa intifada in 2000, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006, and the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2008-9."

"I believe we still have one last chance to achieve peace," he states. "But the window is rapidly closing. If we do not seize the opportunity presented by the now almost unanimous international consensus on the solution, I am certain we will see another war in our region—most likely worse than those that have gone before and with more disastrous consequences."

While King Abdullah has been known for his optimism regarding the peace process, he did admit to *The Washington Post* during an interview that his hopes are beginning to wane.

"...although we will continue to try to bring both sides to the table, I am—for the first time—the most pessimistic that I have ever been in 11 years. 2011 will be, I think, a very bad year for peace, and invariably when there's a status quo, usually what shakes everybody up is some sort of military confrontation, at which point we all come running and screaming to pick up the pieces. Nobody wins in a war."

Clearly, many unanswered questions plague the arid country—with the solutions to them as varied as those who create them. Given the delicate nature of the region's situation, it is apparent much more will have to occur before Jordan can fully maximize its potential and create the peace it desires.

As one editorial writer in the *Jewish-Herald Voice* aptly stated regarding the future of the region, "The only thing that seems assured is that more uncertainty lies ahead..." □

REALITY

Continued from page 8

foreshadowing of the biblical prophecy of the desert blossoming like a rose (Isa. 35:1).

But Ma'ale Adumim has been frozen in its tracks. After a visit from the American Secretary of State in the early 2000s, American diplomatic pressure came to bear and building was eventually halted, with partially finished structures sitting empty across the street from inhabited homes.

Friction with Longtime Ally

For decades, one of the bright spots in Israel's foreign relations was its friendship with Turkey, the first primarily Islamic nation to recognize Israel in 1949. But the 2010 Gaza flotilla incident, in which eight Turkish citizens and one Turkish-American were killed, began a chain of events that led to Israel's Ambassador to Turkey being expelled on September 5 of this year. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan also hit Israel with sanctions and threatened further punitive action.

Turkey's decision elicited praise from some corners of the Middle East and beyond, and grave concern from the United States.

"The breakdown of the relationship is fraught with complications for the US, which for decades has made expensive military, diplomatic and economic investments in both countries," *Financial Times* reported. "Since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, Turkey and Israel have been the linchpins of US policy in the region."

The Real Truth discussed the regional dynamic with Ambassador Uri Bar-Ner, Israel's diplomat to Turkey from 1998-2001. Born in the land called Palestine before the establishment of the Jewish state, Amb. Bar-Ner served as consul general of

Israel to Chicago and deputy consul general to New York. He also held the position of deputy director general of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and served in diplomatic missions to Europe and Asia. He is currently a



■ INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: Ambassador Uri Bar-Ner was Israel's Ambassador to Turkey from 1998-2001.

PHOTO: SHAHAR AZRAN PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

senior advisor to the president of the America-Israel Friendship League.

Commenting on Turkey, he stated, "This decision complicates matters, and we are very shocked by Erdogan's policy and sanctions.

"We do not think that they will impose further sanctions. But if they do, it would hurt Israel, not terribly, but it would hurt. Turkey is Israel's sixth-largest trading partner. The trade deficit of Turkey, worldwide, is \$300 billion... and trade with Israel is \$3.5 billion, so it's one percent, but it's important to them.

"Israel accepted the [United Nations-commissioned] Palmer Report, which recognized that Israel had the right to blockade the flo-

tilla...it recommended that we should express regret [at the deaths of Turks in the flotilla] and make compensations, and we agreed to do it...but even if Israel had apologized completely, it does not seem [this would change the Turkish] strategy of becoming closer to the Arab and Muslim countries, at our expense. Of course, the European Union refused to accept Turkey, and if they would have accepted them even partially, most probably the situation would not be the way it is.

"The United States has a major role now in trying to mend relations between Israel and Turkey. I know they are trying to do it. Perhaps if we renew negotiations with the Palestinians, which Prime Minister Erdogan wants very badly, this will help. We want to do it, but [Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, and the Palestinians] want to go to the United Nations, to enact a UN declaration [recognizing] Palestine as a state. This goes against the Oslo agreement... and against the perspective of the United States, which is that every agreement should be bilateral."

Ongoing Controversy

Why does this tiny patch of largely arid land, possessing no oil reserves in an oil-rich region, draw such international attention and arouse such strong opinions?

The reasons run deeper than geopolitics, human rights concerns, and demographics. Indeed, this region is one where historical blood feuds, intractable rivalries, competing religions, and biblical prophecies—ones that have been provably and definitely fulfilled, and ones that yet will be—collide.

To learn more about what is next for Israel, its allies, and the entire region, read *The Mid-East in Bible Prophecy*. □

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

Billions of people suffer every day. Why does God allow it?

BY DAVID C. PACK

THE WORLD IS filled with suffering of every kind. In fact, billions know little else. Yet God allows vast numbers of human beings to suffer. Think of disease, poverty, war and natural disasters. If God is all-powerful, and a God of love (I John 4:8, 16), why has He not stopped the terrible suffering that afflicts so many, and since men have existed? Is there a REASON God does not intervene?

The ministers and theologians of traditional Christianity cannot explain the *purpose* of human suffering. Many theorize that Adam and Eve were created perfect and complete, until they “fell” because the devil overthrew God’s Plan by tempting them into sin. This idea continues with the explanation that God’s Plan is to restore men to their pre-fall condition—but the devil keeps disrupting God’s progress.

Yet this is false. God is not desperately trying to repair damage brought by Satan’s unforeseen attack on a Master Plan. The God of the universe is in complete control of all aspects of His Creation.

Human suffering is a result of *wrong causes*. There is no use trying to remove wrong *effects* when the CAUSES are ignored. In all physical and spiritual matters, man only addresses the bad *effects* engulfing the world today. He does not understand the *causes* behind the world’s woes.

The Holy Spirit defines God’s character. Notice: “The fruit of the [Holy] Spirit is love, joy, peace, *long-suffering*, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...” (Gal. 5:22-23). But how can God’s character include *longsuffering*? How does God *suffer*?

Before He flooded the world in Noah’s time, “it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it *grieved Him at His heart*” (Gen. 6:6). God felt mental pain (grief) at what mankind had chosen—and become. He brought the Flood to put man out of his misery, stating He would never again do this.

The Bible plainly says, “The LORD is **LONGSUFFERING**” (Num. 14:18). God wants us to understand that even *He* suffers. But this verse does not reveal *why*.

First, all those with children stop and think! When you see your child hurt or sick, how do *you* feel? It grieves you. You suffer your own anguish at their pain. God is no different. He is a parent with children. When His children—mankind—disobey Him, directly hurting themselves in the process, it hurts *Him*. He feels pain!

Mankind’s suffering is no accident. This world is cut off from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Jer. 5:25). This is why so many people, including innocent children, suffer so horribly. God is only working with a tiny few today. He is not delivering and protecting the masses—YET! Man is being given time to learn that his ways do not work. He is learning the slow, painful lesson—for when God calls all mankind later—that when you *keep*

God’s holy, spiritual Law it *keeps* you, and when you *break* that Law it *breaks* you.

Another reason for suffering is that it is a marvelous tool within God’s Plan of producing sons who have developed His character within them. The purpose for every human being’s life is to develop the perfect, righteous CHARACTER of Almighty God (Matt. 5:48). Suffering is tied to character building. Since God is longsuffering, no person is complete in the development of His nature and character *until* he has learned the value of suffering!

Wise King Solomon recorded one of the Bible’s great truths: “In the day of *prosperity* be *joyful*, but in the day of *adversity* consider: God also has set the one over against the other...” (Ecc. 7:14). God did this! He designed life so we would face “adversity,” and be forced to “consider” our circumstances. Certainly adversity is no fun. It is sometimes *very* difficult, hard, painful, even traumatic, to endure. Yet God said He engineered the human existence to include adversity!

However, nothing we endure in this life even remotely compares to the eternal life of supreme happiness in God’s kingdom awaiting those who serve Him: “For I reckon that the *sufferings* of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” at the Resurrection (Rom. 8:18).

To learn much more about this subject, watch *The World to Come* broadcast “Why God Allows Human Suffering” at www.worldtocome.org. □

Fading Memory

Historically, tragedy and hardship have a great effect on Americans. It is then that they come together as one, ready to tackle any challenge that comes their way. In the wake of September 11, this seemed the towering lesson. People felt, "We are strong" and "We will make it through."

Without concerted effort, however, as a horrific event fades in the rearview mirror, so can any lessons learned from it.

Some of the changes after September 11 lasted only a few months. By November, church attendance went back to normal. Other changes lasted a few years. Volunteer numbers continued to increase until 2006, and have been waning since.

Patriotism reached its high-point in 2003, when a Gallup poll revealed that 70 percent of those polled were "extremely proud to be an American." Since then, the number has declined. A similar 2011 *CBS/New York Times* poll found that 61 percent are "extremely proud" to be Americans, which is heading toward pre-9/11 levels when just 55 percent answered "extremely" in a January 2001 Gallup poll.

While some scars of that day remain, the lives of most have largely returned to where they were before September 11.

Yet look at problems besetting the nation today: \$14 trillion-plus in federal debt, rampant unemployment, two wars abroad, bickering politicians, bloated government budgets, increased weather-related disasters, the list could go on.

Taken together, these problems cry out for America to again unite, to look back on 9/11 and the country's history, then seek out and truly apply lessons gleaned.

Most would say that it is this same resilience that has greatly contributed to America's historical success—that for two centuries it has caused the U.S.

to hold the greatest army, be the world leader in agriculture, manufacturing, production, technology and trade, and hold crucial strategic sea gates and defensive strongholds throughout the world. Throughout that time, the nation repeatedly overcame challenges—the Civil War, World War I and World War II, the Great Depression—and almost always emerged even stronger.

Yet America's patriotism is a double-edged sword. While it contributes to showings of national kindness and heroism, it blinds the nation from what it should truly remember from 9/11.

Deeper Meaning

After the terror attacks, people turned to each other for comfort. They turned to the president to make sweeping changes to the nation's foreign policy. They turned to religion to make sense of it all.

Church attendance surged as people mourned a national loss. Many Americans sought momentary comfort in inspirational Bible passages they were taught from their youth, but such verses failed to provide real meaning and understanding of the tragedy.

In such instances, most simply turn to the Bible because that was how they were raised, or because the nation was founded on certain Judeo-Christian principles. Yet the United States and its people have a deeper connection to the Bible than most realize.

Follow carefully. Amos 9:9 states: "For, lo, I [God] will command, and I will sift the house of *Israel among all nations*, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall *not the least grain fall upon the earth*."

Realize that ancient Israel had 12 tribes. The modern-day nation called Israel is mostly comprised of the tribe of Judah. The other Israelite tribes were lost to history. In Amos 9, God promised protection for these tribes as they "sifted," or moved, through the nations. While that was happening, these peoples forgot their heritage.

A special promise was given to the patriarch Abraham and was later passed on to Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh as a birthright blessing.

God promised both would "grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (Gen. 48:16).

The older brother, Manasseh, was to "become a people, and he also shall be *great*: but truly his younger brother [Ephraim] shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a *multitude of nations*" (vs. 19). Only one pair of brother nations has ever become a singular great nation and a multitude of nations—the United States (Manasseh) and Britain and its former colonies (Ephraim).

Centuries of prosperity and decades of being a lone superpower have blinded Americans to the Source of their blessings. They have believed *their* government system, *their* hard work and ingenuity, *their* resilience have led to widespread prosperity. But this belief is mistaken. The reason for America's astounding blessings are promises made to patriarchs of ancient Israel for their obedience to God.

Forgotten Lessons

Americans still desire to retain the blessings—the high standard of living, the abundance of food, the unmatched economic might—they have so long enjoyed. God's blessings, however, require the same action today as in the time of biblical patriarchs: obedience.

This has been God's desire for Israel—and the modern nations that descended from it—since day one. Notice: "For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, '*Obey My voice*, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you'" (Jer. 7:22-23, Revised Standard Version).

Simply put, God states, "Obey, and you will be blessed."

The next verse continues, "But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward" (vs. 24).

God has been working with the peoples of Israel for thousands of

years. He knows their tendency to *forget* that He is the source of their blessings, and to flag in obedience.

Ancient Israel had a short memory span. Over and over, the Bible recounts how they “remembered not” and forgot that blessings came from God. (Read Judges 8:34 and Psalm 78:42.)

Thus, God stated, “From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to *this day*, I have *persistent*ly sent all My servants the prophets to them, day after day” (vs. 25, RSV).

Despite these constant reminders, “they hearkened not unto Me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers” (Jer. 7:26).

The example of ancient Israel is a lesson for their modern-day descendants.

Advance Warning

The United States is not doomed to continue to suffer decline and defeat. The path to restore national prominence is outlined in the Bible—yet it would require national unity as never before.

In Leviticus 26, God explains that disobedience has brought the consequences seen today, notably terrorism. Notice what He says: “But if you will *not* hearken unto Me, and will *not* do all these commandments; and if you shall *despise* My statutes...I [God] also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you *terror*” (vs. 14, 16).

Constant lawlessness has God furious. He sees a people awash in covetousness and greed. He sees a society self-absorbed, where individuals lie, steal and cheat with impunity. He sees a nation steeped in the miserable condition of sin.

And He will soon render swift punishment: “Now will I shortly pour out My fury upon you, and accomplish My anger upon you: and I will judge you according to your ways, and will recompense you for all your abominations” (Ezek. 7:8).

Before God punishes, He always provides a warning about what will come if there is no change. As with any

loving parent who disciplines a child, He leaves no excuse for anyone to continue in ruinous behavior.

In his book, *America and Britain in Prophecy*, David C. Pack explains how the average person will react to this warning: “Most people will not seek God unless forced to—unless severe trials or other circumstances *drive* them to God. During good times, most are happy to trust in their own strength, crediting themselves for their successes and achievements, when they may have had little to do with blessings that

them astonishing, unparalleled blessings beyond what any nation has ever enjoyed. He has kept His promise to Abraham to make many nations from him and to give the sons of Joseph the promised awesome birthright blessings after two and one-half millennia.

“But our peoples have neither been grateful for these birthright blessings, nor sought God, repenting of our national sins!”

What to Remember

The September 11 memorial that now stands where the towers once did is designed to help visitors never forget that historic day. Entering the site, they must follow a predetermined path that leads to a museum pavilion dedicated to the unforgettable day, with the nation’s tallest building (still under construction) towering in front of them.

In addition, waterfalls drop into two square pools set into the footprints of where the twin towers once stood. The pools are ringed with bronze plates carrying the names of attack victims. Newly planted trees line the entire memorial.

With the 10th anniversary of September 11, we call to mind the events of that day. We remember the horror we felt as the towers crashed, the sadness of mourning loved ones, and the renewed appreciation for the freedoms we enjoy.

But just remembering the event is not enough. America must learn lessons. It will take a period of hardship to alert the United States to what is blocking God from blessing it.

September 11 was the front edge of a time of trouble soon to overtake America. This coming period of continuous calamity will be one that future generations will truly never forget.

Those who learn the lessons from what is occurring now, and from that historic and tragic September day, can escape—if they REMEMBER God is the only source of blessings and learn to obey Him by living His Way now.

For a fuller picture of what is foretold to occur, read *America and Britain in Prophecy*. □



■ GROUND ZERO TODAY: Construction continues at One World Trade Center and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York City (July 8, 2011).

PHOTO: MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

came to them. On the other hand, these same people generally *blame* God when things go wrong in their life.

“But understand this. God does not and has never *owed* blessings to anyone. He may *choose* to bless individuals or nations, for His own purposes, but no one automatically *deserves* prosperity, wealth, abundance and a generous portion of God’s bounty.

“The Bible says that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23), which means all have qualified themselves for *death* (Rom. 6:23)—and nothing more!

“So it is with the peoples of America and Britain. God has bestowed to

HURRICANE

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and growing hatred, unrest and the already-discussed never-ending cycle of war in the Middle East—and deteriorating conditions throughout Africa—and earthquakes, volcanoes and frightening weather patterns across much of the world—and devastating fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, drought and floods occurring with greater frequency and intensity—and headlines screaming of murder, rape, robbery and crimes of every kind."

"Is all of this really only a little temporary worsening of what is otherwise 'business as usual' for planet Earth? Many *more*—and much *louder*!—are the voices that say no, and that time is running out to solve the really big problems facing the world. More world leaders are expressing concern about the rise of division within and between nations. So are other voices of authority in education, the military, science and sociology. Yet, because this is also an age of religious sundowners and doomsayers, most will not pay real—serious!—attention."

Disaster Upon Disaster

Where does Hurricane Irene fit into this puzzle? Notice Mark 13, which is also in the context of the last days: "There shall be famines and *troubles*..." (vs. 8).

The word "*troubles*" is translated from a Greek term that means "disturbance, that is, (of water) roiling, or (of a mob) sedition: trouble." While this can certainly include the riots in England, the Arab Spring, and narcotics war in Mexico—it also implies an increase in floods, *hurricanes*, cyclones and other severe storms, which are all forms of "roiling water."

In addition, the Old Testament of the Bible details another end-time trend: "Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor shall be upon rumor" (Ezek. 7:26). The archaic language hides the phrase's true meaning. In the original Hebrew, "mischief" means *ruin* and *disaster*; "rumor" can be translated *news* and *report*.

Look at headlines from a single day. You will find there *is* tragic news report

than \$1 billion currently available for federal disaster assistance, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is temporarily suspending payments to rebuild roads, schools and other structures destroyed during spring tornadoes in Joplin, Mo. and southern states in order to pay for damage caused by Hurricane Irene," *The Washington Post* stated.

How long can America afford these compounding disasters?

As more weather-related disasters continue to strike the U.S., a prevalent attitude will surface. Notice: "...there shall come in the last days SCOFFERS..." (II Pet. 3:3).

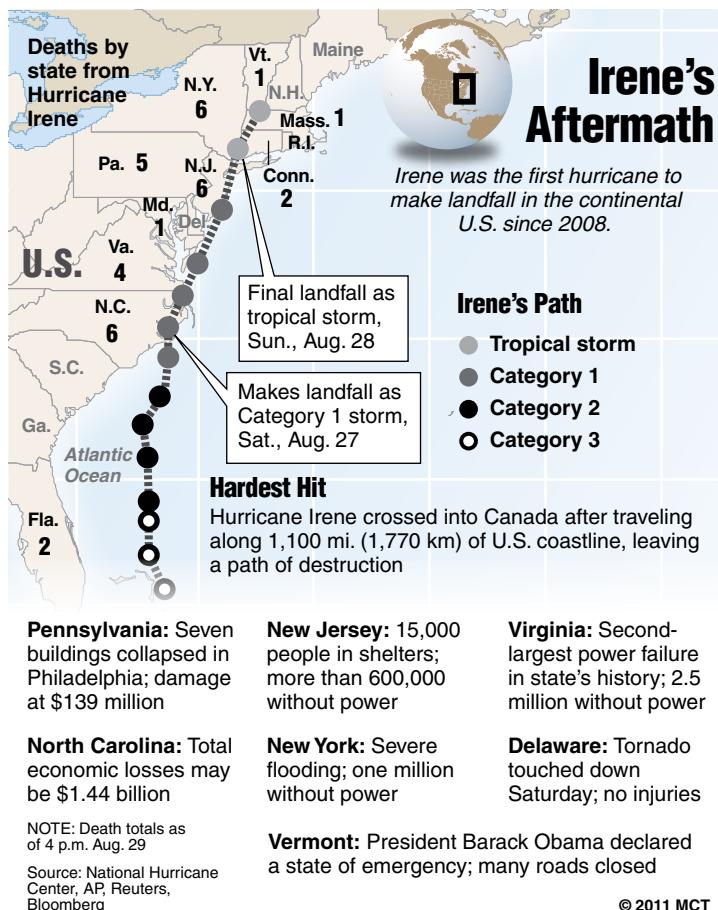
When presented with the facts of what is foretold to come, many will laugh and mock. God knew this and recorded their *snide* response to Bible prophecy: "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning...." (II Pet. 3:4).

Do not allow yourself to fit into this category! Do not deceive yourself into thinking the constant barrage of weather upsets is normal.

In these last days, people will claim that what is occurring is "no big deal," "overblown," and "exaggerated." Hurricane Irene shows that many *already* feel this way!

But the words of the Bible should be on your mind as the nation recovers from Hurricane Irene—as Joplin rebuilds after an EF5 tornado—and as monuments in the nation's capital are repaired as a result of a 5.8-magnitude earthquake.

With each new report of tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes and other natural disasters, understand that you are witnessing a worsening scenario foretold millennia ago. □



after tragic news report! Before one set of crises is addressed, another smashes into the world. This is particularly true for the United States.

Hurricane Irene exemplified the weakness of America's crumbling roads, antiquated sewer systems, and outdated power grids. As disasters pile upon one another, the infrastructure (which once kept the nation safely running) will only worsen each calamity—as will the country's ability to pay for such disasters.

Consider Hurricane Irene's impact on the federal government: "With less

PERSONAL

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The timing of this persecution is *just ahead!*

Next notice: “To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly *into the wilderness*, into HER PLACE, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent” (vs. 14).

A biblical “time” is equal to a prophetic year of *360 days*. Revelation 12:14 refers to the same period, that of *3½ times*. Revelation 11:2 says *42 months*—or *1,260 days* ($3\frac{1}{2} \times 360$ days). These are *literal* days. (This is the 1,260-day period referenced earlier.) The woman you saw flies to “her place” for *3½ years*—in the *wilderness* (not heaven).

In contrast to rapturists, Jesus instructed His disciples to “*flee* to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it [Judea] *depart out*” (Luke 21:21). The message is—LEAVE QUICKLY! God’s people are told in two other places to *flee Judea*, where they will have been gathered. Read Matthew 24:16 and Mark 13:14.

The apostle Paul wrote this sobering warning: “Of the *times* and the *seasons*, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you...For when they shall say, *Peace and safety*; then *sudden destruction* comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall *not escape*” (I Thes. 5:1, 3). The masses will come to think that everything is now better—that improved world conditions—peace and safety—have arrived. But those who study the Bible seriously know otherwise.

NUMBER 19: The Two Witnesses arrive

The Bible foretells the coming of two special servants just before the outset of the Great Tribulation—who wield tremendous—*unprecedented*—POWER. Revelation 11 says, “I will give POWER unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore [1,260] days, clothed in sackcloth” (vs. 3). These men can cause droughts and plagues, turn waters to

blood, and breathe fire on any who try to kill them.

Guided by and imbued in a special way with God’s Spirit, they will contend in Jerusalem with the Beast, the False Prophet, and all under their sway. Surrounded by hostile forces, but working directly with Christ (Zech. 4:14), these “prophets” (Rev. 11:10) will powerfully repeat GOD’S WARNING to a deceived world.

NUMBER 20: The Great Tribulation begins

Recall that the first four seals of Revelation, along with *earthquakes, commotions and troubles*, Jesus said would be only “the beginning of sorrows [travail or tribulation]” (Matt. 24:8). These things are far from the end of matters. The opening of the fifth seal does not describe a horse and rider. Instead, it reveals the soon-to-come worst time of world trouble in history!

This coming cataclysm will be worldwide. Jesus said, “Then shall be *great tribulation*, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened [cut short], there should no flesh be saved [left alive]” (Matt. 24:21-22). The prophet Daniel said, “...there shall be a time of trouble, such as *never was* since there was a nation even to that same time...” (12:1). Jeremiah also recorded, “Alas! For that day is *great*, so that *none is like it*: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (30:7). These obviously all describe the same time.

Although few verses use the term “Great Tribulation,” many Old and New Testament prophecies explain and describe it. This world-shattering period will be truly horrific in nature—and thoroughly explaining all elements of it involves far more than the space available in this article. But you do *not* want to be on the wrong side of what happens.

NUMBER 21: The heavenly signs appear

Next comes the *sixth seal*—the heavenly, or astronomical, signs. The apostle John recorded this: “When He had

opened the *sixth seal*...there was a great earthquake; and the *sun* became black as sackcloth of hair, and the *moon* became as blood; and the *stars of heaven fell* unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is *shaken of a mighty wind*” (Rev. 6:12-13).

Jesus said this: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the *sun* be darkened, and the *moon* shall not give her light, and the *stars shall fall from heaven*, and the powers of the heavens shall be *shaken*” (Matt. 24:29). This is an almost verbatim, phrase-by-phrase description of Revelation 6:12-13. Jesus has again interpreted the sixth seal—and its timing. The phrase “immediately after the tribulation” removes all doubt about when these horrendous signs arrive.

The prophet Joel also spoke of this time: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible Day of the LORD come” (2:31). The arrival of the heavenly signs heralds a profound shift in the direction—and speed!—of events. This is seen by continuing in Revelation 6: “The *great day of His wrath is come*; and who shall be able to stand?” (vs. 17)—when heaven and Earth are shaken!

The answer? No one!

NUMBER 22: The year of God’s wrath begins

The Day of the Lord—God’s wrath—follows the sixth seal. This time reveals God’s AWESOME POWER! It is comparable to *nothing* that has ever happened before, or ever will again.

The terrible period of God’s awesome power and wrath is foretold to last an ENTIRE YEAR—*after* the initial $2\frac{1}{2}$ years of the Tribulation. Together, these events make up the 1,260 days. Isaiah writes of God’s wrath, “It is the *day of the LORD’s vengeance*, and the *year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion*” (34:8). Jeremiah calls it “the *year of...visitation*” (11:23; 23:12). (Read Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34 to see the prophetic “day for a year” principle outlined.)

Some claim the heavenly signs have already occurred. This is *impossible!* Jesus makes plain that they all *follow—not precede*—the Tribulation. The Tribulation and Day of the Lord are *not synonymous!* These are totally separate, *different* events. The heavenly signs come *between* the Tribulation, which precedes them, and the Day of the Lord, which follows them.

Here is an important distinction: the Day of the Lord reflects the wrath of *God*. The Tribulation is actually the wrath of the *devil*. It is also the devil's final persecution and martyring of many true Christians who have become lukewarm.

Professing Christian leaders are ignorant of both *how* these three earth-shattering events come—in what *order* they appear—and *why* God sends them. Ever-worsening false prophets, prophecy writers and other supposed experts always get these things wrong—as they do everything else. Those who cannot distinguish between even these basic, separate events have *no hope* of understanding what God foretells.

NUMBER 23: The seventh seal opens

Revelation 8 declares, “When He had opened the *seventh seal*, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given *seven trumpets*” (vs. 1-2).

Understand! This verse proves the seven seals are *not* the same as the seven *trumpets*. This is critical to recognize—and is a big KEY to understanding the whole book of Revelation. (1) The seventh seal equals *all* seven trumpets and (2) the seventh trumpet equals the seven *last plagues*, or *vials*. The seven trumpets do not *follow* the seventh seal—they *are* the seventh seal! Simply reading more carefully eliminates this error. God does call the seven trumpets “plagues” (Rev. 9:20), but again they are not the seven *last* plagues. Keep these things clear.

NUMBER 24: The seventh trumpet blows, Christ descends

When the seventh trumpet blows and Christ descends in the clouds (Rev.

1:7), He brings with Him salvation and the resurrection of the dead occurs. Notice: “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the *trump* of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we [true Christians] which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord *in the air*” (I Thes. 4:16-17). In I Corinthians 15:52, it says that this happens “at the *last trump*.”

But the nations are not happy to see this Christ. They will have come to believe and trust in a counterfeit system, and many will have expected to be “raptured away” to safety by a *false christ, not of the Bible*.

NUMBER 25: Armageddon

Endless books and movies have depicted the so-called “final battle between good and evil.” Surprisingly, the Bible mentions Armageddon in only one verse. It says, “He [God] gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (Rev. 16:16). Armageddon comes from two Hebrew words—“har,” meaning hill, and “megiddo.”

Megiddo lies within the borders of the modern state of Israel, about 60 miles north of Jerusalem and 20 miles east of the port city of Haifa. The location of 30 different cities over thousands of years, Megiddo is today little more than a 15-acre pile of rubble on a hilltop. Anciently, it provided a natural *gathering* place due to the flatness of surrounding topography.

Let's understand what will then be the world scene. The revived Holy Roman Empire—recall the Beast and False Prophet of Revelation—will have already conquered parts of the Middle East. It will have established a foothold in Jerusalem, and will invade the Middle East under the pretense of bringing peace. Oil, but also probably issues concerning food, will likely prompt the Beast into seeking control of the region. Daniel wrote, “But tidings out of the *east* and out of the *north* shall trouble him [the Beast]” (11:44). While the Beast's army is in the holy

land—other military giants will move in to oppose it.

Understand that the Bible reckons locations from Jerusalem. Now, what big countries are *east* and *north* of Jerusalem? Russia, China, India and Japan! It is likely these, with possibly other nations, will constitute the huge *200-million-man* army of Revelation 9:16. Ezekiel 25:4 and verse 10 call this army the “men of the east.”

The world will have reached the point Jesus described: “Except those days should be *shortened* [cut short], there should no flesh be saved [again, left alive]” (Matt. 24:22). All human beings would be wiped out without God's intervention.

Now grasp two vital points. (1) God brings certain armies to Megiddo, and (2) the Bible says this is a *gathering place*, not an *event*—and not a battle (Rev. 16:16). When the Bible speaks of Armageddon, it is *not* referring to either the end of the world or the final battle between “good and evil,” as so many believe. This is critical to understand. There is no battle foretold at Armageddon! What happens is called “The Battle of that Great Day of God Almighty!” (vs. 14). This is GOD'S battle! This last great clash will be fought by armies that will have *gathered* at Armageddon and then traveled to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2), or what is today called the Kidron Valley. This is located east of Jerusalem, about 60 miles south of Megiddo. The battle is at *Kidron*, not Megiddo.

Two major forces—the Beast, aligned with a coalition of moderate Arab states (Psa. 83)—and the men of the East, plus the remnant of a radical Arab league led by Egypt (Ezek. 30)—will see Jesus Christ coming out of the clouds. When the Beast and eastern hordes gather, the False Prophet will work his final miracles to delude the masses. Considering Christ the greater threat, these armies will unite, forming an alliance to repel what they perceive as their common enemy. These armies will be angry, unwilling to submit to God. Deceived, they will think JESUS Christ is in fact

the “ANTI-christ.” The result? The Bible says they will “make war with the Lamb” (Rev. 17:14).

The prophet Zechariah explains the outcome: “Then shall the LORD go forth, and *fight against those nations*, as when He fought in the day of battle” (14:3), and “this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth” (vs. 12).

In this awful picture, Jesus Christ is victorious against His enemies—ending *all* of man’s failed attempts to govern himself. In the end, the all-powerful, returning Christ destroys the armies that destroyed Jerusalem! Revelation 19:20 reveals the fate of the Beast and False Prophet—public execution by burning.

NUMBER 26: Christ returns and establishes His kingdom

Notice: “His [Christ’s] feet shall stand in *that day* upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east” (Zech. 14:4). The greatest moment in history arrives. Christ replaces all human powers and laws with His own. All governments of men—including every great and small nation on Earth—are removed and replaced by God’s government. Fairness, justice and peace finally come to a sick and broken planet!

This prophecy about Christ will finally be fulfilled: “The *government* shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His *government* and *peace* there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His *kingdom*, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever” (Isa. 9:6-7).

Beyond all the *bad news* is wonderful GOOD NEWS! Sadly, few speak of it! When Christ establishes God’s government, it will usher in peace for all nations! The earth will *never* blow up—it will *never* be destroyed.



The Bible's Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! A Voice Cries Out

Read this free book at www.thercg.org to learn more about prophecy!

Man’s systems of government will be destroyed.

Jesus Christ was born to rule all nations. This is the central theme of the entire Bible. Notice: “Out of [Christ’s] mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them” (Rev. 19:15).

Have you been told about these passages? I never learned or even heard of them in the church of my youth—yet here they are, available with unmistakable clarity.

Finally, World Peace!

Soon after the establishment of God’s kingdom, all suffering will disappear. War will also be a thing of the past. So will terrorism. Crime will vanish. Children will play safely everywhere. Drugs and alcohol will no longer enslave people. Poverty will be gone. As will illiteracy. Mass healings will occur. A pure language will help re-educate the population. Earth’s polluted environment will be restored. Clean air and pure drinking water will be everywhere. Even the nature of animals will be changed.

Christ, and the saints, will rule all nations as they have never been ruled. He will be compassionate, perfect in character, truthful and full of wisdom—and love those He governs. All government corruption will be gone. While firm, He will administer the commandments with patience and understanding—and grant forgiveness to all who sincerely desire to change.

All religious deception—and confusion—will disappear. The world will become a *perfect* environment to finally be able to live God’s Way according to His perfect Law—which is the way of peace, prosperity and joy. Everyone will learn God’s truth: “The earth shall be *full* of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9).

What a marvelous time is coming. To learn more, you will want to read my inspiring book, *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* It offers a picture from God’s Word beyond the grandest plans of men.

Most talk only about the end of the world and supposed *annihilation* of humanity. This is because they are IGNORANT of the most important parts of Bible prophecy. We teach *all* of Bible prophecy—and the TRUTH of it! You do not need to be without knowledge of what is coming. But you must study diligently.

Another book, *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out*, reveals things you cannot imagine. Find time to read it—all of it. And take time to look at everything else we offer on prophecy, particularly the book *America and Britain in Prophecy*.

On our three websites—www.realthruth.org, www.worldtocome.org and www.thercg.org—there is virtually no question for which a PLAIN ANSWER has not been provided—on prophecy, or any other subject. □

WEATHER & ENVIRONMENT

Earthquakes Rattle U.S.

Two strong earthquakes rocked the Western, Midwestern and Eastern regions of the United States during one week in August. The shaking caused injuries, damaged buildings—including large cracks in the Washington Monument and broken spires on the National Cathedral—prompted the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people, and halted operations at a nuclear facility for fear of a meltdown. Both tremors were followed by less intense aftershocks.

First, on August 22, a magnitude-5.2 earthquake hit southern Colorado.

"It was felt as far away as Greeley, about 350 miles north, and into Kansas and New Mexico..." a National Earthquake Information Center geophysicist told *The New York Times*.

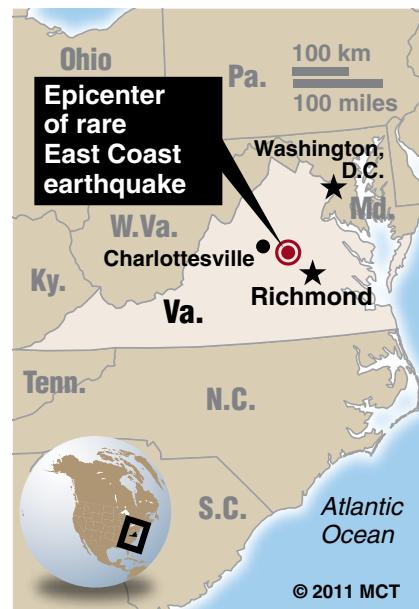
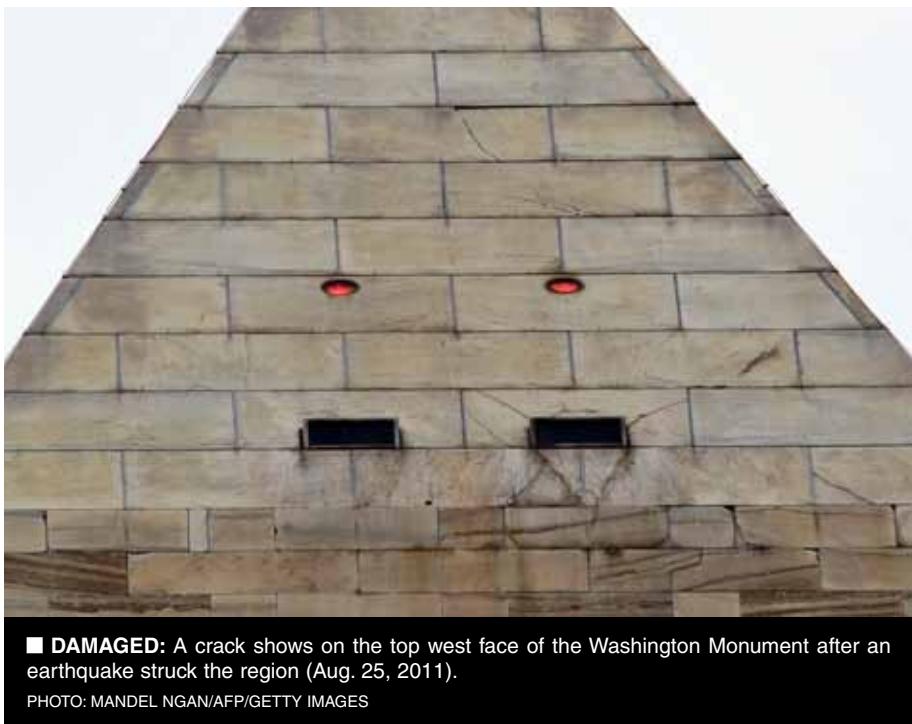
The newspaper added, "She said that while Colorado had experienced several earthquakes close to [this earthquake's] size in recent decades—a magnitude 5.3 near Denver in 1967 and a magnitude 5.7 in the state's northwest corner in 1973—both of those quakes were ultimately determined to have been caused by human activity, from explosives or drilling."

The following day, a rare magnitude-5.8 earthquake with its epicenter in central Virginia shook the Eastern seaboard from Georgia to Canada.

"It sounded like a train running under our feet and an airplane landing on the roof at the same time," a Virginian described in a *Washington Post* letter-to-the-editor.

Analysts consider both of the quakes a "wake-up call" as the event exposed the area's level of unpreparedness for a major disaster.

"Immediately after [the] tremor, panic, rather than considered action, was widespread," CNN stated. "Not knowing what to do, tens of thousands of people fled buildings (or were ordered to evacuate) and ended up packing downtown sidewalks and even spilling into the streets...Even



in big quakes, it is generally safer to ride out the shaking inside, rather than running outside, where there's the potential of being hit by falling shards of glass and building debris."

At the earthquake's epicenter in Mineral, Virginia, officials estimate the tremor caused approximately \$17.5 million in damages. □

About 10 miles from the tremor's source, the North Anna nuclear power plant, which had earthquake sensors removed in the 1990s due to budget cuts, "shut down automatically...after it lost off-site power for seven hours," *USA Today* reported. "During that time, backup diesel generators kicked in to keep the radioactive core cool." One of the four plant reactors failed, and authorities are concerned that broken underground pipes could leak radioactive material into groundwater.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the Central Virginia Seismic Zone has had a track record of several small to moderate earthquakes since the 1800s, but this was the region's largest quake in more than a century.

"The largest known damaging earthquake in this area occurred in 1875. The 1875 shock occurred before the invention of modern seismographs, but the felt area of the shock suggests that it had a magnitude of about 4.8. The largest historical earthquake in Virginia, with a magnitude of 5.8, occurred further to the west in 1897." □

HEALTH ISSUES

Study: Half of U.S. and UK Adults Will Be Obese by 2030

An article series published in *The Lancet* medical journal estimated that about half of the population of both America and the United Kingdom will be obese by 2030.

"Using a simulation model to project the probable health and economic consequences from rising obesity rates in the United States and the United Kingdom, researchers at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and Oxford University forecast 65 million more obese adults in the U.S. and 11 million more in the U.K. by 2030, leading to millions of additional cases of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer," *Science Daily* reported.

Citing the study, the news site stated that obesity "prevalence among men would rise from 32% in 2008 to approximately 50% and

from 35% to between 45% and 52% among women" in the United States.

"Obesity is fast replacing tobacco as the single most important preventable cause of chronic noncommunicable diseases, and will add an extra 7.8 million cases of diabetes, 6.8 million cases of heart disease and stroke, and 539,000 cases of cancer in the United States by 2030," *Reuters* reported.

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Health Survey, roughly a third of U.S. adults and about "17% (or 12.5 million) of children and adolescents aged 2-19 years are obese."

Reversing the obesity pandemic is a major challenge in a nation where people increasingly fall into poor eating habits and live sedentary lifestyles. According to esti-

mates, obesity costs the U.S. \$150 billion a year.

"Almost no week goes by without a new headline about obesity," *The Lancet* stated. "The latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention figures for the US population in 2010 released in July are alarming: 12 states have obesity rates higher than 30% and no state had a rate lower than 20. Since these figures rely on self-reported height and weight, they are likely to be underestimated...The projected costs to treat these additional preventable diseases are an increase of \$48-66 billion per year in the USA and £1.9-2 billion per year in the UK. Health systems everywhere are already struggling to contain costs. Without prevention and control of the risk factors for obesity now, health systems will be overwhelmed to breaking point." □

WEATHER & ENVIRONMENT

Massive Wildfires Overtake Texas

Out-of-control wildfires in Texas burned at least 1,000 homes within one week—more than 800 in 48 hours—forcing more than 5,000 people to evacuate.

Texas governor Rick Perry told reporters that some 21,000 wildfires across 3.6 million acres have burned since the start of the fire season in December 2010, which is a "landmass [that] is equal to approximately the size of the state of Connecticut."

The extended drought that has afflicted the nation's second-largest state since the turn of the year escalated when ongoing wildfires met with high-speed winds from Tropical Storm Lee. The storm dumped more than 20 inches of rain in neighboring Louisiana and Mississippi, yet not a drop of much-needed rain fell in Texas.

"Many Texans prayed Tropical [Storm] Lee would bring rain, but



■ **WILDFIRE AFTERMATH:** A golf course is surrounded by burned-out homes and scorched grass and trees in this aerial photograph taken near Possum Kingdom Lake, Texas (Sept. 1, 2011).

PHOTO: IAN MCVEA/FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM/MCT

instead only gusty winds made Texas' most active fire season ever that much worse," *ABC News* reported. "The state is experiencing its worst drought since the 1950s. In the past nine months, Texas has experienced six of the ten largest wildfires in its history

and since November 3,523 homes and structures have been lost to the flames, according to the Texas Forest Service."

Weather officials say that the prospect of the area receiving rain in the near future is bleak. □

