

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2021

THE

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# REAL TRUTH™

A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

# 9/11

## Remembering What Was Lost

**Forever at Odds?**  
*Navigating the East-West Rift*

An 'Obligation'  
to Kill

**What Really Happened to  
the Dinosaurs?**

Should Faith Be a  
Mystery?

THE  
**REAL TRUTH**<sup>™</sup>  
A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING

VOL. XIX | NO. 5 | SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2021

A R T I C L E S

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■ U.S. Coast Guard ship *Bertholf* maneuvers during a joint exercise with the Philippines near Scarborough shoal in the South China Sea. Chinese ships monitored the joint U.S.-Philippines exercises from a distance (May 14, 2019).

TED ALJIBE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

**Forever at Odds?  
Navigating the  
East-West Rift**  
Bridging China and  
America's polar opposite  
perspectives eludes the  
world's greatest minds. But  
they miss a key principle.  
**Page 12**

**FRONT COVER:** As seen from New Jersey, smoke hangs over lower Manhattan after the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in a terrorist attack in New York City (Sept. 11, 2001).

HULTON ARCHIVE

**CREDITS:** All photos from Getty Images unless otherwise noted. Articles on pages 12-15, 21-24 and 30 contain information from Reuters and The Associated Press.

**Personal from the Editor-in-Chief  
Why This Magazine!**  
**Page 1**

**9/11: Remembering What Was Lost**  
Twenty years have passed since the worst terrorist attack on American soil. There is one crucial lesson we must never forget from that day.  
**Page 4**

**What Really Happened to the Dinosaurs?**  
The Bible says a lot more about these prehistoric creatures than most realize. Here's how what it says aligns with the geological record.  
**Page 16**

**An 'Obligation' to Kill**  
As the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan, the Taliban targeted Afghan pilots in revenge-seeking attacks for their role in bombings.  
**Page 21**

**Should Faith Be a Mystery?**  
Contrary to popular belief, true faith was meant to be understood!  
**Page 26**

**World News Desk**  
**Page 31**

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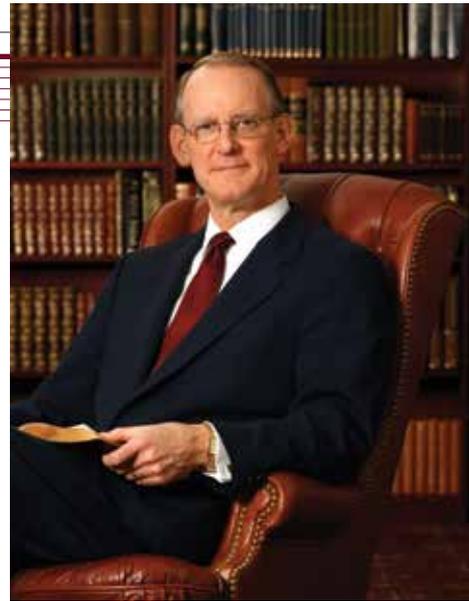
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## PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



# Why This Magazine!

**T**HE REAL TRUTH is a truly unique publication. There is no magazine like it. It answers the BIG questions in life, those that few others seem willing to address.

Actually, this magazine is the revival of *The Plain Truth* magazine, started by then editor-in-chief, Herbert W. Armstrong, in 1934. Over the next 52 years, until his death in 1986, the circulation of *The Plain Truth* slowly grew to 8.2 million monthly subscribers, with an estimated 25 million readers worldwide!

How was this possible? Let me tell you the story—because it is really the story behind *The Real Truth* magazine.

God called Mr. Armstrong in the spring of 1926. He was forced to disprove evolution, while at the same time prove absolutely the existence of God. Through a period of intensive study, he slowly began to see, from the Bible, that God was working out a great purpose on Earth. He learned that God's Plan had been foretold long ago on the pages of a book that most people own, but rarely or *never* read. As a result, the world was in complete ignorance of that Plan.

The idea of a fledgling magazine was born in Mr. Armstrong's mind. He understood that a hard-hitting monthly magazine, coupled with *The World Tomorrow* radio program, was necessary to reveal the plain truth—the *real truth*—behind what the media reported.

Newspapers, radio and later television only reported **WHAT** was happening without explaining **WHY**. Mr. Armstrong recognized that mankind does not know the solutions to civilization's greatest problems—and that those solutions were found in the Bible. He also understood that modern religion had utterly failed in explaining the *real* purpose of life.

Technology has come a long way since then. Today, design and publishing capability is dazzling. This was not the case in 1934. Mr. Armstrong began the first issue of *The Plain Truth* in February of that year by using a hand-cranked mimeograph machine to print 250 copies for the first tiny subscription list. From the outset, the magazine explained the real meaning of world news and events. It addressed the biggest, most perplexing problems facing mankind—head-on!

Subscribers saw this, and the readership steadily grew, month after month, and then year after year. By the time of Mr. Armstrong's death, *The Plain Truth* was read in seven languages—in *all* countries of the world. It was the single largest, multi-language, religious publication—by far—in the world at the time. Its circulation may have only been exceeded by *Reader's Digest*.

*The Real Truth* magazine also started small—but has grown rapidly in readership because Mr. Armstrong paved the way with that truly extraordinary magazine.

Mr. Armstrong understood Christ's instruction, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8), so he understood that he must offer the magazine *free of charge*. He also determined to never accept advertising so that the

powerful impact of its content was neither diminished in size nor diluted in purpose and impact.

Similarly, *The Real Truth* offers all its bi-monthly hardcopy issues and electronic resources FREE to those who are seeking to understand today's world.

*The Plain Truth* was never a political magazine—and never a typical religious magazine. Neither is *The Real Truth*. *The Plain Truth* spoke out at a level above politics—unlike the endless columnists, commentators, reporters and political analysts of this world who look to humanly devised solutions. It dared to speak with boldness and clarity about the ONLY SOLUTIONS to what are now *insoluble* problems plaguing humanity and explained that those solutions *will come*.

So does *The Real Truth*.

Man's governments and political solutions, like mainstream religion, have also utterly failed to do anything but make humanity's problems worse. Invariably, *man's* solutions seem to eventually generate more and greater problems.

*The Real Truth* magazine does not offer opinions, suppositions or assumptions. It brings facts, evidence and *proof* of those issues about which it speaks. We speak from a position of *authority*, and never apologize for it.

Of course, some people do not want the facts. They actually prefer cherished suppositions in place of correct understanding. *The Real Truth* offers you *correct* understanding—explanations you have never seen before. It brings you confident assurance that you are looking at social trends, world conditions, current events and burning issues from the only *right* perspective.

The tradition of the high standard of excellence, which *The Plain Truth* achieved, brought it before presidents, prime ministers and kings. Brilliant professors, accomplished scientists, skilled musicians, great athletes, captains of industry and other leaders in every walk of life read it. But it was read and appreciated in far more cases by the common man—teachers, bricklayers, salesmen, secretaries, farmers, factory workers, truck driv-

ers, construction workers, and many others.

*The Plain Truth* changed lives. It brought hope. It explained the *bigger view* in a world where most are completely blind to the causes behind all the bad effects billions of people witness every day.

*The Real Truth* also brings hope and a vision of the big picture. This magazine is truly different in almost every way.

It has become distressingly evident that this world is in terrible trouble. Time is running out for mankind to stop war, terrorism, famine, disease, pollution, poverty, ignorance, religious confusion, rampant immorality, breakdown of the family and other growing problems that threaten civilization.

Almost none are willing to speak up—or *out*—about these problems.

The writers of *The Real Truth* and I, as the voice of *The World to Come*, do this! We do not hold back the ANSWERS you need in order to find the way to peace, happiness, abundance and true security amid the short-term gloom that lies ahead for this world!

We produce articles explaining the cause of war, what's wrong with the weather, can science eradicate pollution, how racial bigotry will eventually disappear, what lies ahead for America and Britain, the value of right ethics—and the definition of true character, the real cause of the moral crisis in the West, what's wrong with modern education, why so many seek escape and pleasure, and the definition of true success.

We also explain the world's lack of great leaders—and what will replace current leaders, how peace will come in our time, how to build strong families—rearing happy, productive children, how to end your financial worries, and why new diseases are appearing and older ones are reappearing—stronger than before.

We are also not afraid to speak out about what is wrong with modern religion. We explain why there are thousands of differing—and *disagreeing*—forms of Christianity, the real origin of man's supposed "Christian" holidays,

why religion cannot explain or solve a single one of the world's great problems, how to understand real faith, how to identify the real Christ of the Bible, the way of "give" versus "get," the origin of human nature, principles of healthful living, how to identify God's true Church, and many, many other related subjects.

These articles and other regular features do not just describe the *effects* of today's problems. There is already too much of that, and it leaves people uncertain, fearful and depressed because they see NO WAY OUT! They identify the causes—*why* things happen as they do, revealing the true purpose for this life.

Search out the facts of what we say. I also urge you to follow up on the links within articles on *The Real Truth* website. They lead to the vast amount of other literature and materials that we offer.

After doing this, only be willing to believe us if you see *proof*. We offer you plain, clear TRUTH, made understandable to any with an open mind.

You cannot afford to miss a single issue. And be sure to check the website for other news and updates posted regularly. This will allow you to keep abreast of what is happening in a world where huge, cataclysmic changes lie just over the horizon!

On a final note: After Mr. Armstrong's death, his successors began to alter and dismantle *The Plain Truth*, eventually *selling* subscriptions to a mere few thousand people who still wanted it in its new form.

This meant that someone had to restart—*restore*—*The Plain Truth* magazine. Decades of experience trained me for this task. From the time I married Mr. Armstrong's secretary in 1971, circumstances allowed me to grow close to him and to learn from him personally for a period of almost 15 years. This prepared me to carry on in his absence, and to *restore* the plain understanding of that wonderful magazine.

While we cannot bring back the original *Plain Truth* magazine, you are reading its replacement, its only *true* extension, identical in style, impact—and MESSAGE! □



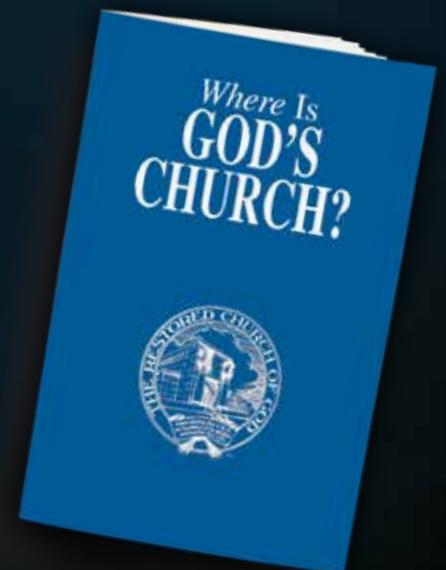
# *Where Is God's Church Today?*

Jesus Christ declared, "I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). If He promised His Church would never be destroyed, where is it today? Jesus gave identifying signs in the Bible to locate it. He said His Church would:

- Be a little flock
- Teach the truth
- Be separate from the world
- Be set apart by its beliefs
- Be identified by its biblical name
- Not mingle truth with error
- Be structured
- Not be divided

## **Locate the Church Jesus Built!**

*Order Your Free Copy of  
Where Is God's Church? at [rcg.org/wigtc](http://rcg.org/wigtc).*



# 9 11



# Remembering What Was Lost

Twenty years have passed since the worst terrorist attack on American soil. There is one crucial lesson we must never forget from that day.

BY TIMOTHY D. RANNEY

**S**OMEHOW, IT HAS been 20 years. *Two decades* since terrorists hijacked planes and crashed them into U.S. symbols of military power and commerce. Yet those events are seared into the consciousness of everyone who lived through them...

Of course, September 11, 2001, began like any other day. I remember being at work for a health insurance company in Nebraska. A colleague came in and demanded I come with him. I refused just as firmly. Since I traveled so much for work at the time, it was unusual to have time at my desk. I was relishing the rare office productivity.

Finally, he grabbed me by the arm, dragged me from my desk and placed me in front of a TV in the cafeteria. Watching the World Trade Center towers burn during a live broadcast was surreal. Watching them crumble into piles of metal, glass and dust was equally unreal—like watching a movie. There was now a gaping hole in the New York City skyline.

Yet, for me, the event was also deeply personal. Through work, I knew people who were in the towers that day. Some were friends. Some were good friends. I knew their families from dinners we had eaten together, sometimes in their homes. *True friends.*

All told, 2,977 people were killed that day (not including the terrorists): 2,753 people died in the attacks in New York City including 343 firefighters, 37 Port Authority officers, 23 police

officers, and all the passengers and crew on the airplanes; 184 died in the Pentagon attack; and 40 died in the thwarted attack when a plane crashed in Pennsylvania. Many more have continued to suffer from the residual physical and mental wounds. Families of the victims who died that day still suffer.

A surviving friend related a gut-wrenching story. Someone both he and I knew, after descending just a couple of flights of stairs, said he needed to return to his desk. A manual switch had been recently installed under the man's desk that would back up the entire data off site that was stored locally in the tower. In the panic of the moment, he forgot to flip the switch. It would cost the company dearly if the switch was not activated.

My good friend said the colleague was told by many not to go back. But the man quickly determined it would only take a few minutes at most. So, he turned and ran back up the stairs—going against the flow of humanity fleeing the already burning tower. We know the man made it to his desk and flipped the switch because the data was fully backed up to a remote site. But we never saw him again. A family suffered the loss of a husband and father.

I remember seeing the anguish and tears on my friend's face as he described his devastation. I cried with him. Although I tried, no amount of consoling in any manner could ever relieve him of the anguish he felt. I listened to my friend quietly. All I could do was just be there.

We all have stories from 9/11. Some of us are firefighters who experienced the most harrowing day on the job. Some of us are the children of “jumpers,” those who propelled themselves from broken windows or walls in the

towers to avoid a fiery death—or perhaps hoping they would somehow survive the fall. Some of us remember the smell of burnt plastic that lingered in the air of New York City for weeks after the attacks.

All of us were changed by that day, and there were many things learned during and after 9/11. Revisiting those horrible events 20 years later brings back into focus the most important lessons of all.

## Individual Impact

As I watched the towers go down on my work cafeteria's TV, I was already overwhelmed with an intense heartache for the people I knew. They were in those buildings, scrambling for their lives. I felt an intense pain for their wives, husbands and children who would never see them again. I watched it live for some time in disbelief. The commentators were also just as disbelieving.

I cannot recall exactly when, but I realized I needed to go home. This was a national emergency and my house was only a few miles from the U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base. All branches of the military reported through this base. At that moment, StratCom was one of the most important military command bases in the world.

I was more grateful than I ever had been to be able to go home. To my wife. To my children if they were home from school. I realized that, after today, many would never see their loved ones again.

So I just left. I mentioned to one colleague that I was leaving and walked out the door. The roads were barren. Traffic was nearly nonexistent on usually busy roads.

■ Firefighters raise an American flag at ground zero in New York City (Sept. 11, 2001).

THOMAS E. FRANKLIN/BERGEN COUNTY, NJ, RECORD VIA GETTY IMAGES

# Hours of Terror

For the entire trip home, I fought back tears for those I knew, or maybe used to know.

At home, there was an eerie quiet. Chilling, in fact. It was a quiet that my wife and I had never experienced before. All of the air traffic had been locked down. Not a single airplane could be seen in the sky, much less heard.

Suddenly, every direction we looked there were fighter jets in the sky. Aircraft engines thunderously vibrated the air. They looked like gnats in the sky. As suddenly as they appeared, these U.S. military fighter jets knifed straight up into the atmosphere and disappeared into the scattered high clouds at breakneck speed.

That same eerie calm settled over the area once again. Chilling was now an understatement. I was now fearful. Psalm 23 came to mind. I thought of how Bible prophecy could be playing out right before our eyes. *Was this the end?*

Considering the events of that morning, my wife and I assumed the worst—an imminent attack focused on the nearby vital military base. We looked at each other and decided to remain outside on our deck, preferring to face a quick death directly from munitions rather than slowly dying from radiation poisoning, or some other after effect of a nuclear bomb—or even wounded and unrescued in the basement of our house.

“It was a nice life with you,” I whispered as we stood arm in arm. I had never felt so helpless. Just standing there. Waiting to die.

Just then, a large aircraft flew over us several hundred feet in the air. Growing up in the U.S. Air Force as a dependent of my dad’s career, I was able to recognize the plane: Air Force One.

The president of the United States was on board and on approach to land at the base. The plane had hurriedly fled Florida where the nation’s leader was visiting with school children to an “undisclosed location.” Seeing that Boeing 747-200B abated our concerns about an impending broader attack. The president would only land in a safe place.

I recount this story with tears in my eyes. My wife has tears as well. We still have heartbreak for those we knew who became surviving family members and those who suffered in that fateful attack. It permanently changed us.

After September 11, friends and family became more important to us. Trust could be automatic with those known most intimately. New friends somehow became more difficult to develop. Trust took longer to form in new relationships. Consequently, new relationships were developed less frequent.

Jobs that required absence from home were shunned in favor of jobs that would allow time together with our children and our families. My wife and I both changed careers—we speculate this was probably from life changes that resulted from 9/11.

The impact of these events caused a different direction in our lives. The value of trusted closer relationships was even more evident to both of us. This meant more day-to-day service to those whom we knew better. Instead of community service in projects and programs, we quietly and more directly helped and served family, friends, and neighbors: food, clothing, meals, money, trips and even vacations were shared.

Yet I know my family is not alone with 9/11 having such a sweeping impact. Everyone who lived through September 11 was changed. In fact, the entire world would never be the same.

## It Changed Words

More subtle changes occurred within our society after that fall day in 2001. New terms like “jumpers” were used while other words were redefined.

Before 9/11, “ground zero” was defined as the Earth’s surface directly above and below an exploding nuclear bomb. Since 2001, ground zero more broadly means the site of devastation, disaster or violent attack. An online definition of ground zero states, “The site of the former World Trade Center in New York City in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.”

### 7:59 a.m.

American Airlines Flight 11, with 92 people aboard, takes off from Boston’s Logan International Airport en route to Los Angeles.

### 8:14 a.m.

United Airlines Flight 175, with 65 people aboard, takes off from Boston; it is also headed to Los Angeles.

### 8:19 a.m.

Flight attendants aboard Flight 11 alert ground personnel that the plane has been hijacked; American Airlines notifies the FBI.

### 8:20 a.m.

American Airlines Flight 77 takes off from Dulles International Airport outside of Washington, D.C. It is headed to Los Angeles with 64 people aboard.

### 8:41 a.m.

United Airlines Flight 93, with 44 people aboard, takes off from Newark International Airport en route to San Francisco. It was scheduled to depart at 8:00 a.m.

### 8:46 a.m.

Flight 11 is crashed into floors 93-99 of the north tower of the World Trade Center, killing everyone on board and hundreds inside the building.

### 8:47 a.m.

NYPD and FDNY forces dispatch units to the World Trade Center, while Port Authority Police Department officers on site begin evacuation of the north tower.

### 9:03 a.m.

Hijackers crash United Airlines Flight 175 into floors 75-85 of the WTC’s south tower, killing everyone on board and hundreds inside the building.

### 9:37 a.m.

Hijackers aboard Flight 77 crash the plane into the western facade of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., killing 59 aboard the plane and 125 inside the building.

### 10:07 a.m.

After passengers and crew members aboard Flight 93 attempt to retake the plane, hijackers deliberately crash into a field in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, killing all aboard.



■ Top, hijacked United Airlines Flight 175 is flown into the south tower of the World Trade Center (Sept. 11, 2001). Left, firefighters walk toward one of the towers at the World Trade Center before it collapsed. Right, a woman reacts as she looks up to the burning towers. Bottom, a victim is helped by pedestrians at ground zero.

CNN (TOP); JOSE JIMENEZ/PRIMERA HORA/GETTY IMAGES (LEFT); SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT); JENNIFER S. ALTMAN/WIREIMAGE (BOTTOM)



**“My father, Norberto, was a pastry chef at Windows on the World in Tower One. For 10 years, he made many fancy and famous desserts, but the sweetest dessert he made was the marble cake he made for us at home...Whenever we parted, Poppi would say, ‘Te amo. Vaya con Dios.’ And this morning, I want to say the same thing to you, Poppi. I love you. Go with God.”**

**Catherine Hernandez**  
Daughter of 9/11 Victim  
Source: *Parade*

■ From top left to bottom right: A man helps evacuate a woman through rubble and debris after the collapse of one of the World Trade Center towers (Sept. 11, 2001). Rescue workers sift through the wreckage at ground zero (Sept. 13, 2001). The rubble of the towers smolders after their collapse (Sept. 11, 2001). A firefighter mourns after the buildings collapse. A stunned woman flees the scene of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

STAN HONDA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES; PORTER GIFFORD/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES; JENNIFER S. ALTMAN/WIREIMAGE



**“I still have the shoes I wore to work that day. The soles are melted and they’re caked in ash. I keep them in a shoebox with the word ‘deliverance’ written all around it. They’re kind of like my ark, a reminder of God’s presence and the life I owe to him.”**

**Stanley Praimnath**  
9/11 survivor  
Source: *Guideposts*



Even how we remember events changed. The numbers 9/11 now equate to the events of that day. The United Kingdom followed suit after the 7/7 terror attacks in 2005. The 2008 Mumbai terror attack is known as 26/11.

War has always been known to be armed conflict between different nations or states or different groups within a nation or state. But war became different after 9/11. No longer was it isolated to armed conflicts between nations. Instead, it became broader.

According to a legal definition, the War on Terror is “a global war most of the western nations and their allies waged against a spiderweb of non-state insurgency groups.” This was a new paradigm based upon the uncertainty of insurgent war. Manmade catastrophe became a constant possibility and an ongoing, continual threat.

This change catapulted each of us into the greatest uncertainty of our age.

### Why Adversity?

Author Don DeLillo called 9/11 “the defining event of our time.” Long before, President John F. Kennedy said, “There is nothing more certain and unchanging than uncertainty and change.” This uncertainty is often seen in the face of adversity. 9/11 marked a sudden increase in uncertainty.

The event drove a specific point home. We are not in control of our lives. Life is full of uncertainty. This means that much of our adversity is not a result of our individual choices. We must then ask ourselves, if we cannot control events, what is left? The answer is simple: our response.

How we respond to events and circumstances *is* our choice. Hardship is universal. Ecclesiastes 7:14 instructs us what to do when it strikes: “... in the day of adversity consider.” “Consider” here means to advise self, to take heed, or to listen. We must recognize that troubling times will strike and stop and consider when they do. Ask: What do you do in the day of

adversity? What will you do the next time it arrives?

There are many things to meditate on before and during adversity, even in catastrophic times. These events can change us for the better, if we allow them.

### The Greatest Lesson

Back in late 2001, one characteristic was seen over and over. It is something we could use a lot more of today: COMPASSION. Many who watched and experienced 9/11 demonstrated empathy, sympathy and concern. This was seen in eyes swollen from tears, anguished faces, clenched fists, sore throats from the dust and debris in volunteers and rescue workers, and the outpouring of support after the event.

Compassion is an undeniable human reaction when we see catastrophe—understanding, care and concern are often the result. Compassion includes the heartache we have when we hear about suffering happening to others and their resulting misfortune. Compassion includes the desire and the drive to help those hurt by this suffering.

We can choose to have compassion—just as God shows us.

God is the most compassionate Being in the universe. And His outflowing concern never ceases. As the Creator of all that exists, He sees and deeply understands all these things and more.

Notice this from the book of Lamentations: “It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because *His compassions fail not*. They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness” (3:22-23).

Yet how does a compassionate God allow an event like 9/11?

It helps to know that He has a master plan for mankind. It involves allowing human beings to try out their own ways to show that they do not work. That is what is occurring today.

Even so, God still yearns to help. His heart breaks to see suffering.

The example of Jesus Christ in the first century proves this point. Despite

■ Top left, firefighters embrace as they try to grapple with the terrorist attacks (Sept. 11, 2001). Top right, New York firefighters carry a team member who was injured in the collapse of the towers. Middle left, a firefighter cries during a funeral service for a fallen crew member (Sept. 15, 2001). Middle right, a poster shows people missing since the attacks (Aug. 22, 2002). Bottom, the sun sets on a 9/11 memorial in front of the lower Manhattan skyline (April 21, 2021).

MATT MOYER/CORBIS (TOP LEFT, TOP RIGHT); JOE RAEDLE/ (MIDDLE LEFT); MARIO TAMA/ (MIDDLE RIGHT); GARY HERSHORN/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES



**“When Americans lend a hand to one another, nothing is impossible. We’re not about what happened on 9/11. We’re about what happened on 9/12.”**

**Jeff Parness**  
 Founder of New York Says Thank You  
 Source: *Guideposts*



being persecuted by the religious leaders of the day, He still said this: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, *how often would I have gathered your children together*, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!” (Matt. 23:37).

Throughout history, God has been ready to comfort and shelter people as a hen does her chicks. Yet few will accept this offer.

Later on, Jesus *wept* over those in Jerusalem: “If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes” (Luke 19:42).

Verses 43-44 speak of a still future time of trouble to befall Jerusalem—events in God’s Plan aimed at preparing world inhabitants to accept His abundant compassion.

While the world is not quite ready to turn to God, individuals can.

God cares so deeply for each one of us that He numbers the hairs on our heads (Luke 12:7). This means when something happens to us, each one of us, He is aware. His compassion does not, will not, and cannot fail.

We should strive to be the same. This starts by being grateful for our lives and our circumstances. This grateful attitude can encourage others around us.

Of course, this is not always so easy.

### Compassion Fatigue

As these last 20 years have passed, the spike in compassion from 9/11 has waned. It does reemerge when there are other traumatic events, yet it does not seem to last as long. One reason for this is there has been a shift in how we experience adversity and view catastrophe.

We can tire and grow weary of the constant bombardment of information showing nearly constant devastation. Constant suffering. We can begin to lose sympathy for others. Compassion fatigue can replace compassion itself.

Compassion fatigue was originally defined in the 1980s by Charles Figley. By 1992 it was used to describe the response of those exposed to regular traumatic events: disaster relief work-

ers, emergency workers, and health-care workers are examples. Compassion fatigue is, “Indifference to charitable appeals on behalf of those who are suffering.” It is apathy to the point of being cold and uncaring. The definition goes on to state compassion fatigue is “experienced as a result of the frequency or number of such appeals.”

Compassion fatigue is from regularly experiencing trauma. Trauma can be personal or can be observed. Until recently, this intense trauma was experienced only by those who were present during a disaster or during trauma’s aftershock.

Now the information age gives us the opportunity to vicariously and constantly view human catastrophe. Whether from newscasts to online posts to social media, seeing others suffer is a regular event for all who are watching. It can numb us. This numbness results in a diminished ability to empathize, to feel compassion for others.

Soon it becomes just another murder in a deteriorating city, one of many mass shootings in the last year, or locusts causing yet another famine. It is not me or my family. It is not in my backyard.

We all feel worn out from the 24/7 news cycle. Being constantly connected by the internet is *fatiguing*. There is the potential of millions dead in India from COVID-19, the fires in the Amazon rainforest, collapsing governments in Haiti, Lebanon, Tunisia, Afghanistan... on and on it goes.

What can we do to combat becoming cold and numb?

### A Solution

In 2016, one Iowa school presented a program to understand 9/11 and provided a lesson in compassion for their students. That year was the first freshman class to not have personally experienced September 11. According to *The Gazette*, parents and teachers decided to create an experience for these students to help them understand what happened back in 2001.

Using video, books and personal stories from teachers and parents to provide context, the horror of the moment was relived for the students.

Instructors played a news program recorded live as 9/11 unfolded. The ninth graders were laughing at the commercials and the types of clothes the reporters were wearing, said Tony Stenberg, a teacher at the school. Then the program cut to the terror attack. He described an eerie feeling when the students realized what it was.

Instead of seeing 9/11 as just history, students saw it as real. “It helps you slip into someone else’s shoes,” said Sean Neilly, a Kennedy High School history teacher and social studies facilitator for the Cedar Rapids district. The students understood on a deeply personal level the impact 9/11 had on America, their community, and their families. Compassion followed.

Through this simple exercise, students came to realize the importance of this event. They discussed the impact and they understood. They learned compassion.

Just like the students, compassion is a quality we can develop by seeking to understand others. We should try to make it personal when we see human suffering. It should hurt. We should cry. We should deeply sigh in our hearts.

Yet, again, this is difficult. We need help. To understand how you should react to world events—and to ensure you do not grow numb to the hardship and horror going on around the world—you must have an anchor. That starts with proving for yourself that God exists.

Reading in the Bible that God’s “compassions fail not” is fine, perhaps even comforting. However, knowing for *certain* that He exists and is ready to extend help to you will completely change how you live. You will have the comfort of knowing God’s Plan for mankind—even in the midst of chaotic world events. Also, you can confidently turn to this loving Being and ask Him to help you grow in compassion yourself. To start this process, read our book *Does God Exist?* ([rcg.org/dge](http://rcg.org/dge)).

With all of the tragedies occurring every day, it is always a “day of adversity” somewhere on this Earth. So let’s consider: Will you have compassion on those in their day of adversity? □



# FOREVER

## Navigating the

Bridging China and America's polar opposite perspectives eludes the world's greatest minds. But they miss a key principle.

BY DOMINIC J. RIVARD

“**A**LL PATRIOTS were brothers once.” Those are the words Zhou Enlai, China's premier under Mao Zedong, proclaimed at an official dinner hosting U.S. President Richard Nixon.

Well, not exactly. Those are the words a singer *acting* as the Chinese premier said in an opera about the American leader's 1972 groundbreaking visit to China.

“Let us drink to the time, when they shall be brothers again!” Zhou continues before a toast in the scene

from composer John Adams' *Nixon in China*.

The libretto from this work was a dramatized version of an already dramatic meeting between Communist China and the United States, who had endured 23 years of frozen relations. But even though the lyrics do not

ILLUSTRATION BY JODY E. LYDICK



# AT ODDS?

## East-West Rift

exactly recount the event, it summarized a situation that seemed just as odd to Americans as an opera in an era of punk rock and hip hop.

A communist leader characterizing Chinese and American people as fellow patriots and brothers on a quest to reunite would seem bewildering at best.

Despite this irony, the world's leading democratic nation in 1972 officially established diplomatic ties with China, a bastion of communism. The relationship did foster stronger

relations over the ensuing decades. Yet, nearly a half a century later, the awkwardness and outright tension between China and the U.S. continues.

As a Canadian having lived and done business in China for many years before moving back to Canada, and having personally known and worked with scores of Americans, I have seen firsthand the dichotomy between the two nations. My unique experience has helped me understand why tension remains between China and the U.S.

### Strained Relations

The COVID-19 pandemic put the friction between the two powers on full display. Both countries have continually traded blame for the origins of the virus.

At the G7 Summit in the UK, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke to his Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, to urge him to release more details about whether COVID-19 leaked from a Wuhan laboratory.

Mr. Yang told Mr. Blinken the laboratory theory was absurd, accord-

ing to the state-run *China Global Television Network*, and that “genuine multilateralism is not pseudo-multilateralism based on the interests of small circles.”

Even before COVID-19 struck, the West has consistently pointed the finger toward China for its human rights abuses in the form of forced labor, repression of religious minorities, such as the Uyghur, incarceration without trial, political indoctrination and forced cultural assimilation in “transformation-through-education” centers.

China’s government rejected U.S. accusations of forced labor in Xinjiang and accused Washington of hurting global trade.

U.S. companies are pressured to avoid clothing, produce and other goods from Xinjiang, where the ruling Communist Party is accused of holding more than 1 million members of mostly Muslim ethnic groups in detention camps. Washington has blocked some imports, while Beijing has whipped up Chinese consumer anger at foreign brands that express concern about forced labor.

“The so-called human rights and forced labor issues in Xinjiang are completely inconsistent with the facts,” said China’s Ministry of Commerce spokesman Gao Feng.

“The U.S. approach has seriously undermined the security and stability of the global industrial chain and supply chain,” he said. “China firmly opposes it.”

Beyond the rhetorical war between governments, these sentiments are shared among both nation’s citizens. Chinese retailers routinely sell T-shirts, stickers, hats, umbrellas and other merchandise containing slogans of rebuke: “America is not qualified to talk down to China!” and “Chinese people will not put up with this!”

According to a 2021 survey by the Pew Research Center on feelings of Americans towards various Asian countries, though most have improved or remained neutral, China and its ally North Korea have received very negative ratings. The sentiment spanned across all age groups, genders, edu-

cation levels and political affiliations within the U.S.

The two nations have made tremendous progress over the past several decades. The Wilson Center outlined: “Over the last 30 years, Sino-American relations have undergone an impressive transformation from animosity and conflict to candid dialogue and constructive cooperation.”

“But key issues remain unresolved, and the potential for troubling divergence is real as China becomes an economic powerhouse, a military force in Asia, and a potential rival to U.S. hegemony.”

Despite decades of burgeoning economic ties and political outreach, the two nations have never really been able to see eye-to-eye on a range of issues. Are the U.S. and China natural enemies who are temporarily courting, or are they like long-lost brothers who can reunite with mutual understanding of their fundamental differences?

### **Chinese Expansion**

The threat of conflict appears to constantly loom between hemispheres as China’s military build-up and territorial assertions in the Asia region is forcing America’s reaction.

This is most apparent in the South China Sea.

The Biden administration upheld a Trump-era rejection of nearly all of China’s significant maritime claims in the South China Sea. The administration also warned China that any attack on the Philippines in the flashpoint region would draw a U.S. response under a mutual defense treaty.

The stern message from Secretary of State Antony Blinken came in a statement released ahead of the fifth anniversary of an international tribunal’s ruling in favor of the Philippines, and against China’s maritime claims around the Spratly Islands and neighboring reefs and shoals. China rejected the ruling.

Ahead of the fourth anniversary of the ruling last year, the Trump administration came out in favor of the ruling but also said it regarded as illegitimate virtually all Chinese maritime claims in

the South China Sea—outside China’s internationally recognized waters. The current administration’s statement reaffirms the previous position, which had been laid out by Mr. Trump’s secretary of state, Mike Pompeo.

“Nowhere is the rules-based maritime order under greater threat than in the South China Sea,” Mr. Blinken said, using language similar to Mr. Pompeo’s. He accused China of continuing “to coerce and intimidate Southeast Asian coastal states, threatening freedom of navigation in this critical global thoroughway.”

The Asian nation’s effort to exert military dominance has only been successful regionally. Yet Beijing has made international reach economically through its Belt and Road initiative.

This multi-trillion-dollar infrastructure scheme launched in 2013 by President Xi Jinping involves development and investment initiatives that would stretch from East Asia to Europe and expand China’s economic and political influence.

In a conversation with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, President Biden suggested that allies should have a plan in place to rival China’s Belt and Road initiative.

“This is not just about confronting or taking on China,” a senior official in Biden’s administration said at the G7. “But until now we haven’t offered a positive alternative that reflects our values, our standards and our way of doing business.”

The G7 and its allies hope a plan called the Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative would be “an ambitious new global infrastructure initiative with our G7 partners” and become the alternative to China’s initiative, the official said.

Still, the West is clearly posturing to counter China’s economic rise, which according to the Lowy Institute’s latest Asia Power Index is predicted to surpass the U.S. as the world’s biggest economy by 2028.

### **Headed Toward War?**

If tensions between the world’s biggest militaries ratcheted up to war, it would

prove catastrophic beyond imagination. Both nations are nuclear countries and have the world's largest economies to fund a massive arms race.

In his book *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?* Dr. Graham Allison of Harvard University unveiled a historical pattern where increasing tensions between rising and reigning states led to diplomatic friction and war. Dr. Allison names this pattern "Thucydides' Trap," referencing a Greek strategist who identified the growth of Athenian power and the fear of the dominant Spartans as the cause of the Peloponnesian War between 431 and 404 BC.

Dr. Allison identified 16 historical cases in which the rise of a rival state provoked a response from an existing power. In most of those cases, devastating wars followed and led to the quick decline of influence of both sides.

These cases suggest relations between rising and reigning powers almost inevitably fight one another to preserve or secure their superiority.

To avoid this outcome, the author suggests both China and the U.S. need to humble their stances, genuinely endeavor to understand each other's perspective, and seek compromise. Otherwise, the two powers are poised to face the same fate as others before them—becoming locked in a cataclysmic conflict.

But achieving complete mutual understanding is no small undertaking. What would it take for two nations with practically opposite political ideologies, national objectives, histories and geographies to fully understand each other's perspective and avert war?

### **Contrasting World View**

In a study submitted to the National Academy of Science, psychologist Richard Nisbett stated: "There is plenty of anecdotal evidence suggesting that Western and East Asian people have contrasting world-views. Americans break things down analytically, focusing on putting objects into categories and working out what rules they should obey."

By contrast, East Asians have a more holistic philosophy, looking at objects or situations in relation to the whole. "Figuratively, Americans see things in black and white, while East Asians see more shades of grey," says Dr. Nisbett.

That difference in thinking drives the tension between the two nations.

According to Dr. Nisbett, this distinctive pattern has developed because of the philosophies of these two cultures. "Harmony is a central idea in East Asian philosophy, and so there is more emphasis on how things relate to the whole," he stated. "In the West, by contrast, life is about achieving goals. Westerners and Asians literally see different worlds."

This is why Chinese people are more apt to adhere to principles that seem outlandish to the average Westerner. Where an American views Beijing's one-child policy as an interference of personal choice, for example, a Chinese family conforms because it sees the practice as necessity for the very survival of the nation.

Similarly, group unity and team-building activities is expected in China—to the point it takes on a military form that the West can see as harsh.

During my time living in China, staff of the company I worked with would often participate in military drills led by the Chinese army to instill group discipline and cohesion to Chinese ideals. This is common in schools and sports. We can all remember the opening ceremony of the 2008 summer Olympics in Beijing during which 10,000 drummers worked in perfect unison.

This same mindset is also why large-scale infrastructure projects can be completed in stunning time. In June, one construction company—with the help of three cranes, scores of prefabricated pieces, and hundreds of workers—built a 10-story apartment unit in under 29 hours.

Such events—sometimes involving the personal sacrifice of mass groups of people to simply put on a great show in the name of China—is contrary to Western thinking. Any effort put on in the U.S. would more likely be supported

if it involved some personal benefit or consequence.

This vast gap in psyche was born out of vastly different formative experiences.

### **History Shapes Thinking**

The Chinese people, who are more deeply in touch with their history, still carry the intentions, motivations and emotions of generations past. *The Diplomat* explained: "Part of what is happening now derives naturally enough from the trajectory of any rising power—or a power that after years of investment and work is feeling like its time has come."

In the case of China, it is *millennia* of investment and work.

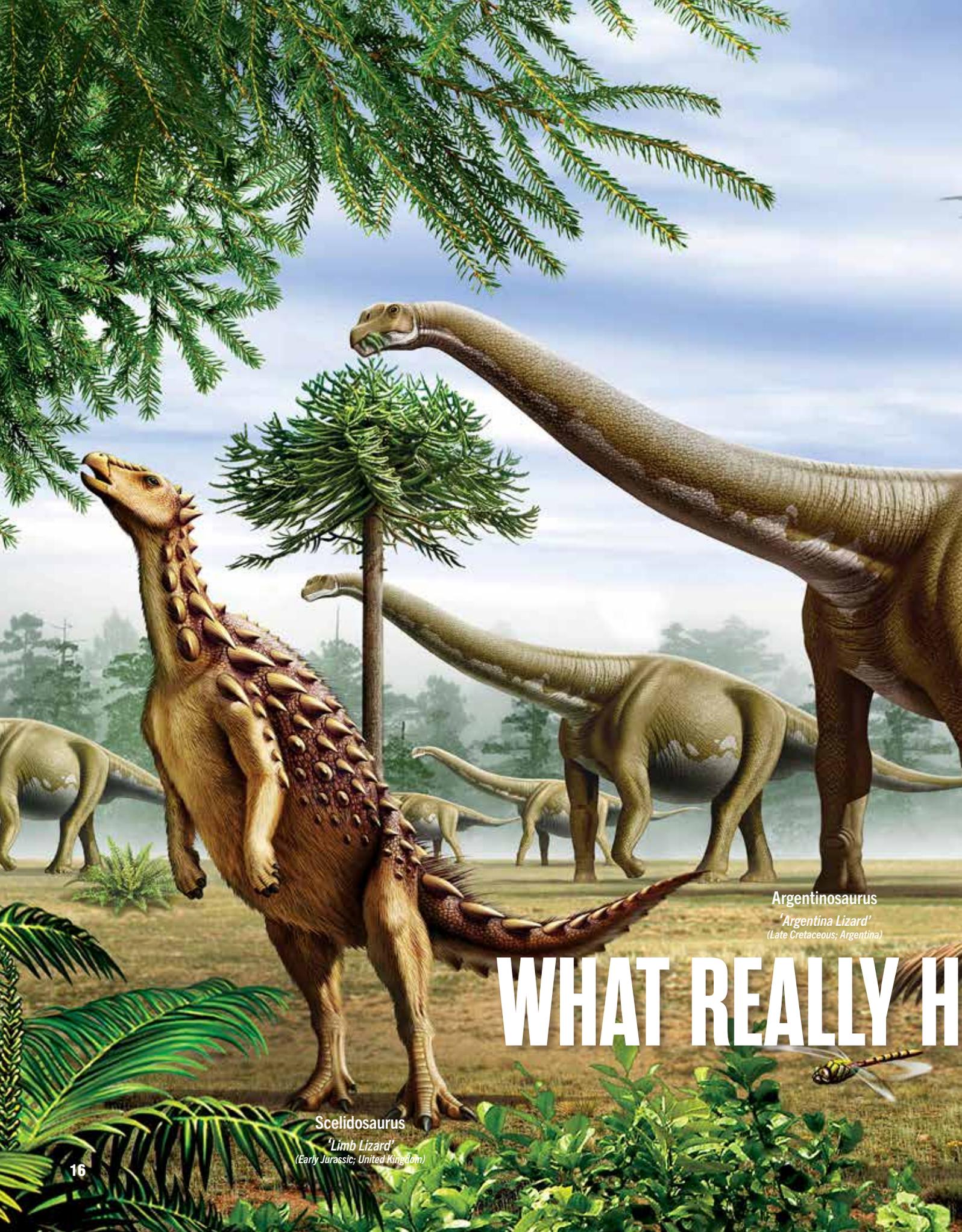
Despite China hosting the world's largest population, as well as a history of accomplishments in navigation and technology that came centuries before Europe's Industrial Revolution, it was Western powers that helped bring about the Asian giant's dynastical demise. Think about the U.S. specifically, a nation born merely in the 18th century that catapulted almost immediately to global acclaim and power.

It would seem only natural that China would hold on to a "we were here first" and "we bore the heat of the day" mentality.

Also think of the Asian nation's history of threats and attacks—and its reaction to them. Stretching from as far back as the 7th century BC, Chinese rulers commissioned the now 13,000 miles of fortifications today known as the "Great Wall of China" to defend themselves from nomadic invaders. The most infamous example of these raiders from the northern steppe is Genghis Kahn—whose blood-thirsty "great ride" with the Mongols across Asia resulted in the first time the Chinese empire was fully ruled by foreigners.

In the 20th century, Japan's occupation of Manchuria before World War II contributed to the eventual rise of the Communist Party in 1949. Also the threat of the use of atomic weapons

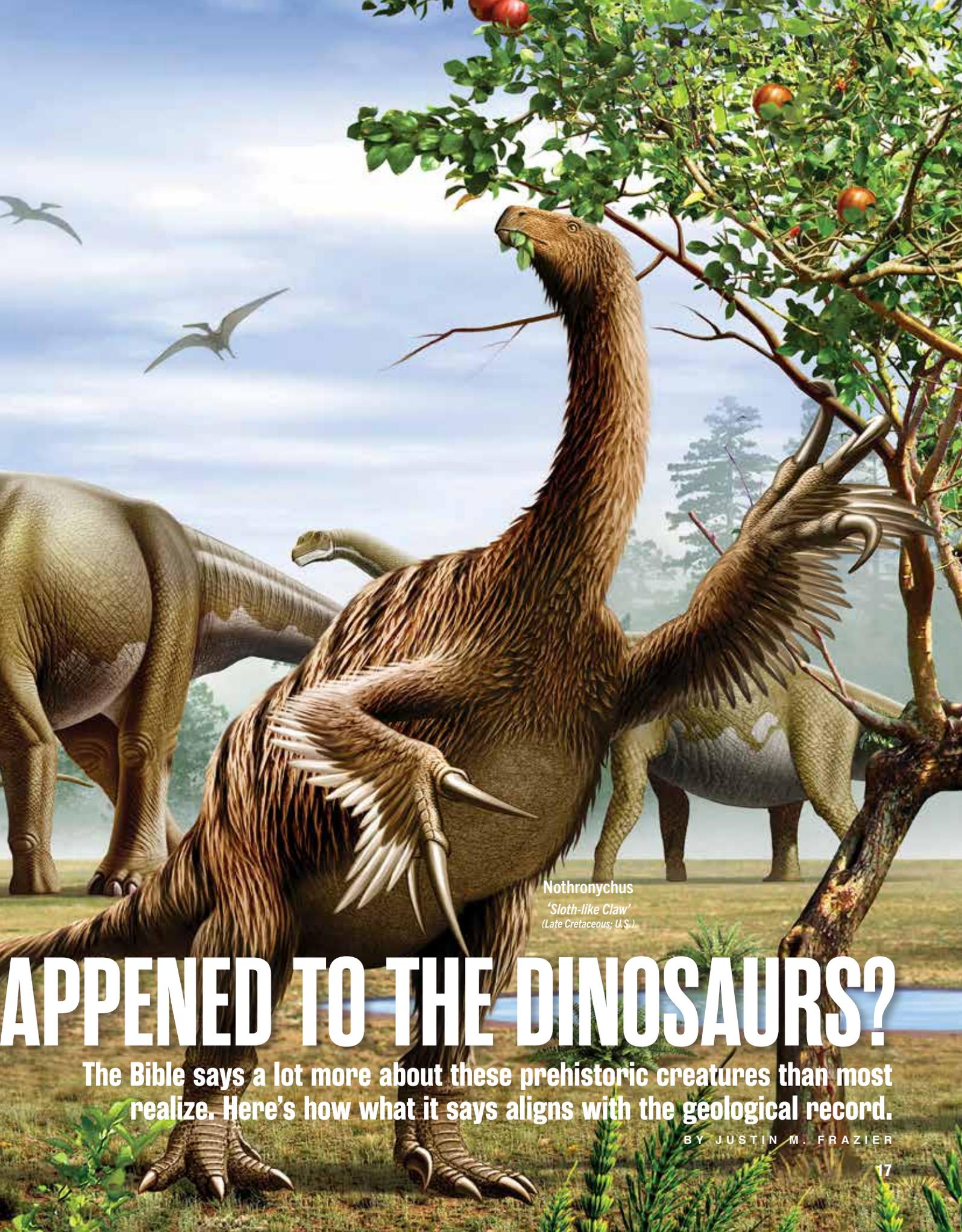
*Please see CHINA, page 30*



Argentinosaurus  
'Argentina Lizard'  
(Late Cretaceous; Argentina)

# WHAT REALLY H

Scelidosaurus  
'Limb Lizard'  
(Early Jurassic; United Kingdom)



Nothronychus  
'Sloth-like Claw'  
(Late Cretaceous; U.S.)

# APPENED TO THE DINOSAURS?

The Bible says a lot more about these prehistoric creatures than most realize. Here's how what it says aligns with the geological record.

BY JUSTIN M. FRAZIER

**F**OR THE SCIENTIFIC community, there is only one explanation. A giant explosion occurred nearly 14 billion years ago, eventually leading to all the galaxies, stars and planets in the known universe. The Earth formed about 4.5 billion years ago, and for millions of years life steadily evolved into larger and more complex forms.

The dinosaurs—creatures predating humans whose fossilized bones have been discovered across the globe—were mostly wiped out in a cataclysmic meteor impact 66 million years ago.

For many Bible readers, however, all of this seems impossible.

Millions who believe in an infallible God who authored the Bible point to the Creation account in Genesis 1. They say Earth and all life on it were created over the course of seven days. This occurred 6,000 years ago, calculated by adding up all the genealogies in the Bible.

The dinosaurs—if they even existed—would have been roaming the Garden of Eden with them. Some “young Earth” believers claim dinosaurs were around until Noah’s Flood.

For scientists who draw their conclusions from observable facts, this sounds ludicrous. Yet the religious look to the Bible as the foundation of knowledge.

So people from both camps often end up agreeing on one thing: You cannot believe in God *and* science.

Or can you?

Those who think so try forcing the two together. For example, some claim God is powerful enough to create the universe any way He wants. So they say God used the Big Bang and billions of years of evolution to bring life about on this planet. This is the idea of intelligent design or theistic evolution, that God used natural processes to finish and improve on His original Creation.

But if this is true, then the dinosaurs would have existed millions of years

ago as an unsuccessful branch in the tree of life—they would not have lived alongside humans before the Flood as young Earth creationists assert.

Knowing what really happened to the dinosaurs, and ultimately how and when Earth was made, is possible. It starts with knowing that the Bible and science *do* agree. The problem with scientists and Bible theorists is they miss what Scripture actually says.

Examining the holes in thinking of all sides of the debate will prepare you to see the incredible truth of the Bible.

### **A Young Earth?**

The Bible shows that when God made the Earth, it was made perfect from the beginning.

The prophet Isaiah recorded God’s eye-witness account of Earth’s creation. “For thus says the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited” (45:18).

The Hebrew word translated “vain” in this verse means formlessness, confusion, unreality and emptiness. This matches what Paul wrote to the Corinthians that “God is not the author of confusion” (I Cor. 14:33).

But this does not match what young Earth creationists believe. Look at the first two verses of the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void” (Gen. 1:1-2).

The Hebrew word translated “without form” is the same one translated “vain” in Isaiah 45:18. It appears to state God made the Earth to be an empty waste! This contradicts the account in Isaiah!

But a mistranslation clarifies the account in Genesis. The word “was” in verse 2 should be translated “became.”

These two verses should read: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth *became* without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”

A thorough reading of the creation account in Genesis 1 and putting all the relevant verses together shows that God created Earth along with the uni-

verse, then *something happened*, and light was extinguished.

After this, “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” as He prepared to renew the planet over a seven-day period along with the introduction of mankind. This means the rest of the chapter describes the *re-creation* of Earth’s surface—long after it was originally created and then somehow destroyed.

### **Prehistoric Life**

Piecing together all the Bible passages about Creation makes it clear that the third planet from the sun existed long before mankind was made approximately 6,000 years ago.

But what happened that made the Earth become “void”?

The disappearance of the dinosaurs could shed some light. The fossil record indicates that dinosaurs emerged about 245 million years ago and dominated Earth until a meteor struck the northwestern coast of the Yucatan peninsula about 66 million years ago. Scientists claim the resulting cataclysm destroyed 76 percent of all life at the time.

The scientific community estimates the meteor that hit the Gulf of Mexico was up to 13 miles wide—taller than Mount Everest. The impact vaporized the meteor and formed the Chicxulub crater, which is over 90 miles wide and 12 miles deep. Researchers believe it shook Earth like a magnitude-12 earthquake at the impact site with magnitude 9 to 10 shockwaves all around the world. These “smaller” earthquakes triggered volcanos, landslides and mudflows everywhere.

The impact rang the Earth like a bell, but the damage continued.

As the meteor struck, the ground pushed out of the crater was shot into a low orbit. All around the globe, ejecta fell from the sky, superheating the atmosphere. Within minutes, the whole world was on fire. Every animal on the surface of the planet died and plants burned up. Acid rain killed off marine life.

The soot and dust in the upper atmosphere blanketed the planet for up to a decade. After the fires burned out, the temperature plummeted. The

lack of sunlight reaching the surface would have plunged the planet into a years-long winter, killing off the plants and animals that might have survived the fires.

This could explain why Earth became “without form” and “void.” However, it also discredits the idea that mankind is the product of guided evolution.

The meteor impact left its mark all over the globe in a layer of clay and soot rich in iridium, an element uncommon on Earth but common in asteroids. This layer is called the Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-Pg) boundary. The fossil record abruptly ends for most lifeforms in this layer.

Scientists believe the impact killed off just about everything weighing more than about 55 pounds. The theory is that animals small enough to get into the water or go underground survived the fires that raged and the accompanying climate change.

But the idea that life survived this impact has problems. Everything that could burn, including carcasses and plant life, did. The planet was dark for a decade or more as the smoke and dust stayed in the atmosphere, so nothing grew. The waters were acidic and would have killed anything that tried to drink or live in it.

Many paleontologists believe this impact would have wiped out most dinosaurs except avian (birdlike) ones. Dr. Jack Horner and his colleague Mary Schweitzer helped find the first soft tissue inside a fossilized dinosaur bone. By comparing protein within that tissue to 21 currently living animals, they found the closest relatives to be chickens and ostriches. Alligators were a close third.

Just as very few birds burrow today, very few of the avian dinosaurs were known to burrow or swim at the time of the impact, the only ways scientist believe animals could have survived. But if the impact destroyed 76 percent or even all life, how could avian dinosaurs have survived *at all*?

This means birds could not exist today, which leaves no room for guided evolution to have occurred.

### Problem for Future Paleontologists

Paleontologists generally refuse to acknowledge that anything written in the Bible could be true, which leaves them only the fossil record to believe in. Trying to piece together what happened before, during and after a cataclysmic event with minimal evidence, however, means there are bound to be inaccuracies.

The fossil record before and after the K-Pg boundary are vastly different. Therefore, the only conclusion scientists can come to is that the species before died off and the species that survived evolved.

But the Bible indicates something else entirely. Isaiah 11:6-9 describes a world quite different from the one we inhabit today, but still on the Earth. Verse 7 begins, “And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together.”

What a *strange* picture—a cow and bear feeding alongside each other with their calves and cubs lying down. We are not used to seeing that kind of proximity between predator and prey. For these two to coexist, the bear must become as docile as domesticated cattle.

The second half of the verse shows the predatory nature of all animals will change. The lion, one of the fiercest hunters, will “eat straw like the ox” (vs. 7). Verse 8 describes how asps and vipers, deadly snakes, will be harmless even to young children. The bear, the lion, the asp, the viper and all carnivorous or dangerous animals “shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain” (vs. 9).

What happens to change the nature of these animals?

God promises a cataclysm that will change not just Earth as the Chicxulub impact did, but the stars as well. “For thus says the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land” (Hag. 2:6). The event described here will make the Mexico meteor impact look like tossing a pebble into a sandbox.

## DIVERSE VERTEBRATES

### Megalosaurus ('Big Lizard')

**Type:** Large Theropod  
**Period:** Mid Jurassic, 170-155 million years ago  
**Location:** United Kingdom  
**Length:** 30 feet  
**Diet:** Carnivorous



Megalosaurus was one of the first dinosaurs discovered. Recent studies show this dinosaur may have been covered in downy feathers, particularly along its back and belly.

### Triceratops ('Three-horned Face')

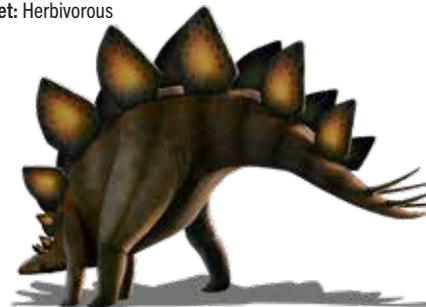
**Type:** Ceratopsian  
**Period:** Late Cretaceous, 68-66 million years ago  
**Location:** U.S.  
**Length:** 36 feet  
**Diet:** Herbivorous



A triceratops skull is one of the largest of any land animal with its three horns, parrot-like beak and frill that reached nearly three feet across. Its horns could have been used to fend off attackers, and its frill to protect the neck or attract mates.

### Stegosaurus ('Roof Lizard')

**Type:** Armored  
**Period:** Late Jurassic, 155-145 million years ago  
**Location:** U.S.  
**Length:** 36 feet  
**Diet:** Herbivorous



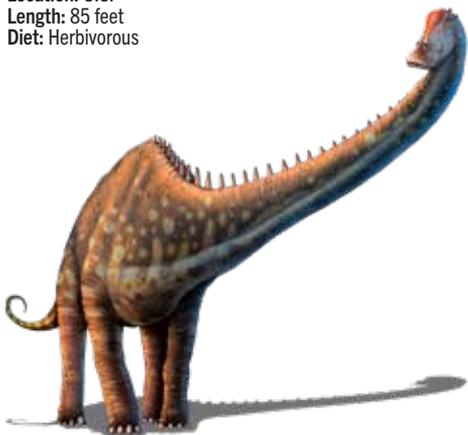
Stegosaurus used its tail for defense. Its bony plates embedded in the skin were not attached to the skeleton. Scientists suggest the plates may have been used for temperature regulation or to ward off predators.

**Deinonychus** ('Terrible Claw')  
Type: Small Theropod  
Period: Early Cretaceous, 120-110 million years ago  
Location: U.S.  
Length: 9.8 feet  
Diet: Carnivorous



Deinonychus was bipedal and like most theropods is believed to have had feathers. The huge claw on each foot swiveled and a single kick could tear prey apart.

**Diplodocus** ('Double Beam')  
Type: Sauropod  
Period: Late Jurassic, 155-145 million years ago  
Location: U.S.  
Length: 85 feet  
Diet: Herbivorous



Diplodocus likely used its long neck to reach high vegetation. This dinosaur may have had narrow, pointed, bony spines lining its back. It is believed that ligaments running from the hip to the back of the neck allowed it to hold its head horizontally.

**Parasaurolophus** ('Crested Lizard')  
Type: Ornithomimid  
Period: Late Cretaceous, 76-74 million years ago  
Location: North America  
Length: 36 feet  
Diet: Herbivorous



Parasaurolophus walked both as a biped and quadruped. It is speculated that its crest was used for vocalization and thermo-regulation.

SOURCE: NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

After this, animals will have a different nature. But here is the catch for those who think God would use evolution to bring this about. Isaiah 11 reveals that the same animal can exist on either side of an extinction boundary with body types so different that they appear to be different animals.

While certain paleontologists hypothesized that avian dinosaurs were the predecessors of modern birds, they cannot say which dinosaurs became which birds. The forms of modern birds are too different from the dinosaurs.

Now consider how difficult a job a *future* paleontologist would have describing where a grass-eating lion or a docile bear originated. They would have nothing to connect the great teeth and claws of these fierce beasts to an animal that grazes like a cow.

### What Really Happened to the Dinosaurs?

To see the Bible's answer, we must go to the very beginning, which is not found in Genesis. John 1:1 states: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God..."

Verse 3 states "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made."

Before *anything* was made, two Beings existed: the Word and God. The Word here is the same Being who became Christ, as the account points out: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (vs. 14). God is also called the Father.

Together, they created everything in a specific order.

First came angelic beings. The Bible reveals this because it states the angels "sang together and...shouted for joy" (Job 38:7) when God "laid the foundations of the earth" (vs. 4).

One of these created angelic beings was Lucifer. Ezekiel 28:14 names this being "the anointed cherub that covers" who "was upon the holy mountain of God." This is describing an archangel who was "perfect in your ways from the day you were created" (vs. 15).

But Lucifer, despite his perfection, rebelled against God's authority and

attempted to dethrone Him. Isaiah 14 describes: "You have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt *my* throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (vs. 13-14).

Note the existence of clouds, which suggests the devil had to ascend from Earth to reach heaven.

God's power overwhelmed Lucifer's attack. Isaiah 14 records: "How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground!" (vs. 12). This verse states Lucifer—now called Satan the devil—was "cut down" to the "ground." This shows Satan fell to Earth's solid surface with cataclysmic FORCE.

Jesus Christ (who as the Word involved in Creation and has seen everything that had ever happened) witnessed this: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

Lightning can move from a cloud to the ground at about 75 miles per second. If Satan fell that fast, it would have had an incalculable physical impact on the planet.

The effect of God plunging Satan into Earth's surface—or of other fall-out of space objects—could have left the planet devoid of life. This explains Genesis 1:2, that the Earth became "without form" (meaning desolate and deserted) and "void" (meaning an indistinguishable ruin).

The Earth remained like this for perhaps millions of years until God began renewing the *surface* of the Earth (Psa. 104:30; Gen. 1:2). This involved bringing back plant and animal life that had been killed—just in different forms. God then told those creatures to "be fruitful and multiply...and let fowl multiply in the earth" (vs. 22).

When Scripture is examined properly, it shows science and the Bible are in PERFECT HARMONY.

Learn more about the validity of God's Word by reading *Bible Authority...Can It Be Proven?* at [rcg.org/bacibp](http://rcg.org/bacibp). □



# AN ‘OBLIGATION’ TO KILL

As the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan, the Taliban targeted Afghan pilots in revenge-seeking attacks for their role in bombings.

**A**FGHAN AIR FORCE Major Dastagir Zamaray had grown so fearful of Taliban assassinations of off-duty forces in Kabul that he decided to sell his home to move to a safer pocket of Afghanistan’s sprawling capital.

Instead of being greeted by a prospective buyer at his realtor’s office earlier this year, the 41-year-old pilot was confronted by a gunman who walked inside and, without a word, fatally shot the real estate agent in the mouth.

Zamaray reached for his sidearm but the gunman shot him in the head. The father of seven collapsed dead on his 14-year-old son, who had tagged along. The boy was spared, but barely speaks anymore, his family says.

Zamaray “only went there because he personally knew the realtor and thought it was safe,” Samiullah Darman, his brother-in-law, told *Reuters*. “We didn’t know that he would never come back.”

At least seven Afghan pilots, including Zamaray, have been assassinated off base in recent months, according to two senior Afghan government officials. This series of targeted killings, which have not been previously reported, illustrate what U.S. and Afghan officials believe is a deliberate Taliban effort to destroy one of Afghanistan’s most valuable military assets: its corps of U.S.- and NATO-trained military pilots.

In so doing, the Taliban—who have no air force—are looking to level the playing field as they press major ground offensives. The militants are quickly seizing territory once controlled by the

U.S.-backed government of President Ashraf Ghani, raising fears they could eventually try to topple Kabul.

*Reuters* confirmed the identities of two of the slain pilots through family members. It could not independently verify the names of the other five who were allegedly targeted.

In response to questions from *Reuters*, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed the group had killed Zamaray, and that it had started a program that will see Afghan Air Force pilots “targeted and eliminated because all of them do bombardment against their people.”

A UN report documented 229 civilian deaths caused by the Taliban in Afghanistan in the first three months of 2021, and 41 civilian deaths caused by the Afghan Air Force over the same period.

■ Afghan Army troops disembark an Afghan Air Force Black Hawk helicopter during a troop resupply at Camp Shorabak in Helmand Province, Afghanistan (July 28, 2018).

U.S. MARINE CORPS/1ST LT. KATHLEEN KOCHERT/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

Afghanistan's government has not publicly disclosed the number of pilots assassinated in targeted killings. The nation's Defense Ministry did not respond to requests for comment. The Pentagon said it was aware of the deaths of several Afghan pilots in killings claimed by the Taliban, but declined comment on U.S. intelligence and investigations.

Afghan military pilots are particularly attractive assassination targets, current and former U.S. and Afghan officials say. They can strike Taliban forces massing for major attacks, shuttle commandos to missions and provide life-saving air cover for Afghan ground troops. Pilots take years to train and are hard to replace, representing an outsized blow to the country's defenses with every loss.

Shoot-downs and accidents are ever-present risks. Yet these pilots often are most vulnerable in the streets of their own neighborhoods, where attackers can come from anywhere, said retired U.S. Brigadier General David Hicks, who commanded the training effort for the Afghan Air Force from 2016 to 2017.

"Their lives were at much greater risk during that time [off base] than they were while they were flying combat missions," Brig. Gen. Hicks said.

Although Taliban assassinations of pilots have happened in years past, the recent killings take on greater significance as the Afghan Air Force is tested like never before.

In early July, U.S. forces left America's main military bastion in Afghanistan, Bagram Air Base outside Kabul, as they complete their withdrawal from the country 20 years after ousting the Taliban following the al-Qaida attacks of September 11, 2001.

"Pilots are on top of the Taliban's hit list," the senior Afghan government official said.

That Afghan official and two others, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they're working to protect pilots and their families, moving some to on-base housing and relocating others to safer civilian neighborhoods.

A White House National Security Council spokesperson strongly condemned "all targeted assassinations in Afghanistan" and stressed U.S. commitments to continue providing security assistance to the Afghan military.

The Afghan Air Force is heavily dependent on U.S. training, equipment and maintenance as well as logistics to ensure a reliable pipeline of munitions and spare parts. The Pentagon told *Reuters* it would seek to provide Afghanistan with extra aircraft to ease the strain of combat losses and maintenance downtime.

## **"The entire Afghan Air Force comprises 339 qualified aircrews and 160 aircraft—less than a quarter of the fleet size of U.S. commercial carrier Southwest Airlines."**

David Petraeus, a former CIA director and former commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, warned that failure of the United States to provide enough support for the Afghan military could be disastrous.

"We are potentially consigning Afghanistan and the Afghan people to a civil war," Mr. Petraeus said in an interview.

Washington moved to evacuate interpreters who worked for the U.S. military, but it is unclear if the Biden administration would risk doing the same for Afghan forces, like pilots. Some officials believe offering an exit strategy for elite Afghan troops could accelerate a feared collapse following the U.S. withdrawal.

U.S. intelligence assessments have warned that the Afghan government could fall in as little as six months, two U.S. officials told *Reuters*.

"No one wants to have the [Afghan forces] preemptively throw in the towel," another U.S. official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

### **Precious, Overstretched**

Two Afghan Air Force pilots were killed on June 7 while trying to evacuate troops wounded during a surge of fighting against the Taliban insurgency.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for shooting down their Russian-made, U.S.-financed Mi-17 helicopter. Local media identified the deceased pilots as Milad Massoud and Abdul Alim Shahrayari. The Afghan Defense Ministry said in a statement that the aircraft crashed, but it did not say why, nor would it identify the pilots. An Afghan official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed the chopper was shot down.

Both the crew and the aircraft were precious.

The Afghan fleet contained just 13 Mi-17 helicopters and 65 qualified aircrews of pilots and co-pilots to fly them, according to U.S. military data from April 2021 and November 2020, respectively.

Those data show the entire Afghan Air Force comprises 339 qualified aircrews and 160 aircraft—less than a quarter of the fleet size of U.S. commercial carrier Southwest Airlines.

The "usable" fleet is even smaller—around 140 aircraft—after accounting for aircraft undergoing maintenance, according to the same April data.

Built in America's image, the Afghan Air Force is equipped with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and lumbering C-130H transport aircraft, neither of which Afghans know how to maintain, according to a Pentagon report released in April. Those aircraft are serviced by U.S.-funded contractors, which also handle most maintenance for the rest of the fleet, including A-29 Super Tucano light attack aircraft, AC-208 Eliminator planes and MD-530 helicopters, according to that report.

A separate 2020 report by the Pentagon's Lead Inspector General warned that Afghanistan's fleet would

stop being “combat effective” within a few months if the Afghan Air Force were to lose contractor support. The Pentagon has not said how many contractors will remain in Afghanistan.

*Reuters* contacted two large U.S. defense contractors that support the Afghan Air Force: Leidos Holdings Inc and DynCorp International, now part of Amentum Services Inc. Spokespeople for those companies declined to say how many contractors, if any, were still in Afghanistan.

In comments to *Reuters*, the Pentagon acknowledged the withdrawal of contractors could impact routine maintenance, something it was working to address. Spokesman Major Rob Lodewick said it had already become common practice to send aircraft abroad for heavy maintenance.

Mr. Petraeus said that is not only costly, but it is “impractical” in a wartime setting to fly aircraft out of Afghanistan for repairs. Remote instruction and meetings via video-conference also have natural limitations.

Along with Afghanistan’s Special Forces, the Afghan Air Force is a pillar of the nation’s strategy for

preventing a Taliban takeover of cities. In addition to providing air cover and performing bombing raids, pilots conduct medical evacuations, ferry supplies and transport troops for the country’s over-stretched army.

Since Mr. Biden’s April withdrawal announcement, Taliban militants have more than doubled the number of districts under their control in Afghanistan to 203, which is nearly half the country’s 407 districts, according to the *Long War Journal*, an online publication associated with the conservative think-tank Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington.

Western security officials said insurgent forces have captured more than 100 districts, but the Taliban say they have control of more than 200 districts in 34 provinces comprising over half the Central Asian country.

Swift gains by the Taliban put more strain on Afghan Air Force crews and aircraft to repel the advances.

Before the summer wave of Taliban offensives, the Afghan Air Force was flying missions at a faster pace than anticipated, piling up maintenance

checks that took more planes out of circulation, according to a May report by the Pentagon’s Inspector General.

General Austin Miller, the commander of U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan, warned on June 29 that he was concerned about “overuse” of the Afghan Air Force.

“If you overuse the organizations, it’s difficult for them to...reconstitute,” Gen. Miller told reporters.

In remarks from the White House July 8, Mr. Biden said aid to Afghanistan’s military would continue after the U.S. military mission ends on August 31. But Mr. Biden was hardly optimistic about Afghanistan’s future, casting doubt on the two-decade-old project to preserve a unified, centralized state. Still, he said a Taliban victory was not inevitable.

“I trust the capacity of the Afghan military, which is better trained, better equipped and more competent” than the Taliban, he told reporters.

### Stay and Fight?

It was not just Taliban death threats against him and his family that drove decorated Afghan helicopter pilot

■ Afghan soldiers load a simulated casualty onto a Black Hawk helicopter during an evacuation drill at Camp Shorabak in Helmand Province, Afghanistan (July 14, 2018).

U.S. MARINE CORPS/SGT. LUKE HOOGENDAM/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS



Major Naiem Asadi out of Afghanistan. Maj. Asadi said the Afghan Air Force had failed to do enough to protect pilots vulnerable to off-base assassinations.

“They spend a lot of money on [the training] of these pilots, but they can’t spend any money on the pilots for their security,” Maj. Asadi told *Reuters* in an interview, after arriving in New Jersey in June to start his bid for asylum.

Experts say the morale of Afghan forces could prove critical in preventing collapse, given the momentum of the Taliban and the perceived weakness of the Afghan central government in key parts of the country.

A review by a U.S. government watchdog found nearly half of all foreign military trainees who went Absent Without Leave (AWOL) while training in the United States since 2005 were from Afghanistan. The Pentagon eventually halted training of Afghan pilots inside the United States.

Niloofer Rahmani, the first female fixed-wing pilot in the Afghan Air Force, won asylum in the United States in 2018 after receiving death threats from the Taliban and others in Afghan society who condemned her for working alongside the U.S. military.

Miss Rahmani, who is now training in Florida to become a flight instructor, said the Afghan government did not take those threats seriously enough and that even some of her fellow pilots did not think women should fly. She said she was not paid for a year.

Still, the decision to leave Afghanistan was not an easy one.

“It honestly broke my heart, I was depressed for two years just thinking about it,” Miss Rahmani said, explaining she felt like she had abandoned her family and what once seemed like a promising military career. She said she feared many pilots would drop out of the force “because of lack of support, because of the threat.”

An active-duty Afghan pilot, speaking to *Reuters* on condition of

anonymity from Afghanistan, said he, too, was trying to figure out a way to flee the country in the face of deteriorating security.

Some are finding the U.S. door shut. Mohd Hamayoun Zarin, a former A-29 pilot, expressed shock that the U.S. Embassy in Kabul rejected his visa request in March.

As an Afghan Air Force veteran who spent years training in America, Mr. Zarin is convinced the Taliban will make good on their many threats to kill him and his family now that U.S. troops are leaving.

It would be payback, he says.

“I wasn’t dropping flowers on them. These were bombs,” Mr. Zarin said in an interview, detailing his case publicly for the first time in the hopes that the United States might reconsider.

In its letter to Mr. Zarin, viewed by *Reuters*, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul said he was ineligible for the same visas set aside for interpreters because he did not work directly for the United States, but rather for the Afghan government.

Mr. Zarin said that distinction makes little difference on the ground in Afghanistan, where he was known as an English-speaking pilot who spent years training in the United States.

### **Trained Killers**

Masood Atal, a Black Hawk helicopter pilot, was driving on his day off on December 30 to buy fruit for his mother when two motorcycles flanked his gray Toyota Corolla on a Kandahar city highway, one on each side of the car.

Gunmen on the back of both bikes opened fire on Atal, shooting him 11 times, once in the face, six times in his right arm and hand, the rest in his chest, his family said.

Atal had confided to his family that he had received Taliban death threats, the latest in an expletive-laced phone call just two days before he was killed.

“We’re killing you,” they told him, recounted Bashir Ahmad, one of Atal’s brothers.

Atal had asked for bodyguards and a bullet-proof car but the Afghan military turned him down, Mr. Ahmad said, accusing it of being “very weak on these things.”

An Afghan military spokesman, Sadeq Esa, confirmed Atal had been killed by the Taliban but did not provide further comment about his case.

The Taliban confirmed it killed Atal and said it would do the same to other pilots.

“Targeting those who bombard civilians, who drop blind bombs on civilian houses, is an obligation for us and we will do this,” Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban spokesman, told *Reuters*.

For Atal’s parents, it was their fifth child killed in the many decades of fighting in Afghanistan. In 1984, during the Soviet occupation, a rocket fired by an anti-Soviet mujahideen landed in front of their children’s school in Kandahar, killing another son and three daughters, the family said.

Such crossfire has killed untold numbers of Afghan civilians. But there was nothing indiscriminate about Atal’s killing, his family said. The Taliban “are absolutely focusing on the pilots first...to make the Afghan government vulnerable enough so they can be beaten,” said another brother, Waheed.

Catching the killers of Afghan pilots has proven difficult.

A few weeks after the January shooting of Zamaray, the airman shot dead in his realtor’s office, Kabul police told the family they had made an arrest. They asked Zamaray’s 14-year-old son to identify the suspect.

Glimpsing the detainee at the police station, the teen informed police they had the wrong man. Police tried to convince the boy that the suspect might now look different because he had a broken nose, the family said.

“The police were pushing [Zamaray’s] son to identify and implicate the wrong person just to hide their weakness and show an achievement,” Darman, Zamaray’s brother-in-law, said. □



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Decode Using Cipher:

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# Should Faith Be a Mystery?

BY EDWARD L. WINKFIELD

**R**ELIGIOUS FAITH is disappearing. People no longer trust in the idea of a Creator or His miracles.

Belief in God is tantamount to belief in a “magical being with superpowers who reads minds and grants wishes,” as one atheist so brazenly stated.

Such feelings are gaining traction.

A Pew Research poll updated in 2019 showed the continued trend away from belief in the supernatural. Atheists, agnostics and those with

no religious affiliation—collectively called “nones”—make up about 30 percent of the U.S. population.

Interestingly, 78 percent of these “nones” were reared in families with a religious affiliation. Despite spending their childhood in such an environment, half of them cited “non-belief” or a lack of faith as the reason they abandoned religion (ibid.).

The specific reasons they gave for turning away were sobering and revealing. Several statements include: “Too many Christians doing un-Christian things.” “Religion is the opiate of the people.” “Lack of any sort of scien-

tific or specific evidence of a creator.” “Rational thought makes religion go out the window.” “I just realized somewhere along the line that I didn’t really believe it.”

Their answers reflect the growing mix of pessimism, rationalization and defeat when it comes to maintaining and understanding faith.

Where does this leave those searching for, or striving to hold onto, their belief?

### A Host of Explanations

The Catholic Church has dominated religion spanning two millennia. It

is considered an authority on religious matters, including the subject of faith.

Catholic bishops use encyclicals to interpret doctrinal “mysteries” for their congregants. (The word “mystery” and other closely related terms appear nearly 400 times in the catechism, a summary of Catholic beliefs.) In 2013, Pope Francis used one such encyclical, titled *Lumen Fidei* (“The Light of Faith”), to explain the meaning of faith. In it, he compares it to a “guiding light.”

Building on the analogy, he wrote: “...in the absence of light everything becomes confused; it is impossible to tell good from evil, or the road to our destination from other roads which take us in endless circles, going nowhere... The light of faith is unique, since it is capable of illuminating every aspect of human existence.”

The pope’s obscure words did little to solve the mystery of faith!

Protestants are not much better. In an attempt to clarify and simplify faith’s meaning, they established the tenet of *sola fide* (Latin for “faith alone”). Their goal was to explain faith by removing the necessity of doing works to achieve salvation, a belief prevalent in the Catholic Church.

This eventually led to many in the Protestant movement rejecting the role of outward acts of faith in Christianity, claiming that faith or belief alone is all that is required. This meant that your faith could not be seen by others—making it even more mysterious and difficult to understand.

Both the Catholic and Protestant explanations fuel those who reject organized religion. They have little choice but to see faith as something unable to be understood and all about spirituality or a series of mushy-sounding proclamations based on feelings.

Secularists believe faith is all about confidence and being strong-minded. To them, faith boils down to maintaining optimism in a bad situation and keeping a positive attitude.

The Bible calls faith a “mystery” (I Tim. 3:9), which is why so few understand it.

Yet God’s Word *also* says that “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6).

Therefore, faith is a *mystery* God wants us to solve!

### What Is True Faith?

Scripture says that faith is beyond having hope or confidence. The Bible clearly separates these qualities. Notice: “And now abides *faith, hope, charity* [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [love]” (I Cor. 13:13). Hope is obviously separate from faith. Additionally, Christians are told in Hebrews 10:35 to “cast not away therefore your *confidence*,” just before three verses later saying “the just live by *faith*.” Confidence and faith are also different.

Believe it or not, the Bible does give a very straightforward definition of faith. First some context.

Immediately after a promise of Jesus Christ’s Return to Earth, Scripture says, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man *draw back*, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who *draw back* unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:38-39). God is saying that He is not pleased with those who “cower” or “shrink” from believing Him. Despite what may seem like intimidating or unbelievable circumstances, God expects people to believe Him and save their lives as a result.

A natural question coming off this is, “How can I resist the urge to doubt God in seemingly impossible circumstances and believe Him instead?”

God immediately in the next verse tells us that doing this takes faith and He defines it. Notice: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). See this as an equation, “Now faith is...” What follows is the biblical definition of the word so few seem to understand. Scripture says faith is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” We should examine each key term for greater insight. (Definitions are based

on *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. The serious reader will want to examine these for himself.)

The first word, “Now,” meaning *but, and* or *moreover*, connects the subsequent definition of faith to the end of the previous chapter as already shown. (There were no chapter breaks in the original text.) The word “faith” means *persuasion* or *conviction*. From here, God, through Paul, specifies what this faith or conviction is. He describes it as both a “substance” and “evidence.”

Substance means *a setting under* or *a support*. This indicates that faith is the support or foundation upon which hope is built. (This is proof that faith is different from hope). Faith is the support upon which an expectation is based. You fully expect something to transpire because it is resting on your faith.

God also calls this faith evidence, meaning *proof*.

People know what evidence is. Evidence in a court of law is proof shown to determine guilt or innocence. Yet God uniquely differentiates the proof of faith from proof shown in a courtroom. He says faith is evidence of “things *not* seen.” This is vital to understand.

Human beings depend on their five senses to observe the world around them. If evidence cannot be seen, heard, smelled, tasted or felt, it is deemed non-existent. On the contrary, true faith, *by definition*, cannot be observed. It goes beyond the senses.

The faith or belief *itself* is the evidence that everything will work out as God promises. This is why we are told to “walk by faith, not by sight” (II Cor. 5:7).

Related to “things not seen,” one can only *hope* for something that has not occurred. Once an expectation is seen or comes to pass, there is no further need to hope for it. This further ties the first and second parts of Hebrews 11:1 together.

If the previous explanation remains unclear, consider the following. Even non-religious faith can meet the criteria of “things hoped for” or “things

not seen.” For instance, a skydiver boldly jumps from a plane based on the faith that his equipment was rigorously tested by the manufacturer. His faith is based on the *hope* that the manufacturer maintained their previously trusted standards.

A young mother confidently drives away from the mechanic despite having not personally seen the mechanic reattach the brake line on her vehicle. Her only *evidence* for putting her life and the life of her children at stake is the work order she signed at check out. In both cases, people took action based on their faith or belief in something.

Where faith in skydiving equipment or brakes on a vehicle differ from godly faith is that there is no *absolute surety* that everything will work out as hoped for—which could lead to catastrophic results.

What makes the faith of Hebrews 11 different is that it rests on something fail-safe—something absolutely guaranteed. The only things in the universe *fully* guaranteed are God’s promises.

God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18). He does what He says He will do (Num. 23:19). When He says He will do something, it happens, else He ceases to be God.

### Importance of Faith

You should now see faith more clearly. It is not merely a label for a certain religion or denomination. It is not a character trait used to describe someone who seems religious—as in “he is a man of faith.” It is more than having blind hope that everything will work out. It also goes beyond just believing Jesus died for the sins of mankind. Faith is much bigger than all this. It is a basic “doctrine of Christ” that should be understood early on by a Christian (Heb. 6:1).

Faith is unique in Scripture in that it is on two short lists. It is both a *fruit* of God’s Spirit as well as a *gift* of God’s Spirit. In describing God’s character, Galatians 5 says: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, *faith*, meekness, temperance...” (vs. 22-23). Faith also joins wisdom, knowledge, working of mir-

acles, prophecy, healing and speaking and understanding different languages as gifts given and manifested by the power of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:4-11). Appearing on both lists elevates faith in importance.

Being named as a fruit of the Spirit makes faith one of God’s character traits. Are you surprised by this? Most would assume God simply wants His followers to have faith. Yet this is not the case. God Himself has faith. This is why Christ, who was God manifest in flesh (John 1:1, 14), displayed it so well.

Jesus demonstrated faith perfectly during His earthly ministry. He was willing to die for what He believed. He knew His Father’s plan and stuck to it through the excruciating pain and suffering of a corrupt trial, gruesome beating, and eventual crucifixion. His faith was obviously much more than having a positive outlook on life or remaining optimistic or upbeat.

Because it is also a gift, godly faith is not something we can work up on our own. While we can and should have a certain “human faith” according to the Hebrews 11:1 definition, we are justified, or made righteous, by the faith of Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16). Did you catch that? Notice it did not say faith *in* Jesus Christ, but instead said we must have the faith *of* Jesus Christ. This is important to understand. We must have Christ’s faith in us—which comes through the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we must grow in faith. Remember “doubting Thomas”? It was reported to him that the resurrected Jesus had been sighted. Christ said all along He would be brought back from the dead, yet somehow Thomas doubted the reports. Perhaps he believed for a time but lost sight once he *observed* Christ’s brutal torture and murder by the Roman government—in effect his senses took over. It eventually took Christ telling Thomas to *physically* put his hand into His side before he believed.

Jesus went on to differentiate those who believe based on His words alone from those who need tangible proof

to believe (John 20:27-29). These are just a few of the many verses that explain the subject of faith.

What about the belief that faith alone is required to receive salvation? This scenario is impossible. Full-fledged belief and trust in God always leads to action. This is the reason James said that “faith, if it has not works, is dead...” (Jms. 2:17).

### Faith in Action

For people to have true faith in God, they obviously must know who He is. With this in mind, read the following powerful verse in I John 2: “He that says, I know Him [God], and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (vs. 4).

Evidently, it is not a matter of just believing in God. Demons do that (Jms. 2:19). Belief must manifest itself in action, namely obedience to what God requires. This was James’ point in the previous verse, in which he inextricably tied actions or “works” to faith. It is by our actions that our faith is demonstrated to others—including God (vs. 18).

True faith compelled servants of God to do extraordinary things. Paul practically boasted of their exploits throughout Hebrews 11.

Abel demonstrated his faith by sacrificing the very best of the “firstlings of his flock.” Literally burning something of value for the sake of his Creator took faith. His offering was deemed “more excellent” than his brother Cain’s offering of firstfruits from the ground (vs. 4). There is no indication that Cain took the time to select the very best (Gen. 4:2-4). Cain’s offering was ultimately rejected, leading him to kill Abel in anger and jealousy. This shows that a demonstration of true faith can lead to physical death.

Enoch also pleased God through his faith (Heb. 11:5) and walked with Him during his life (Gen. 5:22-24). After referencing Enoch, the book of Hebrews states that God is a “rewarder of them that *diligently* seek Him” (11:6). Enoch demonstrated sustained faith over an extended period of time,

which will lead to a reward. This is another primary example for us.

Even those with little Bible knowledge have heard the story of Noah and the ark. He built the large boat to save his family and the animals from a coming flood (vs. 7). Though Noah had no proof that a rainstorm of a magnitude never seen or recorded before would occur, he dutifully heeded God's warning. By his actions, he "condemned" his neighbors who chose not to take God at His word. By faith, Noah believed God and saved his life and the lives of his family. We can do the same.

Abraham, often called the "father of the faithful," is revered for taking God at His word.

For instance, after 75 years of building a life for himself and his family, he immediately departed his homeland upon request by God (Gen. 12:4). To show his gratitude after victory over four kings in a military effort to rescue his nephew Lot (Gen. 14:14-16), Abraham faithfully obeyed God and gave part of his wealth to pay tithes to Melchizedek, King of Salem (vs. 18-20). Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:1-4). Parting with hard-earned funds in obedience to God takes faith. Abraham knew his action would result in God blessing him (Mal. 3:10).

Abraham also believed God when He promised that his wife Sarah,

faithful in her own right, would give birth to a son even in her old age. Later, Abraham was willing to sacrifice this same son without argument. He knew Isaac was a part of a promise that Abraham would father many nations (Gen. 12:2) and thus God could bring him back from the dead if necessary (Heb. 11:19). This is despite there being no "evidence" of any resurrections until that point.

While Abraham had faith his descendants would grow into "many nations," this did not happen during his lifetime. God spared Isaac and he went on to father Jacob, whose sons gave birth to the 12 tribes of Israel.

Abraham's faith ultimately led to some of the most powerful nations today, as explained in David C. Pack's book *America and Britain in Prophecy*.

God was true to His word!

The list of faithful servants and their actions goes on. Joseph's faith led him, against insurmountable odds, to become co-ruler in the most powerful nation in the world at the time. Moses, in faith, chose a meager existence over power and prestige. Though mighty in words and deeds (Acts 7:22), he decided "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25).

Rahab (Joshua 2:1-22), Gideon (Judg. 6-8), Barak (Judg. 4-5), Sampson (Judg. 13-16), Jephthah

(Judg. 11-12), Hannah (I Sam. 1:1-20), and David (I Sam. 17-18), whose stories are detailed in Scripture, all displayed remarkable faith. They could obviously "see" something that others could not (Heb. 11:27).

### **Mystery Solved!**

Jesus wonders whether He will find faith on the Earth when He returns (Luke 18:8). He knows what He will be looking for, and now—so do you.

True faith does not waver. It is a complete and total belief in God, whether you fully understand His ways or not. If your faith in God depends on whether He does things the way you think He should, then it is misguided. God recorded promises He will perform for His people. These promises are sure. However, God does not always say *when* or *how* these promises will be fulfilled. This is where faith comes in. We must simply believe that God will do what He says in His own time. Sometimes the response comes immediately and sometimes it comes after a while.

Though we may not know the method or the timing of God's intervention in our lives, we can know His will for His people. The Bible contains these promises. In order to claim them, we need to know what they are. Our requests must line up with His will. To know what is and is not His will, we must study His words to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, *will of God*" (Rom. 12:2).

Studying His Word will also cause our faith to increase, since faith "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (10:17).

Faith does not have to remain a mystery. God says there is "one faith" (Eph. 4:4-5). It is not the counterfeits offered by the world. It is a gift that, if accepted, leads to eternal life. Faith is an unwavering belief that God will perform the promises contained in His Word. This belief must be followed by action.

For more understanding of faith, read the booklet *What Is Real Faith?* Study it with an open Bible and prove it for yourself. □



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# CHINA

Continued from page 15

by the U.S. prompted Mao Zedong to begin developing his nation's own nuclear arsenal.

All of these existential threats over the millennia fostered a collective, defensive mindset.

Compare that to the typical American response to foreign threats. After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, for instance, the U.S. government did not go about retrofitting buildings to withstand jets, changing government systems, or developing more nukes. It began a global war on terror and further sought to spread democracy.

This would make sense, considering the U.S. has never faced thousands of years of raids from surrounding nations. Washington has never been sacked by a foreign power. Rather America, despite threats, has generally only experienced expansion and growth.

An *Economist* article described how the 19th century Opium Wars continue to shape China's view of the West today, though those conflicts are largely forgotten in Britain and America.

"From the British point of view, [the battles] were minor compared with those of the 20th century," the publication stated. "And they are on the other side of the peak and decline of Britain's imperial power, which has tended to obscure them from view. But China has not forgotten the Opium Wars. The conflicts were a humiliation, exposing the hollowness of its claims to be the world's most powerful empire. They set it on a quest, which continues to this day, to rediscover its strength."

Chinese schoolchildren are taught this history: It is practically obligatory for them to make pilgrimages to sites that showcase examples of Western aggression. For example, the ruins of the Summer Palace in Shanghai—which was destroyed by British and French troops during the second Opium War—was memorialized by the Communist Party as a "national base for patriotic education," along with 428 other such sites across the country.

An equivalent act for Americans would be to mark the location of the first White House, which was burned down by British imperial forces during the War of 1812. School children would be required to visit and foster some sense of victimization.

Yet most U.S. schoolchildren or college students never visit Pearl Harbor, the World Trade Center in New York City, or significant monuments in the capital memorializing traumatic events that have shaped their history.

As a result, the events do not make an emotional and psychological impact and, at worst, are completely forgotten.

Without acknowledging these vast differences in world views, both the U.S. and China can never truly foster stronger ties.

## A Better Way

In China, there is a well-known proverb that translates: "An army puffed up with pride is doomed to defeat."

In the Western world, there is a similar proverb: "Pride comes before the fall."

This has defined the rise and fall of nations throughout the millennia of mankind's history.

The Bible also aptly defines the danger of pride, but it takes it one step further. The book of Proverbs states: "Only by pride comes contention" (Prov. 13:10).

Before pride even has a chance to cause defeat, it brings *contention* or quarreling. In other words, when you see two people arguing, both are proud, not wanting to yield to the other party. Nations are no different. When you see two countries in a spat over words, the trading of goods, or military threats—rest assured arrogance is involved.

The same principle applies to the world's two biggest economies butting heads. While China staunchly defends its image and heritage, the U.S. asserts *its* form of government, *its* lifestyle and *its* economic system are for everyone.

Each stands by what it believes is right for society. And so inevitably they fight.

It takes humility for one person to step back and ask, "Am I doing the right thing by fighting? Is my position even correct?" It takes even greater humility to seek to de-escalate the situation.

For the two nations to establish stronger ties, *both* must at least begin to understand each other's stance. Understanding and appreciating the different viewpoints stemming from the very different cultures is a start. This will require deep compromise and modesty from both sides.

But there is a greater act of humility both peoples must perform to ensure prosperity and proper relations. The second part of the verse in Proverbs 13:10 reveals the antidote: "with the *well advised* is wisdom."

One way in which both nations—as well as all mankind for all time—have fallen short is seeking wisdom from the One who made the nations and "set all the borders of the earth" (Psa. 74:17).

The Bible declares that God can "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79). He had intended for all peoples to live in harmony and prosper without a need to conquer each other. Yet mankind has not chosen this way—each nation stands by its own ways.

The pages of God's Word make clear the only hope for true and lasting peace and cooperation is for both sides to realize they are *wrong* and have a total change of mind.

When this happens, proper cooperation and immense economic advancements will ensue. Personal relationships will be free of misunderstanding, mistrust and unfair competition.

The world has been held back because of pride. God tells us to humble ourselves and seek His counsel to have lasting advancement that benefits everyone. Only then will the peoples of America and China be able to shake hands and see eye-to-eye—a time when the two nations being brothers will not seem odd.

Our free book *Tomorrow's Wonderful World – An Inside View!* ([rcg.org/tww](http://rcg.org/tww)) helps explain more about how this will become a reality. □

INTERNATIONAL

# International Tourism May Not Rebound Until 2023

Geneva (Reuters) – International tourism arrivals are set to stagnate this year, except in some Western markets, causing up to \$2.4 trillion in losses, a United Nations study said on June 30, adding the sector is not expected to rebound fully until 2023.

COVID-19 vaccination and certificates are key to restoring confidence in foreign tourism, which provides a lifeline for many countries, especially small island states that rely heavily on the sector to provide jobs, it said.

In 2020, international arrivals plunged by 73 percent from pre-pandemic levels in 2019, causing estimated losses of \$2.4 trillion in tourism and related sectors, according to the report by the UN’s Conference on Trade and Development and World Tourism Organization.

“The outlook for this year doesn’t look much better,” Ralf Peters of UNCTAD’s trade analysis branch, told a news conference.

“The first three months were again bad, there was not much traveling happening,” he said.

“There is an expectation of a certain recovery in the second half of the year, at least for North America and Europe to a certain extent,” he told *Reuters*, crediting vaccinations.

The report sets out three scenarios for 2021, showing international tourism arrivals forecast to drop by between 63 percent and 75 percent from pre-pandemic levels, resulting in losses of between \$1.7 trillion and \$2.4 trillion.

“In international tourism we are at levels of 30 years ago, so basically we are in the ‘80s...Many livelihoods are really at threat,” said Zoritsa Urosevic, Geneva representative of the Madrid-based UNWTO.

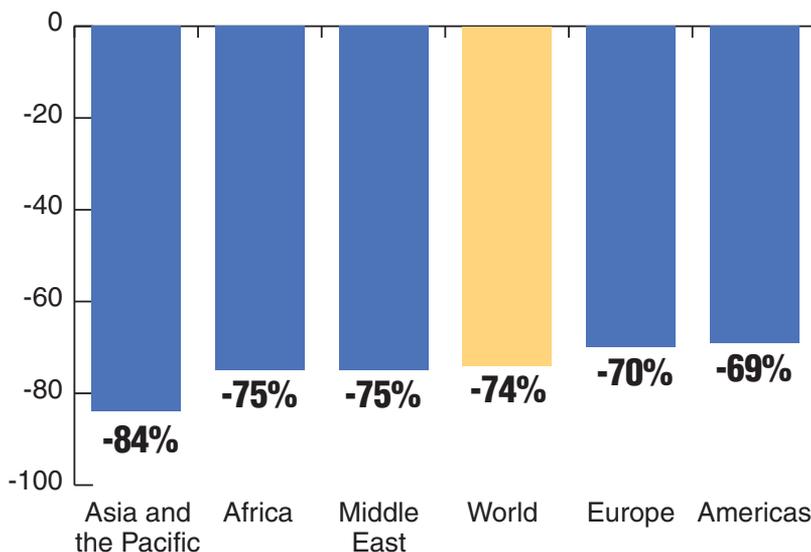
“What we are looking at in the long run is...meeting the 2019 numbers after 2023,” she said. □



People sunbathe on the beach on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa, Italy (June 22, 2021). REUTERS/GUGLIELMO MANGIAPANE

## 2020 International Arrivals

Asia and the Pacific—the first region to suffer the impact of the pandemic and the one with the highest level of travel restrictions currently in place—recorded the largest decrease in arrivals in 2020 (300 million fewer). The Middle East and Africa both recorded a 75% decline.



Source: UNWTO  
Graphic: Staff, TNS

## U.S. Overdose Deaths Hit Record 93,000 Last Year



**N**ew York (AP) – Overdose deaths soared to a record 93,000 last year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. government reported on July 14.

That estimate far eclipses the high of about 72,000 drug overdose deaths reached the previous year and amounts to a 29 percent increase.

“This is a staggering loss of human life,” said Brandon Marshall, a Brown University public health researcher who tracks overdose trends.

The nation was already struggling with its worst overdose epidemic but clearly “COVID has greatly exacerbated the crisis,” he added.

Lockdowns and other pandemic restrictions isolated those with drug addictions and made treatment harder to get, experts said.

Jordan McGlashen died of a drug overdose in his Ypsilanti, Michigan, apartment last year. He was pronounced dead on May 6, the day before his 39th birthday.

“It was really difficult for me to think about the way in which Jordan died. He was alone, and suffering emotionally and felt like he had to use again,” said his younger brother, Collin McGlashen, who wrote openly about his brother’s addiction in an obituary.

Jordan McGlashen’s death was attributed to heroin and fentanyl.

While prescription painkillers once drove the nation’s overdose epidemic,

they were supplanted first by heroin and then by fentanyl, a dangerously powerful opioid, in recent years. Fentanyl was developed to treat intense pain from ailments like cancer but has increasingly been sold illicitly and mixed with other drugs.

“What’s really driving the surge in overdoses is this increasingly poisoned drug supply,” said Shannon Monnat, an associate professor of sociology at Syracuse University who researches geographic patterns in overdoses. “Nearly all of this increase is fentanyl contamination in some way. Heroin is contaminated. Cocaine is contaminated. Methamphetamine is contaminated.”

Fentanyl was involved in more than 60 percent of the overdose deaths last year, CDC data suggests.

There is no current evidence that more Americans started using drugs last year, Dr. Monnat said. Rather, the increased deaths most likely were people who had already been struggling with addiction. Some have told her research team that suspensions of evictions and extended unemployment benefits left them with more money than usual. And they said “when I have money, I stock up on my [drug] supply,” she said.

Overdose deaths are just one facet of what was overall the deadliest year in U.S. history. With about 378,000 deaths attributed to COVID-19, the nation saw more than 3.3 million deaths.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reviewed death certificates to come up with the estimate for 2020 drug overdose deaths. The estimate of over 93,000 translates to an average of more than 250 deaths each day, or roughly 11 every hour.

The 21,000 increase is the biggest year-to-year jump since the count rose by 11,000 in 2016.

More historical context: According to the CDC, there were fewer than 7,200 total U.S. overdose deaths reported in 1970, when a heroin epidemic was raging in U.S. cities. There were about 9,000 in 1988, around the height of the crack epidemic.

The CDC reported that in 2020 drug overdoses increased in all but two states, New Hampshire and South Dakota.

Kentucky’s overdose count rose 54 percent last year to more than 2,100, up from under 1,400 the year before. There were also large increases in South Carolina, West Virginia and California. Vermont had the largest jump, of about 58 percent, but smaller numbers—118 to 186.

The proliferation of fentanyl is one reason some experts do not expect any substantial decline in drug overdose deaths this year. Though national figures are not yet available, there is data emerging from some states that seems to support their pessimism. Rhode Island, for example, reported 34 overdose deaths in January and 37 in February—the most for those months in at least five years.

For Collin McGlashen, last year was “an incredibly dark time” that began in January with the cancer death of the family’s beloved patriarch.

Their father’s death sent his musician brother Jordan into a tailspin, Collin said.

“Someone can be doing really well for so long and then, in a flash, deteriorate,” he said.

Then came the pandemic. Jordan lost his job. “It was kind of a final descent.” □

## Is Global Plastic Pollution Nearing an Irreversible Tipping Point?

Current rates of plastic emissions globally may trigger effects that we will not be able to reverse, argues a study by researchers from Sweden, Norway and Germany published July 2 in *Science*. According to the authors, plastic pollution is a global threat, and actions to drastically reduce emissions of plastic to the environment are “the rational policy response.”

Plastic is found everywhere on the planet: from deserts and mountaintops to deep oceans and Arctic snow. As of 2016, estimates of global emissions of plastic to the world’s lakes, rivers and oceans ranged from 9 to 23 million metric tons per year, with a similar amount emitted onto land yearly. These estimates are expected to almost double by 2025 if business-as-usual scenarios apply.

“Plastic is deeply engrained in our society, and it leaks out into the environment everywhere, even in countries with good waste-handling infrastructure,” says Matthew MacLeod, Professor at Stockholm University and lead author of the study. He says that emissions are trending upward even though awareness about plastic pollution among scientists and the public has increased significantly in recent years.

That discrepancy is not surprising to Mine Tekman, a PhD candidate at the Alfred Wegener Institute in Germany and co-author of the study, because plastic pollution is not just an environmental issue but also a “political and economic” one. She believes that the solutions currently on offer, such as recycling and cleanup technologies, are not sufficient, and that we must tackle the problem at its root.

“The world promotes technological solutions for recycling and to remove plastic from the environment. As consumers, we believe that when we properly separate our plastic trash,

all of it will magically be recycled. Technologically, recycling of plastic has many limitations, and countries that have good infrastructures have been exporting their plastic waste to countries with worse facilities. Reducing emissions requires drastic actions, like capping the production of virgin plastic to increase the value of recycled plastic, and banning export of plastic waste unless it is to a country with better recycling,” says Ms. Tekman.

### A Poorly Reversible Pollutant

Plastic accumulates in the environment when amounts emitted exceed those that are removed by cleanup initiatives and natural environmental processes, which occurs by a multi-step process known as weathering.

“Weathering of plastic happens because of many different processes, and we have come a long way in understanding them. But weathering is constantly changing the properties of plastic pollution, which opens new doors to more questions,” says Hans Peter Arp, a researcher at the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute and Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology who has also co-authored the study. “Degradation is very slow and not effective in stopping accumulation, so exposure to weathered plastic will only increase,” says Dr. Arp. Plastic is therefore a “poorly reversible pollutant,” both because of its continuous emissions and environmental persistence.

Remote environments are particularly under threat as co-author Annika Jahnke, researcher at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research and Professor at the RWTH Aachen University explains:

“In remote environments, plastic debris cannot be removed by clean-

ups, and weathering of large plastic items will inevitably result in the generation of large numbers of micro- and nanoplastic particles as well as leaching of chemicals that were intentionally added to the plastic and other chemicals that break off the plastic polymer backbone. So, plastic in the environment is a constantly moving target of increasing complexity and mobility. Where it accumulates and what effects it may cause are challenging or maybe even impossible to predict.”

### A Potential Tipping Point

On top of the environmental damage that plastic pollution can cause on its own by entanglement of animals and toxic effects, it could also act in conjunction with other environmental stressors in remote areas to trigger wide-ranging or even global effects. The new study lays out a number of hypothetical examples of possible effects, including biodiversity loss in the ocean where plastic pollution acts as additional stressor to overfishing and ongoing habitat loss caused by changes in water temperatures, nutrient supply and chemical exposure.

Taken all together, the authors view the threat that plastic being emitted today may trigger global-scale, poorly reversible impacts in the future.

“Right now, we are loading up the environment with increasing amounts of poorly reversible plastic pollution. So far, we don’t see widespread evidence of bad consequences, but if weathering plastic triggers a really bad effect we are not likely to be able to reverse it,” cautions Dr. MacLeod. “The cost of ignoring the accumulation of persistent plastic pollution in the environment could be enormous. The rational thing to do is to act as quickly as we can to reduce emissions of plastic to the environment.” □



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