

The Good News

September-October 2005

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING



DisUnited Nations

Why Can't Man's Best Efforts Bring Peace?

Appeasement in the Face of Danger • Passing on Our Faith to Our Children
The Biblical Holy Days That Reveal Christ's Role • Halloween: Behind the Mask



Terrorism is the scourge of the modern age. More than 30 years ago, living just outside of London, I remember being inconvenienced on more than one occasion by the IRA terror campaign on the British mainland. Later in the same decade my wife and I lived through a terrorist war in Africa, in which we lost a number of personal friends and acquaintances.

Today it's Islamic terrorism that is affecting our way of life. It didn't start on Sept. 11, 2001, but it has certainly spread since then. July saw terror return to the British capital. This time it was not the IRA but Islamic suicide bombers.

Coincidentally, in the same month, the IRA renounced terrorism, encouraging hopes of peace in Northern Ireland.

War and peace have been constant themes throughout history. Wars are fought and peace follows. Eventually, other wars come along, followed by peaceful interludes. Man seems unable to learn

The prophet Isaiah summed up one of man's greatest weaknesses when he wrote, "The way of peace they have not known."

the lessons. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah summed up one of man's greatest weaknesses when he wrote, "The way of peace they have not known" (Isaiah 59:8).

We live in worrying times, with the constant and spreading fear of terrorism coupled with a growing threat of nuclear terror. Jesus Christ warned that man would eventually come to the point of self-extinction, except that Christ Himself will intervene to save mankind (Matthew 24:21-22). He will then establish the Kingdom of God, the central message of His ministry 2,000 years ago (Mark 1:14).

One of the primary causes of terrorism is religion. Different religious beliefs have caused conflict in various parts of the world for thousands of years.

In the last decade we saw conflict in the Balkans between Croatian Catholics, Serbian Orthodox Christians and Bosnian Muslims. War and the threat of war have been a constant for six decades in the land of the Bible as Jews and Muslims struggle for mastery over the Holy Land. In India, Hindus and Muslims are in conflict; in Sri Lanka it's Buddhists and Hindus.

For almost 14 centuries there has been repeated conflict between Muslims and Christians, with the threat of a return to such wars on the rise again today.

When the disciples asked Jesus Christ what sign would signal His second coming (Matthew 24:3), He responded with the following words: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (verse 6). He added: "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (verse 7).

Of the time His Kingdom is established on earth, God says, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

Isaiah was inspired to write of this coming time of Christ's rule: "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end . . . from that time forward, even forever" (Isaiah 9:7).

Jesus told His disciples to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33) and to pray daily for that coming Kingdom (verse 10). That is the only real hope for lasting peace for the world.

—Melvin Rhodes, Senior writer

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Church president: Clyde Kilough *Media operation manager:* Peter Eddington *Managing editor:* Scott Ashley *Senior writers:* Jerold Aust, Roger Foster, Melvin Rhodes, Tom Robinson, John Ross Schroeder *Art director:* Shaun Venish

Circulation manager: John LaBissoniere *Editorial reviewers:* John Bald, Bruce Gore, Paul Kieffer, Graemme Marshall, Richard Thompson, David Treybig, Lyle Welly

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NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

United States: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 Web site: www.gnmagazine.org E-mail: info@ucg.org

Canada: United Church of God—Canada, Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada
Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569 Web site: www.ucg.ca

Caribbean: United Church of God, P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas
Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566

Martinique: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

Spanish-speaking areas: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: info@ucg.org

EUROPE

British Isles: United Church of God, P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts, WD19 6FZ, England
Phone: 020-8386-8467 Fax: 020-8386-1999 Web site: www.goodnews.org.uk

France: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

Germany: Vereinte Kirche Gottes/Gute Nachrichten, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany
Phone: 0228-9454636 Fax: 0228-9454637

Italy: La Buona Notizia, Chiesa di Dio Unita, Casella Postale 187, 24121 Bergamo Centro, Italy
Phone and Fax: (+39) 035 4523573 Web site: www.labuonanotizia.org E-mail: info@labuonanotizia.org

Netherlands: P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, Netherlands

Scandinavia: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 3535, 111 74 Stockholm, Sweden
Phone: +44 20 8386-8467 Fax: 0046 0142 10340 E-mail: sverige@ucg.org

AFRICA

East Africa—Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda: United Church of God—Kenya
P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200, Kenya E-mail: kenya@ucg.org Web site: www.ucgeastafrica.org

Ghana: P.O. Box 3805, Kumasi, Ghana E-mail: ghana@ucg.org

Malawi: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi Phone: (02) 226076 E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

Mauritius: P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes, Mauritius E-mail: mauritius@ucg.org

Nigeria: United Church of God—West Africa, P.O. Box 1715, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria

Phone: 234-1-791 8009 E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland:
United Church of God—Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205, South Africa
Phone and Fax: 043 748-1694

Zambia: P.O. Box 23076, Kitwe, Zambia Phone: (02) 226076 E-mail: zambia@ucg.org

Zimbabwe: P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare, Zimbabwe
Phone: 011716273 E-mail: zimbabwe@ucg.org

PACIFIC REGION

Australia: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia
Phone: 07 55 202 111 Free call: 1800 356 202 Fax: 07 55 202 122

Web site: www.ucg.org.au E-mail: info@ucg.org.au

Fiji: United Church of God, P.O. Box 11081, Laucala Beach Estate, Suva, Fiji

New Zealand: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Auckland 1015, New Zealand

Phone: Toll-free 0508-463-763

Philippines: P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines

Phone and fax: +63 82 241-0150 Cell/text: +63 918-904-4444 Web site: www.ucg.org.ph

Tonga: United Church of God—Tonga, P.O. Box 2617, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

ALL AREAS AND NATIONS NOT LISTED

United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A.
Phone: (513) 576-9796 Fax (513) 576-9795 E-mail: info@ucg.org

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DisUnited Nations: Why Can't Man's Best Efforts Bring Peace?

British statesman Winston Churchill, soon after its creation, wondered whether the United Nations would be "a true temple of peace" or "a cockpit in a Tower of Babel." Sixty years after its creation we still wonder whether it will fulfill its lofty goals and whether mankind will ever find lasting peace.

by Howard Davis

Imagine all the nations of the earth were one big unhappy family, which they are. Imagine they have a meeting hall and a family organization in a beautiful skyscraper in New York City, which they do. Imagine this family claims to live by a list of lofty principles for peace and human progress called the United Nations Charter, many spiritually influenced by principles and prophecies of the Bible. Again, they do—but really don't.

Sixty years of global family organization

As the largest gathering of world leaders in history meets this September to open the General Assembly of the United Nations, the family metaphor for the United Nations actually fits.

Humanity is now a huge, dynamic yet sadly dysfunctional family of 6.3 billion people that meets only at the United Nations in a systematic and orderly way. At the UN, mankind's greatest issues, both profoundly spiritual and immediately practical, are wrestled, debated, pronounced and acted upon on a scale not duplicated in any other international body.

The time for a truly effective United Nations is long overdue. But who will lead it in a world where no nation or person demonstrates the spiritual qualifications to unite us all as one big happy family? Neither the United States nor any other nation can perform such a messianic role. Certainly U.S. President George W. Bush does not claim such a role. Neither does UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Nor would the world's nations let them.

At the UN, mankind's greatest issues, both profoundly spiritual and immediately practical, are wrestled, debated, pronounced and acted upon on a scale not duplicated in any other international body.

Touring the UN and interviewing various officials for *Tomorrow* TV programs and this article, I was impressed with the scale and importance of this place.

As I dove into the background stories about the development of the United Nations, I came to respect the profound spiritual significance the UN has as a global family organization. It is the one official place where the whole human race attempts to create a better world, or at least tries to keep this one from blowing up. Better to try to discuss problems than to destroy one another.

Fundamentally flawed?

The idea underlying the UN is that mankind's innate goodness will dominate the world when the greatest powers are knit



together in a security arrangement through their own enlightened self-interest in peacekeeping and peacemaking.

The actual history of the UN for the last 60 years, however, has not proven mankind has any "innate goodness." One UN employee summed up its basic problem for me in an interview: "It's a great idea, but people are flawed."

Lately, some serious flaws threaten its existence. The United States, among others, has demanded reforms. Time will tell whether the proposed reforms will come and, if they do, whether they will be enough.

A decade of scandal

"The UN-sponsored Iraq oil-for-food scandal is probably the

greatest financial rip-off in the history of the world,” former U.S. State Department officer Jack Skruggs told me. He formerly worked for the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

The UN Security Council created the oil-for-food program in 1995 to provide humanitarian aid to Iraqi people suffering from sanctions imposed on Iraq after the defeat of Saddam Hussein in the first Persian Gulf War. Under its terms, Iraq could sell crude oil on the open market through the UN and the proceeds would



As good as the UN's humanitarian efforts are, the violence inherent in human nature as a means of resolving conflict will bring man back to the same crucible of war from which the United Nations sprang 60 years ago.

be carefully distributed for humanitarian food and aid back to the Iraqi people directly to ensure Saddam's dictatorship would not profit.

It now appears tens of billions of dollars may have been stolen from the people of Iraq when the proceeds of the oil went to the personal bank accounts of many officials and companies—even billions to Saddam himself.

Another recent scandal in the UN is the Commission on Human Rights. At one point the United States was voted off the group because it had withheld funds over suspected UN financial mismanagement.

It was replaced by notorious human-rights abusers Libya and Somalia—both of which have a history of the systematic use of torture as an instrument of state policy, yet remain on the council along with Cuba and Sudan.

Other recent UN failings include the

untold number of sexual assaults committed by UN peacekeepers in the Republic of Congo and several other hot spots in the world, the coddling of rogue regimes, the constant anti-American and anti-Israeli rhetoric, and lavish administrative spending.

Kofi Annan has agreed to sweeping reforms to correct these failings, promising to increase audits of the UN's \$3.2 billion annual budget and implementing a strict code of ethics for employees. The called-for reforms also include expelling regimes using torture and human rights abuses in their own countries and member nations found engaging in genocide or crimes against humanity.

Worth the effort?

Some critics say that the UN is a waste of time and has never been worth the effort. While this is one strand of political thinking, every U.S. president since World War II has disagreed.

Is the UN a real force for human progress or an illusion? After all, it employs about the same number of people as Disney World, and many would say it brings

considerably less happiness to the world.

But the UN does not deal in fantasy, though from time to time it has acted as if it does. It is not a place to escape. It is a serious place where the world's leaders and the intelligent, even brilliant, people they rely on attempt to seek solutions, save countless millions of desperately poor human beings, avert and stop wars and facilitate cooperative global efforts promoting health, economic development and peace.

UN agencies and activities are found everywhere on earth, on every continent in every time zone. The UN represents all of us alive today who live in its member countries. There is no greater place where the human potential for good and evil are represented every day, or where the brilliance and fundamental problems of human nature are demonstrated day in and day out.

If the UN fails, the fundamental flaws of humanity will be the cause.

Geopolitical opera house

The United Nations was begun on stage at the San Francisco Opera House where 51 countries signed the UN charter on June 26, 1945, after a dramatic diplomatic effort orchestrated by the U.S. State Department in the closing months of World War II. The script was intended to create a different, more secure world. Oddly, the world now seems more insecure than a hundred years ago.

The concept for the creation of the UN developed in the mind of U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and his State Department in the throes of global war—as they considered the failure of the earlier League of Nations, caused in large measure by the lack of American participation. Now the United States would play a leading role. The motives were to establish a world of universal peace and human progress through a set of international activities and structures of a universal organization.

This global body would be authorized to act on behalf of all legitimate national governments and guaranteed by the security pledges of the “Great Powers,” as the leading allied nations were called.

After the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, which ignited World War II, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the need to establish “a stable international organization” after the war.

President Roosevelt wrote to the pope stating that although no single spiritual or civic leader on the international scene could create such a structure, “the time for that will surely come.” He then told the pope that America would “encourage a closer association between those in every part of the world—those in religion and those in government—who have a common purpose.”

It was Roosevelt himself who would develop the UN structure.

In his 1941 State of the Union address, President Roosevelt proclaimed a hope for the future based on “four essential human freedoms”—freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear. He said they were not for “a distant millennium,” but “a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our time and generation.”

Roosevelt thought a secure world with peace and plenty was possible if he could create the right kind of international structure organized around these principles.

A famous newspaper editor noted his concepts were “the opening of a new era for the world” and “a new Magna Carta of democracy.”

President Roosevelt first used the term “United Nations” for the World War II Allies in a document called *The Declaration by the United Nations*. It was signed by himself, Winston Churchill and the Soviet and Chinese ambassadors to Washington on Jan. 1, 1942, a few weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Genesis in moral clarity

During this time of developing lofty aspirations, tens of millions were killed as war raged on. Roosevelt’s administration operated in what has been called the “complete moral clarity” of life and death in this ever-more-virulent struggle of good and evil fought across the globe.

To create a framework of agreement for future security, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the goals of global peace through disarmament, economic progress and political freedom were all developed as integrated pillars for the future world organization in the Roosevelt State Department. It was these principles and ideas that became the charter of the United Nations.

As it progressed, the concept of the United Nations was promoted to Joseph Stalin for the integration of the Soviet Union as one of the Great Powers.

Roosevelt, feeling that the nation-state systems of alliances with checks and balances could no longer be relied on to prevent global war, believed that the Great Powers needed to “run the world” for an indefinite time after the victory. He believed that lesser powers could be kept peaceful if the Great Powers held sway over a global military directed by their decisions on the newly proposed Security Council.

By the final conference of the “Big Three” at Yalta in February 1945, Stalin had agreed with Roosevelt and Churchill’s plan

for the basic idea of the United Nations, as long as the permanent five Great Power members of the Security Council could each veto enforcement decisions.

France, though no longer a global power but a cornerstone of the new Europe, was

person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote

social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

“AND FOR THESE ENDS to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

“HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.

“Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the



This mosaic, based on a famous painting by American artist Norman Rockwell, is displayed on a wall of the UN building leading to the General Assembly chamber. It illustrates Jesus Christ’s statement, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

offered a permanent seat on the Security Council. So was China, then struggling with a communist insurrection that eventually created the red China of today.

The United Nations was the cornerstone of Roosevelt’s vision of the world’s future after World War II.

The United Nations charter

Before you analyze whether the vision worked, you need to understand what the UN says it is and does. The preamble to the charter explains the intent and philosophy of the organization:

“WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human

United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.”

In the UN, all nations agree to act according to a basic understanding that “membership . . . is open to all peace-loving nations which accept the obligations.”

The organization acts in accordance with the following principles: It is based on the sovereign equality of all its members; all members are to fulfill in good faith their charter obligations; they are to settle their international disputes by peaceful means and without endangering international peace and security and justice; they are to refrain from the threat or use of force against any other state; they are to give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes in accordance with the charter; nothing in the charter is to authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters

that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.

Temple of peace or Tower of Babel?

Two months before the ratification of the UN, its principal creator, Franklin Roosevelt, died of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945. Roosevelt never saw the successes or failures of his vision of the United Nations.

The San Francisco Conference began two weeks later on the day Soviet forces encircled Berlin, and continued to meet as Germany was dismembered. One observer has noted that the participants had an “almost constant awareness of the pressure of history.”

The UN almost died stillborn at the conference. Stalin already didn't see any point in the charter obligations as advancing the purposes of the Soviet Union. His mission was the communist ideology of global domination through any and all means, including violence. He had already begun to gobble up Eastern Europe. He initially didn't even send his foreign minister to the conference.

Even with such lofty ideals written into its structure, almost immediately the weakness of the whole concept of the United Nations became apparent. While the UN allowed robust involvement of every nation on earth, the participants shared no common set of rules or spiritual culture of mutual humility and respect to help them achieve lasting peace.

Ever since Lenin, the Soviets believed a treaty was only worthwhile if it advanced communist aims. The UN would be useful if it enhanced Soviet opportunities. As a member of the powerful Security Council, the Soviet Union would veto any effort that blocked communist expansion.

Even as the conference proceeded, the United States was working on the atomic bombs it would drop in August to end the war with Japan. At Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world community was stunned. What should be done with the awesome power of atomic weapons?

In January 1946, the General Assembly created the Atomic Energy Commission. America proposed to give all its nuclear technology to this agency of the UN, whereupon no state would develop nuclear weapons. The UN would be the only force that had nuclear weapons to ensure global peace. It further proposed that it would license the technology for peaceful use to nations throughout the world.

The Soviet Union spurned the offer.

Almost immediately the world was made bipolar, manic in its competition between East and West and depressing in its constant threat of nuclear war. The world lurched into a nuclear arms race with the threat of unimaginable mass destruction between the United States and its allies on the one side and the Soviet bloc on the other.

Within a year after its creation, Winston Churchill observed that the United Nations was at a crossroads. Would the UN take the actions needed to create a truly peacefully disarmed world as the charter described or become a platform for rebellion against peaceful and principled world governance?

He said: “We must make sure that the [United Nations'] work is fruitful, that it is a reality and not a sham, that it is a force for action, and not merely a frothing of words, that it is a true temple of peace in which the shields of many nations can some day be hung up, and not merely a cockpit in a Tower of Babel.”

Pulpit for propaganda

The UN's failures fulfilled the fears of Churchill. There were a few periods when it was used to preserve or make peace, but many more when it was unable to prevent war or genocide—sometimes even bringing more problems.

Korea, the Six-Day War, Vietnam, Cambodia, Biafra, the Sudan, Rwanda, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq War, Bosnia, the Angolan civil war, the ongoing war in the Republic of Congo and more were all failures of Roosevelt's vision and the inherent inability of people to rule themselves peacefully.

The UN often became a pulpit of propaganda in rebellion against the peaceful intent and actions of all nations required by the charter. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev pounded his shoe on his desk as the world watched on television, proclaiming to the West, “We will bury you!”

In the 1970s some members of the UN General Assembly exalted violence as a means of political progress. Condemned as the foremost terrorist in the Middle East by the United States, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman Yasser Arafat was welcomed as a head of state by the General Assembly.

The UN broke the charter's principles when it exalted the PLO's indiscriminate killing of civilians as part of its violent resistance against the existence of Israel—a nation itself created by an act of the UN in 1948.

Ugandan dictator Idi Amin Dada addressed the General Assembly that same year, 1974, as the head of the 47-nation Organization of African Unity. To thunderous applause, he declared the United States an imperialist state dominated by a Zionist oligarchy.

Under General Assembly rules, any UN member state leader can address the General Assembly, no matter how personally unqualified or despicable. Amin soon came to be known as “the butcher of Africa” and in 1978 was run out of Uganda after he slaughtered more than 300,000 innocent people—many of them women and children—pillaged the national finances and destroyed the most advanced economy in East Africa.

Noble principles—when they will work

Franklin Roosevelt believed all nations would ultimately cooperate in the UN out of enlightened self-interest. Since 1945, however, nations generally have used the UN in their *unenlightened* selfish interest. The United States is no exception, although it has generally acted with a more consistent intent to act within the spirit of the UN charter than almost all other nations since World War II.

What America does not have is what all others *also* lack—a spirit of truly *unselfish* interest, care, concern and love for others.

What is needed is a new spirit in every nation to live by the spirit and letter of the Norman Rockwell artwork donated by the United States on the second-floor wall leading to the General Assembly. It is the mosaic celebrating Jesus' statement, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

The UN does much good. The World Food Organization feeds tens of millions who have no food. The UN High

Recommended Reading

In spite of the best efforts of mankind, we have failed to find lasting peace. Today mankind is at greater risk than ever with the proliferation of terrorism and nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Will the human race face extinction? In spite of terrible times ahead, God promises humankind a world of peace and plenty, though not by human efforts. To discover how this world will come about, request your free copy of the booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.



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Commissioner for Refugees maintains a lifeline for millions displaced by war and natural disasters. The World Health Organization prevents the outbreak of global epidemics like SARS, which could kill millions if not carefully contained.

But as good as the UN's humanitarian efforts are, the violence inherent in human nature as a means of resolving conflict will bring man back to the same crucible of war from which the United Nations sprang 60 years ago.

There is really nothing standing between humankind and World War III and all that will mean. If the UN fails to avert the next global war, could it mean that human civilization as we know it is over?

Yes—the next global war means precisely that. But *mankind will not end*. Nor will ordered society. Humanity will enter another period in which a spectacular *new* civilization will emerge. This coming world tomorrow will fulfill the loftiest goals articulated by the United Nations. The fundamental difference will be that it is directed and controlled *by God*, not the nations of this world.

The coming eternal united nations

The nations of this world have never been truly united. But the time is coming when they will be. The United Nations of the future will be the result of the Kingdom of God on earth, not the geopolitical efforts of the nations.

The current United Nations, at some date in the future, will fail. Yet its lofty goals will endure.

The reason the UN endures today is because all nations understand that its goals remain the highest for the world, and these goals will endure as long as the world hopes for the future. But the central message taught by Jesus in the Bible is the coming of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15).

It will suddenly appear in a moment of supreme crisis, amid a complete meltdown in man's ability to control his violent nature. Then a new divine government will supernaturally unite all the nations based on a new way of life and new way of leadership.

God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). Only He is qualified to rule all nations.

The fact is, Jesus Christ authored every lofty principle of the United Nations either directly or indirectly. Total disarmament, peaceful negotiation, the wealthy caring for the poor, the value of developing every creative talent of man, the healing of the

sick, the relief and restoration of justice for the suffering victim of indiscriminate violence—all flowed from His teaching recorded in the Bible.

Forgiveness and reconciliation, the need for integrity and total transparency of leadership, and ultimate justice for the perpetrators of crimes against humanity are all promises and prophecies articulated by Jesus Christ.

Woodrow Wilson, U.S. president during World War I, absorbed these ideals from his father, a Presbyterian pastor. They became part of the ideology of Wilson's vision of the League of Nations at the end of World War I, which heavily influenced Roosevelt's dream of the United Nations. Roosevelt himself was exposed to these biblical concepts as a devout Episcopalian.

These UN architects were well aware of the teachings of Jesus on these issues. Both were regular churchgoers. Their generations were broadly and thoroughly exposed to the Bible.

No other leader in world history, religious or otherwise, ever laid the groundwork of perfect ethics in principles and actions as Jesus Christ did. No one today, when reading the New Testament, can really argue about the qualifications of Jesus Christ to rule the world tomorrow.

But few in the world today really believe Jesus Christ will come again and make His principles a global reality. The good news is that *He will*.

Matthew 25 tells us: "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (verses 31-33).

Jesus Christ is coming to rule and administer justice over every nation and every leader of the United Nations. He will use the gold standard—the law of God, first articulated by God in the Garden of Eden, codified under Moses to the nation of Israel and revealed to all humanity in the pages of the Bible.

Man's future is still wonderfully positive, because one day all nations will be transformed through a conversion to the nature of Christ, when the human character takes on the nature of God. That change in man's nature will provide what is needed for "collective security" in a truly peaceful world of united nations.

That is God's promise. It is God's work. It will surely come. **GN**

UN's Millennium Goals: How Do They Compare to God's?

In 2000 the United Nations established "Millennium Development Goals" to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger; reduce disease, child mortality and malnutrition; and to improve education, personal incomes and opportunities, housing and sanitation worldwide by the year 2015. All 191 UN member states have pledged to meet these goals. While admirable aspirations, how do they compare to what God promises for the future?

by Howard Davis

Just imagine—a thousand years of peace, complete justice, high-quality education, miraculous health care, plenty of food, a pristine environment and year after year of double-digit economic development without even the possibility of war for every nation on the earth.

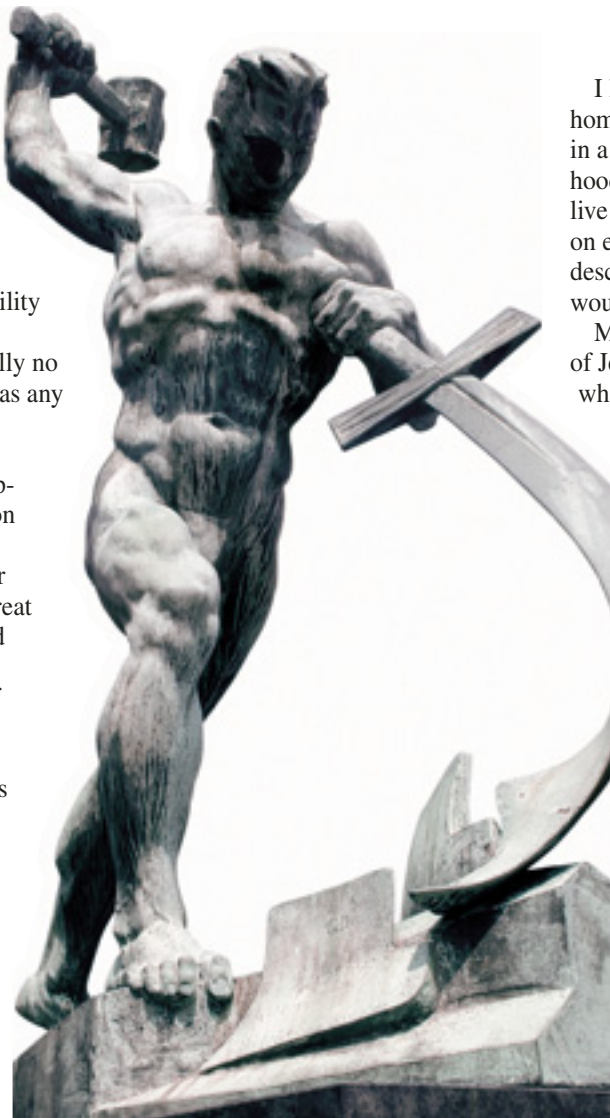
This is a vision of the future virtually no one thinks about today—much less has any faith will actually come.

It may come as a surprise that the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals have elements in common with the prophecies of Jesus Christ. Both are visions of a better future for all mankind. Both are to fulfill the great goals of all humanity. Both are based on the term "Millennium." And both are basically not believed by most of the world gripped in skepticism and cynicism.

The difference is that Jesus Christ's vision of a Millennium of fabulous progress is much more far-reaching and profound. It promises to deal more realistically with the causes and solutions to world problems. But it seems even more impossible because it will require God to make it happen. In reality, this is all the more reason to believe it.

UN millennium goals too modest

Visiting the United Nations in New York in June, I spoke with the charismatic Ghanaian Marian Aggrey of the UN's Public Information Department. She spoke articulately about the UN's Millennium Development Goals. I interviewed her in the impressive UN Security Council chamber.



This famous sculpture stands in the park next to the Hudson River on the east side of the United Nations Headquarters building in New York. Explaining its imagery, the sculpture's base bears an inscription taken from Isaiah 2:2-3: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." This prophetic passage refers to the conditions that will exist after Jesus Christ returns and begins His reign on earth.

I live in a typical and modest suburban home with my wife and four children in a middle-class American neighborhood. I wouldn't want my children to live like the bottom 2 billion people on earth even if the UN goals Ms. Aggrey described for them are achieved. Neither would most readers of this article.

Ms. Aggrey introduced me to the staff of Jeffery Sacks, the world's expert on what to do with underdeveloped economies, for an interview about the possibilities of ending global poverty.

He explained the need for the UN Millennium Goals: More than 1.5 billion people live on less than \$1 a day, most at about 60 cents, and tens of millions live on less.

By 2015, the world leaders have resolved to cut in half the number of people with income of less than \$1 a day, provide safe drinking water to the poor populations of the world and reduce by half the number of people experiencing severe malnutrition. They further hope to remove 100 million people from desperate slum conditions by 2020.

There is nothing wrong with these goals—except they are too modest. Ambitious though they are, they will give no hope to hundreds of millions left to languish and die.

On the positive side, the UN's Millennium Goals have begun to globalize a series of specific possibilities for human progress. It is only now that serious discussion of the eventual end of poverty on earth is emerging. Many world

leaders have the laudable goals of helping all human beings achieve their potential and be relieved of desperate poverty, hunger, disease and abuse.

But we must all acknowledge that they are tinkering with a human race that is profoundly flawed and a world system that is virulently blind in its selfishness. The United Nations can do nothing to alter these underlying problems. This is why divine intervention is necessary to fix the fundamentals. This world will not lay down its arms—which cost nearly \$1 trillion a year—to help eliminate the most desperate poverty.

It is especially for the faceless, nameless hundreds of millions who are left behind



by the Millennium Goals that the miracle of another reality will one day come to pass.

Our disbelieving world

The idea of 1,000 years of universal progress for humanity is found in a prophecy near the end of the biblical book of Revelation (see 20:4, 6). Imagine a world in which every country in Africa is as prosperous as the United States of America is today, and every country in Asia and South America is wealthier than any nation in the world of the 20th century. Such a world appears beyond belief.

Yet the fact that the world doesn't believe a heavenly paradise will become an earthly reality doesn't mean it won't happen. It simply means people today can't see past the terrorism, poverty, ignorance and blind arrogance of wealth and cynical politics to imagine how a divine promise will be fulfilled that sweeps away all of the evil roadblocks to progress.

The prophets of the Bible, from Moses and Isaiah to Jesus and His apostles, said the world simply can't perceive the Kingdom of God because of its self-absorption and hardness of heart.

Nor do dominant global religions today

perceive and teach about the future world of justice and progress described in your Bible. Most believe heaven is the ultimate paradise for man, not what Jesus said about the Kingdom of God coming to rule on earth.

Christ's Millennium prophecy at the United Nations

Ironically, the United Nations building itself acknowledges the existence of these idealistic prophecies. In the wide circular stairway that leads up to the street called United Nations Way across from the main



headquarters building, Isaiah's famous prophecy of the Millennium of God surrounds visitors.

It expresses the hoped-for reality behind the vision of the United Nations charter endorsed by all the nations of the world today. This inscription at the UN directly refers to the future administration of Jesus Christ:

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:3-4, King James Version).

The same inscription appears on the famous statue depicting a man beating a sword into a plowshare that stands in the park along the east side of the headquarters building beside the Hudson River, celebrating the literal disarmament of the nations of the world. In this world to come, the trillions of dollars spent on military efforts in our world will be diverted

to human development, not destruction.

The wonderful world tomorrow

Jesus proclaimed a realm of the divine existence of God, another dimension of reality open to man in the future through faith and conversion to Him now. He called it the Kingdom of God. He said the faithful believer could enter this existence just as He did.

When God calls a person to understand the Kingdom of God in this life, He is offering supernatural help now, even for the desperately poor person left behind in the most destitute regions of the world. He is given faith, hope and a desire to live up to his or her divine potential. Faith in the



Kingdom of God and obedience to God creates a relationship with Him.

Jesus Christ said a man of vision would consider this the pearl of great price, for in it is the promise of eternal life. It is

the ultimate purpose and inevitable reality for the future of human life.

Christians, Muslims and Jews—collectively more than half of the world's population—need to understand that the promise of a fabulous future on earth is our common heritage. All nations need to understand what Abraham, the father of the faithful who lived nearly 4,000 years ago, believed in this vision of a world of peace based on a coming civilization "whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). It puts all the heartache of this world in perspective.

A new world capital

In the world to come, the center of global power will never again be New York, Washington, London or Rome. God,

through Jesus Christ, will supernaturally establish his global capital of government at Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3).

Earth's new capital will be the epicenter of global developments under which all nations will unite in a universal spiritual family under an administration of love, care and opportunity. The earth will be transformed into a paradise through the brilliant accomplishment of a human race liberated from evil and guided by Jesus Christ.

This new global government will institute a process of reconciliation among all peoples. Social injustices will be forgiven and forgotten as the world repents of its

heart, mind and intellect. Man will be given opportunity to take on the nature of God.

Global Garden of Eden

In prophecy after fabulous prophecy of this Millennium, the spectacular transformation of the earth is described in terms that have amazed theologians.

Indeed, many have speculated that these predictions are merely metaphors that could never come true. Now, with all the scientific advancements of the last few decades, many—if not all—of the physical aspects of these prophecies could be seen as conceivable and possible, but only in

chemical poisons will be eliminated.

Education will be universal and the secrets of God that underlie all physical matter and biological life will be revealed. The spiritual knowledge of the nature of God Himself will be universally taught and believed. “For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

Jesus Christ will bring the most virulent of enemies in the world together through a common conversion. People of all religions—former Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc.—will become part of a new universal brotherhood throughout

the world. All other nations will be linked in the same way. The most hated of former enemies in the Middle East will develop relationships as integrated states within a common religion, culture, transportation and economic structure coordinated from Jerusalem (Isaiah 19:21-25).

What a future for the world! All these prophecies are real. They preexisted the United Nations and its Millennium Development Goals by 2,000 years and more.

Which is the more powerful vision, the greater hope? Which of these sets of goals would you rather see happen?

It's time to understand our responsibility as human beings to care for one another, to start living for and working toward these goals now. And to orient us, we need to accept and believe that our common future is wonderful beyond our wildest dreams, praying earnestly, as Jesus told us to in Matthew 6:10, “*Your kingdom come!*” **GN**



The future world is compared to the Garden of Eden. Ecosystems will be changed. “The desert shall . . . blossom as the rose” (Isaiah 35:1). Poverty and famine will be eliminated. Even animals’ very nature will miraculously be genetically reengineered.

past. Millennia of hatred and prejudice will fade; every personal injustice and penalty will be erased for those who willingly surrender to this new government.

Unjust, oppressive practices will no longer be allowed. Every cultural or religious practice that then prevents the true uniting of all nations as a global family at peace will be abolished. Faith in the God of Abraham will become universal.

There will be no question who God is.

Human beings will no longer be resistant to Christ’s “golden rule,” now featured in gold letters on artwork donated by the United States displayed by the entrance to the United Nations General Assembly: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

The basis for the uniting of all nations in the world tomorrow will be a common spiritual understanding, a new perception of

the hands of a perfect world system. And rest assured, the perfect system is coming.

The future world is compared to the Garden of Eden (Isaiah

51:3; Ezekiel 36:35). Ecosystems will be changed. “The desert shall . . . blossom as the rose” (Isaiah 35:1).

Poverty and famine will be eliminated. Even animals’ very nature will miraculously be genetically reengineered: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them . . . The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain . . .” (Isaiah 11:6-9).

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped” (Isaiah 35:5). Right education and miraculous healing will eliminate disease. Abundant healthful food will be produced (Amos 9:13). Destructive food manufacturing will be banned, and the destruction of the environment through

Recommended Reading

Many prophecies of the Bible foretell a wonderful world tomorrow when the agelong problems of today—war, poverty, religious deception, disease and more—will be eliminated under the righteous rule of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. This transformed world, and our part in it, was at the heart of Jesus’ message, the gospel—good news—He brought. If you’d like to learn more, request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets



World News and Trends

An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

Disease pandemics threaten mankind

The 1918-19 influenza pandemic took the lives of millions of men, women and children. Is a possible repetition in the offing today?

While the 1918-19 pandemic killed 50 to 100 million people around the world, *Foreign Affairs* relates: "Today, with a world population of 6.5 billion people, more than 3 times that of 1918, even a 'mild' pandemic could kill many millions of people."

Further: "Dr Julie Gerbreeding, Director of the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, called the possibility of avian flu spreading from Southeast Asia (its likely place of origin) 'a very ominous situation for the globe'" (*International Herald Tribune*).

Since very early last year millions of birds in Southeast Asia have died. This particular bird flu mutates and jumps from species to species. It

has already been found in certain mammals and possibly a few people. Although it has not yet mutated into a form that is easily transmissible to human beings, that possibility is very real and very worrisome.

Infectious diseases remain very high on the list of threats to human life on a large scale. Some 25 million human beings have already died from AIDS, and another estimated 39 million are infected with HIV. Malaria and tuberculosis are also major causes of death.

Among the four horsemen of the book of Revelation is the pale horse, symbolic of devastating disease epidemics to ravage the earth in the end time. The Bible strongly indicates that we have not yet seen the full impact of these deadly modern plagues—far from it. (Sources: *The Times* [London], *International Herald Tribune*, *Foreign Affairs*.)

The tragic decline of European Christianity

Peter Berger is director of the Institute of Culture, Religion and World Affairs at Boston University. He wrote in *The National Interest* that "both the Catholic and Protestant Churches are in deep trouble in Europe. Attendance at services has declined sharply for many years, there is a shortage of clergy because of lagging recruitment, finances are in bad shape and the churches have largely lost their importance in public life. Western and central Europe is the most secularized area in the world" (emphasis added throughout).

British author Niall Ferguson, a history professor at Harvard University, has joined the ranks of those who are very concerned about the state of Western Christianity. His telling article in *The Sunday Telegraph* is appropriately titled: "Heaven Knows How We'll Rekindle Our Religion, But I Believe We Must."

He states in the text: "According to the Gallup Millennium Survey of Religious Attitudes, barely 20 per cent of Western Europeans attend services at least once a week, compared with 47 per cent of North Americans, and 82 per cent of West Africans. Less than half of Western Europeans say God is a 'very important' part of their lives, as against 83 per cent of Americans and virtually all West Africans."

Ed Vitagliano, news editor of the *AFA Journal*, a monthly publication of the American Family Association, connects the decline of British Christianity with the accompanying collapse in morality.

He quoted a number of religious authorities, including Roman Catholic Cardinal Cormac

Murphy-O'Connor who said: "It does seem in our countries in Britain today, especially in England and Wales, that Christianity, as a sort of backdrop to people's lives and moral decisions—and to the government, the social life of the country—has almost been vanquished."

In summary, Niall Ferguson offered his opinion that "if nothing else, a weekly dose of Christian doctrine will help to provide an ethical framework for your life, and I certainly don't know how else you are going to get one."

To understand the essential historical background of what has really happened to Christianity and why, please request or download our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*. (Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph* [London], *The National Interest*, *AFA Journal*.)

Spacewalks will one day be common

Would you like to travel in space? Some clearly would, but it would be costly. A Russian company recently announced a plan for offering space tourists a trip around the moon for \$100 million. The same company has already sent two businessmen into orbit for a week for \$20 million.

Recently the world watched the spacewalk of an astronaut who removed protruding strips from the underbelly of the space shuttle *Discovery*. "A spacewalking astronaut gently pulled two potentially dangerous strips of protruding fabric from *Discovery's* belly with his gloved hand Wednesday, successfully completing an unprecipitated emergency repair job" (AOL News,

Pedophilia mushrooming in Europe

Recent media reports revealed the existence of the biggest-ever pedophile network in France. This tragedy happened not in a city, but in a rural area. Sixty-five men and women were charged in the crimes.

London's *Times* stated the sickening news that "at least 45 children, including babies six months old, were assaulted by their parents, or prostituted for money, alcohol, cigarettes and even a car tyre." One man's daughter was raped on 45 occasions over a three-year period, both by himself and other men.

All European countries share this shameful problem and Britain has not escaped. The *Daily Mail* reported that "between 1980 and 2001, almost 70,000 sexual crimes involved gross indecency and unlawful sexual intercourse with a female child." The National Crime Intelligence Service said that "as many as 95 per cent of incidences of sexual abuse go unreported."

The growth of the Internet has multiplied networking opportunities for pedophiles. Among the 7,000 U.K citizens who had used their credit cards to gain electronic access to child pornography were police officers, top military personnel, judges, teachers and doctors.

The Bible aptly describes our Western societies today: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds . . ." (Isaiah 1:5-6, New Revised Standard Bible). (Sources: *Daily Mail*, *The Times* [both London].)

Aug. 3). Exciting? Yes, though spacewalks are not something the general public can experience.

However, one day you will be able to travel freely in space—to the remotest edge of the universe in fact. Your Bible reveals that all human beings who choose to serve God and follow Him to the end of their physical lives will afterward be transformed into spirit beings (1 Corinthians 15:42-54). In that state they will be able to travel as God can to anywhere and everywhere in a mere instant. Yet ironically, the greatest excitement and satisfaction will be right here on earth (Revelation 21).

We may not get to travel in space today, but in the next life we will. In the world of tomorrow, space travel will be free with no danger to our personal safety. One day, everyone will enjoy space travel. If you'd like to learn more, request or download our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*



Saudi oil and U.S. dependency

The recent death of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia created some concern from those nations that are dependent on Saudi oil. A top Saudi diplomat reassured all oil-dependent countries that the Saudis would pump oil "to the best of our capability, with a reasonable price" (CNN, Aug. 2).

"Saudi Arabia holds a quarter of the world's known oil supplies, and crude futures set a new record of \$61.57 a barrel after news of Fahd's death. 'I would like to reassure you of our government's pledge to continue King Fahd's legacy of providing the world with a stable and secure source of energy,' Rihab Massoud, the Saudi charge d'affaires in Washington, told reporters" (ibid.).

On March 24, 30 prominent Americans wrote

Tourism trumps terror

Just hours after three massive bombs ripped through the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh on July 23, Jonathan Gatland, a British doctor on vacation with his three children stood defiant. He would not go home and he would return again. 'Fear is not going to stop me,' he said simply" (*The Christian Science Monitor*, Aug. 2).

As terrorism has accelerated in recent years, many thought the tourist trade would die. Instead, travelers have grown accustomed to a new era of random bombings. Why do we see this new attitude toward such attacks? "Human beings are incredibly resilient creatures; we're very adaptable and we build tolerances," says Dr. C. Scott Saunders, director of the UCLA Trauma Psychiatry Service" (ibid.).

Since 9/11 this earth has become an increasingly more dangerous environment (2 Timothy 3:1). Still, cowardly terrorists win when people cower in their homes.

Terrorism ultimately comes from "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), Satan the devil. Jesus Christ said that he was a liar and murderer from the beginning of the world (John 8:44). We might add "terrorist" to those descriptors, as the evil that drives terrorists to slaughter innocent men, women and children is motivated by his murderous thinking.

However, it won't always be this way. God has sentenced him to incarceration for 1,000 years at Christ's return (Revelation 20:1-3). Then, divine truth will trump the chief of terrorism. If you'd like to learn more, request or download our free booklets *Is There Really a Devil?* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. (Source: *The Christian Science Monitor*.)

a letter to President George W. Bush about an impending oil crisis. Former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, former CIA Director James Woolsey, former Assistant Secretary of Defense Frank Gaffney and others, including 12 retired generals and admirals, five former secretaries of defense and several retired senators and representatives signed the letter.

Oil is critical for the future of the Western world. Yet the Middle East, rich with that lifeblood of the world's economy, is a boiling stew of conflict of almost every kind. Bible prophecy tells us that it will eventually boil over, igniting a horrendous end-time conflagration that will bring the human race to the verge of extinction.

The only thing that will spare us, in fact, is Jesus Christ's return to earth to save us from ourselves (Matthew 24:21-22). If you'd like to learn more, request or download our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. (Source: CNN.)

Italy: Latest sick man of Europe

According to journalist Peter Popham in the British *Independent*, "Although [Italian Prime Minister Silvio] Berlusconi may scoff, his country has become the sick man of Europe." Economic growth is in the doldrums at 0.6 percent and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has sharply criticized Italy for its meager level of financial growth. The European Commission is likewise very unhappy with its ballooning budget deficit, which is considered in some quarters a long-term danger to the euro.



Said a London *Times* feature article: "The weak point in Europe's monetary union is Italy . . . Since joining, Italy has lost competitiveness against other euro members. The economic situation in Italy has the potential to develop into a full-blown crisis."

And yet biblical prophecy strongly indicates that Italy will have a major role in the fulfillment of key end-time prophecies. To understand further, request or download our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. (Sources: *The Independent*, *The Sunday Times* [both London].)

UN treaty to make abortion a basic right?

Some countries are using a UN treaty to make abortion an international legal right, according to the Catholic World News Web site, cwnnews.com.

Language making "sexual and reproductive health services"—UN jargon for abortion—a basic human right has received broad support from governments involved in drafting a UN treaty to protect and promote the rights of the disabled. Such language has never previously appeared in a binding treaty.

If approved, the treaty would require signatory nations to "provide persons with disabilities with the same range and standard of health and rehabilitation services as provided other citizens, including sexual and reproductive health services." By describing such services as rights guaranteed to all citizens, the treaty would essentially enshrine abortion rights as international law.

The current draft also includes language that has been interpreted as supporting euthanasia by banning life-saving measures for the ill and medical treatment for those attempting suicide.

The drive to include these provisions in the treaty is being led primarily by the European Union. Oddly, abortion in most circumstances is still illegal in several EU member nations, including Ireland, Poland, Portugal and Malta. (Source: Catholic World News.)

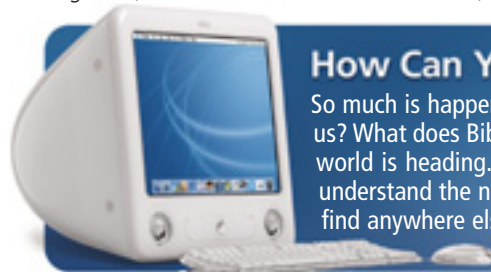
The high cost of peace in Northern Ireland

The recent announcement that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) is to decommission its arms in October was met with both relief and suspicion.

Nonetheless, there is an official consensus that this particular arms struggle is virtually over for the foreseeable future. In a feature article, *The Daily Telegraph* summed up the incredible cost since 1969: "3,637 killed, 45,000 wounded, 15,300 bombs, 36,000 shootings, 30,000 terrorism convictions, 300,000 troops deployed since 1969 and a financial bill of £100 billion+."

In light of this staggering toll, several questions may well be asked: When the present war on terror is finally finished, what will the statistics look like? How many lives, both civilian and military, will have been lost in this effort to overthrow Western civilization? How much money will have been spent? The IRA was mostly confined to one relatively small part of the British Isles. Today's terrorism is global. (Source: *The Daily Telegraph* [London].)

PhotoSpin



How Can You make Sense of the News?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly. Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the *World News & Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy. This eye-opening site offers you a perspective you won't find anywhere else—the perspective of God's Word, the Bible. Visit us at www.wnponline.org today!

Appeasement in the Face of Danger: Deadly Parallels

Following the July 7 terror bombings in London, many evoked memories of the blitz in World War II. Regrettably, that's not the only analogy with the Second World War that is appropriate.

by Melvin Rhodes

After the July 7 terror bombings on three London Underground (subway) trains and one of the city's famous double-decker buses, Western leaders were quick to recount memories of the resolve of Londoners during the World War II blitz on the city by the German Luftwaffe.

The blitz isn't the only comparison one can draw with the Second World War.

Another is the matter of appeasement.

For much of the decade preceding the September 1939 German invasion of Poland that precipitated World War II, Winston Churchill was warning of impending calamity. He was largely ignored, criticized as a warmonger and kept out of government. This period came to be known as the famous statesman's "wilderness years."

But he was right.

Just one year before the outbreak of war, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sat down and talked with Adolf Hitler in Munich, purportedly receiving his assurances that he would stop his aggression. Returning to Britain, waving a piece of paper in his hand as he came down the steps of his airplane, Chamberlain proclaimed "peace in our time."

He had appeased Hitler by giving in to Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakia, trusting things would end there. But all he did was buy time while Hitler grew stronger.

The apostle Paul warned of such delusion: "For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them . . ." (1 Thessalonians 5:3). While this prophecy specifically applies to the global state of deception just preceding the coming Day of the Lord, the principle is always at work: The subtle spirit of appeasement blinds people to the truth, leading to serious, often fatal, misjudgments.

For some time now too many Western leaders today have been making similar mistakes in the war on terrorism. As the



A double-decker bus lies in ruins on a London street after a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden backpack on July 7, killing 15 and injuring dozens more.

threat to Western civilization has mounted, they have often been in the dark, blinded by political correctness, unable to see the stark threat that faces us all.

Occasionally there's a voice like Churchill's crying in the wilderness, but too often it's been quickly smothered by the politically correct mantra that all religions and cultures are essentially equal and can live peaceably side by side. Attitudes leading up to and in the immediate aftermath of the London bombings are a case in point.

"Islam and terrorism don't go together"

Two days after the London bombings, Charles Moore, former editor of London's *Daily Telegraph*, wrote an article for the paper July 9 in which he asked the question: "Where is the Gandhi of Islam?"

He commended Londoners for their stoicism and the emergency services for their magnificent work, but then wrote the following astute paragraph: "Yet there seems to me to be a radical disjunction between our heroic capacity to deal with the immediate effects of terrorism and our

collective refusal to confront what lies behind it. The effects of this disjunction are, literally, fatal."

Mr. Moore quoted the deputy assistant commissioner of the London metropolitan police, Brian Paddick, who, when asked about the nature of the terrorists, said: "Islam and terrorism don't go together."

Mr. Moore comments on this statement: "It is true that the vast majority of Muslims are not terrorists, or involved in terrorism, and this needs to be said strongly if people assert otherwise. But if the Metropolitan Police really believe what Brian Paddick says, if they really, truly think that the words 'Islam' and 'terrorism' must not be linked, then we have little hope of catching the killers, of understanding how the terrorism works, or of preventing new atrocities."

Mr. Moore adds a very perceptive thought: "What strikes one again and again about the reaction of the public authorities, of commentators, of the media, is the terrible lethargy about studying what it is we are up against. We are dealing with an extreme interpretation of one

of the great religions of the world.

"We flap around, looking for moderates and giving them knighthoods, making placatory noises, putting bits of Islam on to the multi-faith menu in schools, banishing Bibles from hospital beds, trying to criminalise the expression of 'religious hatred,' blaming George Bush and Tony Blair."

In other words, we have practiced appeasement as a previous generation did in the years leading up to World War II. He continues: "But if we do not know the way the faith in question works, its history, its quarrels, its laws and demands, we will not have the faintest chance of distinguishing the true moderate from the fellow-traveller or of bearing down on the fanaticism."

Dangerous ignorance of religion and history

It's not surprising that the British people are ignorant of Islam. The average citizen today is almost as ignorant about Christianity.

After two devastating world wars, Britons abandoned practicing Christianity in droves, holding onto it in name only. Church attendance plummeted. Having rejected the Bible as the standard for religious and moral absolutes, people rapidly accepted a new standard—that of multiculturalism and political correctness.

According to this standard, all religions, cultures, creeds and ideas are morally equal and not to be criticized. There is no absolute right or wrong; no one can judge another's beliefs and actions.

After decades of swimming in this sea of political correctness and multiculturalism, most people today genuinely believe that there is little or no difference between various religions. They have become spiritual appeasers, no longer able to discern right from wrong, truth from error, safety from danger. They know little or nothing about the Bible or the Koran.

This was not the case with previous generations of Englishmen. American historian Benson Bobrick wrote about the incredible enthusiasm the English people had for the Word of God in past centuries. "Englishmen carried their Bible with them—as the rock and foundation of their lives—overseas," wherever they went (*Wide as the Waters*, 2001, p. 12).

Canadian historian Jacques Barzun wrote that this enthusiasm for the Bible "did not cease for 350 years. 1900 was the

first year in which religious works (at least in England) did not outnumber all other publications" (*From Dawn to Decadence*, 2000, p. 10).

The same enthusiasm could be found in the United States at the time. The July 10 *Lansing State Journal* noted that at the Michigan State University campus in East Lansing, excavations are taking place at the site of one of the first student dormitories, called "Saints Rest," which was "named by students after a popular Christian devotional of the time" in 1856.

Less than 150 years later our most prestigious universities reject the Word of God and teach secular values to our young people. They have lost their spiritual moorings in a world floundering spiritually because it has discarded biblical standards.

The Old Testament prophet Hosea wrote to modern-day Ephraim, the British people who formed the "multitude of nations" foretold in Genesis 48:19. Through Hosea, God tells us, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6, emphasis added throughout). This is not knowledge of the physical universe, but knowledge of who we are, why we are here, and God's eternal standards that show us how to succeed in relationships, both individually and at the national level.

How well that describes so much of the Western world today. Rejecting the timeless truths and standards of the Bible has set our peoples up for destruction. Not understanding the truths of God only causes spiritual confusion and leads to acceptance of false religions and philosophies which, in turn, lead to ever-increasing problems, conflicts and dangers.

Hosea 7:8-9 adds: "Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples [embraced other cultures and religions as equally valid with the true faith of the Word of God] . . . Aliens [people who worship other gods] have devoured his strength, but he does not know it."

Ancient Ephraim had the same problem modern Britain and other Western countries have today without knowing it. They have been blinded, thinking that accepting all religions and cultures as equal is a strength when too often it sows the seeds of social and cultural disintegration.

The enemy within

Imagine if, in World War II, one in eight Londoners was a German. This would

have complicated the situation alarmingly. Today, one in eight Londoners is Muslim, many of whom are second-generation British residents. It is becoming increasingly evident that some have been recruited for terrorism from their number, especially from militant mosque congregations.

Three of the four London suicide bombers were second-generation Britons born to Pakistani parents (the fourth was a Jamaican-born immigrant to Britain and a Muslim convert).

The first of the men arrested for the unsuccessful July 21 bombings had immigrated to Britain from Eritrea with his parents at age 14. In spite of a prison sentence for knife-point muggings as a teenager, he had been granted British citizenship and given some \$60,000 in welfare payments over recent years.

Another of the suspects arrested for the failed bombings had also been on welfare and lived in government housing. All four suspects had moved to Britain as children or teenagers and apparently were radicalized and moved to terrorist acts after moving there.

Richard Reid, who in December 2001 attempted to blow up a transatlantic American Airlines flight with explosives hidden in his shoe, was born in a London suburb to an English mother and a Jamaican father. He had converted to Islam while in prison.

Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, sentenced to death in Pakistan for the 2002 kidnapping and beheading of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl there, was a London native and former student at the London School of Economics, born in Britain to Pakistani immigrant parents.

In April 2003, two British citizens, Asif Mohammed Hanif and Omar Khan Sharif, carried out a suicide-bomb attack in Mike's Place, a Tel Aviv nightclub frequented by many Americans. Sons of Muslim immigrants, the bombers had been recruited by the terror group Hamas in Britain and entered Israel using their British passports.

Recent articles on terrorism in Iraq highlight that many of the insurgents are second-generation Muslims recruited from Western Europe—their parents were immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa, but they were born in Europe.

Iraq and Britain aren't the only places where Western-born converts to violence have emerged. Mohammed Bouyeri, convicted of shooting Dutch filmmaker Theo

van Gogh on an Amsterdam street before nearly beheading him, had lived all his life in Holland since his birth there to Moroccan-immigrant parents.

“What moved me to do what I did was purely my faith,” Bouyeri explained in confessing the killing. “. . . I was motivated by the law that commands me to cut off the head of anyone who insults Allah and his prophet.”

Some Muslim leaders have spoken out and strongly condemned such acts, particularly in the wake of the London bombings. Yet these realities raise serious questions about the ideals of multiculturalism, including the widely held conviction that second-generation immigrants are fully assimilated and identify with their new country.

Two days after the second round of London bombings failed, London’s *Telegraph* published results of a survey of attitudes among Britain’s Muslims illustrating the magnitude of the problem. “The sheer scale of Muslim alienation from British society that the survey reveals is remarkable,” stated the article’s author, Anthony King, professor of government at Essex University.

“Although a large majority of British Muslims are more than content to make their home in this country, a significant minority are not,” he continued. He explained that almost of third of those surveyed believe that “Western society is decadent and immoral and that Muslims should seek to bring it to an end.”

He further found that “nearly one British Muslim in five, 18 per cent, feels little loyalty towards this country or none at all.” In terms of numbers, this means that “well over 100,000 British Muslims feel no loyalty whatsoever” toward Britain. Perhaps most ominously, he reported that “one per cent, about 16,000 individuals, declare themselves willing, possibly even eager, to embrace violence” (“One in Four Muslims Sympathises With Motives of Terrorists,” July 23).

Western leaders in denial

While Prime Minister Blair and President Bush express their commitment to advance democracy in the Middle East, they should take note of the threat at home to Western ideals of democracy.

Charles Moore, the former *Daily Telegraph* editor cited earlier, continued in his piece: “I have beside me an article that appeared during our recent [May] election campaign in *Muslim Weekly* [London]. By Sheikh Dr Abdalqadir as-Sufi, it calls for

the replacement of British parliamentary democracy with ‘a new civilization based on the worship of Allah,’ attacks the Conservatives for being ‘in the hands of an illegal Jewish immigrant from Romania’ and speaks of the ‘near-demented judaic banking elite.’

“. . . Last year, [London mayor Ken] Livingstone extended a warm welcome in London to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a mainstream, world-famous spiritual leader based in Qatar. Qaradawi has supported suicide bombing against Israelis, the treatment of all Jews as legitimate targets, the whipping of homosexuals and the killing of all Americans—civilian and military—in Iraq.”

There’s little wonder that the same mayor was in denial over the perpetrators of the London bombings. “This isn’t an ideology, it isn’t even a perverted faith, it’s mass murder,” Mr. Livingstone was quoted as saying in London’s *Financial Times* July 8. The bombings were unquestionably mass murder, but the perpetrators certainly appear to have been motivated by both religious ideology and perverted faith.

When a terrorist isn’t a terrorist

Even the word “terrorist” became controversial in Britain, when it became clear that the BBC would not use the word to describe the bombers, apparently because the broadcaster might lose some of its international audience. According to the organization’s editorial guidelines, “the word ‘terrorist’ itself can be a barrier rather than aid to understanding” (Tom Leonard, “BBC Language That Labour Loves to Hear,” *Daily Telegraph*, July 13).

The BBC also canceled a dramatization of a patriotic British classic from World War I, *Greenmantle* by John Buchan, a follow-up to the classic *39 Steps*. The novel’s heroes thwart a German plan to unite Islamic peoples against the British,

a very real threat at the time.

The BBC’s decision to cancel was in stark contrast to their refusal to be pressured last year when Christians protested over the showing of the blasphemous London stage play *Jerry Springer—the Opera*. There’s clearly a double standard of continuing contempt for Christianity and its values, coupled with fear of Islam and a growing inability to say anything critical of this religion, its history or its followers.

In the United States, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) follows the same philosophy, fearful of critiquing Islam in a documentary special made for the *Empires* series while being dismissive of Christian beliefs in other documentaries.

Failing to see the danger

Those of us who are older know that the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, on New York and Washington, D.C., of March 11, 2004, in Madrid and of July 7 and 21 in London this year would not have happened 50 years ago. Massive immigration from the Third World, prompted by politically correct government policies, has significantly changed the demographics of Western nations in the last four decades.

Britain has long welcomed many immigrants from the Third World, as have many other European countries. Likewise the United States, once a haven for white European immigrants, in recent decades changed its policies to bring in more poor, culturally alien peoples from Asia, Africa and the Middle East who are far less likely to successfully assimilate. Many observers are now—too late—questioning the wisdom of those moves.

After the London bombings, a cry immediately arose to change Britain’s practice of granting asylum even to some convicted of or wanted by authorities for religious extremism in their own countries and to expel those who, taking advantage of Britain’s free-speech protections, have argued for the overthrow of Britain’s democracy and the establishment of an Islamic state.

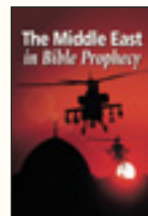
For four decades politicians, intellectuals and academic institutions on both sides of the Atlantic have espoused political correctness and multiculturalism, reversing the biblically based beliefs and ideals held by our ancestors since the Reformation. Instead of being thankful for the blessings Almighty God bestowed on the British and American peoples, they blame Western leaders for virtually all the world’s problems.

Continually heard on the BBC following

Continued on page 29

Recommended Reading

To better understand the roots of the conflict between Islam and Western civilization, be sure to request a free copy of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*. This fully illustrated booklet takes you on an eye-opening journey through history and the Bible to help you grasp the roots of this age-long conflict and where Bible prophecy indicates it will lead. You need this vital information—be sure to request your free copy today!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

Christopher Dobson

Terrorism in the 21st Century

Interview by John Ross Schroeder

Editor's note: *Never before in history has the terrorist threat been so all-encompassing. Following the July suicide terror bombings in London, The Good News interviewed British author and journalist Christopher Dobson, one of the world's most knowledgeable authorities on terrorism, to help our readers better understand today's terrorism.*

The Good News: How would you define terrorism? And does it ever really work?

Christopher Dobson: A good working definition is a paraphrase of the United Kingdom's Prevention of Terrorism Act. Terrorism is defined as the use of violence for political goals and includes any use of violent force for the purpose of putting the public or the community in fear.

Terrorist groups have no arms that can really face the Western military might head-on. But they do feel that they can cause the West so much grief that it will eventually give up the struggle.

In fact terrorism does work in certain circumstances. Previously we saw the end of the European terror groups like the Baader-Meinhof gang [a German terrorist group of the 1960s and '70s]. They all went in time.

But from their point of view, the Irish Republican Army has in fact achieved a great deal of what they set out to do through the means of terror. Whether they could have achieved an equal amount by peaceful political means is another matter. I am convinced that they could have achieved as much by peaceful ordinary democratic politics.

But they don't look at it that way. They say, "We achieved this through the gun and semtex [plastic explosives], and otherwise we would not have done it." So from their

point of view terrorism was a great success.

I am sure that the present Islamic terrorists look at it in the same light. From their point of view, they are going to win. They are going to kill "the great Satan," the United States, and "the little Satans," Great Britain and Israel. They will continue their efforts despite the losses they are taking.

GN: In what way has terrorism today



suicide bombers emerged in Lebanon from Hamas and Hezbollah. Although small in scale, they were quite remarkable in their effects.

There were some women involved, and they were very effective in that area. But overall the incidents had very little effect in the West because it was regarded as something out of our ken that was never going to happen in Europe or in America. Today you get these suicide bombers working in Iraq almost every day. It's a major business now.

Going back a bit I remember the suicide truck bombing of the French and American barracks in Lebanon in 1983. More than 200 American marines and some 60 French soldiers were killed. In effect this operation was very successful because after that the French and the American marines withdrew from Lebanon. This was an indication to the terrorists that they could succeed through using suicide bombers.

These are very potent weapons. We saw

Terrorist groups have no arms that can really face the Western military might head-on. But they do feel that they can cause the West so much grief that it will eventually give up the struggle.

changed from the terrorism of the 1970s?

CD: It has changed principally in its scale. The terrorism of the 1970s was on a much smaller scale—smaller bombs, assassinations, some car bombs. The most effective method used in the 1970s was, of course, hijacking—which we don't see much of anymore except, of course, to use planes as lethal weapons of attack. We saw what happened with nearly 3,000 people dead as a result of 9/11. That sort of thing did not occur in the 1970s.

We have also seen the great rise in suicide bombers. There were no suicide bombers in the 1970s. I believe the first

in London in this last week something we never, ever thought we would have to see here—tragic loss of life and massive disruption caused by four young men and four bombs.

Although there are those of us who have been warning for many years that a bomb on the London Underground [subway system] would be the terrorists' most effective weapon in this crowded city, not really much notice was taken of those warnings.

I think this attack was only a matter of time. The London Underground is very vulnerable. Millions of people use



About Mr. Dobson

Christopher Dobson has authored or coauthored many books on terrorism, including *Terrorists: Their Weapons, Leaders and Tactics*; *Black September: Its Short, Violent History*; *The Never-Ending War: Terrorism in the 80's*; *The Carlos Complex: A Study in Terror*; *The Weapons of Terror*;

International Terrorism at Work and *Counterattack: The West's Battle Against the Terrorists*.

Mr. Dobson has worked as a journalist for *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Daily Express* and has been assistant editor for *The Daily Mail*. He lives in England with his wife Shirley. They recently celebrated their 50th anniversary.

it every day and you cannot possibly stop every person getting on board and search them for bombs. It is a target for causing utmost destruction, producing a great deal of fear and disrupting the economy of the country.

This is the other way in which terrorism has changed—the targets have changed. Remember, poison gas was used in the Japanese Underground. There is always a possibility of water supplies being poisoned. There is also a possibility of somebody building a “dirty bomb” packed with radioactive material.

GN: Do you think terrorists could successfully use chemical, biological or nuclear weapons of mass destruction against a Western nation like Britain, the United States or Israel?

CD: I think there is a possibility that these weapons will be used. Of course, they are more complicated and more easily discovered by security forces. Therefore, they are currently less useful than the ordinary high-explosive bomb, which has proved to be a very effective weapon. But if the terrorists see that these more complex weapons will give them an advantage, they will take that route. We have seen how they have developed their techniques over the years.

GN: What do you see as the primary aim or goal of today’s terrorism?

CD: Ultimately, and I say “ultimately” advisedly, the aim is to have Islam as the greatest power in the world. But before you get to that stage, in their view, you have to restore the pride of the Islamic people. You have to get rid of regimes like the Saudi Arabian monarchy and have such countries taken over by hard-line Islamists. You have to wipe out rival groups of Islam.

GN: For some time we have heard that poverty and oppression are the root causes of terrorism, yet the London bombers and others have been shown to be educated and members of the middle class. Osama bin Laden is a multimillionaire and his right-hand man is an Egyptian doctor. What can you tell us about the motivation of many of today’s terrorists?

CD: I think that it is wrong to assume that terrorism comes from poverty. It does not! Otherwise the whole of Africa would be full of terrorists.

Terrorism is carried out mainly by educated people because in a perverse way they understand what they are doing. They are capable of being taught; they are capable of listening to teachers in the mosques. These are not things that come easily to

poor, poverty-stricken people. Yes, you can arouse a mob of poor people to riot and to kill people, but you cannot really rely on ill-educated people to learn the technicalities of modern terrorism.

GN: Israel seems to have dramatically reduced the number of suicide bombers over the last year or so. To what do you attribute that?

CD: Israel has always regarded itself as being at war and it reacts to terror as if it is at war. It has also taken various physical measures that have made the bombers work harder. For instance, there’s the



I think that it is wrong to assume that terrorism comes from poverty. It does not! Otherwise the whole of Africa would be full of terrorists . . . Yes, you can arouse a mob of poor people to riot and to kill people, but you cannot really rely on ill-educated people to learn the technicalities of modern terrorism.

great fence, the great wall that they have built which has made the bombers’ life more difficult.

They have adopted measures of punishment that we have not adopted in the West, although some of them derive from the prewar period of British rule. At that time if a terrorist was discovered, he himself might be hanged or put in prison, but his family home would also be blown up. Collective punishment was imposed.

So, strangely enough, the Israelis have this basis of huge countermeasures to build on whereas the British have seemingly forgotten about all those measures. This is because we are no longer a colonial power, and also the British people are a much more tolerant people than we were when a colonial power.

GN: What can the West realistically do to effectively stop terrorism?

CD: Going back to your question about

poverty, people would say that you had to put all these wrongs right, and in particular you had to give the Palestinians their land back—that being, in their view, the main cause of terrorism today.

But I am not sure that this is the way forward. We obviously have to take all the military and security measures we can. We have seen the British Parliament agreeing this week on new measures to be taken—measures we would have thought absolutely impossible a few years ago.

I can remember being in Cyprus in the 1950s when terrorists were blowing up and shooting people in their aim for independence. Yet we were still allowed to go out to the planes on the airfields and see our friends off. There were no searches—just a look at your passport and you went through.

The next step was, of course, with the IRA. Suddenly nonpassengers were not allowed to go out to the planes and your bags were searched. We now regard bags and suitcases being searched as a normal procedure. But when it was first introduced, it was thought a terrible infringement on our freedoms.

Now it is all being taken a step further. We now have devices that not only

look into our suitcases, but we also have instruments that see what we are wearing underneath. So gradually, with each terrorist outrage, the countermeasures are being stepped up, much to the disgust of libertarians. But we must face the fact that we have to do it.

The other thing is, what can we do to win hearts and minds? It is obvious that the terrorists are winning hearts and minds among their young men and women. How can we win them back? That’s going to be a very long process and a very difficult one. It’s going to require the involvement of Muslim leaders all over the world. So often, of course, their teachers have taken the other route, and that’s where our great difficulty lies.

GN: How do we deal with homegrown terrorists among us here in Britain? Their own ethnic groups heavily influence them both at home and abroad.

CD: I think the big point here is integration. These terrorists are Brits that are born here of British nationality. They talk with British accents, which is very confusing to us. Obviously they are Arab or Indian or Pakistani from their appearance, but they speak with Birmingham or other British accents.

This is awfully confusing. What we have to do is to make sure that British accents prevail over the tribal, clan warfare of their parents' or grandparents' home country, and that's going to take a very long time. We have to try to integrate them into the British way of life.

They should not live in Muslim ghettos, but they do. If you emigrate to a country, you will go where your original countrymen already are because you feel comfortable there. And you tend to open your own restaurants and your own clubs.

That's going to take a very long time to break down. Of course, integration has taken a terrible blow with the London bombs because many people don't trust any young Pakistani even though he may in fact be a true Brit. That is a really bad step backwards.

GN: The London Underground packs in people like sardines every weekday morning. There does not appear to be any way of realistically preventing another terrorist attack. Can you comment on that?

CD: I am afraid there is little way of preventing a terrorist attack without imposing all sorts of restrictions that will be almost impossible both economically and politically.

It is always a danger we have to face. The terrorist has the advantage of always having the initiative. He can decide where he wants to attack, how he wants to attack, and, with a suicide bomber, he has the ability to walk into a place, prepare to attack and walk out again if conditions aren't right. He can choose whatever target he wants.

And there are other targets just as vulnerable as the London Underground. There are the football [i.e., soccer] stadiums people are packed into every weekend and quintessential English cricket matches, not to mention theaters and cinemas. All these are potential targets.

GN: What are Western governments doing at the highest policy level to combat terrorism?

CD: They are introducing stricter and stricter measures. They are trying, behind the scenes, to get governmental cooperation.

Certainly the intelligence services of the

West are working together far more than ever before because this is a common problem. If they don't work together, then terrorists will slip through the net. You have to put aside national feelings in all this and cooperate.

Although we have seen Mr. Blair and Mr. Chirac quarreling over various important aspects of national life, I don't think they quarrel very much over the way in which they approach terrorism. Cooperation is the answer to trying to solve the problem.

GN: Roughly speaking, how many terrorist organizations are there in the world today?

CD: Roughly speaking, I think there are possibly 30 to 40 that we have to worry about. The major terrorist organizations today are, of course, Islamic.

Al-Qaeda itself is rather like a huge worldwide company with a headquarters and with semi-independent groups in any countries where there is a strong fundamentalist Islamic influence. So while we talk of al-Qaeda as being one terrorist group, it really isn't. It consists of a number of terrorist groups spread around the world who may come together for certain operations. They usually carry out operations in their own countries in the name of al-Qaeda.

GN: To what extent do these terrorist groups cooperate?

CD: The al-Qaeda groups do cooperate. They conduct corporate "business" through e-mails and through mobile phones, which are a tremendous advantage. But in another way they are also an advantage to the security forces because they can listen in, which is a major weapon in the war against terrorism. ETA in the Basque region of Spain and the IRA have cooperated in the past.

GN: Is there anything else you'd like to mention in closing?

CD: One of the great debates going on in Britain today is between the far right and the far left. It is between people who believe that strict, very uncomfortable measures should quickly be taken to curb terrorism and people who believe that any attempt to curb terrorism ultimately infringes on people's rights.

There is this great debate going on and it is one that must be watched very carefully. If one side wins utterly we get measures imposed on us which none of us would enjoy. And if the other side wins utterly, the terrorists will be given many more opportunities to carry out their attacks. **GN**

Who's Behind The Good News?



Who's behind *The Good News* magazine? Many readers have wondered who we are and how we are able to provide *The Good News* free to all who request it. Simply put, *The Good News* is provided by *people*—people from all walks of life, from all over the world.

But those people have a common goal: **to proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all the world as a witness and to teach all nations to observe what Christ commanded** (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20).

We are dedicated to proclaiming the same message Jesus Christ brought: the wonderful *good news* of the coming Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1). That message truly is good news—the answer to all the problems that have long plagued humankind. Through the pages of *The Good News*, various booklets (also free) and our radio and TV programs, we show the biblical answers to the dilemmas that have defied human solution and threaten our very survival.

We are committed to taking that message to the entire world, sharing the truth of God's purpose and plan for us as taught by Jesus Christ.

The United Church of God has congregations and ministers around the world. In these congregations believers assemble to be instructed from the Scriptures and to fellowship. For locations and times of services in your area, contact us at the appropriate address on page 2. Visitors are always welcome.



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Passing on Our Faith to Our Children

Teaching our children about God and leading them into a relationship with God can be intimidating. Nonetheless, all parents have a responsibility to teach their children about God and His Word.

by Jim Servidio

Passing on our faith to our children may seem daunting, yet each parent can be effective in ways no one else can. Each child has a special bond with his or her parents that was designed by God. Because of this special relationship, parents have a greater opportunity to teach and profoundly influence their children than anyone else. In recognition of this unique situation, God commissions parents with the task of training their children spiritually.

Every parent has the responsibility to teach his or her children about God—to regularly provide them biblical truth and not just take them to church services each week where someone else can teach them.

Consider what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: “. . . I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, *which dwelt*

conduct interesting family Bible studies. They may feel inadequate or ineffective in the task of guiding and leading their children. Indeed, we may feel that the religious instruction of our children should be left to “experts” like pastors, or perhaps those



God has given *us* as parents the primary responsibility for passing on His truth and way of life to our children. So how can we best accomplish this?

This series of two articles will provide the biblical background as well as useful guidelines to help parents instill biblical knowledge, values and behavior in their children.

The urgency of this responsibility

Clearly our society is deteriorating morally. Many sociologists call this the “post-Christian” era because traditional Judeo-Christian values have been rejected by our culture.

George Barna, who founded the Barna Research Group and does regular surveys regarding religious matters and issues in the United States, conducted two nationwide polls in 2002. They showed that fewer than one out of three professing “born-again” Christians believes there is such a thing as absolute truth.

The surveys also found that few Americans turn to their faith as the primary guide for their moral and ethical decisions. Truth today is considered relative. The vast majority doubts absolute moral truth. Yet the Bible says God does not change (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8) and that pure

All Christian parents undoubtedly have a desire to see their children live by the truths of the Bible, the very Word of God. Yet not all know how to pass these truths on to their children.

first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5, emphasis added throughout). Timothy’s grandmother had this faith and was able to pass it on to her daughter, who then passed it on to Timothy. In this example, the faith of God was passed down through three generations.

All Christian parents undoubtedly have a desire to see their children live by the truths of the Bible, the very Word of God. Yet parents can sometimes worry that they might be pressuring their children into conformity, and may therefore shy away from necessary spiritual interactions. Others may be too preachy or appear overly spiritual. Both approaches can hinder a young person’s response to God.

Some may hope that just an association with others of like mind will result in a kind of “spiritual osmosis” for their children—that the truth will sink in automatically.

Some parents may feel they do not have the creativity or experience necessary to

especially gifted in working with children and young adults.

While humility is an admirable trait and others may be able to help our children learn about God, the fact remains that

Are Your Children Called?

“**C**alling” is the term the Bible uses for the process of God bringing a people into a relationship with Himself (Acts 2:37-39; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Peter 1:10).

It may surprise some to learn that God is not calling everyone in this present age (compare John 6:44), but is working with a small group of people called the “firstfruits” (James 1:18)—training them to help Him during the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. (To understand further, please request a copy of our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*)

If you are reading this magazine and coming to understand the scriptural teachings it presents, God is likely calling you—and your children—now. What does that calling mean? That God wants to have a personal relationship with you, wants you to follow His laws and way of life, to repent of sin,

become baptized, receive the gift of His Holy Spirit and ultimately be changed to an eternal spirit being to live forever as part of His divine family.

What an awesome calling for you and your children!

A parent who is called by God and understands God’s truth really has but one course of action. He or she must follow Abraham’s example of teaching his children God’s truth, with the expectation that they will understand God’s way of life and choose it as their own.

The biblical perspective is always to encourage people to answer God’s calling. God revealed through the prophet Malachi that one of His purposes in human marriage is that “He seeks godly offspring” (Malachi 2:15). This is God’s desire for our children—their special heritage and identity.

religion is to keep ourselves “unstained from the world” (James 1:27, Revised Standard Version).

If we are to remain unstained, there must be a standard to delineate between right and wrong. Unlike in the past, American youth today do not have moral principles reinforced on a day-to-day basis in society. On the contrary, they are regularly undermined.

Key scriptures in the New Testament show that events looming on the horizon will make this situation worse, not better. As Matthew 24:24 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 9-11 tell us, false religion will be on the increase (to understand more about this, please request our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*).

Clearly a time of great testing is coming in the future. Our children will need to be able to discern what is happening to our world so they can be prepared to face its dangers. It is crucial that we help them.

God wants our children to learn

The apostle Paul told Timothy: “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures” (2 Timothy 3:15). How had he known? His mother had instructed him in the Scriptures starting in his childhood. Now he himself was *receptive* to that teaching. This is a responsibility of our children as well. Parents have to do the teaching, guiding and setting the example. But children have to be receptive. That’s *their* part.

They should be taught to not resist learning and understanding. Proverbs 1:8 encourages them, “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother.” Young people have a responsibility and a duty too. They need to open their eyes and ears and in a willing attitude learn the truth as their parents instruct them.

A note of caution: When children are resistant, parents need a great deal of wisdom and patience in dealing with them. Every family’s situation is a little different and you may need some help in patiently working with your children. Our booklets *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension* and *Making Life Work* are available free as helpful resource materials.

In any case, your children need to be *taught* God’s truth—by you. They will *not* absorb it by osmosis or by breathing the air in your home. They will not become convicted of God’s truth by default. Throughout the Bible, we see that God’s intent has always been that parents should provide the basic spiritual instruction. Ministers

Overcome Obstacles to Instruction

It’s clear from many scriptures that God places a high priority on parents teaching their children His truth regularly and in a deliberate manner. But, as with so many other areas of our lives, we may find there are obstacles that hinder our intent to fulfill this duty. What are some of these obstacles, and how can we overcome them?

- One obstacle most of us face is that “there’s just no time to fit it in!” Yes, often there’s not enough time in the day to do all we need to do. Both parents and children can be pulled in too many directions with the demands of work, school, homework, after-school activities, recreation, family commitments and all the other things that we have to fit into our schedules. However, if providing our children with regular instruction from God’s Word is a priority, *we must and will find the time*. What could be more important?



All families are very busy during the day. Too bad. The important point is that *sufficient time* should be allotted for spiritual instruction.

Paul’s statement in Ephesians 5:15-16 certainly applies: “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, *redeeming the time*, because the days are evil.” We must use our time effectively. Spiritual priorities must not be neglected.

Many families find that having a family Bible study works best at the start of the day before other activities and distractions can crowd it out. Others have found a way to have regular study time with their children in the evening. Whatever the case, every family should schedule the time that works best for *them*—whether morning, afternoon or evening. The important point is that *sufficient time* should be allotted for spiritual instruction.

- Another obstacle that might come to mind is the thought that “my children won’t understand the Bible anyway.”

It’s a serious error to assume our children cannot understand the Bible. God commanded all parents of His nation Israel to teach their children about Him and His laws. The expectation is obvious that they *could* understand. God referred

to the nation of Israel as a “congregation” and He calls His Church “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16). There are clear parallels between God’s expectations for those He called out of Egypt and the “Israel of God” today.

We must remember the tremendous significance of our children’s spiritual destiny. They are given the same invitation to pursue God’s truth and receive the Holy Spirit that their parents are given (Acts 2:38-39). It is true that they may choose not to pursue a spiritual calling immediately. If any of our children choose not to embrace God’s truth, let it not be because we didn’t diligently teach it to them as they were growing up.

Notice what the apostle Paul told the Corinthian brethren: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean [i.e., ‘common,’ or no different than other children in the world], but *now they are holy*” (1 Corinthians 7:14). Our children *can* learn God’s truth.

- Another obstacle might be a worry that “my children might find it boring.” The reality is that some children find almost any activity other than play, leisure or time with friends boring. Mathematics, history or science classes may be boring to some students, but we would not excuse them from the class for that reason.

Parents and teachers know the subject matter will be beneficial to them in the long run, and so we expect them to listen to the material and learn it. Studying the Bible may not always be exciting, but there are always intriguing ways to make it more interesting and more easily retained.

- A final obstacle might be that we feel that “I’m not a good teacher; I wouldn’t know where to start or how to do it.” Like it or not, every parent is a teacher. Every day we teach our children lessons by the choices they see us make. For example:

- They see what values we hold important.
- They see how sincere we are about learning and keeping God’s ways.
- They see how important God’s Word is to us.
- They see how important prayer to God is to us.
- They see how much we care about them and their future.

We are *already* teaching our children every day. Let’s make sure that we are properly teaching them the precious truths God wants and expects us to pass on to them.



and youth teachers can help and assist, but the chief responsibility rests with parents.

A right approach to instruction

Parents are unique in that each has a bond with his or her child in a way that no one else does. When we speak from the heart in love about what is *in* our hearts from God's Spirit, it is more likely that we will reach them. Love is a very powerful motivator. When we take time to instruct

have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. Parents should realize that they have this responsibility. And it is clear from this scriptural passage that it can be achieved by using more than one method.

The patriarch Abraham was praised by God for his dedication to teaching God's way of life to his family. In Genesis 18:19 God said of Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his

That is God's clear desire. If we are following God and are surrendered to Jesus Christ, this is a promise to us and our children (compare Acts 2:39). So we start from this biblical premise to understand what God wants for us as parents and young people.

A similar sentiment is found in Isaiah 59:21: "And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, *or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children*, says the LORD, from this time forth and for evermore" (Revised Standard Version).

This passage reminds us again of the remarkable example found with Timothy's grandmother teaching her daughter, and her daughter, in turn, teaching Timothy.

A sacred duty and responsibility

Parents can play a powerful role in encouraging their children to choose God's way of life. It doesn't matter if they are not trained as teachers. Parents who walk with God have the Creator in their lives and know His way.

Some parents may be more naturally gifted in teaching, but all parents share in this sacred duty and responsibility. We *do* affect the faith of our children, even if it's only by our example.

As parents, let's all make sure that we apply Deuteronomy 6:5-7. If we do our part, we can help our children embrace the true Christian faith from God's Word. Like Lois and Eunice, we too can pass this faith to our children from generation to generation.

Next time we'll look at some of the actual methods we can use to teach our children about God and His ways and several areas that form the foundation of parental instruction. **GN**



Parents do have a clear biblical responsibility to teach their children about God, His instructions for them, His plan for the human creation and how they can have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

our children, we are teaching them something about our family's priorities and the value we personally place on God's Word.

If we make the effort to provide them with biblical instruction—however awkwardly we may appear in starting out—they will learn that this is important to us and should be to them as well.

Notice God's instruction in Deuteronomy 6:5-7: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. *You shall teach them diligently to your children*, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." This instruction implies different kinds of teaching for different contexts.

So parents do have a clear biblical responsibility to teach their children about God, His instructions for them, His plan for the human creation and how they can

household after him, and *they shall keep the way of the LORD*, to do justice and judgment, that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (King James Version).

We don't know all that Abraham said and did as he taught his family the way of God. The Bible doesn't give the details. As parents we're all to look at our scriptural responsibility and ask ourselves, "How am I going to apply this? What's going to work with our lifestyle and our schedule so that I'm fulfilling my biblical responsibility?"

Looking to a brighter future

In Isaiah 44:3, God shows us the kind of model He wants to see in families in describing the future time when His utopian Kingdom will be established over the earth: "For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and *My blessing on your offspring.*"

Recommended Reading

The foundation of good parenting lies in a strong and stable marriage. To help you better understand the biblical principles behind strong marriages and families, we've prepared a new booklet, *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*. If you want your children to grow up to be happy, productive and well-adjusted, you can't be without the priceless information in this free booklet. Request your free copy today!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

God, Science and the Bible

News from the world of science about God and the Bible

by Mario Seiglie, Tom Robinson and Scott Ashley

Remains of King David's palace found in Jerusalem?

Israeli archaeologist Eilat Mazar announced in August that she has found in Jerusalem the remains of what could be the palace of the famed biblical King David mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:11.

For almost a decade Dr. Mazar suspected that the palace lay to the north of the mostly buried original walls of the cramped ancient city (that is, the walls from the time David captured the city from the Jebusites). She based this in part on 2 Samuel 5:17, which says that David, facing a Philistine invasion, "went down [from his palace] to the stronghold." Part of the foundation wall of what is believed to be this "stronghold" is clearly visible in east Jerusalem today.

Taking her cue from this hint that David's palace lay uphill from this ancient fortress, Dr. Mazar began excavations in that area in February. She also knew that in the 1960s, British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon had uncovered nicely worked stones and capitals that topped large columns, both clear evidence that a large and ornate ancient structure had existed nearby.

There she uncovered foundations for a huge building, with boulders about two yards thick forming walls that extended at least 30 yards. Pottery fragments found just beneath the structure dated to the 12th to 11th centuries B.C., right before David captured Jerusalem and made it his capital. Other fragments found in a corner of the building were found to be from the 10th to 9th centuries B.C., during which David and his son Solomon reigned in Jerusalem.

Another intriguing find was a seal bearing the name of a biblical figure—Jehucal (also called Jucal), son of Shelemiah, a government official mentioned in Jeremiah 37:3 and 38:1.

At this point it is impossible to conclusively prove

whether the structure is David's palace, the Jebusite or Israelite fortress, or some other structure not mentioned in the Bible. That will have to await further excavation, which is blocked at the moment by privately owned houses overlaying the site.

Regardless of what the structure eventually proves to be, it is definitely a major find. "This is a very significant discovery, given that Jerusalem

David and Solomon, a period which has played a kind of hide-and-seek with archaeologists for the last century."

The find is "something of a miracle," according to Amihai Mazar, professor of archaeology at Hebrew University. "What she found is fascinating, whatever it is."

Dr. Mazar's work has been sponsored by the



Recent excavations in Jerusalem have uncovered massive foundation walls of what could be the palace of the biblical King David. At right, a worker cleans pottery fragments uncovered in the dig. Pottery from the 10th and 9th centuries B.C. helped date the large structure to the period of David and his son Solomon.

as the capital of the united kingdom is very much unknown," explained Gabriel Barkay, an archaeologist with Israel's Bar-Ilan University. "This is one of the first greetings we have from the Jerusalem of

Jerusalem-based Shalem Center Archaeology Institute and funded by American financier Roger Hertog. Jerusalem's Hebrew University is academic sponsor of the excavation.

President Bush calls for teaching Intelligent Design in schools

American President George W. Bush raised the stakes in the debate over teaching evolution in schools in August when he said that children should be taught about "intelligent design," the idea that an unseen power or intelligence has guided the origin and development of life.

Asked by a reporter whether intelligent design should be taught in schools, he responded, "Both sides ought to be properly taught . . . so people can understand what the debate is about." He continued: "Part of education is to expose people to different schools of thought . . . You're asking me whether or not people ought to be exposed to different ideas, and the answer is yes."

His remarks heartened many parents, educators and religious leaders who have repeatedly asked legislatures and school boards to point out the many problems with Darwinian evolution and the extreme improbability that the complexity of life and the universe around us came about by blind chance.

John West of the Seattle-based Discovery Institute, a think tank supporting intelligent design, welcomed the president's remarks. "President Bush is to

be commended for defending free speech on evolution, and supporting the right of students to hear about different scientific views about evolution," he said.

President Bush's statements brought harsh criticism from evolutionists, liberal politicians and other opponents of intelligent design, who argue it is without scientific support and should remain out of the classroom.

However, as noted in this section in the last issue of *The Good News*, a recent poll showed that only 38 percent of medical doctors surveyed believed that "humans evolved naturally with no supernatural involvement," and 65 percent thought intelligent design should be allowed or required to be taught in schools alongside the teaching of evolution.

Further, a July nationwide Harris poll found that almost two thirds (64 percent) of U.S. adults believe "human beings were created directly by God" and that 55 percent believe creation, intelligent design and evolution should all be taught in public schools. Only 12 percent agree that the most widespread current practice, that of teaching only evolution in public schools, is appropriate.

Continue reading *The Good News*, and especially this section, as we regularly point out problems with Darwinian evolution and report on findings supporting the Bible and the biblical view of creation.

Halloween: Behind the Mask

Every year, on the evening of Oct. 31, millions of families celebrate a distinctly odd holiday known as Halloween. For your own good, you need to know what lurks behind the mask of Halloween.

by Jerold Aust

Halloween is undoubtedly one of the strangest holidays people celebrate, with its symbolism of witches, devils, skeletons, bats and black cats. Is it not a little bizarre that children are taught to dress up as ghosts and monsters to go from house to house demanding “trick or treat!” (with the threat of a trick or prank constituting a playful form of extortion)?

While tricks are no longer the norm in most places, it used to be common in many areas that refusal to give trick-or-treaters candy invited minor acts of vandalism, such as having one’s windows marred with a bar of soap, trash dumped on the lawn, toilet paper unrolled across tree limbs, and raw eggs thrown against the house and car.

Where, how and when did such strange customs begin? And why do they continue?

Many parents encourage their children to celebrate Halloween, assuming it to be harmless and innocent fun. But why? Would parents honor this holiday if they knew what’s behind it—behind the mask?

Halloween’s origins

Few people really understand the origins of Halloween. However, many clues are obvious from the trappings of the holiday—witches, ghosts, jack-o’-lanterns, skeletons and the like.

History shows that behind the dark mask of this popular children’s holiday reside the terrors of an ancient Celtic festival renamed All Hallows Eve. It was originally a holiday marking the mythical time when the dead supposedly rose from their graves to walk the earth.

To better understand the origins of Halloween one needs to be introduced to the ancient pagan festival of Samhain (usually pronounced *sow-en*).

In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, under the heading “Halloween,” the authors link Halloween to the eve of Samhain, “a celebration marking the beginning of winter as well as the first day of the New Year within the ancient Celtic culture of the British Isles.”

This encyclopedia explains that “the time of Samhain comprised the eve of the feast and the day itself (31 October and

1 November). This event was a crucial seam in the social and religious fabric of the Celtic year, and the eve of Samhain set the tone for the annual celebration as a threatening,

occupants would offer tributes of food and drink to them. A fear of nocturnal creatures, such as bats and owls, persisted, since these animals were believed to communicate with



Many parents encourage their children to celebrate Halloween, assuming it to be harmless and innocent fun. But would parents honor this holiday if they knew what’s behind it?

fantastic, mysterious rite of passage to a new year” (1987, p. 176).

Both the eve and day of Samhain were thought to be a time when the barriers between the human and supernatural worlds were broken, allowing passage between the two. “Other worldly entities, such as the souls of the dead, were able to visit earthly inhabitants, and humans could take the opportunity to penetrate the domains of the gods and supernatural creatures.

“Fiery tributes and sacrifices of animals, crops, and possibly human beings were made to appease supernatural powers that controlled the fertility of the land. Samhain acknowledged the entire spectrum of nonhuman forces that roamed the earth during that period” (*ibid.*, p. 177).

The Encyclopedia of Religion then explains the origin of the bizarre customs that survive in today’s Halloween: “Divination activities remained a popular practice. *Adults, dressed in fantastic disguises and masks, imitated supernatural beings and visited homes where*

the spirits of the dead” (emphasis added).

Halloween comes to the New World

Centuries later, Irish and Scottish immigrants brought the custom of Halloween with them to the New World. After massive immigration of the Irish to the United States during the great potato famine in Ireland (1845-46), Halloween eventually became a national event.

Today, says *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, “modern Halloween activities have centered on mischief making and masquerading in costumes, often resembling otherworldly characters. Folk customs, now treated as games (such as bobbing for apples), have continued from the various divination practices of the ancient celebrants of this occasion. Supernatural figures (such as the ghost, the witch, the vampire, the devil) play a key role in supplying an aura of the mysterious to the evening, whether or not they originally had an association with the festival.

“Children are particularly susceptible to the imagery of Halloween, as can be seen in their fascination with the demonic likeness of a carved and illuminated pumpkin, known as the jack-o’-lantern. In recent times, children have taken up the practice of dressing in Halloween costumes and visiting homes in search of edible and monetary treats, lightly threatening to play a trick on the owner if a treat is not produced . . .

“There also has been renewed interest in Halloween as a time when adults can also

cross cultural boundaries and shed their identities by indulging in an uninhibited evening of frivolity. Thus, the basic Celtic quality of the festival as an evening of annual escape from normal realities and expectations has remained into the twentieth century” (p. 177).

God unmask Halloween

Does the Bible have anything to say about strange customs and holidays such as this? In fact, it does—and none of it is good.

While God’s Holy Days in the Bible celebrate the role of Jesus Christ in bringing

mankind to salvation in the eternal family of God (as explained in the following article and our free booklet *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*), Halloween is a celebration of the opposite—of demonism, witchcraft, death and evil spirits.

God’s Word makes it clear that no one should dare entertain witchcraft or act as a sorcerer. “There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one who practices witchcraft*, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, *or a sorcerer*, or one who conjures spells, *or a medium*, or a spiritist, *or one who calls up the dead*. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD” (Deuteronomy 18:10-11, emphasis added throughout).

God pronounced death on any Israelites who would dare dally with demonism or Satanism: “A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them” (Leviticus 20:27). “You shall not permit a sorceress to live” (Exodus 22:18).

Why such a harsh penalty? God did not want such perverted, demonic practices to spread among His people and corrupt others. “But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams *shall be put to death*, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall *put away the evil* from your midst” (Deuteronomy 13:5).

Would God be against something as harmless as Halloween, especially since it allows children to have fun and enjoy a little entertainment? Can’t we let them have a little harmless fun?

Frankly, Halloween is anything but harmless. It focuses one’s attention on witchcraft and demonism, which flies in the face of the holy God Almighty! When parents not only allow but also encourage their children to celebrate witches and goblins, they are teaching them that it’s acceptable to deal in demonism.

And we have seen what God thinks of that. God is a God of light and truth (1 John 1:5). Satan, “the god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4), is a very real being—a being of darkness, deception and death (Revelation 12:9; John 8:44). We are to have nothing to do with his ways. (To learn more, request our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

Do not assume that Halloween is a

Continued on page 29

How Did a Pagan Holiday Become a ‘Christian’ Celebration?

Originally Halloween was a pagan festival oriented around fire, the dead and the powers of darkness. Most everyone knows that Halloween takes place on Oct. 31. Far fewer, however, understand the connection between Halloween and the next day on the calendar, the festival of All Hallows’ or All Saints’ Day, celebrated by some churches and denominations Nov. 1.

One author surmises that All Saints’ Day was established to commemorate the saints and martyrs of the Roman Catholic Church and was first introduced in the seventh century (*Man, Myth, and Magic*, Vol. 1, 1983, p. 109). Oddly enough, history shows that Halloween—this ancient, thoroughly pagan holiday with its trappings of death and demonism—is inseparably tied to All Saints’ Day.

Pagan festivals from time immemorial have had a curious way of worming their way into Christianity over the centuries. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* explains that “the British church attempted to divert the interest in pagan customs by adding a Christian celebration to the calendar on the same date as the Samhain [the ancient Celtic name for the festival that eventually would be renamed *Halloween*].

“The Christian festival, the Feast of All Saints, commemorates the known and unknown saints of the Christian religion just as the Samhain had acknowledged and paid tribute to the Celtic deities” (1987, Vol. 6, p. 177).

How did this strange turn of events come about—the Catholic Church transforming an ancient pagan festival into one to supposedly honor deceased saints?

The 1913 edition of *The Catholic Encyclopedia* records this about All Saints’ Day: “In the early days the Christians were accustomed to solemnize the anniversary of a martyr’s death for Christ at the place of martyrdom. In the fourth century, neighboring dioceses began to interchange feasts, to transfer relics, to divide them, and to join in a common feast. Frequently groups of martyrs suffered on the same day, which naturally led to a joint commemoration.

“In the persecution of Diocletian the number of martyrs became so great that a separate day could not be assigned to each. But the Church, feeling that every martyr should be venerated, appointed a

common day for all. [Eventually] Gregory III (731-741) consecrated a chapel in the basilica of St. Peter to all the saints and fixed the anniversary for 1 November” (Vol. 1, p. 315).

Pope Gregory’s choice of Nov. 1 for this celebration was significant. Author Lesley Bannatyne explains: “That the date coincided with Samhain was no accident: the Church was still trying to absorb pagan celebrations taking place at this time . . .

“Villagers were also encouraged to masquerade on this day, not to frighten unwelcome spirits, but to honor Christian saints. On All Saints’ Day, churches throughout Europe and the British Isles displayed relics of their patron saints. Poor churches could not afford genuine relics and instead had processions in which parishioners dressed as saints, angels and devils. This religious masquerade resembled the pagan custom of parading ghosts to the town limits. It served the new church by giving an acceptable Christian basis to the custom of dressing up on Halloween.

“In addition, the Church tried to convince the people that the great bonfires they lit in homage to the sun would instead keep the devil away . . .” (*Halloween: An American Holiday, An American History*, 1998, pp. 9, 11).

Later a second celebration, All Souls’ Day, was instituted on Nov. 2. Eventually these two holidays merged into the present observance on Nov. 1, which was also called All Hallows’ Day. The name of All Hallows’ Even (evening) for the night of Oct. 31 evolved into the name Hallowe’en, or Halloween as it is called today.

This is a brief history of how men rationalized taking an ancient pagan festival rooted in death and demonism and adapting it for use as a “Christian” celebration. Regrettably, it flies in the face of God’s explicit instruction to not use pagan practices to worship Him.

He clearly states in Deuteronomy 12:30-32: “. . . Do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods . . . Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

The Biblical Festivals That Reveal Christ's Role in God's Plan

Jesus Christ celebrated seven festivals every year that most Christians today can't even name, yet they have His imprint all over them. He is the reason for each of these seasons, and they have great meaning for anyone who would like to follow Him better. What are these festivals, and what do they reveal about our Savior and King?

by Vince Szymkowiak

In October this year, a relatively small number of faithful followers of Jesus Christ will meet in locations around the world to celebrate four Holy Days that Jesus of Nazareth and the early New Testament Church observed. On each of these days they will be reminded of His central role in the meaning of these festivals.

Ironically, most Christians—people who by their very name indicate their respect and obedience to Christ—know little about these days authorized by the Bible and observed by our Savior and His followers after His crucifixion.

What are these festivals, and what role does Jesus play in each of them? It is crucial that we see the biblical Holy Days in the proper perspective. That perspective is that of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the One who sits at the right hand of the Father, is central to God's plan of salvation for humanity.

We all know that when Jesus came to earth, He came to die for our sins and to pave the way for eternal salvation. He taught His followers true Christianity, by both His words and His example.

One example that we see recorded in Scripture is His example of observing the festivals of God. Luke tells us that His custom was to observe God's Sabbaths (Luke 4:16). Matthew shows that He observed the Passover (Matthew 26:17); John records Him observing the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 10).

Later passages show that Jesus' followers also observed the Holy Days of God, now with deeper spiritual understanding—*Christian* understanding. Paul admonished the gentile Corinthians to properly observe the Feast of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread (1 Corinthians 5:7-8) because these days were *Christian* celebrations.

Christ is our Passover sacrifice for sins

Passover, which included the sacrifice of the Passover *lamb*, was commanded by

God (Exodus 12; Leviticus 23:4-5). Passover is also mentioned no less than 28 times in the New Testament, with the majority

Caiaphas said that Jesus would “die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish” (John 11:50).



Jesus is our true Passover lamb. The ancient ceremony pointed to Him and His sacrificial death on our behalf.

of occurrences found in the Gospels.

But what is the New Testament Passover all about? It is about the One who is so profound, so holy, so important, that without Him there is no New Testament Passover. That Someone is Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote of Passover's significance in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8: “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For *indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us*. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (emphasis added throughout).

Just before Jesus' last Passover observance before His crucifixion, the high priest

John explains this with this comment: “Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, *and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad*. Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death” (John 11:51-53).

These scriptures and others reveal that Jesus is our true Passover lamb and that the ancient ceremony pointed to Him and His sacrificial death on our behalf. In fact, the Gospels show that He was slain on *the very day* of Passover.

As we observe the New Testament Passover (kept in the spring in the northern hemisphere), we commemorate and come

to better understand the central role Jesus has in the removal of our sins as foreshadowed by the Passover lambs. “And you know that He [Jesus] was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5).

Unleavened Bread: Jesus Christ in us

The second annual festival, the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, follows right after Passover (Leviticus 23:6-8). In observing these days, Christians discover that this biblical festival is a time to focus on putting sin out of their lives.

For seven days Christians avoid leaven (an agent such as yeast or baking soda that causes bread dough to rise), as leaven represents sin during the festival.

Paul, referring to “the leaven of malice and wickedness” (1 Corinthians 5:8), compares leaven to sin and its tendency to grow and spread. Jesus referred to leaven as representing hypocrisy (Luke 12:1), false doctrine (Matthew 16:12) and moral depravity (Mark 8:15). These are some of the sins Christ’s true followers must overcome.

But there is an even deeper meaning to the Days of Unleavened Bread. These days picture the promise of the risen Christ. He was resurrected during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Jesus promised that He and the Father would make Their home in our hearts (John 14:23). In fact, Christ living within us gives us the sure hope of future glorification as the divine children of God (Colossians 1:27).

As we eat *unleavened* bread during this festival, representing sincerity and truth (see 1 Corinthians 5:8), we are reminded that Jesus Christ is the perfect example of this. We should desire with all of our being to have that Holy One living within us.

Observing the Days of Unleavened Bread reminds us that it is not *our* righteousness that causes us to overcome sins. Rather, it is the righteousness that comes as a result of Jesus living *His* righteous life in the hearts of His people, empowering us to conquer sin.

As the apostle Paul explained: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, *but Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, King James Version).

Thus the Days of Unleavened Bread are a celebration of the resurrected Christ who saves us from our sins, living again in us.

Pentecost: Christ empowers His Church

The third of God’s festivals is Pentecost. It was celebrated with much excitement in Israel because it signified the completion

of the early firstfruit harvest from the fields. Israelites could be assured of food for their families when God’s blessing was on them. This festival, too, teaches us much about Jesus Christ’s role in God’s plan.

When Jesus was about to ascend to heaven following His resurrection, the apostles were perplexed because their risen Lord was being taken from them. But Jesus had already promised them that He would not leave them as orphans (John 14:18). Answering their concern as to what they should do after His death, He promised that both He and the Father would come to the disciples by and through the power of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-23).

Jesus repeated this promise in Luke 24:49: “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” That power is the Holy Spirit. As Jesus foretold, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), and suddenly the disciples became the Church of God.

No longer were they a dazed and bewildered group of men and women—they were now *the people of God*. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they would now be able to truly overcome sin. And through that same power, God’s Church would take the gospel to the entire world.

This all became possible because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He fulfilled His promise by empowering the Church with the Holy Spirit. As Christians celebrate Pentecost to this day, we are reminded that Jesus continues to empower His Church to do His will and to preach the gospel.

We will now briefly cover each of the next four Holy Days, which come in the autumn of the year. As we examine them, we will again notice the pivotal role Jesus Christ plays in fulfilling the meaning of each of these days.

Trumpets: Announcing Christ’s return

The Feast of Trumpets is observed in late summer or early autumn, September or October of the Western calendar, on the first day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar (Leviticus 23:24-25).

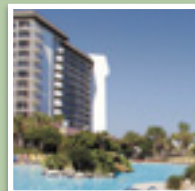
Trumpets were used in biblical times for several purposes. They were used to announce the beginning of this first autumn Holy Day (Leviticus 23:24). Trumpets were also used to announce the coronation of a king (1 Kings 1:39-40). They were used as an alarm to warn of war (Numbers 10:9; Jeremiah 4:19). They were

Why Not Join Us for the Feast Jesus Kept?

Jesus of Nazareth, His apostles and the early New Testament Church observed the Feast of Tabernacles, a biblical festival that celebrates Christ’s coming reign over the earth. In fact, when He returns, all nations will observe this festival (Zechariah 14:16-19).

But you don’t have to wait until then. Members of the United Church of God, an International Association, observe it every year in locations around the world. You can observe it with us this year, Oct. 18-25, at these locations:

Argentina; Australia (Frederick Henry Bay, Tasmania; Merimbula, New South Wales; Noosa, Queensland); **Bolivia; British Isles; Cameroon; Canada** (Kelowna, British Columbia; Kingston,



Ontario; Regina, Saskatchewan; St. John’s, Newfoundland); **Chile; Costa Rica; Estonia; France; Germany; Ghana; Guatemala; Italy; Ivory Coast; Jamaica; Jordan; Kenya; Malawi; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Peru; Philippines** (Baguio City; Davao City; Iloilo City); **Portugal; Rwanda; South Africa** (George, Uvongo); **Sri Lanka; Togo; Tonga; United States** (Bend-Redmond, Oregon; Branson, Missouri; Escondido, California; Jekyll Island, Georgia; Kerrville, Texas; Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii; Lexington, Kentucky; Panama City Beach, Florida; Steamboat Springs, Colorado; Wildwood, New Jersey; Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin).

For more details, visit:

www.ucg.org/feast

used to call the people of God to assembly (Numbers 10:1-8).

All of these purposes find their ultimate fulfillment in the New Testament teaching that Jesus Christ will return to the earth. At His return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He will battle against the armies of earth that oppose Him and His rule (Revelation 19:11-21).

He will also assemble His people together at the sound of the seventh trumpet. The New Testament makes it clear that the resurrection of Christ's faithful servants will occur at the blowing of the seventh trumpet: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and *with the trumpet of God*. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

And in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 we read: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet*. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Another key scripture is Revelation 11:15: "Then the seventh angel sounded [his trumpet]: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'"

The biblical Feast of Trumpets foreshadows the long-awaited second coming of Jesus Christ!

Atonement: Satan banished

The Day of Atonement is perhaps the most unusual of the biblical Holy Days. It is a day on which God's people fast, avoiding food and drink (Leviticus 23:26-32; Acts 27:9).

Atonement is also the day in which the Israelites sacrificed one goat as a sin offering (Leviticus 16:9) and released a second goat, the scapegoat (Hebrew *Azazel*), into the uninhabited wilderness (Leviticus 16:10).

The first goat, which was sacrificed as a sin offering, represented Jesus Christ. This

goat was slain, its blood shed to cover the sins of people (verses 15-16) just as Christ's blood covers our sins. The mediating high priest in this ceremony also represented Christ. The scapegoat is representative of Satan, who departed from God and is responsible for the temptations of humanity. Satan is the one Jesus called a "liar" and a "murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).

After Jesus returns to earth, He will commission an angel to banish Satan into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-3). Satan will no longer be allowed to deceive the nations. This world will not know peace until Satan the archdeceiver is put away. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the One who has crushed the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15) and whose sacrifice will afterward be applied to the earth's repentant nations, is central to the ultimate fulfillment of this day.

Tabernacles: Christ's millennial rule

Jesus is also central to the understanding of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles. He observed this Feast while He was on earth and told others to observe this Feast as well (John 7:2-14).

In Old Testament times the Israelites would gather in Jerusalem and dwell in small huts or booths made from the leafy branches of trees, rejoicing in the worship of God (Leviticus 23:40). The Old Testament links the reign of Jesus Christ on the earth with the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-21).

After Jesus returns, the world will experience a 1,000-year period of peace and prosperity (Revelation 20:1-6). He will serve as the King of the Kingdom of God under God the Father. The earth will be changed—not through the achievement of mankind, but through the infinite power of Almighty God.

In Isaiah 35:4-7 we read of this time: "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb

sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water . . ."

These verses will be literally fulfilled when the One who now sits at the right hand of the Father, Jesus Christ, returns to earth.

The last festival: Salvation offered to all

Following the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles is a final feast day, the *eighth* day (Leviticus 23:36). This festival has an ultimate and profound meaning in the plan of God.

Many today worry about loved ones who died before they came to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. They worry about loved ones who died before they repented and were baptized in faith. Their concern is that their loved ones are lost, doomed forever in an ever-burning hellfire.

But God is a God of love. He will never allow any human being to be lost without first being given a fair opportunity to hear the gospel. All who have gone to their graves without the knowledge of God will ultimately be given an opportunity to know God and respond to Him.

In Ezekiel 37:10-14 we read of a great resurrection of people, Israelites who had died without really having understood God's great plan: "So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

God's words to them are: "Behold, O My people, *I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves*, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it."

Ezekiel 37 tells us that a time is coming when those who died without the full knowledge of God will be given an opportunity for salvation. They will finally recognize Jesus

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The Good News is dedicated to proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ and to revealing the biblical solutions to so many of the problems that plague humanity. Published in several languages, it is sent free of charge to all who request it.

Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and our extended worldwide family of coworkers and donors who help share this message of hope with others.

We are grateful for the generous tithes and offerings of the members of the

Church and other supporters who voluntarily contribute to assist in this effort to proclaim the true gospel to all nations. While we do not solicit the general public for funds, contributions to help us share this message of truth and hope with others are welcomed.

The United Church of God, in accordance with responsible financial stewardship, is audited annually by an independent accounting firm.



Christ for what He really is, our Lord and our Savior.

Non-Christians who lived their entire lives without ever hearing the name of Jesus—the only name by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12)—will at last have the opportunity to accept His sacrifice as payment for their sins and be given their opportunity to receive God's Spirit.

This last of God's festivals represents the Last Judgment. The meaning of this final festival is that a time is yet coming in God's timetable in which those who never had the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be raised from their graves and learn God's truth for the first time.

Jesus described it as a time when the long-dead inhabitants of Nineveh and people like the Queen of Sheba would rise in a period of judgment with those of Jesus' day (Matthew 12:41-42). Since the Father "has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22), Jesus himself will be the final judge of all mankind.

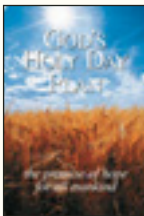
This festival does not symbolize, as Pentecost does, those who presently are called and who know the Lord's will. We know that our time of judgment is right now, and that we must be busy serving God today.

But those who have never known the truth will someday be given the opportunity to know God and understand His great plan. The meaning of this festival is that it will not ultimately be only the *few* who will be given opportunity for salvation, but *the many*. God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4, compare 2 Peter 3:9).

These Holy Days of God give us an overview of God's great plan of salvation. The fulfillment of these days is dependent on the One who became man, who died for our sins, who now sits at the right hand of the Father and who is coming again. That One's name is Jesus Christ. **GN**

Recommended Reading

To better understand the Holy Days of the Bible, God's plan for the salvation of mankind and how the world will finally be transformed under Jesus Christ's righteous rule, be sure to request your free copies of the booklets *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. You'll discover much more about the amazing good news of the future revealed in the Bible!



Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our Web site at

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

Appeasement

Continued from page 16

the London bombings were questions about how four young men born and brought up in Britain could take the lives of so many, about what made them feel so "alienated" and asking how can Britain and other countries do better in assimilating Muslims.

Nobody even considered the possibility that perhaps Islamic and Western values are inherently incompatible, a fact that Islamic nations themselves acknowledge by their refusal to allow non-Muslims to immigrate into their countries.

The Dutch politician Pym Fortuyn was one of the first to realize this, pointing out that Islamic values threaten liberal Dutch society. Assassinated in 2002, he paid with his life for the comment. So did Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, mentioned earlier. Perhaps it's not surprising that BBC employees are careful about criticizing Islam!

Do we have the will and wisdom?

Clearly the London suicide bombings have caused some Western leaders to awaken to the serious threat that confronts their nations. Hopefully it's not too late.

Rejection of biblical standards and absolutes has had many unforeseen consequences. Lack of discernment—characterized by appeasement in the face of growing danger—has been only one sad result of trying to live apart from the Word of God.

In an age of religious confusion, exacerbated by the new ideology of multiculturalism, does the Western world have the will and the wisdom to face up to the real threat that ideological terrorism poses? If not, we can only expect more attacks in the future. While many Western leaders and intellectuals flounder about spiritually, unable to discern the danger, terrorists remain single-minded in their deadly purpose.

The prophet Isaiah's words from more than 2,500 years ago seem so relevant today: "Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for *truth is fallen in the street*, and equity cannot enter. So *truth fails*, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey [or, as some references render it, 'he who departs from evil is accounted mad']" (Isaiah 59:14-15).

Christians, meanwhile, must seek the discernment that can only come from God's Word and continue to pray fervently for God's Kingdom to come. Only then will the suffering and violence that plagues our world finally come to an end. **GN**

Halloween

Continued from page 25

harmless holiday. God hates mankind's dabbling in the spirit world of Satan and his demons!

If there were no other reason available, that should be enough. But there are more reasons. Halloween keeps humankind, and many Christians, confused, disoriented and separated from the one and only true God.

God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Nor is He the author of Halloween or any other "Christianized" pagan holidays (Amos 5:21). Why would the only true God who loves mankind support any worldly holiday that blinds human beings to Him and His truth and that holds men, women and children captive to deception?

What does God expect from you on Halloween?

You now know what lurks behind Halloween's mask: Satan the devil! God will one day unmask the ritual and tradition of Halloween to all people (Hebrews 8:10-11).

If you believe that God exists and you understand that He is highly offended by the holidays designed and perpetuated by the god of this age, then you have a choice: whether you will begin honoring God the way He expects to be honored and be blessed for doing it, or whether you will ignore the truth revealed in history and His Word. Don't wait!

God is not a god of masks, but a God of truth. God says that if you honor Him, He will honor you (1 Samuel 2:30). Ignore God and He will leave you subject to the god of this world and all that entails. God expects all who love and honor Him to repent from dead works and turn in faith toward Him, the only true God. **GN**

Recommended Reading

It's ironic that so many of today's major holidays—including major religious celebrations like Christmas and Easter—originated in ancient pagan festivals and customs, while God's Holy Days revealed in the Bible are almost universally ignored. Which should you celebrate, and why? To learn more, request your free copies of the booklets *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?* and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. While you're at it, also request *Is There Really a Devil?* You'll be surprised to discover the truth about these things!



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Letters From Our Readers

“Marital Happiness: The Choice Is Up to You!”

Thank you for your commonsense articles on marriage in the last issue of *The Good News*. These days marriage is all too often approached with the attitude of getting what one wants, or the expectation that the “right” partner will automatically make one happy. The article shows that when two people do not always see eye to eye (and what two people do always agree?) they can choose to accept the other as he or she is. Naturally there are cases where this may not be enough, but if both partners are truly willing to submit to each other, that can surely make a difference.

Reader from Hertfordshire, England

I enjoy receiving your magazine. In fact I requested it so that my children might have an opportunity to read a periodical that covers issues and world topics according to a scriptural perspective. However, I would like to mention a problem I have with the article “Marital Happiness: The Choice Is Up to You.” Sometimes it’s not up to you. My husband professes to be a Christian, yet outside of the church he is a liar, a cheat and an adulterer—the list goes on ad infinitum.

I have tried to talk to him about this. I have begged him to go to counseling. I have gone to counseling on my own and have visited two different staff members of my church. I pray for him and our marriage, yet he refuses to change. So you see, it is not my choice. If I choose to stay in my marriage and work on it and pray for it, it is still a one-sided effort. I believe your article should have covered that scenario.

Reader from the Southern United States

We are saddened to hear of the personal plight of this reader and any others in such a situation. Making a marriage work of course depends on both partners. One partner flagrantly violating the marriage covenant may destroy a marriage through no fault of the hurt partner, and we did not intend to imply otherwise. Our general-advice articles addressing social problems like marital difficulties cannot cover all situations, including those that may be perilously close to the point of no return and are desperately in need of professional help and expertise.

Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?

I just finished reading *Life’s Ultimate*

Question: Does God Exist? and found it pretty much on target. I have taught science in the public schools for 40 years and am now teaching in a private Christian school. I think it might be helpful for me to also read *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*

R.F., Apollo, Pennsylvania

Interesting cancellation

I have received your May-June issue. Thank you for helping me understand the Bible more than I could ever imagine. I always pray to God for wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Now my parents say to close this practice because we are Muslim.

S.L., Internet

Letters from around the world

Again, thank you very much for continuing to send me not only *The Good News*, but also the free booklets and the free *Bible Study Course*. Your ministry is a blessing to many people around the world and I know that God will always give you the strength, power and provisions that you need to continue serving Him in fulfilling the great commission. All your booklets are very interesting and valuable to read. Honestly, through them I began to understand God’s true plan for mankind and His great laws for us. My friends are interested in your *Bible Study Course*.

H.M., London

Thank you very much for the valuable magazine and booklets that you have sent me. Your writers are fantastic and they are leading their readers into deep meditation. *The Good News* is fortunate to have such dedicated writers and our world is in need of such biblical interpreters.

P.J., India

I have received *The Good News* magazine along with the booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* They are a great blessing to me and I am greatly enriched spiritually by reading them. They are also a great source of information and inspiration.

M.R.N., India

Although I am a Roman Catholic, I really enjoy reading *The Good News*. There are so many who are not willing to accept God as

their master, but *The Good News* is the pathway for them to realize who God is and why we should accept Him.

S.P.H., Sri Lanka

I want to thank your organization for providing us with free publications that expand our knowledge of the world we live in. My mom and I requested several of your booklets and we appreciate your services very much. Your publications help us to cope with life.

M.C.R., Philippines

I just received my copy of *The Good News* and am busy reading it because it is so interesting. I pray that you will be blessed and continue to bring all nations together by passing the good news onto us. Future leaders, especially the youth like us who are growing up, need prayers and guidance.

V.O., Kampala, Uganda

I appreciate receiving *The Good News*. I am an Anglican, but everything I read in your magazine certainly coincides with my beliefs. I appreciate the information you give about what is going on around the world. Of course, some will be critical of this magazine because it tells the truth. *The Good News* is beautifully illustrated, and the layout is excellent. In my estimation, you have not only raised the bar to another level, but have sought to maintain the quality of the message contained in the magazine.

I.C.C., Nigeria

The Good News is my real link with what life is about and the plain, simple truth of Christ’s reason for being during these days of false doctrine. Thank you for your honesty in this publication. Please find enclosed a modest contribution.

M.W.M., Cornwall, England

Please accept this donation for the work of God Almighty in preaching the message of the coming Kingdom of God.

L.A., Burnaby, B.C., Canada

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to The Good News, Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254, U.S.A., or e-mail gninfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).



Questions & Answers

Q: The whole world is in a mess—wars, conflicts, the killing of innocent peoples. Can we do anything? A major, determined effort is required if humanity is to survive.

Dr. R.P., Geneva, Switzerland

A: The Bible says that “the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs” of a new age (Romans 8:22). So contrary to most conventional Christian teaching, God is not trying to “save the world” now, in this age of man—although that is His ultimate future purpose for mankind (John 3:17).

Indeed the Bible speaks of progressively worsening world conditions until a time when humanity stands on the brink of annihilation (Matthew 24:21-22). Then, when humanity is finally ready to listen, Jesus Christ will personally and directly intervene in the affairs of nations and usher in the Kingdom of God (verses 29-31; Revelation 11:15; 17:14). He will then, at long last, bring peace to the world.

In the meantime, what can we do? Previous attempts to enforce “utopia” on others have often resulted in brutal dictatorships and the forfeiting of the most basic human rights. And Jesus Himself pointed out that some common problems, such as poverty, will always be with us in this life (Matthew 26:11).

Yet we can become involved in the most important work on earth, *that of preaching the true gospel to this world*. Matthew 24:22 refers to a group of people called “the elect,” for whose sake the earth will not be destroyed. The elect are those who have been called and sanctified by God. They have repented of their sins and those sins have been forgiven, covered by Jesus Christ’s atoning blood. They have also been baptized (immersed in water) and, with the help of God’s Spirit, are now learning to pattern their lives after Christ’s example (1 Peter 2:21).

The end result will be a group of people to whom God will give everlasting life, and who will assist Christ when He comes back to earth to rule mankind for a thousand years (Revelation 20:6). Then God will offer salvation to all of humankind.

Part of the elect’s purpose now is to

support the preaching and publishing of the true gospel message of repentance and salvation to as many as God makes possible (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20). Although it is the duty of every Christian to ease suffering and distress whenever and wherever such opportunities arise, it is not his or her *primary* responsibility to become involved in well-meaning efforts to right the wrongs common to this age—that is, apart from God’s initiative, direction and help.

Salvation for most of mankind will only come in a great future resurrection to occur after Christ’s millennial reign. Nonetheless, those called by God now in this present age can repent and gain access to Him through receiving His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-39).

But what about all the suffering we see daily? God the Father has promised that after Christ’s 1,000-year reign and the great resurrection following it, He too will come to live on a completely transformed earth. At that time there will be no more sorrow, pain, crying or death (Revelation 21:4).

Suffering will be a thing of the distant past. The Father will erase the traumas of this present world and permanently exclude unrepentant murderers, liars and all others who would threaten His new society of permanent peace and untold happiness.

To study further into God’s great purpose for mankind, please request our free booklets *Why Does God Allow Suffering?*, *What Is Your Destiny?* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. Also, to understand more about how to participate in the preaching of the gospel, please request our free booklet *This Is the United Church of God*.

Q: Could you please tell me what denomination your church is? My husband and I are both Baptists, but we enjoy your magazine.

Mrs. C.B., Northern Ireland

A: Our name is the United Church of God, an International Association. We have congregations and members around the world. We are not associated with any denomination of Protestantism, Orthodoxy or Catholicism. We are dedicated to

following the beliefs and practices of the early New Testament Church. We also take very seriously Jesus Christ’s commission to preach and publish the gospel—good news—of the Kingdom of God in all nations (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20).

To fully understand our role and our historic and prophetic mission, please request or download the free booklets *This Is the United Church of God* and *The Church Jesus Built*. The former describes our history, structure, organization and teaching. The latter details the Bible’s definition of and teaching about the Church.

Q: What form of government do you have in your Church?

Reader on Internet

A: First and foremost, Jesus Christ is the Head of God’s Church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). The United Church of God strives to yield to Him and the Father to guide the decision-making process.

On a human level, the Council of Elders (comprising 12 ordained ministers chosen for a set term by the Church’s elders around the world) oversees the care of the United Church of God in general, the preaching of the gospel and the administration of our financial resources.

Our ministerial services team and home office staff in Cincinnati, Ohio, serve under the authority and guidance of a president chosen by the Council of Elders—functioning in cooperation with this body of ministers and its chairman.

Similar arrangements prevail in other countries. All make up the United Church of God, an International Association, working in cooperation with the home office in the United States. For a more detailed understanding, please request our free booklet *This Is the United Church of God*.

Editor’s note: Space limitations often prevent us from answering all questions in every detail, thus letters may be shortened and/or additional questions omitted. We want to reply to as many different readers as possible. That is why we urge our readers to request or download the appropriate free publications that more fully address such questions and concerns.

Will the World Ever See a Time of Lasting Peace?



Photo illustration by Shaun Venish/Getty Images

Today's headlines are filled with bad news—war, famine, natural disasters, governmental scandals and the like. With all this bad news, what kind of future can we look forward to?



Almost 2,000 years ago, a prophet came bringing a vital message for this world. That prophet was Jesus Christ, and His message was “the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14). The word *gospel* means *good news*. But what was the good news Jesus Christ brought? What is the kingdom of which He spoke? And does it have anything to do with the problems that threaten us today?

Most people don't understand the truth about the Kingdom of God. Yet it is the central theme of the Bible—and truly the best news the world can hear!

In *The Gospel of the Kingdom* you can discover the truth of the surprising message Jesus Christ brought. This booklet shows you, from the pages of your Bible, exactly what that message is—and what it means for you. For your free copy, visit our Web site or contact any of our offices listed on page 2.

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